Journal of European Baptist Studies

Publication – Twice a year

Editorial Office
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ISSN 1213-1520 (print) | ISSN 1804-6444 (online)

Open Access
This journal is published in open access in cooperation with Index Theologicus.
https://www.jebs.eu | https://www.ixtheo.de

Print Subscriptions
International Baptist Theological Study Centre
The Baptist House, Postjesweg 150, 1061 AX Amsterdam, The Netherlands
https://www.ibts.eu | jebs@ibts.eu | +31-20-2103025
Subscriptions to this journal are also available through EBSCO and Harrassowitz.

Cover design by Thought Collective, Belfast, Northern Ireland
https://www.thoughtcollective.com | hello@thoughtcollective.com

Electronic Access
This journal is indexed in the *ATLA Religion Database*® and included in the full-text *ATLASerials*® and *ATLASerials PLUS*® collections. Both are products of the Atla, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606, USA
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IBTSCENTRE
AMSTERDAM
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International Conference

Dimensions of Baptist Identity: Past and Present

22–24 April 2021

The International Baptist Theological Study Centre offers the opportunity to explore key contemporary issues in an international academic environment. We would like to extend an invitation to join us in this conference which will explore the topic of Baptist – or, as some participants may prefer, baptistic – identity from different perspectives, including spirituality, theology, and practice. Both the constants and variables of identity will be discussed. What are Baptist identity markers and how have these been perceived, interpreted, developed, and lived out in different cultural settings? Papers from historical and present-day perspectives are welcome, as well as presentations focusing on Baptist relations with other traditions.

If you are interested in presenting a paper, please send the title and a short abstract (maximum 300 words) for consideration to Dr Toivo Pilli (pilli@ibts.eu) before 10 February 2021. The papers are expected to be no more than 30 minutes in delivery.

For further information and registration contact Laura Dijkhuizen (dijkhuizen@ibts.eu) or you can register online before 10 March 2021 via https://forms.gle/eA6t6JxScm1pbJiGA.

Papers will be considered for publication in the *Journal of European Baptist Studies*.

Participants are responsible for their travel and accommodation arrangements. A limited number of travel scholarships are available for participants from low-income countries, depending on the number of applicants.

Note: Should (inter)national COVID-19 travel and/or event restrictions still be in place, the conference will be held over Zoom or will take place in a blended format.

Journal of European Baptist Studies
Volume 20 No. 2 Autumn 2020
Guest editors: Ian M. Randall and Keith G. Jones

Editorial
20th Anniversary Edition

Why the Journal Exists

In the Autumn of 2000, the senior staff team of IBTS, then based in Prague, set out on an adventure to create a *Journal of European Baptist Studies (JEBS*) that would provide a platform for baptistic theology which would enhance the standing of European Baptists[1] as theological thinkers, missiologists, Biblical scholars, historians and ecclesiologists.

The original editorial board of Cheryl A. Brown, René Erwich, Parush R. Parushev, Petra Živnůsková,[2] and ourselves are now spread throughout the world — in the USA, Australia, Bulgaria, Germany and the United Kingdom. However, the vision we articulated then has been carried forward by our successors and we celebrate together twenty years during which *JEBS* has flourished and taken its place as a journal of note in the world of radical, gathering church theology,[3] building on insights from notable theologians such as James Wm McClendon Jr and Glen Stassen. These founding influencers are referred to elsewhere in this edition and the review of the twenty volumes to date repeatedly show how IBTS, now in Amsterdam, and this journal, *JEBS*, has played a part in shaping and transforming baptistic communities, theological seminaries and missionary initiatives in so many different places in Europe and, indeed, throughout the world.

In the editorial of Volume 1 Number 1 it was made clear that the purpose of *JEBS* was not to duplicate what was already being done through various evangelical and scholarly publications, but to give Baptists the opportunity to explore issues of theology and practice relevant to the radical reformation tradition. We set out in that first edition to enable Baptist scholars, especially those at the beginning of their vocation, to be published in a reputable journal in the English language, one of the dominant languages for theological dialogue in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. We made clear that *JEBS* would be open to publish articles in all the major, and indeed

[1] The definition of European Baptists follows that of our parent body, the European Baptist Federation, covering Baptists from Vladivostok on the Pacific Ocean to the Azores in the Atlantic Ocean, and from Nord Kapp in Norway to the boundaries between Egypt and Sudan, and certainly including all of Middle Asia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Iraq. Our Europe may not be that of the geographers, but is our Baptist vision.

[2] Petra's married name is Kopsich.

[3] IBTS, through *JEBS,* has been at the forefront of developing a theological tradition rooted in the ecclesiology of radical, believing church, intentional, convictional, gathering communities of faith.

minor, areas of theological, historical, Biblical, ethical and missiological discourse.

We also asserted that those who wrote for *JEBS* would be free to express their own views, which may not always be the views of IBTS, nor of the European Baptist Federation. In setting this out we were mindful of the saying of W. M. S. West,[4] who often remarked that 'where there are two Baptists, there are three opinions'.

What we wanted above everything else was that we would 'attract articles that will contribute to the growth and health of Baptist witness in Europe today'.[5]

Our Contributors to Volume 20 Number 2

Before turning to a review of the contents of *JEBS* over twenty years, we want to introduce to you those who have articles produced within this volume. *JEBS* policy has always been to invite submissions from anyone who has something important to say within the parameters rehearsed above. On this occasion, to celebrate twenty years of publication, we have looked within the IBTS community to our former students and staff. In so doing three things have become clear. IBTS alumni are spread throughout the world and are engaged in vital work as the people of God in a myriad of different contexts. The second is that many have found their homes within the world of theological education, church leadership, and missional development. Some do so in contexts which are not the places of their birth. The third is that though the constituting partners of IBTS, the Baptist Unions of the European Baptist Federation, were not universally accepting of the ministry of women when IBTS was re-focused in the mid-1990s, IBTS has paved the way for many women to be formed as ministers, scholars, leaders and teachers, and this volume presents several of those who have made a significant contribution to Baptist life in contexts which many would not have countenanced in the middle of the last century.

Manuel Martínez Ortega, from Spain, has engaged with issues of Reformation theology and spirituality in the Spanish context and gained a doctoral degree from his studies at IBTS, in cooperation with Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. He is currently President of Facultad Internacional de Teología IBSTE in Castelldefels, Barcelona, one of the five officially accredited Protestant Faculties in Spain.

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[4] W. M. S. West (1922–1999) was a British Baptist scholar. Principal of the oldest Baptist seminary in the world, Bristol Baptist College in England, a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and one-time resident of IBTS in Rüschlikon, whilst completing his doctoral degree at the University of Zürich.

[5] 'Editorial', *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, 1, no. 1 (September 2000): 3.

Constantine Prokhorov is a Baptist Church historian who lives in Omsk, Siberia, and has contributed much to researching the values and history of Russian Baptists. He studied at IBTS gaining a doctoral degree from the University of Wales, and in his article offered for this special edition of *JEBS* he has, yet again, brought to light another important aspect of baptistic life as it existed under communism.

Lina Toth, Assistant Principal of the Scottish Baptist College, hails from Lithuania, came to IBTS to undertake master's studies, and went on to complete a doctorate, and to be part of the Academic Team. She is now an accomplished author and has been involved in theological dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church as part of a commission of the Baptist World Alliance. In this edition of *JEBS* she interviews Parush R. Parushev, a former director, vice rector, then rector of IBTS, and together they reflect on the ideas and influences of McClendon and Stassen in shaping our theological emphases and distinctives. She also contributes a paper on Baptist-Roman Catholic relations in Lithuania, first given orally at a gathering of the bilateral conversations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance.

Julie Justus Williams is the Director of Global Partnerships and Unity for the Baptist World Alliance in Falls Church, Virginia. She journeyed from the USA to Prague to gain a European master's degree. Within our international community Julie gained a deep appreciation of the attitudes and insights of Baptists from many parts of the world, and this is reflected in Julie's contribution to this volume on how IBTS shaped her for her current ministry in our world Baptist body.

Alexandra Ellish came to IBTS after completing first degree studies in Edinburgh. Most of our students come through the route of recommendation by their tutors or seminaries. Alex found the seminary from the IBTS website and with her husband, Phil, came to do a master's degree. On completing this, she returned to the United Kingdom and became part of a church planting team in the East End of London. She is now engaged in a wider ministry of support in pioneer ministry with an Anabaptist context.

Rosa Hunt, Co-Principal of the South Wales Baptist College, hails from Malta; her first language is Maltese and she is now developing her strengths in her third spoken language, Welsh. Rosa did her doctoral studies with IBTS, starting in Prague and completing the studies in Amsterdam. She serves as a pastor in South Wales and has an academic interest in the Church Fathers. In her article for this edition she focuses on a critical issue in many of our believing communities throughout Europe where we often have minority communities thinking and worshipping in another language to that

of the dominant culture. How do we demonstrate in a meaningful way being inclusive church?

Joshua Searle, Director of Postgraduate Studies at Spurgeon's College in London, came to IBTS from Oxford to do a master's in mission and was excited to be exposed to the theological thoughts of McClendon and others. After doctoral studies at Trinity College, Dublin, he now lectures in theology and public thought. In his article he engages with the thought of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. It reminds us that the IBTS residential community in Prague was based around Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*[6] as a gathering and praying community.

Henrikas Žukauskas is another representative of the Baltic states, who came to IBTS to attend conferences and, eventually, to pursue doctoral studies. Henrikas has held various posts in Lithuania, including as a missioner, local church pastor in both Klaipeda (Memel, an important place in Baptist history) and Vilnius. He has also served on the board of the Union, and is currently its Chair. He and his wife have a special ministry in using the performative arts and he explores this issue in this volume of *JEBS*.

Helle Liht, Assistant General Secretary of the European Baptist Federation and living in Estonia, came to IBTS to study applied theology at master's level and her dissertation reflected her already existing interest in creation care. Helle has been at the heart of European Baptist life since the 1990s, firstly in EBF youth work, then with the General Secretary, Tony Peck, at the centre of the work of the EBF.

The 'shape' of this volume

Our colleague, Parush R. Parushev, often encouraged doctoral students to shape their work in the formula three by three. Whilst we do not necessarily believe this method to be always useful, you will note that in this issue we have three articles on history, three on the contemporary church, and three that might be classified as theological and ethical.

Themes through Twenty Years of *JEBS*

An analysis of the Volumes of *JEBS* over the past twenty years reveals some dominant themes, which is not surprising given the re-focused purpose of IBTS from 1998 onwards. One of the main aims the Editorial Board had from the beginning was to enable young scholars to publish, and principally, to support IBTS master's and doctoral students to venture academic articles in the English language. It is salutary to note that over forty IBTS students set out on their academic careers and publications through the pages of *JEBS*.

[6] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (London: SCM Press, 1954).

One of the dominant topics was that of national or regional Baptist history in Europe with over twenty-five articles on that theme.

Again, given the IBTS programme emphasis on mission, there have been over twenty-six articles around the theme of mission in a post-modern, post-communist world. Related to this, IBTS was one of the first seminaries in Europe to place an emphasis on creation care and ecology with special eco seminary weeks, partnership with the Orthodox Academy at Vilémov, and engagement with the European Christian Environmental Network[7] and the John Rae Initiative.[8] At least ten articles set out an approach to these on-going critical issues for our world.

In the first issue of Volume 1, *JEBS* began exploring what the ecclesiology of a gathering, intentional, convictional community of believers might look like and subsequently the journal has published twenty-five articles around this theme.

A seminary — or a research centre, as IBTS has defined its identity today — should also be reflecting on the purpose and methods of theological education and ministerial formation. In Volume 1 Number 2, then-IBTS Director David M. Brown, posed a challenge in his article 'Theological Education: Filling a Bottle, Passing a Baton, Opening a Door'.[9] This stimulating challenge aimed at the Baptist seminaries in Europe has seen *JEBS* publish sixteen articles on theological education over the past twenty years with at least six articles on related themes of adult education and special educational needs.

Alongside this and relating to the function of the institution there have been seven articles on the practice of ministry and nine articles on Christian ethics, with at least eight articles on the relationship of Christianity to society, the state and art.

Whilst IBTS is a Baptist institution integral to the Baptist Unions and Conventions of the EBF, the articles and vision in *JEBS* have always pointed to the wider community of Christians in the world. So, we have seen at least ten articles on ecumenism and four on the beliefs of the Baptist World Alliance, especially focused around the centenary of the BWA in 2005.

From 1998 onwards IBTS recognised that its primary direction was not as an institution focused on the area of Biblical studies and research. Nevertheless, the seminary has had a succession of Biblical scholars who have been IBTS directors, or adjunct faculty, including Professor Wiard Popkes, Professor I. Howard Marshall, Dr Cheryl A. Brown, Dr Peter F.

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[7] European Christian Environmental Network, https://www.ecen.org/ [accessed 21 October 2020].
[8] John Rae Initiative, https://www.jri.org.uk/archived-briefings/ [accessed 21 October 2020].
[9] David M Brown, 'Theological Education: Filling a Bottle, Passing a Baton, Opening a Door', *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, 1, no. 2 (January 2001): 5–20.

Penner, Dr Rollin Grams, Dr Robin L. Routledge and the Revd Alec Gilmore. *JEBS* has, accordingly, had a steady input of articles on the Old and New Testaments, nineteen in total, with related articles on hermeneutics.

Again, from the very outset in the life of the re-focused IBTS the emphasis was on academic study in the context of a community of spirituality. Inevitably, practices led to reflection and *JEBS* has published at least thirteen articles reflecting on spirituality.

As commented earlier, the works of James Wm McClendon Jr[10] have been an influence amongst the faculty and students, as has the work of Glen Stassen,[11] and at least seven articles directly reflected their influence on the IBTS community. One of McClendon's interests was biography as theology and *JEBS* has published thirteen articles which might be placed in that category.

The editorial board

As indicated earlier, the original editorial board of *JEBS* was formed from the Directorate of IBTS. The directorate model was established in the 1998 re-focusing of the seminary. Over the years seventeen people have served on the editorial board. The longest serving has been the Revd Docent Dr Parush R. Parushev (serving between 2000–2018) followed by the Revd Dr Lina Toth and Dr Tim Noble (15 years and still serving), then the Revd Dr Keith G. Jones (14 years from the inception of *JEBS* until his retirement) and the Revd Dr Ian M. Randall and Dr Toivo Pilli (12 years each). From 2000 until 2013 Mrs Denise Jones served as manager and sub-editor. From 2016–2020 Dr Dorothy McMillan served as managing editor of JEBS. Since the move to Amsterdam and with the re-shaping of the work so that there is no longer a wider community based at the IBTS Centre, scholars from various parts of Europe have been selected to serve on the editorial board. The current group consists of Dr Toivo Pilli (Chair, Tartu, Estonia), Dr Lina Toth (Glasgow, Scotland), Dr Tim Noble (Prague, Czech Republic), Revd Dr Mike Pears (Amsterdam, Netherlands), Dr Oleksandr Geychenko (Odessa, Ukraine), Dr Ksenija Magda (Zagreb, Croatia) and Dr Constantine Prokohrov (Omsk, Russia). They carry forward the values and vision of the founding editorial board with enthusiasm and commitment.

The contributors

The majority of articles for *JEBS* have come from twenty-eight countries in Europe, from the pens of IBTS faculty and adjunct faculty, from the students, and from colleagues at other European Baptist seminaries. However, *JEBS*

[10] James Wm McClendon Jr, *Systematic Theology*, 3 Vols: *Ethics, Doctrine, Witness* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986, 1994, 2000).
[11] See, for instance, Glen Stassen and David Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

has hosted articles of scholars from throughout the world, spanning all the continents except Antarctica. The editors have been delighted to publish articles by distinguished international scholars in the journal over the years. They have included Professor Miroslav Volf (Croatia and the USA), Professor Albert Wardin Jr (Poland and the USA), Dr Daniel Carro (Argentina), Dr Frank Rees (Australia), Professor David W. Bebbington (Stirling, Scotland) and Professor Nancey Murphy (Fuller Seminary, USA).

Of the 230 plus articles and notes *JEBS* has published, disappointingly, only 34 have been by women. This does not reflect the proportion of women students who have studied at IBTS, Prague, and at the IBTS Centre, Amsterdam, over the last twenty years. Improving the proportion of articles published by women is a task for the editorial board to address. In this volume five of the nine main contributors are women, demonstrating the commitment of *JEBS* to ensure excellent women alumni of IBTS have a proper profile.

What Difference Has *JEBS* Made?

We believe the work of *JEBS* has succeeded in several significant ways. It has given young scholars the opportunity to be published in a journal which is circulated throughout the world, and has helped several to establish themselves in the wider world of academic theology, mission, and historical studies.

It has placed before academia an understanding that there is a body of baptistic theology, mission, and historical studies which approaches matters from another base of reflection and reasoning outside of the approach of the classic world of Roman Catholic, Magisterial Reformation, and Anglican theological discourse.

It has addressed countless issues in our post-modern world from the background of convictional Christian theology which understands primary theology to belong to the local ecclesia of God, though valuing the place of secondary theology which goes on in academia.

Quo Vadis?

The work of *JEBS* is far from concluded. In guest editing this anniversary volume we have been struck, again, by the fact that the values and concerns that led us to founding the *Journal of European Baptist Studies* in 2000 are as vital today as they were then.

We commend this special edition to you as the articles within it deserve attention and response. The motivation of the community which

nurtures and produces the key group of scholars who contribute to *JEBS* continues to deserve encouragement and support in their mission.

Read on, then, and be enlightened.

Ian M. Randall and Keith G. Jones

Guest editors

Convictional Theology in East and West Twenty Years Ago and Now: Dr Lina Toth in Conversation with Dr Parush R. Parushev

Lina Toth: First of all, Parush, can you introduce yourself, for the readers who may be new to JEBS?

Parush R. Parushev: I am a native of Sofia, Bulgaria, and the first part of my life was spent as a scientist. I had gained a BS/MS and PhD (Science) from Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) State University of Information Technologies, Mechanics and Optics, in what then was the Soviet Union. I became a scientific researcher, senior research fellow and finally the head of a laboratory at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences as well as a lecturer, and docent, at the University of Sofia in the field of applied mechanics and robotics. In the estimation of others, I was considered to be a promising researcher in the field of hard science.

I have seen some of the patents you secured with your colleagues — what an impressive and exciting career path it would seem to be! How then did you leave it to become a theologian?

Amongst various invitations to international gatherings of scientists and academicians in the early 1980s, there was one to Krakow, Poland. It happened to coincide with the time of the graduation of Roman Catholic priests and theologians of the Theological Faculty of the local (and Poland's oldest) University. Countless people had gathered for the occasion, many travelling on foot from the most distant parts of Poland in the chilly winter on this yearly pilgrimage to Krakow, as the utmost profession of their faith. Up to that point, my life was embedded in the experience of three generations of communists-by-conviction, and seemingly guided solely by rationality and reason. But there, in Krakow, I was forced to realise that there were people — including some of my academic colleagues — who did not uphold the communist idea and who professed a genuine, wholehearted belief in a very different reality. It was not easy to ignore their witness.[1]

[1] On the details of this encounter with the believing community in Poland and its implications, see Parush R. Parushev, 'Faith That Matters in the Culture of Ghosts', in *Stories of Emergence: Moving from Absolute to Authentic*, ed. by Mike Yakonelli (Grand Rapids: Emergent YS with Zondervan, 2003), pp. 204–18.

This vibrant and active Catholic community confronted me with a different way of life, a way more meaningful and morally appealing than that of the rest of the Polish Communist society or other Communist societies that I knew or lived in. It was a prime example of counter-cultural, and at the same time contextual, corporate witness against the grain of the dominant public ideology.

How did you come into contact with the Baptists — a much less numerous, and much more secluded, expression of Christian tradition in Eastern Europe?

I had some questions after I started getting to know the Polish Catholic Church more closely. My primary concern was with its multi-levelled hierarchical structure. It was quite similar to the structures of the ruling Communist parties in Eastern Europe, which I guess were originally copied from the (Orthodox) ecclesiastical institutions. I was asking myself whether such a strict top-down structure could avoid the seduction to power, and whether such power could be redeemed to become an agent of liberation. Was there a meaningful communal way of life of the faithful, I asked, that would be 'flat' in structure?

So it was the corporate witness of the Polish believers that planted the seeds, but such witness, as important as it was, was not enough, at least for me. The plant of faith in me started to grow under the impact of a personal witness which made the biblical story alive and tangible in terms of my immediate life-experience. Faith and mission must always have a personal witnessing face. In my case it was a Bulgarian woman by the name of Fikija Apostolova. She was living out her beliefs against the odds in a way that was bringing new meaning in her life, and making a difference in the lives of those around her. Through her witness I discovered the church not as a structure or institution, but as a community of shared life. In my case, it was a Baptist community.

However, even the faithful witness of a genuine believer, added to the credibility of the visible presence of a community of faith, is still not enough for the conversion process. The pilgrimage of faith is guided by a series of signposts by which corporate and personal witness mark the process of conversion. The mysterious personal experience of the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God imparts the new that comes in Christ in the believer's heart and mind — the *metanoia,* or conversion — and that became

my experience too.[2] This enables the next steps in the Christian pilgrim's journey: the continuous transformation and growing in Christ-likeness, discipleship and witness. The repeating cycle of preparation for mission marked by personal and corporate witness to the culture, through conversion and the nurturing of disciples, to maturing them for socially relevant witnessing is at the core of Christian mission, as I understand it.[3]

In the very way you describe your story, I also hear the echoes of the work of James Wm McClendon — a theologian who has been highly significant for your own theological journey, but also, especially through yourself, for IBTS and IBTSC as a whole. As a way of reflecting on Christian ethics, McClendon suggests a metaphor of three strands. These three are the bodily strand, or personal life; the strand of community, or the corporate embodiment of life; and the strand of the anastatic, or resurrection ethics which colours and aligns the other two strands with the vision of the newness of life through Christ.[4] Here you apply the 'strand metaphor' to the experience of your own conversion. How did you come to study theology, and to be attracted to McClendon's theology?

As I (slowly) turned from a Communist Party Secretary and an atheist to a Christian believer and a member of a Baptist church in Bulgaria, it led me to gaining an MDiv from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary of Kentucky (SBTS), and a PhD (Theology) from Fuller Theological Seminary, (California), as well as ordination into Baptist ministry. I am sure that it was by God's provision that on this journey I have had several outstanding theological guides. I met first Glen Stassen (an ethicist) in SBTS. He introduced me to the work of Jim McClendon (a theologian) and later to that

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[2] For some testimonies of the critical role of the examination of one's nominal or inherited convictions confronted by authentic Christian living and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, see Yakonelli, *Stories of Emergence* 2003, passim.

[3] See Parush R. Parushev, 'Witness, Worship and Presence: On the Integrity of Mission in Contemporary Europe', *Mission Studies*, 24, no. 2 (2007): 305–332, and Parush R. Parushev and Lina Andronoviene, 'McClendon's Concept of Mission as Witness', in *Anabaptism and Mission*, ed. by Wilbert R. Shenk and Peter F. Penner (Erlangen, Germany: Neufeld Verlag Schwartzenfeld, 2007), pp. 247–64. For a somewhat similar holistic paradigm in the theology of mission, cf. Bernhard Ott, *Beyond Fragmentation: Integrating Mission and Theological Education; A Critical Assessment of some Recent Developments in Evangelical Theological Education* (Carlisle, Cumbria: Regnum Books International with Paternoster, 2001), pp. 103–149.

[4] James Wm McClendon Jr, *Systematic Theology: Ethics, Volume I*, rev. edn. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002; originally published 1986), passim; James Wm McClendon Jr, *Doctrine: Systematic Theology, Volume II* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 109. Parush Parushev himself often employs the term 'visionary' to describe the third strand of human life which has to do with the vision 'of construing the world according to […] [the] best aspirations' of its holders. (Parush R. Parushev, 'Convictions and the Shape of Moral Reasoning', in *Ethical Thinking at the Crossroads of European Reasoning*, ed. by Parush R. Parushev, Ovidiu Creangă and Brian Brock (Prague: International Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), p. 37.)

of Nancey Murphy (a philosopher). I studied with all of them and they also guided my doctoral studies as a team. These world-class thinkers became my friends and shaped not only my way of thinking but, importantly, my way of being a thinking *Christian*. All three of them believed in a community that lives out its faith corporately, and reflects on it and passes it on in words, songs and deeds to the next generation of the disciples of Christ. This holistic theological view reflected my own experience of Eastern European baptistic communities. McClendon's theology of convictions became for me the primary vehicle of engaging with the theology of a faith community and of a believer.

Can you tell us about your involvement with IBTS and IBTSC, and what you are doing now?

From 2000 to 2014, my life was based at the International Baptist Theological Seminary of the European Baptist Federation, in Prague, the Czech Republic, and for a few more years, at the International Baptist Theological Study Centre in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, as the institution relocated and refocused. There I served as a senior lecturer (2000–2016), Academic Dean (2002–2013) and the Rector/Director of IBTS in Prague (2013–2016).

Whilst I am still involved in the work of IBTSC as a senior research fellow and doctoral supervisor, I am once again based in Bulgaria. I serve as the Rector of the St. Trivelius Higher Theological Institute in Sofia, and as Associated Director for Academic Development of the Scholars' Programme of the Langham Partners International.

You were instrumental in the birth of this very journal. Tell us a little bit of that story.

When I started working at IBTS, I was asked what, given my previous academic experience, I could contribute to the development of the institution. I suggested that for us to have credibility as a European Baptist research and higher educational institution, we should have a journal. This idea had already been in the minds of Keith Jones (the then Rector) and Ian Randall (the then Academic Dean), so very quickly we started to work on launching the new journal which was named the *Journal of European Baptist Studies*. The publication showcased each of the main four academic fields of IBTS, with articles in the area of Biblical Studies, Baptist and Anabaptist history,

Contextual Missiology and eventually Applied Theology — at that time the newest of the four MTh programmes in the making.

The MTh in Applied Theology was launched in 2001, with you serving as the director (or course leader). I remember this well, as I was a student in that first cohort, and the programme was absolutely formative for my own development as a theological thinker.

IBTS was looking for an umbrella programme that would include aspects of Christian pedagogy, spirituality and homiletics. I knew I wanted to add a module on Church and Social Ethics. We also supplemented pedagogy with leadership, and spirituality with discipleship. I also remember conversing about this new programme with Jim McClendon. He was just about to publish his third volume, *Witness*.[5] Under Jim's influence, I was particularly interested in the relationship between theology and culture. That's how the key element of the programme emerged, in the shape of the module then called Church in Contemporary Society. He seemed to be very happy with this idea.

So, 'applied', but not 'systematic', theology?

That was precisely the question asked by our external examiner during the process of validating the programme. Yet in my view, systematic theology is a grandiose term without much content. The way I put it, what passes for systematic theology is simply systematically organised subjectivity. In my understanding, for Baptists, or baptistic communities, it is much more important to explore what is actually believed (rather than simply claimed to be believed), and why (including the way these beliefs may be shaped and coloured by the culture-at-large).

In other words, McClendon's convictional theology?

Indeed. I started pondering the issue of convictions and convictional theologies relatively early in my theological studies, whilst taking a course with Glen Stassen in the Southern Baptist Seminary on Christian ethics. McClendon's *Ethics* was one of the textbooks. What impressed me first of

[5] James Wm McClendon Jr, with Nancey Murphy, *Witness: Systematic Theology*, Vol 3 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000).

all was the carefully crafted way Jim presented his thoughts in that volume by using the structure of 3x3x3...

…Of course, most of your students at IBTS will remember your mathematical take on the structure, and your attempts to convince them to follow 3x3x3, especially for their doctoral projects!

Quite so! But beyond my being impressed by structural beauty, it struck me how much sense *Ethics,* as well as *Doctrine*, which McClendon was presenting to us at the time, made, especially to those of us who came from faith communities that were not saturated by a great deal of systematic theological thinking, but where the primary source of theological thinking was the life stories of 'saints' (regardless of whether we used the language of saints or not). For instance, for us as Bulgarian Baptists, our faith had been nourished by such books as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Encountering McClendon, it dawned on me how dissenting communities in Bulgaria or elsewhere were passing on their theological heritage through such stories.

And hymns and songs — which were also stories of a kind.[6]

Yes, indeed. In contrast to the recommendation attributed to Barth (the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other), these communities hold the Bible in one hand and the hymnal (or its equivalent) in the other.

However, my real immersion in convictional theology came when I started my studies with McClendon himself, by that time at Fuller Theological Seminary. In so many ways McClendon was ahead of the trend, paving the way for non-foundational theologising.[7] As Curtis Freeman notes, convictional theologising became more widespread in different educational centres in the US and in Europe,[8] including the Vrije Universiteit and the Chair of Convictional Theologies there. There are a number of younger scholars who have developed and are developing this line of thought.

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[6] Lina Andronoviene, 'As Songs Turn into Life and Life into Songs: On the First-Order Theology of Baptist Hymnody', in *Currents in Baptistic Theology of Worship*, ed. by Keith G. Jones and Parush R. Parushev (Prague: International Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), pp. 129–141.

[7] Stanley Hauerwas, Nancey Murphy, and Mark Nation, eds., *Theology without Foundations: Religious Practice and the Future of Theological Truth* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994).

[8] Curtis Freeman, 'A Theology for Radical Believers and Other Baptists', introduction to James Wm McClendon Jr, *Systematic Theology* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2012).

The first issue of the first volume of JEBS included your article entitled 'East and West: A Theological Conversation'.[9] It is a fascinating reminder of the interplay of culture and theology we have already noted, and particularly, the differences, as you saw them at the time, between the way Baptists in the East and the West thought about and expressed their theology. So, what is this 'Eastern' and 'Western' way of thinking?

This article was written *ad hoc*, upon the encouragement of the then *JEBS* editor, Ian Randall. He had heard me share that, in my understanding, there were two distinctly different ways of theologising. One way based on logic and analysis, representing the traditional Anglo-American approach to critical thinking. I have been trained in it myself both as a scientist and as a theologian. The other way was much more narrative-dependent, and I could observe it in Eastern European churches as well as in Eastern European students who struggled to express their ideas in a way that would be appreciated by their (Western) markers and examiners. Hence 'East' and 'West', or 'integrative' and 'differential' thinking, and my argument that there was a need for both.

What I found particularly helpful was your observation that whilst the differential theological discourse is concerned with the question of 'what' is being said, paying attention to integrative thinking helps us understand the 'why' — that is, where the person is coming from and what story, or stories, they are living in. Paying attention to the latter is just as significant in church life as it is in academic theological discourse if we are to help each other to identify, interpret and transform our own convictions.

Indeed. I started thinking about these two types of theological discourse whilst working on my own doctoral dissertation and considering different methodological issues involved in theological argumentation. I have greatly benefited from Nancey Murphy's[10] appropriation of Stephen Toulmin's work on the analysis of the uses of arguments in philosophy and science,[11] and particularly her work on a theological argument as a comprehensive logical structure comprising different elements of logical thinking: grounds, claims, warrants, backings, rebuttals and qualifiers. I also looked at Glen Stassen's dimensions of moral reasoning in terms of how our way of

[9] Parush R. Parushev, 'East and West: A theological conversation', *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, 1, no. 1 (2000): 31–44.
[10] Nancey Murphy, *Reasoning and Rhetoric in Religion* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1994).
[11] Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958 and 1993); and Stephen Toulmin, Richard Rieke and Allen Janik, *An Introduction to Reasoning* (New York: Macmillan, 1978).

perceiving reality, our trust, our loyalties, interests and ground-of-meaning beliefs guide our ethical thinking. For him all these dimensions of reasoning are as important as the rational aspect.[12] I noticed that it really did not differ from McClendon's insistence that what guides our lives is our deep-seated, if not easily verbalised, convictions in all three strands of our theological and ethical thinking.[13] So all these amalgamated in presenting my perspective on the way our minds work when we address theological and ethical issues, and looking at the ways in which convictions really colour our way of argumentation — how we use texts to build on and present our arguments.[14]

Your consideration of these two different 'mental languages,' as you called them, also served as an impetus for developing a new module at IBTS on Critical Thinking which sought to recognise, affirm and develop these two distinct ways of theological reasoning.

The module certainly helped students, especially those coming from Eastern Europe, to organise their writing and become more fluent in the Anglo-American theological reasoning and rhetoric. At the same time, they started to use their own context, life stories and images within that framework more confidently. This is where such notions as convictional and embodied theology were particularly helpful. They did not lose some of the excitement of the topics arising out of their own life stories, but were able to present them, eventually, in a form that would be appreciated by more analytically inclined readers.

How did your own thinking about convictional theology and these different ways of thinking continue to develop during your years at IBTS?

In the module and in my later thinking I moved away from the categories of 'differential' and 'integrative'. Instead I frame it as two levels of critical

[12] Glen H. Stassen, 'Critical Variables in Christian Social Ethics', in *Issues in Christian Ethics: A Festschrift honoring Dr. Henlee Barnette*, ed. by Paul D. Simmons (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1980), pp. 57–76.

[13] Parush R. Parushev, 'Walking in the Dawn of the Light: On Salvation Ethics of the Ecclesial Communities in Orthodox Tradition from a Radical Reformation Perspective' (doctoral dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Theology, 2007), p. 112 and Chapter 4 passim. Similar observation was made by Parush's colleague Michael Lyndsey Westmoreland-White earlier in 'Incarnational Discipleship: The Ethics of Clarence Jordan, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Dorothy Day' (doctoral dissertation, SBTS, 1995), chapter 1, n. 97.

[14] On a somewhat similar way of thinking, although in a different key, see Marlene Enns, 'Towards a Theoretical Model of Mutuality and its Implication for Intercultural Theological Education: Holistic and Analytical Cognition' (doctoral dissertation, Trinity International University, Deerfield, IL., 2003).

analysis of an argument — the rational logical superstructure of intellectual reasoning which is guided by and grounded in the author's convictions. Most critical here was my encounter and work with yourself and David McMillan, two of my PhD students who defended their theses with distinction. You, Lina, asked me some important questions: How might convictional theology help our discourse on a 'good' or 'happy', or 'fulfilled' life?[15] What does friendship mean in terms of how we communicate with 'friends' and 'foes'?[16] I remember us discussing the substantial overlapping of convictional sets in the context of friendship, and the idea that primary disagreements typically arise from the grounds of ultimate convictions.[17] Of course, our loyalties and interests also matter, but the reason why we have different loyalties and interests is because we hold to different visions of the meaning of life. So the 'foes', or those we strongly disagree with, are those with a very different understanding of the meaning of life and how good life is guided by visionary, inspirational impulses.

Then came my very substantial encounter with David McMillan, who raised a key question: what happens when we are in a conflict situation? How do we reconcile, or deal with, convictional differences when both sides appeal to the same source of authority?[18] His primary concern of the time was, how do we use the source of inspirational thinking such as Christian Scriptures, in the conflict situation of Northern Ireland, when we seemingly hold one and the same source of religious inspiration, but have radically different views on how they work out in our lives. This question became the focus of his dissertation, and I consider it one of the most significant contributions to convictional theology.[19]

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[15] Lina Andronoviene, 'Struggling with Female Happiness: God's Will and God's Blessing in Primary Evangelical Theology', in *Grounded in Grace: Essays to Honour Ian M. Randall*, ed. by Pieter J. Lalleman, Peter J. Morden and Anthony Cross, Centre for Baptist History and Heritage Series (Oxford: Regent's Park College: 2013), pp. 277–291; *Transforming the Struggles of Tamars: Single Women and Baptistic Communities* (Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2014).

[16] Lina Andronoviene, '"I have Called You Friends"': On a Theology of Friendship', in *Ethical Thinking at the Crossroads of European Reasoning*, ed. by Parush R. Parushev, Ovidiu Creanga, Brian Brock (Prague: International Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), pp. 115–129; 'From the Love of Friends to the Love of Strangers: Reflections on Friendship and Discipleship', *Baptistic Theologies*, 7, no. 2 (2015): 73–87.

[17] 'Patterns of Academic Reasoning', in, *Academic Reasoning, Research and Writing in Religious Studies: A Concise Handbook*, ed. by Parush R. Parushev, Rollin G. Grams and Lina Andronovienė, 2nd edn, revised and enlarged (Prague: International Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), pp. 5–19; Lina Andronovienė, '"I have Called You Friends"', p. 128.

[18] David McMillan, 'McClendon/McClendonism: Methodology or Ideology?' *Baptistic Theologies*, 3, no. 1 (2011): 45–58; 'Willem Zuurdeeg and the Concept of Convictional Theology', *Baptistic Theologies*, 6, no. 1 (2014): 72–81; 'Discipleship as Deconstruction', *Baptistic Theologies*, 7, no. 2 (2015), 117–131.

[19] David McMillan, 'Convictions, Conflict and Moral Reasoning: The Contribution of the Concept of Convictions in Understanding Moral Reasoning in the Context of Conflict, Illustrated by a Case Study of Four Groups of Christians in Northern Ireland' (doctoral thesis, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2019).

Coming back to your article on theological discourse in 'East and West', has your thinking changed since, given the break-neck speed of cultural change over these past twenty years, as well as the impact of Western-funded initiatives in the European East?

Twenty years may not be enough for a monumental change. However, our context in Eastern Europe has indeed very rapidly become open to the ideas and mission work of various Western theological networks. With them, for good or for bad, came a much more Western way of presenting ideas and approaching the biblical text. Indeed, younger theologians who have graduated from West-based or Western-funded schools have appropriated a rather different hermeneutical approach, and that has brought a clash of traditions of reading and understanding the Bible, and a conflict between a 'literal' approach, so to speak, and the more 'scholarly' or rational way of handling the biblical text.

The second influence was through translated material. Here again we have mixed impact on traditional narrative-embedded ways of theologising. Saying that, the very fact that there were resources made available, and to a wider circle of people, provided for a broader platform to express various views, especially through newly established theological journals. In any case, neither of these different ways of thinking have won the day yet in Eastern European evangelical thinking.

So, there is no sharp divide. There are arguments in the biblical text and in theological treatises, no doubt about that. On the other hand, stories matter — both in the East and in the West. This is our common ground. The richness of the narrative provides a venue to inquire into the convictions of the author, and they continue to be the primary vehicle on the level of grassroots theological thinking and expression. The real challenge is, can we have these two ways of thinking complementing each other, rather than clashing. What is needed is appreciation for convictions in the West, and for logical thinking in the East. As Father Dumitru Stăniloae notes encouragingly, we may see them as gifts to be exchanged 'for the sake of the other'.[20]

[20] Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, 'The Holy Spirit and the Sobornicity of the Church', in *Theology and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 54.

Juan de Valdés's Authorship of *Dialogue on Christian Doctrine* (1529)

Manuel Martínez Ortega

This article responds to a proposal made by Francisco Calero and Marco Antonio Coronel, which offers the defence that the *Dialogue of Christian Doctrine* was not written by Juan de Valdés but by Juan Luis Vives. The article relates the historical evidence, presents arguments from its contents, and then evaluates the proposal of Calero and Coronel. The historical evidence around the *Dialogue* is both distinguished and numerous, directly involving related witnesses and the declarations of eminent figures of sixteenth-century Christianity. Its contents, particularly since the discovery of Charles Gilly concerning the textual dependence of the *Dialogue* on Luther, depict an author whom it is impossible to identify with Juan Luis Vives. The arguments presented by Calero and Coronel are built upon inferences, not answering or questioning the historical evidence that points to Valdés's, authorship. The authorship of Valdés, therefore, is confirmed with the analysis and arguments presented in this article.

Keywords

Juan de Valdés; sixteenth-century Spain; *Dialogo de Doctrina*

Introduction: The person and the Writing

Juan de Valdés is a religious figure of sixteenth-century Spain. He was the first Bible commentator to write in Spanish, providing an important example of translation of the biblical text in that language around the time of the Reformation. His significance, more than theological or linguistic, is found in the field of spirituality as well as in his relationship to Luther, the Roman Catholic Church, Erasmus, and the *Alumbrados* of Castile. The study of Valdés and his religious environment reveals an interesting momentum in sixteenth-century Castile, with a number of religious currents which would later develop into the condemned *Alumbrados*, Spanish Mysticism, Spanish Erasmianism, and Valdés's contribution to the Reformation in Italy. Among other eulogies, his contemporaries spoke of Valdés as '*scriptore superbiat orbis'*.[1] After his demise, however, the consolidation of a polarised dualism

[1] Daniel Roger, 1573, cited in Juan de Valdés, *Dos Diálogos Escritos por Juan de Valdés*, Reformistas Antiguos Españoles, vol. IV (Madrid:1850), title page.

of Catholicism versus Protestantism sadly diluted his distinctive contribution and progressively made him unattractive to either of those antagonistic positions.

Valdés's writings have steadily been discovered throughout the years. In the second half of the nineteenth-century, Benjamin B. Wiffen and Luis de Usoz y Río recovered his writings and biography from the past oblivion of heretics, publishing most of his spiritual, theological, and biblical works.[2] Their work was followed by Edward Boehmer, in an endeavour to vindicate significant Spanish Reformers and their writings suppressed by religious intolerance. In Wiffen and Usoz's initial publication, two dialogues by Valdés's brother were wrongly attributed to Juan de Valdés.[3] Later other writings of Valdés were discovered.[4] Most were brief, confirming the character and thought expressed in the previously published works. The case of *Dialogue on Christian Doctrine*, however, was clearly different.

Dialogue on Christian Doctrine was discovered by Marcel Bataillon in 1925 in the Library of Lisbon, Portugal. It remains today, the only extant copy of this work. The facsimile edition was published with an introduction by Bataillon. Eighty-nine pages of Bataillon's approximately three hundred, were dedicated to notes which mostly connected the *Dialogue* with the rest of Valdés's works.[5] The evidence in favour of Valdés's authorship drawn from both history and its contents was such that no question ever arose concerning the matter until almost a century later, in 2009.

Even though Valdés's authorship of the *Dialogue* was never questioned, the debate over its teachings and characteristics indirectly confirmed it. On the one hand, recognised scholars on the period and geography of the *Dialogue* have confirmed Valdés's authorship. An example is José Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras, Professor of Church History at the Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca.[6] Works centred on Valdés, and the contents of the *Dialogue* also confirmed the affinity between this writing and

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[2] Edward Boehmer and Benjamin Barron Wiffen, *Bibliotheca Wiffeniana: Spanish Reformers of Two Centuries from 1520, Their Lives and Writings, according to the Late Benjamin B. Wiffen's Plan and with the Use of His Materials* (Halle, Germany: K. Trübner, 1874).

[3] *Diálogo de Mercurio y Carón*, and *Diálogo entre Lactancio y un Arcediano* (also known as *Diálogo de las cosas acaecidas en Roma*).

[4] For example, Juan de Valdés, *Cartas inéditas de Juan de Valdés al cardenal Gonzaga,* introduction and notes by José F. Montesinos (Madrid: impr. de S. Aguirre, 1931); Juan de Valdés, *Las ciento diez divinas consideraciones: recensión inédita del manuscrito de Juan Sánchez (1558)*, ed. by Jose Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras, Centro de Estudios Orientales y Ecuménicos «Juan XXIII» (Salamanca: Universidad Pontificia, 1975).

[5] Juan de Valdés, *Diálogo de Doctrina Cristiana*, reproduction en fac-similé de l'exemplaire de la Bibliothèque nationale de Lisbonne (édition d'Alcala de Henares, 1529), avec une introduction et des notes par Marcel Bataillon, ed. by Marcel Bataillon (Coimbra: Impr. da Universidade, 1925).

[6] See Juan de Valdés, *Diàleg de Doctrina Cristiana*, introduction and notes by J. Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras (Barcelona: Proa, 1994); A. Gordon Kinder, *Valdés, Juan De*, vol. IX, Biblioteca Dissidentium: Repertoire Des Non-Conformistes Religieux Des Seizième Siécles, ed. by Oswald Glaid and Simone Simoni (Baden-Baden: Valentin Koerner, 1988).

the rest of Valdés's works.[7] Even as late as 2019, Jorge Orlando Gallor Guarín defended a doctoral thesis on the *Dialogue on Christian Doctrine* as being by Juan de Valdés. This doctoral thesis was led by Professor Francisco Chico Rico, Professor of Literature Theory and Comparative Literature at the University of Alicante, and by José María Ferri Coll, a literature teacher from that same university. Tomás Albaladejo, of the University of Madrid, took part in the tribunal and gave a prologue and encomium to the publication of that thesis.[8] Different scholars, therefore, from different theological perspectives and areas of expertise, have agreed and built upon Valdés's authorship.

However, the consensus over Valdés's authorship was questioned by Francisco Calero y Calero and Marco Antonio Coronel in 2009.[9] Calero and Coronel first deprived Alfonso de Valdés, Juan de Valdés's brother, of the authorship of his two dialogues, attributing them to Juan Luis Vives. Upon that new and not-yet-debated proposal, they proceeded to link its Erasmian similarities to Valdés's *Dialogue on Christian Doctrine*, suggesting that Juan Luis Vives was its author. It is surprising that in the face of the strong and previous general consensus over Valdés as its author, their argument did not address the historical attestation and Valdesian characteristics.

This article will present the historical evidence of the Holy Office (the Inquisition) in Toledo, a tribunal noted for its archives and the careful recording of their proceedings. Furthermore, the article will briefly analyse some crucial teachings in the *Dialogue*, particularly in light of what recent decades have more clearly revealed about its religious context and sources. After the assessment of external and internal pieces of evidence, this article will evaluate the proposal of Francisco Calero and Marco Antonio Coronel. The historical evidence and evaluation of the internal arguments will confirm Valdés's authorship and also underline the difficulty with Luis Vives as the author.

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[7] See Juan de Valdés, *Le dialogue sur la doctrine chrétienne*, introduction and notes by Christine Wagner (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1995); Carlos Gilly, *Juan de Valdés, traductor y adaptador de escritos de Lutero en su «Diálogo de Doctrina christiana»* (Montserrat: Abadía de Montserrat, 1982); Margherita Morreale, 'J.de V. come traduttore dei Vangeli ed il Nuovo Testamento di Erasmo', *Atti dell'Istituto Vencto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti*, vol. 125 (1976–77): 507–540.

[8] Jorge Orlando Gallor Guarin, *Diálogo de Doctrina Christiana de Juan de Valdés: Retórica cultural, discurso, y literatura* (Alicante: U. de Alicante, 2019), p. 13ff.

[9] Juan Luis Vives, *Diálogo de Doctrina Christiana*, intr. ed. y notes of Francisco Calero y Calero y Marco Antonio Coronel Ramos (Madrid: BAC, 2009); Marco Antonio Coronel Ramos, 'Juan Luis Vives y Juan de Valdés ante Mt. 5–7: traducción y exégesis', *Studia Philologica Valentina*, 10, no.7 (2007): 231–378.

The Historical Case for Valdés's authorship of *Dialogue on Christian Doctrine*

The existing documentary evidence for the authorship of this anonymous dialogue is remarkable. The attestation comes from individuals with a direct acquaintance with Valdés and of distinguished rank and relevance. The most significant testimony is found in the declarations from 1532 by Alonso Sánchez and Juan de Medina, both canons of the Church of Santiuste in Alcalá de Henares. Their declarations were given in the trial of the Holy Office against Juan de Vergara, a professor at the University of Alcalá de Henares, an eminent and emblematic figure of Spanish Erasmianism who had travelled with the Imperial Court of Charles V through the Low Countries and Germany. The declarations of these two witnesses, as well as that of Juan de Vergara concerning the *Dialogue* and its author, were corroborated in a parallel trial against María de Cazalla, sister of Bishop Juan de Cazalla.[10]

The content of the declarations in both trials is clear and explicit. The author of the *Dialogue* is identified as Juan de Valdés, a student in Alcalá de Henares. The title is identified almost verbatim except for the word *Dialogue*, which is exchanged for the word *book*, and the adverb '*a new',* which is omitted: *Libro de Doctrina Cristiana hecho por un Religioso*. Its Valdesian authorship is particularly strengthened by the personal involvement of Juan de Vergara in favour of the *Dialogue*. Juan de Medina declared that 'it appeared to him that Vergara had a friendship with that one Valdés, and he [Vergara] felt bad at any offence which that one Valdés might receive'.[11] Alonso Sánchez also affirmed that Vergara had pleaded with him to use moderation with the *Dialogue* because Valdés was his friend.[12] Juan de Medina explicitly stated that Juan de Valdés himself had 'intensely pled'[13] with him to ignore dissident propositions in the *Dialogue*, swearing that he had never written them in that wrong sense. Regarding María de Cazalla's declarations, there is also the personal involvement of Bernardino Tovar, half-brother of Juan de Vergara. María referred to Tovar's censure of Valdés for having published his book quickly without further revision and corrections.

The controversial reception of the *Dialogue* increased its attestation. In the trial against Vergara, Alonso Sánchez, also linked with the University of Alcalá, stated that Hernán Vázquez had the manuscript in Toledo 'many

[10] Juan de Cazalla was chaplain of Cardenal Cisneros in the conquest of Orán. Juan was appointed to write the chronicle of that significant event.
[11] Inquisición de Toledo, *Proceso de Fe contra Juan de Vergara* (Archivo Histórico Nacional, leg. 223, n. 42, 1533–1537), fol. 182^{v}.
[12] Ibid., fol. 181^{v}.
[13] Ibid., fol. 182^{r}.

days […] before it was printed'.[14] Hernán Vázquez had initially been reluctant to publish a number of things which he thought were wrong. Hernán 'procured and laboured to defend and expound and excuse all he could of that book'.[15] After its publication, the book was discussed by a committee of doctors and theologians in the house of Mateo Pascual, the university's Rector. Other distinguished personages, sensitive to Spanish Erasmianism, were present, such as Abbot Pedro de Lerma, Hernán Vázquez, Balvas, Francisco de la Fuente, Loayasa, Diego de la Puente, Vargas, and Bernardino Alonso.[16]

General Inquisitor Manrique was also aware of the *Dialogue,* as the trial against Vergara records. Manrique sent a message requiring that Valdés was to make corrections and subsequently print the book 'soundly'.[17] Furthermore, Vergara, in his own house, pleaded with Juan de Medina that 'if there were anything erroneous or heretical in the book', it was not to be made known.[18] María de Cazalla corroborated the controversy in her trial. García de Vargas, her husband's tailor, and a friend of Diego Hernández affirmed being in María's home and hearing her partially favouring the book.[19] When María was asked about it, she confirmed having 'praised it many times […] even though […] some things could be better said and without scandal, as in reference to […] tithing and […] confession'.[20] María acknowledged Friar Pedro de Vitoria's[21] preaching against the book, which caused her to hide her copy in the lowest parts of a chest. Finally, the *Index* of prohibited books of 1551 and 1559 registered the *Dialogue* with Valdés as its author.

Evidently the publication of *Dialogue on Christian Doctrine* was marked by a controversial environment, inquisitorial pressures, and the impulse for alternative perspectives of the Christian faith. The rank and number of individuals involved in those declarations are particularly distinguished. The individuals involved, when compared with the contents of the *Dialogue*, reveal that the raging controversy was not over the *Dialogue* itself nor due to *Alumbrado* suspicions. What was at stake was Spanish Erasmianism, as Marcel Bataillon has appropriately called it. Erasmus was the enemy against whom traditional, sixteenth-century Spanish Catholicism

[14] Ibid., fol. 181[r].
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., fol. 182[r].
[18] Ibid.
[19] Inquisición de Toledo, *Proceso de la Inquisición contra María de Cazalla*, ed. intr. y notas, Milagros Ortega-Costa (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1978), pp. 88–89.
[20] Ibid., p. 118.
[21] Pedro de Vitoria was a Dominican Friar, Prior of his convent in Burgos, known for his defence of monasticism against Erasmus in *Septem Collationem ad Erasmus* (see, Bataillon, *Erasmo y España, Vol.I* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1966), pp. 255–258).

contended, particularly addressed by the prominent theologian of the period Diego López de Zúñiga (d. 1531). This scenario is what led to the significant historical evidence that accompanied the publication of the *Dialogue on Christian Doctrine.*

Internal Evidence for Valdés's Authorship

To the manifest historical evidence attesting Valdés's authorship of the *Dialogue*, its internal evidence adds confirmation. As Valdés's known works display a strong Erasmian connection, this would be expected in the *Dialogue* too, and since Bataillon, scholarship has shown a dependence in Valdés on Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz and also parallels with Luther. Beyond a dependence relationship, research has proven that Valdés glossed both Erasmus and Luther, adding or excluding phrases and thus expressing his own thought. This particular use of sources, which I contend is a notable characteristic of the *Dialogue*, also confirms Valdés's thought and his authorship of the *Dialogue*.

The discovery of the *Dialogue* by Bataillon certainly strengthened the Erasmian perspective of Valdés that had existed since the nineteenth century.[22] Its eulogies to Erasmus as 'excellent doctor' and 'true theologian' certainly indicate an affinity. Furthermore, the *Dialogue* was found to translate Erasmus's *Inquisitio de Fide* as its first teachings. However, this textual dependence included some particular glosses that clearly differed from Erasmus's teachings, some of which this article will indicate.

While evidence testifies to common grounds among the diverse initiatives for reform in the sixteenth century, Valdés's use of Erasmus goes much further than a Pauline emphasis on internal virtues and ethics to the neglect of external ritualism. Before entering into the particular translation or gloss of Erasmus's dialogue, it is important to note that the choice of this work is significant. From its outset, the *Inquisitio* refers to the 'smell of brimstone', 'ex-communication',[23] or thoughts such as 'lest I should seem to favour heretics', or 'how comes it about then, that there is so great a war between you and the orthodox'.[24] These expressions unequivocally portray a hypothetical conversation between the author, Erasmus, and Luther concerning the understanding of the Apostle's Creed. This particular dialogue, as Craig Thompson states, argues the supremacy and sufficiency of the teachings of the Creed 'for establishing and preserving concord among

[22] Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, *Los Heterodoxos Españoles*, Vol III (Madrid: Librería Católica de San José, 1880), pp. 187–255.
[23] Desiderius Erasmus, *Inquisitio de Fide: A Colloquy*, *1524,* trans. and notes by Craig R. Thompson (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1975), p. 55.
[24] Ibid., p. 73.

Christians'.[25] *Inquisitio* actually manifested Luther's agreement with those Christian essentials.

A significant difference between the *Dialogue* and Erasmus is with regard to anthropology. The view of the person, their will and capacity to choose was a cardinal teaching at the time of its publication. The *Dialogue* expresses a clear inclination towards the thought of Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz, Valdés's first teacher, if not also towards Luther. This is expressed in the *Dialogue* even when translating Erasmus's *Inquisitio*. Erasmus defended a Platonic perspective of humanity, according to which God 'printed with his finger […] an eternal law' in the individual's spirit 'through which we almost always incline ourselves to do that which is good and honest'.[26] Furthermore, 'the spirit makes us divine beings, the flesh [makes us] beasts', and the soul is in the middle, 'indifferent'.[27] The *Dialogue*, however, added to Erasmus's words that humanity fell down to 'misery' through Adam.[28] The individual — added by the *Dialogue* to Erasmus's translation — is 'blind' and 'blundering', 'not knowing that which we ought to do, externally or internally'.[29] The human heart, writes the author of the *Dialogue* in a section of his own, 'cannot stop loving […] himself and things for [his own] interest'.[30] The individual 'is blinded by his own self-love', and on account of that 'disordered heart', he will never be able to do any good thing before God.[31] These words significantly agree with Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz, and also agree with Luther's thought as portrayed in *Exurge Domine*.[32] Later on, the *Dialogue* translated verbatim from Luther the statement that the individual's will is evil, [33] and the *Dialogue* added, 'even when it appears very good'.[34]

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[25] Erasmus, *Inquisitio*, ed. by Thompson, p. 43.

[26] Desiderius Érasmus, *El Enquiridion o Manual del Caballero Cristiano; y la Paráclesis o Exhortación al estudio de las letras divinas*, ed. and prologue by Damaso Alonso, trans. by Alonso Fernández de Madrid, Arcediano de Alcor (first printed 1526; Madrid: S. Aguirre, 1932), p. 187.

[27] Ibid., pp. 187, 188.

[28] Erasmus, p. 59 (See *Diálogo de Doctrina Cristiana*, ed. by Bataillon, fol. 9^{v}. For clarity here, Bataillon replicates the usage of folio, verso or recto found in the original documents from the *Inquisitio* in the facsímile edition of the *Dialogue*).

[29] Erasmus, *Inquisitio*, ed. by Thompson, p. 36.

[30] A characteristic issue for Alcaraz, evident in a letter from him (Inquisición de Toledo, *Proceso de Fe de Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz, Isabel de la Cruz, y Gaspar de Bedoya*, Archivo Histórico Nacional, leg. 106 Exp.5, 1524–1539*,* fol. 34^{r}) as well as in the accusation (ibid., fols. 67^{v}, 70^{v}, 77, among others).

[31] Valdés, *Diálogo de Doctrina Cristiana*, ed. by Bataillon, fol.38^{v}, words differing from Erasmus and Luther.

[32] Papal Encyclical, 'Condemning the Errors of Martin Luther: Exurge Domine', *Papal Encyclicals Online* http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo10/l10exdom.htm. [accessed 27 May, 2015] (article 31, cf. also article 32).

[33] Gilly, *Juan de Valdés, traductor y adaptador*, p. 108. See *Diálogo de Doctrina Cristiana*, ed. by Bataillon, fol. 38^{v} corresponding to Martin Luther, 'Decem Praecept', *Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: Herman Böhlau Nachfolger, 1883), II: 128. Henceforth, such correspondences and parallels will be indicated by the symbol =.

[34] *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, fol. 78^{v}; Luther, 'On the Lord's Prayer'*, Luther's works,* vol. 42, ed. by J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, and H. T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 42.

Regarding soteriology the *Dialogue* also varies from Erasmus. According to Erasmus, after baptism, man is cleansed from original sin and placed with freedom of choice in front of 'two ways'.[35] Man may serve Christ or the world's ugly and abominable vices.[36] For Erasmus, 'those of us who follow' the strength given by the Spirit and the spiritual law (i.e. virtue) will be 'justified'.[37] Salvation, in Erasmus's writings, is a recompense for austerity,[38] a 'reward' 'conquered' through virtue.[39]

In contrast to Erasmus, the *Dialogue* presents justification through 'faith alone', a position that has been recognised since Bataillon's work in 1925.[40] Bataillon defended that concept in the *Dialogue*: 'the soul is invited to confess his own nothingness and to put all his trust in a supernatural intervention, which of this nothingness will make a fullness.'[41] Bataillon furthermore asserted that corresponding to the rest of Valdés's writings, justification by faith is the 'root of religious life'.[42]

When the use and glosses of Erasmus's *Inquisitio* are considered along with the *Dialogue*'s use of Luther, the authorship of Valdés is further confirmed. Erasmus's *Inquisito* constitutes 9 percent of the *Dialogue*, but the translation of Luther's works constitutes 13 percent of it. This number does not justify the author as a 'translator and adaptor of Luther's writings', as Carlos Gilly contends.[43] However, the translation or adaptation of Luther's *Decem Praecepta* and *On the Lord's Prayer* is evident, as relevant authors of a more Catholic perspective, such as José I. Tellechea Idígoras or Christine Wagner, have accepted.[44]

Adding to this use, but at variance with some of Erasmus's teachings, the *Dialogue* actually glosses Luther, expressing a clear affinity with him. Translating Luther, the author wrote,

> O sinful man, know yourself, that neither through your own strength nor your exercises will you ever be able to reach a perfection that you would not pursue other gods, because […] in your heart […] you love creatures more than me.[45]

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[35] Erasmus, *Enquiridion*, p. 201.
[36] Erasmus, *Tratado del niño Jesús y en loor del estado de la niñez*, trans. by Diego de Alcocer, ed. by Eugenio Asensio (first printed Sevilla, 1516; Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1969), p. 68.
[37] Ibid., p. 264.
[38] Ibid., pp. 210–211.
[39] Ibid., pp. 82, 83, 84–85, 117,118. Cf. also *Demand of Jesus Christ*, a small writing attached at the end of the publication of *Treatise on the Child Jesus*.
[40] Valdés, *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, pp. 135–36.
[41] Bataillon, *Erasmo y España, Vol. 1*, pp. 410–11.
[42] Ibid., p. 407.
[43] As stated in the very title of his book (Carlos Gilly, *Juan de Valdés, traductor y adaptador de escritos de Lutero en su «Diálogo de Doctrina christiana»* (Montserrat: Abadía de Montserrat, 1982)).
[44] Juan de Valdés, *Diàleg de Doctrina Cristiana*, introduction and notes by J. Ignacio Tellechea Idígoras (Barcelona: Proa, 1994), p. 22; Wagner, *Le Dialogue,* pp. 40–42.
[45] Valdés, *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, fol. Xxv = Luthers Werke, Weimar edn, I: 399. Referred to by Gilly, *Juan de Valdés*, 1997, p. 106.

As Bataillon had already noted, the author's position is 'demonstratively identical' with that of Luther.[46]

Another relevant characteristic of the *Dialogue* is the use of justification as a synonym of salvation. The term is either inserted in Erasmus's *Inquisitio* or translated from Luther.[47] The *Dialogue* first made the following insertion into Erasmus's *Inquisitio,* that 'through this highest sacrifice, we might be reconciled with him when we lay on his name all our trust and the hope of our justification'.[48] Also translating Erasmus, the author glossed the Latin *servaret*[49] into 'being participants of his [Christ's] glory, which he wanted us to obtain by virtue of his justice'.[50]

In addition to the use of Erasmus and Luther, some traits of the *Dialogue* are clearly traceable to the thought of Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz, as expressed in his inquisitorial trial, thus being a clear influence in Valdés's own thinking. Domingo de Sta. Teresa observed that the author of the *Dialogue* included 'substantial' additions to Erasmian teachings that expressed 'a different conception of the spiritual life which will become evident in the writings of the Italian period'.[51] The author of the *Dialogue* strongly defends, for instance, the existence of 'saints' in his lifetime, reproaching the 'gross foolishness of many who crazily and with daring say that there are no saints in the world anymore'.[52] This emphasis on 'saints', which, as Bataillon notes, is a continuing theme in Valdés's *Commentary on Matthew*, is much more than a 'discrete testimony of sympathy towards the *Alumbrados'*, a sympathy which Bataillon dislikes.[53] Saints and Christian perfection constitute essential traits and emphases in Valdés, absent in both Erasmus and Luther, and traceable to Alcaraz and the *Alumbrado* conflict.

Regarding traces of Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz's teaching which was accused of *Alumbradism*, the *Dialogue's* teaching on perfection is significant, particularly as the *Dialogue* translates from Luther's *Commentary on the Ten Commandments* and *On the Lord's Prayer*. In this life, Luther stated that it is not possible to have 'perfect healing from all vices of body and soul'.[54] However, in the *Dialogue*'s gloss of Luther regarding the fifth commandment, whereas Luther states that if the commandment is

[46] Valdés, *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, p. 255.
[47] Inserted by Valdés. See Juan de Valdés, *Obras Completas*, ed. by Angel Alcalá, vol. I (Madrid: Fundación José Antonio de Castro, 1997), p. 22; translating Luther, see ibid., pp. 33,37.
[48] Ibid., p. 22.
[49] 'Quo venit humilis ut nos instiueret ac *servaret'*; in English, 'Who came in a low condition to instruct and *save us'* (Erasmus, *Inquisitio*, pp. 66–67).
[50] Valdés, *Obras Completas*, ed. by Alcalá, vol. i, p. 25. Comp. Erasmus, *Inquisitio,* p. 66.
[51] Valdés, *Obras Completas*, ed. by Alcalá, vol. i, p. 62.
[52] For example, Ibid., p. 28.
[53] Valdés, *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, pp. 231–233.
[54] Ibid., p. 515.

to be taken as it is 'none will be saved or too few',[55] the *Dialogue* adapts this statement to 'I would believe that this is only for the perfect'. The *Dialogue* continues,

> It is true as you say, that in order to reach this as I say it is necessary that we be perfect […] he that sees himself lacking in this regard, let him see through it that he is not perfect […] so let him work with continual prayer to God, so that from imperfection [God] will make it perfect.[56]

These references to perfect ones are clearly traceable to the religious environment of Pedro Ruiz de Alcaraz and Juan de Valdés.

In addition to cardinal teachings, other elements confirm Valdés as the author of the *Dialogue*. Since its discovery, Bataillon pointed out parallel teachings and even common illustrations with the rest of Valdés's writings.[57] These correspondences refer to major themes of Valdés, such as the heart's necessity to love something,[58] or charity as perfect love.[59] These major parallels also include Valdés's classification of sinners,[60] the need of and prayer for a living faith,[61] the possibility of only the spiritual man fulfilling God's commandments, and only with special grace from God.[62] Most significantly, there is the parallel of Valdés's hermeneutic and theological distinction between the law and the gospel.[63] Domingo Sta. Teresa and Jose C. Nieto support this unity of authorship, and Domingo Ricart adds a further significant aspect: he points to similarities 'not only in the lexicon, but in the same phrase architecture'.[64]

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[55] Ibid., p. 466.
[56] Ibid., fol. 31^{v}.
[57] Juan de Valdés, *Diálogo de doctrina Christiana y el Salterio*, transcription, introduction and notes by Domingo Ricart (Mexico City: U. Nacional Autónoma, 1964), p. 9.
[58] This 'love' theme was central in J. Cazalla's *Light of the Soul* and present in Spanish Erasmianism. Bataillon points to Raimond de Sabonde, *Viola Animae*, Chapter 24, livre III (1500), (Valdés, *Diálogo de Doctrina Cristiana*, ed. by Bataillon, fol. 38 = Valdés, *Alfabeto Cristiano*, ed. by Usoz, p. 27; also *Diálogo de Doctrina Cristiana*, ed. by Bataillon, pp. 247–249).
[59] Charity as perfect love of/from God (*Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, fol. 26^{v}) Bataillon appropriately sees it described in *Considerations*, n.70 and 98 (Bataillon, p. 243).
[60] This twofold classification of sinners would become threefold in the *Alphabet* (*Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, fol. 49^{v} = *Alfabeto Cristiano*, ed. by Usoz, p. 57; *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, p. 252).
[61] (1) Recognition of weakness at the need of faith (*Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, fol. 83^{r} = *Alfabeto Cristiano*, ed. by Usoz, pp. 61-62; *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, p. 270). (2) On the conscience of not having faith (*Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, fol. 53^{r} = *Alfabeto Cristiano*, ed. by Usoz, p. 3; *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, pp. 253–254; also noted by David Estrada in *Juan de Valdés*, *Diálogo de Doctrina Cristiana*, Col. Obras de los Reformadores Españoles del Siglo XVI, (Sevilla: Ed. MAD S.L., 2007), p. 154). (3) On dead and living faith (*Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, fol. 53r = *Alfabeto Cristiano*, ed. by Usoz, p. 60; *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, p. 253).
[62] This parallel is noted both by Bataillon (p. 243) and Domingo de Sta. Teresa, *Juan de Valdés, 1498 – 1541; su pensamiento religioso y las corrientes espirituales de su tiempo* (Roma: Apud Aedes Universitatis Gregorianae, 1935), p. 74; (*Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, fol. 36^{r} = *Alfabeto Cristiano*, ed. by Usoz, p. 21).
[63] Valdés, *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, fol. 137^{r} = *Alfabeto Cristiano*, ed. by Usoz, p. 20ff (Bataillon, p. 233).
[64] Valdés, *Diálogo y Salterio*, ed. by D. Ricart, p. 9.

Even regarding form and style and agreement with all the rest of Valdés's works, the *Dialogue* does present some particularities. It has some repetitious forms,[65] monotonous connections,[66] confusing expressions,[67] and an excessive use of interrogatives.[68] These aspects, which are usually taken as negative elements, constitute however a particular method of Valdés's didactic emphasis, repeated in his works written in Italy.

Coronel and Calero, and their Proposal: Juan Luis Vives as the Author of the *Dialogue*

In 2009, Francisco Calero and Marco Antonio Coronel Ramos presented *Dialogue on Doctrine*, contending that it 'had to wait 480 years […] to be published with the name of its author […] Juan Luis Vives'.[69] I do not agree with Calero or Coronel's arguments, neither in their relevance nor in their content. First of all, they propose the authorship of Vives against all previous research on *Dialogue on Doctrine*, without providing any response to or reconstruction of all the historical documentary evidence previously referred to. Furthermore, considering that Vives was a Valencian author, who studied in Paris in 1509, then travelled to Bruges (Flanders) and England, rejected an offer to study in Alcalá de Henares and retired to Bruges, Calero and Coronel give no account for how his writing in Spanish could end up in Miguel de Eguía's press in Alcalá de Henares. It is also telling that Vives wrote all his known works in Latin. Calero and Coronel do not provide any evidence for the motive that led Juan de Vergara, a close friend of Vives, to speak of Valdés as the author instead of Vives. In light of the later research on *Dialogue on Doctrine,* it would be interesting to hear Calero and Coronel's explanations of Juan Luis Vives's use of Erasmus's *Inquisitio de Fide* and Luther, but they give none.

To deny Valdés's authorship, Calero and Coronel present three basic arguments. The first argument is based on a theory suggested by Nieto and ratified by Tellechea Idígoras concerning Valdés's age.[70] Being very young,

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[65] *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, pp. 181–182; Juan de Valdés, *Valdés' Two Catechisms: The Dialogue on Christian Doctrine and the Christian Instruction for Children*, introduction and notes by José C. Nieto (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1981), p. 14.

[66] Domingo Sta. Teresa, *Juan de Valdés,* p. 64.

[67] For example, 'and I say, turning to what I said before, that in addition to saying to you that which I first said, you should also say to them …' (Valdés, *Obras Completas*, ed. by Alcalá, pp. 181–182; *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, fol. 65[r]).

[68] Nieto, *Two Catechisms*, p. 14.

[69] Juan Luis Vives, *Dialogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Calero and Coronel, p. ix.

[70] Ibid, pp. 299–300, 342. Tellechea referred to Valdés as being 14 years old in Escalona due to his being called 'muchacho', and 18 in Alcalá in 1527 where he was called 'iuvenis' (*Diáleg*, pp. 12–13, 16). However, emblematic works like Sebastian Fox Morcillo's *De iuventute* (Basilea, 1556), would not reflect *iuvenis* as just applied to 18-year olds. Ignatius Loyola arrived at the University of Alcalá aged 35, and in the Inquisitorial trial opened against him, a witness described him as a 'mancebo' or 'youth' (Ricardo

Valdés is considered too immature to have written *Dialogue on Doctrine*. That suggestion, in reference to Valdés's birth date, has been discarded by the evidence discovered by Dorothy Donald and Elena Lázaro[71] as well as by Manuel Amores.[72]

Donald and Lázaro, based on documents found in the diocese of Cuenca, cite a letter from Valdés's father in which he refers to his son, Juan (June 8, 1506). From the letter, Donald and Lázaro conclude that Juan was with his father in Benavente, where his father attended the Court as Cuenca's Procurator. Just as his brother Alfonso represented his father in a bureaucratic issue in Cuenca, so Juan represented his father in Cuenca's Council. This argument would place Valdés's birth around 1490. Manuel Amores, in contrast, discovered the declarations of Sancho Muñoz, a citizen of Cuenca who heard Valdés's father say that Juan and Alfonso had been born at the same time.[73] Calero and Coronel's argument, therefore, is based on a questionable and questioned theory.

Calero and Coronel's second argument is based on the supposed contradiction of the *Dialogue's* translation of Matthew 5–7 and Valdés's translation in his *Commentary on Matthew*.[74] Calero and Coronel particularly refer to the unfolding of some terms, 'translating two words out of only one in the original'.[75] This is presented as a contradiction with Valdés's intention to translate 'word by word', as stated in his *Commentary on Romans* and *on Matthew*. Margherita Morreale had already pointed to this difference, and concluded that it did not constitute grounds for any suspicion for a different authorship.[76] The natural changes of maturity and environment may fully account for differences in emphasis, definitions, and textual translation. Morreale, furthermore, states that Valdés's first translation came from the Latin Erasmian text, whereas his translation in the *Commentary* (comparing it with Matthew 5–7) was taken from the Greek text. As to the unfolding of a word in two synonyms, Morreale considers it typical of Spanish Erasmianism. Morreale's declaration fully aligns with the natural change that would have taken place as Valdés abandoned the Erasmian circle and its

García Villoslada, *San Ignacio de Loyola*, Nueva Biografía (Madrid, 1986), p. 281, cited in Monteserin, ed., *Alonso y Juan de Valdés*, 1995, xlviii). Valdés himself refers in the first pages of the *Dialogue* to a 30-year old friar and calls him 'mancebo' (*Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, fol. 5^{v}).

[71] Dorothy Donald and Elena Lázaro, *Alfonso de Valdés y su Epoca* (Cuenca: Excma. Diputación Provincial, 1983).

[72] Manuel Amores, 'Los Hermanos Alfonso y Juan de Valdés: Fueron Gemelos,' *Papeles del Huecar*, no. 15, Abril-Mayo (2004): 28.

[73] In Spanish, '*De una ventregada'*. Declaration found in Inquisición, *Archivo Diocesano de Cuenca*, secc. leg. 780, expte 2.180, fol. 11. Cited in, Manuel Amores, 'Los Hermanos Alfonso y Juan', p. 28.

[74] Marco Antonio Coronel Ramos, *Juan Luis Vives y Juan de Valdés ante Mt 5–7*.

[75] Juan Luis Vives, *Dialogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Calero and Coronel, p. 301.

[76] Margherita Morreale, 'Juan de Valdés come traduttore dei Vangeli ed il Nuovo Testamento di Erasmo', in *Atti dell'Istituto Veneto de Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* (Venecia: Instituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1977), pp. 507–40.

influence in Spain and moved to Italy, something which is also reflected in the contents of his writings in Italy.

On the contrary, the statement that Valdés did not use the translation of 'two words out of only one in the original' is incorrect. Valdés's later writings in Italy not only present examples of expanded translations,[77] but there are also several examples of Biblical quotations and translations in which Valdés particularly unfolds one term in two. In Valdés's *Christian Alphabet*, he translates Colossians 3:1 and expands 'seek' into two terms: 'If you have, brethren, been spiritually raised with Christ, *lift up* your spirits[78] to the high things […] *investigate* the high things, not those that are on earth.'[79] Also, in *Christian Alphabet*, as Valdés translates 2 Corinthians 10:13, he takes two terms and doubles them: 'God is just and faithful, and will not allow […] that we be tempted nor chastised more than that which our strength will endure.'[80]

There are, furthermore, explicit examples of Valdés quoting in Latin and translating in Spanish, where that expansion takes place intentionally. In the third Consideration of *One Hundred and Ten Considerations*, as Valdés refers to Romans 8:14, he writes, '*Qui spiritu Dei aguntur* …' and explicitly translates, 'He who is a son of God allows himself to be ruled and governed by God.'[81] In a later Consideration, which would be numbered 113, Valdés translates Romans 8:26 and writes, 'The Holy Spirit helps and supplies[82] our foolishness[83] and weakness.'[84] In *Seven Doctrinal Epistles*, Valdés translates Luke 10:21 and, again, expounds his translation and doubles a single Greek term: 'I thank you eternal Father […] that you have hidden these divine secrets from human prudence and wisdom, and have revealed them to those who in the eyes of the world are vile and small.'[85] Even in his *Commentary on Matthew*, Valdés explains, 'you are a scandal' (Matthew 16:23) as, 'you are cumbersome and an irritant'.[86] In his *Commentary on Romans*, Valdés

[77] For example, in *Consideración*, n.95 there is an explicit expanded translation from the Latin of John 3 'Tu es magister in Israel et haec ignores …' 'If you are unable of this spiritual regeneration, of which, granted it is spiritual, but is such that it takes place here on earth and in the men on earth, how much more you will be unable to believe the divine generation, of which I could speak to you, because that one is not done from earth, but from heaven, and it does not perform an earthly but a celestial work!' (Valdés, *Obras Completas*, ed. by Alcalá, p. 705).
[78] In Spanish, *ánimos*.
[79] Valdés, *Obras Completas*, ed. by Alcalá, p. 429. Italics mine, to point to the dual translation.
[80] Ibid., pp. 453–4.
[81] Ibid., p. 498.
[82] In Spanish, *favorece*.
[83] In Spanish, *imbecilidad*.
[84] Valdés, *Obras Completas*, ed. by Alcalá, p. 763.
[85] Ibid., p. 842.
[86] Juan de Valdés, *El Evangelio según Mateo: Declarado por Juan de Valdés*, ed. by E. Boehmer (Madrid: Librería Nacional y Extranjera, 1880), p. 310.

specifies, 'Where it says "I serve", it may also be said "I adore, respect, and revere".'[87]

These explicit examples demonstrate that whereas in his Commentaries — where he separately expanded his teaching — Valdés sought a 'word by word' translation, in his other works he maintains an expanded translation and the unfolding of important words.[88] No explanation is given by Valdés in the *Dialogue* after the translation of Matthew 5–7, and such a lack, rather than being surprising, would tend to indicate that Valdés was following a recognised and common Erasmian habit of unfolding words in order to make it more understandable. In any case, it is neither a difference between *Dialogue on Doctrine* and the rest of Valdés's writings nor a case for discarding Valdés's authorship of the *Dialogue.*

The third argument presented by Calero and Coronel deals with the characteristics of Valdés's thought as if the interpretation of Valdés's thought were not one of the most debated issues of the Spanish Renaissance. Calero and Coronel briefly outline the 'strengths' of Valdés's thought and the principles with which 'Valdés's thought seems to be characterized'.[89] Not only do they explicitly express their subjective estimation of Valdés's thought, but they take the similarities between *Dialogue on Doctrine* and the rest of Valdés's writings as the fruit of Valdés's affinity for Erasmus. The evidence, however, is contrary to Calero and Coronel's suggestion. The parallels between the *Dialogue* and Valdés's writings in Italy, evident and ratified since Bataillon in 1925, cannot in any way be explained only by an affinity with Erasmus. A decisive example of that is the verbatim translation of Luther's introduction *On the Ten Commandments*.[90] Are Calero and Coronel suggesting that we should think of the Erasmian Juan Luis Vives as more Lutheran than he is usually considered? I suppose they are not.

Quite the opposite, Calero and Coronel's positive arguments in defence of Vives's authorship are built on inferences rather than on evidence. To defend their position, Calero and Coronel find the study of Vives's letters 'truly important', even though they recognise that they are in 'very

[87] Juan de Valdés, *La Epistola de San Pablo a los Romanos* (Barcelona: Gómez Flores, 1982), p. 7.

[88] Other examples of Valdés unfolding words: Ex.3:14 'I am who I am', as if it said 'I am he who am by myself, and who give being and life to all things that are and live' (Valdés, 'Seven Doctrinal Epistles', n.2, *Obras Completas*, ed. by Alcalá, p. 841); Luke10:21 'You have revealed them to those who in the eyes of the world are vile and small' (Ibid, p. 842); Phil 2:12 'pay attention and work our your salvation' ('Little Treatises', *Obras Completas*, ed. by Alcalá, p. 899); 1 Cor 10:13 'God is faithful and just that will not allow […] that we be tempted nor punished' ('Alphabet', *Obras Completas*, ed. by Alcalá, p. 453).

[89] Calero and Coronel's language is a subjective appraisal (Vives, *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Calero and Coronel, pp. 304, 305); also, 'These thoughts *we believe* are on the foundation of the concept of the soul in Juan de Valdés' *Alphabet*' (*Obras Completas*, ed. by Alcalá, p. 345).

[90] Valdés, *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon, fol 19^{r}l.16–22 = *Luthers Werke*, Weimar edn, I: 398, lines 6–9; Valdés, *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Bataillon ,19^{v}, lines1–9 = *Luthers Werke*, Weimar edn, I: 398, lines 10–14, 16–17. Taken from Gilly, *J. Valdés translator of Luther*, see *Alfabeto Cristiano*, ed. by Usoz, p. 56.

incomplete condition', and their edition 'needs many[91] clarifications'.[92] Vives's authorship would also need to be verified through the comparison of the contents of his *De Veritate Fidei Christianae* or *Treatise on the Soul* with *Dialogue on Doctrine,* but these reflect no close affinity with the *Dialogue*.[93] In Vives's letters to Juan de Vergara, his 'best friend in Spain', Calero and Coronel offer the defence that Vives appears to write with 'enigmatic sentences' and with 'a coincidence between his writing […] and the subject matter of the works *Dialogue on the Things that Happened in Rome,* and *Dialogue of Mercurio y Caron*'.[94] These events obviously had repercussions and echoes among all Erasmians; there is no wonder Vives referred to it in his letters to his friends. Contrarily, Donald and Lázaro clearly present the genesis and important historical attestation of Alfonso de Valdes's authorship of this dialogue on Rome.[95]

Nevertheless, Calero and Coronel, not taking into account evidence such as Castiglione's reproach to Alfonso for having written those two dialogues,[96] attributes their authorship to Juan Luis Vives. Subsequently, Calero and Coronel trace similarities between these two previously mentioned dialogues with *Dialogue on Doctrine*, even bringing *Lazarillo de Tormes* — a famous Spanish anonymous work previously attributed also to Alfonso de Valdés — into the comparison. Considering the close relationship of these twin brothers, it is fully reasonable that there would be some affinity. However, to set aside positive documentary evidence, to usurp the authorship of Alfonso's dialogues because of a questionable reference in one of Vives's letters, and then use it to deprive Valdés of his authorship of the *Dialogue*, is a weak argument for discarding historical attestation and past research on both Alfonso and Juan de Valdés.[97]

It is beyond our purpose or reach to discern the reason behind Calero and Coronel's proposal. I would agree with Calero and Coronel's view of Vives: 'One of the highest summits of humanity, in which his contributions to pedagogy, psychology, philosophy, history, pacifism, help for the poor, and spirituality in general shine.'[98] But Vives's eminence does not force his authorship on all the anonymous, supposedly Erasmian writings of his time. Vives's authorship of the *Dialogue* is neither the 'solution' which 'perfectly

[91] In Spanish, *muchísimas* (superlative).
[92] Vives, *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Calero and Coronel, p. 370.
[93] Juan Luis Vives, *Joannis Ludovici Vivis Valentini Opera omnia* (London: Gregg, 1964). There is no extant evidence of Vives's works except in Latin.
[94] Vives, *Diálogo de Doctrina*, ed. by Calero and Coronel, pp. 372, 373.
[95] Donald and Lázaro, *Alfonso de Valdés*, pp. 200–220.[96] Letter of Castiglione from Madrid, October 1528, repr. in Wiffen, *Life of Juan de Valdés*, p. 82.
[96] Letter of Castiglione from Madrid, October 1528, repr. in Wiffen, *Life of Juan de Valdés*, p. 82.
[97] A similar unsuccessful endeavour happened concerning Valdés's authorship of *Diálogo de la Lengua*, clearly referred to by Bataillon (*Diálogo de Docrtina*, ed. by Bataillon, p. 155ff).
[98] Vives, *Diálogo de Doctrina,* ed. by Calero and Coronel, p. ix.

fits' the *Dialogue*'s authorship, nor 'Occam's razor, according to which, the easiest explanation is the more plausible one', as Calero and Coronel claim.[99] Calero and Coronel's thesis does not engage with the consensus or arguments that previous scholars from all backgrounds, such as Bataillon, Jose I. Tellechea Idígoras, José C. Nieto, and Gordon A. Kinder among others, have agreed for decades.

Conclusion

The weight of evidence in favour of Valdés as the author of the *Dialogue* corresponds to the confidence of individuals and to years of Valdesian research. Scholars of different perspectives and areas of expertise have only built upon and added considerations that confirm Valdés's authorship. The declarations registered by the Inquisition are remarkable and clearly point to Valdés. Theological positions and textual dependences in the *Dialogue* fit the influences on and thought of Valdés. A deeper comparison with Valdés's thought and writings could be considered, but the examples presented are representative and relevant, particularly the historical environment of the publication of the *Dialogue*. If a new proposal that denies Valdes's authorship were to be considered, it should include the existing historical evidence and its internal characteristics. Considering all the facts and inferences presented, therefore, the evidence of Valdés's authorship appears to remain as the most appropriate conclusion.

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[99] Ibid., p. xi.

The Prayer House of Omsk Baptists in 1919

Constantine Prokhorov

This article describes an episode from the history of the civil war in Siberia in 1919. The Central Baptist prayer house in Omsk was requisitioned by troops of Admiral Kolchak, the commander of anti-Bolshevik forces in Siberia, and for several months was used as a military headquarters and barracks for soldiers. The release of the prayer house from the military post was made possible due to the assistance of the world-wide fellowship of Baptists. Famous brothers William and Robert Fetler took an active part in these events.

Keywords

Siberia; Omsk; prayer house; Siberian Baptist Union; civil war; A.V. Kolchak government

Background to the Building of Omsk Prayer House

In 1905–1907, Baptists in Omsk, Siberia, built a large chapel, or in the language of Slavic evangelicals 'prayer house', on Myasnitskaya Street in the city during the period of the first Russian Revolution. It was in that period that Russian 'sectarians' — as Baptists and other non-Orthodox believers were usually termed — first gained freedom of religion in Russia. In 1906–1907, the Siberian Baptist Union was also formed, with its centre in Omsk. And the new prayer house, which could seat up to 1,500 people, became the main church building among the Russian Baptists throughout Siberia.

There are some details about the Omsk prayer house in the travel notes of Dementy Aleksandrov, the evangelist of the All-Russian Union of Russian Baptists. He visited Western Siberia in the autumn of 1907. The construction was actually completed in Alexandrov's presence. Here is what he then noted in his diary:

> This house is built of brick: length – 25 metres, width – 18 metres, the height of the walls inside the house – 6,5 metres, and outside – 9,6 metres. It has a gallery with a capacity of up to 700 people; two pulpits, one of which is small and the other is 2,5 metres high above the deliberation room.[1]

[1] *Otchet baptistskogo missionerskogo obshchestva za 1907–1908 gg.* [Report of the Baptist Missionary Society for 1907–1908] (Odessa, 1909), pp. 25–26.

The necessary funds for the construction were given by Gavriil Ivanovich Mazaev, the chairman of the Siberian Baptist Union, a very wealthy man who was involved in cattle breeding and fine-fleeced sheep in Siberia. Interestingly, although Mazaev was able to finance all the construction work alone, he reportedly 'did not want to deprive other members of the community of the blessings of God'.[2] There was blessing in giving. As a result, the Omsk believers made the decision that Mazaev would initially pay all the necessary amount — which at the end of 1907 was about twenty-nine thousand rubles[3] — and then gradually, over the course of several years, half of these funds, as a result of general donations, were planned to return to Mazaev.[4] However, in practice, the return of the money was severely delayed, and was still being discussed at the congress in Omsk in 1919.[5]

A photograph has been preserved which was taken on 14 October 1907 during the grand opening of the prayer house in Omsk. It shows both the pulpits and a part of the gallery (balconies), which then adjoined all four walls of the building, thus it was very spacious. The general enthusiasm of the Omsk Baptists and the speed of construction work (the main work was carried out in the summer of 1907) did not affect the quality: the house turned out to be a very solid structure, and it still serves as the main building of the Omsk Baptist Church.

During the solemn service, or consecration, at the opening of the prayer house and in the presence of many people Mazaev made the following comment: 'From now on, we have placed our feet firmly on the banks of the Irtysh River and, like Yermak, we will begin the second conquest of Siberia — of course, religiously.'[6] The reference was to Yermak Timofeyevich, who, in the sixteenth century, led the conquest of Siberia for the Tsar. Mazaev's words were not without a prophetic spirit: up to the end of the 1920s, the Siberian Union of Russian Baptists grew and strengthened, spreading its influence to cities and villages from the Ural Mountains to the Far East, and encompassed tens of thousands of people.[7]

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[2] See: K. Prokhorov, *V sibirskikh palestinakh. Istoriya Omskoy tserkvi evangel'skikh khiristian-baptistov (1890s – 1941)* [In the Siberian Palestines. History of the Omsk Church of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (1890s – 1941)] (Omsk – Steinhagen: Samenkorn, 2019), p. 130.
[3] *Otchet baptistskogo missionerskogo obshchestva za 1907–1908 gg.*, p. 26.
[4] *Pervy svobodny s''ezd Sibirskogo otdela Soyuza russkikh baptistov v Omske* [The First Free Congress of the Siberian Department of the Union of Russian Baptists in Omsk] (Omsk, 1918), p. 46.
[5] *Blagovestnik* [Evangelist] (Omsk), 4 (1919), p. 40.
[6] *Omskie eparkhial'nye vedomosti* [Omsk Diocesan Gazette], 3 (1908), pp. 22–23.
[7] *Blagovestnik*, 4 (1919), p. 41.

Previous page, top: Omsk prayer house in the 1920s

from the archive of Omsk Baptist Church

Previous page, bottom: consecration of the prayer house on 14 October 1907

from the State Museum of the History of Religion, St. Petersburg

This page, left: Admiral Alexander Vasilyevich Kolchak (1874–1920)

public domain

This page, top right: William Fetler (1883–1957)

from the archive of the Union of Evangelical-Christian Baptists, Moscow

This page, bottom right: Robert Fetler (1892–1941)

from the archive of the Union of Evangelical-Christian Baptists, Moscow

During the Civil War

Over the years of the existence of the Omsk Baptist community, the authorities have seized its prayer house three times: during World War I (April 1916–June 1917); during the Civil war in Siberia (February–June 1919); under the Soviet rule (1935–1991). This article focuses on the second requisition of the house of worship, which took place in 1919.

In the winter of 1918–1919, Omsk was flooded with refugees from Bolshevik Russia. The city was so crowded with visitors that it was almost impossible to rent any room in it. Few people paid attention to those who arrived — even if the arrivals were well-known and eminent. Together with refugees, many evangelical believers found their way to Omsk. It is interesting to note that even some English soldiers — from among those who arrived in Omsk in October 1918 to help the Siberian government in the fight against the Bolsheviks[8] — were evangelical believers and soon began to attend the Baptist Sunday services in the Omsk prayer house.[9] The local community warmly welcomed these soldiers, talked willingly with them through an interpreter (the famous Baptist minister Robert Fetler, who then lived in Omsk, was able to interpret) and spoke of them in such terms as 'they are our brothers from Britain', and 'dear guests'.[10]

During this period, Omsk was also the centre for the formation of many military units, premises for which, according to the laws of the war, were requisitioned. And so, on 21 February 1919, the prayer house of Omsk Baptists on Myasnitskaya Street was occupied and became the headquarters and barracks of the 3rd Steppe Siberian Regular Regiment.[11] Initially, the military behaved kindly and even allowed the believers to conduct services one day a week (Sundays) in the part of the house they were not using. However, already by March 1919, the Baptists were denied this. As in the period of the previous requisition of the building (in 1916–1917), they had to divide into groups and gather for prayer in private houses.[12]

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[8] 'Vstrecha angliyskikh voysk' [Reception of the British Troops], *Sibirskiy Vestnik* (Omsk), 27 October 1918. See also: D. Ward, *Soyuznaya interventsiya v Sibiri 1918 – 1919 gg* (Moscow: State Publishing House, 1923), p. 65.

[9] *Blagovestnik*, 1 (1919), p. 6.

[10] Ibid.; *Droog* [Friend] (Issue of the Russian Missionary Society in Philadelphia, USA), 8 (1919), p. 63.

[11] *Blagovestnik*, 1 (1919), p. 6; *Spravochnik i spisok abonentov telefonnoy seti Omska i Atamanskogo khutora* [Directory and List of Telephone Network Subscribers of Omsk and Ataman Village] (Omsk: F.G. Brekhov, 1919), p. 17. See also: A. Rakova, *Omsk – stolitsa beloy Rossii* (Omsk: [n. pub.], 2010), p. 68.

[12] *Blagovestnik*, 1 (1919), p. 6; The famous Omsk writer A.S. Sorokin then wrote, 'Why is the Baptist house closed? There is a military barrack there...' (Historical Archive of the Omsk Region, F. 1073, op. 1, d. 547, l. 47.)

Believers Defending Their House of Worship

The board of the Siberian Baptist Union petitioned the authorities to release the prayer house from the military, but were unsuccessful.[13] Then the Omsk believers, having heard about the significant material, technical and military assistance provided by the Western powers to the Kolchak government, decided to act differently. Here the key figures were two brothers, Robert and William Fetler. Both had studied in London at Spurgeon's College, and were aware of international Baptist links. Robert Fetler, who had settled in Siberia, wrote a letter to his brother William (in Russian, Vasily Andreevich), who was living in the United States at the time, and informed him of the requisition of the main prayer house in Omsk and of the negative consequences of this event for the entire Siberian Baptist Union.[14] Robert Fetler apparently asked William to organise a collection of signatures among influential American Baptists and to send a collective message to Admiral Kolchak in Omsk, who had proclaimed himself 'Supreme Ruler'. The petition from across the ocean, according to the design of Robert Fetler, was intended to carry more weight than the petitions of the Omsk believers.[15]

William Fetler, after receiving the alarming news from Omsk, decided to act immediately. Correspondence across the ocean took quite a while, and he recognised that collecting signatures in America would also take time. However, in the view of the Fetler brothers the matter was urgent, and William sent a personal message to Admiral Kolchak in late April 1919. Although this was written by William Fetler himself, it is significant that he used the pronoun 'we'. This could refer to the American people as a whole or to an international Baptist community. For the sake of the benefit of the case, William signed this message with his most impressive titles, which he had at that time: Director General of the Russian Missionary and Educational Society in America; the editor of the journal *Friend of Russia (Philadelphia)*.[16]

The message of the letter was clear. However, it diplomatically avoided a harsh accusatory tone and offered a way forward for the other party. Fetler used the argument of religious freedom, obviously assuming that Kolchak's administration would prefer to take a different approach towards religious minorities than that of the 'old' tsarist government. It is also possible, reading between the lines rather than from explicit statement, that Fetler sensed that Kolchak could benefit from the support of as wide a spectrum of the population as possible, Baptists included. Religious freedom

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[13] *Blagovestnik*, 1 (1919), p. 6; no. 4 (1919), p. 40; *The Missionary Review of the World*, September 1919, p. 712.
[14] *Droog*, 4 (1919), p. 30; no. 8 (1919), p. 63; Prokhorov, *V sibirskikh palestinakh*, p. 417.
[15] Ibid.
[16] *Droog*, 10 (1919), p. 77.

was a crucial topic for Slavic Baptists, and now it was brought into discussion in a changing political situation. Here is the text of this interesting document:

> *30 April 1919*
>
> Gracious Sovereign, Citizen Admiral Kolchak!
>
> I'm sorry to trouble you. Here, in the United States, it is reported that a Baptist prayer house was closed in Omsk, turning it into a club for soldiers or officers.
>
> In America, a country of complete religious tolerance, this is incomprehensible, and such persecution for faith is strange in a country ruled by the humane and liberated people's rulers.
>
> But maybe we are misinformed. For this reason, I appeal to you, as the head of the Siberian Government, with a humble request to explain to us this case of persecution for faith, if it occurred, and also to inform whether you intend to hinder the practice of faith at all, as under the old government, or we can hope for the complete freedom of religion in Russia.
>
> For many important reasons, we are very interested to know this.
>
> With deep respect,
>
> Vasily Andreevich Fetler.[17]

The mention of the 'club for soldiers or officers' in this letter is an echo of the very first reports of events in Omsk, when the purpose of the requisition of the building was still not completely clear to the believers. The same phrase, as well as the characteristic reservations ('maybe we are misinformed', 'persecution for faith, if it occurred') indicate William Fetler's rapid response to the request for help when it was not yet possible to find out all the details. The tone of William's letter is also noteworthy. In it one feels not so much the conviction or accusation of Kolchak, but a Christian exhortation, which it was hoped would prompt the admiral to rectify the situation. And to do this without damaging anyone's reputation. Fetler's desire to draw the attention of the 'Supreme Ruler' not only to the particular situation with the Baptist prayer house, but also to the general state of affairs with regard to religious freedom in the territory under his control, is also noteworthy.

The message of William Fetler was not left unanswered. The office of Admiral Kolchak reacted to it in a most serious way. Here is the full text of the official letter received by William from Omsk in the summer of that year.

[17] Ibid.

ADMINISTRATIVE DEPARTMENT

OF THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT

_____

Director of Chancellery of
THE SUPREME RULER
15 July[18]1919
No. 3670
The city of Omsk

To Vasily Andreyevich Fetler, General Director of
the Russian Missionary and General Education
Society in America, the editor of the journal
"Friend of Russia", Philadelphia.

As a result of your letter of 30 April, this year, the General Directorate for Religious Affairs was requested, and reported the following: in its activities, both in relation to the Orthodox Church, and in relation to heterodox and other religions, the General Directorate proceeds entirely from the principles of law-based state. It invariably strives for the consistent implementation of the principles of religious freedom and autonomy of religious societies, limited only by the requirements of State laws, and is guided by the laws of 17 April 1905 and 14 July 1917[19] on freedom of conscience. In particular, it also considers it its duty to protect the unhindered exercise of the legal right of permitted sects to freely perform their divine services.

In view of this, immediately after receiving the information about the occupation of the Baptist prayer house by the quartering of soldiers, the General Directorate immediately began investigating the case on the spot and entered into a relationship with the War Ministry on the release of this building. The War Department, completely agreeing with the fundamental point of view on the religious policy of the General Directorate and, in particular, on this issue, from its part ordered the release of the Baptist prayer house. This order was not, however, executed for some time, apparently due to the impossibility of

[18] This letter should probably be dated 15 June, not 15 July, because it is known that the prayer house in Omsk had already been returned to the believers on 30 June 1919.

[19] These laws, adopted in the era of revolutions, guaranteed freedom of conscience and religious convictions to all citizens of Russia. See: *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossiyskoy imperii* [The Complete collection of laws of the Russian Empire] (SPb., 1908). Vol. XXV, S. 257; *Vestnik Vremennogo pravitel'stva* [The Bulletin of the Provisional Government], 1917, 20 July.

> immediately placing the soldiers in other premises. The War Ministry specifically stated that the impossibility of immediately releasing the Baptist prayer house was due solely to Omsk being overcrowded now, and so the building will be vacated immediately after the leaving of the regiment that occupies the building and that it will take no more than 10 days to complete this task.
>
> The General Directorate considers this as a single fact, caused by random circumstances, and in no way arising from the principles of the State religious policy and which in no case can be a precedent.
>
> I have the honor to inform you of the above on the issue you have raised about the freedom of conscience in Russia.
>
> Director (ad interim) of the Office of the Supreme Ruler
> Major General Martyanov,
> Head of Department
> Tishcheev.[20]

This historical document quite definitely testifies to those moral and political priorities, which the Kolchak government followed. Of course, the very fact of requisitioning the prayer house and the placement of a headquarters and barracks in it does not adorn the Kolchak War Ministry with glory.[21] It is unlikely that the White Russian Army officers would have done this with the Orthodox church, and therefore a discrimination against the 'heterodox' believers, of course took place here. At the same time, the legal assessment of the situation and the reaction to it of the General Directorate for Religious Affairs[22] under the Ministry of the Interior is significant. It is also very important that in replying to William Fetler, General Alexander Martyanov, who was one of Kolchak's most trusted representatives,[23] was not only polite and courteous, but his words were reinforced by deeds: on 30 June 1919, the Omsk Baptists received back their prayer house. In the conditions of war and an acute shortage of premises in the city, this building could probably have been transferred to another army unit or government organisation.

The Omsk believers responded with great joy! Below is a note which was published immediately in two Russian evangelical magazines, in the second half of 1919:

> *Omsk City Community*. We are pleased to announce that, after a long wait, on 30 June of this year our prayer house was released from the troops. It took several days to clean the house, and on Sunday, 6 July, the first prayer meetings took place. We ask you to pray for us so that the Lord blesses all works in the field of God in Omsk.[24]

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[20] *Droog*, 10 (1919), p. 77.
[21] At that time the Minister of War was General N.A. Stepanov.
[22] At that time the head of the Department for Religious Affairs was I.A. Tikhonravov.
[23] See, for instance, I. Kuptsov, A. Buyakov and V. Yushko, *Bely generalitet naVostoke Rossii v gody Grazhdanskoy voyny. Biografichesky spravochnik* (Moscow: Kuchkovo pole, 2011), pp. 333–334.
[24] *Blagovestnik*, 4 (1919), p. 45; *Droog*, 10 (1919), p. 77.

Thus, the second requisition of the prayer house of the Omsk Baptists, although described as 'long', lasted a little more than four months. Unlike after the previous requisition, this time the building did not require significant repairs. A simple 'house cleaning' was enough. Probably, the Kolchak military had some kind of instructions that ordered them to be careful with requisitioned property.

In general, until November 1919 (the fall of the regime of A.V. Kolchak), the Omsk Baptists did not experience significant restrictions in their religious life. With formal permission, they held congresses, preached, performed baptisms, moved freely around Siberia, and published spiritual books, brochures, and their own magazine.[25] Severe restrictions were to follow. However, the episode in 1919 is an indication of what the world-wide fellowship of Baptists, across national boundaries, can sometimes achieve.

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[25] See more details in Prokhorov, *V sibirskikh palestinakh*, pp. 422–425.

Challenges and Opportunities in the Healing of Church Memories: Reflections on Baptist-Catholic Relations in Lithuania[1]

Lina Toth

Written as a response to a theme of 'Challenges and Opportunities in the Healing of Church Memories' for the Phase III of the Joint Commission for the International Dialogue between the Baptist World Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, this article investigates the Lithuanian speaking Baptist-Catholic relations. Providing an overview of the country's geopolitical, cultural and religious context, it highlights the role of nationalist sentiments, religious majority-minority dynamics, and the impact of the Lithuanian Catholic Church's recent loss of social, political and cultural hegemony, in Lithuanian ecumenical relations. It also draws attention to the role of ecumenical work around the translation of the Bible as a catalyst for the healing of painful memories and an opportunity for the formation of new bonds.

Keywords

Lithuania; Baptists; Catholicism; nationalism; ecumenical relations; bible translation

Introduction

The stimulus for writing this paper was the third meeting of Phase III of international ecumenical conversations between the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) which took place 9–13 December 2019 in Warsaw, Poland. The overall theme of this phase of the dialogue is 'The Dynamic of the Gospel and the Witness of the Church'. The 2019 meeting was devoted to the theme of 'Challenges to Common Witness', 'giving attention to contemporary circumstances in church and society that represent not only challenges faced by Baptists and Catholics in fulfilling their summons to offer common witness to Christ, but also opportunities for bearing witness to the gospel

[1] A version of this article was presented at the Joint Commission for the International Dialogue between the Baptist World Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in Warsaw, 10 December 2019.

together'.[2] In relation to exploring the challenges to common witness, the realities of lingering hurts and strains in the relationships were acknowledged, and avenues for 'the healing of the memories' were considered. Lithuanian Baptist-Catholic relationships was one of the cases presented; this article is an adapted version of that presentation.

I begin with a quote from the Lithuanian Baptist monthly *Tiesos Draugas* ('Friend of the Truth'). The magazine was published between 1924 and 1940, and the quote comes from an editorial of October 1931:

> The Government of our country has given us rights to preach the Word of God and to pray and worship God according to our convictions. Nevertheless our brothers and sisters have to suffer persecution […] We try not to offend those who think otherwise, and instead pray that God would bring all to the truth of genuine Gospel. Not everybody likes such teaching, and for that reason we are persecuted […] But thanks be to God, we have the freedom of faith and our government is not persecuting us for our faith. Deception does not endure, and the officials of our Government are wise enough to distinguish between lies and truth. The intention of [this] our little magazine is to spread love everywhere, and not to offend anyone, but alongside many friends it has many enemies too. In certain locations post offices are run by Catholic priests or organists, and they withhold our magazine, refusing to pass it on to the subscribers.[3]

How justified or measured was such grievance? In order to understand its context, an overview of the geopolitical and cultural context of the country is due.

Geopolitical, Cultural and Religious Context until World War II: Broad Strokes

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was known as the last pagan country in Europe, baptised only in 1387. In many ways it retained various pagan elements, which resulted in a rather syncretic form of Christianity.[4] There was a brief period of Reformation, mostly promoted by the Lithuanian nobility, but due to an effective Jesuit mission, not least by the establishment of Vilnius University, Lithuania was soon Catholic again, with the exception of a few small Reformed islands and a few ethno-religious minorities. Under

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[2] 'Communiqué', http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/alleanza-battista-mondiale/dialogo-internazionale-tra-la-chiesa-cattolica-e-l-alleanza-batt/communiques/2019-warsaw.html [accessed 17 December 2019].

[3] T.G. [Teodoras Gerikas], 'Apžvalga' [Overview], *Tiesos Draugas*, 10 (1931), p. 4.

[4] For example, Miranda Zapor Cruz, 'The Role of Catholicism in the Development of Lithuanian National Identity', *Church History and Religious Culture*, 94 (2014): 479–504 (p. 484); Antanas Musteikis, *The Reformation in Lithuania: Religious Fluctuations in the Sixteenth Century* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1988), p. 69. On the syncretism of different Baltic tribes, see W. R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical Awakening* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 38. Whilst discussing Livonia primarily, Ward suggests that in the Baltic region as a whole, 'the penetration of Christianity of any kind was remarkably shallow' (ibid).

Czarist Russia — from 1795 to 1918 — and especially with the emergence of collective national identities that characterised nineteenth-century Europe, Roman Catholicism played an 'extraordinarily powerful role'[5] in the nurturing of Lithuanian identity and countering the Czarist suppression of the Lithuanian language.[6] By 1918, when Lithuania declared its independence, Lithuanian identity and Catholicism were virtually inseparable, with the Catholic Church dominating both the political and cultural life of the new country.[7]

In contrast to the towering significance of the Lithuanian Catholic Church, the Baptists had never been more than a minority among minorities, particularly in regard to the native Lithuanian population. There was one significant exception, however, and it had to do with a recently incorporated region. Termed 'Prussian Lithuania', or Lithuania Minor, it represented a very different cultural and religious context.[8] I have considered the contrast between these 'two Lithuanias' and the Baptist work in these two contrasting contexts elsewhere,[9] but in this article I will stay with what is generally termed Lithuania Proper or 'Major'. Here, the statistics for 1930 report sixty

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[5] Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*, trans. by Ben Fowkes (New York, 1985), pp. 5–96.

[6] For example, T. Balkelis, *The Making of Modern Lithuania* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 6.

[7] Cruz, 'The Role of Catholicism,' pp. 489–90. Matters became somewhat more complicated after the 1926 coup d'état which resulted in an increasingly authoritarian rule by the Lithuanian Nationalist Union and a certain degree of distance between the State and the Catholic Church. (For a study of the period in English, see, e.g., R.J. Misiunas, 'Fascist Tendencies in Lithuania', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 48, vol. 110 (1970): 88–109.) However, the Lithuanian Catholic Church continued to function as 'the most influential institution in Lithuanian society' (Cruz, 'The Role of Catholicism', p. 491).

[8] Lithuania Minor consisted of the region around Memel, or Memelland, which had represented the eastern part of the Prussian Kingdom and, from 1871, unified Germany. Founded by the Teutonic Knights, Memel, or Klaipeda, as it was and is called by Lithuanian speakers, was situated on the northernmost tip of East Prussia on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. In 1923, under controversial circumstances, the region finally came under the jurisdiction of the newly independent Republic of Lithuania, although retaining considerable autonomy, not in the least in religious matters. See, for example, V. Vareikis, 'Memellander/Klaipėdiškiai Identity and German-Lithuanian Relations in Lithuania Minor in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', *Sociologija. Mintis ir veiksmas*, 6, nos. 1-2 (2001): 54–65.
In contrast to the Catholicism of Lithuania Proper, Prussian Lithuania was deeply influenced by German culture and Lutheranism, at times under the severe pressure of Germanisation. The religious-cultural context of Memel itself was cosmopolitan, but the local population was largely Protestant, predominantly Lutheran, and, especially if one ventured into the surrounding villages, with a strong flavour of Pietism. It was there, in Memel, that in 1841 the first Baptist church on what is now Lithuanian territory was founded. The story of Memel Baptist church — at one point, the largest Baptist church by membership in Continental Europe — is not only a story of a vibrant missionary identity amongst predominantly German-speaking believers, but is also instrumental to the beginnings of the Baptist movement in Latvia and the Baptist beginnings in Russian Transcaucasia. See, for example, H.J. Coleman, 'Baptist Beginnings in Russia and Ukraine', *Baptist History and Heritage*, 42, no. 1 (2007), 24–36; Ian M. Randall, *Communities of Conviction: Baptist Beginnings in Europe* (Schwarzenfeld: Neufeld Verlag, 2009), pp. 87–88.

[9] Lina Toth (Andronoviene), 'Revival Among the Aliens: The Case of Lithuanian Baptists', in *Baptists and Revivals: Papers from the Seventh International Conference on Baptist Studies*, ed. by William L. Pitts Jr (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2018), pp. 304–323; 'Strangers in the Land and True Lovers of the Nation: The Formation of Lithuanian-speaking Baptist Identity, 1918-1940', *Perichoresis*, 16, no. 1 (2018): 99–117.

Lithuanian-speaking Baptists from among 1040 adherents across the country.[10]

In what follows, I will briefly reflect on the way the Baptists, as a tiny minority, saw their relationship to the Catholic Church, the dominant religious player of the country. It is important to acknowledge that, as a Lithuanian Baptist and someone whose own family was part of this story, I approach the subject from a particular perspective. As a historical scholar, however, I also have done my best to check my own possible biases and blind spots against the existing scholarly literature. Moreover, as a theologian, I would argue that the Gospel warrants paying particular attention to the voice of those in the minority. The minority happens to be a Baptist one in this case, but I would insist that a similar approach be applied to situations where the Baptists represent the voice and power of a majority.[11]

Catholics and Baptists as Majority-Minority Relations Prior to World War II

The Catholic context was certainly a key factor in the formation of Lithuanian-speaking Baptist identity, even if by the way of negative identity, namely, Baptists being 'not Catholic'. Much frustration was caused by the fact that, from the creation of the state in 1918 to its Soviet annexation in 1940, the Catholic Church in Lithuania Proper had successfully blocked the introduction of a civil registry.[12] This situation created serious difficulties for those belonging to 'unrecognised' religions as well as non-religious persons in terms of marrying, registering their children and burying their dead, also illustrated by rather disturbing accounts of priests refusing the burial of the bodies of those who had links with Baptists.[13] Indeed, one of the pressing matters (and a key *raison d'être)* for the creation of the Baptist Union of Lithuania was the legal recognition of the Baptist Registry Centre in Kaunas, established in 1931–1932.[14]

On the other hand, there were some bridge-building efforts. The earlier issues of *Tiesos Draugas* in particular contain regular attempts by Lithuanian Baptists to identify good practice and good teaching by other churches, including the Catholic Church of Lithuania. For example, in 1925

[10] Teodoras Gerikas, Letter to Jonas Inkenas, 30 June 1930. The majority of the Baptists in Lithuania Proper were German, Latvian, or Russian speakers.
[11] Examples of such contexts referred to or explored by other members of the dialogue were Naga Baptists in India and the 'Bible belt' of the southern USA.
[12] Regina Laukaityte, 'Society Without a Civil Registry (1918-1940): Outcomes and Consequences', *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 18 (2013): 105–122.
[13] Petras Martinaitis, 'Prisiminimai iš vaikystės dienų' [Memories from childhood days], private manuscript, 12 April 2005, pp. 1–2. Available through the author.
[14] Albertas Latužis, *Po Jo Sparnais: Baptistų istorija Lietuvoje 1841-1990* (Klaipėda: Eglė, 2009), p. 137.

the magazine reprinted a poem from the Catholic periodical *Šv. Pranciškaus varpelis* (*The Little Bell of St Francis*).[15] Two issues later, the editor of *Tiesos Draugas* reflected on the fact that *Šv. Pranciškaus varpelis* was forbidding its readers to read Protestant publications, including such periodicals as *Tiesos Draugas*. The editor then proceeded to comment that *Tiesos Draugas*

> has never yet quarrelled or ridiculed anybody. It strives to fight against godlessness and sin by preaching Christ's love. Its co-workers are believers from different Protestant churches, as well as Catholics with a living faith.[16]

What was seen by Lithuanian Baptists to be the absence of this 'living faith' in the Lithuanian Catholic tradition, and what featured as their most common criticism of it, was an ignorance of and/or the lack of respect for the Bible.[17] I mention it here without further comment, but the question of the role of Scripture will re-emerge in this Lithuanian Catholic-Baptist story several times.

Lithuanian Baptist construction of a theology of culture involved navigating the increasing tension between love for one's nation[18] and the insistence on an ultimate citizenship in the heavenly Kingdom.[19] With the intensification of nationalist sentiment, the growing emphasis of Lithuanian-speaking Baptists on building bridges of peace is evident in different communications, and especially in the editorials of *Tiesos Draugas*. Amidst the highly charged nationalistic rhetoric that characterised the country of the time, the relationship between being Lithuanian and being Catholic was also being questioned: 'Not all Catholics [in Lithuania] are good Lithuanians. There are among them various types, those who have become quite Polish, and others.'[20] The accusation of having become 'Polish' is significant. Lithuania's capital, Vilnius, was captured by the Polish army in 1919 and remained under Polish control until it was returned to Lithuania by Soviet Russia after its invasion of Eastern Poland in 1939. Indeed, the idea of regaining Vilnius as the capital of Lithuania was central to the general Lithuanian identity discourse of the time. According to an insightful observer of the politics of that time, the ideal of Vilnius as the capital of Lithuania '[was] a much stronger dogma than the dogmas of the virgin birth, the infallible Pope and other dogmas of the Catholic Church'.[21]

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[15] J. Naruševičius, 'Žmonės užimti be galo...' [People are endlessly busy…] (1925), cited in *Tiesos Draugas*, 2, no. 3 (1925), p. 1.
[16] Editor, 'Laiškų dėžutė' [Letter box], *Tiesos Draugas*, 2, no. 5 (1925), p. 4.
[17] For example, T.G., 'Knygų knyga' [The Book of books], *Tiesos Draugas*, 1, no. 5 (1924), p. 2.
[18] T. G., 'Laiškų dėžutė', *Tiesos Draugas*, 4, no. 2 (1927), p. 4.
[19] T. G., 'Tikyba ir tautybė' [Faith and nationality], *Tiesos Draugas*, 17, no. 2 (1940), pp. 10–12.
[20] T.G., 'Tikyba ir tautybė', *Tiesos Draugas*, 17, no. 2 (1940), pp. 10–12.
[21] Dangiras Mačiulis and Darius Staliūnas, *Lithuanian Nationalism and the Vilnius Question,1883-1940*, Studien zur Ostmitteleuropaforschung, Vol. 32 (Marburg: Herder-Institut, 2015), p. 200.

It is important to note that the strength of nationalist sentiment was considered to be problematic by the Vatican as well, with its representatives being 'concerned with the absence of the spirit of the universal Church in the hearts of Lithuanian [Catholic] clergy, who were inspired rather by the ideals of national revival'.[22] Thus, for instance, the Vatican's 1925 concordat with Poland, which recognised the diocese of Vilnius — the capital of Lithuania as far as Lithuanians were concerned — as part of the Polish Catholic Church, was met with anger and protest. 'The crowd threw rotten eggs at the windows of the flat of the representative of the Vatican, and the diplomat was forced to leave the country.'[23]

During the 1930s, with the increasingly authoritarian direction of the country and 'conservative Catholic nationalism' as 'the official and exclusive ideology' of President of the country Antanas Smetona,[24] the stance towards the Catholic Church grew more forceful in official Lithuanian Baptist rhetoric, such as in a long report on the conversion to Baptism of Brazilian Catholic priest Jose Marcelino Nunes de Araujo: 'I became dead to Catholicism.'[25] At this point, certain aspects of the legal rhetoric of the state were amplified in order to contrast them with what was felt to be an atmosphere of religious hostility: 'our state's constitution recognises equal rights to all religious organisations, […] [but] the Catholic Church hates us.'[26] The feelings would have been reciprocal, reflected in the Lithuanian Catholic press of the time which regularly warned the readers against 'Biblists [Jehovah's Witnesses], Baptists and other pioneers of godlessness', cautioning that 'we cannot permit Lithuania to become a Protestant or Communist country'.[27]

Pausing at this point, we can observe the key role that nationalist sentiments can play in the ecumenical relations between the dominant religious group and the minorities. This is a story not only of Lithuania, but many of its other European neighbours of the time, regardless of the particularities of the dominant religious group. The roots of the process can

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[22] Arunas Streikus, 'The History of Religion in Lithuania since the Nineteenth Century', in *Religious Diversity in Post Soviet Society: Ethnographies of Catholic Hegemony and the New Pluralism in Lithuania*, ed. by Milda Alisauskiene and Ingo W. Schröder (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 40.
[23] Mačiulis and Staliūnas, *Lithuanian Nationalism*, p. 93.
[24] Leonidas Donskis, 'Mapping Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Lithuania', *East European Politics and Societies*, 13, no. 3 (1999): 474–500 (p. 488).
[25] 'Šviesos keliu' [Walking the way of light], *Tiesos Draugas*, 9, no. 4 (1932), p. 4.
[26] 'Lietuvos sveikinimas Talino suvažiavime' [Lithuania's greeting at Tallinn convention], *Tiesos Draugas,* 7, no. 10 (1930), p. 3.
[27] Č. Šaduikis, 'Vilkai avies kailyje' [Wolves in sheep's clothing], in *Vienybė* [Unity], 16, no 11 (1931), p. 87. To alleviate at least some of the tensions, humour was also employed. Reflecting on the fact that certain Lithuanian Catholic periodicals issued a warning not to read such literature as *Tiesos Draugas* and called it 'trash', Gerikas noted that 'after such advertisement, some people decide to get acquainted with such "trash" and as a result encounter genuine Gospel truth. So we are not upset over such advertisement, and indeed are even grateful for cost-free announcements about our newspaper's existence'. ('Iš redakcijos krepšio' [From the basket of the editor], in *Tiesos Draugas*, 15, no. 3 (1938), p. 8.)

be seen in the nineteenth-century European phenomenon which Stefan Berger terms 'the sacralization of the nation'.[28] It enforces a particular national identity narrative: 'unless you are Catholic, (or Orthodox, or Lutheran), you are not really or fully Lithuanian (or Bulgarian, or Estonian).' As Jonathan Hearn noted, nationalism involves making 'claims on behalf of a population to identity' as well as to territory and jurisdiction.[29] In relation to religious identity, one's belonging to a minority religion has to go hand in hand with the relinquishment of a claim to national belonging. That is, one can be a Baptist, or a Lutheran, or an Orthodox, as long as one is content to identify as a non-Lithuanian. Here we see the dynamic described by Hearn at play, accompanied by the othering of those who do not conform to this identity claim made on their behalf.

Under the Soviet Occupation: Survival Politics

As it happened, Lithuania did become a 'Communist country'. The life of the young Republic was brought to an abrupt end first by Nazi Germany's ultimatum and annexation of Prussian Lithuania in 1939, and then by the Soviet Union's ultimatum and annexation of the Republic of Lithuania in 1940. The end of World War II brought a Soviet occupation which lasted until 1990, when the newly elected parliament declared the restoration of Lithuanian independence.

The Soviet decades brought a very different set of priorities to the life of all religious groups. The official doctrine of the USSR and the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic included the separation of state and church, whilst confirming — in theory at least — the citizens' freedom 'to perform religious rites'.[30] Social engagement of the churches was prohibited (leading to a development of a very particular kind of a theology of witness)[31] and the organised social activities of the religious groups were highly restricted, although the specific restraints varied as the leadership passed from Stalin to Khrushchev to Brezhnev, and finally (with a few very short chairmanships in between), to Gorbachev. The years under Stalin involved drastic measures against all the religious groups, including arrest, prosecution and the

[28] Stefan Berger, 'History and Forms of Collective Identity in Europe: Why Europe Cannot and Should Not Be Built on History', in *Essence and the Margin: National Identities and Collective Memories in Contemporary European Culture*, ed. by Anna Saunders and Laura Rorato, Studie Imagologica, Amsterdam Studies on Cultural Identity, Vol. 15 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), pp. 21–28 (p. 25).
[29] Jonathan Hearn, *Rethinking Nationalism: A Critical Introduction* (London: Red Globe Press, 2006), p. 11.
[30] 'Constitution of the Lithuanian SSR of 1940', quoted in V. Stanley Vardys, *The Catholic Church, Dissent, and Nationality in Soviet Lithuania* (Boulder CO: East European Quarterly, 1978), p. 232.
[31] Lina Andronoviene and Parush R Parushev, 'Church, State, and Culture: On the Complexities of Post-Soviet Evangelical Social Involvement', *Theological Reflections: Euro-Asian Theological Journal*, 3 (2004): 161–213.

deportation of clergy as well as the closure of churches. In the context of Lithuania — the only Catholic country amongst the fifteen Soviet Socialist Republics — the suppression of the Catholic Church was particularly intense,[32] although it could be argued that these Stalinist measures only 'strengthened the synergy between Church and nation'.[33]

Faced with Khrushchev's antireligious propaganda campaign of 1959 to 1964, Catholic Church authorities (and indeed much of the population-at-large) developed forms of low-level resistance against the Soviet state's efforts to undermine the role of the Catholic Church in the life of what was left of the Lithuanian nation. The Church's popularity did not wane with Brezhnev's attempts to further limit the legal rights of religious associations and closely monitor the clergy considered to be 'disloyal' to the regime.[34] Dissent was expressed through such activities as the underground publication of the Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, which regularly covered the repression of Catholics, but also other violations of religious and human rights in the Soviet Union as a whole.[35] As Šaulius Girnius puts it, the Chronicle 'played an important role in convincing many Lithuanians, even nonbelievers, that the Church [was] the chief guardian of the national heritage'.[36] The Chronicle may have been the most famous, but not the only, samizdat publication. *Aušra* (*Dawn*), also published by Lithuanian Catholics, was equally strong in making the link between the survival of the Lithuanian nation and the survival of the Lithuanian Catholic Church: 'every Lithuanian should be a Catholic who lives according to the precepts of the Bible.'[37] Reference to the Bible here is notable: whilst the translation and publication of the Bible in Lithuanian had often been a Protestant venture,[38] the Bible would later prove to be the key area of Baptist and Catholic collaboration. At this point in time, however, the survival mode and siege mentality meant that any ecumenical relations were very limited, and the Second Vatican Council's *Unitatis redintegratio* had little impact on the ground.

Meanwhile, the handful of Baptists who had survived the war, occupation and deportations, were joined by some new settlers from the

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[32] See, for example, Streikus, 'The History of Religion in Lithuania', pp. 47–50.
[33] Cruz, 'The Role of Catholicism', p. 494.
[34] Cruz, 'The Role of Catholicism', p. 497.
[35] For full text in English, see http://lkbkronika.lt/en/.
[36] Šaulius Girnius, 'Fifteen Years of the Lithuanian *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research*, Baltic Area Situation Report 3 (8 May 1987), p. 41.
[37] Kestutis Girnius, 'Nationalism and the Catholic Church in Lithuania', in *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, ed. by Sabrina Petra Ramet (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1984), pp. 82–103 (p. 97), quoted in Cruz, 'The Role of Catholicism', p. 499.
[38] Giedrius Saulytis, 'Pirmieji Šventojo Rašto vertimai į lietuvių kalbą. Teologinė perspektyva' [First Lithuanian translations of Scripture. Theological Perspective] http://biblijosdraugija.lt/biblija/pirmieji-sventojo-rasto-vertimai-i-lietuviu-kalba-teologine-perspektyva/ [accessed 1 November 2019].

Soviet Union who happened to be, or became, Baptists. Integrated into the All-Union Council of Evangelic Christians-Baptists (AUCECB), Baptists in Lithuania had to find new ways of negotiating life within and beyond their own fragile, multicultural, multi-lingual communities, which by now also incorporated Pentecostal communities, forcefully merged with AUCECB in 1945.[39] In some of these congregations, such as one in Klaipeda, strong ecumenical links were forged with the local Lutheran congregation. Albertas Latužis, a Lithuanian Baptist historian, would argue that such association was based on the 'pietistic inclinations' of the local Lutherans as well as the fact that both groups were '[minorities] in the Catholic environment'[40] — a reminder that, radical change of circumstances notwithstanding, the majority-minority dynamic was still present. The closest relationship, naturally, was with the Pentecostals, who after the merge were in many ways inseparable. Ecumenical links also existed with some Reformed and Adventist groups, but no official links were forged with either the Orthodox or the Catholics.[41]

It should also be noted that there was no formal structure uniting these disparate and diverse Baptist-Pentecostal congregations until 1979, when an association of Lithuanian Baptist congregations in the framework of the AUCECB was established.[42] Various restrictions placed by the Council for Religious Affairs in terms of places of and opportunities for communal worship meant a careful navigation of the awareness of surveillance, relating to the local authorities, and dealing with the occasional pressure by KGB workers. Such circumstances encouraged an inward-focused, self-protecting stance. However, in comparison to the Catholic Church, Lithuanian Baptists (alongside most other religious minorities) generally experienced gentler treatment from the side of the authorities.[43]

The era of Mikhail Gorbachev and his perestroika and glasnost projects brought the relaxation of previous restrictions and possibilities for engaging in increasingly open religious and evangelistic activities. The 'beginning of the end' of the Soviet regime was signalled by such events as the return of Vilnius Cathedral to the Catholic Church and its re-consecration in February 1989: a joyous occasion the live broadcast of which I remember watching, with wonder, together with my (Baptist) family.

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[39] For an English-language overview, see Albertas Latužis, 'Lithuanian Baptists during Soviet Times', *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, 11, no. 1 (2010): 5–24.
[40] Latužis, 'Lithuanian Baptists', p. 15.
[41] Ibid., p. 22.
[42] Ibid., pp. 20–21.
[43] Ibid., p. 23.

Post 1990 and beyond: Transformations in the Majority-Minority Relations

The early years of independence reinforced the motif of the Lithuanian Catholic Church as the guarantor and protector of Lithuanian identity. Whilst the constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, adopted in 1992, affirmed freedom of conscience, religion, and belief, and declared there to be no state religion as such, a clear distinction was made between 'traditional', 'state-recognised', and 'other' religious communities.[44] The criteria of a 'traditional' religion has been primarily inspired by the religious landscape of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and therefore includes, beside the Roman Catholic Church, the Russian Orthodox Church, Old Believers, Judaism, Karaism, Sunni Islam, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and the Reformed Evangelical Church — but not Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals or Adventists. It is important to note that none of the religious communities with the legal status of a 'traditional' religion had conversionist aspirations in the Lithuanian context, and therefore did not represent a challenge to the dominant status of Roman Catholicism as the 'national' Lithuanian faith. Of course, this is not unique to the Lithuanian context. As Ingo Schröder points out,

> The close ties of majority churches to ideas of cultural heritage and local historicity make the establishment of 'other' religions, perceived as strange and essentially foreign to the local social environment, especially difficult and the joining of such religious communities appears as an act of conscious rejection of one's historic culture.[45]

In relation to Catholicism in particular, Schröder notes that 'in Catholic majority societies issues of cultural authenticity and political power relations are equally important themes in the religious field as questions of belief and religious practice.'[46] The Lithuanian religious context is an illustration of Schröder's thesis.

However, what is taking place in the twenty-first century, after the novelty of the freedom of religious expression has waned, points to a gradual but substantial erosion of the dominance of the 'national' religion. As such, it is not unique by far, and in fact characterises contemporary Lithuania as much as the Western world as a whole. However, Catholic majority societies share a particular set of processes in this regard, and for the purposes of brevity I will offer Schröder's summary of this dynamic. Firstly, he claims 'there is the erosion of the unified majority religion by the increasingly

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[44] For a more detailed discussion, see Milda Alisauskiene and Ingo W. Schröder, 'Introduction', in *Religious Diversity in Post Soviet Society*, ed. by Alisauskiene and Schröder, pp. 6–8.
[45] Ingo W. Schröder, 'Catholic Majority Societies and Religious Hegemony: Concepts and Comparisons', in *Religious Diversity in Post Soviet Society*, ed. by Alisauskiene and Schröder, pp. 17–37 (p. 18).
[46] Ibid., p. 18.

individualistic understanding of what this religious identity means'. Secondly, it is expressed in secularism not as a rejection of one's religious identity, but as 'the loss of church authority in people's everyday lives and the view of the dominant church as one ideology among many'. Thirdly, there is a noticeable increase of 'alternative' religious views and practices, not necessarily as established new religious movements, but as 'the filtering down of certain beliefs and ideas, especially from the fields of New Age and Esotericism, into bricolages of individualized religiosity'.[47] Whilst in the last census (2011), over 77 percent of the population of Lithuania still identified themselves as Roman Catholics,[48] 'for many, contact with the Catholic Church is confined to the provision of services on occasions like baptisms, marriages, or funerals. Catholicism does not provide them with a matrix for perceiving the world or a guideline for action in everyday life.'[49]

In this context, there has been a marked shift in the attitude of the Lithuanian Catholic Church, particularly in relation to various Protestant groupings, which can be described as 'a more dialogical "syncretic rapprochement"'.[50] It is certainly observable on the ground even from my own, rather limited, participation in the Lithuanian religious scene, and can be illustrated by various joint ventures which simply could not be imagined in the early post-Soviet years: 'Prayer Breakfasts' which bring together all the local clergy/religious representatives; words of greeting brought by a local Catholic priest at an anniversary of a local Baptist church or a Baptist pastor asked to offer a (brief!) sermon at a Catholic mass; or a joint celebration of a wedding of a Catholic and a member of a different Christian community.[51]

Consequently, it can be argued that the loss of social, political and cultural hegemony has been the most positive development for Lithuanian ecumenical relations. The Church is, as *Unitatis redintegratio* puts it, 'God's only flock' indeed,[52] but Jesus seemed to think of it as a 'little flock' (Luke 12:32), and, from a Baptist perspective, that may be the norm. In the case of the Catholic Church of Lithuania, this new reality has translated into the Church distancing itself from the axis of 'Lithuanianness', an increased focus on the pastoral needs of the local parish, and, albeit with a considerable

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[47] Ibid., pp. 31–32.

[48] 'Results of the 2011 Population and Housing Census of the Republic of Lithuania', http://statistics.bookdesign.lt/dalis_04.pdf (p. 152) [accessed 3 November 2019].

[49] Ingo W. Schröder, 'The Elusive Religious Field in Lithuania', in *Religious Diversity in Post Soviet Society*, ed. by Alisauskiene and Schröder, pp. 79–98 (pp. 83–84).

[50] Schröder, 'The Elusive Religious Field', p. 89; Gediminas Lankauskas, 'From Conftrontation to Conciliation: On Synretic *Rapprochement* between Catholics and Charismatic Evangelists in Lithuania', in *Religious Diversity in Post Soviet Society*, ed. by Alisauskiene and Schröder, pp. 99–124.

[51] See also Lankauskas, 'From Confrontation to Conciliation', pp. 99–124.

[52] *Unitatis redintegratio*, 2, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html [accessed 4 November 2019].

delay in terms of Vatican II, a new openness towards other ecclesial communities. To put it starkly, 'the world' (in the sense of an increasingly secular Lithuanian society turning away from the church as a dominant social institution) may have played a key role in offering a real chance for the healing of the memories of Lithuanian Baptist-Catholic relationships.

There is, however, another notable point of reconciliation and collaboration which is related not to external factors and circumstances, but to cooperation focused on the translation of the Bible into Lithuanian. One of the pleasant surprises of the Soviet times was the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference publication of the New Testament in modern Lithuanian, translated by Father Česlovas Kavaliauskas and released in 1972. Produced in consultation with the Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Lithuania, Jonas Kalvanas Sr, it was well received by different religious groups in Lithuania as well as by Lithuanian expatriates.[53] After the collapse of the Soviet regime, an inter-confessional group was established for the preparation of a new, ecumenical edition of Kavaliauskas's New Testament translation, with the support of the United Bible Societies, which was published in 1992. The Lithuanian Bible Society was founded in the same year. The representatives of founder churches included the Baptists and the Roman Catholics, as well as Evangelical Lutherans, Evangelical Reformed, Pentecostals, Old Believers, Seventh-Day Adventists, and the Orthodox. Indeed, most of the presidents of the Society so far have been Catholic representatives. Given the common perception of a 'Bible Society' as a Protestant venture,[54] this was, and continues to be, significant.

The next significant step in the work of the Society was the editorial work on the recent translation of the Old Testament into modern Lithuanian, produced by a Lithuanian priest Antanas Rubšys, Professor at Manhattan College, New York. The whole Bible in modern Lithuanian was eventually released in two versions — one by the Lithuanian Bishops' Conference in 1998, and another, 'ecumenical', edition of the Lithuanian Bible Society in 1999.[55] Thus, although not without difficulties, the directive of *Dei Verbum*

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[53] 'Į Prizmės klausimus atsako Petras Kimbrys' [Petras Kimbrys answers the questions of *Prizmė* journal] *Prizmė*, 4 (1997) https://www.prizme.lt/zurnalas/? [accessed 4 November 2019] (p. 624).

[54] For example, Louis Luzbetak, 'Roman Catholics, Bible Societies and Bible Translation', *The Bible Translator*, 42, no. 2A (1991): 41–47 (p. 42).

[55] Although the same translations for the Old and New Testaments were used, there were two editorial commissions. One was privately funded and consisted primarily of the Lithuanian (Catholic) expats in the USA, while the second, ecumenical, commission was funded by the United Bible Societies and functioned in cooperation with the translator of the Old Testament and the editor of Kavaliauskas's translation of the New Testament. The ecumenical commission adopted the 'Guiding Principles for Interconfessional Cooperation in Translating the Bible' agreed by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the United Bible Societies and there were hopes to merge the work of the two commissions, producing a single version (in two editions reflecting canon differences) of the Lithuanian Bible. Unfortunately, this did not materialise. Petras Kimbrys, a member of the ecumenical Commission, considers the main reasons to be dissimilarities in transliteration of toponyms and proper names, differing timelines of the work of the two

for the translations of Scripture 'produced in cooperation with the separated brethren'[56] was embodied in the ecumenical work of the Lithuanian Bible Society. While by far not unique in the work on ecumenical Bible translations, I find this a particularly powerful and hopeful theological symbol in the Lithuanian context: for all their differences and profoundly divergent identity narratives, Lithuanian Catholics and Lithuanian Baptists[57] have found a common cause around the work of making the Bible available in the contemporary language of their people. This certainly has not guaranteed an agreement on the questions of biblical hermeneutics, but the lively debates at the inter-confessional group's discussions on the editorial tasks have been an encouraging example of Scripture coming alive with all its significance for life today — sometimes coming alive only because of how it is read by others.

Conclusion

In this article, I have reviewed the major developments in the relationship dynamics between the Catholic Church of Lithuania and Lithuanian-speaking Baptists. Particular attention was drawn to the role of dominant religion in the formation of collective national identity, religious majority-minority dynamics, and the impact of the Lithuanian Catholic Church's recent loss of social, political and cultural hegemony on Lithuanian ecumenical relations. Lastly, I highlighted the role of ecumenical work on the translation of the Bible as an opportunity for the formation of new bonds and the healing of the memories of the past.

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commissions, and two different software programmes used. See Petras Kimbrys, 'Dar kartą apie Biblijos vardų adaptavimą ir ne tik apie tai', *Bažnyčios žinios* [Church News], 2 (1998) https://www.baznycioszinios.lt/old/bz9802/802atg.html [accessed 4 November 2019].

[56] *Dei Verbum,* 22, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html [accessed 4 November 2019].

[57] Alongside others, it must be said — but on the practical level the Catholic and Baptist representatives have played a key role in the work of the Society.

Experiencing Our Essential Oneness in Christ: How Studying at the International Baptist Theological Seminary Influences My Global Ministry Through the Baptist World Alliance

Julie Justus Williams

Julie Justus Williams reflects on how her time at the International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS) in 2004–2005 provided a foundation for ministry at the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) as the Director of Global Partnerships and Unity. At IBTS, Justus Williams experienced unity in Christ through intentional community, diversity, and corporate worship. The essential oneness in Christ that she witnessed in community at IBTS is instructive to her success at the BWA, and to carrying out the ministry entrusted to her by the worldwide Baptist family. The lessons she learned and relationships she created at IBTS are indispensable as she serves the BWA community of 47 million.

Keywords

IBTS; BWA; community; worship; diversity

Introduction

I attended the International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS) — the flagship institution of the European Baptist Federation (EBF) — from 2004 to 2005 when it was located in Prague, the Czech Republic. I am grateful for my theological studies and the way in which they have equipped me to serve global Baptists at the Baptist World Alliance (BWA). I did not know how deeply my experience at IBTS would influence my work at the BWA, where I have worked ever since I finished my graduate studies, but looking back I can see the profound imprint of my time at IBTS on my work.

Many people idealise their educational experience, but I firmly believe my experience at IBTS was exceptional. The international character and emphasis of the institution is unmatched, especially within the worldwide Baptist family. The seminary is also distinguished for its dual focus on both Baptist studies and fostering intentional community across cultures. Since its inception in 1949, IBTS has been devoted to bringing 'together the faith community, academia, mission, church development, spirituality and community as: a learning community; a community of spirituality; a

multicultural community; a community of higher academic rigour specialising in research and reflection of Baptist issues'.[1] The IBTS community proved to be both life-changing and foundational in my calling to serve with the BWA. Of course, studying in picturesque Prague, where I often had to pinch myself when walking through the Old Town section of the city, gazing at the city's magnificent history, was a welcome luxury.

My decision to attend IBTS was initiated by Reid Trulson, then the American Baptist International Ministries area director for Europe and the Middle East, and who had previously been an American Baptist missionary in the Czech Republic. I met Trulson when I served on the American Baptist Churches USA General Board and the Board of International Ministries from 2001 to 2004. When he heard that I was considering pursuing my post-graduate studies outside the United States, he suggested that I visit IBTS. Since I had already started my career at the BWA, attending a seminary affiliated with one of the BWA's regional bodies felt like a natural decision, and my desire to move abroad was solidified by my participation in the BWA annual gatherings. I had taken several courses on mission at Eastern University and had participated in several short-term overseas mission trips thus I had some mission experience. At the time, the idea of attending IBTS was far more exciting than intimidating, though intimidating all the same. When I realised that IBTS was more affordable and offered a shorter graduate degree program than any comparable US seminary, it was nearly impossible to consider any other option. We all know it is hard to compete with time and money!

I soon discovered that I was not the first to affiliate myself with the BWA and IBTS; their shared history was already rich. Many leaders have woven the history of these two Baptist organisations together, most notably Josef Nordenhaug and Denton Lotz. Nordenhuag was the first president of the seminary, then located in Rüschlikon, Zurich, Switzerland, serving from 1950 to 1960. He left the school to become the fourth BWA General Secretary where he remained until his death in 1969.[2] In 1973, American Baptist missionary Denton Lotz joined the Rüschlikon seminary faculty.[3] Lotz then became the sixth BWA General Secretary in 1988, serving until his retirement in 2007. I was privileged to join the BWA under Lotz's leadership.

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[1] 'History', *IBTS Centre Amsterdam* <https://www.ibts.eu/about/history/> [accessed 22 June 2020].
[2] James Leo Garrett Jr, 'The Internationalization of the Alliance, 1960-1970', in *Baptists Together in Christ, 1905-2005*, ed. by Richard V. Pierard (Birmingham, Alabama: Samford University Press, 2005), pp. 129–168 (p. 133).
[3] Carol Woodfin, *An Experiment in Christian Internationalism: A History of the European Baptist Theological Seminary* (Macon, Georgia: History & Heritage Society, 2013), p. 97.

However, the shared history of the BWA and IBTS extends beyond these two iconic leaders. Long before the creation of the European Baptist Federation, members of the BWA committed to cultivating Baptist theological education on the continent. This commitment is recorded in a resolution passed at the first European Baptist Congress in 1908, establishing an 'international European Baptist University College in a central place'.[4] Although there was a question as to the location of the school, the desire to create this international institution continued. In 1911 the continental committee of the BWA reaffirmed this commitment and even asserted that the BWA should own the school's campus.[5] Many decades later, under the EBF's stewardship, according to BWA Historian Ken Manley,

> the regional body moved the school from Rüschlikon, Switzerland, to Prague, Czech Republic. When the new facilities were dedicated in April 1997, EBF Secretary Walter declared it would be the "bridge both of east-west and north-south".[6]

The idea of a bridge between nations and cultures also is central to the BWA. Established in 1905, the ambitious mission of the global Baptist body is no less relevant today. The preamble to the BWA Constitution states the following:

> The Baptist World Alliance, extending over every part of the world, exists as an expression of the essential oneness of Baptist people in the Lord Jesus Christ, to impart inspiration to the fellowship, and to provide channels for sharing concerns and skills in witness and ministry. This Alliance recognizes the traditional autonomy and interdependence of Baptist churches and member bodies.[7]

The essential oneness, our commonality in God, is at the heart of my current position with the BWA. The scope of my role as the Director of Global Partnerships and Unity can be daunting, but it is also a joy to serve in this capacity. One of my main responsibilities is to relate to our 241 member bodies, located in 126 countries and territories, who represent over 47 million Baptists around the world. Serving in this capacity for the past decade, I have sought to nurture the essential oneness of the Baptist community by shepherding 28 new member bodies into the BWA. In previous positions at the BWA I served by administering relief and development through Baptist World Aid, advocating for human rights through our Freedom and Justice office, advancing theological reflection

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[4] *Baptist World Alliance First European Baptist Congress, held in Berlin, 1908 (August 29th to September 3rd)*, *Authorised record of proceedings*, ed. by J. H. Rushbrooke (London: Baptist Union Publication Department, 1908), pp. 234, 237.

[5] Woodfin, *An Experiment in Christian Internationalism*, p. 1.

[6] Ken R. Manley, 'Forward into the New Century, 1995-2005', in *Baptists Together in Christ, 1905-2005*, ed. by Richard V. Pierard (Birmingham, Alabama: Samford University Press, 2005), pp. 275–299 (p. 291).

[7] 'Constitution of the Baptist World Alliance as Amended by the General Council, July 2020' http://baptistworld.org/constitution [accessed 27 August 2020] (p. 1).

through our Study and Research office, and promoting global mission through our Evangelism and Education initiatives.

The essential oneness in Christ that I witnessed in my community at IBTS has been instructive to my success at the BWA, and to carrying out the ministry entrusted to me by the worldwide Baptist family. While I might be able to fill this entire journal with stories and anecdotes, I will focus my reflections on how IBTS provided a foundation for my ministry at the BWA through its intentional community, intentional diversity, and intentional corporate worship. I have a deep respect for the vast differences among BWA Baptists and the unity we have, as Paul states in Ephesians 4:5, in 'One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism'.

Intentional Community

When I arrived at IBTS, I was instantly invited to join in community. My earliest memories at IBTS are of a faculty-led community walking tour of Prague, a lively open house games night with all the students, and the weekly van trip to the neighbourhood grocery store, where I tried to figure out what kind of milk to buy using a Czech phrase book (it took me three weeks). Even today, I am reminded of how important it was to take a break each day and fellowship over coffee. The IBTS custom was to pause mid-morning and offer students, faculty and staff a time to find a respite from studies, teaching and work to share life and be together as a community. The daily fellowship was where bonds of friendship and community began and were cultivated, among the 'record 140 students from forty nations in the autumn term of 2004'.[8]

During those first weeks, IBTS instilled in me the value of getting out of my comfort zone to seek global community. Taking a leap of faith and choosing to study in Prague gave me the opportunity to share a flat with Helle Liht, who is now the Assistant General Secretary of the European Baptist Federation. By intentionally crossing cultures, I met Marko and Tina Grozdanovi, leaders in the Union of the Baptist Christians in the Republic of North Macedonia. Marko and Tina offered me lifelong friendship and introduced me to the joys of Balkan hospitality. There are so many others as well, and because of my time at IBTS I am blessed with relationships that help me get my work, the work of the BWA, done effectively.

Beyond the natural friendships, I learned the art of cultivating cross-cultural relationships at IBTS. Without this skill, I would not be an effective leader for the BWA, where gathering cultures is a priority. James Henry Rushbrooke, who was involved with the BWA from its beginning and would

[8] Woodfin, *An Experiment in Christian Internationalism*, p. 361.

later become the organisation's first General Secretary, emphasised the importance of gathering together in person at Baptist World Congresses. In a 1938 article he stated,

> These World Congresses are not merely occasions for the election of officers and committees and the delivery of speeches. They have furnished opportunities for a remarkable and intimate drawing together of Baptists from all parts of the world. Links of personal friendship now unite our people around the globe.[9]

I intentionally pursued practical community exposure to Baptist life in Europe when I was at IBTS. I volunteered part-time with the EBF while living on campus. This was convenient because the EBF offices had just moved to IBTS. From there, I witnessed the leadership transition of the EBF Regional Secretary, from Bulgarian Theo Angelov to Englishman Tony Peck. In my role at the BWA, I personally relate to each one of the BWA's current six regional secretaries. The first-hand experience and insight I gained from seeing how the regional secretaries' roles work and hearing their point of view on matters pertaining to the larger worldwide Baptist family, have proven to be invaluable. I understand some of the challenges that regional bodies face, including funding and how they strive to relate to the worldwide Baptist family. I believe this small insight helps me to relate better with the regional secretaries.

As part of my volunteer work with the EBF, I also had the privilege of working alongside British historian Alec Gilmore as he organised and catalogued both IBTS and EBF materials in the basement of the library.[10] Through his stories and passion for preserving the past, I came to appreciate the importance of maintaining the BWA records for those who will serve after me. I have been able to directly build on that interest because, for the past decade, one of my responsibilities at the BWA has been to publish the annual yearbook. This publication, in part, documents the leaders of the BWA, its member bodies, and the statistics for the worldwide organisation. It is a vital historical record for future generations. Through this publication we are able to preserve some of our shared history, which reflects our oneness in Christ. I am forever indebted to Gilmore for allowing me to see his joy in documenting and safeguarding the past, so that it can be a blessing and a catalyst for the future.

In addition to the yearbook, I oversee the modest BWA library. By recommendation from fellow IBTS alum Melody Maxwell, we asked Bill and Nancy Lively to catalogue the BWA library in 2018. I met Bill and Nancy during my time at IBTS, when they volunteered in a similar capacity to nurture the seminary's growing library. It was a joy to rekindle our

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[9] J. H. Rushbrooke, 'The Baptist World Alliance', *Baptist Quarterly*, 9, no.2 (1938): 67–79 <https://doi.org/10.1080/0005576X.1938.11750454> (p. 69).
[10] Woodfin, *An Experiment in Christian Internationalism,* p. 368.

friendship as they came to the BWA office to sort through our materials and make the catalogue available online, which enables researchers around the world to see what is included among the BWA's 1,700 volumes.[11] Their work has further enabled us to preserve and document the stories of the BWA's international community.

We always have the benefit of hindsight, and as I look back at my experience at IBTS I am exceedingly grateful for the people I met, who also valued the intentional community on offer, and nurtured it, and helped me to formulate the expansive vision I needed to work in a global church organisation. My efforts to serve God through my ministry at the BWA have been profoundly shaped by what I learned living in intentional community at IBTS. The people I met both inside and outside the classroom, and the relationships we forged, are the foundation of my service these past fourteen years.

Intentional Diversity

More than just introducing me to intentional community, IBTS helped foster my deep appreciation for our diversity as Baptists. This was evidenced both in where students and faculty hailed from on the map, and in their cultural and theological understandings.

Diversity has been a feature and focus of the seminary since it was created. Although IBTS is in Europe, my attendance at the school was not an anomaly. The first cohort of students hailed from fifteen different countries, including the United States. It was especially enlightening to read that the first administration decided 'Americans should be carefully screened and the number strictly limited'.[12] I wonder if that was the case when I attended!

By living in a diverse community, where many different languages were spoken, my eyes and ears were opened in a new way and my perspective was uniquely changed. I echo the observation of one visitor to the campus during the early years, who reported that the seminary was definitively diverse after hearing 'grace said in five different languages at the five meals he ate with students in the dining room'.[13] Never before had I lived alongside so many who spoke a different first language than I did. Having to navigate the differences in linguistic understanding was formational for me. I learned to choose my words more carefully, because what we say and how we say it must be understood through the lens of

[11] The Baptist World Alliance online library catalogue is available at https://www.librarything.com/catalog/BWAlibrary/yourlibrary.
[12] Woodfin, *An Experiment in Christian Internationalism*, p. 16.
[13] Ibid., p. 16.

another language. I also learned that humour does not always translate across cultures, which was a potential pitfall for my quick tongue. I was humbled when I realised that so many of my classmates were taking instruction and pursuing their master's level education in their third or fourth language. I quickly understood that since I was communicating in my first language — my only language at that — I had no excuse for not getting my assignments done on time!

Being exposed to such linguistic diversity at IBTS instilled in me the importance of having the BWA's publications and materials available in more than just English. In my time at the BWA, I have had the privilege of organising volunteers to translate important BWA documents, one of which has been translated into more than twenty languages. This year, the BWA also celebrated linguistic diversity through our virtual Pentecost services that took place in May. As a BWA team, we were committed to including songs and testimonies from all six regions and an Acts 2 scripture reading was voiced in five different languages.

With so many different languages and cultures gathered at IBTS, not to mention personalities, it was important to establish a unique culture for the seminary. Keith Jones, the then Rector, ensured we had a common understanding by capitalising on the concept of the 'Swiss Train' clock, which is revered for its punctuality. Jones often explained that if we arrived at 09:00 for chapel services, we would be late because the 'train would have already left the station'. There are so many different concepts of time around the world, we would never have known whose concept was governing without the obvious and emphatic example of the Swiss trains. Although it was sometimes hard to make it to chapel on time, I appreciated the need to develop a collective culture for a diverse group of people. In fact, I have tried to do the same in my time at the BWA, and I often think of the Swiss trains when I plan our worship and business meetings at Annual Gatherings. If we do not pull away from the station at the right time, I have found that our discussions often do get derailed!

The most extensive BWA document on diversity and creating a common culture is the *Principles and Guidelines for Intra-Baptist Relationships*. Drafted by the General Secretary's Special Commission on Intra-Baptist Relations, it was approved by both the BWA Executive Committee and General Council in 2013. The document 'aims to provide a framework for BWA's response to the diversity of language, culture, opinions and perspectives in meetings and in the various operations of the international body'.[14] I was fortunate to work alongside then-General

[14] 'Covenant on Intra-Baptist Relationships', *Baptist World Alliance* (2013) <https://www.baptistworld.org/intra-baptist-covenant/> [accessed 27 August 2020]. I commend the work

Secretary Neville Callam and commission co-chairs Daniel Vestal and Edward Wheeler as they led the crafting of the covenant. The *Principles and Guidelines for Intra-Baptist Relationships* embodies both what I learned and experienced at IBTS, and what lies at the heart of our fellowship as a worldwide Baptist family:

> BWA seeks to live out its commitment to unity in the face of the diversity that marks its membership. It regards this diversity as a God-given gift and therefore essential to effectively represent the kingdom of God despite certain obvious challenges. In order to achieve the goals for which the BWA was established, and which continue to be the foundation for cooperation among BWA members, the BWA must maintain a delicate balance. That balance is between maintaining a unity of purpose and common commitment even as the organization seeks to honor and be blessed by the diversity that characterizes the fellowship.[15]

I have the joy to work towards the balance mentioned above in my position as Director of Global Partnerships and Unity. Diversity is so vital to our life together that the *Principles and Guidelines for Intra-Baptist Relationships* is included as part of all our major meeting materials as a call to unity and intentional communication. While it is a lofty benchmark, I pray that the BWA continues its commitment to cultivating diversity by empowering Baptists from 'various cultures, languages, customs, histories, racial identities, ways of expressing theological conviction, and personal and communal encounters with Christ in different cultural contexts' to join, flourish, and be heard in the BWA movement.[16]

In addition to being introduced to a diversity of languages while studying at IBTS, I was also introduced to a wide array of theologies held by Baptists. Yes, in the classroom I was exposed to both Baptist and non-Baptist theological giants such as James McClendon, Glen Stassen, C. René Padilla, Stanley Hauwerwas, and Nancey Murphy. However, it was also through my many friendships that I learned more about differing theological understandings. For example, I heard stories about places in Eastern Europe where men and women still sit on opposite sides of the church aisle. I heard perspectives of Arab Christians living in Palestine. Not everyone held the same view of the role of women in ministry and other hot button theological topics. We also differed on what we thought a good Christian should or should not do. By sharing our lives and viewpoints we learned what mattered most was our unity in Christ.

I believe the unique diversities inherent in my experience at IBTS provided a theological perspective that enables me to relate with more

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to all who are interested in an archetype of criteria for cultivating respectful relationships and meaningful organisational dialogue.

[15] 'Principles and Guidelines for Intra-Baptist Relationships', *Baptist World Alliance* (2013) <https://www.BaptistWorld.org/intra-baptist-covenant-english> [accessed 23 June 2020] (p. 1).

[16] 'Principles and Guidelines for Intra-Baptist Relationships', p.1.

understanding toward each of our member churches within the BWA, scattered across the globe, but united under the umbrella of baptistic theology. This perspective is essential as I help shepherd new groups through the membership process and welcome them to the BWA family. Unfortunately, theological diversity can sometimes be a stumbling block in the life of the BWA. During my tenure, some member bodies have decided to disassociate from the worldwide organisation. It is always heart-breaking to receive news that an organisation has chosen separation instead of fellowship. However, more often than not, it is our diversity in theological understanding that gives us a beautiful glimpse of our unity in Christ.

The BWA maintains theological diversity among the member bodies and the fellowship of 47 million Baptists by focusing on our essential oneness in Christ. During the BWA membership application process, prospective members are invited to review the 'Message to the Churches' that was adopted in 1970 by the 12th Baptist World Congress in Tokyo, Japan. If they do not already have a statement of faith, applicant bodies are further invited to 'comment on the views held by [their] organization in relation to this excerpt':

> We […] recognize the Lord Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, as the sole and absolute authority in all matters of faith and practice, realizing that in so believing we ourselves are under a solemn obligation to be continually seeking to know more perfectly his will. We hold that each church has liberty under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to interpret and implement Christ's teaching, understanding the responsibility resting on us of ensuring that each church is a true fellowship of believing persons. Our understanding of Christian baptism of believers […] stresses the necessity of conversion and personal faith and carries with it the recognition that we are called in Christ to a new life of goodness with Christ and with one another.[17]

This essential statement of faith encourages members of the BWA to unify their fellowship with the global Baptist movement in spite of any focused theological debates that might distract from unity in Christ. It prioritises unity and an essential oneness in Christ over any litany of disagreements, while still allowing space for doctrinal growth. There are certain baptistic principles that members must adhere to in order to join the BWA, but they do not constitute an exclusionary theological examination. Recognising the beauty of unity that comes from cultivating diversity is something that Baptists have long been known for. IBTS showed me the importance of celebrating this diversity and it informs the inclusionary way I foster relationships with incoming member bodies to the BWA.

[17] 'Statement of Faith Claims Form', *BWA Membership Application*, BWA files.

Intentional Worship

The culture of corporate worship at IBTS prepared and trained me for my role with the global Baptist family. As part of my responsibilities with the BWA, I also oversee and coordinate the times of worship during our March Executive Committee meetings and our Annual Gatherings. Additionally, I contribute to the crafting of worship experiences for the Congress main sessions.

The fabric of corporate worship was woven into the DNA of IBTS at its inception. Carol Woodfin reports that when IBTS first opened, 'religious activities, including daily chapel services, comprised a significant part of student life'.[18] Later, under the leadership of Josef Nordenhaug, 'on class days, Tuesdays through Fridays, students and faculty worshipped together in a chapel led by a student, faculty member, or a guest'.[19] This communal spiritual practice continued throughout the years and so when I arrived in 2004, I welcomed the opportunity to worship each weekday morning with the rest of the IBTS community at 09:00, Swiss train time.

During these morning chapel gatherings, I encountered a multitude of perspectives and voices. Each member of the community would take turns organising and facilitating our worship together. We would sing songs that were both old and new to me, read Scripture, and pray for each other and the world. The call to pray for the world was tangible since, as described by former Rector Keith Jones, the IBTS chapel had

> a large map of the world down one side as a reminder of people who will not and cannot pray for themselves. Prayer comes in many forms and many languages — perhaps extempore prayer in ten or fifteen languages. The needs of the world, nations, countries, peoples, are at the heart of this real intercession.[20]

Hearing the Lord's Prayer in multiple languages at BWA gatherings still reminds me of IBTS chapel.

The experience of praying daily for the world at IBTS has served to centre my understanding of the BWA's responsibility to regularly lift up all members of the BWA family in our prayers. Following the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Prayer Cycle, the BWA staff has a tradition of praying for each one of our member bodies in turn, throughout the year, through our weekly devotions. The rotation is organised in such a way that by the end of December, each year, all 241 member bodies of the BWA have

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[18] Woodfin, *An Experiment in Christian Internationalism*, p. 17.
[19] Ibid., p. 41.
[20] Keith Jones, 'An Anabaptist-style Communion at Šárka Valley Community Church, Prague', *Anabaptist Mennonite Network* <https://amnetwork.uk/resource/an-anabaptist-style-communion-at-sarka-valley-community-church-prague/> [accessed 23 June 2020].

been lifted up in prayer by the BWA staff. According to the World Council of Churches,

> The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle enables us to journey in prayer through every region of the world and through every week of the year affirming our solidarity with Christians all over the world, brothers and sisters living in diverse situations, experiencing diverse problems and sharing diverse gifts.[21]

During our weekly devotions, before the BWA staff pray for the member bodies and other Christians in a specific country, space is given for individuals to share personal experiences. I am particularly grateful for the weeks that we pray for member bodies in Europe because it gives me an opportunity to share about the ministry of friends, most of whom I first met at IBTS.

The highlight of corporate worship at IBTS was sharing in the Lord's Supper each Wednesday. Understandably, this service was longer than the other days of the week and also included a short homily. Standing together in a large circle around the chapel, this was my first real experience of the common cup. The bread was baked every week by Denise Jones. After breaking and passing the bread, we were invited to partake in the cup, a 'simple pottery chalice made in Bohemia' filled with wine 'from the vineyards around Mikulov, Moravia, where once Hubmaier's Anabaptist community enjoyed a peaceful existence'.[22] Admittedly, my time at IBTS started with me hesitantly dipping the bread in the chalice, unaccustomed to anything so communal. However, I soon embraced the practice of the common cup. Jones notes that 'people gather in a circle round the table. Not for them the form and distance of pews or rows of chairs with a table set ahead and apart. The way of Gathering is inclusive and participatory.'[23]

This visualisation of equality, fellowship, and participation, both inside and outside of worship, impacted me greatly and the bond that I felt each week, and the feeling of shared community, is one that I have not experienced since leaving IBTS. Perhaps the closest I came to feeling the same sense of community was at the 21st Baptist World Congress, when all the participants from 80 countries were invited to partake in the Lord's Supper. General Secretary Neville Callam captures the experience well in his introduction to the Congress report book:

> In this Communion service, the multi-cultural groups of followers of Jesus Christ from across the world remembered the story of God's saving actions in Jesus Christ, rejoiced over the presence with them of the risen Lord and treasured with

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[21] 'In God's Hands: The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle', *World Council of Churches* <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/prayer-cycle> [accessed 23 June 2020].
[22] Jones, 'An Anabaptist-style Communion'.
[23] Jones, 'An Anabaptist-style Communion'.

> deep anticipation the assembly at the eschatological banquet that their own gathering prefigured.[24]

IBTS also exposed me to different styles of worship that have impacted how I approach corporate worship on an international scale. Two notable European models come to mind. It was at IBTS that I first learned about the meditative style of worship that is associated with the Taizé community of monks based in France.[25] Asserting that 'singing is one of the most essential elements of worship', their signature 'short songs, repeated again and again, give it a meditative character' which 'thus becomes a way of listening to God'. At IBTS I experienced how this form of worship 'allows everyone to take part in a time of prayer together and to remain together in attentive waiting on God'.[26] This repetitive and meditative style makes worship accessible to all, using simple words and tunes, and is an invaluable source for me to draw from when I am coordinating worship for a group of global participants from vastly different cultures, languages, and traditions of worship. My experience with the Taizé worship style has also helped me see the importance of incorporating approachable elements of worship that are easily learned because there are few songs known universally. We must learn together and learn quickly.

The other European worship style that I was introduced to at IBTS was that of the Northumbria Community. Headquartered in Northumberland, England, the Northumbria Community is self-described as 'a dispersed network of people from different backgrounds, streams and edges of the Christian faith' joined in the 'desire to embrace and express an ongoing exploration into a new way for living, through a new monasticism, as Christians that offers hope in our changed and changing culture'.[27] The partnership between IBTS and the Northumbria Community began in 2005, while I was a student, when the community sent a group to Prague.[28] I can remember vividly the morning chapel services during their visits where we shared together in portions of their daily office. I still find myself humming the tunes of the Celtic blessings they incorporate into their gathering times. The exposure to the community not only provided a resource to draw from when creating worship services, but their dedication to community is something I attempt to emulate with the global Baptist family.

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[24] Neville Callam, 'Preparing for Congress', in *Jesus Christ The Door: The Official Report of the Twenty-first Baptist World Congress*, ed. by Eron Henry (Falls Church, Virginia: Baptist World Alliance, 2015) pp. 5–10 (p. 9).
[25] 'Meditative Singing', *Taizé* <https://www.taize.fr/en_article338.html> [accessed 23 June 2020].
[26] Ibid.
[27] 'Introducing the Community', *Northumbria Community* <https://www.northumbriacommunity.org/who-we-are/introducing-the-community/> [accessed 23 June 2020].
[28] Woodfin, *An Experiment in Christian Internationalism*, p. 377.

When I was at IBTS, I also participated in the church community that met every Sunday in the seminary's chapel. My initial intent was to focus on investing in the community where I already lived since I knew that my time in Prague would be short, but my experiences there also became instructive. Many of my fellow students attended Šárka Valley Community Church (SVCC) for the same reasons I did, and so it became an extension of my communal daily experience with them. Woodfin notes that this was part of the intent of the church plant, 'because of so many diverse groups on the campus […] building cohesive community proved to be a challenge. The Šárka Valley Community Church, constituted in June 1999, met in the IBTS chapel and enhanced the seminary's spiritual life.'[29]

One practice that deeply impacted me was the monthly agape meal following the SVCC Sunday morning worship service. This was more than the potluck fellowship meal that I was accustomed to. IBTS then-Rector Keith Jones also served as SVCC moderator for a time. He best describes the gathering:

> When the meal takes place in the setting of an agape, of course the bread is broken and shared round the table before the meal begins. Children present have the special privilege of dipping their bread in milk and honey (this is not allowed to the baptized!) helping them see with anticipation the koinonia yet to come. After the meal, gathered from food all have brought, has been shared, the cup passes around the table.[30]

The notion of the agape meal, with everyone having a seat at the table, has also impacted my ministry at the BWA. I have come to understand that the BWA is responsible for providing more than just a seat at the table. The BWA provides an equal seat at the table for each member of the worldwide Baptist family. I strive to see all those that I interact with via email, at meetings, and at the BWA office as Christ sees them, as children of God. Dietrich Bonhoeffer's words express this: 'God did not make this person […] to dominate and control, but in order that I might find above him the Creator. Now the other person […] becomes the occasion of joy, whereas before he was only a nuisance.'[31] I have not always agreed with every person in the worldwide Baptist family, but the community we are called to be a part of is diverse, messy, and wonderful in all of its humanity. Our Baptist community is not only for the ordained, or the president of a convention or union. Our community is all 47 million BWA Baptists, regardless of age, gender, and theological education. Nothing is more expressive of our Baptist identity than loving and promoting equality in worship.

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[29] Woodfin, *An Experiment in Christian Internationalism*, p. 341.
[30] Jones, 'An Anabaptist-style Communion'.
[31] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* (London: SCM Press, 1954), pp. 92–93.

Conclusion

One of the blessings of the Baptist World Alliance is that it is truly an international organisation. With 241 member conventions and unions in 126 different countries and territories, I have the pleasure of corresponding daily with individuals from vastly different cultures, ages, backgrounds, first languages, and time zones. While some of my international knowledge has certainly been acquired through the more than thirty Annual Gatherings, Congresses, Youth Conferences and other BWA meetings that I have attended, a significant portion of my experience comes from my time at IBTS.

IBTS taught me that there is no substitute for stepping out of your comfort zone and seeing more of the world and the people God has created. It is through this cross-cultural experience that I encountered our essential oneness in Christ. Our essential oneness in Christ was evident during the 'the Inaugural Meeting of the first Baptist World Congress […] held at Exeter Hall on Tuesday, July 11, 1905', when the almost 3,000 participants from twenty-three nations joined their voices together to sing, 'From distant climes, from every land, Behold us Lord, before Thee Stand.'[32] Our essential oneness in Christ was evident during the origins of IBTS, when the first twenty-eight students gathered from fifteen countries to learn and to find community amidst post-war rebuilding of trust and relationships between individuals formerly on opposite sides of conflict.[33]

Our essential oneness in Christ is still experienced today through these communities. It was felt during the two recent virtual Pentecost worship services hosted by the BWA during the Covid-19 pandemic. It was a joy to gather with 10,000 people from more than 100 countries in worship and thanksgiving. While IBTS has moved locations since I completed my studies, the core vision remains the same. From its new location in Amsterdam, the IBTS Centre remains committed to providing opportunities to reflect our essential oneness in Christ. The 2021 conference on 'Dimensions of Baptist Identity: Past and Present' continues in this tradition as the meeting 'will explore the topic of Baptist — or baptistic — identity from different perspectives'.[34]

What drew me to IBTS, the desire to pursue a master's degree in a cross-cultural setting, away from home, has also been listed as a criticism of the institution. Woodfin stated that

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[32] *The Baptist World Congress: London, July 11-19, 1905* (London: Baptist Union Publication Department), p. 1.
[33] Woodfin, *An Experiment in Christian Internationalism*, pp. 8–9.
[34] 'International Conference 2021', *IBTS Centre Amsterdam*, <https://blog.ibts.eu/2020/06/11/international-conference-2021/> [accessed 23 June 2020].

> a frequent complaint against the seminary over the years […] had been that it took students away from their home environment for several years, making re-entry into ministry there difficult. Yet the advantage to studying away from home was that students *had* the time to devote to study and reflection.[35]

My experience strongly contradicts this criticism. What I gained outside of the classroom was invaluable to me and strengthened my preparation for global service. In my experience, the trials of re-entry into ministry were worth the benefit of dedicated time in community, and in the library to research and write. I find this especially true now as I write this article, juggling work and parenting in the midst of a global pandemic.

I will never forget the community I encountered, the lessons on diversity, and the worship experiences that I shared at IBTS. Everything about the seminary was intentional, and through it I saw the essential oneness we have in Christ in each one of my IBTS community members. Because of this intentional lesson, I am able to mindfully celebrate our essential oneness in Christ as a worldwide Baptist family of 47 million members.

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[35] Woodfin, *An Experiment in Christian Internationalism*, p. 355.

Church Planting in the United Kingdom Inspired by the Anabaptist Vision

Alexandra Ellish

The Anabaptists of the sixteenth century emerged at a time of societal and religious upheaval and change. They rejected the nature and practices of the church in the Christendom era: synthesis of gospel and culture, shallow discipleship and lack of missionary engagement. As western culture slowly emerges from Christendom, the Anabaptist vision offers resources, insights and experience for Christians today grappling with how the church engages with culture, tells the gospel and nurtures disciples. This article argues that from the context of the United Kingdom, it is time to take a further step from endorsing Anabaptist values towards establishing believers' communities in the re-discovered Anabaptist vision of peacemaking, radical discipleship, and love for enemies and neighbours.

Keywords

Church planting; Anabaptism; discipleship; peacemaking; UK

Introduction

Church planting today looks materially different from five centuries ago. At least in most places in Western Europe, Christians are unlikely to face the persecution and suffering experienced by their Anabaptist forebears. Critics might question whether church planting is an unnecessary dilution of limited resources, a risky endeavour with unknown outcomes, or even sectarian. In recent years there has been increasing creativity as churches from various traditions grapple with engaging with a wider range of people in the changing contexts and cultures of the United Kingdom and Western Europe.[1] In this article my purpose is to argue for the development of church plants drawing on insights from the Anabaptist tradition.[2] The Anabaptist vision offers

[1] See, for example, Stefan Paas, *Church Planting in the Secular West: Learning from the European Experience* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans, 2016).

[2] By this I mean the form of church arising from the Radical Reformation of the 1500s and described in such books as C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: an Introduction* (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 1995); George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Publications, 1992); Walter Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism in Outline* (Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 1981) and reformed for a modern readership by people such as Stuart Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials for a Radical Faith* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2015).

inspiration and some clear virtues and values which are a valuable resource for church planting and re-imagining the nature and purpose of the church.

Setting the Scene

Anabaptism today in Belfast, Northern Ireland sounds like Catholic and Protestant communities singing Christmas carols together next to the Peace Wall; just one initiative of *Soulspace*,[3] led by Karen Sethuramen and Gordon McDade, which works for peace and reconciliation through cross-community events, training and service opportunities.

Anabaptism today in southwest England looks like a Zoom[4] gallery, a weekly gathering of Jesus-followers committed to a peace-centric gospel, who are creating space for exploring questions of faith, life and theology. Folks who are stressed and burdened by the complexity of life are co-creating inclusive communities characterised by 'simplicity of life, simplicity of gatherings and simplicity of spirituality'.[5]

Anabaptism today in a Baptist church in London smells like home cooked food; like trestle tables pushed together to make a larger table as people from Kurdistan, Albania and just-down-the-road pull chairs up, hesitant, but tempted by delicious Syrian food.

Inspired by the stories, courage and passion of the early Anabaptists,[6] people across the United Kingdom are exploring what believers' church Christians might learn from our radical, dissenting (and persecuted) forebears. These Christians are discovering a movement characterised by reconciliation, deep commitment, whole-life discipleship, peacemaking, and hospitality as a context for mission.

Since my studies in Prague at the International Baptist Theological Seminary (IBTS), concluded over ten years ago now, I have similarly been captivated by the Anabaptist vision, formulated in 1943 by Harold Bender, who focused on discipleship and non-violence. His approach was later

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[3] The Revd Karen Sethuramen is a Baptist Minister who, with Gordon McDade, launched a Celtic community in Belfast, Northern Ireland, focusing on gender equality, peace and reconciliation. In 2010 McDade and Sethuramen formed the Down Community Church seeking to move out from traditional forms of free church life and draw on Anabaptist and Celtic church insights.

[4] Zoom is a cloud-based video technology company based in California which provides peer to peer software for video teleconferencing and has grown exponentially during the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic.

[5] Steve Jones is the founder of 'Simply' based in Exeter, https://steve-jones.org [accessed 21 October 20].

[6] For stories of early Anabaptists see, for instance, H. Wayne Walker Pipkin, *Scholar, Pastor, Martyr: The Life and Ministry of Balthasar Hubmaier* (Prague: IBTS, 2006); C. Arnold Snyder and Linda A. Huebert Hecht, eds., *Profiles of Anabaptist Women: Sixteenth Century Reforming Pioneers* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996); William R. Estep Jr, *Anabaptist Beginnings (1523-1533)* (Nieuwkoop, Netherlands: De Graaf, 1976); and, a popular introduction by Keith G. Jones, *A Believing Church: Learning from some Contemporary Anabaptist and Baptist Perspectives* (Didcot, Oxon: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1998).

developed further by other scholars, including James Wm McClendon Jr. I would describe myself as an Anabaptist (small 'b') baptist minister, unofficial neighbourhood chaplain, and Jesus-follower currently working out my vocation in a small corner of southeast London. Part time, I also work as a co-ordinator with Urban Expression[7] to support mission and church planting in marginalised communities in London. It is this combination of roles — community minister, pastor, enabler and organiser — that has brought me to the question of Anabaptist church planting, and why we need it.

Unfortunately, while the seeds of Anabaptism had fertile soil in which to bury themselves, I had only passing interest in Anabaptist history when I first started at IBTS. I have not retained much from the compulsory weekly Wednesday afternoon lectures from doctoral students researching seemingly obscure Anabaptist personalities or historical figures. James McClendon Jr's 'biography as theology',[8] or peacemaking ideas from Glen Stassen,[9] fortunately, remain clearer in my memory. Academic learning at its best takes place in the context of caring, authentic relationships. The experience of living at IBTS in a community shaped by particular practices, then led and nurtured by Keith G. Jones alongside others, was the light, water and air needed for my budding interest in Anabaptism to grow roots and shoots.

During my time at IBTS, I had the privilege of working with Helle Liht[10] and Tony Peck[11] in the office of the European Baptist Federation,[12] and I enjoyed participating in the diversity and complexity of Baptist family life in Europe and the Middle East. Whilst travelling with a group of EBF Mission Secretaries to the 'Jesus in the City' congress in Bristol, UK in 2007, I first stumbled across Urban Expression and was introduced to Juliet Kilpin and Stuart Murray.[13]

All these experiences, mixed now with practical pastoral work and theological reflection, have led to clearer awareness that the Anabaptist heritage has a valuable contribution to make to mission and witness in a multi-cultural and secular society. Many more different kinds of churches

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[7] Urban Expression is an urban mission agency that recruits, equips, deploys and networks self-financing teams, pioneering creative and relevant expressions of the Christian church in under-churched areas of inner city, outer estates, and marginalised communities. See https://www.urbanexpression.org.uk [accessed 21 October 2020].

[8] James William McClendon Jr, *Theology as Biography* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002).

[9] See, for instance, Glen H Stassen, *Just Peacemaking* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1992).

[10] Helle Liht is an Estonian Baptist and serves as Assistant General Secretary of the EBF.

[11] The Revd Tony Peck is a British Baptist who has served as General Secretary of the EBF since 2004.

[12] http://www.ebf.org [accessed 21 October 2020]. For a history of the European Baptist Federation see Bernard Green *Crossing the Boundaries; A history of the European Baptist Federation* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1999), and Keith G. Jones, *The European Baptist Federation: A Case Study in European Baptist Interdependency 1950-2006* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2009).

[13] Juliet and Jim Kilpin and Stuart Murray were the founders of Urban Expression. Juliet and Stuart continue to be involved in the Anabaptist Mennonite Network in the United Kingdom.

are needed to engage with changing western culture, and the Anabaptist experience is a helpful resource. Although church planting has not been a key priority for Anabaptists in the UK thus far, more Christians are beginning to nurture fellowship-type believers' communities where Anabaptist values are informing and inspiring their practice. One area where Anabaptist values have been significant is Urban Expression, a movement of small teams of Christians committed to living out the gospel on the margins.

Urban Expression Inspired by Anabaptist Values

Urban Expression is an urban church planting and mission network which was started in 1997 as a response to the concern that most church planting was taking place in more affluent areas in the UK, where there were already many established churches and where church planting efforts frequently uncritically replicated the 'mother church'.

Urban Expression works as a grassroots organisation. It is a network of people committed to radical Jesus-shaped discipleship, mission and community in neighbourhoods struggling with marginality and deprivation. After completing my studies at IBTS, I was ordained in the Baptist Union of Great Britain in 2009 and have spent the last eleven years in churches and teams connected with Urban Expression.

Urban Expression (UE) now has twenty-four teams spread across the UK (and eleven teams in the Netherlands founded by UE's sister agency there). Teams range in size and character, from social enterprises, to missional communities, table churches and retreat homes. The glue which holds the network together are the three core values of relationship, creativity and humility; and seven commitments: being on the margins, being Jesus-centred, committed to the *shalom* vision of peace, seeking the kingdom of God, nurturing uncluttered church, serving unconditionally, and building respectful relationships with all people. Urban Expression is not an explicitly Anabaptist church planting network. However, the Anabaptist vision is apparent in the core values and the seven commitments. In addition, Urban Expression is committed to work in neighbourhoods and networks that do not belong culturally or socially to the centre of society. This is similar to the experience of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists. A number of Urban Expression trustees, coordinators and team members draw inspiration from Anabaptist faith and practice and some people identify their expressions of Christian community as intentionally Anabaptist.

Anabaptists in the UK

Some of the baptistic believers who are key voices in sharing Anabaptist contributions and values in the UK are connected with the Anabaptist Mennonite Network[14] (AMN as it is now known, following the merger of the Mennonite Trust and the Anabaptist Network), most notably Stuart Murray.[15] The Network's roots are in a student residence in the 1950s, welcoming Christians from across the world at a time of open racial hostility. Active in the work of reconciliation was the London Mennonite Centre (LMC), run by North American Mennonite[16] mission workers. It was decided that instead of setting up a new denomination, which might threaten or be considered competition to local churches, the Mennonites would offer resources and insights from the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition to Christians in other traditions. Although there were no attempts to plant churches, a Mennonite church did emerge from the community of the LMC, which closed in 2013 after a number of difficult years. On a personal note, I should mention, that it was primarily through relationships with people involved in Urban Expression that I experienced first-hand the lived-out convictions of Anabaptists. However, the Anabaptist Network also played a crucial role in understanding the goals of this re-emerging radical tradition.

The Anabaptist Network, formed in 1991, adopted the same policy of not planting churches but, instead, offering resources and building relationships with Christians interested in and inspired by the Anabaptist vision. For three years from 2015, I worked with the Network to build relationships with younger adults already connected with the Network, and develop new connections with those who were interested in 'anabaptist-like' values — especially active peacemaking and reconciliation.

I had many fascinating conversations with passionate, justice-seeking Jesus-followers and activists. Many of these folks were working out their calling to be peacemakers through their professional work for organisations committed to the environment, debt relief, local and international peacemaking and mediation. Some had learned enough about Anabaptism to add elements of this tradition to their Christian discipleship but were generally not looking for more points of connection with the Network. However, I was frequently asked 'where can I be part of this kind of community?', and had to admit that I had only a very limited number of suggestions. There are currently no Anabaptist-Mennonite denominations

[14] The merger took place in 2020. See https://amnetwork.uk/ [accessed 21 October 20].
[15] Stuart Murray is a prolific author. His work includes *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition* (Waterloo, ON: Pandora Press, 2000).
[16] The Mennonite Church is an Anabaptist church arising out of the Dutch Anabaptist, Menno Simons. Mennonite churches exist in a variety of denominational groupings, principally in North and South America, associating together in the Mennonite World Conference founded in 1925, and have a recognised Christian world communion of about 2.1 million believers.

active in the UK, although a number of local churches in membership with other denominations have affiliated themselves with the AMN. For example, the values of E1 Community Church in Tower Hamlets, London, inspired by the Anabaptist tradition, are to be a Jesus-centred, multi-voiced, local church committed to peacemaking. The Bruderhof community[17] and one largely Portuguese-speaking Mennonite church in Eastbourne are the only explicitly Anabaptist churches in the UK. The Brethren in Christ Church[18] has a number of small and mostly Zimbabwean congregations, which draw on Anabaptist, Wesleyan, Evangelical and Pietist traditions. There are also study groups and occasional gatherings of people connected with the AMN. Taking this into account, it is hardly possible to deny the need for more communities shaped by Anabaptist values and practices where people could experience distinctive, radical ways to live Christian faith and life.

The Case for Planting Anabaptist Churches

In February 2020, the AMN held a consultation to consider actively planting new Anabaptist churches. Over the years there have been conversations about sticking to the 'no church planting' rule, with strong feelings on both sides of the argument. This weekend gathering was an opportunity to discuss and discern with a larger group of people what the future might hold for the newly formed AMN and to explore if the 'no church planting' rule was still serving the aims of the kingdom of God or if it was time to reconsider and prioritise church planting.

Since that gathering, there are various experiments in the pipeline to explore this question further. The AMN has gathered resources for Christian communities linked to the Network to explore their distinctive Anabaptist identity alongside other communities in a year-long 'learning journey'. There are proposals to form a dispersed intentional Anabaptist community; or to fund pioneers and church planters to nurture Anabaptist communities. Might something emerge from any of these ideas? If we fail to engage or take some risks, how might we respond when people ask us about community expressions of *shalom* and peacemaking? Does this require a separate movement or network of church planters and pioneers who will self-consciously identify with and nurture Anabaptist communities? Considering that there is no official Anabaptist denomination in the UK, how might these churches connect with each other? Who will provide accountability for them? There are still many questions to wrestle with, but it is my conviction

[17] On the history of the early years of the Bruderhof community in the UK see Ian M. Randall, *A Christian Peace Experiment: The Bruderhof Community in Britain, 1933–1942* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2018).
[18] The Brethren in Christ Church (BC) is based in the USA. It is an Anabaptist Christian denomination rooted in the Mennonite community, shaped by radical pietism and the Wesleyan holiness tradition.

that there is a clear need for the planting of new churches in the peace church tradition in the UK; particularly at this time of political and social turmoil, where there is a deep need for active non-violence, for reconciliation between hurting people and communities, and for daily practices to sustain discipleship. The current pandemic offers the opportunity to re-imagine Christian community with less power and privilege but deeper relationships and clearer commitment to the person of Jesus. The conversation is alive and kicking.

The early Anabaptists were passionate church planters,[19] committed to establishing new churches instead of reforming existing churches. Today, church planters are drawing on inspiration from the Anabaptist tradition as they reflect on how to engage in culturally sensitive and contextually appropriate mission. Although the present-day and Early Radical Reformation contexts are separated by five hundred years of history and change, the Anabaptists emerged at a time of similar cultural and social upheaval. They might offer us some insights into how we inhabit and witness to an alternative narrative to our dominant culture. The Anabaptist tradition is embodied and communal — it is most authentically and faithfully expressed in the discipleship and mission of the community of disciples, not in the gathering dust of theological tomes.

In the following, I will consider three aspects of Anabaptist theology embodied in the UK through the core convictions of the AMN which might offer a unique contribution to the current and growing enthusiasm for church planting. There are seven core convictions[20] in total, however as I cannot consider all seven here, I will address the first, fifth and sixth. (See Appendix 1 for the full list.)

Followers of 'the Way'

> Jesus is our example, teacher, friend, redeemer and Lord. He is the source of our life, the central reference point for our faith and lifestyle, for our understanding of church and our engagement with society. We are committed to following Jesus as well as worshipping him. (Conviction number 1)

The early Anabaptists[21] were committed to following after Jesus, or *Nachfolge*, as the radical reorientation of a person's life to the way of Christ,

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[19] See, for instance, Wilbert R. Shenk, ed., *Anabaptism and Mission* (Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 1984); Wilbert R. Shenk, and Peter F. Penner, eds., *Anabaptism and Mission* (Schwarzenfeld, Germany: Neufeld Verlag, 2007).

[20] In 2006 members of the Anabaptist Network gathered to formulate seven core convictions which each express an essential belief and lead to a commitment. See Stuart Murray, *The Naked Anabaptist: The Bare Essentials for a Radical Faith* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2015) and Anabaptist Mennonite Network, *Core Convictions* https://amnetwork.uk [accessed 23 October 2020].

[21] See, for instance, Werner O. Packull, *Hutterite Beginnings: Communitarian Experiments during the Reformation* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Walter Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism in Outline,* especially chapter 4, 'Cross, Suffering and Discipleship'.

articulated most passionately by Hans Denck: 'No one can truly know Christ unless they follow him in life.'[22] Becoming a follower of Jesus was an active and ongoing journey of discipleship and transformation, not only a transactional event for salvation. This Anabaptist principle applies to believer's church ecclesiology, discipleship and mission and provides the key to understanding the rest of the Scriptures. As culture moves increasingly into post-Christendom and becomes less familiar with the structures, symbols and institutions of Christendom, we have fresh opportunities to tell the story of the upside-down kingdom, and life, actions and words of Jesus Christ.[23] Diminishing cultural familiarity with a patriarchal, hierarchical and institutionally racist church could be considered a gift to church planters today.

Anabaptist communities forming new churches will need to consider what the most appropriate ways of gathering might be — particularly now as there is still so much uncertainty and fear around how life must change in the light of Covid-19. Whilst some churches have moved further towards consumerism and passive attendance on the performance spectrum, others have discovered new ways of connecting and relating. It is here that Anabaptist spirituality may prove inspirational and serve as a model. In communities experiencing lockdown because of Covid-19, neighbours have started to recognise each other during clapping and drum-banging,[24] while pictures of rainbows in windows have brightened dreary streets and pavements. Churches have recognised that they were frequently not the first ones on the scene to help in their neighbourhoods, nor were they always as organised as community WhatsApp[25] groups burst into action. The challenge going forward is for Christians to have greater imagination about who they are and how the Jesus story is good news in their communities. No doubt, similar creativity was present among the early Anabaptists.

For Anabaptists, following Jesus is communitarian as well as individual. The meal table is a significant place of discipleship and hospitality.[26] Today's commentators are emphasising that millennials and

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[22] William Klassen and Hans-Juergen Goertz, 'Discipleship', *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* (June 2019) https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Discipleship&oldid=166831 [accessed 24 October 2020].

[23] See, for instance, Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018).

[24] In the early months of Covid-19 in the United Kingdom citizens were invited to come out of their homes on a Thursday evening and cheer and clap the key workers in the UK National Health Service.

[25] WhatsApp is an encrypted person to person, or person to group audio and audio-visual technology.

[26] Alan and Eleanor Kreider, *Worship and Mission After Christendom* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2011).

those who are part of Generation Z,[27] as digital natives,[28] are used to consuming information, entertainment and connection 'on demand'. Assuming that Sunday morning is not the only God-ordained time for meeting,[29] and in view of the increasing necessity and desire for online connection, how might Anabaptist communities find helpful online spaces and patterns to nurture relationships, welcome people, and help people to grow in their faith? As our lives have shrunk so significantly, perhaps a return to house gatherings, neighbourhood meet-ups, and everyday discipleship in the way of the early Anabaptists will nurture our faith and our witness.

It has frequently been noted that it is not Jesus that puts people off Christianity — but the church and Christians, who have arguably spent more time patrolling the perimeter fence than demonstrating and emulating the life of Christ. Taking seriously the call to discipleship and following after Christ might help Jesus-followers to navigate uncertain territory as we pay sustained attention to the way that Jesus resisted power and subverted cultural expectations and religious norms.

Developing leaders and being perpetual students

> Churches are called to be committed communities of discipleship and mission, places of friendship, mutual accountability and multi-voiced worship. As we eat together, sharing bread and wine, we sustain hope as we seek God's kingdom together. We are committed to nurturing and developing such churches, in which young and old are valued, leadership is consultative, roles are related to gifts rather than gender and baptism is for believers. (Conviction number 5)

This principle is particularly pertinent in a time where people from both inside and outside church communities are becoming increasingly disillusioned with their political and religious leaders. Within the church this might be due to the number of high-profile Christian leaders who have been accused of serious sexual misconduct in recent years, but also more positively, there is a growing conviction that leadership is something that can be shared, developed and nurtured in a community. Asset-based community development theory, a bottom-up way of working with communities that focuses on community strengths and assets rather than on deficits and problems, is gaining traction with grassroots missional initiatives.[30] The membership of congregations from diverse Christian traditions in

[27] Generation Z are the demographic cohort succeeding Millennials and preceding Generation Alpha. Researchers and popular media use the mid-to-late 1990s as the starting birth years and the early 2010s as ending birth years.

[28] Digital native is a term coined by Mark Prensky in 2001, used to describe the generation of people who grew up in the era of ubiquitous technology, including computers and the internet.

[29] On developing alternatives see Keith G. Jones, 'Gathering worship: some tentative proposals for reshaping worship in our European Baptistic Churches today', *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, 13, no. 1 (September 2016): 5–26.

[30] Teams connected with Urban Expression use these methods of community engagement.

community organising networks like Citizens UK[31] demonstrates that there is a growing appetite and desire for relational, collaborative and local leadership development. For those seeking to nurture new Christian communities, the theology of the *missio Dei*[32] goes hand-in-hand with an asset-based mindset. If we believe that God is already at work in unknown or yet to be discovered ways, we can partner with others already engaged in that work. Christians nurturing new communities are invited to be co-learners and guests, instead of centring themselves as hosts and 'pioneers'. Perhaps Anabaptist communities can embody and offer the gifts of their unique heritage, convictions and practices, within the wider church and culture, without competition or hostility. This heritage includes accountability between 'brothers and sisters', and emphasis not only on Christian beliefs, but also on Christian behaviour modelled by Jesus Christ.

Adopting a posture of vulnerability and dependence on a neighbourhood community, instead of self-sufficiency, might offer a corrective stance to the self-portrayal of the church as all-powerful and immutable. The early Anabaptists frequently met in homes and hospitality was an important element of their witness.[33] Even their hermeneutics was communally orientated.[34] In this context, conversation and dialogue comes naturally and these early Anabaptists often invited those gathered (sometimes even their opponents) to offer their understanding or interpretations of biblical texts. This was unheard of in the sixteenth century, and is still not a regular feature today in most Sunday morning teaching slots, where a mono-voiced sermon is the main method of communication. Twenty-first century culture places significant value on 'experience'. People are yearning for opportunities for transformation, for adventure, and for deep community. For people unfamiliar with the Christian story, experiencing hospitality and observing the Christian community at work and play offers opportunities for learning, development, and participation as part of the journey towards discipleship.

Whilst it might be contentious in postmodern society, re-imaging the Anabaptist practice of 'the rule of Christ' (Matthew 18:15–20)[35] might be another way that new communities can foster open, honest and vulnerable

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[31] Citizens UK is a national network of institutions (churches, schools, mosques, trade unions) who work together for the common good. See, https://www.citizensuk.org [accessed 21 October 2020].

[32] On *missio Dei* see, for instance, David J Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis books, 1991).

[33] See, for instance, C. Arnold Snyder and Linda A. Huebert Hecht, eds, *Profiles of Anabaptist Women,* for examples of the use of homes.

[34] Stuart Murray sets out the case for this in his book, *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition* (Ontario, Canada: Pandora Press, 2000), especially the chapter 'Congregational Hermeneutics', pp. 157–185.

[35] See, for instance, Bridge Builders Ministries, UK for transforming conflict (https://www.bbministries.org.uk), or Community Justice Initiatives in Canada, working on restorative justice in communities in need (https://cjiwr.com) [accessed 21 October 2020].

communication. Accepting that conflict is part of being in relationship with others, an Anabaptist approach to dealing with conflict would take seriously the call to non-violent peacemaking between individuals, communities, and within and among churches. Churches inspired by the Anabaptist vision might invest time in exploring different tools, resources, and processes to resolve disagreements. One example comes from E1 Community Church. During my time in ministry there between 2009 and 2015, we set aside six months to delve deeply into how we as a church dealt with conflict. At the conclusion of this time, the church signed a written agreement detailing the steps for conflict resolution for their community. An Anabaptist understanding of ecclesiology would invite Christians to reorient our lives towards Jesus within the context of a community as we together work out how to witness to the new reality of the kingdom of God breaking in.

Committing to a radical and wholistic lifestyle of faith and discipleship

> Spirituality and economics are inter-connected. In an individualist and consumerist culture and in a world where economic injustice is rife, we are committed to finding ways of living simply, sharing generously, caring for creation, and working for justice. (Conviction number 6)

As concern grows about environmental degradation and climate change, together with increased awareness of structural and institutional racism in British society, the Anabaptist commitment to radical discipleship and witness might be one way of embodying Jesus-centric beliefs in intentional ways. As advertisers increasingly play on human feelings of shame, lack of self-esteem, and loneliness, a commitment to simplicity, sharing and resisting consumerism can speak prophetically to wider society. The early Anabaptists cannot be considered environmental activists or committed to 'green' issues, however there are notable examples of Anabaptist communities living simply as part of their commitment to Christ's call of discipleship. For example, the Bruderhof Community (a worldwide organisation of Anabaptists, with three communities in the UK) [36] reject all ownership of private property and personal possession, instead holding all things in common and trusting God fully to provide for the community's needs. Work and worship are inseparable and all forms of work are equally valued and honoured, whether that is farming, teaching, publishing or product design in one of the community's businesses. Work is understood as an expression of service and love to the community and to their neighbours. The Bruderhof Community commit to living simply so that they can be generous with their support for the poor and vulnerable. They cultivate their own produce and meat wherever possible free from chemicals, and by using

[36] For a public account of the Bruderhof faith, the tenets and orders common to all Bruderhof communities see The Bruderhof, *Foundations of Our Faith and Calling* (Rifton, NY: Plough, 2012).

solar and geothermal energy, continue to explore reducing their environmental impact.[37]

Whilst recognising the many ways that Anabaptist-Mennonite churches and leaders have colluded with the cultural status quo, present-day Anabaptist communities have often been at the forefront of movements for justice, peace and non-violent resistance. Christian Peacemaker Teams[38] were founded in the mid-1980s by members of the historic peace churches including Quakers, Church of the Brethren, and Mennonites, on the passionate conviction that peacemaking should require the same level of investment, commitment and sacrifice for peace as governments demand in relation to war. Speaking in 1984 to the Mennonite World Conference in Strasbourg, Ron Sider implored his listeners:

> We must take up our cross and follow Jesus to Golgotha. We must be prepared to die by the thousands. Those who believed in peace through the sword have not hesitated to die. Proudly, courageously, they gave their lives. Again and again, they sacrificed bright futures to the tragic illusion that one more righteous crusade would bring peace in their time, and they laid down their lives by the millions.
>
> Unless we […] are ready to start to die by the thousands in dramatic vigorous new exploits for peace and justice, we should sadly confess that we never really meant what we said, and we dare never whisper another word about pacifism to our sisters and brothers in those desperate lands filled with injustice. Unless we are ready to die developing new nonviolent attempts to reduce conflict, we should confess that we never really meant that the cross was an alternative to the sword.[39]

More recently, Juliet Kilpin and Simon Jones co-founded Peaceful Borders,[40] an organisation inspired by the Anabaptist story, to '[seek] peace in the spaces in between'. Peaceful Borders emerged at the time of the 2015 refugee crisis, when a number of volunteers (people of peace from different faith backgrounds) from the UK spent time befriending, supporting and working with community leaders in the informal migrant camps in Calais, France. The work of Peaceful Borders is focused around accompanying and equipping people responding to forced migration by supporting new arrivals to the UK, building capacity for peaceful responses to forced displacement, and advocating for displaced people.

Early Anabaptists were largely poor and marginalised people, who witnessed to their friends and neighbours in ways that were meaningful and authentic. Although we must avoid idealising their life and witness, as some Anabaptist communities could also be characterised by withdrawal from

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[37] The Bruderhof Community, 'Living Simply' https://www.bruderhof.com/en/life-in-community/living-simply/ [accessed 21 October 2020].
[38] Christian Peacemaker Teams, 'The Origins of CPT' https://www.cpt.org/about/history/origins [accessed 21 October 2020].
[39] For full text of the speech: https://www.cpt.org/resources/writings/sider [accessed 21 October 2020].
[40] See https://peacefulborders.org [accessed 21 October 2020].

society and prone to schism. However, their positive influence outweighs the negative aspects of this tradition.

Anabaptist communities today, and those inspired by the Anabaptist vision, must walk in the light of this inheritance as they seek to wrestle with the injustices of our time, including racism, which has been painfully amplified by recent deaths and the uprising of collective action. Statements and declarations about being anti-racist will need to be backed up with personal and collective work to hear more voices from various backgrounds, to learn, and to work against injustice. Christians today will need to discover and practise new disciplines as they follow Jesus and courageously break allegiances with white supremacist, classist, sexist and patriarchal hierarchies. Christian communities must enact the way of Jesus to place the last and least valued as first and foremost. As disciples, Christians must commit to sharing life with others which means 'no longer allowing the racial hierarchy to pattern our social lives, manage our geographic movements, shape identities of superiority and inferiority, or interpret one another through white supremacist and antiblack gazes'.[41] Church planting today takes place in the shadow of colonialism and institutional racism, and wrestling with these issues alongside our black and brown brothers and sisters is non-negotiable. Anabaptist theology has a particular gift to the wider church in this regard because Anabaptists affirm that peacemaking is the heart of the gospel: worship, mission and discipleship are all informed by that central conviction. Active peacemaking is needed for reconciliation and transformation to take place within each of us as we deal with our own unconscious racism (sexism, classism), and as we work for healing and *shalom* in our Christian communities, neighbourhoods and the wider world.

Peacemaking and the seeking of *shalom* is a core element of Anabaptist identity today (and one of the AMN's core convictions). Reflecting on and exercising this distinct quality of Anabaptist identity in various contexts — interpersonal relationships, neighbourhood politics and congregational life — requires significant time and energy. Anabaptists might consider how a commitment to peacemaking extends to hosting spaces for difficult and nuanced conversations in a time of 'cancel culture', fear around holding counter-cultural opinions, and growing online aggression. Most people cannot commit to training with a Christian Peacemaker Team with a view to being sent into an area of conflict, but perhaps we might be inspired by other stories of 'ordinary' peacemaking. Like the split-second decision made by Dirk Willems, the sixteenth-century Dutch Anabaptist who after crossing a frozen lake to safety, turned around to save the life of his pursuer who had fallen through a hole and was drowning, despite the fact that he knew he

[41] Drew G. I. Hart, *The Trouble I've Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2016).

would lose his life for saving another's.[42] Or in more recent times, the local Baptist minister who, on seeing a restless group of young people gathering in their usual haunt near her home, quickly got baking and within thirty minutes had managed to dispel the atmosphere of intimidation and violence with her courage, conversation, and cookies. This turned out to be the beginning of an ongoing relationship of trust, support and friendship which emerged out of one brave spur-of-the-moment act of mediation. Or the example of the Amish community of Nickel Mines who immediately extended forgiveness to Terri Roberts, the mother of the gunman who killed five schoolgirls and injured others when he opened fire in their one-room school in 2006. Since then, the Amish community and Roberts have continued to offer mutual support, comfort and friendship in the midst of loss and grief.[43] The Anabaptist tradition has many other stories, resources and experiences to offer that can help disciples of Christ to engage in acts of 'everyday peacemaking' in our time.

Where to Now?

Urban Expression might seem to be the natural vehicle to explore a commitment to more self-consciously Anabaptist church planting. However Urban Expression has a particular call to marginalised communities which should not be compromised, and which may not be the only context where people might want to consider Anabaptist church planting. For those who are willing to take some risks and experiment, should the AMN prioritise church planting and offer targeted funding to support this? Or should there be a three-pronged approach: to more explicitly articulate the Anabaptist underpinnings of Urban Expression and the importance of these values in the Christian calling to marginalised communities; to support Anabaptist church planting in a variety of contexts; and to continue resourcing the wider church through the activities of the Network? The logistics need some working out, but the case for distinctly Anabaptist church planting in the UK seems clear to me. I would be interested to know whether there are similar conversations happening in other parts of the EBF family where there are still a number of historic Anabaptist-Mennonite denominations.

Conclusion

In a climate of fear and suspicion, Anabaptist communities can welcome people to tables of hospitality and reconciliation. In a time of isolation and

[42] The story of Dirk Willems is from a 1660 Anabaptist martyrology compiled by Thieleman J. van Bracht, translated as *Martyrs Mirror* (Scottdale: Herald Press, 1950), pp. 741–42.
[43] Terri Roberts, *Forgiven: The Amish School Shooting, a Mother's Love, and a Story of Remarkable Grace* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2015).

loneliness, Anabaptist Christians can extend friendship and community, travelling companions on the journey of faithfully following Jesus. In a context of upheaval and transition, Anabaptists today can learn from the experience of their forebears who often worked out their discipleship at the margins of society.

In this paper I set out to review how insights from our Anabaptist forebears might be used in contemporary European society, especially amongst Generation Z, but not exclusively so, to create gathering, intentional, convictional and missional communities,[44] which are shaped through the recovery of key Anabaptist insights, but reinterpreted and applied to this present age. I have sought to demonstrate by use of examples primarily from my own context of the United Kingdom, that there are viable and important developments which provide signposts of life and hope as followers of Jesus seek to engage new Europeans with the key message of Christ, but not bound up with the ecclesia of Christendom.[45]

At the close of the consultation of the wider AMN community, in February this year, one young man blurted out to our group, 'It is as if you have this treasure; gold and riches in a chest. Do you not know how valuable that treasure is? Do you not perceive what you have that you could share?' Spurred on by this spirited encouragement, I am convinced that it is time for those who draw with gratitude on the treasure of the Anabaptist heritage, to commit boldly and courageously to the task of re-imagining church planting as a key priority for the Anabaptist family in the UK.

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[44] Keith G. Jones, 'Towards a Model of Mission for Gathering, Intentional, Convictional *Koinonia*', *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, 4, no. 2 (January 2004): 5–13.
[45] See Nigel G. Wright, *Disavowing Constantine* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2007).

Appendix 1: Core Convictions of The Anabaptist Mennonite Network

1. Jesus is our example, teacher, friend, redeemer and Lord. He is the source of our life, the central reference point for our faith and lifestyle, for our understanding of church and our engagement with society. We are committed to following Jesus as well as worshipping him.

2. Jesus is the focal point of God's revelation. We are committed to a Jesus-centred approach to the Bible, and to the community of faith as the primary context in which we read the Bible and discern and apply its implications for discipleship.

3. Western culture is slowly emerging from the Christendom era when church and state jointly presided over a society in which almost all were assumed to be Christian. Whatever its positive contributions on values and institutions, Christendom seriously distorted the gospel, marginalised Jesus, and has left the churches ill-equipped for mission in a post-Christendom culture. As we reflect on this, we are committed to learning from the experience and perspectives of movements such as Anabaptism that rejected standard Christendom assumptions and pursued alternative ways of thinking and behaving.

4. The frequent association of the church with status, wealth and force is inappropriate for followers of Jesus and damages our witness. We are committed to exploring ways of being good news to the poor, powerless and persecuted, aware that such discipleship may attract opposition, resulting in suffering and sometimes ultimately martyrdom.

5. Churches are called to be committed communities of discipleship and mission, places of friendship, mutual accountability and multi-voiced worship. As we eat together, sharing bread and wine, we sustain hope as we seek God's kingdom together. We are committed to nurturing and developing such churches, in which young and old are valued, leadership is consultative, roles are related to gifts rather than gender and baptism is for believers.

6. Spirituality and economics are inter-connected. In an individualist and consumerist culture and in a world where economic injustice is rife, we are committed to finding ways of living simply, sharing generously, caring for creation, and working for justice.

7. Peace is at the heart of the gospel. As followers of Jesus in a divided and violent world, we are committed to finding non-violent alternatives and to learning how to make peace between individuals, within and among churches, in society, and between nations.

A Warm Welsh Welcome? How an Understanding of Hospitality Might Inform Good Bilingual Practice in a Welsh/English Context

Rosa Hunt

This paper describes the tensions between Welsh and English speakers in two intercultural contexts where I work. It explores these intercultural tensions using Derrida's notions of hospitality, and asks whether it is possible to talk about extending hospitality to a language, rather than a person. I start by describing in a little more detail my own experience of the intercultural contexts of both church and college. I then go on to very briefly outline a theoretical framework for hospitality in terms of *host, guest* and *threshold*. Next, I describe a small study I carried out to evaluate a new Welsh-language pastoral group at college. I consider whether this might be understood as an effective act of hospitality towards the Welsh language. I end by considering how this study might inform good bilingual practice in both college and church, as well as perhaps other social contexts. The paper concludes that after the initial act of welcoming Welsh over the threshold by simple bilingual gestures, the host community needs to build an 'understanding space' where Welsh can flourish. This then in turn generates a second threshold where power relations are reversed.

Keywords

Hospitality; bilingualism; Welsh; Derrida

Background

I have two jobs: for half the week I am the minister of a bilingual Welsh Baptist Chapel, Salem Tonteg, and for the other half of the week I am the Co-Principal of South Wales Baptist College which trains women and men for ministry and mission.

In both church and college, I work in an intercultural context. Kwok Pui Lan has described interculturalism[1] as 'the interaction and juxtaposition, as well as tension and resistance when two or more cultures are brought together sometimes organically and sometimes through violent means in the modern period'.[2] In my case, the two cultures are, respectively, the Welsh-

[1] As opposed to multiculturalism.
[2] Kwok Pui-Lan, 'Feminist Theology as Intercultural Discourse', in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, ed. by Susan Frank Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 23–39 (p. 25).

language chapel culture and the English-speaking church culture in Wales.[3] The relationship between the two languages and cultures is a very complex one. English has historically been imposed on Wales and become the dominant language in many areas. In the Baptist family there are monolingual English speakers who define themselves as Welsh, but there are also others in churches linked to English Baptist Associations who basically regard themselves as English and have little understanding of Wales as a distinctive nation with its own language.

In my chapel, these two cultures were brought together when Salem, originally a Welsh-language chapel founded in 1848, started an English-language service and an English Sunday School sometime during the last quarter of the twentieth century.[4] This caused considerable tensions between the two cultures, tensions which of course reflected the same tensions in wider society, and which in fact had been present in the chapel almost since it was founded. The church meeting minutes from 1926 note a proposal that 'sermons be in English' but this was decisively rejected in the next church meeting on 11 May 1926 which records the decision that 'the church accepts the recommendation from the officers, that the church in Salem will not turn into an English Chapel'.[5]

As for South Wales Baptist College, a college founded in Wales to train ministers primarily for a Welsh context, it is interesting to read in the review of the college commissioned under a Welsh-speaking principal (Revd Dr D. Hugh Matthews) in 2000 that

> there was one matter of concern which disturbs the panel and which may need to be addressed unless it was unique to a particular year. One student reports that, "There was a noticeable hostility to the Welsh element in the college" (from some students).[6]

Appointing a Welsh-speaking member of staff and encouraging other staff members to learn Welsh were two of the review's key recommendations. Clearly, even under a Welsh-speaking principal, the tensions of this intercultural juxtaposition were evident.

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[3] I have deliberately used the word 'chapel' to refer to the Welsh-speaking Baptist and Presbyterian churches — in this context, 'church' means the Anglican church. In the English-speaking context, the terminology depends on the location. In my experience, Baptist churches in towns and cities like Cardiff are more likely to be referred to as 'church', whereas in the Valleys, English-language Baptist churches are still very much 'chapel'. It's not uncommon where I live to hear people say 'I am chapel but my husband is church' or 'I go to church in the morning and chapel in the night'.

[4] The official history of Salem is a bit unclear about the date when this happened, but it seems to have been sometime between 1971 and 1980, certainly for the English-language Sunday School.

[5] Taken from the *History of Salem, Welsh Baptist Chapel, Llanilltyd Fardref Pontypridd*, written by Berwyn Davies (unpublished, 2000). The language of the quotation is interesting, and quite theologically correct: the people are the church who meet *in Salem*.

[6] Revd Dr Michael Ball et al., 'Review of South Wales Baptist College', (unpublished internal document, 2000), p. 39.

This paper explores these intercultural tensions using Derrida's notions of hospitality, and asks whether it is possible to talk about extending hospitality to a language, rather than a person. I start by describing in a little more detail my own experience of the intercultural contexts of both church and college. I then go on to outline a theoretical framework for hospitality in terms of host, guest and threshold. I then describe a small study I carried out to evaluate a new Welsh-language pastoral group at college. I consider whether this might be understood as an effective act of hospitality towards the Welsh language. I end by considering how this study might inform good bilingual practice in both college and church, as well as, perhaps, other social contexts.

Salem Baptist Chapel, Tonteg

I was called by Salem to be their minister in June 2013, as a Welsh learner who at that time was operating at *Sylfaen* (foundation level), roughly equivalent to the kind of Welsh that is able to hold basic conversations. The settlement process for Baptist ministers usually includes an opportunity for the potential minister to meet the whole congregation, and for both sides to ask questions. At this meeting, I asked whether the church saw itself as having one congregation or two (one Welsh- and one English-speaking)[7]. The gathered members were initially quite unsure about the answer, and debated it among themselves for a while, eventually coming to the majority consensus that they were one congregation but that more could be done to bring the two groups together.

As I sought to understand what it meant to be the minister of a bilingual chapel, I started to ask myself which linguistic group was the guest, and which was the host? Clearly, the Welsh-speaking congregation had originally been the host and the English speakers the guests. Franz Yoshiy argues that

> the host is the one who receives the guest and offers them hospitality, but in so doing remains the master of his house […] the host must affirm his ownership and control of the domain before he can invite the guest in, and the guest is invited in on the basis that this status quo is respected.[8]

But what seems to have happened in Salem is that the invited guests have grown so numerous that they are now the hosts. However, even that is not strictly correct, as there is an interesting asymmetry here that is not

[7] It is important to those concerned to distinguish between Welsh people and Welsh-speaking people. Many passionately Welsh people cannot speak Welsh.

[8] Franz Joseph Yoshiy II, 'Discerning Difference in Jacques Derrida's Ethics of Hospitality', *Kritike*, 11, no. 2 (2017): 198–221 (p. 209). N.B.: Yoshiy uses 'he' intentionally to preserve a hierarchical Derridean dichotomy.

usually present in other situations to which thinking about hospitality has been applied, for example, refugee groups.[9] The issue here is that Welsh speakers also speak English, and so can manage to participate in a social situation occurring through the medium of English, usually on an equal footing. But the converse is not true: English speakers cannot participate in a social situation being conducted through the medium of Welsh. So, in this paper I would like to consider what happens if we consider the languages themselves (not the speakers) to be the guests and hosts. Is it helpful, or even possible, to speak about offering hospitality to a language rather than a person?

What is Hospitality?

> "[H]ospitality" is [...] a word of Latin origin, of a troubled and troubling origin, a word which carries its own contradiction incorporated into it, a Latin word which allows itself to be parasitized by its opposite, "hostility," the undesirable guest [hôte] which it harbors as the self-contradiction in its own body.[10]

By its very nature, hospitality involves a host, a guest and the nature of the threshold between them. (For clarity, in this section I refer to the host as 'she' and the guest as 'he' in line with Derrida.)

In an act of hospitality, a host invites another (the guest) to cross a threshold. The threshold represents the boundary between the area where the host is at home, and the outside. Thus, from the beginning, the relationship is asymmetrical — the act of invitation needs to originate from the host, otherwise it is invasion and not hospitality. And the guest is usually not at home on the outside of the threshold in the same way that the host is at home on her side. Once the guest crosses the threshold, behaviours need to be negotiated. Is the host going to expect the guest to abide entirely by the host's own rules? If so, the place beyond the threshold is a place where the guest renounces all power and remains permanently the guest. Is the host going to renounce all power, and allow the guest to do as he wishes? If so, the threshold has actually disappeared. This is what Derrida and others have referred to as unconditional hospitality, in which there must be no pressure or obligation to behave in any particular manner: 'one might draw from this a rather abrupt conclusion […] hospitality is infinite or it is not at all.'[11] The question of whether such unconditional hospitality is actually possible is a moot point. Instead, what commonly happens is what Derrida has termed a

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[9] See for instance, Ivana Noble and Tim Noble, 'Hospitality as a Key to the Relationship with the Other in Levinas and Derrida', *Theologica*, 6, no. 2 (2016): 47–65.

[10] Jacques Derrida, 'Hostipitality', *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities,* 5, no. 3 (2000): 3–18, (p. 3).

[11] Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 48.

'hostipitality', in which the hospitality offered by the host retains a degree of hostility.[12] This is where the host and the guest must negotiate with each other the rules for co-existing within the same 'home'. In such a case, one might say that a new set of thresholds have been generated, and for each threshold the same tension between hospitality and hostility holds.

Why does the host make the hospitable gesture in the first place? It is often argued that people pursue hospitality because they are attracted to it as an ideal, out of a mixture of seeking the pleasure of the guest and a sense of duty.[13] Indeed, in Salem Chapel, the gesture of hospitality towards the English language contained these elements. There was a real sense that the church had something good to offer (the gospel of the saving love of Jesus), and that they wanted to share this good news with as many people as possible. But there was also an element of self-preservation and fear: it was clear that the demographic was changing, and perhaps the survival of the chapel was dependent on inviting English speakers in.

But is it in fact possible to offer hospitality to something that is not human? Gerasimos Kakoliris reflects on D. H. Lawrence's poem *The Snake*, and argues that

> hospitality ceases to fall under the condition that the other must be a human, that is, hospitality is not any more defined negatively, based on the otherness of the host as the limit between humans and animals, and hence as the limit of the ethical responsibility of the former. In this unexpected encounter, hospitality blurs the boundaries allowing the Other to appear in non-anthropocentric terms, claiming a place within the human ethical responsibility.[14]

Kakoliris is here considering the perhaps more straightforward case of humans offering hospitality to animals, but I think that the point about ethical responsibility still stands. I would argue that the speakers of the majority language, in this case English, have an ethical responsibility towards the minority language, Welsh, ensuring that not just that it survives, but that it thrives.

An Experiment in Hospitality?

In September 2019 we introduced a Welsh-language pastoral group for the first time at South Wales Baptist College (henceforth SWBC). All the students in this group were ministering in a Welsh-language context. Three of them were first language Welsh speakers, and one had learned Welsh and

[12] See for instance, Derrida, 'Hostipitality', p. 4.
[13] See for example, Kevin O'Gorman, 'Jacques Derrida's Philosophy of Hospitality', *The Hospitality Review* (2006): 50–57, especially p. 51.
[14] Gerasimos Kakoliris, 'Hospitality and non-human beings: Jacques Derrida's reading of D H Lawrence's poem "Snake"', *Hospitality and Society*, 6, no. 3 (2016): 243–255, (p. 252).

could speak it fluently. The aim of this group was twofold. First, it was to allow students to share their challenges and problems in their heart language, without the added barrier that comes from constant translation into English. The second was to help them to reflect theologically on situations in the same language that they would need to use once they were back in their church or placement contexts.[15]

In this simple way, Welsh was formally invited across the threshold of SWBC. Already, of course, Welsh had been a welcome guest in the college. Most formal communication from the college is bilingual (this is the norm in Wales), as is most college worship. In practice, this usually means that songs and prayers are displayed bilingually, and everybody can participate in the language of their choice. Bible readings are read twice, once in Welsh and once in English. But this pastoral group made the power dynamics feel very different. The previous year, I had hosted an English-language pastoral group, and the balance of power was clear. I was the host; the venue was my 'house' (my room in college); and the students were my welcome guests. As a tutor and experienced minister, I was the expert in the room. Now, as the person in the room (my 'house') who was least fluent in Welsh, things were often said which I did not quite understand, and when I came to express my thoughts and advice on a problem that the students were encountering, my words were far less eloquent than I would have liked them to be. I often stumbled over phrases and searched for words. As the students helped me to say what I wanted to say, the host/guest balance kept shifting. We were extending hospitality to each other.

As in any other well-functioning pastoral group, the sense of cohesion between these four students grew, and they would often end up sitting together at meals and in other informal social contexts. Naturally, this meant that they would speak Welsh to each other, and so it has become commonplace to hear Welsh spoken about the college, something which I think is relatively new. This has encouraged one student and one member of staff who are learning Welsh to try out their Welsh too.

As part of a review of the year, I asked the four students in my pastoral group to answer a few questions about their experience of being part of a Welsh-language pastoral group. All four of them agreed to take part, but in the end, one was unable to do so and withdrew.

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[15] For the importance of theological students to be able to reflect theologically in their placement language, see Dewi Arwel Hughes, *Castrating Culture: A Christian Perspective on Ethnic Identity from the Margins* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2001).

Questionnaire Answers

Student A

Student A described themselves as

> a fluent Welsh speaker and I speak Welsh in my everyday life. I speak Welsh to my spouse, my children and in my work environment.

As a first-year student, student A had no experience of being part of an English-language pastoral group last year. When asked to place themselves[16] on a scale from 0-10 (where 0 denoted extremely uncomfortable and 10 denoted completely comfortable) to describe how comfortable they felt speaking Welsh in college this year, student A chose 6, and made the following comment:

> Obviously in College the majority of students do not speak Welsh, and due to this, although I do speak to my Welsh peers, I find that I have to turn to English on many occasions (this is not a problem, only when I forget English words). Also, I have found myself apologising for speaking Welsh, not that anyone has an issue with it, it is just polite and you do not want anyone to feel ignored.

Student A felt that being in a Welsh- (rather than English-) language pastoral group had provided them with more support from both tutor and peers. They commented,

> I believe it is essential, not only due to the language, but it is also our shared understanding of our culture. By this, I mean how we worship in the rural Welsh speaking communities, there is a marked difference.

Here student A is making the important point that chapels which have Welsh in common as their primary language also share a common church culture with traditions and expectations which are often absent from English-speaking chapels, even those in the same neighbourhood. This is borne out in the comment on the next answer, which affirmed that being in a Welsh-language pastoral group has made it easier to reflect theologically on placement experiences:

> Again it is the culture. I have been raised and worshipped in a very traditional form of worship, and I have found (not intentionally) that some of my English peers do not understand the differences. Therefore, it is a great platform to share ideas and worries in an understanding space.

The Welsh language has been invited across the threshold and an 'understanding space' has been created within the host's home where the guest can themselves be at home.

[16] In an attempt to further protect the anonymity of the respondents, I use third person plural pronouns to describe the students.

Student A gave the college full marks (10) for its hospitability to the Welsh language, and could not think of any ways in which more hospitability could have been demonstrated, commenting,

> The College has treated the Welsh language very well, and through this the Welsh culture and our history is being treated with great respect […] We had a lecture explaining the importance of the Welsh language, but also our history and how it has shaped us as a people. We have always had a unique culture, e.g. Eisteddfod, and it is wonderful that this is being opened up to the students.

Student B

Student B described themselves as

> a first language English speaker who has learnt Welsh. I usually try to speak Welsh to people who are first language Welsh speakers or people I have got to know through the medium of Welsh.

Student B is in their final year and had been in an English-language pastoral group last year. On the 0-10 scale of feeling comfortable speaking Welsh in college last year, they chose 7, commenting,

> I felt fairly comfortable, but often it didn't feel like there were many other Welsh speakers around. I was actually in a pastoral group with two other Welsh speakers, but it was an English-medium group.

In fact, the number of Welsh speakers in the College was the same last year as it has been this year, but 'it didn't feel like that' because there had been no 'understanding space' created within the host's home for the guest.

Student B had felt 'very positive' about the idea of trialling a Welsh-language pastoral group, and when asked why they thought the college had made this change, they replied,

> Pastoral group is supposed to be a safe place where people feel comfortable to share quite personal information and pray for one another. Often it is more difficult to do this in your second language, so it is important to provide a space where Welsh-speaking students can do so.

Of course, as a first language English speaker, student B would not derive these benefits in the same way as a Welsh speaker would, however they made this comment:

> It has been a very supportive group, and for me it has enabled me to learn more about what it is like for those doing ministry in a Welsh-speaking context, which will no doubt be helpful in my future ministry.

Here, we see the 'understanding space' creating a second threshold, which student B had to cross over in order to enter a Welsh-speaking pastoral space within the wider English-speaking space of the College as a whole. By being actively welcomed into this space by their fellow Welsh-speaking students, student B has gained more understanding 'about what it is like for those doing ministry in a Welsh-speaking context'. It is interesting to note

that a lack of knowledge of the Welsh chapel culture is not an impediment to crossing this threshold, but an inability to speak Welsh would be. Welsh is the passport which enables this second threshold to be crossed.

By accepting the invitation to cross this second threshold, student B has surrendered some of the host's privilege, and is no longer quite as 'at home'. They comment,

> As a second-language Welsh speaker, I sometimes find it hard to follow what some people are saying as they are from different parts of Wales where the accents are quite different.

When asked how comfortable they felt speaking Welsh in the college this year, student B chose 8 on the scale, and reflects,

> Because the Welsh-speaking students have got used to speaking to one another in Welsh in our pastoral group, I think that we feel more able to do so in informal social times […] I have really got to know one other student well through the medium of Welsh through sharing a room at Trefeca so I think that helped too […] with peers, I feel that our group has gelled very well and maybe the language factor is part of that.

The Welsh language pastoral group had no impact on student B's ability to reflect theologically on their placement experience

> because I am second language Welsh and I have mostly been ministering in an English-speaking context this year.

When asked how hospitable the college was to the Welsh language, student B awarded an 8, and commented,

> The pastoral group in Welsh has been a big help with this. I think the college does really well trying to make the services bilingual too.

Student B cited opportunities for Welsh language discussion in small groups, and use of Welsh in college worship, and the college covenant as activities which came across as hospitable to the Welsh language, and suggested that maybe one way of being more hospitable would be to invite a Welsh-language preacher to a college service (with translation equipment). They said that they had 'very much enjoyed' being part of the Welsh-language pastoral group and would be happy to do it again.

Student C

Student C described themselves as someone who speaks

> Cymraeg yn gyntaf bob tro, heblaw mod i yn ymwybodol bod rhyw un yn ddi Gymraeg.[17]

On the 'how comfortable did you feel speaking Welsh in College last year' scale, student C placed themselves as 5, commenting that

[17] 'Welsh every time, unless I am aware that there is someone who is "without Welsh"' — the 'without Welsh' is the Welsh-language way of describing non-Welsh speakers.

> as college was predominantly English, it was easier to keep quiet (especially at the start of 1st year).

In fact, there were at least four Welsh speakers in the college at the time, around a quarter of the student body, but in student B's words, it may not have felt like that to student C.

Student C's reaction on first hearing that the College was going to trial a Welsh language group was

> Great! Far easier to communicate in first language […] being with a group of people with similar experiences (worship styles, sizes and activities) and similar problems and situations.

In fact, student C comes from a different denomination (Presbyterian) than the other two students who took part (both of whom are Baptist). However, the chapel culture seems to be more closely tied to the language than it is to the denomination, in that student C felt that their Welsh-speaking Baptist fellow students had similar experiences, problems and situations. It would be interesting to know whether this sense of shared experience mediated by a common language setting would extend to students training for the priesthood in Church in Wales churches, for instance.

Student C thought that there had been more Welsh spoken and heard round the college during this year, and said that their 'comfort level' at speaking Welsh had gone up from 5 to 8 on the 0 to10 scale. They found that being in a Welsh-language pastoral group had provided more support, commenting,

> I have had far more contact with others (WhatsApp, phone, text etc) this year. I feel far closer as a group.

Student C said that being in this group had made it easier to reflect theologically on their placement experience. They awarded the college a mark of 7 out of 10 for its hospitability to the Welsh language, adding that

> the Welsh language seems far more part of college this year (not a noticeable add in, but expected).

I think that by this student C meant that Welsh felt a more natural part of College life this year.

Conclusion and the Way Forward

The results from the questionnaire obviously need to be treated with caution for a number of reasons, not least the very small number of students involved, and the fact that the person commissioning the survey was the pastoral tutor herself. However, the results do seem to corroborate my feeling that the act of hosting a Welsh-language pastoral group had suddenly given

permission for Welsh to be spoken around the college. It was interesting that even though the total number of Welsh speakers had not changed from one year to the next, the perception of the students was that they were no longer an isolated minority as Welsh speakers. Creating the group constituted a formal act of welcome to the Welsh language, inviting it across the threshold. Once the threshold had been crossed, the group became what student A termed an 'understanding space', not just a space where members understood one another, but also a space in which understanding about the Welsh chapel culture could be gained by the tutor and student B, who was not a first language Welsh speaker. Thus, a new threshold had been created, in which the power balance was somewhat reversed, and the criterion for crossing the threshold and being allowed access was now the Welsh language.

If it is thought that creating parallel 'understanding spaces' in an intercultural church context would be a helpful contribution to bilingual worship, what can this study tell us about extending a welcome to the Welsh language in a church context?

First of all, in English-language worship contexts in Wales, the Welsh language needs to be invited to cross the threshold. In this case, the 'church' acts as the host, and the Welsh language is the guest. If the church is the host, who is the church? The church is those in authority, with the power to make decisions. It will be the minister, the trustees or deacons, the Sunday School leader, the worship leader. The host's welcome will manifest itself in the choice of songs, the bilingualism or otherwise of newsletters and announcements, the simple words of welcome at the beginning of the service (Croeso), or of thanks to acknowledge a contribution to the service (Diolch). Once Welsh starts to be used in a worship service in a non-self-conscious way, or without attention being drawn to it, then the presence of Welsh in an English language context becomes normalised. Welsh has crossed the threshold as an invited guest.

The presence of Welsh in this context as a normalising force may trigger different reactions. Welsh speakers or learners already attending the church may experience a welcome to this hidden part of their identity, and it may feel 'safe' for them to start using their Welsh in church. If a speaker from the front 'signals' that they speak Welsh, and that Welsh is welcome in this space, then a Welsh-speaking member of the congregation may feel brave enough to exchange some words in Welsh with that church leader. In this case, the congregation member is both host and guest. By having their Welsh-speaking identity welcomed, that person feels more fully welcomed or integrated into the church.

On the other hand, when Welsh crosses the threshold, monolingual English speakers may experience this as a threat. They may feel excluded

from communal worship if a song or response is available exclusively in Welsh, or they may feel excluded from conversations. If this happens, the host may withdraw their hospitality, and start to manifest hostility instead. Almost certainly, there will be a struggle to try to maintain the upper hand in the host-guest relationship, by defining and restricting the parameters within which Welsh can cross the threshold, and by defining and restricting the areas of the host's 'house' it is free to inhabit.

If, however, the initial foray over the threshold goes well, then perhaps a renegotiation of power boundaries can begin. Hospitality may become more radical — after all, true hospitality 'challenges and confuses margins and centre'.[18] In student B's words, Welsh becomes 'not a noticeable add-in, but expected'. This is the point at which the 'understanding space' needs to be consciously established, and is perhaps the second stage of the process. Welsh language speakers and learners may become part of the decision-making structures themselves, having a say in planning and participating in worship, but such structures are unlikely to operate in Welsh as the presence of even one non-Welsh speaker forces the whole group to revert to the common language of English. Thus an 'understanding space' within the church in which the Welsh language can flourish is essential, and it is less likely to arouse hostility if it is initiated by an English speaker who has learned Welsh. Sometimes, the person who lives on the threshold is the best person to initiate radical hospitality, and may be perceived as less of a threat by both camps. However, there is no circumventing the fact that such 'understanding spaces' constitute a second threshold which cannot be crossed without the ability to communicate in Welsh. Of course, a church could further demonstrate its commitment to such hospitality by investing in translation equipment, and it may be really important to do so — because the 'understanding space' allows the guest who has gained access to gain valuable understanding of their host's cultural life.

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[18] Paul Cloke and Mike Pears, *Mission in Marginal Places: The Theory* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2016), p. 131.

Prophecy, Protest and Public Theology: The Relevance of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Prophetic Mandate in Today's Post-truth World

Joshua T. Searle

German pastor, theologian and martyr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945), maintained that in situations of rampant injustice, Christians are commanded by Christ to love their neighbour by taking a stand against evil. Bonhoeffer's life and legacy remind us that Christian compassion is obliged to express itself in protest, active resistance and civil disobedience — in other words, by 'putting a spoke in the wheel of injustice'. In this article I will explore how Bonhoeffer's life and legacy can help Christians to discover their public witness to the world in terms of prophetic protest.

Keywords

Bonhoeffer; prophecy; protest; post-truth

Introduction

Bonhoeffer maintained that in situations of rampant injustice, Christians are commanded by Christ to love their neighbour by taking a stand against evil. Bonhoeffer's costly discipleship teaches us to guard against our natural tendency to think about compassion in romanticised or sentimentalised terms. Jesus's compassion, Bonhoeffer noted, was not expressed in sentimental platitudes. As well as offering comfort to those who suffer, Christian compassion also includes moral courage in order to resist evil.[1] Through his experience of resisting Hitler, Bonhoeffer understood that to be compassionate in a context of corruption, injustice and the lies and fabrications of a state-controlled media meant engaging in spiritual warfare. Loving one's neighbour was a matter of casting down strongholds through prayer and prophetic engagement with the principalities and powers, which enslave and denigrate people. Deeds of mercy needed to be combined with prophetic acts on behalf of justice. Walter Wink maintained that 'we cannot speak of love and at the same time be part of institutional structures that

[1] Joshua T. Searle, *Theology After Christendom: Forming Prophets for a Post-Christian World* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018), p. 138.

perpetuate injustice'.[2] Christian compassion does not just motivate us to pull bodies out of the water; it also induces us to go upstream, find out who is pushing them into the river and to resist evil in the name of Christ.[3] Bonhoeffer's life and legacy remind us that Christian compassion is obliged to express itself in protest, active resistance, and civil disobedience — in other words, by 'putting a spoke in the wheel of injustice'.[4] In this article I will explore how Bonhoeffer's life and legacy can help Christians to discover their public witness to the world in terms of prophetic protest.

Bonhoeffer the Prophet

What do we mean when we refer to Bonhoeffer as a prophet? Prophecy is a term that has been so universally misunderstood by Christians that when a genuinely prophetic word is spoken, most people are unable to perceive it. Prophecy has been cheapened and demeaned by those who associate it with bizarre speculation about the end times. It thus needs to be said at the outset that true prophecy has nothing to do with speculative ferment that indulges in biblical code-cracking or date-setting for Doomsday. Prophecy has nothing to do with facile speculations that attempt to find specious connections between the apocalyptic Beast (Revelation 13) and prominent political or religious leaders. Despite all the online ferment and far-fetched conspiracy theories, there is nothing prophetic about trying to identify the Antichrist and the False Prophet with Pope Francis, Paul McCartney or the European Union. Prophecy is not about trying to set out a mechanical itinerary of future events.[5]

The truly prophetic figure, by contrast, is someone who is aware of the spiritual forces acting in history and who knows all the possibilities contained within the infinite sphere of the effective action of God for whom all things are possible. The true goal of biblical prophecy, as Sergei Bulgakov (1871–1944) pointed out, is 'to indicate what is possible and to deflect what should not be, by an appeal to repentance and courage'.[6] Prophecy is not a matter of passive expectation, but of creative realisation. Nikolai Berdyaev (1874–1948) concurred that it 'is not prediction, it is not a forecasting of events. Rather, it is the vision which apprehends things present in the light of their eternal issues. It is apocalyptic, it is an unveiling.'[7] The prophet

[2] Walter Wink, *The Powers that Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), p. 153.
[3] Joshua T. Searle and Mykhailo N. Cherenkov, *A Future and a Hope: Mission, Theological Education and the Transformation of Post-Soviet Society* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), p. 14.
[4] Renate Wind, *Dem Rad in die Speichen fallen: die Lebensgeschichte des Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlag-Haus, 2006).
[5] Joshua T. Searle, *Theology After Christendom*, pp. 26–27.
[6] Sergius Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb*, trans. by Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 246.
[7] George Seaver, *Nicolas Berdyaev: An Introduction to His Thought* (London: J. Clarke, 1950), p. 119.

envisages the future across the boundaries of the present, but they see only as one looking through a glass darkly. The prophet views present realities *sub specie aeternitatis* — from the perspective of eternity. In the words of Berdyaev, the prophet 'glimpses the mystical realities that lie behind particular historical events and disclose their limited objectives with the religious meaning of the world'.[8] Bonhoeffer was a prophet to the extent that he was endowed with faculties of spiritual perception that made visible the savagery of demonic spirits that had incarnated themselves within the 'banality of evil' that characterised the everyday existence and the institutions of Nazi Germany.[9] Bonhoeffer had a rare gift of being able to penetrate beyond the façade of superficial social reality and to bring to light the true nature of the issues. Reality, for Bonhoeffer, was fundamentally spiritual. He recognised, in common with some of the finest minds in history from Plato to Kant, that there is a deeper reality beyond the visible appearance of physical things and historical events. Reality should therefore not be conflated with mere appearance and spectacle — and certainly not with banal or triumphalist political sentiment, such as the trite clichés of Nazism. With the clarity of his prophetic insight Bonhoeffer thus understood that the Nazi Party signified not only a pathological political ideology, but also symbolised or embodied an underlying spiritual and metaphysical disease.[10]

In a world like ours today, in which lying has become a form of art and deceit constitutes the default mode of social reality, it is very difficult to live in the truth. Since social reality is saturated in falsehood and superficiality, it takes sustained effort and constant vigilance to live in the depth of truth. Truthful speech is distrusted and even despised by the majority of people because it threatens to expose the foundation of lies upon which social conventions and political institutions repose. Berdyaev claimed that 'the pure, undistorted, disinterested truth of Christianity could endanger the very existence of the world. For worldly societies and civilizations, Christian truth is like a consuming fire descending from heaven.'[11]

The early twentieth century existentialist philosophy of Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), with which Bonhoeffer was deeply acquainted,[12] compellingly demonstrated that for individuals it is far easier and more comforting to live a lie than to live the

[8] Nikolai Berdyaev, *Sub Specie Aeternitatis ili s Tochki Zrenia Vechnosti* (Moscow: T8RUGRAM, 2018), p. 8.
[9] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Penguin, 1963).
[10] The term, 'metaphysical disease', is taken from E. F. Schumacher, *Small is Beautiful* (London: Sphere, 1974), p. 83.
[11] Nikolai Berdyaev, *Istina i Otkrovenie* (Moscow: T8RUGRAM, 2018), p. 32.
[12] Peter Frick, *Understanding Bonhoeffer* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), pp. 138–40.

truth.[13] As Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) put it, the gospel presents every human being with a basic choice: either to choose the authentic existence of walking in the truth with Christ (cf. 3 John 1:4) or to live an inauthentic existence in which we lose ourselves to the trivial distractions of entertainment and superficiality.[14] Will we live life with Christ or without Christ? One of the aims of the prophet is to empower people to live with the vulnerability and risk to which we expose ourselves when we live in a condition of authentic Christian freedom. The prophet enables us to protest against the blind acceptance of traditions and customs that are inspired by what Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) called the 'herd instinct' (*Herdentrieb*)[15] that governs the collective consciousness. In contemporary social and political discourse this impulse is sometimes labelled 'public opinion' or the 'will of the people'.

The Emergence of a New Kind of Christianity

What marks Bonhoeffer out as a prophet, rather than as a mere theologian or social commentator, is his ability to see beyond the superficial events of their times and to perceive the raging abyss that was surging beneath the surface of world history. He was prophetic to the extent that he understood that the gospel required Christians not to withdraw from society, but to express their solidarity with the world in all its fallenness and suffering.[16] This conviction lies behind Bonhoeffer's anticipation of the emergence of a new expression of a world-orientated Christianity.[17] In other words, Bonhoeffer was working out a new kind of theology that would be appropriate for an emerging post-Christian age. With the passion, intensity and devotion of a prophet, Bonhoeffer saw that Christianity was no longer the dominant force in contemporary society. He did not preach 'peace, peace', when there was no peace and he asked searching questions about what this new reality meant for Christian existence in a post-Christian world.[18]

In a letter to his friend Eberhard Bethge (1909–2000), Bonhoeffer wrote from his prison cell on 30 April 1944 that

[13] John Macquarrie, *An Existentialist Theology* (London: SCM, 1960), p. 22.
[14] Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1934), p. 84.
[15] Günter Abel, *Nietzsche: die Dynamik der Willen zur Macht und die ewige Wiederkehr* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), p. 54.
[16] Bonhoeffer, in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 6: Ethics*, ed. by Clifford J. Green (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2009), p. 258.
[17] Bonhoeffer, in *Ethics*, ed. by Green, p. 256.
[18] Ralf K. Wüstenberg, *A Theology of Life: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Religionless Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

> what is bothering me incessantly is the question of what Christianity really is, or indeed who Christ really is, for us today […] We are moving towards a completely religionless time; people as they are now simply cannot be religious any more. Even those who honestly describe themselves as "religious" do not in the least act up to it, and so they presumably mean something quite different by "religious" […] and if therefore man becomes radically religionless — and I think that that is already more or less the case […] what does that mean for Christianity?[19]

Bonhoeffer realised ahead of his time the radical implications for Christian existence of the demise of bourgeois religiosity, which Kierkegaard had called 'Sunday Christianity'.[20] Bonhoeffer's aim was to expound a vision of theology that recognised that Christ was Lord not just of religion or of church symbols and rituals, but of the whole of life. As Bonhoeffer put it, 'Christ is no longer an object of religion, but something quite different, really the Lord of the world.'[21] Out of this conviction, Bonhoeffer rejected the fallacy of dividing the world into its sacred and secular dimensions. Bonhoeffer maintained that

> there are not two realities, but only one reality, and that is God's reality revealed in Christ in the reality of the world. Partaking in Christ, we stand at the same time in the reality of God and in the reality of the world […] Because this is so, the theme of two realms, which has dominated the history of the church again and again is foreign to the New Testament.[22]

One of the key themes that connects the scattered fragments of Bonhoeffer's theological writings is Christ's solidarity with the world in its immeasurable suffering. 'The world', Bonhoeffer affirmed, 'is not divided into parts between Christ and the devil, it is the holistic world of Christ, whether or not the world itself knows this.'[23] Accordingly, Bonhoeffer insisted that faith should be joined to every sphere of life, including politics, business and the media, as well as religion and education. Faith cannot be confined to private morality or to church attendance, but the rule of Christ should be extended to all of life in recognition that 'the world is the Lord's and all that is therein' (Psalm 24:1).

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[19] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), p. 279.
[20] See chapter 4 of John Heywood Thomas, *The Legacy of Kierkegaard* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012).
[21] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, p. 281.
[22] Bonhoeffer, quoted in David M. Gides, *Pacifism, Just War, and Tyrannicide: Bonhoeffer's Church-World Theology and His Changing Forms of Political Thinking and Involvement* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), p. 334.
[23] Bonhoeffer, quoted in John D. Godsey, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015), p. 215.

Bonhoeffer's Critique of Cheap Grace as a Prophetic Challenge

As is well known, Bonhoeffer criticised the tendency of Christians to view their faith mainly in terms of intellectual fidelity to a system of beliefs. He called this 'cheap grace'.[24] In Bonhoeffer's view, as well as impoverishing the spiritual lives of individual Christians, cheap grace had consequences that extended even beyond the key issue of personal discipleship; this kind of cheap grace also contributed to the rise of Hitler and the Nazis in Germany.[25] Cheap grace had tilled the spiritual soil of the German nation, thus creating a fertile breeding ground for the ideological perversions and theological blasphemies of Nazism. By reducing Christianity to a private, pietistic religion of salvation from sin that had no necessary material connection with the believer's life, character or conduct, the vast majority of German Christians were both morally and spiritually unequipped to resist Hitler.[26] Moreover, since most German Christians had no tradition of thinking theologically or biblically about political events, many Christians even accepted Hitler's rise to power as 'the will of God'. Although genocide was an integral part of Nazi ideology, these Christians supported Hitler because he had promised to restore law and order and traditional family values after the chaos and perceived decadence of Weimar Germany.[27]

Bonhoeffer recognised that the rupture between life and salvation, between faith and obedience, created by 'cheap grace', had led to the enfeeblement of Christianity's prophetic witness to the world. As a result of cheap grace, the differences between born-again Christians and the general population tend to be primarily cosmetic, concerning matters of doctrine, worldview and behaviour. At the deeper, structural level of consciousness and spiritual formation, many Christians are just as captive to the anti-gospel forces of consumerism, and are just as indifferent to the pain of the world as everyone else. Thus, as was the case in Bonhoeffer's time, the response of many Christians today to salient issues that emerge from the public sphere is often devoid of a theological basis and sometimes directly contradicts fundamental biblical-theological principles of truth-telling, humility, honesty and integrity — one thinks, for example, of the overwhelming support of evangelicals for Donald Trump or the finding that Anglican

[24] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), pp. 43–45.
[25] Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 386.
[26] Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, pp. 57–59.
[27] Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Christians in the UK were significantly more likely to vote for Brexit than the rest of the population.[28]

Prophets are thus needed in the church today in order to expose the hypocrisy of traditional so-called 'family values', which upon closer reflection, turn out to be disturbingly anti-Christian. Authoritarian regimes from Hitler's Germany to Putin's Russia offer examples of how demonic ideologies can be cloaked in the garb of traditional family values — expressed in the Nazi slogan of *Kinder-Küche-Kirche* (Children-Kitchen-Church).[29] Tragically, we also witness how some Christians today can be deceived into supporting fascist populist parties because they pursue their dehumanising agendas under the banner of the promotion of 'traditional values'.[30] This helps to explain why people who self-identify as evangelical Christians are disproportionately well represented in right-wing political organisations, such as the Republican Party in the USA, the UK Conservative Party, the UK Independence Party, and more extreme groups like Britain First and the British National Party.[31] Similarly, some Christians can be duped into supporting authoritarian political regimes that purport to impose traditional 'Christian' morality by passing legislation that discriminates against homosexuals. Such legislation may have a thin veneer of Christianity, but in fact contravenes the gospel imperative of compassion, which upholds the dignity and sanctity of all people, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion or sexuality.

'Only a Suffering God Can Help Us Now'

As well as his world-affirming vision of Christianity, Bonhoeffer's prophetic significance also consists in his radical reorientation of theology towards the suffering of God. This tendency had a long pedigree in German theology that stretched back to Martin Luther (1483–1546), who formulated a robust and influential 'theology of the cross' (*theologia crucis*),[32] but Bonhoeffer revived this emphasis and gave it a powerful expression for the time of crisis

[28] Greg Smith and Linda Woodhead claim to have found that 81 percent of American evangelicals supported Donald Trump in the 2016 US presidential election and that 66 percent of Anglicans in the UK voted leave in the 2016 EU Referendum. See Smith and Woodhead, 'Religion and Brexit: populism and the Church of England', *Religion, State & Society*, 46 (2018): 206–223. For more on evangelicals' support for the right-wing nativism of Donald Trump, see Ben Howe, *The Immoral Majority: Why Evangelicals Chose Political Power over Christian Values* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2019).

[29] Mary Fulbrook, *A History of Germany 1918–2014: The Divided Nation* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), p. 66.

[30] Searle, *Theology After Christendom*, p. 57.

[31] On the UK context, see Andrea C. Hatcher, *Political and Religious Identities of British Evangelicals* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), p. 180; on the link between evangelical beliefs and right-wing politics in the USA, see Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York: Guilford Press, 1995), pp. 173–76.

[32] Alister E. McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 1985).

in which he lived. Writing from his prison cell, where he was being held by the Gestapo, Bonhoeffer famously claimed that 'only a suffering God can help us now'.[33] To truly follow Christ meant incurring not reward, honour and success, but anxiety, solitude, shame and disgrace.[34]

Bonhoeffer rejected the superficial triumphalism of official Christianity in Germany in the 1930s, which he associated with the vulgar worship of success that he regarded as one of the characteristics of the evil Nazi regime. Instead, he reinstated suffering, rather than triumphalism as the essence of the Christian life. In the *Ethics* Bonhoeffer wrote that

> the cross is not random suffering, but necessary suffering. The cross is not suffering that stems from natural existence; it is suffering that comes from being Christian […] A Christianity that no longer took discipleship seriously remade the gospel into a solace of cheap grace.[35]

By demonstrating solidarity with the world in its suffering, Christian churches, as expressions of the *Communio Sanctorum* on Earth, can become a catalyst for humanising forces, such as compassion, dignity, respect and courtesy. Bonhoeffer teaches us that the global church needs a concentrated, focused and coordinated strategy to overcome the lies, deceit and inhumanity that characterises so much of our public life. Bonhoeffer realised long ago that meeting in church buildings on Sunday mornings and singing escapist songs that make vacuous professions of romantic love to Jesus will not change the world, but will merely produce cheap faith and perpetuate a religious subculture that widens the gulf between faith and life.[36]

In the world today we are witnessing the emergence of a new generation of spiritual seekers, who are moved not by the propositional postulates of dogmatic theology, but by the spiritual reality of lived experience and transformed humanity.[37] As Harvey Cox puts it, 'The experience *of* the divine is displacing theories *about* it.'[38] Organised forms of Christianity are declining. In the UK alone, hundreds of church buildings have been sold off and converted into carpet warehouses, apartment blocks, mosques, New Age centers, or even nightclubs.[39] The hierarchical structures of crumbling church institutions and educational establishments are

[33] Bonhoeffer, quoted in *Holocaust Theology: A Reader*, ed. by Dan Cohn-Sherbok (New York: New York University Press, 2002), p. 149.
[34] Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (London: SCM, 1967), p. 361.
[35] Bonhoeffer, quoted in Peter Frick, 'The Imitatio Christi of Thomas à Kempis and Dietrich Bonhoeffer', in *Bonhoeffer's Intellectual Formation: Theology and Philosophy in His Thought*, ed. by P. Frick (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), pp. 31–52 (p. 43).
[36] Searle, *Theology After Christendom*, p. 38.
[37] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 506.
[38] Harvey Cox, *The Future of Faith* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011), p. 20.
[39] Andrew Brown and Linda Woodhead, *That Was The Church That Was: How the Church of England Lost the English People* (London: Bloomsbury Continuum, 2016).

becoming more defective, dysfunctional and irrelevant in our contemporary post-Christian world, precisely as Bonhoeffer said they would.

Conclusion: The Coming of Age of Bonhoeffer's Prophetic Vision

For these reasons I am persuaded that Bonhoeffer's costly witness is as relevant and urgent now as it was at any time since the Nazi era. In today's world of Brexit, Putin, Trump, Orban, Bolsonaro, Erdogan and other populist 'strong men', fascism seems to be making a comeback. Fascism as a political ideology may have been universally discredited after 1945. Yet the spirit of fascism has been dormant and is now beginning to rise again as the catastrophes of the Second World War and the Holocaust recede further and further into the historical memory. Bonhoeffer's experience of the popular appeal of Nazism made him realise that democracy does not always harmonise with freedom. Under the spell of Nazism, the German masses had chosen to follow the Führer with absolute devotion. After the political chaos and economic disasters of the Weimar Republic, the mass of people cared not for constitutional liberty and abstract rights, but for material prosperity and a sense of restored national greatness. Therefore, when a fascist strongman, Adolf Hitler, emerged with a promise to 'make Germany great again', millions of Germans, including the vast majority of German Christians, supported him. If Bonhoeffer were here today, it seems that he would probably recognise our situation in which a global financial crisis has generated a resurgence of populist strongmen, whose promises to restore 'traditional family values' and 'national greatness', have gained mass support. Given these developments, Bonhoeffer would probably remark that the world today was living through a dangerous era of dehumanisation and God-forsakenness.

The signs of our present times indicate that the world is on the brink of a radical, revolutionary change. With the onset of the global coronavirus pandemic of 2020, it seems that we are witnessing the dawning of a new era in which there will not be a return to normality as we have known it, which brings huge opportunities for Christian witness to the world, but also many challenges. The universal impression is that the world is experiencing a time of momentous change and social upheaval. The consequences of these changes for Christian faith in the world are, as yet, unknowable. But what is clear is that spiritual values are disintegrating under the constant assault of powerful dehumanising forces in today's society. In this new authoritarian age, a new world is coming into being — a world that Bonhoeffer, with his first-hand experience of the Nazi regime would have recognised. This is a world that is moved not by the Christian values of love, compassion and

solidarity, but by power, by the racial politics of *Blut und Boden* (blood and soil), and the demonic power of collective national identity and the media-fabricated 'will of the people'.[40] It is imperative that Christ's followers in the world today prepare for an enduring struggle in defence of gospel values, such as truth, freedom, dignity and compassion.

It has been observed that we are living in very harsh and vulgar times.[41] Insensitivity, meaninglessness and a prevailing sense of nihilism have rendered people indifferent to human suffering. In the words of two leading sociologists, we are witnessing 'unparalleled displays of human insensitivity'.[42] Society is stuffed with useless, valueless information about the most banal superficialities, which denote the tedious triviality and emptiness of mass culture and fabricated moral sentiment. Politics, too, is undergoing a period of crisis. Instead of noble sentiments, authentic communication and substantive policies that promote justice and peace, politics today is pervaded by feeble banalities. Dead clichés are uttered from lifeless mouths for the purpose of verbal manipulation of gullible consumer-electorates.

The devaluation of meaning and truth in political discourse is a disastrous phenomenon that goes largely unnoticed today. Politicians worry about the devaluation of currencies and stock markets; the devaluation of meaning and truth seems not to trouble them. This is perhaps unsurprising, considering that politics today is usually conducted under the banner of economics. Economic interests usually determine the ideologies of political parties and their policies. Under the domination of economics, the aspirational horizons of many politicians seem hardly to extend beyond the everlasting aggrandisement of GDP, regardless of the human and ecological costs. Yet the devaluation of reality incurs incalculable penalties. In an age of global pandemics, the degradation of the natural world through human exploitation,[43] and the growing appeal of populist demagogues throughout the world, the crisis assumes a spiritual, as well as a social and economic character.

We can only speculate what Bonhoeffer would make of all this, but I think he would say that the signs of the times betoken a crisis of compassion and the commencement of a new faithless age in which people have lost

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[40] Jean-Yves Camus and Nicolas Lebourg, *Far-Right Politics in Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2017), p. 17.

[41] Leading sociologists the late Zygmunt Bauman and Leonidas Donskis refer to the early twenty-first century as an 'age of modern barbarism'. See Bauman and Donskis, *Moral Blindness: The Loss of Sensitivity in Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), p. 139.

[42] Bauman and Donskis, *Moral Blindness*, p. 11.

[43] Bonhoeffer's theology has significant implications for contemporary environmental ethics, as Steven C. van den Heuvel argues in his book, *Bonhoeffer's Christocentric Theology and Fundamental Debates in Environmental Ethics*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017).

reliable criteria for distinguishing between love and hate, freedom and slavery, and truth and falsehood. Bonhoeffer's legacy gives us a shining example of how to follow Christ in dark times. Bonhoeffer's theology of solidarity and his insistence on the need for Christianity to extend beyond matters of personal piety has important implications for Christians today. For Bonhoeffer, Christian engagement with politics assumes the form of spiritual warfare and the casting down of strongholds through prophetic engagement with the *archai kai exousiai* (powers and principalities — Ephesians 6:12) which enslave and denigrate people. I think Bonhoeffer would challenge Christians today to face up fearlessly to the challenges of living in a 'post-truth' age in which deceitful politicians present their media-spun fabrications as 'alternative facts'.[44] To put it more positively, for Christians the goal of prophetic engagement with politics is to humanise the public space by upholding spiritual values of truth, integrity and solidarity. For Christians, such engagement is both a political mandate and a gospel-spiritual imperative.

To read the works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer is to be reminded of the gulf that exists between the prophetic-spiritual dynamism of the gospel message on the one hand, and the moribund institutionalism of many churches on the other. Bonhoeffer's writings contain the seeds of a new kind of Christianity that is radically orientated towards the world and which expresses the saving power of the gospel in the midst of the world in all its brokenness and sin. The world still awaits the emergence of Christianity not as a religion of private salvation, but as a gospel movement of universal, creative compassion.[45] This is a gospel that does not separate itself from the world, but expresses indefatigable solidarity with the world in its fallenness and suffering. My hope is that we can learn from Bonhoeffer in order to envision Christianity in precisely these terms.

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[44] Matthew d'Ancona, *Post-Truth: The New War on Truth and How to Fight Back* (London: Penguin, 2017).
[45] For more on this theme, see Joshua T. Searle, *Theology after Christendom: Forming Prophets for Mission in a Post-Christian World* (Eugene: Cascade, 2018).

Baptist Churches and Performative Arts: Building a Theological Case for an Unlikely Friendship in Mission

Henrikas Žukauskas

This article presents a case for looking at the relationship of art and mission from a Baptist perspective, especially focusing on performative or performing arts. I explore the possibility that the relationship of arts and mission is not an addition to the normal way of doing mission that can be considered or not, but rather reveals something fundamental and necessary. This attempt begins by juxtaposing two twentieth-century theologians, one a French Catholic, Yves Congar, and one an American Baptist, James Wm McClendon Jr. By focusing on Congar's thoughts about how to engage modern unbelief and McClendon's ideas of mission and university, I will bring forth a correlation. Following this I will turn to my own missionary context, post-Soviet Lithuania and the arts scene of our post-totalitarian society as a third conversation partner. Would a developed relation between performative arts and the theology of the Holy Spirit bring some necessary insights for mission in a post-Soviet context?

Keywords

Arts; mission; Pneumatology; post-Soviet; Lithuania; Yves Congar; James Wm McClendon Jr.

Yves Congar: Theological Patterns of Engagement

The French Catholic theologian Yves Congar (1904–1984) is important for my article in several ways. First, I am from a country where most of the citizens identify themselves as Catholics; the Roman Catholic Church remained an institutional force to reckon with even throughout Soviet times. But it is not only the theological logic behind engagement with the surrounding culture that is interesting, but also the theology of engagement more generally. Congar, in this case, would be the first on any list as a theologian who wrote on ecumenism, reform and the theology of lay people in the church. Sometimes when in academic circles I would — as a Lithuanian Baptist home missionary — mention that I was studying Yves Congar. Several questions would be immediately asked. To say that my interest was because Lithuania is a predominately Catholic country would

not be an adequate answer. At a deeper level, I have sought to engage with Yves Congar's *Dialogue Between Christians*.[1]

While overviewing his life journey and his collaborations in ecumenical work, Congar points out an interesting shift which occurred in his theological pilgrimage. He points to life-shaping circumstances in this journey and especially marks out the significance of this early *Dialogue,* an article from 1935. This was 'a theological tailpiece to an enquiry into the causes of unbelief', which followed a three-year-long research project of his colleagues in a French Catholic journal *La Vie Intellectuelle*.[2] This article raised a question about the responsibility of Christians and the church for the prevalence of modern unbelief. When reflecting on that article some thirty years on, Congar explains that he initially sought to address the failure of the church to present to humanity a face which would conform to the Gospel and tradition. Thus, this early response to unbelief would — as he saw it — be through a renewal of the view of the church, which would transcend the juridical idea of it.[3] However, in *Dialogue Between Christians*, he suggests a further 'transcendence'. He looks at something more radical than the idea of the church; this was the very notion of faith and the correlative idea of revelation. He writes as follows:

> It is the idea of God as the living God which is the indissoluble link in Judaeo-Christian revelation between theology, anthropology and cosmology, the living God, man and the world! The greatest obstacle which men encounter today on the road to faith is in fact the lack of any credible demonstrable connection between faith in God and the prospect of his reign on one hand, and man and terrestrial creation on the other. There is a pressing need for a clear vision and demonstration of the intimate connection which these realities have with one another as the most effective answer to the reasons for modern unbelief.[4]

This long section in Congar had several points of appeal for me. First, the quotation was set in a work on ecumenical collaboration. Consequently, its 'transcending' character allows a Baptist to read it as a *rapprochement*. Then, second, it is not merely ecumenical in a churchly sense, but also a move deeper into 'the very notion of faith', or 'the correlative idea of revelation'. This leaves to one side not merely a juridical idea of the church, which would focus the discussion on accepting the claims of the institution of the Catholic Church, but the discussion of the church altogether. The Catholic claims are not thus dismissed, but there is a move towards the central tenets of Christian belief. This might help reassess the claims

[1] Yves Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians: Catholic Contributions to Ecumenism* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966).
[2] Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, p. 22. The original article is Yves Congar, 'Une conclusion théologique à la enquête sur les raisons actuelles de l'incroyance', *La Vie Intellectuelle*, 37, no. 2 (1935): 214–249.
[3] Congar, *Dialogue Between Christians*, p. 23.
[4] Ibid.

concerning the institution at a later juncture, if still necessary, but in a different light. Third, it is made clear that what persists in his life journey is the desire to address the causes of the modern prevalence of unbelief.[5] This invites and creates the possibility of looking at the underlying logic of this appeal.

For Congar, the problem of understanding the causes of unbelief, or a loss of a relationship with God (one might say, a vertical dimension) is addressed by identifying and demonstrating links between God, creation and humanity (including the horizontal dimension). Furthermore, these connections are to be shown as 'intimate' for the answer to be 'most effective'. These two notions evoke further questions for a Baptist missionary. What would 'effective' mean in the light of a discussion about coercive claims made by the institution of the church in engaging the culture? Or how would an issue of intimacy be articulated in the light of an understanding of divine action in and through the church, and with regard to the issue of mediation of that action? Immediacy and directness of experience of encounter with God in the Spirit, important aspects for a Baptist believer, link with Congar's emphasis on the living God. Yet, there is more to Congar's proposal than immediately meets the eye. Some nuances point to its underlying logic. First, he actually insists on addressing the causes of unbelief and not merely unbelief as such, or as he has it in his early, ecclesiological work, collective causes. This is the crux of his relation between 'intimate' and 'effective'. These collective causes included a failure on the part of the church. Congar pointed to the lack of incarnation of faith through the lack of involvement by the church in all of human experience and activity.[6] It is thus a Christological argument. The intimate interweaving of realities, the power to convince, on the other hand, anticipate the development of the theology of the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology).[7] This posits an appeal but also a claim for a Baptist theologian–missionary as to the implications of belief in the Trinity for one's missionary engagement.

While Congar moved from ecclesiology, the engagement of the church is still central to his approach. In the earlier work he referred to it as the 'politics of presence', that is, the (public) presence in the culture of signs of faith, which point to Christ,[8] and manifest God's desire for the all-

[5] For more on this see also Gabriel Flynn, 'The Role of Unbelief in the Theology of Yves Congar', *New Blackfriars*, 85.998 (2004): 426–443.

[6] See Yves Congar, 'Une conclusion théologique', and Jürgen Mettepenningen, *Nouvelle Théologie – New Theology: Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2010), pp. 43–45.

[7] I argue for this kind of 'logic' to Congar's work as a whole in my thesis, Henrikas Žukauskas, 'The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Relation God–World in the Theology of Yves Congar' (doctoral thesis, Vrije Universiteit, 2018), available online https://research.vu.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/61554392/complete+dissertation.pdf.

[8] Congar, 'Une conclusion', p. 248.

embracing fullness of human existence.[9] In his early work, Congar called for the re-creation of a milieu that is favourable to faith and ultimately to human existence. This preoccupation with milieu persisted in his later work. So, in *Tradition and Traditions* he says, 'Tradition as coextensive and fundamentally identified with the Christian life as handed on in the Church since the time of the apostles — is the proper milieu of faith.'[10] This 'Tradition' is a milieu in which ideas and attitudes are communicated in a living synthesis that has a logic of its own, not the logic of words, but the logic of action.[11] To articulate the role of action in this understanding of living tradition would require more space than this article affords, but it is significant to add that the Holy Spirit is the 'Transcendent Subject' of Tradition.[12] For our purposes here, however, it is interesting to note that in terms of public engagement, visible in the early article, the notion of milieu is less prominent. On the other hand, the identification of the logic of action reasserts the 'politics of presence', with the Holy Spirit as its subject. However, to what kind of society would this politics lead? Also, would a disruption of such a milieu mean that faith is not formed and then the action of the Holy Spirit is limited?

There is a challenge to Baptists who claim that they live without traditions, even if they would probably agree with Congar on the importance of lived, that is performed, faith.[13] A need to respond to this challenge, in my view, arises from the appeal concerning how to address unbelief. A truly effective response, to return to the initial quotation from Congar, lies in a proposed vision of the unveiling of God, which interweaves three books: the

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[9] While primarily incarnational and thus Christological, the fullness also refers to the catholicity or universality of faith. The loss of visibility, for Congar, referring to Thomas Aquinas, was the loss of a sign which allowed one to see what to believe (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q 178, A 1, 2nd rev. edn, trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1920), online edition copyright by Kevin Knight http://www.newadvent.org/summa/3178.htm [accessed 10 April 2015]). In signs God presented humans with a human face. In this way, everything truly human was transfigured and assumed into Christ by the Spirit. Thus, it anticipated the development of Pneumatology.

[10] In Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions: An Historical and Theological Essay* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 369.

[11] Ibid., pp. 361–375. See especially his discussion about the notion of tradition and action as proposed by Maurice Blondel, pp. 363–368.

[12] Ibid., p. 338. Congar, *Meaning of Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004) pp. 30–31 quotes Blondel: 'Tradition is the progressive understanding of the riches possessed objectively from the beginning of Christianity, held and enjoyed in a truly Christian spirit, and transformed by reflection from "something lived implicitly into something known explicitly".' He refers to Maurice Blondel, 'Histoire et Dogme: les lacunes de l'exégèse modern', *La Quinzaine,* 56 (January and February 1904): 145–67, 349–73, 433–58. English translation, Alexander Dru, and Illtyd Trethowan, *The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1994).

[13] Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, p. 493. Congar's general challenge to theology (and most of all to Protestants) is as follows — it has to gain ground on two points: 'First, there is the relation of the Church to Christ and what he did during his life on earth. Secondly, the union between the Church and the Holy Spirit, and the action of the Spirit in the Church's history […] the elaboration of a more satisfactory doctrine of the Spirit's activity in the *Church* as such will be a necessary condition for a more adequate theology of Tradition.'

Scriptures, the human person, and the book of creation.[14] Such an approach tends to resist the reduction of the manifestation of God to Scriptures and looks for 'the intermediary for every communication of God', and affirms that God manifests and communicates not only in words and ideas, but also in realities.[15] This latter point emphasises the reality wherein the activity of God and humanity interweave. However, the question of what kind of practice is presumed by this approach is not clarified. Is it a retreat to an ecclesial practice or real engagement with the society? Furthermore, does such a presentation of the vision also apply to the contexts where ecclesial life and cultural life have suffered the attempts of dismantling, as in former Soviet republics? And then, in this case, is the vision sufficient and effective enough to address the situation, and is it relevant in a situation of forced secularisation?

James Wm McClendon Jr: Patterns of Intimacy and Delight

Before directly addressing the Lithuanian context, I turn to the insights of the North American baptist (he spoke of small 'b' Baptist, to indicate a stream of church life rather than a denomination) theologian James William McClendon Jr (1924–2000). During my studies in the International Baptist Theological Seminary when it was based in Prague, McClendon's works helped myself and others to make sense of and articulate some of our baptist convictions, and so here I briefly turn to his work to explore the resonance of baptist[16] experiences with Congar's vision. It is not my intention to provide a thorough juxtaposition but to discern some possibilities of encounter that can appeal to a baptist missionary.

The second volume of McClendon's Systematic Theology, *Doctrine*, has three parts and the third is called 'The Fellowship of the Spirit'. He concludes it with a section 'The End of Mission'.[17] Towards its conclusion he turns to an unusual piece of evidence to convince those who are alien to or disillusioned with the missionary and transformative character of the baptist movement. McClendon (pointing to the practice of worship as an evidence) finishes the section with an account of singing a song commonly used in baptist assemblies: 'What a fellowship, what a joy divine, Leaning on the everlasting arms […].'[18] The performance of the song reminds me of the logic of action I have already encountered in Congar. But there is an even

[14] This is explicitly articulated in Yves Congar, *Tradition and Traditions*, p. 65.
[15] Ibid., p. 67.
[16] In this section, I follow McClendon in using the small 'b' Baptist to refer to a stance in church life rather than to the particular denomination.
[17] James Wm McClendon Jr, *Doctrine: Systematic Theology, Volume 2* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011), pp. 439–454.
[18] McClendon, *Doctrine*, p. 452.

deeper connection. For McClendon, 'joy divine' and 'fellowship' are 'the two very ends of the Spirit mission'.[19] Experienced in worship, would they (joy and fellowship) resonate with Congar's idea of 'intimate connections' between the realities, and present a reality to be experienced (in practice) beyond mere vision?

This might not only explain the appeal a baptist may feel for a vision like Congar's, but also articulate a baptist perspective and possible contribution. For McClendon, this joy or ecstasy and fellowship together constitute the intimacy of the final eschatological state. But it already begins in the practice of the church. This oneness to which the activity of the Spirit is directed means the church is to be the church of the Spirit, aimed 'not at sectarian narrowness or dogmatic rigidity or organizational evolvement but at syzygy or wholeness'.[20] This already invokes 'joy', mentioned earlier, but also points to a place for baptists. Thus, Christianity cannot be complete without this 'vast, amorphous ecclesial type, the baptist'.[21] But the fulfilment is wider than ecclesial. McClendon uses the imagery of 'syzygic' or sexual unity from Russian philosopher Vladimir Sergeyevich Solovyov.[22] The point is that love (in this case conjugal) can achieve its fullness only with the transformation of its whole environment. While this happens through sacrifice, it is not at the expense of the individuality of all its members. The organism (embracing, but not reduced to political, religious organisms) is thus completed as it completes individuals, through the transformative mission of the Spirit.[23]

This approach seems to connect with what Congar was aiming at and could explain the appeal to baptists, but what could be a baptist contribution? This 'ecstasy and fellowship' for McClendon are 'the distinguishing marks of the Spirit of God', to be classed under what he calls providential signs, as distinguished from historic and remembering signs.[24] For one thing, they comply with what Congar was referring to when writing about God communicating in realities. But, furthermore, he brings these about in discussing the Pentecostal experience of the Spirit.[25] It is significant that the argument is made through 'the practice of worship in these communities […] accessible to any who will train their ear to its inner music'.[26] But as I read

[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., p. 450.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Alexander Schmemann, ed., *Ultimate Questions; An Anthology of Modern Russian Religious Thought*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965), pp. 73–134.
[23] McClendon, *Doctrine*, p. 449.
[24] Ibid., 438. If historic signs refer to events such as the Exodus, Easter and Pentecost, and remembering signs refer to baptism and preaching, providential signs are the manifestations of God in one's personal or communal journey, revealing the relevance of the Gospel to a particular circumstance.
[25] Ibid., p. 437.
[26] Ibid., p. 451.

this from the Lithuanian context it highlights a sovereign action of the Spirit — as happened with the collapse of the Soviet Union when people also came to faith without or outside the ecclesial milieus, which were intentionally dismantled. And this posits the question of the relation of the Spirit and action, or milieu, differently.

Before considering Lithuania, I will briefly turn here to the last chapter of McClendon's third volume of systematic theology, *Witness*, entitled 'Theology and the University'.[27] It will not only strengthen the affinity with Congar's vision of addressing the causes of unbelief, but also will help to introduce the role of the arts. McClendon's aim in this section is to argue for the crucial role of theology in the university and for university as a meeting place of 'the two cultures, that of the gospel and that of the world'.[28] It allows us to return to the issue of milieu raised earlier and elaborate on it, this time with a spatial imagery. McClendon speaks about the two-sided conversation wherein the church engages the world, and for McClendon one aspect of this is through theology in the context of university. Building on an image of the gallery in old American towns, where family members would engage in friendly conversations with passers-by, it culminates in the '*loggia* or public arcade of Italian Renaissance cities'.[29] While the image is doubtlessly alluring, it is not easily applicable to the post-Soviet context. Perhaps an action or performance itself could be a milieu where milieus are destroyed?

One would have to read the whole section to capture the openness and engagement among the disciplines and theology which McClendon proposes. Its scope definitely measures up to Congar's. But there is one specific contribution which helps elaborate on the issue of milieu and action. McClendon argues for the inclusion and the necessary role of theology alongside the arts and sciences, with a section pointedly called 'arts and sciences theologically awake'.[30] First, this allows us to see that a theological look at action, like the performance of song, to which I referred earlier, is not limited to a church practice. There is a kind of engagement through a practice of art. McClendon uses the practice, or art, to reveal a theological rationale within it and make a case for theology among the 'liberal arts'. This is because, according to McClendon, the arts refer to the world as it is but also to the imagination of what the world might be. Here he moves from general arts to art. So art 'employs existing conventions (symbols?) in creative *action*

[27] James Wm McClendon Jr, *Witness: Systematic Theology, Volume 3* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), pp. 387–420.
[28] McClendon, *Witness*, pp. 388, 387. A big part of McClendon's argument is historic and concerns the origins of universities, contending that 'the church gave a precious gift to the culture: the university itself was that gift' (p. 391).
[29] Ibid., p. 412.
[30] Ibid., p. 413.

whose dual *reference* is *affectively* conveyed to its audience'.[31] While here the use of art is an illustration, the fact that this chapter sums up the book, does allow the practice of art to be seen as a milieu of conversation and engagement.[32]

Artistic Action as the Milieu of the Spirit in a Post-Soviet Setting?

The juxtaposition of tradition as action and the milieu of the Spirit, and arts as loggia within the university, along with concern for engagement rather than retreat, all allow me to turn, lastly, to the Lithuanian context. Reading Congar from the present Lithuanian setting brings significant change to the issue of the public milieu of faith. One is looking at a majority Catholic country in the wake of the Communist regime that was aggressively set against faith. Sociologists point out how the regime used social control, differentiation of social spheres, depersonalisation and mechanisms of socialisation: all of which characterised the Soviet period and affects post-Soviet life.[33] On the other hand, the disillusionment with Soviet-type urbanisation highlighted the potential of the relatively autonomous organisation of Catholicism and the genuine companionship associated with it.[34] The role of the Roman Catholic Church in Lithuania in resisting Russification stands out, which explains its persisting ties to Lithuanian cultural identity and a continual role in consolidating civil society.[35]

However, new challenges come with democratic pluralism and adjusting to developing and westernising institutions.[36] Thus, Congar's emphasis on a 'politics of presence' as a kind of continuing incarnation, should be read vis-à-vis concerted efforts to destroy the structures that sustained these memories. While a kind of continuing touch on the part of

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[31] Ibid. p. 414. McClendon also sees in American art two poles, towards empirical or the spiritual, to be juxtaposed with the central point of the Gospel of Jesus Christ 'the Word become flesh' (McClendon, *Witness*, p. 137).

[32] McClendon, *Witness,* p. 418. McClendon writes about the energy flowing in both directions, which undergirds a broader image of the relation of church and culture. This relation for him is best expressed through the twofold rhythm of 'diastole' and 'systole' taken from Edwin Ewart Aubrey, and 'going-out and return' taken from Julian Hartt (Edwin E. Aubrey, *Secularism a Myth: An Examination of the Current Attack on Secularism* (New York: Harper, 1954), p. 30; and Julian Hartt, *A Christian Critique of American Culture: An Essay in Practical Theology* (New York: Harper, 1967), pp. 300–302).

[33] Milda Ališauskienė and Ina Samuilova, 'Modernizacija ir religija sovietinėje ir posovietinėje Lietuvoje', *Kultūra ir visuomenė: socialinių tyrimų žurnalas*, 2, no. 3 (2011): 67–81 (p. 73). One should add to this the massive displacement of population, the dismantling of rural religiosity, lay organisations, religious education, the elimination of religious consciousness, even secular churches, rites of passage and state funeral houses. See Arūnas Streikus, 'Shifts in religiosity in the face of Soviet type urbanization: the case of Lithuania', *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 48, no. 2 (2017): 8–10.

[34] Streikus, 'Shifts in Religiosity', pp. 8–10.

[35] Valdas Pruskus, 'Katalikų bažnyčios kaita Lietuvoje transformacijų laikotarpiu', *Problemos*, 63 (2003): 45–61.

[36] Ibid.

the Roman Catholic Church should not be altogether dismissed, it is not sufficient anymore.[37] While 79 percent of people in Lithuania identify as Roman Catholics, the sociologists of religion note that the attitude to Catholicism is 'rather superficial and consumerist' and 'Catholicism does not provide […] a matrix for perceiving the world or a guideline for action in everyday life'.[38] The role of Catholicism as a social milieu, which provides 'a dominant belief system and moral guidelines', according to Schröder, is marginal.[39] Does this mean that what I have previously marked out about the 'politics of presence', the milieu of engagement, has to be dismissed as irrelevant?

I want to suggest the contrary, and this time to refer to my personal testimony. I grew up in Lithuania under the Soviet regime in a home which was not religious. Growing up in Kaunas, a city which was the capital of Lithuania before Soviet occupation, I remember a second layer to the lives and stories in which people lived. On old bookshelves or somewhere in the attic you would find journals and books from the former times. They were forbidden. Catholic religious art, some of it folk and from rural places, was on display in these old homes of the intelligentsia and had an aura about it. These works of art carried this aura even if they were taken out of their religious milieu, which was aggressively targeted as indicated earlier. This did not mean that existential and spiritual questions were eradicated, but rather that they were explored in different milieus, spaces or communities. In my case it was the practice of performative art, namely theatre, which is quite understandable in a Lithuanian context.[40] Theatre was the space to explore how the new historic reality reflected on what it was to be a human being, frequently invoking religious imagery.[41] Theatre was also a space to engage in political discourse, albeit by means of grotesque and apocalyptic

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[37] This can be illustrated by the image of Rūpintojėlis, which Lithuanian Catholic theologian Ligita Ryliškyte uses as a way to interpret post-Gulag experience. This Lithuanian image of Christ is a part of popular culture: it is a wooden sculpture, and its name could be translated 'One who cares' or 'Dear One, who provides'. See Ligita Ryliškytė, 'Post-Gulag Christology: Contextual Considerations from a Lithuanian Perspective,' *Theological Studies*, 76, no. 3 (2015): 468–484.

[38] Ingo W. Schröder, 'The Elusive Religious Field in Lithuania', in *Religious Diversity in Post-Soviet Society: Ethnographies of Catholic Hegemony and the New Pluralism in Lithuania*, ed. by Milda Ališauskiene and Ingo W. Schröder (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp. 79–98 (pp. 80, 84).

[39] Schröder, 'The Elusive Religious Field', p. 85.

[40] On theatre as a ritual of social life and Lithuania as 'the theatre republic' within the Soviet Union, see Gintaras Aleknonis, 'Visuomeninio gyvenimo ritualas', *Menotyra*, 4 (45) (2006): 49–53. Aleknonis looks at the high ritual potential of theatre in the light of the neglect by Soviet ideology of religious and other rituals. Other forms of art would be relevant as well, for example abstract painting. See Kristina Budrytė, 'Lietuvos abstrakčioji tapyba sovietmečiu' (doctoral dissertation, Vytautas Magnus University, 2009).

[41] Edgaras Klivis, 'Ecce Homo: žmogaus reprezentacijų dinamika Lietuvos sovietmečio teatre', *Logos*, 43 (2005): 196–209. Klivis explores how the image of the human being developed in Lithuanian theatre of Soviet times in the face of specific historic reality. It is apparent from his account, that while religious imagery is frequently in the background, it is a backdrop for exploring the conflicts of the human being in the face of totalitarian aggression and prevalent conformism. See especially pp. 199–201.

imagery.[42] The eschatological feeling surrounding the times was also visible in theology.[43]

Then, the changes began. The stories of Chernobyl, then the Baltic Way, and the change of regime brought diverse religious and spiritual novelties. It was in a context like this that my theatre studies began. I saw them as a search for meaningful action. Keeping in mind the role theatre played, the existential, political and spiritual dimensions of such action were also important. In the process of studies, I developed an interest in Christian eschatology through my friend who studied in a fundamentalist Baptist institute. He gave me study materials and I began writing a play for an examination performance. I applied to this process all the critical scrutiny and artistic imagination necessary to justify a public performance and to embody or perform it. This was my entrance into the alien world of the Bible and an attempt to appropriate it to make it my own. My friend from the Baptist institute had an immediacy and directness of experience when talking about God. This contrasted with the hierarchic structures of mediation, a lack of immediacy and directness in approach to Scriptures which I saw in Lithuanian Catholicism. My friend's radical experience gave an existential urgency for such eschatological pursuit.

As I was writing, a strange thing happened. I mentioned that I was trying to appropriate this biblical text and to make it my own. But it suddenly became apparent that I was being incorporated into its drama, and consequently there was a rift of dramas. Instead of writing a drama and creating its world, I began seeing that this drama was encapsulating my life and enabling me to recreate it afresh. One of the central images in this discovery was the image of living waters streaming from the inside of the believers in Jesus Christ, from John 7. These living waters, the image of the Spirit, were connecting us (me), our embodied selves, the world, and Jesus Christ, and interweaving these realities. The feelings of intimacy, ecstasy, and fellowship were connected with this event of visitation by the Spirit in the process of artistic engagement with biblical text. Furthermore, as this article makes clear, this experience consequently played an important role in searching for and engaging theological themes in later ministry. Such a view of personal experience thus insists on a performative aspect; its complexity embraces issues of culture, experience, faith and beliefs. Firstly, this experience illuminated the lingering but not sufficient 'presence' of the signs

[42] Researchers point to the 'polysemic grotesque way', allowing more to be said than is permitted in public in a Lithuanian version of political theatre which influenced further developments continuing into the present. See Ginta Čingaitė, 'Kosto Ostrausko ir Kazio Sajos politinio teatro ypatumai', *Teksto slėpiniai*, 15 (2012): 47–72 (p. 47). On 'political theatre' engendering a critical and analytical dialogue between stage, audience and reflecting on the environment, see Indrė Daunytė, 'Politinio teatro apraiškos Europoje ir Lietuvoje XX amžiuje', *Menotyra*, 4 (29) (2002): 33–42.

[43] Ryliškytė, 'Post-Gulag Christology', p. 480.

of faith in Lithuanian culture, the 'politics of presence' in Congar's sense. Secondly, the experience also expanded as I became involved in the artistic process and performative practice of working with biblical text, so that what was an artistic experience was transformed into an explicitly religious experience. Thirdly, it was the religious experience that was searching for structure and action. It was formed and illuminated by, but also negotiated with the theological themes I have outlined. More significantly for the theology and practice of mission, this experience points to the overlap between the belief in the Holy Spirit and its performative aspect. The fact that this is done with reference to performative arts and the theology of the Spirit is significant in that the Soviet regime sought to disrupt religious continuities.

Conclusion

I have looked at the resonance between the theological vision of Yves Congar and the Pneumatological emphases of James Wm McClendon Jr from a post-Soviet perspective. What interested me in particular was how useful their imagined conversation might be for the context in which the presence of religion was intentionally attacked. While I affirmed the missionary potential of Pneumatological emphases, I have also highlighted that such violence presents a unique challenge. I then introduced the Lithuanian arts scene, especially that of performative arts, which carried in itself an implicit religious and prophetic dimension. This has allowed for the 'transposing' to it of some of Congar's thinking regarding the 'politics of presence', namely, the milieu of forming faith or engagement with it, and for the underlining of a performative aspect of this milieu. But the significance of such a juxtaposition of performative art and theology of the Spirit, and of the view of art as the milieu of the Spirit might go beyond just a transposition to the Lithuanian situation. If it is significant in the context of aggressive secularisation, why not in a context of secularisation more generally? If this is the case, how does such an approach invite creative cooperation with other activities and movements more generally? Taken seriously, such an invitation would require theologically embracing social movements, human action and performativity in reassessing classical theological themes. Such creative and aesthetic engagement would be crucial in re-creating destroyed environments, including our creation.

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Beyond Instrumentalism and Mere Symbolism: Nature as Sacramental

Helle Liht

The aim of this article is to reflect on the possible ways in which theology has contributed to the current ecological crisis and to offer a departure point for a theological shift in the Estonian free church tradition. Drawing insights from Paul S. Fiddes and Paul Tillich, it analyses three approaches towards creation: instrumental, symbolic and sacramental. It will be shown that the instrumental view, developed as a result of Enlightenment thinking, and the symbolic use of creation, asserting the arbitrary split between material and spiritual, represent a deficient theology which denies creation's God-given inherent value and its role in the history of salvation. It proposes that the sacramental view of creation, acknowledging creation as an actual sign of God's grace, would offer a biblical understanding of creation and help to shape people's attitudes toward it.

Keywords

Creation; instrumental; symbolic; sacramental; free church

Introduction

Earlier this year I was asked to write a column for an American Christian online magazine, *EthicsDaily* to mark the 2020 World Water Day. This began my thinking on how water is viewed in the context of my own Estonian free church tradition and how this view is connected to the global issue of the ecological crisis.[1] This article is a further study on the same topic, expanding the discussion from water to the whole of creation. However, it is not a comprehensive theological survey but rather an attempt to suggest a direction for the discussion by reviewing the way creation is seen, interpreted and used in theology. I draw insights from Paul S. Fiddes, a contemporary Baptist theologian, and Paul Tillich, the twentieth-century Protestant theologian. Guided by their insights, I try to unpack some of the problems regarding the relationship between God the Creator, human societies and

[1] Helle Liht, 'Water: An Actual Element of God's Grace and Redemption', in *EthicsDaily* online, 18 March 2020 https://ethicsdaily.com/water-an-actual-element-of-gods-grace-and-redemption/ [accessed 22 June 2020]. Further in the current article I also use the term 'evangelical', as this issue concerns a wider Protestant community than only the Estonian free church tradition. However, I do recognise that the evangelical community has different streams and therefore may have also different approaches to creation.

non-human creation that have contributed to the ecological crisis, and then to suggest a way forward.

The proposal of this article is for my own tradition to shift the way it views creation away from an instrumental and mere symbolic understanding, to a sacramental one. The instrumental view sees creation through the lens of human need and desire, and with this, creation's primary function becomes the enabling of human life and development. I claim that such a view abandons the biblical understanding of creation which recognises the inherent value of the whole of creation and not only human beings. The symbolic view of creation as developed in the Protestant tradition connects creation to the sacraments/ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper), yet prioritises the spiritual meaning over the material elements. It therefore disconnects creation from redemption and tends to narrow God's activity in the present and the future to the spiritual realm. For these reasons I propose that my own evangelical and free church tradition might adopt a sacramental view, which affirms God's presence in and through creation.

Instrumental View of Creation

In recent years there has been a lot of talk about climate change and the future of our planet. The variety of related topics is vast, starting with personal life-style issues and ending with inter-governmental negotiations on reducing CO_2 emissions and promoting sustainable development goals. On the other hand, there are still climate-change deniers and those who doubt our human responsibility for it. However, their voices are becoming quieter in the face of the growing number of natural disasters, whether these are hurricanes, bushfires or droughts. These events, together with scientific research, leave no doubt about the changing realities and humanity's role in them.[2] The seriousness of the climate situation and its impact on human life is mobilising various groups in society to act and offer different ways to stop this threatening development.

Discussing the future of our planet, the secular discourse is inclined to focus on economic considerations. Most governments aim to encourage economic growth, while at the same time they seek to guarantee a good living environment for their citizens. One key concept in this discussion is 'natural resources' — resources that are not man-made yet make human life possible on earth. Some of these are non-renewable, while others are renewable. Progressive governments encourage different methods of investment in sustainable and low-carbon economies. These abandon the use of 'non-

[2] The United Nations (UN) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) provides regular reports with assessments on a scientific basis of climate change. See the collection of the reports at https://www.ipcc.ch/ [accessed 23 June 2020].

renewable natural resources' and reduce, or in best cases stop, polluting the atmosphere. This is seen as an 'innocent' way to ensure economic growth, and the result is that the vicious cycle of ever-growing production and consumption continues to flow.

It is ironic that on the one hand we are resolved to sort out the problems of global pollution, loss of biodiversity and accumulative climate change; yet on the other hand, the main concern of the majority of governments is economic growth. Economic growth seems to have become the key to defining human well-being. Increasing personal income gives access to (better) education, (better) health services, (more) comfortable living. And even if in recent years the word 'sustainable' precedes the term 'economic growth', it is still about economic considerations and growth.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) attempts to offer a balancing instrument to prioritise human well-being, and therefore adds the dimensions of education, health and coherent community relations to economic considerations. Also, in preparation for the 2020 Human Development Programme, the 'environmental dimension' has been brought in more explicitly because environment is considered 'a key enabler of human development'.[3]

Although these approaches vary, they adopt the same view that creation's primary function is to ensure an ever-improving human well-being. The key question is what do we need to do for our planet to continue to be habitable for us, our children and grandchildren.

These are important questions to be tackled, yet such a human-centred approach views creation primarily as instrumental for human life and development.[4] An instrumental view of creation is affirmed by the generally adopted language of 'environment' and 'natural resources'. These technical terms reinforce the understanding that everything on our planet is assessed from the human point of view and is there to serve human purposes. 'Environment' is being constantly shaped to make life more convenient for

[3] United Nations Development Programme, *Towards HDR 2020* http://hdr.undp.org/en/towards-hdr-2020 [accessed 23 June 2020].

[4] Paul S. Fiddes discusses the fruits of the Enlightenment project and explains how in 'modernity' the world becomes an object 'that is detached from the subject'. He suggests that such a 'self-world relation […] fails to attend the world in its own right' and 'fosters the tendency of the self to try and control […] the world around it'. See Paul S. Fiddes, *Seeing the World & Knowing God: Hebrew Wisdom & Christian Doctrine in a Late-Modern Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 30–36. Different scientific approaches since Charles Darwin have established a connection between human beings and non-human creation to the extent that they claim *homo sapiens* to be one of the species among other animals and thereby clearly only one element in the whole ecosystem. Yet in my opinion this does not seem to affect the way human beings generally understand and treat creation — the Enlightenment project has seemingly a deep and lasting impact on humanity's self-understanding.

human beings. And in that process 'natural resources' are being utilised, benefitted from, and exploited.

It is true that human beings would not be able to survive without a 'support system' — fertile land, clean drinking water, and tolerable weather conditions. All these are essential for human beings to live on the earth. Yet this does not mean that responding to human need is the only reason why non-human creation exists. Non-human creation is instrumental for human life, yet in addition to this, the biblical account views and values it in its own right. I will come back to this later in the article.

To conclude this section, I want to propose that it is precisely because of the bare instrumental view of creation that we today stand in front of the half-open door to climate catastrophe. If creation is understood to exist for human beings only, it is impossible to draw a line between its use and overuse. Economic growth is too often achieved at the expense of loss of natural habitats and biodiversity, yet it is a formally accepted, preferred and fostered concept to achieve human well-being. Creation is seen as the mere means to that end, the 'natural resources' and 'environment' for human beings. But where do we draw the line between human well-being and human greed? There seems to be nothing to stop this vicious cycle of production and consumption, a *perpetuum mobile* of the continued destruction of the earth. Therefore, I propose that, in order to bring any change into such utterly harmful practices, the way we view creation needs to be completely transformed.

Symbolic Use of Creation

As I already indicated at the end of the introductory section, the Judeo-Christian tradition has great potential to challenge the instrumental view of creation. The biblical account sees creation as something that has received its value from God and that relates to God in different ways. The fundamental understanding that the earth belongs to God guides the everyday life of the Hebrew people as they sow and harvest and herd their cattle. Jürgen Moltmann sees the celebration of Sabbath as a practice that shapes the Hebrew people's understanding of the earth as God's creation and their responsibility to care for it — following the Sabbath rules guarantees rest for people as well as for the earth.[5]

Furthermore, there are several scriptural texts which reveal a special connection between God and creation. The whole creation brings glory to God (Psalms 19, 104). Therefore, we can conclude that it is God's good

[5] Jürgen Moltmann, *Ethics of Hope* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), pp. 113–114.

intention to have a divine relationship with the entire creation. Fiddes asserts that

> God relates to all creatures in their own way, and not only humans but the world of nature sings praises: God is with the wild hinds as they calve, releases the wild asses to roam freely, and teaches the hawk and eagle to soar in the sky; the waves roar before God, the heavens pour forth speech, the trees of the field sing and clap their hands as the divine king comes.[6]

The New Testament vision embraces the traditional understanding of God by the Hebrew people which binds together God's acts of creation and redemption. This gave people a reason to thank him and praise him (see, for example, Psalms 8, 19, 24, 95, 104). The New Testament church did not doubt God's intention to redeem both people and the whole created order (Matthew 6:10, Romans 8:18–23). And the early Christians understood themselves as God's agents in his total redemptive work in the world.[7]

So, the potential to challenge the instrumental view of creation is clearly there in the Judeo-Christian tradition. However, for many contemporary evangelical churches, including those in my own tradition, the basic relationship between God the Creator and non-human creation has been overshadowed by the Enlightenment-enforced dualism of body and mind, material and spiritual. Thus, non-human creation has been made a passive object to be subdued by human beings.

It is commonly argued that Protestantism is the father of 'privatised religion' and 'extreme individualisation' which in turn has led to the 'secularisation' of creation.[8] Although there is an ecological motive present in the original understanding of the Reformers,[9] Paul Santmire, analysing the subsequent development of Protestant theology, traces the reduction of the importance of the theme of creation. He distinguishes in the Reformers' thinking 'focal' and 'circumferential' elements and demonstrates that the focal elements continued to live and develop in modern Protestant theology while the circumferential elements largely disappeared from the picture. For

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[6] Paul S. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003), p. 56. Cf. John Weaver, *Earthshaping Earthkeeping: A Doctrine of Creation* (London: Lynx, 1999), pp. 37–38.

[7] See Nicholas T. Wright, *Creation, Power and Truth* (Hong Kong: Graphicraft Limited, 2013), loc. 133–138 of 1668, eBook.

[8] See, for example, Dee Carter, 'Unholy Alliances: Religion, Science, and the Environment', *Zygon*, 36, no. 2, (June 2001): 357–372 (p. 360).

[9] See Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., *Lectures on Genesis, Chapters 1–5*, Vol. 1 of *Luther's Works* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), pp. 3–68; James Wm McClendon Jr, *Doctrine: Systematic Theology, Volume 2* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994) p. 158; H. Paul Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 128–132; Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation* (London: SCM Press, 1985), p. 35. I have studied the ecological motive in the Reformers' thinking at greater depth in my unpublished master's thesis 'Restoring Relationships: Towards Ecologically Responsible Baptist Communities in Estonia' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Wales, 2008).

example, for Luther the focal theme was clearly the doctrine of justification, establishing the right relationship between God and an individual human being which culminates in human salvation. This theme was firmly established in the Protestant tradition, yet the ecological motive was left aside and largely disappeared from Protestant theology. As a counterweight, the seventeenth-century scientists developed an independent mechanical view of creation. The resulting split was inevitable. Santmire concludes that as a result of this process, 'nature […] was approached as a self-enclosed, machine-like structure without any value or life of its own before God, set apart from both God and humanity'.[10] Creation became an object to be controlled by science and fast-developing technology. This was central to a concept of human progress which would contribute to a better life and was therefore embraced by many.

Yet there is an important part of Christian life and worship that continues to require the involvement of natural elements. These are the sacraments/ordinances. In the Protestant tradition, churches celebrate mainly two sacraments/ordinances — baptism and the Lord's Supper. Each of them relies on actual physical elements of water, bread and wine.[11]

Here it is necessary to explain that in the evangelical tradition, including my own free church tradition in Estonia, the word 'sacrament' is hardly used. Instead, the word 'ordinance' is chosen to indicate that this practice was 'ordained' by the Lord himself and this is what he has asked his followers to do. So, the concept of 'ordinance' emphasises the human response to the Lord's command and therefore mainly the human 'response' element in the practice. Tillich, examining the history of Protestant tradition, explains that this is a result of the legitimate Protestant resistance to a Roman Catholic sacramental system which was overloaded with 'magical' elements and ideas. However, he claims that this was something of an overreaction by Protestants and an important understanding of God's presence through the natural elements was lost.[12]

This is not true by any means of all contemporary Protestants. However, in the Estonian free church tradition the word 'ordinance' tends to underline a theology that understands and articulates baptism as a purely symbolic act. It is understood as an 'outward sign' through which an already converted person expresses their faith and promises 'obedience' to Christ's

[10] Santmire, *The Travail of Nature*, pp. 122–124, 133.
[11] Due to the limitations of this article, from here onwards I look only at the practice of baptism and its natural context of water as an example to discuss the symbolic view of creation adopted in most evangelical circles, as well as to discuss the sacramental view of creation in the next section. Discussion on bread and wine, the natural elements of the Lord's Supper, would certainly add depth and complexity to this topic, however they are beyond the scope of this article.
[12] Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. xix, 94.

command.[13] There are other similar meanings given to the practice of baptism, for example, as a 'witness' to God's saving act or as 'obedience' to the example of Jesus. Or, as in my own tradition at the time when I was baptised, it was also seen as a 'vow' to keep a clear conscience before God. All these meanings symbolise some aspects of human moral responsibility on one's Christian journey. Yet water as a natural element has no role in these explanations of baptism.

There is, though, another meaning applied to the practice of baptism which to a certain extent explains the role of water in it. Following the apostle Paul, there is a tradition to proclaim that 'we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life' (Romans 6:4). In this image water symbolises the grave connected to Christ's death and resurrection. It is a powerful symbol in which the believer passes through the water and 'dies' and 'rises' with Christ. However, yet again, the interpretation of baptism moves quickly to a spiritual symbolism of Christ and his body and gives no value to the water as a natural element.

So why is water used in the practice of baptism?

Symbols are important. They point towards something that is beyond themselves and thereby expand the existing reality. A simple immersion in the water becomes a much deeper act which carries an important religious meaning. Yet focusing predominantly on the symbolic meaning of baptism apart from its natural context is a danger in itself, running the risk that connection with the existing created reality is lost. This, on the other hand, weakens the meaning of the symbol until it becomes a poor shadow of what it could be and how it could inspire Christian discipleship. Tillich argues that disconnecting sacraments from their natural environment exposes them to 'subjective imagination' and arbitrary meaning.[14]

So, what could the water symbolism in the practice of baptism mean? When we think of water and its connection with baptism, we have to admit to water's ambiguous nature. The first link that comes to one's mind is perhaps that water brings life. Dry fields do not grow crops. Thirsty people and animals lose strength and pass away. Fish perish on the shore. A baby in its mother's womb cannot develop without water. The obvious conclusion is that all life on earth utterly depends on water. But water can also cause

[13] For in-depth analysis of the theological development of how different baptistic communities within the Evangelical Christian and Baptist Union of Estonia have interpreted the practice of baptism and contributed to the current understanding, see Toivo Pilli, *Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Estonia: The Shaping of Identity 1945–1991*(doctoral thesis, University of Wales, 2007), pp. 142–150.

[14] Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, p. 101. Tillich also claims that Protestants 'have replaced the great wealth of symbols appearing in the Christian tradition by rational concepts, moral laws, and subjective emotions'. This is noticeable also in the way baptism is explained in the Estonian free church tradition and is worthy of the further study that is beyond the scope of this article.

suffering and pain. How many fishermen have lost their lives in the cold waves? And how many villages have been swept away by extreme floods?

Perhaps it is this ambiguity of water which has made it a symbol for several aspects of spiritual life. Most religions have ceremonies or rites connected to water. Fiddes reflects on the significance of water in the Judeo-Christian tradition and connects it with birth, cleansing, conflict, refreshment and journey.[15] The symbolism of all these water motifs carries implications for the practice of Christian baptism.

A baby's birth through water from the mother's womb first associates water with new birth. Water's naturally purifying effect becomes a symbol of spiritual cleansing. The threatening forces of water evoke the connotations of death and the grave. Yet the revitalising power of water elevates it to a symbol of the renewal of life. And crossing the Red Sea, and later the River Jordan, signify the journey of the people of Israel as they left behind their past in slavery and the desert, and looked forward to the promised land.

Fiddes explains that these primordial images, which are born from the experiences of the people of Israel and now echo in the practice of Christian baptism, are deeply embedded in the natural context. It is exactly from this natural context that they understood God's saving deeds on their behalf, and this formed their faith in God the Redeemer. These events could not have happened without water. In these images creation and redemption are bound together.

Yet Fiddes takes a step further and says that creation *is*[16] a redemptive act of God. He notes that 'creation is redemption in the sense of overcoming the waters of chaos' at the beginning of time, and ultimately in Jesus Christ who became human flesh, a part of created reality.[17] His life, death and bodily resurrection seal the togetherness of creation and redemption.

Yet when we look at the practice of baptism in the Estonian free church tradition and among evangelicals in general, we have to admit that the meaning given to the powerful symbol of baptism revolves around human action. The way baptism is understood leaves aside those aspects of the rich symbolism that express God's presence in this particular act, and God's work in the wider history of salvation. The symbol has become rather shallow and has lost much of its potential to empower people for meaningful discipleship. No doubt that 'witness', 'obedience', and 'vow' are important meanings to preserve, but these reflect more of a person's individual moral

[15] Fiddes, 'Baptism and Creation', in *Reflections on the Water*, ed. by Paul S. Fiddes (Regent's Park College, 1996), pp. 47–67.
[16] The emphasis is mine.
[17] Fiddes, 'Baptism and Creation', p. 59.

obligations, rather than the connectedness to God's people in biblical times and to God's redeeming work in history.

Tillich argues that '[i]f nature loses its power, the sacrament becomes arbitrary and insignificant'.[18] Disconnecting faith from creation adversely affects both faith and creation.

Sacramental View of Creation

In the previous two sections I have argued that both the instrumental and the mere symbolic uses of creation reflect a deficient theology. The instrumental view robs creation of any divine purpose or meaning. And the mere symbolic use of creation, as developed within the evangelical tradition, quickly shifts the focus to a spiritual meaning to which creation points, but undermines its own inherent God-given value.

This deficiency has been clearly pointed out by Tillich in his study of Protestant theology and tradition:

> The decrease in sacramental thinking and feeling in the churches of the Reformation and in the American denominations is appalling. Nature has lost its religious meaning and is excluded from participation in the power of salvation; the sacraments have lost their spiritual power and are vanishing in the consciousness of most Protestants; the Christ is interpreted as a religious personality and not as the basic sacramental reality, the "New Being".[19]

Tillich wrote this in 1948 when the first edition of his *Protestant Era* was published. Back then the effects of such a deficient theology regarding creation were much less noticeable than now. Today, more than seventy years later, it is commonly agreed that it is the largely Protestant West, putting into practice its ideas of progress and expansion, that has caused most damage to our planet. The theological roots of such a development have been traced and expounded by many theologians, and their studies build a solid ground for further steps to be taken in order to counter such thinking.

It can be debated whether the transformation should be driven by theory or practice. No doubt both are needed. However, I tend to lean towards the primacy of a crucial theological shift. Focusing on practical creation care activities does not seem to be of value if it does not connect with people's faith.[20] It is for this reason I propose that a theological shift needs to happen first, on which good practice can be based.

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[18] Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, p. 112.
[19] Ibid., p. xix.
[20] I chaired the Baptist World Alliance Commission on Creation Care for five years from 2016–2020, and my observation is that this has been one of the least attended Commissions. There may be several reasons for this, however, I believe that lack of interest in this topic is the dominant one. It is partly for this reason I wrote a column in *EthicsDaily* in which I advocate making the theme of creation care a regular part of

As said at the outset, the main proposal of this article is that adopting a sacramental view of creation would help evangelical theology establish a healthier relationship between human societies and the non-human creation. So, what does it mean to say that creation is sacramental? And how would it impact the relationship between humanity and non-human creation? Within the scope of this article I draw attention to three aspects which I hope may help shape an evangelical view of creation.

Inherent value of creation

I propose there are at least three themes that emerge from the biblical account and contribute to a sacramental view of creation. Firstly, the biblical account sketches a picture of creation which has an inherent value — value that is given by God and determined by its relationship to God.[21] Because of these features, creation has power to participate in God's sustaining and redeeming acts for the whole world. Through creation God is present in the world, and God's grace becomes visible and tangible for human beings.

In the previous section, I gave some examples of how the biblical account asserts creation's inherent value. Looking at the example of water, its inherent properties are the power to cleanse, refresh, re-vitalise. It is because of these properties that water actually participates in God's sustaining and redeeming work in the world. And it is because of these properties that water has become an essential element for the practice of baptism. Tillich argues that '[a] special character or quality, a power of its own, is attributed to water. By virtue of this natural power, water is suited to become the bearer of a sacral power and thus also to become a sacral element.'[22] Fiddes makes a similar point when he says that

> the water in baptism is not merely a visual aid to help us understand various spiritual concepts: in its sheer materiality or 'stuffness' it actually communicates the presence of the transcendent God. A created thing provides places and opportunities for a transforming encounter.[23]

Now the question is whether God's presence can be experienced and acknowledged only through the baptismal water that connects the person being baptised with the body of Christ and the people of God. Or can any other experience that contains water as a cleansing, refreshing or revitalising matter become a transforming encounter with a transcendent God? Can a

church worship services. See Helle Liht, 'Why Our Worship Must Focus More on Creation Care', *EthicsDaily* online, 19 April 2018 https://ethicsdaily.com/why-our-worship-must-focus-more-on-creation-care-cms-24810/ [accessed 22 June 2020].

[21] Andrew J. Spencer, 'What Kind of Value Does Creation Have', *Ethics and Culture* http://www.ethicsandculture.com/blog/2020/what-kind-of-value-does-creation-have [accessed 4 September 2020].

[22] Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, p. 96.

[23] Fiddes, 'Baptism and Creation', p. 58.

glass of water extended to a thirsty person become a gift from God and signify God's grace?

When we look at the story of Israel's desert journey, it depicts the situation of people in need in the desert of Sinai. God's people became thirsty in the dry wilderness heat, and they quarrelled with Moses. God responded to the cry of Moses by providing them with water from the rock. God's presence became evident through water and provided people with physical relief. In this story there is an element of helplessness and vulnerability and an openness for God to act. This expression of mutual relationship, of Moses on behalf of the people turning to God in faith and God responding to his request with grace,[24] is something that can be recognised as the gift of creation becoming a meeting point with the transcendent God. Yet the power of water to refresh, revitalise and quench the thirst is the same now as it was in the time of Israel's desert journey. Therefore, it can continue to offer an opportunity for a transforming experience where faith and grace come together.

While these two occasions — the baptismal ceremony and water given to the thirsty — may be seen to carry different weights in salvation history, both should be recognised as a sign of God's grace and faithfulness in a sacramental way.

Integrity of creation

I have used water as a starting point to discuss the sacramental nature of creation. Water as a means of baptism brings together its different qualities which have signified God's presence to his people throughout the history of salvation. Yet water is only one 'member' in the 'community of creation', which is itself characterised by interdependence and mutuality of relationships.[25] Therefore I now move on to the second aspect which provides a reason to view the whole of creation as sacramental — the integrity of creation.

The English word 'integrity' has a variety of connotations depending whether the source of the translation is Latin or Hebrew. The prime meaning of Latin *integer* is 'whole', 'complete', while the Hebrew *tom/tummah* has an additional connotation of 'innocence', 'blameless'. These meanings help

[24] Christopher Ellis discusses the interaction of faith and grace in the context of baptism and says that 'if faith becomes a key pivot of divine activity, that very faith looks to God's graciousness and offers not an anthropocentric but theocentric understanding of what happens in baptism'. See Christopher Ellis, 'Baptism and the Sacramental Freedom of God', in *Reflections on the Water*, ed. by Paul S. Fiddes (Regent's Park College, 1996): 23–45 (p. 30).

[25] The term 'community of creation' is introduced by Jürgen Moltmann. With this term Moltmann forms an understanding of a community which consist of human and non-human members and where the mutuality of relationships ought to be recognised. See Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 3.

us to unpack two important questions for the understanding of creation: first the nature of creation and secondly the wholeness of creation.

As early as 1988, Christopher B. Kaiser wrote an article in response to a call made by the World Council of Churches inviting churches to work for the integrity of creation. His understanding was, as he points out, that the background of such a high-level call was a belief that maintaining the integrity of creation is a human responsibility. He therefore conducted a study of how creation is discerned in the biblical tradition and claims that 'the biblical notion of the integrity of creation is based on the social nature of God, and not on human stewardship'. His argument is that the biblical concept of integrity (in Hebrew *tom/tummah*) carries the meaning of righteous or innocent and is used to describe human beings. The integrity of creation was not questioned in biblical and early Christian thought. Instead, creation was seen as an example to humans of obedience and lawfulness (e.g. Jeremiah 5:22–23; 8:7).[26]

However, Kaiser also points out that any theological construct which connects *human responsibility* to the integrity of creation tends to view creation as 'fallen'.[27] The complication of such a view is that it diminishes creation's worth and from there it is only a short step to declare the demise of the entire created order. It denies the goodness of creation and its power to act as a sign of God's grace.

In the Estonian free church tradition, for instance, such a limiting view of creation has been dominant for quite some time. Although God's creation is more and more experienced as something good and beautiful, a contradictory understanding of a fallen world is strongly rooted and prevails. According to this view, the Fall of humankind has touched everything and everybody in the world. The earth has changed compared to the time when God claimed that everything he had created was good. It shifted God's rule on the earth into Satan's hands, and since that time he is the prince of the world. And because the entire world is affected by the Fall and human sin, the 'true' Christian community finds its identity in an otherworldliness and will eventually be rescued from this perishing world.[28] While this understanding is still noticeably present in the Estonian free church tradition, there is also some openness to examine and revise this view and to learn from

[26] Christopher B. Kaiser, 'The Integrity of Creation and the Social Nature of God', *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 49, issue 3 (August 1996): 261–290 (pp. 265–268).
[27] Ibid., p. 263.
[28] In the Estonian context, such an understanding arose alongside the nineteenth century's revival movement and the establishment of the first Baptist churches. They separated themselves from 'the world' as well as from the Lutheran church which, according to their understanding, practised only the formalities of a Christian faith. I have studied this aspect of Estonian free church theology in depth in my thesis, 'Restoring Relationships: Towards Ecologically Responsible Baptist Communities in Estonia' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Wales, 2008).

other Christian traditions which do not carry such strong imprints of Enlightenment thinking. The Union of Evangelical Christian and Baptist Churches of Estonia is a member of the Estonian Council of Churches, which in June 2020 adopted a resolution 'We Love Creation'. It affirms the goodness of creation, calls for repentance from destructive human habits and invites further reflection, study, and sustainable practices in all areas of church life.[29] This resolution establishes an initial theological framework that moves away from the understanding that creation is fallen and therefore is to perish, and instead recognises creation's God-given worth and power to signify God's grace.

Secondly, I want to touch on the issue of the wholeness of creation. I believe it is important to keep the perspective of creation's wholeness in theological discussion to avoid fragmentation or prioritisation of some elements or aspects of creation. Water, bread and wine are used for the practices of baptism and the Lords' Supper, and therefore there is a greater potential in the Protestant tradition for these elements to be recognised as sacramental. I have used water to make some theological affirmations yet it ought to be acknowledged that water's qualities can be experienced as purifying, refreshing and renewing only in the context of the whole complexity of creation. Contemporary science has established an understanding of an interconnected creation, or 'ecosystem', where the existence and well-being of one part of the system is closely linked to its other parts. Interdependence, mutuality, and diversity are the keywords of this concept.

Natural sciences have established the concept of a holistic ecosystem within the last hundred years, yet in theological thinking it has been present much longer. In the scope of this article I can only make a short reference to Saint Francis (12th–13th century). As is well-known, Francis systematically and poetically uncovered the beauty of the wholeness of creation. His 'Canticle of the Creatures' sketches a rich image of a family — brothers sun, wind and fire, sisters moon, stars and water, mother earth and even sister bodily death — all of them together, including human beings, forming the mystery of life created by the Most High, all-powerful, good Lord who is worthy of praise, glory and honour.[30] While such a sentiment can be easily considered as 'naive romanticism', Pope Francis makes a helpful connection between this old canticle and contemporary attitudes toward creation. He affirms that the way we view creation affects the way we behave towards

[29] See Estonian Council of Churches, 'We Love Creation' http://www.ekn.ee/inc.teema.php?id=467 [accessed 28 June 2020].
[30] Ilia Delio, Keith Douglass Warner, Pamela Wood, *Care for Creation: a Franciscan Spirituality of the Earth* (Ohio: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2008), pp. 5–6.

it.[31] Therefore the image of 'family' encourages attention and care and would help to avoid exploitation and misuse.

Fiddes uses the same poetic image when he discusses God's covenant with the whole of creation and says that '[t]he world is not a complicated machine but a complicated family', and the task of Christian theology is to try to articulate its mutuality and interdependence in a move away from dominion.[32] I therefore propose that the integrity of creation, researched and affirmed by contemporary natural sciences, opens up the way to understand the whole of creation sacramentally.

The element of mystery in creation

A sacramental view of creation also preserves its sense of mystery. Reading topical reports about the physical sciences, I am full of awe and admiration for what scientists have been able to achieve during the last decade — discovery of the Higgs-Boson particle, identification of the Crispr-Cas9 gene-editing system, detection of gravitational waves, discovery of new exoplanets using the Kepler Space Telescope and much more. In the light of all these incredible achievements, it sounds almost contradictory when Sara Gottlieb-Cohen, a cognitive scientist, admits that 'science means not knowing'.[33] It is a humble affirmation of the magnificence and wonder of the created universe that human beings can observe, study and be part of, yet not pretend to be its owners. Today humanity knows so much more than a hundred or a thousand years ago, yet this knowing has also increased the amount of unknowing. There seems to be no end to the questions which arise from questions that have already been answered. And despite all discoveries, there still remains a large space for mystery — things we do not know and cannot explain yet which are revealed to our senses — in how we understand the universe (or perhaps a multiverse) today.

Recognising the mystery of creation awakens respect, awe, and admiration. In Christian theology these human responses to what is sensed and experienced belong to God and shift the focus from creation to the Creator, the source of all life. Several Old Testament Psalms express something of such experience of the Hebrew people and their response of awe and praise (e.g. Psalms 8, 19, 24, 95, 104). Here it is important to notice that the connection between creation and the Creator as voiced in the Psalms is a living and ongoing relationship through which God speaks and makes

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[31] Pope Francis, *Laudato Si: On Care For Our Common Home* (Vatican: Vatican Press, 2015), pp. 10–11 http://www.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf [accessed 4 September 2020].

[32] Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, p. 56.

[33] Sara Gottlieb-Cohen, 'Science Means Not Knowing', *Scientific American*, 19 July 2019 https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/observations/science-means-not-knowing/ [accessed 27 June 2020].

his presence in the world known to his people. A beautiful example of a theocentric view of creation is Psalm 104:1–4:

> Bless the Lord, O my soul.
> O Lord my God, you are very great.
> You are clothed with honour and majesty,
> wrapped in light as with a garment.
> You stretch out the heavens like a tent,
> you set the beams of your chambers on the waters,
> you make the clouds your chariot,
> you ride on the wings of the wind,
> you make the winds your messengers,
> fire and flame your ministers.

Recognising the mystery of creation presents a challenge for contemporary Estonian free church theology and, I believe, also for wider evangelical theology. We need to shake off the layers of 'Enlightenment arrogance' of knowing, and embrace the mystery which even many secular scientists cannot deny.[34] God is present in creation through things which we cannot explain as well as through the things we can. This is the sacramental nature of creation which invites human beings to accept a humbler place in the community of creation.

Conclusion

This article grapples with what is probably the greatest challenge facing our contemporary world. Against the background of recent climate change, theology faces crucial questions of how to interpret the relations between God and creation. While recognising the importance of non-human creation as a context for human life and well-being, and the need for sustainable development, this paper argues that creation, from a biblical perspective, has an inherent value; it is not only an instrument serving economic growth or other human needs. The Judeo-Christian tradition challenges the instrumental view of creation, though the Enlightenment dualism of spiritual and material has tended to make creation a passive object to be controlled by science and technology. Even if not true universally, the sacramental link between created elements and spiritual reality has been weakened or lost in a number of Protestant traditions, including in the story of the Estonian free churches, from where this paper derives some examples. As a result, water in baptism and the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper are reduced to mere symbols, losing the view that God's presence could be understood through

[34] I have borrowed the expression 'Enlightenment arrogance' from Paul S. Fiddes who is using it to discuss the self-portrait of a human being developed in the Enlightenment. See Paul S. Fiddes, *Seeing the World & Knowing God*, p. 261.

physical elements. Spiritual takes precedence over material. It is the third approach, the sacramental, that the article prefers over the instrumental and symbolic understanding of creation. Creation has an inherent God-given value; it can be interpreted as a redemptive act, overcoming chaos, and through physical nature God is present in the world. In addition, the notion of the integrity of creation, poetically-theologically expressed as belonging to the same family of God, or scientifically using the terminology of an ecosystem, opens new ways of understanding the whole creation sacramentally. This sacramental view of nature has the potential for a sense of mystery, an experience which physical sciences seem to confirm rather than eliminate, and which theologically calls human beings to overcome an arrogant way of life and to live in a humble community with creation and the Creator. The theological shift towards a sacramental interpretation of the physical world, proposed in this article, is necessary to better inform our action as committed people of faith in truly caring for the whole of God's creation.

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The Contestable Church: Southern Baptist Ecclesiology in Conversation with Radical Democracy

Christopher Schelin (graduated 2018)

ABSTRACT (abridged): This thesis offers a practical theological analysis of Baptist ecclesiology as a type of 'democracy' in which decision-making authority is ultimately vested in the whole membership of a given congregation. This Christian tradition is brought into theoretical dialogue with radical democracy, which aims for a participatory politics centred upon the reception of difference and engagement in robust contestation. The question addressed is how the encounter with radical democracy may help Baptists to re-interpret their ecclesiology in order to realise more capably the conviction that the divine will is discerned in a church's collective deliberation. Due to the diversity of both Baptist movements and radical-democratic theorists, this argument is restricted to specific contexts. First, the Baptists in view constitute the historical lineage that originated in seventeenth-century English Separatism and developed in the American South, denoted as the 'southern Baptist' tradition. Second, the conversation with radical democracy is limited to the writings of the American philosopher Romand Coles. Chapter one presents a diachronic review of 'democracy', whilst chapter two highlights research on diversity, conflict, and pastoral authority in congregations, weighing its implications for the validity of radical-democratic ecclesiology. The next three chapters elucidate how Coles and southern Baptists have wrestled with the shared themes of philosophical/theological anthropology, contestation, and the nature of authority. Each chapter provides a summary of Baptist perspectives before juxtaposing Coles with a particular theologian who stands within the southern Baptist lineage. Suggestions are made as to how Baptists might both incorporate Colesian insights and offer a theological critique in response. The conclusion reviews both convergences and divergences, arguing that southern Baptists will find Coles's radical democratic theory useful for retrieving and re-imagining their congregationalist ecclesiology.

Revd Dr Christopher Schelin is the Dean of Students at Starr King School for the Ministry, a multireligious seminary in Berkeley, California.

Lam Chi-fung's Transformative Role in Shaping Hong Kong Baptist Life between 1950 and 1970

Alex Kammoon To (graduated 2018)

ABSTRACT: Hong Kong has the largest Chinese Baptist population in the world. Lam Chi-fung, a Baptist layman, was key to the speedy growth of Hong Kong Baptists and played a transformative role in shaping Hong Kong Baptist life between 1950 and 1970. When China turned Communist in the mid-twentieth century, large numbers of refugees flooded Hong Kong, resulting in a sudden increase of both social and spiritual needs. While recovering from its war-torn economy, the British government did not have resources to cater to the needs of its colony. After being driven out from mainland China, foreign mission agencies were reluctant to either invest their money or relocate personnel to Hong Kong, fearing that it would soon be taken over by Communist China. In view of the situation with its imminent social and spiritual needs, Lam took the initiative of inviting foreign mission groups, in particular Southern Baptists, to send as many missionaries as possible to Hong Kong and collaborated with the government to build a large number of Baptist structures in Hong Kong. Despite tensions concerning the fear that the self independent process and indigenous efforts of native Baptists would be damaged by inviting foreign missionaries and disputes if the Baptist teaching of church-state separation was being infringed when seeking government support, Lam succeeded in growing Baptists to become the largest denomination and formed a new Baptist landscape in Hong Kong.

Dr Alex To is the Assistant Professor of Church History at Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Relation God-World in the Theology of Yves Congar

Henrikas Žukauskas (graduated 2018)

ABSTRACT: French Catholic theologian Yves Congar (1904–1984) is associated with major renewals of the Catholic church in the twentieth century. His theology is deeply and consistently conscious of the internal and external struggles of the church in the world. My thesis proposes that development of the theology of the Holy Spirit in his later work and these early sensitivities are directly connected. This implicit relation of the Holy Spirit and the world, my argument goes, is essential to understanding Congar's work as a whole, but is not so far explored by Congar scholars. Set vis-à-vis concerns and sensitivities, this growing appreciation of the role of the Holy Spirit, I contend, allows to better understand and give space to the world and humanity in the tripartite dialogue God-world-humanity. To achieve this, I provide a historical-theological reading, which shows this dialogue as continuing in the whole of Congar's work and I focus on three major stages of his work. The accumulation, maturation and rifts in his work on the reform in the church, tradition and the Holy Spirit are analysed. Following Congar and key to my argument, history is viewed as a locus of theology, and milieu (the ecclesial life), method (the theology of tradition) and theological themes (incarnation and the Holy Spirit) are shown as interweaving. Gradually Congar's implicit sapiential view of the relation God-world-humanity, sustained by a Trinitarian theology of two divine missions, emerges. The development of the theology of the Spirit beside that of the Son leads to a conclusion that, thanks to the activity of the Spirit, human and free activity in the world might be viewed at the same time as the activity of God. Congar's attempts to achieve greater intimacy and integrity, and more intimately reconnect God and the world, do not lose their pertinence. However, a more pronounced and affirmed view of the Spirit's activity in the world as such would be necessary to better address contemporary concerns.

Dr Henrikas Žukauskas is a missionary with the Baptist Union of Lithuania. He currently serves as Chair of the Baptist Union of Lithuania.

Church Planting Practices Among Muslim and Druze Communities in the Near East: A Conversation about Mission in the Light of the Early Church

Grant Porter (graduated 2018)

ABSTRACT: This study asks the question, "How do the patterns of mission and church planting among Muslim and Druze communities in the Near East compare with those patterns in the early church movement during the apostolic period?" What led me to ask this research question was a phenomenon I had recently observed. New faith communities based on the claims of Christ were and are still emerging among the Muslim and Druze populations in the Near East, communities that are rooted to varying degrees in the evangelical tradition. However, questions have been raised by other, more established evangelical communities as to the validity and orthodoxy of these new communities of faith. After some further exploration it soon became apparent that little academic research had been attempted to discover how these new communities had formed, what they practised, and why. Employing Case Study research methodology, this study examined five Christian faith communities (each community as a case) that emerged in Muslim and Druze societies and interviewed leaders and adherents associated with those respective communities. Eighteen semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted. As it appeared that these new faith communities shared the common evangelical view of Scripture as authoritative, not only in creed but also in practice, the thinking of a number of New Testament scholars in the areas of mission and church planting in the early church movement in the apostolic period was utilised as a means to elicit meaningful reflection from the interviewees. Their thinking became a valuable conversation partner, with the new faith communities asking questions of those scholars (in a sense) and being asked questions in turn. This process was conducted in two rounds of interviews. The thesis concludes with critical reflection on the contemporary practice of each of the fellowships, both in comparison with each other, and in comparison with the scholarly thinking around the praxis of the early churches.

Dr Grant Porter is originally from Australia and has lived for 35 years in the Middle East, involved in evangelical ministry. He is currently a programme director with a charitable trust.

Convictions, Conflict and Moral Reasoning: The Contribution of the Concept of Convictions in Understanding Moral Reasoning in the Context of Conflict

David McMillan (graduated 2019)

ABSTRACT: This research was motivated by a desire to understand better the process involved in framing attitudes to decision making in the context of conflict and peacemaking, especially as a result of experience in Northern Ireland. The study is located at the intersection of theological ethics and practical theology, as research that engages with theological ethics by addressing issues of moral reasoning in a manner that is informed by, and may also contribute to, the field of practical theology. The research explores the concept of convictions, as proposed by James McClendon and James Smith (drawing on the work of Willem F. Zuurdeeg), as a possible methodology for understanding the formation of attitudes toward, and processes of, moral reasoning in the context of conflict. The thesis also draws on the work of Glen Stassen and Parush Parushev in regard to convictions and moral reasoning and the results of the investigation are 'tested' by way of a case study, which examines the responses of selected groups (n=4) of Christians in Northern Ireland to the 1998 Belfast Agreement. Data consist of official church statements, other statements from Christian organisations and a wide range of letters and advertisements placed in local newspapers. Core convictions of the four groups are uncovered and identified as key influences on the moral reasoning behind each group's response to the Belfast Agreement. The research concludes that the unique development of the concept of convictions by McClendon and Smith contributes an important means of understanding moral reasoning in general and Christian moral reasoning in contexts of conflict.

Dr David McMillan is a former Baptist pastor from Northern Ireland who, until recently, served as Development Director at IBTS Centre Amsterdam.

Book Reviews

Constantine Prokhorov, *Russian Baptists and Orthodoxy, 1960–1990* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Monographs, 2014), 510 pages. ISBN: 978-1783689903.

This substantial work by Constantine Prokhorov (who completed his PhD at IBTS Prague) is a significant contribution to our understanding of the history of Russian Baptists in the thirty years immediately preceding the collapse of the Soviet Union. These were mainly the years of Khrushchev and Brezhnev, when the post-war Soviet policy of isolation allowed very few meaningful contacts with the West.

Prokhorov's central thesis is that, during this period, Soviet Baptists — despite being clearly 'protestant' in belief and outlook — in some important ways mirrored Russian Orthodox thinking and practice. This was partly because of their shared experience of isolation from the West, and shared suffering and persecution because of their Christian faith. The author is careful to point out that the resulting commonalities did not arise because of any formal agreements between Baptists and the Orthodox. Rather it was the case that some observable features of Soviet Baptist life in this period exhibited similarities in both theology and practice with Orthodoxy.

In the central chapters of the book Prokhorov goes on to explore this idea, first with regard to God and soteriology, where he sees the influence of the Orthodox 'apophatic' tradition, and a link between Orthodox theology and the traditional Arminianism of Russian Baptists. Even the 'sola scriptura' of the Baptists is modified in some ways by the shared traditions and heritage of what it means to be Russian. On the church and sacraments, Prokhorov notes that, during the period under review, Soviet Baptists gave lists of up to seven 'holy ordinances' and that, for instance, in their celebration of the Lord's Supper there was a certain sacramental mysticism that echoed Orthodox practice. Soviet Baptists also paid more attention than would be common among most Baptists to certain aspects of the Orthodox Liturgical year, and Prokhorov argues that in the reverence given to the actual book of the Bible it almost became equivalent to an Orthodox icon.

As in Orthodoxy, Russian Baptist spirituality was firmly based on *sobornost* (community) rather on the typical Protestant individualism; and the strict ordering of the life of believers and church life resembled some Orthodox monastic traditions. At the same time there are many examples of a kind of shared 'folk religion' in terms of popular piety, modes of dress and behaviour in society.

All this went along with some close fraternal relations between Baptist and Orthodox leaders during this period. Something of that has continued beyond 1990, but since then the influence of USA-based evangelicals on Russian Baptists has also meant a certain distancing from some of the 'commonalities' between Baptists and Orthodoxy described here.

I found Prokhorov's thesis compelling, based as it is on a wealth of primary sources, especially the official journals of both the 'registered' Baptists (AUCECB) and the breakaway 'Reform Baptists' or *Initsiativniki* (CCECB). Notably, he detects the same Orthodox influences on both groups.

Extensive interviews with former Russian Baptist leaders now living in North America bring this story to life in a most interesting way, with some delightful vignettes of Russian Baptist (and Orthodox) life in this period.

Overall, this is a fascinating window on the history of Russian Baptists in a unique and challenging time in their history, and an important study for anyone seeking to understand the traditions that inform the life of present-day Russian Baptists.

Reviewed by Revd Tony Peck — General Secretary, European Baptist Federation.

Konstantin Prokhorov, *In the Siberian Palestines: History of the Evangelical Christians-Baptist Church in Omsk (1890-1941)* [my translation of the original book title in Russian: В СИБИРСКИХ ПАЛЕСТИНАХ - История Омской церкви евангельских христиан-баптистов (1890-е – 1941 г.)] (Omsk, Steinhagen: Samenkorn Publishing, 2019), 928 pages. ISBN: 978-3862032273.

This book is dedicated to recent memorable dates such as the 300th anniversary of the city of Omsk and the 120th anniversary of the founding of the Omsk Evangelical Christians-Baptist church. The project was supported by the Union of Baptist Churches of the Omsk region, as well as by the Research Center of the Euro-Asian Accreditation Association.

The author focuses primarily on the first foundational fifty years of the Omsk church. In thirteen chapters Prokhorov describes the beginnings of the church and some of its activities, while at the same time relating them to the overall historical processes and influences in Eastern Europe and in the region. The church was born and registered in difficult times and flourished in spite of limited freedoms before the 1917 revolution, followed by Soviet

persecution. As the author unfolds the story of the growing Baptist movement in Western Siberia, he stops just short of the dawn of the Second World War.

Prokhorov's account of the Omsk church history is a rich collection of archival documents, pictures and drawings that bring to life a time period that merits much more research and uncovering. The author not only unveils important memories, but also documents the shaping of the identity of the early Baptist movement in Western Siberia. In the midst of the larger narrative, little stories are told about different people, their everyday life and specific events. All these convey to the reader a feeling of the time and context of the early years of the Baptist movement in the region. Baptists in Omsk are presented as active participants in the social, economic and cultural life of their region. The author encourages his Baptist readers to follow their example and again engage meaningfully with contemporary society.

The story of the Omsk church and the Baptist movement in wider Western Siberia is painted against many historical developments in Russia and beyond. Omsk and Western Siberia are portrayed as a centre of Baptist faith in this vast territory, reflected against developments in wider Russian Baptist circles. Therefore, the reader encounters rich references to Russian culture, history, its novelists and poets and many other aspects that round off the picture drawn by the author.

The book is well constructed and its writing style effectively bridges popular and academic language. It brings joy to the heart of a historian and archivist who finds all sources collected like a treasure room! Prokhorov pursues a rigorous academic approach in his referencing and integration of many historical sources. At the same time, the text is easily readable, with many explanations and illustrations which invite not only academics but also lay readers to discover the history of evangelicals in Omsk and its surroundings.

This book sets out to present the history of the Baptists in the Omsk region, but it accomplishes more than that. It is a witness to God's acting in human realities and through faithful people — men and women, poor and rich, respected and outcast. They were all touched and changed by the love of Christ, who is in the midst of the movement and walks through the city of Omsk, its adjacent villages and the whole region, just as he at one time walked through Palestine.

Reviewed by Dr Peter Penner — Professor of Missiology and New Testament, Campus Danubia, Austria.

Douglas J. Heidebrecht, *Women in Ministry Leadership: The Journey of the Mennonite Brethren, 1954–2010* (Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2019), 326 pages. ISBN: 978-1894791533.

In 2013 I read Douglas J. Heidebrecht's doctoral dissertation (completed at IBTS Prague) with a focus on how he interpreted discernment in the processes of women in ministry leadership, in which he gave several insights that helped me to look at congregational processes in the Netherlands. In this book, *Women in Ministry Leadership*, emanating from his doctoral thesis, Heidebrecht provides a thick description of many years of searching for discernment concerning women in ministerial leadership with the Mennonite Brethren in Canada and the United States. Heidebrecht critically examines how the Mennonite Brethren have dealt with the question of whether 'all avenues of ministry and leadership are open to women as well as men, or are women restricted from certain roles and subordinated to male authority on the basis of gender alone?' (p. 17). He identifies three threads that emerge in the conversation: understanding the Scriptures regarding the question; the praxis of communal discernment; and living faithfully amid contextual voices.

Heidebrecht gives an in-depth description of the ways in which the question of whether and how women can function in church leadership was engaged. Starting with an emerging conversation (–1973), via challenging tradition (1971–80), discerning belief and practice (1978–87), unravelling consensus (1988–93), to conflicting convictions (1992–2002) and finally seeking consensus (2001–10) — a road of almost 60 years. Heidebrecht analysed minutes of different conference meetings, columns and articles in periodicals, and symposia, which all provide insight into how the question of the place of women in ministerial leadership was influenced.

Only after a detailed description does Heidebrecht move on to reflections and conclusions on each time period. He identifies three recurring areas of tension: the tension between 'congregational autonomy and interdependence'; between 'biblicism and interpretive discretion; and between the role of authoritative leadership and the value of community participation' (p. 62).

Heidebrecht observes the situation of the Mennonite Brethren in Canada and the United States. This context is specific, and Heidebrecht describes key actors such as Katie Funk Wiebe, John Toews and Valerie Rempel. However, at the same time, several developments he describes are

also recognisable in other contexts: the influence of the broader evangelical gender debate; the previously mentioned areas of tension; men dominating the conversation at conventions; the importance of role models in practice and discussion. That is why this work of Heidebrecht transcends the situation and context of the Mennonite Brethren and — despite all the differences — calls for recognition in different contexts. This thick description provides insight into how processes in Conventions and Unions run, and that is valuable for everyone involved in these lengthy discernment processes.

Reviewed by Ingeborg te Loo — Co-ordinator of Learning Network, IBTS Centre, Amsterdam.

Andrew J. Kirk, *Being Human: An Historical Enquiry into Who We Are* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2019), 404 pages. ISBN: 978-1532664199.

In this book Andrew Kirk focuses on the question of what it means to be human. This author is well-known for his contribution on the subject of mission and relevant aspects of missiology of Western culture. *Being Human* is a fruit of Kirk's sustained interest in the aspects of secular culture and how these are related to the Christian mission and message. The book is unique in that it offers an account of the views on humanity and human nature from the Renaissance, including the Reformation, through the Enlightenment to the present. It is motivated by the intention 'to grapple afresh with the notion of being human' (p. 3). The book encompasses a timespan of five centuries, different intellectual milieus, many authors and various topics.

After introducing the foundational presuppositions of the enquiry (ch. 1), Kirk proceeds to a description of the Renaissance shift towards humanism (ch. 2) and its consequences for the external authority in politics represented by John Locke (ch. 3). Chapters 4 to 9 explore the Enlightenment humanism exemplified by such figures as Hume and Diderot, Darwin and 'masters of suspicion' Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. Kirk argues that the Enlightenment has departed from the yet theocentric Renaissance humanism and that this has resulted in what he calls 'secular humanism' (ch. 10), which denies any reality beyond the natural world (p. 277). In two final chapters the author outlines the perspectives of some prominent Christian theologians who have dealt with the issues relevant to human existence and identity. He summarises the key topics of the enquiry and in chapter 12 proposes a method of abduction for 'dialogue in the context of truth' (p. 379).

The book is an apologetic essay that consistently argues for the theistic metanarrative as the proper context in which humans could make sense of themselves and their experience. Dealing with different authors and their contribution on the subject, Kirk demonstrates that materialistic or secular humanism lacks explanatory power to answer satisfactorily the most acute aspects of being human — their origin, humanness, morality and the problem of evil. He concludes that Neo-Darwinists cannot resolve convincingly the issue of human origin, while secular humanists fail to explain the origin of consciousness and morality.

A vast project like this is by necessity a complex one. However, Kirk deals skilfully with its complexity, explaining some knotty ideas and demonstrating flaws and consequences of the secular humanist metanarrative. Although the book is straightforwardly theistic, Kirk demonstrates a commendable openness to honest and sincere dialogue with opponents. Whether such dialogue is ever possible at all is hard to tell.

Andrew Kirk has written an important book, which not only fills a gap but also points to the field in which theologians should invest their efforts in the near future.

Reviewed by Dr Oleksandr Geychenko — Rector of Odessa Theological Seminary, Ukraine.

Paul Cloke and Mike Pears (eds), *Mission in Marginal Places: The Theory* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2016), 250 pages. ISBN: 978-1842279090.

Paul Cloke and Mike Pears (eds), *Mission in Marginal Places: The Praxis* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2016), 234 pages. ISBN: 978-1842279106.

Paul Cloke and Mike Pears (eds), *Mission in Marginal Places: The Stories* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2019), 274 pages. ISBN: 978-1780781853.

In this review I discuss the trilogy of books in the *Mission in Marginal Places* series co-edited by sociological scholar Paul Cloke (Professor of Human Geography at the University of Exeter) and theological scholar Mike Pears. Pears was part of an Urban Expression community and carried out his PhD research (at IBTS Centre, Amsterdam) on a theology of place. He is currently Director of IBTS Centre in Amsterdam.

The aim of the series is to make available current thinking and material relating to mission in marginal places. This 'harvest' of material consists of theological convictions, expressed in stories, reflection and theory. These convictions can be summarised in three points: first, Christian mission must give priority to those on the margins. Second, a theology of mission must be a reflection on lived experiences. Third, mission studies must be in dialogue with social studies, for example on issues such as 'globalization, shifting experiences of 'place' and 'space', self-other relationships, urban studies and changing patterns of marginalization'.

Although the three volumes of the series are titled *The Theory, The Praxis* and *The Stories*, this distinction is not very clear throughout the series. Every volume consists of theory, praxis and stories, which is actually the very aim of Cloke and Pears's approach. They use ethnographical research as a source of theological reasoning, which requires an openness to question the theological tendency to bring fixed categories to the data.

Volume 1, *The Theory*, consists of three parts: Mission and Marginality, Mission and Others, and Mission and God. This volume intends to lay down a theoretical framework for the rest of the series. In volume 2, *The Praxis*, five realms are engaged for mission: the economic, political, social, environmental and creative realms. Volume 3, *The Stories*, explores the processes and practices of storying mission. Our way of witnessing is often framed by the convictions of the (middle-class Christian) culture from which we come, the authors argue. This might frustrate a perspective on what is actually going on. Storying thus requires an openness for 'new forms of social and spatial in commonness with other kinds of people' and 'a willingness to free up our imaginations of others'. This leads to new ways of engaging Scripture and how its narrativity is connected with community identity.

This reflexive interaction between social studies and (biblical) theology is the major strength of the series. The articles are written by authors who were part of mission in marginal places for years. There are no easy theories here. What this series offers is a profound contribution to a theology of mission, by using theological and sociological ways of research, by engaging concrete communities, asking the difficult questions, and by continuous and meticulous reflection on this engagement.

In doing so, the series contributes to three areas in particular. First, it offers a contribution to the development of a theology of place in missional context. Second, it offers a post-Christendom interpretation of several realms of society. Third, it offers a post-Christendom, marginal hermeneutic. In other words, it demonstrates the influence of time (post-Christendom) and place (marginal communities) on the reading and interpretation of Scripture.

This series' approach does also raise some questions. First of all, strangely enough, it suggests a Christendom setting: Christians are pictured primarily as part of a middle-class majority. Therefore the greatest risk for mission is ignoring power balances. Christians should not be too eager to communicate their news, but instead be open for learning possibilities. Also, one of the major dangers of being involved in mission are dominant 'orthodox' theological frames. I simply do not recognise this in the Dutch context, and I can hardly imagine this is the case in a British setting.

Second, the series works from a liberation theological preference of the poor. This, however, results regularly in a moral distrust of any power whatsoever. I do not find this approach constructive or theologically appropriate. This leads to my third question: why should mission in the West be primarily focused on marginal places? This is stated but not explained, sociologically or theologically.

Finally, there is some tension on the mission part of mission. The series emphasises dialogue and 'Third Space' kind of approaches, but somehow mission is about witnessing to Jesus by the church, which is a community committed to following Jesus as Lord. This tension between the particularity of the church and a *missio Dei* openness to society, where God is already at work, between sending and learning, is always there. The series' approach is not able to overcome this twentieth-century dilemma, which I think is a missed opportunity.

These critical notes aside, the three volumes are an essential read for everybody who is interested or engaged in mission in Western society — students, pastors and academics. It will question the way you read your Bible, the way you read society and your perspective on church and mission — in a good way.

Reviewed by Dr Daniël Drost — pastor at Baptist Church, Deventer, lecturer and researcher at the Dutch Baptist Seminary, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam.

Ivana Noble, *Essays in Ecumenical Theology I: Aims, Methods, Themes, and Contexts* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 286 pages. ISBN: 978-9004381087.

Despite the title that will make few hearts beat faster, this is a rich book, offering a plenitude of insights regarding the broad field of ecumenical

theology in general, and the Orthodox and Hussite traditions in particular. Ivana Noble, Professor of Ecumenical Theology at Charles University in Prague, and a former president of Societas Oecumenica, wants to present 'a consistent attempt to see Christian tradition even after the separations and schisms as a common heritage that includes even the painful divisions that need to be overcome' and to illustrate how such an understanding 'opens up reconciled relationships' (pp. 1, 3). The book is a collection of articles and lectures written and presented between 1995 and 2017, but all significantly reworked and updated.

Regarding method, she does not exclusively choose one method that should be followed. In fact, the whole book is an illustration of the different methods that can be used and can be fruitful. For example, in chapter two she makes a convincing case for using three complementary methods: hermeneutical, phenomenological and epistemological. All three methods are mutually related. Every method is a servant; it has its beginning and its end (p. 35).

A beautiful chapter is chapter three on the apophatic aspects of theological conversation. The apophatic way is an important counterpart of the kataphatic way, the narratives and symbols of revelation: 'The kataphatic way, necessary for being able to share any content of our faith, still needs the ongoing company and corrective of the apophatic way, so that the content does not become idolatrous.' (p. 42) Other topics that come along are religious belonging in a changing Europe, two chapters on the experience under a totalitarian communist regime and intriguing thoughts on secularisation and liturgy (Schmemann!).

The final twelfth chapter describes Noble's personal journey, from the first ecclesial naivety, through a hermeneutics of suspicion, inter-religious and inter-cultural encounters (discovering that 'within Christianity the cultural differences often play a more significant role than the confessional ones'), to a post-critical view of the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic. During an Easter service in which the abbot washed the feet 'also of "strangers" like me', she experienced something as 'incommunication, as opposed to and a healing against excommunication' (p. 211). From this experience she tries to build an ecumenical theology that creates space for a free investigation of Christian traditions. When she adds that she also wants to take on board 'the religious, the non-religious, and even the anti-religious other' I wonder why she mentions them at this stage, especially in light of the fact that the free churches are almost absent from this book. Should not this substantial part of Christ's body be included when we talk about the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church? So, before broadening ecumenical theology to other religions, it would be better first to take seriously that there is still a (growing) delta of (free) churches, whose gifts are also part of the

common Christian heritage. I see this as a missed opportunity in this otherwise excellent book. What is hopeful is that it is titled 'Essays in Ecumenical Theology I'. I am hopeful that Ivana Noble will bless us with Part II, and that it will also give attention to the contribution of the baptistic and pentecostal churches.

Reviewed by Teun van der Leer — tutor at the Dutch Baptist Seminary, Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam.

Alexandr Flek, *Parabible* (Prague: Biblion, 2018), 192 pages. ISBN: 978-8087282403.

The author (who completed his MTh at IBTS Prague) is a Czech evangelical pastor and translator. In 2009 he published *Bible 21*, a modern translation for twenty-first-century people. According to the author, the motivation for his latest book was a desire to address today's 'uninitiated outsiders'. Most Czechs today no longer understand biblical texts without first becoming 'some kind of insiders, experts on the Bible'. Flek originally wrote the individual paraphrases as illustrations for his own sermons and published them on social networks. A positive response subsequently encouraged him to bring them together and publish it as a book.

Parabible is not a paraphrase of the whole Bible, but only of the sixty stories and parables from the life of Jesus described in the Gospels. The stories are abbreviated and mostly transferred to contemporary Czech scenery. Jesus grows up here in the small village of Nošovice in the east of the republic. He causes upheaval at the wedding, not in Cana of Galilee, but in Karvina, a small town on the Polish border. He chooses his disciples not from the fishermen, but from the 'IT specialists', who are enthusiastic about his 'start-up'. Together they go 'to build a network that has not been here before'. Another example comes from John 9, where Jesus heals a man who was born blind. In *Parabible*, the man has AIDS and is in a regional hospital.

The book is divided into five parts, which more or less cover gospel events. The individual parts are called Incarnations, Missions, Confrontations, Passions and Finals. From the graphic point of view the book looks very modern and the individual chapters are separated by almost meditative illustrations. The reader also has the opportunity to compare Flek's paraphrase with the original (Czech) biblical text, which is printed in

smaller letters on the opposite page of each chapter. For readers who are experts, there is also a Greek original for each paraphrased portion. The possibility of comparing the paraphrase with the original is important, because most Czech readers are indeed almost biblically illiterate.

The individual stories in *Parabible* do not always follow each other; the reader understands that it is a selection of episodes. Some paraphrases contain a nice wit and have the potential to appeal to (not just young) people who would not read a normal Bible. For example, wedding bridesmaids are waiting for Justin Bieber instead of the groom, and when they run out of batteries on their mobile phones, those who have taken a power bank prove their foresight. Political analogies are fine, but probably understandable only to the Czech reader. For example, why the Prime Minister plays the role of Pilate, and is populistically afraid of the 'voice of the people' is quite clear, but why he is afraid of the Czech president is known only by the Czechs! The fact is that some biblical realities can be contextualised only with difficulty — the image of church leaders chasing Jesus together with police in a gardening colony below Prague Castle to arrest him is difficult to imagine. Also, the idea of having the country's prime minister get rid of (execute) a potential presidential candidate does not fit.

Despite some weaknesses, Alexandr Flek's *Parabible* represents a very successful and unprecedented attempt to bring the biblical message closer to the secular reader.

Reviewed by Dr Jan Hábl — Professor of Pedagogy at Hradec Králové University, Czech Republic.

Jim Purves, *Seeing it Real: Finding the Roots of Sensible Faith* (Independently published, July 2020), 83 pages. ISBN: 979-8665242040.

Jim Purves, *Finding it Real: Tracing the Roots of Faith* (Independently published, July 2020), 100 pages. ISBN: 979-8665266923.

Jim Purves, *Making it Real: Cultivating the Growth of Sensible Faith* (Independently published, July 2020), 70 pages. ISBN: 979-8669617080.

These three books (all available as paperback or Kindle editions) 'explore a way of marrying authentic Christian experience to a theological

understanding'. The first, *Seeing it Real*, argues for a 'sensible' theology, that is, one which allows for experience. The healing, redeeming Jesus of personal experience is the bridge between humanity and God: we can understand this God 'only as we talk of Him reaching out to show Himself to us in the way spoken of in the Scripture, a way that is always *from* the Father, *through* the Son and *by* the Holy Spirit'.

Book two, *Finding it Real*, discusses historical theology. From the fourth century, the 'sensible' God gradually disappeared as theology became more abstract. Christ was understood in two ways. The 'Venerated (Chalcedonean) Christ' was beyond the reach of man (sic!). The 'Idealised (Calvinist) Christ' was admirable but overly rational. Nineteenth-century Scottish theology offered an alternative: the 'Paradigmatic Christ' provides a pattern to follow and draws us into full sensory communion with God. Book three, *Making it Real*, explores this. The Venerated and Idealised Christs elicit passive response. The paradigmatic Christ, however, requires self-renunciation, 'purposeful participation' and transformation, all of which necessarily entail suffering. Thus, authentic discipleship is found.

Purves, who is an experienced pastor, provides many personal anecdotes as springboards for theological discussion. The style is by turns chatty and formal. Sometimes I found the argument difficult to follow. A comprehensive introduction and a concluding summary would have been helpful. I appreciated seeing Scottish theologians brought into the spotlight, and hope that this introduction to the 'paradigmatic Christ' will stimulate discussion. More exploration of the nature of transformation would lessen the risk of reducing Christian practice to ethics, and an acknowledgement that the paradigmatic Christ is as much a product of theology's times and cultures as any other would help maintain balance. We 'see through a glass darkly'.

On the surface, this is an exercise in apologetics. But it is also a spiritual autobiography. At root, I suspect, is this question: why did profound charismatic experience prove insufficient to nourish him throughout his Christian life? Purves's answer, if I have understood it correctly, is that if theology tends to avoid discussing experience, we can easily over-emphasise it, ending up with a venerated and idealised Christ – easy to worship, but who demands little. The paradigmatic Christ may be harder to follow, but only He can 'make it real'. This insight is pastoral gold, and I shall be pondering it for some time to come.

Reviewed by Dr Marion Carson — member of Adjunct Faculty, IBTS Centre, Amsterdam.

Hikmat Kashouh, *Following Jesus in Turbulent Times: Disciple-Making in the Arab World* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Monographs, 2018), 152 pages. ISBN: 978-1783685134.

Hikmat Kashouh (who completed his MTh at IBTS Prague) is Adjunct Research Professor at the Arab Baptist Theological Seminary, and Senior Pastor of Resurrection Church, Beirut (RCB). He is ideally placed to reflect on the challenges and opportunities presented to the local church as it responded to the mass movement of people into Lebanon, due to the Syrian conflict.

This is not simply a book on discipleship, but rather a story of how a local Lebanese church has been transformed into a church that has grown significantly in number and understanding of who it is called to be and the impact it is called to make in society, within the ongoing context of a refugee crisis. In this book Kashouh offers valuable insights into how the church seeks to disciple their new Syrian, Iraqi, Kurdish and other neighbours, in authentic, hospitable, holistic and humanising ways that are faithful to the biblical mandate. Whilst identifying differences in the way Muslims and Christians understand many elements of faith, Kashouh is respectful of the faith of Muslims, yet clear about his Christocentric understanding.

Throughout the book Kashouh weaves in personal insights drawn from his own life growing up during the Lebanese civil war, acknowledging the prejudice he and other Lebanese had towards Syria and its people. However, as a biblical scholar whose PhD focused on the early Arabic gospel manuscripts, he draws on his understanding of the New Testament cultural context as well as his understanding of modern Arab culture. Key biblical insights come alive in the accounts of God moving in the lives of individuals and families involved in RCB. These lenses enable Kashouh to develop an approach to discipleship which values both the existing local church, as the gathered and historic community of faith, and a more organic approach. Kashouh does not shy away from the challenges faced within pastoral ministry in such a complex situation and gives examples of how they approached these, such as, the wearing of the *hijab* and marriage guidance in a multi-cultural, multi-national and multi-faith-background church. He also shares strong views on how churches and organisations in the West should seek genuine partnership with the local church in the Arab world.

In this highly accessible book, Kashouh introduces some of the key elements of the church's teaching and practice of discipleship. Chapter themes include: Reaching, Witnessing, Changing, Nurturing, Teaching, Serving, Healing, Praying, Belonging and Suffering. The appendix briefly

describes the elements of what the church calls its 'Discipleship Pathway', focusing on: Believing; Being Filled; Crowning; Belonging; Witnessing about Christ and Making Disciples.

The church in Lebanon has experienced something extraordinary from which others can learn. In a very real sense, as a result of a huge influx of people who had become refugees from the Syrian war, the 'enemy' became the 'neighbour' and in many cases the neighbour, as a result of the Christlike welcome they received, became sisters and brothers in Christ. Whilst written in a very specific context, there are valuable lessons for those involved in the church as to how we relate to those who are different or new. Rather than simply expecting 'them' to change and become like 'us', we see here that we too must change. Written for those with an interest in how the church of the Middle East remains faithful to its biblical mandate in the face of so many challenges, readers will appreciate the honest authenticity and insightfulness of this unique book.

Reviewed by Revd Dr Arthur Brown — Director for Mission, BMS World Mission.

Jan Hábl, *Even When No One is Looking: Fundamental Questions of Ethical Education* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018), 137 pages. ISBN: 978-1532630361.

The author (who completed his PhD at IBTS Prague) is a professor of pedagogy at Hradec Králové University in the Czech Republic. Elsewhere Hábl describes himself as working 'at the borders of pedagogy, anthropology, ethics and the philosophy of education', with a particular interest in the work of the seventeenth-century Czech theologian, pedagogue and educational philosopher Jan Amos Comenius. This interdisciplinary nature of Hábl's work means that it has relevance for a wide range of academics and professionals.

In the introduction Hábl sets out his stall: this book is not an overview of ethical theories or a teaching guide on moral education; rather the author's intention is to undertake 'a search for the foundations or fundamentals upon which an ethical or moral education stands'. The intriguing question (using the words of Comenius) that runs throughout the book is: 'How can we teach a person to know the good, desire the good, and do what is good, and do it "even when no one is looking"?'

Exploring this question involves engaging with other fundamental questions, such as: Is human nature good or evil? What makes a good deed

good? Can goodness be taught (and learned)? What kind of ethics should we teach? Such questions form the six chapter titles of the first part of the book. Hábl's starting point is the crisis of the modern paradigm: 'Modernity, overwhelmed by success in the field of science, began to believe in automatic advancement in the field of morality […] the one who "rightly" knows will "rightly" act.' In these six chapters he sets about the deconstruction of this notion, building a compelling case for individual, social and meta-ethical dimensions of ethics as mutually inseparable. Hábl (justifiably) argues that pedagogical professionals often focus on the individual and social aspects, with little understanding of any clear meta-ethical dimension.

Chapter seven is given over to a rigorous consideration of 'therapy' versus 'formation' approaches to moral education. As an educationalist, I found Hábl's problematisation of autonomy and indoctrination (in relation to children) particularly stimulating and his emphasis on the obligation for teachers to exceed mere facilitation was refreshing.

In the final chapter, Hábl leads the reader through key aspects of the work of Jan Amos Comenius, for whom effective education consisted of the 'unbreakable bonds' of knowledge, morality and piety. Comenius's views on pedagogy are lauded by many as progressive beyond their time, though Hábl notes that their spiritual aspect has been dismissed by some as 'medieval mud clinging to his feet'. Agreeing that Comenius's concept of ethical education is 'old and unfashionable', Hábl concludes by asking rhetorically whether that is not its greatest strength.

Despite the irritant of several typographical errors in the published text, Hábl's writing style is lucid and his profession as a gifted teacher is evident throughout. He guides the reader along step by step and uses intriguing and accessible examples to illustrate his theoretical arguments. I found the book fascinating and highly pertinent both to those teaching children and to those involved in teacher education.

Reviewed by Dr Dorothy J. McMillan — Book Reviews Editor, Journal of European Baptist Studies.