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Journal of European Baptist Studies: Call for Papers for JEBS, no. 1, 2024

Theme: Interpreting Baptist Identity, Mission, and Practice in Historical and Present Contexts

The 2024 summer issue of the journal will celebrate 75 years of the ministry of the International Baptist Theological Study Centre, now in Amsterdam. The three thematic areas of identity, mission, and practice have been present in IBTS research from its beginnings. This special *JEBS* issue intends to bring into one volume some of the research that has emerged in the areas of interpreting Baptist identity, analysing mission challenges in a changing world, and making efforts to understand the practices of believing communities, especially in terms of their engagement in society. This topical framework may also be seen in the very story of IBTS itself. These topics can be approached from different angles, depending on the researcher's inclinations and methods. However, it is the editorial board's hope that the articles will demonstrate how IBTS research and its work as a study centre has developed over 75 years as well as highlight some of the key questions with which our research community is wrestling.

We invite all who wish to submit papers for consideration to send an abstract (200–300 words which provide a broad summary of the intended article) by email to the Editor Toivo Pilli as soon as possible (jebs@ibts.eu).

Key dates:

Call for Papers: June 2023

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Editorial

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In *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, the power of the White Witch over Narnia is summed up in Mr. Tumnus's explanation to Lucy that 'she makes it always winter'. The curse, of course, is that Narnia always exists in a kind of deadness. It is always cold, never with the celebration of Christmas. There is no spring to enjoy the greening of creation, no summer to bask in creation's brightness.

Since at least the early 1990s, there has been talk of an 'ecumenical winter'.[1] It is a phrase that is still used to describe the state of ecumenical affairs, though less so than in previous years. One begins to wonder if it will be always winter and never Christmas in the world of ecumenism.

It is hoped that this issue of *JEBS* shows that this will not be the case. While ecumenical activity may not have the singular focus it once had, the scholarly work in this issue shows that ecumenism is alive and well, though, to shift the metaphor, we have to be attuned to its harmony and ready for its challenge. It may be that we have to listen for the nuances of translating the gospel message into various languages and cultures. For this, Rosa Hunt is helpful in showing how language itself is a 'spiritual force', using the example of Welsh- and English-speaking congregations in Wales. Her ecumenical challenge to the reader is to surrender the desire to control a narrative or situation and embrace the multivalent nature of our understanding of the Christian faith.

[1] There were several shorter works in the early 1990s that contained the term. See Emilio Castro, *The Ecumenical Winter?* (Indianapolis, IN: Council on Church Unity, 1992); S. Mark Heim, 'Montreal to Compostela: Pilgrimage in Ecumenical Winter', *Christian Century*, 109 (1992), 333–335; Carl J. Peter, 'A Role Model in an Ecumenical Winter', *Worship*, 66 (1992), 2–10.

We may also to listen for those tones of the past that we find worthy of repeating today. Steve Harmon is helpful here in his investigation of Neville Callam's ecumenical contributions. Harmon understands Callam's ecumenism as one founded on Baptist principles of ecclesial interdependence which avoids theological or practical imperialism. The ecumenical challenge is to follow such an example of allowing the other to remain the other while still claiming them as a brother or sister.

There are also the dissonant tones that we find in the melody, seen in the internal disagreements that we often experience in the church. Andy Goodliff suggests a way forward through those situations. Drawing on the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Declaration of Principle, he outlines several virtues that are needed in faithfully handling the difficulties of disagreement: humility, patience, baptismal grace, love, and peace. The ecumenical challenge Goodliff offers is to focus on our own character in approaching the other, in order to ensure that we deal with them as a fellow image-bearer worthy of love rather than an enemy to be overcome.

Continuing the theme of dissonant tones: if Goodliff exhorts people to focus on Christian virtue within disagreements, Helen Paynter shows a way for those who have such a character to put their virtues into practice. She identifies self-criticism, the humble admission of personal limitations, the willingness to find virtue in the other, the need for compassionate listening, and the acknowledgement that God is not on our side all of the time as needed practices for dealing with disagreement. She then uses the example of critical race theory to put her suggestions to the test. Paynter's fundamental ecumenical challenge is to pursue humility and recognise the independence of God in our disagreements.

Uwe Swarat examines a familiar tune in Baptist history, namely the various understandings of the Lord's Supper. After a brief description of the Zwinglian and Reformed views of the Supper, Swarat details his view of the eucharist as both a human act and a divine act, or, as he calls it, a 'work of grace and of faith in one'. Swarat's ecumenical challenge is to hold these two works together, and so understand the communion table as a place where believers meet with God and one

another, for, at the table, according to Swarat, God 'seals for us each time anew the union between God and ourselves and between the disciples among themselves'.

Christopher Schelin zeroes in on one part of the melody: the relationship between Baptists and Pentecostals. Arguing from early English Baptist history, Schelin argues that there is considerable overlap between what are today considered Pentecostal beliefs and practices and those of the early Baptists, including the laying on of hands, Spirit-empowered and Spirit-focused worship, and divine healing. Schelin's ecumenical challenge is to see points of convergence between ourselves and the other, that we might find common ground on which to stand and walk together.

Finally, my own article seeks to identify a unifying theme in the music — something shared in common by all believers and which can bind our ecumenical activities. To do so, I look at the example of John Ryland Jr and how he practised catholicity, concluding that his catholicity was rooted in a shared experience of Christ. The ecumenical challenge stemming from Ryland's example is to be content with the image of Christ that we find in the other.

While there is an unquestioned diversity of perspectives contained in this issue, there is a throughline that unites the articles contained herein: desire. There is a desire for unity seen in these articles. It is expressed in different ways, and it takes a variety of shapes, but the thing that unites these articles is the desire to see Jesus's prayer in John 17 answered.

Perhaps the existence of this desire is all that we may ask in this extended winter. Indeed, desire is appropriate in winter: in winter, we long for the spring, for fresh growth, for new sprouts, for warmth, for longer days, for the green of spring and the freedom of summer.

But it may be that we can go further than that and try to find our own way towards spring. To do so, let us return to the first words of Jesus to his disciples: follow me.

That is the vocation of a disciple: to follow Jesus. Whoever is following Jesus is, by definition, a disciple, and if a person is a disciple,

then we ought to be united to them in some way. This, of course, involves some agreement as to doctrine, not the least of which concerns 'Who is Jesus?' This question, however, has largely been settled within Christianity for many centuries. The fundamental question of ecumenism, then, is not doctrinal but practical: who is following Jesus? Who is being the hands and feet of Jesus in the world?

This need not be as difficult as we sometimes make it. Imagine Jesus says to two people in the first century, 'Follow me'. They both do so and find themselves walking behind Jesus, literally following him. One says to the other, 'So what do you think about the nature of salvation?' The other says, 'I am not sure. What do you think?' The first explains how they understand salvation. The second says, 'I am not sure that I agree with all of that.'

Mind you, the two people are steadily following Jesus the entire time. Shall the second person stop following Jesus because they disagree with the first? No. The call that they answered was 'follow me', not 'agree with other people who follow me'.

We return, then, to desire. Do we want to follow Jesus with people with whom we disagree? Do we desire to have fellowship with Jesus and with people that we may have a hard time understanding?

Unlike the winter that we all experience, this ecumenical winter can be ended simply by desire. Do we want it to end? It is hoped that this issue of *JEBS* not only demonstrates that the desire is alive and well but that there are concrete ways of expressing that desire which will enable Baptists and others to pursue the unity for which Jesus prayed.

Unity in Translation: The Role of Translation in Building Up the Unity of the Body of Christ

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Abstract
This is an article about the role that translation can play in building up the unity of the body of Christ. It rests on two fundamental assumptions: the first that Christianity is essentially a faith which has no existence independent of its translations; the second that the proclamation of the Christian message is truest to itself when expressed in the natural idiom of a culture. In this article, I examine the arguments supporting these assumptions. These fundamental theological axes are then related to a practical analysis of the power shifts which inevitably occur when translation of the Christian message occurs, with particular reference to Baptist congregations in Wales, and the potential for disunity generated by linguistic and cultural difference. This in turn leads to a consideration of what constitutes good practice in bilingual worship. I conclude that even in seemingly monoglot congregations, the social and linguistic background of individuals means that we are operating in an essentially multilingual and multicultural environment. There are two main ways of ensuring unity in such a situation — one is to impose a cultural and linguistic hegemony, and the second is to surrender control and seek to encourage the flourishing of multiple readings of the Christian message in line with the language and cultural idioms of those present. I suggest that the second way is truer to the model of translation which God demonstrated in the incarnation.

Keywords
Translation; bilingual worship; Welsh; unity

Christianity: An Essentially Translatable Faith

The Bible is a translatable book — Dewi Hughes[1]

Christianity is not a set of doctrines, a collection of laws, or an anthology of stories and myths. It is a movement founded on a person, Jesus Christ. Because of this, the first Christians moved away from recording their sacred scriptures on scrolls (like the beautifully ornate ones which housed the Torah) to recording them on codices, a sort of notebook

[1] Dewi Hughes, C*astrating Culture* (Glasgow: Paternoster Press, 2001), p. 80.

available for common trade use. They moved away from recording their sacred scriptures in a sacred language — instead, the gospels and epistles were written down in the local Greek vernacular, which was not even the first language of Jesus himself. This was consistent with their belief that God's supreme act of self-disclosure was actually to be found in the life, person, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and that all other forms of God's communication were to be subject to this one and interpreted in its light. The early church, and particularly the Syriac fathers, spoke often of the three divine modes of self-revelation, each superior and chronologically subsequent to the previous: God reveals Godself in creation, God reveals Godself in Scripture, and supremely, God reveals Godself in the incarnation of Jesus Christ.[2]

God's self-revelation is essentially an act of translation. Like all translation, it is both restricted and given freedom of play by the choice of words, idioms, shades of meaning, ideas, and metaphors available in the target (or host) language. One of the Syriac fathers, Ephrem Syrus, expressed this as God having to limit God's self-revelation according to our capacity to receive:

> The Lord who is beyond measure
>
> Measures out nourishment to all,
>
> Adapting to our eyes the sight of Himself,
>
> To our hearing His voice,
>
> His blessing to our appetite,
>
> His wisdom to our tongue.[3]

This means that when God chooses to *reveal* Godself through the sacred Scriptures of both Old and New Testaments, God also chooses to *clothe* Godself in the limitations of human names and metaphors. And God does this in order to bring men and women to Godself. For the church fathers and mothers, this saving love is always the motivation behind God's giving and God's restraining of Godself

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[2] Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem* (Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1985), pp. 40–42.

[3] Ephrem Syrus in Sebastian Brock, *St. Ephrem the Syrian*: *Hymns on Paradise* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), IX. 27.

— and the restraining is necessary because of our weakness and littleness. Here is Ephrem again:

> Do not let your intellect be disturbed by mere names,
>
> for Paradise has simply clothed itself
>
> in terms that are akin to you
>
> […]
>
> your nature is far too weak
>
> to be able
>
> to attain to its greatness,
>
> and its beauties are much diminished
>
> by being depicted in the pale colours
>
> with which you are familiar.[4]

For Frances Young this is a sacramental view of language. Without abandoning the referential nature of language, it recognises that

> the Reality referred to transcends all possible linguistic expression, and so is explosive of both literalism and conceptual deciphering […] it ultimately validates an 'expanding' or open-ended sense of ever more meaning to be discerned, the polyvalence recognised in poetry.[5]

Because of these linguistic restraints, even God's self-revelation in the Bible is inferior to God's self-revelation in his Son. The incarnation itself is of course an act of translation, where God takes on the limits of human flesh, but it is *the* superior and decisive act of translation to which all others must bow.

The complication, though, as the early church understood only too well, is that our understanding is mediated through language. Those who encountered Jesus Christ heard him speak in human words, interpreted those words, wrote them down, repeated them, and translated them. Very, very few of Jesus's spoken words in Aramaic survive in the gospels. The vast majority of his teaching has been translated into Greek. But translation is not just about language — it is

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[4] Ephrem Syrus in Brock, *Hym. Par.*, XI.7.

[5] Frances M. Young, *Biblical Exegesis and the Formation of Christian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 144.

about cultural idiom and belief, habits and customs. And therefore, translation of the Christian message is as much about how the events of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection (as well as the other events described in the Bible) are described, received, and understood not only by the culture within which these things originally happened, but also by whichever host culture the message is translated into:

> Christianity is a religion of historical events that are decisive in the meaning people ascribe to them. That process of attaching meaning to events contains the seeds of personal as well as cross-cultural engagement, and it defines the task of mission.[6]

Lamin Sanneh argues that the early church had two ways of sharing the gospel. The first of these was what he calls *diffusion*. In this mode, the culture of the missionaries is both 'the carrier and the arbiter of the message'. It is necessary for the host culture to adopt the language of the message, but also its cultural assumptions. In the book of Acts, the debates over whether Gentile converts should be circumcised reflect a resistance by Paul and Peter (under the influence of the Holy Spirit) to this model of diffusion, which would have imposed Mosaic law on new converts. Sanneh also sees Islam, with its insistence on using 'the sacred Arabic of Scripture in law and devotion' as an example of mission by diffusion.[7]

> The second mode is what Sanneh terms mission as *translation,*
>
> to institute the recipient culture as a valid and necessary locus of the proclamation, allowing the religion to arrive without the requirement of deference to the originating culture.[8]

This mode of sharing the Christian message requires indigenous theological inquiry, because it does not assume that the original cultural forms (both language and idiom) within which the message was originally couched must be adopted by the recipients. It also demonstrates different priorities: 'Cultural hegemony violates the gospel by giving primacy to conveyance over the message.'[9]

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[6] Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, 2nd edn (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009), p. 33.
[7] Sanneh, *Translating,* p. 33.
[8] Sanneh, *Translating,* p. 33.
[9] Sanneh, *Translating*, pp. 34, 36 (quotation p. 34).

The key point here is that in this model, the message is not just translated into a different language, but undergoes 'a fundamental vernacular reconstruction of the message'.[10] In other words, the act of translation, when done faithfully, requires a distinction between the Christian message itself and the cultural idiom (presuppositions, customs, etc.) used to convey it. Therefore, the act of translation requires considerable theological work by the host culture in order to find a way of expressing the message in their host language which conveys God's revelation in Christ as adequately as possible.

Sell your Shirt and Buy a Welsh Bible …

> The translation of the scriptures into the vernacular was one of the foremost linguistic and cultural developments of sixteenth-century Europe.[11]
>
> *Er mwyn prynu hwn rhag trais; Dos, gwerth dy bais, y Cymro.*[12]
>
> There is no such thing as a church without language, or without the Scriptures […] A mother-tongue response is in tune with the gospel.[13]

The patristic tradition is clear that God translated God's self-revelation into human language, borrowing our metaphors and idioms to clothe himself in human language. Even if we allow a 'dictation' model of inspiration, we still need to allow for the fact that human categories of language are unlikely to be able to express the fullness of God. In fact, God went further than that — God clothed Godself in human flesh, in order to translate it as completely as possible into terms that we could understand. And there is ample evidence down the ages that when translation of the Christian message into the vernacular has occurred, the effect has been transformative. In his *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, James Joyce talks of the three nets which both hold people back from flight but also enable them to fly: nationality, language, and religion. And because religion must be expressed in a language, and

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[10] Sanneh, *Translating*, p. 60.
[11] Glanmor Williams, *Wales and the Reformation* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), p. 356.
[12] 'In order to buy this and be free of oppression, go, sell thy shirt, thou Welshman.' Thomas Jones, writing about the Welsh Bible in 1588 (the same year that the translation of the entire Bible into Welsh was completed), cited in Williams, *Reformation,* p. 358.
[13] Sanneh, *Translating*, p. 97.

because language is intimately connected with nationality, these three nets are all intimately connected. William Morgan, who was responsible for the first translation of the entire Bible into Welsh in 1588, believed that the earlier translations (1567) into Welsh of the New Testament and the Prayer Book, while having serious orthographical deficiencies, had extended the knowledge of English as well as Welsh — as well as improving preaching and general knowledge of the Scriptures.[14]

It is worth quoting at length from (the English translation of) William Morgan's dedication to Queen Elizabeth 1 in the 1588 edition of his Welsh language Bible, in which he picks up so many of these issues:

> For besides the fact that our common people were then comparing together the Welsh and English versions of the Scriptures, they became of late more conversant with the English tongue […] For at that time scarcely any one was able to preach in the British tongue, because the terms in which the sacred mysteries which are in the Holy Scripture should be explained, had either entirely disappeared, swept away as if in Lethian waters, or laid on one side, buried and hidden in a measure in the dust of disuse, so that neither were the teachers able to set forth satisfactorily what they wished to teach, nor the hearers to understand clearly what they did set forth […] they departed in uncertainty and doubt, like men who had found a great treasure which they were not able to dig out, or who had been to a sumptuous feast of which they were not allowed to partake. But now by the exceeding goodness of Almighty God and your very kind interest and the watchful solicitude of the Bishops and by the labours and industry of this your translator this has been accomplished so that we may have both more numerous and better prepared preachers, and hearers more apt to learn […] everyone lives through faith, and faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God which hitherto lying hid in a foreign tongue had scarcely sounded into the ears of our countrymen. When therefore I saw that the translation of the rest of the Scriptures was so useful, nay so necessary (though long deterred by the sense of my weakness, and the magnitude of the work, as well as the evil disposition of certain people) yielding to the wishes of the pious, I allowed myself to be persuaded to undertake this most important, troublesome and to many, unacceptable task.
>
> […]
>
> If there are any who maintain that in order to retain agreement our countrymen had better learn the English tongue than that the Scriptures

[14] Williams, *Wales and the Reformation*, pp. 348–349.

> should be translated into our own, I would wish that while they study unity, they would be more cautious not to hinder the truth, and while they are most anxious to promote concord they should not put religion on one side. For although it is much to be desired that the inhabitants of the same island should be of the same speech and tongue, yet it is to be equally considered that to attain this end so much time and trouble are required, that in the meantime God's people would be suffered to perish from hunger of His word which would be barbarous and cruel beyond measure. Further there can be no doubt that similarity and agreement in religion rather than in speech much more promotes unity. To prefer unity to piety, expediency to religion, and a certain external concord among men to that extraordinary peace which the word of God impresses on the souls of men, show but little piety. Finally how unwise are those, who are of opinion that the prohibition of the Divine word in the mother tongue makes for the learning of another. For unless religion is taught in the vulgar tongue, not knowing its sweetness and value, no one will undergo any trouble for the sake of acquiring it.[15]

The Bible must be translated into the vernacular for people to read and understand it, but this involves a translation not just of words but of cultural idiom. Thus, there is a significant amount of theological and not just linguistic work to be done. A simple example of this is the translation of the words *shalōm* and *eirēnē* into Welsh. In both Old and New Testaments, these words are translated by the single English word *peace*. But there are in Welsh two words for peace: *heddwch* and *tangnefedd*. Dictionaries[16] give slightly differing definitions of these, and acknowledge that their semantic ranges overlap, but they generally agree that *tangnefedd* is an internal state of peace, perhaps more likely to be used of our relations with God and each other, whereas *heddwch* is more to do with external circumstances, perhaps in the context of political situations. The Welsh word for police is *heddlu,* or 'peace force'. It is not *tangnefeddlu*. One Welsh speaker commented to me that '*tangnefedd* is the internal condition that makes external peace (*heddwch)* possible'.

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[15] The English translation of the dedication to the 1588 Beibl William Morgan can be accessed in full through the online archives of the National Library of Wales <https://www.library.wales/discover-learn/digital-exhibitions/printed-material/1588-welsh-bible/english-translation-of-the-dedication-in-the-1588-bible/#:~:text=Dedication%20in%20the%20Welsh%20Bible%20of%201588%20by,etc.%20Ever%20grace%20and%20benediction%20in%20the%20Lord> [accessed December 2022].

[16] I consulted *Ap Geiriaduron,* a smartphone app, *Geiriadur yr Academi* (geiriaduracademi.org) and *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (geiriadur.ac.uk) in December 2022.

This means, then, that while an English speaker might struggle to reconcile Jesus's words in Matthew 10:34 or Luke 12:51,

> Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. (Matt 10:34, NRSV)
>
> Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! (Luke 12:51, NRSV),

with those in John 14:27,

> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. (John 14:27, NRSV),

a Welsh speaker reading the BCND Welsh Bible would not encounter the same level of hermeneutical challenge.

> *Peidiwch â meddwl mai i ddwyn* ***heddwch*** *i'r ddaear y deuthum; nid i ddwyn* ***heddwch*** *y deuthum ond cleddyf.* (Matt 10:34, BCND)
>
> *A ydych chwi'n tybio mai i roi* ***heddwch*** *i'r ddaear yr wyf fi wedi dod? Nage, meddaf wrthych, ond ymraniad.* (Luke 12:51, BCND)
>
> *Yr wyf yn gadael i chwi* ***dangnefedd;*** *yr wyf yn rhoi i chwi fy* ***nhangnefedd***[17] *i fy hun.* (John 14:27, BCND)

In this Welsh translation, the hermeneutical task is considerably simplified for the reader because the translators have chosen two different words for peace*: heddwch* to describe the external, worldly peace that Jesus does not promise, and *tangnefedd* to describe the inner peace that he does promise.

However, it has to be said that the question is even more complex than presented here. I am quoting here from the 2004 edition of the *Beibl Cymraeg Newydd Diwygiedig* (BCND). The most recent translation of the Bible into contemporary Welsh by Arfon Jones (*beibl.net*, 2015, 2021) does not use *tangnefedd* at all. The 1955 edition of the 1588 Beibl William Morgan translation uses *tangnefedd* in Matthew 10:34 (and in John 14:27), but *heddwch* in Luke 12:51.

But of course, this all confirms the point that I am making (after Sanneh): translation into a host language involves theological inquiry and theological decisions. It requires knowledge of the idiom of the host

[17] This is actually the same word as *'tangnefedd'* but has undergone a grammatical mutation.

culture. It restricts some meanings and opens up others. Reading the Bible is not the same experience in English as it is in Welsh — even for the same reader.

Language as a Spiritual Force

> The power of the Welsh language and identity is the spiritual force which unites supporters in a long and difficult struggle to save the language.[18]
>
> Bible translation as the cause of people everywhere challenged the idea of God being quarantined between prohibited walls, and accessible only by licensed retail.[19]

When the Christian message is translated into the vernacular, by translators who understand the cultural idiom into which the message is being translated, there is a shift of power towards the host culture. We can see from the sixteenth century that when the English language became the common standard of faith and worship, it also became the language of reform.[20] This is the practical consequence of the surrender of power to the host culture, and Sanneh uses the term *recipiency* to describe this phenomenon:

> A necessary precondition for effective translation is surrender to the terms of the target culture, whatever exalted notions the translator may have about faithfulness and accuracy to the original forms […] the mother tongue acquired the significance of a revelatory medium, becoming more than an autonomous linguistic device (though that was important), and carrying the implication that the God at work in that medium is the God of other idioms too […] Jesus Christ was assumed to be universally accessible through the medium of particular vernacular cultures, so that universality could propagate the spirit of unity without demanding cultural conformity for its real efficacy […] translation, particularly in its Christian form, stripped language from its idolatrous, fixed power and invested it with a potential for mutuality.[21]

Huw Thomas considers this issue of power shifts associated with use of the vernacular in his discussion of Welsh medium education.

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[18] Huw Thomas and Colin Williams, *Parents, Personalities and Power – Welsh-medium Schools in South-east Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2013).
[19] Sanneh, *Translating,* p. 98.
[20] See Sanneh, *Translating,* p. 103.
[21] Sanneh, *Translating,* pp. 237, 243, 245.

> Welsh medium education is special […] in terms of grassroots movements as distinct from top-down language planning […] There is no understanding of Welsh-medium education except through politics and power, and through aspirations, assertiveness and ambition.[22]

Thomas uses the terminology of Xish and Yish to describe two languages which have unequal power and influence within a community. Xish is the language under threat and Yish a stronger and therefore threatening language in a country or region.[23] These thought categories will come in useful as we consider good practice in bilingual worship in the next section of this article. But for now, let us pause for a moment and consider in more detail the issues of power associated with translation into the vernacular. In my context, as in Thomas's, the Yish language (stronger) is English, and the vernacular Welsh is the Xish language (under threat). But which Welsh is the true vernacular? The eminent Welsh historian Glanmor Williams is a case in point. His grandmother on his mother's side was a country girl from West Wales, while his grandfather on his father's side had been born into a cultured, Welsh-speaking household in Breconshire.

> Welsh was the language of the hearth and of worship for the Williams family, but in any other public domain its use, in Glanmor's words, was considered artificial or an affectation. […] The upshot was that, although Glanmor was never ill at ease while speaking Welsh throughout his life, he never believed it to be his first tongue or that he had gained the fluency which young people raised in Welsh-speaking communities could boast. […] In view of the fact that he expressed himself more easily in English than in Welsh, it is all the more remarkable that he committed himself all his life to publishing a regular flow of books, articles and reviews through the medium of Welsh […] Why he should have chosen to write in Welsh was never properly explained […] [As Glanmor himself put it]: It would be idle of me to pretend that I do not often veer uneasily between the Welsh-speaking Welshman and the non-Welsh-speaking Welshman. And I have to confess that my grasp of Welsh is not as good as I should like it to be. […] A creature who is too British for many Welsh-speaking Welshmen, and too much of a Welshman for the non-Welsh speaker.[24]

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[22] Thomas, *Parents, Personalities, Power*, p. x.

[23] Thomas, *Parents, Personalities, Power*, p. xxxi.

[24] G. H. Jenkins, '"Am I walking a tightrope?": Religion, Language and Nationality', in *Degrees of Influence: a Memorial Volume for Glanmor Williams*, ed. by G. H. Jenkins and G. E. Jones (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), pp. 142–163 (pp. 149–150).

In other words, there are many vernaculars: there is the Welsh of the countryside farm hearth, the Welsh of the cultured university lecturer. There is the Welsh of the traditional chapel and the Welsh of the young people streaming out of a Welsh-medium school. Each of these occupies a position along the Xish/Yish spectrum, and we will need to bear these multiple vernaculars in mind in when we consider good practice in bilingual worship.

Bilingualism as Unity in Christ

The Welsh theologian Dewi Hughes has written about his experience of establishing a bilingual church in Bangor, North Wales.[25] As a first language Welsh speaker, steeped in Welsh at home and in chapel, the only places where he found a corporate expression of vibrant faith were English-speaking:

> I was very aware that I was something of a spiritual schizophrenic — torn between my Welsh upbringing, my Welsh devotional life and rich evangelical history on the one hand, and my English corporate spiritual life on the other.[26]

Hughes talks about the 'very real tension'[27] that this caused him and other Welsh-speaking Christians. Before looking any further at Hughes's story, it is worth taking some time to understand why this tension is still very apparent in Welsh chapel life today, and so the next section will look at the Welsh Baptist context in general before returning to Dewi Hughes's specific experience.

The Welsh Baptist Context

For many Welsh-speaking Christians, choosing a lively, vibrant church involves not only a missing out on the opportunity to worship in their mother tongue, because many lively 'evangelical' churches are English language ones, but also a loss of their rich Welsh, evangelical chapel culture. This is because English language churches, even in Wales, are

[25] Hughes, *Castrating Culture*, pp. 50–56.
[26] Hughes, *Castrating Culture*, p. 51.
[27] Hughes, *Castrating Culture*, p. 14.

so strongly influenced by the variety and richness of resources which are available from American and English publishing houses and churches.

Baptist churches in Wales have a choice of two Unions to belong to: the Baptist Union of Great Britain, and the Baptist Union of Wales. Their membership is usually historically determined. The Baptist Union of Wales has been shaped by Welsh non-conformist history, practices, and heritage. It has two wings: the Welsh language wing and the English language wing. Usually, the wings have separate presidents, who have a year's term of office (although at the time of writing, both wings have the one president, the Revd Dr Densil Morgan). The Baptist Union of Wales has one general secretary, which is a permanent position over both wings. There is not a homogeneity of language across the Welsh language wing, because, as Glanmor Williams lamented, different people and different churches have a different level of perceived or actual competence in Welsh. Some churches only have historic ties with the language. To give one example, early on in our time in Wales, my husband and I went to a Welsh Baptist chapel which was very proud that all its hymns were in Welsh (although the rest of the service was in English). We did not speak any Welsh at the time, so my husband asked one of the (very Welsh-sounding!) older ladies what one of the hymns was about. She replied that she had no idea, but she loved singing the words. This is not in any way a criticism; the important point here is that for her, singing in Welsh was an essential part of her worshipping God. The Welsh hymns were her vernacular, her mother tongue of worship, even though she did not understand the words — but in a wider and deeper sense, she understood the language! At another church, a woman whose first language was Welsh heard the Bible being read from the beibl.net version (in simpler, more informal Welsh) for the first time. She was astonished that she understood it, and said that she had become accustomed to believe that the Bible was not read in order for people to understand it.

Then, at the other end of the spectrum, there is my current church, Tabernacle Baptist Chapel in Cardiff, where not only are all the services in Welsh, but the entire life of the church, including all social events, is conducted in Welsh. The hymns and carols sung are not usually translations of classic English hymns, but often original Welsh

language compositions. The Welsh of this chapel is not a translated Welsh, Yish cultural idiom being expressed in Xish, but a genuine grassroots Welsh culture, and an environment where English is very, very rarely heard.

Nor is there a homogeneity of culture across the two language wings of the Baptist Union of Wales, because, inevitably, the English language wing has been more influenced by the Yish effect of English Christian culture. However, there is still a noticeable difference of culture between churches in the Baptist Union of Wales and those in the Baptist Union of Great Britain. Moreover, within the Baptist Union of Great Britain churches, there are those whose cultural idiom has aligned itself more closely with that of the Yish Christian culture. A classic example of this is the Alpha course which originated from Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) in London.[28] This is an eleven-week course which has proved hugely successful all over the world, and involves a group of people meeting regularly over food and drink to watch the videos and discuss them. To quote their website,

> We believe that everyone should have the chance to explore faith, ask questions and share their point of view. Alpha is a series of sessions exploring the Christian faith. Each talk looks at a different question around faith and is designed to create conversation. Alpha is run all around the globe and everyone is welcome. It runs online, in cafés, churches, universities, homes — you name it! No two Alphas look the same, but they generally have three key things in common: hospitality, a talk and good conversation.

In the early 2000s I was minister of an English language Baptist church in the South Wales valleys. This church is entirely English speaking, but when Alpha was advertised in the area, there was no interest at all. People in the Valleys community could not relate to the people in the videos — they seemed so well-spoken, so 'posh', so 'sorted' — a different type of person altogether. Having said that, the husband of one of the church members, who was not a church goer, asked if he could keep a set of the videos. He said that when he was bored, he would just put the video on so he could hear this posh man speaking English so beautifully …

[28] Alpha <https://alpha.org> [accessed December 2022].

The 'very real tension' which Hughes refers to is seen very clearly here — it is the tension between the vernacular of a Welsh Christian (both in the sense of their mother tongue *and* their cultural idiom) and the corporate expression of Christian 'church' which is available to them.

Is Bilingualism the Answer?

> I was faced with having to work out how expressing unity in Christ, which often meant living my corporate Christian life through the medium of English, fitted in with my growing appreciation of my Welsh-language Christian heritage. In my experience, this very real tension for many Welsh-speaking Christians was resolved in the bilingual church that I had the privilege of helping to establish and lead from 1969–75.[29]

Dewi Hughes sought the answer to this tension in helping to establish a bilingual church in Bangor, North Wales, where he had been a student. In Eglwys Efengylaidd Ebeneser, English and Welsh speakers met separately for the morning service, initially in separate places and then in the same building, consecutively. Eventually, when space became available, the two congregations met separately but simultaneously in the same building. They then had coffee together after the service. In the evening, both congregations came together for an English service. During the week there were separate Bible study groups, but a united prayer meeting with freedom to pray in the language of one's choice. Church business meetings were in English.

For Hughes, the motivation for establishing the bilingual church was not merely or even primarily practical. It was theological — a means, as we saw in the quotation above, of seeking to express unity in Christ. Sadly, the experiment only lasted for six years:

> As leaders, we had to contend with complaints from both sides. The Welsh speakers were unhappy about those aspects of the church's life that were exclusively in English, while some of the English speakers could not understand the need for anything in Welsh at all since all the Welsh speakers could understand English![30]

[29] Hughes, *Castrating Culture,* 14.
[30] Hughes, *Castrating Culture*, pp. 52–53.

Eventually, the church separated into two congregations, along language lines, and both churches are still going today.[31]

Multilingualism and Unity in Christ

> Cross-cultural boundaries are accorded an intrinsic status in the proclamation of the gospel, and Christians who stood at such frontiers acquired a critical comparative perspective on their own cultural forms. They were challenged — as Paul was — to shed the blinkers of their cultural prejudice in order to face with unencumbered eyes the magnitude of God's salvific grace in other cultural settings. Cultural systems that turn in on themselves harden into xenophobia, with little relevance for the rights of neighbours. Trailing multiple idioms, mission helps to break the old wineskins with the pressure of cross-cultural experience, dissolving the barriers of cultural exclusion and suspicion.[32]

I started off this research because of a personal interest in how bilingual worship can be done well. My own journey has led me deeper and deeper into Welsh cultural and linguistic life, as I moved from being the minister of an English speaking chapel in Wales which was a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, to being the minister of a bilingual church in the Welsh Valleys which belonged to the Baptist Union of Wales (English Wing, then later Welsh Wing) but had affiliations with the Baptist Union of Great Britain, to my current church in the capital city of Wales which is entirely Welsh-speaking and only belongs to the Baptist Union of Wales (Welsh Wing). In the bilingual church, the Welsh-speaking and English-speaking congregations worshipped separately, but came together for coffee and church (business) meetings. There were exceptions though — for the sake of unity, at Easter, Christmas, and Harvest we would hold bilingual services, and these were very hard to do well. As Hughes comments, the fundamental problem is that the Yish language, English, is understood by everyone, and therefore those who do not speak Welsh see the obvious solution as being to hold everything in the common language, English.

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[31] The story of the church is told in this very interesting YouTube video, Eglwys Efengylaidd Ebeneser Evangelical Church, Bangor:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mhLBYopVd0> [accessed 12 April 2023].

[32] Sanneh, *Translating the Message*, p. 35.

However, I have sought to show in this article that this approach of imposing a common language is a very dubious one. There are a number of reasons for this. The first is that it is not the pattern of communicating the Christian message which God uses. When revealing Godself in Scripture, God communicates ideas which are expressed by men and women (mostly men) in human language and a cultural idiom (thought categories, moral judgments, etc) specific to the sociohistorical locus of revelation. This was widely understood and accepted by the early church, and in fact John Chrysostom writes of the creation account that the Bible has not one creation account but many, and in each case the truth about creation is 'translated' into the local idiom:

> Don't be surprised, dearly beloved, if Moses followed this procedure speaking as he was at the beginning in the early stages to very down-to-earth Jews, when even Paul in the age of grace, when proclamation of the good news had advanced so much, was able, in the speech he was on the point of delivering to the Athenians, to base his teaching to them on visible realities […] In addressing his letter to the people of Colossae he did not keep to that approach, but addressed them differently, in these words: 'In him were created all things — those in the heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones, dominations, principalities, powers — all were created by him and with him in mind.' John, the Son of Thunder, by contrast shouted aloud 'Everything was made through him, and without him no single thing was made'.[33]

The ultimate act of God's self-communication, though, is when God translates Godself into human flesh. In this way God in Jesus not only takes on human language but accepts all the limitations of human flesh and living in a human society, down to accepting a legal verdict which sentenced him to death. In Philippians 2:6–8, Paul describes God's act of self-translation as a kenosis, choosing the limitations of human existence at the cost of something we probably cannot imagine.

The point, then, is that the Christian message has only ever existed in translation. There is no privileged language for its communication, nor is there any privileged cultural idiom. God chose to use the vernacular, whether communicating through Scripture or the incarnation, and so should we.

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[33] Robert C. Hill, *Saint John Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis 1–17* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 2:8.

The second point, though, is that there is in fact only one gospel message, one Jesus Christ who calls all to be his disciples. But every time that gospel message is translated into the vernacular, theological enquiry is undertaken in order to express that message faithfully in the local cultural idiom and language. This means that power to control and define the message shifts away from the source language and culture to the host culture. This surrender of power is precisely what God consents to at some level in the incarnation — again, see Philippians 2:6–8. Thus, we have one gospel message, but a near-infinite multitude of expressions of it. This multiplicity is not a corruption of the purity of the message but is intrinsic to its very nature. The power shifts it produces are entirely consistent with the gospel message of liberation in Christ.

Paradoxically, then, and this is my third point, this diversity springs from unity. It is an inevitable product of remaining faithful to the one God revealed in Jesus Christ, and God's choice of the manner of self-revelation, that the proliferation of translations occurs. Thus, respecting and encouraging this multi-voiced expression of the Christian message is a way of expressing unity in Christ which is far more faithful to him than an imposed cultural or linguistic hegemony would be.

The discussion of the complexity of the Welsh situation should have made it clear that, in virtually any church in Wales, we are not dealing with a monolingual situation. We are not even dealing with a bilingual situation. Even if the only two languages spoken are English and Welsh, the range of formality and fluency within those languages as well as the variation of culture within any one church means that it would be far more appropriate to speak of multilingualism.

The task of the church is to express its unity in Christ by understanding, respecting, and allowing the multilingual and multicultural expressions of faith of its members. This will go much deeper than the simple choice of language use. Each church is going to have to do the hard work of translating the Christian message anew. This can only be done if those responsible for proclaiming the message understand the culture of the congregation, and are willing to surrender their own cultural and linguistic norms in order to provide a faithful translation of the message into the local vernaculars.

In so doing, I suggest that Sanneh's twin concepts of *recipiency* and *reciprocity* may come in useful to structure our thinking. In the context of this article, *recipiency* (as explained above) would describe the hard work of translation that each church leader must do in order to convey the Christian message in the local vernacular(s), thus recognising and yielding control to local culture. *Reciprocity* then occurs when the power shift results in a growth in confidence within the host culture — confidence in their own language, thought forms and idioms, and their ability to express the Christian message *in their own terms*.

> [W]e may say of this reciprocity that if people are trying to learn your language, they can hardly avoid striking up a relationship with you, however much they may wish to dominate you. Assuming that they do wish to dominate you, your best defence is the weapon they have grasped haltingly, namely, your language and all that belongs with it.[34]

Translation is hard work, and maintaining unity in diversity is harder work still. There is no simple algorithm or recipe for this, but instead it seems to me that a constant focus on the translation which God was willing to do of Godself in Christ, accepting its inherent risk of being misunderstood and misinterpreted, should serve as the model for those who wish to work towards unity by recognising and valuing multilingualism. Such an approach results in the reciprocity which Sanneh describes: a growth in confidence in people being able to express their faith with the dignity of children of God.

> God is no further — and no closer — than the language of common discourse, which makes translation a safeguard against believers becoming strangers to God and to one another, and against reducing believers to the status only of clients; translation exists to define the ground of our adoption as God's children, a God who speaks our language and who, in forming us in the accents of birth and nurture, calls us to a united, common purpose.[35]

[34] Sanneh, *Translating*, p. 210.
[35] Sanneh, *Translating*, p. 98.

Interdependency without Imperialism: Neville Callam's Ecumenical Contributions

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Abstract
This article, originally presented as the presidential address for the annual meeting of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion Region-at-Large,[1] explores the contributions to the ecumenical movement of Neville Callam, who served as General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance from 2007 until 2017. The article treats Callam's contributions to ecumenism in terms of the background of his own ecumenical formation, the ecumenical service of his ministerial career prior to his election as BWA General Secretary, his ecumenical leadership of the BWA, and the ecumenical theology articulated in his publications. The article characterises Callam's ecumenical vision as one rooted in the ecclesial interdependence that marks Baptist congregational ecclesiology despite its tendencies toward a more radical congregational independence, but an interdependent ecumenism that resists an imperialism to which some approaches to ecumenical convergence are susceptible.

Keywords

Neville Callam; Baptist World Alliance; ecumenism

Introduction

The Baptist World Alliance — the Christian world communion for Baptists founded in 1905 — has as one of its constitutional objectives 'to promote understanding and cooperation among Baptist bodies and

[1] An earlier version of this article was presented as the presidential address for the annual meeting of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion Region-at-Large during the College Theology Society Annual Convention, Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut, 4 June 2022.

with other Christian groups, in keeping with our unity in Christ'.[2] All of the nine General Secretaries of the BWA from J. H. Rushbrooke to Elijah Brown have contributed to advancing this objective through their service in that role, but arguably none more so than Neville Callam — not only through the ecumenical dimensions of his leadership of the BWA, but as a published Baptist ecumenical theologian in his own right. This article explores Neville Callam's ecumenical contributions in terms of the ecumenical formation he received, the ecumenical service of his ministerial career prior to his election as BWA General Secretary, his ecumenical leadership of the BWA, and the ecumenical theology articulated in his publications. The main title of this article, 'Interdependence without Imperialism', expresses something of the distinctiveness of Callam's ecumenical vision: an ecumenism rooted in the ecclesial interdependence that marks Baptist congregational ecclesiology in spite of its tendencies toward a more radical congregational independence, but an interdependent ecumenism that resists an imperialism to which some approaches to ecumenical convergence are susceptible.

Callam's Ecumenical Formation

Callam's election in 2007 as the eighth General Secretary of the BWA was significant in no small measure because he was the first (and thus far only) non-European and non-American to serve in that role. Four General Secretaries have been from the United States, and five from Europe (one from the United Kingdom, two from Norway, and one from Germany). But Callam's Jamaican identity not only diversified the top leadership of the BWA; his formation by the Baptists of Jamaica and by their distinctive patterns of ecumenical relationships helped shape the convictions that guided his ecumenical leadership of the global Baptist community. Callam on multiple occasions has credited his Jamaican formation as a primary influence on his ecumenical outlook, and in retirement he completed a book manuscript of 272 pages (single-

[2] Baptist World Alliance, 'Constitution of the BWA', <https://secureservercdn.net/166.62.112.219/o7e.4a3.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/BWA-Constitution-and-Bylaws-2020.pdf> [accessed 3 January 2023], 'Preamble' and 'II. Objectives'.

spaced) titled *Ecumenism in Jamaica, 1890–2021*.[3] Callam began researching and writing the book in 1981, but put it on hiatus when he became BWA General Secretary in 2007 and resumed work on the project in 2018 following his retirement. It is a work of thoroughly documented historiography that also gives expression to Callam's own ecumenical theology; it will make important contributions to ecumenical studies as well as to scholarship on Jamaican Christianity. A companion book titled *Fading Ecumenical Dream* documents eighteen collaborative ecumenical initiatives introduced in Jamaica during the period covered by *Ecumenism in Jamaica* — some of which have more recently de-emphasised or abandoned their original ecumenical aims (a phenomenon with parallels in my own North American context, it should be said).[4] This article draws from the account of ecumenism in Jamaica in these works as it relates to Callam's own ecumenical formation. The article will return later to the perspectives on ecumenical theology expressed therein, along with other published sources for Callam's ecumenical perspectives.

In the first two chapters of *Ecumenism in Jamaica*, Callam narrates the history of the arrival of the Christian traditions in Jamaica — the story not only of the arrival of Christianity, but also of the introduction of the churches' divisions that would call for a Jamaican ecumenism. Missionary work by Catholics, Anglicans, Quakers, Moravians, Baptists, Methodists, and Presbyterians in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries established those traditions in Jamaica that came to be known as the 'mainline churches' of that context, but this work was entangled with European colonialism and its importation of enslaved Africans to the island. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which saw the ending of slavery in Jamaica and eventually Jamaican independence from Great Britain, those traditions were joined by Congregationalists,

[3] Neville R. Callam, *Ecumenism in Jamaica, 1890–2021* (unpublished book manuscript, 2022). At the time of writing this article, plans for the publication of this book manuscript were not yet finalised. I am grateful to Callam for sharing the manuscript with me in connection with my research for this article.

[4] Neville R. Callam, *Fading Ecumenical Dream* (unpublished book manuscript, 2022). Likewise, at the time of writing, plans for the publication of this book manuscript were not yet finalised. I am grateful to Callam for sharing the manuscript with me in connection with my research for this article.

the Christian Church (or Disciples of Christ), the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Salvation Army, the Church of God, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (the latter was established in Jamaica in response to an invitation from Rastafarian leaders who desired the presence of an indigenous African expression of Christianity in Jamaica). While the modern ecumenical movement arose in part out of the missionary recognition of the scandal of a divided evangelisation, in Jamaica the impetus for seeking the unity of the church developed rather differently. In a paper Callam presented to a World Council of Churches Faith and Order Consultation with Younger Theologians in Finland in 1995 — over a decade before his election as BWA Secretary — Callam made these observations:

> One major problem resulting from the evangelization of the Caribbean region is the preponderance of churches of numerous confessional groupings which were 'planted' by missionaries who were too busy compiling statistical reports to send to their homelands, to attest to their 'success' and to justify the continuing financial commitment required, to find time to engage in the kind of ministry which takes St John 17 seriously […]The churches led by the missionaries manifested little or no interest in the problem the churches pose for the church.
>
> With the development in Caribbean churches of an increased awareness of the theological implications of our history and the commitment to working out a theology which rejects self-disparagement and self-hate, the churches began to discover how the divisions among them have hindered the effective fulfilment of the ministry to be carried out. The divisions were understood as a sign of the strategy, sometimes framed without an awareness of its devastating consequences, to divide and rule the oppressed people who had recently been evangelized. The development of local Councils of Churches and of such instruments as the Caribbean Conference of Churches represents efforts to meet the need to work together in the one ministry which has been given to the church by other than human agency.
>
> If interchurch co-operation was motivated by a desire to protest against the taken-for-granted divisions which characterise us, it was predicated, also, on the need to unite in the face of a hostile social context which had not yet emerged from captivity to an implanted mentality which was insensitive to Caribbean reality. In the church in the Caribbean region, the road to unity is paved not with the stones of doctrine and constitution, but with the marl of a deeply felt community sense

> emerging from a common history of slavery and emancipation […] In addition, we believe we have received a missional mandate which requires us, who are united by a history and culture over which the Triune God is sovereign, to live out our dignity together in community to the glory of God. The route to unity taken by the historic Faith and Order Movement may be differently directed.[5]

This last sentence was by no means a rejection of Faith and Order approaches to ecumenical convergence, but a recognition that this vital stream of the ecumenical movement has not always driven the ecumenical commitments of the Caribbean churches and that they nonetheless have embodied the church's call to unity in other distinctive ways that further the one ecumenical movement. More will be said about Callam's positive assessment of the Faith and Order stream of the one ecumenical movement later in this article.

In the section on the Baptists in *Ecumenism in Jamaica*, Callam recounts the history of Jamaican Baptists from the missionary work in the 1780s of formerly enslaved African American George Liele, the first Black person to be ordained to Christian ministry in colonial America, to the present, giving particular attention to the ecumenical commitments of the Jamaican Baptists. These are reflected in the ecumenical antislavery advocacy prior to emancipation and collaborative support of integral human development in Jamaica ever since, but also in the participation of Jamaican Baptists in the institutional structures of the modern ecumenical movement. The Jamaica Baptist Union was a founding member of the Union of Evangelical Churches in Jamaica in 1895 (which became the Jamaica Council of Evangelical Churches in 1900) and of the Council of Christian Churches in Jamaica in 1922. While it was not one of the founding Baptist member unions of the World Council of Churches, the

[5] Neville R. Callam, 'F&O: A Perspective from the Caribbean', paper presented to a World Council of Churches Faith and Order Consultation with Younger Theologians, Turku, Finland, 3–11 August 1995 <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/fo-a-perspective-from-the-caribbean> [accessed 3 January 2023]. Livingstone Thompson, on the other hand, attributes the origins of ecumenical engagement in the Caribbean in general and in Jamaica in particular, to the influence of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 and the participation in that conference of missionaries from the denominations with a missionary presence in the Caribbean (Thompson, 'Ecumenism in the Caribbean', *Ecumenical Review*, 53, no. 3 (July 2011), 421–427). The perspectives of Callam and Thompson on the roots of Caribbean/Jamaican ecumenism are not mutually exclusive.

Jamaica Baptist Union officially joined the WCC as a member church in 1995 after having already supplied official representatives to the WCC's Standing Commission on Faith and Order for decades: Horace Russell served in the role from 1968 to 1990, and then Neville Callam himself did so from 1992 to 2007 (Glenroy Lalor succeeded Callam in representing the Jamaica Baptist Union on the Commission on Faith and Order). On multiple occasions, Neville has credited his current ecumenical convictions to his initial Christian formation by Jamaican Baptists. Thanks to this formation, he could not imagine that there was any other way to be a Christian, or a Baptist Christian, than to be ecumenical.

An important means of Callam's ecumenical formation in Jamaica was the United Theological College of the West Indies. That institution, which in 1975 awarded him the Diploma in Ministerial Studies in connection with his Bachelor of Arts in Theological Studies from the University of the West Indies, embodied the Jamaican commitment to ecumenical relationships and was a significant means of fostering these relationships. Baptist theological education in Jamaica had an earlier history that began with the foundation of the Calabar Theological College in 1843. Presbyterians had established a Theological Hall two years earlier, and later in the nineteenth century, the Methodists and Anglicans had also opened institutions of theological education. In the early twentieth century, these institutions began to find ways to approach their work co-operatively; in 1913, the Baptist, Presbyterian, and Methodist colleges launched a more formal pattern of co-operation with the sharing of faculty to teach courses in various subjects. In 1966, with the assistance of the Theological Education Fund of the World Council of Churches, six denominations founded the present United Theological College of the West Indies: besides the Baptists, the Anglicans, Moravians, Methodists, Lutherans, and the United Church of Jamaica, which had united the Congregationalists, Disciples of Christ, and Presbyterians. The history of the United Theological College has been documented in a University of Utrecht doctoral dissertation by former Jamaica Council of Churches General Secretary Edmund Davis and is the subject of a chapter in *Fading Ecumenical Dream*, Callam's

companion volume to *Ecumenism in Jamaica*.[6] By the time Callam was a student in the United Theological College, 1971–1975, this ecumenical venture in theological education had also entered into a cross-registration arrangement with St. Michael's Seminary and Theological College, the Catholic seminary in Jamaica. Such a context undoubtedly shaped Callam's developing ecumenical convictions.

The same can be said for Callam's education at Harvard Divinity School, where he studied from 1978 through 1980, earning the Master of Theological Studies degree with a focus on theological ethics. The ecumenically inclined Swedish New Testament scholar and Bishop of Stockholm Krister Stendahl was dean there until 1979, leading an ecumenical and interfaith faculty that included Radical Reformation historian George Huntston Williams. Harvard Divinity introduced Callam to additional dimensions of ecumenical awareness on which he would soon draw.

A significant personal influence on Callam's ecumenical formation was Horace Russell, who served as president of United Theological College 1972–1976, during the years of Callam's studies there. Russell had become the first full-time Jamaican-born faculty member of the Calabar Theological College in 1958, after completing studies at Regent's Park College of the University of Oxford. In 1968, Russell was appointed as a member of the WCC Commission on Faith and Order as the first person from the Caribbean to serve on the Commission; he was eventually its vice moderator and served on the Commission until 1990. Callam succeeded Russell in this role in 1992. Russell was the author of numerous works in Baptist historical and theological studies as well as missiology and ecumenism — including four books, five booklets, seven chapters in multi-author books, and seventeen journal articles — and was described in a tribute to him published by the Baptist World Alliance in 2014 and re-posted upon his death in 2021 as 'the foremost church historian in the English-speaking Caribbean' who was 'at the forefront of forging a Caribbean theology

[6] Edmund Davis, 'The History of Theological Education in Jamaica: The United Theological College of the West Indies and its Four Antecedent Colleges, 1841–1966' (doctoral thesis, Universiteit Utrecht, 1998); Neville R. Callam, *Fading Ecumenical Dream*, chapter 12.

for more than 50 years'.[7] Callam's ecumenical contributions build on Russell's pioneering work as a Baptist ecumenist.

Callam's Pre-General-Secretary Ecumenical Service

Before he succeeded Russell on the WCC Commission on Faith and Order, Callam had already been active in ecumenical service in Jamaica and the Caribbean. During his years of pastoral ministry, he also served as chair of an ecumenical ministerial association, chairman of the Church and Society Commission of the Jamaica Council of Churches (1989–1993), chairman of the Faith and Order Commission of the JCC (1993–2000), and as member of the Steering Committee of the Regional Ecumenical Institute of the Caribbean Conference of Churches (2003–2007). On behalf of the Baptist World Alliance, he represented Baptist life in the Caribbean region on the joint commissions to international dialogues with the Anglican Consultative Council and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Phase II (he resigned from the latter when he assumed his duties as General Secretary).

Callam's appointment to the WCC Commission on Faith and Order in 1992 soon led to numerous roles of leadership in the work of the Commission during the fifteen years he served on it. Prior to resigning from the Commission on Faith and Order when he began his service as BWA General Secretary, Callam participated in thirty-six meetings of its Standing Commission, Plenary Commission, working groups, drafting groups, and consultations, often sharing in planning and leading these meetings and speaking on their programmes. Callam was co-moderator of the Consultation on Ecclesiology and Ecumenical Hermeneutics; co-moderator of the Drafting Group on Ecclesiology; co-moderator of the Study on Ecclesiology; member of the Consultation on the Ecumenical Implications of our Common Baptism; co-moderator of the Consultation on Episkopé and Episcopacy and the

[7] Baptist World Alliance, 'Celebrating Christian Witness of The Reverend Doctor Horace Orlando Russell', cited in 'Reverend Horace Russell Dies; Leaves Huge Legacy', *Radio Jamaica News,* 6 April 2021 <http://radiojamaicanewsonline.com/opinion/reverend-horace-russell-dies-leaves-huge-legacy> [accessed 4 January 2023]. The BWA tribute no longer appears on the BWA web site, but it is quoted extensively in the *Radio Jamaica News* story.

Quest for Visible Unity; member of the Planning Committee for the 2004 Commission Meeting; co-rappeteur for the Consultation on Ministry and Ordination in the Community of Women and Men in the Church; and presenter of a paper on 'Baptism and Christian Initiation' commissioned by the WCC Central Committee.[8]

Callam's Ecumenical Leadership of the BWA

Callam relinquished these positions when he assumed his duties as BWA General Secretary, but he then embodied his passion for the unity of the church in his ecumenical leadership of the global Baptist community as an important dimension of his responsibilities. This included first and foremost his insistence that the BWA continue to engage in international bilateral dialogues with other Christian world communions. The BWA had already been participating in the international bilaterals that proliferated in the wake of Vatican II. Catholic initiatives to enter into formal dialogue with other communions soon after the Council encouraged non-Catholic communions to dialogue not only with the Catholic Church but with one another. In 1973, the BWA began a five-year dialogue with the World Alliance of Reformed Churches; this was followed by dialogues with the Catholic Church (1984–1988), the Lutheran World Federation (1986–1989), the World Mennonite Conference (1989–1992), and the Anglican Consultative Council (2000–2005).[9] As noted earlier, Callam

[8] Neville R. Callam, 'Ecumenical Service and Some Ecumenical Conferences in Which I Participated' (unpublished document shared with the author).

[9] Baptist World Alliance and World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 'Report of Theological Conversations Sponsored by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and the Baptist World Alliance', § 2 in *Growth in Agreement: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, ed. by Harding Meyer and Lukas Vischer, Faith and Order Paper no. 108 (New York: Paulist Press; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1984), pp. 132–151; Baptist World Alliance and Catholic Church, 'Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World: A Report on Conversations 1984–1988', in *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982–1998*, ed. by Jeffrey Gros, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch (Geneva: WCC Publications; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 373–385; Baptist World Alliance and Lutheran World Federation, 'A Message to Our Churches', § 1 in *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982–1998*, ed. Jeffrey Gros, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, Faith and Order Paper no. 187 (Geneva: WCC Publications; Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 155–175; Baptist World Alliance and Mennonite World Conference, 'Theological Conversations, 1989–

was a member of the joint commission for the dialogue with the Anglican Communion and was in the midst of serving as a member of the Baptist delegation to a second phase of dialogue with the Catholic Church, 2006–2010, when he was appointed General Secretary and thus relinquished his role in that dialogue. As General Secretary, Callam worked to facilitate the reception of the agreed report from Phase II of the Baptist-Catholic dialogue[10] and was instrumental in securing commitments for launching a third phase of dialogue four years after the report from the second phase was issued (in contrast to the two decades that elapsed between Phase I and Phase II, this time making possible embodied continuity in the makeup of the dialogue joint commissions). He also led in the initiation of a dialogue with the World Methodist Council (2014–2018)[11] and a dialogue with representatives of global Pentecostalism that met initially in 2011 but was placed on hiatus the following year.[12] Callam also in 2011 led a small team of Baptist theologians to re-engage an earlier series of 'pre-conversation' with representatives of the Eastern Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate, the outcome of which was a mutual recommendation to proceed to a formal dialogue that proved not to be possible due to opposition from the

1992', in *Growth in Agreement III: International Dialogue Texts and Agreed Statements, 1998–2005*, ed. by Jeffrey Gros, Thomas F. Best, and Lorelei F. Fuchs, Faith and Order Paper no. 204 (Geneva: WCC Publications; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), pp. 426–448; Anglican Consultative Council and Baptist World Alliance, *Conversations Around the World: The Report of the International Conversations between the Anglican Communion and the Baptist World Alliance 2000–2005* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2005).

[10] Baptist World Alliance and Catholic Church, 'The Word of God in the Life of the Church: A Report of International Conversations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance 2006–2010', § 62, *American Baptist Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2012), 28–122.

[11] Baptist World Alliance and World Methodist Council, *Faith Working through Love*: *Report of the International Dialogue between the Baptist World Alliance and the World Methodist Council* (2018): <https://o7e.4a3.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Final-Report-of-the-International-Dialogue-between-BWA-and-WMC.pdf> [accessed 4 January 2023].

[12] Jim White, 'Global Baptists to explore talks with Orthodox and Pentecostals', *Baptist News Global,* 6 July 2011:
<https://baptistnews.com/article/globalbaptiststoexploretalkswithorthodoxandpentecostals/>
[accessed 4 January 2023]

Bob Allen, 'Baptist-Pentecostal Talks Postponed', *Baptist News Global,* 8 August 2012:
<https://baptistnews.com/article/baptist-pentecostal-talks-postponed/> [accessed 4 January 2023].

Russian Orthodox Church, led by Patriarch Kirill, to a dialogue with the Baptists.[13]

Callam saw to it that the BWA was represented in plenary meetings of WCC Commission on Faith and Order as a Christian world communion (beyond the representation supplied by member churches such as the Jamaican Baptist Union and the Baptist Union of Great Britain in both the Standing Commission and the Plenary Commission), and that the BWA was represented in the Faith and Order Commission's 'Moral Discernment in the Churches' project.

As General Secretary, Callam participated in the annual meetings of the Conference of Secretaries of Christian World Communions, the Forum on Bilateral Dialogues, and the Global Christian Forum, and delivered one of the plenary addresses at the Tenth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan, South Korea. In addition, Callam represented the global Baptist community at Pope Francis's pilgrimage visit to Assisi for the Day of Reflection, Dialogue and Prayer commemorating St. Francis in October 2011 and at the Taizé Jubilee Celebrations commemorating the centenary of Brother Roger's birth and the tenth anniversary of his death, held at Taizé in France in August 2015.

An important expression of Callam's ecumenical leadership of the BWA was his use of the General Secretary's editorial columns published quarterly in the *Baptist World* magazine to call the attention of the global Baptist community to ecumenical matters. He wrote forty-one of these columns between 2007 and 2017, nineteen of which addressed ecumenical themes. Among them are editorials insisting on the importance of Baptists engaging in ecumenical dialogue; urging Baptists to think ecumenically about baptism; calling for reflection on the ecclesial status of the BWA as a Christian world communion; explaining why discussions about the possibility of a common date for Easter are important; appealing for ecumenical solidarity in work on ecclesial moral discernment of ways forward regarding the ethical issues

[13] Steven R. Harmon, 'Report on Pre-Conversations between Representatives of the Baptist World Alliance and the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate', unpublished paper presented (*in absentia*) to the Baptist World Alliance Commission on Doctrine and Christian Unity meeting during the annual gathering of the Baptist World Alliance, Santiago, Chile, 2–7 July 2012.

that have divided the churches in recent years; suggesting that monasticism offers spiritual treasures Baptists might receive; and highlighting the implications of uniting churches with Baptist participation for Baptist perspectives on Christian unity — in particular the union in Sweden between Methodist, Evangelical Covenant, and Baptist churches, with the membership of the resulting united church in the BWA meaning that the BWA now includes some Methodist and Evangelical Covenant members.[14] It should also be noted that, while the BWA General Secretary does not direct the BWA Resolutions Committee to offer specific resolutions for adoption by the General Council, in 2012, during the BWA annual gathering in Santiago, Chile, the General Council adopted a resolution on 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World' that speaks to the 'wider ecumenism' of inter-religious dialogue by commending and endorsing the document *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World* that had been jointly issued by the World Evangelical Alliance, the World Council of Churches, and the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue.[15]

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[14] The following columns are among those authored by Neville Callam devoted to ecumenical issues and aspects of Baptist ecclesiology with ecumenical implications: 'Appeal to Baptist Theologians', *Baptist World*, April/June 2008, p. 31; 'A Common Date for Easter', *Baptist World*, July/September 2008; 'Baptist Sages of the East: Worthy of Emulation', *Baptist World*, April/June 2009, p. 31; 'Marking the Baptist Quadricentennial', *Baptist World*, July/September 2009, p. 31; 'Baptists Help Overcome a Scandal', *Baptist World*, July/September 2010, p. 4; 'From Alliance to Communion', *Baptist World*, October/December 2010, p. 31; 'The Subject of Baptism', *Baptist World*, January/March 2011, p. 4; 'A Test of Hospitality', *Baptist World*, October/December 2012, p. 4; 'The Triumph of the Love of Christ', *Baptist World*, October/December 2013, p. 4; 'Negotiating Disagreement on Ethics and Morals', *Baptist World,* October/December 2014, p. 4; 'Baptists Together in a Ministry of Compassion', *Baptist World*, July/September 2015, p. 4; 'Fresh Offerings from Heaven', *Baptist World*, January/March 2016, p. 4; 'On Reading in Context', *Baptist World*, April/June 2016, pp. 4–5; 'Known by Our Love', *Baptist World*, July/September 2016, p. 4; 'The Case for Christian Unity', *Baptist World*, October/December 2016, p. 4; 'Reclaiming Baptist Interdependency', *Baptist World,* January/March 2017, p. 3; 'What a Difference!', *Baptist World*, April/June 2017, p. 3; 'Built Sacred Space', *Baptist World*, July/September 2017, p. 3; 'BWA and the Future', *Baptist World*, October/December 2017, p. 2.

[15] Baptist World Alliance, 'BWA General Council Resolution 2012.4: Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World' <https://baptistworld.org/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world/> [accessed 17 March 2023]. For the text of the document commended and endorsed by the BWA resolution, see World Evangelical Alliance, World Council of Churches, and Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue, *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World,* 28 June 2011, <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world> [accessed March 17, 2023]. An anonymous referee of this present article

Callam's Ecumenical Theology

In his General Secretary columns, Callam was functioning as a public ecumenical theologian, communicating to a general readership some of the ecumenical theology he wrote for theologically educated persons in other venues, sometimes for Baptists but frequently for ecumenical readerships. Besides the two manuscripts of forthcoming books on ecumenism in Jamaica mentioned earlier in this article,[16] Callam published a book rich in ecumenical themes entitled *From Fragmentation to Wholeness: Race, Ethnicity, and Communion*, which addressed the more stubborn divisions in the body of Christ related to race and ethnicity through the lens of eucharistic practice.[17] He has also published several journal articles and book chapter essays on ecumenical topics, including articles in *The Ecumenical Review* on 'Hope: A Caribbean Perspective', 'Baptists and Church Unity', and 'Baptists and the Subject of Baptism';[18] an article on 'The Mission of the Church in the Perspective of the World Council of Churches' Text on the Nature and Purpose of the Church' in the *International Review of Mission*;[19] an article on 'Baptists and the Quest

noted that while there had been BWA resolutions on ecumenical matters prior to Callam's tenure as General Secretary (notably 'BWA General Council Resolution 2001.4: Conversations between Christian Communions' <https://baptistworld.org/resolution-on-conversations-between-christian-communions/> and 'BWA General Council Resolution 2008.5: Ministry of Reconciliation' <https://baptistworld.org/ministry-of-reconciliation-2/>), apart from the aforementioned resolution on 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World' there were no specifically ecumenical resolutions adopted during Callam's service in the role. The referee raised the question of why this was the case, despite Callam's clear ecumenical commitments. It is possible that Callam avoided pushing too far in that direction in light of the suspicion of conciliar ecumenical relationships in some quarters of the global Baptist community represented in the BWA General Council, but as I have noted above, the BWA General Secretary normally does not direct the BWA Resolutions Committee to offer specific resolutions for adoption by the General Council; a particular year's committee is free to propose to the General Council the resolutions they deem most relevant.

16 Callam, *Ecumenism in Jamaica*; Callam, *Fading Ecumenical Dream*.

17 Neville R. Callam, *From Fragmentation to Wholeness: Race, Ethnicity, and Communion* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2017).

18 Neville R. Callam, 'Hope: A Caribbean Perspective', *The Ecumenical Review*, 50, no. 2 (April 1998), 137–142; Callam, 'Baptists and Church Unity', *The Ecumenical Review* 61, no. 3 (October 2009), 304–314; Callam, 'Baptists and the Subject of Baptism: Any Real Progress during the Last 25 Years?', *The Ecumenical Review* 67, no. 3 (October 2015), 334–361.

19 Neville R. Callam, 'The Mission of the Church in the Perspective of the World Council of Churches' Text on the Nature and Purpose of the Church', *International Review of Mission*, 90 (July 2001), 237–242.

for Consensus around Baptism' in the *American Baptist Quarterly*;[20] and chapters in multi-author works addressing Faith and Order ecumenism from the context of the Caribbean, Baptist worship in ecumenical perspective, Baptist participation in bilateral dialogues, and visions for ecumenical progress in relation to current challenges for the ecumenical movement.[21] The following observations summarise seven key emphases in Callam's own ecumenical theology as expressed in these publications.

First, Callam insists on the indispensability of the Faith and Order stream of the modern ecumenical movement, but co-inherent with the missiological and Life and Work streams. The modern ecumenical movement was birthed by the quest for unity in mission. But one of the missionaries present at the Edinburgh Conference, American Episcopal missionary to the Philippines Bishop Charles Brent, became convinced that unity in mission would soon run up against the limits of the enduring divisions of the church unless the global church also addressed the theological roots of their divisions.[22] Brent proposed that there be a regular international conference on Faith and Order to address the church's doctrinal divisions; the first was held in Lausanne, Switzerland in 1927. In the wake of the First World War and the industrial revolution, the realisation of the need for inter-church co-operation in addressing social challenges led the Lutheran Archbishop of the Church of Sweden Nathan Söderblom to host the first Conference on Life and Work in Stockholm in 1925. The motto that became associated with the Life and Work movement was 'doctrine divides, but service unites'; it foreshadowed a growing tension between

[20] Neville R. Callam, 'Troubling the Waters: Baptists and the Quest for Consensus around Baptism', *American Baptist Quarterly*, 37, no. 2 (Summer 2018), 198–232.

[21] Neville R. Callam, 'Talking Community Beyond the Home Ground', in *Ministry Perspectives from the Caribbean: Essays in Honor of Horace O. Russell*, ed. by Eron Henry (Bronx, NY: Caribbean Diaspora Baptist Clergy Association, 2010), pp. 30–42; Callam, 'Worship and the Unity of Baptists Today', in *Beyond 400: Exploring Baptist Futures*, ed. by David J. Cohen and Michael Parsons (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), pp. 222–235; Callam, 'In Thanks and Hope', in *Encountering the God of Life: Report of the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, ed. by Erlinda Senturias and Theodore Gill, Jr. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2014), pp. 97–100; Callam, 'Baptists in Bilateral Theological Dialogue', in *Baptist Identity into the 21st Century: Essays in Honour of Ken Manley*, ed. by Frank Rees (Melbourne: Whitley College, 2016), pp. 157–168.

[22] Alexander C. Zabriskie, *Bishop Brent, Crusader for Christian Unity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1948).

the Life and Work and Faith and Order streams of the ecumenical movement that in some respects is still with us today. Callam's primary participation in the institutional instruments of the ecumenical movement has been situated in its Faith and Order stream, but in his paper 'Faith and Order: A Perspective from the Caribbean' presented to a WCC Faith and Order Consultation with Younger Theologians, Callam said,

> Whilst the clear theological focus on the unity of the church must always be affirmed, a successful attempt to alienate this focus entirely from the consideration of issues affecting God's reconciling and transforming purpose for all of creation will blunt the appeal of Faith and Order to most of the churches in the Two-thirds world.[23]

Second, Callam urges Baptists to pursue the ecumenical goal of the visible unity of the church rather than merely being content with affirmations of an already-present spiritual unity. Callam's survey of Baptist perspectives on church unity published in *The Ecumenical Review* grants that Baptists by and large have preferred to identify spiritual rather than visible unity as the proper ecumenical goal, but it also gestures toward a theology of an ecclesial *koinonia* that has concrete manifestations and can be expressed within a paradigm of 'unity in reconciled diversity', which Callam has characterised positively in other writings.[24]

Third, Callam refuses to allow Baptists to be pressured to surrender their core ecclesiological convictions as a condition for ecumenical convergence. Some ecumenical proposals seem to place the burden on ecclesial minorities such as the Free Churches to rethink their non-conforming perspectives for the sake of ecumenical progress — for example, the insistence on the historic episcopate as an essential principle of unity in the 'Appeal to All Christian People' issued by the Lambeth Conference of the Church of England in 1920;[25] portions of

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[23] Callam, 'F&O: A Perspective from the Caribbean'.

[24] Callam, 'Baptists and the Subject of Baptism'; cf. Callam, *Ecumenism in Jamaica*, chapter 11; Callam, 'A Bold Step toward Church Union', unpublished address to the Church Unity Breakfast at the American Baptist Churches USA Biennial Meeting, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 25 June 2011.

[25] Anglican Communion Office, *The Lambeth Conference: Resolutions Archive from 1920* (Anglican Consultative Council, 2005), resolution 9:

the Ministry section of *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* also come across in this manner.[26] Callam encourages Baptists to find ways to appreciate the legitimacy of other communions' baptismal practices and structures for ministry without abandoning their own. He has something of a Catholic counterpart in Cardinal Walter Kasper, who in conversation with the Baptist-Catholic dialogue commission in 2009 offered support for an ecumenical vision of a communion of communions, in which each communion retains its distinctive identity while being in full communion with the others — also a vision of ecclesial *koinonia*.[27]

Fourth, Callam characterises ecumenical progress as a process of conversion. In an address at a Church Unity breakfast during the 2011 American Baptist Churches USA biennial meeting in Puerto Rico, Callam explored more extensively the Swedish church union scheme with Baptist participation that he also highlighted in a *Baptist World* magazine column.[28] He characterised this expression of unity as a mutual conversion of ecclesial identity that made this form of organic unity possible. In another *Baptist World* column, Callam highlighted conversion as a distinctively Baptist emphasis with not merely individual but ecclesial, and even ecumenical, implications, drawing on the work of the late Puerto Rican Baptist theologian Orlando Costas.

Fifth, Callam insists that any ecclesiological structures arrived at through ecumenical convergence should be regarded as provisional. In employing the uniting church in Sweden as a test case for visions of visible unity, Callam noted, 'There is a certain provisionality about existing church structures generally, including those which emerge out of church union schemes. The coming together of the Baptist, Methodist and Mission Covenant churches in Sweden does not imply that, for these partners, the road to church unity is over.'[29] This is an

<https://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/127731/1920.pdf> [accessed 6 January 2023], paragraphs 6 and 7.

[26] World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper no. 111 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982), pp. 16–30.

[27] Cf. Walter Kasper, *That They May All Be One: The Call to Unity Today* (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 50–95.

[28] Callam, 'A Bold Step toward Church Union'; Callam, 'Conversion', *Baptist World*, October/December 2015, p. 4.

[29] Callam, 'A Bold Step toward Church Union', p. 9.

eschatological ecumenical vision for Baptists and others that in my own work I have called a 'pilgrim church ecclesiology' that progresses toward (and sometimes regresses from) fuller realisations of the unity of the church.[30]

Sixth, Callam encourages the embrace of receptive ecumenism as a paradigm that facilitates convergence through the conversion of the churches. In the final chapter of *Ecumenism in Jamaica*, entitled 'Moving Toward the Future', Callam affirms the promise of this paradigm that has been named and theologically explored during the past two decades but has been practised in various ways for as long as the church has existed.[31] He describes it in this fashion:

> No single tradition embodies all that God has called the church to be. At the same time, each church tradition hosts unique gifts that it has preserved and developed over the years. The cause of ecumenism is not primarily to merge all churches into one great universal organic union, although some mergers seem clearly to be within the will of God. It is, instead, the exchange of gifts between Church Communions that may lead to expressions of unity without uniformity and a state of fuller communion among the church traditions.[32]

Seventh, Callam regards the socially-located contextual existence of the churches as integral to the catholicity of the church. The WCC Commission on Faith and Order made a significant turn toward affirming the indispensability of contextual theologies to the wholeness of the church in the last stretch of work on the convergence text that became *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* in the aftermath of the 2009 Faith and Order Plenary Commission meeting in Crete, where Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Coorilos of India called out the failure of an earlier draft to attend to contextual theological challenges and 'to encounter the real *ecclesia* among communities of people in pain and suffering'.[33] This moved the Plenary Commission to

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30 Steven R. Harmon, *Baptist Identity and the Ecumenical Future: Story, Tradition, and the Recovery of Community* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), pp. 213–242.

31 See *Receptive Ecumenism and the Call to Catholic Learning: Exploring a Way for Contemporary Ecumenism*, ed. by Paul D. Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

32 Callam, *Ecumenism in Jamaica*, chapter 15.

33 Geevarghese Mar Coorilos, 'The Nature and Mission of the Church: An Indian Perspective', in *Called to Be the One Church: Faith and Order at Crete*, ed. by John Gibaut, Faith and Order Paper No. 212 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2012), pp. 188–192.

recommend that the drafting committee 'make it more contextual, more reflective of the lives of the churches throughout the world', a recommendation that was heeded in the final text.[34] But Callam had already been calling for precisely this recognition by the ecumenical movement, from his 1995 presentation to the Faith and Order Consultation with Younger Theologians through his 2001 analysis in the *International Review of Mission* of an even earlier draft of what became *The Church: Towards a Common Vision* — then entitled *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* — and well beyond to his current work on Jamaican ecumenism.[35]

Conclusion

The introduction of this article suggested that its title 'Interdependency without Imperialism' expresses the distinctiveness of Callam's ecumenical vision: an ecumenism rooted in the ecclesial interdependence of Baptist ecclesiology, but which resists ecumenical imperialism. The title echoes language Callam employed in a *Baptist World* column titled 'Reclaiming Baptist Interdependency'. It ends with this sentence: 'Hardly can one identify a greater need of Baptists today than to rediscover Baptist interdependency — an interdependency that rejects cultural imperialism, paternalism and neo-colonialism, a true interdependency that is untainted by notions of empire.'[36] This has in mind intra-Baptist relationships, but it applies to ecumenical relations as well. There are ecumenical paradigms that amount to ecumenical imperialism: for example, 'home to Rome' (or Constantinople), or merger into the structure of a 'super church' (which is not the aim of the WCC, but there was enough worry that this was its aim that the New Delhi definition of 'The Unity We Seek' in 1961 took pains to dispel

[34] World Council of Churches, *The Church: Towards a Common Vision,* Faith and Order Paper no. 214 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2013), p. 45.

[35] Callam, 'F&O: A Perspective from the Caribbean'; Callam, 'The Mission of the Church in the Perspective of the World Council of Churches' Text on the Nature and Purpose of the Church'; Callam, *Ecumenism in Jamaica*.

[36] Callam, 'Reclaiming Baptist Interdependency'; republished as Callam, 'Why We Must Reclaim Baptist Interdependency', *Good Faith Media,* 1 February 2017 <https://goodfaithmedia.org/why-we-must-reclaim-baptist-interdependency-cms-23887/> [accessed 6 January 2023].

such fears[37]). There have, however, been manifestations of the previously noted pressure for ecclesiological minorities to converge toward majority positions on baptism and episcopacy. It must be noted that there have also been Baptist expressions of ecumenical imperialism that seemed to hold out the hope that unity might come about when the rest of the churches are converted to Baptist principles. In contrast, Callam has endeavoured to convince more Baptists that they have much to gain from the ecumenical movement and to persuade their ecumenical dialogue partners that the ecumenical movement has much to gain from Baptists — an ecumenical interdependency that makes space for the conversion of the churches toward the visible unity of the one body of Christ.

A fitting conclusion for this article is Callam's own conclusion to his plenary address to the Tenth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan, South Korea on 4 November 2014, which gives expression to his Baptist ecumenical vision of an ecclesial interdependence without imperialism. It includes a prayer from the Orders of Worship for the Sixth International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches that was held in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, 22–29 March 1995. Callam concluded his address in Busan thus:

> As we go forward in the pilgrimage of unity, may we never disconnect the search for unity from the search for justice and peace! This is necessary if the church is to be faithful to God's great mission to gather the whole of creation under Christ's lordship into communion with God. The challenges are daunting, but the opportunities are immense for us to go forward with passion for the unity of the church. May our prayer continue to be: 'O God, holy and undivided Trinity, give us who are still divided the thirst and hunger for communion in faith, life, and witness. Keep us restless until we grow together into the fullness of the whole body of Christ, in accord with Christ's prayer that we who believe in him may be one.' Amen.[38]

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[37] World Council of Churches, 'Report of the Section on Unity', in *The New Delhi Report: The Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches, 1961* (New York: Association Press, 1962), pp. 116–135.

[38] Neville R. Callam, 'In Thanks and Hope', pp. 97–100. The prayer Callam quotes is from *Orders of Worship for the Sixth International Consultation of United and Uniting Churches, Ocho Rios, Jamaica, March 22–29, 1995*, p. 4.

The Politics of Disagreement in the Body of Christ

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Abstract
This article[1] builds upon my 2022 Whitley Lecture asking how Baptists deal with the politics of disagreement. Like the Whitley Lecture, it uses the Baptist Union of Great Britain's Declaration of Principle as a means of suggesting a set of virtues — humility, patience, hope, grace, love, and peace — that should characterise how we approach and discuss areas where we disagree.

Keywords
Disagreement; politics; Declaration of Principle

Introduction

To talk about the church being political can be understood in different ways. It can mean the ways that the church engages in political issues and questions; for example, the way the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) contributes to the important work of the Joint Public Issues Team.[2] It can also be used as a way of describing how the church can resemble what we see in the politics of parliament, that is, the disagreement, division, and hostility that emerges between political parties. This appears more extreme in the UK parliament and its equivalent in the United States of America, where two parties dominate and rarely has there been a need for coalition with other parties. In our own Baptist life, at least in England, and mirroring other church denominations, the ongoing response to LGBT inclusion feels deeply

[1] This article is an expansion of a short piece originally published in the *Baptist Times* on the 28 April 2022 <https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/634708/The_Church_is.aspx>.

[2] The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) is a partnership between the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church, and the United Reformed Church, founded in 2007. The purpose of JPIT is to help the churches work together for peace and justice through listening, learning, praying, speaking, and acting on public policy issues. See 'About us', The Joint Public Issues Team <https://jpit.uk/about-us> [accessed 11 April 2023].

political, with different positions and groupings seeking to initiate or resist change.[3] Agendas are in play. Rules and policies are contested and competing visions or stories are marshalled around what it is to be truly Baptist.[4] There is a sense from some that Christians should rise above politics, that politics is close to being a dirty word, or at least no word fit for the Christian life.

In my 2022 Whitley Lecture, I argued that to be Christians, to be churches, is to be unavoidably political.[5] I wanted to reclaim politics as something to be engaged with rather than pretending it can be avoided. Politics is simply the name we give to the way we relate together as people who share something in common. It is the practices, following Luke Bretherton, that enable us to negotiate a shared life in the face of disagreement and differences, some of which can be, or can feel, inevitable and/or intractable.[6] The question is not whether we should be political, but what kind of politics we should inhabit and embody. For Baptists, to name our life (as churches, Associations, Unions, and as a European Baptist Federation) as political is to free us to recognise that disagreement and differences are to be expected as we seek to follow in common the one we name Lord and Saviour. This is true where Baptists engage in ecumenism.[7] The ecumenical breakthroughs of the twentieth century[8] — the birth of the World Council of Churches, the Conference of European Churches — demonstrated an ecclesial politics that sought to heal a long history of division and pursue greater

[3] For one account of how Baptists have responded to same-sex relationships, see Andy Goodliff, 'Baptists and Same-Sex Relationships: A Brief History', *Baptist Ministers' Journal*, 353 (January 2022), 9–19.

[4] For an earlier attempt to navigate this particular disagreement, see 'The Courage to be Baptist: A Statement on Baptist Ecclesiology and Human Sexuality', *Baptist Quarterly*, 48, no. 1 (January 2017), 2–10. The statement was authored by Beth Allison-Glenny, Andy Goodliff, Ruth Gouldbourne, Steve Holmes, David Kerrigan, Glen Marshall, and Simon Woodman.

[5] Andy Goodliff, *The Ruling Christ and the Witnessing Church: Towards a Baptist Political Theology*, The 2022 Whitely Lecture (Oxford: Whitley, 2022).

[6] See Luke Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life: Political Theology and the Case for Democracy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), p. 34.

[7] On Baptists and ecumenism see Steven Harmon, *Baptist Identity and the Ecumenical Future* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016).

[8] In which European Baptists have played a significant role, e.g. Ernest Payne (WCC), Glen Garfield Williams (CEC), Morris West (WCC), Myra Blyth (WCC), and Keith Clements (CEC).

unity. Difference and disagreement are still present, as they are within all denominations.

Disagreements and differences are to be expected because we are human beings, all of whom fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). While the Apostle Paul says we have, by the Holy Spirit, access to the mind of Christ (1 Cor 2:16), our minds are those that are being renewed (Rom 12:2). We know in part; one day we shall know in full (1 Cor 13:12). Attending to Christ, to the Bible, and to the guidance of the Holy Spirit this side of Christ's return, will produce disagreement and difference. Most of the time, this is something we live with; our politics allow us to maintain unity at little cost. There is an implicit sense that we feel that we are more alike than we are different, although this is largely assumed and rarely tested. Where disagreement does emerge we do not see it generally as a dividing issue, but one in which we are able to practise a degree of tolerance.

Nigel Wright, in a discussion of tolerance in the church, distinguishes between dogma, doctrine, and opinion.[9] Not all is dogma and not all is opinion. There can be no toleration, he says, on what is deemed dogma, for this is the core of Christian belief, expressed primarily in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed,[10] but Christians can live with disagreement on doctrine and opinion. Doctrines are those beliefs added to the dogmatic core by a denominational movement. For Baptists, this would be primarily around believer's baptism and the autonomy of the local church, but this is not a bar to ecumenical relations with other Free Churches and denominations. Within a denomination, determining what counts as doctrine and what counts as opinion is the challenge. So, for example, for Baptists is the theology of marriage a doctrine or is there room for a range of opinion? This is a

[9] Nigel Wright, *Free Church, Free State: A Positive Baptist Vision* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), pp. 220–224.

[10] Of course, historically, Baptists have been suspicious of any required subscription to creeds, while at the same, they have been 'acknowledged as trustworthy witnesses to faith' (Paul Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), p. 9).

current area of disagreement within the BUGB.[11] Wright warns of making 'interpretative opinion a test of orthodoxy' and urges for what he calls 'the exercise of productive tolerance within an overall firm commitment to Christian dogma'.[12] He recognises this is a 'precarious venture' and, as such, 'demands much grace', but this is what discipleship is.[13] Elsewhere, Wright argues that 'the church of tomorrow will have to learn the skills of careful ethical consideration and debate', which will require, he says, 'maturity, wisdom and skill'.[14]

Disagreement and difference can sometimes be something that feels more difficult to tolerate. We are living through one of these situations with regard to the understanding of marriage and same-sex relationships. How do we cope theologically with disagreement and with difference? This is both a question for each Christian denomination as well as for churches ecumenically. How can we love one another in the face of profound disagreement? These questions are now being addressed by theologians, as seen in the recent work of James Calvin Davis, *Forbearance: A Theological Ethic for a Disagreeable Church* and Christopher Landau, *A Theology of Disagreement: New Testament Ethics for Ecclesial Conflicts*.[15]

I believe that we can find the resources and practices within our Baptist politics. Other church traditions will have their own resources, as can be seen, for example, in Bretherton's descriptions of Pentecostalism, Anglicanism, and Roman Catholicism.[16] In my Whitley Lecture, I highlighted four elements to a Baptist politics present in the BUGB's Declaration of Principle, which is the stated basis of our

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[11] Currently, BUGB churches can opt to register their buildings for same-sex weddings. However, accredited ministers are unable to enter into a same-sex marriage due to the existing ministerial rules, which define marriage exclusively as between a man and a woman.

[12] Wright, *Free Church, Free State*, p. 223.

[13] Wright, *Free Church, Free State*, pp. 223–224.

[14] Nigel Wright, *New Baptists, New Agenda* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), p. 149.

[15] James Calvin *Davis, Forbearance: A Theological Ethic for a Disagreeable Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017); Christopher Landau, *A Theology of Disagreement: New Testament Ethics for Ecclesial Conflicts* (London: SCM, 2021). See also, *The Morally Divided Body: Ethical Disagreement and the Disunity of the Church*, ed. by James Buckley and Michael Root (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012) and Mike Higton, *The Life of Christian Doctrine* (London: T & T Clark, 2020), chapter 8.

[16] Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, chapters 4, 5, and 6.

unity.[17] These four elements are both a statement of belief[18] and a set of practices[19] which contain a call to be communities with a particular character.[20] We might say that the Declaration of Principle has what Ellen Charry has called a pastoral (or practical) function.[21] Christopher Ellis likewise argues that it is 'an expression of spirituality, because it combines belief with practice'.[22] It was worded to guide its constituent churches, associations, and colleges into a shared life that could flourish together under the rule of Christ.[23] It is convictional theology and these convictions are an 'ethical commitment'. In this article, I want to offer a way of seeing the Declaration of Principle as pastoral and ethical, where its theological beliefs cannot be separated from theological virtues.[24] If this is understood, this should shape the way disagreements

[17] The Baptist Union of Great Britain:
<https://www.baptist.org.uk/Groups/220595/Declaration_of_Principle.aspx>.
The Declaration of Principle in its current form can be traced back to 1904, with small, but important revisions made in 1906, 1938 and 2009. For the history, see *Something to Declare: A Study of the Declaration of Principle*, ed. by Richard Kidd (Oxford: Whitley, 1996), pp. 17–25. For an engagement with the wording of the Declaration of Principle, especially its first clause, see Jeff Jacobson, 'An Exploration of the First Clause of the Declaration of Principle', in *Attending to the Margins: Essays in Honour of Stephen Finamore*, ed. by Helen Paynter and Peter Hatton (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2022), pp. 253–276. There is hopefully some overlap with core principles found in other European and global Baptist bodies.

[18] 'It may not be a Confession of Faith but it is none the less notably theological and identifies an authentic expression of Baptist ecclesiology' (Kidd, *Something to Declare*, p. 24).

[19] The practices are congregational discernment, baptism, and witnessing.

[20] The phrasing here echoes Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981). For more on the language of practices, see James McClendon, *Ethics: Systematic Theology, Vol. 1*, rev. edn (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000) and *Doctrine: Systematic Theology, Vol. 2* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994); and more recently Ryan Andrew Newson, *Inhabiting the World: Identity, Politics, and Theology in Radical Baptist Perspective* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2018).

[21] See Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[22] Christopher Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM, 2004), p. 233.

[23] The current wording of the Baptist Union of Great Britain's vision is *growing healthy* churches in relationship for God's mission.

[24] Other Baptists offer a virtue ecclesiology. See John Colwell, *Living the Christian Story* (Edinburgh; T & T Clark, 2001) and *The Rhythm of Doctrine* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007); and Paul Goodliff, *Shaped for Service: Ministerial Formation and Virtue Ethics* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017). For one theological account of a range of virtues, see Stanley Hauerwas, *The Character of Virtue: Letters to a Godson* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2018).

are approached and conducted between Baptists themselves and between Baptists and other ecumenical partners.

The Authority of Christ and Humility

The Declaration of Principle begins by recognising the authority of Christ,[25] which I suggest should produce in us humility: Christ is Lord, we are not. Humility begins in seeing that authority does not belong to us.[26] We are placed in a position under Christ.[27] As Paul puts it in his letter to the Galatians, 'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me' (2:20). I am — we are — now a self-in-relation to Christ.[28] This humility is lived out by recognising, with Brian Haymes, that 'all our theologies must have a provisionality about them'.[29] Haymes continues,

> Tentativeness is not a mild form of sin but might be the expression of serious searching faith. Hence, in Baptist theology, there will be a recognition of plurality and we shall be properly wary of those who wish to squeeze us into their own mould.[30]

This is to practise humility. Where we disagree, rather than *lord* our viewpoint over the other (Mark 10:42), we are called to practise a humility of speech, taking care with how we speak to one another. As Nicholas Lash says,

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[25] 'That our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters relating to faith and practice […]' (Declaration of Principle, article 1).

[26] 'There is a demand which God-in-Christ makes upon us which can only be expressed by use of the language of authority, obedience, submission and duty' (Nigel Wright, 'Spirituality as Discipleship', in *Under the Rule of Christ: Dimensions of Baptist Spirituality*, ed. by Paul S. Fiddes (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2008), pp. 79–101 (p. 91). For two wonderful accounts of humility, see Samuel Wells, *Walk Humbly* (Norwich: Canterbury, 2019) and Stephen Cherry, *Barefoot Disciple* (London: Continuum, 2011).

[27] The phrase that Baptists have often used is 'under the rule of Christ'. For a discussion of this in terms of a Baptist spirituality, see *Under the Rule of Christ*, ed. by Fiddes.

[28] On this verse, see Susan Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), pp. 151–175.

[29] Brian Haymes, 'Theology and Baptist Identity', in *Doing Theology in a Baptist Way*, ed. by Paul S. Fiddes (Oxford: Whitley, 2000), pp. 1–5 (p. 5).

[30] Haymes, 'Theology and Baptist Identity', p. 5.

> Commissioned as ministers of God's redemptive Word, we are required, in politics and in private life, in work and play, in commerce and scholarship, to practice and foster that philology, that word-caring, that meticulous and conscientious concern for the quality of conversation and truthfulness of memory, which is the first casualty of sin. The Church, accordingly, is or should be a school of philology, an academy of word-care.[31]

If Lash is right to name the church as a school of philology, then worship is our classroom. In worship, we learn words of welcome, praise, lament, confession, thanksgiving, intercession, and blessing. As Stanley Hauerwas says, 'liturgy is the source of word-care necessary for our lives to be beautiful and good'.[32] How we speak to one another also requires humility in how we listen to one another. Disagreement is often exacerbated because of a failure to properly listen to what others are saying. A posture that begins by listening is one that values others, as Bretherton outlines:

> To truly listen necessitates taking seriously who is before us and attending to that situation […] action born out of listening acts in trust that others not like me might have something to teach me. In short, it demands humility to recognize that, whatever the justice of my cause or coherence of my program, I could be wrong, and I don't know all there is to know about how to live well.[33]

This humility extends not only to how we speak and to how we listen but also to how we read and interpret Holy Scripture. In the Declaration, the authority of Christ is linked to the revelation of Scripture,[34] but that which is revealed in scripture, Baptists claim, requires interpretation.[35] There should be an appropriate humility in

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[31] Nicholas Lash, 'Ministry of the Word or Comedy and Philology', *New Blackfriars*, 68 (1987), 472–483 (p. 477), cited in Stephen Fowl, *Engaging Scripture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 164.

[32] Stanley Hauerwas, *Performing the Faith* (London: SPCK, 2004), p. 163.

[33] Bretherton, *Christ and the Common Life*, p. 453. See Newson, *Inhabiting the World* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2018) for a Baptist theology that emphasises listening.

[34] 'That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ […] is the sole and absolute authority […] as revealed in the Holy Scriptures […]' (Declaration of Principle, article 1). Key here is that no Scripture has any authority independent of Christ: 'The exclusivity of Scripture as the basis for Christian thought and practice is not derived from its own identity, considered in isolation, but is a function of its relationship to the Lord' (Grant Macaskill, *The New Testament and Intellectual Humility* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 209.

[35] '[…] as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each Church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His laws' (Declaration of Principle, article 1).

what we claim is the meaning and truth of Scripture. As John Webster argues regarding Scripture,

> We do not read well; and we do not read well, not only because of technical incompetence, cultural distance from the substance of the text or lack of readerly sophistication, but also and most of all because in reading Scripture we are addressed by that which runs clean counter to our will […] Reading Scripture is thus best understood as an aspect of mortification and vivification: to read Scripture is to be slain and made alive.[36]

In the face of disagreement, which is to be expected, we should show more humility in what we can say of God and of revelation in Scripture. This should not be read that we can say nothing but, rather, as an argument for *how* we say what we believe we interpret and understand.[37]

Baptist theologians Nigel Wright and Brian Haymes have both used a word that is helpfully related to humility: 'modest'. Wright, in a chapter called 'The Courage to be Modest', defines modest as 'the style and manner with which we hold and advocate […] doctrine in the contemporary world'.[38] He says, 'The historical ambiguities of the church, its present failures, and our awareness of our frail humanity mean that the voice with which we speak is tempered.'[39] Haymes writes of 'The Way of Practical Modesty' and argues that 'there is a necessary tentativeness in religious believing, that lives with doubt, seeing as in a mirror, dimly (1 Cor 13.12)'.[40]

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[36] John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 87–88.

[37] For further discussion see Sean Winter, *More Light and Truth? Biblical Interpretation in Covenantal Perspective*, The Whitley Lecture, 2007 (Oxford: Whitley, 2007) and Sean Winter, 'Persuading Friends: Friendship and Testimony in Baptist Interpretative Communities', in *The "Plainly Revealed" Word of God? Baptist Hermeneutics in Theory and Practice*, ed. by Helen Dare and Simon Woodman (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2011), pp. 253–270.

[38] Wright, *New Baptists*, p. 31.

[39] Wright, *New Baptists*, p. 41.

[40] Brian Haymes, 'The Way of Practical Modesty', in *Wisdom, Science and the Scriptures: Essays in Honour of Ernest Lucas*, ed. by Stephen Finamore and John Weaver (Oxford: Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, 2012), pp. 99–116 (p. 114). Elsewhere, Haymes names modesty as 'a mark of spiritual maturity' ('Still Blessing the Tie that Binds', in *For the Sake of the Church: Essays in Honour of Paul Fiddes*, ed. by Anthony Clarke (Oxford: Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, 2014), pp. 91–102 (p. 99).

Humility — modesty — should be the first virtue that shapes the way we approach and engage in our disagreements.

Congregational Government, Patience, and Hope

Second, the Declaration of Principle recognises the liberty of the local church to discern[41] — the practice of congregational government — which should form us in the virtue of patience. Alan Kreider has shown that in the early church patience was seen as 'the greatest of all virtues' and, as a result, they as the church, 'trusting God, should be patient — not controlling events, not anxious or in a hurry, and never using force to achieve their ends'.[42] We are patient in disagreement, believing in the possibility that by listening, worshipping, and living alongside one another, and waiting on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this can lead to places not yet seen. Patience is required because the discernment of the church is often an expression of 'slow wisdom'.[43]

Stephen Pickard in his book *Seeking the Church*, compares three types of church: the fast-asleep church, the frenetic church, and the slow church.[44] The fast-asleep church is one in thrall to what is perceived as an unchanging tradition and refuses to entertain any kind of need to change. The frenetic church is one that lurches from one idea or programme to the next and is all too happy to undergo change. Baptists can be both kinds. We are more likely to be the second, but examples of the first exist. Pickard's third type of church, named slow, is one that recognises that things take time and that the church is always 'incomplete and contingent'.[45] Slow church is one that is travelling, but not so fast that those who are settled are left behind, and not so slow

[41] '[…] each Church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His laws' (Declaration of Principle, article 2).
[42] Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016), p. 2.
[43] I am leaning here on Ruth Moriarty's forthcoming doctoral research into how church meetings in Baptist churches discern, which she names 'slow wisdom'.
[44] Stephen Pickard, *Seeking the Church: An Introduction to Ecclesiology* (London: SCM, 2012), pp. 210–239.
[45] Pickard, *Seeking the Church*, p. 228.

that the pioneers get too far ahead.[46] To note another book by John Swinton, the practice of congregational government is about *Becoming Friends of Time*.[47] Swinton argues against a view of the tyranny of time, instead claiming that time is a gift. Where we disagree, we cannot go to sleep and we cannot rush to answers. What is required is patience, as we, slowly, take the time to pray,[48] to listen, and to seek ways forward.

Patience of this kind will be costly, sometimes more for some than for others. Here I point to the recent work of Paul Dafydd Jones, *Patience: A Theological Exploration*, and his discussion of patience as a 'burdened virtue'.[49] Jones writes that 'patience is a term that has been embedded in a program defined by mystifying justifications, shoddy history, and ethical donothingism'.[50] This is to acknowledge that the call to patience might sometimes be justly countered by an impatience to an inertness that will not even accept the possibility of needing to engage in meaningful conversation. When some want simply to go to sleep, the appropriate response can be to wake them up, to summon them to listen.

Given the sacrificial nature of patience, it should be accompanied by the virtue of hope, a hope that resides in Christ (Col 1:27). Hope here is not optimism, what Hauerwas called 'hope without truth',[51] but hope in Christ, who died, was raised, is ascended, and will come again. We wait in patient hope, acknowledging that 'the history of redemption has not yet reached its conclusion'.[52] We wait in patient hope knowing that our discernment is not infallible nor ultimate; instead

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[46] The language of travelling, settlers, and pioneers I owe to David Coffey.

[47] John Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time: Disability, Timefulness, and Gentle Discipleship* (London: SCM, 2017).

[48] Prayer is not mentioned in the Declaration of Principle, but it is perhaps implicit in the phrase 'the guidance of the Holy Spirit'. Prayer is both an act of humility and of patience. For an account of prayer that I think is helpful, see Norman Wirzba, *Agrarian Spirit: Cultivating Faith, Community and the Land* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022), pp. 61–86.

[49] Paul Dafydd Jones, *Patience: A Theological Exploration* (London: T & T Clark, 2022), p. 9. Jones borrows the language of 'burdened' from Lisa Tessman, *Burdened Virtues: Virtue Ethics for Liberatory Struggles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[50] Jones, *Patience*, p. 272.

[51] Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1988), p. 95, cited in John Colwell, *The Rhythm of Doctrine* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), pp. 24–25.

[52] Colwell, *The Rhythm of Doctrine*, p. 22.

we walk in ways known and *to be made known*.[53] The virtues of patience and hope should counsel us to see that, while our disagreements can be deep, it does not mean we should give up lightly on fellowship at the Lord's table or in the church meeting, council, or assembly, whether between Baptists only, or at the wider ecumenical table.[54]

Baptism, Grace, and Politics

Third, the Declaration of Principle names the practice of believer's baptism,[55] which, of course, is to name an area of ecumenical disagreement.[56] Baptism in the New Testament is always ethical — in baptism, an old life is put to death and a new life is received (Rom 6:1–12; Col 2:12), and we are clothed with a new set of habits (Rom 13:14; Gal 3:27; Col 3:12). In baptism, we are transformed into the 'realm of grace' and a new community is 'created by grace'. In John Barclay's words, 'Those who have received [grace] are to remain within it, their lives altered by new habits, new dispositions, and new practices of grace."[57] This surely, then, has implications when our ways of being church (from local to global) face disagreement within themselves. Baptised into grace, putting on Christ, calls us to be gracious:

> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Eph 4:32)
>
> Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each

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53 See Ernest A. Payne, *Ways Known and To Be Made Known,* Presidential Address (London: Baptist Union, 1977); and also Anthony R. Cross, "'Through a Glass Darkly": The Further Light Clause in Baptist Thought', in *Questions of Identity: Studies in Honour of Brian Haymes*, ed. by Anthony R. Cross and Ruth Gouldbourne (Oxford: Centre for Baptist History and Heritage, 2011), pp. 92–118.

54 For a powerful picture of the table, see Paul Bayes, *The Table* (London: DLT, 2019), pp. 2–5.

55 'That Christian baptism is the immersion in water into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ[…]' (Declaration of Principle, article 2).

56 In *Something to Declare*, Kidd et al. offer a reading of this article with an openness to baptism in other forms (p. 38). See also, Paul Fiddes, 'Baptism and the Process of Christian Initiation', *Ecumenical Review,* 54, no. 1 (2002), 49–65.

57 Barclay, *Paul and the Power of Grace*, p. 149.

> other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (Col 3:12–13)

'There is no possibility here of "cheap grace"',[58] writes Barclay. If baptism immerses us in grace, we cannot help but be gracious in word and deed. This is an 'ongoing process'[59] of conversion in our lives. As Colwell notes, 'Baptism is not so much a first step on the pathway of discipleship and obedience as it is the means through which we are set on that pathway of discipleship and obedience.'[60] Those baptised into Christ and his church are 'placed into a context […] through which the theological virtues […] can be nurtured and can grow'.[61]

The language above of 'one another' and 'each other' is a reminder that our baptism is into the body of Christ, into a new community, into a new set of relationships. Baptism is not a purely individual affair but something deeply communal — grace and love are tied to fellowship (2 Cor 13:14). While Baptists have given renewed attention to covenant and the way church, association, and union call us into covenant relationship,[62] the basis of that covenant is our baptism into Christ — baptism is the tie that binds us together (Col 4:4–6).[63] Colwell has noted with regards to baptism that 'many contemporary Baptists are often strangely muted concerning their defining distinctive'.[64] His point is that Baptists are in the strange position where some 'do not ultimately insist on baptism at all'. I want to make a

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[58] Barclay, *Paul and the Power of Grace*, p. 90. 'Cheap grace' being a phrase coined by Dietrich Bonhoeffer; see *The Cost of Discipleship* (London: SCM, 2015; first published in 1959).

[59] Myles Werntz, 'Light for Navigating Moral Disagreement', in *Sources of Light: Resources for Baptist Churches Practicing Theology*, ed. by Amy L. Chilton and Steven R. Harmon (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2020), pp. 230–240 (p. 233). See also Newson, *Inhabiting the World*, pp. 76–100, who speaks of conversion as a 'process of reorientation and *disorientation*'.

[60] John Colwell, *Promise and Presence* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), p. 131.

[61] Colwell, *Promise and Presence*, p. 131.

[62] See here various writings of Paul Fiddes, especially *Tracks and Traces*.

[63] Here I would argue that the Declaration of Principle needs to be strengthened by a separate article or an addition to the article on baptism which mentions the Lord's Supper. For some helpful recent work on Baptists and the Lord's Supper, see Ashley Lovett, '"To Become the Future Now": Baptists Being Shaped by the Table', in *Gathering Disciples: Essays in Honor of Christopher J. Ellis*, ed. by Myra Blyth and Andy Goodliff (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), pp. 153–171; and Lovett, 'Baptists on the Lord's Supper and Christian Character', *Baptist Quarterly,* 50, no. 4 (October 2019), 155–169.

[64] Colwell, *Promise and Presence*, p. 109.

different point and suggest that too often we have 'too little'[65] an expectation of, and theology concerning, baptism. We have not properly recognised and articulated the (theological) politics of baptism.[66] The politics of baptism is that by grace we have been made part of a more 'determinative body'[67] — the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13). Baptism gives us a new identity and a new community: we are a new politics in the world.[68] That politics is founded on grace and forgiveness. This is not optional; kindness and forgiveness[69] are 'a *necessary* component of grace'.[70] Where we are in disagreement, what does it mean to show grace to one another?

Christian Witness, Love, and Peace

Fourth, the Declaration of Principle recognises the duty (and joy) of Christian witness,[71] which calls us, I suggest, to the virtues of love and peace. This third article of the declaration reminds us that the church lives in the world and as such our disagreements almost always take place in public, and so how we handle them is a witness to the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is a demonstration of God's love (John 3:16; Rom 5:8; 1 John 3:16) and peace (Rom 5:1; Eph 2:14–17; Col 1:20) and it is through the witness and life of the

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65 Brian Haymes, 'Making Too Little and Too Much of Baptism', in *Ecumenism and History: Essays in Honour of John H. Y. Briggs*, ed. by Anthony R. Cross (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), pp. 175–189.
66 For one account, see Brian Haymes, 'Baptism as a Political Act', in *Reflections on the Waters: Understanding God and the World through the Baptism of Believers*, ed. by Paul Fiddes (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 1996), pp. 69–84. See also Goodliff, *The Ruling Christ*, pp. 24–28.
67 Stanley Hauerwas, *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), p. 24.
68 The phrasing here is deliberate. It is not that we have a politics, but that we are politics, which relates to the point that Hauerwas has famously argued: 'the church does have a social ethic, it is a social ethic'.
69 The Baptist Haddon Willmer has written compellingly about the possibilities of what he calls the 'politics of forgiveness'. See Haddon Willmer, 'The Politics of Forgiveness — A New Dynamic', *Furrow* (1979), 207–218, and *Forgiveness and Politics* (Belfast: Centre for Contemporary Christianity in Ireland, 2003).
70 Barclay, *Paul and the Power of Grace*, p. 125.
71 'That it is the duty of every disciple to bear witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelization of the world' (Declaration of Principle, article 3).

church that the world knows this gospel of love and peace. As Colwell writes, 'Through its service and being as witness, the Church is a rendering of the gospel to the world.'[72] The content of the gospel and its character are the same. The gospel of God's love and peace demands a church that bears witness in its own life to that love and peace. The witness of the church is not something the church only believes, but it is something the church becomes.[73]

'Love one another', says Jesus in the gospel of John (John 15:17). As George Beasley-Murray comments, 'The injunction to love is the first and last word of Christ to his friends.'[74] Love here is joined with friendship. The church is a community of friends, not first of our doing, but that of Christ: 'I have called you friends' (John 15:15).[75] Friendship is something given; it is the gift of the gospel. The gospel is characterised by love, and therefore people of the gospel must be those who demonstrate love to one another, to their neighbours, and to their enemies. Love here is not of a sentimental kind, but is love that is defined in and by the gospel story, which we name as grace, and is 'marked by uncalculating generosity'.[76] Disagreement is not always resolvable, but we can pursue what has been called 'loving disagreement'.[77]

Love is related to peace and we are encouraged to live at peace (Rom 12:18; 2 Cor 13:11; 1 Thess 5:13) and make every effort to do what leads to peace (Rom 15:19). This is possible because Jesus is our peace (Eph 2:14; 2 Thess 3:16) and has given us that gift through the

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72 Colwell, *Living the Christian Story*, p. 85.

73 See Michael Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015).

74 George Beasley-Murray, *John*. Word Biblical Commentary, 2nd edn (Dallas, TX: Word, 1999), p. 275.

75 For a Baptist account of ecclesial friendship, see Lina Toth, 'Befriending Churches', in *Seeds of the Church: Towards an Ecumenical Baptist Ecclesiology*, ed. by Teun van der Leer, Henk Bakker, Steven R. Harmon, and Elizabeth Newman (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2022), pp. 67–77.

76 Colwell, *Rhythm of Doctrine*, p. 43; see pages 39–44 for Colwell's treatment of the virtue of love.

77 See Landau, *A Theology of Disagreement* and his John Stott London Lecture, 10 November 2022 https://licc.org.uk/resources/loving-disagreement-christian-wisdom-for-a-polarised-world/ [accessed 11 April 2023].

cross (Col 1:20; Eph 2:1–16; Rom 5:1).[78] This leads Hauerwas to claim that peace-making is a virtue 'intrinsic to the nature of the church'.[79] Our goal should be peace and our approach to disagreement should be marked by peaceful words and actions.

Conclusion

This article, like my Whitley Lecture, seeks to make a modest contribution: our character as Christians should shape how we approach and engage in disagreement.[80] We disagree strongly as Baptists and between Christians of all denominations. Our differences on some matters run deep, particularly at the current time in response to same-sex relationships. Reconciliation of these disagreements does not seem straightforwardly forthcoming. The question is, does our reconciliation that is visible in our confession of one Lord, one faith, and one baptism (Eph 4:4–6), enable us, or perhaps demand us, to remain in union even if that unity is under pressure? Do our politics, rooted in the virtues of humility, patience, grace, love, and peace — virtues witnessed in the life of Jesus — give hope that we can love one another with integrity without agreement on every issue?

The church is political. We are fallen, finite, and forgiven. We are a people on the way and in the fray.[81] We are people of conversation and conversion. We are learning to love God and to love neighbour. Let me conclude with a quote from Colin Gunton, one of my favourite theologians (and teachers): '[The Spirit] liberates us, by bringing us into community: by enabling us to be *with* and *for* the brothers and sisters

[78] For a theological account of peace, see John Webster, *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reason* (London: T & T Clark, 2012), pp. 150–170.

[79] Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today* (Durham, NC: Labyrinth, 1988), p. 95.

[80] Against those who accuse him of sectarianism, Hauerwas says, 'I have never sought to justify Christian withdrawal from social and political involvement; I have just wanted us to be involved as Christians' (*A Better Hope* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2000), p. 24). This article attempts to make a similar argument.

[81] To borrow the title of Helen Dare's helpful 2014 Whitley Lecture.

whom we do not ourselves choose."[82] I pray that might be true of us who are Baptists, both denominationally and ecumenically.

[82] Colin E. Gunton, *Theology through the Theologians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), p. 201.

Getting out of Our Trenches to Meet in No-Man's Land

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Abstract
The penetration of the culture wars into the church on both sides of the Atlantic is a deeply worrying trend. The two polar extremes are pulling hard, and in opposing directions, with a huge breakdown in trust, respect, and courtesy. People are being hurt or becoming disillusioned, and the name of God is not glorified. How can we rebuild trust and unity in this climate? In this article, I offer three biblical tools: self-criticism, from Amos; the concept of no-man's land, developed from the Joshua narrative; and compassionate listening, from Job. The article then considers, as a worked example, how these virtues might operate with regard to one particular shibboleth of our time: Critical Race Theory.

Keywords
Cultural analysis; Critical Race Theory; political polarisation; Old Testament/Hebrew Bible; ecumenism; peacemaking

Introduction

Although it appears to date back to the nineteenth century, use of the term 'culture wars' experienced a sharp up-tick in frequency in the late 1980s.[1] This reflects a growing polarisation of thought and practice, perhaps beginning in the United States of America, but now certainly including much of Europe, too.

Between May 2020 and May 2021, the United States experienced two defining moments, which together exemplify this dangerous polarisation of political and social ideology. The first was the public murder of George Floyd on 25 May 2020, along with the Black Lives Matter protests which ensued and the subsequent conviction of Derek Chauvin for his murder. The second was the storming of the Capitol

[1] This can be demonstrated, within digitised published media, by inserting the term 'culture wars' into the Google Books N-Gram tool.

building on 6 January 2021 by a largely White crowd protesting the 'stolen' election and parading QAnon propaganda.

Within Europe, cultural divisions tend to be geographically linked, with one recent commentator rather facetiously referring to 'the contrast between the attitudes of the Western pansexual glitterati and the Intermarium's good old boys and girls'.[2] However, neither East nor West Europe exhibits homogeneous cultural opinion.

The church is not immune from these trends. The polarisation in US society, with what is often characterised as 'woke liberals' on one side and 'gun-toting nationalists' on the other, is also seen within the American church. Within Europe, too, the political and cultural polarisation increasingly finds expression within the church.

At the risk of over-simplifying a complex matrix, we might make the following generalisation. Within the Western church (by which I mean North America, the United Kingdom, and mainland Europe), two narratives are competing for primacy. We will term them 'Conservative' and 'Progressive'. Conservatism — used in this specific sense — takes a literalist or fundamentalist view of the Bible, prioritises the ethical issues of foetal rights and traditional human sexual expression, holds firmly to the value of freedom of religion, is strongly patriotic, and looks back with nostalgia towards its nation's 'Christian' past. The alternative, Progressive narrative prioritises care for the marginalised and vulnerable, personal freedom, and fairness. This narrative's use of the Bible focuses more on places where the Scripture supports themes of justice and is likely to be less literalist. Conservatives are more likely to be pro-gun (where relevant) or in favour of national military action, while Progressivism includes pacifist movements. Conservatives stress 'family values', often with an emphasis on traditional gender roles. Progressives tend to be pro-feminist and pro-LGBTQ. Many who characterise themselves as Conservatives would align with right-wing political parties, and they are generally white; those on the Progressive side are more likely to represent a broader range of ethnicities and tend to cast their votes left of centre. Conservatives may align with politicians

[2] Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, 'Culture Wars in the EU', Institute of World Politics blog <https://www.iwp.edu/articles/2021/07/23/culture-wars-in-the-eu/> [accessed 9 Jan 2023].

who promote tight controls on immigration, sometimes coupled with racist rhetoric (in the US, this may be anti-Latino; in Europe, it is more likely to be Islamophobic); Progressives may be receptive to more open immigration policies.

On each side of the divide, there are certain 'shibboleths'; matters which operate as a test of orthodoxy. These include, but are not limited to: a cluster of questions around human sexuality and gender identity; perspectives on race and racism, including the applicability of Critical Race Theory; gender roles in the church; and the relationship of the church with government and power.

This penetration of the culture wars into the church is proving extremely damaging. The two polar extremes are pulling hard, and in opposing directions. There is a huge breakdown in trust, respect, and courtesy. Both sides vent their spleen publicly on social media, which only serves to intensify the division further. This is amplified by the effects of echo-chambers, which operate not simply within social media platforms and through selective reporting by news networks, but are also deeply intensified by theological and even educational silos. In the meantime, people become hurt or disillusioned, and the name of God is not glorified.

How can we rebuild trust and unity in this climate? In this article, I will offer three biblical tools, and then consider, as a test case, how they might operate with regard to one particular shibboleth of our time.

Three Biblical Tools

Amos: Self-Criticism

Behind the written words of the prophets are oracles which were probably first delivered performatively. A case in point is offered by the 'Oracles Against the Nations', contained in Amos 1–2. There is no consensus on the historical reality of their utterance, but here is one suggestion, offered by Hayim Tawil.

> The prophet faces his audience, thunderously opens with v. 2 which paints God's appearance as a roaring lion, thus manifesting Himself by means of lightnings and thunders […] The prophet then turns and faces the northeast

> raising his hand towards Damascus and prophesies against Aram (Amos i 3-5). While his hand is still raised upward he turns halfway slowly lowering his hand towards the southwest, pointing to Gazah, the most southern city of Philistia and enumerates its transgressions (Amos i 2-8).[3]

In Tawil's imagined reconstruction of the prophet's delivery, much is made of the geographical position of the nations in relation to his presumed position in Samaria. As he speaks each oracle, Amos flings his arms from one side to the other, describing a great cross, which is the form of the final letter of the Paleo-Hebrew alphabet: 'Amos clearly draws the letter Taw = X marking the effacement of the eight nations from the face of the map, i.e. the earth.'[4]

Imagining this great flourish helps us to focus on the rhetorical effect of the oracles. Amos, a prophet from the southern nation (Judah), has been called by God to prophesy in the northern nation (Israel). We obtain a glimpse of how this ministry was received in the words of Amaziah, prophet of Bethel:

> Amaziah said to Amos, 'O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; but never again prophesy at Bethel.' (Amos 7:12–13)[5]

We might therefore imagine the satisfaction experienced by the people of Israel as they hear the six pagan nations receiving messages of condemnation, one by one. And then the prophet draws breath and delivers a seventh oracle — against Judah! One might imagine their surprise and, perhaps, their *Schadenfreude*. Seven is the number of completeness; this is the climax of the prophetic judgement.

But unexpectedly, Amos has not finished. Drawing breath once again, he now denounces Israel, with the longest and most detailed condemnation of all. The self-satisfaction of his listeners must have quickly evaporated, as they are caught in his 'rhetoric of entrapment'[6] and find themselves judged for their manifold abuses. Amos thus stands

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[3] Hayim Tawil, 'Amos' Oracles against the Nations: A New Interpretation,' *Beit Mikra: Journal for the Study of the Bible and Its World* (1996), pp. 388–375 (pp. 375–376).

[4] Tawil, 'Amos' Oracles against the Nations', p. 376.

[5] Biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

[6] The phrase is R. Danny Carroll's, although Carroll argues that, given its written form, the opening verses of the book remove any surprise when the prophet turns upon the home nations (R. D. M. Carroll, *The Book of Amos* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), p. 138).

in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets who, unlike the prophets of the other nations, exercise *self-criticism*; that is, they bring God's word of rebuke, warning, and judgement against their own kings, priests, and people.[7]

In her book *Learning from the Germans*, Susan Nieman examines the way that Germany has sought to come to terms with its troubled past, and she seeks to apply this question to the issue of the legacy of slavery in the American South. Through her research, Nieman identifies that self-criticism is vital to the process of healing in a society that has been fractured by great moral injury.[8]

The church, too, must face up to some of the harms it has committed or permitted in the name of Christ; and not all of these harms are buried in the mists of history.[9] Honesty about our errors and refusing the temptation to attempt to conceal or whitewash them is an important step in the self-criticism which will build bridges across the cultural divide.

But considering Amos as a prophet who exemplifies the self-criticism of biblical Israel also makes us aware of the complexities of who is 'self'. Because both Israel and Judah constitute the covenant people of God, in one sense Amos is practising self-criticism when he addresses either nation. The ready movement of the prophets between the two nations seems to presuppose such a perspective. But in another sense, as suggested above, Amos might have been viewed as practising 'self'-criticism when he condemned Judah, but 'non-self'-criticism when speaking to Israel. Now, as then, God's highest standards are applied to

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[7] For a comparison between Old Testament prophesy and the customary prophesy of the nations around, see John Walton, *Ancient near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd edn (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2018), pp. 40–44.

[8] Susan Neiman, *Learning from the Germans: Confronting Race and the Memory of Evil* (London: Penguin, 2020), p. 372.

[9] As one example among many, see the highly critical report on the handling of sexual abuse allegations by the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee. Guidepost Solutions, 'The Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee's Response to Sexual Abuse Allegations and an Audit of the Procedures and Actions of the Credentials Committee', 15 May 2022 <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6108172d83d55d3c9db4dd67/t/628a9326312a4216a3c0679d/1653248810253/Guidepost+Solutions+Independent+Investigation+Report.pdf> [accessed 17 Jan 2023].

his covenant people,[10] and as church we need to take responsibility for our own sin before we seek to address wider society about their sins. But, again, who is 'self'? Does a Baptist criticising a Catholic constitute *self*-criticism? Does a Progressive criticising a Conservative — or vice versa?

It seems to me that 'self'-criticism must take place in ever-narrowing, ever-intensifying circles. We might, indeed, have a valid critique to offer towards practice outside our own tradition or cultural circle. But a more focused version of self-criticism must be applied to our own contexts. And, within that, we must apply the highest standard to our own little clique, and then within that, to ourselves. Pre-eminently, we must attend to the logs in our own eyes (Matt 7:1–5).

Of course, self-criticism is futile unless it leads to change. In view of the egregiously divisive polemics that the church has permitted and condoned in recent years, people on both sides of the divide need to be willing both to learn and grow, and to admit it publicly.

There are at least three significant barriers to the sort of change that is needed. The first is the deep entrenchment of personal opinion, reinforced by theological silos and echo-chambers, as mentioned above. Change of opinion generally takes place through exposure to the ideas and experiences of others, and through mental flexibility and psychological openness. Herein lies the importance of listening well, which we will consider below.

The second barrier is an extension of the first, and arises from the power of the group, where entrenched collective attitudes become normative; in the language of Christian theology, they become doctrine or dogma. This is a form of tribalism, where the identity of individuals is closely tied up with the group and its normative patterns of behaviour and belief.

There tends to be a disproportionate focus on both sides of the gulf upon the issues that divide rather than upon the core gospel values. Conservatives may speak disproportionately about gender roles in the

[10] See, for example, Luke 12:48 and 1 Peter 4:17.

church and the home.[11] Progressives often focus heavily upon 'inclusion' as a gospel value, which is often focused closely upon the inclusion of LGBTQs.[12]

To use the language of Gavin Ortlund, we need to learn to exercise 'theological triage'. Ortlund urges that we distinguish between first-rank doctrines, which are essential to the gospel; second-rank, which are urgent for the church; third-rank, which are important to Christian theology; and fourth-rank which are indifferent.[13] He proposes four criteria to enable the wise allocation of doctrines within this category.

1. How clear is *the Bible* on this doctrine?
2. What is this doctrine's importance to *the gospel*?
3. What is the testimony of the *historical church* concerning this doctrine?
4. What is this doctrine's effect upon the *church today*?[14]

Gracious and thoughtful interrogation of one's inherited and absorbed beliefs, which are sometimes assumed without critical challenge, should facilitate self-criticism and growth.

The third barrier, which arises as a consequence of the first two, is the role of public shame, particularly where the cult of the strong leader is operative. A public climb-down by such a leader can mean loss of their personal reputation, as well as jeopardising their salary or stipend which is often dependent upon the favour of congregants. Similarly, for individuals, deviating from the group norm (whether that group is a local church community or an online community) can result in marginalisation, ostracisation, or even excommunication.

A fundamental Christian principle is that it is not possible to be truly converted unless one acknowledges one's own guilt before God. Likewise, we all believe in a God whose wisdom and knowledge

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[11] See, for example, the analysis of Mark Driscoll's preaching in Jennifer McKinney, *Making Christianity Manly Again: Mark Driscoll, Mars Hill Church, and American Evangelicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023).

[12] This is an empirical observation; I am unable to identify any research which establishes this formally. It would be a fruitful topic for research.

[13] Gavin Ortlund, *Finding the Right Hills to Die On: The Case for Theological Triage* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2020), p. 47.

[14] Ortlund, *Finding the Right Hills to Die On*, p. 79. Emphasis original.

infinitely exceeds human capacity. In principle, then, humility ought to be a cardinal Christian virtue. The knowledge of our own finitude, and of our own moral failures, should be a defining paradigm which shapes all Christian relationships. This leads us into a consideration of the virtue of listening.

Job: Compassionate Listening

We encounter a biblical lesson about this virtue in the book of Job. Job, afflicted for no fault of his own, finds himself visited by three friends who have the worthy initial intention of offering comfort (2:11). But their silent compassion soon gives way to the determined and dogmatic repetition of standard theological tropes. This is partly because they lack the humility to imagine that their theology does not amount to a complete system, something that becomes clear at the end of the book, when God says to them, 'you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has' (42:7). Humility involves a willingness to entertain the possibility that we are wrong, or at least inadequate in our theological understanding. This is not the same thing as lacking firm convictions, but it implies a willingness to learn and grow — a willingness to listen to alternative viewpoints.

Further, Job's friends also lack the compassion to comprehend that their arguments, however 'right', are not sensitive to the needs of the man suffering before them. They do not listen to his pain.

Most pastors understand the need to tailor their words to the present needs of the person before them. The whole of one's theological system need not be brought to bear at any particular moment, and even the most firmly-held convictions can be offered with gentleness. But such pastoral sensitivity is sometimes lacking on the larger stage. The urge to be theologically 'correct' may play out in the minimisation of the suffering of another. Thaddeus J. Williams writes,

> The easy response is to roll our eyes and chalk others' experiences up to snowflakery or a Marxist conspiracy. Eye-rolling comes particularly easy to us if we have no personal experience of being mistreated because of our skin, sex or status. We must fight the temptation to take that easy road.[15]

[15] Thaddeus J. Williams, *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth: 12 Questions Christians Should Ask about Social Justice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2020), p. 140.

Those who do not suffer may possess power superiority in relationships with those who do, a power which must not be overlooked. We do not have to allow 'lived experience' to trump all other concerns in order to acknowledge its validity. To take an example from the debate around the legitimate expressions of human sexuality, it is possible to express a conservative stance with either aggression or sensitivity, with attention to the grief experienced by many same-sex attracted people, or with complete indifference to it. An exemplary — in my opinion — pairing of deep conviction and equally deep compassion is demonstrated by Brad Harper, the evangelical pastor who co-wrote a book with his gay son, Drew.[16]

In addition, a commitment to listening will also entertain the possibility of finding good in the other; it will seek the good intention, and honour what is honourable, even when differences remain. Even opinions that we consider egregious can originate in a laudable moral impulse. The social psychologist Jonathan Haidt has argued that we have five 'moral tastes' whose conflicting pulls we have to balance when coming to ethical decisions.[17] People on the political right and left tend to have different priorities as they balance those factors. A listening stance will seek the virtuous impulse in the other, acknowledging that good people might hold opinions that differ from our own.

From the book of Job, we learn the value of listening well and with emotional sensitivity. This will help prevent us from overlooking the pain of others. It will also cause us to refuse to claim for oneself a monopoly of good intention. It will make us seek to understand the underlying causes of the other's opinions and actions and be open to the possibility that those causes have merit, even if disagreements persist.

And how are we to conduct our dialogues, as our disagreements persist? This brings us to the third biblical tool that I propose.

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[16] Brad Harper and Drew Harper, *Space at the Table: Conversations Between an Evangelical Theologian and His Gay Son* (Portland, OR: Zeal Books, 2016).

[17] Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (London: Penguin, 2012), pp. 131–179. Haidt's 'tastes' are those of care, fairness, loyalty, authority, and sanctity.

Joshua: Standing in No-Man's Land

The book of Joshua has a little-recognised key moment, which occurs just before the battle of Jericho.

> Once when Joshua was by Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing before him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went to him and said to him, 'Are you one of us, or one of our adversaries?' (Josh 4:13)

This is a turning point because in the narrative of the Pentateuch up to that moment, Joshua has had little reason to doubt that God is on his side. Apart from the time that God explicitly forbade the people from going to battle (Num 14:40–45), Israel has never lost a military confrontation up to this point. Moreover, he has seen God intervene powerfully on many occasions: bringing the people out of Egypt and making covenant with the people at Sinai, with these words 'if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples' (Exod 19:15).

Therefore, if Joshua had known the identity of the man with the drawn sword, it is unlikely he would have asked the question that he did. But we, the readers, should be as astonished as he was when the man's identity is revealed, and he speaks these words.

> He replied, 'Neither; but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.' (Josh 5:14)

This radical idea that God is not unconditionally on Israel's side is the lens through which we should read the remainder of the book. We note that although Joshua's army decisively wins the battle of Jericho, the battle of Ai which follows immediately afterwards is a punishing defeat for Israel. Victory, we are to understand, can never be guaranteed. It is always contingent upon the divine will. And God is free. Indeed, the very heart of the self-revelation of God on Sinai contains an expression of that freedom — a dangerous freedom: "'I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live".' (Exod 33:19–20)

In response to the revelation by the commander of the Lord's army, Joshua prostrates himself:

> And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and he said to him, 'What do you command your servant, my lord?' The commander of the army of the Lord said to Joshua, 'Remove the sandal from your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.' And Joshua did so. (Josh 5:14–15, NRSV translation altered)

New light has recently been shed upon the significance of Joshua removing his sandal in this text. Despite most English translations rendering it in the plural ('remove your sandals from your feet'), in the Masoretic Text, Joshua is actually instructed to remove his sandal from his foot (both singular).[18] Allen Hamlin Jr has argued that this action bears less connection with the burning bush than is normally claimed, but, rather, it should be linked with the kinsman redeemer's abrogation of his entitlements in Ruth 4:7–8, an action which appears to be based in the symbolic function of shoes to connote power and privilege. Joshua is, thus, relinquishing his claim to the land. Hamlin states succinctly, 'In the removal of a sandal, [Joshua] releases and transfers any claim to possession as a result of his forthcoming conquests.'[19]

What this means is that Joshua is, quite literally, standing in 'no-man's land'. The land is the Lord's, and will continue to be the Lord's even when he grants battle victories and tenancy to his people.[20]

Joshua's conversation with the Lord's commander provides a helpful model as we consider our engagement in the 'culture wars' of today. It is all too easy for Christians on both sides to believe that God is on their side. Many worship songs make this claim and such ideas may be uncritically assumed in the church.[21] But — to repeat the point —

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[18] The LXX, Syriac, and Vulgate have the plural, which may represent an attempt to smooth out a difficult text.

[19] Allen Hamlin, Jr, 'Holy, Place, Stand, Sandal: Rethinking the Divine Commissioning of Josh 5:13-15', paper presented at the Postgraduate Research Conference of Trinity College Bristol and Bristol Baptist College, June 2022.

[20] See, for example, Leviticus 25:23.

[21] See the discussion in Carolyn Whitnall, 'In the Presence of Whose Enemies?: A Discourse Analysis of a Popular Christian Song in the Context of a "Worship Protest"', *Journal for the Study of Bible and Violence*, 1 (2022), 6–42.

God is free and unrestricted to side with either party exclusively, a feature that we discover again and again in the biblical narrative.[22]

The idea of 'no-man's land' may also provide a model for productive dialogue. Just as warring parties tend to meet for parley in neutral territory, so the concept of a place which belongs to no human serves as a reminder that we are always on holy ground. In the ancient theological scheme, the land of Canaan was holy space, akin to the Temple itself — a theme which maps through to the church. *We* are God's holy place. No entitlements or claims carry any weight here. In the same way that the servant whose debt had been cleared lost his entitlement for debt reclamation (Matt 18:23–35), so we must lay down all claims to privilege, grudge, or the higher moral ground. Michael Gorman has shown that the pattern of the cross, as set out in Philippians 2:6–8, forms the theological grammar for a cruciform shape to the lives of Christian disciples.

> In these verses we find (1) a pattern of voluntary renunciation rather than exploitation of status […] Although [*status*], not [*selfishness*] but [*self-abasement/slavery*].[23]

We have briefly considered three biblical tools to help us find proposed ways forward in the culture wars. To summarise, these proposals are as follows:

- Self-criticism is a virtue, and must intensify as we get closer to 'home'.
- We must acknowledge our limitations and seek the virtue in the 'other'.
- Theological correctness does not remove the need for compassionate listening.
- No side can claim the unequivocal support of God.

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[22] See the discussion in Tremper Longman III, 'Warfare', *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. by T. D. Alexander and B. S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), pp. 835–839 (p. 838).

[23] Michael Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 167.

- We operate in a space that belongs to God alone, where all entitlements must be relinquished.

We will now attempt to apply these to a worked example.

Worked Example: Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT in Outline

The Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement is both an academic and an activist movement which seeks to determine and challenge intersecting structures of race and power.[24] It has its foundations in postmodern theories such as those of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, as well as earlier thinkers such as Marx. The movement emerged from the American Civil Rights movement but has developed substantially in more recent decades, including the diversification to encompass other ethnic populations and marginalised groups. Critical *Race* Theory can thus be considered a sub-branch of Critical Theory, an umbrella term that embraces a variety of issues sharing broadly similar methodologies and theoretical underpinnings.

CRT states that 'racism is ordinary, not aberrational'[25] in society, meaning that it tends to be unseen by those whom the structure privileges, particularly whites. Rennie Eddo-Lodge writes of the built-in privilege structure:

> Neutral is white. The default is white. Because we are born into an already written script that tells us what to expect from strangers due to their skin colour, accents and social status, the whole of humanity is coded as white. Blackness, however, is considered the 'other' and therefore to be suspected. Those who are coded as a threat in our collective representation of humanity are not white.[26]

CRT argues that racist systems serve important purposes for the dominant group, which therefore form a powerful disincentive to change, with Robin DiAngelo arguing,

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[24] Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 3rd edn (New York: New York University Press, 2017), p. 3.
[25] Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, p. 8.
[26] Rennie Eddo-Lodge, *Why I'm No longer Talking to White People about Race* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 30.

> White fragility may be conceptualized as a response or 'condition' produced and reproduced by the continual social and material advantages of whiteness. When disequilibrium occurs — when there is an interruption to that which is familiar and taken for granted — white fragility restores equilibrium and returns the capital 'lost' via the challenge. This capital includes self-image, control, and white solidarity. Anger towards the trigger, shutting down and/or tuning out, indulgence in emotional incapacitation such as guilt or 'hurt feelings,' exiting, or a combination of these responses results […] [T]hese strategies are reflexive and seldom conscious, but that does not make them benign.[27]

CRT considers race itself to be a social construct, not an ontological category based upon genetics.[28] Thus racial categories were 'invented' by those who sought to instrumentalise the bodies of others, particularly in the colonial and human trafficking projects. But saying that race is a socially constructed category 'is not to say that the category has no significance in our world. On the contrary, a large and continuing project for subordinated people […] is thinking about the way power has clustered around certain categories and is exercised against others.'[29]

CRT as a movement developed both within and without the church. A great voice of Black Liberation Theology (one of the forerunners of the more contemporary CRT movement) is James Cone. Cone urges the contextualisation of the gospel into Black experiences, arguing for its bankruptcy in the absence of such integration:

> What are we to make of a tradition that investigated the meaning of Jesus' relation to God and the divine and human natures in his person, but failed to relate these christological issues to the liberation of the slave and the poor in the society? […] In the absence of the theme of freedom or the liberation of the slave, did the Church lose the very essence of the gospel of Jesus Christ?[30]

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[27] Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to talk about Racism* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2018), pp. 105–106.

[28] Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, pp. 8–9.

[29] Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color', *Stanford Law Review*, 43, no. 6 (July 1991), pp. 1241–1299 (p. 1296).

[30] James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, rev. edn (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012), p. 104.

A contemporary Black theologian whose voice is influential is Jemar Tisby. Tisby rejects some of the more extreme forms of CRT[31] but is unafraid to call the American church to account for what he describes as its adaptive racism:

> Racism never goes away; it just adapts. [From the mid twentieth century] many politically and theologically conservative Christians strayed away from the use of explicitly race-based language and appeals. Yet those appeals did not disappear. Instead they mobilised around the issue of taxation of private Christian schools, many of which remained racially segregated or made only token efforts at integration. They supported presidents and legal policies that disproportionately and negatively impacted black people. They accepted a color-blind rhetoric that still utilized racially coded messages […] Simply by allowing the political system to work as it was designed — to grant advantages to white people and to put people of color at various disadvantages — many well-meaning Christians were complicit in racism.[32]

Critiques of CRT

CRT has been critiqued on methodological grounds. Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay, for example, criticise it for being reductionist, pessimistic, and inflammatory, part of a methodology which is unfalsifiable, and ultimately working against the liberal human rights project.[33]

CRT has also received stringent theological critique in conservative Christian circles. Conservative theological objections to CRT centre on a number of issues. It is argued that CRT theorists view 'sin' largely through the lens of collective White-on-Black oppression, rather than regarding such oppression as part of a wider understanding of the human predicament.[34] This arises from a totalising (and false) metanarrative, which views racism as the 'original sin', and offers a false

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[31] See his statement, given in relation to a dispute which well exemplifies some of the polarisation which this article is attempting to address. Jemar Tisby, 'Racial Compromise and Complicity at Grove City College', Footnotes by Jemar Tisby: <https://open.substack.com/pub/jemartisby/p/racial-compromise-and-complicity?utm_campaign=post&utm_medium=email> [accessed 17 April 2023].

[32] Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), p. 171.

[33] Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay, *Cynical Theories: How Universities Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity – and Why This Harms Everybody* (London: Swift, 2020).

[34] Williams, *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth*, p. 49.

gospel of anti-racism rather than redemption. Critiques like this arise from, for example, statements like this from James Cone.

> When whites undergo the true experience of conversion wherein they die to whiteness and are reborn anew in order to struggle against white oppression and for the liberation of the oppressed, there is a place for them in the black struggle of freedom. Here reconciliation becomes God's gift of blackness through the oppressed of the land. But it must be made absolutely clear that it is the black community that decides both the authenticity of white conversion and also the part these converts will play in the black struggle of freedom. The converts can have nothing to say about the validity of their conversion experience or what is best for the community or their place in it, except as permitted by the oppressed community itself.[35]

It could be noted that Cone's position is rather more nuanced than this rather polemical statement would suggest.

Further theological objections to the sort of world view proposed under the Critical Theory umbrella relate to the epistemological prioritisation of experience over objective truth,[36] and the binary division of the world whereby evil is wholly located within the 'other' or, for those grappling with historic guilt, within the 'self'. Christopher Watkin comments, 'There is a fault line between good and evil, but it does not run […] between different social groups. It runs down the middle of them.'[37]

CRT as a Shibboleth

CRT has proved to be extremely polarising in our churches — or has highlighted the polarisation that was already present. Some have welcomed it, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, considering it a useful tool to help us grow in our affirmation of all peoples. Kelly Hamren, for example, says, 'While CRT fails to recognize the root cause of racism (human sin), critical race theorists have done a good job paying attention to the ways in which racism manifests itself in Western societies.'[38]

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[35] Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, p. 222.

[36] See, for example, the critique offered in Carl R. Trueman, *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2022), pp. 158–159.

[37] Christopher Watkin, *Biblical Critical Theory: How the Bible's Unfolding Story Makes Sense of Modern Life and Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2022), pp. 122–123.

[38] Kelly Hamren, 'Unpacking Critical Race Theory (CRT) for Christians: Toward a Better Theology of Race', Blog post for Power to Change Students, 16 February 2021

Others have called it a 'cancer' that needs to be 'cut out', because it is 'lethal' to the gospel.[39] In 2020, the presidents of the six seminaries of the Southern Baptist Convention issued a statement that 'affirmation of Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality and any version of Critical Theory is incompatible with the Baptist Faith & Message'.[40] It cannot, therefore, be taught within any of the seminaries. And criticisms of CRT may go well beyond a careful theological engagement with the theory. For instance, some racial justice advocates have found 'CRT' to be a label that has been pejoratively applied to them for their work, even when it is not methodologically founded on CRT.[41] Such oversimplification of others' arguments is a common feature of the more polemical versions of the debate on both sides.

So how might the biblical tools we identified above be brought to bear upon this polarisation? I cannot deny a certain anxiety about writing on this subject, as a white woman. But I write as someone who does not wholly align with either the Conservative or the Progressive viewpoint (as these terms have been used above). And I write as a Christian minister and theological educator — positions which entail a responsibility to the church — who loves the church and is grieved by its divisions. My fear of being misunderstood or told that my voice is irrelevant must not trump the need for moderate voices to speak out. My suggestions do not seek to close down conversation and debate, but to open it up. We must all work for peace in every way we can.

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https://p2c.com/students/articles/unpacking-critical-race-theory-crt-for-christians-toward-a-better-theology-of-race/?fbclid=IwAR300VHj8ZztE-bOz8eA0g3bUszBOviT9K3d6cM2kqAyy HAb9D9VmQRmoBk [accessed 17 April 2023].

[39] 'Critical Race Theory and the Southern Baptist Convention', Christ Reformed Baptist Fellowship <https://crbf.us/sermon-and-bible-study-videos/crt-and-the-sbc> [accessed 11 April 2023].

[40] The statement can be found at the Baptist press website: George Schroeder, 'Seminary presidents reaffirm BFM, Declare CRT Incompatible': <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/seminary-presidents-reaffirm-bfm-declare-crt-incompatible/> [accessed 17April 2023].

[41] The point was made by Jemar Tisby in the podcast, 'Episode 209/Critical Race Theory with Jemar Tisby & Dr Christina Edmondson', Be the Bridge <https://bethebridge.com/episode-9-critical-race-theory-with-jemar-tisby-dr-christina-edmondson/> [accessed 17 April 2023].

CRT and Self-criticism

What does the tool of self-criticism have to say to this problem? As it is an imperative for every disciple of Jesus Christ, it is a virtue that should be practised on both sides of the divide. We should all look self-critically at the ways that our actions (whatever the merit of our intentions) may cause harm to others. We also need to be willing to be self-critical of the harms that our traditions might have caused.

Those who advocate for CRT often call for self-criticism from those who have not wholly embraced its conclusions. But, as we have seen, self-criticism should be most potent in our closest circles. As Thaddeus Williams points out, 'God's solidarity with the poor and oppressed in Scripture never means that he elevates their perspective to sacred, unquestionable status.'[42] Proponents of CRT might consider whether their assumptions about others are always founded upon evidence, or whether they fall into the temptation of essentialising the 'other'.

Those who oppose CRT are quite possibly well-aware of the call to repent of the collective and often historical sins of their traditions. But rather than respond defensively, they might reflect humbly on what they as individuals and their traditions need to change. The vigorous protest sometimes offered against the notion of collective guilt needs to be set against the clear moments in Scripture where a whole people group are held collectively responsible for sin. Amos's oracles are a good example.

CRT and Compassionate Listening

One of the fault-lines between CRT-based theologies and what we might term 'traditional' theological approaches is CRT's appeal to personal experience. I share with traditionalists the concern that experience should not become the epistemological gold standard; it is not the ultimate and finally determinative way of 'knowing'. But we are not brains in vats; we are embodied beings, and that embodiment matters. The incarnation brings the Word who is Truth into *being*, in

[42] Williams, *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth*, p. 157.

flesh and blood; we eat and drink bread and wine to reify our connection with that living Word.

As we saw, Job's three friends 'knew' what was 'true'; their theology is broadly in line with much of the theology of the Old Testament. But that did not negate or nullify Job's experience, which is expressed in the most deeply empathetic terms for many chapters. When God appears in the whirlwind towards the end of the book, both Job and his friends are silent. Ultimately, both traditionalists and CRT theorists, in order to be biblically faithful, must heed the strengths of the other approach, acknowledge the limitations of their own, and submit to that which cannot be deduced or experienced but only encountered by divine revelation. And, as the whole of Scripture testifies, divine revelation does not neutralise human reason or nullify human experience, but engages with and transforms both at the deepest of levels.

Critical Theory seeks to expose and challenge power relationships. These power relationships often go entirely unnoticed by those who hold the power, who may feel indignant and hurt when they are 'accused' of holding privilege, when they have never intended such a thing.

While those who oppose CRT would challenge the underlying theoretical background to this approach (it leans heavily upon the work of Michel Foucault and Karl Marx, for instance), it would be unwise to disregard the challenge which it poses. If there *are* power dynamics that we fail to see because we are their beneficiaries, the way of Christian faithfulness must lead us to attend to them, just as the prophets cried out on behalf of those who were excluded from the power structures of their day: the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner. Humility and teachability would suggest that we have much to learn from those who would point out the ways that our conversations and public structures might exclude or privilege certain people.

Critical Theory is also commonly reproached for encouraging people to see themselves as victims. Sadly, however, the response by those who oppose this trend is often to deny the harms that lead people to position themselves in such a way. But denying that people are

victims will not make them feel less victimised. It is better to listen and learn.

A strength of CRT is this imperative to people in the dominant group to become aware of their own privilege. Privilege is often invisible to those who possess it, until they come into a real and compassionate encounter with those who lack it. Peggy McIntosh has compiled a list of fifty privileges which white people enjoy, often unconsciously, in what she terms the 'invisible knapsack of white privilege'. They include the following observations:

> If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race.
> I have no difficulty finding neighborhoods where people approve of our household.
> I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.[43]

Becoming aware of the privileges we possess need not make us feel guilty, but should make us more compassionate towards those who do not share them and should provoke us to identify and challenge structural injustice.

Along with compassion comes the willingness to listen and learn and the humility to admit the possibility of some virtue in the other side. Those on both sides of the divide might do well to consider the effect that theological echo-chambers, tribalism, and the fear of shame have upon the positions they publicly occupy. If we could foster a culture within our churches where growth and change are possible, even encouraged, we would be more likely to find common ground.

CRT and Relativisation of Claims (No-man's Land) and of Identities

Another criticism commonly levelled against Critical Theory is the way that people are located within certain identities (Black, Queer, Cis, etc.) and the prioritising of that identity over their own individual identity. Kimberlé Crenshaw describes this as the 'process of recognizing as social and systemic what was formerly perceived as isolated and

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43 Peggy McIntosh, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* <https://hd.ingham.org/Portals/HD/White%20Priviledge%20Unpacking%20the%20Invisible%20Knapsack.pdf> [accessed 17 April 2023].

individual', and argues that, for people in marginalised groups, this 'identity-based politics has been a source of strength, community, and intellectual development'.[44] This approach stands in contrast with the rugged individualism which characterises modernity; a perspective which still persists today, particularly in the emphasis placed upon individual salvation by many churches.

Both of these stances contain theological truth, but neither of them is a complete theological system. At our baptism we enter the holy, catholic, and apostolic church; we are part of the Body of Christ, and our individualism has to be subordinated to the needs of that body — in all its diversity.[45] But all other identities that we claim, while not removed,[46] are now subordinated to our prime identity as children of God.

Once again, traditionalists and proponents of CRT need to learn from one another, while attending to the authoritative voice of God, as revealed in his Son and in Scripture, and while prioritising the needs and concerns of the marginalised.

Ultimately, neither group can claim that God is on their side. God refuses to be co-opted to any agenda which is less than the total renewal of the whole earth, victim and victimiser alike (Col 1:15–22). We all operate in 'no-man's land'; this is a place where no-one can drive in a stake and claim 'this is mine'. All claims are subordinated to God's, and all claims to being 'correct' are relativised in the light of God's truth. The church is not ours.

Towards Some Preliminary Conclusions

This article has offered three biblical tools for self-reflection and self-criticism, in an attempt to bring the polarised sides of the culture wars into productive and healing conversation. I conclude with some

[44] Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins', pp. 1241–1242.
[45] See, for example, Paul's discussion of the mutual responsibility of members in the body in 1 Corinthians 12.
[46] See Gal 3:28, for example.

questions which might prove pertinent as we consider our own positions regarding those with whom we disagree.

Questions to ask

- What are the power dynamics between us?
- What does the Other want to say to me?
- What pain does the Other carry?
- What can I learn from the Other? (Where am I wrong? Where is my theological system inadequate?)
- Where I disagree with the Other, what is the best construction I can place upon their motives?
- Where I disagree with the Other, what rank does this issue have in theological triage?
- When I meet the Other in no-man's land, what will we discover that we have in common?

Perhaps the place where we are most obviously in no-man's land is the Table of the Lord. As we come to break bread, we rediscover that we are guests, not proprietors. We come by invitation, not entitlement. We do not control the invitation list. Our past experiences do not make us more worthy, and our past sins do not prevent us, in God's grace. We cannot come unless we confess our sins with humble self-criticism. We eat and drink in memory of a broken body, and so we commit ourselves to attending to the still-broken Body of Christ.

The Lord's Supper — Gift and Gratitude: A Baptist's View

Uwe Swarat

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Abstract
Baptist theology, at least in German-speaking countries, has usually paid little attention to the Lord's Supper. Nevertheless, the Lord's Supper plays such an important role in Holy Scripture, in church traditions, in the ecumenical dialogues of the twentieth century, and in the reality of church life, that it seems unreasonable to neglect it theologically. So, this article seeks to stimulate Baptist thinking on the Lord's Supper in the light of tradition and Scripture. The author argues that Baptists have too often sought to link themselves to Zwingli instead of Calvin. That means they have too often adopted a purely symbolic, anti-sacramental understanding of the Lord's Supper. But this understanding does not correspond to the biblical accounts of its institution. In contrast, Calvin's teaching on the Lord's Supper understands the Supper as a work of grace and of faith in one. This twofold meaning is clearly expounded in the Consensus Tigurinus of 1549 and is of great ecumenical significance today.

Keywords
Lord's Supper; Holy Communion; Reformed tradition; sacrament; remembrance; fellowship

Introduction

Until now, Baptist theology has paid only little attention to the Lord's Supper, at least in German-speaking countries,[1] though the themes of 'church' and 'baptism' have been and still are prominent. On the one hand, this is understandable, as ecclesiology and the doctrine of baptism are the areas which have determined Baptist identity from its beginnings and in which consist the greatest differences to other church traditions. Nevertheless, the Lord's Supper plays such an important role in Holy

[1] It seems to apply to the wider European context too: The *Dictionary of European Baptist Life and Thought* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster 2009), which in other respects is highly commendable, has no article with the headwords Lord's Supper or Lord's Table.

Scripture, in church traditions, in the ecumenical dialogues of the twentieth century, and in the reality of church life, that it seems unreasonable to neglect it theologically. So, this article seeks to stimulate Baptist thinking on the Lord's Supper in the light of tradition and Scripture.[2]

The Baptist Link to the Reformed Tradition on the Lord's Supper — in Which Sense?

For the German-speaking countries, we can begin our reflections with the work of the New Testament scholar and professor at the Hamburg Theological Seminary Wiard Popkes, *Abendmahl und Gemeinde* (*The Lord's Supper and the Church*), written in 1981. Popkes's work remains the only book on this subject in the German language by a Baptist. Popkes has shown that there is no specific Baptist doctrine and practice regarding the Lord's Supper. The Baptists associated themselves to a large extent with the Reformed tradition. According to Popkes, this was a mistake, because that which is otherwise typical for Baptists, namely strong spiritual experience and emphasis on church life, was neglected at this point. It would be rewarding in many respects to discuss this thesis more extensively. I should like to restrict myself here to taking up Popkes' impulse in a particular direction, while emphasising something different. That is, I do not think that the link to the Reformed tradition is, as such, a theological weakness. The essential criterion for an adequate teaching on the Lord's Supper is not whether it is typically Baptist or not, but if it is scriptural, that is, whether it conforms to the gospel of Jesus Christ. If we follow this criterion, then we can be open as Baptists even to older theological traditions — if they are able to stand up to the test of Scripture.

The theological problem with the Baptist doctrine and practice lies, in my opinion, in the fact that the differences within the Reformed tradition between Calvin and Zwingli are usually not sufficiently

[2] This paper was originally written for an oral presentation at a theological conference. I thank Revd Andrew B. Duncan (Gladbeck, Germany) for the translation into English. It has been revised for the present publication. A German version of the text has been published with the title 'Abendmahl – Gabe Gottes und Danksagung der Beschenkten' in *Theologisches Gespräch*, 29 (2005), 131–148.

considered. Put another way: Baptists have too often sought to link themselves to Zwingli instead of Calvin. Through the theological connection to Zwingli, the essential spiritual function and power of the Lord's Supper is removed. Put simply, it is my conviction that the Lord's Supper receives and maintains its true and genuine importance only when we understand it not un-sacramentally, as Zwingli, but sacramentally, as Calvin. If we were to ask Baptist church members and pastors in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland what the Lord's Supper is, we would receive very often the answer that it is a meal of remembrance and of fellowship, not a sacrament, but a symbol. Although many believe that this is really the Baptist and the typical Reformed teaching, both these assumptions are inaccurate. The purely symbolic, anti-sacramental conception of the Lord's Supper is by no means the teaching which has become typical of the Reformed tradition, and it is also not the only stance adopted by Baptists in their theology and confessions.[3] But, as it is so often argued in our ranks, I should like to enter into debate with it here.

The Purely Symbolic, Anti-sacramental Understanding (Ulrich Zwingli)

The purely symbolic, anti-sacramental understanding was introduced into Protestant theology by Ulrich Zwingli.[4] Zwingli did not always emphasise the same things in this matter, but he has become relevant in the history of dogma and theology principally in that he refused to understand the Lord's Supper and baptism as sacraments, that is, as means of grace. Zwingli's key statement is that the Holy Spirit does not require a means of transport to reach people: 'He, (the Spirit) is himself the force and the carrier through which everything is brought. He does

[3] Uwe Swarat, 'Gemeinschaft mit Christus und untereinander: Abendmahl und Abendmahlsgemeinschaft in der baptistischen Tradition', in *Eucharistie – Kirche – Ökumene: Aspekte und Hintergründe des Kommunionstreits*, ed. by Th. Söding and W. Thönissen, Quaestiones Disputatae 298 (Freiburg i.Br.: Herder, 2019), pp. 224–253; Uwe Swarat, 'Das Verhältnis von Wort und Sakrament aus baptistischer Sicht', *Una Sancta, Zeitschrift für ökumenische Begegnung*, 77 (2022), 221–235.

[4] Cf. W. P. Stephens, *Zwingli – An Introduction to His Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

not need to be brought himself."[5] With this thesis, he not only denies that the Holy Spirit is mediated to us through the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, but also that the Spirit inevitably reaches us through preaching. All who are inclined to agree with Zwingli's criticism of the sacrament should recognise that it is based on a fundamental determination of the relationship between the Word and the Spirit, which sees the Holy Spirit as, in principle, independent of the Word of God. Zwingli admits that God usually uses the sermon to lead people to faith, but he deems this to be an accommodation of God to the weaknesses of human beings, who are too strongly bound to the perceptions of their senses. However, it does not correspond to God's being that God uses external means to cause internal processes. God uses the external means of the sermon, but God is not bound by this means to stir up faith. Zwingli states this because he wishes to emphasise the sovereignty and freedom of God who does not place salvation at the disposal of humans. At the same time, we sense a clear devaluation of the external as against the internal, or of the bodily as against the mental and spiritual, which has its origin not in the teaching of the Bible but in Platonist philosophy.

Concerning baptism and the Lord's Supper, it is generally known that Zwingli can characterise them in Latin as *sacramenta*, but he lays value on keeping the original semantic meaning of the word, namely 'oath'. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are oaths or pledges, and not God's oaths, but our oaths as believers for our intercourse among ourselves. The acting subject in the sacrament is not God but the believer. Accordingly, the sacraments can neither produce nor strengthen faith, they cannot even give persons assurance of God's grace and forgiveness. Assurance through the so-called sacraments happens rather on the human level. In receiving baptism and the Lord's Supper, a person gives an oath, that they are a Christian and that they align themselves with the church. Hence the church is assured that this person believes in Christ. At the same time, there lies in the taking of the sacraments the responsibility of the individual to live according to the rule of Christ. The sacraments are, nevertheless, no means of grace.

[5] Zwingli, 'Fidei Ratio (1530)', in *Huldrych Zwingli, Schriften, Bd. IV* (Zürich: TVZ Theologischer Verlag, 1995), p. 113.

They are not signs of a grace which is given in them but are signs of grace which has already been granted.

Zwingli's understanding of the Lord's Supper conforms to this whole picture. Against the scholastic teaching on the repetition of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross on the altar of the church, he declares the Lord's Supper to be a remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ, which happened once and for all. And against the Lutheran teaching on the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in bread and wine, he states that, while it is true that the body and blood of Christ are present in the Lord's Supper, they are not in the elements but 'in the mind of the believer'.[6] In both instances the believing person is stressed to be the subject in the Lord's Supper. It is the human who remembers the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, and it is the human in whose mind Christ is present in the Lord's Supper. Zwingli's clash with Luther on the words of institution ('this is my body', or 'this means my body') is determined by his conviction that the external signs do not refer to a current act of grace by God but only to a past act. If we want a share in Christ, then, according to Zwingli, eating the bread and drinking the wine do not help us at all; only faith helps. Faith comes not from the sacraments but only from the Spirit of God, for external things can never effect internal results.

Having a symbolic understanding of the Lord's Supper in Zwingli's sense means, therefore, recognising only an internal presence of Christ in the mind of the believer and relating the Lord's Supper only to a past salvation event and not to a present act of God. It is the believing human who acts in the Lord's Supper and not God. It is a fellowship meal in the sense that men and women recognise themselves and others to be Christians and oblige themselves to live Christian lives in commitment to the church.

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[6] Zwingli, 'Amica Exegesis (1527)', in *Huldreich Zwinglis Sämtliche Werke*, *Band V*, *CR XCII* (Leipzig: Heinsius, 1934), pp. 588–589.

Criticism of the Anti-sacramental Understanding of the Lord's Supper

This understanding of the Lord's Supper is, in my opinion, insufficient in essential points. The problem lies less in that which is said about the Lord's Supper than in that which is contested about the Supper. Put another way, the problem lies in the contrasts which arise from Zwingli's teaching.

The Separation of the Spirit from the Word

Zwingli's fundamental contention depends on his determination of the relationship between the word and the Spirit. He correctly observes that the sermon does not automatically and of itself create faith but that this is a work of the Spirit. Instead of establishing the necessary togetherness of word and Spirit, he one-sidedly emphasises the Spirit and reduces the significance of the sermon. He contradicts those who emphasise the word at the expense of the Spirit, and he commits the error of emphasising the Spirit and neglecting the word. But Spirit and Word belong together because the Christ in us (*in nobis*) and the Christ out of us, the Christ for us (*extra nos*, *pro nobis*) belong together. God's revelation and work of salvation are not immediately performed internally in us but happen at first outside of us in history. The word stands for this. Firstly, the Word that is Christ himself, then the word of Holy Scripture, which witnesses to him as the historical revelation of God, and finally the word of the sermon, which conveys the original witness to Christ through Scripture to each generation as the new, contemporary word. Because the faith through which we are saved is faith in the Word of God, therefore the Holy Spirit requires the word in order to stir up faith in us. The word is, in fact, transporter of the Holy Spirit. It carries the Holy Spirit from outside of us to us by witnessing to Christ, and the Holy Spirit carries the word into us by means of planting faith in our heart. Zwingli is worried that we place the sovereignty of God in danger when the Spirit is bound to the word, but he overlooks that God is sovereign enough to bind himself to the word as an external means. We can identify God through his word, and we should not disparage this. Thus, we should not look upon the sermon based on Holy Scripture as just being a human confession, which doubtless it is, but also as God's word in a human's mouth. We do not

need to fear for God's freedom when we expect that God himself addresses us through the sermon. As soon as we recognise the sermon to be an external means through which God is willing to give us his Holy Spirit and faith, we have already left Zwingli's theology. We can and must ask ourselves, whether baptism and the Lord's Supper, just as the sermon, are also forms of God's word and, therefore, also means of God's grace.

Only the Human and not God as the Subject of the Lord's Supper

The decisive topic for understanding baptism and the Lord's Supper lies in the question, who is their subject? Who is active in baptism and in the Lord's Supper? Zwingli's answer: it is the believer who acts. The believer confesses Christ and the church. This answer is, of course, correct, for baptism and the Lord's Supper are, in fact, a common act of the believing church and of the believing individual through which they confess themselves as belonging to each other and to Christ. But we must ask whether this says everything, that is, whether Zwingli is correct when he sees the sacraments *only* as an act of a human being and *not* as an act of God. This question has been and is being discussed in Baptist theology, usually in connection with baptism. Various theologians give differing answers here. It can also be asked in connection with the Lord's Supper. Does God act in the Lord's Supper in the present on the congregation of the faithful, or do the faithful just look back on an earlier act of God? Do we meet in the Lord's Supper the Christ *for* us or just the Christ *in* us? Does God, in the Lord's Supper, make the believers certain of his grace and does God strengthen their faith, or do the believers assure one another that they are living in God's grace? How we answer this question has far-reaching consequences for how we approach the Lord's Supper.

Precarious Consequences for Devotion at the Supper

It seems to me that the anti-sacramental Zwinglian understanding makes personal access to the Lord's Supper more difficult as it takes away our joy in it. An indication of this is the fact that Zwingli recommended taking the Lord's Supper just four times a year. When the significance of the Supper consists only in that the participants mutually confirm their faithfulness to Christ and to each other, then it really is sufficient

when this just happens at some few festive events. According to Zwingli, our faith is not strengthened through the Supper, and there is therefore no continuous spiritual need to be stilled by the Supper.

On the contrary, because the church members mutually confirm that they are under grace, the participant must ask themselves if they are capable at that time of confessing such a thing. The words of the Apostle Paul, which are often (in my younger days always) read at the table, that one should not unworthily celebrate the Supper (1 Cor 11:27–30), have been and still are immediately misunderstood with this background. One senses that one is not completely at peace with Christ or with the brothers and sisters and, therefore, shies away from participating in the Lord's Supper. But if one can only take part in the Supper when one has a firm faith and a clean conscience, the Supper then becomes a heavy burden. It stands before us as a law which requires works so that we can approach God, and not as the gospel, through which God calls those suffering under sin and doubt to cast their burden upon himself. One must know what one is doing when one says with Zwingli that the Lord's Supper does not give forgiveness, does not strengthen faith but just gives testimony, that we have already experienced all this. To such a Supper are not invited those who are 'poor in Spirit' (Matt 5:3), who know their need of God, but only those who feel themselves rich in the Spirit and strong in the faith, to confirm themselves mutually in this. The Supper can thus deter many of the burdened and tempt others to self-righteousness.

The Zwinglian understanding of the Lord's Supper as a remembrance meal has had a similar effect. It states that Christ becomes present at the table in that the participant is brought to think back on the cross of Christ. Here again the Supper becomes a demand on the believer, for they are required to imagine Christ for themselves. How close Christ comes to me during the Supper depends on how intensively I can imagine the events on the hill of Golgotha. This remembrance demands concentration, and, for this reason, it is often desired that the Supper is taken in silence. Although visible signs of God's goodness stand in bread and wine before the participants and are held out to them, people will often retreat into themselves and their power of imagination. Whoever succeeds in painting Christ before their mind's eye has the

impression of sensing Christ's presence. Whoever does not succeed in this puts themselves in question and becomes afraid of the next effort in this direction. This is the experience of not a few people in Baptist churches where the Supper is above all seen as an act on the part of humans. It becomes a law which drives some to desperation and others to trust in their own works.

The Meaning of the Lord's Supper according to the Accounts of its Institution

The worrying spiritual consequences of the Zwinglian teaching show that the gospel of Jesus Christ requires another kind of understanding of the Lord's Supper. I believe that the New Testament in fact offers another understanding of the Supper, namely, one which does not see the Supper only as a human confession of faith but also as a gift of God. As I do not have space for a more complete exegetical argument, I will limit myself to those observations which are the most essential, namely, the accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper. These reports are central to a proper understanding of the Supper, for the Lord's Supper is not celebrated in Christianity as a ceremony with an ecclesiastical origin, but as a rite, which Jesus Christ himself has instituted. Christianity is, therefore, bound in its understanding and practice of the Lord's Supper to the will of the donor. The content, which Jesus Christ invested in this ceremony, remains authoritative for all time. When we now inquire for the original meaning of the Lord's Supper at its institution, we pass over the many historical problems which are present in the accounts of the institution, and we concentrate on the characteristic features which become clear in all the reports. What can we learn from the institution of the Lord's Supper about its meaning and sense?

The Lord Gives, the Disciples Receive

The first simple, and decisive, observation consists in the fact that at the institution of the Supper, it is above all Jesus Christ who is acting. It is *he* who invites the disciples to the meal, *he* is the host at the table, *he* takes the bread and the wine, *he* prays, and *he* distributes bread and wine to those present. When the Christian church celebrates the Lord's Supper,

then it should happen in such a manner that it is still the table of *the Lord* around which they are gathered. Jesus is still the host and the one who distributes the gifts; even though he is no longer bodily present, he is present with his disciples through his word and Spirit as the one who has been raised into heaven. Jesus Christ acts in the power of God in the Lord's Supper on the disciples; the church receives the gifts from his hand.

Admittedly, the disciples also act during the meal, but their action is secondary to the initiative of God's Son. The disciples let themselves be invited to the table and be given the bread and the wine. This is not just passivity, for they respond voluntarily to the initiative of Christ. They are not dictated to; they accept the invitation. They are not force-fed, but they let themselves be given bread and wine. The disciples are therefore *active* in the sense that they are *voluntarily passive*; they let Christ give them a present. If one wants to describe what sort of action the disciples undertake at the Supper, one does it best with the term 'receiving action'.[7] The action of the disciples consists in receiving gifts from their Lord. Both the Lord and the disciples are active at the Supper, in that the Lord takes the initiative and bestows his gifts, and the disciples accept them.

The Lord Carries Out an Action and Gives It Meaning

The second observation on the institution of the supper consists in the fact that the Lord speaks as well as acts. The distribution of bread and wine among the table companions is an action, but this action is accompanied by words which give it meaning. The togetherness of word and action is essential. If the Supper were an action without words, the disciples would have to state its meaning themselves and would thereby be unclear about the mind of the benefactor, or they would understand the action as a material-magical event which unfolds its efficacy without words and understanding. Both are eliminated in that Jesus himself gives his action meaning. The Supper is thus not a magical event but is an action, whose effectiveness is bound to the word, which the founder

[7] I took this term (in German 'Empfangshandlung') from the Lutheran systematic theologian Werner Elert, *Der christliche Glaube: Grundlinien der lutherischen Dogmatik*, 6th edn (Erlangen: Martin Luther, 1988), p. 359.

speaks and which the participants hear and should accept. The Supper is also not an action which the disciples should give a meaning to according to their own insights, but one to which the founder himself gives meaning.

It must be observed, however, that Jesus does not only speak to his disciples but also that he performs this action with them. That which he wants to convey to them is expressed not only with words but also in an action. He does not just *say* that he will give them something, he actually *gives* it. Not only is a new teaching communicated, but an action is performed. In this, it is clear, on the one hand, that Jesus's word is not only one which explains, describes, and gives meaning, but it is a powerful, accomplishing word, namely, the word of the creator, which does what it says. On the other hand, it becomes clear that Jesus does not just wish to reach his disciples on an intellectual level, where he conveys spiritual knowledge, but in addition to their thinking, he makes a claim on their will and their doing, so that he has dealings with the disciples as whole beings and, therefore, clothes his word in an action. The Lord's Supper is thus an action which is given a meaning through the word of Jesus.

Jesus Dedicates the Fruit of His Dying to His Disciples

Our third observation directs itself to Jesus's words of explanation. There are different opinions as to what these words originally were. We do not have to discuss this here, but we will just take the simplest form: 'This is my body', 'this is my blood'. We have to understand these words in the context of the original events on the eve of Jesus's death on the cross. It is obvious that Jesus did not want to perform a substantial transformation of the bread and the wine and that the disciples could not have understood it in this way, for Jesus sat bodily among his disciples. His body and his blood could not at the same time be essentially in the bread and the wine. The 'is' in the words of institution is therefore to be understood in the first place as 'means', because the words belong to a symbolic action. However, with these words, Jesus identifies the bread with his body and the wine with his blood, and with this identification he distributes bread and wine to his disciples. The disciples receive bread and wine *as* Jesus's body and blood. What the action means really happens in this moment. In symbolic identification,

the bread 'is' that which it means, and the wine 'is' that which it means. The old fight about 'is' and 'means' in the words of institution does not do justice to the event of establishment, because, in this, both aspects belong together. It is misleading to ask whether the Supper is a reality *or* a symbol, for that which happens in the Supper is a reality-symbol. In the symbolic action, the meant spiritual reality is present.

What does Jesus mean when he identifies the bread with his body? The term 'body' stands for bodily life. He gives this life of his as nourishment to his disciples. He speaks of this at the farewell meal under the shadow of his coming death, he speaks of it in view of the *broken* bread, and he speaks of it in the context of his *shed* blood, about which he speaks immediately afterwards. Jesus's life, which he symbolically gives to the disciples, is thus the life consecrated to death, is the life which he is about to sacrifice. In this, he shows his disciples that not only his life, which he has lived up until then, but also his dying now means life for them, his disciples. The giving of his life unto death occurs for the good of the disciples. This is explicitly stated in the first epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians and in Luke's Gospel: 'This is my body, given for you', it is being sacrificed for your good. In John's Gospel, which does not directly report on the Lord's Supper, this meaning of the word concerning the bread is given very succinctly in Jesus's speech in John 6:48, 51. There Jesus says, 'I am the bread of life. This bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world.' This does not remain just a *word* of Jesus in the instituting of the Supper but becomes an *action*. When Jesus gives his disciples the bread, which means his life given for them in death, he dedicates to them in advance the salvation and the life that will spring out of his death.

The word concerning the cup, which comes together with the word concerning the bread, repeats that which the word on the bread has already said, the difference being that the meaning of the blood of Jesus in relationship to his violent death is even clearer. Jesus's death should be a power of salvation for his disciples and the foundation of a new covenant between God and humanity through the forgiveness of sins (compare Exod 24:8). Here also Jesus does not only *explain* the meaning of his death with words but *gives* the disciples the cup with the wine and truly dedicates to them that which the wine signifies. Thus, he

prepares his disciples for his death and takes care that they — at least afterwards — recognise that his bloody dying is an act of salvation, whose fruits are given to them. When Jesus here speaks of his body and blood, he does not mean two different substances that he wants to give them. He means with both terms nothing other than himself, his own life, which he gives unto death, for the salvation of others who receive this deed as deliverance. In giving himself in and with the bread and wine to the disciples, he gives them the deliverance which he achieves on the cross. What he achieves on the cross belongs to them. There are, thus, not two gifts distributed in the Lord's Supper but one gift in two forms. This one gift does not consist of a material substance but in the work of salvation, which Jesus has completed for us sinners. The gift, which is distributed to us at the Lord's Table, is the proceeds of Christ's dying: reconciliation with God, the new covenant.

The Scriptural Celebration of the Lord's Supper as Work of Grace and of Faith in One

If we consider these three observations on the institution of the Supper as a whole, it becomes clear that the Lord's Supper is a visible form or a ritual carrying out of the gospel. The gospel of the justification of sinners says that God wishes to give us eternal life through the giving of his Son unto death and that we are reconciled with God and taken into covenant with him when we accept in faith with gratitude what Jesus did for us on the cross. For Christ's sake, we are saved from the damning judgement of God, and that completely by grace, that is, through God's free favour toward us, completely without any merit on our part. At the same time, it is through faith alone, in that we let God give us salvation. In the gospel of justification, grace and faith belong together: the giving action of God and the grateful receiving action of humanity. In the same way, both God and humanity are active in the Lord's Supper, God in his grace, in which he gives us the yield of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, and humanity in faith, through which humanity lets themselves be given the gift of acceptance into the covenant. We cannot do justice to the Lord's Supper, neither when we understand it with Zwingli to be a human's act of faith and of confession alone, nor when we understand it to be a means of grace, whose efficacy is independent of a human's

faith and confession. We have in the Lord's Supper the same togetherness of God and a human action as in baptism, which should not surprise us, because both baptism and the Lord's Supper anchor our salvation in the death of Christ and are, therefore, both visible forms of the gospel of justification. George R. Beasley-Murray has finely said of baptism, 'It is the God-determined rendezvous between grace and faith.'[8] This is exactly true of the Lord's Supper as well. The Lord's Supper and baptism are, therefore, a relationship-event between God and humankind, a meeting in which God turns to the human and the human turns to God.

This meeting character moulds not only the event of justification but God's whole history with humanity of revelation and salvation. Emil Brunner has correctly emphasised that everything which occurs between God and humanity has the structure of a personal correspondence, an encounter on the level of the I and the you, where God opens himself for the human and the human reciprocally themselves for God.[9] For this reason, the Christian service of worship cannot be properly understood if it is not comprehended as a dialogue, as the meeting in which God speaks to the people and the people answer to God. In the service, it comes to a meeting between God and humanity, because God leans down to humanity (katabatical, descending aspect of the service) and because humanity sends their prayers and songs up to God (anabatical, ascending aspect of the service). The German word 'Gottesdienst' includes both aspects of this encounter. The service is the place where God serves us men and women, and — this is fundamental — the service is also the place at which we humans serve God. In the same way, the place of baptism and the Lord's Supper, namely, the service of the gathered church, leads us to the knowledge that baptism and the Lord's Supper are sacraments in the sense that God serves us in them through his gift and that we serve God through our confession and through our gratitude.

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[8] G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1962), p. 273.

[9] Emil Brunner, *Wahrheit als Begegnung* (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1938; 2nd edn, 1963); English version: *Truth as Encounter* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964).

The Lord's Supper as a Meal of Remembrance and Fellowship

If we call the Lord's Supper a meal of remembrance and fellowship, as is frequently done in Baptist churches, then we should not interpret the two terms 'remembrance' and 'fellowship' just as human acts, but we should see God's working in it as well. Remembrance and fellowship are not just things which we *enact* but are firstly something that we *receive*.

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper according to both Luke and Paul with the words, '*Do* this in remembrance of me.' The remembrance of Jesus giving his life for us should take place through the act, an act which has been given to us by the Lord and which re-enacts that the Lord gives himself to us. The participants at the Supper are not called upon to exercise their imagination, through which they move themselves notionally into the past. The Lord's Supper is much more itself the remembrance of Jesus. When the believer repeats what Jesus did with his disciples on the eve of his death, then that historical Supper and the salvation-event symbolised therein are repeated anew. It is Jesus who brings himself into remembrance through the Lord's Supper and dedicates to us today — as he did then to the first disciples — the fruit of his death. As we celebrate the Lord's Supper, Jesus's sacrificial death is made present to us, so that it benefits us too. The Lord's Supper is not at first a matter of our remembering (active) but that we are reminded (passive); it is not a question of our human capability to transfer ourselves notionally into the past, but it is a question of God's will to make the past event present for us. The remembrance which happens in the Supper is, therefore, firstly a gift of Jesus. Our own commemoration of his death takes place in that we allow ourselves to be given the Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a meal of fellowship, indeed. But the fellowship which results from the Lord's Supper is not only an expression of interpersonal fellowship but a communion with Christ. When Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 10:16–21 of the 'communion of the blood' and of the 'body of Christ', he understands communion as sharing. Through the cup and the bread, the believers get to share in the blood and the body of Christ, that is, they receive a share not in the

substances of the blood and body of Christ, but in that which Christ through his dying has done for them. The Lord's Table is a meal of fellowship, first of all in the sense that it joins us to Christ as the originator of our salvation. Jesus Christ gives us fellowship with himself. This 'vertical' dimension of the fellowship, the connection between Christ and the believer, is the primary aspect of the Lord's Supper, for the Supper is and remains the *Lord's* Table, to which we are invited. Nonetheless, in this bond with Christ lies the basis for the bond among the believers, that is, for the 'horizontal' dimension of the fellowship. Because the individual believers are bound up with Christ, they are at the same time inserted into the fellowship of the believers; the bond with Christ is not for individuals alone, but for all who believe. Thus, the fellowship of believers has its basis in Jesus Christ. As Christ gives himself as deliverer for all, he combines the beneficiaries into a fellowship. The common share in Christ creates the church, and, therefore, every Lord's Supper reminds us also of the fellowship among the believers. The Lord's Supper is, to a certain extent, the crossing point of the vertical and the horizontal dimension of the Christian fellowship. As a fellowship meal, the Lord's Table is at first a gift of the Lord to the believers. It is the Lord himself who grants a share in his work of salvation and through this joins the guests at the table in fellowship. Whatever form the participants give to the fellowship, it can only be a consequence of the divine gift around which the meal is centred.

The Twofold Meaning of the Lord's Supper in the Protestant-Reformed Tradition

Ulrich Zwingli

The understanding which I have sketched above — and which I take to conform to scripture — of the Lord's Supper as both an act of grace and of faith has often been missed in the history of theology, where before Zwingli, the human side, the act of faith, had been mostly underestimated. Zwingli tried to compensate for this failure but tended to overestimate the human side and thus did not do justice to the grace-character of the Supper. We have to make a similar judgement on some

utterances from the Baptist side and from related churches. Zwingli himself seems to have been conscious at times of the shortcomings of his theology in this matter. When he calls the sacraments 'signs of the covenant' he means, at first in his typical manner, that the sacraments are related to the covenant between the people in the church; they are a sign by which others are assured that we belong to them. Around the end of his life, he took up other ideas; for example, he held that the sacraments are signs of the divine covenant, through which God strengthens our faith. Here appears in outline with Zwingli a connection between the vertical, interpersonal dimension of the sacrament and the horizontal, human-and-God-connecting dimension which above all Calvin later represented.

John Calvin

Calvin's teaching on the Lord's Supper cannot be adopted today in all its trains of thought. The controversies at the time of the Reformation circled above all around the heavenly (ascended) body of Christ and, thus, around the teaching on the two natures of Christ and the understanding of the ascension of Christ. The discussion ended with all persons involved in aporia, so that the arguments of those controversies cannot simply be reproduced today. Nevertheless, Calvin's teaching on the Lord's Supper still offers helpful orientation, in that it pulls the Holy Spirit into the centre and thus gives weight to God's actions as well as to human action. According to Calvin, it is the Holy Spirit who makes the body and the blood of Christ present in the Supper. Against the Catholic and the Lutheran teachings, he emphasises that the body and blood of Christ cannot be materially-spatially present in the elements. The elements do not enclose Christ in themselves, but they illustrate what Christ wishes to be for us. The body and the blood of Christ are nevertheless present but mediated through the Holy Spirit, who uses the words of institution and the external elements to give us a share in the death and life of Christ. The Lord's Supper has not only a cognitive meaning, in which it symbolises what the gospel says to us, but also a causative purpose, in which as a tool of the Holy Spirit it offers and distributes to us that which it characterises. Bread and wine are certainly just signs and not the thing itself. But they are not empty signs, for Christ has given them to us to assure us of his promise. Calvin writes, 'To all

these things we have a complete attestation in this sacrament, enabling us certainly to conclude that they are as truly exhibited to us as if Christ were placed in bodily presence before our view, or handled by our hands' (*Institutio Christianae Religionis* IV,17,3).[10] Later, he says,

> For why does the Lord put the symbol of his body into your hands, but just to assure you that you truly partake of him? If this is true let us feel as much assured that the visible sign is given us in seal of an invisible gift as that his body itself is given to us. (*Institutes* IV,17,10)

According to Calvin, we receive Jesus Christ truly in his body and blood, given for us, but we receive him not spatially enclosed by the elements, but in that the Holy Spirit nourishes our soul with Christ when our bodily mouth receives the bread and the wine. For Calvin, an effectual Lord's Supper is a gracious act of God and a human act of faith in one. First, God wishes to assure us in the Supper of his good will and thus strengthens our faith. Secondly, the Supper is the place granted to us to praise God and to glorify him with our confession, to demonstrate the unity of the believer with Christ and with other believers, and to guard this unity. These statements on the meaning of the Supper, in which Calvin integrates Zwingli's concerns, but also goes beyond Zwingli, correspond to that which Calvin gives as a definition of a sacrament, in which he pays accord to God's action as well as the human's. A sacrament is 'an external sign, by which the Lord seals on our consciences his promises of good-will toward us, in order to sustain the weakness of our faith, and we in our turn testify our piety towards him, both before himself, and before angels as well as men' (*Institutes* IV,14,1).

The Consensus Tigurinus 1549

The double character of the sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper (e.g. that God testifies to us of his grace in them and we testify our faith before God and people) was accepted by Zwingli's successor Heinrich Bullinger as well as by the church in Zurich. Calvin and Bullinger both

[10] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. by Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: the Calvin Translation Society, 1845).

declared in the 'Mutual Agreement concerning Sacramental Substance' (*Consensus Tigurinus*) of 1549[11] that

> the goals and purposes of the sacraments are such as to be marks and tokens of Christian profession and community or fraternity […]. But the goal which is preeminent among others is that through them God may testify, represent, and seal (*testetur*, *repraesentet atque obsignet*) his grace to us. (no. 7)
>
> Moreover, while the testimonies and seals of his grace which God has given us are true, without any doubt he truly offers inwardly by his Spirit that which the sacraments figure to our eyes and other senses. […] And likewise we may give thanks for these blessings once displayed on the cross which we now grasp daily by means of faith. (no. 8)

Calvin opened up the possibility for a balanced teaching on baptism and the Lord's Supper, which understands them as a gift for faith as well as an expression of faith. As this teaching has been shown to be scriptural, it is necessary in my opinion for our Baptist theology and for our churches to find unanimity on this basis.

The Ecumenical Significance of an Understanding of Sacrament Which Links Grace and Faith

With such a balanced teaching on baptism and the Lord's Supper, an important contribution would be made for an ecumenical theology and for an inter-church *rapprochement* in doctrine. We can observe in the last decades — at least in areas where German is spoken — that in the theology outside of the Reformed tradition the acceptance of such a starting point in the doctrine of the sacraments has also grown. The Leipzig Lutheran Ulrich Kühn defined the sacraments as 'real symbolical acts of faith of the church of Jesus Christ'.[12] Kühn's teaching on the sacraments begins with the recognition that the sacraments are rites 'in which the church expresses its belonging to Christ and commits itself to the triune God'. The human response and confession aspect of

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[11] *Consensus Tigurinus (1549): Die Einigung zwischen Heinrich Bullinger und Johannes Calvin über das Abendmahl*, ed. by Emidio Campi and Ruedi Reich (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2009); translation of the Consensus from the original Latin into English in this volume is found from p. 258 onwards.

[12] Ulrich Kühn, *Sakramente*, Handbuch Systematischer Theologie, Band 11 (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1985), pp. 306, 308, 312.

the sacraments, which were fundamental for Zwingli and has always been held correctly by Baptists, is thus also found here in the foreground with a Lutheran, who had worked in the context of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). He emphasises that the Spirit-worked faith has a constitutive significance for the sacrament. According to Kühn, a mediation of salvation also takes place in the sacrament, because Christ as head of his church is present and active through his Spirit in the service of worship. Through Christ's promise the sacraments become means, in which the believing church 'experiences the presence and favour of its Lord in a particularly intensive manner'. It would be rewarding if Baptist theology would take up a dialogue with this kind of Lutheran theology.

It is not just Lutheran theology where the confessional character of the Supper is emphasised. In Catholic theology there are also valuable testimonies that the sacraments are acts of grace and faith in one. The Dutch scholar Edward Schillebeeckx, for example, declared that the sacraments are moments of personal encounter between God or Christ and the individual believer.[13] For Schillebeeckx, the sacraments are visible forms of expression of the love of God, which is freely given and which must also be freely accepted. Without the returned love towards God on the part of the recipient, the sacrament would be a 'deceiving sign'. The Budapest-born French-German systematic theologian Alexandre Ganoczy interprets sacraments as 'systems of verbal and non-verbal communication' within the church and as 'interactive encounter events between the grace and the faith of particular […] members of a concrete church'.[14] The Swiss systematic theologian Eva-Maria Faber treats the sacraments as ways of 'mediation between God and human', in which the 'godness' of God is made open for human beings and the humanness of men and women is brought into movement toward God.[15] With Faber too appears the term 'personal encounter' between God and humanity, with the consequence that, for her, the 'response of faith' belongs to the 'objective form of the sacrament'. It is surely not

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[13] Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christus, Sakrament der Gottesbegegnung* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1960), p. 135.
[14] Alexandre Ganoczy, *Einführung in die katholische Sakramentenlehre*, 3rd edn (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991), p. 116.
[15] Eva-Maria Faber, *Einführung in die katholische Sakramentenlehre* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2002), pp. 24, 64–65.

accidental that both Ganoczy and Faber have done research on Calvin. One can recognise in their teaching on the sacraments an effect of the Protestant-Reformed teaching on Catholic theology.

Grateful Reception of the Gifts of Christ: Observing the Lord's Supper in a Manner that Conforms with the Gospel

In devoutly practising the Lord's Supper, the significance cannot be underestimated of understanding this rite not one-sidedly as a means of grace or as an act of faith, but as a mediation of a personal encounter between God and human. The gathered faithful receive in the Supper a representation of the saving gospel, which is the origin of all spiritual life. So as the Lord invites us as his disciples to his table, he seals for us each time anew the union between God and ourselves and between the disciples themselves. He affirms and makes us sure of the communion between God and ourselves and thereby also of the basis of the fellowship of the believers among themselves. Through this confirmation of what God promises to us, God strengthens our faith, our love, and our hope. The Lord's Supper strengthens our faith, because it assures us that Jesus Christ died for us and that we obtain forgiveness of our sins and eternal life. It strengthens our love, both our love for God and for our brothers and sisters. Our love for God is made stronger, in that we thank him for his wonderful gift in Christ and bring him our sacrifice of praise. Our love for the church is made stronger in that we share not alone but together in Christ's work of salvation, and we thank God together for his blessings. Finally, our hope is made stronger, because the faith and love, which the gift of God stirs up in us, are a pledge and deposit of the coming glory, in which we shall celebrate in unlimited communion with the Lord the festival of his eternal kingdom. Thus, a joy at the Lord's Supper arises already now, which we experience not as a burden but as a blessing and therefore gladly celebrate it. Such a celebration honours God, because it glorifies him as the provider of good gifts. Then, as always when these things are done rightly, God's honour and human joy are bound together.

The 'Pentecostal' Beginnings and Ecumenical Horizon of Early English Baptists

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Abstract
As their collective identity coalesced through the seventeenth century, early English Baptists grounded their vision of a reformed church not only on right understanding of Scripture but also faithful dependence on the Holy Spirit. Consequently, they experimented with and contested a range of practices that would be recognised as 'Pentecostal' in the present day. These practices included the laying on of hands for receiving the Holy Spirit, direct inspiration of the elements of worship such as songs of praise, and divine healing of illness. These characteristics express points of ecumenical convergence with the later Pentecostal and charismatic movements that belie bounded theological demarcations. This article[1] rehearses those initial Baptist convictions about being a Spirit-empowered people, identifies the parallels with Pentecostalism, and argues that a retrieval of this history should lay the groundwork for as-yet unrealised ecumenical dialogue.

Keywords
Baptists; Pentecostalism; charismatic Christianity; ecumenism

Introduction

Two hundred and fifty years before Pentecostalism emerged out of revival meetings across the world, the English Baptist prophetess Katherine Sutton embodied a spirituality redolent of later charismatic emphases. Like so many other devout Puritans and Separatists of the era, Sutton long travailed in angst over the weight of her sins and sought assurance of election. During this season, she not only searched through Scripture for divine direction, but also gleaned insight from 'dreames

[1] A version of the material in this article was presented in a paper to the Annual Meeting of the Association of Baptist Professors of Religion, Belmont University, Nashville, Tennesse, 23–25 May 2022.

and visions of the night'.[2] She became convinced that the established church was in error and united herself with a Baptist community. Sutton recounts that, during one of her many occasions of illness, she requested intercession from her pastor and church, with the result that she was healed while they prayed.[3] Sometime afterward, she submitted to believer's baptism.

As she meditated on the promises of God's generosity in Matthew 7:7,11 and of inspired prophecy in Acts 2:18 and Joel 2:28, Sutton began praying for further empowerment by the Holy Spirit. She reports that her plea was dramatically fulfilled as she was out on a walk one day. She received a 'gift of singing' in which words and melody would come upon her in a moment.[4] Some of these songs were understood as prophetic oracles, including calls for national repentance and predictions of future events. Sutton embarked upon a public ministry for several years, culminating in the publication of her autobiography, *A Christian womans experience*, in 1663. The narrative is pneumatologically rich as it testifies to a life of continual trust in and dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

Sutton's model of faithful living is rapidly becoming normative for increasing numbers of believers. In February 2020, the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, in collaboration with Oral Roberts University, announced the completion of a demographic analysis concerning the worldwide growth of Pentecostal and charismatic Christian faith. The authors proposed a new umbrella term, 'Spirit-empowered Christianity', to summarise the shared vision that unites renewalist Roman Catholics with house-church apostles. Across its many permutations, Spirit-empowered Christianity has been a global evangelistic success story for twelve decades and counting. An estimated one quarter of all Christians may be classified as

[2] Reprinted in Curtis W. Freeman, *A Company of Women Preachers: Baptist Prophetesses in Seventeenth-Century England* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), p. 598.
[3] Freeman, *A Company of Women Preachers,* p. 606.
[4] Freeman, *A Company of Women Preachers,* p. 608.

'Spirit empowered' and the report predicts that the percentage will rise to one-third by 2050.[5]

The history of Baptist engagement with Spirit-empowered movements is characterised by a complex ambivalence. In his voluminous survey, *Baptists and the Holy Spirit*, C. Douglas Weaver narrates how Baptists in the United States have responded to these forms of Christianity with varying degrees of opposition, wariness, and the occasional warm embrace.[6] European Baptist interactions with Spirit-empowered Christianity have been comparable.[7] While both sides of the conversation have frequently asserted sharp demarcations, the relationship between Baptists and Pentecostals or Charismatics has long included expressions of hybridity. For contemporary examples of convergent identity, one may list the Evangelical Free Church in Sweden,[8] the Nigerian Baptist Convention's endorsement of the

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[5] 'Spirit-Empowered Christianity is one of the fastest growing global movements, new study shows', Religion News Service, 25 February 2020: <https://religionnews.com/2020/02/25/spirit-empowered-christianity-is-one-of-the-fastest-growing-global-movements-new-study-shows/> [accessed 23 March 2022].
For the full text of the study, see Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, *Introducing Spirit-Empowered Christianity: The Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements in the 21st Century* (Tulsa, OK: ORU Press, forthcoming).

[6] C. Douglas Weaver, *Baptists and the Holy Spirit: The Contested History with Holiness-Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2019), p. xii.

[7] For the spectrum of European Baptist responses to Spirit-empowered movements, see Nigel G. Wright, 'Charismatics', in *A Dictionary of European Baptist Life and Thought,* ed by John H. Y. Briggs, Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 22 (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009), pp. 78–79; John H. Y. Briggs, 'Pentecostalism, Baptists and', in *A Dictionary of European Baptist Life and Thought*, ed. by Briggs, pp. 386–387; Anneli Lohikko, 'August Jauhiainen and the Pentecostal Dilemma in the Finnish Baptist Union (1930–1953)', in *Counter-Cultural Communities: Baptistic Life in Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. by Keith G. Jones and Ian M. Randall, Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 32 (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), pp. 115–172; Douglas McBain, 'Mainstream Charismatics: Some Observations of Baptist Renewal', in *Charismatic Christianity: Sociological Perspectives*, ed. by Stephen Hunt, Malcolm Hamilton, and Tony Walter (Houndmills, UK: Macmillan Press, 1997), pp. 43–59; Nigel Wright, 'The Influence of the Charismatic Movement on European Baptist Life and Mission: Theological Reflections', *EPTA Bulletin,* 13, no. 1 (1994), 5–18 (note that EPTA Bulletin is currently known as and found under The Journal of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity).

[8] For a history of 'Spirit-empowered' Christianity in Sweden, see Jan-Åke Alvarsson, 'Pentecostalism in Sweden and Finland', in *Global Renewal Christianity: Spirit-Empowered Movements Past, Present, and Future*, *Volume 4: Europe and North America,* ed. by Vinson Synan and Amos Yong (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2017), pp. 179–197. The Evangelical Free Church asserts its combined Baptist and charismatic identity on a glossary page of its website, 'Ordlista för EFK',

continuity of miraculous gifts in its Statement of Faith,[9] and 'Bapticostal' expressions among African-American believers, such as the Full Gospel Baptist Church Fellowship International.[10]

Weaver's survey briefly acknowledges historical anecdotes that further crumble the Baptist-Pentecostal dividing wall; specifically, he names the ecstatic eruptions in revival services conducted by Separate Baptists in eighteenth-century America as well as accounts of faith healing in seventeenth-century England.[11] Katherine Sutton's account invites further inquiry into the possibilities for ecumenical comparison, because she so remarkably epitomises Pentecostal spirituality from a post-conversion enduement of the Spirit, to the expectancy and reception of divine healing, to the manifestation of seemingly extraordinary gifts and graces. My purpose here is to synthesise prior research and offer new summations of source material to document how these prominent themes in Sutton's discourse recurred among Baptists in seventeenth-century England. Sutton was a distinctive voice but not entirely idiosyncratic, for many of the first Baptists both taught and embodied the conviction that the Holy Spirit must be actively sought to enable multiple dimensions of Christian discipleship. This conviction animated the controversies regarding the laying on of hands and the singing of hymns in worship and modulated their nearly uniform commitment to the cessation of the so-called 'extraordinary' spiritual gifts at the close of the apostolic age. This data will allow me to elucidate parallels with Spirit-empowered Christianity, drawing specifically from 'classical' Pentecostal sources,[12] to reveal that the first generations of Baptists bore a greater resemblance to this form of the faith than would be suggested by their spiritual descendants. I will conclude with a proposal that this tentative set of convergences may catalyse formal

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Evangeliska Frikyrkan <https://www.efk.se/intro/ordlista-for-efk.html> [accessed 23 March 2022].

[9] Nigerian Baptist Convention Statement of Faith <https://www.nigerianbaptist.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/NBC-Statement-of-Faith.pdf> [accessed 23 March 2022].

[10] Full Gospel Baptist Fellowship International <https://www.fullgospelbaptist.org/> [accessed 23 March 2022].

[11] Weaver, *Baptists and the Holy Spirit*, pp. xv, 31.

[12] For a definition of classical Pentecostalism, see Wolfgang Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism: The Crisis of Global Christianity and the Renewal of a Theological Agenda*, Pentecostal Manifestos (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), pp. 11–12.

ecumenical dialogue between Baptists and Pentecostals equivalent to those undertaken by the Baptist World Alliance and other international bodies representative of distinct Christian traditions.[13]

Recognisably charismatic behaviours and practices did not arise *sui generis* among English Baptists. As historian Geoffrey Nuttall demonstrated, early Baptist focus on the Holy Spirit was framed by a broader pneumatological resurgence conceived within Puritan theological reflection. From his vantage point in the mid-twentieth century, Nuttall boldly claimed that the doctrine of the Spirit 'received a more thorough and detailed consideration […] than it has at any other time in Christian history'.[14] While such a claim is surely dated in the wake of the global charismatic renewal, Nuttall elaborates a Puritan emphasis on direct experience, as well as debates regarding personal revelation and an eschatological outpouring of the Spirit, that parallel later Pentecostal and charismatic convictions.[15]

Comparison between Pentecostalism and the first Baptists is naturally complicated by the dynamic pressures placed upon the latter. Early English Baptists were engaged in multiple processes of collective identity formation during a turbulent era of political, cultural, and religious upheaval.[16] They aimed to restore and build authentic Christianity in defiance of the claimed apostasy of Rome and Canterbury, but also in rejection of the more radical proposals of the Quakers and Seekers. Their self-understanding as the 'baptised churches' was thus fiercely and continuously debated. While tendencies and broadly-accepted notions may be identified, I do not claim a generic consensus regarding the convictions that will be described. The early Baptists were not mere rational biblicists who read and applied the dictates of the text, but neither can they be neatly scripted into grand

[13] The records of bilateral dialogues can be found at the website of the Baptist World Alliance <https://baptistworld.org/dialogues/> [accessed 23 March 2022].
[14] Geoffrey Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1947), p. viii.
[15] Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit*, e.g. pp. 7, 28, 49–56, 102–108, 135 and following.
[16] Cf. Matthew C. Bingham, *Orthodox Radicals: Baptist Identity in the English Revolution,* Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

narratives of perennial charismatic currents flowing through church history.[17]

Empowered by the Spirit

One significant controversy that highlights early Baptist concern for the Spirit-filled life was the debate over the laying on of hands upon converts after baptism. The history of this debate has been covered elsewhere and can be briefly summarised. Beginning in the 1640s, some Baptists became convinced that Christ had established the imposition of hands as a fundamental ordinance of the church. A central text in support of this belief was Hebrews 6:1–2, which names the practice as one of the elementary doctrines of the Christian faith. The majority of General Baptists came to accept the teaching, which was endorsed by their General Assembly and incorporated into three confessions of faith. Laying on of hands received some support among Particular Baptists but never became widespread in their ranks. The controversy resulted in a significant number of pamphlets that were published both in defence of and opposition to the rite, with the two active periods occurring in 1653–1655 and 1669–1675.[18]

As was the case with credobaptism, proponents' efforts centred on establishing the biblical credentials of the imposition of hands rather than elaborating a theological interpretation. Nevertheless, as Ernest Payne noted, advocacy was not restricted merely to biblicist warrants, as if the rite was to be performed simply out of obedience to the textual command. Practitioners understood the Holy Spirit to be intimately related to the laying on of hands and in some way conveyed to the

[17] Early Baptists are thus absent from works such as *Christian Peoples of the Spirit: A Documentary History of Pentecostal Spirituality from the Early Church to the Present*, ed. by Stanley M. Burgess (New York: New York University Press, 2011); and Eddie L. Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity* (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2002).

[18] See Ernest A. Payne, 'Baptists and the Laying on of Hands', *Baptist Quarterly*, 15, no. 5 (1954), 203–215; Clint C. Bass, *Thomas Grantham (1633–1692) and General Baptist Theology*, Centre for Baptist Studies in Oxford Publications 10 (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2019), pp. 103–116, 134–136; Joseph C. Delahunt, 'The "Laying on of Hands" Controversy: Convictional Analysis of Performative Practice', in *Baptist Sacramentalism 3*, ed. by Anthony R. Cross and Philip E. Thompson (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2020), pp. 194–197.

believer because of it.[19] Clint Bass has identified how certain proponents struggled to define the significance of the rite with greater precision and as a result opponents accused them of inconsistency.[20] Some simply described it vaguely as an increase of the Spirit's presence[21] whereas others, such as John Griffith, implied or claimed that the initial indwelling of the Spirit occurred through the rite.[22]

My own review of Baptist writings advocating the imposition of hands reveals three notable tendencies. First of all, a consistent theology *does* appear among the plurality of authors and is represented by those who specify the meaning of the rite. Out of the fourteen figures surveyed, five state the purpose of the ordinance as the reception of the gifts and fruits of the Spirit delineated by the Apostle Paul.[23] In his plea to fellow Baptists to adopt the ordinance, John More declared that they should 'expect that some useful gift or gifts should be given you to profit withal' and specifically named the gifts of knowledge, faith, and prophecy as having been bestowed upon recent recipients.[24] The

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19 Payne, 'Baptists and the Laying on of Hands', p. 214.
20 Bass, *Thomas Grantham*, pp. 110, 123–124.
21 For example, Christopher Blackwood, *A Soul-searching Catechism*, 2nd edn (London: Printed by J.C. for Giles Calvert, 1653), p. 56, available at Early English Books Online: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/A28310.0001.001?view=toc> [accessed 17 June 2022]; Benjamin Keach, *Laying on of hands upon baptized believers* (London: Benjamin Harris, 1698), p. 77, available at Early English Books Online <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A47585.0001.001?view=toc> [accessed 17 June 2022].
22 Bass, *Thomas Grantham*, pp. 109, 123.
23 John More, *A lost ordinance restored* (London: Richard Moone, 1653), pp. 4, 7, available at Early English Books Online: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A89283.0001.001> [accessed 17 June 2022]; Thomas Tillam, *The fourth Principle of Christian religion* (London: Printed by E.C. for Henry Eversden; 1655), pp. 19, 31–37, 41, 52, available at Early English Books Online: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo2;idno=A94351.0001.001> [accessed 17 June 2022]; William Rider, *Laying on of Hands asserted* (London: R. Moon, 1656), pp. 63, 72f., 88f., 152, available at Early English Books Online: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo;idno=A57271.0001.001> [accessed 17 June 2022]; Thomas Grantham, *Christianismus primitivus* (London: Francis Smith, 1678), Book 2, Section 2, pp. 32, 41f., available at Early English Books Online: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo2;idno=A41775.0001.001> [accessed 17 June 2022]; Samuel Fisher, *Baby-baptism meer babism* (London: Henry Hills, 1653), pp. 501–504, available at Early English Books Online: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo;idno=A39573.0001.001> [accessed 17 June 2022].
24 More, *A lost ordinance restored*, p. 7.

General Baptist leader Thomas Grantham, a prolific and articulate advocate of the doctrine, distinguished the work of the Spirit as bringing about conversion from the subsequent indwelling of the Spirit via the gifts and fruits, in which the Spirit becomes a 'seal and confirmation of the Souls of Christians'.[25]

Second, the implied sacramentality of grace conveyed through a visible sign was made explicit by several advocates. For the Particular Baptist leader Benjamin Keach, laying on of hands had equal status with baptism, being one of the 'two Doors to be passed through' during Christian initiation.[26] Remonstrating against the Quakers, Keach referred to all ordinances as 'conduit-pipes for conveyance of the Spirit' and that each ordinance had a particular blessing attached to it.[27] Christopher Blackwood similarly describes the imposition of hands as the *vehiculum spiritus*.[28] Grantham also viewed laying on of hands as sacramentally efficacious.[29] Such sacramentalism was not a restriction on divine grace. Both Keach and Thomas Tillam, for example, insisted that God was free to act outside of the rite even as they summoned believers to the ordained means of empowerment for moral living and mutual ministry.[30]

Finally, proponents appealed to direct experience as confirmation of the rite's centrality and efficacy. While largely denying that laying on of hands would be accompanied in the present day by the miraculous occurrences depicted in the New Testament, Baptists perceived themselves changed by it. William Pryer testifies to weakened devotion and increased susceptibility to temptation when he opposed

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[25] Grantham, *Christianismus primitivus*, Book 2, Section 2, pp. 32–33.

[26] Keach, *Laying on of hands upon baptized believers*, pp. 2, 89.

[27] Keach, *Laying on of hands upon baptized believers*, preface, p. 98. Keach was likely influenced by Tillam, who previously referred to the laying on of hands as the vehicle or conduit pipe for conveying the Spirit's gifts: Tillam, *The fourth principle of Christian religion*, p. 19.

[28] Blackwood, *A Soul-searching Catechism*, p. 57.

[29] Bass, *Thomas Grantham*, p. 126.

[30] Tillam, *The fourth principle of Christian religion*, pp. 26, 33; Keach, *Laying on of hands upon baptized believers*, p. 78. Cf. contemporary British Baptist theologian John Colwell for the ecumenical understanding of a sacrament as 'a sign through and in which God freely accomplishes that which is signified, not in a manner that can be presumed upon or manipulated, but in a manner that is truly gracious' (Colwell, *Promise and Presence: An Exploration of Sacramental Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), p. 11).

the laying on of hands, but upon being convinced and submitting to it, he found that, for himself and others, the result was an increase of religious zeal and love for others.[31] Tillam, an erstwhile cessationist, offers a cryptic testimony of witnessing invisible yet powerful 'operations of the Spirit' during the performance of the rite. To those who did not experience an immediate effect he counselled a patient faith, waiting upon the Spirit to manifest more fully.[32]

Worship in the Spirit

A second dimension of early Baptist life that demonstrates a keenly felt dependence upon the Spirit was their common understanding that authentic worship must be directly, even quite specifically, inspired. While Baptist theology of worship is noted for emphasising the Christocentric theme of the risen Lord's presence 'where two or three are gathered' (Matt 18:20),[33] the first generations of Baptists repeatedly quoted or alluded to Jesus's declaration in John 4:23 that true worship will be conducted 'in spirit and in truth'. This text appears twice in Sutton's autobiography, or three times if one counts the citation in the foreword written by her friend and supporter Hanserd Knollys.[34] He alludes to or cites the verse multiple times in his own corpus[35] and it also appears in the works of, among others, John Murton, John Tombes, and

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31 William Pryer, *The poor mans progresse and rest* (1655), pp. 11–12, available at Oxford Text Archive: <https://ota.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/repository/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.12024/A56233a/A56233.html/> [accessed 23 June 2022].

32 Tillam, *The fourth principle of Christian religion*, pp. 36, 59.

33 Cf. Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2004), pp. 93, 230; Rodney Wallace Kennedy and Derek C. Hatch, 'Introduction', in *Gathering Together: Baptists at Work and Worship* by Kennedy and Hatch (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), p. x.

34 Freeman, *A Company of Women Preachers*, pp. 595, 602, 621.

35 For example, Hanserd Knollys, *The parable of the Kingdom of heaven expounded* (London: Printed for Benjamin Harris, 1674), p. 15, available at Early English Books Online <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo2;idno=A47568.0001.001> [accessed 17 June 2022]. On the frequency of Knollys' references, see Dennis C. Bustin, *Paradox and Perseverance: Hanserd Knollys, Particular Baptist Pioneer in Seveneth-Century England,* Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 23 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), pp. 290–291.

Isaac Marlow.[36] This theological theme developed as part of the critique of the 'set forms' of Catholic and Anglican liturgy.[37] Ensconced in the Reformed tradition with its understanding of worship defined by the 'regulative principle', Baptist rebukes of prescribed liturgy were characteristically rooted in its lack of explicit Scriptural mandate. But yet again, as with the laying on of hands, early English Baptists did not limit their arguments to biblicist parameters, with prescribed liturgy coming under rebuke for quenching the Spirit.[38] As Keach wrote, while true worship required the Word — that is, practice according to the true order and ordinances of Christ — it would be conducted in vain without the Spirit's aid.[39]

The necessity of Spirit inspiration was a central conviction for both proponents and detractors of singing in worship. Initially, Baptists largely rejected congregational singing as a 'carnal' form of the old covenant that had been abrogated by Christ's death and resurrection. New Testament passages that appeared to recount singing either referred to an internal 'spiritual' experience or to the Spirit's

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[36] John Murton, *A most humble supplication of many the kings Maiesties loyall subjects* (n.p., 1621), p. 33, available at Early English Books Online: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo2;idno=B07159.0001.001> [accessed 17 June 2022]; John Tombes, *Iehovah iireh: or, God's providence in delivering the godly* (London: Printed by Richard Cotes, for Michael Sparkes Sr., 1643), p. 5, available at Early English Books Online: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo;idno=A94736.0001.001> [accessed 17 June 2022]; Isaac Marlow, *Prelimited forms of praising God, vocally sung by all the church together, proved to be no gospel ordinance* (London, 1691), p. 43, available at Early English Books Online: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo2;idno=B04474.0001.001> [accessed 17 June 2022]. Of course, this attention to John 4:23 was not peculiar to Baptists but was expressed within the broader Puritan-Separatist movement. See Matthew Ward, *Pure Worship: The Early English Baptist Distinctive*, Monographs in Baptist History, 3 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), pp. 84–85.

[37] Ward, *Pure Worship*, pp. 82–84.

[38] For example, Vavasor Powell, *Common-prayer-book no divine service* (London: Printed for Livewell Chapman, 1661), p. 4, available at Early English Books Online: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo2;idno=A55574.0001.001> [accessed 20 June 2022]. Powell was Welsh but ministered among Baptists in England.

[39] Benjamin Keach, *The breach repaired in God's worship* (London, 1691), p. 170, available at Early English Books Online: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo;idno=A47407.0001.001> [accessed 20 June 2022].

extraordinary inspiration of individuals during the apostolic age.[40] Some communities, in line with fellow Puritans, made allowance for the metrical singing of Psalms as an ordained practice. But many, following John Smyth's convictions about spiritual worship, understood the use of any prescribed text as an interference with the obligation to rely on immediate inspiration in the exercise of ordinances such as preaching and prayer.

Matthew Stanton has identified two stages in the Baptist adoption of singing.[41] The latter stage occurred as the infamous 'Hymn-Singing Controversy' in the last decade of the century, when Benjamin Keach spearheaded the widespread adoption of communal singing of pre-composed hymns. But the first stage generated a unique Baptist innovation in which individuals like Sutton claimed in-the-moment reception of a song and could express it as the solo exercise of a gift in worship. These claims understood musical inspiration not to have ceased at the close of the New Testament period; rather, it was a present reality that Baptists witnessed and manifested. In his foreword to *A Christian womans experience*, Knollys affirmed that Sutton had received a definite spiritual gift, such that the person so filled 'break[s] forth into singing'. Furthermore, Knollys claimed his own experiences of such ecstasy and voiced his wish that the prophecy of Joel 2 be fulfilled, such that the 'sons and daughters of Zion' may receive an anointing of the Spirit and praise God with new song.[42] Edward Drapes likewise argued in *Gospel-Glory proclaimed before the sonnes of men* that 'true praising of God from the power of the Spirit' is one of the ordinances of the church, wherein an individual receives a special gift for the edification of the whole.[43]

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[40] James M. Renihan, *Edification and Beauty: The Practical Ecclesiology of the English Particular Baptists, 1675–1705*, Studies in Baptist History and Thought, 17 (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), pp. 146–152.

[41] The following is taken from Matthew Stanton, *Liturgy and Identity: London Baptists and the Hymn-Singing Controversy* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022).

[42] Freeman, *A Company of Women Preachers*, pp. 594–596.

[43] Edward Drapes, *Gospel-Glory proclaimed before the sonnes of men* (London: Printed for Francis Tyton, 1649), pp. 162f., available at Early English Books Online <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo2;idno=A81727.0001.001> [accessed 20 June 2022].

When Keach implored Particular Baptists to accept collective singing of pre-written hymns, his arguments were both textually derived and pneumatologically focused. As Stanton notes, Keach shifted the definition of an inspired song, according the Spirit a necessary role in the composition of a work. In his first major defence of congregational singing, *A Breach repaired in God's worship*, he presented the writing of sermons and hymns as comparable; in both cases, an inspired composition fulfils the 'Spirit and truth' paradigm of worship if it is written in accordance with Scripture and by the aid of the Third Person.[44] Knollys, having been convinced of the appropriateness of group singing by Keach, likewise paralleled the ordinances of song and prayer, declaring both 'are to be performed by the anointing of the Spirit'.[45] Ultimately, Keach made inspiration a general principle for all rites: 'There is no Duty nor Ordinance of the Gospel, that can be performed acceptably to God without the Spirit, or the gracious influences thereof.'[46] While inspiration was now understood in a synergistic mode rather than as divine dictation, Particular Baptists at the end of the century still conceived of authentic worship as a Spirit-led endeavour.

Signs of the Spirit

The first Baptists inherited a doctrine of the cessation of extraordinary spiritual gifts that had been explicated by John Calvin.[47] Yet this general cessationism was complexified by the early Baptists' experiences that signified the manifest presence of the Spirit. The testimonies of Knollys and Sutton regarding a special inspiration for song mitigated against a complete break with the apostolic era, as did other claims regarding

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[44] Keach, *The breach repaired in God's worship*, p. 136.

[45] Knollys, *An exposition of the whole book of Revelation* (London, 1689), p. 76, available at Internet Archive <https://archive.org/details/expositionrevela00knoluoft/mode/2up> [accessed 20 June 2022].

[46] Keach, *The breach repaired in God's worship*, p. 170.

[47] Cf. John Mark Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Post-Biblical Miracles*, rev. and expanded edn, Word and Spirit Monograph Series, 1 (Tulsa, OK: Word and Spirit Press, 2011), p. 22–23; Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England*, pp. 22–23.

prophetic inspiration.[48] But the most significant exception to cessationist doctrine was the belief in and practice of divine healing, which was especially prevalent among Particular Baptists. Historian Jane Shaw devotes an entire chapter of her book *Miracles in Enlightenment England* to the Particulars, wherein she relates that the ordinance of healing was accepted from the middle of the seventeenth through the early eighteenth century.[49] It arose in the political context of the Civil War and Commonwealth as England was troubled by violence and instability. Baptists justified healing through an appeal to the instructions in James 5 for elders to anoint the sick with oil.[50] The *ordinance* of healing was typically distinguished from the *spiritual gift* of healing. Whereas the latter was an extraordinary practice reserved for the apostolic age, the former was a permanent endowment of the Spirit for the rightly-ordered church.[51]

Nevertheless, exercises of divine healing were accompanied by ecstatic behaviours similar to those described in Scripture and later Pentecostalism. Shaw retells the account of Vavasor Powell from 1646, when he was struck by a fever and felt he was dying. He sent for his ministerial colleagues in London, who came to his side and prayed for him. Powell testifies that he fell into a six-hour trance before recovering from his illness.[52] Knollys wrote about an incident when Benjamin Keach also appeared to be at death's door. Not only did Knollys pray for Keach to recover, but he felt moved to speak a word of special revelation, declaring, 'Brother Keach, I shall be in heaven before you.'

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48 Cf. the other examples of prophetesses in Freeman, *A Company of Women Preachers*. Further discussion would also include what the Puritans and early Baptists called 'prophesying', the practising of which overlapped with preaching but included spontaneous oratory by congregants in worship. Cf. Christopher L. Schelin, 'Unbreaking the Circle: Congregational Hermeneutics and Intra-Congregational Difference', *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, 16, no. 2 (2016), 19–32; Christopher L. Schelin, *The Contestable Church: Dissent, Democracy, and Baptist Ecclesiology* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, forthcoming).

49 Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 33. On comparative General Baptist neglect of healing, despite the absence of opposition, see Bass, *Thomas Grantham*, pp. 126–127.

50 Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England*, p. 34.

51 In this respect, Baptists disagreed with John Calvin, who held that the practice described in James 5 was no longer valid. See Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England*, p. 39.

52 Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England,* pp. 33–34.

Knollys passed away two years later but Keach would live for another fifteen years.[53]

Baptists did not always delimit healing as solely an outcome of the James 5 rite. Abraham Cheare related the account of Francis Langford in Cornwall, who experienced relief from his tuberculosis after being baptised. Langford had been persuaded to accept believer's baptism and then came to the conviction that he would be healed upon fulfilling his obedience. He sent for Cheare, who arrived to find him in a severely weakened and malnourished state. Langford was brought down into the water and then, upon being baptised, he strode uphill to his horse and was led home. He announced his recovery, ate a hearty meal, and slept soundly through the night. Langford did not experience an immediate and full restoration of his body but he called for his fellow believers to remain in prayer for his ongoing healing. A colleague confirmed in a letter to Cheare that Langford was improving over time.[54]

Despite the widespread practice of healing as well as other apparent exercises of dramatic spiritual power, the early English Baptists typically insisted on the distinction between the extraordinary or 'outward' and ordinary or 'inward' gifts of the Spirit, reserving the former to a special dispensation of the apostles or as accompaniments to the initial proclamation of the gospel in a new territory.[55] There are few stated exceptions to this rule, which are generally advanced with qualification. Deep into his lengthy volume *Baby-baptism meer babism*, Samuel Fisher engages Baptist critics of the laying on of hands who charge that its ongoing practice should be accompanied by the signs and gifts reported in the New Testament. Fisher contends that God granted the visible gifts so prominently in the beginning to confirm the Christian message, while the most vital graces are always granted for the benefit of believers. However, he declares that the outward gifts are only rare in

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53 Bustin, *Paradox and Perseverance*, p. 147.

54 See 'A Letter of Abraham Cheare on Baptism, c. 1648–1658', in *Waiting on the Spirit of Promise: The Life and Theology of Suffering of Abraham Cheare,* by Brian L. Hanson and Michael A. G. Haykin, Monographs in Baptist History, 1 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), pp. 41–46.

55 For example, Tombes, *The searchers for schism search'd*, p. 80; Thomas Morris, *A messenger sent to remove some mistakes* (London: Printed for R.E., 1655), pp. 14–16, available at Early English Books Online <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo2;idno=A89333.0001.001> [accessed 23 June 2022].

appearance, not completely abated, and specifically names healing, the discernment of spirits, and words of knowledge and wisdom as presently operative. The greatest outward gift that remains is prophecy, which may be received by those who accept prayer and the imposition of hands.[56] Tillam similarly distinguishes the external gifts, meant for the confirmation of the word and the conversion of unbelievers, from the intrinsic or 'best' gifts that empower all faithful Christians. For the former, he names healing, miracles, extraordinary prophecy, and the speaking and interpretation of diverse tongues (understood as foreign languages, not ecstatic utterance). The gift of tongues is absent because the mission field has been blocked by both the Pope and the Turks. In principle, all the gifts remain, but the extraordinary gifts are needless and unsuitable in comparison to the best gifts, enumerated by Tillam as wisdom, knowledge, faith, 'ordinary' prophecy, and the discernment of spirits.[57]

Among the theological writers whose texts remain extant, only Thomas Grantham provides an unqualified endorsement of continuationism.[58] In *Christianismus Primitivus*, Grantham asserts that the church has 'a perpetual right to […] all these spiritual gifts', naming the biblical examples without further distinction. He repudiates cessationism with the retort that God did not place the Spirit in the Body of Christ for only a few days, then to depart; rather, the Spirit must remain until God's people reach the fullness of Christ. The church is in no less need of divine assistance since the close of the New Testament period. As long as the same duties remain, the church should expect that God will supply the same gifts. Grantham bolsters these theological warrants with experiential support, claiming testimonies to the dispensation of gifts such as special prophecy and the manifestation of

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[56] Fisher, *Baby-baptism meer babism*, pp. 502–504. Fisher defines prophecy here as 'speaking to exhortation, edification, and comfort', and thus refers to inspired preaching and teaching rather than a specified, revelatory utterance.

[57] Tillam, *The fourth principle of Christian religion*, pp. 27–32.

[58] As this article was nearing publication, I learned that Grantham's fellow General Baptist Matthew Caffyn briefly endorses the panoply of spiritual gifts as a hypothetical possibility, to be sought in earnest prayer. See *Faith in God's promises, the saint's best weapon* (London: S. Dover, 1660), p. 19. Available at Early English Books Online: <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A78621.0001.001> [accessed 3 March 2023]. Credit to Steve Holmes for this discovery.>

miracles.[59] Grantham defends continuationism in other writings as well, including *The Fourth Principle of Christ's Doctrine Vindicated*, a tract in defence of the laying on of hands, and *A Sigh for Peace*.[60] Grantham's maximalist endorsement of spiritual empowerment is thus a consistent theme of his corpus, even as it stands as exceptional to the general theological tenor of the emerging Baptist movement.

The Ecumenical Horizon

One of the central concepts of the ecumenical movement is *convergence*, which is the reconciliation of divided Christian communions through shared, albeit not uniform, affirmations regarding doctrine and practice.[61] Convergence may be facilitated when the dialogue partners engage in 'receptive ecumenism', or the identification of the distinctive gifts that traditions offer one another as they seek the fullness of Christ.[62] But, as most famously exemplified by the landmark document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, published by the World Council of Churches in 1982, convergence may also derive from a recognition that traditions are closer in their understanding of the faith than polemics had claimed.[63] Minna Hietamäki writes that when the parties in dialogue set aside previous hostilities, they discover themselves to be bearers of 'shared convictions and viewpoints' and may grow together toward

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[59] Grantham, *Christianismus primitivus*, Book 2, Section 2, pp. 38–39.

[60] Grantham, *The fourth principle of Christs doctrine vindicated* (London, 1674), pp. 25–29, available at The Angus Library and Archive, Regent's Park College: <https://theangus.rpc.ox.ac.uk/treasures/the-fourth-principle-of-christs-doctrine-vindicated/> [accessed 23 June 2022]; Grantham, *A sigh for peace* (London, 1671), pp. 146f., available at Early English Books Online: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=eebo;idno=A41790.0001.001> [accessed 23 June 2022].

[61] Steven R. Harmon, *Ecumenism Means You, Too: Ordinary Christians and the Quest for Christian Unity* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010), p. 111.

[62] Steven R. Harmon, *Baptist Identity and the Ecumenical Future: Story, Tradition, and the Recovery of Community* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), p. 150.

[63] World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982). On the surprising ecumenical consensus regarding believer's baptism, see Harmon, *Baptist Identity and the Ecumenical Future*, pp. 38–39.

consensus or, at least, an acknowledgment of plural complementarity.[64] As an offering to the further realisation of ecumenical encounter, I will highlight the parallels between the lived faith of seventeenth-century English Baptists and the later Pentecostal churches. The examination of parallels will address topics in reverse order from the historical survey.

A significant component of Pentecostalism is its emphasis on 'signs and wonders', which advocates frequently credit as playing a significant role in its explosive global expansion.[65] Pentecostal theologians Daniel Albrecht and Evan Howard write that the movement is characterised by a pervasive expectancy that the Holy Spirit will manifest in dramatic and transformative fashion.[66] Although early Baptists espoused cessationist doctrine as a rule of thumb, their practice represented an inconsistent commitment to this teaching. Some of the first English Baptists discerned the hand of God in transformative, otherwise inexplicable moments of inspiration and dramatic manifestations. Such experiences gave them permission to exclaim, in Thomas Tillam's words, that 'wonders are not totally ceased'.[67]

In the domain of what is called, perhaps quite problematically, the 'miraculous', the practice of faith healing instantiates the fullest comparison. Pentecostal healing has immediate roots in the Holiness movement of the nineteenth century.[68] The ministry of healing and claims of effectiveness have played a central role in the growth of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity, and in some instances the majority of converts in a region will claim a healing experience as the catalyst.[69] While healing did not serve an evangelistic function for the

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64 Minna Hietamäki, *Agreeable Agreement: An Examination of the Quest for Consensus in Ecumenical Dialogue*, Ecclesial Investigations, 8 (London: T&T Clark, 2011), p. 10.

65 For example, Paul Alexander, *Signs and Wonders: Why Pentecostalism is the World's Fastest Growing Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009).

66 Daniel E. Albrecht and Evan B. Howard, 'Pentecostal Spirituality', in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism,* ed. by Cecil M. Robeck, Jr. and Amos Yong, Cambridge Companions to Religion (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 235–253 (p. 237).

67 Tillam, *The fourth principle of Christian religion*, p. 36.

68 Cf. Weaver, *Baptists and the Holy Spirit*, pp. 21–22.

69 For the specific example of Chinese Christianity, cf. Gotthard Oblau, 'Divine Healing and the Growth of Practical Christianity in China', in *Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Healing*, ed. by Candy Gunther Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 307–327; Michael J. McClymond, 'Charismatic Renewal and Neo-Pentecostalism: From North American Origins to

early English Baptists, it was a similarly pervasive and surprisingly uncontroversial practice. They prayed for healing with a comparable trust in God's power to dramatically overcome illness, giving forthright testimony to occasions when such a grace was granted.

The early Baptist rejection of forms to rely instead upon the Spirit's inspiration resonates with Pentecostal theologies of worship. While, according to Pentecostal theologian Wolfgang Vondey, early Pentecostals did not develop their liturgical practices in explicit opposition to established forms, they nevertheless reconstituted worship to allow for greater freedom and flexibility to engage the Spirit's promptings.[70] Church historian Grant Wacker described early Pentecostal worship as 'planned spontaneity', which is to say that it was crafted so as to heighten the probability that believers would experience a transformative encounter with God.[71] In parallel with the evolution of Baptist gatherings, Pentecostal worship has formalised over time while the role of the preached sermon and the training of the preacher have increased in significance.[72]

But irrespective of shifts in the *ordo*, the essentiality of the Spirit's presence remains a central conviction of Pentecostal theology. What Albrecht declares about Pentecostal liturgics bears no distinction from what has been demonstrated regarding the early English Baptists: 'Any liturgy minus the Spirit, or minus the people's engagement in the work of worship […] is in danger of being the mere work of humans, not the work of God in and through and with humans.'[73] While the various

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Global Permutations', in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, ed. by Robeck and Yong, pp. 31–51 (p. 40); Wonsuk Ma, 'Asian Pentecostalism in Context: A Challenging Portrait', in *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, ed. by Robeck and Yong, pp. 152–173 (p. 159).

[70] Vondey, *Beyond Pentecostalism*, p. 128.

[71] Grant A. Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 99.

[72] Aaron Friesen, 'Classical Pentecostal Liturgy: Between Formalism and Fanaticism', in *Scripting Pentecost: A Study of Pentecostals, Worship and Liturgy. Explorations in Practical, Pastoral and Empirical Theology*, ed. by Mark J. Cartledge and A. J. Swoboda (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), pp. 53–68 (p. 58).

[73] Daniel E. Albrecht, 'Worshiping and the Spirit: Transmuting Liturgy Pentecostally', in *The Spirit in Worship – Worship in the Spirit*, ed. by Teresa Berger and Bryan D. Spinks (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2009), pp. 223–244 (p. 223). Cf. Tombes, who wrote that no one can worship God 'unless the Spirit of God dwell and act in him' (Iehovah iireh, p. 5).

Christian communions generally affirm, in principle, the necessity of the Spirit for authentic worship in song, Scripture, and sacrament, the early Baptists and Pentecostals have foregrounded this belief through the expectation that the Spirit will 'show up' and with the confidence that specific actions in worship manifest divine inspiration. Among the first Baptists, such spiritual anointing was ascribed to prophetic singing and later the composition of congregational hymns. Pentecostals have found this anointing in spontaneous preaching and testimony, congregational singing in tongues, and other seemingly supernatural manifestations.[74]

Finally, the Baptists who insisted on the laying on of hands for reception of the gifts evoke an obvious parallel to the multifarious Pentecostal doctrines grouped under the umbrella term of 'baptism in the Holy Spirit'. Amos Yong notes that the post-conversion reception of the Spirit, accompanied by speaking in tongues, has been recognised as *the* central characteristic of Pentecostalism.[75] However, this definitive teaching has been anything but uniform, with extensive debate over its purpose, distinctiveness vis-à-vis regeneration, and its relatedness to tongues as an evidential sign. Pentecostal and charismatic disputation over baptism of the Holy Spirit offers a word of caution against facile comparisons with laying on of hands as practised by some of the first English Baptists. The latter, for their part, also failed to construct a systematic consensus regarding the significance of the rite and its place in the journey of Christian initiation. What can be said is that, for both these early Baptists and for later Pentecostals, the experience of a post-baptismal reception of the Spirit indicates a shared sense of dependence upon and seeking after divine empowerment for faithful living. In this respect, Pentecostals and the early Baptists have aimed at the same target: waiting on the Spirit so they may be gifted and shaped by the Spirit in service of the *missio Dei*.

Certain notable differences between seventeenth-century Baptists and modern Pentecostals remain, apart from the general reluctance of the former to recognise the ongoing validity of all the

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74 Albrecht, 'Worshiping and the Spirit', pp. 231, 240; Friesen, 'Classical Pentecostal liturgy', pp. 57, 59.

75 Amos Yong, *Renewing Christian Theology: Systematics for a Global Christianity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), ch. 4. Kindle edition.

biblical workings of the Spirit. There is no evidence whatsoever that Baptists exhibited that most distinctive of charismatic practices; namely, *glossolalia* or the ecstatic, non-grammatical utterances known today as speaking in tongues. Even the figures most affirming of continuity referred to tongues in the abstract and not as an immanent manifestation. When they discussed the hypothetical gift of tongues, they understood it to be *xenolalia*, or the supernatural grace to speak an unlearned foreign language. Baptist worship, while allowing for spontaneity as members prophesied and sang hymns, did not nurture enthusiastic physical exertions of the sort that would scandalise opponents of later revivalist movements, such as intense bodily motions, 'holy laughter', or the paralysis of being 'slain in the Spirit'. Ecstatic phenomena were not unknown among English dissenters of the period, especially the Quakers. It is probable that Baptists curtailed any expressions in their midst so as to maintain some respectability in the Reformed mainstream over against the radical fringes.[76]

Baptist theologian Curtis Freeman has proposed, with a wry sense of humour, that the significant traits shared between Baptists and Pentecostals — namely, conversionist spirituality, believer's baptism, and global evangelism — reveal the latter effectively to be 'Baptists with a foreign-language requirement'.[77] In the case of the early Baptists, can we justifiably reverse the comparison and consider them to be Pentecostals before Pentecostalism? If we define Pentecostal or 'Spirit-empowered' Christianity according to a taxonomy of distinctive characteristics, as Gina Zurlo and Todd Johnson do, then the first Baptists are not particularly representative, with no or minimal

[76] On Quaker charismata, including possibly the exercise of tongues, see Hyatt, *2000 Years of Charismatic Christianity*, pp. 89–93; Carole D. Spencer, 'Holiness: The Quaker Way of Perfection', *Quaker History*, 93, no. 1 (Spring 2004), 131–132. For Baptist objections to emotional displays in Quaker worship, cf. T. L. Underwood, *Primitivism, Radicalism, and the Lamb's War: The Baptist-Quaker Conflict in Seventeenth-Century England,* Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 94. For both Baptist and Quaker impulses to achieve a greater measure of social and theological respectability, see Underwood, *Primitivism, Radicalism, and the Lamb's War*, pp. 11–12.

[77] Curtis Freeman, 'Pentecostal power', *Baptists News Global*, 25 May 2012 <https://baptistnews.com/article/pentecostal-power/> [accessed 21 June 2022].

expression of typical features.[78] But the beliefs and practices noted in this article compare favourably with qualitative descriptions of 'Pentecostalism' as a generic form of Christian spirituality. In Lesslie Newbigin's classic study of major perspectives on the nature of the Church, he categorises these into the three 'streams' of Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal. While the Catholic stream prioritises the structure of the church and the Protestant emphasises its proclamation, the Pentecostal stream centralises the 'experienced power and presence of the Holy Spirit today'. The church is not just where the word of God is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered, but also where the Spirit is acting in power.[79] More recent scholars such as Wolfgang Vondey and Allan Anderson have sharpened the definition of generic Pentecostalism as a diverse movement of believers who prize the ecstatic encounter with the Holy Spirit manifesting in spiritual gifts, signs, and wonders.[80] What distinguishes 'Spirit-empowered' or 'Pentecostal' believers from other Christians is not the (universally claimed) dependence upon the Spirit, but the *operationalising* of this conviction in regular practice. When significant numbers of early Baptists sought the Spirit's gifts through the laying on of hands, felt immediate inspiration in worship, and prayed confidently for the healing of illness, they exemplified strong pentecostal tendencies, even if not to a degree or a consistency that commands typological acceptance.

Present-day Baptists are perpetually attentive to their origins and history as these contribute to contemporary discussions of theological identity. The recognition that Baptist forebears expressed a 'Pentecostal' spirituality invites reflection on how their successors may conceive of the Spirit's activity in their midst. Such awareness also calls Baptists toward an ecumenical horizon in mutual recognition of the faith they share with Spirit-empowered believers. Although a previous attempt to initiate a formal bilateral dialogue between the Baptist World Alliance

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[78] For their taxonomy, see chapter 1, 'History and Characteristics', in Zurlo and Johnson's forthcoming book, *Introducing Spirit-Empowered Christianity*.

[79] Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God* (New York: Friendship Press, 1954), pp. 94–95.

[80] See Wolfgang Vondey, *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel*, Systematic Pentecostal and Charismatic Theology (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), pp. 3–6; Allan Heaton Anderson, *To the Ends of the Earth: Pentecostalism and the Transformation of World Christianity,* Oxford Studies in World Christianity (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 5–8.

and the Pentecostal World Fellowship failed a decade ago,[81] a growing recognition of common bonds can, and I believe shall, motivate further convergence as Christians 'seek the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace' (Eph. 4:3).

[81] Curtis W. Freeman, personal email correspondence, 20 June 2022.

Catholicity and Ecumenism: Learning from the Life and Practice of John Ryland Jr

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Abstract
John Ryland Jr (1753–1825) was a celebrated leader among the British Particular Baptists, serving as he did as pastor of two influential churches, as co-founder of the Baptist Missionary Society, and president of the Bristol Baptist Academy. He was known in his own day, and increasingly in ours, for his catholicity. This article is, in a sense, a retrieval of Ryland. It examines his theology of catholicity, demonstrating that he rooted his catholic practice not necessarily in agreement upon precise theological propositions but, rather, in a shared experience of Christ shown through a life of holiness. The article then shows how Ryland's catholicity can help inform present-day ecumenical activity.

Keywords
John Ryland Jr; catholicity; retrieval; ecumenism; Particular Baptist

Introduction

Decades ago, James McClendon asked, 'What is a Southern Baptist Ecumenism?'[1] The focus of this issue of *JEBS* is not so narrow and geographically focused as that, but the heart of his question is still valid: what is a Baptist ecumenism? McClendon answered the question thus: 'It is an acknowledgment of the grace of God in places other than our place, in persons other than ourselves, in churches other than our churches.'[2] This answer is still worth considering. It is rhetorically excellent and theologically expansive. Upon reflection, however, another question surfaces: With whom shall we engage in ecumenical activity? How do we see the grace of God in these other places, persons, and churches? What are we looking for?

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[1] James Wm. McClendon, 'What is a Southern Baptist Ecumenism?', *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, 10 (1968), 73–78.
[2] McClendon, 'Southern Baptist Ecumenism', p. 73.

As we seek answers to these questions, it must be recognised that ecumenism should be practical. The World Council of Churches defines it as 'visible unity in one faith and one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ'.[3] Regardless of one's assessment of the specifics of that definition, it must be admitted that it requires a live, communal practice. Every element of the definition requires that something be done with someone else. Therefore, the 'with whom' question is paramount.

The present article aims to add to the discussion and offer a way forward towards an answer by means of an examination of the catholicity of John Ryland Jr. Ryland's experience-based practice of engaging with and embracing those outside of his theological tradition can be instructive for those of us today who seek to do the same.

John Ryland Jr: Baptist Statesman and Practitioner of Catholicity

John Ryland Jr (1753–1825) was a Baptist minister, academy president, missionary sender, and denominational leader in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. He was a staunch Calvinist, though he rejected the high Calvinism that had flourished earlier in the century. He embraced what came to be known as moderate Calvinism,[4] which, essentially, was a Calvinism that held that the gospel was to be offered freely to all people.[5] He was also a committed Baptist. He pastored two

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[3] World Council of Churches, Faith and Order Commission, 'Appendix 12: By-laws of Faith and Order as approved by the WCC Central Committee 2014', *Minutes of the Commission on Faith and Order Meeting at the Monastery of Caraiman, Busteni, Romania, 17–24 June 2015, Faith and Order Paper No. 222* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2015), p. 101. Cf. Steven R. Harmon, *Towards Baptist Catholicity: Essays on Tradition and the Baptist Vision* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), p. 202.

[4] Ryland himself would not have called his Calvinism 'moderate'. Indeed, he called it 'strict'. See his footnote in John Ryland, *The Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope* (London: Button and Son, 1816), pp. 9–10. He likely would have subscribed to Andrew Fuller's classification of Calvinists into high, moderate, and strict, by which he meant Calvinists of the John Gill and John Brine stripe, Calvinists of the Richard Baxter stripe, and those of his own stripe, respectively (see Ryland, *Work of Faith*, p. 566).

[5] This has to do with the so-called 'Modern Question', which predated Ryland but which he put thus: 'Whether it be the duty of all men to whom the gospel is published, to repent and believe in Christ' (Ryland, *Work of Faith*, p. 6). For more on the Modern Question, see Geoffrey F. Nuttall, 'Northamptonshire and "the Modern Question": A Turning-Point in Eighteenth-Century Dissent', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 16, no. 1 (April 1965), 101–123; and Anthony R.

Baptist congregations (College Lane in Northampton and Broadmead in Bristol); helped to found the Particular Baptist Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Amongst the Heathen, later to be known as the Baptist Missionary Society; served as the president of Bristol Baptist Academy; and wrote a work defending the practice of believer's baptism.[6]

All of this is meant to show that Ryland had a very definite theological tradition to which he was committed and from which he never wavered. This is important to remember because he also was known for his catholicity.

Before we continue, a note on the word 'catholicity'. 'Ecumenism' is the word used today for the effort to work with those outside of one's theological tradition. That word did not enter the popular lexicon until well after Ryland's time.[7] The word that he and his contemporaries used was 'catholicity'. Like any synonyms, there is not a perfect semantic overlap. However, when Ryland and his contemporaries spoke of what this journal issue is about, they would have used 'catholicity' or 'catholic'.

Ryland's catholicity was a leading feature of his life and ministry, as understood both by his contemporaries and recent scholars. With regard to his contemporaries, Robert Hall Jr gave the funeral sermon for Ryland, and Ryland's catholicity was mentioned prominently. Hall says of Ryland,

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Cross, *Useful Learning: Neglected Means of Grace in the Reception of the Evangelical Revival among English Particular Baptists* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), pp. 112–119. Ryland produced a brief history of the Modern Question in his *Serious Remarks*. See John Ryland, *Serious Remarks on the Different Representations of Evangelical Doctrine by the Professed Friends of the Gospel*, 2 vols (Bristol: J. G. Fuller, 1818), 2, 8–26.

[6] John Ryland, *A Candid Statement of the Reasons Which Induce the Baptists to Differ in Opinion and Practice from Their Christian Brethren* (London: W. Button, 1814). Ryland's commitment to the Particular Baptist tradition and denomination is seen also in the greater strictness of admission to the Bristol Baptist Academy under his presidency (see Anthony R. Cross and Ruth Gouldbourne, *The Story of Bristol Baptist College: Three Hundred Years of Ministerial Formation* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022), p. 106). He understood the Academy as a training ground for ministers of his own denomination and guarded what had been entrusted to him.

[7] See the brief history of the word's usage in R. David Nelson and Charles Raith II, *Ecumenism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), pp. 5–6.

> Though a Calvinist, in the strictest sense of the word, and attached to its peculiarities in a higher degree than most of the advocates of that system, he extended his affection to all who bore the image of Christ, and was ingenious in discovering reasons for thinking well of many who widely dissented from his religious views. No man was more remarkable for combining a zealous attachment to his own principles with the utmost liberality of mind towards those who differed from him; an abhorrence of error, with the kindest feelings towards the erroneous. He detested the spirit of monopoly in religion, and opposed every tendency to circumscribe it by the limits of party.[8]

Recent scholarship has also begun to recover this aspect of Ryland. Michael Haykin sees it as an essential part of Ryland's pneumatology.[9] Christopher Crocker understands it as a vital part of Ryland's legacy.[10] My own work *All Who Love Our Blessed Redeemer* explores Ryland's catholicity in depth.[11]

Ryland demonstrates an abiding commitment to his own theological distinctives alongside a wholehearted embrace of those outside of his own tradition. As we consider ecumenical engagement in our own day, retrieving the life, thought, and practice of John Ryland Jr can be instructive.[12]

Ryland's Theology of Catholicity

Ryland builds his understanding of catholicity on a simple foundation: other Christians, no matter their denomination or tradition, are related to Christ just as Ryland himself is. In other words, it has to do with

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[8] Robert Hall, Jr, *The Works of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M.: With a Memoir of His Life*, ed. by Olinthus Gregory, 3 vols (New York: Harper, 1832–1835), 1 (1832), 218.

[9] Michael A. G. Haykin, "'The Sum of All Good": John Ryland, Jr. and the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit', *Churchman*, 103 (1989), pp. 343–348.

[10] Christopher W. Crocker, 'The Life and Legacy of John Ryland Jr. (1753–1825), a Man of Considerable Usefulness: An Historical Biography' (doctoral thesis, University of Bristol, 2018), pp. 331–360.

[11] Lon Graham, *'All Who Love Our Blessed Redeemer': The Catholicity of John Ryland Jr* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2022).

[12] For more on theologies of retrieval, see W. David Buschart and Kent D. Eilers, *Theology as Retrieval: Receiving the Past, Renewing the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), pp. 22–37; and John Webster, 'Theologies of Retrieval', in *Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. by John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 583–599.

union with Christ. In a sermon entitled 'Mutual Love a Mark of Christ's Disciples', he speaks of the special love that ought to be evident between believers, saying that it is a higher love that 'is grounded upon their relation to Christ, and their resemblance of him'.[13] It is not agreement on propositions that feeds Ryland's catholicity; it is mutual relationship to Jesus. Indeed, it is Jesus's welcome and embrace of others that leads to Ryland doing the same. He writes to Stephen West,

> But, of course, every honest man thinks his own opinion most scriptural. But I never could find my love to my Paedobaptist brethren impeded by thinking differently on that subject. Indeed, I think some subjects of diversity of judgment which do not change a man's usual denomination are far more important than others which do. But all who love our Lord Jesus, and in whom I can trace his image, I am sure ought to be dear to me.[14]

Ryland repeats this emphasis in an address published as *Eight Characteristics of the Messiah*, in which he says, 'We become closely united in one body, with all who love our blessed Redeemer.'[15]

This does not mean that Ryland is a quasi-relativist, holding that convictions do not matter, nor he is a pragmatist, willing to ignore convictions for the sake of unity. Indeed, as mentioned above, he remained committed to his own Calvinistic Baptist theology to the end of his life. Moreover, he urged people to uphold the truth so far as they understood it. In his farewell address to the church at College Lane, he warns them to 'watch and remember […] with reference to the *articles of*

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[13] John Ryland, 'Mutual Love a Mark of Christ's Disciples', *Pastoral Memorials*, ed. by J. E. Ryland, 2 vols (London: B. J. Holdsworth, 1826), 1, 329. He makes a distinction between love for all people and love for other Christians, writing that 'Our Lord is not here speaking of that sincere benevolence, which should extend to all mankind, including our personal enemies, and those who may be at present enemies to God. This he strongly inculcates elsewhere. The law of God requires it, the gospel promotes it, and true saints possess it. But the text relates to a higher kind of love, which we must admit is more confined in its objects. It includes complacency, and is restricted to those who are the true disciples and brethren of Christ.' (1, 329)

[14] John Ryland, 'Letter to Stephen West, 31 March 1814', *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 30, no. 117 (January 1873), 178–187 (p. 180).

[15] John Ryland, *Eight Characteristics of the Messiah* (London: B. R. Goakman, 1811), p. 11.

your FAITH'.[16] His own articles of faith, delivered to that same church at his ordination, demonstrate his commitment to traditional doctrine.[17]

Despite this, Ryland did not believe that differences in convictions should be reason enough to remain at arm's length from other Christians, still less to disregard those who differ as non-Christian. He writes, 'On points wherein true Christians may differ from each other, search the Sacred Scriptures for yourself. Unite more closely with those that you really think nearest the standard; but let nothing prevent your showing a sincere affection to all who hold the head.'[18] Read the Bible for yourself. Form your own convictions. Find others who hold similar convictions and fellowship with them more closely. But Christian love should not be restricted to that group. It is for 'all who hold the head'. That is, it is for all who are related to Jesus. Union with Christ, then, stands as a central, defining element of Ryland's catholicity. In one sermon on Romans 12:4–5, Ryland asserts that 'it is the Union of true Believ^{s}. wth. X^{t}. w^{ch}. lays the Found^{n}. of their special Love to each other. They are connected wth. him as y^{r}. com^{n}. Head, & are all under the Infl^{ce}. of his Spirit.'[19] In another sermon, preached twelve times between 1809 and 1822, Ryland exhorted the people that

> [e]specially in proportion as we enter into the Spirit of his Gospel, our Union wth. him will produce Attachm^{t}. to each other. The [cross] is the great rallying Point for the true Catholic Church. Do you worſhip God in the Spirit, rejoice

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16 John Ryland, *The Earnest Charge, and Humble Hope of an Affectionate Pastor: Being the Substance of Three Discourses. Addressed to the Church, and Congregation, in College-Lane, Northampton, December 1, 1793* (Bristol: W. Pine, 1794), p. 6.

17 He speaks therein of his Confession of Faith as a 'Testimony to the precious Truths I embrace, which I wou'd frankly and gladly avow before many witneſses' (John Ryland, 'A Confession of Faith Delivered by John Ryland Junr of Northampton at His Ordination to the Pastoral Care of the Church in College Lane', in *Original Manuscripts (c. 1770–1824)*, Bristol Baptist College Archives, p. 1).

18 Ryland, 'Mutual Love a Mark of Christ's Disciples', *Pastoral Memorials*, 1, 330.

19 Ryland, 'Sermon Notes: Romans 12:4-5', *Original Manuscript Sermons: Old Testament, Vol. II*, Bristol Baptist College Archives. In quoting Ryland's handwritten work, I have endeavoured to maintain his own style, including spelling and abbreviation. However, at times, this serves to obscure rather than enlighten. This is true of the above quotation. It says, 'It is the union of true believers with Christ which lays the foundation of their special love to each other. They are connected with him as their common head, and are all under the influence of his Spirit.' He goes on, 'They are *one Body in Him*, all ſharing in the same Advantages resulting f^{m}. their Connect^{n}. [from their Connection] with him' (Ryland, 'Sermon Notes: Romans 12:4-5').

> in X^t. Jesus, & place no Confid^ce. in the flesh? this will more closely unite true Saints in one Communion, than any outw^d. denomination.[20]

In Ryland's thought, one Christian's union with another, regardless of denomination, tradition, or conviction, is founded on union with Christ. Ryland's catholicity, then, is theologically christocentric. However, the matter is more complex than that. To speak of union with Christ in Ryland's thought immediately involved the work of the Holy Spirit. As has been stated, Ryland was a Calvinist. To be brought into union with Christ is a work not done by human beings or via human agency; rather, it is a work done by the Spirit. He writes, 'That salvation is *applied to the heart*, *by the effectual influence of the Holy Spirit*, is another principal truth of the gospel.'[21] Union with Christ, then, is effected by the Holy Spirit.[22]

This still does not settle the matter, however. Just as ecumenism is a practical issue for people today, so also catholicity was for Ryland. It was not primarily a theological matter for him; it was practical.[23] The question that he had to answer, and with which we began, was how does one know that another person is united to Christ?

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[20] Ryland, 'Sermon Notes: Isaiah 11:10', *Original Manuscript Sermons: Old Testament, Vol. I*, Bristol Baptist College Archives. He first preached the sermon at Broadmead, repeating it in eleven more times in the ensuing years. It seems to have been a sort of 'stock' sermon, one which contained truths that he felt many needed to hear from him. In yet another sermon, on Psalm 133, Ryland says, 'We sh^d. cultivate a Union of Sp^t. with all that are truly united to Christ, let them differ from us as much as ever they can, and be one in ♥ [heart; Ryland drew a heart here] w^th. him. Not that we sh^d. violate Consc. or sacrifice the Truth in the smallest Matters; but let us speak the Truth in Love, and whereunto we have attain'd, let us walk by the same Rule, and mind the same thing.' (John Ryland, 'Sermon Notes: Psalm 133', *Discourses on the Book of Psalms*, Bristol Baptist College Archives)

[21] John Ryland, *The Practical Influence of Evangelical Religion* (Bristol: J. G. Fuller, 1819), p. 11; cf. Andrew Fuller [Agnostos], *The Reality and Efficacy of Divine Grace* (London: Lepard, 1790), p. 13.

[22] In a sermon entitled 'The Scriptures Opposed to Impressions', Ryland writes, 'The influence of the Holy Spirit is needed and promised, not to reveal new truths, but to impress the heart with those already revealed, and to induce us honestly to apply them to our own case; to obey the precepts; to accept the invitations; to rely on the promises' (John Ryland, 'The Scriptures Opposed to Impressions', *Pastoral Memorials*, 1, 174). For more on Ryland and the Holy Spirit, see Haykin, 'The Sum of All Good', pp. 332–353; and Graham, *All Who Love Our Blessed Redeemer*, pp. 139–143.

[23] Indeed, other than sermons that dealt with the topic, Ryland did not write a work on catholicity. Rather, he practised it.

Experiential Catholicity

While theologically christocentric, Ryland practised a fundamentally experiential epistemology of catholicity. The union with Christ that the Spirit effects is not merely theoretical. Ryland at times called it a 'vital union', by which he meant 'the evident effect of divine operation on the soul'.[24] It had an impact on the life of the person so united to Christ. The impact was a life of Christlikeness, a holy life that could be witnessed and understood.

It is here, in this vital union, that a holy life takes shape, producing a likeness to Christ which can be discerned in another person. The quotation referenced earlier shows this in short form, in which Ryland speaks of the higher love of Christians for one another as 'grounded upon their relation to Christ, and their resemblance of him'.[25] Vital union is in their 'relation to Christ', and it is demonstrated or discerned in their 'resemblance of him'. Ryland's catholicity lives in this area of shared experience of Christ and living a life that resembles Christ's.

Ryland's understanding of union with Christ and its outworking in a holy life empowered by the Spirit leads him to lean heavily on a person's experience of grace in determining their practice of catholicity. Note carefully, however, Ryland does not require a certain level of Christlikeness in order for him to treat them as a fellow believer. In a sermon entitled 'The Communion of Saints', Ryland writes, 'So far as we can obtain evidence of godly sincerity, and a cordial union with Christ, we ought to take pleasure in the communion of faith, by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in our brethren toward Christ Jesus.'[26] Ryland's overall catholic impulse was to search out the

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[24] John Ryland, *Christ, the Great Source of the Believer's Consolation; and the Grand Subject of the Gospel Ministry* (London: J. Buckland and J. P. Lepard, 1788), p. 11. In other words, it is a life-giving union, one which can be seen in its effects. Ryland also held to a 'secret union', which was God's election of a person to salvation (Ryland, *Christ the Great Source of Consolation*, p. 11). His emphasis was on the vital union, since it had effects that could be seen.

[25] Ryland, 'Mutual Love a Mark of Christ's Disciples', *Pastoral Memorials*, 1, 329.

[26] Ryland, 'The Communion of Saints', *Pastoral Memorials*, 2, 280. In another place, Ryland exhorts his readers to 'take Complacency in the image of Christ where ever it can be discerned' (John Ryland, *The Dependance of the Whole Law and the Prophets on the Two Primary Commandments: A Sermon Preached before the Ministers and Messengers of the Baptists Churches Belonging to the Western*

merest hint of Christlikeness and allow that to drive his engagement with the other as a fellow believer.

Because of this, in his practice of catholicity, Ryland sought not agreement as to propositions but, rather, evidence of the presence of Christ in the experience of others. While Ryland never denied the importance of what he considered right doctrine, fellowship with others as Christians did not ultimately lean on agreement as to right doctrine. For evidence of this, we need look no further than the case of Robert Hall Jr.

Hall was eleven years younger than Ryland. They shared much in common: they were both named after their fathers, their fathers were both Baptist ministers, they both followed their fathers into ministry, they were both precocious as children, and they both served as the pastor of Broadmead in Bristol (Hall was Ryland's successor). They carried on a correspondence for many years,[27] and, as mentioned above, Hall preached Ryland's funeral sermon.

They differed in significant ways as well, most notably for present purposes, in their theological commitments. Hall's theology was not that of Ryland, a fact of which Ryland was keenly aware. In a letter to Levi Hart, after referencing Hall's recent mental health struggles,[28] Ryland tells Hart that Hall's 'Zeal for the Divinity of X^{t}. and the Atonement has for some years greatly increased', and that he 'long haesitated respecting the personality of the Holy Spirit', though Ryland tells Hart that Hall was 'getting right on that head',[29] though he does not specify how.

Association, at Their Annual Meeting Held in Salisbury; on Thursday (Bristol: Briggs and Cottle, 1798), p. 41).

[27] See Geoffrey F. Nuttall, 'Letters from Robert Hall to John Ryland 1791–1824', *Baptist Quarterly*, 34 (January 1991), 127–131.

[28] Hall suffered two public mental breakdowns between 1804 and 1806. The letter to Hart was written in 1805, so Hall's struggles were truly ongoing at that point. For an eyewitness account of one of Hall's breakdowns, see Timothy Whelan, "'I Am the Greatest of the Prophets": A New Look at Robert Hall's Mental Breakdown, November 1804', *Baptist Quarterly*, 42 (2007), pp. 114–126.

[29] Ryland, 'Letter to Levi Hart, 10 August 1805', *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 30, no. 117 (January 1873), p. 7. Note the antiquated spelling of 'hesitated'.

At this point in Hall's life, Ryland understood him to have a sub-trinitarian theology.[30] This would have been a significant theological issue for Ryland, as he saw the Trinity as a vitally important doctrine. His 'Confession of Faith' contains a clear statement of his belief in the Trinity. In his later ministry, he continued not only to hold to that belief but plead the necessity of believing it.[31] The same is true for the divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit.[32]

Despite this, Ryland writes of Hall that he 'had seen in [Hall's] youth such strong evidence of his real Religion' that he had great hopes that Hall would not be 'drawn off from the Gospel'.[33] This evidence was seen from Hall's youngest days, meaning that he saw it not only through the bouts of insanity and holding to non-trinitarian doctrine but also when Hall himself rejected Calvinism, and specifically the Calvinistic election to which Ryland held closely, and embraced philosophical materialism.[34] Ryland does not tell Hart what it was that he saw in the young Hall, but of the adult Hall, Ryland could say, 'I know of no man of singular genius, that discovers leſs pride of Talent than R. Hall. He wonderfully increases in apparent piety and Devotion also.'[35] Ryland's catholic embrace of Hall, and his treatment of him as a Christian brother, rested not on Hall's theology but on his life of Christlikeness, specifically his humility and piety.[36] This showed to Ryland that Hall was indeed united to Christ and, therefore, Ryland was bound to receive him as a spiritual brother.

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30 Whether or not Hall actually held to this theology is, for the purposes of this article, immaterial. The point is that Ryland understood Hall to believe these things.

31 See John Ryland, 'On the Connection of the Doctrine of the Trinity, with Other Scriptural Truths', *Baptist Magazine*, 17 (January 1825), pp. 1–4, 59–63.

32 Ryland, 'The Love of the Spirit', *Pastoral Memorials*, 2, 45.

33 Ryland, 'Letter to Levi Hart', p. 7.

34 See Robert Hall Jr, 'Letter to Broadmead', 9 December 1790, in *The Works of Robert Hall, A.M.*, ed. by Olinthus Gregory, 3 vols (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1832–1835), 3 (1835), 19–20; cf. Cody McNutt, 'The Ministry of Robert Hall, Jr.: The Preacher as Theological Exemplar and Cultural Celebrity' (doctoral dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), pp. 109–116.

35 Ryland, 'Letter to Levi Hart', p. 7.

36 Humility was a key virtue for Ryland. He saw it as the central fruit of an experience of divine grace: 'The first original *source* of true humility is *a sight of the divine glory*' (John Ryland, 'The Nature, Evidences, and Advantages of Humility', *Baptist Magazine*, 2 (November 1827), p. 498).

For Ryland, the final and most definitive evidence needed for Christian fellowship is shared spiritual experience of Christ shown in a life that looks like that of Jesus. As he puts it in one sermon, 'The more fruit we bear, the easier will it be to prove our union with Christ.'[37]

Ryland's Catholicity and Our Ecumenism

The aim of this article is to retrieve Ryland's catholicity for the purpose of informing a present-day understanding of ecumenism. This concluding section will present three ways that Ryland can help us move forward in our understanding and practice of ecumenical engagement.

First, Ryland displays a relational catholicity. A relational catholicity is one in which the ecumenical efforts are centred not on high level talks between representatives of various traditions but on individuals reaching out to and engaging with others outside of their tradition. Ryland's catholicity demonstrates the importance of truly knowing the other, or at least of endeavouring to know the other as a person made in God's image. Engaging with ideas is wonderful and should be promoted at all times, but if ecumenism is about 'visible unity in one faith and one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ',[38] then the issue is not ideas but people with whom we are in relationship. For Ryland, Robert Hall Jr was not an idea. He was a friend, a friend whom Ryland knew from his youth, and in whom he saw evidence of the presence of Christ in vital union. Whether it is with Hall or in his correspondence with non-Baptists and non-Calvinists outside of England, Ryland's catholicity is one that takes place within relationships. This urges an ecumenism of the same stripe: one which is founded on relationships and even friendships between people of differing traditions.

Second, Ryland's catholicity also shows the importance of an ecumenism of the heart and hands, seen in relationship with an ecumenism of the head.[39] Ecumenism of the head focuses on agreement

[37] Ryland, 'Christian Fruitfulness', *Pastoral Memorials*, 1, 341.

[38] WCC, Faith and Order Commission, 'Appendix 12: By-laws of Faith and Order', p. 101.

[39] These phrases are not new. 'Ecumenism of the head' and 'ecumenism of the hands' make up the two streams of the World Council of Churches (Antonia Pizzey, 'Receptive Ecumenical

as to doctrine. While this is not to be rejected completely, ecumenism of the heart and hands invites a more wholistic model of ecumenical engagement. An ecumenism of the heart posits an ecumenism that seeks a shared experience with Christ. It focuses on identifying in others the presence of Christ and then allowing that presence to drive our engagement. It sees spiritual realities as determinative for partnership, communion, and mutuality. An ecumenism of the hands is one in which people labour together and allow that co-labouring to drive communion.

This is seen clearly in Ryland's relationships with Arminian Methodists. As a Calvinist, it should be no surprise to learn that Ryland rejected Arminianism. In one of his early books, he states the matter plainly: 'As to manner, I have not aimed to please critics; as to matter, I have aimed to displease *Arminians*.'[40] In a funeral sermon for his friend Joshua Symonds, Ryland exhorts the church to seek a new pastor who will be a 'man of the ſame ſtamp with all you have had yet, who ſhall keep at equal diſtance from real Arminianiſm and falſe Calviniſm'.[41] In the last essay he wrote for publication, he defends Calvinistic principles and offers criticism for those of Wesley and his followers. He does so on largely theological grounds, attacking specifically the Wesleyan emphasis on religious impressions, the doctrine of falling from grace, and the idea of general redemption.[42]

Learning: A Constructive Way of Approaching Ecclesial Identity and Renewal', *Receptive Ecumenism: Listening, Learning and Loving in the Way of Christ*, ed. by Vicky Balabanski and Geraldine Hawkes (Adelaide, Australia: ATF Press, 2018), pp. 64–65). 'Ecumenism of the heart' is found as far back as the 1950s (Ruth Rouse and Stephen Neill, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517–1948* (London: SPCK, 1954), p. 194) and was used in 2022 by the moderator of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches to refer to 'an ecumenism in which we look at other churches first of all with the eyes of communion in the love of the compassionate Jesus; with the eyes of common commitment to God's kingdom; and only within the solid foundation of that unity in Christ do we look at what separates them in matters of faith, ordained ministry or ethics' (Agnes Abuom, 'Report of the Moderator: Witnessing Together to Christ's Compassionate Love', World Council of Churches, 11th Assembly, 31 August to 8 September 2022, Karlsruhe, Germany <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/A01-Report-of-the-Moderator-ENG.pdf> [accessed 12 February 2023]).

[40] John Ryland, *Serious Essays on the Truths of the Glorious Gospel: And the Various Branches of Vital Experience. For the Use of True Christians* (London: J. Pasham, 1771), p. xxi.

[41] Ryland, *Christ the Great Source of Consolation*, p. 34. Symonds had been the pastor of the Baptist church in Bedford.

[42] Ryland, 'On the Alledged Impiety of Calvinism', *Baptist Magazine*, 17 (July 1825), p. 285.

In light of his published record, Ryland's life and practice with regard to Arminians is surprising. Contemporary newspaper accounts place Ryland at Wesleyan missionary society meetings. He was present and 'rendered […] assistance' at the sixth anniversary meeting of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in Bristol.[43] Later, he would serve as the chairman of a meeting of the Wesleyan Auxiliary Society for the Northampton district, working alongside Methodists such as Joshua Taylor, Richard Watson, and George Cubitt.[44]

One of the most interesting stories of Ryland's catholic practice with regard to Arminians and Methodists has to do with a man named John Garvin, a Methodist schoolmaster sent by the Sierra Leone Company.[45] At one time, Garvin had been desirous to join the Baptist Missionary Society as a missionary. Ryland writes to his friend John Sutcliff,

> I hope you will consult Bro[r]. Horne about the Weslean preacher mentioned herein [Garvin]. I shou'd be sorry to neglect any Conscientious Man who thinks our practice right and shou'd also [be] sorry to be eager to make a convert to a party or to let any other denomination of Christians justly suspect us of unfairness. I refer to the M[r] Garvin mentioned in the last page of this Letter. He has written to me himself, but says nothing about Sentiments. I sh[d]. not refuse [him] for not being a compleat Calvinist, tho I think myself a very staunch one, much lefs sh[d]. I refuse him for not calling himself by that name.[46]

He knows Garvin's beliefs; at least, he knows that he is a Wesleyan. Yet he commends him to Sutcliff and would not refuse him because of his Arminian beliefs. Garvin's commitment to the cause of missions bound him to Ryland, so much so that he could see him as a co-labourer in the same work.

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43 'The Wesleyan Methodists', *Bristol Mirror*, 12 May 1821, p. 3.

44 'On Tuesday last', *Northampton Mercury*, 21 June 1823, p. 3.

45 For more information on Garvin, see Madge Dresser, *Slavery Obscured: The Social History of the Slave Trade in an English Provincial Port* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), p. 174; Iain Whyte, *Zachary Macaulay 1768–1838: The Steadfast Scot in the British Anti-Slavery Movement* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), pp. 73–78; Christopher Fyfe, *A History of Sierra Leone*, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 1, 69–70.

46 John Ryland, 'Letter to John Sutcliff', June 1796, Isaac Mann Collection, National Library of Wales.

Bringing this to our present ecumenical engagements, we may see that through labouring together, we understand ourselves as engaged in the same work, though it may be varied, and driving toward the same goal, though we may do so in different ways. That understanding then drives people to see that they are truly united to the same Christ.

Finally, Ryland's catholicity may also help us find and appreciate an ecumenism that is satisfied with difference. It is an ecumenism in which we do not attempt to convert the other; rather, we are satisfied in our own convictions, and we are content with convictional differences. Ryland was criticised at one point for his speaking on foreordination before a Calvinistic Baptist audience.[47] Ryland defended himself in a letter to the editors of the *Baptist Magazine*, saying that he believed that he said nothing that the church members would not have also believed. Had he been before a non-Calvinist audience, however, he writes, 'I should not have obtruded my opinion upon them, but have confined myself to the topics of still greater importance on which we agree.'[48]

While John Ryland Jr was not a perfect catholic exemplar,[49] the manner in which he remained committed to his own theological tradition and distinctives while embracing those who believed differently is worthy of our attention as we seek to move forward in ecumenical activity. This does not solve every issue, but an ecumenism that is rooted in a shared spiritual experience of Christ demonstrated in a life of Christlikeness allows us to engage with various traditions while remaining fully committed to our own. This seems to be a helpful way forward that would yield positive dividends for those who attempt it.

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[47] He had preached this message at the Baptist church on Eagle Street in London. Joseph Ivimey was the pastor.

[48] John Ryland, 'Letter to the Editors of the Baptist Magazine', Bristol Baptist College Archives, published as 'On the Divine Decrees', *Baptist Magazine*, 14 (September 1822), pp. 365–368.

[49] He had little good to say about Roman Catholics, though even with them Ryland was cautiously open. See Graham, *All Who Love Our Blessed Redeemer*, pp. 106–108.

Book Reviews

Andy Goodliff & Paul W. Goodliff (eds.), *Rhythms of Faithfulness: Essays in Honor of John E. Colwell* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2018), 266 pages. ISBN: 9781532633508.

Reviewed by Helen Dare

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This *festschrift* brings together seventeen British Baptist theologians to honour their friend and colleague John Colwell, a theological educator (teaching at Spurgeon's College) and a local church minister. Colwell has enthused others in the study of theology through both his teaching and his publications — including *Promise and Presence*, *The Rhythm of Doctrine*, and his more personal book *Why have you forsaken me?*, which explores Psalm 22 in the light of his experience of bi-polar disorder. In addition to this, the volume also recognises his foundational role in the development of the Order for Baptist Ministry (OBM), a dispersed community committed to sustaining each other in ministry through a 'commitment to prayer and attentiveness' and a 'commitment to gather' (www.orderforbaptistministry.co.uk/expressions).

It is the pattern of the OBM's daily office that gives shape to the chapters comprising the first part of the book, with essays concerning our becoming present to God, the presence of God, confession, biblical interpretation, prayers of concern, and a sending out to love and serve Christ in the world. The second part of the book follows the seasons of the Christian Year (and the days and seasons of the OBM Daily Office). There are, as is to be expected, chapters on Advent, Lent, and Pentecost — liturgical seasons familiar to most Baptists. Yet in looking beyond usual Baptist practice to the liturgical year in its fullness, there are also chapters on the less familiar Annunciation, Passiontide, Creation, and All Saints.

However, this volume contains far more than theological reflection to stimulate the thought of those who are members of the OBM, already use a daily office, or follow the seasons of the Christian Year. There are essays here not only from contributors who work in the field of Christian doctrine, but also (owing to Colwell's interests and influence) from a liturgical theologian, biblical scholars, and historians. Many of the chapters draw on emphases from Colwell's own work, entering into dialogue with it. Some (such as Richard Kidd and Paul Fiddes) continue disagreements with Colwell in an irenic fashion, in the manner of colleagues and friends who have built a practice of disagreeing with each other respectfully. Others take Colwell's work as a springboard to develop new ideas. Whichever approach they take, however, the esteem with which the authors hold him is clearly reflected in how they engage with his work carefully and with a generosity that runs throughout the book. Given the quality of all of the chapters, it is likely that each reader's favourites will be determined by their own particular interests, and while engaging with each article alone is rewarding, together they have the potential to challenge and inspire many readers in different contexts. In reflecting on his interaction with Colwell, Nigel Wright comments, 'Theological wrestling is an emotionally costly business, not least because of what is at stake' (p.173). This volume demonstrates that being willing to engage in that task is not only costly, but also enormously creative.

Walter Brueggemann, *Virus as a Summons to Faith: Biblical Reflections in a Time of Loss, Grief, and Uncertainty* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 92 pages. ISBN: 9781725276734.

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Walter Brueggemann is an influential Old Testament scholar and theologian, a prolific writer who has shaped theological minds for decades as he ignited a vision for prophetic imagination for the church.

Brueggemann authored this book only six weeks after the start of the Covid-19 crisis. It is incredible to see such a thoughtful work come out in such a short time. With his deep understanding of Scripture and his vision for prophetic imagination for the church, Brueggemann helps his readers think through the implications of the pandemic critically, theologically, and biblically. Brueggemann accomplishes this difficult task by skilfully taking his readers on a journey through several Old Testament narratives to draw lessons that can relate to the crises of today. He believes that 'any serious crisis is a summons for us to reread the Bible afresh' (p. xi).

The book starts with a hard read, trying to answer the *why* question. Why would God cause or allow the plague to happen? Brueggemann argues that there must be an interplay of at least three interpretive possibilities for such a God-linked reality.

The first interpretive possibility is a 'transactional mode of covenant' (p.1). This is simply when people reap what they sow. God blesses people who obey him and curses those who disobey him. The second is 'YHWH's purposeful enactment of force' (p.5). This is when God mobilises the negative forces of creation to accomplish his purposes. The third 'concerns the sheer holiness of God that God can enact in utter freedom without reason, explanation, or accountability, seemingly beyond any purpose at all' (p.10).

Brueggemann then moves into encouragement mode, helping us consider God's mercy and goodness, teaching us how to pray and how to change our perspective from that of 'a *preoccupation with self* to a *submission to and reliance upon God*' (p.46). Brueggemann ends the book with a message of hope, that the groaning of this world precedes the birth of newness, right after he does what we expect of him. He implores our prophetic imagination to embrace the new realities, the new normal, as God's gift to us. '[T]he future […] belongs […] to bold faithful thought that evokes bold faithful action' (p.58). Brueggemann concludes each chapter with a powerful prayer that personalises the lessons learned.

What starts as a hard read, grappling with understanding the purposes of God, ends in an exhortation for prophetic imagination. Each crisis is a summons to a more profound and active faith.

We are now three years removed from the start of Covid-19. This was by no means the latest crisis or cataclysmic event that we have experienced. I am writing from a region that is still reeling from recent earthquakes in southern Turkey and northern Syria, devastation which requires no less of a summons to faith.

Thank you, Dr Brueggemann, for grounding our reality in biblical faith and grounding our faith in the 'power and wonder of YHWH' (p.5).

Daniel G. Oprean, *Theology of Participation: A Conversation of Traditions* (Carlisle: Langham Publishing, 2019), 267 pages. ISBN: 9781783686384.

Reviewed by Helle Liht

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Daniel G. Oprean is Professor of Theology at Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad, Romania, and a pastor in the Romanian Baptist Union. This book, a revised version of his doctoral thesis, grew out of his own experience as a Baptist pastor and preacher in a predominantly Orthodox country where Baptists are a minority, and, as observed by him, encapsulated in their own tradition and living in isolation. Ministering in such a setting led Oprean to conclude that 'if we are to think seriously about the Christian mission in Romania in contemporary times, our thoughts need to include the sincere sojourners from the Orthodox churches' (p.4). Following this conclusion, Oprean presents the two key aims of his book. His first aim is to contribute towards contextually relevant baptistic theology by engaging with the local Orthodox tradition and thereby to counterbalance the theologies imported by the foreign fundamentalist missionaries. His second aim is to enhance the dialogue between the Romanian Baptist and Orthodox communities and 'contribute to the mutual understanding of the two' (p.6).

To achieve these aims, Oprean engages with the writings of two prominent theologians: Paul Fiddes, a British Baptist theologian (1947–) and Dumitru Stăniloae (1903–1993), a Romanian Orthodox theologian, both formative within their own traditions. The first part of the book explores the theological thought of Stăniloae, and the second, that of Fiddes. In both cases, he focuses on three key subjects which are central for both traditions — baptism, eucharist, and spirituality. By analysing these, he builds a foundation for the third part of the book, which is a dialogue between the two.

One of the strengths of the book is skilfully sketched summaries of the theological thought of Stăniloae and Fiddes. These would serve, even without the third part, as an appeal to stretch and deepen one's understanding of baptism, eucharist, and spirituality. Yet the third part opens up new horizons for both the Baptist and the Orthodox traditions in Romania. Oprean's thorough study presents the understandings that both theologians have in common as well as where they differ from each other, and this builds a solid base for ecumenical dialogue between the two traditions.

Another strength of the book is that Oprean explores the concepts of baptism, eucharist, and spirituality in relation to Stăniloae's and Fiddes' understanding of the Trinity and the concept of *perichoresis*. Furthermore, trinitarian theology is the backbone of Oprean's study, giving it a depth and potential to disclose the relational and participatory character of not only God and humanity, but that of all created order. In the scope of this study, Oprean does not go much beyond exploring baptism, eucharist, and spirituality, yet there is great potential to expand the conversation to all spheres of life created and to be redeemed by the Triune God.

Although Oprean places this study firmly and humbly within the Romanian context, I believe it has great value for many Baptist communities, especially in Eastern Europe, where the past communist regimes have pushed the churches into isolation and thereby also shaped their theologies. As a model for ecumenical dialogue, the importance of the book is even greater.

John Weaver, *Emmaus: Journeying Toward and Onward from Emmaus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2022), 140 pages. ISBN: 9781666743708.

Reviewed by Craig Gardiner

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In his latest book, John Weaver delivers that most interesting of phenomena: a deeply autobiographical volume which is not actually about the author. It is, instead, an honest and richly resourced text for Christian discipleship, and while it does draw on the author's experience of ministry, it is more consciously rooted in the biblical account of Jesus and two disciples on the Road to Emmaus. The resultant interplay of exegetical insight, theological understanding, and personal reflection allows Weaver to 'impose a shape' (p.71) upon his understanding of discipleship. That this shape is then skilfully articulated should come as no surprise. Weaver has a proven record of holding polarities in creative tension: finding Christ within the sacred *and* secular, revelation through science *and* faith, as well as exploring both academic *and* pastoral vocations. *Emmaus* is written after Weaver's retirement from formal employment, but he rejects notions that ageing heralds 'decline and loss' (p.48). Instead, he argues that maturing and holistic theologies move away from '*either-or*' dichotomies and towards more '*both-and*' ways of thinking. Weaver's commitment to such a methodology speaks with authority throughout the book's exploration of a 'whole life discipleship', where 'worship is life' and 'mission is being' (p.63).

Weaver finds in the Emmaus narrative, a paradigm of discipleship that listens to others with genuine curiosity, explores experience in the light of Scripture, and shares its reflections within authentic hospitality. This 'journey towards Emmaus' emerges as a core motif by which disillusioned individuals and disappointed communities might discover a gospel that honours their pain, but nonetheless leads them into authentic companionship with Christ. Such discoveries become the 'thin places' of divine epiphany explored by Weaver through personal recollections of his life as a geologist, pastor, and his travels overseas. There is always enough biography to ground the authenticity

of the testimony, but never so much that it distracts from his challenges to discipleship. How, he asks, might we experience not only a conversion to Christ and church, but be 'converted to the world for which Christ died'? (p.42). What does it mean, to live a 'cross shaped life' (p.46) that learns through 'tragedy and failure' (p.63) and testifies to relationships that might matter more than religious regulation?

From this fulcrum of understanding, Weaver travels 'away from Emmaus' by exploring a pilgrimage with disillusionment. He enquires how such a journey might lead the church towards a 'second naivete' of faith that embraces vulnerability, overcoming our tendencies to settle for 'unexamined certitude' (p.84), and a theological 'littleness of mind' (p.85). His pilgrimage celebrates the practicalities of journaling (even as an intermittent practice) in articulating our discipleship before God.

In effect, this book is Weaver's own journal of personal pilgrimage. There are minor quibbles where inquisitive readers may welcome more extensive referencing and a deeper exploration of notions such as 'cross shaped life'. Occasionally the sources cited might be more diverse. But at its heart, this book wrestles honestly with the same questions Weaver has consistently posed to students, congregations, and himself: 'Where is God and the good news in this story?' and 'What might that mean for us?' The book does not seek to offer all the answers to such questions, but it does deserve a thorough reading for the quality of Weaver's persistent enquiry.

Erich Geldbach (ed.), *Baptists Worldwide: Origins, Expansions, Emerging Realities* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2022), 562 pages. ISBN: 9781666795879.

Reviewed by David Luke

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At one point the editor notes, 'Baptists with their emphasis on congregational polity and the "autonomy of the local church" must further face the difficulty of who may with some kind of authority speak

for them.' It is a difficulty that confronts the person who seeks to tell the Baptist story. This account of the Baptists is one told from the perspective of the Baptist World Alliance, which connects around half of the Baptists in the world. As such it has the feel of an institutional account, with lots of lists and countless abbreviations.

In Geldbach's introduction he laments that, due to the invasion, a proposed chapter on Baptists in Ukraine has been dropped as it is no longer current. He then engages in a denunciation of Russian aggression and those who have supported it. While many will support his sentiments, it is a rather unusual inclusion, given the nature of the book.

The strength of the book, and one that is often lacking in other book-length accounts, is that it employs multiple voices. While there are chapters from several notable Western Baptist historians, we also hear about non-Western Baptists from people who form part of their national movements. These are the most engaging sections of the book. There is a fast-paced chapter on the story of the Nigerian Baptist Convention. There is also a provocative chapter on Baptists in South Africa, as they seek to deal with the legacy of apartheid. The section on South America has two insightful chapters on issues confronting Baptists in this region. The second of these, which focuses on Argentina, considers the challenge of implementing Baptist principles against the background of that nation's history and culture.

Overall, however, the book is North American-centric in its orientation, with around one third of the contributors from the United States. There are four chapters, a quarter of those focused on national movements, given over to Baptists in the United States. This includes a chapter devoted to the pension scheme of the American Baptist Churches, USA, while there is a single chapter on the movements in fourteen Asian countries.

There is a considerable amount of information in this collection about the Baptist movement at a macro and institutional level. As an account of Baptists few will find it an inspiring one, since not many are stirred by the machinations of conventions and their decisions. It is,

nonetheless, a very useful reference work and an interesting snapshot of the global diversity of Baptist life in the early twenty-first century.

Sunggu Yang, *King's Speech: Preaching Reconciliation in a World of Violence and Chasm* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019), 101 pages. ISBN: 9781532650918.

Reviewed by Erica Whitaker

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The preaching of Martin Luther King Jr has been examined by scholars and theologians for over half a century. Sunggu Yang, Assistant Professor of Christian Ministries at the College of Christian Studies at Portland Seminary, George Fox University, gives new insight and perspectives on King's theological preaching. This book explores King's sermons and how King's writing encourages Christians in the face of injustice and fear. Yang gives both a historical review as well as the significant relevance of King's preaching ministry of God's reconciliatory work in the church and in culture.

Yang gives the reader a clear structure, parsing the book into four concise chapters. The first chapter highlights important biographical aspects of King's preaching, including institutions like Morehouse College and mentors like Tillich and Barth who influenced King's theology. The second chapter explores how King developed his theology on violence and reconciliation specifically, examining one of King's most influential writings, *The Letter from Birmingham Jail*. The third chapter analyses how King crafted his sermons using *Death of Evil upon the Seashore* as a key illustration of King's strategic approach to sermon writing and delivery. Chapter three also illustrates King's 'other-typology' in his exegesis and preaching of Exodus. The final chapter gives three practical lessons from the life and preaching of King for those desiring to live in King's belief of 'Beloved Community'.

There are many strengths of Yang's *King's Speech*, specifically in his approach to the extensive life of Martin Luther King Jr through the

lens of King's theology of preaching. This nuanced approach opens a new path for practically applying concrete aspects of King's work in our world today. However, the practical application for the church today could have been expanded more thoroughly in chapter four. Further depth in considering how preachers today could apply King's work on justice and non-violence would offer methods for clergy and churches to implant in their current ministries. There is also omission of any criticism of King's patriarchal posture in ministry and how King explicitly did not fully support women in leadership roles, both in the church and in the fight for justice.

This book is a must read for those interested in a fresh approach to reconciliation in a world of violence and conflict, offering a new perspective on King's preaching for the church today.

Alexander Chow Alexander & Emma Wild-Wood (eds.), *Ecumenism and Independency in World Christianity: Historical Studies in Honour of Brian Stanley* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2020), 370 pages. ISBN: 9789004437531.

Reviewed by Peter Stevenson

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At first glance, reflections on disconnected events in 1899 and 1900 appear to offer little to contemporary discussions about World Christianity. Jumping to that conclusion would mean missing Mark Noll's imaginative contribution to this stimulating collection of essays. He considers some people who were not in the headlines as a new century was dawning, whose experiences nevertheless helped shape the unexpected growth of World Christianity in the twentieth century. Looking back, he argues that events involving people such as Pandita Ramabai, Vedanayakam Samuel Azariah in India, and William Wadé Harris in West Africa, 'represented signs in the wind' (p.35), hinting at the dramatic nature of Christianity's global growth in the decades ahead.

Alongside Noll's study, this book contains essays from an international team of distinguished scholars all paying tribute to Brian

Stanley's 'acclaimed historical scholarship on World Christianity' (p.1). From a Baptist perspective it merits attention, partly because Stanley's teaching career began at Spurgeon's College and his book, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society, 1792–1992*, is acclaimed by David Bebbington as 'the best of any missionary society so far published' (p.21).

In her essay, Kirsteen Kim adopts the methodology employed by Brian Stanley in his magisterial study, *Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History* (Princeton University Press, 2018), by examining 'two contrasting examples from different parts of World Christianity in a similar period to analyse the different ways in which Christians have responded to a particular theme or issue' (p.63). Thus, in chapter 4 she explores ecumenical and evangelical discussions about the relationship between churches and missions. Kevin Ward follows on with another 'unexpected juxtaposition' as he reflects on the East African revival in the light of revivals in East Asia. A similar strategy is evident in chapter 6 where Allen Yeh reflects on creation care in Latin America by comparing Catholic and evangelical perspectives.

Those three chapters form part of the first major section of this book: *Studying World Christianity*. The next six chapters examine aspects of *Christians Working Together*, followed by five chapters exploring *Pluriform Christianity*.

'And what more shall I say?' There is not space to engage adequately with the rich feast offered by Andrew Walls, Ian Randall, Dana Robert, Sebastian Kim, Marina Xiaojing Wang, and others. Their contributions demonstrate how valuable insights emerge by paying close attention to the diverse ways in which Christianity is embodied in different geographical, and historical, contexts. The eight chapters focusing on mission in various Asian contexts helpfully expanded my global vision.

This volume is a valuable resource which invites and encourages further research into World Christianity. Hopefully it may also entice more readers to explore Stanley's *Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History* (see following review).

Brian Stanley, *Christianity in the Twentieth Century: A World History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 504 pages. ISBN: 9780691196848.

Reviewed by Ruth Gouldbourne

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Stanley's intention in this book is to provide a history of Christianity in the twentieth century, not in what has become the normal, Eurocentric way, but rather telling the story from a global perspective. As a leading historian of World Missions, he is peculiarly well able to explore the topic from such a viewpoint, and this book is evidence both of his skill in communicating, and of the importance of such an approach.

In the introduction he explains that he is aiming neither for comprehensive coverage of everything that might come under the heading of 'Christianity in the twentieth century', nor for a specifically chronological approach, but rather is selecting themes that are especially important for understanding Christianity in global terms, and then approaching them through a 'compare and contrast' approach to case studies. Each chapter presents two contrasting examples of the theme he is considering, and the whole combines to produce a mosaic picture that allows the reader to grasp an overall sense of what is — or could be — an extremely complex subject.

Through his chapter themes, he explores issues such as nationalism, ecumenism, oppression, religious plurality, mission, and migration. The use of two case studies in each chapter means that there is a binocular view of each topic, which allows both for the exploration of difference and the tracing of similarities.

Although the book is not strictly chronological in approach, the chapters follow a roughly chronological sequence, starting with the 1914–1918 World War and ending with a consideration of migrant churches. This sets up some helpful echoes, as the contrast between the positions of the beginning and the end of the century comes into focus.

As an approach, this global perspective has many strengths. In the chapter about Christians living in a religiously plural context, Stanley

refers to 'how introverted Christianity in its European form [has] become'. This has particular relevance in that chapter, but does apply to the rest of the book. Reading the history of the last century through eyes from different parts of the world is challenging, encouraging, and worrying.

There are some frustrations. Stanley is very strict on dealing with only the twentieth century. He comments several times in various summaries that 'this situation now looks different as we come into the 21st century' — it would have been interesting to know how. This is especially true in the material dealing with Orthodoxy, as things have changed so much in the last twenty years (and the current impact of religion in the Ukraine war), and in the discussion of Christian nationalism in the light of the current situation in the United States of America. However, this is a history, not a reflection on current affairs, and it offers rich material for exploration and understanding. The roots of Liberation theology, and the different ways in which it is explored in Latin America and Palestine are particularly interesting.

This is an important book, both in content and methodology, and we are grateful to Brian Stanley for its arrival on our shelves.

Klaas Bom & Benno van den Toren, *Context and Catholicity in the Science and Religion Debate. Intercultural contributions from French-speaking Africa* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 244 pages. ISBN: 9789004420281.

Reviewed by John Weaver

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This text is essentially an exploration of theological reflection. The study is located in the emerging field of intercultural theology: the theological study of, and dialogue between, various religious perspectives in terms of how they exist in relation to their respective social and cultural environments.

In French-speaking Africa three different cultures meet: African traditional cultures/religions; Western colonial and post-colonial

involvement; and Christian independent mission and African Christianity. The studies are based on six groups (one of academics and one of students) drawn from three university cities: Abidjan (Ivory Coast), Yaoundé (Cameroon), and Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of Congo).

The authors are based at the Protestant Theological University in Groningen, Netherlands, where Klaas Bom is assistant professor of Systematic Theology and Benno van den Toren is chair for Intercultural Theology. They have spent a great deal of time on location with these six groups. Their study is an exercise in 'formal theology' and engages academic theological reflection, while using the insights harvested from 'espoused theology', the lived theology of the faith community.

They consider intercultural theology as a three-way conversation between different participants discussing their understanding of God in his relation to the world. This allows for a critical realist exchange. They maintain that to gain new insights, true intercultural exchange means giving equal attention to alternative understandings of the nature of scientific knowledge, of religious knowledge, and of the knowledge transmitted by other traditions.

We are introduced to a multi-dimensional model of theological reflection through Group Model Building to counter the dominant understanding of science and religion (in the North Atlantic world), and this allows consideration of how the debate is modelled in African concepts and understanding, using the language and concepts of the local population.

Models are produced by each of the six groups; however, the authors note that a causal loop diagram or model is a simplification of a comprehensive and complex debate on science and Christian faith, as recorded by the groups.

They describe the 'catholicity' of the debate in the sense of encompassing the whole church and the whole of humanity. 'Intercultural theology' holds that theological reflection is on the one hand localised and embedded in particular social contexts but on the other hand is part of a worldwide conversation with the global 'catholic' community of Christian communities.

The authors ask, Can these voices from a particular cultural and geographical setting be heard in a global debate? Do we allow Christ and the salvation he brings to grow in cross-cultural translation? New language and cultures lead to new insights as was seen in the early church with the influence of Greek philosophy.

I have explored some multi-dimensional models of theological reflection in my own work (*Outside-In*, Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2006, and *Christianity and Science SCM Core Text*, London: SCM, 2010), but much of our European approach to the Science and Faith debate is two-dimensional: western science and Christianity. The models developed in this book are both refreshing and challenging and offer encouragement for a multi-dimensional approach in all areas of theological reflection.

Lon Graham, *All Who Love Our Blessed Redeemer: The Catholicity of John Ryland Jr. Monographs in Baptist History* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2022), 224 pages. ISBN: 9781666726633.

Reviewed by Ian Randall

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It is sometimes thought that the idea of Baptist catholicity is a recent interest that some individuals have taken up but which does not reflect the mainstream of Baptist tradition. It is true that important books seeking to advocate this perspective have come out in recent years. Steven Harmon's *Towards Baptist Catholicity* (2006) was one among several. But this excellent volume by Lon Graham, which began life as an IBTS Amsterdam PhD, shows that far from being a relatively recent innovation, 'catholicity' has a significant place within the Baptist story.

The book focuses on John Ryland Jr (1753–1825), a leading figure among the Particular Baptists in England. His range of gifts and interests meant that he was an effective pastor, at Broadmead Baptist Church, Bristol; a College president, at Bristol Baptist College; and a dedicated supporter of the Baptist Missionary Society. Lon Graham argues convincingly, from an impressively wide range of published and unpublished sources, that someone as committed to Particular Baptist

convictions as was unquestionably the case with Ryland Jr, was at the same time determinedly catholic in his sympathies.

As well as its profound probing of Ryland Jr himself, this volume helpfully investigates earlier examples of Baptist catholicity. While Henry Jessey and John Bunyan would be expected, although there are fresh insights here regarding them, Graham shows the influence of an overlooked figure in the Broadmead church, Robert Purnell. At all stages in this study, there is an abundance of footnote references in which to revel. In some cases, the rich material found there might usefully have been included in the main text.

There is a clear portrayal in what Graham writes of the theological foundations on which Ryland Jr built his catholicity. This is a key aspect, since there could be an inclusive spirit that pays little regard to scripture. At the same time, it is heart-warming to read of the personal relationships that were important to Ryland Jr. He displayed a deep concern for and affirmation both of orthodoxy and of other believers from whom he differed in some areas. It is a combination splendidly brought out in the book's title, taken from what was central to Ryland Jr. This is an outstanding book, which informs and also inspires.

Lina Toth, *Singleness and Marriage After Christendom: Being and Doing Family* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2021), 143 pages. ISBN: 978-1532635588.

Reviewed by Susan Stevenson

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This volume in the *After Christendom* series comes from Lina Toth, Assistant Principal and Lecturer in Practical Theology at the Scottish Baptist College. Drawing on her passion for theology and history she re-evaluates the familiar slogan, 'God first, family second, then church', in the light of Scripture, Christian tradition, and the history of Christendom.

Throughout the book the author invites readers to look again at what she identifies as our inherited assumptions about marriage and

singleness. This is needed in order to hear afresh the radical call of Jesus to his church to become a community growing together towards a deeper, gospel-shaped vision of a 'happy' life.

After an introduction which clarifies the book's aims and provides a helpful map through the material, there follow eight chapters covering the biblical and historical material.

The opening chapter considers the prevalent perception that marriage and the life of the nuclear family are more important to the make-up and ministry of the church than singleness. The next chapter outlines Old Testament perspectives on singleness, marriage, and family life. Against this background, Toth argues that a radical shift comes in the teaching of Jesus, which prioritises the new community of the church.

Having painted a picture of families and households in the Greco-Roman world, the next chapter examines New Testament evidence, showing how the first churches both challenged and adapted to social norms. This prepares the way for an examination in the next chapter of Christian literature outside the New Testament, which reveals the hostility generated by the perception of the church as a destabilising influence on the social order.

Chapter 5 traces the development of the theology and practice of marriage as Christianity became the established religion of the empire. The next chapter follows that story through the changes brought on by the Reformation, by the Industrial Revolution, on to the emergences of Victorian family values.

In chapter 7 the focus turns onto Western society's growing preoccupation with happiness and the perception that romantic love and a nuclear family are essential to a 'happy' life. Some of those issues are discussed in chapter 8, which challenges churches to be real communities in the midst of a fragmented, consumerist culture, and offers 'some key ideas for a "happy" Christian life in an increasingly post-Christian context'.

This book is designed as a discussion starter and does this in a helpful way, along with providing suggestions for further reading.

Questions about 'happiness' are live issues both in the church and beyond. Post-pandemic questions about what it means to be authentically church are even more urgent.

I was stimulated and excited by this skilled theologian who opens up 'the fascinating unsettling world of the bible' in a way that offers new perspectives and hopeful possibilities.

Stefan Paas, *Pilgrims and Priests: Christian Mission in a Post-Christian Society* (London: SCM Press, 2019), 384 pages. ISBN: 9780334058779.

Reviewed by Scott Kohler

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At the outset of *Pilgrims and Priests*, Stefan Paas describes his work as 'a study about missional spirituality' (p.xvii). The book covers a lot of ground and touches many disciplines. Yet this declaration indicates that the ultimate aim of the book is to come to a Christian understanding of what it means to do mission in a society that seems to see little value in what the church has to offer. In addition to positions as a Professor of Missiology at both the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Theologische Universiteit Kampen, Paas has written about and been active in church planting, so he is well situated to reflect on the questions at the heart of this work.

After opening chapters that give an account of both the secular situation and various ideas of mission in the church's Christendom past, the lengthy third chapter ('From Folk Church to Conquest') articulates a careful typology and critique of major models of the church in relation to mission. Given his deliberately post-Christendom perspective, Paas's sympathetic but critical words about 'Countercultural Church' represented by neo-Anabaptists will be of special interest to readers of this journal. In chapters 4 to 7 Paas presents his own proposal, taking his cues from a rich biblical theology of exile and 1 Peter's images of the church as a community of 'pilgrims and priests'.

One of the motivating impulses in Paas's theology of mission is his conviction that 'Christians need to find a way to have "joy over one

sinner who repents" (Luke 15:7,10) rather than being obsessed by quantitative success' (p.72). In the interest of finding this way, he proposes 'a spirituality of signs and foretastes' rather than instrumentality in the church's approach to mission (p.198). This is what it means to operate as priests in a world where we come to see ourselves as an alien or pilgrim people. Worship takes a central role in this spirituality and practice of mission, and in this respect the book is worth reading alongside the mid-twentieth-century writings of Martin Thornton who, from a very different cultural situation, made this priestly element central to his pastoral theology of worship. For churches and leaders confronted with questions about which direction their gatherings should be aimed — whether toward God or toward an unbelieving world — Paas's work suggests a helpful and integrative way of seeing and understanding the church's task. In his words, this task is to live out this 'spirituality of signs and foretastes' that will 'demonstrate the reality we believe in and hope for' (p.229).

Much of the value in *Pilgrims and Priests* arises from its explanatory power, with the treatment of the biblical experience of exile in chapter 4 especially illuminating for the post-Christian setting in which much ministry in the West now takes place. One is left with a desire to elaborate and witness in practice the approach that is set forth in these pages.

Rupen Das, *The God that the Poor Seek: Conversion, Context, and the World of the Vulnerable* (Carlisle, UK: Langham Global Library, 2022), 280 pages. ISBN: 9781839732737.

Reviewed by Sarah Mhamdi

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Rupen Das states at the beginning of his book that many of us do not 'understand the spirituality of the poor'. Das uses conversion to following Christ as a window to see into the spiritual lives of two groups of people living in poverty — formerly Muslim, Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Hindu converts to Christ in Bangalore, India. The author

says that the book is 'the stories of how some of the poor encountered Christ'.

Before the stories, Das takes us on a journey to understand how missiologists and theologians have approached the topics of conversion, poverty, contextualisation, and hearing the voices of the poor. In each area we see how people have understood the subject in the past, before considering current principles and practice.

When we reach the chapters on the stories of the poor, Das outlines the context of the people whose stories he collected: Syrians in Lebanon experiencing event-based poverty — their situation is due to something that happened — and Indian slum dwellers experiencing generational poverty. All those interviewed shared how and why they now follow Christ. The final two chapters are given to interpreting and assessing the stories and sharing who is the God that the poor seek.

Rupen Das is a well-known, well-respected author, researcher, and professor, based in Canada and the USA with extensive experience working in humanitarian assistance and development. He is concerned that the voice of the poor is heard, and understood, whenever people seek to work with them or on their behalf. Das wrote the book as he often wondered what 'the poor, the victims of human trafficking and abuse, and the refugees think about God'. In his conclusion he comments that what he saw and heard impacted his personal understanding of God.

After years in development work myself, I was attracted by the title of the book: Who is it that the poor want to encounter? How do I live in a way that shows that Christ makes a difference to my life and can to others? I was eager to reach the voices of the poor themselves and, at first glance, was disappointed that these did not start to appear until page 115! But, of course, Das knows what he is doing and the outline of why we are using conversion as a key, the historical overview, and setting out principles is essential.

The book is written in an academic, but accessible style. Specialist words are explained so that it could be read by non-missiologists/theologians. I would have been interested to see Das talk to practitioners who are working among similar communities to see if

they have reached the same conclusions in their experiences of sharing Christ among people living in poverty. I think that this will be a good reference for Christians interested in working among the poor.