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THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS AND THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS, OR WHY THE SAINTS MATTER FOR BAPTIST THEOLOGY

DEREK HATCH

Howard Payne University

In his essay, “Theology and Sanctity,” Hans Urs von Balthasar made note of a long-running historical development the seeds for which were planted in the scholastic period but bore fruit in the modern: “Theology and spirituality have become, as it were, each a world of its own, with hardly any point of contact, and so the saints and spiritual writers are more and more ignored by theologians.”¹ This observation is alarming, and von Balthasar continues by offering suggestions to stitch these two worlds back together and resolve the impoverishment suffered by each due to their separation. For Baptists, although the historical details may differ from von Balthasar’s Catholic context, the assessment of the terrain is very similar. Baptist Christians often oscillate between two opposing poles of theology and spirituality. Theological discussion rarely touches on the saints or spiritual writers either. In fact, the saints can hardly be described as constituting a separate world since many Baptists are suspicious of the project entirely, including naming particular individuals as saints, their continued remembrance in annual sanctorals, and the devotion to and intercession of the saints. All of these have caused many Baptists to call into question the place of saints within Christian life and practice, to omit them entirely, and to worry about those who do embrace them.

In this article, the prevalent Baptist understanding of the saints will be examined. Focusing on Scripture, “saints” have been viewed by many Baptists as simply a synonym for all members of the church. This coheres with a Baptist emphasis on the priesthood of believers, where holiness is grounded in the personal with little or no external shape provided. Interestingly, Catholics have similarly discussed holiness or sanctity in a broader (or more diffused) manner with an articulated emphasis on the universal call to holiness. After discussing this theme, this article will examine some recent work about saints by Baptists. This return to “the saints” is significant and will contribute to an argument that the universal call to holiness (and its Baptist analogue in the priesthood of believers) requires the recognition of sanctity in other people (i.e., the saints) who issue an invitation to pursue alongside and who mediate the divine empowerment to embody the same holiness.

¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Theology and Sanctity,” in *Word and Redemption* (Montreal: Palm, 1965), 63.

BAPTISTS AND “THE SAINTS”

To begin, it is important to note that Baptists have said very little about saints and have tended to avoid serious discussion of the subject altogether. For instance, few congregations have the word “saint” in their title, a practice that is common among Catholic and some Protestant traditions.² There is no calendar of saint observances, and no persons are officially remembered as “saints.” Moreover, it is not merely the absence of certain “saintly” emphases that marks Baptist faith and practice. Indeed, many Baptists are even suspicious of those who have embraced a robust economy of sanctity (especially Catholics). The invocation of saints in prayers prompts worries about replacing Jesus as the object of our prayers. At the very least, Baptists grow concerned that the saints function as a necessary stepping stone for the religious life. E. Y. Mullins, similarly concerned about anything that might stand between an individual believer and God, would likely identify the economy of saints as the sort of “religion by proxy” that works against the soul’s competency in religion.³ Moreover, devotional practices related to particular saints are occasionally cited as a sign of something patently unscriptural and unchristian.

Of course, as Baptists do acknowledge, the word “saint” does appear in the New Testament, primarily as a substantive version of the adjective *hagios*, which means “holy.” The plural substantive *hagioi* is translated “holy ones” or “saints.” While scarcely used in the gospels and the book of Acts (four times total), it is prominent within the Pauline literature (8x in Romans, 10x in the Corinthian correspondence, and 20x in the rest of the Pauline corpus) and the Apocalypse, where we observe thirteen occurrences. Notably, when used in the New Testament, it is almost always plural. The general Pauline use points to Christian believers in a certain locale, serving as a common element in each letter’s greeting. In Philippians, for example, we find, “To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi” (1:1, NRSV). The letter to the Colossians is addressed “to the saints and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ in Colossae” (1:2, NRSV). In the Pauline epistles, this term is used broadly in connection with the hospitality of the church (Romans 12:13, 15:26; 1 Timothy 5:10, Philemon 7), of its love and care (Colossians 1:4, Philemon 5), of its reception of divine revelation (Colossians 1:26), and of its divine empowerment (Ephesians 3:18). Moreover, the saints are active, sending greetings to a few letters’ recipients as well (2 Corinthians 13:13, Philippians 4:22).

To be sure, there are several possible exceptions to this widespread use of the term (or at least ambiguous uses worthy of attention). In the Pauline letters, the term occasionally points to

² Notable exceptions include St. John’s Baptist Church in Charlotte, North Carolina. It should be noted that using “saint” to name a congregation seems far more likely to occur in an African-American Baptist church.

³ E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion: A New Interpretation of the Baptist Faith* (Philadelphia: Judson Press, 1908), 54.

aspects of vocation: “To all God’s beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints” (Romans 1:7, NRSV; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:2). This disrupts the static identity of believers as saints to indicate that the believers (i.e., God’s beloved) are beckoned to holiness. Other texts speak of the saints in connection with future blessings. Ephesians 1:17-19 states, “I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are *the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints*, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power” (NRSV). Here, even as their breadth might not be diminished, the saints retain a deeper significance as part of God’s inheritance.⁴ Similarly (though with a bit more ambiguity), Colossians 1:11–12 deploys an inheritance image: “May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has *enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light*” (NRSV).

The fact that “the saints” are literally “the holy ones” is also important to note, as it deepens the biblical background of the term. Underscoring the consecration or “set apart” character of these people, the way of life embraced by Christians becomes important. In 1 Peter, this path is described as a turning from former desires toward the hope found in Christ: “[A]s he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct” (1 Peter 1:15, NRSV). Further in the letter, the church is described as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Peter 2:9, NRSV). These Petrine phrases echo discussions of holiness in the Old Testament, especially the covenant between God and Israel, which was formalized on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:3–6).⁵ Throughout the remainder of the Pentateuch, discussion of particular practices and stipulations was linked to holiness: “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy” (Leviticus 19:2, NRSV; cf. Leviticus 11:45; Deuteronomy 7:6, 28:9). Here, the people of God bear witness to the holiness of God and seek to embody it in the world. Consequently, when 1 Peter adopts this language, it brings this sense of holiness to the community of Christians as well. That is, “Israel’s vocation as God’s elect, holy, and witnessing people is passed on to a united company of believing people, both Jews and Gentiles, who find their true calling by sharing in Christian fellowship the unity they have in Christ as his people.”⁶

In light of these brief scriptural observations, it is not surprising to find that Baptists have held a very circumscribed notion of saints within Christianity. This is seen in the confessions of

⁴ While there are differing opinions regarding the nature of this inheritance, one intriguing reading links this to the Israel’s promised inheritance of the land, a shared gift in which everyone participates.

⁵ Paul S. Fiddes, Brian Haymes, and Richard Kidd, *Baptists and the Communion of Saints: A Theology of Covenanted Disciples* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 15.

⁶ Ralph Martin, “Ephesians,” in *Broadman Bible Commentary*, vol. 11 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1971), 133.

faith written by Baptists through the centuries. The London Confession of 1644 uses the word “saints,” but does so in a very limited manner, describing the church as “a company of visible saints, called and separated from the world, by the word and Spirit of God, to the visible profession of the faith of the Gospel.”⁷ These saints participate in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and share in communion with others within “his walled sheepfold and watered garden.”⁸ The Second London Confession of Faith of 1689 also discusses saints, noting that they are united to Christ and bound with one another in “an holy fellowship and communion in the fellowship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services, as tend to their mutual edification.”⁹ Moreover, with its distinct Reformed emphasis, this confession invokes saints as a synonym for the elect when it discusses their perseverance to the eschaton.¹⁰

Overall, W.T. Conner sums up a representative Baptist view when he writes that “saints” is used in the New Testament in a sense that indicates people (i.e., all Christians) set apart for God. He elaborates: “These believers had been dedicated to God in that by the act of their own wills they had surrendered themselves to God. . . . [I]t is also the work of God by His Spirit in bringing the sinner to surrender his life.”¹¹ He views this notion of sanctity as part and parcel of the sanctification undergone by all believers who are linked to Christ, resulting in “a righteous life [that] grows out of the indwelling Spirit.”¹² He contrasts this with a Catholic understanding of sanctity, where saints are a special class of people who, in Conner’s view, may be worshiped. Acknowledging that Catholic theology distinguishes between the worship of God and the veneration of saints, Conner declares, “We have no ground in either Scripture or reason for maintaining that we have any living connection with those who have gone on before.”¹³ Aside from concerns about idolatry, he worries that saintly intercession detracts from the work of Christ.

Baptists have been reluctant to sharply distinguish between clergy and laity; instead they have viewed all Christians as fellow priests on level ground in Christ. Any distinction is purely functional, lest it expand into a domineering hierarchy. Similarly, excessively distinguishing the sanctity of specific persons from the church at large strikes many Baptists as dancing very close to idolatry—allowing a portion of the creation to take the place of the creator. Instead, any special

⁷ “London Confession of 1644” (art. XXXIII), in *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed., William L. Lumpkin, ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 165.

⁸ “London Confession of 1644” (art. XL, XXXIV), in *ibid.*, 167, 166. For two other uses of the term, see art. I & XXXII in *ibid.*, 156, 165.

⁹ “Second London Confession of Faith” (art. XXVII), in *ibid.*, 289–90.

¹⁰ “Second London Confession of Faith” (art. XVII), in *ibid.*, 272–74.

¹¹ W. T. Conner, *What is a Saint?* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1948), 9–10.

¹² *Ibid.*, 11–12. Later, he does acknowledge that, if all Christians are saints, then the departed may still hold that status: “They were [saints] while living, and surely death has not unsainted them. They belonged to God while living; surely they still belong to him” (*ibid.*, 27).

¹³ *Ibid.*, 17.

honour due to saints is gifted to everyone. Nonetheless, a Baptist embrace of a more robust theology of sanctity may not be as dangerous as has been feared, especially when viewed in connection with an emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. To explore this possibility, attention to the Catholic understanding of sanctity within the context of the pursuit of holiness will be necessary.

THE UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS

Baptists tend to emphasize the priesthood of believers over against what they call a Catholic understanding of sanctity that is reserved for a select class of people (e.g., priests, bishops, martyrs). However, while specific saints do play a role in the Catholic notion of holiness, there is more to be said. Extending from Matthew 5:48, where Jesus tells his disciples, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (NRSV), Catholics are advised to take seriously admonitions to love enemies, to avoid anger and lust, and to be salt and light.¹⁴ All people and all of life are included. As the Catholic Catechism states by quoting from Gregory of Nyssa’s *Life of Moses*: “Christian perfection has but one limit, that of having none.”¹⁵ In short, the faithful are called upon, as those who follow Jesus, to embrace a path of sanctity.

This path is described in the Second Vatican Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) as the universal call to holiness in the church. The council states that “all in the Church, whether they belong to the hierarchy or are cared for by it, are called to holiness.”¹⁶ Drawing on the Apostle Paul’s admonition to the Thessalonians that holiness makes up the fabric of all our lives, the text reiterates, “all the faithful of Christ of whatever rank or status, are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity.”¹⁷ The focus of such a vocation is Christ himself, the one who called us to be perfect and the one who modelled this holiness in his earthly sojourn, primarily in the two greatest commandments. Concerning his disciples, *Lumen Gentium* says, “The followers of Christ, called by God not by virtue of their works but by his design and grace, and justified in the Lord Jesus, have been made sons of God in the baptism of faith and partakers of the divine nature, and so are truly sanctified.”¹⁸ Thus, like Christ himself, all of the faithful will be “marked by love both of God and of [their] neighbor.”¹⁹ With Christ as the

¹⁴ *Lumen Gentium* connects the universal call to holiness to this admonition to perfection: “[A]ll the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord, each in his own way, to that perfect holiness whereby the Father Himself is perfect” [Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), §11].

¹⁵ Quoted in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §2028.

¹⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §39

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, §40. Cf. 1 Thess 4:3.

¹⁸ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §40.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, §42.

exemplar, the goal of discipleship becomes Christologically shaped as well. Indeed, this link between Christ and the holiness of disciples echoes Augustine's statement in the *City of God* that "we can rightly call all those christi who are anointed with His chrism, forasmuch as the whole body with its head is one Christ."²⁰

In the Catholic view, then, there is no doubt that this call is universal, but the ways that it can be manifested and developed are multiple. In other words, as the council states, "The forms and tasks of life are many but holiness is one—that sanctity which is cultivated by all who act under God's Spirit and, obeying the Father's voice and adoring God the Father in spirit and in truth, follow Christ."²¹ This sanctity is broader than simply a handful of people—that is, those whom Aristotle called "great-souled." Instead, all the faithful (in all stations of life) are part of the same journey and headed in the same direction, even in the midst of great diversity. Aiming to illustrate the breadth of this chorus, *Lumen Gentium* discusses the manner in which several classes of people share in this call, including bishops, priests, ministers of lesser rank, married couples and parents, widows and single people, humanitarians and activists, and all people, especially those "weighed down by poverty, infirmity, sickness and other hardships."²² What we see here, then, is not a superhuman sense of sanctity. Rather, the council, by appealing to people of all stations of life, offers what it calls "a more human manner of life" to the world.²³

One year after *Lumen Gentium*, the council released the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*). This document extends from *Lumen Gentium*'s emphasis on the significant place and work of the laity in the church. The decree states that the church has a "diversity of ministry but unity of mission."²⁴ Thus, while ordained ministers certainly have roles to play in pursuit of this aim, the laity do as well since they "share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ."²⁵ This Christological emphasis elevates the work of the laity in the world. More specifically, they are to endeavour for "evangelization and sanctification" as they live "in the midst of the world and of secular affairs."²⁶ In short, their work for holiness in all parts of life serves as "a leaven in the world."²⁷

More recently, popes have highlighted the centrality of the universal call to holiness. In January 2001, John Paul II offered *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, an apostolic letter on the occasion of the new millennium. In it, he outlined the church's priorities going forward. Not surprisingly, he

²⁰ Augustine, *City of God*, Book XVII, ch. 4.

²¹ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §41.

²² *Ibid.*, §41.

²³ *Ibid.*, §40.

²⁴ Second Vatican Council, *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, §2.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

focused primarily on holiness, which he described as “a message that convinces without the need for words” and as “the living reflection of the face of Christ.”²⁸ Continuing, he stated, “Holiness, whether ascribed to Popes well-known to history or to humble lay and religious figures, from one continent to another of the globe, has emerged more clearly as the dimension which expresses best the mystery of the Church.”²⁹ Recalling *Lumen Gentium*, he noted that the council document rediscovered this mystery when it recognized the church as a people gathered together in the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.³⁰ This holiness, though, is more than a state; it is a task as well, one that deserved the utmost attention and effort: “all pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness.”³¹ Further, John Paul II connected baptism to holiness in a manner that should appeal to Baptists: “To ask catechumens: ‘Do you wish to receive Baptism?’ means at the same time to ask them, ‘Do you wish to become holy?’”³² He reiterated the council’s point that holiness is not a condition reserved for a few special persons. Instead, John Paul II declared, “The time has come to re-propose wholeheartedly to everyone this *high standard of ordinary Christian living*.”³³ To do so requires “training in holiness,” which includes the art of prayer, Eucharistic practice, penitential contrition, and listening to and proclaiming the word of God.³⁴

In a November 2014 general audience in St. Peter’s Square, Pope Francis also invoked the theme of holiness as discussed in *Lumen Gentium*. Grounded in baptism, “all Christians . . . share in the same vocation,” one that he described as a “universal vocation to being saints.”³⁵ Like John Paul II and the Second Vatican Council, Francis refuted the notion that sainthood is something obtained through determined effort. Instead, sanctity is always received as a gift, “granted to us by the Lord Jesus.”³⁶ It involves “rediscover[ing] oneself in communion with God, in the fullness of his life and of his love.”³⁷ Consequently, sanctity is not the “prerogative of the few.”³⁸ Francis gave more texture to this claim by walking through various states of life (consecrated, married, unmarried, parent or grandparent, catechist, educator, volunteer).³⁹ In short, he declared, “[E]very

²⁸ John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, §7. Available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-ineunte.html.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., §30. Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §4.

³¹ John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, §30.

³² Ibid., §31.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., §§32-41

³⁵ Francis, General Audience (19 November 2014). Available at https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiencias/2_014/documents/papa-francesco_20141119_udienza-generale.html.

³⁶ Ibid., §1.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., §2. Francis even imagines a potential dialogue objecting to this claim: “But, father, I work in a factory; I work as an accountant, only with numbers; you can’t be a saint there . . . ‘. ‘Yes, yes you can! There, where you work, you can become a saint’” (ibid.).

state of life leads to holiness, always! In your home, on the street, at work, at church, in that moment and in your state of life, the path to sainthood has been opened.”⁴⁰ To pursue that path, Francis suggests small acts consisting of patience, prayer, generosity, and hospitality as progress.⁴¹

Throughout all these reflections, it is clear that in the Catholic view the laity have a significant role to play as part of Christ’s ministry of reconciliation to the world (cf. 2 Corinthians 5). Despite the presence of formally designated priests, bishops, and even saints, the laity are called to a vocation of holiness. As *Lumen Gentium* states, “In the Church not everyone marches along the same path, yet all are called to sanctity.”⁴² What results is a shared priestly role for the entire church, lay and clergy alike, one where “all together, and each one to the best of his ability, must nourish the world with spiritual fruits. They must diffuse in the world the spirit which animates those poor, meek and peace-makers whom the Lord in the Gospel proclaimed blessed.”⁴³ As can be observed, this priesthood has some significant resonances with its Baptist counterpart.

Similarly, Baptists might agree to a “sainthood of all believers,” where all are equal in Christ regarding the pursuit of holiness. Yet, this general call to sanctity does not exclude a place for specified saints. In fact, the Baptist concern that named saints are problematic could undercut the depth of this broader shared sainthood. After all, the fullness of this universal vocation received by the whole church is manifested in the life and witness of these specified saints, as *Lumen Gentium* makes clear: “[T]he authentic cult of the saints consists not so much in the multiplying of external acts, but rather in the greater intensity of our love, whereby, for our own greater good and that of the whole Church, we seek from the saints ‘example in their way of life, fellowship in their communion, and aid by their intercession.’”⁴⁴ To lose specified saints might mean losing part of the path toward incarnating the fullness of Christ’s love. Therefore, while there may be aspects of this understanding of the saints that confound or bother some Baptists, it is worth the time and effort to consider recent Baptist reflections on the saints in order to ascertain whether genuine *rapprochement* is possible.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., §3.

⁴² Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §32.

⁴³ Ibid., §38.

⁴⁴ Ibid., §51. Elsewhere, *Lumen Gentium* links the holiness of the faithful with the saints by stating, “[T]he holiness of the People of God will grow in fruitful abundance, as is clearly shown in the history of the Church through the lives of so many saints” (ibid., §38).

RECENT BAPTIST WORK ON THE SAINTS

James McClendon's *Biography as Theology*

James McClendon discusses the role of saints in several of his works, most notably *Biography as Theology*. There, McClendon argues that specific biographical accounts should be embraced as serious theological resources, illuminating visions of the shape of the Christian life in new contexts. He surveys several lives, including a person who led an international entity (Dag Hammarskjöld), a civil rights leader (Martin Luther King), a New Testament scholar turned farmer (Clarence Jordan), and a lesser-known composer and musician (Charles Ives). These lives are significant not for the theology they articulate or embody, but for what they reflect and how they illustrate new possibilities for the shape of the Christian life. In other words, as McClendon states, these lives confront us to make room so that our theology can be “adequate to lives such as these lives.”⁴⁵

McClendon draws on the insights of German Catholic priest and theologian Romano Guardini, who saw the saints not as super-Christians, but as particular intensities of the love of God and love of neighbor. Guardini writes that a saint is someone “to whom God has given the strength to take this commandment with utter seriousness, to understand it profoundly, and to bend every effort to carry it out.”⁴⁶ With the vast array of saints across the centuries, “saints serve as models for new styles of being Christian, opening paths which many others will follow.”⁴⁷ These intensities need not be extravagant. In fact, both Guardini and McClendon are looking for more subtle saints in the post-Enlightenment era, those that will be found in homes, offices, and factories as well as monasteries and churches. In short, saints of this generation “take up the way of practical holiness in daily life.”⁴⁸ Moreover, as McClendon notes, this reinvigorates an interest in the saints’ role in worship—what he is unashamed to describe as veneration of saints.⁴⁹ Drawing on a Roman Catholic distinction between *dulia* (a devotion that is rendered to God by honoring these graced exemplary lives) and *latria* (worship that is due to God alone), he states that no saint should be the object of worship.⁵⁰ In practice, then, while he is clear that “the saints are all of God’s children,” McClendon proposes that a Baptist veneration of particular people in worship can “serve as encouragement and guidance for our own lives in the presence of God.”⁵¹ As later authors have

⁴⁵ James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today’s Theology* (1974; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 25.

⁴⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, 156.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 156–57.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 180.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 181, 173.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 179.

indicated, McClendon's thoughts are the beginning of a Baptist framework for veneration (i.e., honoring) of the saints and nonetheless a worthwhile proposal regarding the place of the saints as a whole.⁵²

Fiddes, Haymes, and Kidd, *Baptists and the Communion of Saints*

In 2014, Paul Fiddes, Brian Haymes, and Richard Kidd, all three British Baptist theologians, co-authored *Baptists and the Communion of Saints: A Theology of Covenanted Disciples*. In its pages, each contributes to a sustained treatment of the saints and how they might find a more robust role in Baptist life and thought. The authors view the term *saints* as a signifier for more than simply all the faithful, though it does have at least that sense as affirmed by early Baptists. Additionally, they see value in designating a select handful of people as “the saints,” those in whom “there appears to be a particular disclosure that calls for attention.”⁵³ This disclosure is not based on the merits or abilities of the individuals, but on the grace of the Holy One within them. We recognize such grace perhaps due to special circumstances that make it visible in a peculiar manner, not only captivating our gaze, but beckoning us to imitation. Highlighting the role of ecclesial judgment and recognition, the authors state, “the church corporately has *found* them to be a focal point for reflecting on the generosity of God in human life.”⁵⁴

When considering the saints' ongoing significance, the authors discuss these faithful ones in the context of memory. Indeed, understanding the “memory of God” as a useful metaphor for conceptualizing the abiding relationship between the creator and the creature, they see the memory of God as binding all the saints together as all are in Christ.⁵⁵ Thus, even beyond death, these beloved disciples continually serve the church and are signs of Jesus' life and work. Because of this, they note, “To remember them and others is to be inspired by the Spirit.”⁵⁶ Moreover, the authors welcome the intercession of these who live in God, these whose prayers (like all prayers), “ride upon the praying of Christ into the most holy place.”⁵⁷ To be certain, they avoid any sense that Mary and the saints are a necessary conduit for our prayers, but they do affirm that we offer our prayers with Mary and the saints such that our prayers are never alone.⁵⁸ The authors make the

⁵² See Andy Goodliff, “Towards a Baptist Sanctoral?,” *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 13.3 (May 2013): 24-30.

⁵³ Fiddes, Haymes, and Kidd, *Baptists and the Communion of Saints*, 23.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 69–70. “To be remembered by God would be nothing less than being alive in God” (*ibid.*, 90).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 92–93. See also Baptist World Alliance and Catholic Church, “The Word of God in the Life of the Church: A Report of International Conversations between the Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance, 2006–2010,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 31.1 (Spring 2012): 88–89 (§§ 156–58).

point that even Baptists elevate certain individuals—pastors, evangelists, martyrs—for the sake of their devotion to Christ.⁵⁹ In fact, they see “the saints” as something of an antidote to the celebrity that tends to characterize the lives of these people. Rather than saints, they are often viewed as heroes whose actions are their own qualification. Instead of the spotlight center stage, “saints may indeed be hidden on the periphery of the public world. . . . [T]heir lives make no sense apart from the God they serve.”⁶⁰ In other words, a singular focus on a particular saint is owed to “God’s own singularity.”⁶¹ This particular disclosure recognized within these saints does not eclipse their faults. On the contrary, by living their lives before God (*coram Deo*), the presence and effects of their sin are magnified.⁶²

Fiddes, Haymes, and Kidd highlight the fact that an emphasis on the priesthood of believers need not exclude named saints from Baptist life and thought. In fact, to truly take this priesthood seriously, a specified economy of saints might even be necessary. Brian Haymes makes precisely this point: “Insofar as we are in [Christ]—saints alive on earth and those departed in Christ—might we not think of ourselves as the one priesthood of all believers in and under Christ our head? An essential aspect of this priesthood is to offer prayers for the world, focused in the divine prayer for the coming of the kingdom, the doing of God’s will on earth.”⁶³ In other words, while all of the faithful (both alive and dead) are rightly named as “saints,” those specified (and even elevated) for their particular witness to Christ and his holiness redirect our focus toward the church’s continual prayer for the consummation of God’s kingdom.

BAPTISTS AMONG THE SAINTS

As has been discussed, the economy of saints does not detract from the pursuit of holiness; rather, it offers resources for the fulfilment of that pursuit. It does so in several important ways. First, the saints, instead of usurping the role of Christ, serve as signs of the fullness of Christ. Returning to Hans Urs von Balthasar, he writes that the saints are situated within God’s relationship with the world: “[The saints] never at any moment leave their center in Christ. They give themselves to their work in the world, while ‘praying at all times’ and ‘doing all to the glory of God.’”⁶⁴ In other words, whether discussing saints such as Athanasius of Alexandria (who suffered for the sake of

⁵⁹ “Baptists have always known, along with the whole church, that some lives do disclose the divine presence and grace in a specially striking way” (ibid., 114).

⁶⁰ Ibid., 106.

⁶¹ Ibid., 149.

⁶² Ibid., 112.

⁶³ Ibid., 20.

⁶⁴ Balthasar, “Theology and Sanctity,” 68.

Christological orthodoxy), Thérèse of Lisieux (whose life and devotion were permeated by the love of Christ), or André Trocmé (who saved up to 2500 Jews from the Nazi concentration camps), their lives and actions are unintelligible without Christ and the church.

Second, the Christological emphasis is not abstract. The saints, like Christ himself, occupy the rough ground of human existence. As David McCarthy notes, “They are constituted by, and are the instantiation of, our access to the reality of communion—to God’s community of human life, to God in the lowly, to the incarnation. The saints and their lives embody an incarnational reality; they populate the borderlands between the future and now, there and here, and heaven and earth. . . . They bring ordinary life and people into a real experience of *communitas*.”⁶⁵ The saints—these ordinary people—do not restrict access to God. Rather, they open greater access (even more than might be available solely through personal devotions) by mediating the divine presence to all of the faithful in all places and times. Von Balthasar resists the temptation to view the saints as simply past historical data, stating, “The saints have always been on guard against such an attitude, and immersed themselves in the actual circumstances of the events of revelation. They desired to be present, when and where each thing happened.”⁶⁶ The work of the saints, then, is ongoing and ever-present in the church.

Finally, the saints speak to the catholicity of the whole church. That is, while there is a “localness” in sanctity that allows each believer to honour (perhaps even venerate) a particular saint who may be unacknowledged beyond that setting, there is an additional need to share in the pursuit of sanctity in order to more fully participate in the mystical body of Christ. When surveying lists of official and unofficial saints, one gains an awareness of the depth of the call to holiness and the breadth of its scope, reaching across the earth but also throughout time. After discussing the so-called “Hall of Faith,” the writer of Hebrews states, “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. . . .” (Hebrews 12:1-2a, NRSV). This cloud of witnesses consists not only of Old Testament saints such as Abraham, Moses, and Rahab. Indeed, it is filled with all the faithful, especially those named saints who embody our vocation of holiness most intensely and who point to our “pioneer and perfecter” most distinctly (i.e., the one whom *Lumen Gentium* calls “the crown of the saints”).⁶⁷ In this way, we see the saints articulating an ecclesiology that simultaneously makes room for the universal and local, truly embracing the catholicity (i.e., wholeness) of our faith.

⁶⁵ David Matzko McCarthy, *Sharing God’s Company: A Theology of the Communion of Saints* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 53.

⁶⁶ Balthasar, “Theology and Sanctity,” 81.

⁶⁷ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, §50.

CONCLUSION

Von Balthasar has written that “the life of the saints is theology in practice.”⁶⁸ Such words may sound odd to Baptist ears. However, even with prevalent Baptist convictions, the saints should have a significant role to play. Interestingly, as has already been noted, Baptists have elevated key figures within their history, perhaps using the memory of Lottie Moon, Martin Luther King Jr., or someone else to channel reflections on what Christlikeness looks like in the contemporary context. In this way, these persons are not only inspirational, but they also participate in the presence of Christ, mediating that to the church at large. This mediation is not always affirming, at times challenging the ways in which we may have lost a sense of sanctity. As Fiddes, Haymes, and Kidd write, the saints’ role in the formation of Christlikeness can be both “inspiring and disturbing.”⁶⁹ Other traditions, recognizing the importance of several Baptists, have honored them as part of their sanctoral cycle; Baptists can do the same, not only honouring the memory of their Baptist departed, but sharing in the memory of all of the Christian faithful who have gone before and who continue to share in the life of God even now.⁷⁰ An embrace of “the saints” is not a turn away from Christ, but a pivot toward a deeper journey into the vocation that rests upon all believers – to be holy as God is holy.

⁶⁸ Balthasar, “Theology and Sanctity,” 79.

⁶⁹ Fiddes, Haymes, and Kidd, *Baptist and the Communion of Saints*, 161. “Recalling the saints illustrates the risks and diverse meanings of discipleship, the wide variety of forms of life following Christ may take” (ibid., 160).

⁷⁰ Several Anglican communions honor John Bunyan. In the Episcopal Church in the United States, Walter Rauschenbusch has a feast day (July 2), as does Roger Williams (February 5), Martin Luther King, Jr. (April 4), William Carey (October 19), Adoniram Judson (April 12), and Lottie Moon (December 22). The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America honors King on January 15. Steven Harmon recommends that Baptists embrace the calendars of other traditions, with a few caveats: “If Baptist historians were to propose additional exemplary Christians from the Baptist tradition to add to such calendars in producing a sanctoral that is both distinctively Baptist and broadly ecumenical, Baptist congregations might be able to include in their weekly worship a few moments for telling the stories of men and women who have provided worthy examples of lives lived in the service of God and humanity” [Steven R. Harmon, *Towards Baptist Catholicity: Essays on Tradition and the Baptist Vision* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2006), 170].

‘A LITTLE CHAPEL 9 MILES OUT OF NELSON’: REVISITING BAPTIST BEGINNINGS IN AOTEAROA

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Baptist beginnings in Aotearoa-New Zealand are not as clear as they may seem. The current national Baptist website names Nelson Baptist Church as “the first Baptist Church in New Zealand.”

¹ Alan Roberts, writing in his wonderful local church history agreed: “The Nelson Baptist Church has the honour of being the first Baptist church to be formed in New Zealand.”² The Baptist website mentions two key early Baptists: 1) “the first notable Baptist, Henry Cooper Daniell”, who emigrated in 1841, settled later in Nelson, and eventually became a founding member of Nelson Baptist, and 2) “the first Baptist minister, Decimus Dolamore”, arriving in 1851 to help “establish Nelson Baptist Church” along with Daniell and the other founding members.³ A similar picture is seen in *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand* (1966), which reads as follows:

The first Baptist Church in New Zealand was formed at Nelson in May 1851. The ship Comet brought the Rev. Decimus Dolamore, a Baptist minister from Bedale, Yorkshire, who was seeking service in the colonies. The Church began under his leadership with 15 foundation members. A grant of land was obtained from the Provincial Government and a building was erected.⁴

From such summary statements alone, one would easily assume Baptist history in Aotearoa-New Zealand to have relatively simple beginnings, characterised primarily by the work of two men, Daniell and Dolamore, leading to the establishment of the first Baptist Church. Daniell, however, was not the person Dolamore was expecting to meet when he arrived on these shores. Dolamore was expecting to meet and serve an existing community which Baptist historian Martin Sutherland rightly describes as a “nascent church”.⁵ Both Sutherland’s account and Paul Tonson’s treatment in the *Handful of Grain* series, draw from a letter from Daniell to his mother, originally published in the English Baptist *Repository* and later reprinted in Roberts’ history of Nelson Baptist. It reveals a

¹ Baptist Churches of New Zealand, “Our Story | Baptist Churches of New Zealand,” *Baptist Churches of New Zealand*, n.d., <http://www.baptist.org.nz/general/Our-Story/>.

² Alan Roberts, *Nelson Baptist Church: The Journey Continues - A Narrative of the Years 1951 to 2001* (Nelson, New Zealand: Nelson Bays Print, 2002), 7.

³ Baptist Churches of New Zealand, “Our Story | Baptist Churches of New Zealand.”

⁴ G. T. Beilby, “Foundations (Baptist Churches),” in *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, by A. H. McLintock, online. (The Government of New Zealand, 1966), <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/1966/baptist-churches>.

⁵ Martin Sutherland, *Conflict & Connection: Baptist Identity in New Zealand* (Auckland: Archer Press, 2011), 10.

third character, a migrant carpenter named James Poppleton Horne, whose role, even if not long-lasting, was significant in the earliest chapters of the Baptist story in Aotearoa. To explore the extent of this activity, we will first re-visit the impression offered through Daniell, and then gather observations from Horne himself, in a correspondence that appears to not have won a wide modern audience.

HORNE ACCORDING TO DANIELL

Opening his narration of the Nelson Baptist story, Alan Roberts reproduces a letter from Daniell “to his mother in Bristol”.⁶ It provides us with a very early, and notably critical, picture of Horne. Daniell’s account of Horne’s ministry experience is scant. Horne is introduced as a carpenter “living in the country” who had “become apparently very seriously impressed” and “took it into his head” to be baptized. Sutherland, likely taking into account later events, describes Horne as becoming “convicted of Baptist principles”.⁷ Horne was then both baptized by and then baptized a (formerly Wesleyan) acquaintance of his, and subsequently “took to preaching”. He then “got together some followers and built a little chapel about 9 miles out of Nelson.” Paul Tonson, through uncited sources, documents that Horne called this chapel ‘Rehoboth’, after the “well dug by Isaac (Genesis 26:22)” and meaning “we shall be fruitful in the land.”⁸

It is clear that Horne and his “followers” intended to be recognised as a Baptist church. Daniell reports that Horne, through a former “member of the Baptist Chapel in England”, wrote to a Baptist contact, “a Mr Derry of Barton, England, stating that a Baptist cause had been raised in Nelson settlement”. According to Daniell, Horne’s letter, forwarded by Derry to be inserted in the “Baptist Reporter”, requested “some young man to come out and take oversight of this Church”, and promised that their current relatively poor state would not prevent them from maintaining “a young man without encumbrance.” This request, of course, was answered affirmatively by Decimus Dolamore, who was willing to leave his position as “Pastor of the Baptist Church of Bedale, Yorkshire” and “undertake the charge” at the church described by Horne.

At this point Daniell begins to narrate the conflict which emerged between he and Horne, particularly over Horne’s intent to be recognised as a Baptist. In the absence of any local established Baptist movement, Daniell, along with his wife and “four Baptist families” in Nelson, “who were accredited members of [Baptist] Churches in England [...] had worshipped and communed with

⁶ Roberts, *Nelson Baptist Church: The Journey Continues*, 7, and subsequent quotes from Daniell.

⁷ Sutherland, *Conflict & Connection*, 10.

⁸ Paul Tonson, *A Handful of Grain: The Centenary History of the Baptist Union of New Zealand—Volume 1: 1851–1882* (Wellington, NZ: N.Z. Baptist Historical Society for the Baptist Union of New Zealand, 1982), 49.

the Wesleyans.” Meanwhile, Horne’s group had tried “often” to win the “sanction and support to his proceedings in the country”. Daniell cites two reasons why he and the other urban Baptists “could never unite with him”; 1) “his doctrine was erroneous” and 2) “his practice, as relates to discipline, [was] at variance with Scripture and propriety”. It is not clear what the particular issues were.

The relationship between the rural and urban groups sunk even further when Horne was able “to obtain from His Excellency [the Governor] the promise of a grant of a piece of land in the town for the purpose of erecting a Chapel.” Horne apparently had secured the land not “for himself and followers only”, but rather “by representing himself as the representative of the Baptist Body”. It just so happened that the grant was to be prepared at the office where Daniell worked, enabling him to confirm that Horne had “especially asked for [the land grant] on behalf of the Baptist Body generally.” He goes on to describe his dissatisfaction:

When I understood the grounds upon which the land was to be granted to him, I saw directly that if we – that is, those of us who consider ourselves, in the true sense of the word, Baptists – that if we should, at any future time, wish to obtain from the Government a piece of land it would not be granted as the Government would at once reply “Why, we have granted a piece of land already to your body!”

Daniell and a friend were able to persuade “the Government officer” to “delay the issue of such a grant until measures could be taken to secure the fair representation of the Baptist Body in the grant.”

A meeting date was appointed, which turned out to be more momentous than expected. Daniell records that Horne came prepared. He “came into town, attended by a large number of his followers. He had invited several of the respectable inhabitants to come and hear the matter, including the Crown Lands Commissioner.” Daniell and the urban Baptists argued that Horne “had no right to ask for the grant on behalf of the Baptist Body generally, but only as for himself and followers”. If correct, this would leave the land up for grabs, as “the Governor would not grant to him and his Church simply, but to the Baptist Denomination generally.” Progress seemed unlikely. An hour after the meeting was adjourned to reconvene that evening, a vessel called “The Comet” arriving via Sydney, arrived ashore with the Rev. Mr Dolamore and his wife. Subsequently, Dolamore, “who had been sent for by Horn’s party, and who knew nothing of any Baptists being in Nelson, but fully expected to be located in the country,” was introduced instead to Daniell having presented letters of introduction to a colleague. Dolamore’s arrival meant that not only was land at stake in the conflict, but also, it seemed, the newly arrived minister.

Horne's party, which Daniell calls "the people in the country", were deemed "utterly unable to support a Minister, and it soon appeared from their admission that they expected a young man, who, while capable of earning his livelihood by his own labour, might also assist Horn in preaching." Daniell and the urban Baptists suspected Horne's true motive was "the hope of getting such sanction from the Churches in England as should establish him in the eyes of the public and his own people." Daniell and the other town Baptists, though they "could not venture unassisted to think of supporting a minister", nonetheless promised to "strain every nerve to endeavour to support him" if he stayed. Dolamore's decision came down on the side of Daniell and the town Baptists, however he also planned to "visit the country once a month."

It is not clear if the rural congregation remained long enough to receive a visit from Dolamore, as it was "completely broken up" after "a few weeks". Daniell's final assessment is that they were justified "in keeping aloof" from Horne, in the light of "some inconsistencies and charges proving his unfitness for the position he had assumed".

Daniell's portrait of Horne admits of at least some activity, most notably preaching and erecting a Chapel. Reading in between the lines, we see Horne's efforts to network with other Christians in the Nelson area, in particular Daniell and the urban Baptists. In sum, however, Daniell's account is distinctly negative. It contains a) their reasons for refusing to join with him, b) their action taken to prevent the land grant from being awarded to him and his church, and c) the resulting consequence of Dolamore settling in with Daniell and the members of what would become Nelson Baptist Church.

HORNE ACCORDING TO HORNE

However accurate or exaggerated Daniell's account was, one point that is surely correct was that Horne wrote a letter to contacts in England. It was addressed to a "John Derry" of Barton, England, who forwarded the letter to a "Brother Goadby... for insertion in the Repository", and made appearance in November 1849.⁹ Its contents give a fuller picture of events leading up to the fateful meeting, and (of course) a more positive portrait of Horne.

It opens with a stated aim of "forming a Baptist church in the settlement of Nelson, New Zealand". With this goal in mind, the bulk of the letter consists of Horne supplying Derry (and any other readers) with his own story. Thirty years old at the time of writing, Horne was the son of a Presbyterian elder, reverend and "eminently good man." Part of a "strictly pious" family he "was

⁹ James Poppleton Horne, "New Zealand: Correspondence", *The General Baptist Repository and Missionary Observer*, Vol. XI—New Series (London: Benjamin L. Green, Paternoster/Row, 1849), 514–16.

brought up in the Presbyterian form of worship.” Early adult life, however, saw him leaving London with the New Zealand Company, “by trade a carpenter, a complete worldling in the pursuit of wealth, and fond of change.” Either due to a troubled conscience, troubled seas, or both, Horne made a vow to serve the Lord “if spared to land”. However, after a short time attending “upon the means of grace”, he subsequently moved up country with sixteen other road and bridge builders. “I scarcely need to say that my resolutions, made in my own strength,” he writes, “began to give way.” In the context of “bad company, and bad examples, and in connection with a strong desire of making money to get home, I seemed to forget for a time the promises I had previously made.”

Horne then goes on to tell of his conversion. In the language he employs, we may possibly discern a hint of Horne’s tone and tenor as one who gained a reputation as “a very acceptable preacher”.¹⁰

But it pleased the Lord to take the work into his own hands, and so to convince me of sin, as to lead me to sue for mercy, where mercy only could be found – in his dear Son. I was brought low, and he helped me; and when in the deepest distress I gained hope from the promises made in his holy word. My attention was particularly directed to the words of Peter, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you,’... I was enabled to believe that Christ would forgive me, and seal me with the spirit of promise; I had not a shadow of doubt; I had every reason to believe I had received the blessedness I sought, by the joy and peace I felt in believing.

Horne was an acquaintance of “an old man who had been a local preacher amongst the Methodists, and who, like myself, concluded that it was the duty of christians [sic] to obey the ordinances of Christ”, and the two baptized one another.

Upon returning to Nelson, a “Sabbath-school” was being established by “a gentleman of the name of Campbell”, and Horne was selected as superintendent, in addition to agreeing “to build a place as speedily as we could for a school-room and preaching place.”¹¹

Horne then recounts his sense of calling to the ministry of preaching. Having been “earnestly requested to commence preaching by several of my neighbours”, and “getting my old Wesleyan friend to pray with me and for me”, he began in 1842, initially being put on a rotating preaching plan amongst a society of “United Christians”. He recounts his reasons for soon

¹⁰ Tonson, *A Handful of Grain*, 49.

¹¹ Horne refers here to Matthew Campbell, who founded several schools in the area, see “Matthew Campbell – Laying the Foundation of National Education NZ,” *TheProw.Org.NZ—Ngā Kōrero o Te Tau Ihu*, 2008, <http://www.theprow.org.nz/people/matthew-campbell/#.WuLV9Mhx0W0>; Nelson Baptist Church would later use this site for its initial meetings, whilst the construction of their building was delayed due to “the more necessary business of building a Brewery”, see “Nelson Baptist Church,” *TheProw.Org.NZ—Ngā Kōrero o Te Tau Ihu*, 2012, <http://www.theprow.org.nz/places/nelson-baptist-church/#.WuLUH8hx0Wp>.

withdrawing his name: "...I soon saw that each preacher was particularly anxious to further his own views, and that high Calvinists, Primitive Methodists... with one poor Baptist, would not do well together." He resigned to preach "to such as came to me, the same faith I had in Jesus, and pointed out to them his example, and besought them to follow him." He then reports the fruit of his preaching ministry. He was eventually joined by "a Mr. Jessop, who had sat under Mr. Brock of Norwich, whose principles were decidedly those of a Baptist... and his wife", who were baptized 1 ½ years prior to the letter. He saw "evidence that the preaching of the gospel there proved itself to be the power of God unto the salvation of some precious souls." He was received by "Richard Hart and his wife" and "for the first time, I saw a little church of seven members united in fellowship with me." At the time of writing, Horne reported that "fifteen have been baptized."

At some stage, the threat of "rapidly declining" health led Horne to drastically reduce the amount of preaching he did. In addition to an unexpectedly speedy recovery, he felt warned "not to be idle" by a dream in which a prisoner looked him in the eye and "cried three times, *Lost! lost! lost!*" After finding his "lungs and voice much improved" while speaking at a Wesleyan missionary meeting, he resumed preaching, whilst maintaining his schoolmaster position.

The remainder of the letter addresses Horne's struggle to establish his congregation as a Baptist church. He praises the "steady adherence" of his congregants, which he affectionately calls "friends", who have stayed with him despite being invited elsewhere. Most of all they are "brow-beaten with the reflection, that I am not recognized by the churches at home". This reflection seems to have come from neighbouring churches. There appears to have been a group and their minister (not the urban Baptists, for they had no minister) who were critical of Horne. They nonetheless gave him "a nearly unanimous call to join them", but he felt convicted to preach only "what has brought peace to my own soul" rather than change his views.

Horne then offers a brief treatment of his relations to the other Baptists in the area. He regrets that they "have not become as yet united to us". As for Daniell in particular, Horne calls him admirably "a man of true piety". Horne does not mention Daniell's concern with his 'doctrine' but instead portrays him as being chiefly concerned with order.

His objections are, that my way of beginning was out of order, and would not be recognized by you, on account of my not being ordained; and he further objects that they having no papers from home to prove their membership with the churches at home, they cannot, for want of the proper power, constitute me as their minister, or form themselves into a church. But why talk of order, when souls all around us are going down to hell!

Here we get a sense that, as Sutherland perceives, as far as Horne and Daniell's conflict was concerned, "the key issues had to do with power and leadership style."¹² Whereas Daniell and the other urban Baptists were content to worship with the Wesleyans until "the proper power" could come and assist with the proper constitution of Horne as a minister, and advised Horne and his congregation to do the same. Horne writes, "to this advice our little church would not accede". He felt compelled by the "peculiar circumstances in which I was placed – the co-operation of divine grace, and the desire of the people," to carry on with the ministry, and discerned his decision to be confirmed by subsequent experience.

At our meetings the people forbore not to cry for mercy, and would not leave the place till we had prayed with them for mercy; and though some, whose parents are Wesleyans, have not yet been baptized, yet they confess they have gotten much good through my instrumentality.

Furthermore, Horne signals the advanced state which his initiative had progressed to; namely having "ordered stuff for the building of a Baptist Chapel", and records that he "received a note, saying it is ready" at the very time of his writing. Here he also mentions "the grant of an acre of land in a very eligible spot, commanding a double frontage of two principal roads", which he had received. Horne's congregation wanted the endorsement from the English contacts before investing the land.

Before closing his letter, Horne outlining four "reasons for addressing you":

1st. It is the design both of myself and the church that we should be identified with the General Baptists. We have no wish to form a new sect. The trust deeds, if you approve of us, will be made in that name. We should be thankful for instruction as to how the deeds should be worded, and to have information respecting your form of church government, that we may be placed upon a more permanent basis.

2nd. We think that when you know our state we shall share in your sympathies, and have an interest in your prayers.

3rd. It would furnish an impetus to our efforts, and tend to remove that impression so industriously circulated, as to our being an unlawful assembly, on account of my not being ordained, nor the church recognized by any of the churches at home.

4th. We want to make all secure to those who may succeed us; and if a young man approved of the church [...] would come out voluntarily, we would thankfully receive

¹² Sutherland, *Conflict & Connection*, 10–11.

him as a labourer amongst us; and if outfitted by you, we would support him for three years, and by that time we have no doubt but the ingathering would be abundant.

We see Horne's desire to establish himself and his congregation in positive light in a closing wish: "may the Lord assist you in forming such views of the case as shall tend to the furtherance of his glory."

In his letter, we gain a valuable perspective for better understanding Baptist beginnings in the Nelson region. We see Horne, son of a Presbyterian preacher, having wandered from God's path, having a strong experience of conversion and sense of call to ministry. We see him negotiate relationships with other Christians and other Baptists, and engaging in ministry that saw a "little church" gathered, a chapel erected, and some "precious souls" saved and baptized. Naturally, Horne's autobiographical account is more positive than Daniell's accusatory picture. Nonetheless, his letter provides valuable contrast and detail, which, when read alongside Daniell, helps us get a clearer sense of how things unfolded.

We know almost nothing of what became of Horne. Tonson quotes an unknown source describing him as being "a very acceptable preacher in his early years" but being "somewhat under a cloud" in his later life.¹³ Whilst Horne may not have engaged in formal ministry again, it seems that he pursued other forms of public service. According to one record, he died in Christchurch, on or near March 21, 1893, having once been "a member of the Provincial Council" of Nelson, and (unsuccessfully) "contested the Superintendency" in 1869, some 18 years after our events.¹⁴

As far as Baptist 'firsts' go in Aotearoa-New Zealand, at least a few occurred in relation to Horne. The first baptism by immersion in this land may well have been the joint baptism of Horne and his Wesleyan friend "twenty miles from Nelson" in a "tracky wood".¹⁵ The first baptistic worship services appear to be those associated with the "little church" Horne managed to gather, meeting in the home of Richard Hart and his wife in Wimea. We now turn to consider the extent to which this "little church" can be seen as a 'Baptist Church'.

THE FIRST 'BAPTIST CHURCH' IN AOTEAROA?

Prior to the question of what makes a Baptist Church is the question of what makes any church a church. Horne, whilst not devoid of biblical, theological or ecclesial concern, seems to have had a *pragmatic* impulse which prioritised saving souls over denominational order and process. A church

¹³ Tonson, *A Handful of Grain*, 49.

¹⁴ H. L. N. Clark, "Re James Poppleton Horne, Deceased," *The Marlborough Express*, 25 March 1893, XXIX:3, <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/MEX18930325.2.32>.

¹⁵ Tonson, *A Handful of Grain*, 49.

preaches the Gospel and sees souls saved and baptised. In Daniell, we saw a *doctrinal* approach seeking sufficient evidence of orthodox belief, thus he cited Horne's "erroneous" doctrine as a key reason for not joining him. A church believes in the God and Gospel of Scripture. A more *ecclesial* perspective is concerned with the global and local meanings of 'church', such as the more universal 'Church' Jesus promised to build (Matthew 16:18), and the local plurality seen in Paul's letter to "the churches in Galatia" (Galatians 1:2). Whereas Catholic theology has seen individual churches as subsisting within the one global Church, Baptist understanding, whilst acknowledging the single "holy catholic Church" incorporating all believers, has seen local churches as the primary locus of Christ's promised presence where "two or more are gathered" in his name. A collection of Baptist churches, thus, cannot be referred as a singular entity, such as 'The Baptist Church in New Zealand', but are understood denominationally in the plural, for example, 'Baptist Churches of New Zealand'. Daniel and Horne both showed a desire to link the new baptistic activity in the new colony with the established churches back home.

All of this lends clarity to the question of whether or not Horne's group, instead of Nelson Baptist Church, was the first 'Baptist Church' in New Zealand. Pragmatically, Horne's identity and reputation as a Baptist may well have extended to the community and its little chapel, thus making it in one sense a Baptist Church. Doctrinally, we remain in the dark as to what specific points of Horne's doctrine Daniell found to be erroneous. Theologically, even Horne's "little church" in Wimea was indeed a locus for the presence of Christ as they gathered in his name. As to the specific question of whether it was a *Baptist* church, it depends on what is meant by 'Baptist Church'. Horne's group never achieved the associational status that they sought with the General Baptists back home, so it cannot be described as a *General* Baptist church, despite their intent to be recognised as such. Furthermore, there would not be a local national Baptist denomination to join until 1882 (31 years later), so it cannot have been a member church of what would become the 'Baptist Churches (or Union) of New Zealand'. But none of this prevents the name Baptist from being used in reference to Horne's group. There is, of course, no single central global (or national) Baptist authority which can dictate who can and cannot use the word. To illustrate, there are various 'Baptist' churches in Aotearoa-New Zealand today which are not member churches of the specific denomination known as 'Baptist Churches of New Zealand'.¹⁶

These churches identify as 'Baptist' apart from membership in the wider Baptist denomination, so too did Horne's group (though it must be said that whilst the modern independent Baptists appear to remain independent by choice, Horne and his congregation were

¹⁶ "New Zealand Independent Baptist Churches," *Independent Baptist Church Locator*, n.d., <http://militarygetsaved.tripod.com/newzealand.html>.

in the process of making plans to establish denominational membership). In light of this, this “little chapel 9 miles out of Nelson” can indeed be seen as the first ‘Baptist’ church in Aotearoa-New Zealand, even if full denominational association was never achieved with any existing bodies.

REFLECTIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY MISSION AND MINISTRY

This clearer picture of Baptist beginnings has significance for mission and ministry. It could be that there is a tendency to remember (and honour) only ‘successful’ efforts, and to forget, and thus fail to appreciate or learn from, other less fruitful endeavours. We now briefly consider three areas of contrast which arose from the above analysis, and which continue to affect contemporary church life.

First, in the personalities of Horne and Daniell, we see a contrast between progress and purity. Horne appears to be a ‘doer’, keen to get stuck in and win souls. His comment “why talk of order when souls all around us are going down to hell!” is illustrative. Daniell, by contrast, is quite happy to fellowship with the Wesleyans, encouraging Horne to do the same, waiting for a Baptist church and minister to be constituted properly. He also is concerned with Scriptural doctrine and practice. If Sutherland is right that their conflict had more to do with power and leadership style than with doctrine, then the inability for a union of the two groups seems unfortunate. We cannot, however, know if Horne’s doctrine did compromise core Christian dogma, so we are limited in our ability to discuss the dynamics of missional progress and doctrinal purity in their case. Suffice to say that just as progress, at times prone to arrogance or error, needs to be chastened and held accountable to purity, so also purity, prone to judgmentalism or inactivity, may need to be unsettled or enlivened by progress.

Second, there is a tension between *rural* and *urban* communities. Admittedly, it is difficult to see any disparaging remarks made by country dwellers about any urban groups, and it may not be accurate to discern a negative tone in Daniell’s references concerning “the people in the country”. It is not difficult, however, to imagine other (perhaps subconscious) layers to the conflict between Horne, a country-dweller accustomed to working with his hands, and Daniell, a city-dweller who worked in an office. Such contrasts can be subtle yet powerful sources of difficulty. As the modern world continues to change with technology and migration, differences of resources, finances, language, culture and longevity can aggravate existing struggles or create new ones. There is, then and now, the need for the patience that bears with the ‘other’, and humility to see the ‘other’ and their needs above your own.

Third, we observe with Sutherland the dual realities of *conflict* and *connection*. Both Horne and Daniell are willing to take actions which will sooner or later be accompanied by conflict. Horne proceeds to build a Chapel, claim the land grant, and make efforts to establish the church as Baptist and secure a minister; all the while going against the advice and blessing of Daniell and the other Baptists. As far as Daniell is concerned, some may see unnecessary conflict created by his refusing to join with Horne's group, and later his later actions to prevent the land deed being drawn up and awarded to Horne. By contrast, we also see efforts at connection in both. Horne partners, or attempts to partner, with various others, and was at the very least able to facilitate the budding growth of a worshipping community. Horne's depiction of Daniell as "a man of true piety" shows a charitable disposition, even if he appears to have been less patient with others he disagreed with. We also see a notable expression of 'connection' in Dolamore's judicious decision to keep the two groups related by offering to visit Horne's group on a monthly basis. This has considerable relevance for relationships within and between local communities and denominations. The best and most lasting connection will not be achieved without facing, and working through, real conflict. However, care must be taken as to just how much conflict a person (or group) can handle, or indeed what matters are worthy of going through conflict for. Conflict is a fire, and one that either will burn bridges *en route* to schism, or under God's good hand can serve to test and purify hearts for long-lasting communion.

CONCLUSION

In this essay, we have seen that Baptist beginnings in Aotearoa, far from being a simple matter of Dolamore arriving to help Daniell establish Nelson Baptist Church, was much more varied and interesting. We have highlighted the significance and amount of ministry which Horne accomplished. This carpenter and minister's son, coming to hold Baptist convictions, felt a call to preach and serve, and managed to bring together a "little church" that seems to have sooner or later identified itself as Baptist. Attributing it all to divine assistance, this little Baptist church saw conversions, baptisms, a Chapel erected, a land grant promised, and seemed poised to connect its fledgling life with the General Baptists at home. Whatever Horne's defects may have been, this history deserves a place in the telling of the story of Baptist life and witness in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

- 1841 Henry C. Daniell arrives in New Zealand
- 1842 Establishment of Nelson settlement
James Poppleton Horne boards vessel going to Australia
Vows to serve the Lord on board vessel
Horne arrives in Nelson
Horne moves “farther up the country”
Resolutions give way, forgets promises
Experience of renewed repentance
Joint baptism with retired Methodist preacher
“twenty miles from Nelson” in “a tracky wood”
Horne returns to Nelson
Chosen superintendent of Sabbath School est. by “Campbell”
Commences preaching within Society of “United Christians”
Withdrew from Society amidst differing views
“preached to such as came to me”
Meets Mr. Jessop; he and wife later join with Horne’s group
“some precious souls” saved under Horne’s preaching
Horne moves to Wimea village, meets Richard Hart and his wife
“a little church of seven members”
“several others” embrace truth afterward
15 baptized at time of 1849 correspondence
- August 1843 Henry Daniell settles in Nelson
- “some time since” 1842
Horne acquires disease, rests from regular preaching
Horne has dream of prisoner crying “*Lost! lost! lost!*”
Next day lungs/voice able to preach at Wesleyan missionary mtg.
Horne appointed schoolmaster at Wimea village
(still held at time of 1849 correspondence)
begins “labours” again
“steady adherence” of friends, despite trials
Criticism that Horne not recognized by “churches at home”
(by non-Baptist church – possibly Wesleyan)
“Mr. Daniels” (Henry C. Daniell) refrains to unite with Horne
disapproves of Horne “not being ordained”
Daniell and others without membership papers
Unable to form church & constitute Horne as minister
Daniell advises to join Wesleyans for the time being
(along with Daniell and “four Baptists families”)
Horne’s “little church” opts not to join Wesleyans
Horne continues ministry with adherents
- 1847 Mr. & Mrs. Jessop baptized
“about a year-and a half” prior to Horne’s letter

- February 1849 Horne obtains grant of land from Governor (while in Nelson)
- Feb-Mar 1849 Horne orders “stuff for the building of a Baptist Chapel”
- 8 March 1849 Horne writes to “Mr Derry” of Barton, England
Horne informed Chapel materials are “ready”
- 18 September 1849 Midland Conference forwards Horne’s letter to “Brother Goadby”
- November 1849 Horne’s letter published in *General Baptist Repository*
- Circa 1850 Decimus Dolamore responds to Mr. Derry
(unknown to Horne and Daniell)
- April 1851 Daniell learns of land grant promised to Horne
Daniell arranges delay of grant
until “fair representation” of “Baptist Body” established
- May 3, 1851 Meeting to determine recipient of land grant
(Decimus Dolamore arrives on “The Comet” from England)
Meeting adjourns with no result
Meeting reconvenes to decide on land grant
Dolamore sides with Daniell and urban Baptists
Dolamore agrees to meet country group monthly
- (a ‘few weeks’ later) Horne’s group broken up

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WITHIN CHRISTIAN MARRIAGES

GRACE CHAMBERLAIN

Independent Scholar

The Church must not ‘sleep’ while its own church families struggle with family violence. It must rise up to directly confront and battle against the problem of family violent... Otherwise, family violence will continue to destroy families for generations to come.¹

In today’s world, and in today’s church, we are constantly faced by a range of ethical issues which demand our attention and our response. One such issue which affects a devastating number of families globally is domestic violence. While it is easy to say that domestic violence is wrong, and is therefore categorised as unethical behaviour, what is less clear is how Christians should respond to the reality of domestic violence. Although violence against children is a very serious subject, this paper will specifically focus on violence suffered by women at the hands of their husbands within Christian homes, and though there are a number of reasons why violence may be present in any marriage or romantic partnership, this paper will look particularly at Christian doctrines or views that have been used to perpetuate violence against women within the context of Christian marriages.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STATISTICS

In New Zealand, it is estimated that in their lifetime, 1 in 3 women will experience some form of sexual or physical violence at the hands of an intimate partner, and 1 in 2 women will experience psychological or emotional abuse.² This “pattern of violence against women that’s broad and deep and horrific” needs to be taken seriously in the church, because churches are not exempt from the horrors of domestic violence.³ Although it is certainly true that men are sometimes the victims of abuse at the hands of women, this is nowhere near the norm.⁴ For example, in New Zealand between 2009 and 2012, 76% percent of people killed in cases of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

¹ Mercy Ah Siu-Maliko, *Christian Faith and Family Violence: A Report for Samoan Christians in New Zealand* (Dunedin: University of Otago, 2016), 8.

² Ministry of Social Development, “Statistics,” *It’s Not OK*, October 19, 2017, <http://areyouok.org.nz/family-violence/statistics/>.

³ Rebecca Solnit, “The Longest War,” in *Men Explain Things to Me: And Other Essays* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), 20; Nancy Nason-Clark et al., *Religion and Intimate Partner Violence: Understanding the Challenges and Proposing Solutions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 1.

⁴ Nason-Clark et al., *Religion and Intimate Partner Violence*, 1

were women, while 24% were men.⁵ Solnit asserts that “Violence doesn’t have a race, a class, a religion, or a nationality, but it does have a gender.”⁶ In other words, while there is no obvious correlation between violence and race, class, religion or nationality, there is one undeniable pattern when it comes to violence: women are far more likely to be the victims of violence than men are, and men are far more likely to be batterers than women are.

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

New Zealand’s Domestic Violence Act 1995 defines domestic violence as “violence against [a] person by any other person with whom that person is, or has been, in a domestic relationship.”⁷ The term “violence” is taken to include abuse of physical, sexual and psychological natures.⁸ This definition importantly highlights the fact that abuse does not have to be physical to be considered violence. Dr. Nancy Nason-Clark, a professor of sociology in Canada who has been researching the relationship between abuse and religious faith for almost 30 years, defines domestic violence as “all forms of violent or abusive behaviour that occur within intimate relationships,” including not only physical violence, but also “wilful neglect and sexual, emotional, or financial abuse as well as threats of intended aggressive acts.”⁹ A common thread that runs through all types of violence, Nason-Clark states, is “the abuse of power and control to hurt, shame, or humiliate another person.”¹⁰ Hester et al similarly describe domestic violence as “any violent or abusive behaviour (whether physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, verbal, financial, etc.) that is used by one person to control and dominate another with whom they have or have had a relationship.”¹¹ Likewise, Cooper-White defines domestic violence as “behavior that *intimidates and controls the battered partner, for the purpose of establishing and maintaining authority...* its aim is not primarily to discharge anger or stress, but to assert ownership and enforce control.”¹² A final definition states that “violence is first of all authoritarian. It begins with this premise: I have the right to control you.”¹³ It appears then that the most fundamental characteristic of domestic violence is not any

⁵ Ministry of Social Development, “Statistics”; “Intimate Partner Abuse” and “Intimate Partner Violence” refer to specific instances of domestic violence in which the abuser and victim are romantic partners.

⁶ Solnit, “The Longest War,” 21.

⁷ Ministry of Justice, *Domestic Violence Act*, 1995, 13.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Nancy Nason-Clark, *The Battered Wife: How Christians Confront Family Violence* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Marianne Hester, Chris Pearson, and Nicola Harwin, eds., *Making an Impact: Children and Domestic Violence: A Reader* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007), 18.

¹² Pamela Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar: Violence against Women and the Church’s Response* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), 126.

¹³ Solnit, “The Longest War,” 27.

one particular type of action, but a particular attitude and intention to assert control in order to maintain authority. Any behaviour or action performed in service of asserting control and maintaining authority invariably becomes violent in some shape or form. Violence is about control.

IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REALLY A BIG PROBLEM IN THE CHURCH TODAY?

Given the emphasis on holiness and growing in Christlikeness that is prominent in the New Testament, one might assume that issues like domestic violence would be less common in Christian homes than in secular ones. Biblical imperatives to “love one another” (John 13:34) and “so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18), not to mention the various passages which deal specifically with marriage, should make an impact on the rates of Intimate Partner Violence within Christian marriages. However, as much as we would like to say that the church is free of this particular evil, this simply is not the case: “spiritual commitment, church attendance, personal piety, and religious traditions do not in and of themselves protect a woman from becoming a victim of her husband’s rage, nor do they ensure that a husband will always deal with his anger in socially and religiously acceptable ways.”¹⁴ In one study commissioned by New Zealand’s Crime and Justice Research Centre, the researchers questioned whether it is really possible to estimate the true prevalence of violence in New Zealand, or indeed in any setting, since domestic violence is often viewed as a sensitive and private family matter, and as a result, often remains locked behind closed doors.¹⁵ This is also true in the church. In fact, it may be even harder to determine the true prevalence of domestic violence within Christian homes due to a value in the church of happy, healthy family life, which can lead to a “strong but subtle pressure on families to maintain the appearance of tranquillity, even when the home is a pressure cooker of tension and abuse.”¹⁶

VIEWS OF WOMEN THAT HAVE PERPETUATED VIOLENCE

Submission

There are a number of ways in which the church has perpetuated the horrors of domestic violence. Certain teachings, while not causing domestic violence, have provided fertile soil in which violence,

¹⁴ Nason-Clark, *The Battered Wife*, 39.

¹⁵ Denise Lievore and Pat Mayhew, *The Scale and Nature of Family Violence in New Zealand: Review and Evaluation of Knowledge* (Wellington: Ministry of Social Development, 2007), 13.

¹⁶ Nason-Clark, *The Battered Wife*, 67.

a noxious weed, has been allowed to grow or persist unchecked.¹⁷ These weeds are further allowed to flourish by the misinterpretation and twisting of some of these teachings. One such teaching has to do with submission. Christian wives are taught to submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18), and based on this instruction, many husbands have felt justified in exerting physical control by punishing their wives every time they perceived them to have stepped out of line.¹⁸ These women, after all, had been told to submit, and if their husbands believed that they were not in fact doing so, they were in violation of God's will. Wives are to submit. The Bible says so. Therefore, any refusal or failure to do so should be met with correction. Many husbands throughout Christian history have taken it upon themselves to "correct" their wives, believing it is their husbandly duty. For instance, one batterer described his belief that it was right for him to beat his wife in order to correct her lack of submission:

I thought it was right to beat her. I've never been the kind of person who hits for the sake of hitting. I've always had God on my side. I knew, I knew what was right to do, when she got too loose and wanted to take away the right to be the one to keep an eye on things and see that everything was done right. When she started taking control of things I had to beat her to put her in her place. It's perfectly clear, it says in the Bible too, the man is responsible for bringing the woman up.¹⁹

Among men who abuse their wives and call it "correction," there seems to be a belief that with the imperative for wives to submit to their husbands comes a command for husbands to correct their wives. In actual fact, corresponding to the instruction for wives to submit is the instruction for husbands not to correct, nor lead or discipline, but to *love* their wives (Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19). Colossians 3:19 instructs husbands not simply to love their wives, but to "never treat them harshly."²⁰ Somehow, though, the instruction for wives to submit is much easier to dwell upon, and it is not uncommon for Christian men who do abuse their so-called insubordinate wives to quote verses like Ephesians 5:22 and Colossians 3:18 to justify their actions, fully believing that God is on their side.²¹

¹⁷ Ibid., 51.

¹⁸ Mercy Ah Siu-Maliko, *Christian Faith and Family Violence*, 19.

¹⁹ Eva Lundgren, *Feminist Theory and Violence Empiricism*, trans. Linda Schenck (Brookfield: Avebury, 1995), 245.

²⁰ Quoted from the NRSV.

²¹ Nancy E. Nienhuis, "Theological Reflections on Violence and Abuse," *The Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling* 50.1-2 (2005): 120.

Women as Morally Inferior

Related to the idea of submission is an attitude that sees the whole female gender as morally inferior to males. For centuries, Eve's part in the fall has been heralded as an indicator of some wickedness inherent in women that goes above and beyond the limits of regular human sin.²² Verses like 1 Timothy 2:14 are used as ammunition against women: "the woman was deceived and became a transgressor," not the man. Supposedly, the fact that Eve sinned first points to a moral deficiency that proves that all women have a greater propensity to sin than men do. The Early Church Father Tertullian clearly held this kind of belief:

Do you know that each of your women is an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age; the guilt must necessarily live, too. You are the gate of hell; you are the temptation of the forbidden tree. You are the first deserter of the divine law... you are the one who persuaded him whom the Devil was not strong enough to attack. All too easily you destroyed the image of God, man. Because of your desert, that is, death, even the Son of God had to die.²³

This kind of thinking in and of itself should be considered abusive, for it frames women as agents of the devil and places the heavy responsibility for the fall on their shoulders alone, while excusing Adam, who, according to Tertullian, the devil could not have led into sin without Eve's help.²⁴ When thinking of this sort is present, any lack of female submission may be seen as posing a significant danger to (male) society, and therefore, any action that keeps dangerous women in line will be viewed as a societal necessity.²⁵ We have come a long way in the two thousand years since the birth of the church, but sadly, the kind of thinking evidenced by early Christian thinkers like Tertullian still has a significant impact on how women are viewed and treated today. While most would never go so far as to say that women are agents of the devil, the fact that in many churches today men still tell women that a reason why they cannot preach or lead is that they cannot be trusted to correctly discern what God's word is saying reveals that the idea of women being morally inferior to men still has a hold on the church today.

²² Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar*, 72–74.

²³ Tertullian, "The Apparel of Women," in *Disciplinary, Moral and Ascetical Works*, ed. Roy Joseph Deferrari, trans. Rudolph Arbesmann (New York: The Fathers of the Church, 1959), 118.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Nienhuis, "Theological Reflections on Violence and Abuse," 119.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT SUBMISSION AND ABOUT WOMEN?

Ephesians 5:21–33

One important passage used by Christian men as a justification for abuse is found in Ephesians 5. While abusers are correct in saying that this passage instructs wives to be submissive, this is only a tiny picture of how Ephesians 5:21–33 instructs wives *and* husbands to relate to one another. The first key verse to look at comes in 5:21, which comes one verse before the instruction for wives to submit. In verse 21, Paul instructs Christians to submit to *one another* out of reverence for Christ. This instruction sounds like a contradiction, since the word submission implies that there is some sort of hierarchy: the submitter places him or herself lower than the one to whom they submit.²⁶ Nevertheless, Paul instructs Christians to submit to one another, evoking an image of a perpetuate cycle of Christians serving one another. What Paul is getting at is that Christian relationships should be characterised by a mutual willingness to humbly and lovingly serve one another.²⁷ It is important to note that the submission here, as in the next verse, is not an enforced submission but a voluntary one: Paul instructs Christians that because of their relationship with and reverence for Christ, they should voluntarily choose to love and serve each other.²⁸

In verse 22, Paul gives the instruction that has been so tragically twisted by so many people throughout church history: wives, submit to your husbands. The idea of wives submitting to husbands was not counter-cultural for the first-century recipients of this letter, but the fact that Paul was not telling wives that they were subordinate to their husbands, but was instead instructing them to choose to submit themselves to their husbands certainly was.²⁹ In verses 23 and 24, Paul states that the submission of wives to their husbands should be like the submission of the church to Christ. At this point, we should probably ask what it looks like for the church to submit to Christ. Throughout the rest of his letter to the Ephesians leading up to 5:21–33, Paul gives Christians a number of instructions of how to live, some of which include leading lives worthy of their calling and striving for unity (4:1–3), speaking the truth in love and growing in the likeness of Christ (4:15), and putting on the new self (4:23–24), which is characterised by things like speaking truth, not letting anger lead to sin, choosing honest work and generosity over theft, speaking in ways that build up rather than tear down, and not being bitter, malicious, angry or slanderous, but instead being kind, tender-hearted and forgiving (4:25–32). In chapter 5, among other instructions,

²⁶ Lynn H. Cohick, *Ephesians* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2010), 136.

²⁷ Peter S. Williamson and Mary Healy, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 157.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 155–56.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 158.

Christians are told to imitate God as beloved children, to live in love, to live as children of light and to be filled by the Spirit (5:1–2, 8, 18). These are a few examples of ways in which the church submits to Christ. It is noticeable that none of these instructions seeks to oppress the church in any way, nor is the church asked to be passive in its submission.³⁰ The particular instructions given in Ephesians paint the church as an active force committed to loving and serving Christ. Likewise, the way wives are instructed to behave towards their husbands is active and vibrant, characterised by values like unity, truth, encouragement, tenderness, kindness and forgiveness. Paul does not instruct wives to be doormats, but to actively choose to love and serve their husbands.

Meanwhile, husbands are also told to serve their wives, through sacrificial love (5:25–33). While Paul suggests that husbands' love for their wives should image Christ's love for the church, this is not what is seen in abusive relationships where submission is demanded. In fact, abusive behaviour that is motivated by a faulty view of submission dishonours Christ, because it reveals a complete lack of understanding of what Christ's love for the church looks like. Christ's love is sacrificial, not power-hungry, controlling and self-seeking.

John 13

Though not speaking specifically about submission, John 13 provides us with a beautiful example of what Jesus' love looks like and a wealth of insight about how Christians are to behave towards one another. First, in verses 1–15, Jesus washes his disciples' feet, choosing to take a position of great humility and service, before declaring that his disciples are to do the same for others. In these verses, Jesus provides his disciples with an example to follow of how to lovingly serve others. Witherington suggests that this account shows how Jesus' disciples "like Jesus, are called to be servants performing self-sacrificial deeds."³¹ Pride, an inclination to taking offense, and a desire to have one's way are simply incongruous with the kind of sacrificial, foot-washing love and humility which Jesus asks of his followers.

Later in the same chapter, Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment to love one another just as he has loved them (13:34). If we want to correctly understand the nature of the love Jesus commands in this verse, we must be careful not to read "Love one another" and then stop there. Jesus does not simply tell his disciples to love, he tells them what their love should look like: Their love should look like Jesus' love. As Köstenberger points out, loving one another was not a new concept: "What was new was Jesus' command for his disciples to love one another *as he has loved*

³⁰ Ibid., 161.

³¹ Ben Witherington, *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 237.

them—laying down their lives.”³² As with John 13:1-15, in 13:34-35, the kind of love which Jesus expects from his followers is an active, radical, self-sacrificial love. Jesus goes on to explain that by practicing such love, the disciples would signify to all looking on that it was Jesus who they followed (13:35). The imitation with one another of Jesus’ sacrificial love, which they had seen glimpses of and would soon see even more powerfully at the cross, would be a clear identifying feature of the community that follows and loves Jesus. Köstenberger comments that “This rule of self-sacrificial, self-giving, selfless love... will serve as the foundational ethic for the new messianic community.”³³ (John 13:34–35).

Returning to Ephesians, it is clear that the way Paul instructs husbands to interact with their wives is very similar to how Jesus instructs his disciples to interact with each other in John 13. In both cases, love is to be modelled after Jesus. Wives are instructed to submit to their husbands, but husbands are equally instructed to love their wives, and any attempt by husbands to love with their fists or with raised voices and threats simply does not imitate Jesus’ kind of love. McKnight suggests that Christians have become far too fixated on the word “submission,” giving the word more weight than it is meant to have rather than focusing on what it attempts to convey: that Christian marriages should be characterised by mutual love and service between husbands and wives.³⁴ Jobes likewise suggests that “When ‘submission’ of the wife becomes the central issue, the image of Christian marriage has already been distorted... marital love is understood as the resolve to live one’s entire life totally committed to the well-being of one’s spouse.”³⁵ Where mutual love and service is seen to be the dominant *modus operandi* of any Christian couple, conversations about “submission” never actually need to happen.³⁶ If either the husband or the wife acts in any kind of abusive way towards their spouse, it is because the culprit, whatever their gender, is not considering the needs of their spouse.³⁷

1 Peter 3:1-7

In 1 Peter 3:1-7, Peter gives instructions to women with unbelieving spouses before briefly addressing husbands about how they should relate to their wives (verse 7). In verses 1-4, Peter instructs women to be subject to their husbands (v. 1) and to have an inward beauty characterised

³² Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 423.

³³ *Ibid.*, 423-24.

³⁴ Scot McKnight, *1 Peter*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 189.

³⁵ Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 210.

³⁶ McKnight, *1 Peter*, 189

³⁷ *Ibid.*

by a gentle and quiet spirit which pleases God, rather than an outward beauty characterised by ostentatious hair, jewellery and clothes (vv. 3–4). The reason Peter gives for why Christian wives should behave this way is that unbelieving husbands may come to know Christ as a result of seeing the way their Christian wives live (vv. 1–2). In the context of marriages between Christian wives and non-Christian husbands, submission serves a specific purpose: it is used as an evangelistic tool. Because verses 1–6 speak of non-Christian husbands, and because submission in these verses serves an evangelistic purpose, these verses cannot be used by Christian husbands to justify their demands that their wives submit. In a culture where submission of the wife is expected, quite likely, the conversion of a wife to Christianity would cause upheaval in the home, and may be perceived as rebellion against her husband.³⁸ Because Christianity was perceived in the first century as a social evil which disrupted the status quo, Peter instructs wives to submit to their husbands in order that these non-Christian husbands would have no complaint to raise against Christianity and may even come to faith themselves.³⁹

In Ephesians 5:21–33, we saw that when Paul gave an instruction for wives to submit to their husbands, he also gave an instruction for those husbands to love their wives. Peter similarly gives an instruction to wives, followed by an instruction to husbands.⁴⁰ In 1 Peter 3:7, Peter instructs believing husbands to be considerate of their wives in their shared lives and to show them honour, “since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life.” Far from naming women as inferior to men, Peter affirms the equal value of women as coheirs with men of the gracious gift of life.⁴¹

In the preceding passage (1 Peter 2:18–25) Peter had discussed Jesus as the example for Christian suffering, and in the following passage (1 Peter 3:8–22) he discusses suffering for doing right. The fact that these instructions to wives and then husbands are sandwiched between two passages about suffering has caused some to wonder if Peter intended to suggest that abused Christian women should stay with their abusive non-Christian husbands.⁴² However, Jobes points out that nothing in 1 Peter 3:1–6 explicitly speaks of domestic violence or of any kind of suffering, and that, in fact, verse 7 can be understood to include a prohibition against domestic violence.⁴³ In verse 7, Peter states that husbands should honour their wives “as the weaker sex,” which refers to the fact that, in most cases, the wife is physically weaker than her husband.⁴⁴ This does not point

³⁸ Jobes, *1 Peter*, 203.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 203–4.

⁴⁰ Note though that the “husbands” and “wives” addressed in this passage cannot be married to each other, since Peter is first addressing wives who have non-Christian husbands (vv. 1–6), before addressing Christian husbands (v. 7). It is not clear whether the husbands in verse 7 have Christian or non-Christian wives.

⁴¹ Jobes, *1 Peter*, 207.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 206.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 206–7.

⁴⁴ McKnight, *1 Peter*, 186; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 209.

to any spiritual inferiority or deficiency.⁴⁵ It is probable, then, that when Peter speaks of “paying honour to the woman as the weaker sex,” he is indirectly teaching Christian men that they must not abuse their wives, who, after all, are “also heirs of the gracious gift of life.” After instructing husbands to treat their wives with consideration and honour, Peter closes verse 7 with the hope that “nothing will hinder your prayers,” implying that if husbands do become abusive, their prayers will not be heard by God.⁴⁶ This verse should be heard as encouragement to abused Christian wives, for it confirms the fact that the abuse they suffer is in no way sanctioned by God. Believing that God does not condone their abuse may be just what some battered wives need to gain the courage to leave abusive relationships.

Imago Dei

“If a God-idol is constructed in the image of those at the top of the power pyramid, then a vicious cycle is put into place in which subsequent generations of children are taught to believe that some people are more like God than others. Little girls grow up believing, mainly at an unconscious level, that they are created less in the image and likeness of God than their brothers.”⁴⁷

It is clear in the Bible that a special dignity and value is bestowed upon humankind. The New Testament is teeming with verses that point to the wonderful reality that Jesus Christ, fully human and fully God came, lived, died, was resurrected, and ascended to the right hand of the Father in order to reconcile sinful humans with the triune God. Early in Genesis, before the fall, the special value of humanity is made explicit in the fact that humans alone among creation are said to be created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27). While some have argued that Eve, who “was deceived and became a transgressor” (1 Tim. 2:14) sinned because she started out with some kind of moral deficiency, Genesis 1:27 gives no such impression.⁴⁸ In God’s image, the verse tells us, humanity was created in both male and female genders, and this implies that both genders are good and equally valued in God’s sight. However, the fall complicates matters. With sin, humans, both male and female, no longer image God as originally intended.

This image of God would have been lost to humanity forever if not for Jesus Christ. Cortez states that “As the one who is both fully human and fully divine, the true image of God, the redeemer of humanity, and the teleological focus of all creation, the mystery of humanity finds its most complete manifestation in Jesus.”⁴⁹ Humanity is redeemed, perfected, and most completely expressed in Jesus Christ, the only example of human life lived sinlessly, and therefore, the only

⁴⁵ McKnight, *1 Peter*, 186; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 209

⁴⁶ Jobes, *1 Peter*, 209.

⁴⁷ Cooper-White, *The Cry of Tamar*, 62.

⁴⁸ Nienhuis, “Theological Reflections on Violence and Abuse,” 115–16.

⁴⁹ Marc Cortez, *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: T&T Clark International, 2010), 5.

human who could represent humanity before God. The image of God is undistorted in Jesus because of his sinless perfection, and through the Spirit, is shared with all who are in Christ, regardless of gender.

Galatians 3:28

Galatians 3:28 offers hope to women who have been told, implicitly or explicitly, that their value is somehow less than that of a man, or that they are somehow morally inferior. In Galatians 3:28, Paul states that “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” What Paul is advocating here is not that gender, class or ethnicity no longer exist, but that these distinctions between people make no difference to one’s standing in Christ. In other words, females as well as males have equal access to Jesus and to salvation.

Complicity

While we may suggest that where Christian men become batterers, the fault lies with their own misunderstanding of the Bible and of how God truly wants men and women to relate, and possibly even with their lack of a true relationship with Jesus Christ, in many cases, the church has consistently failed to explicitly speak out against domestic violence. Although domestic violence is prevalent in the church, and many pastors claim to have met with men and women in their congregations for whom domestic violence is a reality, many churchgoers have never heard a sermon which directly addresses this issue, which means that they have probably never heard their pastors and preachers utter the words: domestic violence is wrong.⁵⁰ In failing to publicly call out domestic violence and name it as sin even though they know it is happening in their congregations, pastors and other Christians leaders may be complicit in the perpetuation of this evil.

In 1 Samuel 3:1–15, Samuel was called by God as he slept in the temple, and in verses 11–14, he received revelation from God that the priest Eli’s house would be judged because of the wickedness of his sons. Verse 13 is an important verse which we should consider when it comes to domestic violence, or any other evil within our churches which we fail to call out and rebuke: God tells Samuel, “I have told [Eli] that I am about judge his house forever for the iniquity *which he knew*, because his sons brought a curse on themselves *and he did not rebuke them*” (Emphasis mine). Eli failed to speak out against evils that he knew about, and as a result, he became complicit in that

⁵⁰ Nason-Clark, *The Battered Wife*, 153.

evil. God's intention to punish not only Eli's sons but Eli's whole family line makes it incredibly clear that this kind of complicity is evil in God's sight.

HOW CAN WE SUPPORT ABUSED WOMEN IN THE CHURCH?⁵¹

[T]here is not as much church-sponsored, concrete help for divided families in the weekly routine of church life as there is ongoing support for healthy families. Most church programs are geared to intact, nuclear families with children, despite the fact that growing numbers of the members do not experience life in this way... The assistance, then, that hurting, fearful abused women need may not be as forthcoming from the institutional church, or even the clergy, as one might expect or hope.⁵²

When thinking about domestic violence in the church, there are at least two levels which we need to address. First, because we do not want to settle for abuse and accept it as a simple fact of life, we must think about prevention methods to raise awareness about domestic violence in order to combat faulty thinking that may lead to violence long before violence itself ever rears its ugly head. Second, because abuse already exists in marriages in our congregations, whether we are currently aware of affected couples and families or not, we also need plans in place about how to respond to and support domestic violence victims, should they come forward in search of help.

Prevention—Let's Talk about Domestic Violence

The first and most prominent tool in our prevention toolbox is our words. Many abused women have expressed a longing that church communities will simply speak out loud about domestic violence, publicly denouncing it and raising awareness.⁵³ Two words are key: we must speak *publicly*, and we must *denounce* domestic violence. If we want to prevent domestic violence in our congregations, then we must talk about it openly and often, and make it clear to all who are listening that domestic violence is never condoned or tolerated. It is crucial that we do not shrink back from talking about this issue, for violence "flourishes most when it is ignored, minimized, or misunderstood."⁵⁴ Failure to speak out will leave victims isolated, it will leave abusers unimpeded, and it will leave everyone else ignorant. We have serious blind-spots in the church where domestic

⁵¹ In some cases, abusers will come forward seeking support to break their abusive habits. It is also possible that husbands will be victims of abuse at the hands of their wives. However, to avoid muddying the water, this implementation plan focuses on how to respond to and support female victims of domestic violence.

⁵² Nason-Clark, *The Battered Wife*, 110.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁵⁴ Nancy Nason-Clark et al., *Religion and Intimate Partner Violence*, 1.

violence is concerned, with many Christians, whether by refusal or by ignorance, not believing that domestic violence really is a major problem within church communities.⁵⁵ Therefore, we need to speak not only publicly about violence, but also clearly, making it evident to our congregations that it is a reality in church which needs to be addressed, that it is not acceptable, that it is not God's will, and that it is not a husband's prerogative.

We should use our words to speak out against domestic violence in a number of different contexts. Firstly, we should be regularly preaching sermons which explicitly address the topic of domestic violence. Repetition is an incredibly useful learning tool, and if we want our congregations to truly internalise the message that domestic violence goes against God's will, then we should be willing to preach that fact often. Though many pastors claim that they specifically address the issue of wife beating through sermons, "very few women parishioners seem able to recall such sermons."⁵⁶ While this could simply indicate poor memory, it may also indicate that pastors believe they are giving the issue of wife-beating more attention than they actually are. We may think that preaching a sermon about 2 Samuel 13, where David's daughter Tamar is raped and then cast off by her half-brother, Amnon, or about Judges 19, where, to protect himself, a Levite allows his concubine to be brutally raped and abused, is sufficient to show that we are against domestic violence. However, when we preach on these sorts of passages, we need to make sure that we are explicit in actually saying the things we want our congregations to hear. We need to actually speak the words: domestic violence is wrong. We cannot simply hope that people will understand our implicit message, but must instead be explicit to ensure they understand. Similarly, if we are preaching messages on topics like submission or suffering, we need to be clear not only of what we do mean, but also of what we do not mean. In other words, where our teaching may seem to permit domestic violence, we need to clear up confusion and plainly tell our congregation that we - and the Bible - are not condoning domestic violence.

Secondly, when women come to see us about other marriage or family issues, we should not be afraid to ask the question: are you safe? Some women may carry the heavy burden of their abuse, desperately wanting to tell someone about it but afraid to start the conversation, especially since not all pastors respond to news of violence supportively.⁵⁷ By asking the question and giving space for women to confide in us, we can demonstrate to women that we will give them support, should they need it. Even for women who have not been abused, asking this question will be useful, since it can serve to reinforce the position that domestic violence is never okay.

⁵⁵ Nason-Clark, *The Battered Wife*, 50–51.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁵⁷ Gary R. Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 413.

A third space in which domestic violence can be denounced is in the context of Bible studies or life groups in which discussion and idea-sharing can help people wrestle together with biblical texts to discover God's heart on the matter of domestic violence. In this kind of small group setting, individuals can begin to internalise truths about domestic violence. Being an active participant in a conversation in which one can share perspectives, stories, questions and misunderstandings is often a more effective way to learn something than sitting and listening is. This means that in a small group setting where discussion is valued and encouraged, individuals have a greater opportunity or ability to internalise lessons and truths about domestic violence or any other topic that may be discussed. Sourcing and providing biblical resources for groups to use to learn about how God views domestic violence would be an immensely beneficial thing for church leaders to do for their congregations.

Response—Supporting Victims of Domestic Violence

When you bring an issue like domestic violence into the spotlight, it is possible that you will have an influx of people coming forward for support who are dealing with that issue. If we are committed to speaking publicly and often against domestic violence, we need to be ready to support hurting people who have been affected by domestic violence. It is not enough to just have a prevention plan; we also need a response plan ready to support women who are already in abusive marriages.

Partnership

When domestic violence happens in the church, particularly when “spiritual” language is used to justify the abuse, it may be very natural for us to want to deal with the abuse as an entirely spiritual issue.⁵⁸ This might mean we are inclined to want to deal with the issue completely in-house, rather than making referrals.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, this can be damaging to domestic violence victims, because, while we may be able to address the spiritual aspect of abuse well, there are other important areas of abuse which we are not adequately equipped to support abused women in.⁶⁰ Domestic violence does not only have spiritual implications: It also has medical, financial, emotional, psychological and legal implications, among others. For this reason, it is important that we form partnerships with professionals and groups in our communities who can help us to support abused women in our congregations. On our list of partners, we should include local support or survivor groups,

⁵⁸ Nason-Clark, *The Battered Wife*, 63–65.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁶⁰ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 408–9.

professional counsellors, local GPs, women's shelters such as the Women's Refuge, and even lawyers and local police. Having this network of partners will help us to be able to support women better, because through these partnerships and people we can refer domestic violence victims to, victims can receive multifaceted support that simply would not be possible if we try to do it all alone.

Creating safe space and speaking truth

Knowing from the outset that, where appropriate, we will call upon other groups and professionals to help us support abused women, one of the most important jobs we should be doing is helping abused women feel safe.⁶¹ Victims need to know that there are people who can function as emotional safe spaces, with whom they can talk about the complex emotions and issues that they have to deal with as a result of the abuse.⁶² We can provide this kind of compassionate and safe space for victims. When we talk with some women, we will probably discover that they have deep-seated beliefs about themselves, God, suffering, marriage, and abuse that come from misinterpretation and from twisted scriptures. Some believe that they deserved to be abused.⁶³ This false thinking can cause them significant anxiety, because they struggle to reconcile their desire that their abuse to end with what they believe. It is important, then, that when interacting with women who have been abused, we are intentional about speaking out truth that can start to replace lies. Some examples of things we might say are, "You did not deserve to be hit. It isn't okay that your husband did that," or "You are incredibly loved and valued in God's sight, and He does not condone what your husband has been doing." To counter lies, we should be ready to point to the true things that God says in his word about how immensely precious his daughters (and sons) are.

Conversation

Something as simple as conversation is an incredibly important tool for victims of domestic violence, particularly if their abuse involved high levels of isolation. In fact, telling their stories is a critical step required in order for abused women to transition in their own minds from victims to survivors.⁶⁴ Abrahams suggests that victims need three levels of contact: "First, normal, everyday conversation, then supportive talk – dealing with what had happened and planning for the future and finally, what might be described as healing talk – a space where they could reflect on their

⁶¹ Ibid., 409.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 412.

⁶⁴ Nason-Clark, *The Battered Wife*, 52.

experiences and learn to deal with their feelings in their own way.”⁶⁵ While a single person may provide support at more than one of these levels, it is important for victims to have a network of people to talk to so that their needs for conversation at these different levels can all be met, and the process of healing can flourish.⁶⁶

Because conversation is such an important tool for women to work through their abuse, an important job which we must take on is empowering women to build healthy networks or call upon the networks that they already have. One way churches can do this is by partnering with other local churches in order to form prayer and support groups which abused women can attend to meet others who share similar stories and who, by virtue of those shared experiences of intimate partner abuse, can relate to another and support each other on a level that others will not be able to. Another way we can do this is to invest time, energy and money into building strong women’s ministries within our churches so that in many cases, by the time violence comes to light, abused women already have strong ties with other Christian women to whom they can turn for support. Women need other women to build relationships with, to share experiences with, to trust, to laugh with, to grow with, and to turn to when life gets hard.⁶⁷ Any friendship between women that the church can help to foster will be an important source of support and comfort for women when, sometime down the road, they face abuse.

A NOTE AGAINST PRIDE

Finally, as already mentioned, it is important that Christian leaders build networks of people and groups to partner with as we attempt to support women through domestic violence. We should not be afraid to contact these people, particularly counsellors and women’s shelters, when we start to get out of our depth. We must particularly make sure that if pride is getting in the way of us reaching out to others who could provide better support in a particular area, we swallow that pride for the sake of the women we are supporting. We will play some role in supporting women, doing whatever we can to make them feel safe, loved, and supported, but there is no shame in asking others for help. In fact, being willing to ask other professionals and organisations to step in and assist us in providing support may stop us from causing victims further harm through ignorance and selfish pride.

⁶⁵ Hilary Abrahams, *Supporting Women After Domestic Violence: Loss, Trauma and Recovery* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2007), 59.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Nason-Clark, *The Battered Wife*, 40.

KEITH CLEMENTS: A BAPTIST ECUMENIST

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What broadly connects Keith Clements' collection of published books and articles together is an on-going argument for the importance of ecumenism. It is no surprise that the subtitle of his autobiography *Look Back in Hope* is 'An Ecumenical Life.' Ecumenism has shaped Clements' life, ministry and theology. He writes that *Look Back in Hope* is "an account of my life as a whole in which ecumenical commitment became central."¹ For this reason he stands out as one of the leading Baptist ecumenical theologians of the last thirty years. Alongside other contemporary British Baptists like Myra Blyth and Simon Oxley, he has held positions, both national and international, within the ecumenical scene.² He was the co-ordinating secretary of international affairs at the Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland (1990–1997)³ and then General Secretary of the Conference for European Churches (1997–2005).⁴ He was a member of the WCC Faith and Order Committee between 1985 and 1998 and of the Baptist World Alliance Commission on Baptist Doctrine and Interchurch Cooperation, 1986–1990. He is the author of over ten books covering modern theology,⁵ ecumenism,⁶ and most notably the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, of whom he is a leading interpreter.⁷ His other contribution, not to be overlooked, is a biography of the early British ecumenist J. H. Oldham and an extensive record of the meetings Oldham oversaw known as the Moot.⁸ Ordained as a Baptist minister in 1967, Clements pastored two churches before becoming a tutor at Bristol Baptist College (1977–1990). He has also been the editor of the *Baptist Quarterly*, the journal of the Baptist Historical Society

¹ Keith W. Clements, *Look Back in Hope: An Ecumenical Life* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2017), x.

² Myra Blyth was Youth Secretary of the British Council of Churches, 1982–1988 and then held, 1988–1999, before becoming Deputy various positions in the World Council of Churches General Secretary of the Baptist Union, 1999–2003, which at the time made her the Union's national Ecumenical Officer. Simon Oxley was General Secretary of the National Christian Education Council, 1984–1992, then County Ecumenical Officer for Great Manchester, 1992–1996 and then Executive Secretary for Education in the World Council of Churches, 1996–2008.

³ This was a new position as British ecumenism shifted from the British Council of Churches to the Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland following the inter-church process in the 1980s. (The body was renamed again in 1999 as Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.) For an account of that process see Derek Palmer, *Strangers No Longer* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990).

⁴ Clements was the second Baptist to hold this position after Glen Garfield Williams who had been the first General Secretary of CEC between 1968–1986.

⁵ Keith Clements, *Lovers of Discord: Twentieth Century Theologies Controversies in England* (London: SPCK, 1988).

⁶ Keith Clements, *Learning to Speak* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997); *The Churches in Europe As Witnesses to Healing* (Geneva: WCC, 2003); *Ecumenical Dynamic* (Geneva: WCC, 2013).

⁷ He has authored five books on Bonhoeffer and was editor of Volume 13 of the English Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works series, *London 1933-1935* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007). Keith Clements, *A Patriotism for Today: A Dialogue with Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Bristol Baptist College, 1984, reprinted in 1986 by Collins); *What Freedom? The Persistent Challenge of Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (Bristol Baptist College, 1990); *Bonhoeffer and Britain* (CCBI, 2006); *The SPCK Introduction to Bonhoeffer* (London: SPCK, 2010); *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Ecumenical Quest* (Geneva: WCC, 2015).

⁸ Keith Clements, *Faith on the Frontier: A Life of J. H. Oldham* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999); (Ed.), *The Moot Papers: Faith, Freedom and Society, 1938–1947* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2010).

in the United Kingdom.⁹ He received his PhD from the university of Bristol in 1997.¹⁰ Since his retirement, he has been a visiting faculty member at Whitley College, Australia, where he has taught courses on Bonhoeffer and on churches and peacemaking.¹¹

Clements is as an ecumenical theologian. He has written little what might be called specifically Baptist theology. It is perhaps for this reason that while Baptist contemporaries like Paul Fiddes, Nigel Wright,¹² and John Colwell have been widely read in Baptist colleges by those training for ministry, the name Keith Clements is probably known by far too few. Clements is an example of another ‘expert’ that English Baptists have failed to properly heed.¹³ Clements deserves to be read as an interpreter of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, whose life and work continue to stimulate much reflection on what it is to be Christian today.¹⁴ He deserves to be read as one who shows what ecumenism is and why it matters, and, more specifically in this regard, Clements merits being read for his knowledge and experience of Christian witness in Europe. This latter is extremely important in the present situation in the United Kingdom, which has been, churches included, too ambivalent about Europe.¹⁵

Clements reads Bonhoeffer historically as well as theologically.¹⁶ He finds Bonhoeffer a living voice for the church today. He does not read Bonhoeffer as an academic exercise. His early book on Bonhoeffer is one that focuses on the question of patriotism, to which Bonhoeffer is his dialogue partner. Through the witness of Bonhoeffer, Clements explores how love of country and love of Christ might properly, that is, theologically, be ordered. The answer in part, he says, being an ecumenical one, on which we will say more below.¹⁷ His second book on Bonhoeffer is one that examines his ‘continuing challenge’ and how they might bear on “concrete issues we face today.”¹⁸ It arose out of the opportunities to speak, (many ecumenical,

⁹ Clements was editor 1980–1985. During this time he also edited *Baptists in the Twentieth Century* (Baptist Historical Society, 1983), which was a set of papers from the July 1982 BHS summer school. He contributed a chapter on the relationship between British and German Baptists during the 1930s and 40s.

¹⁰ This was on the basis of published works. See *Look Back in Hope*, 264.

¹¹ Clements, *Look Back in Hope*, 364–65, 370.

¹² I have written elsewhere on Paul Fiddes and Nigel Wright. See ‘Paul Fiddes – Baptist Servant of the Church’, *Baptist Minister’s Journal* (October 2012): 3–7; ‘Nigel Wright’s Radical Theology’, *Baptist Quarterly* 48.2 (April 2017): 69–77.

¹³ The word ‘expert’ has of course been put under scrutiny in the UK, especially after the Leave EU politician Michael Gove infamously said ‘Britain has had enough of experts’ in June 2016. I use the word following John Lyons (writing in 2011) who said that ‘Baptist churches will need the help of such “experts” as they have to hand, whether such individuals are theologians, biblical scholars, pastors, sages, or even suitable outsiders’, W. John Lyons, ‘In Appreciation of “Reluctant” Prophets’ in Helen Dare and Simon Woodman (eds.), *The ‘Plainly Revealed’ Word of God? Baptist Hermeneutics in Theory and Practice* (Macon, GA: Mercy University Press, 2011), 299.

¹⁴ The 13 volume English translation of Dietrich Bonhoeffer works is a sign of his on-going importance as a theologian, and with that the steady flow of books on and in response to his work. How good it is to have an English Baptist in amongst those working on Bonhoeffer.

¹⁵ In the run-up to the vote on Britain’s membership of the European Union in 2016, Clements wrote an article ‘The EU Debate and the Gospel’ which appeared on the *Baptist Times* website http://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/469860/The_EU_debate.aspx. There has been little theological reflection on Europe, although see Jonathan Chaplin and Gary Wilton (eds.), *God and the EU: Faith in the European Project* (London: Routledge, 2016).

¹⁶ Clements argues for the importance of both systematic theology and church history to inform one another in Keith Clements, ‘The Mutual Contributions of church History and Systematic Theology: The Holocaust and Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a Case Study’, *Pacificca* 20.2 (2007): 162–84.

¹⁷ The penultimate chapter of *A Patriotism for Today* is headed ‘True Ecumenism and True Patriotism’, 150–163.

¹⁸ Clements, *What Freedom?*, v.

that were issued from readers of *A Patriotism for Today*.¹⁹ Even his most recent study of Bonhoeffer, which is a more straight historical account of the theologian's ecumenical involvement, concludes with asking what we learn in today's on-going ecumenical quest.²⁰

This close reading of Bonhoeffer began in his days as an undergraduate at King's College, Cambridge and has been the key shaper of Clements' theological mind. Other theologians often start with a theologian and then move on to others in the tradition. Bonhoeffer has remained a constant companion in Clements' theological journey and thought. This in part reflects Bonhoeffer's shared commitment to ecumenism, which has also been part of Clements' life from his university days. His discovery of Bonhoeffer was joined at the same time by his encounter with a Christianity wider than his Baptist upbringing.

Clements most early discussion of ecumenism is in *A Patriotism for Today*. Here he argues that ecumenism is not just those activities of bringing different denominations together in unity, but, and more importantly, the "manifestation of the universal church across the world of nations."²¹ To be a Christian is more determinative than being a citizen of any particular nation.²² Ecumenism is for this reason not an 'extra' to the life and belief of the church, it is a "dimension of all we do."²³ If ecumenism challenges nationalism, it also, says Clements, challenges "denominational introspection."²⁴ He takes as an example, how some in the Church of England have a "vastly exaggerated opinion" of itself, which makes church relations with others more difficult. (Over thirty years later, it's not always obvious much has changed in this regard.) Clements argues for British Christians to be more ecumenical, more catholic, to recognise our "belonging to the one holy, catholic and apostolic church of all times and places."²⁵ He says this with no comment here on Baptists, for whom, at least a good number in the 1980s would not have shared this view.

Clements moves his argument on to look at the example of Bonhoeffer as an ecumenist and the tensions this generated with his love of Germany. While being Christian is more determinative, Clements does not overlook the reality of our being citizens and of the world as it currently is. Bonhoeffer chose to return to Germany and the reality of what was happening there, where he could have stayed in the United States, in an ecumenical bubble. It was this decision says Bonhoeffer's friend and biographer Eberhard Bethge that "made him ecumenically so alive."²⁶ Ecumenism then ultimately is more than churches becoming one, eschatologically it is the nations discovering their *oikumene* in God. Bonhoeffer, instead of abandoning Germany, was an ecumenical witness within his country at its darkest hour and in this Clements says, "ecumenism and patriotism coincide."²⁷ We cannot forget that nations exist, that we are people of some place, of some country. The gift of the ecumenical vision is that we do not have a false view of our

¹⁹ Ibid., vi.

²⁰ See *Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Ecumenical Quest*, 271–300.

²¹ Clements, *A Patriotism for Today*, 150.

²² Ibid., 158.

²³ Clements, *Ecumenical Dynamic*, 12.

²⁴ Clements, *A Patriotism for Today*, 153.

²⁵ Ibid., 154.

²⁶ Bethge, *Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr* (London: Collins, 1975), 79 cited in Clements, *A Patriotism for Today*, 159. Clements got to know Bethge and his wife, Bonhoeffer's niece, and this I think probably added to his interest in Bonhoeffer.

²⁷ Clements, *A Patriotism for Today*, 161.

country, that in Christ, patriotism does not become an idol. In later work Clements describes this as ‘living in more than one place at once’, what he calls the “ecumenical dynamic.”²⁸

Clements is one committed to the institutions of ecumenism. He has been, in his words, a “professional ecumenist.”²⁹ However he sees ecumenism as something bigger than merely the professional side of ecumenism in its structures and bodies. This is picked up by his use of the word ‘dynamic.’ Where institutional ecumenism, even in its heyday of the 1960 to 1990s, could look like the slow, patient, perhaps not very exciting work, of meetings, and statements and words, Clements has always seen it and experienced it as something lively. It is the meeting of Christians, who discover something greater than their own understanding of Christianity. Clements quotes the former General Secretary of the Baptist Union, David Russell, who after his first international ecumenical experience said, “I began to realise that my God – my God – my Scottish Baptist God – was too small.”³⁰ This does not mean, although for some ultimately it does, that you leave behind your theological convictions as, for example, a Baptist, but it does expand your horizons beyond what is ultimately only one (relatively small³¹) way of following Jesus. Ecumenism for Clements is accepting this ‘living in more than one place at once’ as a gift and as check on all ‘identities and loyalties’ outside of that in we have in Christ.³² For Clements ecumenism and discipleship cannot be separate,³³ being a disciple is to be open and committed to the ecumenical venture of meeting, working, partnering, worshipping together as Christians.

This vision and passion for ecumenism, long-lived in Clements, is in *Ecumenical Dynamic* and *Look Back in Hope*, tempered by his sadness and disappointment in the ecumenical scene, especially in the United Kingdom, of the last ten to fifteen years. We read of his increasing frustration in the last decade at the downgrading of ecumenism within the UK,³⁴ in what had been the great promise, hope, and declared commitment in 1990 to the new ecumenical instruments, which included for the first time the Roman Catholic church and many of the black Pentecostal churches.³⁵ Ecumenism in the UK has become an extra, one largely now under-funded and marginalised as many of the historic churches are consumed by introspection about their on-going survival.³⁶ Current ecumenism in the UK lacks the leaders to “plot a future path”,³⁷ to call their denominations and others to engage in visible unity. Clements sees the death of Basil Hume, who had done so much in the 1980s as a symbol of the decline.³⁸ He also argues that reasons

²⁸ Clements, *Ecumenical Dynamic*.

²⁹ Ibid., 34.

³⁰ Ibid., 5.

³¹ This I take to be the point of Russell’s reference to ‘*Scottish* Baptist God’, for even exposure to Baptists from Europe and wider, would demonstrate that being Baptist looks very different in other places.

³² Clements, *Ecumenical Dynamic*, 5.

³³ Ibid., 33.

³⁴ Ibid., 14.

³⁵ This followed the 1987 Swanwick Declaration which saw the British Council of Churches replaced by the Churches of Council of Britain and Ireland (CCBI) and the national bodies of Churches Together in England (CTE), Churches Together in Wales and Action of Churches Together in Scotland.

³⁶ For an account of ecumenism from the perspective of the United Reformed Church see Martin Camroux, *Ecumenism in Retreat* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016).

³⁷ Clements, *Ecumenical Dynamic*, 13.

³⁸ Clements, *Ecumenical Dynamic*, 13. Basil Hume, the then leader of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales gave an address at the 1998 British Baptist Assembly, which would probably have been impossible a decade earlier.

for the ecumenical winter are the growth of evangelicalism which regards ecumenism as a “distraction from the ‘real task’ of the church”; the priority of inter-faith relations, especially after 11th September 2001; and internal church divisions, most obvious being that of that sexuality.³⁹

Clements response to this is to tell ecumenical stories. Following his own ecumenical story, the main chapters of *Ecumenical Dynamic* seek to offer some examples in Anglo-German relations pre- first World War, Edinburgh 1910, Barmen 1913, Bishop George Bell, Oldman’s Moot gatherings, and the work of CEC. He sees these stories as “creative episodes”, “resources of value”, and offering “echoes of hope.”⁴⁰ For Clements, they tell a different, but an equally (if not even more) important story that is otherwise told about the beginnings of WCC and its subsequent work.

Our own Baptist ecumenical story might be one that failed to ignite and provide opportunities for a new generation. Clements own involvement ecumenically stemmed, in part, from the example and encouragement of Morris West, who had likewise had a tutor in Ernest Payne.⁴¹ It is not clear who has taken up the mantle. However, at the level of the Baptist World Alliance, there is perhaps some encouragement seen in the bi-lateral conversations with the Anglican church,⁴² the Roman Catholic church,⁴³ and currently the Methodist church,⁴⁴ although this must at the same time be tempered by the fact that the fruit and content of these reports fail to reach those in churches or even challenge our national decision making bodies, most obviously in England the Baptist Union Council.⁴⁵ The whole journey of getting English Baptists to join the CCBI and CTE in 1989 and then again in 1995⁴⁶ has not produced any real ecumenical commitment, which maybe why so many Baptists were happy to vote yes on those two occasions, for in the long run it required nothing really of them. This is reflected by the comment from the Reformed historian David Thompson (a university friend of Clements), who has said “The Baptists have not actually been interested in talking to anybody really.”⁴⁷ This has not been true of many individual Baptists,⁴⁸ but of Baptists as a Union, it is a view that cannot entirely be refuted. This is reflected in that since Clements retirement he has been largely ignored by Baptists, despite his experience and standing ecumenically.⁴⁹

In providing this short introduction to the work of Keith Clements, I am hopeful it might inspire new readers of his work and re-ignite a wider recognition that as Baptists we cannot stand apart from

³⁹ Ibid., 16–17.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 21–22.

⁴¹ Keith Clements, ‘The Larger Context: Morris West, Servant of World Ecumenism,’ in J. H. Y. Briggs and Faith Bowers (eds.), *Baptists Together* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 2000), 28–29. West was Principal of Bristol Baptist College and one of those involved, on behalf of Baptists, in the WCC report *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. Payne was General Secretary of the Baptist Union and at one point one of the Presidents of the WCC.

⁴² *Conversations Around the World 2000-2005. The Report of the International Conversations between The Anglican Communion and the Baptist World Alliance* (Anglican Communion Office, 2005).

⁴³ ‘The Word of God in the Life of the Church. A Report of International Conversations Between the Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance, 2006-2010’, *American Baptist Quarterly* (Spring 2012): 28–122.

⁴⁴ These began in 2014 and are to be completed in 2018.

⁴⁵ Disappointingly there has been no serious interest, engagement, consultation, response to any of the reports mentioned above.

⁴⁶ See Ian Randall, *The English Baptists in the Twentieth Century* (Baptist Historical Society, 2005), 444–51, 491–96.

⁴⁷ Thompson is quoted in Camroux, *Ecumenism in Retreat*, 144.

⁴⁸ See Anthony R. Cross, ‘Service to the Ecumenical Movement: The Contribution of British Baptists’, *Baptist Quarterly* 38.3 (1999): 107–22.

⁴⁹ See Clements, *Look Back in Hope*, 364.

ecumenism, that the health of our way of being church requires a shared pilgrimage with others,⁵⁰ which Clements has been an outstanding example.

⁵⁰ On this see also Steven Harmon, *Baptist Identity and the Ecumenical Future* (Waco: Baylor, 2016).

**BAPTIST CHURCHES OF AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND: AFFIRMATION OF WEST
PAPUA INDEPENDENCE STATEMENT**

INTRODUCTION:

1. We, the New Zealand Baptist Union, as the whānau (family) of Baptist churches, believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ reconciles humanity with God, one another, and the wider creation (i.e. land, sea, air, flora, and fauna surrounding us) in fulfilment of part of humanity's original calling to image God through the ministry of faithful stewardship of creation (Gen 1:26–28).
2. Because of this calling to faithful stewardship and participation in Christ's ministry of reconciliation, we have a responsibility to acknowledge and support the special relationship that was created by God between the indigenous peoples of West Papua and the natural environment they have inhabited for many thousands of years, as manawhenua (sovereign nations) and kaitiaki (i.e. stewards of their natural environment), prior to the Indonesian occupation.
3. The Indonesian military occupation has led to the well-documented violent deaths of over 500,000 West Papuan people and their dislocation from ancestral lands (see rationale statements below). This ethnic cleansing has, in turn, led to the degradation of the natural environment as a result of mineral extraction and forestry operations that involve partnerships with multinational corporations (also discussed in rationale statements below).
4. Therefore, we the New Zealand Baptist Union, as followers of Jesus Christ and his ministry of justice, hold the expectation that the New Zealand Government will recognize the sovereignty of the Indigenous peoples of Western Papua and uphold their Human Rights as set out in international declarations it has signed. These include, for example, the United Nations' (1948) *Declaration on Human Rights*, and the United Nations' (2007) *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

STATEMENT OF AFFIRMATION:

The New Zealand Baptist Union has developed the following statement with the intention of encouraging the whānau of New Zealand Baptist churches to actively lobby: (a) the New Zealand Government; (b) corporations with vested interests in West Papua; (c) the Government of Indonesia; (d) other neighbouring Pacific nations; (e) fellow Christians and; (f) the wider international community, to recognize the sovereignty of the Indigenous peoples of Western Papua and uphold their Human Rights.

1. We the New Zealand Baptist Union, as a whānau of churches who are committed to the justice of God, express our deep concern at the historical record of Human Rights abuses that have occurred as a result of the Indonesian occupation of West Papua since 1962.

Rationale:

- West Papua's history as part of the Indonesian Republic stems from a U.N. sponsored process which transferred the territory to Indonesia with backing from the U.S. Kennedy Administration. West Papuans were excluded from the negotiations, which culminated in the 1962 New York Agreement between the Netherlands and Indonesia.
- To fulfil the agreement's requirement of an 'act of self-determination', Indonesia conducted the 1969 Act of Free Choice. Numerous eye-witness accounts confirm that the 'vote' was conducted under conditions of extreme duress and threat; including threats to life. Only approximately 1000 people took part in this process which most West Papuans refer to as the 'Act of No Choice'.
- Since the Indonesian takeover at least 500,000 people are estimated to have died in the ongoing conflict, but Indonesian security forces have not been held to account for their actions.

2. We the New Zealand Baptist Union, as a Whānau of churches who believe in humanity's calling as stewards of creation, also declare our deep concern at the ongoing exploitation of natural resources that has followed the Indonesian occupation of West Papua.

Rationale:

- West Papua, along with Papua New Guinea, is one of the most culturally and biologically diverse places on Earth. The island is home to some 1,000 different language groups (one-sixth of the world's total), with 263 found within West Papua's borders.
- Since Indonesian takeover, West Papua's cultural makeup has changed significantly as a result of migration, both sponsored and informal from other Indonesian provinces. Today indigenous Papuans are believed to be a minority in their own land and if present migration continues as planned this marginalisation will become more extreme.
- West Papua has the largest contiguous expanse of tropical rainforest outside the Amazon and among the largest number of endemic species on Earth. It has a snow-capped mountain chain and is one of the few places on earth where glaciers exist in the tropics.

- This beautiful land, spiritually precious to its Papuan communities is also rich in timber, gold, copper, oil, and natural gas: which has attracted the attention of transnational corporations, such as U.S. based Freeport McMoRan Inc.
- Freeport McMoran Inc. operates the world's largest gold mine and one of the world's largest copper mines. Freeport's Grasberg mine sits at an altitude of 14,000 feet in the remote highlands near Timika. The mine is a joint venture between Freeport McMoRan and mining juggernaut Rio Tinto. In 2014, Freeport contributed a massive US\$1.5 billion to the Indonesian state coffers.
- Each day the Freeport mine releases thousands of tons of tailings or waste rock into the Ajikwa River to be deposited in a vast dead zone in the lowlands. The mine is responsible for the displacement of its traditional tribal land-owners and for human rights abuses since its establishment.
- The NZ Super Fund quit its investment in Freeport McMoran citing the involvement of the Indonesian security forces, employed by Freeport to protect the mine, in documented human rights breaches. (See: <https://ramumine.wordpress.com/tag/freeport/>)
- West Papua's pristine forests are being exploited for timber exports, notably the hardwood kwila, still in use in New Zealand for outdoor furniture and decking. The palm oil industry is steadily encroaching on forest land as foreign investors rush to exploit Indonesia's lax land use regulations.

3. We the New Zealand Baptist Union, as a Whānau of churches who believe in our calling to participate in Jesus Christ's ministry of reconciliation, also declare our unwavering support for peaceful methods to persuade the international community (including Indonesia) to recognize and ensure the political independence of West Papua.

Rationale:

- For some years Church leaders from several denominations (including Baptist leaders like Socratez Yoman) have been promoting the concept of West Papua as "A Land of Peace". This is a concept which promotes dialogue between all actors including the Indonesian authorities to work towards an end to violence and long-term solutions.
- Because the territory is largely closed to outside journalists, grave human rights abuses against humanitarian and human rights workers are common, including massacres, torture, arbitrary arrests, and suppression of basic freedoms, all of which often go unpublicised in western media. The December 2014 killing of four schoolboys by security forces in Paniai,

was widely reported, but still the case remains unresolved.

(See: <http://time.com/4880190/papua-poverty-shootings-justice-paniai/>)

- West Papuan resistance groups, both in exile and within the territory, have forged a new unity and the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP) was granted observer status at the annual summit of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). The MSG is a coalition of Melanesian nations, like the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, who have expressed their deep concern about the situation in West Papua via diplomatic channels: <http://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/new-hopeful-chapter-west-papuas-50-year-freedom-struggle-begins/>
- As of 2017, some 1.8 million West Papuan people have defied the Indonesian government by signing a banned petition demanding a new vote for the independence of West Papua. This petition was therefore signed by some 70% of the West Papuan population and presented to the United Nations' Decolonization Committee, vice-chaired by Indonesia. The petition was subsequently rejected. (see: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/30/west-papua-independence-petition-is-rebuffed-at-un?CMP=share_btn_fb)

4. As a result of the UN Decolonization committee's rejection of a petition signed by some 1.8 million West Papuan people (and verified by reputable international observers), we the New Zealand Baptist Union, as a Whānau of churches who believe in the freedom of conscience that the gospel offers in Jesus Christ, call upon the New Zealand government to actively join other Pacific nations and proactively use diplomatic channels to support the legitimate aspirations of the majority of West Papuan people.

Rationale:

- In the early 1960s New Zealand supported Dutch plans for decolonisation of West Papua, but it has since accepted Indonesia's sovereignty. While New Zealand rightly raises human rights concerns with Indonesia, it does not take a strong advocacy role and continues to maintain defence ties with Indonesia.
- There is important potential for New Zealand to serve as a neutral third-party mediator as West Papuan church leaders, including Socratez Yoman, have requested.

CALL TO ACTION:

Given our concerns outlined in sections 1 and 2 above, we believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ demands the New Zealand Baptist Union recommend that its members (individually and collectively) undertake appropriate actions to help protect the rights of the Indigenous peoples of West Papua. To that end we recommend that:

1. The following actions be undertaken by the Assembly Council of the New Zealand Baptist Union and the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society:

- a. Engage with the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation leaders at every opportunity to raise awareness of the plight of West Papuan people, including West Papuan Baptists, and express our shared concern and need for just action. Where possible, utilize New Zealand Baptist Union networks to amplify the voice of West Papuan Baptist in the wider Baptist World Alliance, including, but not limited to, the Freedom and Justice Division.
- b. Utilise New Zealand Baptist communications, both formal and informal, to highlight and educate New Zealand Baptist churches about the plight of West Papua. This includes, but is not limited to, articles in the *NZ Baptist* and *Support Crew* with links to wider online material.
- c. Develop a partnership with other organisations, including, but not limited to, the West Papuan Action Group, to support and advocate the strategies and aspirations of West Papuan people.

2. The following actions be undertaken by Carey Baptist College:

- a. Provide a public opportunity for indigenous leaders of West Papua to speak about their experiences and their aspirations for justice. This could include, but is not limited to, a Carey Conversation that involves indigenous leaders of West Papua and leaders of the West Papua Action Group. Such a public event would be recorded and made publicly available through Carey Baptist College's website and social media platforms.

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REVIEWS

MYRA BLYTH, ANDY GOODLIFF, EDS. *GATHERING DISCIPLES: ESSAYS IN HONOR OF CHRISTOPHER J. ELLIS*. (286 PP.) EUGENE, OR: PICKWICK PUBLICATIONS, 2017. ISBN: 9781498231572

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My introduction to the work of Christopher J. Ellis was through the volume, *Gathering for Worship: Patterns and Prayers for the Community of Disciples* which he edited along with Myra Blyth on behalf of the Baptist Union of Great Britain. As a new pastor, with a passion for meaningful words guiding gathered worship services, this volume is greatly shaping the way I lead. It was a pleasure, then, to encounter more of Ellis' work through the Festschrift, *Gathering Disciples: Essays in Honor of Christopher J. Ellis*. This work, edited by Blyth and Goodliff, contains fourteen essays all in some way reflecting on the hymns that Ellis wrote throughout his career as a Baptist pastor, college principal, union president, and chair of various committees and councils. The contributors, an almost complete 'who's who' of British Baptist theologians, were given one of Ellis' hymns to reflect on and the result is a feast of insights into British Baptist life with which New Zealand Baptist pastors and leaders could greatly benefit from engaging. It is from this specific New Zealand and Baptist vantage point I offer this review.

To explore Ellis' liturgical theology, each author explores a different element of Baptist church life either at a local or a Union level. Themes of worship, discernment, and mission as well as a theological reflection on the Trinity and ecumenism are explored. There is an incredible breadth of reflection found within these pages.

This *Festschrift* is what Ellis himself speaks of as "Liturgical Theology" by which he means engaging in a process that explores the beliefs of a Christian community by studying its worship practices (p. 5). Despite Ellis' considerable influence on British Baptist life through the many different roles and his writing of hymns, Shona Shaw wonders "If research were to be carried out today in our UK churches, what practices in our congregational singing would it uncover?" (p. 49). I also wonder what would be the result of a similar exercise in New Zealand Baptist churches?

Without a doubt one of the main strengths of this *Festschrift* is its invitation for those in pastoral leadership to carefully consider the worship practices of our congregations. The convictions that Ellis holds which binds the practices of worship together are simple and profound:

1. Attention to Scripture;
2. Personal devotion and openness to the Spirit;
3. A concern for the community of the church;
4. A missiological and eschatological dimension focussed on the Kingdom (p. 6).

These convictions form the basis of Ellis' understanding that "Worship is directed to God, but also *forms* those who worship" (p. 13). They highlight the narrow nature of many contemporary worship songs, focussed perhaps too much on personal devotion to Christ or more often Christ's personal devotion to an individual. They serve as a reminder that the gathered worship service is something much more significant than a collection of individuals praying and praising God, rather, as Gardiner states, "the church is specifically called to proclaim in word and deed that Jesus is their Lord and in worship are invited to participate in a performance of Christ that names, unmasks and engages the surrounding and opposing powers" (p. 28). It is this radical nature of the gathered worship service which challenges the ease with which many approach church life. In its worship practices, the opportunity is given to the church to become, as Gardiner quoting Bonhoeffer states, "a section of humanity in which Christ has really taken form" (p. 28). The chapters reflecting on worship practices invite serious reflection on, but more significantly than that, action to be taken as a result of the church's worship practices.

With a focus on seeking together the mind of Christ being central to Baptist identity, the chapters which explore communal discernment and the practice which results are another strength found within *Gathering Disciples* pages. A fascinating reflection on the journey of the Baptist Union of Great Britain's (BUGB) discernment regarding both gender and marriage equality by Beth Allison-Glenny was, to me, the standout chapter. Allison-Glenny articulates the way in which the BUGB has committed to reading scripture together, which spaciouly gives room for dissent due to the emphasis on "the role of the local church for interpretation of Scripture" (p. 90). Whilst local churches are responsible for discerning the mind of Christ, there of course, is also a place for denominational discernment. The BUGB, then, holds as normative the affirmation of women in ministry, whilst also acknowledging that there are those who disagree. However acknowledging the space for disagreement does not necessarily result in the voices which disagree being unequivocally accepted. Quoting from a report presented to the BUGB Council in 2010, Allison-Glenny states: "Commitment to the full inclusion of women in leadership is our 'norm.' ... Those who want to disagree and want to be part of the family have to reckon with that. There is a place for dissent ... but dissent as a Baptist is to speak up for justice at great personal cost; it is not to perpetuate injustice at great cost to others ..." (p. 92). This statement holds firmly to the position the BUGB

holds, whilst enabling the Baptist hermeneutic emphasising discernment in the local church to also be upheld. An equally bold and gracious example of sitting with difference.

My one critique of *Gathering Disciples* is a contextual one. NZ Baptists have much to learn from the BUBG however as outsiders of the British and European context a few of the later chapters will likely feel bogged down in contextual detail which is difficult to translate. The exception to this would be the historical story of recent decades in the BUGB in Andy Goodliff's chapter on mission and how the equivalent of their National Leaders impacted the Union's view on mission and evangelism. Given the current space of transition that the Baptist Union of New Zealand is in, this chapter could be a helpful guide for this context.

Beyond the first three chapters, Ellis' hymns become more of a spring-board for further reflection into practice, but the writers never lose sight of the theme they have chosen to focus on from his writing. In this way there is much inspiration that can be taken from the idea of pastors writing hymns for their own congregations and contexts. If the hymns that are reflected upon in this *Festschrift* are any indication of the richness and depth that can come from doing so, it is hard to imagine what is stopping us from undertaking such a task in a New Zealand context.

STEVEN R. HARMON, *BAPTIST IDENTITY AND THE ECUMENICAL FUTURE: STORY, TRADITION, AND THE RECOVERY OF COMMUNITY*. WACO, TX: BAYLOR UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2016. (359 PP.) ISBN 9781602585706

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The content of *Baptist Identity and the Ecumenical Future* (BIEF) directly coheres with the author's self-identification as a "Baptist ecumenical theologian" (p. ix), and is the obvious fruit of Harmon's own ecumenical engagement and writing over the years, already reflected in previous publications such as *Towards Baptist Catholicity* (Paternoster, 2006) and *Ecumenism Means You Too* (Cascade Books, 2010). The volume has sparked much engagement, including an entire recent issue of the *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research* (Nov 2016) which reproduced the responses of four Baptist scholars from a May 2016 panel discussion.

On the one hand, Harmon wants Baptists to engage in the costly work, here and now, towards the "visible unity" of the global Church, instead of being content with "quantitative catholicity" (membership in the universal Church, p. 7) until the future return of Christ. Baptists need to embrace the biblical and qualitatively catholic nature and practices of the churches from

which they are separated, including liturgical patterns. On the other hand, he wants Roman Catholics to engage in the same costly work towards unity, which is not yet realized as long as churches remain separated from one another. Catholics thus need to embrace the dissenting voice of Baptists and others in order to become more qualitatively catholic.

To this end, the structure and content of *BIEF* is as follows: In Part I, Harmon argues that a fundamental component of the radical Baptist Vision is ecclesial renewal. He suggests this renewal should occur at both global, denominational and local levels, and that the current ecclesial “moment” is ripe for such renewal.

Part II shows the various points of convergence and divergence between Baptists and Catholics. The various Baptist confessions and the Catholic creedal formulations can be seen as differing expressions of a shared intent to faithfully summarize the authoritative voice of Scripture. Likewise, both Catholics and Baptists engage in rigorous contestation concerning the message of Scripture. Harmon shows that the contestation inherent to the ongoing Catholic processes of dogmatic formulation is akin to the contesting instincts of Baptists, whom he terms as “dissenting catholic Christians” (p. 112). He suggests that “to be radically biblical is ... to be radically catholic” (p. 131) in the qualitative sense, to the extent that the qualitative pattern of catholic faith and practice is sourced in the Scriptures. In light of this, both the radically Biblicist posture of Baptists and the qualitatively catholic and biblical practices are gifts that must be exchanged in order for “the whole church, Baptists included, to become more fully catholic” (p. 132).

Part III explores how “an interconfessional contestation of faith and order and an interconfessional exchange of gifts” can facilitate progress toward ecclesial “visible unity” (p. 149). For example, Baptists, with their congregations individually and collectively identifying as “churches” rather than a (or ‘the’) ‘Church’, can acknowledge their indebtedness to the churches that preceded them, as well as continue to engage in “receptive ecumenism”, the mutual exchange of gifts between ecclesial traditions. Harmon shows how the “gift of magisterium” can be received via what he terms the practice of a “magisterium of all believers” (p. 177). Such a “Free Church Magisterium” hears and weighs the voice of “all believers”, including non-Baptist voices reflected in ancient creeds, Catholic teaching, multilateral dialogues, other contextual theologies, and more (pp. 180–88).

Finally, Part IV explores the kind of ecumenical theology, theologians, and communities needed to progress toward the ecumenical future. Properly “systematic” theology (and systematic theologians) must be: a) comprehensive in drawing widely from Scripture and tradition, b) coherent in displaying the interdependence of doctrine, and c) constructive such that it draws upon the wisdom and traditions of the whole Church, here and there, then and now. Harmon presents the

pilgrim posture, familiar but not exclusive to Baptists, necessary for the ecumenical quest, and shows how this posture was embodied in the way Smyth (in England) and Williams (in the United States) sought a church that was not yet realised in “the confines of their existing Baptist communities” (p. 227). He then creatively adopts and adapts the “two-narrative Christology” of James Wm. McClendon to show that “because the church knows [its] story’s conclusion, the church participates in the quest for Christian unity in hope, no matter how dismal the present prospects for visible unity may seem” (p. 242). The volume’s final chapter in many ways lays out the postures and practices which such a hope-filled journey demands: gentle “persuasion rather than mandate” (p. 264), admission of divisive sins, humility with respect to one’s own gifts, appreciation of the priesthood of other believers, and healthy awareness of unity as a divine gift.

The strengths of *BIEF* are manifest and many. Its argument is comprehensively sustained, meticulously documented, and ultimately compelling. Harmon succeeds in charting a course to a future that is truly ecumenical. He masterfully shows the various ways in which the Baptist impulse for biblical faithfulness could be strengthened by becoming more qualitatively catholic, and how the qualitative catholicity of Catholics can be strengthened by the dissenting Baptist voice. The challenge of “receptive ecumenism,” and more importantly the humility and patience required to actually engage in it, is thoroughly issued, and by an author who actively walks his own talk. Some readers may be frustrated at the lack of strong critique of the various points at which Baptists are likely never to unite with Catholic understanding (though, note, for example, the critique of magisterial infallibility, p. 174). There is no discussion, for example, of Mariology as such, and only a passing reference to the doctrine of transubstantiation. Perhaps some engagement at these and other points of division could encourage some Baptists to engage more readily with Harmon’s important arguments. Then again, Harmon may have wisely judged that it is better for Baptists to critique themselves, and invite Catholics to do the same. On the whole, *BIEF* is certain to enjoy a long-lasting role in future ecumenical discourse, for Baptists, Catholics and the rest of God’s global people.