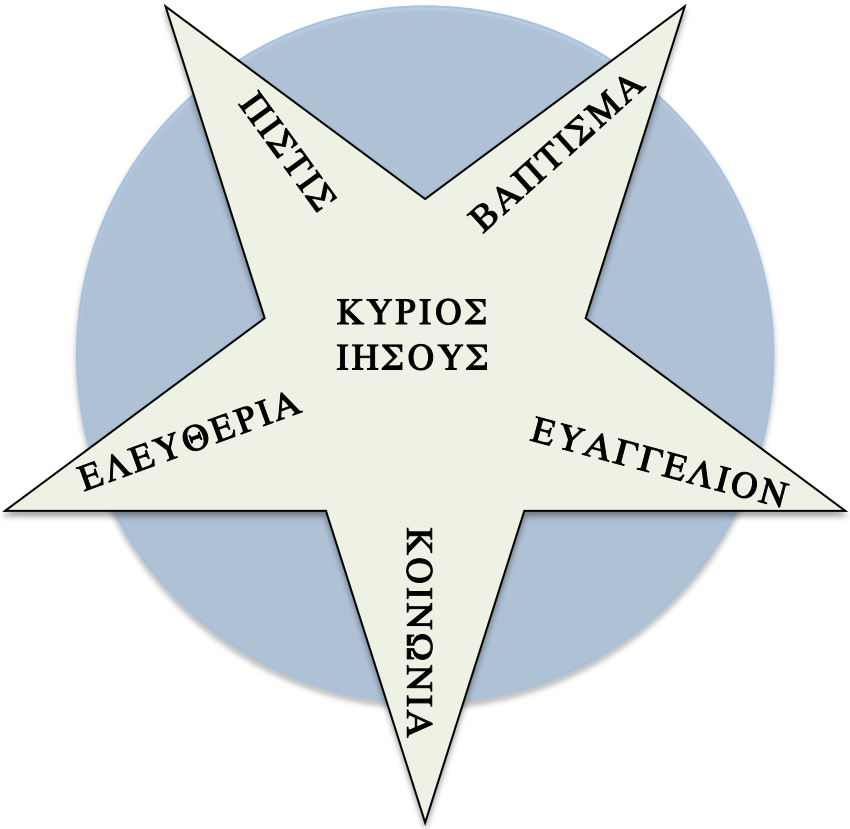
Journal of Baptist Theology
in context



Issue 2

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Editorial

Simon Woodman

The three articles in this issue of the *Journal of Baptist Theology in Context* reflect values inherent in Anabaptist theology and witness. From a post-Christendom approach to the visual arts, to Mennonite ecumenical dialogues as a path to the healing of memories and peace-making, to a participatory approach to forgiveness and reconciliation between genocide perpetrators and victims in Rwanda.

In her article on the visual arts in post-Christendom church, Karen Case-Green offers a powerful antidote to the 'wordiness' of so much of Baptist life and mission. Far from being a case to be made, Jesus becomes an encounter to be had; as one might encounter a work of art in ways that are participatory and transformative. What was lost with the iconoclasm of the reformation is being recovered by Christian artists who use art, sculpture, and other media to authentically communicate the mission of God, with which humans are invited to join. In this way, mission moves from being propositional to creative, as the creating nature of God is encountered through human creativity in ways that subvert, inspire, and release. Art thus becomes a crucial point of connection between church and culture, succeeding where mere language fails, as a means of drawing people into God. The church becomes a curator of God - removing the barriers that others erect and pointing the transcendence of creativity to the transcendent Christ. Karen Case-Green says, in conclusion, 'Missional art should not be afraid to engage in the dual tasks of prophetic criticising and prophetic energising, just as the biblical prophets did.'

Historically, Baptists and Catholics have a distressing history of infringing each other's religious freedom, whether in Catholic-dominated Latin American countries or in the Baptist-dominated American South. Steve Harmon offers insights drawn from the Lutheran-Mennonite report, *Healing*

of Memories: Reconciling in Christ, to suggest how Baptists and Catholics might approach the healing of memories in their own mutual relations. The report offers a process of affirming convictions held in common, revisiting and revising harmful theologies and misconceptions from the past, and honest recognition of differences still deeply held in good conscience in the present, to open a way for the seeking and granting of forgiveness. In terms of seeking common ground, Harmon notes that both Baptists and Catholics share the experience of having been persecuted religious minorities at the hands of an Anglican alliance of church and state, and suggests that having such experiences in our shared histories strengthens the current mutual Baptist and Catholic commitments to safeguarding religious liberty for all persons. However, he also suggests a realism about the extent to which ecumenical healing can aspire, noting that it is unlikely that Baptists and Catholics will share full communion in the near future. However, the process of healing, and seeking a unity of mission and witness is one to which Christ calls all disciples.

Alistair Cuthbert reflects on a far more recent rupturing of relationship, the 1994 Rwandan genocide during which, in just three months, nearly a million people were killed with machetes and other blunt instruments. He notes that one significant feature of the Rwandan situation marks it as different from other twentieth century genocides: 'it was between self-confessing followers of Jesus Christ'. Whatever else this was, it was also a theological genocide; and the interventions of Christian colonial powers in Rwanda are at least in part culpable for creating the context for the violence of 1994. So if there is to be a future for Rwanda that avoids 'a cyclical repetition of the genocide's extremes of violence … there needs to be in place a robust theology and process of forgiveness and reconciliation.' To this end, Paul Fiddes' theology of transformative forgiveness and reconciliation is offered as a model, because it grounds these outcomes in the divine relations and movements of triune God. For Fiddes, there can only be forgiveness when there is memory - the wrong cannot be forgotten if it is to be forgiven. It is the

memory of the violence and injustice of the cross, at the heart of the Christian faith, that invites participation in the God who transforms, forgives, and reconciles.

The articles in this issue repay careful engagement, and the editors hope that they will stir profound reflection on the mission of God through the people known at the Baptists.

Acts of the Imagination: The Missional Potential of the Visual Arts in Post-Christendom UK

Karen Case-Green
Guildford Baptist Church

Abstract: *Visual arts and theology have enjoyed a recent flourishing, what some are even calling a 'new renaissance'. This paper evaluates the potential of this visual language as a means of participating in the missio Dei and argues that this language is vital in our post-Christendom UK context. Rather than seeing the demise of Christendom as a threat to mission, it argues that post-Christendom creates a clearing space for the old story to be retold in fresh ways. Visual culture, and in particular 'prophetic acts of the imagination', play an important part in the retelling. Combining the theological aesthetic of Janet Soskice and Walter Brueggemann, acts of the imagination in the UK will be evaluated.*

Key Words: *imagination; metaphor; mission; visual arts*

2018 saw the first Visual Theology conference in the UK. Professor Ben Quash began by stating that, for the first time since the Reformation, the church is acknowledging that visual culture may be another language – and a significant language at that – through which Christians can fulfil Christ's missional imperative to 'preach the gospel in all languages'.[1] Many would agree that an extraordinary flourishing of creativity is underway in the church, what some are even calling 'a new renaissance'.[2] At the same time, the rise in visual media has re-shaped the way we communicate and this,

[1] Ben Quash, Visual Theology I Conference (The Bishop's Palace: Chichester, 19 October 2018).

[2] Keir Shreeves, *Art for Mission's Sake: Announcing the Gospel through the Creative Arts* (Cambridge: Grove, 2017), 4. This phenomenon is also evident in the United States. See for example Bethel's 'School of Creativity' (https://www.bethel.com/events/school-of-creativity-3/).

in turn, has raised new opportunities for the way the gospel is received.

However, the flourishing of the visual arts challenges traditional understandings of mission and is not always welcome. Since the Reformation, the gospel has largely been announced verbally, not visually, and a hermeneutic of suspicion has dogged the visual arts. There were good reasons for such suspicion. Images can fast become idols. Yet the Bible is, nonetheless, image-rich: the biblical writers were fluent in both the verbal and the visual languages, and the parables, poetry and apocalypses in the Bible all depend on images and on the imagination that creates them.[3] While we tend to be fluent in both verbal and visual languages as children, many of us grow distant from the latter as we grow older. Yet visual art can help us to imagine the world differently. In doing so, it need not lead us away from truth. Instead, in the words of Emily Dickinson, it can 'tell all the truth but tell it slant'.[4]

The cultural context for 'mission' has shifted dramatically since Christendom, partly due to anxiety over post-colonialism. This paper will not shy away from using the word 'mission', but will use it through the interpretive lens of the *missio Dei:* 'the sending of God'.[5] As Christopher Wright states, the *missio Dei* is 'God's own mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation'.[6] It is the triune God who initiates and sends; we merely participate. Moreover, we are made in the image of a creator God and

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[3] John McIntyre, *Faith, Theology and Imagination* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1987), 3.
[4] Emily Dickinson, *Tell all the truth but tell it slant* (1263). This idea is further explored in Karen Case-Green and Gill Sakakini's *Imaging the Story: Rediscovering the Visual and Poetic Contours of Salvation* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), xviii.
[5] Joshua Searle, *Theology after Christendom: Forming Prophets for a Post-Christian World* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018), 88.
[6] Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God* (Nottingham: InterVarsity, 2006), 22-23.

the creative impulse we experience has its ontological roots in Him. Thus mission as 'creative participation' in God's activity in the world will be the missiological lens through which the discussion below is framed.

Examples of missional art-making will be outlined and the wider potential of the visual arts in mission will then be critically evaluated. The scope of the paper will be limited to the visual arts in the UK, particularly in the context of post-Christendom.

Post-Christendom

In Christendom, which began in the fourth century, Christian rites, moral teachings and language were part of the 'taken-for-granted environment'.[7] In a radical shift from the early church's experience, culture and Christianity became synonymous.[8] This lasted for almost fifteen hundred years.

Today we are witnessing a breakdown in this coherence between social institutions and the Christian faith and society is shaped less by the Christian story to express Christian convictions and more by other narratives.[9] As I write this, a story has just broken concerning Iranian Christian converts who have been refused UK asylum because the officials conducting the Home Office interviews had such little knowledge of the Bible that they were ill-equipped to evaluate the asylum seekers' claims.[10] Not only is Bible literacy waning,

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[7] Searle, xvi. This shares McLeod's definition of Christendom.
[8] Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), 80.
[9] Stuart Murray, *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (2nd Ed.; London: SCM, 2018), 21.
[10] May Bulman, 'Home office refuse Christian convert asylum after quoting Bible passages that 'prove Christianity is not peaceful,' *The Independent,* Wednesday 20 March 2019. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/home-office-christian-convert-asylum-refused-bible-not-peaceful-a8832026.html.

many have ceased to marry in church, baptize their children or send them to Sunday school.[11] Christian church attendance has fallen and the church's influence has declined to such an extent that some see it as 'stranded on a sandbank of social and political irrelevance'.[12]

Of course, not all would agree that we are living in post-Christendom or that the church is in such trouble. Many of our UK institutions are still shaped, to some degree, by Christian values. Some UK churches have also grown, particularly those impacted by immigration from African and Caribbean Christians.[13] Moreover, while its demise is being experienced in the global north, Christianity's centre of gravity has moved south. Churches in Latin America, Africa and Asia have seen dramatic growth.[14]

However, despite all this, it is widely agreed that the gap between our nation's cultural values and those of Christianity are widening dramatically. W.B. Yeats' poem, *The Second Coming*, speaks today. Circling around the image of a falcon, Yeats explores the growing disconnect between the falcon and the falconer:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

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[11] Callum Brown, in *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800 – 2000.* (London: Routledge, 2001), 1.
[12] Searle, xviii.
[13] Guest *et al*, 'Christianity: Loss of Monopoly' in *Religion and Change in Modern Britain* edited by Linda Woodhead and Rebecca Catto (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 65.
[14] Kang-San Tan, 'The future shape of Christian mission', *Mission Catalyst* (Issue 3, 2018), 7.

The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.[15]

Yeats' image has a prophetic edge. Written in 1919, it spoke into a sense of global unravelling following World War 1, the Russian revolution and the Easter Rising in Ireland. Yet, as with any prophetic act of the imagination, the image escapes the confines of its immediate context and reverberates into the future. In 2017 *The Second Coming* was the most quoted poem in the UK. It captured our growing sense of national disunity and political uncertainty over BREXIT, while pointing also to the growing disconnect to our past Christian values. The rising tide of populism and nationalism could be seen as a chilling attempt to retrieve a past now dead, including reviving a moribund Christendom.[16] Indeed, the title for this paper, *Acts of the imagination*, is taken from Greenbelt's 2018 festival which explored, in part, how visual sign acts could counter the rising nationalism we are witnessing.

Therefore, rather than seeing the demise of Christendom as a threat to mission, post-Christendom can create a clearing space for the old story to be retold, and prophetic acts of the imagination can play an important part in the retelling. Brian McClaren suggests that if Christendom were characterized by 'theologian-accountants, theologian-technicians and theologian-scientists,' then post-Christendom requires 'theologian-poets'.[17] Rather than seeking to prove faith or argue belief we need prophet-poet-artists to commit acts of the imagination for, as Walter Brueggemann states, people are not changed by 'new rules' or 'instruction' but rather, the deep places of their lives, the 'places of resistance and embrace are reached only by stories, by images,

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[15] W.B. Yeats, *The Second Coming*, as cited in Janet Morley, *Haphazard by Starlight* (London: SPCK, 2013), 45.
[16] Murray, *Post-Christendom*, 20.
[17] McClaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy* (El Cajon: Youth Specialties Books), 161.

metaphors…that line out the world differently'.[18] Acts of the imagination need not escape from reality but instead can line out the world radically differently, according to the way God sees it.

Images Act

Images are important because they say that which can be said in no other way. This is the theological aesthetic of Janet Soskice, a Catholic theologian, who defines herself as a theological realist. Soskice offers a comprehensive critique of theories of metaphor and imagery in her seminal work, *Metaphor and Religious Language*.[19] Rather than treating imagery as a 'decorative' alternative to saying something literally (as Aristotle did), or splitting the references between the literal and the metaphorical subject (as Ricoeur's did), Soskice argues that what is performed through metaphor and imagery can be said in no other way, but, once said, can be recognised by many.[20] Imagery *acts,* states Soskice, adding incrementally to our understanding of something and, in doing so, produces 'new and unique agents of meaning'.[21]

The next section will outline some examples of contemporary acts of the imagination among UK artists.

Acts of the imagination today

Naming, Sarah Bennett. In the first act of art-making in the Bible, Adam was invited to name the creatures that God brought to him. Naming seals something of a creature's

[18] Walter Brueggemann *Finally Comes the Poet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 109-10. Although Brueggemann writes from more of a Christendom context, primarily addressing the church community, his argument is pertinent in post-Christendom.
[19] Soskice uses 'metaphor' and 'image' interchangeably in *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985).
[20] Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, 153.
[21] *ibid*, 31.

identity, which is perhaps why some people agonize over naming a baby.

As Christians, we are invited to define the world prophetically in the light of Christ. The photographer Sarah Bennett did this when she re-imagined the Isan women sold into prostitution in Thailand. In her photographs, she renames the whore 'Strong,' 'Daughter,' and 'Child of God'.[22] Steven Guthrie suggests that Bennett plays Adam: 'Sarah's camera looks out over the girls of Bangkok and says, "Your name is 'human'; your name is 'beloved'; your name is 'image of God".'[23]

'Isan Innocence,' Sarah Bennett

'Strong', Sarah Bennett

Sound Portraits, Epiphany. Prophetic acts of 're-naming' are also the aim of the music ensemble, Epiphany. Working with visual artists to create what they call 'sound portraits', Epiphany work in the public sphere where the church has little or no access. Over the last decade they have performed at the National Portrait Gallery, the Ideal Home Show, the

[22] See Bennett's 'An Artistic Response to the Trafficking of Isan Women in Bangkok as Prostitutes' (BA Honors Thesis, Belmont University, Nashville, TN, 2008), as cited in Steven Guthrie, *Creator Spirit: The Holy Spirit and the Art of Becoming Human* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 175.
[23] Guthrie, *Creator Spirit,* 176.

RHS Flower Shows in London, as well as pubs and community centres around the UK.[24]

'Sound Portrait,' Epiphany (National Portrait Gallery)

During a sound portrait, participants are invited to sit and be played to while the artist paints an abstract impression of how they sense God sees this person. The musicians never plan what they will play. One musician starts and then others join in: it is a project of spontaneous participation. At the end, participants can say what they experienced if they wish. Epiphany will then share in non-religious language what they felt as they played. At the end, a recording of the 'sound portrait' is given to the participant, along with the artwork. Williamson writes: 'We live in a culture where individuals are rarely honoured or loved for who they are and this is a way of saying, without words, that 'You are beautiful, of great value and loved!'[25]

[24] Examples of sound portraits can be found here https://youtu.be/zMdfzSl3s0I and are explored in Case-Green and Sakakini, *Imaging the Story*, 99-100.
[25] Richard Williamson, *Epiphany* (epiphanymusic.org.uk).

'Sound Portrait,' Epiphany (Manchester)

These prophet-artists do more than just see; they re-see. Seeking to participate in God's own imagination, seeing people as God sees them, they call out people's humanity.

Beach Hut Advent Calendars, Beyond. This next piece illustrates how artists can creatively enter the clearing space that post-Christendom provides. The pop-up art sheds, also known as the 'beach hut advent calendar,' have become a key cultural feature of Advent in Hove. Organized by the art group Beyond, twenty-four beach huts are transformed into advent sheds, with a different hut being opened each night to showcase an art installation. Free mince pies and hot drinks are offered and, as visitors gather to watch then next night's shed being opened, people chat together about the Christmas story. It has been well received over the eleven years it has run, with hundreds of people flocking to the promenade each night to see the opening of a new shed.

'Advent Beach Huts,' Beyond (Hove)

'Advent Beach Huts,' Beyond (Hove)

Artists are given one guideline when designing these sheds: their art needs to be based around a Christmas carol of the artist's choice. By juxtaposing a traditional carol with modern-day cultural references in the artwork, the

incarnation is de-familiarized for some, while told for the first time for others. In this threshold space as we enter post-Christendom, where some have a fading memory of the old story and others have never heard it, art-making can have the multi-valence to speak to both audiences.

The Advent shed idea has spread throughout the UK. As well as beach huts being opened, garages, sheds and horseboxes have also been used in churchyards, on village greens and in other communal spaces.

Tree of Life, RSCH. This triptych was created by a missional art community of non-professional artists in Surrey for the breast clinic at the Royal Surrey County Hospital. The idea was conceived when one artist in the group accompanied a friend to her biopsy results. During the long wait, they were faced with grey walls and a screen charting the slow appointment system, which did nothing to alleviate the anxiety in the room. The artist began to imagine what difference a painting might make to the culture of the waiting room.

The art group approached the clinic's Matron with embryonic sketches for a triptych, and dialogue evolved. There were limitations: artwork had to comply with infection-control procedures so the work had to be printed onto photographic canvas. Secondly, no overtly Christian message could be expressed. The artists therefore chose to work around the idea of a tree in all seasons, basing their image on a well-known oak tree at Newland's Corner, a local beauty spot.


Tree of Life, Royal Surrey County Hospital

As they made the triptych, the artists prayed for the Holy Spirit to inspire them. They felt themes of hope and restoration emerge, even in the storm of diagnosis and treatment. In this mixed media piece, therefore, gold and silver threads were woven in and jewels placed in the water.

Since its installation, the triptych has been reproduced and used elsewhere in the public sphere. The original now hangs in a local GP surgery.

Prodigal Son, Charlie Mackesy. A well-known installation is Charlie Mackesy's 'Prodigal Son'. The story of the prodigal son is central to Mackesy, who has created numerous pieces around the theme. As well as being found in churches such as HTB, Mackesy's work features elsewhere in the public sphere, including Highgate Cemetary, Ashfield Prison Chapel, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, Ridley College Cambridge and various safe houses for women. About the parable of the Prodigal Son, Mackesy writes, 'It suggests that we are loved not for what we do but because we exist. It cannot be earned; it is a gift. This is the most liberating truth in existence, that

we are loved, known, forgiven and free'.[26] Preachers can tell their congregations that they are loved by God *ad infinitim* and the words fail to penetrate. However, a sculpture like this can speak with visceral power.

These are just a small number of examples of acts of the imagination among UK artists today. The next section evaluates the missional potential for visual art in post-Christendom UK.

A critical evaluation of the visual arts in mission

Missional art-making can fall prey to several dangers. In a consumerist culture, the temptation towards idol-making is one. Another is the fundamentalist/liberal divide and how to stay true to the *euangelion*.[27] A third is Barth's warning that 'speaking of God means something *other than* speaking about the human in a somewhat higher pitch'.[28] How is an artist to know, for example, in the process of 're-naming' that they are not merely telling people what their itching ears want to hear? (2 Timothy 4:3) These are some of the concerns that will now be addressed. Brueggemann's theology of prophetic imagination and Soskice's theological aesthetic will frame the discussion.

Prophetic Criticizing and Prophetic Energizing. God's mission does not need art-makers to make the world look prettier. Karl Barth may not be considered a friend to many artists. However, while they might dismiss his dialectic, they would be wise to heed his emphasis:

The Bible does not tell us how we are supposed to talk with God, but rather than God says to us. It does not say how we are to find our way to him, but how God has sought and found the way to us…Therefore a

[26] Charlie Mackesy (https://charliemackesy.com).
[27] Searle, *Theology after Christendom*, 146.
[28] Karl Barth, *The Word of God and Theology*. Translated by Amy Marga (London: T & T Clark, 2011) 183.

new world stands in the Bible. God! God's lordship! God's honor! God's inconceivable love!'[29]

Missional art needs to have a prophetic edge, to speak from God's perspective and to line out the world according to the way God sees it. Rowan Williams suggests that art-making 'is not grounded in some celebratory sense of being at home in the world, but rather in an acute awareness of the world not being at home in itself, in a sense of dislocation'.[30] People need to hear God speak to them in the midst of this dislocation.

This will not always be comfortable. The Old Testament prophets engaged in what Brueggemann calls 'prophetic criticizing' as well as 'prophetic energizing'.[31] They critiqued the dominant consciousness, but then energized it by presenting an alternative consciousness. The Biblical prophets were social critics as well as social visionaries, and art-makers need to recover this dual vocation. In an Editorial for *Christianity Today*, Akers asks, 'Where are the creative men and women – the writers, the artists, the filmmakers – who will capture the imagination of our confused world in the name of Christ? Where are those who will expose by their work the vanities and contradictions of our age, and affirm with all the skill they can muster that only in Christ 'are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge?'[32] We need prophetic acts of the imagination which 'criticize' as well as 'energize.'

Unfortunately, visual art is often used as 'eye candy' in mission, with much time being spent on building up to a message that never comes or is over before it has begun. I visited a large church in a university city with a generous arts

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[29] Barth, *The Word of God*, 25-26.
[30] Rowan Williams, 'Poetic and Religious Imagination', *Theology* 80 (1977), 178.
[31] Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 2nd ed (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 39-59.
[32] John Akers, 'Editorial', *Christianity Today* (1989), 13.

budget. Their missional carol service was a visual feast, with art, drama and videography. Yet, while it scored highly on presentation, it was thin on content. No one talked much of God, much less what God says to us. As one guest commented afterwards: 'There was a massive lead-up, but no real punch line'. Confidence in the gospel needs restoring among art-makers. Paul writes, 'For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith' (Rom. 1:16).

Windows. Acts of the imagination should therefore point us beyond ourselves. The poet and priest, George Herbert, is acutely conscious of this:

Lord, how can man preach thy eternal word?
He is a brittle crazy glass:
Yet in thy temple thou dost him afford
This glorious and transcendent place,
To be a window, through thy grace.[33]

Missional acts of the imagination need to be 'windows,' pointing beyond the artist to God. Significantly, one piece of art that Karl Barth *did* value was Matthias Grunewald's 'Crucifixion.' The work depicts John the Baptist, with an elongated index finger, pointing to Christ on the cross. The Baptist acts as witness here. For Barth, witnessing meant 'pointing in a specific direction beyond the self and on to another'.[34] Missional acts of the imagination need to point, ultimately, to Christ. This does not mean that every painting needs to contain a cross, but we do need to recover the *euangelion*: the good news that a new King has come who will bring justice and peace to our world.

De-familiarization. This might mean de-familiarizing conventional Christendom symbols. Once an image becomes

[33] George Herbert, 'The Windows' in *The Complete English Poems* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 61.
[34] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* 1/1. Translated by G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 111.

too familiar, one can stop seeing it. The Welsh artist Stephen Owen is conscious of this tendency, and thus seeks to de-familiarize Christian symbols. In his lectern and communion table (below), Owen carved the lectern in the shape of a cross and drove a huge nail through its base, upon which the lectern balances. Lest we forget that the cross was a tool for execution, the nail jolts us from our familiarity.[35]

Lectern, Stephen Owen, Millmead chapel, Guildford

If the lectern speaks of crucifixion, the communion table (below) speaks of resurrection. The table has a gaping hole, off-centre, at its base. The cracked wood acts on the imaginations of those participating in communion in the Millmead chapel, adding incrementally to their understanding of the words, 'He is not here; He has risen' (Matt. 28:6, NIV). During communion, the images *act*, adding incrementally to our understanding of something and, in doing so, they produce 'new and unique agents of meaning'.[36] Owen follows Soskice's theological aesthetic, treating the imagery as that which can be said in no other way, but, once said, can be recognized by many.[37]

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[35] Stephen Owen, http://www.stephenowen.com/wood.htm.
[36] Soskice, *Metaphor*, 31.
[37] Soskice, *Metaphor*, 153.

Lectern and communion table, Stephen Owen (Millmead chapel, Guildford)

Art for Art's Sake?

It should be noted, however, that there is a reluctance to 'preach' among many art-makers today. Even artists who are commissioned to make artwork for churches would generally prefer to be given freedom to make what they like rather than being told that their work must fit a particular 'message'. Many feel that acts of the imagination should provoke questions rather than try to answer questions that people are not really asking.

Some view C.S. Lewis' famous *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* as a powerful re-telling of the gospel story. Yet Lewis claims never to have set out with the intention of writing a 'message.' Indeed, he refuted the notion that he had fixed on the fairy tale as an instrument, then drawn up a list of basic Christian truths and finally hammered out allegories to embody them:

This is all pure moonshine. I couldn't write in that way. It all began with images; a fawn carrying an umbrella, a queen on a sledge; a

magnificent lion. At first there wasn't anything Christian about them; that element pushed itself in of its own accord.[38]

Therefore, perhaps the visual arts should be viewed as non-utilitarian in mission. Shreeves suggests that our making might look 'more like playfulness than serious evangelism'.[39] How might this take place?

Sacramental Imagination

A word on the sacraments would be useful here. The sacraments are arguably the greatest acts of the imagination the church can offer the world. It is perhaps no coincidence that they came under attack at the same time as the arts during the Reformation. However, Clark H. Pinnock argues that '[God] reaches out to us, not only through the proclamation of the word, but in many other ways, including visible words that embody and mediate'.[40] In the middle of a storm, Paul broke bread on the deck of a ship amidst a crowd of unbelievers (Acts 27) as a sign act of God's provision. In committing this act of the imagination, Paul pointed to a reality more real than the wind and the waves. Today, many people experience the sacraments as a means of grace to aid the 'divine–human encounter'.[41] As physical creatures, we appreciate embodied expressions to perceive the invisible things of God.[42]

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[38] Leland Ryken, 'Reading *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* with C.S. Lewis', as cited in Karen Case-Green, 'Defamiliarisation: purging our preaching of platitudes', in *Text Message* edited by Ian Stackhouse and Oliver Crisp (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014), 159-60.
[39] Shreeves, *Art for Mission's Sake,* 8.
[40] Clark H. Pinnock, 'The Physical Side of Being Spiritual', in *Baptist Sacramentalism* edited by Anthony R. Cross and Philip E. Thompson (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), 8.
[41] Paul S. Fiddes, 'Baptism and Creation' in *Reflections on the Water* edited by Paul S. Fiddes (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1996), 64.
[42] Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love* (Downers Grove, III: IVP, 1996), 127.

'The Son is the image of the invisible God,' Paul writes to the Colossians (Col. 1.15). Sending his Son was the ultimate creative act of God towards humankind. All life flows from Christ. He is the source and he holds all life together. Bonhoeffer believed that the church was actually the world as it was meant to be 'in Christ,' centred upon its true centre, witnessing 'to the foundation of all reality in Jesus Christ'.[43] This 'centring' takes place as we proclaim Christ's reign over the world; and we do this 'on earth as it is in heaven' perhaps most particularly and most earthily when we celebrate the sacraments.[44]

While Calvin limited the sacraments to baptism and communion, others have argued for a wider approach, dividing general revelation and special revelation. Pinnock's has a substantial list for 'general revelation,' yet even here art-making is conspicuously absent.[45] Stephen Pattison, however, suggests that art-making can work as a natural sacrament. In *Seeing Things,* he explores human relations with visual artefacts and raises awareness of the phenomenology of the object, arguing for what he calls 'horizontal sacramentalism'.[46] By adopting Pattison's approach, art-makers can realize the potential to make things that embody and mediate God's grace to the world. Images act.

Images Reverberate

The work of the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard is pertinent here. In his book, *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard, seeks a phenomenological determination of images, arguing that images must be given space to 'reverberate' in our

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[43] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (London: SCM, 1960), 67-9.
[44] Ian Stackhouse, *The Gospel-Driven Church* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), 268.
[45] Pinnock, 'Physical Side', 11. Examples include meeting together, discipling, foot-washing, encountering the poor and hungry and carrying an office in the church.
[46] Stephen Pattison, *Seeing Things: Deepening Relations with Visual Artefacts* (London: SCM, 2007), 254.

imaginations.[47] Bachelard likens the dynamism at work between the image and the imagination to a mollusc emerging from a shell. He suggests that images 'abound,' 'grow,' and finally 'escape,' for the large must always escape the small.[48] The image generates a progression from the material world to the infinite.

The prophetic Biblical imagery has tremendous generative power according to the translator, Robert Alter. He notes, for example, that in Isaiah 24 a man leaps from 'terror' to 'trench' to 'trap' in his effort to escape the enemy (vv.17-18), and then being overtaken by a cosmic force of destruction:[49]

For the casements on high will be opened,
and the earth's foundations will quake.
Shatter, the earth will shatter,
crumble, the earth will crumble …
Is. 24.18-19[50]

Thus we witness what Alter calls 'a semantic skid from the historical to the cosmic'.[51] The image takes on a new power and starts to act back. Remove the imagery and the text is suddenly flattened and loses its generative power. Therefore, space needs to be curated well in order for images to act in the imagination, so that 'the large' can indeed escape 'the small'.

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[47] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*. Translated by M. Jolas (Boston: Beacon, 1964), xix; xxiii. This theory was explored in my MA dissertation 'The Preacher as Image-Bearer', 'Christianity and the Arts' MA, King's College, London, 2012.
[48] Bachelard, 154.
[49] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (Philadelphia: Basic, 2011), 192.
[50] This is Alter's translation.
[51] Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (London: Norton, 2004), 192.

Culture-making

For art-making to act like this, it needs to be out in the public sphere. It is easy for Christians to retreat from the world as they watch Christendom crumble, or to adopt an anti-cultural dialectic which shuns cultural engagement.[52] Yet Wesley Ariarajah's advice is salient here: 'only participants can be prophets, and withdrawal can be a form of betrayal'.[53] What will it look like for art-makers who want to participate in the *missio Dei* in post-Christendom by being culture-makers? Let us recall the words of Jesus:

You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.
(Matthew 5:13-14)

For too long the church has taken an ecclesiocentric, anti-cultural stance instead of acting as agents of transformation within culture. As a result, many artists have removed themselves from the church. Yet Jesus instructs his disciples to be salt and light within the world, as Peterson draws out in *The Message*:

You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth…You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill.
(Matthew 5:13-14)

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[52] Stackhouse, *Gospel-Driven Church*, 268.
[53] As cited in Lesslie Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984* (Geneva: WCC, 1983), 74.

When Jesus told his disciples to be 'salt' in the world it meant providing seasoning and acting as a preservative. Salt serves the world by preventing decay and drawing out good flavours.[54] Jesus warns of salt's worthlessness if it loses its saltiness (v13). Equally, salt preserves nothing if it is so frightened of losing its saltiness that it remains separate from the meat.

Art-makers need to participant in culture – be in it but not of it – and the Church should support them here. Sadly, acts of the imagination like those of Epiphany and the hospital triptych are para-church activities, receiving little or no support from churches. The church is often so busy trying to prop itself up in an increasingly hostile post-Christendom world that it has little time, energy or resources for culture-making.

Yet from the beginning of the biblical narrative, humankind was invited to be culture-makers. The word 'culture' is derived from the word 'agriculture,' with connotations of tilling, ploughing and fertilizing. By stewarding the land, humankind was invited to work the land in order *to make more of it* than they started with.[55] This human ability to 'make' was an intrinsic part of being made in the image of God and participating in God's creative nature. God did not merely make nature; He encouraged Adam and Eve to make culture from nature. He planted a garden. The garden contained hidden raw materials (gold, bdellium, onyx as well as flora and fauna – Gen. 2:11-12), which Adam and Eve could mine and cultivate and with which they could make something.[56]

Andy Crouch argues that culture is what we make of the world.[57] We cannot make *ex nihilo*, but we can create *ex material*, using the materials that God has created to make

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[54] Stackhouse, *Gospel-Driven Church*, 270.
[55] Leonard Sweet, *The Church in Emerging Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 18.
[56] Case-Green and Sakakini, *Imaging the Story*, 6.
[57] Crouch, *Culture Making*, 23.

more than the sum of the parts first given.[58] One might even dare to infer that God actually enjoys seeing His creatures make something of His world! Culture-making is a sign of Christ's life at work in us. As Paul writes, 'For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do' (Eph. 2:10, NIV). The Greek word *poieîn,* from which we get the word 'workmanship,' means 'make';[59] it does not simply mean 'do good deeds'. As God's handiwork, we are called to make works that are 'good' in the richest sense of the word. We see an example of such making later in Ephesians when Paul, rather than quoting Scripture, quotes a new hymn, written by the early church, possibly for Easter or baptisms:

Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. (Eph. 5: 14)

It is clear that, while Psalms were sung and Scripture read, new 'spiritual songs' were also being composed by the early church (Eph. 5:19).[60] Similarly, in Colossians 1, in what has become known as 'the hymn to Christ,' Paul borrows from other cultural material, possibly a hymn used by the early church, as well as philosophical thought of the day, in an attempt to communicate the significance of Christ to a wider audience. This poem/song did not simply drop from the sky. Paul is committing an act of the imagination in creating *ex materia* and, in doing so, he is culture-making.

Such acts of the imagination have the power to subvert our cultural norms. In their culture-making through hymns and songs, for example, the early church countered the imperial imagination. In a world populated by images of Caesar, who held himself up as the son of God and of whom it was said that he was 'equal to the Beginning of all things,' Paul subverts the imperial imagination with this poem about

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[58] Crouch, *Culture Making*, 74.
[59] David Brown and Ann Loades, *Christ: The Sacramental Word,* (SPCK, 1996), 3.
[60] The same happens in Colossians 1:15-20 and Philippians 2: 6-11.

Christ: 'He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation' (Col. 1:15, NRSV).

Culture is not changed simply by 'thinking'. People will always act on what they imagine to be true.[61] Acts of the imagination can re-wire someone, aligning them with an eschatological end. All this culture-making will reach its *telos* when Christ returns, where we find ourselves in a garden-city, one crammed full of culture. John's vision in the book of Revelation shows that God has not written off culture, but has rather redeemed it (Rev. 5:6).[62]

Seeking the Welfare of the City

How are we to wait for that day? Perhaps the Israelites in exile can teach us something here. While they waited to return home, they were told to 'seek the welfare of the city.' The phrase comes from the book of Jeremiah: 'But where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare' (Jeremiah 29:7). It speaks into our exile today in post-Christendom, suggesting that God cares for the whole world rather than merely the Christian part of it. Elaine Graham calls for Christians to speak outside the church walls, using prophetic advocacy in speaking truth to power, and seeking the welfare of the city.[63]

One artist who has sought to do this is the founder of the Craftivist Collective, Sarah Corbett. Corbett campaigned for thirty years before growing disillusioned with conventional activism. She asked herself, 'If we want our world to be more beautiful, kind and fair then why is our activism often not beautiful, kind or fair?'[64] Conscious of the need for something more playful, Corbett founded the Craftivist

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[61] Brueggemann, *Finally Comes the Poet*, 85.
[62] Philip Greenslade, *The Big Story* (Farnham: CWR, 2001), 808.
[63] Elaine Graham, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Public Theology in a Post-Secular Age* (London: SCM, 2013), 227.
[64] Sarah Corbett, 'The art of gentle protest', TEDx (https://craftivist-collective.com/our-story/).

Collective, which aims to create 'intriguing activism'. Art-makers send hand-made gifts to those in power. Marks and Spencer were one such recipient. While campaigning for M&S to implement the Independent Living Wage, the collective organized 'stitch-in protests' outside stores and sent individually designed handkerchiefs with hand-stitched messages to each of the fourteen board members. Upon agreeing to the Independent Living Wage, the CEO, Robert Swannell, stated that M&S would not have countenanced this change of policy had it not been for the collective's intervention.[65] The Craftivist Collective is a good example in post-Christendom of how playful, hopeful protest can bring about change.

Churches are warming to the idea of seeking the welfare of the city. One such example is HeartEdge based from St-Martin-in-the-Fields. Working in four areas: commerce, worship, compassion and culture (visual art, music and performances), the missional aim of HeartEdge is to support those working at the heart of commerce and culture, particularly at the margins and on the edge.[66] HeartEdge is a UK network, restoring the balance between the transcendentals of 'the Good', 'the True' and 'the Beautiful', and helping Christians to seek the welfare of their city in post-Christendom.

Cura

As churches adopt this stance towards culture-making, they will need curators. Decisions will need to be made about what goes out in the public sphere. It is not enough to put a piece of art into the public sphere simply because it carries a strong Christian message. Dorothy L. Sayers urges the church to purge works of 'flabby and sentimental religious art',

[65] Sarah Corbett, 'Gentle Protest', The Greenbelt Festival, 25-28 August 2017, Kettering. https://www.greenbelt.org.uk/talks/gentle-protest-how-gentleness-can-be-a-powerful-tool-in-activism/
[66] For more details, see HeartEdge, 'Catalysing Kingdom Communities', https://heartedge.org.

arguing, 'the artist must service God in the technique of his craft…a good religious play must first and foremost be a good play before it can begin to be good religion'.[67] Blank walls would be preferable to some of the poorly executed, clichéd art that goes up in the name of Christ.

These curators will do more than act as a panel of judges, however. They will also need to show care. Significantly, words like 'curator,' 'curate,' and 'cure' are all derived from the Latin word *cura* ('care') and can be applied equally to the care given to public works (the work of a curator) and to the cure of souls (the work of a curate). As David Levi Strauss suggests, curators have always been 'a curious mixture of bureaucrat and priest'.[68] Therefore, one important role of the curator is to nurture artists, both in their skills and their theology, as they engage in missional art-making.

One such curating group is Bright City, a missional arts stream that runs from St Peter's Church in Brighton. The artists include volunteer illustrators, designers, photographers and film-makers, all looked after by an Arts Pastor.[69] The stream has termly team nights, in which worship and teaching feature, with guest speakers visiting the group like Charlie Mackesy. The Arts Pastor meets up individually with artists to encourage them in their vocations.

Apart from caring for the art-makers themselves, the space in which art-making is exhibited also needs to be curated. This may involve negotiations with public bodies as seen in the RSCH artwork. This requires sensitivity to the relationship between 'seer' and 'image'. Stephen Pattison criticizes the modern West for fostering a society of spectacle. He

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[67] Dorothy L. Sayers, 'The Business of the Artist', *Plough Quarterly* (Autumn, 2018), 39.
[68] As cited in Erin Kissane, 'The Curate and the Curator', July 29, 2010
(http://incisive.nu/2010/the-curate-and-the-curator/).
[69] The streams include: music, production, dance, visual arts and drama (http://www.brightcityuk.com).

distinguishes between two ways of seeing things, pitting Cartesian 'optical visuality' (which assumes a separation between the viewing subject and the object) against medieval 'haptic' visuality (which pulls the seer into a visceral relationship with the tangible object).[70] The Cartesian model could be described as 'staring' while the haptic model is a kind of 'beholding' or 'gazing'. There is reciprocity involved in haptic seeing. Therefore, space needs to be curated well to allow for this, so that people come like pilgrims rather than consumers - and images can act back on the seer.

Conclusion

In summary, this article has argued that the demise of Christendom has created a clearing space for the *missio Dei,* one into which art-makers can enter imaginatively. This is the land of promise.

Entering this land is not without its dangers, however, and this paper has attempted to address them. Art-making needs a prophetic edge if it is to be truly missional. The world does not need more eye candy: pretty art that merely acts as wallpaper. Art-making only has a powerful missiological edge when acts as a 'window', pointing to Christ. Missional art should not be afraid to engage in the dual tasks of prophetic criticizing and prophetic energizing, just as the biblical prophets did.

This article recommends the formation of cross-church curating groups to commission acts of the imagination that seek the welfare of the city and then curate both the work and the artist. Staying true to the root of the word *cura*, their 'care' will involve both administration (negotiating space with governing bodies etc.), and nurture (of art-makers' missional edge and artistic skill). Space needs to be curated well so that images reverberate, or 'act back,' in people's imaginations. The mollusc escapes the shell; the large outgrows the small.

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[70] Pattison, *Seeing Things*, 44.

Finally, the church needs to release art-makers, much as salt-shakers release salt. For too long the church has taken an anti-culture stance rather than being seen as agents of transformation within the world. While we should celebrate the 'new renaissance' that the church is experiencing in the arts, it needs to hold onto its vocation: to bring out the God-flavours in the world. The salt must stay salty.

May we nurture and sharpen the skills and imaginations of our UK art-makers as they put their gifts to the service of the *missio Dei. Veni, Creator Spiritus.*

Notes on Contributor

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The Healing of Memories in Bilateral Dialogues with Anabaptist (and Baptist) Participation[1]

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Abstract: *This article explores ecumenical dialogues between the Mennonite World Conference and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and the Lutheran World Federation, respectively, that gave attention to the healing of memories related to the persecution of the sixteenth century Anabaptists by Catholics and Lutherans as a precondition for further ecumenical convergence today. This work on the healing of memories in bilateral dialogues with Mennonite participation is engaged in light of the ecclesial kinship of Baptists with their Anabaptist forebears in order to apply their lessons to the ecumenical healing that Baptists and Catholics need to experience in their mutual relations en route to engaging in 'common witness', the theme of Phase III of the international dialogue between the Baptist World Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity that began in 2017 and will continue through 2022.*

Key Words: *Healing of Memories; Anabaptists; Mennonites; Lutherans; Catholics; Baptists; ecumenical dialogue*

The previous two phases of international Baptist-Catholic dialogue have touched upon memories of wounds suffered by Baptists and Catholics in relation to one another. The report from Phase I, *Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World*, notes this among the 'challenges to common witness':

> In certain traditionally Roman Catholic countries civil constitutions and laws enacted

[1] An earlier version of this article was presented to the Joint Commission for the International Dialogue between the Baptist World Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Phase III, Year 3, Warsaw, Poland, December 9-13, 2019.

> prior to the Second Vatican Council have not been changed to reflect the teaching of the Council. In some settings with a dominant Baptist majority the traditional Baptist stress on separation of church and state as a means to assure religious freedom has been weakened. Both groups need to exercise greater vigilance to ensure respect for religious liberty (§ 43).[2]

The implication is that in contexts in which one communion has existed as a religious minority where the other communion is politically or culturally established—in Catholic-dominated Latin American countries or in the Baptist-dominated American South, for example—members of each communion have suffered some infringement of religious liberty, though this recognition is not expressed in terms of an explicit confession of wrongdoing or a call to repentance. The report from Phase II, *The Word of God in the Life of the Church*, however, directly calls for repentance and concrete actions that embody repentance in two paragraphs of the penultimate section of the report on 'The Ministry of Oversight (*Episkope*) and Unity in the Life of the Church':

> **200. The historical failures of the past among both Baptists and Catholics must**

[2] Baptist World Alliance and Catholic Church, "Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World: A Report on Conversations 1984-1988", *The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity Information Service* 72 (1990): 5-13; also published in *Deepening Communion: International Ecumenical Documents with Roman Catholic Participation*, ed. William G. Rusch and Jeffrey Gros (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1998), 343-60; *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998*, edited by Jeffrey Gros, Harding Meyer, and William G. Rusch, 373-85 (Geneva: WCC Publications and Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000); and online at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/Bapstist%20alliance/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_19880723_baptist-convers_en.html (downloaded November 29, 2019).

> **be addressed, with due repentance and appropriate action in the present.**
> 201. The new situation created by the spirit of ecumenism invites all brothers and sisters in Christ to re-examine the past and, if appropriate, to revise some of the earlier stances taken by members of our communities. Many within both Christian communions wish to distance themselves from the negative judgments made of each other in the past. Historical failures have been acknowledged from the Catholic side, for instance by John Paul II in his encyclical on ecumenism *Ut unum sint* ('That they may be one') and on occasions such as the liturgy of reconciliation on the First Sunday of Lent during the Jubilee Year 2000. For their part, most contemporary Baptists wish to disassociate themselves from harsh names applied to the papacy by their ancestors in very different circumstances.[3]

Other international bilateral dialogues have addressed such historical failures revealed by a re-examination of the past as occasions for working toward the 'healing of memories'. When the joint commission for Phase III of the Baptist-

[3] 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* (2013), published in *American Baptist Quarterly* 31.1 (Spring 2012): 28-122; *Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity Information Service* 142 (2013): 20-65; also published online by the BWA (https://www.bwanet.org/images/pdf/baptist-catholic-dialogue.pdf) and the Catholic Church (http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/Bapstist%20alliance/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20101213_report-2006-2010_en.html [downloaded November 29, 2019]). The boldface paragraph is a common affirmation by both delegations to the joint commission, and the following paragraph in regular type is "a further elaboration of our convergence" (§ 6).

Catholic dialogue during its second annual meeting in Rome in 2018 began planning in its final session for its 2019 focus on the challenges of common witness, the discussion surfaced the need to discuss possibilities for Baptists and Catholics to work toward the healing of memories. Members of the joint commission mentioned the precedent offered by the 2005-2008 dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation and Mennonite World Conference, the report from which is titled *Healing of Memories: Reconciling in Christ*.[4] It was decided that a brief paper on the Lutheran and Mennonite approach to the healing of memories could serve as a basis for discussion of how Baptists and Catholics might address the challenges to offering a common witness posed by historical failures in their relationships with one another. This article, which is based on the paper presented to the Baptist-Catholic joint dialogue commission during its 2019 meeting, will summarize the background, findings, and proposals of the Lutheran-Mennonite *Healing of Memories* report, along with the efforts taken by both communions to act on its recommendations, and then suggest how Baptists and Catholics might approach the healing of memories in their own mutual relations.

The Healing of Memories in Catholic-Mennonite Dialogue

While the healing of memories was a central focus of the Lutheran-Mennonite dialogue and actions taken on its basis were widely reported, this was not the first time an international bilateral dialogue with Mennonite participation had addressed the need for the healing of memories. Nor was an explicit concern for the healing of memories original to

[4] Lutheran World Federation and Mennonite World Conference, *Healing Memories: Reconciling in Christ. Report of the Lutheran-Mennonite International Study Commission* (Geneva and Strasbourg: Lutheran World Federation and Mennonite World Conference, 2010); available online at https://www.lutheranworld.org/sites/default/files/OEA-Lutheran-Mennonites-EN-full.pdf (downloaded November 29, 2019).

ecumenical dialogue. Attention to the healing of memories had emerged as a religious accompaniment to the truth and reconciliation process that followed the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa; Healing of Memories Workshops held in South Africa beginning in 1995 were in 1998 extended to Rwanda, Ireland, and other international contexts.[5] Two years before the Lutherans and Mennonites began their formal dialogue in 2005, the Catholic Church and the Mennonite World Conference had wrapped up a six-year dialogue and published its report, *Called Together to Be Peacemakers*, which culminated in Part III, "Toward a Healing of Memories".[6] While the focus of the present paper is the paradigm for the ecumenical healing of memories offered by the Lutheran-Mennonite dialogue, a brief overview of the role of the healing of memories in the Catholic-Mennonite dialogue is warranted both by the participation of the Catholic Church in that dialogue and by the historical and theological connections between Mennonites and Baptists.

The expressed purpose of the Catholic-Mennonite dialogue 'was to assist Mennonites and Catholics to overcome the consequences of almost five centuries of mutual isolation and hostility' and 'to explore whether it is now possible to create a new atmosphere in which to meet each other', for 'despite all that may still divide us, the ultimate identity of both is rooted

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[5] See Undine Kayser, 'Creating a Space for Encounter and Remembrance: The Healing of Memories Process'. Research Report Written for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and the Institute for Healing of Memories (January 2000), published online at http://www.csvr.org.za/docs/reconciliation/creatingaspace.pdf (downloaded December 2, 2019).

[6] Catholic Church and Mennonite World Conference, *Called Together to Be Peacemakers: Report of the International Dialogue between the Catholic Church and Mennonite World Conference 1998-2003* (August 2003); available online at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/mennonite-conference-docs/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20110324_mennonite_en.html#_ftn170 (downloaded November 29, 2019).

in Jesus Christ' (§ 2). Part I, 'Considering History Together' (§§ 23-68) recounts the attempt of the joint commission to re-read together three historical eras important to their ecclesial memories. First, they took a fresh look at the sixteenth-century rupture between Catholics and Anabaptists (§§ 38-52). They were able to recognize that theological difference over the practice of infant baptism and the rejection thereof in the practice of 'believers' baptism' were greatly exacerbated by a relationship between church and state that no longer prevails (§ 40) and by inaccurate associations of all Anabaptists with the Peasants' War and the Münster Anabaptist revolt (§ 39). Furthermore, they pointed out that while 'Catholics never suffered any persecution at the hands of Mennonites', there were contexts in which Catholics too had for a time been persecuted religious minorities, particularly in England, Scandinavia, and the Netherlands, so that the ecclesial identity forged in persecution that has been an important feature of Mennonite ecclesiology could be appreciated in both Catholic and Mennonite rememberings of their stories. Second, a reconsideration of the Constantinian era that began in the fourth century (§§ 53-62), which the Anabaptist tradition had long conceived as the 'Constantinian Fall' of the church while Catholics had tended to interpret this era in terms of ecclesial continuity with what preceded it and a salutary Christianization of culture, led both traditions to 'regret certain aspects of the Constantinian era' but to 'recognize that some developments of the fourth and fifth centuries had roots in the early history of the church, and were in legitimate continuity with it' (§ 57). At the same time, they acknowledged that Mennonites were now becoming integrated with their societies, and that the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council and its Decree on Religious Liberty Dignitatis Humanae had moved beyond the Constantinian symbiosis and now '1) affirmed freedom of religion and conscience for all, 2) opposed coercion in matters of religion, and 3) sought from the state for itself and all communities of believers only freedom for individuals and communities in matters of religion' and 'thus renounced any desire to have a predominant position in society and to be

recognized as a state church' (§ 56). Third, 'reviewing our respective images of the Middle Ages' led Catholics to see in the Middle Ages not only the positives of the Christian civilization of that era but also 'the elements of violence, of conversion by force, of the links between the church and secular power, and of the dire effects of feudalism in medieval Christendom' (§ 64). This led Mennonites to recognize that the Middle Ages were not characterized only by aspects of spiritual decline, but also by movements of renewal in spirituality and discipleship that served as 'the spiritual roots of the Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition' (§§ 65 and 67).

Part II, 'Considering Theology Together' (§§ 69-189), reports on the engagement in theological dialogue in the present made possible by the foregoing reconsideration of the past. This most extensive section of the report parallels in many respects the entirety of the report from Phase II of the Baptist-Catholic bilateral, *The Word of God in the Life of the Church*. Besides their much-controverted respective perspectives on baptism and the Eucharist, Catholics and Mennonites engaged in substantial dialogue that revealed convergences as well as divergences regarding various aspects of ecclesiology, especially two: the unity of the church that belongs to the essence of the church in Catholic understanding, and the church's commitment to peace that belongs to the essence of the church in Mennonite understanding.

Two paragraphs in Part III emphasize the contribution of this mutual consideration of theology to the healing of memories:

> 207. Theological dialogue can contribute to healing of memories by assisting the dialogue partners to ascertain the degree to which they have continued to share the Christian faith despite centuries of separation. Mennonites and Catholics in this dialogue explained their own traditions to one another. This contributed to a deeper mutual understanding

> and to the discovery that we hold in common many basic aspects of the Christian faith and heritage. These shared elements, along with unresolved questions and disagreements, are outlined in Chapter II.
> 210. While recognizing that we hold basic convictions of faith in common, we have also identified significant differences that continue to divide us and thus require further dialogue. Nonetheless, and although we are not in full unity with one another, the substantial amount of the Apostolic faith which we realize today that we share, allows us as members of the Catholic and Mennonite delegations to see one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. We hope that others may have similar experiences, and that these may contribute to a healing of memories.

The healing of ecclesial memories was a principal aim of this dialogue from its inception (§ 190). The joint commission identified four requirements for the healing of memories. First, there must be a purification of memories through the mutual reconsideration of respective ecclesial histories (§§ 192-97), to which Part I was devoted. This reconsideration enabled them to discern not only in the Anabaptist tradition but also in the heritage of the Catholic Church in medieval ecclesiastical peace movements a common 'Christian witness to peace and non-violence based on the Gospel' (§ 195). Second, there must be a 'penitential spirit' (§§ 198-206), which the joint commission sought to embody by adopting the following common statement:

> 206. Together we acknowledge and regret that indifference, tension, and hostility between Catholics and Mennonites exist in some places today, and this for a variety of historical or contemporary reasons. Together we reject the use of any physical coercion or verbal abuse in situations of disagreement and we call on all

> Christians to do likewise. We commit ourselves to self-examination, dialogue, and interaction that manifest Jesus Christ's reconciling love, and we encourage our brothers and sisters everywhere to join us in this commitment.

Third, there must be a recognition of a shared Christian faith (§§ 207-10). This is the contribution of theological dialogue to the healing of memories. The joint commission concluded through this dialogue that 'although we are not in full unity with one another, the substantial amount of the Apostolic faith which we realize today that we share, allows us as members of the Catholic and Mennonite delegations to see one another as brothers and sisters in Christ' (§ 210). And fourth, there must be an effort to foster new and improved relationships (§§ 211-14). The joint commission identified and commended already-existing examples of Catholic-Mennonite cooperation in various parts of the world (§ 213) and suggested possibilities for living more intentionally into a new pattern of Catholic-Mennonite relationships: '[A] review of history text books on each side, participation in the week of prayer for Christian unity, mutual engagement in missiological reflection, peace and justice initiatives, some programs of faith formation among our respective members, and "get acquainted" visits between Catholic and Mennonite communities, locally and more widely' (§ 214).

The Healing of Memories in Lutheran-Mennonite Dialogue

The roots of the 2005-2008 dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation and Mennonite World Conference lie in the celebration by Lutherans of the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession in 1980. Mennonite representatives were invited to participate in the Lutheran observances of this anniversary. But as the introduction to the report from that dialogue noted,

> The Mennonites, however, aware that the Augsburg Confession explicitly condemned the Anabaptists and their teachings, wondered whether or how they could celebrate their own condemnation, since they regarded the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century as their spiritual forebears. Most Lutherans, on the other hand, had little awareness of the condemnations of Anabaptists, their persecution and marginalization, or of the ongoing memories of this painful history still alive among Mennonites today.[7]

Since the condemnations of the Anabaptists in the Augsburg Confession are not quoted in full in the report, here are the condemnations both explicitly (regular type) and implicitly (italics) directed against the Anabaptists:

> V. Condemned are the Anabaptists and others who teach that we obtain the Holy Spirit without the external word of the gospel through our own preparation, thoughts, and works.[8]

> *VIII. Likewise, although the Christian church is, properly speaking, nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints, yet because in this life many false Christians, hypocrites and even public sinners remain among the righteous, the sacraments—even though administered by unrighteous priests—are efficacious all*

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[7] Lutheran World Federation and Mennonite World Conference, *Healing Memories*, 11.

[8] 'The Augsburg Confession' in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, transl Charles P. Arand et al (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 40. (Note: these quotations are from the translation of the German text of the Augsburg Confession; this edition also includes a translation of the Latin text of the confession.)

> *the same…. Condemned, therefore, are the Donatists and all others who hold a different view.*[9]
> IX. Rejected, therefore, are the Anabaptists who teach that the baptism of children is not right.[10]
> *XII. Rejected here are those who teach that whoever has once become righteous cannot fall again.*[11]
> XVI. Concerning civic affairs they teach that lawful civil ordinances are good works of God and that Christians are permitted to hold civil office, to work in law courts, to decide matters by imperial and other existing laws, to impose just punishments, to wage just war, to serve as soldiers, to make legal contracts, to hold property, to take an oath when required by magistrates, to take a wife, to be given in marriage. They condemn the Anabaptists who prohibit Christians from assuming such civil responsibilities.[12]
> XVII. Rejected, therefore, are the Anabaptists who teach that the devils and condemned human beings will not suffer eternal torture and torment.[13]
> *XXVII. Still others think that revenge is not right for Christians at all, even on the part of political authority.*[14]

Their qualms about these condemnations notwithstanding, the Mennonites graciously accepted the invitation to participate in the celebration, and the Lutheran World Federation issued a statement expressing regret for the history of suffering inflicted by the Augsburg Confession's condemnation of the Anabaptists. Soon national dialogues

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[9] 'Augsburg Confession', in *Book of Concord*, 42.
[10] *ibid*, 42.
[11] *ibid*, 44.
[12] *ibid*, 49.
[13] *ibid*, 50.
[14] *ibid*, 90.

between Lutherans and Mennonites sprang up to address these wounds, first in France (1981-84), then in Germany (1989-92), and finally the United States (2001-04). The shared theological scholarship of these national dialogues paved the way for the international dialogue, for which plans began in earnest following a joint recommendation adopted by the Mennonite World Council Executive Committee and the Lutheran World Federation Standing Committee for Ecumenical Affairs at their meetings in July and September 2002. Their recommendation was to:

> Approve the establishment of an international study commission with the following mandate: Drawing upon the results of previous national dialogues in Germany, France, and the United States, the commission shall: a) Consider whether condemnations of Anabaptists articulated by the Augsburg Confession (1530) apply to Mennonite World Conference member churches and related churches, and b) Submit a report of the commission's conclusions to the governing bodies of the Mennonite World Conference and the Lutheran World Federation for further action and with a view toward a possible official statement.[15]

After meeting annually from 2005 through 2008, the joint commission published in 2010 a hefty report—110 pages exclusive of appendixes. The largest portion of it—52 pages—is devoted to 'Telling the Sixteenth-Century Story Together: Lutheran Reformers and the Condemnation of Anabaptists'.[16] It is an accessible summary of the historical scholarship in Reformation and Anabaptist studies that re-contextualizes this story. It gives attention to the emergence in the 1520s of various groups that came to be associated

[15] Lutheran World Federation and Mennonite World Conference, *Healing Memories*, 12-13.
[16] *ibid*, 20-72.

with Anabaptism, including the Swiss Brethren, the Hutterites, and the Mennonites. It engages at length the early Lutheran responses to the Anabaptists, including the treatises written against them by Martin Luther and Philip Melanchthon as well as Johannes Brenz's legal contention that the application to the Anabaptists of Roman law prescribing capital punishment for heresy and sedition was misguided, and places these responses in the context of the political realities of the day. This substantial section also details the condemnations of the Anabaptists in the Augsburg Confession and explains their implications for the subsequent treatment of Anabaptists, along with a narration of the consequences experienced from the 1530s onward.

In this reframing of the Anabaptist condemnations, the report notes that 'these statements were not intended primarily to reflect or refute the theological positions held by specific Anabaptist leaders' but 'were meant to distance the reformers theologically and politically from a group with which their Roman opponents had falsely identified them and whose behavior could…be construed as worthy of capital punishment' and that 'some were even designed, indirectly, to accuse their Roman opponents of supporting Anabaptist positions'.[17] Furthermore, the Reformers lacked firsthand knowledge of Anabaptist convictions, for there were few Anabaptists then present in Saxony, and the Anabaptists did not have wide access to the printing press as a means of disseminating their views.[18] In concluding the 'Telling the Sixteenth-Century Story Together' section, the report observes that 'although the condemnations themselves may seem to reflect theological differences and not political consequences, it is quite clear that from the very beginning the condemnations of Anabaptists were framed in the midst of political struggle and, from their very inception, entailed severe consequences for those labeled Anabaptists'.[19] It insisted:

[17] *ibid*, 56.
[18] *ibid*, 56.
[19] *ibid*, 71.

> In the common telling of the history of Lutherans and Mennonites, these results must be acknowledged and dealt with in the present. For Mennonites, the history of persecution has always remained an integral part of their identity; for Lutherans it is essential to rediscover the history of their complicity in such persecution in order to face it honestly today.[20]

Part 3 of the report, Considering the Condemnations Today', first identifies the condemnations that no longer apply in light of what are now to be regarded as Lutheran misunderstandings or mischaracterizations of the Anabaptists: those in articles V, VIII, XII, XVII, and XXVII.[21] The remaining condemnations in IX and XVI, however, regard matters about which the dialogue revealed ongoing disagreements between Lutherans and Mennonites that may be addressed through ongoing theological dialogue today: baptism (article IX)[22] and the relation of the church to the political order (article XVI).[23] One result of this attention to baptism as a disagreement warranting further dialogue is the launch of a Catholic-Lutheran-Mennonite trilateral dialogue on baptism (2011-2017) that connected the conversations about baptism in the Lutheran-Mennonite bilateral with parallel discussions of baptismal theology in the Catholic-Mennonite dialogue; the report will be titled 'Baptism and Incorporation into the Body of Christ, the Church'.[24]

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[20] *ibid*, 72.
[21] *ibid*, 75-77.
[22] *ibid*, 84-90.
[23] *ibid*, 78-84.
[24] Catholic Church, Lutheran World Federation, and Mennonite World Conference, 'Communiqué: Lutheran, Mennonite, Catholic Trilateral Dialogue' (Strasbourg, France, 15-19 September 2017); available online at http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/se

Part 4 turns to 'Remembering the Past, Reconciling in Christ: Moving Beyond Condemnations'.[25] This concluding section insisted that Mennonites and Catholics now recognize one another as Christians and in many contexts of the world have already engaged in 'forms of bearing witness and being open to the witness of others' that include 'common service projects, shared worship and even eucharistic fellowship'.[26] It proposed that a process be envisioned by which the Lutheran World Federation might implement at the level of that Christian world communion what the Lutheran members of the joint commission had already done in asking forgiveness 'for the harm that their forebears in the sixteenth century committed to Anabaptists, for forgetting or ignoring this persecution in the intervening centuries, and for all inappropriate, misleading and hurtful portraits of Anabaptists and Mennonites made by Lutheran authors, in both popular and academic publications, to the present day', and by which the Mennonite World Conference might plan to respond to such an act of confession and repentance, 'with the goal of a mutual granting of forgiveness in a spirit of reconciliation and humility'.[27] The Lutheran World Federation publicly issued an apology and asked forgiveness from representatives of the Mennonite World Conference at the assembly of the LWF in Stuttgart, Germany on July 22, 2010. The representatives of the MWC publicly accepted the apology and offered forgiveness. Immediately after these actions, the leaders of the LWF and MWC led assembly participants in a procession to another location for a worship service devoted to repentance and healing, featuring the sharing of stories,

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zione-occidentale/dialoghi-multilaterali/dialogo-trilaterale-cattolico-mennonita-luterano/comunicati-stampa/2017-strasbourg/en.html (downloaded December 1 2019).

[25] Lutheran World Federation and Mennonite World Conference, *Healing Memories*, 91-110.

[26] *ibid*, 108-09.

[27] *ibid*, 108.

music, and prayers from both Lutheran and Mennonite traditions.[28]

Implications for a Baptist-Catholic Healing of Memories

Baptists are not Anabaptists, strictly speaking, though the two denominational traditions do have an ecclesial family kinship, the precise nature of which has sometimes been the subject of debate among Baptist historians. Baptists originated in the early seventeenth century in the context of the later English Reformation as a development of Puritan Separatism; the first identifiably Baptist church was founded by a community of English Separatist expatriates in Amsterdam when in 1609 John Smyth baptized himself and then the other adult members of his congregation. They met in a bakery owned by a Mennonite, and when in the following year Smyth became convinced that the Mennonite community there was a true church, he sought to lead his congregation to unite with it. This led to the first Baptist church schism, with a portion of the church dissenting from Smyth's effort; this group ultimately returned to England under the leadership of Thomas Helwys and in 1611 or 1612 formed the first Baptist church on English soil in Spitalfields on the outskirts of London.[29] My point in this brief recounting of Baptist origins is to highlight the early connection with Mennonites, with whom Baptists ever since have had much in common, including the practice of 'believers' baptism' and

[28] Byron Rempel-Burkholder, "Lutherans and Anabaptists Reconcile in Service of Repentance and Forgiveness," *MWC News Service* (July 27, 2010); available online at http://joomla.mwc-cmm.org/index.php/news-releases/76-lutherans-and-anabaptists-reconcile-in-service-of-repentance-and-forgiveness (downloaded December 1, 2019).

[29] For a critical examination of the historical sources for this emergence of the Baptists and the relationship of the Smyth congregation to the Mennonites, see James Robert Coggins, *John Smyth's Congregation: English Separatism, Mennonite Influence, and the Elect Nation* (Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, no. 32; Waterloo, Ont.: Herald, 1991), 61-65.

congregational church governance rooted in covenantal relationships. Both Baptists and Mennonites are expressions of what has been called the free church tradition,[30] the believer's church tradition,[31] and the lower-case 'b' baptist tradition.[32] Thus, as Baptist theologian Tarmo Toom (an Estonian Baptist now teaching in the United States) mentions in a journal article on whether Baptists might be able to join the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* that was originally presented as a paper for the preliminary conversations that preceded Phase II of the Baptist-Catholic dialogue, Baptists have felt themselves included in the condemnations originally directed against Anabaptists, and this became an issue addressed in the international dialogue between the Baptist World Alliance and the Lutheran World Federation.[33] Therefore, attention to the healing of memories in the Lutheran-Mennonite dialogue does have important implications for Baptists as well in relationship to some of their ecumenical dialogue partners.

While the Lutheran-Mennonite dialogue report was not structured in precisely the same way as the Catholic-Mennonite report, it is evident that the former has attended to the four requirements for the healing of memories identified by the latter: (1) a purification of memories through

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[30] Designation employed, e.g., by Franklin H. Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church* (Boston: Starr King, 1952) and Gunnar Westin, *The Free Church through the Ages*, trans. Virgil Olson (Nashville: Broadman, 1954).

[31] Designation employed, e.g., by Donald F. Durnbaugh, *The Believer's Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism* (New York: Macmillan, 1968), and in contributions to James Leo Garrett, Jr., ed., *The Concept of the Believers' Church: Addresses from the 1967 Louisville Conference* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald, 1969).

[32] James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, *Ethics*, rev. ed. (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2012), 17-20.

[33] Tarmo Toom, "Baptists on Justification: Can We Join the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification?" *Pro Ecclesia* 13.3 (Summer 2004): 305 (289-306); Baptist World Alliance and Lutheran World Federation, "A Message to Our Churches," § 1, in *Growth in Agreement II*, 155-75.

the mutual reconsideration of respective ecclesial histories; (2) a penitential spirit; (3) a recognition of a shared Christian faith; and (4) an effort to foster new and improved relationships. The three phases of the Baptist-Catholic international dialogue have also devoted attention to these four requirements. While the Baptist-Catholic dialogue has not engaged in the same kind of sustained mutual historical reconsiderations that have featured prominently in the Catholic-Mennonite and Lutheran-Mennonite dialogues, aspects of Phase I and Phase II did explore dimensions of our communions' respective histories in relationship to one another, as did Phase III's attention to more recent histories of Baptist-Catholic relationships in particular contexts in the focus of the 2018 meeting in Rome on the 'Contexts of Common Witness'. All three phases have been approached with a penitential spirit, reflected in the sections of the reports *Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World* and *The Word of God in the Life of the Church* quoted in the introduction of the present paper[34] and in our attention this year in

[34] Baptist World Alliance and Catholic Church, *Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World*, § 43: 'In certain traditionally Roman Catholic countries civil constitutions and laws enacted prior to the Second Vatican Council have not been changed to reflect the teaching of the Council. In some settings with a dominant Baptist majority the traditional Baptist stress on separation of church and state as a means to assure religious freedom has been weakened. Both groups need to exercise greater vigilance to ensure respect for religious liberty'; *idem*, *The Word of God in the Life of the Church*, § 200: 'The historical failures of the past among both Baptists and Catholics must be addressed, with due repentance and appropriate action in the present'; § 201, 'The new situation created by the spirit of ecumenism invites all brothers and sisters in Christ to re-examine the past and, if appropriate, to revise some of the earlier stances taken by members of our communities. Many within both Christian communions wish to distance themselves from the negative judgments made of each other in the past. Historical failures have been acknowledged from the Catholic side, for instance by John Paul II in his encyclical on ecumenism *Ut unum sint* ('That they may be one') and on occasions such as the liturgy of reconciliation on the First Sunday of Lent during the Jubilee Year 2000. For their part, most contemporary Baptists wish to disassociate themselves from

Warsaw to 'Challenges to Common Witness' that may call for the healing of ecclesial memories. Phase I recognized among Baptists and Catholics a shared Christological faith, and Phase II extensively documented a rich and sometimes surprising degree of convergence in a shared faith, articulated in the bold print common affirmations of the report from that phase of dialogue. Efforts to foster new and improved relationships may well be envisioned as a result of the discussion during Phase III—Year 3 of attention to the healing of memories in specific contexts, and the focus of Phase III—Year 4 on 'Forms of Common Witness' may propose concrete actions of common witness that can embody new and improved relationships.

It may be that the expressed intention of the joint commission for Phase III of the Baptist-Catholic dialogue to craft a report in such a way as to facilitate broad reception and to accompany the report with a study guide and other multimedia materials can offer opportunities for ensuring that this phase of dialogue explicitly highlights the four aforementioned requirements for the healing of memories. With regard to the purification of memories through the mutual reconsideration of respective ecclesial histories, the report could have a section that presents and honest narration of a past that in various contexts has been sullied by mutual hostility, but it could also note, as did the Catholic-Mennonite joint commission, that in the history of their respective ecclesial journeys in England both Baptists and Catholics share the experience of having been persecuted religious minorities at the hands of an Anglican alliance of church and state. In this connection, the report could also emphasize that having had such experiences in our histories strengthens the current mutual Baptist and Catholic commitments to safeguarding religious liberty for all persons.

With regard to cultivating a penitential spirit, the report could acknowledge that members of both communions have

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harsh names applied to the papacy by their ancestors in very different circumstances'.

sometimes failed to safeguard the religious liberty of all persons in contexts in which one tradition is in the majority and the other tradition is in the minority, and not only where there is a state establishment of a particular expression of Christian religion, for the cultural establishment of religion can be a powerful and even dangerous form of establishment that sometimes does not foster the liberty of religious minorities. Particular examples of failures in safeguarding the religious liberty of all persons can be named. While the experiences of Baptists in Latin American countries would immediately come to mind for some readers of the report, Baptist failures may be named as well. For example, in Nagaland in India, where Baptists who comprise an overwhelming majority of the population, the Anatangre Village Council in 1991 prohibited the foundation of churches that were not Baptist, and in 2010 villagers tore down a Catholic church in an incident that was widely reported by the media.[35]

Not unrelated to a penitential spirit as a requirement for the healing of memories is the need for an explicit recognition of a shared Christian faith. It is undeniable that earlier in their respective histories, there were members of both communions who did not regard the members of the other communion as Christians. But the report from Phase I clearly reflected a recognition of one another as Christians, and the report from Phase II provided thorough documentation of the shared faith of Baptists and Catholic. Baptists and Catholics should say clearly, once again, that they regard one another as sisters and brothers in Christ. After a long history of Baptist missions in predominantly Catholic countries that were sometimes motivated by the belief that Catholics were not really Christians, and after certain ways of interpreting the 'Declaration "*Dominus Iesus"* on the Unicity and Salvific

[35] Bob Allen, 'Catholics in Nagaland Claiming Persecution at Hands of Baptists', *Baptist News Global* (July 27, 2010); online https://baptistnews.com/article/catholics-in-nagaland-claiming-persecution-at-hands-of-baptists/#.Xe6N1qeZNQI (downloaded December 8, 2019).

Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church' issued in 2000 by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, as well as the 2007 document 'Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine of the Church' led some Baptists to think that Catholics were going back on Vatican II and regarding them as non-Christians,[36] Baptists and Catholics need to affirm unambiguously their regard for one another as fellow Christians who have a shared faith. (It should be noted that those documents may be understood in less exclusionary ways as internal guidance about how Catholics should think about the nature of the church in Catholic understanding.)

Finally, Phase III—Year 4 will offer an opportunity for exploring more directly how Baptists and Catholics might foster new and improved relationships in embodying the healing of memories by imagining the forms that bearing witness to Christ together might assume—especially at the local level, where members of Baptist congregations and Catholic parishes may have very specific memories that need healing on the way to forging new ecumenical relationships that seek the good of the cities they inhabit. In doing so, the joint commission and the local communities that receive their work will be making good the hopes that their predecessors

[36] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Declaration *Dominus Iesus*" (August 6, 2000), online https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html (downloaded December 8, 2019); Francis A. Sullivan, 'The Impact of *Dominus Iesus* on Ecumenism', America (October 28, 2000), online https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/386/article/impact-dominus-iesus-ecumenism (downloaded December 8, 2019); Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 'Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine of the Church' (June 29, 2007), online https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_responsa-quaestiones_en.html (downloaded December 8, 2019).

in Phase I of the dialogue expressed in the concluding paragraph of the report they issued in 1988:

> 58. Conversations between Baptists and Roman Catholics will not lead in the near future to full communion between our two bodies. This fact, however, should not prevent the framing of concrete ways to witness together at the present time. It will be helpful to think of several different levels—international, national, regional, and local—in which Catholics and Baptists could speak or act in concert. Such cooperation is already taking place in a variety of ways: translation of the Scriptures into indigenous languages, theological education, common concern and shared help in confronting famine and other natural disasters, health care for the underprivileged, advocacy of human rights and religious liberty, working for peace and justice, and strengthening of the family. Baptists and Catholics could enhance their common witness by speaking and acting together more in these and other areas. A whole row of issues vital to the survival of humankind lies before us. The prayer of Jesus, "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, are in me and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (Jn 17:2 1), has given a sense of urgency to our conversations. We testify that in all sessions during the past five years there has been a spirit of mutual respect and growing understanding. We have sought the guidance of the Lord of the church and give honor and glory to him for the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit. We pray that God, who has

> begun this good work in us, may bring it to completion (cf. Phil 1:6).[37]

Notes on Contributor

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[37] Baptist World Alliance and Catholic Church, *Summons to Witness to Christ in Today's World.*

Participatory Forgiveness and Reconciliation: A Test Case Using Paul Fiddes' Theology of Participation to Understand Rwanda's Post-Genocide Recovery

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Abstract: *This article is a theological reflection upon the author's personal exposure to Rwanda's post-genocide recovery. Following a succinct historical analysis of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, Paul Fiddes' participatory theology of forgiveness and reconciliation is used to offer a theological analysis of reconciling movements between genocide perpetrators and victims.*

Key Words: *genocide; Rwanda; evil; forgiveness; reconciliation; participation; transformation*

Introduction

> He added that at the beginning, the church managed to reconcile 218 perpetrators with their communities and are now enjoying church services. According to NURC, *hundreds* have already been *reconciled* by the Catholic church, besides *thousands* who have who have been reconciled by Prison Fellowship programme. Recently, 14 Genocide perpetrators in Simbi Parish in Huye District in Southern Province were also *reconciled* with their communities. (emphasis mine).[1]

In August 2018, while on a trip to Rwanda with Tearfund Scotland, I had the opportunity to have lunch with a Bishop

[1] 'Bugesera: 30 Genocide perpetrators reconciled with community, Church'. *The New Times* August 23, 2018, 8.

who, at the time, was a commissioner with the NURC (National Unity and Reconciliation Commission) and also national director of Prison Fellowship, Rwanda. Amidst the telling of his own personal story of the journey to his present role, he gave a number of accounts of forgiveness and reconciliation between genocide[2] perpetrators and the close family members of their victims, as part of the above-mentioned programme of Prison Fellowship.

While on the same trip, a few days later, a number of my colleagues in the Tearfund Scotland group visited a village engaged with and flourishing from co-operative micro-businesses set up by Tearfund. During the three hours visiting the co-operative, two of the party were delighted to see a familiar face when they met a lady from the village whom they were introduced to the year before on a similar trip to this same Rwandan village. The reason for their instant recognition of this lady and delight to meet her again was that twelve months earlier she had stood up, together with her male neighbour, and shared that this man standing beside her was the man responsible for the killing of her husband and children. After serving over twenty-five years in prison for his crimes, her neighbour had returned to his home village, moved back into his family home, and within days was greeted by this woman who appeared at his door with some rice and other food stuffs in order to help him back on the road towards civilian life. This act of forgiveness and courage served to catalyze movements towards forgiveness and reconciliation between a woman and her neighbour, the one who had killed her entire family with a machete during the three months of genocide in 1994.

[2] Any use of the term 'genocide' is that as defined by the 1948 United Nations Convention which states, 'Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, deliberately inflicting conditions calculated to bring about its physical destruction'.

In what follows, I intend to offer a theological analysis of the many stories similar to the one recounted above.[3] By placing Paul Fiddes' participative theology of forgiveness and reconciliation[4] within the context of arguably one of the shortest, most intense and barbaric examples of dysteleological evil in recent history, *ie* the 1994 Rwandan genocide, my aim is to offer an explanation of how and why Rwanda's seeming recovery from those dark three months has managed to transcend and avoid the all-too-human perpetual vicious circle of revenge and retaliation. Before some concluding thoughts, the rest of this paper will split

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[3] As stated in the newspaper article, hundreds and thousands of similar genocide perpetrators have been reconciled to their victims and communities through the work of the Roman Catholic Church and Prison Fellowship in Rwanda. For other accounts, see Annemiek Richters, Cora Dekker, and Klaas de Jonge, 'Reconciliation in the Aftermath of Violent Conflict in Rwanda,' *Intervention* 3.3 (2005): 214-15. For a powerful and personal account of a genocide survivor who forgave the man who murdered her family, see Immaculee Ilibagiza, *Left to Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Genocide* (New York: Hay House, 2006), 228-32.

[4] At this early point in the paper, please allow me to justify the use of Fiddes' theology. Having been to Rwanda and hearing stories of reconciliation, I want to contribute to a broader conversation by reflecting theologically on the Rwanda genocide and its aftermath using the theology of Paul Fiddes. His extensive writings on forgiveness, divine suffering, the nature of evil, *etc* merit, in my opinion, serious consideration. Notwithstanding the claims of Gutierrez that theology needs to enculturate itself into the local community, and acknowledgement of the excellent work done by Archbishop Tutu's *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* in Rwanda, Fiddes' inimitable trinitarian proposal of triune 'persons as relations' has a panentheistic reality to it which is potentially applicable to any rupturing of human relations irrespective of the severity, content or context. None of this justification, obviously, precludes the need for wider engagement with these stories through African theological engagement via the work of theologians such as Emmanuel Katongole or John Rucyahana. For an analysis of African Christian Theology as reconciliation using the work of Tutu, Rucyahana, and Katongole, see J. J. Carney, 'Roads to Reconciliation: An Emerging Paradigm of African Theology', *Modern Theology* 26.4 (2010): 549-69.

into two sections: first, an abridged historical account of the genocide, followed by a theological analysis.

1994's Three-Month Rwandan Genocide

'The Rwandan genocide is a constant reminder that God's Reign in the world has not been fully achieved.'[5] The 1994 genocide in Rwanda brought closure to a very violent and inhumane century by adding a further eight hundred and fifty thousand victims to the millions already slaughtered by despotic, tyrannical regimes in the holocaust and the Gulag. However, one significant fact sets this genocide apart from all the others. As noted by Aguilar it was between self-confessing followers of Jesus Christ: 'Despite those positive signs of nation-building [the post-1994 development in Rwanda] there is still a question mark regarding the actual events and communal actions that triggered the genocide as well as questions regarding the fact that most of those who killed were Christians but very few of them tried to impede the killings'.[6]

The road to the 1994 genocide was littered with different factors including historical events, ethnic tensions, Roman Catholic conversions and Belgian colonialism. Together they created a very complex mosaic of Rwandan culture that, in the end, proved deeper and more pervasive than the baptismal waters of Christian faith in the country. The three-month genocide period that saw just under one million, mainly Tutsi, Rwandans savagely butchered to death with machetes and other blunt weapons did not simply appear out of nowhere. Simply put, April to June 1994 was the inevitable culmination of ever-growing ethnic and educational tensions that had existed for generations and was exacerbated by the Belgian colonial powers.

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[5] Mario I. Aguilar, *The Rwanda Genocide and the Call to Deepen Christianity in Africa* (Kenya: AMECEA Gaba Publications Spearhead Nos. 148-150, 1998), 67.
[6] Mario I. Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation and Genocide: A Theology of the Periphery* (London: SCM, 2009), 3.

Space limitation precludes a full history of the road to genocide in 1994. However, in the two generations before the genocide there were some sizeable catalytic events which increased the determined inevitability of the 1994 genocidal massacre. To begin, the first real evidence of ethnic tensions between Hutu and Tutsi came just one year after Belgium granted Rwanda their independence, when in December 1963 there was a large-scale massacre of 20,000 Tutsi by the Rwandan army.[7] Commentators agree that the sudden death of Tutsi King Mutara Rudahigwa (III) while in Burundi in July 1959 was the initial spark of the later explosion of ethnic violence.[8] The reasons for this include the issue of succession, as he had no son to succeed him, the fusing of the realms of politics, ethnicity and faith during his 28-year reign, and, according to Kakwenzire and Kamukama, because the Belgians changed their policy and started to support the Hutu domination of the Tutsi. In what seems to have been a complete reversal of previous practice, the Belgian authorities charged three times as many Tutsi as Hutu with public disorder charges after the initial violence in 1959,[9] an act viewed as a complete reversal of the previous policy of Tutsi superiority.[10]

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[7] Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation*, 19-21; Aguilar, *The Rwanda Genocide*, 34.
[8] Jean Hatzfeld, *A Time for Machetes: The Rwandan Genocide: The Killers Speak* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), xi.
[9] Joan Kakwenzire and Dixon Kamukama, 'The Development and Consolidation of Extremist Forces in Rwanda 1990-1994', in *The Path of a Genocide*, eds. Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1999), 62.
[10] Perhaps this change of policy was because in the three-year period prior to his death (1956-1959) – a period that Carney describes as one of the most volatile in Rwandan history – Mutara III had ignored calls from Hutu leaders for more cultural and political recognition and he, together with the Belgian authorities, simply passed off these cries as merely an economic issue. J.J. Carney, *Rwanda Before the Genocide: Catholic Politics and Ethnic Discourse in the Late Colonial Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 71; Aguilar, *The Rwanda Genocide*, 33.

Reasons for the increasing polarization between Tutsi and Hutu remain a moot point. It is widely accepted that pre-colonial categories of Tutsi, Hutu and Twa were simply to do with work-related patterns and it was colonial powers that changed these categories into ethnicities which included ethnic-based identity cards.[11] As they re-organized the state the Belgian colonists created a two-fold political objective of declaring the Tutsi as nonindigenous and underwriting Tutsi privilege in law which covered all levels of Tutsi society, starting with the elite and working downwards. This, in turn, catalyzed the development of a Hutu counter-elite that started to exacerbate and increase the tensions between the two tribes.[12]

Following the 1963 massacre in December of that year, there was ever-increasing tension between Tutsi and Hutu which often erupted with periodic violence and massacres. The epicentre of the ethnic tensions was Nyamata, a city in the Bugesera district in the south of Rwanda, 37 kilometres from the Rwandan capital city, Kigali. When the genocidal mass killing started in April 1994, it was most intense in Nyamata.[13]

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[11] Aguilar, *Theology*, *Liberation*, 19-21. For instance, Mamdani argues that the 'social revolution' of 1959 onwards marked a significant departure from preceding times of Rwandan history when there wasn't the polarization of Hutu and Tutsi that developed primarily because of the 'reorganization of the colonial state from 1926 to 1936.' Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 105.

[12] Mamdani, *When Victims*, 101-114. Taylor points out that the change in colonial masters did nothing to change the relationship between Tutsi and Hutu and the new Belgian colonial lords continued to favour the Tutsi over the Hutu just like the Germans had done since the 1880's when they acquired Rwanda in the 'scramble for Africa'. Christopher C. Taylor, *Sacrifice as Terror: The Rwandan Genocide of 1994* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 37-41.

[13] Jean Hatzfeld, *Into the Quick: The Rwandan Genocide: The Survivors Speak* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2005), xiii-xiv. In August 2018 I visited Nyamata while on the above-mentioned trip to Rwanda with Tearfund Scotland. We visited the Roman Catholic Church of

Moreover, as well as the violence in the 30 years leading up to 1994, there was also much sophisticated pre-planning by the Hutu leadership so that when the then Hutu president Juvenal Habyarimana was mysteriously assassinated on 6th April 1994, the genocide instantly started the next day as 'death squads killed leaders of the predominantly Tutsi liberal party' before turning their attention to the general Tutsi population.[14]

As introduced above, any historical account of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 should engage with the well-established fact that this genocide happened in a confessional Christian country.[15] Unlike other mass-killings in atheistic nations such as Stalin's Russia or declining-Christian contexts like pre-second world war Germany,[16] the overwhelming Christian

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Nyamata which has been left untouched since the 24-hour period during the genocide when over 10,000 Tutsi were killed inside the church after having congregated there for shelter and protection. What became for me the archetypal symbol of the sheer dehumanizing barbarity of the genocide was housed in the basement of the church alongside open coffins full of skulls and bones of the deceased: a closed coffin with a large engraved cross on the coffin lid which contained the remains of a pregnant woman who was killed by being impaled with a long spike, thrust up through her vagina and into her womb.

[14] Other early targets included members of the multi-ethnic Social Democratic Party, several cabinet ministers, justices of the constitutional court, journalists, human rights activists, and progressive priests. Timothy Longman, "An Overview of the Rwandan Genocide," in *Perspectives on Modern History: The Rwandan Genocide*, ed. Alexander Cruden (Farmington Hills: Greenhaven, 2010), 23.

[15] The Rwandan census of 1991 reveals that the religious affiliations of Rwandans before the genocide were 62% Catholic, 28% other Christian, and 10% other religion.

[16] While largely acknowledged that the overall picture of the Christian church in Weimar Germany is a complex one, it was the case that the majority *Volkskirche* was predominantly nominal and indifferent with very low church attendance throughout the 1920s. See Daniel R. Borg, '*Volkskirche*, "Christian State," and the Weimar Republic,' *Church History* 35.2 (1966): 186-206.

consensus of Rwanda generates significant questions about the role and possible complicity of the church in that country.

One claim is that early Catholic missionaries influenced and accelerated the development of ethnic differentiation and preference of the Tutsi minority through applying a neo-version of the 'Hamitic hypothesis'.[17] This hypothesis claims that the descendants of Ham's son Canaan - the cursed grandson of Noah in Genesis 9 - the Hamites, were no longer viewed like other 'Negroes' but were in fact Indo-European Caucasians covered with black skin. In other words, the cursed descendants of Ham, via Canaan, are actually a pre-Hamitic species who were gradually corrupted by 'Negroid Africans' over time. Hence the Tutsi were viewed as more Hamitic and therefore to be favoured over the 'more negroid' Hutu and Twa.[18] This theory of racialization which preferred the Tutsi became both an ideological and institutional construct, the creation of which was a 'joint enterprise between the colonial state and the Catholic Church'.[19] The result was that the Hutu population believed that the 'European god' of the Catholic missionaries denied the equality of all the people in the land.[20]

Another significant consideration is that it is claimed that there were internal tensions and divisions within the Catholic Church in Rwanda. In the years running up to Rwandan independence in 1962 there was large-scale disagreement within the Catholic Church on the 'Hutu-Tutsi question.' Various voices and opinions were heard among colonial priests and cardinals: some kept quiet, some sided with the Hutu majority and many of the Church superiors were advising others to keep out of political argument and not mention any of the political or ethnic tensions in the reports they sent back to Rome.[21]

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[17] Longman, "An Overview", 13.
[18] Mamdani, *When Victims*, 79-83.
[19] Mamdani, *When Victims*, 87.
[20] Aguilar, *Theology, Liberation*, 21-23.
[21] Carney, *Rwanda Before,* 91-92.

Post-genocide commentary has raised questions about what kind of 'McDonaldization'[22] approach was used to import and force a certain kind of white, European high theology upon Rwandan society without any sort of enculturation process.[23] Since, claims Aguilar, African theology generally involves an enculturated theology of the whole person,[24] Catholic theology from Europe with its greater emphasis on the dichotomy of body and soul, was less able to fuse with African and Rwandan spiritual culture and ethnic division.[25] Instead, once the first generation of colonized Rwandans were converted to Christianity, future generations received little choice not to embrace colonial Christianity through the sacrament of paedo-baptism in order to fully function as Rwandan citizens.[26] Unfortunately, this promulgated type of

[22] A term by John Drane referring to the cookie cutter approach to modern church planting in the west without much consideration of cultural nuances and differences between countries. John Drane, *The McDonaldization of the Church: Consumer Culture and the Church's Future* (London: DLT, 2000).

[23] Gutierrez adamantly states that the Christian gospel that seeks to liberate should be indigenous to the culture and formed in the hands of the local community of God. There can be no effective separation of theology and Christian community. Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Power of the Poor in History* (London: SCM, 1983), 36.

[24] The more holistic and bodily aspect of African Christianity, especially in its Pentecostal form, is one major reason, claims Smith, why the prosperity gospel has grown as quickly as it has in Africa since the very 'worldliness' of its theology strongly affirms that God cares not just about our souls but also about our bodies and bellies. James K. A. Smith, *Thinking in Tongues: Pentecostal Contributions to Christian Philosophy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 42-43.

[25] Mario I. Aguilar, 'Postcolonial African Theology in Kabasele Lumbala'. *Theological Studies* 63.2 (2002): 312, 317-19; Aguilar, *Theology*, *Liberation*, 99-102.

[26] Mudimbe claims that both the missionaries and their message served a political will and power agenda and so the ordering of the minds through baptism and education helped the colonial masters in their power and control but moved African theology and history more to the periphery. V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis,*

nominal Christianity proved not robust or gospel-centred enough to incarnate and reconcile the tribal and ethnic divisions already present in Rwanda.

Indeed, the accounts of the Hutu killers' testimonies concerning their actions during the three months of genocide demonstrate an extreme form of compartmentalized faith in which their claimed belief system and demonstrated maniacal behaviour[27] were poles apart: before the genocide, they were deacons, church leaders, baptized Catholics, and family men; during the genocide they were maniacal, savage killers; and after they returned to church-going men stricken with 'some remorse.'[28]

So far I have briefly outlined the background to the Rwandan genocide. To avoid a cyclical repetition of the genocide's extremes of violence and to introduce hope, there needs to be in place a robust theology and process of forgiveness and reconciliation. In the rest of this paper, I will proffer that the radical and costly theology of participative forgiveness and reconciliation espoused by Fiddes provides a much-needed account.

Post-Genocidal Recovery within Divine Movements of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

How can we account for the 25 years of relative peace and prosperity that have followed the violent Rwandan genocide? Reframing the recovery as a movement located within the participatory relations of the triune God as described by Fiddes can provide an account of transformative forgiveness

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Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge (London: James Currey, 1988), 47-48.

[27] What some, including Paul Fiddes, would call one's espoused theology and operant theology. For more on the 'voices' of theology see Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine Duce, James Sweeney and Clare Watkins, *Talking About God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (London: SCM, 2010).

[28] Hatzfeld, *A Time,* 132-37.

and reconciliation as typified by the opening anecdote in this article.

Forgiveness and reconciliation grounded in the divine movements of triune participation is, for Fiddes, established perfectly in the quintessential demonstration of the redemptive and transformative power of love on the cross of Golgotha; a Christ event of the holistic love of God that undergirds God's suffering and anguish which befalls the triune God.[29] By contrasting the beliefs and actions of Judas Iscariot and Jesus Christ in the passion narrative, he rightly claims that this amplifies God's self-sacrificing love which was put on full display in the death of Christ on the cross.[30] Moreover, this demonstration of love was accompanied by divine forgiveness, exemplified by Jesus' statement of forgiveness while hanging on the cross.[31]

Therefore, the death of Christ on the cross perfectly demonstrates forgiveness as a divine journey of endurance and anguish, a journey which speaks into our experience of guilt, shame, anxiety and unforgiveness[32] and also reiterates that in times of extreme human suffering and violence 'God is hidden. . . but is not absent'.[33] It is this theology of atonement, one that Fiddes labels a 'subjective view with objective focus,' which could undergird ethnic, tribal and national salvation as a process of transformation; a process which brings healing and helps form a theology of future hope.[34]

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[29] Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1989), 140-168; Paul S. Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 57-63.
[30] Fiddes, *Past Event*, 140-168.
[31] 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing'. (Luke 23:34a)
[32] Fiddes, *Past Event*, 171-189.
[33] Paul S. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2003), 61.
[34] Fiddes, *Past Event*, 14-34.

Moreover, to effectively deal with the residual aspects of human fallenness such as estrangement, anxiety, hostility, fear and idolatry,[35] which could easily create a cycle of revenge in the Rwandan context, one could apply Fiddes' claim that it is imperative to find an atonement theology best suited for this historical epoch and milieu. For historically, he reminds us, models of atonement have usually been determined by their historical context. In the case of Jesus, he was rightfully guilty of blasphemy in Jewish eyes and sedition in Roman minds, and yet human judgement against Jesus doesn't equate to divine judgement against him. Instead, as a subjective view demands, the Father identifies with human fallenness which outworks itself in allowing sinful behaviour take its natural course (Romans 1) and this inevitably leads to Jesus being condemned by a human, corrupt court, thereby suffering alienation and forsakenness of the Father who suffers greatly in the process.[36] Contra Calvin and Luther, the atonement responds to the demands of justice by seeking out restoration and reconciliation as God participates in human estrangement and alienation; forgiveness is offered *before* repentance.[37]

Any atonement theology which can be the ground of mass post-genocidal acts of forgiveness, reconciliation and transformation as witnessed in Rwanda has to be rooted in the fundamental *raison d'etre* of God's transformational love, which is to heal decimated relationships in acts of divine-human reconciliation. God is constantly seeking out people to save (1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9), perennially offering forgiveness and reconciliation to the sinner in a process

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[35] Paul S. Fiddes, 'Salvation', in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, eds. J. Webster, K. Tanner and I. Torrance. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 176-178.
[36] Fiddes, *Past Event*, 84-96.
[37] Fiddes, *Past Event*, 96-111. This is the case in a chronological sense with the cross & resurrection releasing potential forgiveness to all who appropriate it through confession & repentance (Matthew 6:14-15).

which is costly to God. This must happen in the present and involve response from humanity: reciprocal movements in the process of salvation is the intimate act of atonement.[38]

Also, it is vital, argues Fiddes, that this atonement theology of transformation, especially transformational victory over evil, is placed within a greater quest of the unity of creation through redemption. Salvation in the present is enacted by God as creator and redeemer seeking to bring oneness to a chaotic and disharmonized creation, often symbolized in the Hebrew Bible as sea monsters of chaos.[39] Like forgiveness and reconciliation with humans, this harmonization of creation involves much pain, suffering and cost to God and causes him to adopt a continual kenotic posture of vulnerability.[40] Placed this way, therefore, is a nuanced atonement theology in which the victory of Christ over evil through the atoning love of God has the power to move human hearts into action and impact against the evil at work in the world. Humans enter into cooperation with God's saving action via the power of revelation, creative power of the community of the crucified, the unveiling of God's own self, and the power of the story, especially stories of victory over evil.[41]

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[38] Fiddes, *Past Event*, 14-17.

[39] Scholars such as Boyd and Day argue that these monsters are demonic, malevolent beings with their own irrevocable freedom to wreak havoc on creation. Gregory A. Boyd, *God at War: The Bible & Spiritual Conflict* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 93-113; John Day, *God's Conflict with the Dragon and the Sea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 87.

[40] Fiddes, *Past Event*, 17-22; cf. Paul S. Fiddes, 'Creation Out of Love', in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis* edited by J. Polkinghorne (London: SPCK, 2001), 167-91.

[41] Paul S. Fiddes, 'Christianity, Atonement and Evil', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Problem of Evil*, eds. Paul Mosser and Chad Meister. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 222-26; cf. *Past Event*, 135-39. In the near-30 years between these two works of Fiddes there has been little development or change concerning his ideas on the atonement and evil.

When this nuanced theology of transformation, what Fiddes describes as *Abelardian*,[42] is then framed within an egalitarian participation in the relations and movements of the triune God, this is what redefines authority and power and allows creation to move *through* the objective victory of the cross and participate in today's subjective victories of Christ against current diabolical manifestations of evil such as experienced by the Tutsi tribe in Rwanda. Indeed, 'though atonement has been achieved potentially in the event of Christ, it only becomes *actual* in the present, as people make the victory of Christ their own,' which is completed by moving, with the help of Abelard, the main thrust of the *Christus Victor* motif more towards the subjective than the objective.[43]

Practically, for this theological account to genuinely outwork itself in the post-genocide milieu of peace and trust rebuilding[44] there cannot be any separation of the atonement

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[42] When Fiddes takes this conviction of salvation as transformation and conflates it with the kernel of his atonement theory, the love of God, this firmly places him within the stream of Abelard, but a redefined, less traditional, Abelard. For he purports that Abelard, the younger contemporary of Anselm and father of the subjective doctrine of the Atonement, who centrally emphasized Christ as the great teacher and example and the one who arouses responding love within humanity, has been slightly misunderstood. Yes, Abelard attacked the classic objective imagery of the atonement with its dualistic perspective, believed that the atonement should not be focused on overcoming the devil, and rejected Anselm's objective theory. However, he did not simply develop 'Christ as the example of love' model for Christian believers to emulate but instead viewed God's love as transformative, a love that God revealed and poured out on us as an act of fulfilling his own being. The ultimate demonstration of this love happened objectively in the death of Christ when God himself entered the bitter depths of human experience to the utmost degree. Fiddes, *Past Event*, 141-150, cf. Gustaf Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement* (London: SPCK, 1931), 95-96.

[43] Fiddes, *Past Event*, 135-39.

[44] Still very much an ongoing process seen in the fact that from 3pm till 7am the next day, the army patrol every street in Kigali. Also, now 25 years after the genocide, Hutu perpetrators are being

and the Trinity as this identifies the Logos with the human condition and enables God to enter into the mess of the human predicament, offer forgiveness and reconcile us to each other, away from anxiety and hostility. Within atonement as participation, divine omnipotence is that of suffering forgiveness and our participation in the divine relations means when we suffer we do so because we are participating in the divine forsakenness between the Father and Son on the cross.[45] Framing the atonement and divine omnipotence as suffering also means that sacrifice is at the epicentre of salvation[46] and this manifests itself solely through divine persuasion and wooing,[47] not the traditionally held irresistible grace. Grace is prevenient, not unavoidable, since it respectfully treats human freewill as it woos and persuades people into salvation,[48] as well as baptism[49] and subsequently body of Christ membership.[50]

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released from prison, returning to their home villages and so the choice for the villagers of either forgiveness or revenge is very real and stark at this time.

45 Paul S. Fiddes, 'The Atonement and the Trinity', in *The Forgotten Trinity 3: A Selection of Papers Presented to the BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today* edited by Alasdair I. C. Heron (London: British Council of Churches, 1991), 111-117.

46 Fiddes, 'Sacrifice', 63-66.

47 A common theme in the Fiddes corpus that he gets from process theology. For more see Paul S. Fiddes, 'The Trinity in Process Thought', (Unpublished Paper, 1987); Paul S. Fiddes, 'Process Theology', in *Microsoft Encarta Electronic Encyclopedia* (Microsoft/Websters, 1996).

48 Paul S. Fiddes, 'The Understanding of Salvation in the Baptist Tradition', in *For Us and for Our Salvation: Seven Perspectives on Christian Soteriology* edited by Rienk Lanooy (Utrecht: Interuniversitair Instituut voor Missiologie en Oecumenica, 1994), 25-31.

49 Paul S. Fiddes, 'Believer's Baptism. An act of inclusion or exclusion?' Signposts for a New Century', in *Exploring Baptist Distinctives.* (Hertfordshire Baptist Association, 1999), 8-13.

50 Paul S. Fiddes, 'Baptism and Membership of the Body of Christ: A Theological and Ecumenical Conundrum', in *Gemeinschaft der Kirchen und gesellschaftliche Verantwortung: die Würde des Anderen und das Recht anders zu denken; Festschrift für Professor Dr. Erich Geldbach* edited

So defining forgiveness and reconciliation as divine movements of God which allows all humans to participate in the atoning movements of a nuanced-Abelardian atonement model of transformation is, I am arguing, a most salient starting point for a Rwandan future of hope and love. However, how do we get from this theological starting position to *actual* life and relationship transformative reconciliation between assailants and their victims? I suggest that the key lies in considering Fiddes' suggestion that the role of memory plays a significant part in the process of forgiveness.

In a recent paper on the challenges to forgiveness caused by memory and forgetfulness,[51] Fiddes asks whether or not there can be forgiveness without memory? Surely it is not forgiveness if we have no memory of what needs forgiven?[52] Yet, taking their cue from Isaiah's account of Yahweh as the God who both forgives and forgets,[53] a number of thinkers including Volf, Derrida, and Ricoeur suggest that too much memory hampers forgiveness and so perhaps we need to advocate forgetting with forgiveness.[54] Derrida, in particular,

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by Lena Lybæk et al (Oekumenische Studien 30: LIT Verlag Berlin-Hamburg-Münster, 2004), 91-93.

[51] Paul S. Fiddes, 'Memory, Forgetting and the Problem of Forgiveness: Reflecting on Volf, Derrida and Ricoeur', in *Forgiving and Forgetting. At the Margins of Soteriology* edited by Johannes Zacchuber and Hartmut Von Sass (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 117-33.

[52] This standard, intuitive account of forgiveness is summed up wonderfully in Christopher Nolan's movie *Memento* when the husband called 'Lenny' (Guy Pearce) who suffers with complete short-term memory loss while trying to piece together and discover who raped and killed his wife says, 'How am I supposed to heal if I can't feel time'. *Memento*, DVD, (2000).

[53] 'I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more'. (Isaiah 43:25).

[54] Volf powerfully articulates this thesis in Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

defines forgiveness as a *gift* given without any conditions, limits or reciprocation. Forgiveness must be offered before repentance without any expectation or intention that the offender will repent at all, as this act of unconditional forgiveness forgives both the act and actor together.[55]

In doing this, Fiddes claims, the victim is participating in the movements of divine anguish and empathy into the unknown, which tries to win the offender back into relationship. Memory is still there but fades over time; there is no forgiveness as *simply* forgetting. Instead, the journey of forgiving memory becomes part of God's journey and it all needs to be seen as taking part in God himself. All movements of forgiveness and reconciliation participate in the relational network of the triune God, a network which makes room for extreme rebellion and negativity within the 'yes' of the Father and Son.[56] Contrary to much traditional theology, the atonement responds to the demands of justice by seeking out restoration and reconciliation as God in Jesus makes the journey of empathy into the depth of human despair, unforgiveness, estrangement and alienation in order to transform rebellious lives.[57]

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[55] Pastorally speaking, claims Fiddes, if viewed from a participation in the divine perspective, speaking forgiveness over people *before* they have repented will unlock repentance and reconciliation since people are set free from guilt. Christ did this from the cross (Luke 23:34) as well other times in his earthly ministry (Matt 9:2). Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd. 2000), 197-220.

[56] This common theme in Fiddes comes from his reading of von Balthasar, who 'has critical insight when he observes that there is only one place in creation where it is *possible* to say 'no' to God, and that is within the glad 'yes' of the Son to the Father. . . so the human 'no' of rebellion is a kind of twisted knot, an ugly distortion within the relationships of the Trinity - a tragic situation which is revealed by the cross of Jesus'. Paul S. Fiddes, 'The Place of Christian Theology in the Modern University', *Baptist Quarterly* 42 (Apr, 2007): 84-85.

[57] Since punishment has the aim of reform, forgiveness has to be offered *before* repentance. Fiddes, *Past Event*, 96-111.

When remembering that there is a cross in the heart of God[58] due to the active suffering which befalls God, this creates an intertwining of human pain and divine suffering which releases divine kenotic power and transformative forgiveness into the life of the sufferer. This is especially the case in the life of a Christian believer, one who encounters salvation and atonement as transformation, a transforming love manifest in human weakness which is potently atoning enough to confront and deal with unforgiveness caused by nefarious and evil acts. All this, of course, takes time and when we view time, as suggested by Fiddes, as a reality *within* God,[59] then the passing of time which brings about healing is actual movements of participation within the healing relations of the triune God who transforms, heals and never stops the process of growing into our human potential, which can be seen defined as never-ending sanctification and glorification.[60]

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[58] The location of the cross of Christ in the very centre of God's being unearths innumerable corollaries that need explored when trying to articulate salvation and atonement theology in today's cultural milieu. Fiddes primarily focusses upon three, which he believes are non-negotiable in communicating Christian faith and theology in our western contemporary context: sacrifice, justice, and evil. Fiddes, 'Salvation', 183-185; Fiddes, *Past Event*, 84-96; Fiddes, "Christianity, Atonement, 1-21.

[59] Fiddes argues that there is no theological model of time and space that proves either static (tenseless) or dynamic (tensed) understanding of time. Therefore, theology needs to integrate its discussion of time into the doctrine of God, in which our successive moments of time have their source in God's time. Paul S. Fiddes, *The Promised End: Eschatology in Theology and Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 181-218.

[60] Fiddes is committed to understanding salvation as a *process of transformation*. Starting with his baptistic commitment to community and relationship within an eschatological reality, he uniquely interweaves the more eastern concept of progressive divinization which is identified as increasingly moulded into the likeness of God. Within a faithful and committed community, Fiddes defines salvation as a moving away from sin towards a more divinized existence that in the process effectively deals with aspects of residual

Conclusion

'The skeletons of Rwanda tell a story of a fallen institutional Christianity and the presence of a crucified and loving God who gets killed and raped many, many times because the leaders of his own institutional church could not be there to defend him'.[61] Aguilar's sobering conclusion of the 1994 Rwandan genocide leaves a little room for disagreement. For whether or not the complicity of the Rwandan church was largely unprecedented remains a moot point when one considers the needed Barmen declaration in the face of Nazi terror, or the substantial growth of the Atlantic slave trade under the nose of the church in Europe.[62]

However, what is beyond doubt is the sheer barbarity of violent acts committed, not by the state police or armed forces but by neighbour upon neighbour. Despite the fact that the Hutu majority were indoctrinated by the government to dehumanize their Tutsi neighbour by believing that they were cockroaches, this does not lessen the local-particular reality and memory of the brutal violence, nor reduce the emphatic need to articulate an account of forgiveness and reconciliation which will transform the future and not let the past dictate the long term future of hope for each and every village, town and city of this central African country.

As I have argued in this article, an appropriate and heuristically powerful account is one grounded in the participation within the transformational atoning movements for forgiveness and reconciliation within the relations of the triune God. When framed like this, it is possible to hear and believe accounts typified by the opening story and view it as a

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fallenness such as estrangement, anxiety, hostility, fear and idolatry. Fiddes, 'Salvation', 176-78.

[61] Aguilar, *Theology*, *Liberation*, 43.

[62] Willie Jennings argues it was more than 'under the nose.' Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2011).

potentially normative account instead of an exception to the usual vicious circle of retribution. For, as advocated by Fiddes, the only transformational victory over evil is one with an Abelardian root in which the victory of Christ over evil through the atoning love of God is genuinely able to generate the power to move human hearts into action and impact against the evil at work in the world. Then when we enter into cooperation with God's saving action there is the unveiling of God's own self, which manifests itself through the creative power of the story, especially stories of victory over evil.

These stories, in turn, create a community of the crucified based on agape love as illustrated by Christ's death and resurrection, which lays the path to forgiveness and reconciliation. For without agape love, based on God's universal love for us, there can be no common humanity, no equality, no forgiveness and reconciliation, and no justice when that equality is broken in acts of otherness and violence. It is the only cure of the perennial and relentless human pre-disposition to evil and the ongoing battle not to let sin master us (Genesis 4:7).

Notes on Contributor

Rev Alistair (Al) Cuthbert is minister of Falkirk Baptist Church in Central Scotland. He is currently in his sixth year of part-time PhD research at the University of St Andrews exploring the interface between Paul Fiddes' theology and theologies of evil, the demonic and spiritual conflict. Before entering Baptist ministry he was a peripatetic missionary with Youth With A Mission (YWAM) for 10 years, a role that took him all over the world and exposed him to non-western methodologies, paradigms and phenomena concerning the demonic and spiritual warfare.

Journal of Baptist Theology in Context

Aims

- To encourage the sharing of good theological, biblical and historical research by Baptists
- To support pastor–theologians in academic publishing
- To offer the wider Baptist family thoughtful work which will aid their life and mission

Submitting to Journal of Baptist Theology

We welcome submissions from Baptists pastor–theologians. All submissions to be emailed to Andy Goodliff (andy@goodliff.com) as word documents with footnotes. Submissions to be no more than 7,000 words.

Cover Image

The image is based on a painting that was for many years displayed in Helwys Hall, Regent's Park College, Oxford and was designed by Henry Wheeler Robinson (College Principal, 1920-44), representing the five principles of Baptist life: faith, baptism, evangelism, fellowship and freedom. See H. Wheeler Robinson, 'The Five Points of a Baptist's Faith' *Baptist Quarterly* 11.2-2 (January-April 1942), 4–14.