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CHURCH
MISSION
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MISSION AND SHAME

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WELCOME TO THIS EDITION OF ANVIL

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Andrea Campanale

Prov. 25:2 (ESV) says, “It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.”

My understanding of this is that as much as we might wish it were otherwise, God doesn't lay everything out on a plate for us. We are treated like kings. God wants us to wrestle and search, and engage with him/her on a quest. I often feel a bit like a bloodhound on the scent or a detective piecing together the clues in order to work out what the Holy Spirit is up to and how God might be inviting me to participate in our next great adventure together. It was like that when I began my mission work with spiritual seekers. It started with a hunch, a little thought that niggled away that I couldn't get rid of. This was followed by an observation, then a confirmation and a call to step out and trust. Before I knew it, I was travelling a path I could never have imagined. This is what happened when I started investigating shame too.

The thought or question that wouldn't go away was: is the gospel as deliverance from sin genuinely good news for the people I am seeking to reach out to with the love of Christ? Obviously, this truth is amazing and life-transforming. However, if I have to explain what sin is, in order to share that most wonderful of gifts offered to us in

Christ, does that stop it being the life-giving message people most need to hear? Then I had a couple of encounters with people at New Age-type fairs who wanted to know more about Jesus and were open to come to him but said they felt unworthy to do so. A barrier to healing and redemption that had been hidden was coming into view. Yet it wasn't until I was asked to preach about the woman healed of haemorrhaging in Luke 8:43–48 and read a chapter in Janet Davis's book *My Own Worst*

Enemy on that narrative that I realised this was shame.¹ It was then I had to confront my own struggle to receive and accept God's unconditional love and positive regard in my life and faith.

If God is doing something by his Spirit, the other thing that happens is that you become aware other people are discovering the same thing! I read Stephen Pattison's book *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology*,² watched Brene Brown's TED talk “The Power of Vulnerability”³ and was told about others doing academic research on this topic, such as Sally Nash and Catherine Matlock. We decided to come together and form the Transforming Shame Network and in October last year we had our first conference, entitled “The Gospel, Redemption and Shame”. The articles in this

edition of *ANVIL* come out of that event, and there are also videos on our YouTube channel should you want to revisit the contributions from the day.

I cannot commend enough the written pieces included in this issue of *ANVIL*. Sally Nash has drawn on her years of experience in youth work, as well as her comprehensive understanding of shame, to suggest how we might engage with young

people on this topic. Trevor Withers realised the significance of shame in communicating the gospel through regularly going into local schools and now runs a pottery to help people overcome shame by becoming vulnerable and getting creative. Carlton Turner uses his experience of being of Black Bahamian descent to talk about the power of “Self-Negation” when considering shame in the discourse about race. Catherine Matlock specifically considers shame and pioneering mission in the UK out of

“The thought or question that wouldn't go away was: is the gospel as deliverance from sin genuinely good news for the people I am seeking to reach out to with the love of Christ?”

¹ Janet Davis, *My Own Worst Enemy: How to Stop Holding Yourself Back* (Grand Rapids, MI: Bethany House Publishers, 2012).

² Stephen Pattison, *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

³ Brene Brown, TED Talk, “The Power of Vulnerability,” *TED*, June 2010, https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_the_power_of_vulnerability.

her ministry at Kath's Cafe on the Druids Heath estate in Birmingham. How to read the Bible with an honour/shame lens is the subject of Judith Rossall's article and I would highly recommend her book *Forbidden Fruit and Fig Leaves: Reading the Bible with the Shamed*,⁴ where she is able to explore this more fully. Overcoming trauma and shame by developing an intentional Christian community is Linda Fletcher's piece, based on her pioneering practice.

What all these articles have in common is that there is real authenticity here. The wise and vulnerable contributors don't just talk about shame; it has become integral to how Christ's message of liberation and hope has been incarnated afresh by them in their context, at this time. If you would like to join us on this voyage of discovery and renewal, then do please join the Transforming Shame Facebook group.

Andrea Campanale is a CMS mission partner, one of the first commissioned lay pioneers in Southwark Diocese and leads a fresh expression of church, Sacred Space Kingston. She has written on the subject of shame in the book *The Pioneer Gift*, edited by Jonny Baker and Cathy Ross,⁵ and had a paper published in January 2021 on healing from shame in *Missiology: An International Review*.⁶ She spoke about noticing shame at the Transforming Shame conference: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xYPBN3amfk>



⁴ Judith Rossall, *Forbidden Fruit and Fig Leaves: Reading the Bible with the Shamed* (London: SCM Press, 2020).

⁵ Jonny Baker and Cathy Ross, eds., *The Pioneer Gift: Explorations in Mission* (Canterbury Press: Norwich, 2014).

⁶ Andrea Campanale, "Healing from Shame: Possible and Desirable?" *Missiology: An International Review* (January 2021).



PERSPECTIVES ON SHAME IN MISSION AND MINISTRY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

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Sally Nash

INTRODUCTION

I have a vivid memory of a small group of us standing on the stage in my school hall singing the chorus “Can it be true?” for an assembly. It was the 1970s and I went to what is often known as a bog-standard comprehensive school, not a church school. I wonder, if I were 14 today, would I want to be so publicly out as a Christian? The reason I might not want to would be a feeling of shame because of perceptions of my peers about what a Christian is and believes, sometimes gained from headlines, media stories and unhelpful stereotypes. The New Testament was written in a shame culture but whereas today shame is often seen as a psychological issue, then it was social, in the context of a collectivist rather than individualist society. Pattison expands further: “Shame can be seen as an unwanted, polluting condition for groups that has a kind of objectivity that is not merely temporary, psychological, or emotional – and this can lead to profound, important, and sometimes very unpredictable social effects.”¹ This was a starting point for my research on shame in the church, which resulted in a PhD and a subsequent book.² In this article, drawing on that research and ongoing work, I will explore how an understanding of shame may offer insights into mission and ministry with young people, largely in relation to the church as an institution.

UNDERSTANDING SHAME

Shame is a concept with a growing prominence in popular culture through authors such as Brene Brown and Jon Ronson.³ Andy Crouch argued in *Christianity Today* that morality in western society was becoming more shame-than guilt-oriented, which would be a significant shift.⁴ However, there is no consensus about the meaning of shame and it is often culturally determined. What is

shaming for me may not be for you. Thus, our personal values, family, community, socialisation and personality can significantly influence what we feel shame over.

Andrew describes how “what I feel shame for in my present church is very different to what I feel shame for in my home church”.⁵ The distinction is usually made that guilt is about what we have done, whereas shame is about who we are. The difference is between doing and being. We can feel shame about something we feel guilty about but also feel shame with no guilt, as well as guilt with no shame. Shame usually has an audience, including an internalised ideal self. It includes this sense of being seen, exposed. It may also be reinforced externally by non-verbal signals – the shaking of a head or raised eyebrows, for example.

“The difference is between doing and being. We can feel shame about something we feel guilty about but also feel shame with no guilt, as well as guilt with no shame.”

Neil Pembroke suggests that there are five elements of shame: exposure, incongruence, threat to trust, involvement of the whole self and hiddenness.⁷ He also identifies some of the contexts in which we feel shame, all of which might impact young people: situational shame – embarrassing situations; aesthetic shame – falling short of an ideal image; inherited identity shame – can relate to class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality; inferiority shame – feeling lacking, deficient or incompetent; moral shame – breaking rules or mores.⁸ Some of the words used to describe shame are seeing ourselves as flawed, defective, inferior, exposed, wanting, helpless, powerless, humiliated, losing face. Responses to shame vary, but one helpful model is that of Donald Nathanson, who has developed a compass of shame that identifies the defensive strategies we adopt: withdrawal, avoidance, attack self and attack other.⁹ When we see these behaviours, we may want to think about whether shame is at the root of them.

¹ Stephen Pattison, “Shame and the Unwanted Self,” in *The Shame Factor: How Shame Shapes Society*, ed. Robert Jewett, Wayne Alloway Jr. and John G. Lacey (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 13.

² Sally Nash, “Landscapes of shame in the church: a typology to inform ministerial praxis” (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2015); Sally Nash, *Shame and the Church: Exploring and Transforming Practice* (London: SCM Press, 2020).

³ Brown’s TED talk where she discusses shame has had over 15 million views at the time of writing this article. See Brene Brown, TED Talk, “Listening to Shame,” TED, March 2012, https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame.

⁴ Jon Ronson, *So You’ve Been Publicly Shamed* (London: Picador, 2015).

⁵ Andy Crouch, “The Return of Shame,” *Christianity Today* 59, no. 2 (10 March 2015), 32–41.

⁶ Direct quotations from transcripts of questionnaire and focus groups from my research are italicised.

⁷ Neil Pembroke, *The Art of Listening* (Edinburgh: Continuum, 2002).

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Donald L. Nathanson, ed., *The Many Faces of Shame* (New York, London: The Guilford Press, 1987).

More broadly, shame may help define the way we relate to the wider world and give a glimpse as to why young people may have issues with the church. Michael Morgan is a philosopher who believes that we should be able to choose to experience shame in response to some of the dreadful things that happen in the world, as this might motivate us to action. He suggests that:

Shame requires of us that we have some notion of how we should be or ought to be, the kind of person we ought to be, and the kind of person others ought to expect us to be, in terms of which our actions show us to have failed, to be deficient, to be diminished. When we are ashamed, we have lost face because the face we value and hope to have has been displaced or defaced by another face, which is one we regret having, one that disgraces or embarrasses us.¹⁰

Some of the cancel culture experienced currently for, perhaps inadvertently, saying or doing something that brings shame is the context young people are growing up in. They may also struggle with a dissonance between the person they want to be and one the church values; thus, being identified as a Christian with some of the labels that may be attributed to that position such as misogynistic or homophobic can cause shame.

HEALTHY SHAME

While my research has largely focused on the negative dimensions of shame, it is important to understand the ways in which shame is healthy. Thus, Jill McNish suggests that shame is part of what leads us into a relationship with God and Steven Tracy sees that healthy shame is based on our dignity as those who bear God's image.^{11 12} Pembroke argues that shame is the psychological basis of humility and can be a moral motivation in relationships with those close to us and protect against depersonalisation and violation where privacy is not respected.¹³

SHAME AND INSTITUTIONS

The anthropologist Mary Douglas suggests that institutions construct a "machine for thinking and decision-making on their own behalf",¹⁴ one that represents their version of nature and gives them the capacity to monitor how their society is constituted. The

implications of this are that "ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, above and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created"¹⁵ and disorder is seen as negative and potentially dangerous. Thus, within our churches there is often a system that articulates what some of these transgressions are, overtly through things like the Ten Commandments and denominational guidelines. But, also, more covertly by means of a local culture that is lived and not necessarily articulated, sometimes leaving people unaware that they have transgressed until after the event. I can remember in my adolescence that such things as wearing, what was perceived as, too much make-up or listening to the "wrong" sort of music (heavy rock in this instance) were such transgressions. I was made to feel that I had not yet achieved an acceptable standard of holiness. I have not really given time to reflect on whether the fact that I never wear make-up now has any roots in that experience. This can be the broader context in which mission and ministry to young people takes place and will vary across traditions and cultures.

MY DEFINITION

To conclude this discussion of what shame is from a variety of perspectives, this is my synthesised, phenomenological definition of shame:

Shame can cause us to act both positively and negatively, it is contextual and related to an audience including an ideal or internalised other. Positively it may constrain our behaviour in ways which maintain appropriate boundaries, self-respect, facilitates intimacy, discretion, dignity and is facilitated by our conscience. Negatively, shame may involve disgrace, estrangement, exclusion, believing oneself to be worthless, flawed, contaminated, unlovable and manifest in a variety of ways including physiological, withdrawal and rage.¹⁶

This is a summary of what I mean when I talk about shame in relation to mission and ministry with young people,

¹⁰ Michael L. Morgan, *On Shame* (London: Routledge, 2008), 15–16.

¹¹ Jill L. McNish, "Shame's Revelatory and Transformative Potential, and Its Use and Misuse by the Church's Pastoral Ministry," *American Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 6, no. 2 (2003): 3–22.

¹² Steven R. Tracy, *Mending the Soul: Understanding and Healing Abuse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005).

¹³ Pembroke, *The Art of Listening*.

¹⁴ Mary Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 63.

¹⁵ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 4.

¹⁶ Nash, *Shame and the Church*, 182.

although my research has largely focused on how to ameliorate the disgrace shame that is felt by them.

SHAME AND YOUNG PEOPLE

In my experience of young people inside and outside of the church, shame has most often emerged in pastoral conversations. In a wider discussion with other youth workers, we identified some of the things that young people feel shame over in relation to conversations with their youth worker: drink, drugs, sex, appearance, eating disorders, self-harm, tattoos and piercings, swearing, crime, homelessness, rape, domestic violence, sexual identity and activity, learning disabilities and so on. Along with these individual responses, there were also group-focused elements such as friendship break ups, gossip and backstabbing, which can occur in groups and which may cause shame.

One of the issues that emerged was that young people sometimes felt that things happened to them through no fault of their own, but that the church might be judgemental towards them or their family. Some of the issues they felt this over were suicide, abuse, debt, domestic violence, imprisoned family members. While a church might not be shaming, that a young person feels they may be has an impact on our mission and ministry with them. One participant in my research concluded that “I believe many of the issues youth workers face are caused by people being ashamed of who they are or what they have done and their perceived judgement of this”. While it might be frustrating for those of us who try to encourage welcoming and hospitable spaces, this is still a view we encounter: “I think there is still a stigma that you have to be perfect to be accepted [in church] and I think especially young people who don’t attend, or won’t attend, because they feel like they’re going to be judged the moment they walk in”. The Christian shame literature also identifies issues that can cause shame, with Edward Wimberly, for example, listing evil and insensitivity towards others; dehumanising stereotypes; family breakdown; activities we use for coping such as eating disorders, self-harm, alcohol, drugs etc; all the “isms” such as racism and sexism.¹⁷ As part of my research I developed a typology of shame. In the remainder of this article I will look at four dimensions of it: personal, relational, communal and structural.¹⁸

PERSONAL SHAME

Personal shame is that which is experienced by an individual as a consequence of their relationship with the church. Personal shame in my research was around issues of compliance, conformity and sufficiency as well as understanding that there are different levels of shame proneness. Issues of conformity and compliance can be significant in youth ministry as they are integral to the struggles of adolescence. One participant voiced this comment, which is not an unusual one:

When I was growing up in church, I felt unable to be honest about how I lived my life. This led to a dualistic lifestyle, where at home and church I was completely different to at school and with friends. I have felt that church had made me feel like I needed to appear sorted, like I had no issues and that I couldn’t be open and vulnerable with people, because if I was, I was rejected or made to feel dirty, bad or shameful!

One of the challenges in mission and ministry is how the young people perceive us and whether or not we have built the quality of relationship where they feel safe to talk about the things that are deeply troubling them. Some have experienced what felt like a more intentional shaming, believing that “Shame implies fault, being encouraged to feel dirty about yourself, guilty. That you have done something wrong that is pointed out to you in a humiliating manner by someone ‘good/ in the right’ i.e. not you! There are some clear issues of power and judgement.” Being shamed can lead to a dismantling of identity¹⁹ and in my research “nonentity” was a word that described how people felt when personally shamed.

Power can play a significant part in personal shame, with church leaders and others sometimes slipping into mediating God’s word for individuals in a way that gives little or no opportunity for them to say they think God is saying something different to them. Anna was told she was on God’s Plan B after saying she was not returning to the country where she had been a missionary after a serious sexual assault and spiritual abuse. She described herself as a “broken person” and had clearly been shamed by those she had anticipated would care for her. Paula, who has a background in youth work, suggested that:

It’s our job to show love and compassion as people, as a person. I think that’s it. I don’t think it’s our job to, really, to run their life, if someone wants to carry on living their life not in a way that you think they should be living it. I don’t... I think it’s still our job to show love

¹⁷ Edward P. Wimberly, *Moving from Shame to Self-Worth: Preaching & Pastoral Care* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999).

¹⁸ The remaining two dimensions are theological and hidden or buried shame but they are less relevant to this topic, with the theological dimensions being apparent in other elements.

¹⁹ Brad A. Binau, “Administrative Ministry: A Link Between Shame and Stress,” *Trinity Seminary Review* 27, no. 2 (2006): 101.

and compassion to them. Not to say, this love and compassion is dependent on you progressing along the journey. Because I think, should that progression come to a halt, is then the love and compassion going to come to a halt?

In part, these comments from Paula are a personal reflection on her experience of the church. But her experience is shared by some young people who feel abandoned when their journey doesn't have the expected trajectory, although others would talk of the faithfulness of youth workers who continued to be there for them despite what appeared to be happening in their faith journey. As one youth minister commented, churches can "preach too much judgement and not enough grace and mercy".

SHAME AND YOUTH WORKERS

Youth workers also experience shame, which impacts their capacity to engage in mission and ministry with young people as effectively as they might, for example through personal issues such as "my life is not very prayerful". One dilemma can sometimes be reaching out to young people but being unsure of the welcome they would receive if they attended church. Andy shared how he knows of people who will not say where they live because when they mention the estate, there is a negative reaction. Anna recounted how, when relocating from the south to a northern city, she "was made very aware that I didn't fit in and wasn't liked then". Another participant talked very positively of how they were accepted by the church they attended despite very obvious cultural differences, which is encouraging. Sara Savage offers a perspective on the ministry of Jesus that is one for youth workers to both follow and encourage in their settings: "Across the range of Jesus' interactions, we see him on the warpath against all that degrades human dignity and spiritual value. With flexibility and insight he takes the initiative against the social structures, deceptions, defences, learned helplessness, negative thoughts and patterns and paralysing fears that imprison us."²⁰

RELATIONAL SHAME

Relational shame is experienced as a consequence of identification with people within the church, particularly, but not exclusively, leaders. Vicarious shame is another way of expressing this. Brian Lickel et al. argue that a distancing occurs when we experience vicarious shame,

which happens when "people felt ashamed for another's wrongdoing to the extent that they felt that the person's behavior was relevant to a social identity that they shared in common with the wrongdoer and appraised the other person's behavior as a negative reflection on themselves".²¹ These are three examples of relational or vicarious shame that arose in my research and give an idea as to the breadth of issues that are relevant here:

- Every time a child-abuse scandal is uncovered, especially when it has been covered up deliberately by church leaders, I feel shame because the church should excel and be exemplary especially in its care of others.
- Locally, I felt shameful when the youth workers' support group disbanded due to a disagreement in theology.
- Explaining some of the practices of church management to my non-Christian family has made me feel ashamed at times, because I felt embarrassed about my career and felt protective of a career that they disapproved of.

The youth worker making the final comment observed "I didn't want them to judge my faith by how other people behaved". This can be applied more widely for Christian youth workers when encountering a range of value judgements and assumptions about Christians and Christianity that may impact the capacity to engage effectively in mission and ministry. At the extreme end people talked about "Christians who either kill doctors who abort babies, or justify racism using the Bible or feel it's ok to have millions of pounds while people starve", although they observed that all of us have areas where our actions and words may be problematic in relation to our faith.

Differences in how a situation is seen can also be problematic. A student youth worker at a church that believed that Christians should not date non-Christians disagreed with a decision that the leadership made to ask a young person to give up leading a cell group:

I didn't agree with this decision as I felt he was growing so much in his faith through his leadership and with the right guidance he would make the right decisions in life, whatever they may be. As a student youth leader, I felt trapped as it was as if I had to go along with what the leadership said. But what I really wanted was to go and chat to him and say that I didn't agree. I

²⁰ Sara Savage, "Healing Encounters: Psychological Perspectives on Jesus' Healing," in *Jesus and Psychology*, ed. Fraser Watts (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006), 61.

²¹ Brian Lickel, Toni Schmader, Matthew Curtis, Marchelle Scarnier and Daniel R. Ames, "Vicarious Shame and Guilt," *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations* 8, no. 2 (2005): 152.

felt shame to be connected to the comments because it made people think I agreed with them when I didn't. I didn't feel it was our place to judge. He had become such a good leader and couldn't adapt/cope with the shame of not being allowed to do what he loved anymore. He was very angry too. Within a month he left church and never came back that I know of.

There are a range of issues that trigger stories like this, many of them relating to sex and sexuality. "Tainted by association" was a phrase that was used, and for some youth workers it impacted where they wanted to work. It is important to note that the idea of tainted by association is felt by both ends of the theological spectrum, but over different things with the related perspectives on how this impacts mission and ministry.

COMMUNAL SHAME

Communal shame relates to shame that is experienced at a group or congregational level.

Research by anthropologists affirms that groups are stigmatised and deemed shameful over a variety of issues and sadly, this can be true of young people.²² The idea that "a language of relationships, not attributes, is really needed"²³ is one for youth workers to consider as they challenge some of the unhelpful labels that can be given to young people.

As with relational shame, communal shame can be impacted by our theological tradition. Thus, what is understood as taboo in one context may almost be celebrated in another. In my research, the themes that emerged as important in communal shame were stigmatising, disaffection and disempowerment. There are sometimes concerns focusing on purity about pollution and disgust, and those who do not behave as they should (a contextual statement) may pollute the "pure" church. This can impact mission where some youth workers can find that they are discouraged from being involved in outreach in some contexts, as those met on detached work might "pollute" the children of church members. One of the important insights to communicate more broadly is understanding Jesus as restoring God's original understanding of purity as seeing it as an internal heart issue, not external conformity with rules.²⁴ A particular concern for youth workers was that churches sometimes seem to expect perfection in an unrealistic way and the liturgy ends up leaving people with a sense of sin and shame rather than forgiveness and joy. There can also be

a lack of communication that we are all works in progress and that we all make mistakes.

STRUCTURAL SHAME

Structural shame relates to shame that is a consequence of what the church or organisation says, does or believes at an institutional level; it may be embedded in the way the system works. Themes that emerged from my research were collusion and fragmentation. One youth worker commented that "there are different hierarchies of shame depending on what the particular expression of church prioritises in regards to teaching and culture". Pronouncements from the national church have caused problems for some, the vote against women bishops in the Church of England and the historical cover-up of sexual abuse being two instances mentioned, along with attitudes to LGBTIQ people and the reports of institutional racism. The idea that sexual sin is more serious than others is an example. Greed is also something that youth workers find challenging in discussion with young people, particularly in seeing who is held to account for what. Thus, a youth worker talks of how "a friend of mine that I went to church with got herself pregnant and she felt judged and she left the church and subsequently lost her faith completely because she didn't find another church. She just disappeared and that was clearly because the congregation couldn't accept her." A lack of grace is hard for many youth workers because it impacts on the capacity for people wanting to stay involved and belong to a church.

One of the challenges for youth workers is the extent to which they feel trapped into colluding with the institution because of a pressure to toe the line at a structural level. The way that power is used structurally is also a cause for shame, with one person commenting that "the church as an institution is not into any kind of equal opportunities, although many individuals within the institution do hold to the value of equality". That this is a perception of a youth worker and certainly not a minority voice in my research is a concern. Perception is often what shapes our perspective negatively and ends up causing us shame as people associate us with views we may not hold. Youth workers can have particular issues with hierarchical power and the way that it is exercised when it so obviously contradicts the values they are trying to embody in their youth work of participation, empowerment and equal opportunities, for example.

²² Martha C. Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

²³ Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 3.

²⁴ Ritva H. Williams, "Purity, Dirt, Anomalies, and Abominations," in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*, ed. Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 217–18.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

When thinking about mission and ministry with young people and shame, my main concern is how to mitigate the inappropriate shaming that can happen. What is most important is self-awareness because of the danger of projecting shame on to others and perhaps not acknowledging or processing our own.²⁵ Thinking about shame in relation to the content of teaching, preaching, liturgy, expectations and the norms embraced by the church can help mitigate against inappropriate or inadvertent shaming, which can be very damaging to individuals but also the wider ministry and mission of the church. My research suggested that people stopped attending church if they felt shamed over things that were personal or cultural choices. To help mitigate shame, building high-quality personal relationships is valuable, developing a culture of inclusivity and authenticity. When we join an institution, we have to decide if we are in or out and youth workers are vital in creating the culture the young people become part of. This is how one youth worker articulated what they tried to do:

Create safe spaces and relationships; no judgement, safe practice. Putting in appropriate boundaries to protect relationships, with realistic expectations. Encouragement and valuing people's skills, gifts and contributions. Providing opportunities for participation, and celebrating people's successes. Joined-up resources; either mentoring or links to further support such as counselling.

High quality relationships mean that it is easier to raise issues without causing shame, as one person observed: "If we feel accepted unconditionally by someone, them saying to you that's not really the best way of doing things doesn't make you feel ashamed." Challenging is an integral part of youth work, and while we may not do it, as in this example, it is much easier to have a fruitful conversation if we think a person has our best interests at heart. Research suggests that good-quality nurturing and caring relationships can contribute towards healing from shame.²⁶ Youth workers suggest a variety of ways of supporting young people experiencing shame:

Time with them and safety to express themselves. Some way of reaching out and letting them know that they are valued. Show acceptance, recognising we've all fallen short. Try as best to love them as Jesus does and remind them of that love. Be there to listen to them and engage with them. See them as a person, not a problem. Listen, don't judge, offer support, direct them to someone with appropriate skills if necessary. Help them see God's love and amazing grace, that there is nothing they can do to make God love them more and nothing they can do to make God love them less.

CONCLUSION

Finally, this response from a youth worker encapsulates what I hope we can take away from exploring perspectives on shame in mission and ministry with young people:

There is a need to be real with one another and open with each other. Too often the shame comes from what we feel others think. My experience is that when people get down to real conversations and build real relationships, love and acceptance are naturally demonstrated. Churches need to find a balance to, yes, preaching how we need to grow as disciples, but equally that start with God's love, recognising we've all made mistakes and that through faith, not through anything we've done, we've received forgiveness and love through Jesus. Let us stop taking for granted the cross and God's love for us. If I'm honest, I don't have many practical answers. But I think we often overcomplicate Christianity and put stuff, and needing to conform to church ideals, before what Jesus said was most important, "Love God and love others."

In truly doing these first, I'd hope that the church would become a less inappropriately shaming institution.

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²⁵ Jill L. McNish, *Transforming Shame: A Pastoral Response* (London: Routledge, 2004), 185.

²⁶ Wimberly, *Moving from Shame to Self-Worth*, 111.



REFLECTIONS FROM THE POTTERY

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Trevor Withers

Our pottery is set in a disused factory building on the training campus of Youth with a Mission in Harpenden. The site is open to the public and has a very popular cafe.

One day a worship leader, who would happily lead hundreds, stood frozen in the doorway of our cobbled-together pottery studio. I had no idea I was witnessing the beginning of my long interest in the paralysing “shame” culture. She muttered, “I am not artistic and can’t come in.” As the words left her mouth, the tears started to well up in her eyes. This culture of shame that is now so prevalent in our western world is robbing many of a “life that is lived to the full” as Jesus promised.¹ This is particularly true for, and taking a grip on, our young adults. Brene Brown highlights from her extensive research that “shame is an unspoken epidemic, the secret behind many forms of broken behaviour”.²

Gill, who shares the pottery with me, took this tearful girl’s hand and firmly but kindly said, “You will come in, you will put spots on this bowl and most importantly you will have a cup of tea with us.” Whatever lie had been spoken over this musically talented lady had embedded itself deep in her heart. Over the following weeks we saw a true artist emerge; brushes and glazes went missing as she was beaver away decorating pots at home. However, the greatest gift for Gill and me was the laughter – a releasing laughter and an emerging self-belief.

One of the areas that is shut down by shame is our creativity. Any sort of creativity involves vulnerability. The loss of value that we experience through shame makes it difficult for us to be vulnerable and, therefore, creative. This is the case because we put so much of ourselves into what we create and then in some way offer it to a watching and often critical world. Curt Thompson very powerfully connects creativity, vulnerability and God:

But naked vulnerability is not merely a representation of our having been created to be in relationship. God desires us to live like he lives. Thus, to be created in God’s image also refers to us having creative dominion within the world. And to be maximally creative also requires that we are vulnerable.³

We often think of vulnerability as a sign of weakness; however, it takes great courage to be vulnerable, which is often displayed when we are young and childlike, but is eroded away as we step into adolescence.

Ask any class of young children, “Do you like making things?” Every hand in the room will go up simultaneously. The air will be filled with anticipation and excitement at the prospect of making something! I experienced this as I helped an infant schoolteacher with her craft and tech lessons for a few weeks. However, if you ask the same question of a group of teenagers, let alone adults, the response is very different! A few sheepish hands may be raised, tentatively. The excitement generated in the younger setting is replaced by nervousness at the thought of being found out by their peers. So, something happens to us as we grow up; we lose the dimension of fun and freedom to be creative. Thoughts like it not being not cool to make things or an overwhelming sense of possible failure now loom large in our minds.

Genesis records that “God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them”.⁴ The dominant word in this verse is “created”. This is emphasising what it means to be made in the image of God. Therefore, if we are to be like him then being creative will be one of the signs of this. Now before you think I am saying we should all become artists, let’s broaden the view we have of creativity. Each of us will have different and unique ways in which we connect with and express our own creativity. Sir Ken Robinson puts it this way:

*I define creativity as the process of having original ideas that have value.*⁵

This definition expands the horizon for creativity and hopefully draws us back into the space that many have stepped out of, either because it was not perceived as cool, they were told they would never get a job doing that or they were simply made to look foolish in front of others as their creating (usually painting or drawing) didn’t meet the teacher’s expectations.

There is something intrinsically buried in each of us; it

“Ask any class of young children, ‘Do you like making things?’ Every hand in the room will go up simultaneously.”

¹ John 10:10.

² Brene Brown, TED Talk, “Listening to Shame,” TED, March 2012, accessed 27 April 2021, https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_listening_to_shame.

³ Curt Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe About Ourselves* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 122.

⁴ Gen. 1:27 (NRSV).

⁵ Sir Ken Robinson, *Out of Our Minds*, (Chichester: Wiley, 2017), 129.

rests in the core of our being. It is our desire to emulate our Creator God who makes us in his image. It sets a battleground for many where the weapons of words spoken over us many years ago have won long-held victories in keeping these treasured gifts buried and moribund.

Another dynamic here is the realisation that is highlighted by Jordan Peterson in an interview with Marc Mayer, Director and CEO of the National Gallery of Canada, that “systems do not nurture creativity. Telling people what to do and putting them in boxes is counterproductive.”⁶ The effect of some of our education system and parts of church life, which have often adopted this approach, is to restrict artistic and creative endeavour. Our experiences at the pottery studio have confirmed this in many cases. We have lost sight of the fact that we are created to be creative. Instead of joy, we find crushed self-belief.

Having our pottery as part of church life provides a counter to the systems approach as it runs more along creativity and community lines, both of which provide the nurture and healing required for battling shame.⁷ This, as you can imagine, looks quite chaotic on occasion with mess being made with the clay and conversations over cups of tea going in all directions as people find a sense of ease and open up on all sorts of topics! We need to learn to live on this rather chaotic edge and not give in to the all-too-often dominant call to pin things down and create organisation and order. Scott Peck highlights this tension beautifully:

An organization is able to nurture a measure of community within itself only to the extent that it is willing to risk or tolerate a certain lack of structure. As long as the goal is community building, organization as an attempted solution to chaos is an unworkable solution.⁸

So, pre-lockdown Gill and I opened up our pottery every Wednesday for two hours in the afternoon for families to enjoy our chaotic space. Then we would reopen for

the evening and over and over again marvel at the hidden and long-buried talent that emerges in a non-critical, non-competitive atmosphere for adult groups. We have a “we will fire anything you make” policy in our pottery. It doesn’t have to meet a “standard” or be “good enough” to go in the kiln.

We have stood by people when deep grief has been allowed to flow just by handling the clay. There is immense joy when self-esteem is rebuilt and celebrated. The pottery is run on a mixed diet of much prayer, tea, biscuits, tears and laughter.

We have the privilege of taking part in retreat days for 15- to 16-year-olds, which are designed to break exam tension and are hosted by our local schools’ work team.⁹ Our bonus is to see these “cool dudes” become children again and revel when we say it is just for fun. We take our portable potter’s wheel on these days. I will often tell the story of Jeremiah going to the potter’s house as I throw a pot. There Jeremiah saw the potter working on the wheel; the clay he was throwing was marred, perhaps by a small flint, some solid clay or splinters of wood. The potter may have grumbled, but he didn’t give up and in some versions it even says “he made something even more beautiful” from it. Jeremiah felt God was showing him that he will not throw away the damaged person but is committed to transform us all: such a powerful message for each one of us as we grapple with our shame.

Go to <https://cms.org.uk/potter> to watch me throwing and telling this story.

Providing ways for shame to be overcome will need to be part of our church life in some way if we are going to see people encounter the fullness of the gospel and discover that they are loved. The pottery is one way that this has happened for us. What might it be for you?

I am publishing a book on shame and the gospel. For information and availability, email Pam at resources@celluk.org.uk.

Trevor Withers is the team leader of Network Church in Harpenden, which is part of the Pioneer group of churches. He also co-leads Cell UK, which encourages the development of holistic small groups in churches around the UK. He is married to Pam and they have four grown-up children and three granddaughters. Trevor runs a pottery studio with a friend with the aim of encouraging people in their creativity. He has a heart to see our faith lived out in every area of our lives. He spoke about the gospel in a shame culture at the Transforming Shame conference: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V8TmQ80FoFw>



⁶ Jordan Peterson, “Exploring the Psychology of Creativity,” filmed interview with Marc Meyer, *You Tube*, May 2017, accessed 27 April 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxGPe1jD-qY>.

⁷ <https://www.networkchurch.org>, accessed 27 April 2021.

⁸ M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum* (London: Arrow Books, 1990), 93.

⁹ <https://www.stepschoolswork.org.uk>, accessed 27 April 2021.

A portrait of Carlton Turner, a Black man with a beard, wearing a suit jacket, is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The background of the portrait shows a wooden fence and trees.

LEGACIES AND CHAINS: STRUCTURING SHAME IN THE AFRICAN CARIBBEAN

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Carlton Turner

We are living in a time of pandemic and many of the assumptions we've made about how the world works, how it really works, have come into full view.

With the public lynching of George Floyd, Black Lives Matter protests across the globe and even declarations by the Church of England that it is structurally racist, issues such as racism have come to our attention quite dramatically. Being very aware of this important discussion and how it holds deep significance for conversations around theologies of mission, *ANVIL* dedicated a commendable set of reflections in a previous issue.¹ The range of articles are personal and contextual, but they highlight the structural nature of racism that any missional practice, particularly in cross-cultural contexts, would be wise to acknowledge. This current issue is dedicated to the concept of “shame”.

During the pandemic I found myself speaking about the legacies of colonialism at Wells Cathedral and how much of what was being experienced in British society and across the globe were the toxic legacies of colonisation experienced as a reframing of the stories of our lives. I inevitably was meditating on shame.² With the aid of postcolonial insights and reflecting out of the reality of mission practices and their legacies within the African Caribbean, I want to suggest that shame, intrinsically linked to racism, is also a structural reality, inevitably produced and maintained within contexts where colonisation has been a shaping force. In this article I will tease out this assertion by firstly looking at shame within some practical theological work; secondly, insisting that shame undergirds the very shaping of the African Caribbean; and finally, articulating this sense of shame through what I have termed Self-Negation in my own research in the African Caribbean context.

SHAME!

Before parsing the African Caribbean context and commenting on what I have come to name as the process of Self-Negation, it is helpful to tease out the structural nature of shame from a theological point of view.³ Synonyms of the word “shame” abound and words like contempt, degradation, diminishment and reproach can be interchangeable, but generally there

is the sense of a devaluing of one's sense of being. Within the British practical theology scene, shame is getting increased attention. The first thing to state here is that shame is not easily defined and within a Western framework, it has usually been associated with emotions. Stephen Pattison's *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology* positions the phenomenon as something to be traced, that cannot be related to just one theoretical perspective. He sets out a kaleidoscope of approaches – cultural, social constructionist, literary, sociological, biopsychological and psychotherapeutic – with which to understand the experience of shame but is careful to not privilege one over the other.⁴ He suggests an ecology of the terminology that, for our attempts at a description, includes “acute or reactive shame”, resulting from particular events, or “chronic shame”, which tends to be more of a character trait.⁵ Pattison's reflection picks up on the more negative and chronic nature of shame that manifests both in individuals and in societies, arguing that both require a kind of integration.⁶

Sally Nash reminds us that shame is very much an experience, not merely an emotion, and must be understood beyond the personal. In her research on shame and the church, she explains that because shame is difficult to define owing to its complex and hidden nature, a typology is more helpful. The typology arising from her research includes Personal Shame; Communal Shame, Relationship Shame, Structural Shame, Theological Shame and Historical Shame.⁷ What we begin to see from Nash's insights is that shame is deeply structural, but also “structuring”. The church as an entity can, and often does, produce and perpetuate shame. It does so theologically when one's “views of God and their core beliefs are challenged, opposed, ridiculed and misrepresented”.⁸ She warns us that much of what can be shaming is often ingrained in experience of church through metaphor, worship and liturgy. Judith Rossall, in perhaps the most recent work on shame, admonishes us to be careful with our biblical hermeneutics around sin, guilt and shame since we have yet to contend with all that the Bible has to say about them. Unless we get our reading strategy right, Rossall gives this warning: “If we fail to take the broader message into account, we can leave people struggling with a toxic shame. What is more, we are likely to

¹ Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy, “Editorial: Faultlines in Mission: Reflections on Race and Colonialism,” *ANVIL* 36, no. 3 (October 2020).

² The video and script for this talk can be found here: “Legacies and Chains: The Hidden Script,” [YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4fBoUyd09U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4fBoUyd09U). Much of the content of this talk has been adapted for this article.

³ See my recently published book, Carlton Turner, *Overcoming Self-Negation: The Church and Junkanoo in Contemporary Bahamian Society* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2020).

⁴ Stephen Pattison, *Shame: Theory, Therapy, Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 82–85.

⁶ See Pattison, chapter 7 (154–80).

⁷ Sally Nash, *Shame and the Church: Exploring and Transforming Practice* (London: SCM Press, 2020), 16.

⁸ *Ibid.*

become more and more irrelevant to a world that is very concerned with issues such as self-esteem and self-worth.”⁹ With these insights in mind I want to turn attention to a postcolonial assessment of the African Caribbean context where we see just how shame has been structured within plantation slavery.

LEGACIES AND CHAINS

Using a postcolonial lens, I want to further explore the structural aspect of shame. By chains and legacies, I am suggesting that postcolonial and post-slavery contexts, both Western and non-Western, former colonising powers and the formerly colonised, are linked together through processes and events within a shared history. Whether I’m a native Briton or Bahamian, privileges or dispossessions have been determined long ago in ways that we are not often conscious of. These chains, these legacies, are cultural, socioeconomic, philosophical, political, psychological, biological, physical and yes, also theological. Legacies and chains as concepts are very helpful ways of engaging our conversation around shame. This idea is somewhat indebted to the way Joy DeGruy uses the multiple ways in which the trauma of enslavement has followed Black people into contemporary American societies.¹⁰

In my reading of history several insights need to come to the forefront and perhaps the first place to begin is the Graeco–Roman world. Let’s think of the ancient Graeco–Roman empire as a combination of a particular philosophy around culture and civilisation undergirded by a brutal military way of engaging others who are not within Rome’s control. Ancient Rome as an empire did what empires do; it ruled through expansion. Its expansion was through colonisation. Colonisation is not an innocent word or process. It is the imposition of one culture onto another by force. In Rome’s case it was through iron and blood. The suppression and incorporation of other cultures and territories into the Roman colonial system was psychologically, ethnically, spiritually, socially and culturally destructive to those ruled by the empire. A good example of this is the idea of the Pax Romana, so glorified for large periods of the church’s history. The narrative of first-century Palestine was that Rome brought “peace” to its territories. However, peace for Rome meant the utter submission of all its territories and the reorganising of such territories into “colonies”. This peace came through bloodshed.

This peace was no peace at all! It was the structuring of shame for the subjects of Rome’s empire.

By the time we come to European expansion into the New World, beginning with Christopher Columbus in 1492, the idea of Christendom had been crystalised. Christianity had moved beyond its minority Jewish identity and had become the religion of empire. Cross and crown had become intertwined in such a way that notions of civilisation were synonymous with salvation. In other words, to be Christian meant being civilised, European and particularly white. In fact, the shaping of the world at this time had a boundary, and those beyond that boundary were deemed as heathen. It just so happened that that boundary within the first-century Roman-occupied Palestinian world saw those of Egypt and Ethiopia, those of dark skin and so-called false gods, as heathens. But what do you do when your theology is shaped by empire and militaristic suppression? You colonise the other who is not like you and do your best to erase everything that makes them different.

This explains Europe’s first encounter with the New World. Columbus had one mandate: to find new territory (and subjects!) for the king and queen of Spain. This meant the forced conversion of the people he had encountered to the Christian religion. What ensued was the genocide of vast populations of indigenous peoples and cultures that predated Christianity by millennia. By the time we come to the period of the Enlightenment in the seventeenth century with its ideology of rationalism and human progress, much of the underpinning philosophy structured reality dualistically. Human reason would discern reality through opposites, through categories, through boxes. In this period, we find the emergence of the concept of race now taking on a colour: Black would become a race; and race would be a way of categorising and evaluating human beings. Black would stand for the negative, the “other”, the unacceptable and the shamed. We’re not talking any more about the ancient Graeco–Roman world, but the very shaping of Western society and the modern world in which the African Caribbean has played a vital role! This is what Robert Hood argued for in his book with its important question in the title: *Must God Remain Greek? Afro Cultures and God-Talk*.¹¹

But this was also a theological reality. Theologies of empire have long been indebted to this dualistic

⁹ Judith Rossall, *Forbidden Fruit and Fig Leaves: Reading the Bible with the Shamed* (London: SCM Press, 2020), vii.

¹⁰ See, Joy DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (Milwaukee, OR: Uptone Press, 2005).

¹¹ Robert E. Hood, *Must God Remain Greek? Afro Cultures and God-Talk* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990). See also Kelly Brown Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999); Anthony B. Pinn, *Embodiment and the New Shape of Black Theological Thought* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Dwight N. Hopkins, *Down, Up, and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000).

shaping of the world. In an important text on mission, *Mission After Christendom*, David Smith explains that this nascent model of Christendom was undergirded by a platonic philosophy and cosmology that divided the world into dualisms. On the one hand, the empire and its church had the “gospel”, truth and light; on the other, anything beyond the control of the empire constituted ignorance, darkness and evil. With this world view it then became clear that the “barbarous other” beyond the reach of empire needed conversion to the truth, light and culture of Christendom.¹² Western theologies of empire were structured around either/or suppositions, dividing the world between right and wrong, acceptable and dispensable, civilised and uncivilised, and implicitly, black and white! In fact, when our concepts of God are shaped dualistically, then there is no space for imagination, for multiplicity, for the unknown. What we end up with are societies and theological frameworks geared towards producing shame, especially for those who are on the other side of privilege. And the chains remain.

THE SHAPING OF SHAME IN THE AFRICAN CARIBBEAN

These chains literally lead us to the African Caribbean, where colonial missionary Christianity, African slave trade and plantation slavery simultaneously extended Great Britain’s reach across the world but also ensured the continued economic and political strength of the nation within Europe and the wider world. In what follows we can also say that we come to see how concepts of shame structured identity both personally and societally. Plantations were never designed for human flourishing. These were factories with one purpose in mind: the economic yielding of the colonies for the accumulation of wealth back home. Orlando Patterson argues that plantation societies are best described as “non-societies” that functioned solely for economic production.¹³ In such a context slaves were not considered humans, but rather beasts of burden.

They were property. It was determined that they did not really have a rational soul. Interestingly, as Caribbean theologians have consistently pointed out, the English plantocracy were most resistant to educating or Christianising their slaves and made life difficult for missionaries who tried to do so.¹⁴ In exploring the intercultural dynamics of plantation life, Noel Erskine explains the following: “In the meeting of Europe and Africa, blackness was interpreted in the light of bondage, and whiteness in the light of freedom.”¹⁵ In fact, the issue of colour was so deeply rooted that human worth and value was based on gradations based on black–white unions. For example, the term “Mulatto” was given to the child of a Black woman and a white man; “Sambo”, the child of a mulatto and a Black man; “Quadroon”, the child of a mulatto and a white man; “Mustee”, the child of a quadroon and a white man; “Mustiphini”, the child of a mustee and a white man; “Quintroon”, the child of a mustiphini and a white man; and “Octoroon”, the child of a quintroon and a white man.¹⁶ Immediately we see that the central determinant was whiteness, and the central character was a white man. Erskine rightly observed the traumatic shaping of Black life within the Western ecclesiastical and political context when he wrote, “To be white was to be free and to be Black was to be sentenced to bondage.”¹⁷

To further our appreciation of the utter brutality of the historical shaping of the African Caribbean we must dig deeper. Two eminent historians of the Caribbean, Professors Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd, have been at the forefront of the reparations movement when considering the legacies of slavery and colonialism within the British empire. Beckles’s book *Britain’s Black Debt* argues that Britain’s moral bankruptcy is compounded by its failure to answer the call for reparations, given that British slaveowners were paid £20 million in compensation for surrendering their slaves in 1838.¹⁸ This amounts to almost £2.4 billion in today’s currency, according to the CPI Inflation Calculator.¹⁹ If we were to look at the current

¹² David Smith, *Mission After Christendom* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2003), 3.

¹³ Orlando Patterson, *The Sociology of Slavery: An Analysis of the Origins, Development and Structure of Negro Slave Society in Jamaica*, Studies in Society (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1967).

¹⁴ For example, see Dale A. Bisnauth, “Mission Impossible?” in *The Caribbean: Culture of Resistance, Spirit of Hope*, ed. Oscar L. Bolioli (New York: Friendship Press, 1993), 199. See also, Arthur C. Dayfoot, “The Shaping of the West Indian Church: Historical Factors in the Formation of the Pattern of Church Life in the English-Speaking Caribbean 1492–1870” (ThD, Emmanuel College, Victoria University, 1982), 275.

¹⁵ Noel Leo Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology: A Caribbean Perspective* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998), 34.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Hilary McD. Beckles, *Britain’s Black Debt: Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2013). For a deeper understanding of the history of genocide and systems of slavery as it pertains the New World and the Caribbean, see Hilary McD. Beckles and Verene A. Shepherd, *Liberties Lost: The Indigenous Caribbean and Slave Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

¹⁹ *CPI Inflation Calculator*, <https://www.in2013dollars.com/uk/inflation/1833?amount=20000000>

reparations debate, we get a clear picture of just how present conditions have been shaped by historical realities. The Caribbean Reparations Commission says in its 10-point plan:

Point 2 – Repatriation: “Over 10 million Africans were stolen from their homes and forcefully transported to the Caribbean as the enslaved chattel and property of Europeans. The transatlantic slave trade is the largest forced migration in human history and has no parallel in terms of man’s inhumanity to man. This trade in enchained bodies was a highly successful commercial business for the nations of Europe. The lives of millions of men, women and children were destroyed in search of profit.”²⁰

Point 5 – Public Health Crisis: “The African descended population in the Caribbean has the highest incidence in the world of chronic diseases in the forms of hypertension and type two diabetes. This pandemic is the direct result of the nutritional experience, physical and emotional brutality, and overall stress profiles associated with slavery, genocide, and apartheid. Over 10 million Africans were imported into the Caribbean during the 400 years of slavery. At the end of slavery in the late 19th century less than 2 million remained. The chronic health condition of Caribbean blacks now constitutes the greatest financial risk to sustainability in the region.”²¹

LEGACIES IN CONTEMPORARY BRITISH SOCIETY

When we come to the UK context, we have two Black British theologians of Caribbean descent, children of the Windrush generation, who have been prophetic in their assessment of racism and colonialism especially within theology and the church. I speak of Professors Robert Beckford and Anthony Reddie (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbKu8Yv8cbQ>). In both their works they expose the dangerous idea of white normativity and its profound effects on Black bodies and Black life. They argue that Christianity as we have received it through its Western, Graeco–Roman, colonial baggage, must confront its assumption that whiteness is the standard, or is normative, or to put it another way, it is the ideal that one must look up to. Beckford’s latest

book, *Documentary as Exorcism*, explains that colonial Christianity does a kind of bewitchment that works to hide its maltreatment of Blackness and Black culture.²² Reddie, who is the author of *Theologising Brexit*, his latest book, wrote an article in the *Black Theology* journal that he entitled “Christianity Tu’n Mi Fool”.²³ In it he shows how confessional Christianity in postcolonial Britain still carries those chains of oppression where white is held as normative and Black is disparaged and negated, even by Black people themselves.

But why would they do this? How can they say this? Well, if you were Black in the 1950s and 1960s arriving to “Mother England” seeking to be settled within British society as a citizen of the empire, you got the shock of your life. You were rejected in every facet of society, and especially the church. “No Black, No Irish, No Dogs” were not just signs on pubs, they were invisible signs posted on the doors of churches. But let’s stay with the Windrush for a moment. Seventy years later we have come to see how those early migrants have continued to suffer, in plain sight. In 2017, as we prepared to celebrate 70 years of this community who helped to build modern Britain after the war, we saw that so many were wrongly detained, deported and denied legal rights. The review of the Windrush scandal has determined that policies were designed to make life impossible for those immigrants. These policies targeted a group, and divided society between Black and white, all in plain sight. And, for those African Caribbean migrants and their descendants, their lives and their experience were shaped by shame.

SHAME AND SELF-NEGATION

My recent book on Caribbean contextual theology, using extensive qualitative and ethnographic research into the relationship between the church and Junkanoo in contemporary Bahamian society, offers an example of this shaping or structuring of shame.²⁴ Junkanoo is a carnival-like street festival celebrated on New Year’s Day and Boxing Day every year in some parts of the Anglophone African Caribbean. It has come to symbolise Bahamian cultural and national identity. The research question arose out of what I had felt all my life, that these two spheres of national, cultural and religious identity – Junkanoo and the church – were seen as antithetical,

²⁰ See “10-Point Reparations Plan”, *Caricom Reparations Commission*, <https://caricomreparations.org/caricom/caricoms-10-point-reparation-plan/>

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Robert Beckford, *Documentary as Exorcism: Resisting the Bewitchment of Colonial Christianity* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014).

²³ Anthony G. Reddie, “Christianity Tu’n Mi Fool: Deconstructing Confessional Black Christian Faith in Postcolonial Britain,” *Black Theology: An International Journal* 10, no. 1 (2012); *Theologising Brexit: A Liberationist and Postcolonial Critique*, Routledge New Critical Thinking in Religion, Theology and Biblical Studies (London: Routledge, 2019).

²⁴ Turner, *Overcoming Self-Negation*.

and that Junkanoo, no matter how we love it, is not fit for church, nor for the realm of the holy. It is this tension or dissonance, where Bahamians themselves deem a large part of their identity as illegitimate, secular or even demonic, that lies deep within everyday life, and often not consciously perceived. Caribbean intellectual giants such as W.E.B. DuBois, Frantz Fanon and Walter Rodney have helped me to articulate this tension, this structured, chronic, theologically maintained sense of shame, as self-negation.²⁵ In their own ways they frame African Caribbean life through the lens of trauma, when one's story, one's sense of self, is severely disrupted, and this disruption is retold, relived, over lifetimes, on and on until somehow it is resolved or integrated and transformed into a larger narrative. But trauma doesn't only affect the oppressed. It severely affects the oppressor too. It does so by constantly showing up in unjust societies, through protests, revolts, violence and disorder. It ties us all into a drama of violence that cannot be hidden; it cannot be suppressed. Bob Marley, in invoking the words of Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie I's 1963 speech to the United Nations, proves prophetic:

Until the philosophy which hold one race superior, and another inferior, is finally, and permanently, discredited and abandoned, everywhere is war. That until there no longer first-class and second-class citizens of any nation, until the colour of a man's skin is of no more significance than the colour of his eyes, we say war.²⁶

I ultimately argue in the book that there is a problematic, schizophrenic relationship between religion (Christianity/church) and culture (Junkanoo) wherein African Caribbean religious and cultural heritages are considered antithetical, inappropriate or even "demonic" for church use.

My conclusions coincide with what theologians such as Pattison, Nash and Rossall have said earlier.²⁷ There is an ambivalent nature to self-negation as there is an ambivalent nature to shame. Pattison says the following:

"The relationship between shame and Christian thought and practice is complex and ambivalent, as is the relationship between Christianity and human well-being generally. Christianity can create, exploit, and deny shame in groups and individuals. However, it can also diminish and alleviate shame, enhancing worth, efficacy and esteem."²⁸ My research concludes firstly that there is still a hermeneutic around sacred and secular that continues to structure faith and is colonially informed. Secondly, church practices are often, but not always, inherently perpetuating an anti-Africanness, even within an all-Black nation such as the Bahamas, long after national independence from Great Britain. Thirdly, this deep sense of dissonance is carried within the body, the mind, the heart and even within acts of worship. Finally, self-negation is not only personal! Like shame, it can be cultural, institutional, national and regional. It is not simply something that is a product, in an acute sense, but rather something ontological, structured and chronic.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have progressively tried to tease out the structural nature of shame that probably requires further theological attention and is extremely important when thinking about practices of mission, especially in cross-cultural contexts. I have looked at some theological reflections around shame, where we are admonished to remember that it is not so easily defined and must be seen beyond the personal to the structural and the communal. Using postcolonial lenses, I have traced how shame has been key to how empires function, from Ancient Rome to the British empire, with particular emphasis on the shaping of shame within the African Caribbean. Finally, using my work on self-negation within the Bahamian context, I have looked more closely at how ambivalent church and cultural practices perpetuate a deep, structural and chronic sense of shame within post-slavery and postcolonial societies.

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²⁵ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, Signet Classics (New York: New American Library, 1969). Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967); *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967). Walter Rodney, *A History of the Guyanese Working People, 1881–1905* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

²⁶ Bob Marley, "War," track 9 on *Rastaman Vibration*, Island Records, 1976.

²⁷ Pattison, *Shame*. Nash, *Shame and the Church*. Rossall, *Forbidden Fruit and Fig Leaves*.

²⁸ Pattison, *Shame*, 229.



SHAME, RECONCILI- ATION AND THE PIONEER

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Catherine Matlock

Shame is the “the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging – something we’ve experienced, done, or failed to do makes us unworthy of connection”.¹ Shame affects us all; it is part of the human condition. Shame can cause fracture in our relationships – our relationship with God, with others and within ourselves; “shame... is... experienced as if it were directed by one agency of the self against another”.²

Reconciliation is a process of restoring relationship, of acceptance, healing and transformation. Reconciliation is often painful and time-consuming, requiring vulnerability, honesty and humility, and the courage to remain committed to the messiness of being hurting yet hopeful human beings. Whether we are working towards the reconciliation of our fragmented relationship with self or with others, we need to recognise that shame can cause us to hide from, defend, deny or resist the pain of transformation, the compassion and empathy we need to heal. “The antidote to the destructive potential of shame is ‘the healing response of acceptance of the self, despite its weaknesses, defects and failures’.”³ As Christians we are called to the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18), and as pioneers we are “working in innovative ways to see ‘the future emerging in the present’.”⁴ Does this mean that we have a particular calling to witness to and encourage transformative reconciliation in the midst of shame and fractured relationships?

Pioneers are people with the “gift of not fitting in”.⁵ We are often situated at the edges of society and are sometimes at the receiving end of misunderstanding and suspicion from those uncomfortable with ministry outside a traditional church context. As a pioneer, I

am conscious of the paradoxical feelings associated with a contentment yet ongoing discomfort at not fitting in with my ecclesial colleagues, recognising my sense of shame in being at times misunderstood and isolated. Neither do I fit with perceived generalisations of a pioneering temperament. My more introverted, reflective nature will struggle to match any expectations that pioneers are all extroverted, wildly creative personalities. By its very nature, pioneering is a vocation that celebrates diversity and individuality. We need to be sensitive to the shame that can result from any forms of tribalism.

“Pioneers are often called to dwell within the liminal spaces of sociopolitical marginalisation and contemporary religious perplexity. We are required to be risk-takers and innovators seeking to glimpse and faithfully collaborate with the *missio Dei* in a diversity of cultural and community contexts.”

Pioneers are often called to dwell within the liminal spaces of sociopolitical marginalisation and contemporary religious perplexity. We are required to be risk-takers and innovators seeking to glimpse and faithfully collaborate with the *missio Dei* in a diversity of cultural and community contexts. Our calling offers us wonderful gifts of uniqueness, joy and freedom but, in breaking new ground, pioneering also invites us into deep encounters with shame... our own and in others. Working in Druids Heath, Birmingham, often labelled the

forgotten estate, I am acutely aware that shame is a common experience among those who feel most marginalised by society and largely neglected, judged and disempowered. Yet the extraordinary creativity and resilience of the people of Druids Heath offers great potential for individual and communal transformation. If I accept the holy invitation to be aware of and address shame, I have sacred opportunities to encourage transformative reconciliation within myself and the community in which I minister.

¹ Brene Brown, “shame v. guilt”, *Brene Brown*, 14 January 2013, <https://brenebrown.com/blog/2013/01/14/shame-v-guilt/>.

² Donald L. Nathanson, “A Timetable for Shame,” in *The Many Faces of Shame*, ed. Donald L. Nathanson (New York, London: The Guilford Press, 1987), 4.

³ Jill McNish, *Transforming Shame: A Pastoral Response* (New York: Routledge, 2004). 193.

⁴ Tina Hodgett and Paul Bradbury, “Pioneering Mission is... a spectrum,” *ANVIL* 34, no. 1 (2018).

⁵ Jonny Baker and Cathy Ross, eds., *The Pioneer Gift: Explorations in Mission* (Canterbury Press: Norwich, 2014).

In reflecting on the pioneer's relationship with shame and reconciliation, I've come up with seven initial suggestions for what enables our ministry to be transformative:

Synchronicity: As a pioneer I've been encouraged to develop ministry in response to gentle and wonderful encounters with the Holy Spirit in the people and place of Druids Heath. Being attuned to such spiritual synchronicity offers reconciling freedom to the pioneer, untethered to strategies of survival that can exist in preserving tradition and institution. The Spirit's power to transform shame, while flowing freely through synchronicity, might be hampered by the pioneer's own determination to survive if we are particularly challenged by resources, circumstances or context. In practising an expectant sensitivity to synchronicity rather than an anxious strategy of survival, reconciling transformation has the space to breathe.

Sacred space: Pioneers minister in the space between church and "marketplace", a liminal place of reconciliation, between the traditional and experimental, the ecclesial and the ordinary. The Spirit transcends our human division of sacred and secular, enabling a cafe kitchen to be the Holy of Holies and fourteen estate tower blocks to be Stations of the Cross. Shame is transformed as we offer prophetic witness to God's presence in all situations and circumstances, especially for those who would imagine themselves unacceptable in church buildings. And pioneers offer a reconciling presence within themselves, a spaciousness that allows for the healing of shame, as we encourage others to accept restorative love and grace into their lives.

Simplicity: Freed from the expectations of ecclesial systems, pioneers are invited to focus on the gift of simple presence, where risk-taking relies on gentle exploring of relationship between Creator and creature through prayer, ecology, the arts, shared hobbies and contemplative silence. In the simplicity of presence, through deep listening and silent witness, the pioneer is curious to hear others' stories, to reconcile the Spirit's golden thread of hope with the toughest challenges of human lives. Shame is transformed as the gospel of resurrected love is understood within the context and culture of community, the sermon of life offering transformation with sacramental simplicity.

Solidarity: Pioneering is an isolating vocation. Aloneness is an invitation to deeper reliance on the Spirit and inner transformation in the minister. But a perceived lack of belonging can exacerbate the shame of being "different". Ministerial freedom offers us the opportunity to find collaborative partners in church and community, to be natural reconcilers of persons and professions as we seek to develop solidarity of purpose and creative cohesion. The companionship

of other pioneers cannot be underestimated, whether through formal networks or local colleagues. Solidarity presents us with mutual learning, shared challenge and communal celebration, reconciling processes rich in transformative potential.

Silliness: Pioneers have the creative opportunity to play. We can revel in being "fools" for Christ, demonstrating the healing power of humour and the sacred nature of silliness. In Druids Heath, I witness shame transformed in a community cafe where the ability to laugh with others and at oneself is the cultural "norm". It is in the spontaneity of encounter and conversation, the shared silliness of being human, that the reconciling love of the Spirit is free to heal wounds and encourage friendship. Play is a deeply impacting means of engaging the young and the old, of discovering Jesus in artistic expression and imaginative recreation.

Synergy: Where and how we express our ministry as pioneers is no accident of circumstance. The Spirit offers a synergy of transformation, through which our own wounds and shame can be transformed, as we witness to Christ's presence in the communities in which we live and serve. As we seek to reconcile others with their fragmented selves, with others and with Christian faith, their stories, our story and God's story are woven into healing by the unforced rhythms of grace. Such synergy is a divine expression of reconciling love that humbles and aligns us within community. We are not so much transformation-bearers as open-hearted pilgrims on the same journey of restoration.

Sustenance: Hearts and bellies are sustained through hospitality. As a pioneer in an outer Birmingham estate, I have the vulnerable but privileged role of being guest in community. Lacking the control of host, I enjoy the radical hospitality of residents inviting me into their lives, homes and shared spaces. Kath's Cafe is "church" for me, a third space offering reconciling communion and transformation of shame through good value, tasty food and welcome and acceptance for everyone. Pioneers are invited into mutual sustenance through discovering people and places of peace where personal and corporate reconciliation are already transforming lives. We have the joy of joining the spiritual dots as we prayerfully witness communities of hospitality through the lens of their abundant gifts.

It seems fitting to end with a poem celebrating the potential of shame transforming reconciliation within Kath's Cafe, Druids Heath.

A THIRD SPACE

Food, glorious food, the great leveller,
All need to eat and lots love to meet
In a welcoming, safe, third space.⁶

A hospitable, accessible, home from home
Playful without pretence or performance.
A place where one's humanity is embraced
With curiosity, teasing and straight talk,
Conversation and culinary competing as the
main activity.

Food, glorious food, the relationship builder.
Widespread reputation, low-profile recommendation
A winning combination that enables this cafe
To cherish the regular and charm the visitor.
Families, fishermen, golfers, gaffers
Artists, activists, neighbours, networkers
And even the odd priest, collared and called
To discover the sacred outside church walls.

Food, glorious food, the miracle facilitator,
Encouraging connection, vision and prayer.
Jesus shared meals and changed lives;
Gifted hospitality holds vulnerability, hosts the holy.
Shame transformed through warmth of welcome,
Acceptance, laughter, empathy and authenticity.
A wave or a thumbs-up to everyone who passes;
We're loved here, the wise, the wacky and the
wonderful!

Food, glorious food, the social collaborator,
All ingredients needed for courageous cohesion.
A cafe owner with a huge heart for community,
Imaginative, talented residents with hopeful,
helpful spirits,
Partner organisations who feel the magic of this place
And come with resources, skills and appetites to plan
over brunch,
Stirred by a pioneer curate who believes in potential
and prayer.
Faith and fragility, recipe for gracious renewal,
precious fare.



Kath's Cafe on the Druids Heath Estate

Food, glorious food, the reconciling healer,
Hospitality providing space for everyday communion,
Life delivering raw liturgy of love and sacrifice,
The chalice of injustice, the bread of resilience.
Altar and table restorers of peace, symbols of unity
For fractured individuals and fragmented community.
The humble Christ bridges division, inspires
resurrection
Births a Druids Heath Gospel, their story of redemption.

Catherine Matlock,
Pioneer Curate, Druids Heath Estate

Catherine Matlock is currently in her third year of a pioneer curacy in Druids Heath estate, south Birmingham. She has been living with and researching the concepts of shame and reconciliation for several years and feels that there is so much more to be explored within the dynamics that connect them, across a variety of cultures and contexts. Catherine is delighted to have companions on this journey of exploration, particularly through the Transforming Shame Network and Journey of Hope (Reconcilers Together). She spoke at the Transforming Shame conference on how shame affects us: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbj2YivQmMQ>



⁶ Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1997).

WHOSE HONOUR? WHOSE SHAME? SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE BIBLE

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Judith Rossall

Biblical scholars are increasingly realising that honour and shame were both ubiquitous and crucial cultural values in the ancient world and that understanding the influence of these values is therefore important for anyone reading the Scriptures. Those who come from cultures that place less overt emphasis on honour and shame will thus need to do some work to ensure they are alert to the role of these values in how the Scriptures were written and can be interpreted. This is particularly the case in many Western societies because in those, shame is often treated as an individual and psychological issue; however, a careful reading of the Scriptures can alert us to a fuller understanding that recognises that every individual (and therefore every individual's experience of honour and shame) is embedded in and shaped by the society around them.

SHAME IN THE FIRST TESTAMENT

Adam and Eve “were both naked and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25 (ESV)). Many considerations of shame in the Bible begin with the creation stories, which establish some fundamental ideas about human existence. The first is that creation is described as good, not just in the sense of being morally righteous but also in the sense of bringing joy and delight. In Gen. 1, when God sees that creation is “good”, the Hebrew word is *towb*, which is used to describe something beautiful, that which brings joy. The second idea is that human existence is based in relationship – we are created to know ourselves in the gaze of another.¹ The first creation story in Genesis constantly repeats that “God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31 (ESV)) and the second creation story emphasises that the first human created should not be alone and is incomplete until the second is made from his rib. Adam and Eve are then described as being “naked and were not ashamed” (Gen. 2:25 (ESV)). This is a key statement in a story that actually gives very few details about the couple; there is a sense that they were open, accepting and unafraid to show their true selves to each other.

“Psychologists have pointed out that different people respond to shame differently – some withdraw and become quieter while others compensate and become more aggressive in order to cover their shame”

This makes it all the more striking that the very first response to the eating of the forbidden fruit is that the couple begin to judge themselves and hide from God. Their eyes are opened and they realise that they are naked (Gen. 3:7) and that realisation causes them to fear God and conceal themselves from God's presence (Gen. 3:10). It is notable that in Genesis, the couple's experience of shame, their own judgement on their nakedness and their attempts to blame each other and the serpent all happen before God pronounces any kind of verdict on what has happened. The experience of sin somehow alters the couple's perception of themselves and introduces the notion of a judgemental gaze, before God actually responds.²

In Genesis sin and shame are closely intertwined and the story of both sin and shame is then continued in the next generation. Psychologists have pointed out that different people respond to shame differently – some withdraw and become quieter while others compensate and become more aggressive in order to cover their shame. It is possible, therefore, to see the effects of shame being

described also in the story of Cain and Abel.³ Cain responds to shame by blaming his brother and resorting to violence; Abel, who is noticeably passive and silent in the story, responds to shame by becoming withdrawn. Issues of shame and honour are then a key issue in reading Scripture.

THE WIDER BIBLICAL CONTEXT

There is a wealth of material from biblical scholars who discuss shame as part of the wider project to apply learning from the social sciences to our reading of both First and New Testaments. Bruce Malina published *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* in 1981,⁴ and since then the work of the Context Group has established the value of drawing on social anthropology in understanding the historical context of Scripture. The notion that the cultural world from which Scripture comes was collectivist (as opposed to the

¹ Judith Rossall, *Forbidden Fruit and Fig Leaves: Reading the Bible with the Shamed* (London: SCM Press, 2020), 2–3.

² Mike Higton, *Christian Doctrine* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 267.

³ Rossall, *Forbidden Fruit and Fig Leaves*, 12–20.

⁴ Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981).

individualism of much of modern Western society) and that honour/shame was one of the key values of that society is now well established.

There is much to be gained by recognising the particular context and culture in which the Bible was written; however, Zeba Crook has rightly warned against the assumption that any society is 100 per cent collectivist or 100 per cent individualistic, noting the difference between aspiring to be individualistic and being fully so.

These are tendencies: the ancient Mediterranean was no more ¹⁰⁰ percent collectivistic than modern North American society is ¹⁰⁰ percent individualistic. There are elements of each found in the other, but the occurrence of collective concerns among North Americans (e.g., peer pressure) does not diminish the dominance of an individualistic *ideology*.⁵

Those of us in the West must be careful, therefore, not to treat biblical culture as if it is entirely alien to us, while at the same time understanding that by recognising that the desire to have honour and to avoid shame was a central cultural value, we can be alert to nuances in the text that might otherwise be missed. Equally, an approach to shame that recognises the role of the community in deciding who is honoured and who is shamed resists the individualist impulse to regard shame as being purely a personal psychological issue that needs healing. Rather, a reading of Scripture that takes note of the way in which shame and honour shape human life necessarily leads to reflection on issues of sin and how power is exercised. Western readers who are accustomed to looking only for the dynamic of sin–guilt–forgiveness can easily overlook the wealth of biblical material that deals with sin–shame–flourishing (of both individuals and communities).

It is not easy to tell the difference between shame and guilt. In theory they are often distinguished by saying that we feel guilt when we do something wrong but feel shame when we come to believe that there is something wrong with us. Shame is a feeling of being worthless, flawed or unwanted and can range from a temporary experience to a lifelong struggle. In practice, we do not always distinguish well between shame and guilt; people may talk about feeling guilt when in fact what they are dealing with is the deeper and more insidious problem of shame.

The opposite of shame is normally held to be honour and, in a group-oriented society, honour is a

complicated mix of how others see us and our own self-image. It is not possible for someone who lives in a shame/honour culture to have a strong sense of self-worth unless that person is honoured by the group around them. This means that being subject to public disgrace (particularly if a person's honour group abandons them) may be even more devastating in a shame/honour society than in some modern Western cultures.⁶ What is more, in order to be honoured by the group around them, a person needs to live by the values of that particular group. Honour, in this sense, may be said to hold together something that individualistic societies separate – reputation and integrity. Again, this is a nuance that Western readers often miss, regarding the desire for honour as simply meaning a desire to have others think well of you. Just like shame, honour has both an internal psychological and an external social dimension. As Kwame Appiah expresses it:

It's important to understand that while honor is an entitlement to respect—and shame comes when you lose that title—a person of honor cares first of all not about being respected but about being *worthy* of respect. Someone who just wants to be respected won't care whether he is really living up to the code; he will just want to be *thought* to be living up to it. He will be managing his reputation, not maintaining his honor.⁷

Appiah's mention of a code of honour here reminds us of another dimension of honour that is strongly related to being embedded in a group. The assumption is that the group operates by an agreed standard or set of values – what Appiah calls an “honour code”. To be considered and to consider themselves as honourable, a person must live out that code, and importantly since honour involves an intricate relationship between a person's own internal judgement on themselves and the judgement of the group, it is important to live up to that code even when no one observes you.

I said that the honorable person cares about honor itself, not simply about the social rewards of being considered honorable. Emotions like shame (and pride) are reinforced, it's true, when other people are watching – especially those whose respect matters to me most. Nevertheless, honor requires me to conform to the standard for its own sake, not merely for the sake of reputation and its rewards. And someone who aims at reputation for its own sake is taking a dishonorable short cut.⁸

⁵ Zeba Crook, “Honor, Shame, and Social Status Revisited,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128, no. 3 (2009): 599.

⁶ Gabriele Taylor, *Pride, Shame, and Guilt: Emotions of Self-Assessment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 55.

⁷ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Honor Code: How Moral Revolutions Happen* (New York, London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011), 16.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

Appiah goes on to argue that honour and the desire for honour is a powerful motivating force that has been harnessed for good in the past and could be again.

SEEK HONOUR FROM YAHWEH

The Scriptures recognise the danger of a person who is shameless, in the sense of failing to have due regard for others. This is particularly the case when the shameless person is in a position of power. Thus, the leaders of Israel are criticised heavily for their failure to act honourably; in Jeremiah's description the problem is that they have acted shamefully but did not know how to blush (Jer. 6:15) – in other words, they have lost touch with honour in the sense of integrity and treating other people with respect. At the same time, there is also encouragement to seek honour from Yahweh; the challenge to the Israelites is not that they ignore the quest for honour – the challenge is to strive above all to be honoured by Yahweh, which means to live by Yahweh's standards for what is honourable and what is shameful (1 Sam. 2:30). Oppressing the poor is seen as an insult to God while generosity honours God (Prov. 14:31). Equally, God is portrayed as one who honours those whom society shames (1 Sam. 2:7–8).

A further and even more countercultural theme is that God will sometimes call on God's people to bear shame, a theme that is epitomised in the mysterious figure of the so-called "suffering servant" in Isaiah. In Isa. 53, there is a strong emphasis that the servant is "despised, rejected and held in low esteem" among the other forms of distress described, and yet somehow it is that very shame that brings healing to others. The final end for the servant is honour in the sight of God.

Therefore, I will allot him a portion with the great,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
because he poured out himself to death,
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and made intercession for the transgressors.
(Isa. 53:12 (NRSV))

JESUS AND SHAME

These same themes are then explored further in the New Testament depictions of Jesus. Jesus is portrayed as one who challenges the usual assumptions about honour (Luke 14:7–14, Matt. 23:11–12), who honours those whom society treats with disrespect and who takes issue with his disciples' preoccupation with who is the greatest (Mark 9:34, Matt. 18:1, Luke 9:46). In the early parts of the Gospels, Jesus is portrayed as powerful

and yet as often resisting the attempts of others to honour him in public. The ancient Mediterranean world commonly assumed that it was desirable for good and generous acts to become well known – thus bringing honour to the person concerned – and yet Jesus often tells those he has healed to keep quiet (Mark 5:43), while evil spirits who recognise him as "the Holy One of God" are commanded to silence (Mark 1:24).⁹

Crucifixion was deliberately designed to be the most humiliating death conceivable and it is possible to see a devastating determination to shame the victim in many aspects by how it was performed. The victim would be naked and held up for disgrace. There was a deliberate element of being mocked and the execution was usually performed in a prominent public place. The Romans regarded crucifixion as so shameful that it was not discussed in polite company. For the first disciples and for the New Testament writers, one of the great challenges of following Jesus was not simply his death but the particularly shameful way in which he died.¹⁰

The Gospel writers respond to this challenge in different ways. Mark's Gospel makes the dishonour that Jesus suffers a central element in the presentation of who Jesus is. The Gospel is structured so that Jesus is first portrayed as powerful and honourable and yet, as noted, also resisting the attempts of others to enhance his honour by telling people about him. After the Transfiguration, Jesus first predicts that he will be treated with contempt (Mark 9:12) and then suffers the degradation of being betrayed by a disciple, abandoned by those who should have supported him, arrested and put to death in a particularly humiliating way. In this way, Mark makes the mystery of a humiliated Messiah central to the Christian Gospel.

John, however, presents the crucifixion as being, in some mysterious way, a means by which Jesus is glorified (John 12:27–36). Jesus refers to his death as the time when he will be lifted up (John 12:32), which both refers to the fact that victims of crucifixion were elevated and carries the meaning of exaltation and being raised to honour. John stresses Jesus' power and voluntary surrender (John 18:11 and 19:11) and that Jesus was crucified as "King of the Jews" (John 19:19–22). John, it seems, attempts to subvert the humiliation of Jesus' death by characterising it as, in fact, profoundly honourable.

SHAME IN PAUL'S LETTERS

Paul's understanding of Jesus is shaped by the struggle to understand a *crucified* Messiah, regarded by the

⁹ David F. Watson, *Honor Among Christians: The Cultural Key to the Messianic Secret* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2010), 37–62.

¹⁰ Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 87–88.

Jews as scandalous and by the Gentiles as ridiculous, and yet for Paul it is precisely the humiliated Jesus who is the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:23–27). Thus, the crucifixion asks key questions for Paul about what wisdom and power look like in the light of Christ. But the crucifixion was not, of course, the end of the story. For Paul, as for the rest of the New Testament, Jesus is not simply the crucified Messiah, he is also the resurrected one – and it is important to recognise that in raising Jesus from the dead, God vindicated the one who had been humiliated by earthly powers. Thus, Paul opens the letter to the Romans by referring to Jesus as having been “declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4 (NRSV)). We might say that the Roman empire gave one verdict on Jesus in the humiliation of crucifixion, but that God returned a very different one in the resurrection. The letter to the Philippians holds that the death and resurrection together show us something of the nature of God. Jesus, being in the form of God, refuses to grasp at equality with God but empties himself and accepts even death on a cross. Therefore, God exalts him (Phil. 2:5–11).

In other words, in their portrayal of Jesus, the biblical writers seek to raise the issue of “Whose honour and whose shame?” in different ways. Jesus is presented as one who accepted being shamed by those around him but was ultimately demonstrated to be honoured by God. Just as the Israelites were encouraged to seek honour from God, so Paul also is quite comfortable arguing that Christians should be motivated by a desire for honour, provided that the honour they are seeking is from God.¹¹ This is then to be worked out also in the inner life of the Christian Church; Paul’s famous image of the church as the body of Christ allows him to make this argument.

On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do

not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it. (1 Cor. 12:22–26 (NRSV))

There is gracious picture here of a group of people who are particularly attentive to the question of who among them normally receives honour and who is normally shamed. The gospel calls us to ensure that it is those often treated as if they were less valuable who should be given particular respect within the family of God.

CONCLUSION

It is not easy to summarise what the Bible has to say about shame in a relatively brief article, not least because different biblical writers take different approaches to how the subject is handled. It is, however, possible to argue the following. First, that understanding the cultural values of honour and shame is vital for a faithful exegesis of Scripture. Secondly, that the Bible offers a wealth of teaching that is particularly helpful to those who struggle with shame as much or more than they do with guilt. Finally, reading the Bible constantly challenges the reader to consider again what is shameful and what is honourable and how to be faithful to a Messiah who is both the crucified and the resurrected one.

Judith Rossall is tutor in church history and preaching at The Queen’s Foundation, Birmingham. She is a Methodist minister and author of *Forbidden Fruit and Fig Leaves: Reading the Bible with the Shamed* (SCM Press, 2020). She is also a member of the Transforming Shame network, which can be found on both Facebook and YouTube. She spoke about the Bible and shame at the Transforming Shame conference:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvQOVIDB7D0>



¹¹ Jayson Georges, “From Shame to Honor: A Theological Reading of Romans for Honor–Shame Contexts,” *Missiology* 38, no. 3 (2010): 301–2.



TRANSFORMED LIVES AND COMMUNITY AT ST JOHN'S, PARKS, SWINDON:

Discovering the place of shame
in the gospel through witness
and co-creation with female
trauma survivors

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Linda Fletcher

My earliest recollection of the importance of shame to the ministry here on our estate in Swindon is from a specific moment of an Alpha course. I was sitting in my living room with a small group of some of the most vulnerable people I had ever met – survivors of horrific childhood abuse, with trauma impacting their everyday lives – who were at early stages of faith. I was about to explain that on the cross Jesus had taken away all our sins.

I remember it as a moment where time stood still and the Holy Spirit prompted me to stop speaking immediately. I experienced this as an inner warning that to speak of sin alone in this context would do serious harm. I grabbed two pieces of paper and wrote “sin” on one and “shame” on the other. In a halting way I tried to explain what sin was and what shame was and that Jesus died to take away both. I explained that as children, they had been sinned against – what happened was not their fault and therefore it was not their sin, but the sin of the perpetrator. So much of the “sin” they were struggling with – one gentleman had shared he had a “drinking problem” – stemmed from the shame they were carrying as a result of their childhood abuse.

If your needs haven’t been met well as a child, you’ll hold beliefs about yourself like being unlovable and things like that which I struggle with, which is one level of shame, but to me there is a whole other level of shame... that comes from somebody else doing something to me which is wrong, but that I hold the shame for. That is like a whole other level of shame that is toxic. *Anastasia.*

Since this time, as a community, we have been on a journey of witnessing to one another’s trauma. While we do have men who are part of our church community, this work has been done by a self-selecting group of women. We have witnessed to one another with the Bible in one hand and as much input from experts in the

field of trauma and shame (Christian and secular) as I could muster on the other. What has been co-birthed by doing this in the power of the Holy Spirit in our community has been quite remarkable.

From a starting point of being individual women struggling with damage from our past, most with no affinity with a church community, we are becoming “A Lioness Church”. We were initially inspired by Num.

23:23–24 (NRSV): “See what God has done! Look, a people rising up like a lioness,” and then by the realisation that if Jesus is the Lion of Judah and the church is his bride, then the church should be a Lioness Church.

I feel stronger and that I can actually say things. Now if I’m not happy with it then I will say it. I would keep it all in and squash it all down. *Rose*

Perhaps the Bible story that has been most important to us is the woman haemorrhaging in Mark. At first, we wondered why Jesus made the woman show herself by asking, “Who touched my clothes?” – as this would clearly have exposed her to the crowd and heightened her sense of shame, and it seemed like an unkind thing to do. But then we realised that had he not done that, she would never have seen the love he had for her in his eyes or heard him speak the word “daughter” to her. The look of love and the declaration

of her as “daughter” of the living God would have given her a new identity and she, we reflected, would have been able to take off her cloak of shame (inspired by Ps. 109:29) and put on garments of splendour (inspired by Isa. 52:1–2).

Our activities include singing together as St John’s Community Choir, designing, making and selling our “Blessings Bracelets” and worshipping together as “Crazy Christians” – named after Bishop Michael B.



Diane and Rose. Photo credit: Clare Kendall and Theos



Blessings Bracelets express what we long for every woman to know

Curry's book *Crazy Christians: A Radical Way of Life*.¹ We have made a "Cloak of Shame" and bought "Garments of Splendour", which we have used in our worship to help us think about who we are as precious daughters of the Living God.

I say all these things about myself, negative things,
and I stop myself because I know that Jesus doesn't
see me like that. *Kath*

Our choir and the Blessings Bracelets are ways in which we express what we have collectively come to understand. Song lyrics are carefully considered in the light of what we know God wants us to sing "over ourselves" and to him. Three of the most important songs over the years have been "You Say" by Lauren Daigle, "Roar" by Katie Perry and "This is Me" from *The Greatest Showman*. "Roar" speaks to that sense of finding our voices and expressing our anger at what has been done to us; "You Say" enables us to bring before God the voices we struggle with and our desire to hear instead what God says about us:

You say I am loved, when I can't feel a thing.
You say I am strong, when I think I am weak.
You say I am held, when I am falling short
And when I don't belong, oh you say I am yours
And I believe what you say of me.²

"This is Me" speaks of how we had come to be ashamed of our scars, but that we have come to know we are glorious. We sing of our decision that we will no longer let shame that others try to send our way sink in. We sing that we are no longer scared to be seen and will make no apologies for who we are.

Mary Magdalene was a weak woman because she did what she did and she let men abuse her that way. Then she met Jesus and from that point her life was 180 degrees so now she has become one of the disciples and now she is that stronger woman and she is gonna take nothing off of you men anymore. You've done what you've done and now I'm me, now I'm clean and you ain't gonna take that away from me again, absolutely not. That's the way I look at her and that happens to a lot of women today. *Diane*

Our Blessings Bracelets express what we long for every woman to know and include some of our favourite Bible passages. The three bracelet styles are themed "you are precious", "you are held" and "you are strong".

Designed and made by all of us, they make wonderful gifts for women of all ages and all stages of faith. Each bracelet has six silver symbols to remind the wearer of a Bible passage with an important truth. The Bible passages are included in the card that comes with the bracelet. We all wear these bracelets ourselves, choosing the one most relevant for what we need to remember that day. They can also be used as an aid to prayer.

We also run short courses regularly to learn together, looking at Scripture and the latest developments in understanding trauma and shame, deepening our relationships with one another and with God. New women are invited along to all of these things. One such course is called "Small Steps Towards a Calmer You", developed with Willows Counselling, Swindon, a Christian counselling organisation.

There's something very safe about this environment... It's made a world of difference. I've tried counselling in a much more clinical way which isn't faith-based, where the message wasn't necessarily coming from love... This is on a fundamental basis that you are already loved...
Claire, after attending "Small Steps Towards a Calmer You"

The Bible has so much to say on shame that can transform lives; our prayer is for more people to see it. We also hope more church communities will come together that are made up of survivors of abuse – witnessing to one another's stories of the past, co-creating new stories together in the power of the Holy Spirit. One might expect such a community to be a sad and difficult place. The lived reality could not be further from the truth. I have never known a place with so much laughter, joy, colour, sparkle and holiness.

The Revd Linda Fletcher is Priest-in-Charge of St John's, Parks, and St Andrew's, Walcot, Swindon. Parks and Walcot, as the area is known locally, are two large council estates in which Linda has lived and worked for the past nine years. She is passionate about prioritising the ministry of all God's people towards the margins, following after the example set by Jesus.



¹ Bishop Michael B. Curry, *Crazy Christians: A Radical Way of Life* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2018).

² Lauren Daigle, "You Say," track 5 on *Look Up Child*, Centricity, 2018.



ANVIL

BOOK REVIEWS

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Richard Bauckham, *The Bible in the Contemporary World* (London: SPCK, 2016).

The Bible in the Contemporary World is a collection of 14 essays by one of our most original Biblical theologians, written between 2003 and 2014. In this collection Bauckham covers a wide range of topics including globalisation, freedom, consumerism, Divine suffering, the ecological crisis, poverty and the idea of truth. Although there is a wide range of material covered in these essays, too much to cover in a short review, two themes dominate: our modernist/postmodernist context, and the current ecological crisis.

Bauckham correctly notes that in our current context the church is confronted by elements of both modernism and postmodernism. There is the modernist metanarrative of continual progress and economic growth, which has been a cause of the global environmental crisis that now threatens our planet. Alongside this “modern” story of progress is the postmodern suspicion of all metanarratives as oppressive and coercive. He notes (following the French postmodern philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard) that the “story of the obsolescence of all metanarratives in postmodernity was paradoxically itself a kind of metanarrative” (p. 9).

Bauckham argues that the biblical story is indeed a “metanarrative” (a “pre-modern” metanarrative) in that it is a grand story about the meaning of the whole of reality (p. 11); it is one that does not seek to dominate but instead refutes the dominating narratives of empires. The biblical narrative is non-coercing and liberating. However, the church has, in its 2000-year history, at times transformed the biblical story into one that legitimates the existing power structures. Bauckham explores the relationship between the human and non-human creation in the biblical narratives in the first two chapters of Genesis (in chapter six) and in a later chapter (seven) he meditates on the non-human creation in Paul’s letter to the Romans (Rom 8:18–23). In both essays he demonstrates how in Scripture there is what he calls a “triangular relationship” between God, humanity and the earth, and that disruption in our relationship with God has affected the rest of creation.

The Bible in the Contemporary World is the fruit of a long and deep engagement with the Bible. Each of these 14 essays shows deep and original thought. I found myself constantly having to put the book down to think through what I had just read and then to make notes on each chapter. In his introduction Bauckham writes that his purpose in these essays is to “try to understand our contemporary context and to explore the Bible’s relevance to it in ways that reflect serious critical engagement with that context” (p. ix). He has fully achieved this purpose

and this book is highly recommended to all thinking Christians and should be required reading for all who preach or teach the Scriptures.

Tim Gill, Sheffield

Tarana Burke and Brene Brown, eds., *You Are Your Best Thing: Vulnerability, Shame Resilience, and the Black Experience: An Anthology*, (London: Vermilion, 2021)

When I saw this title I was intrigued – Brene Brown on shame in the Black community? Is this cultural misappropriation by Saint Brene? However, as the introduction makes clear, the idea for the book comes from Tarana Burke, founder of the “me too” movement and a friend of Brown. She contacted Brown to ask her about the Black experience with shame resilience because “white supremacy has added another layer to the kind of shame we have to deal with, and the kind of resilience we have to build, and the kind of vulnerability that we are constantly subjected to whether we choose it or not” (p xii). In essence, this is what the book is about. As the title suggests, it is an anthology – 20 essays by a range of African American contributors. The context is clearly American, but the issues and stories will resonate. The range of contributors is stellar and made me realise just how much is going on in the USA around racial justice. They are activists, writers, journalists, an actress, innovator, provocateur, news hosts and my personal favourite – Mama Tanya, the creator and host of Mama Tanya’s kitchen. They are cis-gendered, gay, trans, non-binary, differently abled. Humanity is laid out before us magnificently.

Austin Channing Brown asks, “what do you do when you are all too aware that Blackness make you uniquely vulnerable in this world?” (p.18). The stories face this question and deal with shame, vulnerability, trauma, pain, loss, suffering. In many ways, it is sad and overwhelming, but it is also a testimony to hope and the resilience of so many as these contributors are still standing. Not only that, but they are trying to make a difference in the world. Activist bell hooks tells us that lovelessness is the root of white supremacy and oppression. These stories not only narrate the oppression and the trauma but also they begin to challenge and overcome this with love – “heart work and head work” Burke calls it. The stories also uncover the absolute necessity to name the trauma in order to get justice.

Let me give just one example. Tanya Fields’ story is powerful. It is entitled “Dirty Business: The messy affair of rejecting shame”. She experienced physical abuse for decades until she finally found the courage to leave her partner and move out with her six children.

She was empowered by her Black sisterhood as well as West African spirituality, therapy and the discovery of womanist ideology. She rebirthed herself. She discovered radical Black Joy, she rejected shame and she founded Mama Tanya's Kitchen, "a lifestyle brand for boughetto Black women". These few sentences do not do justice to her story – you have to read her words to feel the pain, the rawness, the fire.

This book is life experience. The book is community. The book will challenge you and give you glimpses into other worlds. This book will inspire you to be the book's brilliant title, from Toni Morrison's novel, *Beloved*. This is a mantra for all of us, "you are your best thing."

Cathy Ross, CMS

Paul Cloke and Mike Pears, eds., *Mission in Marginal Places: The Stories* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2019)

Sometimes people think stories are fluffy, the soft stuff. Don't be fooled. This book is full of "slapping you in the face" encounters that challenge our assumptions and understandings and call all Jesus' followers to living to a higher missional standard. Because of the power of stories, this book is accessible to any reader.

This book is a mixture of encouragement and a call to wake up. It's honest, raw and real – showing the messiness of missional living. There are no neat boundaries, no easy solutions. And yet we are called to be right in the middle of it. Several times I found myself close to tears at the power of these stories: the challenges and never-ending struggles that humans experience and cause, the unresolved injustices, the simplicity of hope-filled mission, the God-carriers in the midst of it all. This book is not for the faint-hearted. It goes to the core of our own deeply held beliefs, values and behaviours; it goes to the heart.

The book is the third in a series of eventually six books. It is a collection of stories that reflect deeply on the contributors' lived experiences, theology and mission. All contributors are practitioners – a book by practitioner for practitioners and everyone else. There are a range of voices telling 19 different stories. The editors have clearly worked towards ensuring a range of voices become heard. Nevertheless, there is room to push that balance further with only six female writers. There is also scope to further diversify the voices that get to present here. Harvey Kwiyani's and Darius Weithers's chapters stand out in that regard. Likewise, we hear very little from those directly impacted by those ministries and missions, which I, by looking at the title, assumed we would. But even here are examples of that. Simon Jay ends his chapter with the voice of a young person who became a regular attendee

of the Peace Meals in Birmingham run by the Haven Community Project. I also like what Dave Close does in his chapter. He tells a story that happened prior to his involvement with the Hot Chocolate Trust in Dundee and thus includes the voice of Charis, who was there when a young person took their life. Dave challenges the editors and the reader, noting that "we often seem to imagine ourselves as essentially catalysts, unchanged by the chemical reaction we provoke. The Bible seems to have no place for catalysts, everyone is changed, there is no cheap grace" (pp. 165–66). And so this book offers stories of change that happened in the practitioner, less through the practitioner, just as Charis and Dave were changed by this young man's death.

The stories are grouped into five sections, each with an editorial conversation by Mike Pears and Paul Cloke. The editorial section is a commentary on the stories, which tries to draw out themes from them: "Moments of Seeing", "Encountering Other Worlds", "Guest or Host?", "Creative Tension", "Who is My Neighbour?" None of these themes are new to missiology or indeed practical theology but the stories allow for fresh insights and new questions to emerge for the reader. This structure allows the stories to breathe while giving the book a framework and cohesion.

One such summary that raises new questions is "that the process of mission may be far more important than its outcome" (p. 131). I remember reading it and thinking, this is so simple, the stories so human, relatable and like us – and yet totally challenging, stretching and beyond anything simple, challenging our assumption and maybe at times obsession with success.

There are stories of encountering people on a bus – such an ordinary everyday place. One author tells of working with a paedophile towards a restorative justice process that sort of fails, but how it forces him to see "the other" in a new way. Another writer finds himself among London's anarchists and squatters, coming face to face with the boundaries of the law, and wrestles with what it means to be with people in these situations. Right at the end of the book, Ruth Webster shares her story of practising environmental mission and honestly reflects on the disappointment "when contact is lost... and when plants are destroyed" (p. 265) in Possilpark, Glasgow.

The majority of these stories are located in the UK and will therefore speak particularly well to a UK-based audience: There is no scope for excuses such as "this is in the US and it is different here". There were many stories that I was able to relate to easily and see parallels to my own context in, and I am sure other readers will feel similarly. These simple stories challenge the reader in more than one way. This book is close to home; at times it may even feel "too close to home".

Susann Haehnel, CMS

Michael Leyden, *Faithful Living: Discipleship, Creed, and Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 2019)

Chapter one, “Ethics by Implication”, argues for an integrated approach to life and faith; that is to say, while faith is *personal*, it is never *private*. Leyden assumes that what we believe should impact how we live day to day; his question is rather “what kinds of lifestyle choices, decisions and actions might be implied for contemporary disciples by the theological substance of the Christian faith?” (p. 14). Avoiding getting bogged down in the “ethics of hard cases”, such as theoretical debates about how to respond to an unplanned pregnancy, Leyden chooses instead to focus on implications for daily life in the sense of intuition of how to live in a Christ-orientated fashion. He explains why he has chosen the Nicene Creed as the orientating lens for his reflection, and outlines the contents of the rest of the book.

Chapter two considers the task of corporate deliberation; how does the church decide collectively? Leyden begins through a discussion of the process employed at the Council of Nicaea. The limitations of that conciliar approach are discussed, as are the problems of postmodern Western hyper-individualism. The crucial elements, of Christian communion in worship and prayer as precursors for any deliberation, and the importance of an attitude of service of one’s fellow believers are emphasised, leading Leyden to also stress the need for listening, humility and forbearance.

Chapter three turns to the doctrine of creation, beginning with a brief overview of the science–religion debate before examining the biblical foundation of the doctrine, including the belief that God created out of nothing. The implications of the doctrine of creation are, Leyden explains, that Christians must subvert anything that does not contribute to the flourishing of non-human animals, and actively promote what does. The discussion is very practical, examining whether Christians should eat meat, and what types of farming and cultivation they can support as Leyden weaves in further biblical reflection with practical examples.

Chapter four examines political responsibility, arguing that if Jesus is Lord of all, that definitely includes the political realm. An exposition of Phil. 2:6–11 explores the Lordship of Christ, before Leyden explains his view that politics is “about the ordering of society and the regulation of power” (p. 82). This leads to a discussion of where Christians should affirm and where they should challenge, including suggestions for how individual Christians should act.

Chapter five shifts the focus first to the virgin birth, examining the biblical accounts and three scholarly

reactions to them in detail, before arguing for the importance of Jesus as a full human being. The second half of the chapter examines questions of disability. Leyden cites the views of Hans Reinders, who proposes that humanity and personhood are realised relationally; as such there can be no distinct category of “disabled” people. All are equally valuable, regardless of any abilities, because of the incarnation of God in Christ, and all are equally dependant on the providence of God for their continued existence. The implication is therefore that we live relationally, in community, not as isolated individuals.

Chapter six examines Christ’s suffering and death, taking in both the Gospel accounts and the discussion in the Epistles. Christ suffers in a suffering world, but through his own pain gave the Christian an alternative narrative, in which suffering is not all-powerful or triumphant. There is much that can be inferred from this stance, not least about the need to suffer with others. Leyden chooses to focus on the debate around quality of life and assisted suicide. He recaps three high-profile cases, before discussing what Christian responses are possible. He presents Christian arguments in favour of and against assisted dying, before coming down in favour of the latter view.

Chapters seven and eight shift the focus from practical discussion to “the dispositions that make Christian ethics Christian” (p. 132). Leyden begins chapter seven with an account of a conversation he had before the first funeral service he took; his training incumbent helped him see that because Jesus has been raised from the dead, there is hope, and that this is the heart of the gospel. This hope is in the now and not yet of the in-between space between the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and his return. Leyden discusses 1 Cor., the eschatological hope of the Epistles and Revelation, especially 1 Thess. and the nature of our present hope. The implications of this disposition are both abstract and concrete, as Leyden explains that those who orientate their lives according to this pattern will act in the present out of a total commitment to the future return of Christ. He explains hope is characterised by imagination, of what the kingdom might be, and of what one must do in preparation for meeting the risen and ascended Christ face-to-face. The second characteristic of hope is self-criticism, by which Leyden means acceptance of one’s limitations and striving to improve oneself, and mission, which refers to action for the betterment of the world.

Chapter eight has a pneumatological focus, for “it is the Holy Spirit who enacts the proximity of Jesus Christ to his Church” (p. 149). Leyden discusses Jesus and the Holy Spirit, especially the noun *parakletos*, which is often translated “advocate”, before exploring the work of the Spirit in the life of Christians. The second part of the chapter examines the implications for moral discernment, stressing the communal nature of such decision-making processes, and the place of prayer within Christian ethics.

He explains that prayer is how we live consciously in the presence of Christ, and so should shape all ethical deliberations.

The final chapter returns to a practical focus, emphasising the importance of catechesis in the local church. Leyden sets out the teaching practices of the Early Church before setting out what he regards as the three key ingredients for adult catechesis. These are firstly, think liturgically; secondly, think pedagogically and thirdly, think responsively. By this he means that the worshipping life of the church is formative for discipleship, one must be intentional, creative and contextually appropriate when teaching the faith, and one should organise local church life and make concrete decisions in response to the gospel.

Leyden has written a book designed to help local church leaders think about how to lead their congregations and how to help disciples pattern their lives after the example of Christ. He succeeds admirably in this task. The addition of questions for reflection at the end of each chapter will enable a group to read this book together, and the decision to avoid too much detailed theological argument will enable those with little formal theological education to access this useful text. This is a book that those who want to reflect seriously on their discipleship should invest the time to read.

Tom Wilson, St Philip's Centre, Leicester

Max Lucado, *You are Never Alone: Trust in the Miracle of God's Presence and Power* (Nashville: Nelson, 2020).

Lucado wrote his study of the miracles in John's Gospel, the seven signs that point to Jesus' identity as the Messiah, during lockdown in the US. His purpose in writing is clear from the title of the book; to remind his readers that even if they feel they have been abandoned by God, nothing could be further from the truth. The reality is that God's presence and power have been – and always will be – with them, no matter what their circumstances or challenges.

In twelve short chapters, Lucado first sets the scene and then discusses each of the seven signs in John, before a chapter on the crucifixion, which explores Jesus' words on the cross "It is finished" (John 19:30). Chapters ten and eleven deal with the empty tomb and Jesus' resurrection beach-side breakfast and conversation with Peter. The final chapter encourages the reader to also have faith in Christ who can do all things. There follows a study guide,

with discussion questions written by Andrea Lucado.

I was a bit surprised by the brevity of the book (the main text finishes on p. 139), and in particular by the lack of discussion of the farewell discourse. This section of John is rich in theological material that is germane to the theme of Christ's enduring presence. Deeper meditation on this topic would have been more sustaining, and speaking personally, more likely to remind me of Lucado's main point, that we are never alone.

This is a short, easy to read book (it took me less than ninety minutes), full of illustrations and stories, some personal to Lucado, others eminently reusable by a preacher. The style is direct and clear, remaining focused on the main point, that the reader is never alone. This is a book to buy, read and then give away to a friend, Christian or otherwise, who needs the encouragement of knowing the eternal God is always with them.

Tom Wilson, St Philip's Centre, Leicester

Judith Rossall, *Forbidden Fruit and Fig Leaves: Reading the Bible with the Shamed* (London: SCM Press, 2020)

There is a temptation for those of us interested in reframing the gospel, myself included, to simply replace the concept of sin with shame. However, what I particularly like about this book is that the author challenges us to hold on to both. She asserts that they are both equally necessary in order to fully understand the fundamental problem with the human condition that entered our consciousness at the fall. And thus how Christ resolved this dilemma by liberating us from sin and shame, restoring honour and reconciling us back to God, one another and our own selves through his life, death and resurrection. She goes back to Scripture and uses her knowledge of the context and the original text to open up some surprising and helpful insights.

As Rossall says in the introduction, "Here is my overall argument for this book. Read the Bible carefully and it says as much about shame as it does about guilt... Sin, guilt and shame can work together to produce a toxic mix" (p. vii). She starts with Genesis and where it all went wrong for Adam and Eve. She then traces what David Allen, in his book on shame, might call the "deep seated shame core with its trail of shame scripts, thoughts and voices and perceptions"¹ through succeeding generations, including the baffling story of Cain and Abel. She continues, "we should balance what happens in the Garden of Eden with two other iconic stories of how sin

¹ David Allen, *Shame: The Human Nemesis*, (Nassau, Bahamas: Eleuthera Publications, 2010), p. 149.

distorts human flourishing – namely the Exodus and the Exile” (p. viii).

In chapters four and five, Rossall examines two more examples from the First Testament which delve further into the relationship between sin and shame. First, the narrative about David and Bathsheba. Second, we’re introduced to Job’s fight for his own sense of worth and integrity, which might become a model for those shamed by the church and well-meaning fellow believers.

Another really helpful sphere of inquiry Rossall opens up for the reader is around the biblical nature of forgiveness. She shares a very personal and moving story from her own ministry about the stumbling block of forgiveness for those who have been the victims of dehumanising and traumatising abuse. I think she is right when she suggests that we have loaded an additional burden on already hurting and broken people when we insist they must forgive the perpetrators of their abuse. I found her slight redefining of what Jesus might have meant by forgiveness, through understanding his words in their original context, incredibly helpful and liberating. I think others who have been “more sinned against than sinning” would similarly find some comfort and relief.

As you would expect, there is plenty of consideration of how Jesus addresses shame in this book and the highlighting of some of the ways he sought to give people back their sense of value and self-worth. However, another interesting and innovative area that Rossall explores is Paul’s use of adoption as an image for discipleship. She says of this analogy that it should be read, “against the Roman background in which adoption implied taking on the honour status of your adopted family and an obligation to uphold that honour in the way that you lived” (p. x).

I would unreservedly recommend this book to anyone interested in sin, shame, forgiveness and the gospel. It feels thoroughly researched and rooted in biblical theology, while also suggesting some fresh interpretation that seems timely and especially helpful for those engaging in pastoral care or mission.

Andrea Campanale, CMS

**Martyn Percy with Ian S. Markham,
Emma Percy and Francesca Po, eds.,
*The Study of Ministry: A Comprehensive
Survey of Theory and Best Practice*
(London: SPCK, 2019)**

Subtitled “a comprehensive survey of theory and best practice”, this is a substantial volume with four editors, forty-plus contributors. and over 700 pages (“a bit of

a door stop”, said the review editor...). Reading it at a chapter a day took me six weeks! Here is a significant and thorough work of reference subjecting Christian ministry to a wide academic spotlight and unashamedly arguing its academic importance for the contemporary and future church.

With such a broad title some degree of subdivision is desirable, and this is achieved by dividing the book into five sections: 1. Understanding Ministry, 2. Models, Methods and Resources, 3. Ministry in Christian Tradition, 4. Styles of Christian Ministry, 5. Issues in Christian Ministry. An Introduction and an Afterword by Martyn Percy bookend the volume.

Inevitably in a multi-authored work such as this, individual readers will find that some chapters will fail to excite them whereas others will accord with their personal interests. To this reviewer four chapters stand out. These were chapters on “The Parish Church” and “Contested Church” by Alan Billings and Justin Lewis-Anthony respectively, two practical theologians whose works rarely miss the pulse of the contemporary church and whose contributions to this volume are timely and challenging. And for sheer entertainment, as well as information and interest, the chapters by Catherine Wilcox on “Ministry in fiction” and by Joshua Rey and Jolyon Mitchell on “Ministry in television and film”, were both a joy to read.

After the recent COVID-19 lockdown the two chapters on digital media in ministry, by Kyle Oliver and Lisa Kemball, have achieved a greater significance than their authors can have ever imagined when they were being written! For those who have neither the time – nor the stamina – to read the entire 700-plus pages, Martyn Percy’s Introduction and Afterword, and the summative Conclusion by Francesca Po and David Gortner (which seeks to summarise the contributions and place them in a framework) will give the reader the gist of this important volume. Realistically, few readers (unlike your reviewer) will feel compelled to read it from cover to cover. But for those who do, the extensive bibliography makes a good starting point for an even more detailed exploration of Christian ministry.

Here is a significant work of reference with important contributions, and theological libraries will not be complete without this book on their shelves. It is difficult to imagine, however, that too many individuals will want to pay the full price of £60 or even the discounted £41 that Wordery and Amazon are offering.

John Darch, Ellesmere

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