

# Lest we Forget

## Five Study Reflections for Small Groups

Lest we forget; by using differing cultural perspectives, these studies have been prepared to equip Baptists to reflect on the 2007 Baptist Union *Apology* and explore ways to address the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade.



'Trinity - after Rublev' by Meg Wroe ([www.megwroe.com](http://www.megwroe.com))

# Contents

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<b>The Context for Apology</b> <b>Wale Hudson-Roberts</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Words of the 2007 Apology</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction from Lynn Green</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Contributors</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Bible Studies:</b>	
<b>Study 1: Doreen Morrison</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Study 2: Joe Kapolyo</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Study 3: Steve Latham</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Study 4: Michele Mahon</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Study 5: Marvia Lawes</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Conclusion: The Journey</b> <b>Wale Hudson-Roberts</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>A Prophetic Community</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Resources</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Timeline</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Endorsements</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Review</b>	<b>31</b>



# The Context for Apology

The UK's role in the slave trade is a matter of "deep sorrow and regret", Prime Minister Tony Blair stated in March 2007. In a statement marking the anniversary of the British Parliamentary Act abolishing the transatlantic slave trade, the former PM said slavery was among history's "most shameful enterprises". His comments were heard in a video message at a commemorative ceremony that took place at Elmina Castle in Ghana, which served as Sub-Saharan Africa's first permanent transatlantic slave trading post. Many Africans and Caribbeans were disappointed that the former Prime Minister's statements fell short of an apology. The facts remain; slave-owning planters and merchants, who dealt in slaves and slave produce, were among the richest people in 18th century Britain. The vast profits from these activities helped to endow All Souls' College, Oxford with an extensive library, build banks including Barclays and finance the steam engine - plus many other activities.

Having been invited by BMS World Mission to speak at the Spring 2007 Baptist Assembly, Karl Henlin (a Jamaican Baptist Pastor of the Gregory Park circuit of Baptist churches) encouraged the Baptist family to consider offering an apology for their role in the transatlantic slave trade. Numerous informal conversations between British and Jamaican Baptists took place following the Assembly.

Four months after the Prime Minister had offered his statement of regret, Jonathan Edwards (the then General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB)) was asked at the meeting of the Baptist World Alliance in Ghana to offer an apology on behalf of BUGB. This occurred during the Reconciliation Service with other Baptist Unions to mark the 200th anniversary of the Slave Trade Act. Since the matter had not been discussed at BUGB Council, or more widely, he felt unable to apologise on behalf of our Union. Instead, a prayer of lament was offered.

Later that same year the BUGB Trustees agreed for the Racial Justice Working Group, moderated by Pat White (herself a Jamaican), to develop a process for a conversation concerning an apology at BUGB Council in November 2007.

On Monday 12 November, in the face of some apprehension, Jonathan Edwards introduced the apology debate. He rightly encouraged Council to listen carefully to one another and to do so with 'deep respect.' Reminding us that we live and breathe in a racist society, he acknowledged that, for some members of Council, it would be difficult to frame the necessary words. Indeed, many Council members could not understand why Council was discussing a possible apology for the enslavement of millions of Africans - particularly as their generation was not 'responsible' for such heinous crimes. Undoubtedly, Council members would have quickly condemned the twin evils of slavery and racism, but perhaps only a few had reflected seriously on racism as the legacy of slavery. The presentations given during the Council debate by David Shosanya, Joe Kapolyo, Richard Kidd and Graham Sparkes helped Council appreciate that legacy. A discussion continued after the presentation, accompanied by some tears, which resulted in an *Apology* being made by Council.

# THE APOLOGY FOR SLAVERY

## COUNCIL RESOLUTION NOVEMBER 2007

As a Council we have listened to one another, we have heard the pain of hurting sisters and brothers, and we have heard God speaking to us.

In a spirit of weakness, humility and vulnerability, we acknowledge that we are only at the start of a journey, but we are agreed that this must not prevent us speaking and acting at a Kairos moment.

Therefore, we acknowledge our share in and benefit from our nation's participation in the transatlantic slave trade.

We acknowledge that we speak as those who have shared in and suffered from the legacy of slavery and its appalling consequences for God's world.

We offer our apology to God and to our brothers and sisters for all that has created and still perpetuates the hurt which originated from the horror of slavery.

We repent of the hurt we have caused, the divisions we have created, our reluctance to face up to the sin of the past, our unwillingness to listen to the pain of our black sisters and brothers, and our silence in the face of racism and injustice today.

We commit ourselves, in a true spirit of repentance, to take what we have learned from God in the Council and to share it widely in our Baptist community and beyond, looking for gospel ways by which we can turn the words and feelings we have expressed today into concrete actions and contribute to the prophetic work of God's coming Kingdom.

*The Resolution was agreed unanimously, and each member of Council bowed in silent prayer and personal commitment.*

*It was then proposed:*

In the light of our discussions concerning the transatlantic slave trade and the statement that arises from the discussions, Council asks the Mission Executive, Trustee Board and other appropriate bodies to continue to develop ways of promoting racial justice within BUGB and wherever possible in the world beyond.

*The amended Resolution was approved unanimously*

Some months later, a delegation of four travelled to Jamaica to offer *The Apology* to the Jamaica Baptist Union. Though *The Apology* was officially accepted by the Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU), their nagging question was, 'how are these eloquent words going to address racism in British Baptist churches? How will they enable a multicultural Union to become a racially just Baptist movement?'

To address these concerns, the Racial Justice Working Group undertook research into the nature and scale of racial prejudice and discrimination being experienced across our Union. It then recommended some strategic priorities to Council, which have become known as *The Journey*, namely:

- *Building multicultural congregations*
- *Developing the leadership skills of black and minority ethnic youth*
- *Training ministers and church members for culturally inclusive ministry and mission*
- *Multicultural events that strengthen the participation of black and minority ethnic individuals and celebrate the cultural diversity within our Union*
- *Establishing culturally inclusive Union structures (including Baptist House)*

Representatives of BMS World Mission and the Baptist Union of Great Britain present the statement of *Apology* to representatives of the Jamaica Baptist Union - Spring 2008



**Left to Right:**

**Wale Hudson-Roberts** (BUGB - Racial Justice Co-ordinator)

**Karl Henlin** (JBU - Former President)

**Jonathan Edwards** (BUGB - General Secretary)

**Stephen Jennings** (JBU - President)

**Karl Johnson** (JBU - General Secretary)

**Pat White** (BUGB - Racial Justice Working Group Moderator)

**Alistair Brown** (BMS - General Director)



# Introduction

2017 marked ten years since the historic *Apology* resolution was made by BUGB Council. To mark this anniversary, I am delighted that this resource has been produced to provide further reflection and interpretation on *The Apology* itself and *The Journey* that has followed. I hope that this will promote further biblical and theological exploration amongst our churches, Associations and Colleges and also challenge the practical outworking of *The Apology* across Baptists Together.

There is no doubt in my mind that we need to keep being intentional about growing into the 'all nations' vision of God's people that we see in the Scriptures. One of the ways we will achieve this is through listening deeply to the experiences and perspectives of others and allowing ourselves and our communities to be shaped by the Lord through these encounters.

You will see that this accessible resource offers reflections and Bible Study notes on *The Apology* through the perspective of Doreen Morrison, Joe Kapolyo, Steve Latham, Michele Mahon and Marvia Lawes. Through considering *The Apology* from these different perspectives, I hope that you will be enabled to think more deeply about how issues of racial justice are relevant and can be applied in your own context.

As we reflect on *The Apology*, I pray that you will find fresh vision and determination to journey on towards our Kingdom future.

**Lynn Green**  
*General Secretary: Baptists Together*



# Peter Stanford

1860 - 1909 born in slavery, he became Birmingham's first Black minister



Photo: Baptist Union of GB Archives

## Contributors



**Doreen Morrison** is an independent researcher, CEO of Liberty Trails Emancipation history tour company in Jamaica and author of *Slavery's Heroes: George Liele and the Ethiopian Baptists of Jamaica 1783 – 1865*. A graduate of Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Illinois and the University of Birmingham, England, she is a member of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) Heritage and Identity Commission for this quinquennial (2015 – 2020).



**Joe Kapolyo** was the Lead Minister at Edmonton Baptist Church, London before his retirement in 2017. Previously he has served as Principal of All Nations Christian College; Principal of Theological College of Central Africa (TCCA), Ndola, Zambia; Pastor of Central Baptist Church (Harare, Zimbabwe); Pastor of Ndola Baptist Church (Zambia); Schools worker with Scripture Union Zambia. He is currently on the Board of Ulting Trust, and a Baptist Union of Great Britain Council member. Joe's publications include *The Human Condition*, *Christian Perspectives through African Eyes* in the Global Christian Library series, published by IVP and *Matthew* in the one-volume African Bible Commentary. Joe is married to Anne and they have two grown-up daughters.



**Steve Latham** is Pastor of King's Cross Baptist Church in central London, and an Associate Tutor at Spurgeon's College. He is committed to urban mission, and has been involved in several racial justice initiatives. He has edited the book *Urban Church: A Practitioner's Handbook*, with Michael Eastman. He blogs at [urban-shepherd.co.uk](http://urban-shepherd.co.uk). He is married to Sue, and has two adult children.



**Michele Mahon** has an MA in Pastoral Ministry and a BA in Youth Work and Ministry. Her research interests focus on the experience and role of women, especially Black women, in Christian ministry. A Baptist minister, Michele served as Youth Pastor at Brockley Baptist Church in south-east London for four years. She was a Chaplain at Lewisham College and a Trustee for South Central Youth, a charity based in Brixton, South London, enabling young people of that locality to exit gangs and fulfil their potential. She has also served as a member of Spurgeon's College Council and Baptist Union Council. Michele and her husband trained with BMS World Mission for long term mission in Peru. Since summer 2017 they have been involved in the training of rural pastors at a mission training centre in Nauta, northern Peru, and enabling youth ministry for churches alongside the Peruvian Baptist Convention.



**Marvia Lawes** is an ordained minister in the Jamaica Baptist Union. She is a graduate of the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI) and holds a Diploma in Ministerial Studies (UTCWI, 1999), a BA degree (Theology, Hons) from the University of the West Indies (1999) and a STM (Master of Sacred Theology) degree from Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA (2004).

Marvia has served in the pastorate locally and overseas through the Jamaica Baptist Union, as Pastor to Stewart Town Circuit of Baptist Churches, Trelawny, Jamaica, as Missioner Pastor to First Isthmian Baptist Church, Colon City, Panama and as Assistant Director of Caribbean Christian Publications, Jamaica

She is a former member of faculty at UTCWI where she taught 'Women, Religion and Liberation' in the Department of Theology and served as Coordinator of the UTCWI Center for Continuing Studies. She is an advocate for women, children and youth, and persons living with HIV and AIDS and is the Vice Chair of the Enabling Environment and Human Rights, Technical Working Group (EEHR-TWG), at the Jamaica National Family Planning Board/Sexual Health Agency, Kingston Jamaica.

Currently, Marvia hosts *The Morning Watch*, a one hour morning discussion radio programme on Love101FM and streamed live at [www.love101.org](http://www.love101.org). In addition, she continues to meet preaching, teaching requests as well as offer training in 'Leadership Development and Church Growth'.

Frederick Douglass  
1818 - 1895 a former slave, abolitionist and human rights leader



# Study 1: Doreen Morrison

When *The Apology* was issued in 2007, I think that the knee-jerk reaction of many British Jamaicans was to ask, "How can I be thankful for an apology which simply celebrates the ending of the slave ships crossing the Atlantic, and not slavery itself?" Now having been asked to respond theologically, deeper reflections leave me sitting angrily, like Jonah in a repentant Nineveh. No, I'm not angry that there has been repentance, gladly seeing that the Church accepts its part in knowingly benefiting from the 'fruits' of slavery, 'paid for' by approximately 60 million Africans, but rather because *The Apology* makes a direct link between slavery and racism. Slavery was a regime first tried on the Irish who, because of their inability to endure the harsh conditions, were replaced by Africans. So history records that slavery was not primarily about racism, but oppression. So, why do we associate it with racism?

Life is more often than not grey, rather than black or white, and so whilst I agree that Baptists were complicit as they ministered in the then British colonies of North America and the Caribbean, accepting the status quo regarding slavery until 1832, it has to be acknowledged that it was British Baptists in America, who God used in the 1700s to raise up a cadre of African Baptist leaders who worked tirelessly to lead the charge for Emancipation in Jamaica. So I believe that *The Apology* should have acknowledged, and lifted high those pioneering Baptists (black and white), who stood out against the crowd: Matthew Moore, George Liele, George Lewis, George Gibb, George Vineyard, John Gilbert, Stephen Cooke, Thomas Nicholas Swigle and others who led the drive for Emancipation. Do you know who they are? Sadly I think many will not, but if you knew them you, like me, would welcome the opportunity today to meet descendants like those of Thomas Burchell, to thank them for the selfless sacrificial giving of his life for Jamaica.

Racism was in fact a legacy of Emancipation, identified by William Knibb shortly after the ink had barely dried on the Emancipation proclamation. In 1839 he reported that a new law had been introduced, which 'makes the distinction of complexion the rule for the measurement of punishment'.<sup>1</sup> This racism increased after 1847 (death of Knibb and Burchell), supported by subliminal messages contained in popular books *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, and the writings of Enid Blyton. It was then embedded in the British psyche by the introduction of the Enlightenment and Evangelicalism. Together they confirmed Western notions of possessing a superior culture, and therefore the proper way to be church, through right thinking, believing, living and dressing. So prescribed for Caribbean Christians was the English language, the organ, hats, suits and shoes, and out went Patois, musical instruments, clapping, dancing and modest dress, all of which had been central to African Jamaican worship for over 80 years.

<sup>1</sup> Hinton, John Howard, *Memoir of William Knibb, Missionary in Jamaica* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1847, 316)

# Questions for Study and Discussion

*The Apology* I believe is a good beginning, but just that a beginning. I believe that history holds a part of the key to moving the whole church forward together, in a non-threatening manner, and so I pose the following questions for further study:

- 1** How might we use the story of Jonah to understand what it means to be an oppressed servant of God, and what may happen if anger is left unresolved?
  
- 2** Is there something to be learned by us from global Pentecostalism or other Baptists in regards to their ability to contextualise their worship; accepting diversity within, rather than seeing assimilation as the only option?
  
- 3** What might we do to increase understanding of our past joint Baptist history within our churches, and Colleges? For example would the celebration of Emancipation Day in Britain, accepted in the Caribbean, be a step forward, choosing to remember Africa's Holocaust, in the same way that we honour the Jewish Holocaust through Holocaust Memorial Day?
  
- 4** Might we consider creating discussion groups to examine why post Emancipation British Baptists accepted notions of racism and injustice, having sacrificially been at the forefront of the drive for Emancipation especially between 1832 and 1838?
  
- 5** What role could contextual theology play in creating a multicultural and inclusive Baptist Union?

*Harriet Tubman*  
1820-1913 escaped slavery to become a leading abolitionist



Photo:  
Felix Lipov | shutterstock.com

## Study 2: Joe Kapolyo

In the aftermath of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB)'s *Apology* for the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (November 2007), a friend asked me several questions, "Who is making *The Apology*? To whom is *The Apology* made? For what is *The Apology* made and to what effect?" Behind these questions lie intellectual and moral problems. Does it make sense and is it morally credible for a generation today to make apologies for injustices they did not personally commit? Many people in Baptist churches across the land are mystified, at times angry and sincerely wonder why *The Apology* was necessary.

When Jesus died on the cross, he died for us and in our place (2 Corinthians 5:21). But how could that be? He had no sin of his own to atone for nor was there any sin in his family (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) history to make amends for. Many people have struggled with this understanding of Jesus' actions. The Greeks thought it was perverse and foolish that a god would become human, let alone that a man's death in seeming weakness and defeat was the apparent means chosen by God for the salvation of human beings (1 Corinthians 1:18, 22-25). In the recent past some people have found this intellectually and morally difficult, calling it 'cosmic child abuse'. Jesus did more than apologise to the Father for our sins. He died on our behalf to pay the penalty for our sin (Romans 3:23-24, 1 Peter 2:20, 2 Corinthians 5:21).

On the basis of Jesus' example, it does not seem intellectually absurd for descendants and current beneficiaries (in material terms) of those who engaged directly in selling, buying, owning, abusing and ruthlessly exploiting other human beings (many white people at that time considered Africans as either very inferior human species or not human at all) to humbly offer an apology.

What are the legacies of the Slave Trade? The British industrial revolution flourished on the back of African slave labour (there were other people in the Caribbean who also suffered enslavement). Industries as diverse as shipbuilding, iron mongering, sugar refining, banking and seafaring all received a tremendous boost from the slave trade. Cities like Liverpool, Bristol, London, Southampton, Ipswich, Newcastle and others all grew in stature and importance on account of the slave trade. We may even say that the 'great' in Great Britain, politically, economically and socially was achieved at the expense of the plundering of the African continent and the lives of the countless millions of Africans who perished during the infamous Middle Passage and of course the slaves who survived and worked or perished on the plantations. This generation continues to enjoy the material benefits of the slave trade.

After the slave trade was made illegal (1807), Britain went on to become the leading colonial power in Africa. There was a lot of good done in the name of colonialism (in education, medicine, commerce, etc). But from an African's point of view, colonialism continued to propagate the same negative attitudes of white superiority and black inferiority and the exploitation of black people that had characterised the four centuries of the slave trade. Britain's material benefits from both the slave trade and colonialism are still with us today.

Many seeds of African under-development were sown in the colonial period, including the insistence that the only thing an African must sell is his labour. Cold War international political realities continued to exploit Africa for the benefit of the protagonists: USSR and the West. International trade agreements continue to treat the African continent as a depository of raw materials for Western exploitation, and of course the Arms industries continue to fuel ethnic disagreements on the African continent.

Many black people today struggle with poor images of themselves and their race as a result of the influences of white domination and exploitation in the past. Many of us possess a double consciousness: the problem created by an identity crisis resulting from the fact that black people are born into a world dominated by whiteness and largely characterised by antipathy to black people. That is the first consciousness. The second is this: black people attempt to make sense of the world through the eyes of the white dominant culture. A lot of black social problems in the West and elsewhere arise out of this complex set of sociological realities. This might even be the main reason for the over representation of black people in our prisons and mental health institutions.

Social, cultural, political and even spiritual structures established in the West during the high watermark of both the slave trade and colonialism are more than likely to have built into them racial biases which consciously or unconsciously discriminate against black and other minority ethnic groups. Structural racism is something that even a leading police officer in the land has conceded.

The Bible in general, and Paul in particular, mentions slavery in many passages, including Colossians 3:22-24, without condemning it. Can slavery in any given time be a part of the Christian way to order society?

Should we conclude that the New Testament (NT) does not condemn all forms of slavery and therefore, by implication, it accepts and condones some if not all forms of slavery? On the other hand, others have concluded that the spirit of the NT is incompatible with the very idea that one person can own another as is practised in slavery. Therefore passages like this should be given special treatment.

Does this passage endorse slavery? The answer is no. This passage accepts that slavery exists. That is not the same as saying that slavery should exist. When the Church arrived on the scene, slavery was a significant factor of society and new believers came from the ranks both of the free and of the slaves. The Apostles sought to establish how believing brothers and sisters from both camps (eg Philemon and Onesimus) could relate to each in the body of Christ.

It would have been easier had the NT issued a blanket order condemning slavery altogether; it did not! The challenge is for all of us to think as Christians when confronted with difficult social and theological issues such as slavery and xenophobia.

# Questions for Study and Discussion

- 1** Give evidence of times and places when apologies have been made for historical abuses or injustices. What have been the impact of such apologies?
- 2** What can an apology of this type (the BUGB *Apology*) do for those to whom it is offered and those who offer it and for future prospects of harmony between diverse ethnicities?
- 3** How does the BUGB *Apology* and its achievements compare to the achievements of Desmond Tutu's post-Apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission?
- 4** What injustices are we guilty of today for which a future generation might well demand an apology from our descendants?



## Study 3: Steve Latham

The 2007 *Apology* for the slave trade, by the Baptist Union, was a historic moment of accepting responsibility for the sins of the past, in order to move forward into God's healing for the future. It was not perceived in this way by everybody, however. Some British Baptists felt aggrieved that they were being associated with such a heinous crime.

Why should we be made to apologise for past sins committed by other people, when we were not even alive? Not only that, were not British Baptists historically at the forefront of the struggle against slavery and the slave trade? Why should the Baptist Union and British Baptist churches, even individual Christians, therefore be made to feel guilty for this and made to stand up and apologise?

Understandable though it sounds, this objection falls prey to a faulty individualistic notion of sin, which ignores the aspect of social sin. The Bible holds a notion of collective sin, through a concept of corporate personality<sup>1</sup>. Both Nehemiah and Daniel, for example, therefore pray in repentance for sins committed by the people of God long before they were born (Nehemiah 1: 5-11; Daniel 9: 4-19).

Members of a social body are held responsible, since all are implicated in the wrong-doing of the collective; there is a solidarity in sin. This is different from the doctrine of inherited original sin. Instead it is a historical business of reaping what was sown (Galatians 6: 7), for good and ill. While God visits the sins of the father on the children to the third and fourth generations, he extends the blessings of the righteous to the thousandth (Exodus 20: 5-6)!

Personal acceptance of responsibility and repentance frees us from this chain of cause and effect through the timeline (Ezekiel 18: 1-32). And it is this which can work healing for the national and local community, through prayers of identificational repentance by which we address the sins of our particular social grouping.<sup>2</sup>

Such prayer is a recognition that the work of Christ in salvation is wider than just our own individual forgiveness (Colossians 1: 20). More than this, Christ's death will bring restoration to the entire cosmic and socio-political order. In addition, it requires action for justice now, otherwise it amounts to empty words. Another reason for *The Apology* is that the sins of the slave trade do not only belong in the past.<sup>3</sup>

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1 H Wheeler Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel*. Revised Second Edition (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981)

2 Russ Parker, *Healing Wounded History. Reconciling peoples and healing places* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2001)

3 Richard Vernon, *Historical Redress. Must we pay for the past?* (London: Continuum, 2012)

Our country still benefits from the accumulated wealth heaped up by the trade, which underlay the prosperity of our major cities and industries. We still reap this built-up advantage today in the global economy. So, our words of apology or prayer must be accompanied by actions, individually and corporately, of reparation towards those who have been harmed (James 2: 14-17).

## Questions for Study and Discussion

- 1** How do you evaluate the relative weight of personal and social sin in accounting for society's ills today?
- 2** How does Christ's death on the cross bring restoration and salvation to today's society?
- 3** What part does prayer and intercession play in realising God's purposes for the church and for society?

*Sojourner Truth*  
1797-1883 born a slave, she became an abolitionist and women's rights activist



## Study 4: Michele Mahon

I remember the BU *Apology* coming out and the controversy surrounding it. It was the topic of discussion among many ministers in London and though most black and minority ethnic (BME) ministers welcomed it, there was much dissension among our white colleagues as to why we were even discussing this issue in the first place. Many did not feel it was necessary as they could not see racism playing a part in their lives and ministries.

This blind spot could only be healed through dialogue, giving space to each other to listen, feel, think, pray and respond to pain and injustice in our midst. I watched as various colleagues either ignored it entirely (due to other more pressing ministry matters) agreed with *The Apology's* sentiments or disagreed completely. As a black female youth specialist minister, I welcomed this statement of repentance, took on the personal challenge to engage in bridge-building and watched for positive change.

My observation is that the challenge of *The Apology* has been embraced by the central structures and bodies of Baptist Together, but perhaps not by others within our Union at grassroots level. My part in helping to change this lies in theological reflection from a Womanist Perspective.

### Meaning

Womanist Theology concerns itself with the way in which some black women experience God. It is a part of Black Theology which is contextual, that seeks to actively resist racism, sexism and classism.<sup>1</sup> Womanism invites dialogue, providing a learning space where black Christian women can gain insight from each other's stories and reflections as they intertwine with God's story.<sup>2</sup>

A group of women gather several times a year for this express purpose, under the title 'BME Women Ministers Network' which started in 2014. These gatherings include worship, honest sharing of our joy and pain, teaching and training from excellent speakers. We have made progress through challenge and encouragement to enable us to experience life in all its fullness. 'God is present in human suffering, not as a mute bystander, but as a companion, refuge, defender and vindicator'.<sup>3</sup>

1 Reddie, A, (2006), *Black Theology in Transatlantic Dialogue*, p83, Palgrave Macmillan: Gordonsville, VA

2 Mahon, M, (2014), *Sisters With Voices: a study of the experiences and challenges faced by Black women in London Baptist Association Church ministry settings*, p30, Staffordshire University: Staffordshire

3 Mahon, M, (2014), *Sisters With Voices: a study of the experiences and challenges faced by Black women in London Baptist Association Church ministry settings*, p32, Staffordshire University: Staffordshire

## Propositions

Women's Ministries within churches and ecumenically are one positive avenue that encourage the gifts and skills of women for the strengthening of the whole church.<sup>4</sup> The collective celebration of these important attributes within women will inevitably result in emancipation for all.<sup>5</sup>

Moving beyond gender-based support networks, we have a task of engaging the church in 'doing theology' by jointly considering biblical texts, presenting them in their cultural, political and historical context, encouraging dialogue and respectful debate about scripture, giving room for the Holy Spirit to give us different perspectives relevant to our specific context and experience.

Another excellent tool promoting development is mentoring. Being supported by another black woman who is further along in the Christian journey is priceless. Apart from eliminating isolation, these nurturing relationships serve to nurture spiritual growth and maturity, and increase effectiveness in both parties' vocation.

## Questions for Study and Discussion

- 1 What do you consider to be the role of women in the church? Has your view changed in any way since you have journeyed with Christ?
- 2 Do you have a mentor or someone who fulfils that role in your life? Take a moment to pray for them.
- 3 What could you do to encourage Women's Ministry in your church?

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4 Alvarado, (2008), *My Sister's Keeper: A strategic leadership coaching model for the identity formation of women in leadership at Total Grace Christian Centre in Metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia*, p19, Proquest LLC, Ann Arbor, MI

5 Rizal, J, (1962), *The Subversive* (El Filibusterismo), L.M. Guerrero, trans. Indiana University Press: Bloomington, IN

*Sam Sharpe*  
 1801 - 1832 born a slave, he instigated the 1831 Slave Rebellion in Jamaica



## Study 5: Marvia Lawes

Apologies for atrocities and crimes against humanity are neither few nor unusual; however, they are hardly ever arrived at easily, contemplated lightly, or done without some amount of controversy. *The Apology* of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) for the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is one such contemporary effort, complete with the aforementioned challenges, that makes it necessary for ongoing individual and communal reflection toward fostering transformative responses in a world of growing inequalities and unjust human relations.

My own reflection on *The Apology* has been a journey which began with its delivery in Jamaica. It came at a time of resurgence in discussions on reparations to African descendants in the Caribbean for the atrocities of slavery and grew larger in my mind with the arrival of 1 January 2015, which marked the beginning of the *International Decade for People of African Descent*. Thus, I saw *The Apology* as a symbolic act that had the potential to be recognised as a restorative and transitional justice initiative. As such, it was a cornerstone in a building process and not a stand-alone act.

I have been heartened to see that the expressed commitment to a process of translating words and feelings into concrete actions had evolved into a strategic plan by the British Baptists and contained in a resource titled *The Journey*, which now guides a process inclusive of ecclesiastical reform in their denomination. It appears to me though, that the wider constituency of the Jamaica Baptist Union, an established partner in the process currently underway, is largely unaware of the plan and our role, if any, in it.

In addition, I believe that by now there would have been clear indications as to where each body stands on the issue of reparations and that the concrete actions should be reparative ones to intentionally address the social, economic, political and religious dimensions of the negative legacies of slavery in Jamaica and Britain. Although *The Apology* can be considered a reparative act, discussions about more reparations should not and cannot be avoided. Certainly not with Baptist voices in Jamaica that are supportive of the Caribbean's call for reparations by Europeans for slavery.

It also struck me that something else has been missing all this time that is key to this process. Whereas, the British Baptists went through a process and arrived at a consensus to apologise, we the Jamaica Baptists are yet to have our own cathartic, redemptive and liberating exercise in reflecting on forgiveness for slavery. It is not acceptable to receive *The Apology* and just 'move on.'

Thus I believe by using a framework of restorative and transitional justice to guide us, we should in this *Decade for People of African Descent* undertake a local plan to intentionally open up and address slavery, its lingering negative effects and its impact on professed forgiveness, trust and reconciliation

with our British sisters and brothers. We would then complete the circle of partnership in a process that can be a prophetic example needed in a wounded, unrepentant and unforgiving world.

## Read Philemon 8 - 22

The book of Philemon is a personal letter of Paul (v19a), addressed to his friend Philemon (v 1b). In it we are introduced to Onesimus, Philemon's slave whom Paul was sending back to him (v 16a). We are not privy to the background story as to how Onesimus ended up with Paul (see Colossians 4: 9). However, it appears that he might be the bearer of the letter in which he was commended to Philemon to be received as a brother (v 17).

Early in the letter, before we even hear the real request, Paul appeals to Philemon (v 8) to do 'what is fitting' - Greek word *aneko*, which can also take on the contextual meaning - 'do what is right by the other.' It is interesting to note that this term *aneko* occurs three times in the New Testament, always in the context of relations among persons, generally accompanying instructions on right relations among Christians in the household of the faithful believers (see Ephesians 5: 4, Colossians 3: 18). Furthermore, all the highlighted relationships in each passage reflect certain dynamics of power and social status (wives and husbands, children and parents, slaves and masters) – the 'powerless' and 'powerful' social structures. In each case Paul (taken as the author), calls for a renewal in behaviour that is befitting faith in Christ, regardless of one's social status as either the powerless or powerful.

Paul does not (here or anywhere else in his epistles) condemn slaveholding. Neither does he command Philemon to grant Onesimus manumission. Thus, still enslaved, Onesimus' life, his movements and even his faith and spirituality were controlled and used by another. He faced negative perceptions about his character, was devalued and dehumanised. Yet, Onesimus stood taller than how he was viewed or treated and resisted inhumanity and chose Christlikeness as his way of being. Even though he was sent as Paul's emissary to Philemon, he helped Philemon to confront the question of his own humanity, rethink the status quo and embrace the opportunity for voluntary conversion to the truth that one cannot own or exploit one's equal. Onesimus helped Philemon establish a new household, representative of the Kingdom of God within the established order, changing it from within.

The letter invites us to consider several issues including power relations, equality/inequality, justice, forgiveness and reconciliation, all of which are still problematic for us today. Slavery, though illegal, is still alive today. Reparations and restoration must keep in view the aim of reconciliation toward living out our full humanity through voluntary, not forced, love of neighbour.

The Christian community is still being called to expose and help reorder structural power relations and inequalities in church and society. May we act quickly, decisively and in generosity of spirit as is befitting our profession of faith and going beyond even that which is required.

# Questions for Study and Discussion

- 1** Discuss the concept of 'power relations' then identify some relationships in church and society where 'power', as exercised in these relationships, either causes or benefits from inequality and exploitation.
- 2** Read Philemon 12 -21 again. See how the issues of debt and loss, reparations, compensation and restoration are raised by Paul (a) in favour of Philemon and (b) in favour of Onesimus.
- 3** How does making an apology and extending forgiveness for slavery make the descendants of slaveholder/enslaved more human and the societies they live in more humane?
- 4** Share your thoughts on an *International Decade for the Descendants of Africans* and say what, if anything, Baptists in Britain and Jamaica can do to mark this period?



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# Conclusion

## The Journey

Years after *The Apology* resolution, questions need to be asked about the impact of *The Journey* on the life of the Union. Let's face it, to change the culture of our Union to the extent that Baptist people of colour believe that 'our lives matter too' is a herculean vision but this is what *The Journey* was calling for. Yes, during these years some helpful resources have been created and are being developed, events have been organised, structures have been challenged. The commitment of the Racial Justice Working Group (practically supported by JBU) remains undiminished. Despite the painstaking application of *The Journey* being painfully slow, this should not deter us from being relentless in seeking its concretisation. The words of *The Apology* were not random words chosen on the crest of a wave to appease disenchanted Black Baptists. What was witnessed on the morning of that final Council debate leading to *The Apology* was a Pentecost moment - hearts and minds coalesced around the prophetic whisper of God.



We must do everything we can to prevent *The Apology* from simply becoming a significant historical event located only in Baptist archives with no positive meaning to the present. Past words must have an active, creative and transformative outcome in the present and future, reminding all shades of Baptists of the importance of continuing to speak truth to power by saying no to the sin of racism; just actions superseding just words.

Apologies are important - though in and of themselves they are unable to bring full healing, liberation and restoration. However, if an apology and sacrificial action align, and action becomes a tangible outcome, the wounded and those responsible for committing the injustice are offered the possibility of hope and justice.

It would be nothing less than a travesty if assumptions that we are already a post-racist Union and a so-called inclusive Baptist community discourage us from building on *The Journey's* recommendations. This would render the many difficult conversations that contributed to *The Apology*, and *The Apology* itself, superfluous. *The Apology* must lead to institutional conversion. It has to enable the creation of a community that people of colour feel they want to fully embrace, feel proud to shape and create, indeed, make their own. Such a community will be marked by cultural reciprocity, laden with just principles, buttressed by the words of *The Apology*, and encourage the flourishing of all God's people - which must surely be our vision for our future.

Since 2007 work has continued on the strategic recommendations made by the Racial Justice Working Group, with the following developments:

To date the Racial Justice Group have delivered, or are still working on, the following projects:

### ***Building Multicultural Congregations***

Council calls upon Baptists Together to listen and work with churches that desire to become multicultural and to gain an understanding of and engagement with the world church.

- *Journeying to Justice* – a book published by Paternoster to increase understanding of the process leading to *The Apology*, and its theological implications for Baptist churches
- *Multi Ethnic Church* – online biblical reflections to enable Baptist churches to create multicultural congregations
- *Lest We Forget* – this online resource including theological interpretations of *The Apology* through various cultural lenses
- *Bicentenary booklet* – a brief and creative history of the relationship between the Jamaica Baptist Union, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and BMS World Mission
- *The Apology* DVD (created by the London Baptist Association)
- *Moving Stories* – a series of online Bible study reflections on migration
- *Pentecost People* – an online worship resource to help Baptist churches engage in multicultural worship (launched at Assembly 2017)
- A network of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Baptist Women - contact Gale Richards for more information (projectdevelopmentworker@hotmail.co.uk)
- *Text and Story* – a biblical reflection on BME heroes and heroines
- Sam Sharpe Project – theologically and practically exploring the legacy of Sam Sharpe (see [www.samsharpeproject.org](http://www.samsharpeproject.org) for details)

### ***Developing the leadership skills of black and minority ethnic youth***

Council calls upon Baptists Together to work with Associations and churches in facilitating the development of the leadership skills of BME young people:

- Inspiring Leadership Programme - A two-three month leadership internship for BME young people in Jamaica
- Wonderful Youth - An online multicultural resource for young people to explore their faith through a multicultural lens which can be used during Sunday groups

### ***Training ministers and church members for culturally inclusive ministry and mission***

Council calls on Baptists Together to listen and work with Colleges, Associations and churches in developing effective multicultural training patterns:

- Racial justice training has been developed for use in our Baptist colleges
- Developing a Justice Training resource (to be implemented in 2019)

### ***Multicultural events that strengthen the participation of black and minority ethnic individuals and celebrate the cultural diversity within our Union***

Council calls upon Baptists Together to listen and work with Association teams and Specialist Teams in organising, shaping and participating in events that will reinforce the importance of cultural diversity

- Bicentenary – a series of events and activities including a Radio Four broadcast of the Bicentenary Service from Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church and the opening event 'Fiddling While Rome Burns' at Spurgeon's College
- Young people of colour from Jamaica and BUGB doing mission for six months abroad in countries such as Jamaica and India through the BMS Bicentenary Action Teams
- General Secretary participating in the JBU Baptist Assembly, celebrating and encouraging churches to reflect on the highs and lows of the two hundred year missional relationship between British and Jamaican Baptists
- 'I Have a Dream' tour – some churches, Associations and Colleges reflecting on the legacy of Martin Luther King for British Baptists
- *The Journey* tour – a JBU delegation came to help promote *The Journey*, during which a number of events and activities were organised to highlight the importance of *The Journey* and its implications for Union life.
- *Justification and Justice* symposium at Spurgeon's College in April 2017.

### ***Establishing culturally inclusive Union structures (including Specialist Teams)***

Council calls upon Baptists Together to listen and work intentionally with all those involved in Baptist life to develop structures that are owned by representatives from both minority and majority cultures.

- Local and National Justice Hubs: This will involve local and national teams committed to gender, racial and disability justice serving Associations/Partnerships, Colleges and churches in creating just cultures for BMEs, women and people with disabilities.



# A Prophetic Community

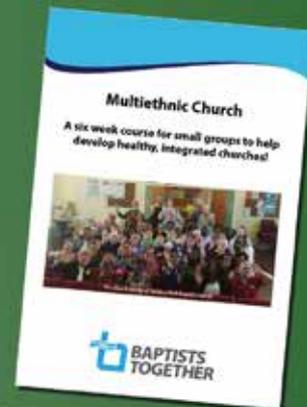
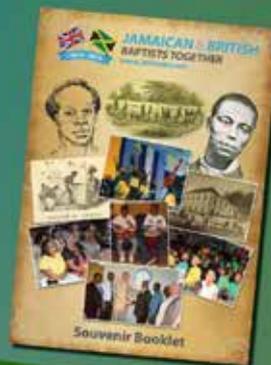
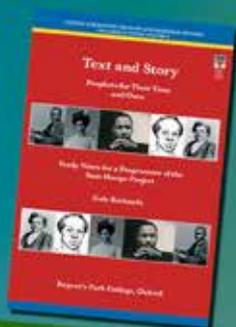
Martin Luther King refused to relegate following Christ to the private, spiritual realm or arenas of personal piety. Also the conviction that one can change society by converting individuals was not an agenda he promoted. For King, individual and social salvation had to occur simultaneously. The experience of rebirth must, according to King, translate into just institutions, structures, policies and laws. The Church at its best always addresses both individual and social salvation, justifying its existence as both the conscience of the State and the best symbol of the Christian community. King's legacy should stand as a reminder to British Baptists that being a prophet in space and time has no relationship whatsoever with injustice of any type. A prophetic Church speaks truth to power, challenging the actions of government and even Church when it undermines the Gospel message.

*The Apology* was a prophetic act and statement - one that King would have commended but only to a degree. For I am sure his question would have been 'what difference has *The Apology* made to British Baptist churches, Associations and Colleges?' I am in no doubt *The Apology* has made some difference to our common Baptist life. Many British Baptists are becoming increasingly sensitive to the theological injunction to act justly, though one of the hindrances to progress is the Obama factor - the notion that Obama's rise to the White House is a metaphor for a post-racist society. King would never have agreed with this and might have reminded us of the role of the prophets who exercised advocacy on behalf of the vulnerable and held the rulers to account for their unjust practices. They spoke up for the marginalised, critiquing a form of religion unconcerned for the weak and the vulnerable. So too in the light of Professor Ted Cantle's<sup>1</sup> most recent report on community cohesion in which he warned that 'segregated societies breed intolerance and prejudice' and that 'white people are leaving urban areas in disproportionate numbers and avoid moving to diverse areas when they do move.'

Baptist churches must seek to be prophetic when faced with racial injustice, whether we have apologised or not. This is not easy. But post-*Apology* we need to work even harder in rooting out all forms of racism and create Baptist churches that speak and live prophetically in the light of *The Apology* made.

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1 Ted Cantle set up the Institute of Community Cohesion (iCoCo) which became the UK's leading authority on community cohesion and intercultural relations. In August 2001, he was appointed by the Home Secretary to Chair the Community Cohesion Review Team and to lead the review into the causes of the summer disturbances in a number of northern towns and cities. The ground-breaking Report – known as 'the Cantle Report' – was produced in December 2001 and made around 70 recommendations.



# Resources

Other resources which may be useful to your small group, include:

- **Apology DVD** - Bible study material based on a meeting of London Baptist ministers to reflect on what took place at BU Council in November 2007. It will help you hear and explore the issues raised at Council, including both the reservations about making this *Apology* and the convictions that finally united all those present. A facilitator's study guide provides information on how to use the resource.  
Copies available from the Faith and Society Team - [faithandsociety@baptist.org.uk](mailto:faithandsociety@baptist.org.uk)
- **Bicentenary booklet** - a souvenir booklet produced in 2014 to accompany the events celebrating 200 years of the relationship between the Jamaica Baptist Union and the Baptist Union of GB.  
Copies available from the Faith and Society Team - [faithandsociety@baptist.org.uk](mailto:faithandsociety@baptist.org.uk)
- **Multiethnic Church** - A six week course for small groups, written by Baptist minister Malcolm Patten, to help develop healthy, integrated churches which reflect the richness and diversity of the Kingdom of God.  
Can be downloaded free of charge from: [www.baptist.org.uk/multiethnicchurch](http://www.baptist.org.uk/multiethnicchurch)
- **Pentecost People** - a resource from the Baptist Union of GB encouraging churches to engage in multicultural worship.  
Can be downloaded free of charge from: [www.baptist.org.uk/pentecostpeople](http://www.baptist.org.uk/pentecostpeople)
- **Text and Story: Prophets for Their Time and Ours** by Gale Richards. This series of study notes encourages adults and young people to reflect on the stories of five Baptist pioneers, on the scriptural texts that shaped them and their own stories today in order to find their place in society and develop their potential for leadership.  
Copies are available from Regent's Park College for £5.
- **Journeying To Justice: Contributions to the Baptist church across the Black Atlantic** edited by Anthony G Reddie with Wale Hudson-Roberts and Gale Richards (Paternoster – April 2017).

# Timeline 1494 - 1813

**1494**

Christopher Columbus lands in Jamaica - inhabited by Tainos people. Subsequently, Tainos are exterminated.



**1699**

80% of people living in the Caribbean are African slaves



**1670**

Treaty of Madrid - Jamaica formally cedes to the British.

**1655**

Jamaica captured from the Spanish by the British.

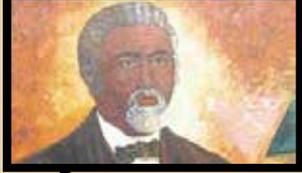
**1700s**

By the end of the 18th century, the principal product of the island is sugar, generated by slave labour forcibly imported from Africa. Sugar production in Jamaica greatly enriches Britain.



**1783**

Arrival in Jamaica of emancipated preacher George Liele, who establishes Baptist work in Kingston.



**1792**

Formation of the Baptist Missionary Society in Britain, which sends its first missionary, William Carey, to India the following year.



**1400s**

**1500s**

**1600s**

**1700s**

**1800s**

**1509**

Spanish claim island. Slaves shipped from Africa to work on sugar plantations.



**1672**

The Royal African Company set up in Britain to regulate the African slave trade.

**1747**

Liverpool becomes Britain's busiest slave trading port.



**1784**

Moses Baker, another formerly enslaved African living in America, establishes church at Crooked Springs in Western Jamaica. With mounting opposition to Christian work among the enslaved population, he seeks help from BMS.

**1788**

Under pressure from abolitionists, British parliament begins to investigate the slave trade.

**1807**

Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade within the British Empire.

**1812**

Formation of the first Baptist Union in Britain.

With thanks to the Jamaica Baptist Union and John Briggs for their guidance in drawing up this timeline

**Timeline  
1814 - 1914**

**Early 1800s**

Jamaican leaders Moses Baker, Sam Swiney, Thomas Swigle, George Gibb and Sam Sharpe offer testimony and costly witness in Jamaica.



**1814**

BMS sends John Rowe, a Bristol student, to work in Jamaica. Although he dies within two years, he pioneers a significant partnership.

**1833**

British Parliament passes the Slavery Abolition Act, followed by the implementation of the apprenticeship system and delayed full emancipation until 1838.

**1842**

Jamaica Baptist Missionary Society is established to engage in mission in other parts of the Caribbean and Africa. The first Theological College, Calabar, is founded to train ministers.

**1865**

Morant Bay Uprising - in reaction to an oppressive regime, with Paul Bogle and other Native Baptists taking a leading role amongst the protestors. Bogle, George William Gordon (a Native Baptist member of the Jamaican House of Assembly) and three Native Baptist ministers executed for sedition, along with 439 negroes. House of Assembly eventually abolished, and planter supremacy ends.



**1838**

British Parliament gives planters £20M as compensation for losing the services of the enslaved, while the enslaved receive no financial compensation.



**1800s**

**Early 1800s**

John Rowe is followed by other missionaries including James Coultart, Lee Compere, James Phillippo, Thomas Burchell, William Knibb and Joshua Tinson. After 1831 they are not prepared to follow a 'no politics' rule in their missionary endeavours.



**1831**

Large-scale slave revolt provoked by a desire for wages, freedom and an additional Christmas holiday. Initially planned as a passive peaceful protest by Sam Sharpe, the rising is savagely put down by the plantation authorities. 312 slaves, including Sharpe are convicted and executed and 144 Baptist chapels are destroyed by colonist mobs.

**1840**

The Jamaica Native Baptist Missionary Society forms in response to prejudice of BMS missionaries toward persons of African descent holding pastoral office in Baptist churches.

**1838 onwards**

Baptists instrumental in establishing 'Free Villages' for the newly emancipated people, including a school and Baptist church.



**1880s**

Islanders gain the right to elect nine members of a Legislative Council and a new Constitution is adopted.

**1860s**

Increased sugar crop failure leads to unemployment. BMS Secretary EB Underhill commends diversification. Banana plantations are set up in 1870s.

**1849**

Formation of Jamaica Baptist Union.



**1912**

Opening of Calabar High School, a boarding school for boys (mainly sons of ministers).

# Timeline 1914 - 2017

**1940s**

Jamaica gains a degree of local political control, with the first elections under universal adult suffrage held in 1944.

**1962**

Jamaica achieves political independence from the UK, remaining as a sovereign state within the Commonwealth.



**1970**

Jamaica Baptist Union plays a leading role in establishing the Caribbean Baptist Fellowship, a constituent body of the Baptist World Alliance with the Revd Azariah McKenzie as its first head.

**2014**

Bicentenary celebrations mark the relationship between the Baptist Unions of GB and Jamaica.



**1939**

Jamaicans arrive in Britain to serve in the Armed Forces during World War II.

**1948**

The Revd David Jelleyman arrives in Jamaica to become Tutor at the Calabar Theological College. He gives 36 years of faithful and dedicated service, primarily to theological education.

**1962-65**

Jamaica Baptist Union pastor, the Revd CS Reid, serves at Moss Side Baptist church, Manchester.

**2007**

200 years after the abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade, the Baptist Union of GB offers an Apology to Jamaican Baptists.

**1929**

Further problems for the Jamaican economy in the wake of the world depression and associated slump in the sugar market.

**1900s**

**2000s**

**1938**

Sugar and dock workers around the island revolt over wages and working conditions, leading to significant changes including an organised labour movement and competitive party system.

**1958**

Jamaica joins nine other British territories as a province of the Federation of the West Indies - withdrawing in 1961 after a referendum.

**1966**

The United Theological College of the West Indies is founded, with the Revd Dr Horace Russell serving as its first Jamaican president from 1972-76.



**2007**

Jamaican Baptist pastor, the Revd Neville Callam, is appointed General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, the first person of African origin to hold that post.



**1948**

The *Windrush* passes through the Caribbean on its way back to Britain, arriving in June 1948 with 492, mainly Jamaicans, aboard to begin life in Britain.



**1941-44**

With a lack of pastoral oversight in many of the island's churches, BMS re-engages with the Jamaican situation as one of its fields of mission.

**1964-65**

Jamaica Baptist Union pastor, the Revd Clement Gayle, is invited to Britain to serve in the Racial Integration Programme.

**2017**

Marking 10 years since the Baptist Union of GB offered an Apology to Jamaican Baptists.



# Endorsements

This is a helpful reminder of a significant event in our journey as Baptists Together. This story needs to be told regularly that the ongoing conversation may give space for the Spirit to lead us to appropriate Kingdom responses.

**Rupert Lazar - Baptist Union President 2016-17**

From a variety of voices and experiences emerges a resource to both challenge and encourage. As a pastor in a multi-ethnic context, with a church seeking to practise a mission of good news across cultures, *Lest We Forget* offers a critical pathway on the journey of living out the commission to be a house of prayer for all peoples.

Tackling the dynamics of apology, forgiveness and restoration, this resource asks questions of oppression and domination that will impact pastoral and missional concerns and lead onto addressing fundamental issues of fellowship. What are the challenges of diversity and identity? What action today heals or enhances the legacy of slavery? Why are issues of racial justice important? How do we share and engage reciprocally with those from a different context?

Overall, by reflecting biblically, historically and culturally, answers emerge from *Lest We Forget* that will leave the local church changed, refreshed and renewed for contemporary mission.

**James Chapman - Cemetery Road Baptist Church, Sheffield**

When a single event within a much longer journey of experience acts as a positive turning point for many involved, we have a responsibility to ensure that we revisit that experience, remind ourselves what we believe happened, and re-evaluate the whole journey from where we stand now. This new resource comes on the tenth anniversary of *The Apology* for slavery, which proved timely in helping to restore and heal relationships in the UK and across the world, and its purpose is summed up in its title 'lest we forget'. It brings a range of voices, commenting on several significant lives, together with some questions about their stories, for us to study and reflect on together as the journey continues. Studying these materials together will enable our journey of learning and healing to continue.

**Margaret Gibbs - Perry Rise Baptist Church, London**

For us, as a diverse group of Christians in the Baptist tradition, finding ourselves in a vibrant, dynamic and diverse area of Birmingham, we wholeheartedly welcome this resource.

As a church, we take seriously the need to develop ourselves as a multicultural church. We take seriously our commitment to listen and to learn and to love.

*Lest We Forget* will help us as together we work through being natural and relaxed about being a diverse people of Jesus, whilst at the same time always being aware that a truly Kingdom way of being needs to be worked at in an intentional way. So, we thank God for each of the contributions made here and the help that we believe each part of this resource will be for us as we look back, live now and lead on into the future!

**Gerard Goshawk - Erdington Six Ways Baptist Church, Birmingham**

*Lest we forget* is an aptly named resource, for how many in our Baptist pews have any more than a fleeting memory of *The Apology* issued by the Baptist Union 10 years ago? Writing as someone who was not at that time part of a Baptist church, it isn't even a memory. This is therefore a welcome resource for all our churches, helping to ensure that issues of race and discrimination are not allowed to creep back under the carpet, where they had resided for many years.

Perhaps the most notable feature of this resource is its uncompromising language and opinions, some of its contributors reflecting significant criticism of the original *Apology*. And while some of it is perhaps a bit academic, couched in the language of an essay question more than a Bible study, for those of us who choose to engage with it, it is guaranteed to have us wrestling with some deep, weighty, complex issues.

**Ken Livingstone - Minister in Training, Stockport Baptist Church and Northern Baptist College**

This is a thought-provoking resource for any individual or group committed to delving deeper into the issue of slavery and its ongoing legacy and consequences. At times the contributions make for uncomfortable reading, contemplating collective sin and challenging passive racism and racial biases, pointing out that while this generation continues to enjoy the material benefits of the slave trade, many black people continue to struggle with their own value and worth. The contributors provide individual perspectives of both *The Apology* itself ten years ago, and *The Journey* that has followed, asking some poignant questions. In view of the fact that many people are still hurting, taking time to consider again both *The Apology* and the questions and concerns that have arisen during the subsequent *Journey* from these different perspectives is an essential step in the process of the worldwide Church becoming a body where every member is valued equally regardless of difference.

**Gill Thurgood - Northern Baptist College and on placement at Morton Baptist Church, Leeds**



## Review

*Lest we forget* is a timely reminder that we are now [more than] ten years on from *The Apology* and [more than] ten years into *The Journey* that followed. This resource sets out the events and deliberations that led up to *The Apology* made by the BUGB Council in 2007 including the words of *The Apology* itself. But more than simply telling the story, this resource offers us different cultural perspectives through which to better understand *The Apology* and to challenge our thinking and our ongoing commitment to *The Journey* that followed.

So Doreen Morrison explores the anger of Jonah and directs us to learn more about the pioneering Baptists (both black and white) who worked tirelessly for Emancipation, and to see racism with its roots in notions of superiority found in the Enlightenment and Evangelicalism.

Joe Kapolyo looks to the example of the cross and the political, economic, psychological, social and spiritual legacies of the Slave Trade and colonialism which still benefit dominant white cultures and identities at the expense of black cultures and identities to explore questions of why we need to apologise and how we handle scripture.

Steve Latham looks to Nehemiah and Daniel which challenge our individualistic understandings of sin with their insight that there is a 'solidarity in sin' which calls all members to accept responsibility and to repent, to free us from this chain of cause and effect and to work towards making amends.

Michele Mahon holds a mirror up to our blind spots which can only be healed by an intentional listening and responding to one another and introduces us to Womanist Theology which seeks to resist racism, sexism and classism and encourages us in our task of 'doing theology' from different perspectives.

Marvia Lawes explores *The Apology* as a symbolic act with the potential 'to be recognised as a restorative and transitional justice initiative'. She encourages us in the transformation that is happening through *The Journey* but challenges us as Baptists Together to rethink how we partner with the Jamaica Baptist Union and others in the process and calls us to consider the issue of making reparation. She also calls Jamaican Baptists to have their own process of responding to *The Apology* and explores the Christ-like character of Onesimus in Paul's letter to Philemon, reflecting on how he helped Philemon to transform power dynamics to be more in keeping with the Kingdom of God.

Each study invites us to join *The Journey* with renewed commitment and energy and challenges us to deepen our theological reflection through some questions for individual study or group discussion and directs us towards further resources.

Above all *Lest we forget* challenges us to join in with that 'Pentecost moment' of *The Apology* calling us to open our 'hearts and minds to the prophetic whisper of God' and to work sacrificially towards becoming a racially inclusive church. *Lest we forget* is a call to our churches, Colleges and Associations to re-orientate ourselves to make this vision a reality so we may truly reflect the glory of God.

**Clare McBeath - Co-Principal, Northern Baptist College**

