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News:

### **New study centre to explore violence and the Bible**

#### **A new study centre at Bristol Baptist College aims to shed light on some of the most confusing parts of the Bible: the texts of violence in the Old Testament**

The Centre for the Study of Bible and Violence launched in November with twin aims:

- to promote postgraduate research in the broad field of Bible and violence; and conversation among scholars of different faiths, nationalities and disciplines who are working in related areas. (academic arm)
- to provide resources to the churches in order to equip them to offer a counter-violence, counter-extremist narrative; and to promote confidence in the value of the Old Testament and the goodness of God. (applied arm)

The Centre's director is the Revd Dr Helen Paynter, an Old Testament tutor at the college who delivered the 2018 Whitley Lecture. The lecture was entitled Dead and Buried – Attending to the voice of the victim in the Old Testament and today.

Reflecting on her Whitley year, Helen spoke of the need to 'recover our confidence in the value of the Old Testament'.

'In my view, the texts of violence in the Old Testament comprise one of the pressing issues facing the church today,' she said. 'This impression has been reinforced by the turnout and comments I have received on my lecture tour.

'I believe it is vital that we recover our confidence in the value of the Old Testament; that we stand upon the absolute assuredness of the goodness of God; and that we learn to interpret our Old Testaments in ways that do not endorse violent action in our own time.'

For Helen, the Whitley lecture tour was part of an ongoing strand of research in the broad area of Bible and violence. It began more than a decade ago when a youth worker told her that one of their young people was in danger of losing her faith

because of her reading of some of the stories in the Old Testament. The new Centre is the latest development.

The Centre is seeking to recruit postgraduate researchers (MTh or PhD), while Bristol Baptist College is in the process of setting up a Bible and Violence pathway in its existing MA programme (MA in Theology, Ministry and Mission). It is 'very optimistic' that it will be able to offer this MA to students from September 2019. The Centre also welcomes speaking requests and suggestions from churches.

The Centre has planned two official launch days. On 4 June it will launch its applied arm with a workshop. The event is aimed at ministers and others who are interested in practical questions relating to the Bible and violence, and will offer a combination of papers and roundtable discussion (more information here).

To launch its academic arm, it will host an inaugural symposium on 17 June mainly for scholars working in the field and students who are interested in the area. The keynote speaker is Professor James Crossley Professor of Bible, Society and Politics at St Mary's University, Twickenham. It is now inviting submissions for the symposium (more information here).

Both days see the launch of Helen's new book, written during her Whitley year. Entitled *God of violence yesterday, God of love today? - Wrestling Honestly with the Old Testament*, the book aims to grapple with the violence of the Old Testament, and provide some pointers to how we might think about it.

'It is not, of course, a final word on the subject,' Helen said, 'it is probably not even my final word on the subject, but it is an attempt to contribute to the conversation.'

For more visit: <https://www.bristol-baptist.ac.uk/study-centres/csbv/>

## **UK 'fuelling war instead of peace'**

**The UK is fuelling war instead of peace with its arms exports, is complicit in the Yemen war, and needs to change its approach to be a credible peacemaker, says Christian Aid**

The international development charity has called on the Government to stop selling arms to Saudi Arabia, as well as other states which are violating international law. It says the Government is on track to be one of the world's biggest arms dealers, which 'casts a shadow' on its attempts to place itself as a values-based international actor committed to tackling global conflict. There's wider backing for this stance, adds the charity, after a ComRes poll found 61 per cent of the British public thinks the Government should stop selling military equipment to Saudi Arabia.

The warnings and conclusions are part of a new report *Resourcing war and peace: time to address the UK Government's double standards*, and coincide with Christian Aid's Christmas peacemakers appeal.

Over the last five years, the UK has sold over two-thirds of its major arms exports to Gulf Arab States, with Saudi Arabia alone accounting for 49 per cent of all such exports. In contrast, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, Denmark (future exports only) and Finland have all suspended arms sales to Saudi Arabia, and Canada may follow suit soon. The US Senate has also provoked debate on ongoing support to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen.

Karol Balfe, who leads on Christian Aid's global peacebuilding programme, said, 'No other arms exporter comes close to this dependence on the Gulf market.'

'In turn, this means that the Royal Saudi Air Force is hugely dependent on British-made aircraft and missiles – maintained and supported in-country by British military and civilian technicians for its own operations.'

'The UK Government risks putting its own perceived national security and domestic interests ahead of human security and protection of those living in conflict. In our work, we see that local actors make a huge difference in turning the tide of violence.'

'We are heartened to see that the British public is with us on this. With 61 per cent believing these arms sales to Saudi Arabia should stop, we are calling out the UK Government's immoral policy of arms exports to repressive regimes.'

The charity praised the UK's role in aid and development, committing to 0.7 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI) for aid and 50 per cent of its aid budget to conflict affected states. However, this was undermined by its arms exports.

Rowan Williams, Christian Aid's chair and the former Archbishop of Canterbury, said the charity was calling on the Government to 'become a leader in conflict resolution and peacebuilding by way of society-building.'

He said, 'We can't pretend that British involvement in war is a thing of the past. We may not have experienced the direct effects of war in this country for a lifetime, and we can be thankful for that; but our overseas policies are still helping to support violence and injustice elsewhere in the world, among those least able to defend themselves.'

'The scale of the humanitarian catastrophe that has overtaken Yemen is one of the most dramatic instances. 14 million people are on the brink of famine, as a result of a war that continues to claim the lives of countless civilians. And this is a war in which the government of the UK is directly complicit: arms sales from this country to Saudi Arabia have increased by two thirds since 2016 and now account for nearly half of Britain's major arms exports.'

'Sustainable development needs political security and the rule of law; it means people having a safe place to call home, security of food supplies and guaranteed access to medical and educational services. Without these things, any talk of security is going to be empty and meaningless – at best a sticking-plaster, at worst something that contributes to worsening our shared insecurity.

'Is the UK prepared to take a new lead in peacemaking by promoting and championing human rights and international law in settings of extreme and indiscriminate violence?

'This Christmas, we are challenging our country and our government to take a long and critical look at its record and to find the courage to become a leader in conflict resolution and peacebuilding by way of society-building.

'We know that the vast majority of this country's citizens want to see an end to arms sales to countries engaged in wholesale slaughter; and a similar majority wants to see our development programmes guided by the needs of people on the ground rather than security priorities alone. We are urging our government to listen to these voices and to act.'

### **'Stopping hunger is about more than food'**

#### **Baptist minister Carol Bostridge has featured in a short film with rapper Professor Green to raise awareness about hunger in the UK**

Carol Bostridge is part-time co-ordinator of the Lewisham Foodbank; Professor Green, real name Stephen Manderson, is a British rapper who has presented a number of television documentaries.

The film takes place at one of the Lewisham Foodbank sites, and begins and ends with Professor Green delivering a piece to camera. He explains that Trussell Trust foodbanks have given out more than a million emergency food parcels to people in crisis this year.

Reflecting on the impact of the welcome people receive at foodbanks, he states, 'Stopping hunger is about more than food. And it starts with a little bit of kindness.'

'It's such a well made film,' said Carol, 'and such good publicity. Stephen (Professor Green) was wonderful – he listened and was kind to everyone.'

Carol was approached by the Trussell Trust, which co-ordinates the only nationwide network of foodbanks in the country, about the possibility of being involved in a film created by consumer goods giant Unilever. The film highlights how this year Tesco is donating 5p to the Trussell Trust on selected Unilever products such as Hellmann's,

Knorr, Marmite, PG Tip's and Colman's. It would be fronted by Professor Green, who has several million followers across his social media feeds.

'They said they were going to do it very sensitively, so it was win-win,' said Carol, who has led the foodbank for four years and recently became part-time regional minister in the London Baptist Association.

The film involves Professor Green chatting with foodbank volunteers and users to learn more about how it operates. Carol can be seen explaining to Professor Green how she's stopped trying to work out whether people entering the foodbank are donating or in need: with 14 million people living below the poverty line, people from all walks of life need the foodbank.

The rapper has shared the film across his various social media platforms, where it has racked up thousands of views.

Carol says it's resulted in more donations and offers of help, but explained that demand for the foodbank's services has gone up anyway.

'We've had people asking to collect for us, and extra donations – though it's always a busy time of the year, I think we've had more than we would normally receive.

'Year on year, the demand always goes up – and we've not had the full roll out of Universal Credit. Whenever there is full roll-out, demand goes up.'

### **South Wales Baptist College appoints new Co-Principals**

**The Trustees of the South Wales Baptist College, Cardiff are pleased to announce that they have appointed the Revd Dr Rosa Hunt and the Revd Dr Ed Kaneen to serve as Co-Principals, from September next year. They will succeed the Revd Dr Peter Stevenson, who will be retiring next summer after leading the college over the last eight years.**

Rosa is currently an Associate Tutor at the College, alongside her role as Pastor of Salem Baptist Chapel, Tonteg where she will continue to serve on a part-time basis. Rosa grew up in Malta but went to England for her sixth form education. She studied Natural Sciences at Trinity College, Cambridge, which was where she met her husband Francis. After a period teaching maths, they spent time in France before moving to Wales in 2006. Following ministerial training at South Wales Baptist College she was called to be Associate Minister at Bethel Baptist Penyrheol in 2010, combining this with work for a PhD in patristic hermeneutics through the International Baptist Theological Seminary. Serving in a bilingual chapel, Salem, Tonteg, she makes the most of every opportunity to speak Welsh.

Rosa is passionate about giving ministerial candidates and church leaders the best possible opportunity not only to receive an excellent theological education, but also to have their characters moulded into the image of Christ as they share in the life of the college community. She is very excited about the prospect of contributing to this strategic task, working alongside Ed, and other colleagues at Cardiff.

Ed has been serving as Tutor in Biblical Studies at the College since 2012. He grew up in the Isle of Man but has connections with Wales through his mother, whose family lived in Bangor. After studying Computer Science and working for BT, he trained for ministry at Regent's Park College, Oxford before serving as a Baptist minister in a newly planted church in Sussex. While there, he undertook postgraduate studies at King's College, London, before going on to gain a New Testament PhD at Durham University. With his family, he is a member of Ararat Baptist Church in Whitchurch, Cardiff.

When asked how he felt about the appointment, Ed said, 'I am genuinely thrilled about the opportunity to share with Rosa in this significant role. In a period of ongoing change for Wales and beyond, I particularly look forward to working with Christians of different denominations to serve God creatively in our nation'.

The Revd D. Marc Owen, chair of the Cardiff college trustees, said, 'We are delighted to be able to make this exciting joint appointment and believe that Ed and Rosa will be able to provide positive leadership as the College moves into the next stage of its work equipping people for relevant forms of ministry and mission.'