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## From the Chair/ David Sims



### Keep Going: Facing a world of post-truth, lies and uncertainty

Word of the Year  
~ post-truth ~

It is the truth that sets us free, and that is as true in our post-truth world as it ever was. Many of us have had bad experiences with people who claim that their truth is *the* truth, and we have

been educated in a pluralist view which understands that there are many perspectives on truth. We are past the stage of accepting that something is so simply because someone who sounds authoritative

says that it is so. We now understand that where you stand depends on where you sit, as the old American political phrase has it. Experts may be self-serving, and research results may have come from work that was sponsored by a commercial

interest. I once worked in an operational research project in BP where we were conducting a large simulation of the movement of oil around the world to work out whether it was cheaper to build more storage tanks in Rotterdam (making my department look less efficient than our competitors) or keep ships waiting in the Channel (making the shipping department look less efficient). By chance, I happened in the bar one evening on someone who was working on a parallel project in the shipping department. You know where this is

Perspectives  
on Truth

going; each project was coming out with results, objectively, scientifically and sincerely, which would make their own department look good.

Constructing Our Understanding

But this is not the whole story. There are also lies. 'Misery lit' has some clear examples of this; books have sold well on the claim that their authors are telling all about their childhood in the holocaust, or in the favelas, only for it to emerge later that the authors spent their childhood in Switzerland, or in a middle-class suburb. It is a lie to suggest that President Obama was not born in the United States, or that human industry is not contributing to global warming. To denigrate experts, as one of our recent Cabinet Ministers did in the UK, is to prepare the ground for the acceptance of lies. Truth is not infinitely flexible, or soft, or tolerant of continual attempts to chip away at it. In the social science literature, the social constructionist literature which emphasises how we construct our understanding of the world together, is balanced by a small literature on 'death and furniture'. There are some things that we cannot, individually or collectively, construct out of the way, for example that we all die, and that when we walk into furniture it hurts.

So why do we tell lies? We might want to win a referendum by printing figures that we know to be false on the side of a bus. We might want to ensure the future of our faith community by describing its virtues in a way that we know to be different from

The 51:49 Principle

how it feels on a wet Tuesday. We might express certainty about what happens after death in order to offer a unique selling proposition for our faith, or equally because we cannot bear the pain of not knowing precisely what happens next when someone that we love dies. Graham Allison proposed 'the 51:49' principle, whereby the less sure we are about something, the more strongly we will argue for the side which we think is slightly more likely. All this is human, but then so are all sorts of unacceptable behaviours. If we think, with Yeats, that 'things fall apart; the centre cannot hold', we do not necessarily retreat into order and certainty.

So what? At times of uncertainty, for our churches, for our country, for the Western world, for the planet, it is not enough to shrug and decide that it is all beyond us and there is nothing that we can do. Nor is it productive to start claiming a certainty that we do not feel, because (a) that is not truthful and (b) we can see all too clearly the awful and destructive consequences of people accepting supposed certainties in desperation. We keep going, knowing with Julian of Norwich that 'All shall be well, and all shall be well,

We keep going...

and all manner of thing shall be well' and with St. Paul that 'I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8: 38-39, NRSV).

## Modem's 2017 Annual Conference

**STOP PRESS:** Modem's 2017 Annual Conference will be held from **Thursday 7 December to Friday 8 December** at Sarum College, Salisbury. Reserve the date now - details to follow.

<http://www.modemuk.org/>

## Behind the scenes: Modem 1-Day Conference/ Rachel Noel

**Rachel explains some of the objectives and planning behind the new format of this year's one day Modem Conference.**



At Modem, we think one of our key strengths as an organisation are the interesting people from different disciplines and different churches that want to pursue questions relating to leadership, management and ministry. At the end of our 2015 conference the participants felt that more opportunity to discuss the ideas, and bring different perspectives to the conversation, would be really fruitful. In preparing for this year's conference, we took this feedback very seriously and explored how we could build this into the structure of the day.

### **A Space for Conversations**

Our vision for the day was to create a space for these conversations to develop. We wrestled with ideas of how we could set the tone for the day, how could we clearly demonstrate that we wanted to engage people in the conversation, that we really valued their input. We felt that it was important to do this wholeheartedly, and not just with an extended section of questions at the end of a typical keynote speaker speech.

We were fortunate that our speakers Rev Dr Emma Percy and Dr Clare Watkins were open to our ideas, and so the format for our conference emerged. Emma and Clare were both brave enough to not put together a controlled keynote presentation - instead agreeing to give us a short introduction to their work, and to then discuss and question their ideas with each other before opening up the conversation with everyone else at the conference.

### **Developing Ideas**

We had set the tone for this day by distributing a chapter from Emma's book (<http://tinyurl.com/Modem2016EmmaPercyChapter>) and an article that Clare had written (<http://tinyurl.com/Modem2016ClaireWatkinsArticle>) together with some starter questions to help get people thinking. We also invited participants to submit any further questions related to the topic before we'd even arrived at the venue! Through the pre-conference emails and the structure of the day, we wanted to give people the confidence to really take part in the conversations, to add in their voices and feel part of developing the ideas that would emerge.

### **An Interactive Approach**

Our thinking was that there are lots of questions in the area of 'organisation encounters theology: making sense of ministries', and that as the day developed, our 'outcomes' wouldn't be any definitive answer, instead we were looking to create more developed questions. We planned extended time for conversation in the morning, where conference participants would be able to choose which set of questions they wanted to engage in. Towards the end of the conversation time, they would have to capture any emerging questions - which would lead into the following conversation, with participants having the opportunity to continue in one conversation or change to a different topic.

You'll have to read David's article (p.6-7) to find out if our plans were successful.... or why not come along to our 2017 conference 7-8 Dec 2017, to find out how the conversation will develop!



Lumen URC, day conference venue



## The Centre for Leadership Learning at Sarum College

**Tim Harle**, who recently completed his term as Vice-Chair of Modem, introduces the work of a unique centre, which combines aspects of a business school, conference centre, retreat house and seminary.



Left: The first cohort of students graduated from Sarum's flagship MA in Christian Approaches to Leadership in 2015.

Top: A view across Salisbury



Sarum hosts Modem's residential conferences. Here, internationally acclaimed leadership scholar, Donna Ladkin, reads a poem during one such conference. Her books, such as *Rethinking Leadership*, are highly thought of by Sarum's MA students. Prof. Ladkin is External Examiner for the MA in Christian Approaches to Leadership.

In a speech due to be delivered in Dallas, Texas in November 1963, President John F Kennedy was going to point out that "leadership and learning are indispensable to each other". That speech was never given, but the link between leadership and learning is one that we are proud to maintain at Sarum College. Learning has taken place on this site, in Salisbury Cathedral Close, for centuries. Sarum College was established in 1995, and 2016 saw the launch of the Centre for Leadership Learning.

### The Centre is responsible for a number of activities, including:

- **Accredited courses in Christian Approaches to Leadership**, validated by the University of Winchester. Three part-time options are available: a one-year Post-Graduate Certificate, two-year Diploma and three-year MA. MA students typically take three modules, based around Monday-Thursday residentials, in each of the first two years, and complete a dissertation or practical project in their final year. Individuals can also join individual modules without being registered for the MA.
- **Non-accredited short courses and seminars.** From pastoral supervision to liminal leadership, we run courses from ½ day to week-long or weekend residentials.
- **Bespoke Leadership Development Programmes.** A typical programme for a client, for example an Anglican Diocese, may combine a residential element with locally-based small group work.



Canadian author David Hurst presents a copy of his Harvard Business School book, *Crisis and Renewal*, to Librarian, Jayne Downey. Hurst was at Sarum to lead a seminar on *The New Ecology of Leadership*. The Library provides leadership students and visitors with a rare combination of scholarly publications on leadership studies and theology. Eagle-eyed readers may spot some of Modem’s books on the shelves in the background.

- **Hosting conferences.** The combination of the College’s setting, some 40 ensuite bedrooms, and onsite catering facilities, offers a distinctive venue. We have co-hosted Modem’s residential conferences in recent years; another recent example was an ESRC-sponsored seminar ([www.ethicalleadership.org.uk](http://www.ethicalleadership.org.uk)).
- **Research projects.** We are coming to the end of a three-year part time project working with Heads of Church Schools exploring the distinctive leadership challenges they face. This project was sponsored by the Sarum St Michael Educational Charity ([www.sarumstmichael.org](http://www.sarumstmichael.org)).
- **One-to-one mentoring.** This may take place over a period of time with clients visiting Sarum from time-to-time. Sarum is also a favourite venue for people on sabbatical: they can stay residentially, take advantage of the Library, and also take part in MA modules.

We especially value the broad range of our students and lecturers. The former include representatives of the Anglican, Baptist, Elim, Independent, Methodist, Roman Catholic, Quaker and Vineyard traditions. The latter may come from a Department of Theology or Business School, or be a practising leader or consultant.



Sarum’s Principal, Revd Canon Dr James Woodward, welcomes delegates to an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) seminar on *Developing Ethical Leaders: The Contribution of Philosophy and Spirituality*. The seminar was co-hosted at Sarum by Prof. Andy Henley from Cardiff Business School. Speakers included Prof. Geoff Moore from Durham University Business School, Dr Karen Blakeley from Winchester Business School, Edinburgh-based activist theologian Eve Poole, and the MD of National Express UK Coach, Tom Stables.



Sarum has small rooms for group discussions, but delegates may choose to meet elsewhere. Here, a group of headteachers share some of the challenges they face.

**To find out more about the Centre for Leadership learning, please visit:**

<http://www.sarum.ac.uk/learning/leadership-ministry>. Tim can be contacted on ✉ [tharle@sarum.ac.uk](mailto:tharle@sarum.ac.uk) or  [@TimHarle](https://twitter.com/TimHarle)

## Modem Conference 2016 Report

### Organisation encounters theology: making sense of ministries in a changing world/ David Sims

Rachel Noel has explained how and why we chose a different format for this year's annual conference, and the result was that about 35 of us met for a day that was inspired and ignited by our visiting speakers, but which also required all of us to interact and participate more than some conferences. Our speakers were acknowledged experts in the field, but rather than ask them to do set piece talks, which would have been fascinating, we asked them to tell us where they were currently in their thinking, then to interact with each other around their topics, and then to interact with all of us as we all thought together. This report is inevitably the thinking of one of the people present. If others who were at the day came away stimulated differently, then that is a measure of the success of the day.



Dr Clare Watkins, Lecturer in Ministerial Theology at the University of Roehampton, teaches and researches in the areas of ecclesiology, sacramental theology and practical theology. She has a particular concern for working theologically in ways that contribute to ministerial formation and church life and mission. She is a lay Roman Catholic. Revd Dr Emma Percy, Chaplain and Welfare Dean, Trinity College Oxford, researches, writes and speaks about theology and mothering, Anglican ministry and the theology of care. She is chair of WATCH (Women and the Church).

#### The Metaphor of Ministry

Church is neither just a human organization nor some sort of divine mystery. Ministries are no easier to talk about because of the individualistic language of our contemporary culture. The New Testament features a lot of the plural 'you'. Ministries are not individual matters. We are always going to be using metaphors, and all metaphors run out of steam at some point. A metaphor is a model with staying power, but it can also start misleading us if pushed too far. The metaphor of ministry as mothering is an interesting example of that. Some of the work on mothering emphasises that it needs to be 'good enough' and that perfection is an unreasonable and unhelpful goal (reminiscent of the point that Justin Lewis-Anthony makes about George Herbert's view of ministry, which has made generations of ministers feel inadequate). The minister needs to be able to forgive and to be forgiven. The desire to control looks strange if we use mothering as our metaphor; mothers shape, encourage, develop, but the child is an autonomous being which grows and develops in its own way. There was debate about whether the ordained minister is responsible for enabling others to grow – why is it that way round? Are we not all growing, and ministering to each other in ways which make us mutually responsible for growth? Are any of us ever grown up? Or are we continuing works in progress?

The minister has to recognize that many people in their local church do not actually need much from them. We all like to be needed, and can be tempted to create dependency. We are all marinated in the managerialist, neoliberal discourses that are all around us, and these influence the church too. It was suggested that another metaphor for organizing and the ministry of organizing would be 'curating', setting out the objects to which others may pay attention. It was also suggested that we fall into being too church focused. As soon as we start talking about ministry we are prone to thinking about it within churches. And because there were quite a lot of Anglicans in the room, and because Anglicans have been making a public mess of their discussions of ministry recently, we may have spent more time than we should discussing the current problems of Anglican ministry, and the attempts to reform it.

Too Church Focused?

Most of us come to a conference with questions in our mind that we want to address, and the speakers and many others had shared their questions in advance. Of course we did not all go away with our questions answered; better than that, we had developed better questions in cluster groups. I have grouped these questions into 6 areas.

## Developing Better Questions

**Vulnerability.** How can we move from control and rigidity to influence and fluidity? How do we take responsibility for controlling how we relate to other people without trying to control them? Is prayer our most radical way of handing over control? How do we maintain dialogue, vulnerability and conversation in a church that is called to be foolish?

**Subversion.** Subversion is universal and mutual. How do we learn Godly subversion? How does our theology of the Holy Spirit challenge and subvert 'common sense' approaches to structure, ministry and church organization? Do the opportunities to challenge power reduce the further up the hierarchy you go? How will the idea of ministry line up with the lived experience of this less formal generation? Should authority be delegated?

**Definitions.** One group likened ministry to craft beer making with its emphasis on local ingredients, local control and competition. (There is interesting research on craft beer making which suggests that it is highly collaborative, much more so than most local councils of churches!) How do official values and written creeds relate to lived values? Is the model of ministry predominantly used in the church masculine? What does it mean in Ephesians 4 by 'building up the body' until all come 'to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ' and is this a workable definition of ministry? Are the current models of church structures and ministry relevant in the light of continuous change? Ministry should be conceptualized as something that is expansive, lay and ordained, informal and formal, done with, not to people. How do we allow our understanding of ministry to be influenced by non-Western understandings of community and authority?

## Conceptualized Ministry

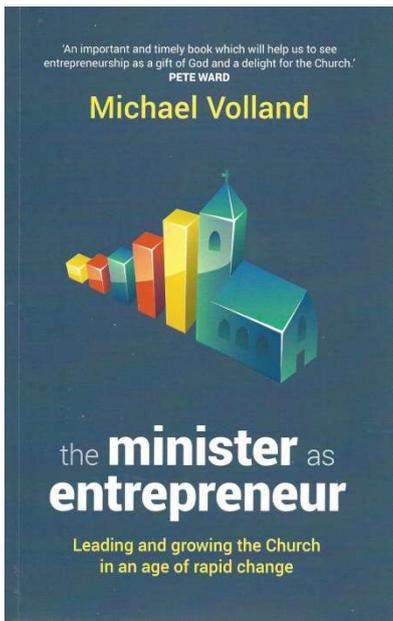
**Leadership.** Are we prepared for our power to be challenged? Should we be using a more relational leadership (perhaps more Trinitarian, although Clare pointed out that the current tendency to speak of the Trinity as if it were three people sitting around talking to each other was misleading)? Is there a difference between oversight and hierarchy? Might the role of the ordained be to discern and articulate meaning, and to help people see God in their situations?

**Measurement.** Do we need measurement? What do we measure and why? How might organization and leadership be different if we believe in death and resurrection? What are the biblical and theological criteria for 'success' or 'failure' in ecclesial organizations? How might they differ from other organizations? Things emerging from the periphery are hard to measure; does that mean that they are devalued? Is ministry all about working on the edge in immeasurable ways?

**Individualism.** Can hierarchy within ministry be part of diversity? Is leadership in ministry something that individuals do? How do you move ministry from the individualistic to the communitarian? How do we stop leadership from turning into them and us? How do we get some of the more collaborative models of current leadership into church thinking and practice? What leadership model flows from Ephesians 4? How do we acknowledge human needs to move in and out of relationships of dependency?

It was a rich and varied day, which participants could mould as they wished, with many questions asked, and some answered, on how we make sense of ministries. As always with a conference report, you had to be there, and even if you were, you will have different take-aways from mine. That is part of the diversity of ministry. We are grateful to the Susanna Wesley Foundation for their generous sponsorship of this conference.

## Diversity of Ministry



***The Minister as Entrepreneur: Leading and growing the Church in an age of rapid change*** by Michael Volland

SPCK, 2015, vi + 149pp, ISBN 978-0-281-07182-1, £12.99.

*Reviewed by Andrew Henley*

This short book sets out to explore attitudes towards, opportunities for and constraints facing ordained church leaders who attempt to adopt entrepreneurial strategies towards their work and ministry. The author is a former military chaplain and parish missionary, and currently teaches at an Anglican theological college. The book itself draws heavily on research conducted in the Diocese of Durham in support of his doctoral thesis. The basis of the research was a series of in-depth interviews with eighteen Church of England ministers, representing a range of theological traditions and working across different parish contexts.

Part 1 of the book is a rapid overview of academic ideas about entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur. As the book readily acknowledges, these are contested terms, and do not easily lend themselves to precise definition. In the popular mind entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship conjure up both positive and negative connotations, and perhaps particularly within the church there is suspicion that entrepreneurial activity is too often associated with financial gain rather than social value. However, as the author points out, this latter view has too readily sprung from the “enterprise culture” of the last two decades of the twentieth century, and discounts the positive sense in which the creation of wealth can lead to wider common good and need not be motivated by personal gain.

The book provides a summary overview of the historical development of the understanding of the role of the entrepreneur in a market-based economy. Few academics, of course, would subscribe to a narrow view focused solely on monetary gain and would instead define entrepreneurship in terms of the identification of creative opportunity. Volland draws heavily on the work of Bill Bolton and John Thompson who have authored a number of practitioner-orientated textbooks over recent years, to focus on the types of personal attributes ideally possessed by entrepreneurs. He sets out from the start, and subsequently explores in detail, the following definition of the minister-as-entrepreneur: “a visionary who in partnership with God and others, challenges the status quo by energetically creating and innovating in order to shape something of kingdom value” (p. 32). It is interesting that he works with a definition of an entrepreneur rather than of entrepreneurship as a process – many authors (and international bodies such as the OECD) give as much, if not more weight, to the latter.

However, the focus on the person rather than the process is arguably justified by the content of chapter 3, provocatively entitled “An Entrepreneurial God?”. If God displays entrepreneurial attributes, and if, as the author argues, entrepreneurship as a concept can deepen our understanding of God, then it becomes legitimate to construct a positive Christian image of the entrepreneur. The short theological reflection on this important point left this reader wanting to see this given a lot more consideration. But Volland moves quickly into a brief survey of entrepreneurial figures in the biblical narrative and through church history. I suspect that many of these figures would not have quickly self-identified as entrepreneurs, but high achieving leaders often do not self-attach the “entrepreneur” label until it is unpacked and explained.

Part 2 of the book focuses on a range of aspects of the author's research with church ministers, and tackles the following themes: attitudes towards entrepreneurial behaviour in the church (chapter 5); the availability of church buildings as a resource for entrepreneurial activity (chapter 6); teamwork and partnering (chapter 7); enabling and hindering factors (chapters 8 and 9) and finally the impact of senior church leadership (chapter 10). Overall, those interviewed are surprisingly positive about attitudes towards and scope for entrepreneurial activity in the church. However, they are also realistic about the challenges and difficulties of working within a very conservative organizational climate, with teams and partners who are more often than not hard-pressed volunteers, and with physical resources that can both support new opportunities but whose upkeep can also drain time, money and enthusiasm. Although the book doesn't explicitly draw on this perspective, the recent "effectuation" model of American academic Saras Sarasvathy would fit well into the minister-as-entrepreneur context. Entrepreneurial behaviour is not so much to do with unusual people taking high risks in search of high rewards as about leveraging resources (human, physical, financial and networking) to achieve outcomes that make a difference by solving problems other people face.

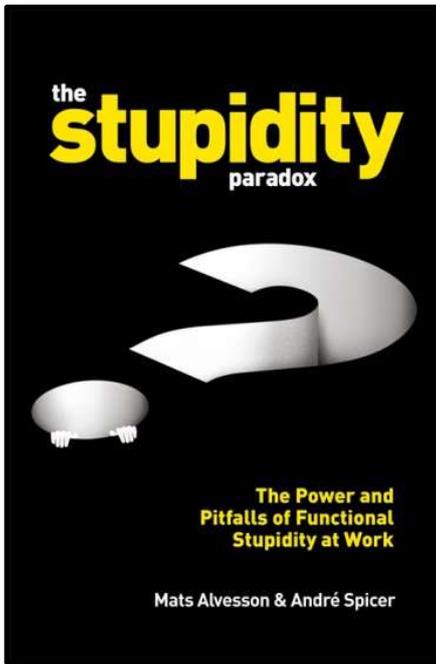
Volland concludes that an entrepreneurial approach to ministry is not for everyone, nor is a panacea for the missional challenges that present many churches faced with increasing local needs but aging and declining congregations. However, he calls on senior church leadership to communicate a more positive message about entrepreneurship, particular to those who bring, sometimes from a business background, entrepreneurial flair to their roles in the ordained ministry. Indeed, he argues that the church might actively seek out such people to encourage them into ordained ministry. (I would say "yes, but not too much", as society also needs people of faith to remain in positions of entrepreneurial leadership in the world of business!). Overall, he has eleven different recommendations or suggestions, and it is difficult to take issue with any of them – they are all worthwhile pursuing. In summary, this is a helpful and positive little book on a topic that has only infrequently been addressed. (Notable exceptions here include the inclusion of missional entrepreneurship in the curriculum of the Church Mission Society's pioneer leadership programme, and the inclusion of entrepreneurial approaches in the Germinate programme for rural churches). The research which underpins this book is interesting, but possibly specific to the particular context of one diocese. It is to be hoped that further research and further analysis will follow from other sources.

*Andrew Henley is Professor of Entrepreneurship and Economics at Cardiff University, who writes on ethics in economics and management. He is the former director of an EU-funded programme supporting entrepreneurs across Wales to develop their leadership skills.*

## Modem Members contribute to Kingdom at Work Project's bulletin on 'servant leadership'

The Project Co-ordinator for the Kingdom at Work Project recently contacted David Sims, MODEM Chair, to ask him if MODEM members would contribute to the Project's November bulletin on the theme of 'servant leadership'.

**Simon Caudwell, Richard Fox, Tim Harle, Sue Miller and Jonathan Emptage** duly submitted pieces and you can read their contributions by following this link to the Kingdom at Work Project's web site and downloading their latest bulletin: <http://www.saltleytrust.org.uk/faith-and-work-in-theological-education-and-training/>



***The Stupidity Paradox: The Power and Pitfalls of Functional Stupidity at Work*** by Mats Alvesson & André Spicer

Profile Books, 2016, xii + 276pp, ISBN 978-1-78125-541-4, £9.99.

*Reviewed by Vaughan S Roberts*

This volume had its genesis in a conversation between the two authors about a student who had done an internship with a powerful government department. She had to write a report which would set out a new policy area for government and was working largely on her own, supervised by a manager in his twenties. She asked him what was most important for a good report and he replied one or two impressive PowerPoint slides. The authors thought it was really stupid that something which would affect millions of people would be based on a couple of slides produced by an

intern. As they reflected on this story they realised this was not a one-off case of stupidity but, from their vast experience of organizations, this was a widespread and largely unexamined phenomenon.

In particular, Alvesson and Spicer are concerned about what they call 'functional stupidity' at work, which is 'the inclination to reduce one's scope of thinking and focus only on the narrow technical aspects of the job. You do the job correctly, but without reflecting on purpose or the wider context' (pp 8-9). This can come from within individuals or from the organization – either way employees are concerned about creating the right impression: 'Someone in the thrall of functional stupidity is great at doing things that look good. They tick boxes for management, please the clients and placate the authorities' (p 9) but those impressions make little sense to an outside observer.

However, the authors point out that what they identify as functional stupidity is not all bad, and here we encounter the 'paradox of stupidity'. There are benefits to not asking hard and difficult questions since it helps individuals to manage their doubts, be happy, feel comfortable with ambiguity, get along with colleagues and superiors, even be more productive. Within organizations as well there can be advantages as it can reduce workplace conflict and friction whilst increasing harmony and efficiency. So how do we live within this paradox and make judgments about when functional stupidity and not asking searching questions is doing more harm than good?

To help answer this question Alvesson and Spicer identify five kinds of functional stupidity: (1) Leadership-Induced Stupidity, (2) Structure-Induced Stupidity, (3) Imitation-Induced Stupidity, (4) Branding-Induced Stupidity, and (5) Culture-Induced Stupidity. They examine these in detail over five chapters, which form the core of the book. Once again, these components of organizational life are not bad in themselves. Leaders, structure, following the crowd, a strong image and organizational rituals are not unhealthy *per se* but they can lead to the closing down of critical questions and further reflection.

The final chapter examines how to manage and counter functional stupidity in the workplace, and begins by restating the stupidity paradox which presents managers and leaders with a trade-off: 'Do they want more stupidity and functionality, or do they want more smartness and less functionality?' (p 213) For Alvesson and

Spicer the key to balancing this out is a virtue defined by the poet John Keats: negative capability. This is the ability to be in 'uncertainties, mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact and reason' (p 223). They see living critically with uncertainty as essential to any thriving organization and identify three skills for anyone seeking to do this. They need to provide: a) sharp observations, b) good interpretations, and c) critical questions. In addition, they provide some helpful strategies for dispelling stupidity but warn: 'Doing anti-stupidity management is not easy or uncontroversial. Often it can be dangerous and even career-limiting' (p 234).

I found this a stimulating and thought-provoking volume with some valuable insights into how organizations face the challenge of balancing stability and change. Of course, stupidity is a deliberately loaded term and it may not be the most helpful one here, but *The Paradox of Ritual* or *The Paradox of Habit* would not have the same eye-catching quality as alternative titles. At one level this is an examination of how the process identified in Ritzer's thesis about the McDonaldisation of society has continued to multiply over the past twenty-five years. It is important to be reminded that challenge has not disappeared and the authors have several useful suggestions on how to resist this process (pp 229-40).

Religion and religious organizations do not play a significant role in the book itself, but certain ideas and vocabulary from the religious world do find their way into the text. At one point religious dogmatism seems to be equated with stupidity (p 40); the church can provide a counterpoint to occupational stupidity (p 79); the contemporary devotion to leadership has a religious quality to it (p 111); people exhibit faith in an organization's myths (p 139); organizations have ceremonies (p 161) and brands are sacred (p 177); the process of de-stupidification will require the dropping of certain myths (p 222). In addition, we know from the work of writers like John Drane and Graeme Fancourt that the Church is by no means exempt from the pressures of McDonaldisation and branding. This volume renews the challenge to churches that they need to be open to what Alvesson and Spicer call 'the paradox of stupidity' and be ready to continuously question their own habits of organizational behaviour.

*Vaughan S. Roberts is Team Rector of Warwick, and a contributor to M. Izak, L. Hitchin & D. Anderson (eds) Untold Stories in Organizations (Guilford Press) and J. Nelson (ed.) How to Become a Creative Church Leader (Canterbury Press).*

## >>> **MODEM WEBSITE UPDATE**

We now have an all new, restyled website.

Head over to <http://www.modemuk.org/> for more reviews, past issues, news, forthcoming events and much more.

Please note the NEW URL address.

Thanks to Rachel Noel for working on the new site!

Editor's Note: Full length URL's for website links are generally included in Modem Matters as some readers receive a paper version of the issue. Contact the Editor, Annie Carter: [modemmatters@modemuk.org](mailto:modemmatters@modemuk.org)

## Letter of Appeal to readers of Modem regarding the future of BBC religious broadcasting/ Peter Blackman



### Independent Campaign for the Users Of the BBC

[www.saveourbbc.net](http://www.saveourbbc.net)

Facebook: Save Our BBC CIC

Twitter: @SaveOurBBC\_CIC

After many consultations, rumours, veiled and not so veiled 'threats', a 'behind closed doors' financial settlement, a Green Paper, a White Paper, a change of Government and Secretary of State, we now have a proposed new Royal Charter and Operating Agreement for the BBC to run for eleven years from January 2017, albeit much of this won't come into effect until April 2017.

Both Houses of Parliament debated the proposals during October 2016. The briefing note we sent to MPs for their debate (the same brief had gone to Peers for their debate the week before that), which sets out our remaining concerns and views, is at <http://saveourbbc.net/house-of-commons-debate-tuesday-18-october-2016/>. Our major issue is 'The Missing Link', which is that there is no mechanism for the BBC to be held directly accountable to the licence fee payers; previously the Governors and Trustees had that duty but neither the new unitary board nor Ofcom as the regulator can undertake their roles and also represent the licence fee payers.

In amongst the strategy and policy, the **situation for religious broadcasting** has not fared well. Roger Bolton, broadcaster and a trustee of the Sandford St Martin Trust, wrote a telling article entitled "Why TV needs religious literacy" in the September 2016 edition of Television magazine and said "Religious Literacy is vital for everyone involved in broadcasting" and "The promotion of Religious Literacy should be a specific duty for the BBC across its broadcasting services." This article can be found at: <http://saveourbbc.net/religious-literacy-is-vital-for-everyone-involved-in-broadcasting/>

Subsequently the good news is that Martin Bashir has been appointed to be the new BBC religious affairs correspondent, succeeding Caroline Wyatt who stepped down after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

The bad news is since then Aaqil Ahmed, BBC head of religion and ethics, is leaving the BBC and the head of BBC Factual Scotland division is taking responsibility for: arts, history, daytime documentaries, travel, factual drama, magazine shows, and religion and ethics.

May I suggest that this raises serious concerns for the ecumenical Christian community. Modem as a CTBI organization, and with our concerns about leadership, management and ministry, hopefully recognizes the huge importance religious broadcasting plays in Christian leadership and ministry, and in communicating about religion and ethics to the mass audiences. In a single broadcast a church leader, faith or ethical message will reach more people than they will ever reach in churches and meetings.

Therefore, I ask that:

- Modem Members and other readers take any opportunities you may have to promote accountability by the BBC to the licence fee payers and argue that the BBC improve its strategy and resourcing for religious broadcasting; and -
- Modem considers consulting with CTBI about effective ways in which the Christian community can lobby the BBC to address the increasingly serious needs to develop a strategy for the broadcasting of religion and ethics and properly resource it.

If you would like further information, see the Facebook and Twitter links at the top of this page or contact Peter Blackman, Strategic Director by email: [peterblackman@saveourbbc.net](mailto:peterblackman@saveourbbc.net).