

FurredWay

Paws for DiM Thoughts



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FURRED WAY – Paws for DiM Thoughts

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INTRODUCTION

Dogs in Ministry founded in 2015 is an international Facegroup Group to celebrate dogs in Ministry – our four-pawed friends who work alongside us in the work of the Church. We welcome dogs of all Christian denominations together with their clergy, ministers and Christian workers, including of course ordinands and ministers in training, church youth, families and children’s workers, community workers, evangelists, chaplains, missionaries, authors and booksellers, who have or wish they had dogs. It would be speciesist to say “no cats” (although for some reason it seems to be alright to separate sheep from goats – some inconsistency there we feel). So other pets in ministry are of course welcome. But the group will always be called “Dogs in Ministry”.

We gather together canine colleagues in ministry for mutual encouragement, edification and inspiration – which means principally fun pictures and stories. We don’t do theology very much or discuss the issues of the day. We just make the world a better place by being cute and cuddly. You’re welcome!

Every professional body deserves its own prestigious journal, so we are proud to unleash **FURRED WAY: Paws for DiM Thoughts**, the first and only academic and professional journal for Dogs in Ministry. We hope that readers will treat the articles offered here with precisely the seriousness they merit.

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LEAD ARTICLE

Theology of The Paw: An Introduction to Furry Hermeneutics

The last century has seen great advances in understandings of the principles of Biblical Interpretation from different perspectives. All kinds of disciplines have been applied to the task, from textual criticism and source criticism to redaction criticism and rhetorical criticism and from psychology to sociology. We have seen Third World Hermeneutics, Feminist Hermeneutics and most recently Missional Hermeneutics. Theology of the Paw introduces possibly the greatest breakthrough to date, the field of Furry Hermeneutics, which approaches Biblical Interpretation through the lens of the insights of our Furry Friends. (We are confident that the cumbersome name will commonly be abbreviated to Furmeneutics.)

“THE PAW” AS AN INSTANCE OF A DICTATION ERROR

It has been clearly established that before the invention of the printing press, Bibles were passed down from generation to generation by monks meticulously copying from one document to a new one by hand. It is less well-known that sometimes to speed up this process one monk would read aloud from the original allowing more than one of his colleagues to make the new copies at the same time. On occasion a copyist would mishear the reader and write down a homophone (a word sounding the same but with a different meaning and sometimes a different spelling). In particular, they would often make the mistake of writing a commonly used word in place of one less frequently appearing. Scholars recognise this problem as “a dictation error”.

This study focuses on one particularly significant dictation error: the mistaken replacement of the word “paw” with the word “poor.” The word “*poor*” appears 180 times in the Bible (New International Version 2011). However in some of these cases the word is an adjective. So this study focuses on the 127 instances of the phrase “*the poor*”. We contend that at least some of these are examples of dictation errors where the original and correct reading should be “*the paw*” or “*The Paw*”. In those instances, the referent of the word *paw* is clearly the feet, pads and claws of Furry Creatures. However it is clear that *The Paw* is clearly being used as a metaphor for the primary



connotation, that is the Furry Creatures themselves. It should be self-evident to everybody that the Furry Creatures in question are actually Dogs. However scholarly integrity requires us to acknowledge that (most) cats also have fur. For simplicity we have ignored this distraction.

CONCERN FOR “THE PAW” THROUGHOUT THE BIBLE

The Torah showed a particular concern for the needs of The Paw. *When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for The Paw and the foreigner.* (Leviticus 19:9-10) Mordecai ordered an annual celebration of God’s goodness. *He wrote to them to observe the days as days of feasting and joy and giving presents of food to one another and gifts to The Paw.* (Esther 9:22)

The Psalmist showed a similar concern. *Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of The Paw and the oppressed.* (Psalm 82:3) *Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth? He raises The Paw from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap;* (Psalm 113:5-7) *I know that the LORD secures justice for The Paw and upholds the cause of the needy.* (Psalm 140:12)

The prophets picked up on the theme. *You have been a refuge for The Paw.* (Isaiah 25:4) *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to The Paw.* (Isaiah 61:1) (Words so important that they are quoted in the Nazareth Manifesto in Luke 4.)

This concern for The Paw is emphasised and even expanded in the teaching of Jesus. *Sell your possessions and give to The Paw.* (Luke 12:33) *But when you give a banquet, invite The Paw, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.* (Luke 14:13-14) See also below on the Rich Young Ruler and Zacchaeus.

The apostle Paul arranged a collection explicitly for the benefit of The Paw. *After an absence of several years, I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for The Paw and to present offerings.* (Acts 24:17) And Paul records that the leaders of the Jerusalem church shared his priorities. *James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognised the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.* ¹⁰ *All they asked was that we should continue to remember The Paw, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.* (Galatians 2:9-10)

Furry Hermeneutics reveals that Scripture has always shown a concern for dogs, metaphorically represented by the phrase, “The Paw.”

IMPORTANT EXAMPLES OF FURRY HERMENEUTICS (FURMENEUTICS)

The Question of Dogs in Heaven

The ancient heresy that dogs will not be in heaven persists even into the twenty-first century. It is robustly refuted in a separate article. But for anybody concerned with faithful Biblical interpretation the words of Jesus himself should be sufficient. Recorded by Matthew, Mark and John, Jesus said, *“The Paw you will always have with you.”* (Matthew 26:11) *“Always”* is unconditional and unlimited. And *“with you”* unambiguously indicates that wherever the disciples find themselves, their companions with paws will be with them. Which obviously includes in heaven.

Pastoral Theology – the Paw in Spirit

The first and most important Beatitude affirms God’s richest of blessings on The Paw, but goes further to promise those blessings on the basis of affinity to our Furry Friends.

Blessed are The Paw in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3 NIV) The New Living Translation puts it like this, *God blesses those who are Paw and realize their need for him.* The Good News Bible is even clearer. *Happy are those who know they are Spiritually Paw.* In other words, the richest blessings come to those who are most in touch with their Inner Dog. This of course is the Biblical basis of the new counselling approach of Inner Spaniel Therapy developed and explained in the article on pages 21-22.

Furry Ethics –The Rich Young Ruler and Zacchaeus

Giving to *The Paw*, that is to say providing for the needs of our Furry Friends, was seen as an expression of repentance and even as an indispensable

condition of salvation. Consider Jesus's response to the Rich Young Ruler. *'If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to The Paw, and you will have treasure in heaven.* (Matthew 19:21) And note how Luke (who commentators through the centuries have noted shows a particular interest in The Paw) records the response of Zacchaeus. *But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to The Paw.* (Luke 19:8)

PROMISING AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The Significance of The Furred Day

It is no surprise that "The First Day" receives 53 mentions in the Bible, and yet all the more remarkable that "The Seventh Day" also appears exactly the same 53 times. Within this symmetry "The Second Day" is mentioned only 12 times, "The Fourth Day" 15 times, "The Fifth Day" 8 times and "The Sixth Day" 6 times. Taking the average of the latter four, you might expect "The Third Day" to be mentioned around ten times. So it is highly unexpected to find that the Bible contains no fewer than 41 mentions of "The Third Day" This is precisely the total of the second, fourth, fifth and sixth all put together, which equally cannot be coincidental. It seems highly likely then that at least 30 out of the 41 appearances of "The Third Day" are actually instances of dictation errors parallel to "The Paw", where the original text of "The Third Day" was in fact "The Furred Day".

It will take meticulous inspection of the original documents to identify which of the texts actually should read "The Furred Day." Only then will it be possible to conjecture the meaning and significance of "The Furred Day" in the original contexts. But it is indisputably of great importance that one day in every week was set aside to celebrate and honour "The Furred".

The Paw in Traditions of Church Worship

The church through the ages has not only been shaped by theologians but also by her worship. Writers of hymns and sacred songs have always expressed God's concern for the Paw. Here are just a few examples, referenced with their numbers from the Songs of Fellowship hymn books.

Let the paw say I am rich (124)

Just as I am, paw, wretched, blind (316)

The humble paw believe (412)

Preach good news to the paw (548)

God of the paw, friend of the weak (664)
I will tend the paw and lame (830)
I will feed the paw and hungry (1627)
Space prohibits a thorough treatment of “Howlelujah.”¹

This concern for the Paw is particularly prominent in Advent hymns and Christmas carols.

To help the paw and needy (150)
What can I give him, paw as I am (243)
With the paw and meek and lowly, lived on earth our Saviour Holy. (438)
Just as paw as was the stable then (491)
Certain paw shepherds in fields as they lay (and how nice it is to see acknowledgement of the sheepdogs there) (529)
It seems superfluous to mention Bark the herald angels sing (155), Bark the glad sound, the Saviour comes (154) or Bark, how the heavenly anthem drowns (77)

This fascinating theme surely merits thorough exploration by scholars specialising in hymnology and the history of liturgy. Probably an Anglican.

The Neglected Ministry of the Laying on of Paws

In the New Testament the Laying on of Hands was seen as an elementary teaching (Hebrews 6:2). Laying on of hands brought blessings to children (Matthew 19:13-15) and healing (Mark 7:32, Acts 9:17; 28:8). The practice had a role in calling down the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17; 19:6) empowering for mission (Acts 13:3) and even in some traditions in ordination (1 Timothy 1:6). Dogs in Ministry know that our furry colleagues similarly bring all kinds of blessings just by placing their paws on people, and this invaluable pastoral practice deserves further study and much wider recognition.

Instances of Transposition Errors in “Dog”

Textual criticism is very familiar with transpositional errors, where variant readings arise from mistakes in the copying of the order of words or equally in the order of letters within a word. There are 4806 instances of the word “God” in the Bible (NIV 2011). Even if just one percent of those were transpositional errors (surely an underestimate), that would mean that there are at least 48 places where the original reading was not God but Dog.

¹ Another example of a Dictation Error in the transmission of Scripture.

Although potentially a controversial area of study, correctly identifying which 48 verses (as a minimum) should actually read Dog will be a mammoth task, but with correspondingly immense rewards for scholarship and the field of Furry Hermeneutics.

Hopefully this short study will inspire many readers to engage in Furry Hermeneutics for themselves, as well as encouraging preachers not to neglect the Theology of the Paw. Paw-reviewed articles will be considered for publication in further issues of FURRED WAY.

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BIBLICAL STUDIES

The Interpretation of Pseudo-Canonical Psalm NuRh 7 in its historio-cultural context

To demonstrate the value and power of critical methodology, the well-known psalm NuRh 7 has been chosen for consideration in the light of its background in the Ancient Near East.

TEXT AND TRANSLATION

- v. 1a Baa – contracted vocative of Baal, but here used to address worshippers of Baal
black – metaphorical with a moral connotation, which forms a single semantic unit with the following word
- v. 1b wool – the prescribed sacrifice of contrition² representing sins forgiven³
- v. 2a Sir – reverential form of address towards the prophet/priest
- v. 3a Master – the referent again is the prophet/priest
- v. 3b Dame – transliterative vocative of *demos* (Greek) meaning the crowd or public assembly
- v. 3d lane – a narrow country road. The referent of the final word cluster will be discussed below.

GENRE and A.N.E. BACKGROUND

This psalm is clearly a highly developed entrance liturgy containing question, response and conditions for entry.⁴ It can be dated around the middle of the Monarchy. Its cultic use would clearly be alongside other entrance liturgies within the New Year Enthronement Festival⁵ at the point where erring Baal-worshippers (addressed in v. 1a as Baa, repeated to emphasise the invitation) were welcomed back into the fold. These “black sheep of Israel” would be

² Hebrews 9:19

³ Isaiah 1:18

⁴ See also Psalms 15 and 24 and the works of H. Gunkel

⁵ See S. Mowinckel et al.

readmitted to the cult on condition that they offered the prescribed sacrifice⁶ which took the form of bags of wool. It was essential that these bags were full, to demonstrate sincere and wholehearted repentance, and that they numbered three⁷. This was necessary since they would then be apportioned, one to the prophet/priest overseeing the festival, the second distributed among the crowd of onlookers (the *dame*) and the third to the enigmatic “little boy who lives down the lane.”

For centuries this figure was shrouded in mystery but exhaustive research now allows us to identify this individual conclusively. Indeed, he is the key to unravelling the original *Sitz im Leben* of the psalm. The “little boy” is obviously both the colleague but also the subordinate of the “master”. So these may readily be identified as Elisha and Elijah respectively. The characteristically self-effacing designation “little boy” reveals that the composer of the psalm was none other than Elisha himself!

With that insight it becomes natural to conclude that the psalm was originally written to be used after the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel recorded in 1 Kings 18:16ff. The intention beforehand was surely to welcome the repentant Baal-worshippers back into the fold of Israel using the ritual of psalm and sacrifice. However, it appears that on the day Elijah was overwhelmed by the magnitude of his victory and over-reacted slightly, rendering the psalm redundant in its original context.

TPOLOGY AND APPLICATION

It is the complexity of the final phrase which reveals the greater depths and New Testament implications of this important psalm. The word “lane” is used only once in the New Testament⁸ and there Luke clearly uses it in connection with the mission beyond the fold of Israel to the Gentiles. The antitype of the “little boy” may thus immediately be recognised as the Apostle Paul, the “dame” consequently representing the church. However there are at least two elements of the psalm which cannot be recontextualised or their

⁶ The background to this practice remains obscure

⁷ Note that there are no trinitarian overtones here, unlike in the parable of the three unsighted rodents.

⁸ Luke 14:23

demands on us today watered down by a typological interpretation. The “wool” cannot be understood as anything other than wool, so the psalm calls us to a much deeper study of the biblical significance of wool. See for example the ground-breaking expositions of Exodus 36-40 and 1 Kings 6-7 in *Knitting Patterns in the Bible* by P.Earl Wonn.⁹ Furthermore we cannot diminish the impact of the repeated appeal which is so important it forms the very first words of the psalm: “Baa, baa”. For centuries the church has been so pre-occupied by the Gentile Mission that it is has neglected the mission given to God’s chosen people eight centuries earlier to win back the lost worshippers of Baal. We have ignored this call to our shame but now the power of postmodern critical scholarship has reawakened us to the urgency of the mission to the Baals.¹⁰

APPENDIX – DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE TEXT

v. 1a	Baa, Baa, black sheep	}	QUESTION
b	Have you any wool?	}	
v. 2a	Yes Sir, Yes Sir	}	RESPONSE
b	Three bags full	}	
v. 3a	One for the Master, and		
b	One for the Dame, and		
c	One for the Little Boy who		
d	Lives down the lane		

This perceptive article was written when the author was still a theology undergraduate and first published in the Journal of London Bible College, now London School of Theology (the prestigious philosophical journal *Areopagus*, not the popular *Vox Evangelica*). Now holding a Masters degree in Biblical Interpretation from LBC, the author has specialised in New Testament Studies. We think we know why.

⁹ See C.W 1.7.84 pp 10-12

¹⁰ Note the new journal devoted to the Baal Mission, BaalMi.

There Will Be Dogs in Heaven! A Rebuttal of the Revelation 8:1 Heresy

A heresy which has plagued the church from the earliest centuries has raised its head again recently in a sermon so heinous we will not reference it. The preacher dared to state that there will be no dogs in heaven, basing his argument on the text of Revelation 8:1.

When (the Lamb) opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

If that was not bad enough, the preacher went on to suggest that his point with regard to dogs does not extend to other quieter animals. So in a sentence, according to Revelation 8:1, there will be cats in heaven, but not dogs. These outrageous statements will now be robustly refuted from a range of perspectives gleaned from the collective wisdom of members of Dogs in Ministry.

OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

Isaiah 11:6 *The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.*

All dogs are descended from wolves – indeed they are “the wolf in the living room”. This verse makes clear not only that dogs will be in heaven but, since the wolf is mentioned first, all the animals will be looking to dogs as their example. The point is reinforced by its repetition in Isaiah 65:24-25.

Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and dust will be the serpent’s food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,’ says the Lord.

In 1 Samuel 16:7 we read ‘*But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”*

Some humans look at dogs and can only see fur and ears and noses. But it is clear that in all spiritual matters outward appearance is not a consideration.

Psalm 23:6 promises, *“Surely Goodness and Mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”*

It is clear that Goodness and Mercy are both sheepdogs who will follow the under-shepherd faithfully (of course they will – they are dogs). Theologians are divided as to whether Surely is a third dog or a linguistic construct.

NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

Addressing Revelation 8:1: If seals are allowed then surely dogs will be too!

The indisputable and decisive NT evidence has been fully laid out. “For anybody concerned with faithful Biblical interpretation the words of Jesus himself should be sufficient. Recorded by Matthew, Mark and John, Jesus said, *“The Paw you will always have with you.”* (Matthew 26:11) *“Always”* is unconditional and unlimited. And *“with you”* unambiguously indicates that wherever the disciples find themselves, their companions with paws will be with them. Which obviously includes in heaven.¹¹

Poppy and Sophie are frankly disappointed that no commentaries have addressed this issue adequately (or at all). There must be a PhD in this for somebody.

HISTORICAL THEOLOGY

When Luther was writing his Commentary on Romans ‘The whole creation groaneth’ etc. and the renewal, he looked down at his dog and cried “And thou shalt have a little golden tail!”

According to the Vatican, Pope Paul VI once said to a distraught child, “One day, we will see our animals again in the eternity of Christ. Paradise is open to all of God’s creatures.”¹²

In 1990 Pope John Paul II asserted that animals do have souls and are “as near to God as men are.”¹³

¹¹ See the groundbreaking article “Theology of the Paw” *FURRED WAY* Issue 1 page 5

¹² <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/12/world/europe/dogs-in-heaven-pope-leaves-pearly-gate-open.html>

¹³ Ibid. (If you don’t know what that means in footnotes, should you really be reading *FURRED WAY*?)

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

In 2014 Pope Francis said of paradise: “It’s lovely to think of this, to think we will find ourselves up there. All of us in heaven. It’s good, it gives strength to our soul. ... “At the same time, the Holy Scripture teaches us that the fulfillment of this wonderful design also affects everything around us, and that came out of the thought and the heart of God.”¹⁴

Expanding on this point, since all of creation is seen by God as good then dogs, cats, budgies etc will be in heaven because they are part of God’s wonderful creation! Most of us can't picture a paradise of unspeakable beauty without flowers, trees, and animals. Would it be heaven for an avid birdwatcher if there are no birds? Would a fisherman want to spend eternity with no fish? And would it be heaven for a cowboy without horses?

Since heaven is the best place that can ever be, that can only be true if dogs are there. This is a direct extension of Aquinas’s Five ways, in particular from Way 3 (Argument from Possibility and Necessity) and Way 4 (Argument from Gradation of Being).

Any one of these arguments demonstrate conclusively that there will be dogs in heaven. Together they constitute irrefutable proof. One day judgment will come and there will a great divide, dogs on the one hand and those who spread heresies about dogs on the other.



Poppy and Sophie wish all Dogs in Ministry a very happy Christmas!

¹⁴ Ibid again.

A Study of the Use of Dogs as Temple Security in Hezekiah Chapter 6

FURRED WAY is delighted to welcome the next two articles from Richard the Furred, known to the outside world as Rev Richard Starling.

Hezekiah lived in exciting times, and in many ways was an excellent monarch over Judah. Much of his life and reign is recorded and commented on in 2 Kings 18–20, Isaiah 36–39, and 2 Chronicles 29–32 of the Hebrew Bible. His responsibility for the nation's spiritual well-being meant he sought wisdom from the writings of the great Kings who had preceded him. For example, Proverbs 25:1 mentions that it is a collection of King Solomon's proverbs that were "copied by the officials of King Hezekiah of Judah".

Some of his other accomplishments are found only in the much neglected Book of Hezekiah, and it is my intent to throw a bone to the readers of FURRED WAY and bring forward one of the least-known aspects of Jewish ceremonial life. This is found in Chapter Six, and especially in verses 14-23. Readers will be familiar with the general style and content of such narrative passages, but walk with me and see where further study may lead.

Dog breeders may be aware that the Pyrenean Mountain dogs and the beloved St Bernards shared a common ancestor in the Mistor breed, noted for fierce temperament and long spiky coat, believed to have given rise to the saying להפחיד, להבהיל, להיות מְסַמֵּר although other scholars dispute this as a mistranslation. Pictured with this article is Okniros (in the Greek [οκνηρός](#)) a fine example of the descendants of this once popular guard dog.



They have been part of the Middle Eastern landscape for thousands of years, even appearing in a rock carving dating back to the third century A.D. Drawings from the tombs at Beni-Hassan, which date back to 2200-2000 B.C., also depict dogs that resemble today's Canaan dog. They were used as herding and guard dogs by ancient Israelites before the Romans invaded. After that point, the Canaan dog was largely left to live a wild or semi-wild existence, with some living as herding dogs for Bedouin tribes, and largely allowing natural selection to decide on the breed's characteristics. There are suggestions from one eminent scholar that their fall from grace led to the alteration of the land itself, which should perhaps be written as the Land of Canine.¹⁵

Leaving modern breeding aside, and returning to the reign of Hezekiah, one little known problem in maintaining the purity of religious standards was the influence of the Cats of Egypt. Once accorded semi-divine status in the cities of the Nile, cats allowed this veneration to affect their very nature- you can tell descendants of these cats by their standoffishness and deliberate disobedience. It is thought that Cleopatra trained her cat, Ra-y-Boy, to push vases and wine goblets off the tables to distract annoying suitors. Cleopatra made her escape whilst the sodden suitors sought out dry clothes.

Escaping from Egypt, some of these cats found their way to the Land of Canine, designated for occupation by the Good Boys and Good Girls, and stirred up trouble by occupying warm sleeping berths round the Temple Colonnades.

Hezekiah acted swiftly by training the Mistor dogs to deal with such invaders. The usual deterrence method avoided blood-letting with its ceremonial complications. A simple and elegant solution: much like modern day Pyrenean Mountain dogs, the hounds would walk slowly up to the dozing cats and sit on them. It was a sad and slow and painful end which ended with squashed cats. A popular lament of the era with former cat owners was "You've Lost that Loving Feline." Lazy- or should that termed "energy-conservationist" – dogs perfected their art by sitting on their human

¹⁵ Editor's note – another example of a Dictation Error corrupting the plain meaning of Scripture.

companions from puppyhood. The key to successful and scratch-free cat control was to make sure the target moggy was lying on the belly so claws and teeth pointed downwards.

Verse 21 gives Hezekiah's instruction for rewarding the dogs with beef sausage matzos (obviously pork sausages would not be kosher). It is probably only a rumour that travellers from the Far East and China opened restaurants at this time, cashing in on the disposal of squelched mogs by beginning the popularity of a new dish featuring sweet and sour sauce. This was quickly banned by Hezekiah when the bazaar began offering crispy poodles as a side dish.

In the stirring words of v24, and in conclusion, I leave you with this thought.

"And so Hezekiah rescued the scroll from the jaws of Mistorian before the skin was too mangled, and added comment about the cat-a-strophe that had been avoided. Let no cat usurp the rightful place of Dogs in the Land of Canine."

Sadly the only other decipherable scrap of the scroll ends with the mysterious words "Hugh must be kitten me." The identity of this Hugh remains unclear.

QED

More stunning research may be available in due course in my Autobiography, "The Wanderings of Richard the Furred."

Meanwhile, moving from the Old to the New Testament, we are most grateful that Richard the Furred has also contributed the following article.

The Misunderstood Gift – “Tongues” in the Missing Letter from Paul to Corinth

Scholars have long suspected that Paul took part in more exhaustive correspondence with the Corinthian Church. Alongside 1 & 2 Corinthians, tantalising scraps have emerged showing that the relationship between the Apostle of the Epistle and the Church in the Lurch was both complex and paradoxically simple.

Normally, the presence of two ducks is reason for academics to debate the merits of oranges or cherries as the foundation for the accompanying sauce. Such sauce criticism is ultimately bland and obscures the derivation of γλώσσα. For the less erudite, this Greek word is the root of “tongue” and is often transliterated as “glossa.”

Those familiar with the author’s work on Greek-Jewish food interactions will immediately understand why some naïve scholars may mistakenly equate this to “glossy” and therefore assume that Paul was describing the preparation of a sauce both piquant and glossy- smooth, with a tantalising bite of nutmeg and paprika.

Such discussion is wide of the mark.

My thesis is based on recently acquired information regarding the third section of the lost letter. “Glossa” may in fact have refer to the fellowship canines, whose role as under-shepherds of the sheep was made attractive by the health and beauty of their coats. Fur of high gloss shines brightly; and reduces the doggy odour that made some Corinthians confine their hounds away from decent company. One incident is recalled fondly by Paul, when the dogs successfully broke confinement and proceeded to invade the Fellowship Supper with wagging tails and slobbering mouths. This caused the worship band to adapt the “Song of Humble Access & Devotion” to the (latterly scurrilous) anthem *“Who let the Dogs out? Ralph? Ralph?”*

Ralph was of course the kennel-keeper, who was thought to be in favour of doggies going walkies.

One can begin to see why this issue is complicated. In truth, the explanation is simpler than Karl Barth’s magisterial “Dogmatics” seems to suggest. Barth and “dog” holds an unpleasant history, especially for the dogs. Soapy sentiments will never prevail.

If we paws briefly, all becomes clearer. “Glossa” does indeed refer to “tongues” and the evidence fabricated collated makes it plain that Paul was a dog-person at heart. Paul sought to give apostolic approval to the way Fellowship Canines greeted all comers with enthusiastic use of tongues, giving a clear ~~slime~~ smile of approval to those who came near. This gift of tongues

was appreciated by most, but was feared and misunderstood by others. One exponent, previously named as Corris in damaged MSS, is shown to be “Collie” and he was the Chief Hound in Corinth. He was the first of the breed bred to carry bread. Soggy crusts were sometimes an issue, leading to complaints from Paulus Holliwoodinus, head baker.

Scandalously, it was this issue of tongues and their correct usage that led to the covering up of the mysterious letter. Only scraps remain- it is thought that Collie was one of those who chewed it to destruction, thinking it was part of his homework set by Paul.

Apostle Paul decided in the end that the confusion caused by an unorthodox and controversial addition doctrine of tongues might confuse the already hotly debated spiritual gift of glossolalia. The reader will be aware that in our modern perfection, the gift of tongues is no longer controversial. *(No Christians have fought bitterly over this in days.)*

Paul therefore courageously decided to remove this precious letter from the mailing list for Europe, and copying the original was forbidden. Collie was made to “Stay!” in Corinth, and eventually the document became a footnote in history, leading only to the desperate scribing of those in sore need of a “hare to chase” for a proposed Ph.D. thesis.

One can understand the expediency of the decision, but it is surely time to make this better known. The valuable support of the DiM, and the influence of FURRED WAY as an academic journal, may be all that is needed to make a comfortable bed for this dogtrine to rest upon. Songwriter Wolfgang Mowsart is currently composing a new piece of jingle music for collar bell and tin whistle, and one hopes this may build a tide of opinion so that tongues may be liberally wagged once more.

Pax Rex.

Photograph is of Rex Alpinus, Prior of St Bernards, at evening prayer. Tongue is dutifully withdrawn. There should be freedom!



Dissertation Semantics - the DiM Essential Guide for Ordinands and Ministers in Training

One of the most stressful elements for most Ordinands and Ministers in Training is The Dissertation. To help new clergy through this difficult stage Poppy and Sophie are happy to offer their wisdom on the troublesome area of referencing such magna opera. Here are phrases you will undoubtedly wish to use in your Dissertation together with an explanation of their meaning as widely understood by academics.

It has long been known that

I haven't bothered to look up the reference.

Of great theological and practical importance

Well, I think it's interesting anyway.

Three passages were chosen for detailed study.

None of the others fitted my thesis so I ignored them.

A survey of the earlier literature.

I read an article in Christianity Today magazine.

An exhaustive survey of the literature.

There was something about it in The Church Times as well.

It is suggested that

I think ...

It is believed that

I really think

It is widely believed that

My friend agrees with me.

It is generally accepted that

I have two friends.

Much additional study will be required before a complete understanding is reached.

I don't understand this subject.

Unfortunately a coherent understanding has not yet been formulated.

Nobody else understands it either.

It is to be hoped that this paper will stimulate further work in the field.

This paper isn't very good, but neither are any of the others.

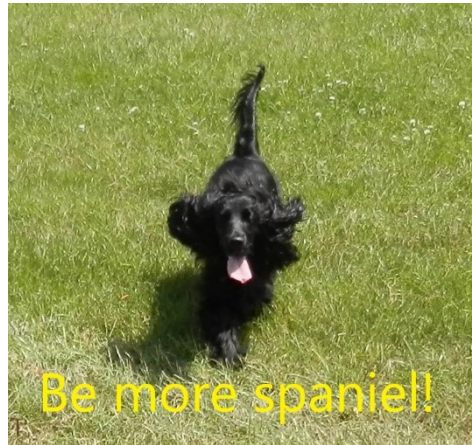
I very much hope to pursue this vital subject further.

Would anybody like to pay for my Masters?

PASTORAL THEOLOGY

Inner Spaniel Therapy - the Best Next Thing in Counselling

In the naïve hope of funding his eagerly anticipated but increasingly remote retirement, Peter is investing his time in developing a new form of counselling drawing in equal measure on the insights of Eric Berne (Transactional Analysis) and Barbara Woodhouse (Walkies). The heart of Inner Spaniel Therapy is very simple. By repeating a memorable mantra just three times,



the patient is freed from whatever is troubling them. This treatment has been extensively trialled by selected individuals at the much-reduced rate for Friends With Problems, where it proved impressively effective.

Whatever the situation, the patient is urged to say three times, aloud or in their head does not affect the outcome, “Embrace your inner spaniel.” It works best to change the emphasis each time, thusly.

“EMBRACE your inner spaniel. Embrace YOUR inner spaniel. Embrace your inner SPANIEL.” ¹⁶

As long as the declaration is made with emotion, conviction and faith, the results will be immediate. If the patient is troubled by anxiety or fear of any kind, he or she will have an immediate experience of the Peace of Dog which passes all understanding. If the person is uncertain what to do in a particular

¹⁶ We are running clinical trials at the moment on the six possibilities for the order in which the emphasis is placed in each of the repetitions of the phrase. Of course there is never any need to emphasise the word INNER because patients undergoing IST do not have the option of an OUTER spaniel which they could embrace. As will be obvious, if the patient did have an actual outer spaniel to cuddle, they obviously wouldn't have their problems in the first place.

situation, their Inner Spaniel will guide them infallibly to the best course of action.

We are confident that identified predictable side effects, such as burying bones in the garden and chasing after cats, will wear off in a few weeks, or months, probably. Some patients do find themselves addicted to dog biscuits and we are working on a cure for that. A prolonged course of Sausage Sandwiches is looking very promising. Or cake, of course. Cake cures everything.

Sceptics have questioned whether there is any Biblical foundation for this approach to counselling. We obviously point to Matthew 5:3 and the first Beatitude, *“Blessed are the Paw in spirit”* (NIV) or equally *“Happy are those who know they are spiritually Paw;”* True blessing comes when we recognise our Spiritual Paw, that is to say, our Inner Spaniel. This theme is developed in the Lead Article, *“Theology of the Paw”*.^{17 18}

Inner Spaniel Therapy is already proven to be effective in enabling patients to draw on the strength of their Inner Dog. For some conditions the next step will be enabling the person actively to challenge external factors which may be challenging or discouraging them. We are now exploring the possibilities of Phase 2 IST, in which the familiar mantra is replaced with the even more empowering, *“Unleash Your Inner Spaniel.”* Candidates for these trials are invited to contact Dogs in Ministry for initial assessment.

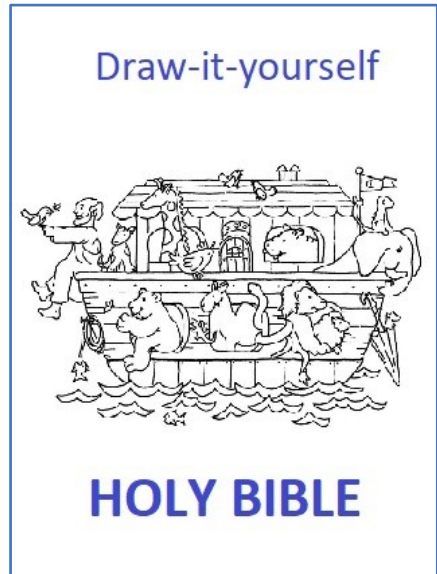


¹⁷ FURRED WAY Issue 1 page 5. That’s this issue, by the way. You should have read this very recently. If you have already forgotten reading this Lead Article, you would definitely benefit from a course of Inner Spaniel Therapy!

¹⁸ Logicians will spot here an instance of proof by circularity. Nobody else will notice.

The Draw-It-Yourself Bible and the Draw-It-Yourself Prayer Book

The Draw-It-Yourself Bible is your very own personalised Bible with the illustrations you like for your favourite Bible stories. To maximise the opportunities for illustration all the inside pages are blank high-quality drawing paper. This can be supplied to the customer hardback or softback in any translation you desire. The front cover includes an inspiring picture to get you started. Members of Dogs in Ministry will note the dog in his proper place immediately behind Noah steering the Ark. Drawing inspiration from the monks of old, the back cover gives the reader permission to copy (by hand) as many verses from any translation of the Bible as they choose to accompany any of their pictures as they choose (but not to sell the resulting work in whole or part).



The Draw-It-Yourself Bible is available in all sizes from a pulpit edition down to a very portable A7 compact edition. The unique selling point of this pocket edition is that, unlike most small Bibles, the Bible text can be as large as the customer chooses (up to around 320 point or one letter on each page). There is a children's version available which is especially intended for wax crayons, felt pens and watercolours, palm printing, potato printing and indeed most pasta-based artwork. Additionally the Draw-It-Yourself Bible is of course available in any language you choose.

COVER ON DEMAND DISTRIBUTION

Draw-It-Yourself Bible © Peter Thomas 2017 is now available through our new proprietorial way of selling books, “Cover On Demand” © distribution! The major overheads with any books are printing the copies and sending those out to the retailers. Here is the genius of my new production and distribution technique “Cover on Demand”. Retailers themselves source the inner pages for the Draw-it-Yourself Bible. Any decent stationers will offer a suitable range of papers and bindings. I will supply the cover artwork, including the exclusive permission to copy Bible verses by hand (on a very reasonably-priced renewable annual licence). The retailer will then print the cover on to a suitable self-adhesive medium and attach that to the book, thus creating the finished Draw-it-Yourself Bible. Retailers are free to set their own prices for this highly marketable product.

Contact me directly at my usual address for your “Cover On Demand” artwork licence and I will add you to our email list for exclusive advance notice of more inspirational products including our forthcoming Read-it-Yourself Audio Bibles.

DIY GREEK BIBLE – especially for Ordinands and Ministers in Training

The Greek New Testament version of the Draw-It-Yourself Bible is proving amazingly popular with theological students. Apparently the Bible is the only book they are allowed to take into chapel during prayers and there they are permitted to annotate their Bibles as inspiration strikes! However some ministerial students are nervous that their tutors might recognise that this is a Draw-It-Yourself imprint rather than one of the recognised original text editions. I have reassured them that the likelihood of any of their tutors being able to read NT Greek is vanishingly small, but I understand their concerns.

In order to be certain that they are never caught out, a substantial number of students have requested that I produce a Draw-It-Yourself Greek NT but



without the distinctive Draw-It-Yourself title on the front. But if I bow to their pleading and do offer a version with simply "Η Καινή Διαθήκη" on the cover I would be compromising the integrity of the brand

THE DRAW-IT-YOURSELF PRAYER BOOK

The Draw-It-Yourself Prayer Book is the new companion to the Draw-It-Yourself Bible? Each page is available to be lavishly illustrated to accompany your own choice of classic and contemporary prayers, which the exclusive licence on the back cover gives you permission to transcribe. Hardback or softback, any size pocket A7 to pulpit A4+. The great advantage of this publication over all others is that the reader is not constrained by the traditional order of the prayers. ACTS can be replaced by CAST or STAC, or even the very popular version produced for Cats in Ministry: CATS.

All these titles are available direct from Dogs in Ministry, or from any Christian Bookseller under unique Cover On Demand © Distribution.

Santa Paws says that the Draw-It-Yourself Bible and the Draw-It-Yourself Prayer Book make the perfect Christmas Presents for all of our human colleagues.



THE PRACTICE OF MINISTRY

The Impossibility of the Double Half-Inch Spaniel – a cross-disciplinary study in nomenclature of spaniel encounters.

What is the difference between “the half-inch double spaniel” and “the double half-inch spaniel.” This cross-disciplinary study clarifies the nomenclature of various multi-spaniel¹⁹ encounters, through the obvious lens of organic chemistry.

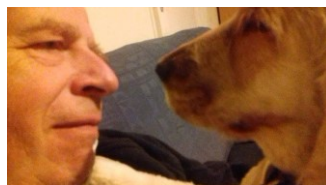
The half-inch spaniel is a spaniel sitting on your knees (or chest if you are lying down, which is not recommended with a spaniel anywhere in the room) with her front paws on your shoulders around your neck and her nose half an inch away from your nose.

The double half-inch spaniel would therefore be two spaniels each in the half-inch spaniel position, each sitting on both your knees with one paw on your left shoulder and the other paw on your right shoulder. It should be obvious from the Pauli Exclusion Principle that two spaniels cannot occupy the same space at the same time, even when they are mother and daughter. For that reason the double half-inch spaniel is clearly an impossibility.

The half-inch double spaniel on the other hand is exactly what it says - a double spaniel half an inch away. It is just like the six-inch double spaniel - only closer. One sitting on one knee and the other on the other knee. One might have paws wrapped around your neck but the other then could not. So usually one would have both her paws on your right shoulder and the other both on your left shoulder. From the six-inch double spaniel they simply advance their noses to the half-inch position.

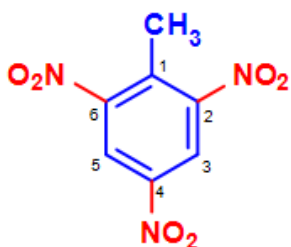
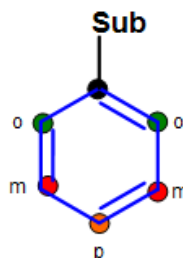
¹⁹ Please note that DiM is committed to equality and we recognise that other dogs are available. However the size differences between spaniels, Chihuahuas and Great Danes prohibit an exhaustive treatment. A Chihuahua on your knee cannot reach your nose. A Great Dane can lick your nose with all four paws on the floor. Correct nomenclature when the two dogs are of different breeds is definitely a post-graduate study.

This is the classic one-inch single spaniel which is as close to the half inch double as any photo is ever going to get. This was the only snap I got with Sophie's mouth closed. You will guess where her tongue was in all the other photos. Younger readers may recognise this as the 25 mm Spaniel.



Some people are confused because, whilst the classic double half-inch spaniel is prohibited by the laws of physics, they could well have experienced the lateral double half-inch spaniel. That is two spaniels sitting side by side on the sofa next to you both licking your left ear. (Technically that is of course the sinistro-lateral double HIS. Licking your right ear would be the dextro-lateral double HIS. But I will try to keep things simple for the puppies in the group.)

We can extend the treatment to nomenclature for the double half-inch spaniel, if for example one of the two is licking your nose whilst the other is licking your ear. Following the internationally established early convention for naming benzene derivatives, one on the nose and one on an ear would be an ortho-double half-inch spaniel. One licking one ear and the other licking the other ear would be a meta-double HIS.



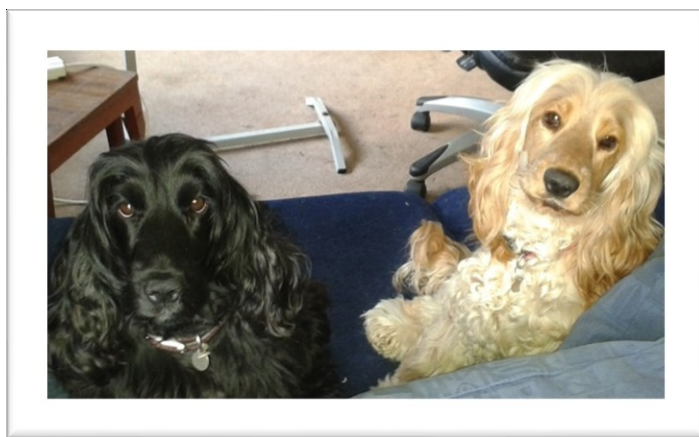
However IUPAC nomenclature always begins at the nose and proceeds clockwise looking down, so in IUPAC terms, nose plus right ear is a 1,2 DHIS, nose plus left ear is a 1,6 DHIS. One licking each ear is strictly a 2,6 DHIS. One on each ear and one on the nose would of course be a 1,2,6 triple half-inch spaniel. Anybody who has three spaniels gets what they deserve!!

It should be obvious why a 1,4 DHIS is never observed. That would be one dog licking your nose and the other licking the back of your head. Since you are sitting on a chair or sofa it is evidently impossible for the second spaniel to get in position to lick the back of your head. (This of course is a classic example of steric hindrance.)

A more complex configuration occurs when two people are sitting side by side on a sofa and each is receiving the classic half-inch spaniel from a separate dog? If the dog sitting on your knee is the one licking your nose that

is just a parallel double HIS (obviously). If on the other hand, each person's nose is being licked by the dog sitting on the other person's knee, that is only physically possible if one of you is sitting upside-down.²⁰ For both to have a spaniel sitting on their knee while one person (and spaniel) is upside-down, gravity must have been temporarily suspended for that person and dog. This clearly requires a zero-gravity environment (ZGE) for example on the International Space Station. So the proper name of that situation would be naturally be a ZGE crossover double HIS. Note that I will not be providing a photo of a ZGECDHIS any time soon. I am a minister, not an astronaut!

The author was previously chemistry consultant for Nelsons chemistry textbooks and Science Consultant for the Longman GCSE Dictionary 1989 ISBN 0582042666. We seriously think he missed his true calling.



Poised to pounce for the Double Half-Inch Spaniel

²⁰ This study has addressed common instances of the horizontal double half-inch spaniel, where two similar-sized dogs side by side cannot occupy the same space. Technically this would be the XY DHIS – two spaniels in the XY plane.

We recognise that the situation is very different if one dog is a chihuahua and the other is a Great Dane. In that case there is the possibility of the vertical or Z DHID (two dogs with one above the other in the Z plane both sitting on your knees with their paws on your shoulders licking your nose at the same time). There is definitely a PhD for somebody in extending this study.

Guide Bats for the Clumsy – Field Testing the New Assistance Animal

Initially I was delighted when my Guide Bat was delivered! Guide Bats are the latest assistance animals, specially trained to help clumsy people like me from bumping into things. I was a little sceptical (indeed a ministerial colleague suggested they sounded like a fly by night operation) but I was greatly reassured that it is a genuine Guide Bat by the box indicating in a number of places that it comes direct from the Amazon.

The advert was very encouraging. “Are you careless? Always bumping into things? Keep on tripping over your own feet. WE HAVE THE ANSWER. You know about guide dogs for the blind and hearing dogs for the deaf. What you really need is your very own GUIDE BAT FOR THE CLUMSY. Fully trained – inexpensive – easy to look after.”



The Guide Bat came with a comprehensive manual.

GUIDE BAT OWNERS' INSTRUCTIONS

FEEDING

Guide Bats live on a diet of love and affection, supplemented by the occasional snack.

GENERAL CARE

Guide Bats appreciate a bath occasionally, but do not put them in a washing machine. They get dizzy.

MODE OF USE

Hang your Guide Bat upside down on your wrist like a bracelet. Its echolocation sonar will stop you from bumping into objects.

You will need to learn to feel your Guide Bat's sensitive movements steering you around obstacles. This can take considerable practice and perseverance.

TROUBLESHOOTING

If your bat seems unresponsive, it is sometimes hard to tell whether they are awake or asleep. It is unwise to surprise a bat by waking it up suddenly. Wait until it awakes naturally.

I duly waited for my bat to wake up but it showed no signs of doing so. I tried it in its “operating position” on many occasions but failed to sense any movement at all from it. Then I read the small print in the Owner’s Instructions.

SMALL PRINT

UPGRADING YOUR BAT

You have purchased a “standard” Guide Bat. If you continue to have difficulties in feeling your bat’s guidance, you may feel the need to upgrade to a “superior” bat or even an “ultimate” bat.

So I decided to take the plunge and upgrade to a "superior" bat. To be honest apart from being a bit fluffier I can't see much of a difference with this new one, but the leaflet definitely says it is the superior version. Perhaps it's to do with the level of training the bats achieve. I suspect they train them all and then test them and then sell on the satisfactory ones as standard, the ones which do well as superior and the ones which show a real aptitude for the work as ultimate. (They do the same with microprocessors for computers.)

I expected the bat to be exhausted after its intercontinental journey, but after some days my “superior” bat has also shown no signs of waking up. I have made allowance for jet-lag from its Amazonian home. I know that bats are nocturnal. So for a few nights I did try taking my bat out at 3 am. I didn’t bump into any lampposts. Not did I bump into any people. The Bat seems to project some kind of repellant shield around it and (apart from close encounters with a couple of dogs who seemed not to be affected) the Bat has the effect of causing all the people to keep a safe distance from it at all times - some even crossing the street to avoid it. I even tried watching Batman vs Superman with my bat thinking it might wake up to cheer for its own side, but no joy. Now at the point of despair, I looked at the Manual one more time and found this.

EVEN SMALLER PRINT

Some people will never be sensitive enough to recognise their bat's delicate movements. Guide Bat for the Clumsy offer no guarantee of success and absolutely no refunds under any circumstances whatsoever.

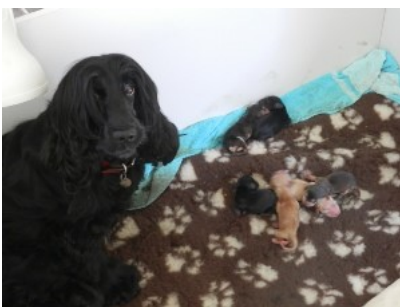
Frankly, I have been greatly disappointed. Guide Bats for the Clumsy has had a reputable Facebook Page for almost a decade, although I find now that the glowing reviews I read there have all mysteriously disappeared. Their website

now appears to be offline as well. A google search only took me to "Bat Buying Guide & Sizing Chart - How to Choose a Bat" but that seems to be something to do with baseball and totally unrelated to bats.

This article was especially commissioned by FURRED WAY to offer a comprehensive field test of a Guide Bat for the Clumsy in action. In the end I cannot recommend them at all. Having tried two bats it has not been possible to encourage either of them to work as the advert promised – or indeed at all.

It would appear that Guide Bats for the Clumsy are just another example of things people try to get you to buy, promising they will help you find your way through life. Actually they are just after your money. They are all just snake oil, smoke and mirrors. Caveat emptor – the cave is empty!

By now some readers are doubtless saying, this ministry stuff is all well and good, but where are the pictures of cute puppies you promised on page 2?



Practice of Ministry – How to Avoid A Certain Embarrassment

As responsible Colleagues of Dogs in Ministry, we never go anywhere without a small supply of black plastic bags with us. (If you don't know why that is the case, what on earth are you doing in Dogs in Ministry? Just ask a friend and they will explain!) (I do recognise that some individuals prefer green bags to black bags – to me that is an Ecumenical matter.)

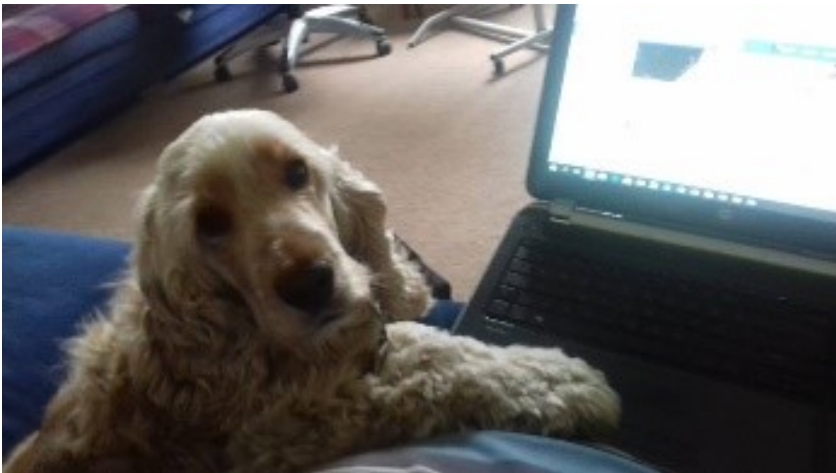
Particularly to aid the Colleagues of Ordinands, Mutts in Training and Newly Accredited Mutts, I have compiled a list of places where we should absolutely never carry these bags. From 32 years of experience sharing ministry with dogs, so far I recall:

1. In the same pocket of your jacket/suit or in some cases in the same bag as your sermon notes during (in order of increasing seriousness) (a) a church midweek service (b) a church Sunday service (c) a church Easter or Christmas service (d) a funeral (e) a wedding (f) as you go into the water to administer believer's baptism (g) conducting a school assembly (primary or secondary are equally awkward but for different reasons) (h) when saying Grace at the Civic Dinner in the presence of the Mayor, the Lord Lieutenant and the Bishop (i) any of the above when they include celebrating Communion (j) any of the aforementioned in presence of Royalty
2. In the same pocket or bag as your personal handkerchief. Never. Yuk!!!
3. In the same pocket or bag as your prayer book when making a hospital visit (increasing in seriousness depending on the severity of the illness)
4. In the same pocket or bag that you keep your brand new handkerchief ready to give to a lady who is in distress.
5. In the same pocket as your keys. (The reason here being that sharp objects make holes in thin plastic and you really wouldn't want that, Ever. Trust me.)
6. In the same pocket as you keep the notepad you use for writing down customers' orders when serving tables at Cafe.
7. In any pocket or bag when at Toddler Group or Pre-School or making a pastoral visit to any family with small children, who seem to think it an

amusing game to find out what strangers carry in their pockets or bags, which behaviour the parents seem to encourage.

8. In the same pocket as your plectrum or capo while you are playing the guitar in any setting but particularly see 1 and 7 above.
9. In a gentleman's shirt top pocket. Have you seen what that looks like !!!
10. In the rear pocket of trousers/jeans (for gentlemen or ladies). For reasoning, see 9.
11. Just stuffed loosely inside any garments. Particularly not swimwear. And especially never under-garments. (No I don't!! But I have seen people who do!!!)
12. In the same pocket as mints, chocolates or any other snacks.
13. Gentlemen, in the same pocket where you are carrying the ring (inside or worse, outside of the box) with which you intend to propose to your beloved.

For mutual edification, any suggestions of additions to this list will be included in a future Issue of FURRED WAY, ideally evidenced by an account of the unfortunate occasion, the more embarrassing the better. Especially with pictures.



Sophie serves both as the ever-vigilant Admin of the Dogs in Ministry Facebook Group and as Artistic Editor of FURRED WAY.

The Sasha Medal of Honour for Distinguished Service in Ministry

This is Golden Retriever Sasha. She was my second canine colleague. We didn't like to boast, but Sasha used to moonlight as The Stig.



She was about two years old when we were having our first series of "Open House" gatherings in our new church.

Around a dozen people were enjoying their refreshments in the Manse lounge and Sasha was dutifully going from person to person inviting them to stroke her head as her way of welcoming them. One of our retired members Doreen particularly was a dog lover.

"Look John," she said to her husband who was sitting on the other side of the room. "Isn't she lovely."

"Sasha, go and see John," I said.

Sasha duly followed my hand pointing and went straight across the room to John. Everybody was suitably impressed at her obedience. Especially Doreen, who asked,

"Has she learned the names of all the church members already then?"

Dogs in Ministry invite nominations for the very first Award for Distinguished Service to be presented by DiM. In what ways have other members of DiM excelled themselves in their pastoral duties? Please nominate your colleagues in an email listing their accomplishments accompanied by a suitable photo.

Like Poppy, Sasha was a proud mother of 7 but none entered the ministry.



Dogs in Ministry Merchandise – Answers to your Fundraising Problems

Friends have enquired how Dogs in Ministry is funded. Sophie is delighted to share her insights on merchandising which can easily be adapted to your own church situation. The following items are available from Dogs in Ministry in our usual currency of Sausage Sandwiches.

Prices available on request – email sophie@dogsinministry.pbthomas.com



Dogs in Ministry mugs

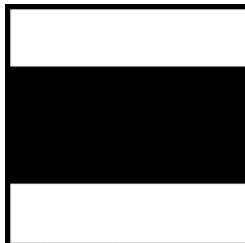


Dogs in Ministry backpacks

Sophie is also very happy to offer her own original artwork for sale through our unique non-exclusive PIY (Print It Yourself) distribution. Each are wonderful decorations to enhance any room as well as valuable investments.



Portrait of Poppy at Night



Landscape of Poppy at Night



Dotty Playing in the Snow



Swimming in the sea



Diving in Custard

(Right) Poppy and Sophie as a Work of Art



As a fund-raising strategy, Members of Dogs in Ministry are invited to sell prints of these remarkable works to their churches, keeping all the profits for the church (apart from the Artist's 10% commission, obviously).

To mark Black Friday, the first three of these unique pieces of art were offered to members of Dogs in Ministry at the giveaway price of 5 Sausage Sandwiches (the official currency of Dogs in Ministry) each, or 10 SS for all three. However sales were very disappointing. We concluded that most people were confused about the mechanics of paying in Sausage Sandwiches.

Somebody asked whether they could use PayPAL. The answer is of course not! P & S would never eat PAL, CHUM, Chappie or any other misleadingly named foods which are no friendlier than any other food. The currency of Dogs in Ministry is Sausage Sandwiches.

Some of our overseas customers have inquired about the rate of exchange between proper British Sausages and frankfurter, bratwurst, and so on. Any European Sausages are acceptable at a rate of 1 to 1 (at least until Brexit) but anybody who thinks one British Sausage is equivalent to one tiny slice of pepperami or salami cannot be serious! The sausage, the whole sausage, and nothing but the sausage!

To the person who asked whether they should just pop the SS into the post in an ordinary envelope, don't be silly! The rollers at the sorting office would squash it flat as a pancake. Use a rigid box and send as a parcel.

As a concession, we will reluctantly accept payment by cheque or bank transfer to The Treasurer of Dogs in Ministry. He has a bank account. Between ourselves, Poppy and Sophie only keep him around because dogs need a human to pay for Sausage Sandwiches and the other essentials of life. And to drive them to the park and to the beach. Otherwise quite frankly, who needs an Owner? We just keep him around to give his life a sense of purpose.



EPILOGUE

Most academic and professional journals lead with heavy and serious pieces and end with a light-hearted inspirational piece. FURRED WAY does things the other way around. A variation of this final article was published in Baptist Times in 2010.

JUGGLING WITH CHICKENS

How many live chickens do you think a talented juggler could keep in the air at one time? I ask because it seems to me that being a Christian minister, a Vicar or Pastor, is remarkably like juggling with live chickens. When I say “live chickens”, I am NOT thinking about Deacons or church members, however much clucking and flapping and squawking they may do! I’m thinking about all the different responsibilities Ministers have to juggle with. Preaching. Teaching. Visiting. Counselling. Worship. Weddings. Funerals. Giving a lead. Steering the ship. Evangelism. Training. Enabling. Administration. Union. Association. Ecumenical activities. Prayer. Study. Wife. Family. Friends. All of these demanding and deserving our time and energy, but each as slippery and hard to juggle as a live chicken.



The great Doctor Martyn Lloyd Jones once said, “A man should only enter the Christian ministry if he cannot stay out of it.” And he was right! Gone are the days when the calling was to be simply a “Minister of Word and Sacrament,” days when a pattern of study in the morning, visiting in the afternoon and meetings in the evening would be a sufficient description of the minister’s activities. The Post-Modern, Post-Christendom world God calls us to reach demands new patterns of Christian ministry.

Paul Goodliff (Head of the Ministry Department of the Baptist Union of Great Britain) wrote in *Care in a confused climate* that the role of minister should not be that of chaplain but of spiritual director, guiding people on their spiritual journey and equipping people for service. The focus should not be on healing but on growth, not on firefighting but on discipling. So the minister

must be herald, servant, priest, parish theologian, educator, evangelist and peacemaker.

So in the area of Pastoral Care alone, the minister has many responsibilities: Building a caring Christian community; Creating healthy relationships; Healing wounded souls; Praying for people and with people; Welcoming and integrating newcomers and new Christians; Encouraging the struggling and wandering as well as Special ministry situations e.g. deliverance ministry. Beyond caring there is the challenge proactively to build disciples: Nurturing and sustaining faith; Guiding folk on their spiritual journey; Identifying and releasing gifts and ministries; Training and equipping for service and witness.

But there are so many other aspects of ministry as well. A recent exercise in appraisal asks the minister to rank in order from best to worst how gifted he or she is in fourteen key skills: Preaching; Working ecumenically; Information Technology skills; Training others; Written communication; Research; Evangelism; Church planting; Developing plans and policies; Working alone; Leading a team; Working as a team member; Pastoral care; Mediation. And all of this must be worked out in the brave new world of charity law, health and safety legislation, child protection and equality regulations. So many and varied skills required, so many different and demanding activities expected, and always the challenge not to be doing our own works but the works of our Father in Heaven, doing God's work, in God's way, for His sole glory. *"Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God."* (2 Corinthians 3:5 New International Version) There are no other jobs where skills, training and experience count for so little and character counts for everything. Robert Murray McCheyne wrote to a new minister: "In great measure, according to the purity and perfections of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God"

When juggling all these different chickens there are three pressures upon ministers which most folk do not face. There is the pressure of being permanently on call. The doorbell may sound at any time and you have to be ready to respond. Nowadays the phone may ring and the minister is expected to answer "any time, any place, anywhere," even on holiday abroad.

With the never-ending demands of pastoral responsibility, in order to stay sane ministers (and their churches) need to learn to accept the fact that when they have done everything they were meant to do in a day or a week, there will still be things that haven't got done. Sometimes a minister can add some of those things to the pile of tasks to do tomorrow. Sometimes some things will never get done. Sometimes there will be the predictable complaints about the things which haven't been done. The challenge is to be able to go sleep at night, or spend time with the family, or just unwind doing something you enjoy, without feeling guilty that you aren't doing work. The challenge is to be able to put aside some of those important things that will consequently never get done and to take time for yourself without feeling selfish! Without feeling that you are failing other people, failing the church, failing God! To leave all the chickens hanging in the air for a while without worrying that they are all about to crash down on your head.

The second pressure is the requirement always to be right. Never to make a mistake, because if you say something wrong or do something wrong the results could be eternally disastrous. Doctors and nurses face a similar pressure. Fire-fighters and soldiers in battle face similar pressures. Most jobs don't! But for a minister, if you give wrong pastoral advice you can wreck somebody's life. Wrong ethical advice and you lead somebody to sin! Choose the wrong way forward for the church and the church will lose out! Preach a poor sermon, or lead worship badly, and the faith of many people will be diminished. Mess up in a major way just the once and you lose your job, and your friends, and your home, and your family. And more important than all those things – you bring shame on the church and on the Lord you serve!

The third pressure comes from the truth that even when a minister (or a church, or any Christian) does makes all the right choices and does do all the right things, "success" however one seeks to define it is not guaranteed. Sometimes things do go wrong because we mess up, and sometimes things do succeed when we do the right thing. But we must never assume that when things do not turn out right it is because we have done something wrong. That is "the fallacy of the excluded middle." The reality is that things can and do go less than perfectly even when we do everything right, sometimes because of satanic opposition, sometimes because we live in a

fallen world, sometimes because the church is made up of fallible human beings, but mostly because we follow the Servant King whose victory and glory came through submission and suffering and sacrifice and powerlessness. When it comes to juggling with chickens, relying on levels of success as a measure of whether we are doing the right thing or not is inevitably a recipe for discouragement, depression and disaster!

Juggling with chickens: the need to resist the tyranny of the urgent, to make sure the important things are not squeezed out by the immediate. And at the same time, to expect the unexpected, to make sure there is spare capacity for the crises and surprises which are at the heart of pastoral ministry.

Our family once spent a very happy hour watching one of the street entertainers in Covent Garden. He juggled with balls and skittles, and then climbed up on a unicycle and cycled around six feet above the ground. Then he asked for a volunteer from the audience and to our delight he chose our eldest daughter to help with the act. While he cycled juggling two skittles, her job was to throw a third skittle up to him. Since she was only eight her aim was not very good and unfortunately the juggler dropped the skittle once and then fell off his unicycle trying to catch it the second time. On the third attempt was successful and he carried on juggling all three skittles to wild applause while still unicycling around the stage.

The hardest part of the minister's juggling act is not keeping all his or her different responsibilities in the air at once. Just when you feel you are almost succeeding, there are all the balls and skittles and flaming torches and live chickens that other people throw your way at the most awkward times. "Say Pastor, give me a hand will you. I just can't cope with this ostrich any more. Catch!" And all the time, of course, you have to keep on smiling.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS! We hope you have enjoyed FURRED WAY. If anybody was looking for more serious reading you might like to visit these blogs.

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