The St Mary's Centre Annual Symposium

in

Practical Theology and Religious Education

22 – 24 October 2013

at

Noddfa, Penmaenmawr

Abstracts

2.30   Collegial Session 1

Room 1:
Sylvia Baker
Religion, science and creation: what do UK church-goers really believe and why?

In recent years, some attempts have been made to access and describe the beliefs held by UK citizens on the contentious issue of the interplay between science and religion, especially with respect to origins. One such attempt has focused exclusively on UK church-goers. It has sought both to describe their views and to investigate their reasons for holding hose views. This presentation presents some initial results and argues for the need for further research in the light of the findings and of the importance of the issue.

Room 2:
Albert Jewell
'Gerotranscendence': Myth or Glorious Possibility?

In the 1960s ageing tended to be viewed in terms of the expected 'disengagement' of the older person from wider society. More recently the theory of 'successful ageing' has held sway. Often this has been interpreted as seeking to perpetuate as far as possible the aspirations and activities of earlier life stages.
But is there a specific developmental stage reserved for the very old, as most of the great world religions would seem to affirm, and theorists such as James Fowler and the Eriksons suggest? And if so what might it comprise?
The term 'gerotranscendence' derives from the work of the Scandinavian Lars Tornstam. A simple definition is the capacity to rise above the challenges and limitations of ageing. For Tornstam it operates at three levels:
- Cosmic (a different view of time, death etc).
- Ego (less self-centred, less interest in material things etc).
- Solitude (more selective re relationships, more content to be oneself).
If it involves a degree of disengagement it is purposeful disengagement.
Gerotranscendence can therefore be seen as a radical revision of both the above theories of ageing. However: is it really age-related? How universal is it? Is it rather related to personality, or to religious experience?

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4.15   Collegial Session 2

Room 1**:**

Ian Jones

What Difference does A-Level Religious Studies Make? Interviews with Students from two Midlands Sixth Forms

Amongst the key aims of A-Level RS are that students 'use an enquiring, critical and empathetic approach to the study of religion' (Edexcel, 2007) and that they 'reflect on and develop their own values, opinions and attitudes in the light of their learning' (AQA, 2008). But what do A-Level students currently believe about the transcendent? What is their moral outlook? And does studying A-Level RS alter any of this? Over the last 3 years Prof Leslie Francis (Warwick) and Dr Stephen Parker (Worcester) have been leading an investigation into the effects of A-Level RS in students' beliefs, values and worldviews, through a large-scale questionnaire survey of AS students, then re-surveyed as they enter A2 to explore the extent of attitudinal change. To accompany and complement this quantitative approach, a small-scale, in-depth piece of qualitative research has been undertaken with A-Level RS students in two Midlands sixth forms, and with their teachers. Through semi-structured interviews and classroom observation, it explores students' beliefs and values, their attitudes to their Religious Studies courses and the issues it has raised for them, and how these interplay with their personal, home, faith community and classroom contexts. This paper shares findings from that research, arguing amongst other things that A-Level RS is widely valued by students as a resource for developing personally authentic beliefs and worldviews, enables them to develop enhanced appreciation of the views of others. However, it is less clear how far the subject provides adequate resources to interrogate contemporary cultural norms and assumptions about the nature of religion and the basis of ethical decision-making.

Room 2:

Jonas Martinson

Listening to Ministers within the New Testament Church of God: call, ministry and church

The presentation draws on the findings of ten interviews conducted among ministers of the New Testament Church of God in the UK. The findings provide insights into the distinctive position of these ministers in relation to their understanding of their call, ministry and church.

5.30   Plenary Session 1
<u>Room 1:</u>
David Walker
Who goes to church in their twenties? A comparison of occasional and frequent young adult Anglican churchgoers in South London

Some 709 young adults in their 20s, drawn from among a sample of 31,000 individuals who completed the Signs of Growth survey carried out between 2009 and 2012 across almost all parishes of the Anglican Diocese of Southwark, indicated that they were either very frequent or only rare churchgoers. The respondents were asked a range of questions covering: demographic information; church membership and initiation; Christian belonging and sources of spiritual help. The two groups were compared and contrasted. Significant differences of gender, ethnicity and marital status were found between them. The sample was found to contain evidence of effective engagement with both unchurched and dechurched individuals. Relational belonging was high among both groups, whilst suggestions that occasional churchgoers possess a largely nominal faith were found to be false. Both groups were seen to find significant support through prayer, sermons and personal relationships, however discipling courses were seen to have had little impact.

TUESDAY 22 OCTOBER 2013

8.00   Collegial Session 3

<u>Room 1</u>:

Nicholas Thanissaro

Religious experience among Buddhist teenagers in Great Britain: preliminary survey findings

Little research is available on Buddhist attitudes to their identity and still less on the religious experiences that shape these. A three year study (2013–2015) funded by the University of Warwick has sought to investigate the attitudes of 13–20 year-old Buddhists across the Britain. Building on qualitative pilot work, the present paper will report initial findings from the 'Young People's Values Survey' with young Buddhists in British temples – with particular reference to religious experiences of teenage Buddhists. The paper draws on the approach of Alister Hardy's Religious Experience Research Unit, offering comparison with the results of a similarly worded survey question fielded on Greer's (1998) and ap Siôn's (2006) surveys of Christian pupils in Northern Ireland. Aspects of the experiences discussed include individual differences in reported levels religious experience and emergent content categories.

<u>Room 2</u>:

Kelvin Randall

Early and Late Responders to Questionnaires: Clues from Psychological Type

For the empirical quantitative researcher postal questionnaires have a number of advantages. They are relatively low in cost. They are geographically flexible and can reach a widely dispersed population almost simultaneously. Their relative or promised anonymity can encourage respondents to divulge freely quite private information. In addition they permit leisurely or thoughtful replies. Researchers tend to feel that the response rate to a questionnaire is an indicator of survey quality, and so there is a large amount of research into methods which will increase response rates to postal questionnaire studies. In addition to an overview of how to increase response rates, this paper will show that psychological type gives insights into the difference between early and late responders

9.30   Plenary Session 2

<u>Room 1:</u>

Stephen Parker

School Worship, John G. Williams, and the Idea of Childhood Piety at the BBC: introducing the Leverhulme funded project on religious educational broadcasting, 1920s-

During the first part of twentieth century the new technology of radio came to be used as a means of religiously educating children and young people at home and in school. In so doing, a particular idea of the religiously educated child in the broadcast space, a liturgical framework for this piety within broadcasts, and a pedagogy of religious educational broadcasting, was articulated by broadcasters, and came to be exhibited in broadcast worship for children. Such ideas and practices – informed as they were by pre-existing notions of childhood piety, trends in Sunday school teaching (increasingly shaped by the new psychologies of learning), and developments in religious education – reflected and shaped discourse and practices around the, now compulsory, act of school worship in England in the post-war period. The Rev'd John G. Williams, is of note in this context because his career bridges both religious broadcasting and religious education and he was of influence upon both. This paper outlines Williams' understanding of children's piety in his broadcasting and in published work, comparing this with challenges to his approach from the later prominent religious educator, John Hull, in his 1975 book, School Worship: an obituary. Consideration is given to how ideas of childhood piety changed over time (between the 1940s and the 1970s) and across the boundaries of broadcasting and religious education, arguing that these mutual histories maybe informative of the other, in a changing religious context, which forms the basis for a Leverhulme Trust funded project beginning in 2014.

WEDNESDAY 23 OCTOBER 2013

11.15   Collegial Session 4
Room 1:
Jeff Carter
Close at hand, but miles apart? Exploring the relationship between the Digital Universe and the Spiritual Health of Christian YouthTitle to be Confirmed

There has been a significant amount of research exploring youth and their involvement with electronic media, especially as it relates to the areas of social, physical, emotional and psychological health. There has been, however, very little written on the impact of such technologies as it relates to the spiritual health of young people. The process of investigating any potential implications of the use of information and communication technology on the spiritual health of youth began by the administration of a survey of 1200 youth attending the Baptist World Youth Conference in Singapore in July 2013. Using the model of spiritual health as described by John Fisher (2000) alongside other measures including Empathy Measure (Fisher, J. W., Francis, L. J., Johnson, P., &. (2002), Self Esteem Measure (Rosenburg, 1965), Religious Measure (Francis, 2007) and the Environmental Measure (Dunlap 2008) will provide the framework to examine possible correlations in time, content and importance of technology over against a spiritual health grid.

Room 2:
Randolph Ellis
When was now? The disappearance of disappearance

'In a world of appearance, image, illusion, virtuality, and hyperreality, where it is no longer possible to distinguish between the virtual and the real… reality disappears, although its traces continue to nourish an illusion of the real.' (Kellner, 2009 ,p.155). Something has disappeared and though there is puzzlement at its absence, no one quite knows what has disappeared or whether in fact anything has disappeared at all. What is the nature of this situation? If something has disappeared what has come to replace it? Do we continue to act, speak, create and relate to one another in ways that betray that something has disappeared, or do we continue to speak, create and relate to one another as if nothing has disappeared? Where do we (and everything and everyone else, including the Church) fit into this situation. This paper seeks to explore, via the thought of Heidegger and Baudrillard, some of the landscape of this situation and questions whether anyone has noticed if anything significant has disappeared at all.

WEDNESDAY 23 OCTOBER 2013

2.00   Collegial Session 5
Room 1:
Giuseppe Crea
The relationship between priestly motivational styles and personal wellbeing in ministry:
Exploring the connection between religious orientation and purpose in life among
Catholic priests in Italy

This study examines the association between priestly motivation (accessed via the psychological notion of religious orientation) and personal wellbeing (accessed via the psychological notion of purpose in life) among a sample of 155 Catholic priests serving in Italy. The data confirm a positive association between intrinsic religious orientation and purpose in life, but a negative association between quest religious orientation and purpose in life. These findings are discussed in the light of the expectations placed on Catholic priests by the Church and by society.

Room 2:
Gill Hall
Psychological Type and Celtic Christianity

Interest in Celtic Christianity began over forty years ago and continues to attract many individuals. It is a reasonable supposition that psychological type can be used to suggest, in theory, those aspects of the main themes of interest in Celtic Christianity which may appeal to individuals with a strong interest in this form of spirituality. The characteristics of the two perceiving functions, sensing and intuition, and the two perceiving functions, thinking and feeling, will be used to explore each theme in such a way as to offer possible reasons for the different responses and approaches by individuals to Celtic Christianity today. Themes considered include Celtic monasticism, Celtic Christianity and God and Jesus, Celtic Creation, Celtic Christian worship and liturgy, Celtic prayer, Celtic mission, Celtic arts, Celtic Christian holy places and pilgrimage and Celtic saints.

WEDNESDAY 23 OCTOBER 2013

3.00   Collegial Session 6
Room 1:
Paul Thompson
Noughty Teenagers and Their Beliefs

This presentation is based on a PhD project which used a 322 item questionnaire to examine the spiritual and religious beliefs of 2050 young people in school years nine and ten between the Millennium and 2005. The basic thesis of the dissertation is that New Age and esoteric practices and beliefs are now so common-place that young people accept them as normal tools in their spiritual search and expression. In this presentation a representative set of questionnaire items will be examined across a range of categories to discover significant difference within the categories and so to show that young people can be identified as forming unique constituencies of belief and practice according to gender, spiritual or religious identity, and belief in God. These categories include gender, spiritual or religious identity, belief in God, and relationship to Christianity. The research finds a significant number of differences across all of these comparisons.

Room 2:
Leslie J Francis
Who is called to be a bishop? A study in psychological type profiling of bishops in the Church of England

A sample of 168 bishops, serving or retired, in the Church of England completed the Francis Psychological Type Scales. The psychological type profile of these bishops was compared with that of 626 Anglican clergymen. The bishops differed significantly from the clergymen on three of the four aspects of psychological type. The bishops were more likely to prefer extraversion (53% compared with 43%), more likely to prefer sensing (49% compared with 38%), and more likely to prefer judging (88% compared with 68%). Overall the SJ temperament was preferred by 47% of the bishops compared with 31% of the clergymen. Moreover, there was a significant difference between diocesan bishops and suffragan bishops in terms of the judging process. While 37% of the suffragan bishops preferred thinking, the proportion rose to 56% among the diocesan bishops. These findings are discussed in light of the Anglican ordinal and in light of the strengths brought to ministry by different psychological types.

4.30   Plenary Session 3
<u>Room 1:</u>
David Lankshear
Growing and Declining Churches in Southwark Diocese

This presentation drawn from data gathered for the Signs of Growth Project in Southwark Diocese will consider which factors from the data on parishes are associated with growth or decline in numbers of people attending church over the period from 2000 to 2010 inclusive. For the purposes of this presentation churches have been divided into three distinct groups.
1. Declining Churches - defined as those churches where the mean of the Usual Sunday Attendance in the years 2008, 2009 and 2010 shows a fall compared with the mean of the Usual Sunday Attendance for 2000, 2001 and 2002 in excess of 10%.
2. Static Churches - defined as being those churches where the Mean of the U.S.A. figures for 2008, 2009 and 2010 are within 10% of the mean of the U.S.A. figures for 2000, 2001 and 2002.
3. Growing Churches - defined as those churches where the mean of the U.S.A. figures for 2008, 2009 and 2010 exceed the mean of the U.S.A figures for 2000, 2001 and 2002 by in excess of 10%.
 The issues explored will include
 1. Leadership Factors - Ordained and Lay
2. Physical Factors
3. Traditions
4. Activities being offered by the church
 If time permits there will also be a consideration of some of the demographic characteristics within the congregations of these churches at the time of the individual survey of church attenders that formed part of this project.

8.00   Public Lecture
<u>Room 1</u>
The Revd Canon Professor Leslie J Francis
The Piper at the Gate of Dawn: the psychological investigation of mysticism

THURSDAY 24 OCTOBER 2013

9.30   Collegial Session 7
Room 1:
Ann Casson
Non-Church going Catholics and the Catholic Church: a study of Catholic parents'
perceptions of Sunday Mass

This presentation is a reflection on some methodological issues arising from research on those on the edges of a church community. The context for the paper is an empirical research project focusing on baptised Catholics who choose to send their children to Catholic primary school, but who no longer attend Mass. These Catholic parents may maintain a Catholic identity, but the traditional markers of Catholic identity fixed in time and space, namely Sunday Mass attendance in a parish church, are no longer relevant. In the light of the Catholic Church's call to a New Evangelization, it is a pertinent time to investigate these non-church-going Catholics and to explore their beliefs and attitudes to Sunday Mass.

The paper focuses on the challenge for the researcher of identification of, access to and categorisation, of baptised Catholics who are no longer involved in the parish church community. Secondly, there will be a discussion of the impact that the place of research has on the validity of data generated, with particular reference to the extent to which Catholic parents' views on Catholicism may be influenced by the Catholic primary school setting. The presentation concludes with a consideration of the value of measuring a sense of "not belonging".

Room 2:
Neville Emslie
Transformative learning and ministry formation

'If you bring forth that within yourselves, that which you have will save you. If you do not have that within yourselves, that which you do not have within you will kill you' (Gospel of Thomas, 70). 'If we have our own why of life, we shall get along with almost any how' (Nietzsche, Maxims & Arrows 12). The 'why of life' differentiates human ontology, we look for purpose in our lives and meaning in our existence. How much we question, and how deeply, make us who we are, and this is the goal of learning. Using our ability to think, reflect, question, explore, theorise and experience moves us from one

state of being to another; in a word transforms us. The theory and practice of transformative learning is analysed in the particular context of ministry formation. Transformative learning is a means to 'think like an adult' (Mezirow). Is it possible to develop a programme for Anglican ministers in training with critical reflection at its heart and which transforms academically trained ordinands to self-reflective Christian ministers? The ability to reflect on the forces in play in ministry is crucial for ministerial effectiveness, and survival. As important is the ability of the minister to be able to critically reflect on their own frame of reference, his/her own values, beliefs and preconceptions which they bring to every pastoral engagement. This paper accesses the hermeneutical principles of suspicion and retrieval posited by Ricoeur and proposes a hermeneutical model of transformative learning for a critically reflective curacy training programme.

11.00   Collegial Session 8
<u>Room 1:</u>
Steve Glowinkowski and Henry Ratter
Leadership behaviours and practice

Steve will describe leadership behaviours and practice which make a difference, drawing on the commercial experience of his international management consultancy. He will present the Blue 4 Leadership model and briefly touch on climate, culture and GPI.

Henry will provide a brief overview and update on his research project: The relevance and value of the Glowinkowski Predisposition Indicator (GPI) in modelling church growth.

<u>Room 2:</u>
Tania ap Sion
Religious education, interfaith dialogue and community cohesion in Wales: an empirical investigation of the contribution made by the Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education

The provision within each Local Authority of a Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACREs) is a statutory requirement under the Education Reform Act 1988 designed to monitor the implementation of the locally determined syllabus of religious education. As part of their statutory constitution SACREs bring together representation of Christian denominations and religious groups active within the Local Authority. Drawing on a recent survey conducted throughout the 22 Local Authorities in Wales, this paper demonstrates the significant contribution made by SACREs to inter-faith dialogue and community cohesion in Wales relevant to the Welsh Government's community cohesion strategy, Getting on Together: A Community Cohesion   Strategy for Wales (2009). It is argued that any erosion of the capacity of SACREs in Wales to connect with local representatives of diverse religious traditions may carry unintended consequences of damaging the community cohesion strategy.