Disruption, Crisis and Continuity in Religion

British Sociological Association Sociology of Religion Study Group Annual Conference

4th July to 6th July 2022

A virtual conference supported by Gather

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BSA Sociology of Religion
Annual Conference 2022

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17:15   Conference Closes

Keynote Sessions

Keynote 1: Nasar Meer
University of Edinburgh

Monday 4th July, 13:00

Chair: TBC

In not repeating our mistakes: Islam, Modernity and 'what went wrong' in Hegel, Weber and Gellner

The relationship between Islam and modernity continues to rely upon an underlying frame in which Christianity is a secularised reference point for European advance. Hegel, Weber and Gellner are in particular three very different proponents of the view that formative periods of Islam locate it 'in a mould from which it cannot escape' (Zubaida, 1995: 153). The tempting step therefore is to reverse the telescope and re-read the colonial modern through long standing intellectual developments within Islamic thought, and specifically the endogenous forms of thinking that relocate the dynamic within the purview of Muslim scholarship. I will argue that while this is a necessary move, it is also one that invites its own intellectual hazards, and raises particular challenges for the Sociology of Religion in particular.

Biography
Nasar Meer is Professor of Sociology at the University of Edinburgh and co-Editor of the journal *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*. His publications include *The Cruel Optimism of Racial Justice* (Policy Press 2022), *Whiteness and Nationalism* (ed, 2020), *Islam and Modernity* (4 Volumes) (ed, 2017), *Citizenship, Identity & the Politics of Multiculturalism* (2015 2nd Edition), and *Racialization & Religion* (ed, 2014).

Keynote Conversation: John Holmwood with Michael Munnik

University of Nottingham and University of Cardiff

Monday 4th July, 16:30

The Birmingham Trojan Horse Affair and its implications: a conversation between John Holmwood and Michael Munnik

The keynote addresses the lasting consequences of the 'Birmingham Trojan Horse affair' – the claim that there was a plot to 'Islamicise' schools in Birmingham and beyond – for how religious and ethnic minorities are understood in contemporary Britain. The 'plot' hit the media headlines in March 2014 and gave rise to major policy changes, including a new prevent safeguarding duty on all public authorities to protect vulnerable individuals from 'radicalisation'. It also gave rise to a requirement on all schools in England to promote 'fundamental British values'. Yet the professional misconduct cases brought against teachers finally collapsed in May 2017 as a consequence of serious improprieties by lawyers acting for the government failing to disclose evidence. This keynote session is also occasioned by the recent, gripping Serial/ New York Times podcast on the Trojan Horse affair that re-opened the injustice done to a poor, mainly Muslim, community in Birmingham, its schools, and the governors and teachers who worked tirelessly to provide opportunities for their children. Notwithstanding, the response of the British media and politicians has been to deny misreporting and to reiterate the claim that the podcast is one-sided and the schools were a threat to the safety of children and the fabric of life in modern Britain.

Biographies
John Holmwood is Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of Nottingham. He was an expert witness for the defence in misconduct cases brought against senior teachers at Park View Educational Trust and author (with Therese O'Toole) of *Countering Extremism in British Schools? The Truth about the Birmingham trojan Horse Affair* (Policy 2018). He is co-chair (with Layla Aitlhadj) of the *People's Review of Prevent*, which reported in February 2022. He has written about the Serial/NYT podcast here.

Michael Munnik is Senior Lecturer in Social Science Theories and Methods with the Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK at Cardiff University. His research concerns Muslim engagement with news media practices, and before postgraduate study, he worked as a broadcast journalist in Canada. He has worked with organisations including the National Union of Journalists, the Religion Media Centre, the Centre for Media Monitoring and the Independent Press Standards Organisation to improve journalists' understanding of religious and specifically Muslim communities and issues.

Keynote 2: Philip Jenkins

Baylor University

Tuesday 5th July, 16:45

Chair: Rob Barward-Symmons

Disruption, Crisis, and Faith:
How Changes in Climate Drive Religious Upheaval

A substantial literature now analyzes the likely effects of climate change on many aspects of society, politics, and economic arrangements. Less noticed is the very substantial impact that we might expect on religious affairs. Through history, episodes of rapid climate change, and of climate-driven disasters, have virtually always produced sizable religious consequences. These have variously taken the form of driving widespread revival movements, of spawning new apocalyptic and millenarian doctrines, and (frequently) of encouraging a destructive search for scapegoats, including members of minority faiths. Conversely, periods of benevolent climate have produced their own quite different outcomes. Historically, climate is a very significant factor in shaping religious history, and in drawing the world's religious maps. As new climate factors will have a particular impact on Global South nations in coming decades, it is highly likely that those past experiences will provide a template for understanding future religious developments.

Biography
Philip Jenkins is a Distinguished Professor of History at Baylor University, where he serves in the Institute for Studies of Religion. He has published thirty books, including *The Next Christendom: The Coming Of Global Christianity* (2002) and *The Lost History of Christianity* (2008). His most recent book is *Climate, Catastrophe, and Faith: How Changes in Climate Drive Religious Upheaval* (2021). The *Economist* has called him "one of America's best scholars of religion." His books have been translated into sixteen languages.

Keynote 3: Gladys Ganiel

Queens University, Belfast

Wednesday 6th July, 14:30

Chair: Céline Benoit

What Can Sociologists of Religion Learn from (and Contribute to) the Study of Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding?

Disruptions and crises have been central to the study of religion, conflict and peacebuilding. Just over two decades ago, the 9/11 attacks pushed issues of religion and violence to the forefront of public consciousness in the West. A veritable 'army' of scholars, working across a range of academic disciplines, has emerged since then in pursuit of understanding the dynamics of religion, conflict, and peacebuilding. While some sociologists of religion have been prominent in this multi-disciplinary field of study, they have been a minority.

This paper explores what sociologists of religion can learn from, and contribute to, the study of religion, conflict, and peacebuilding. It reflects on some of the key achievements and insights of the religion, conflict, and peacebuilding field. These include gaining wider recognition for religion's socio-political relevance; providing analysis of relationships between religion and national/ethnic identities; and producing insights on how self-reflective religious actors can reform their own traditions, thereby driving social, political and religious change.

While there is much sociologists of religion can learn from these insights, the sociology of religion is especially well-placed to critique and respond to some of the main shortcomings of the religion, conflict, and peacebuilding field. These shortcomings include tendencies to conceive of religion instrumentally, reducing it to an empty category; to focus on institutionalized expressions of religion, thereby neglecting the contributions of women; and to overlook the links between everyday, personal religious practices (such as prayer) and self-reflective activism.

Building on leading scholarship in the religion, conflict, and peacebuilding field, as well as my own decades of research on religion in Northern Ireland, the paper highlights examples of sociological contributions to this wider field. It concludes with reflections on the possibilities for further cross-fertilization, including the implications of drawing religion into the public sphere.

Biography
Gladys Ganiel is Reader in Sociology at Queen's University Belfast. Her specialisms are religion and conflict in Northern Ireland, religion on the island of Ireland, evangelicalism, and the emerging church. Her publications include *The Deconstructed Church: Understanding Emerging Christianity* (Oxford 2014)*,* co-authored with Gerardo Marti, *Transforming Post-*

Catholic Ireland (Oxford 2016), and *Evangelicalism and Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Palgrave 2008). She is currently researching 'Religion in Societies Emerging from Covid-19', a Trans-Atlantic Platform partnership with Montreal, Bremen, and Warsaw, funded by the AHRC.

Special Panel: Honouring Professor James A. Beckford (1942-2022) - A Panel Discussion

Tuesday 5th July, 14:15

Chair: Mathew Guest

With Professor Eileen Barker, Professor Sophie Gilliat-Ray and Professor Hossein Godazgar.

Many of us will have been deeply saddened to hear of the death of Professor Jim Beckford in May of this year. Jim was a hugely significant figure in the sociology of religion over the past 50 years, his scholarship and personal warmth having strong and positive influence across the globe among many colleagues and students. His work on new religious movements and on religion in prisons remains influential, and his concerted mission to sustain a strong relationship between sociological theory and the subfield of the sociology of religion continues to inspire. He was the founding convenor of the BSA's sociology of religion study group in 1975, as well as the holder of numerous other offices within national and international academic organisations during his long career. His capacity for acute insight and clear thinking was matched by his generosity of spirit and cheerful presence. He will be greatly missed. This panel, convened just a few weeks after Jim's death, seeks to offer some initial reflections on his legacy as a sociologist of religion, drawing together a few of those who worked closely with him over the years.

Teachers' Session (in partnership with TRS-UK): Diversifying RE curricula and Disrupting the World Religions Paradigm

Wednesday 6th July, 16:15

Chair: Tim Hutchings

Speakers TBC

Religious Education is in crisis and in need of reform. We know that currently, although there are many examples of good practice across the country, RE remains in danger of reproducing static representations of religion(s) and religious communities. Research has shown that while the World Religions Paradigm informs RE teaching, we remain at risk of essentialising religious communities and portraying religions as monolithic wholes. In an effort to bring diversity within the RE curriculum, teachers and RE specialists will share examples of work they have adopted in the classroom in an effort to capture diverse voices. They will reflect on examples of good practice, and how these can be taken further in order to challenge essentialist views of religion(s). The roundtable will be an opportunity for teachers and RE specialists to discuss how include a variety of voices within the RE classroom.

Note: This session will be accessible for free via Zoom, both for those who have attended the rest of the conference and those who have been unable to.

Please visit https://trs.ac.uk/ for more information on TRS-UK.

Parallel Sessions

Parallel Session A: Monday 4th July, 10:15-12:15

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Curating Spaces of Hope: coproducing shared values and practices in uncertain times Matthew Barber-Rowell (William Temple Foundation)	Good Disagreement? Women priests, symbolic violence and the power to resist Sharon Jagger (York St John University)
British Buddhism, Secularity, and the Politics of Sustainability Caroline Starkey (University of Leeds)	We're still oranges on the Seder plate: crisis among queer Jewish women Mie Astrup Jensen (UCL)
Nonreligious Worldviews and Crisis: What the Study of Existentiality Means for 'Existential Security' Lois Lee (University of Kent)	Faith-inspired, ethically driven Muslim women during the Covid-19 pandemic Shahanara Begum (Birmingham City University)
Global Patterns of Religious Decline: Is Europe an Exceptional Case? Isabella Kasselstrand (University of Aberdeen)	Traditional prayers, returning voices: Orthodox Jewish women and girls' singing in a public ritual under COVID-19 Katja Stuerzenhofecker (University of Manchester)

Parallel Session B: Monday 4th July, 14:30-16:00

Session 1	Session 2
Parallel Room 1	Parallel Room 2
Chair: Kim Harding	Chair: Caroline Starkey
Clergy in a Time of Covid: Autonomy and Accountability Elizabeth Graveling (Church of England)	(Non-)Religion and the Tales from the Borderlands: The Potential of Text Mining and Open-Ended Questions in Survey Research Dominik Balazka (University of Milan/University of Turin/KU Leuven)
English Church Crisis and Innovation in the Pandemic - Findings from the Churches, COVID-19 and Communities Research Project Rob Barward-Symmons (University of York)	Epistemic Discernment: Who is Creating Knowledge in The Study of Religion in Britain? Saiyyidah Zaidi (Independent Scholar/University of Glasgow)
Disruption and Continuity in Funerary Ritual During the Covid-19 Crisis in the UK Jennifer Riley, Arnar Arnason, Rebecca Crozier, Vikki Entwistle, Louise Locock, Paolo Maccagno, Abi Pattenden (University of Aberdeen)	Disrupting the Lived Religion Paradigm Céline Benoit (Aston University)

Parallel Session C: Tuesday 5th July, 10:30-12:30

Session 1	Session 2
Parallel Room 1	Parallel Room 2
Chair: Isabella Kasselstrand	Chair: Céline Benoit
Confession and Critique in the Culture Wars: The short circuit of social justice to self-work Todd Boland, Ponce Jody	Born-Agains and Born-Intos: Disruptions, Crisis and (Dis)Continuities as First-Generation Religions become Second- and then Multi-Generational Religions

(University College Cork)	Eileen Barker (London School of Economics/INFORM)
The social inclusion and belonging of minority identities in Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Humanist spaces: A systematic review Krysia Waldock (University of Kent)	Christianity and the Chinese Community in Britain: Religious, Social, and Political Perspectives Yinxuan Huang (London School of Theology)
Islamophobia, Racism, and the Modern Condition: Theorising Contemporary Religion from West Asia North Africa Ali Kassem (University of Edinburgh)	Why Baby Boomers Turned From Religion: Shaping Belief and Belonging 1920-2021 Abby Day (Goldsmiths, University of London)
Religiosity and Exclusivity: A study on concerted cultivation of Transnational Muslim middle class and school choice Shehana (Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi)	Ethical Crises and the Uptake of Veganism among Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the UK Ellen Atayee-Bennett (University of Southampton)

Parallel Session D: Tuesday 5th July, 14:30-16:30

Session 1	Session 2
Parallel Room 1	Parallel Room 2
Chair: Rob Barward-Symmons	Chair: Ann Gillian Chu
Crisis as Opportunity: The politics of 'Seva' and Hindu nationalist response to Covid-19 pandemic in Kerala, South India Dayal Paleri (University of Edinburgh)	Crisis and authenticity in the study of Islamic law Samuel Blanch (The University of Newcastle, Australia)

An Exploration of the Impact of COVID 19 on the Liturgical Camps of the Roman Catholic Church Cody Warta (University of St Andrews)	Tides of Change: Nonreligion and Its Growing Impact on Law Cory Steele (University of Ottowa)
The Response of Soka Gakkai Youth to the COVID-19 Crisis: Persistent Challenges and New Hopes for the post-COVID World Fabio Bolzonar (Waseda University/Université Libre de Bruxelles)	Managing a Crisis: Examining Two Organisational Responses to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse Hearings Sarah-Jane Page (Aston University)
Populism and Religion in Europe in (Post-)Pandemic Times Daniel Nilsson DeHanas, Marat Shterin (King's College London)	Christian social welfare services in Europe: Responses to crises of continuity and disruption Andrew Orton (Durham University)

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Session 1	Session 2
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Chair: Kim Harding	Chair: Rob Barward-Symmons
Panel Discussion Feminist Identities in the Field: Comfort, Discomfort, Power, and Representation Saleema Burney (Birmingham University) Chloe Gott (University of Leeds) Renasha Khan (Kings College, London) Dawn Llewellyn	Strategies and categories: faith-based organisations and climate action at the United Nations Jodie Salter (University of Leeds)
	How social movements in Indonesia employ religious creativity to respond to environmental crises Jonathan Smith

(University of Chester) Sarah-Jane Page (Aston University) Caroline Starkey (University of Leeds)	(University of Leeds / Universitas Gadjah Mada)
	Inside the Climate Crisis: Green Spirituality as Political Resistance Maria Nita (The Open University)
	Imagining Paradise Ahead: Scriptural Reasoning and Circumspect Speculation among Jehovah's Witnesses Joseph Webster (University of Cambridge)

Paper and Panel Abstracts

Parallel Session A: Monday 4th July, 10:15-12:15

Parallel Room 1

Chair: Céline Benoit

Curating Spaces of Hope: coproducing shared values and practices in uncertain times

Matthew Barber-Rowell

(William Temple Foundation)

In this paper I will set out a new approach to coproducing shared values, and explore implications of this for the role of different beliefs values and worldview in uncertainty times. The approach I will set out is 'Curating Spaces of Hope' (Barber-Rowell, 2021).

I will begin by setting out contexts of uncertainty in the UK, created by multiple crises including COVID-19 pandemic and Brexit. I argue uncertainty is deepened further by the greatest shift in belief landscape for millennia (Clarke and Woodhead, 2018). I will frame experiences of uncertainty in terms of 'liminality' (Turner, 1967, 1969).

I will set out Curating Spaces of Hope, in terms of liminality, difference, rhizomatic or non-linear forms, and productive of shared values. I will show how Spaces of Hope can map differences within liminal spaces and in so doing, coproduce new understandings of shared values and practices. Using data from ethnographic sites in north west England characterised by Christian and non-religious worldviews, I will evidence how this coproduction implicates the fruit faith groups produce and their partnerships with others with different beliefs values and worldviews.

I will then explore how Spaces of Hope might aid responses to uncertainty in the UK. I will use recent research into the role of faith groups in combatting COVID-19 (Keeping the Faith, 2020) and their proposed role post-Brexit (Kruger, 2019). I will finish by offering pilot data from secular, Christian and Muslim contexts showing how Curating Spaces of Hope can meet this challenge in practice.

British Buddhism, Secularity, and the Politics of Sustainability

Caroline Starkey

(University of Leeds)

Over the last decade, a growing number of Buddhist organisations in Britain have begun to offer 'secular' courses targeted at the general public. These include retreats, workshops, and

weekly classes, teaching techniques for mindfulness, compassion, and reconnection with nature. Although described as 'secular', 'universal' or 'non-Buddhist', these courses are typically taught in Buddhist temple spaces and/or by Buddhist teachers. Adopting self-consciously 'secular' language and style appears to be a significant departure for British Buddhist groups, and may be related to economics. Once operating with low budgets, in renovated buildings and front-rooms, those Buddhist centres that have owned premises and paid staff, need to give increasing attention to financial sustainability in what has become a crowded Buddhist and Buddhist-inspired spiritual marketplace. This paper presents new empirical research, funded through a SocRel seedcorn grant, which explores how and why the idea of the secular is understood and operationalised by a range of Buddhist groups in this context. Although I will argue that offering so-called 'secular teaching' is an important aspect of financial sustainability and may constitute 'strategic secularity' (Engelke, 2009), I question the accuracy of drawing rigid boundaries between the 'secular' and the 'Buddhist'. Using Talal Asad's (2003) analytical concept of 'intention', I demonstrate that, despite economic necessity and a particular framing of certain teaching styles and contents, the motivation for providing 'secular' courses is inextricable from the motivation to provide Buddhist teaching and practises, highlighting the porosity of the concepts at play.

Nonreligious Worldviews and Crisis: What the Study of Existentiality Means for 'Existential Security'

Lois Lee

(University of Kent)

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart's 'existential security' thesis (2005) has wide currency in the study of religion and religious change. At its heart is the idea that religious beliefs support people in contexts of existential instability and crisis – an idea echoing Marx's famous notion of religion of as 'the opium of the people'. In recent years, the flourishing social scientific study of nonreligion and non-belief has found that nonreligious worldviews can function similarly to religious ones: they are resources that individuals and communities draw upon in response to existential challenge and crisis. I have conceptualised these resources as 'existential cultures' (Lee 2015, 2019), whilst others have returned to the concept of worldview (Taves 2020), but further ethnographic research is needed to understand them more deeply. This presentation shares interview data from 'Understanding Unbelief: Across Disciplines, Across Cultures', an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research project exploring religious non-believing in six countries: Brazil, China, Denmark, Japan, the UK and the US (2017-2021, John Templeton Foundation). These data provide insight into when and how nonreligious worldviews are drawn on by individuals to navigate life's ordinary and extraordinary disruptions and crises, and deepens our understanding of the relationship between existential cultures and existential security, as well as the role of theism in this relationship.

Global Patterns of Religious Decline: Is Europe an Exceptional Case?

Isabella Kasselstrand

(University of Aberdeen)

In the scholarly debate on contemporary religious change, critics of secularisation theory have argued that Europe, with its low levels of religious participation, is an 'exceptional case' (Davie 2002) in a world that is 'as furiously religious as it ever was' (Berger 1999:2). Contrary to this argument, I will use data from the World Values Survey and the European Values Study to demonstrate clear patterns of religious decline alongside the modernisation of diverse global contexts. In addition to examining global patterns, particular emphasis will also be placed on comparing a selection of countries from around the world as case studies of secularization. Here, I show that even contexts that are culturally, religiously, and geographically distinct – but that are rapidly modernising with high or increasing levels of economic and human development – share similarities in terms of their patterns of religious decline.

Parallel Room 2

Chair: Tim Hutchings

Good Disagreement? Women priests, symbolic violence and the power to resist

Sharon Jagger

(York St John University)

Disruption, rebellion, and protest seem like challenging concepts for women who are priests in the Church of England. As research has shown (Randall, 2015; Page, 2017; Robbins and Greene, 2019) the working lives of women priests are scarred by institutional and relational discrimination, despite their growing numbers and the introduction of women bishops. The Church's structure – known as the two integrities – supports and legitimises discriminatory practices based on gender and has been in place for almost 30 years. The story of the original campaign for women's ordination is characterised by radical, persistent, and angry protest by women (Field-Bibb, 1991; Dowell and Williams, 1994; Furlong, 1998). Where, then, is this protest against the misogyny that is at the heart of the Church's structure? Research suggests one possibility: women priests struggle to name sexism and misogyny in the Church (Walsh, 2011; Robbins and Greene, 2018). In my own research I have considered how symbolic violence (Jagger, 2021) is a hidden, but equally damaging, way to destabilise the status and subjectivity of women as priests. My research also suggests that institutional discourse generates significant barriers to women's protest. Yet, this is only half the story. I have also discovered that women's protest is far from absent in the priesthood, though it is often below the surface. This paper proposes that women priests perform acts of rebellion and subversion, from a position of liminality, that resist symbolic violence and that can, I argue, eventually erode the foundations of the Church's dual structure.

We're still oranges on the Seder plate: crisis among queer Jewish women

Mie Astrup Jensen

(UCL)

Despite increasing acceptance of LGBTQ+ people in religious spaces, such as ordaining LGBTQ+ religious leaders, performing same-sex marriages, and introducing more inclusive prayers and readings, a group of LGBTQ+ Jews across denominations experience stigmatisation, rejection, and discrimination.

This paper reveals emerging findings from my PhD fieldwork. Drawing on BNIM interviews with non-heterosexual Jewish women, this paper addreses how these women perform individual, familial, and communal practices and their struggles with religious Judaism.

This paper highlights four case studies. The first focuses on a lesbian ex-Haredi woman who was match-made and left the community shortly before her wedding day. She was rejected by her siblings and the Haredi community after she left. Struggling, she left the Haredi community. The second focuses on a Masorti pansexual trans woman who was denied access to some synagogues because of her gender and sexual identities, and eventually left religious Judaism. The third focuses on an ex-modern Orthodox lesbian who from a young age did not believe in the scriptures and struggled with the inegalitarian structure of modern Orthodoxy. She left religious Judaism, but attended an LGBTQ+ synagogue in the States for a while, which was culturally rather than religiously motivated. Finally, the last case study focuses on an ex-Haredi trans woman who got told by her community that there would be no place for her in the community if she transitioned, and who then joined a Masorti community.

Focusing on these four people, the paper will address their crisis with remaining faithful to their communities.

Faith-inspired, ethically driven Muslim women during the Covid-19 pandemic

Shahanara Begum

(Birmingham City University)

Recent studies show Muslim women as increasingly politicized and politically visible post 9/11 and 7/11 (Joly and Wadia 2017; Lewicki and O'Toole 2017; Massoumi 2015; Rashid 2014), thus challenging prevalent stereotypes and providing an alternative framing of Muslim women. With the plethora of research on Muslim women based on stereotypes and popular discourses where Muslim women are both in 'need of saving and increasingly symbolic of threat' (East-Daas, 202), how do Muslim women engage in political activism? What happens during a crisis situation?

This paper explores how Muslim women engage in faith-inspired, ethically driven activism during the Covid-19 crisis. Using qualitative interview data, this paper demonstrates the increased salience of Muslim women activists in local communities and social media during

the Covid-19 pandemic. Why is religion an important motivating factor? How do Muslim women participate during the pandemic? What help and support do they provide and how do they connect with their local communities? Muslim women participate in a range of activism from grass-roots campaigns, online social media, to running food banks and community kitchens to setting up networks and organisations. They are motivated by their 'religion' and seek 'justice for people' and 'fairness and equality': these principles rooted in their faith shapes how they carry out political actions and activities. This paper concludes that during a crisis, Muslim women play a role in British society, helping their local community in a variety of ways, thus moving beyond the binary frameworks of 'oppressed' versus 'threat' stereotypes.

Traditional prayers, returning voices: Orthodox Jewish women and girls' singing in a public ritual under COVID-19

Katja Stuerzenhofecker

(University of Manchester)

In this paper, I examine the contentious practice of Orthodox Jewish female voices being heard in public rituals. I draw on my recent ethnographic research that recorded and analysed how two UK-based online groups of Orthodox Jewish women and girls have synthesized tradition and innovation in order to fill a gap in ritual provision during the current pandemic. The case study reveals an intricate combination of authorised liturgy, technological opportunities, gaps in collective memory, and critical mass of skills, determination and participant numbers. While the pandemic has acted as a catalyst to innovation, the case serves to test the utility of Ronit Irshai's concept of 'narrative ripeness' that measures a community's readiness to accept and enact gender equality change, and systematically identifies contributing factors. Defining 'the community' is complexified by the online groups' local, national and international reach that is shot through with pre-existing relations across Jewish movements and continents. While it is too early to assess whether pandemic-prompted change will be large scale and long-term, now is the time to record and analyse desire for and resistance to the sustainability of changes made.

Parallel Session B: Monday 4th July, 14:30-16:00

Chair: Kim Harding

Clergy in a Time of Covid: Autonomy and Accountability

Elizabeth Graveling

(Church of England)

The basis of ordained ministerial relationships is held in tension between covenant, contract and constitution. As office-holders rather than employees, most Church of England parish clergy have no line management, vague role descriptions, and little by which to measure their performance. During the covid-19 pandemic, clergy have had, variously, no voice in or complete responsibility for decisions about how to run their churches safely, in the context of disrupted relationships and profound challenges to vocation and normal markers of success. Drawing on self-determination theory, this paper uses survey data and qualitative interviews with four cohorts of clergy to explore how questions of autonomy and accountability have played out in the context of a societal crisis over which they have had minimal control. It shows how such a crisis brings into sharp focus pre-existing social, theological and ecclesial structures and dynamics which render Church of England clergy accountable simultaneously to everybody and nobody - except God.

English Church Crisis and Innovation in the Pandemic - Findings from the Churches, COVID-19 and Communities Research Project

Rob Barward-Symmons

(University of York)

On the 24th March 2020, following the national lockdown announced the previous day, the Church of England closed their premises around the country in response to the rapidly developing COVID-19 pandemic. Both public worship and private prayer were banned in buildings that had overseen generations of crisis and pandemics stretching back to the Black Death and beyond. Overnight, spiritual practices shifted online, outdoors, and even onto answerphone lines, while the overwhelming levels of grief, isolation, poverty, illness, and mental health struggles across all of society both increased the need for local church response while simultaneously limiting their ability to do so, all the while dealing with constantly changing regulatory expectations. Based on data from over 5,000 responses from Church Leaders, Church Members, and Non-Members to two national surveys taken between September 2020 and March 2021, along with follow up interviews with dozens of respondents, this paper will explore how churches of all denominations across England responded to the crisis and how this was experienced by those who interact with and depend on the church on a regular basis. This paper will consider the impact not only on weekly worship activities but also wider spiritual, pastoral, and charitable endeavours, as

well as the faith and wellbeing of those involved, and the potential long-term impact on English Christianity. The pandemic triggered an unprecedented crisis in the English Church, but also saw an extraordinary level of innovation and transformation that could yet define the future of the Church in England.

Disruption and Continuity in Funerary Ritual During the Covid-19 Crisis in the UK

Jennifer Riley, Arnar Arnason, Rebecca Crozier, Vikki Entwistle, Louise Locock, Paolo Maccagno, Abi Pattenden

(University of Aberdeen)

The Care in Funerals project has explored experiences of disruption and adaptation in funeral practice during the pandemic through 65 interviews with bereaved individuals funeral directors and funeral celebrants and officiants. For many, the completion of rituals related to the dead body, the family and the community was of paramount religious importance. This included leaders of Jewish (e.g. Chevra Khadisha) and Muslim organisations (e.g. cemeteries, burial trusts) whose death rites were profoundly disrupted by pandemic uncertainty and infection control concerns. They sought to establish ways to perform these rituals safely and legally during the crisis, often with significant changes to process and personnel. Changes included: adapted rituals (e.g., dry ablutions); the translation of rituals online or into hybrid formats; establishing specialist sub-teams; training younger and less vulnerable community members to perform rites; and obtaining PPE and providing training in its proper use. Their spokespeople described these rites' importance richly and were proud of what they had achieved amid the pandemic's challenges.

These participants and organisations were determined to compromise on neither religious priorities nor pandemic guidance. Their accounts depict multiple intersecting considerations and authorities: tradition; God; the state; safety; the deceased; and their bereaved. They also hinted at a fear of being exceptionalized on account of minority religious identity should they be seen to fall short of Coronavirus Act requirements. This suggests a complex relationship exists between religious and secular institutions with respect to death rites and rituals, raising important questions about the former's place in the UK funeral industry.

Parallel Room 2

Chair: Caroline Starkey

(Non-)Religion and the Tales from the Borderlands: The Potential of Text Mining and Open-Ended Questions in Survey Research

Dominik Balazka

(University of Milan/University of Turin/KU Leuven)

In social sciences, commonly used methodological handbooks frequently describe the use of open-ended questions in surveys as ambiguous, labor-intensive, and widely inadequate for large-N studies. These sources typically treat text as a type of data suitable exclusively, or almost exclusively, for qualitative analysis. However, the advancements in the field of text mining are progressively changing the way in which textual data can be analyzed and exploited to address pressing theoretical and empirical issues. One possible example is the use of semi-automated categorizations to create more articulated and empirically realistic classification strategies of various (non-)religious identities. Indeed, scholars are increasingly interested in alternative ways to classify and measure phenomena occurring at the border between religion and non-religion (culturalized religion, alternative spiritualities, residual forms of religiosity among nones, etc.), as well as those belonging to the formerly neglected category of non-religion (like indifference, anti-religiosity, or multiple secularities more broadly conceived). While the questionnaires of major international survey programs still avoid the use of open-ended questions, I will argue that this practice is largely based on limitations that either no longer exist or can be contained with CAWI or mixed-mode approaches. Potential applications, advantages, and pitfalls will be explored using empirical examples from sociology of religion and other disciplines.

Epistemic Discernment: Who is Creating Knowledge in The Study of Religion in Britain?

Saiyyidah Zaidi

(Independent Scholar/University of Glasgow)

In examining the process of knowledge creation there are three significant questions: epistemology, how can we use 'skilful action [to] reveals a "knowing more than we can say?"' (Schön 1991, 51); politics, 'what is learning?' (Brockbank and MacGill 2007, 38), i.e., how knowledge is constructed and by whom?; and dialogue, whose voices are heard and whose voices are silent in the pursuit of knowledge? (Freire 1970, 19, 63). It is each author's epistemic, political, and conversational position impacts the research approach and texts produced. Current epistemological approaches are either strategic and used by the powerful, or tactical and deployed by marginalised scholars. Claudia Brunner (2021) asks researchers to 'undo (read: un/do because we cannot fully undo it without at the same time reproducing it) epistemic violence' (208). This leads to exploring how researchers may feel called to become 'epistemically disobedient in how we interrogate knowledge (inherited deposits) and change the terms of academic engagement in knowledge production' (Jagessar 2021, personal correspondence, September 6). In this paper I hypothesise that an epistemic discerned approach can add a spiritual dimension where researchers make decisions based upon the needs of their research, those they consult – including God – and aim to be aware of

advantage, disadvantage, and/or violence which all have power and positionality embedded within them.

Disrupting the Lived Religion Paradigm

Céline Benoit

(Aston University)

The lived religion paradigm has been prominent in sociology of religion over the last two decades. Building on the work of Orsi, McGuire, and Ammerman – amongst others – many scholars have used lived religion as a theoretical framework that enables them to explore how religion is lived. While the lived religion paradigm has served to challenge how we think of religion, and whose voices are included when we conduct research on religion, I question whether we have really made the most of the lived religion paradigm. In this paper, I reflect on its current limitations, and how it may be used as a broader methodological tool to explore how participants encounter religion in 'mundane ways,' and to consider the place of religion in the everyday lives of participants *regardless* of their own [non-]religious background. I will use findings from my research project on how religion is encountered in the mundane space of the school context to demonstrate how it is possible to think about lived religion beyond its current conceptualisation. I argue that by limiting lived religion to a theoretical framework, we are doing a disservice to the concept of lived religion.

Parallel Session C: Tuesday 5th July, 10:30-12:30

Parallel Room 1

Chair: Isabella Kasselstrand

Confession and Critique in the Culture Wars: The short circuit of social justice to self-work

Todd Boland, Ponce Jody

(University College Cork)

The impact of Covid has exacerbated and amplified global attention to racial injustice, with the international #BLM gaining traction after the murder of George Floyd. Yet, with the dampening effects of lockdowns and regulations, much activism has been restricted to mediated communication; from the mainstream to social media, and particularly anti-racist texts which we examine in this paper – for instance, DiAngelo's White Fragility or Kendi's How to be an Anti-Racist, effectively 'how-to' instructions in countering internalised racism. In our analysis, these manuals combine two strikingly religious elements – confession and preaching, the latter running parallel to Weber's charisma or a form of parrhesia after Foucault. Beyond calling out racism and rallying around social justice causes, these texts – and many equivalents on-line – exhort their readers to a excoriating self-examination, where past conduct is interrogated, suspected and accused of being racist. Acceptance of guilt, obedience to the requirement of self-scrutiny, verbalisation of sins; all of these elements recapitulate the Christian practice of confession. While well-intentioned, such discourses inadvertently short-circuit the pursuit of justice to the purification of the individual in an implicitly limitless project of self-work.

The social inclusion and belonging of minority identities in Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Humanist spaces: A systematic review

Krysia Waldock

(University of Kent)

Social inclusion and belonging are ideas and terms which are pertinent to many belief system groups. However, reports exist of exclusion those who have marginalised identities in some belief system groups. The aim of this review was to explore the social inclusion and belonging of people with minority identities in Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Humanist belief systems. The three research questions were: To what degree do people with a minority identity report being socially included or feeling as they belong in the four included belief systems? If there are barriers to full inclusion, what are they? What form do they take? And what is the interface between social inclusion and belonging, and the four belief systems under examination? 29 studies were included, with 23 of the studies looking at issues pertaining to LGBTQIA+ people. 24 of the studies were in a Christian context and five in a Muslim context. None of the studies were from Hindu or Humanist contexts. The quality of included studies was mixed. 5 themes emerged from a thematic synthesis of the papers: 'the minority

believer'; 'the perennial outsider'; 'degrees of exclusion'; 'pockets of empowerment' and 'it's complicated'. Issues of stigma and stigma management were found from the themes 'the perennial outsider' and 'degrees of exclusion', echoing broader literature. Individual acts of inclusion and exclusion appear to frame wider feelings of inclusion and belonging. Idiosyncrasy across and between groups was also found particularly across all themes. Limitations and directions for future research will be discussed.

Islamophobia, Racism, and the Modern Condition: Theorising Contemporary Religion from West Asia North Africa

Ali Kassem

(University of Edinburgh)

Islamophobia has received growing attention over the past years across public, media, and academic debates (Beydoun 2018; Kumar 2012; Lean 2012; Tryer 2013; Green 2015; Saeed 2016; Wolfreys 2016). Throughout, it is often assumed to be a 'western' phenomenon, and its study has almost exclusively focused on cases and happenings from the global north (Yel and Nas 2014; El Zahed 2019; Bayrakli and Hafez 2018). Working against this assumption, this project think and re-think Islamophobia's workings from alongside the lived experiences of people in the West Asia North Africa region based on reflexive in-depth qualitative fieldwork. Beginning with a case-study of Islamophobia in Lebanon and extending into comparative analysis examining islamophobia in Egypt, Tunisia, and Iraq, the project asks what it means to study Islamophobia as a form of racism within Muslim-majority and Arab-majority spaces and what such a theorisation raises in thinking racism and racialisation and their relation to 'religion' and the religious. Drawing on Latin American decolonial thought (Grosfoguel 2016; Mignolo 2011) as a form of south-south theoretical dialogue, the project argues for the need to re-think racism beyond its Euro-American confines as a global historical connected phenomenon in which contemporary religion continues to be central. Doing this, the project decolonially reflects on the relationship between contemporary religion, and Islam in particular, to 'modernity' within West Asia North Africa as well as globally.

Religiosity and Exclusivity: A study on concerted cultivation of Transnational Muslim middle class and school choice

Shehana

(Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi)

This ethnographic study was carried out in Kerala, a Southern state of India during 2019-2020. The study primarily focused upon the transnational muslim middle class parents and how they are navigating school choices for their girls. The rampant Gulf migration to the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries since 1990s has produced a hybrid cultural transition among the community (Soares and Osella 2009; Turner 2013). This newly emerging Muslim middle class is keen to bring influential changes in the public sphere by engaging in multiple financial and cultural entanglement in the state. Following, exclusive educational institutions are becoming important marker of religiosity and 'distinction' among the community like

elsewhere in the South Asian countries. Religion is rebounding like never before in the global context and in more nuanced ways in the society (Green 2018). There is scant attention given to religion particularly in the context of educational settings and school choice. Most of the literature on school choices are based upon western secularisation and rational choice theories (Nasir 2020). Against this backdrop it is important to understand the school choices, local life-world and subjectivities of Muslim middle class grounded in sociology of religion and particularly theories of multiple modernities (Jung and Sinclair 2015). By employing in depth interviews, fieldwork and secondary sources of literature this study looked at the intersection of class, religion and gender too.

Parallel Room 2

Chair: Céline Benoit

Born-Agains and Born-Intos: Disruptions, Crisis and (Dis)Continuities as First-Generation Religions become Second- and then Multi-Generational Religions

Eileen Barker

(London School of Economics/INFORM)

Although one cannot generalise about new religious movements (NRMs), if one defines them as first-generational religions, that is, consisting predominantly of converts (who may have had a 'born-again' experience but were certainly not brought up in the faith they now espouse), one can distinguish certain characteristics that can commonly be detected to a greater or lesser degree. These include a greater enthusiasm for their religion's beliefs and practices than are normally found among those born into their religion; an atypical representation of the population; a founder/leader wielding charismatic authority; the adoption of a dichotomous worldview; the subject of suspicion and possibly discrimination from non-members; and a tendency to change more radically and rapidly than older, more established religions. These 'sectarian' or 'cultic' characteristics frequently undergo 'denominationalisation' with the passage of time – but not always. This paper will explore ways in which several NRMs have undergone dramatic challenges with the arrival of their children not only from the very fact of their existence, demanding the resources of time and money, but also as they grow into young adults questioning their parents' beliefs and practices. Sometimes this leads to the NRMs disintegrating altogether, but can result, after a number of disruptions and crises, in their abandoning several, if not all, of the features that characterised them as a first-generation movement.

Christianity and the Chinese Community in Britain: Religious, Social, and Political Perspectives

Yinxuan Huang

(London School of Theology)

Using data from a ground-breaking survey on the social life and Christian engagement of ethnic Chinese people in Britain (2022, N=1,179), the present study aims to establish a comprehensive understanding of the constituencies and characteristics of Chinese Christianity in Britain. The Chinese church in Britain is at a critical historical juncture amid a series of socio-political events such as the rapid growth of the ethnic Chinese population in Britain over the past decade, the COVID-19 pandemic, and tensions across mainland China and Hong Kong. For example, the large influx of Hong Kong migrants to the UK presents a dramatic impact on the existing landscape of Chinese Christianity in the UK as we know it. While literature in this terrain is scarce and focused primarily on historical perspectives, this paper offers a fresh empirical assessment of the underlying religious, social, and political complexities in the Christian engagement of the Chinese community.

Findings from the empirical analysis suggest that, as compared to the general British Christian population, Chinese Christians present a significantly higher level of religiosity. Nevertheless, perceptions of Christianity and patterns of Christian involvement are highly diverse within the Chinese (Christian) community, which manifests in mainly two ways. First, the Chinese Christian experience is strongly associated with social differences embedded in value orientations, migration history, and social capital. Second, it is evident that political views, especially attitudes towards mainland China, are dividing the Chinese church and shaping personal consumer choices in the Christian market.

Why Baby Boomers Turned From Religion: Shaping Belief and Belonging 1920-2021

Abby Day

(Goldsmiths, University of London)

Baby Boomers, born post-WWII and defining the 1960s' cultural revolutions, were the last generation to be baptised and taken regularly to mainstream, Anglican churches. Their parents raised them to be church-attending, and yet questioning semi-conformists, enabling them to become ex-religious and to raise the Millennials to be the least religious generation ever. Theirs are stories of loss, renewal, redemption and 'truth', providing new answers to old questions and helping explain one of the most significant periods of religious change in the UK and Canada.

Based on 55 interviews and secondary data analysis carried out in 2020/21, this new research challenges tired paradigms of individualisation, consumerism and moral relativism, suggesting Boomers captured the moral high ground as they rejected individualistic, patriarchal, racialised and classed forms of Anglicanism in particular and religion more generally.

Ethical Crises and the Uptake of Veganism among Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the UK

Ellen Atayee-Bennett

(University of Southampton)

Ethical crises in our modern age, such as climate change, environmental crises, factory farming and the mistreatment of animals, have inspired a small, albeit growing population of Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the UK to make the move towards veganism. Few studies explore these groups of people, so my research seeks to fill this gap, by exploring the experiences of vegan individuals belonging to each of the Abrahamic faiths. I am especially interested in how religious and cultural beliefs, values, and practices shape one's experiences, and how Jewish, Christian, and Muslim vegans are reshaping and redefining what it means to be Jewish, Christian, or Muslim through veganism in late modern Britain. This qualitative study, which employed semi-structured interviews, WhatsApp diaries and virtual participant observation, explored the everyday lives of 12 Jewish vegans, 12 Christian vegans, and 12 Muslim vegans, all of whom were over the age of 18 and lived in the UK. Whilst veganism is rarely associated with Abrahamic beliefs and practices, my participants made strong connections between the two, explaining that their vegan ethical beliefs align with religious ethical teachings, and as such, veganism complements Abrahamic religion, both in terms of following said ethical teachings and complying with religious dietary injunctions. Among my participants, there was overwhelming concern that religious communities are not sufficiently addressing the ethical concerns of the day, and that there is a real need for progress to be made; for them, veganism was an ideal solution.

Parallel Session D: Tuesday 5th July, 14:30-16:30

Parallel Room 1

Chair: Rob Barward-Symmons

Crisis as Opportunity: The politics of 'Seva' and Hindu nationalist response to Covid-19 pandemic in Kerala, South India

Dayal Paleri

(University of Edinburgh)

The paper will examine how Hindu nationalist service organizations, specifically the Deseeya Sevabharathi (DSB), reconfigure the religious conception of 'Seva' to advance the project of constructing a Hindu social identity during the covid pandemic in the state of Kerala. The south Indian state of Kerala has been anomalous in the story of the rise of the Hindu nationalist movement in contemporary India as the movement has continuously failed to make any considerable political inroads in the state. However, the disastrous economic and livelihood consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic in the state, which was heavily dependent on foreign remittance and service industries- have opened up new spaces of engagement for the Hindu nationalists. Drawing on the fieldwork conducted in central Kerala during the pandemic, this paper will elaborate on how the DSB used the crisis moment of the pandemic to reach out to economically and socially backward communities using a language of 'Seva' to build a Hindu social identity, susceptible to build a majoritarian Hindu nationalist politics. The paper argues that, though the members of DSB posit their service activities as a continuity of the medieval religious idea of ritual service to temple deities, their idea of 'Seva' is directly influenced by the postcolonial state's welfare measures and early missionary movement. However, the reconfiguration of 'Seva' as a continuous religious concept enables the Hindu nationalist to attain greater acceptance and legitimacy in spheres that secular state welfare could not reach, thereby accelerating the construction of Hindu social identity in the region.

An Exploration of the Impact of COVID 19 on the Liturgical Camps of the Roman Catholic Church

Cody Warta

(University of St Andrews)

Particularly amongst Roman Catholic parishes in the US, the various responses to COVID 19 created an unexpected divide between two increasingly polarized liturgical expressions. While those churches who primarily or exclusively practiced according to the novus ordo largely transitioned to "spiritual communion" via online means or stalled their services entirely, a wide selection of parishes who practiced the extraordinary form continued meeting in person and distributing communion. It is especially notable that many priests in this latter group did not cease distributing communion on the tongue. Perhaps in part due to

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these differing reactions, those communities celebrating the traditional Latin Mass experienced a remarkable increase in growth during the year of 2020 and especially during the early phases of the pandemic. As such, when Pope Francis increased the restrictions on the Traditional Latin Mass with his motu proprio entitled Traditionis custodes, many conservative Catholics interpreted this action as a declaration of war between these camps. In this presentation, I examine how COVID-19 has contributed to the polarizing of broadly liberal and conservative Roman Catholics. I also explore why this issue is particularly prevalent in the US, and how practicing Catholics therein have neatly mapped it onto various political landscapes.

The Response of Soka Gakkai Youth to the COVID-19 Crisis: Persistent Challenges and New Hopes for the post-COVID World

Fabio Bolzonar

(Waseda University/Université Libre de Bruxelles)

The global COVID-19 pandemic crisis has had dramatic health, social, and economic consequences that are likely to be felt for years to come. Young people are arguably been one of the social categories that has been most affected by the pandemic. At the same time, they have also fostered new initiatives and innovative forms of social engagement to mitigate the disruptions of the pandemic. This paper studies the response of the youth members of Soka Gakkai (SG), a Buddhist movement widespread in Japan, in the city of Tokyo during the COVID-19 crisis. Although the process of secularization has made significant inroads in Japanese society, SG has been able to promote a vast array of activities during the pandemic. This paper claims that this engagement has not been limited to providing spiritual support and social assistance services, but it has also renewed religious practices and made a great effort to envision a new model of society for the post-pandemic world. Drawing on interviews with youth members of SG, SG's documents, and news in the press, this study describes and discusses the social initiatives of SG Youth. The aim of this paper is twofold. Empirically, it intends to document the entanglements between religious, social, and political activities promoted by SG. Theoretically, it wishes to develop its empirical insights to go beyond the paradigm of secularization and provide a non-Western perspective on the study of religion to critically address the Anglo-American canon that still exerts great influence on social sciences.

Populism and Religion in Europe in (Post-)Pandemic Times

Daniel Nilsson DeHanas, Marat Shterin

(King's College London)

In previous work with Marat Shterin, we have defined populism as 'a political style that sets a "sacred" people against two enemies: "elites" and "others".' As such, all populism incorporates a notion of the 'sacred', broadly construed, which can be illuminated by drawing on theoretical ideas within the sociology of religion. European populism can be seen as paradoxical because it has been fuelled by Christian rhetoric and symbolism, even though religious observance across much of the continent remains at a low ebb. To investigate this

seeming paradox, I focus on populist movements and their leaders in the EU, with particular attention given to Marine Le Pen (National Rally) in France and Viktor Orbán (Fidesz) in Hungary. I then briefly consider three 'edge cases' that influence and delimit populism from the borders of Europe (Russia, Turkey, and the UK). Finally, I explore how the distinctive social history of post-Christian/post-soviet/supranational Europe provides a fertile ground for a Christian-civilisationist, nativist, anti-bureaucratic character of populism in our (post-) pandemic times.

Parallel Room 2

Chair: Ann Gillian Chu

Crisis and authenticity in the study of Islamic law

Samuel Blanch

(The University of Newcastle, Australia)

The socio-legal study of Islamic law has been fixated on questions of crisis and rupture. From Weber to Hodgson to Hallaq, scholars have analysed catastrophic encounters between Islamic legal traditions and the coming of the colonial and the modern. Rather than trying to recuperate a more authentic narrative of the history of Islamic law and society, this paper reflects on the assumptions and sensibilities that inform this scholarly enterprise.
I explore the dynamics of this scholarly focus on time through the prisms of rupture and crisis on the one hand, and their reverse, the idea of an authentic or continuous Islamic presence on the other. While this focus seeks to pay due regard to the legacy of the colonial encounter, I argue that it is implicitly predisposed toward a normative assessment of the Islamic present in terms of the quality of its 'authenticity'. I demonstrate the perseverance of a particular kind of historicism in shaping studies of Islam, a historicism that cuts across both older Orientalist and more recent revisionist studies of Islamic law, as well as sociological and anthropological studies of contemporary Islamic legal life. This liberal and more recently 'post-modern' historicism tends to prevent scholarship from comprehending other arrangements of legal and social life that might be ordered, for example, according an aesthetic or ethical logic rather than a temporal one.

Tides of Change: Nonreligion and Its Growing Impact on Law

Cory Steele

(University of Ottowa)

Since the 1960s, Canada, like many other Western countries, has experienced a rapid growth in the number of people who identify as having "no religion." This increase in the nonreligious has prompted various social institutions to reconsider social policies to ensure this growing population is afforded full and equal participation in society. One such institution that has been called on to resolve conflicts associated with the growth of nonreligion is that of law. The law has been called on by the nonreligious to decide upon the constitutionality of various

social practices promoted by the state, including the use of prayer to open municipal town hall meetings, and legislation that has often prohibited access to physician-assisted dying, same-sex marriage, and abortion. The intersection of law and nonreligion not only provides insight into how the law is utilized by the nonreligious, but also acts as a window through which to explore the beliefs, values, and practices of the nonreligious, which are often entangled with religion. This paper explores the beliefs and values of the nonreligious as articulated in law. It shows how nonreligion, as conceptualized in law, challenges the binary approach to religion/nonreligion often found in the sociology of religion. This paper argues that the nonreligious are more actively having their voices heard by Canadian courts. Nonreligious beliefs and values are being adopted by Canadian courts in their decisions, thus creating greater space for the inclusion of nonreligious worldviews in Canadian society and contributing to nonreligious conflict resolution.

Managing a Crisis: Examining Two Organisational Responses to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse Hearings

Sarah-Jane Page

(Aston University)

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) based on England and Wales, is an independent statutory inquiry that has explicitly focused on religious organisations. While the Church of England and Catholic Church received sustained and separate attention (amassing over 60 days of hearing time collectively), other religious groups were amalgamated into one singular investigation, encompassing everything from smaller Christian organisations, to mosques and Jewish traditions. Based on a thematic analysis, this paper will compare a 15-day hearing pertaining to the Church of England's Chichester diocese and 1.5 days of hearings related to the Jehovah's Witnesses, examining the role survivor testimony, expert accounts and religious representatives played in each case. Differences regarding power, knowledge and voice in each case indicates that such inquiries must be understood as social constructions, with this also impacting the extent to which the broader public absorb the messages conveyed by the Inquiry. While the IICSA revealed significant safeguarding failings for both organisations, the process for accountability and the extent to which apologies were utilised operated very differently. The Church of England acknowledged that things had gone badly wrong and various senior clergy apologised on behalf of the Church. In contrast, the Jehovah's Witness spokesperson did not apologise; instead, parents were blamed for not being vigilant enough in protecting their families from CSA. I argue that these differences are due to the differential social positioning of each organisation, as well as the specific role that is played by particular theological commitments.

Christian social welfare services in Europe: Responses to crises of continuity and disruption

Andrew Orton

(Durham University)

The involvement of Christian churches and organisations in the provision of social welfare support has been a long-standing historical feature in Europe. Nevertheless, their role and contribution has increasingly been the subject of many debates and controversies, as contexts have shifted, populations have changed, and previous assumptions have become challenged at individual, social and political levels. In addition, those involved in delivering these services have themselves experienced tensions, disruptions and discontinuities, not least in the process of trying to apply their faith to their practice within diverse and changing organisations and societies. In an increasingly complex and competitive landscape of welfare provision, where resources are tight and politics fraught, and traditional sources of donations may become constrained, the possibility of essential support becoming disrupted becomes heightened. At the same time, existing dilemmas over how to respond can become exacerbated by wider social crises, such as significantly increased migration flows linked to particular conflicts, and the Covid-19 pandemic. This presentation therefore draws on initial work with Middlemiss Lé Mon, Edgardh, Fischer and Moos, as well as Eurodiaconia, to consider how such trends may affect Christian social welfare providers going forwards, and why this might matter for the social welfare sectors and societies to which they contribute.

Parallel Session E: Wednesday 6th July, 10:00-12:00

Parallel Room 1

Chair: Kim Harding

Panel Discussion: Feminist Identities in the Field: Comfort, Discomfort, Power, and Representation

Saleema Burney, Chloe Gott, Renasha Khan, Dawn Llewellyn, Sarah-Jane Page, Caroline Starkey

(Birmingham University, University of Leeds, Kings College, London, University of Chester, University of Leeds)

At last year's conference, 'Feminist Identities in the Field', panellists considered how feminist interventions in the sociology of religion shape their fieldwork, how contributors intentionally adopt feminist strategies, and how their methodologies have helped and sometimes challenged their research. During the discussion, audience members raised important questions about the panel's lack of diversity, the prominence of 'secular' and Christian research sites, and the differences that sharing a global heritage identity with participants makes to ethics and relationships in the field.

This roundtable continues this conversation. We invite SOCREL members to take part and to share your experiences of how power is inflected in feminist methodologies; how this can neglect race, class, disability; how intersectional approaches can reveal excluded structures and identities; and how your work interrogates and disrupts whiteness in study of gender in the sociology of religion.

We welcome reflections, short papers, and position statements that consider the extent that subjectivity can cause 'comfort' and/or 'discomfort' in the field, the discipline, the academy, and wider publics, and the complexities of taking power and representation seriously in the study of religion and gender.

If you would like to take part in this session, then please contact: d.llewellyn@chester.ac.uk and c.starkey@leeds.ac.uk

Parallel Room 2

Chair: Rob Barward-Symmons

Strategies and categories: faith-based organisations and climate action at the United Nations

Jodie Salter

(University of Leeds)

Faith-based organisations (FBOs) have become increasingly visible in climate change action in and around the United Nations, with growing numbers of faith-based observers at UNFCCC

and the UNEA. The role of FBOs in climate action has been framed variously through their social, economic and moral capital, yet these roles are complicated by multifaceted and changeable understandings of both 'climate change' and 'religion'. As such, the following questions arise: What role do FBOs play in climate action at the UN and to what extent are these roles distinctively 'faith-based'? How do FBOs navigate across different spheres of climate action and what are the implications for the categories of climate change and religion? To address these questions, I will draw on findings from interviews and participant observation, conducted both online and face-to-face at COP26. These findings demonstrate the diversity with which FBOs engage with the UN and suggest that the focus on interfaith initiatives and faith representation at (and by) the UN may overlook the diversity with which faith actors frame climate change and engage in climate action. Yet I will also argue that FBOs do seek to carve out a distinctively faith-based approach to climate action through moral, though not always confessional, framings of climate change and by engaging with the category of religion strategically in this nominally secular arena.

How social movements in Indonesia employ religious creativity to respond to environmental crises

Jonathan Smith

(University of Leeds / Universitas Gadjah Mada)

Religions play an important yet poorly understood part in how social movements motivate societies to respond to environmental crises and the rapidly changing climate. One common response to crisis has been theorised by scholars of religion and ecology as religious creativity, which means inventing new ways of living by adapting beliefs to address new environmental challenges. This presentation shares findings from an ongoing two-year study examining how environmental social movements in Indonesia employ creative adaptation of religious beliefs and practices to encourage changes in environmental behaviour. Indonesia sits on the global frontline of environmental crises, with a rich history of religious diversity and environmental activism. Using the methodology of a modified framework synthesis, we collected and analysed 250 empirical studies (in English and Indonesian) of environmental social movements in Indonesia between 1990 and 2022. The study has resulted in a robust conceptual framework for religious creativity by: 1) extending the concept by bringing related theories in conversation with each other, and 2) contextualising it using empirical data from Indonesia. In keeping with the theme of the conference, this presentation will report on four findings from the study: 1) contextual factors that directly influence movements to adopt religious responses, 2) examples of Islamic, Christian, Hindu and Indigenous Religious concepts, rituals and practices, 3) how movements join these beliefs and practices with other environmental concepts and values to articulate new beliefs and practices, and 4) applicability of this conceptual framework to sociologists studying how religion is disrupted in response to multiple crises.

Inside the Climate Crisis: Green Spirituality as Political Resistance

Maria Nita

(The Open University)

My research with Green Christians in the UK has sought to identify the processes of cultural change among these new heterogenous Christian networks, such as acculturation and innovation through prayers and rituals, during protest camps, retreats, festivals. In this paper I will look at self-identified religious and non-religious actors in my ethnographic research – such as Extinction Rebellion groups, climate camps, or transition towns groups – observing the religious and spiritual dimensions of their activism and involvement in these green networks and communities. I will show that the greening of religion and ritualization of protest actions inside the climate crisis, is bringing to the fore a new syncretic green spirituality. This emerging spirituality is primarily drawing on the religious traditions that had influenced the transatlantic green movement post 1970s, such as Eco-Paganism, Quaker spirituality, Western Buddhism, Celtic Christianity – in conjunction with the growing arts and performance festival cultures that have shaped contemporary society. Specific attention will be paid to the Christian Rebels who are jointly involved in their own Christian churches and the climate movement. Based on this investigation I look at how religious actors operate inside the 'radically inclusive' space of the climate movement, and attempt to re-conceptualize green spirituality as a latent or expressed form of political resistance.

Imagining Paradise Ahead: Scriptural Reasoning and Circumspect Speculation among Jehovah's Witnesses

Joseph Webster

(University of Cambridge)

Based on new ethnographic fieldwork among Jehovah's Witnesses in County Antrim, Northern Ireland, this paper examines how Witnesses imagine the soon arrival of the eschaton. As Witnesses live and preach during the present 'last days of this wicked system of things', the nearness of Armageddon inspires hopeful acts of 'imagining a paradise home ahead'. In this future, the millennium is a busy period of mass bodily resurrection, deep spiritual reeducation, and total environmental renewal, culminating in the final destruction of Satan and the establishment of a New World. But what will life in the millennium and into Paradise be like? Who will receive resurrection? Will everyone be youthful? Will children be born in the New World? How will the planet heal following the environmental horrors of Armageddon? Because no death exists in the New World, will everyone be vegetarian? By considering how such questions are pondered by Witnesses, this paper aims to show what happens when ultra-rational scriptural reasoning reaches its limit, and then pivots to allow continued pondering via what I term 'circumspect speculation'. Far from being what Witnesses would call 'foolish and ignorant debates', circumspect speculation can instead be understood as a careful extension of 'reasoning from the scriptures' via tentative Biblical inference. Always offered with the warning that 'we can't know for sure', circumspect speculation allows Witnesses a hermeneutically guarded way to extend hopeful imaginings of

life in the future about which neither the Bible nor Watchtower literature offers definitive statements, while still remaining tethered to both.