



The changing face of British Methodism between 1997 and 2008: A study in empirical theology

John M. Haley¹, Leslie J. Francis^{2,*}

¹Methodist Circuit Minister (Presbyter), Torbay, UK

²Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln, UK

Abstract: This study compares the findings of two population surveys of Methodist ministers (presbyters) serving in Great Britain in 1997 and 2008. The findings identified nine areas of change: the quality of Methodist worship is improving; Methodist worship is becoming less traditional and less distinctively Wesleyan; communion is becoming less prioritised; ministers are learning to implement a better work-life balance; the work-related psychological wellbeing of ministers is improving; there is an increase in conservative religious beliefs; expectations on the practices and values of members is being relaxed; homosexual practice is becoming more acceptable; and welcome for Methodist-Anglican unity is receding.

Keywords: British Methodism • empirical theology • survey • change over time

Introduction

One of the core biblical roots for the emerging field of empirical theology resides in the dominical invitation to go to observe the sower at work (see Francis and Village 2015). In step with Jesus' invitation, empirical theology has a keen eye for observing God's activity in God's world. Empirical theology is grounded in the disciplines of the theological academy, including biblical studies, systematic theology, church history and pastoral sciences, but also integrates within the theological academy insights, methods, and theories borrowed from the social sciences. Jesus' invitation to go to observe the sower at work is an observational theology that takes human experience seriously and applies both qualitative and quantitative research techniques, techniques that have been sharpened by the social sciences.

Watching the sower of good seed at work in the broad light of day, according to Mark 4: 39 (and followed closely in Matthew 13: 3-9), Jesus' listeners were first invited to employ qualitative techniques, noting the predictable patterns that occurred, distinguishing four kinds of soil. On the path, the birds ate the seed; on the stony ground, the seed failed through lack of moisture; among the thistles, the seed failed because it was choked; on the good soil, the seed flourished. The initiative to observe did not end there with qualitative methods. Quantitative methods were brought into play as well, noting the variation in the quantity of growth, distinguishing between thirtyfold, sixtyfold, and a hundredfold. Building on the foundations that he found in Mark, Matthew added a second narrative about the sower of weeds at work in the darkness of the night (Matthew 13: 24-30). On this occasion the empirical theologians were caught off guard and had failed to observe the activity that had taken place under the cloak of darkness.

* E-mail: leslie.francis@lincoln.ac.uk

The Changing Face Of Theology

Ilo, Stan Chu



The Changing Face Of Theology:

The Changing Face of Theology Patrick Fannon, 1968 **The Changing Face of Religion** James A Beckford, Thomas Luckmann, 1989-06 Most of the chapters in this volume were contributed to a symposium on the Changing Face of Religion which formed part of the World Congress of Sociology in New Delhi India 1986 *The Changing Faces of Religion in XVIIIth Century Scotland* Raquel Lázaro Cantero, Julio Seoane, 2016-12-01 S kularisierung wird oft mit der Aufkl rung in Verbindung gebracht Jedoch wurde sie nicht von allen Denkern der Aufkl rung verfochten Mithilfe dieses Buches soll Licht auf die von den schottischen Aufkl rern aufgedeckten Probleme und L sungen geworfen werden die sich bei der Untersuchung des Stellenwertes der Religion in der Gesellschaft auftaten Tats chlich sahen Hutcheson Reid Hume Smith Ferguson und Millar die Situation der Religion in der Gesellschaft aus verschiedenen Perspektiven und kamen oftmals zu sehr unterschiedlichen Schl ssen Dieses komplexe Verst ndnis von Religion f hrte zur Zusammenstellung dieses Buches welches sich auf drei Fragen konzentriert Welche Rolle nimmt die Religion in der Gesellschaft ein Inwieweit beeinflussen die Existenz Gottes und die Naturreligion die soziale Ordnung Wie sollten bestimmte religi se berzeugungen in einem s kularen Kontext verstanden werden und was haben sie f r soziale und moralische Folgen Diese drei Kernfragen sind eng mit den wesentlichen gemeinsamen Anliegen der schottischen Denker verbunden der Verteidigung der nat rlichen menschlichen Geselligkeit gegen kontraktualistische Theorien sowie der Feststellung ob die Religion die politische und moralische Gesellschaftsordnung behindert oder best rkt Secularization is often associated with the Enlightenment However not all Enlightenment thinkers defended it This book aims to cast light on the problems and solutions that the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment uncovered when studying the place of religion in society In fact Hutcheson Reid Hume Smith Ferguson and Millar saw the situation of religion in society from different perspectives and often reached very different conclusions This complex understanding of religion is what led us to compile this book which focuses on three questions What is the role of religion in society How does the existence of God and natural religion affect the social order How should certain religious beliefs be understood in a secular context and what are their social and moral repercussions These three key issues are closely connected to the Scottish thinkers chief common concerns defending natural human sociability from contractualist theories and determining whether religion hinders or strengthens the political and moral order of society

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Currents in the Interpretation of Paul Neil Elliott, 2024-09-05 The apostle Paul has long been championed or criticized as a Christian thinker as a brilliant theological genius or an enthusiastic convert who spun arguments to justify his new allegiances In these essays Neil Elliott engages some of the most provocative currents in contemporary scholarship including

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future This helpful book is appropriate for pastors and lay readers interested in biblical interpretation *Handbook of African Catholicism* Ilo, Stan Chu, 2022-07-13 A disciplinary map for understanding African Catholicism today by engaging some of the most pressing and pertinent issues topics and conversations in diverse fields of studies in African Catholicism

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