



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

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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.

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The Changing Face Of Theology

CO Houle



The Changing Face Of Theology:

This book delves into The Changing Face Of Theology. The Changing Face Of Theology is a crucial topic that needs to be grasped by everyone, ranging from students and scholars to the general public. The book will furnish comprehensive and in-depth insights into The Changing Face Of Theology, encompassing both the fundamentals and more intricate discussions.

1. The book is structured into several chapters, namely:

- Chapter 1: Introduction to The Changing Face Of Theology
- Chapter 2: Essential Elements of The Changing Face Of Theology
- Chapter 3: The Changing Face Of Theology in Everyday Life
- Chapter 4: The Changing Face Of Theology in Specific Contexts
- Chapter 5: Conclusion

2. In chapter 1, the author will provide an overview of The Changing Face Of Theology. The first chapter will explore what The Changing Face Of Theology is, why The Changing Face Of Theology is vital, and how to effectively learn about The Changing Face Of Theology.
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4. In chapter 3, this book will examine the practical applications of The Changing Face Of Theology in daily life. This chapter will showcase real-world examples of how The Changing Face Of Theology can be effectively utilized in everyday scenarios.
5. In chapter 4, the author will scrutinize the relevance of The Changing Face Of Theology in specific contexts. The fourth chapter will explore how The Changing Face Of Theology is applied in specialized fields, such as education, business, and technology.
6. In chapter 5, the author will draw a conclusion about The Changing Face Of Theology. The final chapter will summarize the key points that have been discussed throughout the book.

This book is crafted in an easy-to-understand language and is complemented by engaging illustrations. It is highly recommended for anyone seeking to gain a comprehensive understanding of The Changing Face Of Theology.

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