

Tuesday 9th July at 14:30 - 16:00

Parallel Session A

Communicating and Islam

ROOM 1.64 GLAMORGAN

Thinking Congregationally – Diaspora Muslims and Communicating Religion

Azim Ahmed
(Cardiff University)

'Congregational studies' has been a staple of sociology of religion in the UK and the study of Christianity, through the work of scholars such as Mathew Guest and Linda Woodhead, as well as the United States, where it is strongly associated with Nancy Ammerman. It has value also in application to other religious communities, especially religions in a minority context.

In this paper, I outline the shape and dimensions of the British Muslim congregational landscape. I argue that it has, within the context of Anglophone Islam, replaced other historic forms of association (such as the *tariqa*) in Muslim-majority countries to become the dominant means of organisation. This shift has been driven by a demand for religious nurture and upbringing, as the congregation is a means and pattern for communities to communicate religion inter-generationally in diaspora when other institutions are not available.

I root my argument in ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in British mosques, and conclude my paper by exploring what 'thinking congregationally' about Islam and other religious traditions might offer to sociology, Islamic studies, and religious studies.

Making Islam One's Own

Omer Ajjazi
(University of Toronto)

My ethnographic research explores violence and social repair following natural disasters and conflict in the mountainscapes of Northern Pakistan and Kashmir. One of my interlocutors is Sattar Shah. Sattar calibrates his investments and reliance on others as being subservient to his relationship with Allah. He possesses a spirituality, a certain kind of asceticism, developed over a lifetime of negotiating relationships with varying degrees of reciprocity, betrayal, and fulfilment. Sattar is adamant in his rejection of the social and strict reliance on Allah for fulfilling even the most basic of needs such as obtaining milk or the occasional cigarette. He has arrived at the conclusion, that only Allah has stood by him through the violence that saturates everyday life in the mountainscapes. I posit that another kind of attention is required to capture the work he performs: a lifelong accumulation of strength and fierceness, which cannot be sufficiently explained through forms of self-cultivation. By drawing attention to the particularities and situatedness of Sattar's relationship with Allah, I attempt to show that this relationship is accumulative and accretive of the very social it seeks to reject. The rejection of the social or engaging with it on one's own terms, constitutes a site of the social in itself, one that is needed for Sattar's sustenance. This allows us to appreciate how Sattar Shah makes Islam his own, rather than only being subjected to its ethical norms. The paper contributes to the theory of social repair and violence, and how an attention to Muslim affects and normativities can differently illuminate each of these. It also highlights the challenges of adequately 'communicating religion' when it is approached in an embodied, lived, and felt sense.

Communicating Islam to Muslims: Adhaan, Da'wa and the Machinery of Plausibility Structure Generation

Riyaz Timol
(Cardiff University)

According to Berger and Luckmann's sociology of knowledge, language is the instrument of socialisation par excellence. Every time we speak, a constellation of meanings are codified into a set of lexical and syntactical symbols that are deciphered by the mind and press upon consciousness. This paper argues that, as a pre-eminently oral tradition, the socialising potential of language has been integrated into the warp and woof of Islam as lived religion. Five times a day, the muezzin loudly and publicly announces the call to prayer [*adhaan*] from minarets around the world thus verbalising core tenets of Muslim faith. Similarly the vocal recitation of the Qur'an has been instituted into three of the five daily prayers with the Friday prayer having an oral sermon [*khutbah*] incorporated as an obligatory component. After the Qur'an, devout Muslims derive from a huge corpus of hadith literature an ensemble of pious utterances to sanctify the

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perfunctory acts of daily life. Drawing on the author's ethnographic fieldwork with the British branch of the Tablighi Jama'at – widely regarded as the largest movement of grassroots Islamic revival in the world – the paper further explicates the modalities through which da'wa, or Islamic proselytization, is used to communicate Islam not to outsiders, but rather as a mechanism to consolidate the commitment of existing believers. Language thus emerges as a key vehicle through which core elements of Islam's symbolic universe are instantiated in space and time, thus allowing their plausibility to be maintained in subjective consciousness.

Biography

Dr Riyaz Timol is a Research Associate at Cardiff University's Centre for the Study of Islam in the UK. His research interests include ethnographic methodology, intergenerational transmission of Islam in Britain and the relationship of Islam with modernity. He is the Principal Investigator of a national study examining the lived experiences of British imams.

Religion and Popular Culture

ROOM 1.80 GLAMORGAN

Sufism on Social Media

*Ayesha Khan
(Cardiff University)*

In this paper, I argue the existing research is yet to explore several themes, which are key to understanding some of the contemporary forms of Sufi expression in Britain. Today religious people can consume the Internet or move between different Sufi-affiliated organisations, as a source of religious guidance and spiritual teaching, without necessarily observing the traditions of a particular group or sect. I begin by exploring naat recitation on social media. This practice has become popular amongst young British Muslims through the rise of 'celebrity' naat reciters (naat khwaans). As 'Islamic music' can be considered a form of paraliturgical worship, naat recitation is an oral and aural form of religious and spiritual practice. Gatherings which were once confined to a specific space (such as, private homes) or a single sex (such as, male only), are now publicly available and can also be live-streamed, therefore observed in real-time. I also examine 'Sufi shopping', where Islamic paraphernalia is purchased online for people to replicate or learn cultural Sufi traditions and the Prophetic example (Sunnah). In this paper, I explore the methodology and ethics of researching religious practice on social media and discuss my findings on contemporary Sufi expression amongst young British Muslims.

The Black Colour of Pop Culture: Islamic State and Popular Culture

*Grzegorz Kubinski
(Pedagogical University of Cracow
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology)*

This paper focuses on Islamic State not only as a terrorist organization, but also as a socio-cultural phenomenon. While religious and ideological content is extremely important in this terrorist organization, it is equally interesting how it is passed on to different socio-cultural groups. Much of the group's message is targeted at recipients from the Western world. The question thus arises how this message, calling for submission to Islam and acceptance of its values, is formulated to be understandable for a Western audience.

In this paper, I highlight pop culture patterns, media strategies and symbolism used in the mass media, which Islamic State has taken over and transformed for its own propaganda narrative. Examples of western pop culture elements like music, the internet, computer games or fashion that have been transformed by Islamic State and used as elements of propaganda. I conclude with consideration of peaceful, alternative strategies of opposing the wave of terrorism. On the one hand, it is an analysis of the use of irony and satire mechanisms, thanks to which the media message of Islamic State becomes weakened. On the other hand, the analysis concerns the places of violence and terrorist attacks committed by ISIS, which become spontaneous monuments commemorating bloody events as well as places of symbolic, but also real opposition to Islamic State violence. Although nowadays it seems that this organization has ceased to threaten Western societies, it cannot be forgotten that, despite media silence, ISIS is still functioning. We note the presence of groups and individuals in Western countries who are sympathetic to ISIS, as well as continued struggles in the Middle East and Africa. Constant monitoring and analysis of media propaganda strategies, including Western cultural patterns used by terrorist organizations, therefore continue to be justified.

Biography

Grzegorz Kubinski (*Ph.D. in sociology, Jagiellonian University, 2005*) assistant professor at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Pedagogical University in Cracow, Poland. His recent scholarly interests focus on sociology of religion, sociology of body and cultural studies. His latest monograph is *Czarny kolor popkultury. Panstwo Islamskie i kultura popularna, [Islamic State and popculture]* 2018.

'Sold-out' Religions: Showcases of Secularity

Nevin Sahin

(Orient-Institut Istanbul)

December marks a 'spectacular' clash of religious events addressing the secular individuals of the modern era. While the Christian world keeps celebrating Christmas in December, the Muslim world has recently adapted December for celebrating 'the wedding day' of a Muslim Sufi leader, i.e. commemorating the death of Rumi (Mevlana). 17 December 2017, in this sense, is a significant day in that it simultaneously witnessed two commemorative events from these religious domains and it provides ground for understanding how religion is communicated within the secular contexts of two different religions. While the American a Capella quintet Pentatonix delivered their sold-out performance at The Anthem in Washington DC as part of their A Pentatonix Christmas tour, Turkish traditional musicians held their final and sold-out whirling performance of the 744th Seb-i Arus titled Fraternity Time (Kardeslik Vakti) in Konya on this day. Two different religions, two different continents, two different events, and two different music genres share a variety of elements in common with regard to staging and communicating religion. The comparative analysis of the discourses surrounding the two performances in issue and the content analysis of the performances reveal the ways of negotiating religion towards secularity and secularity towards religion through 'spectacular' performance and the consumerism embedded in the intermingling encounter of religion and secularity. In light of the qualitative analyses, this paper seeks a Debordian interpretation of consuming and re-producing contemporary religion through showcases of music and dance.

Religion and the Visual

ROOM 1.60 GLAMORGAN

Scripture on the Screen? Young Filmmakers' Perspectives of the Bible as Creative Inspiration

Robert Barward-Symmons

(University of Kent)

This paper presents the findings from a five-month research project for 'The Pitch' film fund exploring the perspectives of emerging British filmmakers towards the Christian Bible as source of inspiration. Based on semi-structured interviews with both religious and non-religious filmmakers across the UK, this paper will outline the attitudes towards and experiences of religion and Christian scripture among this potentially influential group, and the impact this might have on their creative process. Biblical stories, themes, and characters have been woven throughout films since the birth of cinema, and scholars such as Adele Reinhartz (2013) have explored this relationship in the movies as they are presented to the public. This research seeks to understand the future of this phenomena from the perspective of filmmakers at the beginning of their career. This paper will also draw upon major new research data from a Bible Society/YouGov study of 20,000 individuals across England and Wales into religious attitudes and practices and show where filmmakers fit within this wider national picture. Mediatisation theorists such as Stig Hjarvard and Lyn Schofield Clarke (2011) have argued that mass media has become a primary source of information about religious issues – and narratives – in modern society. If this is the case then understanding the intentions and beliefs behind the representation of biblical themes or narratives in film – whether 'faithful' to the original text or otherwise – offers an invaluable insight into the nature of the contemporary mass-communication of religion.

Neoliberal Religiosity: Techno-religious Objects and Marketization of Religion in Turkey

Esma H Celebioglu

(George Mason University)

In the contemporary world, technology incorporates into many areas of life from economy to social life, including religions and traditional belief systems. With the interaction of technology and religion, multiple techno-religious objects have been recently introduced into the Islamic religious market.

The introduction of techno-religious objects in the religious market of Turkey and their popularization have mostly occurred within the last decade, during the ruling period of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi—hereinafter AKP). Today, the marketization of religion and the Islamic culture of consumption characterize the lifestyles of a majority of the conservative Muslim population in Turkey and created a profit-based conservative culture.

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This article aims to analyze the transformation of religiosity in Turkey through the marketization of religion and the popularization of techno-religious objects in the last decades. I will demonstrate intersections of religion and technology and how techno-religious objects take place in the transformation of the Islamic landscape in Turkey related to the neoliberal reforms and practices of the AKP era.

I will first examine different functionalities of techno-religious objects and discuss how these objects play a role in the identity formation of Muslim individuals. Then, I will analyze how these objects reshape religious practices in Turkey in relation to the neoliberal policies of the AKP. Lastly, I will try to answer how marketization of religion can promote the state ideology in Turkey and I will argue how techno-religious objects can function as techniques of governing in the AKP era

Cinema and Religion: An Inquiry into the Image of Gods in South Indian Cinema

Mahima Raj

(Central University of Karnataka)

The paper intends to problematise the creation of certain images of both pseudo-secular and secular qualifiers in the post millennial South Indian cinemas. The subject of investigation posits focus upon the creation, manufacture and monitoring social valence of certain constructions of images, mentalities, attitudes and public reception of and around the image of both lord Ganesha and lord Hanuman. The hyper ventilating attributes of the representations of lord Ganesha and lord Hanuman has been a crucial aspect of cinematic narratives lately in the Indian subcontinent. However, the paper would look into its origins and metamorphosis only in the South Indian socio-political scenario due to want of familiarity in the northern cultural contexts. Accounting the phenomenon as a public exhibition of mere faith or belief would deny from perspective of other political and cultural dimensions in the continued and recurrent hyperbolic representations of the above mentioned image constructions. The paper will look critically into select South Indian popular films, especially from Kannada, Tamil and Telugu film industries and aim to conceive and problematise a theoretical approach to such manufacturing of images. The paper further advances the proposition towards the constructions of masculinity in public spaces. The study will also extend its analysis into the realms of memory studies and attempts to revitalise the role of screen images in manufacturing the collective memory of any given society.

Religion and the Secular: Institutions

ROOM 0.86 GLAMORGAN

Mindfulness: Religious or Secular (and why it matters)?

Alp Arat

(Cardiff University)

Highly abstract yet deeply embodied notions such as being, presence, and stillness are gaining considerable currency in secular societies. Mindfulness meditation in particular now represents a quintessential expression of such trends. Despite its ubiquity however, this phenomenon has so far garnered little attention from sociology, let alone the sociology of religion.

Our current understanding of this milieu thus remains limited to a clinical evidence base focused primarily on the efficacy of mindfulness for improved personal health and wellbeing. In an effort to go beyond the prevailing discourses in medicine, psychology, and neuroscience, this paper will draw on a three-year project titled 'Mapping Mindfulness in the UK' (Leverhulme Trust) and present a social cartography of the people, places and practices that constitute the contemporary mindfulness milieu.

Drawing on 400 survey responses and 20 interviews with UK-based mindfulness teachers, plus several focus groups with 60 stakeholders in the field, this paper presents original empirical evidence to tackle the following key questions: (1) Who are the people at the forefront of the UK mindfulness milieu? (2) What is mindfulness, how is it defined, and what does it mean to be, practice, and live a mindful life? (3) To what extent does mindfulness represent a religious or nonreligious phenomenon? Taken as a whole, we illustrate how secular mindfulness now offers a unique platform for a great deal of religious work, and discuss the wider implications of such trends for the modern evolution of religion and secularity.

Legitimizing Religion in the National Health Service: The Deployment of 'Legitimate Language' by Acute Healthcare Chaplains

Jo Bryant

(Cardiff University)

Chaplains have a long history of involvement in healthcare provision, but their position has become increasingly contested over the past 70 years. The establishment of the NHS shifted healthcare provision from the domain of primarily religious agents to the state (Woodhead 2012) and consolidated the growing influence of secular and medical discourses over against religious discourses healthcare (Norwood 2006). Unlike prison chaplains, healthcare chaplains are not supported by a statutory mandate, and have been the subject of increased scrutiny from secularists over the past ten years. In this context, healthcare chaplains often refer to the marginal nature of their work. Despite these challenges, healthcare chaplains continue to constitute a state sanctioned form of public religion in a secular healthcare system.

I contend that the resilience of healthcare chaplaincy depends on chaplains' ability to speak the 'legitimate language' (Bourdieu 1991) of the institution. Findings from my doctoral research on healthcare chaplaincy show that chaplains are the primary gatekeepers of religion in healthcare, so long as they align their decision-making with institutional legitimate language. Legitimate language in the NHS can refer to secular sacralities such as patient-centred care, equality and diversity, cost-effectiveness, and safeguarding vulnerable people. This paper will outline some of the ways in which legitimate language is deployed by chaplains, and propose that chaplains negotiate their place in healthcare in ways which implicitly recognise Habermas' 'institutional translation proviso' (Habermas 2006). In this way, healthcare chaplaincy offers a critical case study for examining how religion is communicated in the public sphere.

Communicating Science and Religion. Discursive Practices of Polish and Ukrainian Natural Scientists.

Maria Roginska

*(Pedagogical University of Cracow,
Institute of Philosophy and Sociology)*

The paper contributes to the discussion on secularizing impact of science in modern societies. The starting point of my research is sociological data showing lower religiosity of scientific communities in comparison to general populations in different countries. This might indicate that science does exert a secularizing force on modern ideologies. The explanatory hypotheses of the phenomenon are, however, ambiguous and predominantly concern Western countries. Based on the 100 in-depth interviews with elite physicists and biologists from, significantly under-investigated in this respect, Central and Eastern Europe (Poland and Ukraine), I focus on discursive practices of scientists, who explain their understanding of "nature" and "supernatural" or "science" and "religion". I analyze significant differences in the "orthodox" and "heterodox" discursive practices typical for the scientific and religious fields (Pierre Bourdieu) in each country to show how these findings can be helpful in explaining lower religiosity of the scholars. The results demonstrate generally that the weaker religiosity of the academy has heterogeneous origins and forms, and therefore there is no reason to speak of the universal role of science in secularization processes. We shall rather consider multiple culturally conditioned models of scientific influence on religion.

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Parallel Session B

Islam and the Media

ROOM 1.64 GLAMORGAN

Communicating Ramadan: Changes in Coverage on British TV and Radio

Laura Jones
(Cardiff University)

Ramadan, the month of fasting, is one of the five pillars of Islam that has a substantial impact on British Muslims' everyday lives. It should be no surprise then that the occasion has been discussed in British TV and Radio as early as the 1930s and received increasing coverage since.

This paper aims to discuss some of these trends beginning with more Orientalist and exotic portrayals of Ramadan from 1930-1960, moving to a more racial frame in the early 1980s, turning to a more explicitly 'religious' lens from the late 1980s onwards. I assert this generally resembles the way Muslims have been perceived in Britain over the years, particularly the government's shift from a racialised to religious understanding of Muslim communities.

I further argue that in recent years, coverage has made a shift from the theological and confessional to the more 'everyday' aspects of fasting Ramadan. This follows the academic turn to study more 'everyday' and 'lived' aspects of religion (Ammerman 2016), but also perhaps represents a shift in the way religion is being perceived in the wider British public sphere with a growing realisation that religion can and does exist beyond the confines of religious institutions.

Finally, I discuss the idea that Muslims are increasingly taking ownership of narratives about Ramadan in the British media. This is not only due to changing forms of media and more opportunities for individuals to tell their stories, but due to the growing agency and organisation of Muslims in Britain today.

Ramadhan on My Radio: Bradford's Fast FM the UK's first Muslim Restricted Service Licence

Sean McLoughlin
(University of Leeds)

To cut down on pirate radio, the 1990 Broadcasting Act allowed new short-term 'Restricted Service Licences' (RSLs). Such licences enabled community groups to broadcast for one month within a local 5km radius. In Bradford this new opportunity to 'communicate religion' prompted local Muslim businessmen to apply successfully with friends already working on Asian radio shows in the city for a license. 'Fast FM' was Britain's first radio station dedicated to broadcasting during Ramadhan. Indeed, it attracted regional, national and international attention in part because of negative media associations between Bradford and the Rushdie Affair. However, Fast FM actually gave voice to the everyday interests and concerns of Bradford's largest minority ethnic community in ways not possible before, being an early example of participatory 'talk radio'. An emerging 'Muslim' public was also in evidence as Fast FM mobilised its listeners in donating generously in response to disasters and for good causes at home and abroad, e.g. the earthquake in Pakistan during 2010. During the last 3 decades several different collectives of broadcasters have won Bradford's RSL for Ramadhan from the broadcasting regulator, Ofcom. Indeed, applications for this RSL in Bradford are higher than in any other UK city and can be lucrative in terms of advertising revenues. The pioneers of Muslim community radio in Bradford also supported the establishment of Radio Ramadan RSLs in Keighley, Sheffield, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, London and beyond. This paper reports on research as part of an AHRC funded collaboration with the National Science and Media Museum.

'Official Sources' and 'Real People': How Journalists Understand Authority when Reporting on Muslims

Michael Munnik
(Cardiff University)

Media representations of Muslims in Britain have often disappointed both faith practitioners and scholars. Imputed failings include distorting beliefs or practices, essentialising the faith, and amplifying voices that are not representative of Islam. Much of this, I suggest, hinges on questions of authority: what journalists and Muslims recognise as authority can differ in important ways, and what is communicated about religion depends on this orientation. Drawing on studies of journalism practice, prior professional experience, and ethnographic fieldwork and qualitative interviews in Scotland, I discuss the conventional preference among journalists for 'official sources' and the problems this can present in terms

of hierarchy in Islam. I contrast this with a less-studied imperative, also present in newsrooms, for 'real people'. This category matches well with Islam's decentralised tradition and presents an opportunity to improve diversity of sources and stories present in media coverage. It still requires knowledge and responsibility on the part of journalists, however, to ensure the claim to authority is represented properly.

Islam and Gender

ROOM 1.80 GLAMORGAN

Why would a Muslim woman want to pray in a mosque?

Louise Cabral-Jackson

(The University of Edinburgh)

The 'golden era' of British mosque building of the 1960-70's created much needed diasporic space which became the loci of communal worship, cultural activities, education and identity production, and communication of religious and sociocultural norms. However, in the UK Sunni Muslim women have poor access to mosques which may limit their agency as learners, leaders and communicators of their religion. Women's exclusion/inclusion has become a contested theme in contemporary Islamic discourse but very few qualitative studies have asked British Muslim women about their prayer space experiences and preferences. The corpus of Islamic texts includes multifarious views on women's access to mosques and has been debated since the time of the Prophet Muhammad. For the Sunni Hanafi legal school, women's access is limited according to the relative risk that a particular woman's presence might cause fitna (seduction or great unrest) if she prayed in mixed congregation in the mosque. For the Shafi'i school it is a matter for a male authority over women. There is however a juristic consensus that it is not obligatory for women to pray in the mosque, not even the Jumma Friday prayer. Further legal debate surrounds the question of whether a woman's prayer elicits more divine reward in a mosque (as men's prayer does) or in her own home. Due to the range of arguments, this research explores Muslim women's experiences of daily prayer in different spaces and what their preferences were for place of prayer. Furthermore, mosques perform multivalent work, they are frequently the seat of power in the community and the location of religious education and other socio-cultural events. This research asks to what extent can women and do women want to access these other aspects? What experience do women in Blackburn have of praying in local mosques? How was the experience for them? Is it a regular event, for social or educational reasons? Or just for Eid prayers? For those women who do not pray in local mosques do they wish to and what prevents them from doing so? Have they prayed in 'inclusive' mosques? Or do they want to see changes in 'traditional' mosques?

This qualitative research is for my master's thesis and draws on semi-structured interviews with 10 Muslim women in the Blackburn area. Women have been recruited by a 'snowball' process from my contacts in the area, including scholars and Imams. The participants will be Sunni Muslim women between the ages of 20-50 years old who have lived at least ten years in the area. Interviews will take place in May 2019 and data will be analysed in May and June using grounded theory. This generates codes which reflect the processes being described by the participant and memos to allow theoretical ideas to arise from the code.

By examining the experiences of Muslim women's prayer habits and preferences, I hope to uncover how religious and cultural norms have been communicated, perpetuated and challenged practices.

Challenging the Narrative: Communicating Religion and Identity with Algerian Muslim Women in London

Meryem Abdelhafid

(Coventry University)

Algerian women have long been associated with land and honour, or otherwise fantasized and othered by many Western scholars. Failing to communicate the complex experiences of Algerian Muslim women has led to the construction of a stereotypical image miscommunicated in literature and media. In the UK, little research has been conducted on Muslim Algerian women's lived experiences within British society put in parallel with negative media representation of Muslim women. This highlights the significance of understanding how communication but also miscommunication are negotiated when building a narrative. By challenging historical and contemporary portrayals, this paper aims at exploring identities related to being Algerian and Muslim in the UK. Through conducting a feminist ethnographic research with Algerian women, my PhD research aims at understanding the process through which these women negotiate religion, migration, and identity. Meeting with women in different spaces of the city creates space for communicating own experience and observing participants' interactions with other people as well as me. As a researcher, communication with literature around Muslim Algerian women and also with women's interaction with religion in their daily life, put forward a new dynamic of complex narratives that need to be transmitted and investigated.

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PARALLEL SESSION B

Discussing Gender in the Muslim Atlantic

Daniel Nilsson DeHanas, Peter Mandaville

(King's College London)

What do discussions and debates within Muslim communities on gender look like in the United Kingdom and the United States today? How do the two contexts compare when it comes to this issue? What aspects of the discussion travel well between these two settings, and—conversely—what gets lost in transatlantic translation? In this paper Daniel Nilsson DeHanas will share early findings on these questions from a new research project with Peter Mandaville on the 'Muslim Atlantic' which explores relationships between American and British Muslims. The research on gender is based on a set of interviews with Muslim public figures in each country, a workshop at the British Islam Conference, and a range of focus groups. The paper will connect to issues such as the resonance of the #metoo movement among Muslim communities in each context and concerns raised at the intersections race, class, and gender.

Non-Religion and Non-Abrahamic Religion

ROOM 1.60 GLAMORGAN

Communicating Religion through Symbols amongst Worshippers of Igbe Orhe, a Monotheistic Non Abrahamic Religion in Delta State, Nigeria

Onoseme Fortune Afatakpa

(University of Ibadan)

Diverse collections of symbols communicate religion at various era and places. Extant studies have focused on objects and symbols that communicate religion in the Abrahamic monotheistic religions like Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Equally, scholars have carried out studies on how symbols are used to communicate religion in non theistic religions like Buddhism and Confucianism. However, my contribution to this conference seeks to explore the use of symbols, objects and linguistic affirmations in communicating religion among worshippers of Igbe Orhe, a monotheistic non-Abrahamic Religion that evolved from the Urhobo speaking ethnic group in Nigeria. This is an ethnographic study. Data was collected qualitatively through interviews and Focus Group Discussion. Data collected was analyzed using the descriptive narrative approach. Using symbolic interactions as a theoretical frame work, findings show that in Igbe Orhe, the symbols communicating religion are divided into four principal categories: the Natural, Non Natural, Artistic and Cultic. These symbols are used to communicate the doctrines and dogmas, serve as identification agents, and ensure the comportment of its adherents in the larger society and achieving higher mystical experiences. Also, the symbols are imbued with variety of denotations about the social relations of its adherents. In addition, the symbols communicating religion in Igbe Orhe are associated with its founder's experience with the numinous. The study concludes that communicating religion through symbols can help to preserve the heritage of any religion.

The Stickiness of Non-Religion:

Intergenerational Transmission and the Formation of Non-Religious Identities

Rachael Shillitoe, Anna Strhan

(University of York)

The rapid rise of those identifying as 'non-religious' across many countries has prompted growing interest in the 'religious nones'. A now burgeoning literature has emerged, challenging the idea that 'non-religion' is the mere absence of religion and exploring the substantive beliefs, practices and identities that are associated with so-called unbelief. Yet we know little about the micro-processes through which this cultural shift towards non-religion is taking place. Drawing on data from an ethnographic study, this paper examines how, when, where, and with whom children learn to be non-religious, and considers the different factors that are implicated in the formation of non-religious identities. While research on religious transmission has demonstrated the importance of family context, our multi-sited approach reveals the important role also played by both school context and children's own reflections in shaping their formation as non-religious, suggesting a complex pattern of how non-religious socialization is occurring in Britain today.

The difficulties in communicating non-religious beliefs.

Joanna Malone

(University of Kent)

This paper will discuss some of the difficulties of communicating non-religious beliefs. Despite the fact that existing research has shown the multiple and varied alternative beliefs and non-religious or non-believing cultures that exist (Lee 2015; Manning 2015; Brown 2017), many still associate being a non-believer with a nihilistic outlook on life and being

the mere absence of religious belief. This paper draws on ongoing doctoral research which is in the early stages of analysis and is exploring the nature and experience of non-belief for older-adults in the UK. Specifically, the research investigates the life histories of older-adults in relation to their non-belief (including their backgrounds, childhood, religious background), the significance and expression of non-belief in older-adults' everyday lives, as well as pinpointing and shedding light on what non-believing older-adults do believe in, examining alternative beliefs and the potential existence of non-believing and non-religious cultures. The paper will discuss some of the difficulties in articulating non-religious beliefs and alternative beliefs and will draw upon the early analysis of 40 interviews with non-believing older-adults in Canterbury and Liverpool.

Christianity, Mormonism and Gender

ROOM 0.86 GLAMORGAN

Churching: Remaking a Ritual for Mothers in the Church of England

Dawn Llewellyn

(University of Chester)

The paper draws on a project examining the reasons why the women in an Anglican church in the North-West have reintroduced 'Thanksgiving for Women after Childbirth', or 'churching'. The ritual, rooted rites of purification after birth, was usually held after childbirth to mark a mother's return to the community after surviving pregnancy and delivery (Cressy, 1993). Formalised in English liturgy in the 12th century, its emphasis shifted away from purification towards blessing and thanksgiving. Although it features in the Book of Common Prayer and was an active part of church life until the 20th century, it is thought to have been abandoned; considered superstitious and misogynistic (Houlbrooke 2011).

Despite its apparent disappearance and unpopularity, it has been reintroduced by a group of women belonging to 'St James'. In 2010, Beth, a Reader in the church organised a churching service. Without a priest but using the formal church space, Beth organises four services for women who have requested the service - to acknowledge the times they have given birth. Family and friends are also welcome and take part, and once the service has ended the attendees move to the back of church, rearrange the furniture, and have a celebratory lunch in time for the mother and toddler group to join in. Drawing on the early stages of the fieldwork - participant observation of the service and interviews with some participants - this paper traces the re-emergence of churching at St James.

'This was something that could look like me': young women's journeys towards ordination

Elizabeth Graveling

(Archbishops' Council, Church of England)

Nearly a quarter of a century after women were admitted to the priesthood in the Church of England, in 2017 the number of women starting training for ordination overtook the number of men for the first time. However, closer analysis reveals a much less even distribution by age, with those training for ordination under the age of 40 far more likely to be male and those over 40 predominantly female. This paper draws on qualitative research with ordinands classed as 'young vocations' (defined as those under the age of 30 at the point of selection for training) to explore how young women and men receive and negotiate the complex messages communicated by the church and wider society and informing the process of discerning and presenting oneself for a vocation to ordained ministry

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Parallel Session C

PANEL: Religion and Modest Fashion

ROOM 1.64 GLAMORGAN

Modest workwear as communication of religious values: UK women wearing abayas to work in Saudi Arabia

Reina Lewis

(London College of Fashion, UAL)

Media commentary and research focuses on modest dressing as a concern for women within religious communities – whether regarded as personally expressive or as oppressively imposed by religious communities. In contrast, the AHRC funded project Modest Fashion in UK Women's Working Lives, examines instances when women encounter religiously related codes of modest dress and behaviour as a workplace requirement – regardless of their own religious beliefs or background. This paper covers the experiences of women (religious and non-religious) working for ostensibly 'secular' businesses and organisations in the UK who visit Saudi Arabia for work and are, therefore, required to wear an abaya and follow rules of spatial gender segregation. Asking how women acquire an abaya and learn the appropriate body management, the paper explores if and how abaya-wearing impacts on their function and relationships at work. In doing so, the project repositions considerations of religiously related dress as communication. Contra to Muslim women in the UK, for example, who may use modest fashion to communicate non-verbally their participation in British and global modernity, what does it mean to communicate religious cultural values that may not be your own? Given that many women wearing abayas for work in Saudi Arabia are not experienced abaya consumers, this paper examines the processes by which their consumption is mediated by modest fashion industry professionals and local informal advisers.

Modest fashion at work: the employee experience in UK faith-based organisations

Kristin Aune, Lina Molokotos-Liederman

(Coventry University)

Modest fashion is a term popularised in critical studies by Reina Lewis to refer to a range of clothing practices, rooted in diverse religious traditions, in which women adopt particular styles of dress, cover certain parts of their bodies, or wear or avoid particular items, to express or adhere to religiously-related norms. Extending work by scholars including Lewis and Tarlo, who examine religious women's modest fashion practices in everyday life, this paper looks at the workplace, and how women employ modest fashion when working for faith-based organisations in the UK, based on interviews conducted for the AHRC project 'Modest Fashion in UK Women's Working Life'. In addition to seeing employment as a context for modest fashion, the project broadens the focus beyond religious women: might non-religious women's workwear be understood as a form of (implicit or non-elective) 'lived religion'? Data from semi-structured interviews with women working in UK faith-based organisations (e.g. faith schools or religious charities), either as employees, contract workers or visitors, are analysed to investigate women's forms of dress, whether modest fashion is enforced or encouraged at work, and how women feel about this. The paper investigates how workplace modest fashion can be an additional tool and promising site for interfaith dialogue. It explores how women's adoption of modest fashion, when working for faith-based employers, can be understood as a form of, or tool for, inter-faith dialogue.

This paper is based upon doctoral research which examines the relationship between 'interfaith encounters' and 'peaceful relations' among young people in London's schools through a mixed methods evaluation of the Faith and Belief Forum (F&BF)'s School Linking Programme. School Linking aims to train teachers in interfaith dialogue facilitation skills and bring students of different faiths together to creatively engage with questions of identity, belonging and belief.

Gender, Segregation and Selection: Interfaith Dialogue in British Faith Schools

Lucy Peacock

(Coventry University)

The paper explores key issues around selection in interfaith programme's: gender and religious diversity. On what basis does F&BF pick and link schools, and are there unintended consequences? Which students are being chosen to take part by the teachers and why – is the agency of students being undermined by school policy or parents? To what extent does the programme's assumptions of 'religious difference' drive the selection of participants? Are the students really meeting 'new' people?

Gender emerges as a key, yet unacknowledged factor, the paper argues. Selection can exacerbate tensions around gender and caution should be taken to avoid feeding into prejudices or negative perceptions of a) faith schooling and b) gender dynamics in religious groups in general. Data from participant observation and focus groups will be used to explore, first, the implications of splitting up young people by gender – how does this feed into the exclusivity debate around faith schools? Second, gender power dynamics will be explored between the teachers themselves in order to determine what effect, if any, this has on the successful outcomes of interfaith dialogue.

Not like other girls': Modest Fashion as a marker of faith for Christian women.

Shona Hayes-Mackenzie
(University of Chester)

Drawing on initial findings in my PhD research, this paper examines modest fashion as a marker of a Christian woman's 'good girl' (Sharma, 2011), identity. Fashion plays an important role in shaping both identity and community (Arthur, 1999; Lewis, 2013) and for the proposed study group, women aged 18-30 involved in an Evangelical Christian community, fashion also intersects with their lives as Christian women. This paper explores the relationship between fashion and faith in the evangelical community, and therefore extends the focus on modest fashion, which has mostly focussed on Jewish and Islamic contexts. Modest dress is a form of material religious culture and is part of the way Christian women express identity, therefore I propose modest dress as a site through which to examine women's understanding of their religion, gender, identity. Dressing modestly for young Christian women can serve as a marker to the outside world that they are waiting until marriage for sexual union. Evangelicalism places an emphasis on finding a boyfriend and to marry him (Webster, 1996, 274) and to be fully invested in their own purity and the purity of their 'Christian Brothers'.

Religion and Education

ROOM 1.80 GLAMORGAN

Communicating religion in secular education about religions

Emma Salter
(University of Huddersfield)

Communicating religion in secular education about religions. I start with the premise that secular education has a responsibility to represent religions authentically because religious people rarely have a choice about if their religion is included in an educational syllabus, but have a stake in how it is represented. Next, the paper raises questions about custody of representation of religions in secular education. It argues that education about religions is inevitably an interpretive, hence hegemonic, process that deflects custody of representation from the religion being studied, to the agent of education – ie the teacher, or other types of learning resource. Having claimed custody of representation, secular education then encounters the many problems of authentic representation. This paper addresses three: i) the multiple internal diversities of religions, ii) the ontology of religion as a sui generis category, and iii) the 'religious life' (sometimes called 'living religion'). Finally, the paper reviews a 'pedagogy of insider voices' to evaluate if religious practitioners (insiders) discussing their religious beliefs and practices with students in secular educational contexts alleviates the problems of authentic representation signalled above. It achieves this by presenting findings from four semi-structured interviews with Christian ministers from different denominations who conduct educational study-visits in their own churches. The interviews sought to understand why these ministers engage in secular education of religion (Christianity in this instance), and how they preferred their religion to be represented. To conclude, the paper contemplates to whom custody of representation does, and should, belong in secular education about religions.

Diversity of Religion and Belief in Primary Schools: Research Making an Impact?

Hemming, Peter,
(Cardiff University)

Communicating social research findings about religion can be an important step in realising the potential of such research to play a role in affecting change and influencing everyday lives and experiences. However, pathways to research impact can be complex and demanding for researchers hoping to 'make a difference' on the ground, with considerable hurdles to overcome at different stages of the process. This paper explores an ongoing project on diversity of religion and belief in primary schools, mapping out the journey from dissemination, to engagement, to impact, to evaluation, and reflecting on successes and challenges along the way. The paper includes a brief outline of

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the research from which the project stemmed and the processes by which it aimed to create educational impact. It also presents provisional data and findings from an evaluation survey that sought to assess what types of impact the project has achieved for different stakeholders in primary schools across England and Wales.

Biography

Dr Peter Hemming is a Senior Lecturer in Social Sciences at Cardiff University, specialising in the sociologically-informed study of education, religion, and childhood and youth. He is co-investigator on the Leverhulme Trust funded project 'Mapping Mindfulness' and is the author of 'Religion in the Primary School: Ethos, Diversity, Citizenship'.

What values and beliefs do Quaker schools communicate to their students and does it matter educationally?

Nigel Newton

(Cardiff University)

Quaker schools have a long history in England dating back to the Seventeenth Century. Although there are currently only 9 schools in the UK and Ireland, they have frequently appeared in the press relating to some of their more distinctive practices such as times of silence (Bloom, 2009; Ainsworth, 2011; Rustin, 2015). However, there has been very little research on Quaker education in the UK and none which has focused on the experiences of students within the Quaker schools. The Quaker schools research project explored the views of students, along with perspectives of teachers, across 5 Quaker senior schools in England. The aim was to investigate students' perceptions and experiences of their schools and to examine the relationship between these and their engagement with the educational opportunities their schools provided. The project also sought to explore the ways, if any, students across different Quaker schools experienced a similar 'authentically' Quaker education. In what ways do these schools communicate Quaker values and beliefs and does this matter to the educational experience of students?

References:

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Religion, Society and Communication

ROOM 1.60 GLAMORGAN

Reconciliation through Dealing with the Past? Communicating about how Presbyterians Responded to the Troubles

Gladys Ganiel

(Queen's University Belfast)

This paper explores my experience of communicating about religion during an action research project in partnership with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI). The project was conceived by PCI as a way to gather stories of how 'ordinary' Presbyterians experienced the Troubles and how they perceived their church's response to the conflict. Its aims have been to reflect on what Presbyterians did well and what they failed to do, identifying lessons that can contribute to reconciliation and dealing with the past. During 2017, 122 people were interviewed, including ministers, victims, security forces, paramilitary ex-combatants, emergency responders and health workers, grassroots peacemakers, politicians, people who left Presbyterianism, and critical friends from outside the denomination. Between February-May 2019 I will be working with a facilitator and six focus groups to create training manuals based on the research: one for congregations and one for trainee ministers at PCI's seminary. Participants in the focus groups will be presented with the results of the research, discuss it, and help shape the educational resources. In this paper I will reflect on communicating about religion and the Troubles on four levels: the wider PCI, which has been suspicious of academic research on religion; interview participants; focus group participants; and with a wider, popular audience through a forthcoming book. While the ongoing nature of the research makes it difficult to draw final conclusions, I will identify the main challenges for communicating this research to diverse audiences in a Northern Ireland that remains deeply divided along religious lines.

A Democratic Approach to Reporting Religion: Comparing the Newspaper Coverage in Britain and Turkey

BSA Sociology of Religion Annual Conference 2019

Cardiff University

Ahmed Topkev
(Cardiff University)

In this paper, I will outline my PhD research, in which I develop two fundamental arguments: 1) religion as part of civil society can both support and undermine democracy; 2) it is a legitimate topic to examine the media's democratic performance in its coverage of faith. This legitimacy is grounded on the established relation of religion in the media to democracy.

Using content and framing analyses supplemented by qualitative examples, I examine the frames used to cover religion and to what extent the four dimensions of the deductively proposed and inductively verified democratic approach to reporting faith – spiritual, world life, political, and conflict – are employed in eight British and eleven Turkish national newspapers during three distinct weeks in 2014.

I will focus on my findings, the most striking of which is the contrasting portrayals of Christianity and Islam between both countries. However, even the reporting of the majority religions does not fit a balanced presence of all the four meta-frames. The findings also show that the employment of the meta-frames in the reporting of Islam in Turkish newspapers is more balanced than in the coverage of Christianity in British newspapers. There is a limited employment of the spiritual meta-frame including for the majority religions in both countries, and a lesser use of context for putting faith in action in the reporting of Christians in the world life meta-frame which is dominant in their coverage in Britain, when compared to the coverage of Muslims in Turkey.

'Fresh expressions of church' in the British Methodist Church: Communicating 'church' in contemporary cultures?

Andrew Orton, Hamish Leese and Adam Gemar
(Durham University)

The Methodist Church is amongst those historic denominations facing particular challenges in the British context in communicating beyond existing participants and engaging people with their religion, in a context of declining membership and attendance at many traditional forms of church service. One prominent response by some congregations has been to seek to develop 'fresh expressions of church' relevant to changing cultural contexts which reach beyond existing participants. However, the innovative and frequently contested nature of these initiatives can make researching them challenging. This paper shares the findings from the first national survey of a random sample of British Methodist Church circuits focused on these initiatives. Through this, the paper shares a critical overview of their scope and the ways in which they are engaging in communicating and engaging people with the Christian faith. The subsequent analysis (incorporating a latent class analysis) offers new critical insights into the range of initiatives incorporated within this label of 'fresh expressions of church', the types of innovation they are involved in, and the extent to which they are seeing themselves as achieving their aims.

British Evangelical Christians communicating the gospel - relevance, hostility or a lack of confidence in the faith?

Greg Smith
(Associate Research Fellow, William Temple Foundation)

St. Francis of Assisi reportedly said, 'Preach Jesus, and if necessary use words.' Historically evangelical Christianity has relied heavily on the preached word as a means of communicating the gospel. In recent years there has been a turn to social action and community involvement. While church based preaching, and mass meeting evangelism continues, friendship evangelism and small-group methodologies such as the Alpha Course have emerged. Yet even in evangelical circles church involvement continues to decline, with a few exceptions in ethnic minority groups and metropolitan settings. At the same time new technologies of communication, such as social media have been adopted by many evangelicals

How do British evangelical Christians understand these transformations in relation to their core mission of communicating the gospel? How do they seek to make the message relevant in a more diverse and rapidly changing society? Where do they adapt the theological content of their message? How far do they attribute failure to the apathy or hostility of their audiences (or from the devil)? Or do they perceive the problem as an internal one - a dysfunctional and hypocritical church, or their own lack of confidence in articulating their faith or fear of opening their mouth before unbelievers? Drawing on panel survey data from the evangelical Alliance 21st Century Evangelicals research programme this paper will explore some of these questions and seek to locate them in an analysis of the contemporary religious market.

Religion and Digital Platforms

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Mormon YouTube Influencers: Case Study of '8Passengers' on YouTube

Zita Bartolome Narbon, Míriam Díez Bosch

(Universitat de Girona)

In the year 2000, C. Helland proposed the dichotomy between 'Online Religion' and 'Religion Online'. In 2015, he extended his theory by affirming that 'for those individuals who participate in online religious activity, there is no separation between their offline lives and their online experiences'. In this way, he perceives the Internet as being simply one more way to extend religious practices and significance. This article analyses the content produced by a family member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on YouTube. Under the hypothesis that the followers of the Church use YouTube Vlogs not only to share their vision and experience of faith with other members of the Church, but also and above all to bring their dogma closer to those who are not part of their religion, breaking stigmas and practicing a kind of indirect evangelization. At the same time, we have analysed the official position of the Church regarding the production, consumption and use of digital content, both from official sources and from its members. During the research, a total of 270 videos uploaded onto the 8Passengers channel between January 2nd, 2018 and November 24th, 2018 have been analysed, in particular noting that religion appears in 44.6 percent of them. Researchers have also reviewed the Church's videos and official articles, comparing styles and messages, perceiving that the incarnate values coincide 100 percent. Conclusions show that 8Passengers is not an isolated case. There are multiple accounts grouped under the category of Mormon YouTube Influencers and the Church actively encourages its members to become producers of digital content, thereby blurring the edges of Helland's dichotomy.

Rewriting the Legacy: New Rendition of Buddhist Scriptures on Electronic Platforms in Contemporary China

Junfu Wong

(University of Cambridge)

Buddhism achieved its transregional triumph in the premodern period primarily through bodily preaching and travelling, an act that emphasized upon the bodily engagement among people. Ever since the proliferation of social media in the twentieth century, religious leaders of diversified cults started to adopt electronic platforms to approach a broader scope of believers. Due to the change of preaching devices, different religious cults reframed their canonical teachings to certain degrees in order to be accepted by believers from diversified backgrounds, thereby showing a different style in their language use to preach through social media. Chinese society confronted this religious reformation of scriptures starting from the twentieth century. Former scholarship concluded this employment of a redesigned system of rhetorical discourse basically attested to the authoritative political suppress received from the governmental level. Nevertheless, this paper explores the practical reasons behind this readaptation. It starts by unveiling the distinctive language features used by religious cults on social media through contrasting it to the original scriptural tradition. It further contends that the selection of expressions stemmed from the challenge caused by a completely unfamiliar readership from all backgrounds, thus a slight adjustment is required to reinforce the religious authorities. Finally, this paper attempts to activate the concept of electronic religion as a postmodern phenomenon as it projects a forthcoming form of digital religious sites.

Communicating Religious Diversity

Damian Guzek

(University of Silesia in Katowice)

In recent years, a number of radical voices have become visible due to digital platforms. Within this context, issues connected with religious diversity have not received any attention to date. Therefore, the primary goal of this paper is to analyze the way of articulating radical voices and discourses of opposition to religious diversity. The work focuses on the discursive practices of far-right leaders of opinions in political debates towards religious diversity in Poland. I describe the challenge of including radical right-wing arguments in social media platforms and how fractured media users within the Polish context have responded. I conclude that the users in Poland who are in opposition to religious diversity are narrowing their Christian values to traditional Catholicism. Such a conclusion leads to an intricate understanding of Poland's far-right movements as shaping their identities through religious norms and religious exclusivism. This xenophobic mood is strengthened when we recall the Catholic foundations of the citizens, but not so much by such factors as race or political orientation.

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Religion, Communication and Authority

ROOM 1.64 GLAMORGAN

'The Information Souq: Religious Authority and Cyber Islamic Environments'

Gary Bunt

(University of Wales Trinity Saint David)

This presentation discusses how the immediacy and 'searchability' of the internet are impacting on ideas about Islamic religious authority, and how different internet hierarchies of authority have developed specifically in relation to social media. It utilises archive material which focuses on Islam, Muslims and the internet. A key question is how, in some contexts, the application of the internet has had an overarching transformational effect on how Muslims practice Islam, how forms of Islam are represented to the wider world, and how Muslim societies perceive themselves? The presentation is illustrated by historical and contemporary examples which indicate the development of cyber Islamic environments, in line with technological and societal shifts. New forms of religious authority have emerged and developed online, utilising technological innovation, and in some cases circumnavigating censorship and other forms of control. The Islamic information marketplace has its own dynamics, and reflects concepts associated with the 'long tail' of demand and supply, showing that in some cases micro-demand for religious products, ideas and services can be fulfilled. There is a relationship between a presentation of Islam online, and its 'analogue' equivalent. The digital mediation of Islam introduces new challenges for researchers and analysts, together with the need for methodological reflection which is cross disciplinary and interdisciplinary in scope, drawing on a range of expertise and interests. The presentation will approach these issues, while encouraging discussion on new academic approaches to diverse forms of Muslim religious expression online.

'Representations of Islam on UK Campuses: Getting Beyond the Dominant Discourses of the Neoliberal University'

Mathew Guest

(Durham University)

This paper reflects on findings from a project - 'Representing Islam on Campus' – that explores how Islam and Muslims are represented within contemporary UK universities. Taking account of the institutional diversity within the UK Higher Education sector, the present paper highlights the various ways in which universities constitute complex sites in which competing narratives about religion in general, and Islam in particular, are placed in the service of wider agendas, most commonly as part of a public demonstration of cultural inclusivity, or within a bureaucratized process of control legitimised in terms of securitisation. Within these circulating institutional narratives, religion is treated as a focus of irrelevance, oddity, or risk, the latter grounded in assumptions about radicalisation. I will examine the dominant discourses that both maintain this arrangement, and which seek to domesticate religion within a neoliberal vision of university life, one that privileges economic rationality while curtailing collective empowerment.

'Read in the Name of Your Lord': Communicating British Salafism in the Written Word

Azhar Majothi

(University of Nottingham)

The medium of print literature produced by regional Salafi movements has been acknowledged by Wagemakers, Hamid, Inge, Farquhar among others as a method of proselytization and growth. Yet little is known about the ever-developing dynamics involved in the spread of translations of key Arabic Salafi texts. Indeed, over the last 30 years, English translations have flooded the Islamic book market, of which many are produced by Salafis, despite them being a minority relative to other sectarian groups, through the collective, yet independent, efforts of translators, publishers, distributors, bookshop keepers and warehouses. Through context analysis, in this paper, I will examine how religious material is 'filtered' by publishers and translators and consider the impact that it has on its audiences - believers and antagonists. I will argue that part of the success of the Salafi movement in the United Kingdom is its occupying of an underestimated religious 'space', the humble bookshelf, in homes, mosques, bookshops and the World Wide Web. This study will shed light on a micro-industry in which the few are communicating to the masses on an increasingly wide range of real and everyday issues; it will also contribute to our understanding of the appeal of Salafism outside Muslim-majority countries.

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PANEL: Religion and Social Welfare in Conversation: A Focus on Buddhist Contexts

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Religion and Social Welfare in Conversation: a focus on Buddhist Contexts

Caroline Starkey, Aura Di Febo, Hollie Gowan
(University of Leeds)

Religious groups and teachings have long played an important role in social welfare, with significant amounts of education, medical care, and social services being provided to the general public by religious organisations. This panel will explore how religion is mediated through social welfare in varying Buddhist contexts; an area that has to date seen little attention in sociological studies of religion and social welfare. First, Aura Di Febo (University of Manchester) will examine the social welfare activities promoted by the Japanese lay-Buddhist organisation Rishsho Koseikai, to discuss how formal regulations and social conventions affected the way practitioners expressed their religiosity when operating in the secularised domain of social care. Second, Hollie-Grace Gowan (University of Leeds) will investigate how women working for the Taiwanese Buddhist Tzu-Chi Foundation are embodying and communicating their religion in (quasi)-secular spaces through the body and acts of social welfare. Finally, Caroline Starkey (University of Leeds) will focus on the ways in which Buddhist nuns, particularly from within communities in the West, use online and digital tools to provide informal welfare support to lay practitioners and develop new communities of practice outside mainstream religious hierarchies.

Religion and Narrative Communication

ROOM 1.60 GLAMORGAN

Storytelling - An Effective Way to 'Communicate Religion'?

Celine Benoit
(Aston University)

Storytelling can be a powerful pedagogical tool; it stimulates pupils' interests and is associated with an increased likelihood that children will remember key messages and morals (Copley, 2007; Crain, 2007; Thornbug, 2013). The value of storytelling in education can be further appreciated when it leads to discussions, debates or some form of engagement from the pupils. In this paper, I draw on data collected in a primary school in Birmingham, where teachers rely on storytelling as a means to teach about and from religion(s). As teachers use religious stories, they believe this allows them to remain impartial and objective as they 'communicate religion.' I demonstrate, however, that there are problems with this approach. Firstly, I argue that it is not possible to claim objectivity when telling a story, and that narrators ought to be aware of their power as they interpret stories and give them preferred meanings. Secondly, as stories tend to be taken out of their historical, cultural and theological contexts, teachers frame religion(s) in secular terms (Ipgrave, 2012). As religions are not religiously understood, and as teachers promote 'neutrality' and 'inclusivity,' storytelling becomes an exercise of secularism. I conclude that consequently, as well as reproducing Western liberal constructions of religion, storytelling can contribute to pupils' disengagement and disaffection from religion, and lead to the marginalisation of religion, particularly in public spaces.

Spinning A Yarn? Knitted Poppies and Patterns of Belief in 21st Century Britain

Vaughan Roberts
(Collegiate Church of St Mary, Warwick)

2018 saw numerous commemorations marking the 100th anniversary of the end of World War 1. Many churches and other organizations in Britain created displays of poppies, often knitted by local groups and individuals. Knitting is a popular craft and pastime, and these projects produced a widespread response in terms of number of flowers created, presentations mounted and significant media coverage.

Whilst this undoubtedly reflects the specific nature of the centenary commemorations my paper will analyse the knitted poppy phenomenon and ask whether there are there wider implications for how religion is perceived and communicated?

In particular, I will examine to what extent these experiences could reflect:

- changes to how people approach death, dying and bereavement?
- a generalised seeking after transcendence?
- an ambivalence between belonging and believing in 21st century culture?
- a yearning for nostalgic stories/yarns about the past
- changes in communicating religion through social and traditional media?
- the unformed nature of contemporary religious experience and faith?

In conclusion, this paper will ask how can understanding the ways in which people, society and churches engage creatively with these past narratives assist in understanding the place of religion and ways in which it is communicated in contemporary British cultures?

Communicating Religion - Silenced Voices in Children's Literature

Anita Lawrence

(University of Glasgow)

Last year, over a third of all print books published were classified as children's books. The range of texts on offer has broadened significantly, and works of fiction can be found covering a wide range of subject matter, including race, refugeeism, sexuality and disability. Yet very few books for children are being published in which religion as a lived experience is featured.

Well known authors of children's books have described conversations with publishers in which they were told that religious themes in children's books could not be marketed as they are too difficult for readers to understand. (Beyond Belief, R4 2016) Voices of children who lead religious lives, through choice or tradition, have been effectively silenced in children's books. This silencing demonstrates a huge change from themes apparent during the golden era of children's publishing, through texts designed to instruct as well as delight (Hunt) to the present day when the portrayal, particularly of a Christian tradition, appears to be absent. Given that children's books are such a powerful form of communicating instruction and understanding, providing insights into the personal lives of the characters that non-fiction depictions cannot offer, is the absence of religious voices a problem in a society where tolerance and understanding is so important? How could fiction be used in the classroom to communicate a deeper understanding of what it means to be a child living in faith? And how can we return voices to those children silenced in the books that are supposed to represent them?

Religion and Disclosure

ROOM 0.86 GLAMORGAN

Discourse Has the Last Word: Communicating Religion and Recovery

Metcalf-White, Liam

(University of Chester)

Holistic and therapeutic modalities of addiction recovery are diverse. In many cases, but not all, they are strategically framed by individuals and groups utilising and communicating discourses of 'religion', 'secular', and 'spirituality'. Examples range from 'faith-based' programmes in a variety of religious traditions, ostensibly 'non-religious' pathways including 'Secular Organisations for Sobriety', and Fellowships like 'Alcoholics Anonymous' that are established on the practices of Twelve-Step spirituality. Drawing from qualitative data collected within communities identifying as 'in recovery' from addiction, I examine the social scientific redescription and transmission of religion and related cultural categories, arguing that discourse has the last word. I challenge communicating religion, and consequently the secular, as 'things' that exist independently of human language and identity formation. This I contend reifies such classifications as ahistorical, and accordingly, encourages an impulse in scholars wanting to substantively define these categories in both essentialist and realist terms. In contradistinction, I suggest that religion and related taxonomies, in the specific context of addiction recovery, but also in the wider Sociology of Religion, be conceived of and communicated as strategically and socially constructed discourses.

'The sensory is belief': exploring how to research, describe, and disseminate verbal and non-verbal communications about religion and belief.

Sarah Lawther

(Nottingham Trent University)

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This paper draws on PhD research that arose out of a need to find the right words, and the right methods, to ask about lived religion in a way that would be inclusive of the diversity and changing nature of belief, and that would capture the sensory, felt, experience of belief. The project has explored communication in a variety of ways such as: asking participants their views on what words to use to ask about religion and belief; inviting participant feedback on language used throughout the project; and using methods that invite non-verbal communications about belief. This has allowed the participants to lead the conversations and talk about their beliefs in a way that made sense to them, capturing how they understand and use words such as 'meaning', 'faith', 'religion,' and 'spirituality', as well as producing media artefacts that describe experience without words such as photographs and pictures.

This paper argues that because the way that individuals understand, use and communicate their beliefs is complex, sometimes beyond words, using words alone to describe them may not be sufficient, and this session experiments with a different way to present this data. This paper also considers how to communicate what has been captured in the research process that is beyond words, drawing on multi-modal research that has explored how to communicate the 'wetness' of multimedia contributions when disseminating research findings (Marks, 2002), (Varvantakis and Nolas, in press).

Communicating 'Religion' and 'God': An Autoethnography

Lin Ma

(University of Bristol)

Doing qualitative research uncovers something unknown and this requires reflexivity. That baggage of knowing something to start with directs our attention of seeking. Ways in which we are communicating ourselves shape what our respondents pick from their knowledge and reality to be translated into words and interpretations that become our data. We produce data; more accurately, we are part of our data, a part that is often under-analysed, or analysed with an identity reflection that hardly causes hiccups in assimilating data into theories. In this paper, I utilise autoethnography to understand the double hermeneutic data distortions. With reflexivity applied, it raises additional questions to my fieldnotes and in-depth interviews with Chinese international students at British evangelical Christian environments. By taking seriously some of the translative and communicative ambiguities, I see how respondents understand and negotiate basic concepts such as 'religion' and 'God'. Here I provide four scenarios where my respondents give seemingly idiosyncratic remarks that as loose ends, ought to be discarded. But in the autoethnographic piece, they provide insights to the personal and cultural contexts and assumptions in a conversation. This process fosters an inter-subjectivity between the researcher and the researched, on which our sociological writing relies. In the field of sociology of religion, I argue that autoethnography as a method is not only introspective, which benefits the researcher, but it also enables researchers at all levels to probe into the self-understanding of sociology of religion, corresponding to the reflexive turn that many disciplines have been going through

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Parallel Session E

Religion, Representation and Image

ROOM 1.64 GLAMORGAN

Muslim Creatives, Film and Television in Britain: Communicating Religion Through Popular Culture.

Carl Morris

(University of Central Lancashire)

In December 2016, the BBC aired a widely-viewed reality television series, *Muslims Like Us*. Some celebrated the programme for highlighting the diversity of Muslims in Britain, whilst others criticised it for 'othering' Muslims and for focusing on the fringe views of one participant. Overlooked in most of these debates was the centrality of Muslim involvement in conceptualising and producing the programme – the commissioning editor, series producer, narrator and the research assistants were all Muslim. While this is one of the most high-profile examples of Muslim cultural production, it is not an isolated phenomenon but rather a bellwether for the growing cultural assertiveness, technical proficiency and artistic scope of Muslims in Britain.

Given that popular culture, as argued by Stuart Hall, is an acute space where 'collective social understandings are created' (Hall, 2009: 122-123), it is significant that Muslims are becoming involved, not as subjects of representation but as sophisticated professionals, in the production of television, film and other forms of popular broadcasting culture. Drawing on original fieldwork interviews, conducted in 2017-18, this paper examines the narratives of this emergent generation of Muslim filmmakers, screenwriters and producers. The paper explores the backgrounds of these Muslim creatives, considering the challenges that they face and the routes they have taken into the production of film and television. This furthermore involves a reflection on the implications of this new Muslim creativity for wider understandings of Islam and Muslims across Britain.

Mis/communications: Gendered Representations of Female Converts to Islam

Icram Serroukh

(Middlesex University)

The gendered aspect of conversion to Islam has revealed itself to be significant in my study on white British women becoming Muslim. The communicative strategies used by converts to manage and voice their decision to become Muslim has been found to be situated within the wider rhetoric of how Muslim women are constructed in the media. The 'emancipation' of Muslim women has been propelled into focus in the context of Islam, especially with recent negative associations with terror activities and wider terrorism discourses (Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2009; Razack, 2004). Islam is seen as 'anti-female' (Soutar, 2010), and the stereotypical associations made, especially the generalisation that Islam is oppressive to women (Fernandez, 2009), has influenced the decision-making process/capacity of converts becoming Muslim. Such stereotypes and stigmatising discourses were found to be internalised by female converts, who were keen to distance their own experiences of conversion from any male influence. In an effort to resist any association with the portrayal of Muslim women as 'victims' of patriarchal norms by the mass media (Sakai & Yasmeen, 2016), converts placed a particular focus on autonomy to claim a voice for themselves. This paper draws on data gathered from semi-structured interviews with (white British) women converts to Islam to demonstrate the communication challenges faced by female converts to Islam, and the rhetorical strategies used to voice and legitimise their conversion.

Living Image of the Guru: Devotional Imagery in India

Pelin Aytemiz

(Baskent University)

Critical literature on photography that derived from a western experience, have assumed that the western ontology on visual representation would be applicable to other contexts. This research would like to contribute to the works that tries to change the canonical focus of the critical debates on photographic practice and contribute to the discussions that tackles the life of photography in non-western cultures. In this sense, this research tries to understand the devotional practices existing in the axis of the belief 'Krishna Consciousness' in India and the relationship with the image of the divine. It looks at the devotional practices involving the representation of the Guru; the visuals and the Living Murti (statue) of the Guru. How the Guru is remembered and kept alive with the help of these representations after the

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abandonment of his body (his death)? This question will be considered through the devotional practices carried by two religious centres: Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math (SCSMATH) and Jagadguru Kripaluji Yoh (JKYog). These are the representatives of two important spiritual pathways in India. Discussions about the devotional practices in the daily spiritual routines of these ashrams are based on the visual material and participatory observation collected during the visits between 2010-2015 to the ashram in the cities of Delhi, Kolkata, Vrindavan, Ekachakra, Nabadwip, Barsana and Mayapur in India. At the same time, the posts (visuals/videos) shared by the two centres in their social media accounts and the discourse in the posts will be used as secondary sources.

Religious Living and Social interaction

ROOM 1.80 GLAMORGAN

Distinctive or professionalised? Understanding the postsecular in faith-based anti-trafficking responses in the UK

*Hannah Lewis, Gwyneth Lonergan, Emma Tomalin, Louise Waite,
(University of Sheffield)*

Responding to a perceived rise in the activity of faith-based organisations in the field of anti-trafficking in the UK, this article examines the intersection of religion and the current 'fight against modern slavery'. We argue that the intersection of faith and human trafficking is an important dimension in understanding the contemporary modern slavery complex, which has not yet been explored in academic research beyond the United States of America. A mapping of UK anti-trafficking organisations demonstrates that FBOs are more likely to be single-issue groups specialising in services for trafficked persons, and are occupying the traditional position of 'filling the gaps' in mainstream provision. While FBOs are clearly prominent in the anti-trafficking domain, we question whether this is really evidence of postsecularism since faith actors are secularising aspects of their work as they professionalise. Examining the multitudinous roles of faith based organisations and actors in the UK anti-trafficking field demonstrates not only the diversity of faith action in this field, but also indicates the emergence of a dual register where FBOs can secularise in some public communications and activities but also retain religious distinctiveness in being able to access certain groups and funding streams, and to connect with people in terms of their faith identity.

Biography

Hannah Lewis is Vice Chancellor's Fellow in Sociological Studies, University of Sheffield. She is PI of the ESRC project 'Understanding the roles of faith-based organisations in anti-trafficking' 2107-2020. She is editor of 'The Modern Slavery Agenda', 2018, Policy Press and author of 'Precarious Lives: Forced Labour, Exploitation and Asylum', 2014, Policy Press.

Communicating Pious Modernity: Trinbagonian Muslim Women's Off-Line and Online Dawa-Discussions

*Janet Bauer
(Trinity College (Hartford))*

The communication of authoritative Islamic knowledge in Muslim diaspora communities in Trinidad and Tobago, historically relied upon the circulation of visiting religious scholars who lectured and debated Islamic subjects toward 'correcting practice' in 'distant places'. In the contemporary digital age, the global circulation of Islamic knowledge has intensified with the expansion of electronic platforms. While, local institutions continue to expand formal classes, women practitioners are also creating online platforms to discuss among themselves what el-Or calls the 'practical' and 'substantial' aspects of religious texts or traditions. In the last decade, the local Darul Uloom (tablighi) Madrasa has become the primary source for transmitting authoritative knowledge, mediating the struggle against 'creolisation' of faith practices, and credentialing local Islamic teachers, including both Indo- and Afro-heritage Muslim women. Charismatic female teachers, graduates or affiliates of Darul Uloom, draw women students to weekly classes, attended by older women practitioners and new converts, coming to Islam through personal networks. Some of these teachers also participate in online forums where women further perform their pious selves toward becoming instruments of dawa by setting an example for others. Drawing on more than 15 years of ethnographic research in Trinidad and Tobago that gives attention to 'narrativizing' the religious self, I will contrast the individual and social creation of 'dawa subjects' (who communicate Islam through lived example) that emerges from exchanges occurring in selected classes with one what's app discussion group and comment on the implications of this for changing racial and generational dynamics within the Trinbagonian Umma.

Communicating Influence in the Academy: What Can Digital Religion Teach the Tech-Filled Classroom?

Tim Hutchings

(University of Nottingham)

The field of media, religion and culture has long been fascinated by the question of authority. If audiences can simply switch off, change channel, or scroll past, what becomes of the religious leader's power to teach, guide, advise, inspire or discipline their followers? Which leaders will gain or lose influence, and how?

Entering a new institution this year, I found my colleagues starting to ask very similar questions about their own teaching. At the university's insistence, our lectures are now recorded for our students to watch online – raising the same fears of displacement, competition and redundancy that religious communicators have wrestled with for decades.

Researchers of media and religion have tried to answer these questions by conceptualizing authority as a relationship enacted through mediated communication (eg Cheong 2017). The affordances and limitations of each medium shape the genres and practices of communication through which authority can be claimed, accepted and resisted.

This presentation will bring together the fields of digital religion and digital learning, looking for insights from both contexts to help understand what it means to communicate religion influentially. I will draw on case studies, including online churches, grief communities, Bible apps and my own classroom experiences, to explore some of the forms of authority and influence that have emerged in digital culture. I will argue that academic teachers have much to learn from religious practitioners about the promises and limitations of digitally-assisted learning.

Religion and Racialisation

ROOM 1.60 GLAMORGAN

Blessing or Burden? UK black faith-practising youth's experiences with faith in their everyday lives

*Dumangane, Constantino.,
(Cardiff University)*

The influence of social and cultural capital in young people's everyday experiences has been researched extensively in the UK and US in relation to class, gender and ethnicity – but to a considerably lesser extent in relation to faith or 'faith-capital' (Dumangane 2017) as a resource that may influence aspects of youth's lives. UK traditional Christian denominations have been experiencing declines in belief and church attendance for decades, yet 2013 UK Census data indicates that Christianity is increasing amongst African and Caribbean (herein 'black') people in England and Wales while decreasing in white British groups. During adolescence, when youth traditionally move away from church attendance, black youth numbers have been growing, particularly in evangelical /Pentecostal churches. Copious US studies have identified the church's impact on steering African American and Hispanic youth away from crime and anti-social behaviours and toward educational success through their ability to promote pro-social behaviours. In the UK there is a dearth of research that explores the impact of the church and faith on black youth's lives. Through interviews with black faith-practising youth who attend UK evangelical / Pentecostal churches, their decisions to be religious and what their faith means to them are explored. Preliminary findings of the strategies black youth engage and adopt when navigating their faith in various everyday environments are presented. And the question of whether they consider their faith to be an influential resource (i.e. 'faith capital'/ blessing) or a risk (burden) in their social, familial, educational and community lives is probed.

Community, Christianity, and the Making of Race

*Aleksandra Lewicki
(University of Sussex)*

This paper examines religious mission and conversion as means of communicating and boundary-making, focusing specifically on their racializing effects. Drawing on an exploration of historic and contemporary examples from recent research conducted in the German context, I explore the conditions that make race come into being. Rather than conceiving of race as a Christian invention, as has recently been argued, I suggest that institutionalized Christianity has distinctly contributed to the making of race by aligning itself with and participating in wider geopolitical projects, such as the Reconquista, Colonialism or the Third Reich. These imperial projects and the racialization of subjects (including Jews and Muslims) were mutually constitutive of one another, while Christian theology and the Christian churches resumed a specific role in the process. Christianity's distinct contribution, especially in relation to political, economic or scientific justifications of racial ontologies, crystallized itself in is the spiritual-metaphysical elevation and the sacralization of their own collective. The paper discusses the relevance of these historic examples for our understanding of current institutional practices in faith-based welfare organisations.

Communicating the exotic? Anti-Judaism and affect in cross-cultural learning about religious Jews.

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Katja Stuerzenhofecker
(University of Manchester)

This evidence-based paper seeks to promote our understanding of the role of affect in the transitional movement from learning object to its reception. My case study examines the development of prejudice and anti-Judaism in Jewish Studies classrooms with particular attention to the representation and perceptions of Jewish gender roles and norms, a highly-publicized area of conflict between liberal values of equality and religious freedom in debates of what it means to be British. The paper engages with the claim that communicating Judaism to non-Jews is not effective without addressing the psychological roots of antisemitic ideology (Marcus 2015). It also draws on insights in the critical study of Islamophobia (Trein 2017) that indicate the significance of affect theory in studies of religious minorities.

Previous empirical study of student learning in Religions and Theology at the University of Manchester collected alumni perceptions of long-term learning outcomes of the study of contemporary religion. 'Exoticisation' of contemporary religious Jews, their practices and thought emerges as a key concept that captures some pathological student responses to the curriculum. I use postcolonial theory and studies of cross-cultural learning to problematize the ways in which 'exoticisation' might be facilitated or discouraged by the curriculum itself. Consideration of the affective dimension in the learning process has wider implications for the communication of religion beyond formal learning situations.

Religion and Mediatized Living

ROOM 0.86 GLAMORGAN

The mediatization of religious practices in urban daily life: The Peruvian case

Rolando Perez
(Pontifical Catholic University of Peru)

The public face of religion in Latin America is undergoing constant transformation, and its relocation in the public sphere is part of a broader process of cultural and social change. This contemporary religious scene is characterized by a plurality of voices generated not only by traditional ecclesiastical institutions, but also by diverse practices and discourses where mediatization processes play an important role.

This paper will examine how urban believers – mainly Catholics and evangelicals – are reconstructing and negotiating their religious identity and belonging, as well as their interactions in everyday life as participants in wider social contexts beyond traditional religious institutions.

It addresses questions such as how mediatized religious practices shape and re-signify religious identity, and how mediated religion facilitates the creation of new meanings, forms and approaches of public engagement.

This paper will explore aspects such as renewed appropriation of religious images, symbols and rituals in the context of mediatized religious consumption, as well as new forms of belief and experience of religious life

We will also discuss how lived religion shapes the communicative practices and strategies of believers who are living out their beliefs in ways that go beyond the traditional sacred places and spheres of secularity.

This paper is part of a research project called 'The transformation of lived religion in urban Latin America: a study of contemporary Latin Americans' experience of the transcendent.'

Intergenerational differences in religion and social capital: The changing nature of the gateway effect

Jennifer Hampton, Stuart Fox, Ekaterina Kolpinskaya, Ceryn Evans, Esther Muddiman
(Cardiff University)

Religious affiliation has long been associated with civic participation and enhanced social capital, acting as an effective 'gateway' for involvement. The well-documented generational decline of religious affiliation and participation is suggested to contribute to the corresponding decline in various forms of social capital (such as associational membership), which itself has consequences for other forms of civic and political activity. However, existing research has paid relatively little attention to the changing nature of religious affiliation and participation to people born and socialised into different social, political and economic climates. Neglected thus far is the consideration of whether the 'gateway effect' remains the same for today's generation of young people as it was for their parents and grandparents.

Our research addresses this gap in the literature, asking whether the nature of the impact of religion on one's propensity to participate in civic activities has changed with the changing nature of religious affiliation and participation, and as the climate in which civic engagement and participation occurs has evolved. Using the UK Household Longitudinal Study,

we compare the beneficial impact of religious affiliation for civic participation across different generations in UK society (such as the 'baby boomers' and 'Millennials'). Our analysis shows that whilst religion continues to have a generally positive effect on social capital, there are substantial differences in how religious and social capital are related between the two generations. How these differences may exacerbate intergenerational inequalities in social capital, and the potential conflict or tension arising from these inequalities, is also explored.

Living as Christian, Living with Media: An Agenda for Research on Chinese Christian Communities in Britain

Xinan Li

(Loughborough University)

This paper proposes an agenda for further research into Chinese Christian communities in Britain, with insights drawn from a doctoral project on Christian conversion of Chinese migrants in Britain. In my doctoral study, typical trajectories of Chinese migrants' Christian conversion have been documented with a three-stage model, encounter, initiation, and commitment. I argued that commitment-centred conversion, as preached by the Chinese Christian institutions and practiced by Chinese migrant Christians, has led to the continuous development of Chinese Christian communities across Britain for seven decades. Through my ethnographic research, I observed that modern digital technologies play an important role in dissemination religious information. And different social media platforms have contributed to the identity formation of different Chinese migrant Christian groups. As I pointed out in my PhD thesis that in today's Chinese-language media, religion, particularly Christianity, is largely under-represented. However, the emergence of social media is changing the status quo. Moreover, a multitude of religious applications accessible through portable digital devices has enabled Chinese Christians to consume religious contents according to their needs. In this paper, I attempt to address the issue of media practice among Chinese migrant Christians in Britain, such as the consumption of religious media contents, the use of different social media, and the building of online ethnic religious community, with specific examples. I look forward to responses from colleagues which can contribute to my future research in both theory and practice.