SocrelNews

2019
Issue 9

Editor's Welcome

Greetings, colleagues!

I'm pleased to be able to share this latest issue of Socrel News with you. We are excited to gather once again as a scholarly community in Cardiff this summer. Our annual conference's theme, 'Communicating Religion', draws on specific strengths from Cardiff University, and we have a good line-up of national and international keynote speakers. Alongside sharing research, it's a good time just to share company, and we have a special dinner available on the Tuesday evening at Cardiff Castle, complete with a guided tour. On Wednesday evening, we'll gather as a field and subdiscipline to honour the contributions of Kieran Flanagan, and we'll hear a special address from Douglas Davies.

As we recognise the contributions of established members, we're also keeping an eye on developing the emerging generation of scholars. We've used Socrel funds to support over a dozen postgraduate scholars. They will also get to take part in a pre-conference event for postgrads and early career scholars. In keeping with the theme of communication, this workshop focuses on social media – its uses both as a source of data and a means of developing your career. Watch the hashtag #socrel19 for activity before and during the conference. And if you haven't registered yet, there's still time. Details are in this newsletter, and you can do it through the BSA's site.

Though the annual conference is a major point at which we gather and share our ideas, we've also had activity since the last issue of this newsletter that I want to highlight. In November, we gathered in London for the Chair's Response Day, focused on the theme of Doing Diversity. This event highlighted a project by Socrel members Abby Day, Lois Lee, and Jim Spickard, as well as featuring contributions from members at large. And late in April, we shared our specialist interest in religion with the wider field of sociology at the BSA's annual conference. Gordon Lynch, Chris Baker, and Marta Trzebiatowska discussed how moral meanings work in social life, and an additional panel highlighted issues relating to gender, values and society drawn from their empirical, highly topical work. It's great to have such a strong field of members who are identifying religion's integral role in the pressing issues of our time.

This welcome note is usually penned by our convener, but Céline Benoit has been pleasantly occupied with her new child and on maternity leave. We wish her all the best and congratulations on the birth, and we look forward to seeing her and all of you this summer in Cardiff.

Michael Munnik, Publications and Communications Officer
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Sociology of Religion Study Group (SocRel) Annual Conference 2019

9-11 July 2019, Cardiff University

Communicating Religion

Charles Hirschkind (University of California-Berkeley)
Mia Lövheim (Uppsala University)
Jolyon Mitchell (University of Edinburgh)

As scholars of religion, we are all tasked with communicating religion in one way or another – to students, to the public, and to our research community. Moreover, what we study is itself a message: participants in our studies and creators of the documents we analyse are communicating religion, and what we receive as data is what Giddens referred to as the 'double hermeneutic,' or ideas and experiences that have already been mediated. What is the religion communicated to us? How do we communicate religion, and what is it that we communicate when we're doing it?

Our focus is on "communicating" as a verb-like gerund rather than "communication" as a static, abstract noun. The substance of communication can include evangelistic and apologistic discourse, education, media, and public policy interventions. The papers feature diverse methodological approaches, including multi-modal and multi-sensory approaches to communicating religion. We understand communicating in multiple contexts, including academia, politics, education, social media and mass media. We imagine multiple frameworks that contour how we imagine communicating religion, encompassing the secular and the digital, the individual and the collective, the implicit and the explicit, the theoretical and the empirical.

Early bird registration closes: 7 June 2019
Registration closes: 28 June 2019
 Please note that after 7 June 2019, a £50 late registration fee will apply to all bookings.

BSA Member Full Conference	£230.00
Study Group Only Member Full Conference	£250.00
Non-member Full Conference	£280.00
BSA Member Day Rate	£100.00
Study Group Only Member Day Rate	£125.00
Non-member Day Rate	£175.00

Please join us for our conference dinner to be held at Cardiff Castle on Tuesday, 9 July. This will include a three-course meal, wine and refreshments, coffees and a 50-minute guided tour of Cardiff Castle before dinner. The dinner and tour is £40 and can be booked when registering for your conference place.

Cardiff University is able to offer a competitive rate for accommodation close to the venue and the city centre. For further details, or to make a booking, please contact conference@cardiff.ac.uk quoting SOCREL19.

For further details, visit the SocRel website:
www.britsoc.co.uk/groups/study-groups/sociology-of-religion-study-group/
For further details about the BSA visit www.britsoc.co.uk

Seed Corn winners study gender, religion and health care

The winners of this year's Socrel Seed Corn Funding will explore the gendered aspects of religion and healthcare through a study of women chaplains.

Lead applicant Sonya Sharma, senior lecturer in sociology at Kingston University, joins Sheryl Reimer-Kirkham, professor of nursing at Vancouver's Trinity Western University. Sharma's first job after completing her PhD at Lancaster University was at Trinity Western. She interviewed for a research post on a project concerning diabetes prevention among young people in aboriginal communities, which speaks to the health and social inequalities side of her research interests. However, Sharma's academic profile showed a depth in other areas that made Reimer-Kirkham think she might also suit a project on religious plurality in healthcare.

"It was both [projects] together that allowed me to work full time doing research just after my PhD," says Sharma.

Dr Sonya Sharma, Kingston University London

Reimer-Kirkham notes Sharma brought expertise that she couldn't source so easily from the local community. There is no graduate programme at Trinity Western, and her own background is in nursing. It's made the two scholars a good team.

Sharma, she says, "brings, 'What does it contribute theoretically?' and I can bring, 'What does it contribute practically?'" With this twin focus, they have led successive projects, including ethnographic work on prayer in hospitals in Vancouver and London.

"As our research programme has evolved," says Reimer-Kirkham, "we've generated a rich body of knowledge in terms of how healthcare institutions and practitioners respond to religious diversity. This latest project led by Sonya is nested in this rich ethnographic work."

As they conducted walking interviews with chaplains, they realised that they hadn't asked sufficient questions concerning the role of gender in their work. Many participant samples for existing research on chaplains are mostly male. This is understandable, as the profession still seems largely composed of men. Literature that does examine gender has tended to focus on nurses, bundling the experiences of female chaplains into that mix. Sharma says it's time to look more closely at their experiences.

"There are a number of women healthcare chaplains, and we wanted to hear from them." Reimer-Kirkham says that, in the Canadian context, "Chaplaincy can still follow patterned ways of traditional institutions and gender roles in terms of who holds the power." For example, "religious sisters founded hospitals across Canada, providing spiritual and religious care for decades, but when these transitioned to be state administered men typically stepped into roles of pastoral care." This may be changing, though, with women being appointed to lead roles as hospital administrators.

Sharma and Reimer-Kirkham are investigating whether gender plays a role in the vocational role of chaplaincy? Are women able to do work within chaplaincy that they have not been able to do in the religious institutions they are affiliated with? And what is it about their particular practices that influences living well together?

They hope to discover whether the differences they observe women making in healthcare contexts can be transferrable to other institutional contexts, revealing something about increasingly diversified workplaces.

Though the seed corn funding is small, the £5000 is intended to initiate projects that can lead to bigger grants. With healthcare and social change at its focus, Sharma hopes that the Wellcome Trust or the Leverhulme Trust will be a sensible avenue to help the project grow. In the meantime, Socrel's support is meaningful for her – especially because members of this academic community know the field so well. "It's really encouraging to be recognised by your peers."

Dr Sheryl Reimer-Kirkham, Trinity Western University

The pair hope to report back on what they've found at Socrel's annual conference in 2020.

Socrel Member Interviews

Eileen Barker
Professor Emeritus of Sociology of Religion
London School of Economics

Your book, *The Making of a Moonie*, is a classic in the field of the sociology of religion. What do you think its influence has been on the shape of current scholarship?

The simplest answer is 'I've no idea'. Perhaps a slightly more pertinent one would be that it would take a heck of a lot more than all the research I put into that book to even begin to find out. But trying to guess from what some people have told me, it has been used more as an example of a methodological approach, rather than by those primarily interested in learning about the 'Moonies', who now prefer to be called Unificationists.

One aspect of the study which was not then all that common was that I tried to face head on the basically philosophical question of free will from an empirical perspective by addressing the then-pertinent issue of 'brainwashing'. Of course, brainwashing is a metaphor. But it was a dangerous metaphor which suggested that converts to the new religions of the time – the 1970s – had been subjected to irresistible and irreversible techniques that made them join (in this case) the Unification Church. This was not just an academic question; concerned parents were paying tens of thousands of pounds to have their (adult) children illegally kidnapped and held against their will until they managed to escape or convince their captors that they had denounced their faith – sometimes with disastrous consequences.

Such ideas and practices had been vigorously challenged by scholars and human rights activists, but in their protestations they tended to start from the assumption that people were active agents. What I did was to define 'choice' in such a way that it could be operationalised, so I could demonstrate empirically that the so-called brainwashing or mind control techniques were neither irresistible nor irreversible, but that the outcome was at least in part due to something that was to be found in the convert him or herself. I was also able to indicate, through comparison with two control groups, that those who joined were not the rather pathetic types of people they were sometimes assumed to be.

Another feature of the research was that I used a number of methods: in-depth interviews on a random sample basis, participant observation (living with the Moonies for weeks on end in various centres); and long multiple-choice questionnaires with a number of open-ended questions. I read the Church's and its opponents' literature as well as numerous articles referring to the movement. I also interviewed former members, relatives, 'anti-cultists' and various others in some way relevant to the study.

Some might think of new religious movements as a trend from the past - the 1960s and 70s, which don't pertain in the same way now. What is the current state of affairs for this strand of religious studies?

New religious movements (NRMs) are certainly not in the public eye in the way they were in the second half of the last century. There are a number of reasons for that – one being a switch of public concern from 'cults' to terrorists after 9/11. Another reason is that a lot of the rubbish that was talked about cults in general has been debunked, largely by sociologists, and that major sections of the anti-cult movement have become more sophisticated in their understanding of the 'cult scene'. Furthermore, most of the movements that had caused the greatest alarm had become considerably less fanatic with the arrival of second and subsequent generations.

However, it would be wrong to think NRMs are no longer with us. A few of the post-war movements have faded away, but many still exist without the media attention they once attracted, with the possible exception of the Church of Scientology. But there are also all manner of new NRMs appearing on the scene. There are, for example, what have been called 'imagined' or 'invented' religions, which do not claim any divine revelation; some, such as the Jedi Knights, draw on popular culture. The Internet (practically unknown before the 1990s) now hosts virtual religions; some, such as the Pastafarians (members of the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster) have achieved considerable publicity and probably a considerably larger following (if less commitment) than had the earlier wave in the '70s. Then there are the new Mega Churches, and, curiously enough, a growth of agnostic or atheistic religions, such as the Sunday Service. Almost weekly we learn of some new form of religion – although the definition of 'religion' now includes beliefs and practices that were well-nigh inconceivable when I first started work as a sociologist of religion.

You established INFORM to contribute your scholarly insights on new religious movements to public policy discussions. What is the value, for you, of engaging in current public debates?

Yes, but it wasn't just to contribute whatever insights I might have, but to try to make the findings of all those scholars of religion who were using well-tried methods of research available to the general public. There are too many sociological theses riddled with impenetrable jargon collecting dust on library shelves when they actually contain important and useful information. I was becoming increasingly frustrated at the nonsense that was being promulgated about NRMs in the media and in the Houses of Parliament. Police were turning a blind eye on kidnapping and other attacks on members of the NRMs. Warnings about the 1978 tragedy of Jonestown when over 900 people had committed suicide or been murdered in the Guyana jungle were included in almost any story about any one of the thousand or so vastly different religions that were currently active in the UK. Paradoxically, the generalised conventional wisdom of all 'cults' brainwashing and exploiting their brainwashed members, whilst gathering millions for their leaders to live in luxury (and so on) actually meant that some very real problems were obscured. This widespread ignorance was resulting in

reactions that frequently exacerbated rather than ameliorated the situation, causing what I considered to be a great deal of unnecessary suffering. By engaging in public debates, and making their work more accessible, sociologists who had studied the movements could both reassure and alert potential converts, relatives of members, policy makers, police, teachers, social workers, lawyers, therapists, the media and the general public. It seemed silly, even irresponsible, for researchers not to share their findings – always remembering, of course, that sociologists are not infallible and that there are many questions that they just cannot (and need to acknowledge they cannot) answer.

Kristin Aune
Professor of Sociology of Religion
Coventry University
Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations

You're in the middle of a project on religious hate crime on campuses. What has surprised you so far about the data you've generated?

The project is a research and intervention project funded by the Office for Students to understand students' attitudes to and experiences of religion-related hate incidents on campus, and we've done a baseline survey to see how they're thinking and feeling. During the project we're doing some practical things to improve students' experiences, for example we've employed a part-time religious hate crime case manager for students to report problems to, and we'll resurvey them at the end of the project to see how aware they are of the support we've put in place. The initial survey's just closed, and the data indicate that a small minority of students have experienced or witnessed a hate incident related to religion. The majority are Islamophobic incidents and verbal abuse, and students mostly don't report formally to the police or to the university. The findings aren't particularly surprising to me, but some of the details of hate incidents are depressing – when we've analysed them properly we'll publish a report and guidelines for the sector. We're also hearing about incidents that some people wouldn't define as hate crime or even as hate incidents – e.g. students thinking that other religious groups are overly zealous in a way that intrudes on their freedom, or tensions between different equality issues (e.g. sexuality or gender and religion).

Last year, you published results of a study on domestic abuse among churchgoers. What was the imperative for this project?

My colleague Dr Rebecca Barnes (from the University of Leicester) and I were approached by the Christian domestic abuse education charity Restored. Restored

had been delivering training for churches on domestic abuse for several years, but encountered disbelief from some that domestic violence was a problem amongst churchgoers. Many studies in the USA showed that churchgoers did suffer domestic abuse, and at similar rates to non-churchgoers, but the research hadn't been done in the UK, so Restored invited us to work with them to undertake the study. This would give them data to show – as they were sure we'd find – that churches are not abuse-free, enabling them to convince churches of the need to undertake training.

Your report notes that six women who took your survey were in relationships in which they feared for their lives. I know the responses are all anonymised, but as a researcher, what do you do with knowledge of such circumstances?

The results had to be anonymous, or people probably wouldn't have felt safe to share their experiences. There's no way of intervening in these circumstances, and it wouldn't be right for a researcher to do so. The decision to leave an abuser has to be made by the victim. Perhaps sharing their experiences prompted some of these women to seek help from one of the sources listed on our survey information sheet – that would be my hope.

Your web profile includes a vision statement alongside your research, which is itself oriented to justice. And you work with a centre for trust, peace, and social relations. What role do values play in the work of the contemporary scholar?

Thanks to the work of feminist scholars, especially from the 1960s and 70s, most social science researchers now admit that value-free research is an impossibility – and those who claim to be 'objective' are just as influenced by values as those who are transparent or 'reflexive' about it. Faced with the choice of pretending to be 'objective' (but not being so) or being explicit about the way values shape our research, I prefer the latter. I also think research that makes a contribution to social justice or peaceful relations between groups is needed – that's what we aim for at the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations. We do a lot of work with religious and other grassroots community groups, and I welcome the fact that universities are now much better connected with religious organisations, so they can do research that responds to real needs. For example the project Chaplains on Campus: Understanding Chaplaincy in UK Universities, which Prof Mathew Guest and I have been doing with Revd Dr Jeremy Law, funded by the Church Universities Fund, has involved interviewing over data 400 chaplains and university managers, to understand chaplains' role and impact and identify areas that could be improved so that chaplains can support students better. Whatever your view on whether universities should be secular spaces or what that might mean, chaplains are doing a lot of good pastoral work with marginalised students, so learning from them to improve how religion is dealt with on campus is surely a good thing.

Rob Barward-Symmons
PhD Candidate in Religious Studies
University of Kent

What is your PhD about?

As you might expect it's shifted a bit over the years, but generally I'm interested in understanding the role of Christian youth groups in the formation of evangelical subjectivity. There have been some brilliant ethnographic studies of evangelical congregations, but the youth groups that accommodate the teenagers in these churches are often only glimpsed in passing. This isn't necessarily a surprise – frequently youth groups in evangelical churches sit in an unusual position, theoretically highly valued as serving a key period of the religious life yet pushed out to the margins of the building and the community. These apparently contrasting positions, practices, and expectations intrigued me enough to set about on an ethnographic study of a youth group at a large charismatic-evangelical church in London. I was based with the group for a year, conducting participant-observation fieldwork (in the position of volunteer youth worker) and interviewing group members, former members, and church leaders. I was focusing on the older teens (aged 14-18) but was also able to spend time in the 'adult' services as well as the younger groups. Mostly I was helping out with their weekly sessions, but also suffering for the research cause by getting involved with one-off events such as paintballing and laser tag.

I'm interested in understanding these youth groups as liminal spaces through which young Christians are encouraged to move from the faith of their childhoods to a fully formed evangelical adult – or that's the idea at least. Approaching it (tentatively) as a form of prolonged rite of passage, I'm exploring the significance of spatial separation from both the adult and child areas and distinct practices focusing on the development of relational bonds (such as an emphasis on play and prioritising periods of unstructured socialising) on these young people and how they contribute towards the development of a particular type of religious subject. The pedagogical practices – again with a strong focus on peer-to-peer relationships – offer opportunities for public challenging of the normative teachings that would be impossible in the adult environment, creating a space in which uncertain and liminal religious identities are accepted (and even encouraged). While the PhD is interested on the teenagers themselves as religious agents, rather than just future adults, I do have one eye on the impact this period might have on their future religiosity as they move into young adulthood – not least because this is a dominant interest of the institutions themselves with regards to these groups.

"Youth" and "young" are key limiting terms in your project. What makes this category distinctive for you?

While it has become a central aspect of my research, it didn't start that way at all. Initially, I was interested in the role that mediated transatlantic influences might play on the development of evangelical subjectivity in Britain, and was intending to do a more conventional congregational study with a focus on these media aspects. But as I developed my ideas further, I realised that working specifically with young people would offer great opportunities for important and original research. Firstly, of course, young people have a particular affinity with digital and social media – though as it happened this aspect became increasingly less important to my PhD as I progressed through the fieldwork. More significant is the desire to mould, remould, and passionately express one's identity in adolescence. Many of us would have experienced wrestling with identity experimentation and formation during these years, and exploring religion (and non-religion) can be an important aspect of that for many teenagers – from throwing themselves into a charismatic youth festival with all the enthusiasm of their peers at Glastonbury to passionately disavowing their childhood faith in a sixth-form common room debate. Contemporary evangelicalism also views this period with particular significance as facilitating the 'moment' in which believers either convert or individually dedicate themselves to their faith having grown up in the movement. As a result, evangelical churches and institutions focus extensive resources and attention towards their current and potential teenage members, and youth-oriented groups, camps, and festivals are hugely significant within the evangelical movement. Pete Ward has even pointed to youth work as 'decisively shaping' evangelicalism in modern Britain. On an individual level, evangelical testimonies often highlight a moment or period in the believer's teenage or student years as a turning point in their commitment to faith, even for those who attended church regularly as children. Despite (or perhaps because of) this, the norms around this pivotal evangelical life stage are often significantly different from those we see in the adult contexts into which these young people are expected to seamlessly transition, as I mentioned earlier. Practices that are commonplace in youth groups across the country would be seen as radical if transposed to the adult spaces in the same churches. So the more time I've spent in these youth contexts, the more fascinating and distinctive I've found these young people and their practices and place within evangelicalism to be.

What's been the biggest challenge to your research so far?

I think the two biggest ones are some that many doctoral ethnographers discover as they go through their research, so I'm sure I am not alone in these! The first was the realisation of what it meant to be working with real people rather than with books or data. Ahead of going into the fieldwork I had developed some methods around digital and social media that I was really proud of and excited to implement. But the reality was that for these young people, going out of their way to help me complete my research was a long way down on their priority lists. Of course I do not mean this to give a negative impression of them – they were amazing and caring young people who have hugely re-invigorated my hope for the future (especially given current, circumstances...) – and as soon as I recognised what I was asking in terms of time and commitment I realised that a lot of my plans were impractical. Ultimately, any active participation on their part would be purely as a favour to me. So I dropped a lot of my initial ideas and focuses and instead developed approaches that would be

deliverable within the timeframe of the sessions themselves. Fortunately the youth leader has supported my research since I first approached him so he was happy to give me opportunities to run sessions, but still it has required a significant shift in the focus of the project. On the positive side, I realised that the best way to encourage the young people to participate in interviews was to provide junk food, which of course meant I had to participate in this aspect of the fieldwork myself! My hope is that overcoming this challenge has ultimately resulted in a more interesting end thesis, but of course I'll leave that up to my examiners to decide…

The second challenge has been just adjusting to the work and life style of this type of PhD research. The fieldwork period led to quite a chaotic and unstructured time schedule, particularly with youth group sessions being naturally outside of school (and therefore work) hours. I have definitely realised that I work better with structure and consistency, and this was particularly difficult to find during this period. I'm also based quite a distance away from my campus, and while I have amazing conversations with and support from Nic Graham and Joanna Malone at Kent and the NYLON group for social science PhD students in London who share work in progress (and my supervisors, of course), I have found that it can be quite an isolating process without a consistent workspace and peer group with whom I could share those daily experiences. But equally, I feel incredibly privileged to have been able to spend that chaotic time with such an amazing group of young people and be able to call it research and, hopefully, get their voices and experiences heard more widely in the religious studies community.

A short tribute to David Martin (1929-2019)

Article by Lina Molokotos-Liederman

I first met David Martin in the spring of 2002, about a year after receiving my French doctorate in sociology of religion. As a young post-doc researcher, I joined the editorial team of the BSA's newsletter and had the honour to interview David Martin for the Association's Network (No. 8, May 2002). I was quite daunted meeting, let alone interviewing, the eminent sociologist of religion behind seminal works, such as *A General Theory of Secularization* (1978), just as I am now writing a short tribute on his career and impact in the field, in addition to the meaningful tributes written by Professor Emeritus Grace Davie (LSE Religion and Global Society blog) and by the Revd Professor Robin Gill for *The Church Times*. I would also like to highlight the edited volume and collection of essays paying tribute to David's work, while he was still alive, *David Martin and the Sociology of Religion* (Joas 2018).
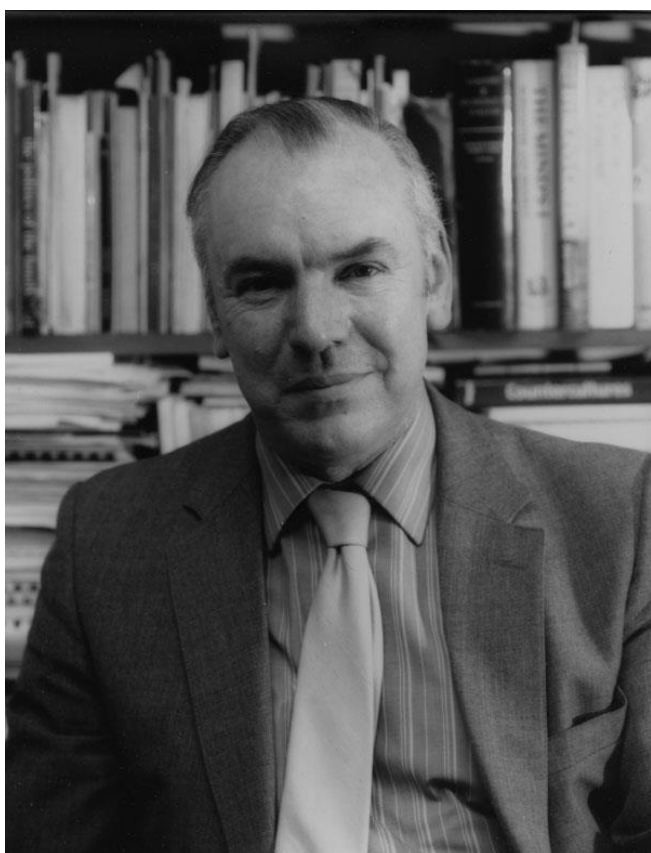

Image: David Martin, c1980s' by LSE Library, found on Wikimedia Commons

I met David at the train station in Woking, where he picked me up so we could meet at his home. I had the honour to meet his wife Bernice, a scholar in her own right, over afternoon tea. We talked for a little over an hour. David took me on a whirlwind "tour" of his professional trajectory, how he started and how he ended up in the field of sociology of religion in quite unusual and convoluted personal circumstances. He benefitted from a unique academic training that combined theology (he was ordained in the Church of England) and political sociology, which can certainly help explain why David himself termed his work as "socio-theology" (see below).

David was brought up in what he called a "fundamentalist" background, strongly influenced by his father. He went to a grammar school where he had to "come to terms with biblical literalism". He went to church but also adopted a more liberal and socialist view of the New Testament. He had to confront this tension head-on when in 1948 he became a religious and political conscientious objector in the army, opting to satisfy his national service requirement in the Non-Combatant Corps. Making his case before a tribunal on why he refused to join the army brought him into contact with people from different religious and non-religious and philosophical backgrounds. It seems that this was a moment, among others, that sparked his initial interest not only in religion, but also in pacifism and its opposite, violence. He would go on to study this topic in the mid 1960s during his PhD at the LSE.

After his national service, David became a primary school teacher. He told me he "stumbled on sociology by accident" and obtained a first degree via a correspondence course for an external London University degree. In 1959, he arrived as a scholarship student at the LSE, where he studied sociology and religion with a particular interest in the Christian origins of peace movements and the links between religion, power, politics and violence. During our conversation, he emphasised that he was especially influenced by the realist theology of Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, on the social reality of violence, which, he said, "destroyed [his] pacifism". After receiving his doctorate, he remained at the LSE and joined the ranks of its faculty, going from Lecturer to Reader to Professor. The LSE would be his institutional home for over 20 years, until his retirement in the late 1980s.

It is difficult to summarize David's vast scholarly work and intellectual contribution in the field. Suffice it in this short tribute to highlight his three main intellectual and innovative contributions in the political sociology of religion: first, his questioning of the taken-for-granted secularization thesis; second, his attentiveness to the advancement of Pentecostalism in Latin America, which relates to his first contribution; and third, his work on the sociology of war and violence.

David is likely best known for his contribution to the study of secularization. In one of his most recent books, *The Education of David Martin* (2014), he articulately wrote how he became engaged in the study of secularization realising the advantages of dealing with "helpful problems": "I looked to sociology for clues to the problems set by a simple faith, only to find the problem might solve itself because sociology expected religion to wane rather than to wax" (p. 4). Similarly, during our conversation he said that, in the 1960s, the master narrative was that "religion did not seem to matter at all" so he "had to hunt for it in sociology, only to encounter the master narrative of secularization".

David's contribution to the secularization debate began with a bang after he wrote his landmark article "Towards Eliminating the Concept of Secularization" (1965). For him, the concept was imposed on, rather than drawn from, the data, especially when looking at the role of religion outside Europe. This established him as an innovative intellectual in sociology of religion. It also paved the way for his ongoing work on this key topic with the publication of two other seminal works: *A General Theory of Secularization* (1978) and *Secularization. Towards a Revised General Theory* (2005). He argued that secularization takes place in diverse ways in different contexts and is not an assumed inevitable consequence of modernization. He analysed the different patterns in the institutional and social erosion of religion starting from his home country, Britain, and expanding his analysis to the different trajectories of secularization and religion in contexts such as the US, France, Scandinavia, Russia, post-communist Europe and Latin America.

In confronting the problematic quality of secularization as a global phenomenon David brought scholarly attention to the overlooked explosion of Pentecostalism in Latin America, as illustrated in his two works *Tongues of Fire* (1990) and *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish* (2001). His work on the growth of Pentecostalism in the Global South (including Africa) and its impact on Catholicism in Latin America and on the formation of transnational religious networks has greatly contributed to our understanding of Latin American Christianity. Related to that is his nuanced attention to the religious revival and the social and political role of Christianity in post-communist central and eastern Europe. He brought these two spheres together in his short book, *Forbidden Revolutions* (1993).

At the same time, David never lost his initial interest in the links between religion and violence. In his Sarum Lecture series at Oxford in the mid-1990s, he further explored the question of religion and violence, including the conditions under which religion contributes to or is involved in violence. These ideas are contained in his book, *Does Christianity Cause War?* (1997), drawing on case studies from Britain, Romania, the US and Latin America. His work in this area was followed much later by another book that brought together his reflections and key intellectual achievements in the political sociology of religion, *The Future of Christianity: Reflections of Violence and Democracy, Religion and Secularization* (2011). In this comprehensive volume he examined very aptly the different configurations of religion and secularization, and politics, democracy and violence, within the modern nation-state and across different continents.

Scholars have suggested that David ventured into a "creative dialogue" between sociology and theology towards "a disciplinary hybrid" of "socio-theology" (Carroll 2018, p. 16; Joas 2018, p. 11). He encompassed in his analytical viewpoint both European and non-European, albeit mostly Christian, contexts, and "pioneered a political sociology of religion" (Joas 2018, p. 1). He also broke the boundaries between sociology and theology, while at the same time maintaining a healthy distance between faith and scholarship.

As an established and seminal scholar in sociology of religion, we may now take David's vast intellectual contribution to the field as for granted. Yet I do have to remind myself of his innovative, complex and nuanced reflections on how religion, especially Christianity, plays out in different ways depending on historical periods and social contexts.

Reflecting back on our first meeting, some 17 years ago, when I was sitting in his living room and library in conversation about his unconventional intellectual trajectory, and our brief exchange of handwritten notes before the publication of the interview, I can appreciate David's invaluable role in forming generations of scholars, such as myself, as pioneering thinker, prolific author, supervisor, mentor, colleague and friend.

Socrel Committee

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