



THE RELIGION AND DIVERSITY PROJECT/RELIGION ET DIVERSITÉ



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Research Statement

I have written widely on Christianity, its growth, decline and transformation in modern times. In *An Introduction to Christianity* (CUP 2004) and *A Very Short Introduction to Christianity* (OUP 2004) I took a sociological approach which paid particular attention to the ways in which power has been imagined and distributed within Christianity. This involved integrating study of the theological, ritual, ecclesiastical and social dimensions of the religion within an historical framework.

I am also interested in the rise of 'alternative' spirituality from the mid 19th century to the present. In my postgraduate study I considered the development of spirituality around the turn of the 19th century, in a colonial context. In *The Spiritual Revolution* (Blackwell 2005), on the basis of empirical research, Paul Heelas and I considered the significance of contemporary forms of 'holistic'/'mind, body, spirit' practices and reasons for their rapid growth since the 1980s. In a recent paper (2011) I consider how spirituality and Christianity have constructed one another through both mutual repudiation and borrowing.

Gender relations have been a central interest in all my writing. I have written several articles on the reasons for women's preponderance in spirituality, and my books on Christianity consider gender relations in the churches and in relation to images of God. I have also proposed a 'gendering' of secularisation theory in sociological study. I am currently carrying this interest forward in research on everyday, lived religion - which I characterise as 'tactical' religion.

I am currently writing a book on *Religion in Public: Realignments in State, Society and Market*, based on the Wilde Lectures delivered at the University of Oxford in 2011. I show how political and economic transformation in the last 50 years has led to a 'deregulation', reconstruction, and 're-regulation' of religious life in the West.



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