

Trio 3: Changing morality and the transformative gospel

This trio arises out of thoughts about what happened in the General Synod of the Church of England on 15 February 2017. The Bishops delivered a report on marriage and same sex relationships. After a debate the Synod voted 'not to take note' of the Bishops Report – because a small majority in House of Clergy voting against 'taking note' of it.

Important issues were at stake: the unity of the church, faithfulness to the received faith, consistency of Christian teaching, the universal outreach of the love of Christ. Faithfulness to the gospel seems to urge us to hold to the old teachings as well as to depart from them.

So three studies: (1) Change and the changing gospel in the New Testament. (2) Christendom and the captive Gospel. (3) The Gospel message and human sexuality.

Trio 4: Rain falling by the river: the uses of poetry for the contemporary explorer of theology.

- I. Poetry and the sciences. Examples to show how poetry can operate in parallel with scientific exploration of the world God created, and how it can function as science's conscience, like Nathan the prophet. Poets will include Gerard Manley Hopkins, Miroslav Holub, and R S Thomas.
- II. Poetry and places of doubt and pain. T S Eliot wrote that 'humankind cannot bear very much reality'. Continuing with R S Thomas, we explore the 'bearing' of our un-knowing of God, and then how poems can offer a truth-telling space in which to face places of pain.
- III. Poetry and liturgy. Many poets have written from the cycles of the Church's year, and from its traditional liturgies. Drawing on the work of Malcolm Guite, Rowan Williams and Carla Grosch-Miller, we explore these possibilities, and whether poetry might take liturgy itself into truer and more honest places.

Each session will also contain readings from *Rain falling by the River: new and selected poems of the spirit* (Canterbury Press), and recommendations on other resources that help make contemporary poetry accessible.



THEOLOGY QUEST AND QUESTIONS in TIVERTON

2017-2018

Who tried Jesus, and why?

David Catchpole

Thursdays 21 and 28 September; 5 October 2017

The quest of the historical Mary

David Catchpole

Thursdays 19 and 26 October; 2 November 2017

Changing morality and the transformative gospel

David Hamer

Thursdays 26 April; 3 and 10 May 2018

Rain falling by the river

Christopher Southgate

Thursdays 7, 14 and 21 June 2018

Where and when?

We meet in the Tiverton Baptist Church Hall, by kind permission of the minister and deacons. Sessions begin at 7 pm and end promptly at 9 pm.

What lies behind it all in TQQT?

Christian people in these early days of the 21st century have a long agenda of topics which lie at the heart of their faith but which raise persistent questions. The aim of these trios is to open up the quest and engage with some of those questions. What do Christians believe, why do they believe it, and should they keep on believing it?

The aim of TQQT is partly, to quote a famous phrase, 'faith seeking understanding', but it also gives space to 'doubt seeking understanding'. If you came before, we hope you will come again. If you didn't, come and give it a try!

Who can come?

Anyone and everyone. There are no entrance conditions – except an open mind and a spirit of exploration!

What will it cost?

Just £6.00 per session (£15.00 per trio). This will cover tea/coffee at half-time.

Who are the members of this year's team?

- *David Catchpole* was Professor of Theological Studies at the University of Exeter and is now a staff member at Sarum College, Salisbury.
- *David Hamer* taught at Blundell's School, where he was also Chaplain.
- *Christopher Southgate* is Senior Lecturer in the University of Exeter, Principal of the South West Ministry Training Course, and the author of *The Groaning of Creation* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), and most recently *Rain falling by the River: new and selected poems of the spirit* (London: Canterbury Press, 2017).

Trio 1: Who tried Jesus, and why?

Relations between Christians and Jews were for many centuries soured by allegations about 'the crime of deicide' and breaches of the law on the one side, and thoroughly biased and historically flimsy accounts in the gospels on the other. The unspeakable crime of the Holocaust introduced yet more sensitivity to the discussion.

So where are we now, 75 years on from the Holocaust? Can we determine why Jesus was crucified, why the authorities (whether Jewish or Roman) regarded him as needing to be removed from the scene, why many have doubted the objectivity of the gospel writers, and whether the actual offence he allegedly committed can be isolated? Was it something to do with a threat to the Jerusalem temple, or some sort of claim to political rule, or some fundamental religious deviation? Who was ultimately responsible for Jesus' condemnation and execution – Caiaphas, or Pilate, or ultimately Jesus himself?

Trio 2: The quest of the historical Mary

The young woman who has gone down in Christian history as 'the blessed virgin Mary' has come to divide Christian opinion sharply and seemingly irreconcilably. She is the object of deep devotion to many, marked out by immaculate conception, a virgin birth, and heavenly assumption, and the subject of unhistorical legend to others. Ecumenical conversations between the churches are troubled by the disagreements. Much hinges on the answer to the question: who was the father of Jesus?

Recent writings about Mary have given new impetus to the discussion, and we will undertake our own studies in the light of some of the best proposals that have been mounted. Historically, what can we reconstruct about her? Theologically, how important is she for contemporary Christian faith? Does 'the virgin birth' rank with the resurrection as the absolute core of the faith, and does talk of the divinity of Jesus hinge on his arguably not having had a human birth father?