



The Study of Angels

One-day conference of the Religious Experience Research Centre, the School of Theology, Religious Studies and Islamic Studies and the Faculty of Humanities and Performing Art

3rd July 2015 (Founder's Library)

10.00 Welcome by Prof Bettina Schmidt, Director of the Religious Experience Research Centre

Panel 1: The Alister Hardy Lampeter Lecture

10.15 The Rev. Prof June Boyce-Tillman, MBE, Professor of Applied music at the University of Winchester and Associate Professor of North-West University, South Africa
Crystallizing the Angels – A methodological proposal for the study of angels

11.00 Discussion

11.30 – 12.00 coffee break

Panel 2: Disciplinary approaches to angels

12.00 Prof Martin O'Kane
Painting the Bodiless: Angels in Biblical Art

12.30 Prof Densil Morgan
'The most extensive study of angelology since Thomas Aquinas': Karl Barth on angels

1-2 p.m. lunch break

Panel 3: Angels in different traditions

2.00 Dr Catrin Williams
Angel(s) in Ancient Judaism and Johannine Christianity

2.30 Theolyn Cortens, Winchester University
Angels in Jewish Mysticism

3.00 Dr David Morgans
Are there Angels in Buddhism?

3.30 Dr Gary Bunt
Jinn in the Machine: Approaching Jinn and Angels in Islam

4.00 Final Discussion

4.30 Departure

Abstracts

Panel 1: The Alister Hardy Lampeter Lecture

The Rev. Prof June Boyce-Tillman, MBE, Professor of Applied music at the University of Winchester and Associate Professor of North-West University, South Africa

Crystallizing the Angels – A methodological proposal for the study of angels



Abstract

The lecture will explore the complex issues involved in the study of angels, examining various frames to accommodate the variety of data available. The data includes accounts of people's experiences and questionnaires associated with them, reported visionary experiences and a variety of artistic sources. These will include images (such as Hildegard's choir of angels), poems (such as those of Rilke), historical accounts (such as the biblical account of the Annunciation) and music (such as Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* and hymn texts). The methodology will build on Fiona Bowie's cognitive empathetic engagement (2014), adding to this, methodologies from the area of Performance-as-Research (Boyce-Tillman et al 2013). These will be put together within the developing methodology of crystallization which "combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text", to build a rich account of the phenomenon problematizing its construction, highlighting researchers' positionality and examining socially constructed meanings to reveal the indeterminacy of knowledge claims (Ellingson 2009 p4). Within these it will draw on Boyce-Tillman's analysis of

elements within the spiritual experience (Boyce-Tillman 2013) into the areas of Metaphysical, Narrative, Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Extra-personal and InterGaian.

Prof June Boyce-Tillman MBE, FRSA read music at Oxford University and is Professor of Applied Music at the University of Winchester. She has published widely in the area of education, most recently on spirituality/liminality. Her doctoral research into children's musical development has been translated into five languages. She is a composer exploring and writing about the possibilities of intercultural sharing through composing/improvising/singing. She has run an interfaith celebration in Tooting since 1986. She has written about and organised events in the area of interfaith dialogue using music in Winchester, Hackney and the Vedic Temple in Southampton. She has held visiting fellowships at Indiana University and the Episcopal Divinity School on Massachusetts and is now an associate Professor at North Western University, South Africa. She is an international performer, especially in the work of Hildegard of Bingen and healing (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vm- cfCvjic>). Her large scale works for cathedrals such as Winchester, Southwark and Norwich involve professional musicians, classical and community choirs, school children and people with disabilities. She is developing models of radical musical inclusion. She has written on women in Christian liturgical music traditions - *In Tune with heaven or not*. She is artistic convenor of the Winchester University Centre for the Arts as Well-being. She is an ordained Anglican priest and honorary chaplain to Winchester cathedral. She was awarded a MBE for her services to Music and Education

Panel 2: Disciplinary approaches to angels

Prof Martin O'Kane

Painting the Bodiless: Angels in Biblical Art

Abstract

Angels, representing a divine other-worldly reality, have always presented both challenges and opportunities to the artist. Without doubt, they provided artists with opportunities to hone their painterly skills in original and creative ways, but, at the same time, care had to be taken to ensure that a precarious balance was maintained - angels had to be depicted in ways that were not so divine and spiritual as to appear distant and remote to the viewer - and yet not so human as to suggest overt sensuality and sexuality. The talk begins with an overview of how artists rose to this challenge. Four case studies then exemplify the variety of approaches that could be taken: Fra Angelico, *The Annunciation*; Delacroix, *Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*; Mantegna, *The Man of Sorrows with Seraph and Cherub*; Caravaggio, *Rest on the Flight into Egypt*.

Martin O'Kane is Professor of Biblical Studies. He is author of *Biblical Art from Wales*; *An Introduction to Biblical Art*, and *Bible Art, Gallery*.

Prof Densil Morgan

'The most extensive study of angelology since Thomas Aquinas': Karl Barth on angels

Abstract

The Swiss Karl Barth (1886-1968) is regarded as one of the leading Christian theologians of the modern era. His multi-volumed *Church Dogmatics* (1932-67) covers virtually all aspects of Christian doctrine and remains highly influential within the discipline of academic theology as well as within the thought of the church. Responding to the Enlightenment scepticism of his colleague, the Marburg New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann, in *Church Dogmatics* III/3 (1950) Barth fashioned an extensive study of the reality of angels and their role within the realm of Christian faith. It is a striking assessment which is even more remarkable given its context, a recently war-torn Europe on the one side and a growing interest in 'secular' theology on the other. This paper will provide a précis of Barth's thought on the topic and consider its value and current significance.

D. Densil Morgan has been Professor of Theology at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David since 2010. Previously he was Professor of Theology at Bangor University, North Wales. A graduate of Bangor and Oxford, he has published extensively on the Welsh religious tradition as well on aspects of twentieth century Christian thought. Among his publications are *The SPCK Introduction to Karl Barth* (London: SPCK, 2010) and *Barth Reception in Britain* (London: T & T Clark, 2012).

Panel 3: Angels in different traditions:

Dr Catrin H. Williams

Angel(s) in Ancient Judaism and Johannine Christianity

Abstract

This paper will examine the main features of angelic speculation in Judaism during the late Second Temple period and will consider the possible significance of Jewish angelology for interpreting the presentation of Jesus in the Gospel of John.

Catrin Williams is Joint Head of School and Reader in New Testament Studies at the School of Theology, Religious Studies and Islamic Studies. Her specialism within New Testament studies is Johannine literature, particularly the Gospel of John. She has published widely in this area and most recently completed work on two edited volumes, one on the relationship between John's Gospel and Jewish apocalyptic and the other to mark 60 years since the publication of C.H. Dodd's *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel*. Catrin is co-chair of the 'John, Jesus and History' research group (Society of Biblical Literature), a member of the Colloquium Ioanneum, and since 2012 she has been the editor of the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*. Many of her publications examine the relationship between John's Gospel and Judaism.

Theolyn Cortens, Winchester University

Angels in Jewish Mysticism

Abstract

This paper explores Jewish mystical speculations about the nature of Creation, in which angels sustain the underlying patterns established by the Creator. The early kabbalistic text the *Sefer Yetzirah*, (usually dated c. 100 CE) claims that the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are the building blocks of Creation and mentions a variety of angels and celestial intermediaries. The similarly dated the *Merkavah* (Heavenly Halls) literature, establishes seven heavens where mystical seekers meet angelic hosts. Also in the first century, Philo of Alexandria described angels as divine agencies. Much later, in the twelfth century, the *Bahir* (The Book of Illumination) speculated on unfolding patterns in Creation as it emerges out of *tohu* and *bohu* (chaos and desolation) with the support of *manhigim* and *pekidim* (directors and functionaries). In the thirteenth century the *Zohar* (the Book of Splendour) incorporates stories of many named angels alongside descriptions of the creative emanations initiated by *Ain Sof*, the endless light of the Godhead. From these mystical texts a myriad of angelic names with their individual roles have been derived and are still being utilized today by modern Angel-spirituality practitioners

Theolyn Cortens, MA is a PhD student at University of Winchester. The thesis is about *Angel-spirituality among British women 1985-2015*. She is also the author of several books about angels published by Piatkus for general readership in the Mind Body Spirit genre.

Dr David Morgans

Are there Angels in Buddhism?

Abstract

Are there Angels in Buddhism? This question, of course depends on what we mean by 'angels' and also on what qualities, powers and characteristics we perceive angels as processing. If by 'angels' we mean beings superior in status to humans, then the answer is yes! That is, in Buddhism there are many different types of non-human entities who share the characteristics of being more powerful, longer-lived, and in general living more contentedly than the average human being, for example *Devas* (Sanskrit, Pāli). But more in keeping with the idea of angels, where their role is to minister to watch over and care for human beings, we have in Mahayana Buddhism, the bodhisattva ideal. Bodhisattvas are beings who are dedicated to the universal awakening of enlightenment of everyone. They exist as guides and providers of succour to the suffering beings and offer everyone an approach to meaningful spiritual life. On the one hand, bodhisattvas are mythical figures and can be awesome in their power, radiance and wisdom. On the other hand a bodhisattva can be as ordinary as your next door neighbour, following the teaching

about generosity, compassion, humility and patience, meaning to live so as to benefit others. This paper means to explore figures from both these aspects of the bodhisattva ideal, in an attempt to make sense of the full range of diversity of this Buddhist teaching by seeing how it is represented by the various bodhisattva figures.

David Morgans is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy and works on a comparison between Western and Eastern Philosophy. He is also an ordained Zen Buddhist Priest and Monk.

Dr Gary R. Bunt

Jinn in the Machine: Approaching Jinn and Angels in Islam

Abstract

This presentation explores some of the ways in which angels and jinn have been represented in historical and contemporary contexts, including through the Qur'an and other Islamic sources. It also discusses popular cultural understandings of jinn, including approaches towards 'exorcism' in Muslim contexts.

Gary R. Bunt is Reader in Islamic Studies at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. His primary research area is Islam and Muslims in cyberspace, and his publications include *iMuslims: Rewiring the House of Islam* (London: C. Hurst & Co.). Further information: www.virtuallyislamic.com