

Institution: University of Bristol
Unit of assessment: 33 Theology and Religious Studies
Title of case study: Roman Catholics and other religions: developing new approaches
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>The researcher's work on Roman Catholic attitudes to other religions, socially and theologically, has impacted civic life, influencing associations between religious people and groups to illuminate and challenge cultural values and social assumptions. This impact has been mediated locally (Clifton diocese web media), nationally (through the Catholic Bishops' Conference and their officers, and through the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations Board curriculum), and internationally (through Georgetown University web resources for Christian-Muslim relations). Stakeholders in these three zones report cultural and social impact throughout the period of assessment through the researcher's work on non-HEI groups and individuals.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>The study concerns a single researcher, Professor Gavin D'Costa (Professor of Catholic Theology since 2006), in two areas of research.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The first area is related to Roman Catholic theological attitudes to the world religions in both official Catholic teachings since 1963 (marked by the Second Vatican Council) and by Catholic theology of religions. This research addresses three related sub-areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The research findings call into question the influential three-fold paradigm for understanding Christian attitudes to other religions. The research proposed an alternative theologically oriented typological approach, showing the earlier paradigm had implicitly favoured one approach. See [1], [4] (all cross references to section 3 below). The research findings question a major current of interpretation of the Second Vatican Council which proposed the Council viewed other religions as a means of salvation. The researcher shows the Council regarded these religions as <i>de facto</i>, not <i>de iure</i>, means of salvation at best. This has significant implications regarding theology of religions and the practice of mission and interreligious dialogue. See [1], [3], [4]. The research findings have shown continuity and discontinuity to exist within Catholic teachings on Jews and Muslims. There is radical discontinuity in pastoral and social attitudes. There is significant continuity in terms of the doctrine of God. This acknowledgment of 'one God' also generates a new research question related to interfaith prayer. The practice of interfaith prayer has often arisen as a response to common disasters ('9/11', the London Tube bombings, the 2004 tsunami). The researcher has developed a novel analysis of interfaith prayer and worship within theistic religions. See [1], [3], [4], [5], [6]. The second area has grown out of the first. It deals with religious pluralism in the public square. This research addresses two related sub-areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the nature of Catholic public theology? The researcher has examined the role of the Catholic university in a pluralist public square, finding that such tradition-specific development of 'knowledge' facilitates genuine difference in pluralist societies. Following Alasdair MacIntyre, the researcher has shown that at its best, this type of Catholic learning is open to other religions. It can learn from and be engaged with these religions through dialectics. See [1], [2]. Can Catholic public theologies contribute to the debate in the social sciences regarding pluralism and the public square? The researcher develops one particular approach, drawing from his work on the Christian university, engaging critically with social scientists like Rawls and Habermas. The research advances a cautious acceptance of translating

Christian language into public discourse, but only by using natural theology. The research approach is acutely aware of the secularising force of such a process. Genuine plurality requires multiple forms of discourse. See [1], [2], [6]. To demonstrate how religions might positively and constructively contribute to social and political culture, the researcher has explored this in Catholic and Muslim social theology. The research suggests that religious contributions could both enhance democracy and the substantive values that make up the common good within a pluralist society. See [1].

3. References to the research

- [1] D'Costa. G. (2009) *Christianity and World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Blackwell-Wiley, Oxford), 233 pp. Listed in REF2.
Funded by AHRC matching leave grant (£30k), with the highest score given to this research project from the AHRC after completion on time.
- [2] D'Costa. G. (2005) *Theology in the Public Square: Church, University, and Nation* (Blackwell, Oxford), 264pp. Can be supplied on request.
Funded completion: University of Bristol Research Fellowship covered teaching costs (£4.5k).
- [3] D'Costa. G. (2000) *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York/ T & T Clark, Edinburgh), 187 pp. Can be supplied on request.
The journal *Reviews in Religion and Theology* 8 (3), 2001, 232–50, carried a panel discussion on the book, with an author response.
Spanish translation: *La Trinidad y el diálogo interreligioso* (Secretariado Trinitario, Salamanca, 2006).
- [4] D'Costa. G. (2011) (Co-authored with Paul Knitter and Daniel Strange) *Only One Way? Three Christian Responses on the Uniqueness of Christ in a Religiously Plural World* (SCM, London), pp. 3–46, 139–152, 185–98. Can be supplied on request.
- [5] D'Costa. G. (2012) 'What does the Catholic Church Teach about Mission to the Jewish People?', *Theological Studies*, 73 (3), 590–613. Listed in REF2.
Plus responses commissioned by the editor of the journal (1) Edward Kessler, 'A Jewish Response to Gavin D'Costa', 614–28; (2) John T. Pawlikowski, 'A Catholic Response to Gavin D'Costa', 629–40.
- [6] D'Costa. G. (2013) 'Continuity and Reform in Vatican II's Teaching on Islam', *New Blackfriars*, 94, 1050, 208–22. DOI: 10.1111/nbfr.12007

4. Details of the impact

International level

- The researcher was invited by Archbishop of Canterbury to the on-going Building Bridges Seminar series (2010 onwards) between Muslims and Christians. The 2010 opening day aimed at public dissemination [f]. The researcher participated in the panel debate 'Religion and Modernity in Christianity and Islam', chaired by the Archbishop (2010), which has had more than 3,000 hits. The Archbishop's Special Advisor on Islam (ASAI) comments that the researcher is a 'real conduit between the academic research community and popular teaching and dissemination' [c].
- As a result, the researcher then worked with ASAI in four ecumenical consultations on Christian attitudes to Muslims: Georgetown/Campion Hall, Oxford Seminars (2010–11). These meetings provided a major resource for Christian clergy, internationally and nationally, to engage with Islam [g]. The researcher's findings were presented at Lambeth Palace (2012) to Christian policy makers in Muslim-Christian matters.
- The researcher's work was discussed outside the academy in blogs, more than 30 in 2012 alone. These include a three-part US blog, 'Those who never hear the gospel' discussing [1], with 162 exchanges [j], and three separate blogs discussing [4], in two of which – 'In Christ Alone' and 'The Myth of Religious Superiority' – there are 129 exchanges. In 2010, the researcher's work was discussed in an atheist forum, 'Dangerous Arrogance: the Catholic Church must stop dehumanizing atheists', which attracted 52 exchanges.

National level – UK

- The researcher's work on theology of religion and typologies [1], [3] is recommended reading for the OCR Exam Board, A level GCE A2 module, 'Theology of Religions'. The researcher's earlier work has been on the syllabus now for ten years. OCR is Europe's largest assessment agency and operates in over 150 countries [e]. The Chief Examiner of OCR comments: 'Professor D'Costa's recent books are recommended reading and good candidates are clearly benefitting from reading his books either by directly referring to him in their exam papers or indirectly through their critique of the traditional paradigm which is indebted to his analysis.' [e]
- Besides impact on schools, the researcher's work has impacted upon the national Catholic Church. The researcher acts as an adviser to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, Commission for Other Faiths primarily through the Interreligious Adviser to the Catholic Bishops' Conference (CBC). His research expertise was used to support the CBC Interreligious Adviser on the UK Papal visit (2010), specifically the meeting of faith leaders (Twickenham), and the Westminster address (Westminster, London). The researcher made e-media outputs on both events for the general public through the Clifton Diocese website [i], ensuring impact on the UK Catholic population in understanding their Church's teachings and social attitudes. The CBC Interreligious Adviser claims that the researcher has 'helped shape the national line on these questions, and to avoid pitfalls in dialogue' especially in relation to interfaith prayer and the Catholic contribution to pluralist culture [b]. The CBC Interreligious Adviser notes that the researcher's advice to the Archbishop overseeing interfaith matters has 'informed and benefitted his work nationally and internationally' specifically in relation to Jewish relations and interfaith prayer [b].
- The researcher's work has also impacted on the wider UK Christian community. The national conference of 'Churches Together in Britain and Ireland' (Swanick, 2010) invited Archbishop Vincent Nichols and the researcher as keynote speakers on 'Church in the Public Square'. The CBC Interreligious Adviser testifies that the researcher's input to this event 'shaped the discussions of the Interreligious Network UK' on this theme [b]. 300 delegates attended and the talk was disseminated widely [h].

Local – Avon

- The researcher acts as adviser and resource to the Clifton Diocese Interfaith Officer (CDIO), (2000–13) and to the Clifton Diocese Director of Adult Education (CDDAE). Impact has occurred in five areas of disseminating research: (i) training in the education of priests; (ii) training and educating deacons; (iii) educating catechists within the Clifton Diocese; (iv) teaching lay people; (v) the production of videos and podcasts for the Diocese website with a view to a much greater audience than the church going communities of Clifton [i].
- CDIO claims the researcher's work helped in the 'innovation of digital media to disseminate and explain Church teachings' and 'ensured a positive relationship between the Catholic community and people of other faiths within the diocese', and that the researcher helped 'to facilitate positive engagement between Catholics and Muslims through local media, including BBC Radio Bristol and *The Bristol Post*' [d]. The researcher's work has informed 'policy changes and policy thinking within the Clifton Diocese' [d]. CDDAE adds of the researcher's impact on priests and deacons, of those that 'might be called "policy" makers ... I am confident that their interaction with [the researcher] has helped when considering policy about catechesis, doctrine, and possibly in their own preaching methods' [a].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [a] Clifton Diocese Director for Adult Education (CDDAE). Corroborating impact made at the local level in Avon Diocese and upon policy makers within the diocese such as priests and deacons.
- [b] Interreligious Adviser to the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales (CBC). Corroborating impact at the national level: related to help in organising the papal visit to the UK; advising the Archbishop Chair of the Interfaith Committee; and impact on the wider Christian community (Conference of the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland).
- [c] The Archbishop of Canterbury's Special Advisor on Islam (ASAI). Corroborating impact at the international and national level, especially in terms of Christian-Muslim dialogue and the production of materials that are used by clergy and policy makers working in this area.
- [d] Clifton Diocese Interfaith Officer (CDIO), 2000–2011. Corroborating the impact made at the local level and at the national level through innovative making of electronic media.
- [e] Chief Examiner for OCR Exam Board. Corroborating the impact of the researcher's work upon this widely utilized A level which is popular at the national and international level. Syllabus details can be found at:
http://www.ocr.org.uk/download/sm/ocr_64324_sm_gce_rev_res_list_u585.doc
- [f] Link to discussion with Archbishop of Canterbury, Professor Abdolkarim Soroush, Rev Dr Harriet Harris, Professor Caner Dagli, and researcher about Christians and Muslims in the public square and the impact of modernity on both traditions:
<http://vimeo.com/28950797>
- [g] Link to Georgetown/Campion Hall Seminar output in the form of a number of papers that will be of use to clergy and policy makers working at the Christian-Muslim interface:
<http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/publications/campion-hall-seminar-papers-on-christian-theological-engagement-with-islam>
- [h] CTBI speech on Catholic theology and public discourse (in the form of an mp3 download) and the discussion that followed, as well as the text of the speech is available at:
<http://www.ctbi.org.uk/CGGA/526>
- [i] Clifton diocese web resources:
<http://archive.cliftondiocese.com/cardinal-danneels-interview-with-gavin-dcosta>
- [j] Blogs (select example of the three part blog discussing the [a]):
<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/2010/12/03/those-who-never-hear-the-gospel-3/>