

Conference at Bangor 2006

The third international conference of the International Society of Empirical Research in Theology took place at the University of Wales, Bangor in North Wales, 20-22 April 2006. In all 55 researchers took part, representing England, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, South Africa, Switzerland, the United States of America and Wales. The theme of the conference was *Texts and Tables*. The first plenary was presented by Robin Gill who addressed the theme of theology and AIDS. The second plenary was presented by Jaco Dreyer who addressed the different approaches of quantitative and qualitative research, exploring the perspectives of establishing truth from participation and distanciation in empirical theology. The third plenary was presented by Leslie Francis and Hans van der Ven who addressed the subject of comparative empirical research in religion. The fourth plenary was presented by Chris Hermans who addressed the subject of epistemological reflections on the connection between ideas and data in empirical research on religion.

Each collegial session ran three parallel seminars under the headings: religion and culture, pastoral issues, and church issues. Papers in the religion and culture stream were offered by Francis Vincent Anthony, Ilona Biendarra, Paul Vermeer and Markus Herbert among others. Papers in the Pastoral issues stream were offered by Christoph Morgenthaler, Stefan Huber and Constantin Klein. Papers in the church issues stream were offered by David Lankshear, Remco Robinson and Jeff Astley. The local planning group were grateful to the staff of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Wales, Bangor for chairing the collegial sessions.

Hans-Georg Ziebertz provided reflections on the conference on the last day which helped to inform and clarify the work of ISERT over the three days actively working together in Bangor.

ISERT was delighted to welcome The Right Reverend Anthony Crockett (Bishop of Bangor) and the Marquis and Marchioness of Anglesey to the conference dinner. The dinner was preceded by a sherry reception and we were serenaded by a Welsh harpist. The local planning group were grateful for the support of the Higher Education Academy in sponsoring this part of the conference.

The third ISERT conference was a great success with researchers drawn from across nine different countries, each bringing distinctive perspectives on empirical research, and enriching the international debate.