



THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN RESISTANCE: A DIALOGUE

In this video Alan Roxburgh and Sally Mann continue a discussion which they began in three short articles. See '[A Christian Counter Movement to Neoliberalism](#)' *Journal of Missional Practice*, Issue 11, Winter 2019.

Neoliberalism is a deeply embedded political theology, so embedded that many churches are unable to imagine any other way to think or live. In this conversation Sally and Alan together describe a worldview which is about human agency and control, about transactions in a market. For many churches and Christians 'this is the way things are'. But because this way of life has visibly failed in

areas of deprivation, Sally notes that here there can be no pretense of agency or control. In churches within these communities a day to day dependence on God can less easily be evaded. Sally describes the generous, open-handed culture which has emerged in her own marginalized context. Sally and Alan raise the question: what of middle-class churches? Are there practices which could help these more privileged places to recover an identity under a sovereign and transcendent God rather than as pawns in a market? Could a high church form of liturgy communicate transcendence in these contexts?

Video 0-4.30 mins

Alan has been reading the literature of church leadership. He observes that this is dominated by assumptions about the power of human agency and of rational, technical methodologies. There is little sense of the mystery of God or of our lives in God. In many churches it appears that talk of God serves largely to introduce a morality to ameliorate the worst aspects of capitalism. Alan is not convinced that forms of high church liturgy which emphasize God's transcendence necessarily help because these tend to default to aesthetics rather than an appreciation of God as other and active.

Video 4.30-11.30 mins

Sally is more optimistic. She notes the importance of the experience of God, encounter with God, 'the weird stuff' in many people's stories. This may occur 'downwards', as churches identify with the deprived and broken, or 'upwards' as they encounter God in high church or Pentecostal liturgies. But if this just amounts to personal spirituality, Alan doubts that this can ever help people to identify that they cannot thrive in a neoliberal world. But this insight may come with adversity, in Sally's view, especially where there is also a renewed appreciation of local commitments and relationships.

Video 11.30-17.30 mins

The significance of the local is illustrated by the 'rat park' experiment.^[1] Sally tells the story of this famous study. Caged in isolation, rats quickly became addicted to drugged water and often overdosed. In a communal and stimulating cage however, 'rat park', rats drank the drugged water sparingly. Churches in their neighbourhoods have the resources to build 'rat parks', fulfilling, stimulating community experiences, and in the context of Christian hope and the honour due people who are made in the image of God. People, particularly men, need the opportunity to know themselves as part of a community not as workers in neoliberalism's 'rat cage'. In this, Alan and Sally feel, is a response to the epidemic of loneliness and the space to ask further questions, in community, about the call of God and the nature of our humanity.

Video 17.30-26.52 mins

[1] Kurzgesagt - In a Nutshell, 'Addiction', You Tube Video, 2015. <https://youtu.be/ao8L-OnSYzg> Last accessed 19th February 2019.