



Action and Belief:

Responding to the Human Condition

Christ Church Georgetown

Adult Forum

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Our Closing Quote from Last Year's Forum

“The real challenge is for the churches to demonstrate that orthodoxy is imaginatively compelling, emotionally engaging, aesthetically enhancing, and personally liberating.”

--Alisdair McGrath



Overview of the Adult Forum 2016-2017

- “Why Be a Christian? Action and Belief: Shaping Christian Identity”

Vermeer




He Qi




Christianity as Response to “The Human Condition

A Suggestion to Consider Four Fundamental Truths:

- We are embodied and mortal
 - We are free and constrained
 - We are capable of good, and inclined to evil
 - We are autonomous and social
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We are Embodied and Mortal


- We are not pure spirits
 - We do not simply have bodies, we are bodies
 - We can move, feel, react, love, hate, hurt, and kill
 - We will die
 - Life is short—and sweet?
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A Few Related Topics for the Year

- How is Christian identity shaped by our mortality?
- How do we think about and make decisions about the ends of our lives?
- How does belief in the resurrection of the body affect our actions?
- How are we affected by the words of Genesis and our Lenten liturgy that “we are dust, and to dust we shall return”?



We are Free and Constrained

- We can choose, and act on those choices
 - We are not self-created or in complete control
 - Our choices are limited by:
 - Chance, luck, fate
 - Other people
 - The natural world
 - Limited knowledge
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A Few Related Topics for the Year

- If God is all-powerful and all-knowing, is there room for human freedom?
- How does Scripture free us? How does it constrain us?
- How do our experiences of tragedy lead to, or away from, a religious response?



We are Capable of Good, and Inclined to Evil

- Are we in the garden or in exile?
- “Original sin”

A Few Related Topics for the Year

- Are we capable of loving one another?
- How much trust can we have in our own moral judgments?
- Is a “good Christian” someone who believes the right things, or someone who treats other people in an ethical way?
- Can we act ethically without religion? Can we act ethically with religion?



We are Autonomous and Social


- We are unique, different, not identical cogs in a machine
- We are born--and remain--needy and dependent
- We are social creatures, formed by and living with others
- The “others” are diverse, and cultures are pluralistic

A Few Related Topics for the Year

- How do other religious traditions view the interaction of action and belief?
- How are our ethical obligations defined or changed by our social context?
- If we look for some sort of salvation, is this as individuals or as communities?



Religious action and belief as a response to these fundamental facts

- How does being religious/Christian help us or hinder us?
 - What options do we have to make sense of our lives in the face of these fundamental facts?
 - How consistent are our actions and our beliefs?
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Acting and
Believing: The
Incredulity of St.
Thomas
(Caravaggio)



Summary Thoughts



“Christ in the Storm
on the Lake of Galilee”
--Rembrandt

Comments, Questions, Concerns....

Are Our Actions Consistent with Our Beliefs?

- “If it were permitted to draw from the actions of men the proof of their sentiments, it would be necessary to say that the love of justice is banished from all hearts and that there is not a single Christian on the earth. Show me men who always act consistently with their maxims, and I shall pass sentence on mine. Such is the lot of humanity, reason shows us the goal and the passions divert us from it.” --Rousseau