

THE ISAAC ARMITAGE LECTURE

Friday 26 August, 2016
Shore Church of England Grammar School

Response to Armitage Lecture given by Rev Dr David Sandifer
Cultivating innocence: Character formation in the age of porn

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Dr Wright, Rev Dr David Sandifer and all of us who care about young people good evening.
I want to thank Dr Wright and Shore Chaplain, Paul Dudley, for the opportunity to respond.
I am grateful to Dr Sandifer for his timely paper on Pornography. In fact, when I saw the

Dr Sandifer's Paper does something to challenge this by giving us an historical perspective. The perspective helps us to see how attitudes are shaped and changed and how what is acceptable becomes the "wallpaper" against which we live. However, seeing how these attitudes can equally be changed by voices that speak up and to see the impact of evangelical voices in the past is helpful. Although, I wonder if the perfect storm of a loss of belief, technology and individualism will make it hard for the prophetic voices of this age to be heard let alone heeded.

Dr Sandifer's Paper acknowledges that pornography has always existed and it reminds us that in every age humankind has taken the good gifts God gives us and marred them. His suggestions for how we might challenge the status quo and be the change we want to see by taking on board the lessons of the past are useful in sharpening our focus on what we could be doing. I was particularly struck by the dual ideas of the loss of the ethic of innocence and the loss of the sense of negative knowledge. Perhaps it is this which is at the

and need to work out what it is”.⁴ This is the story we have to share with our communities because as McGrath writes, “The story we believe we are in determines what we think of ourselves and consequently how we live”⁵.

So to answer the question my community was asking me last week; “what will I do? We will continue to seek to develop young men and young women of character. Our parents choose us for values but if we only teach values we sell our students short. We will seek to grow in them habits of relating and living in the world as image bearers of God and so share the whole story of creation to restoration with them. We will explicitly teach and have them practise virtues which will grow into being marks of their character. We will explicitly teach humility to help our students to know their place in the world and to keep them open to being taught, grace so that they relate to others well, justice to lift their eyes from themselves to the wider world and compassion so that they might be able to put themselves in the shoes of others. It is these that will foster the right view of others, that will grow mutual respect and responsibility. In the same article as Professor Lumby’s view, Dr Amy Shield Dobson stated “that there needs to be an emphasis on ethic, respect and responsibility”⁶.

If we are to be a prophetic voice we need to be sure of the story we are in, confident to share it and unashamed. Then we will speak out about what is happening to our young people because of their accidental and/or deliberate access to pornography and join those who are alarmed. We need to be those who are prepared to lobby our government to change to default, ISP-level, universal internet filtering and be prepared to be labelled by a society that seeks to deride those who dare to disagree.

Dr Sandifer’s Paper challenges us to action not just to intellectual assent.

⁴ ibid p 54

⁵ ibid p 62

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2016/aug/24/experts-criticise-paternalistic-response-to-schoolgirls-sharing-explicit-images?CMP=soc> 568