

Introducing Dr Anthony Reddie | 1 March 2023

On the behalf of our graduates, their families, friends, and the whole community of learning at Sarum College, I extend the warmest of welcomes to Professor Anthony Reddie, who is to give our presentation address. In this introduction let me bring to life his biography and suggest, perhaps, what he might show us by how he engages with practical theology.

I first met Anthony Reddie in 2003 when he participated in a conference that I was organising that was exploring the value of the narratives of older people. He brought into the space his work on the faith stories, and experiences of black elders. He showed us how identity is formed through intergenerational storytelling and how we should always value younger people as they seek to make their way in life.

This work was both a reminder of richness multi-cultural Birmingham that we both love and has shaped us, but also what happens when we empower others by careful attention to their lives.

Anthony works in the interface between Black theology and decolonial/transformational education as a means of conscientization and empowerment.

He is a participative educator and liberation theologian who specialises in undertaking action-research and participative observational work with predominantly poorer Black communities in the UK. The author of 21 books, numerous journal articles and editor of *Black Theology: An International Journal*. He is one of the foremost Practical Black theologians in the world. In 2020 he was the recipient of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lanfranc Award for 'exceptional and sustained contribution to Black theology in Britain and beyond'.

These achievements are his and do not just happen by getting out of bed (though that helps) – what might lie behind them?

In 2017 Angela Duckworth published what became a New York Times best-seller called *Grit: Why passion and resilience are the secrets to success*. In it she argues that grit has two components: passion and perseverance, and says that high-achievers are characterised by alignment towards a single passion of supreme importance, held steadily over time.

Anthony is, to me, an exemplar of this kind of grit. From his first research into the kind of Sunday school materials that worked best with Black kids in Birmingham churches, to his current stratospheric theological ubiquity, he has been passionate about Black theology, as part of the wider goal of human liberation. All practical theologians are in his debt. UK Minority Ethnic / Global Majority Heritage theologians around the world have benefited from his ideas, his mentorship, his

role-modelling, and the provision of thinking-space that he has curated through the journal, Black theology, and the myriad workshops, talks and lectures that he has done.

Passion and perseverance - unafraid to grasp the nettle combined with a fearless preparedness to name some of those things which prevent us all from flourishing.

Graduands, colleagues, friends, please join with me in welcoming our 2023 Presentation Day Speaker, Professor Anthony Reddie.

The Revd Canon Professor James Woodward, Principal of Sarum College

11 March 2023