

Faith in Action? Developing a public theology for the 21st century

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How to achieve the Peaceable Kingdom

- William Temple's CSO – (1942) – a moral, social, political and economic reconstruction of British Society following global war and the crisis of capitalism in the 1930s and the rise of totalitarian government
- Context of modernity, rationality and secularism

'Wants of the age'

- The major 'wants' of his age:
 - Poverty
 - Lack of education
 - Social elitism
 - All of which hamper human potential and flourishing

Beveridge's 5 Giants to be counteracted by a progressive social security system

- Squalor
- Ignorance
- Want
- Idleness
- Disease

The Primary Principle of the Social Order

- Primary divine principle – the free and overflowing gift of God’s love expressed in the doctrines of creation (Imago Dei) and the Incarnation – we are all children of God (belong to God’s family)

Derivative principles (1)

Basis of Christian ethics and politics must be **'respect for every person simply as a person'** and so 'to give the fullest possible scope to the exercise of powers and qualities that are distinctly personal ..and the widest extension of personal responsibility' (67)

Derivative principles (2)

- **D2 The right to social relationships** – it is in dialogue and relationship with others that we find our sense of completeness.
- Hence the (political) importance of *intermediate groupings* (cultural, commercial, religious as well as family) – develops the sense of moral reciprocity that a good social order relies on.
- ‘We feel as though we count for something and that others depend on us’ and thus the State should safeguard ‘the liberty that fosters such groupings’. (69-71)

Derivative principles (3)

- **D3 Idea of service** – the exercise of responsible citizenship – service to neighbour, community, nation and God. Members of the church (as the fleshly body of Christ) belong in order to ‘take our share of the great work’ that is the fulfilment of God’s purpose in the world. This work is carried out ‘in purpose and hope’ in order to guide and encourage the wider social order to function in accordance with the Natural Order. (73-74)

Role of the State

- In the spirit of relational reciprocity, 'the State exists for the citizens, not the citizens for the State' and is a 'community made up of communities' (71) in which both have a moral obligation to fulfill the conditions of common human flourishing
- i.e. It has a moral duty to be more than simply a bare safety net.

Temple's six middle axioms

- The right to access:
- education
- healthcare,
- housing, (irrespective of income or status),
- the right to free speech,
- the right to proper representation at work
- and time to pursue individual and family pursuits within employment (the two days rest out of seven principle).

Role of the Church

- Two-fold
 - Church 'must announce Christian principles and point out where the existing social order at any time is in conflict with them'.
 - 'It must then pass on to Christian citizens, acting in their civic capacity, the task of re-shaping the existing order in closer conformity with those principles.' (1976:59)

Entering the new (paradoxical) public space – Post-Christendom and Postsecular?

- What do we mean by Post-Christendom?
- Post-Christendom is the culture that emerges as the Christian faith loses coherence within a society that has been definitively shaped by the Christian story and as the institutions that have been developed to express Christian convictions decline in power. (Murray 2004:19)

Five features of a PC public sphere

- (1) From the centre to the margins: in Christendom the Christian story and the churches were central, but in post-Christendom these are marginal;(2) From majority to minority: in Christendom Christians comprised the majority, but in post-Christendom Christians are a minority;(3)From settlers to sojourners: in Christendom Christians felt at home in a culture that was shaped by their story, but in post-Christendom they are aliens, exiles and pilgrims in an increasingly strange culture;(4) From privilege to plurality: in Christendom Christians enjoyed many privileges, but in post-Christendom they are one community among many in a plural society;(5) From control to witness: in Christendom churches could exert control over society, but in post-Christendom churches exercise influence (2004:20).

What new gods are emerging? Linda Woodhead (2012)

- The accelerated processes of change associated with globalised capitalism has seen religion in the 21st century increasingly decoupled from the (weakened) nation state and instead ever more aligned to consumer capitalism and the media (2012 26)
- There is no question of a “return” to religion’, i.e. a Christendom mindset and social order (i.e. ‘state-like, religious bureaucracies and hierarchies of leadership’)
- The present era is one in which old ‘certainties were lost and a small number of old gods lost authority and a vast number of new one arose to take their place’ (p.27).

What is the Postsecular – a philosophical shift based or empirical reality?

- Steve Bruce (*God is Dead* 2002). Three interlocking dynamics:
 - 1) Declining importance of religion for the operation of non-religious activities (i.e. politics/economics)
 - 2) Decline in the social standing of religious institutions
 - 3) Decline in religious practices, display of beliefs and believers conducting their lives in a manner informed by these beliefs

From secular to postsecular?

- It is not about reversing the processes of secularisation, nor is secularism as an ideology disappearing from the scene. But it is about the re-emergence (or new visibility) of religion.
- We need to see adopt ‘a postsecular self-understanding of society as whole in which the vigorous continuation of religion in a continually secularizing environment must be reckoned with’. (Habermas, J. (2006), ‘Religion in the public sphere’, *European Journal of Philosophy* 14(1), 1–25.

Empirical evidence of the postsecular?

- The Global North is the exception when it comes to the global visibility/prevalence of religion
- Research from the Pew Centres Forum on Religion and Public Life drawn from 2,500 censuses and surveys world wide suggests that 84% of citizens identify with a religious group (2010 finding – December 2012 report).
 - 32% Christian
 - 23% Muslim
 - 16% Nones
 - 15% Hindu
 - 7% Buddhist
 - 6% Folk religion
 - .2% Jewish

Digging deeper on the NONES

- US Research by Chris Silver
- 59 semi-structured interviews –and @ 1,200 on –line survey.
- 6 types of atheist – ‘The typology of non-belief is fluid.’
- The **cultural non-believers** or intellectual atheists/agnostics (37%)
- **Activist atheist/agnostic** (23%)
- **Anti-theists** (15%) – or New Atheists
- **Ritual atheist /agnostic** (12%)
- **Seeker agnostic** (7%)
- **Non-theists** (4%)

Engaging with the PC/PS public sphere

- How do we construct a new public theology and mission that engages with the challenges and opportunities of the post-Christendom/postsecular public square

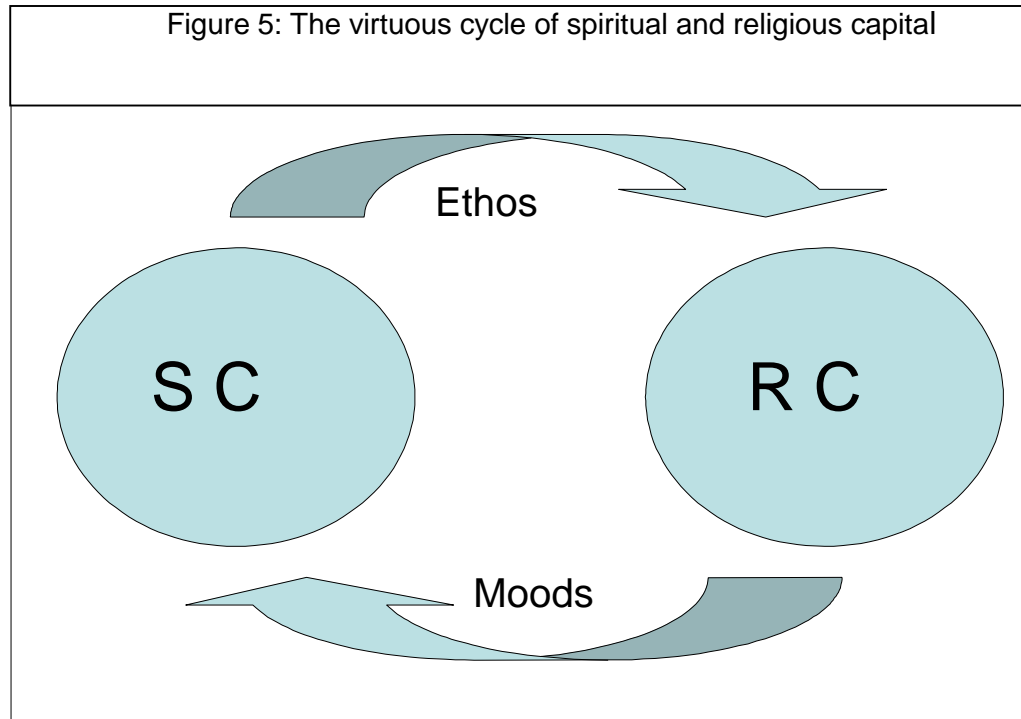
Three types of social capital

- Bonding – refers to inward looking series of relationships that reinforce exclusive identities and homogenous groups based, for example, on family, ethnicity, class and gender- the ties in this group are strong
- Bridging – refers to outward looking relationships that create bridges with other groups of different cultural social economic and political status. ‘Bonding social capital provides a kind of sociological superglue whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD 40’ (Putnam 2000: 3)
- Linking – refers to extent to which an individual or community's networks are capable of linking to other networks in order to address the inevitably unequal access to power and resources - a special form of bridging social capital that specifically concerns power’ (Halpern 2006)

The importance of spiritual capital to social capital – the ‘why that drives the ‘what’

- Social Capital – the importance of relationships, networks and norms that can be used to enrich individuals and communities (Putnam, 2000)
- Religious Capital: ‘... is the practical contribution to local and national life made by faith groups’ (Baker and Skinner, 2006)
- Spiritual Capital: ‘ energises religious capital by providing a theological identity and worshipping tradition, but also a value system, moral vision and a basis for faith... is often embedded locally within faith groups, but also expressed in the lives of individuals’ (as above)

The interaction of religious and spiritual capital – a virtuous cycle of social capital production



Operationalizing the virtuous cycle of religious and spiritual capital as part of social capital

- 3 modalities of church based engagement in the public sphere
- **Being there** – ‘Those mundane spaces of engagement and support that religious groups offer to their local community as a seamless part of their everyday sense of mission and purpose.’ (BONDING?)
- **Mainstream** – ‘...formally accept that they will partake in state initiatives or partnership schemes; they will bid for government contracts, or apply for government training funds in order to fulfil government-led targets and initiatives.’ (BRIDGING?)
- **Alternative** – ‘...consciously pitched to either develop new technological practices of engagement or actively participates in counter-hegemonic practices or discourses’. (LINKING)

3 Charisms of the Church

- **Solidarity**

- Standing with those whose rights and dignity of life are trampled on- standing with those excluded from the public sphere
- Gutierrez – Christianity exists not to worry about the non-believer, but the non-person

Advocacy

- **Advocacy**
 - One not only binds the wounds but addresses the structural reasons that contribute to these wounds enabling the experience of others to enter the public square and corridors of power
 - Sticking your nose in where it s not wanted . How does the church interfere? – ‘from the wellsprings of its own life as an incarnational and sacramental entity’. (Temple)

Prophecy

Prophecy

- speaking truth to power confronting the urban and political powers of the day with the consequences of materialism, greed and corruption. You spend money on what is not bread and create work that does not satisfy (Isaiah)
- Bringing the religious imagination to bear in the creation of alternative spaces and models of what it is to be human and live in community and mode different types of political economy - humorous as well as confrontational

Building blocks towards a UPC

Modality (Practice)	Social Impact	Charism
Being There	Bonding	Solidarity
Mainstream	Bridging	Advocacy
Alternative	Linking	Prophecy

Points of connection in the public space

- Secular Spiritual Capital
- Geographies of postsecular rapprochement
- Churches as hubs of political leadership – how do we develop a new type of citizen

Spiritual capital – not just for people affiliated to religious groups

- Spiritual capital is not the sole preserve of citizens attending religious institutions, but was also, in terms of its properties as a value system and moral vision, a motivating force for those outside formal religious affiliation. In other words, there is such a thing as secular spiritual capital.
- Chris Baker and Jonathan Miles-Watson, 'Exploring Secular Spiritual Capital; An Engagement in Religious and Secular Dialogue for a Common Future' in *International Journal of Public Theology* 2 (4), 442-464.
- See Silver's work on 6 types of No Religion (NONES) – the majority of people in this category are not hostile to religion and see it as an important cultural or intellectual stimulus/backdrop to their own lives.
- The tradition of humanist commitment to equality issues

Emerging Empirical Data

Spaces of postsecular rapprochement (PSR)

- Concept emerging from Human Geography: Cloke, P. & Beaumont, J. (2012) Geographies of postsecular rapprochement in the city, *Progress in Human Geography*, 37(1) 27–51
- Cloke and Beaumont define postsecular rapprochement as ‘a coming together of citizens who might previously have been divided by differences in theological, political or moral principles – a willingness to work together to address crucial social issues in the city, and in doing so put aside other frameworks of difference involving faith and secularism’ (2012: 28).
- PSR represents perhaps ‘...new spaces of hope and new lines of flight that can be released into the politics and poetics of postsecular resistance in the contemporary city’ (2012: 44).

Spiritual capital and Progressive Localism

- In a postsecular space we must allow ourselves the freedom to experiment with multiple discourses, multiple visions of the truth and multiple expressions of identity

(Chris Baker, The postsecular public square, spiritual capital and a progressive politics of hope (2013: 6)

What part can churches play in developing a new type of citizenship?

- Are some of our citizens willing to engage in what one might call a form of citizenship that is 'ethically-based and innovative pragmatism'?
- Are we as churches and faith-groups willing, as part of our welfare service and community development, to be new spaces and hubs whereby we can unlock people's deeper values and ethical concerns (i.e. their spiritual capital) in the pursuit of deeper and more resilient forms of civic engagement and political participation.
- Can we help to address current democratic deficit and disenchantment and help construct a new broad-based politics of hope. (see Slide 11)

Forthcoming Events

- **Reclaiming the Public Space**

- Marking seventy years since the death of Archbishop William Temple, 'Reclaiming the Public Space' examines the role of Christianity, and other faiths, in developing a just society. November 10th People Museum Manchester: Craig Calhoun, Linda Woodhead, Elaine Graham, Lord Plant – many more

- **Building a Politics of Hope:**

Exploring the role and impact of religious political leadership in local communities

February 24th 2015, St Brides Centre London

3 case studies – local currency, Islamic food project, ABCD model/Steve Chalke