

Malvern 2017 – Faith, Belief and Nation-building – What sort of Britain do we want to build for the 21st Century.

Thursday 1st and Friday 2nd June 2017

REPORT



CENTRE FOR FAITHS AND PUBLIC POLICY



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REPORT

This meeting, Malvern 2017, aims to begin a process of curating strategic, deep conversations about nation-building and the role of faith and belief in the United Kingdom. The purpose of this report is to convey, under a series of key headings, some of the discussions that were held on the topics covered by the conference agenda. It also identifies some of the further agendas that could be taken forward from this 24-hour platform.

Malvern 1941 is the template framing our conversation. During the Malvern conversations, conducted during the depths of WWII, William Temple and his peers re-imagined what a rebuilt Britain might look like. Through research, thought and conversations with others, Temple devised his 'middle axioms' (i.e. broad areas of policy derived from foundational religious and philosophical principles) which provide routes for high-level theological principles to feed into daily behaviours and decision-making.

These middle axioms influenced the political thinking of the day and, through the Beveridge Report (formally titled 'Social Insurance and Allied Services') by the liberal economist William Beveridge, they informed the creation of the United Kingdom's Welfare State after the war.

Why revisit Malvern now? Brexit crystallises a sense that these islands are transitioning into a new sense of their own identity. We, as representatives of discourse about faith and identity, hope to contribute towards a new paradigm of British identity, for a more inclusive and peaceful future.

Today's meeting represents the beginning of a proposed process to carry thoughts forward towards answering the questions:

- What sort of nation are we?
- What sort of nation could we be?
- What beliefs sustain that vision?

As did the participants of Malvern 1941, we examine certain categories of social activity and think about the role and character of the United Kingdom and its constituent countries in relation to Europe, and also in relation to perceived threats to its identity.

Differently from Malvern 1941, we work with the previous meeting as a context and model for today's discussion, and, while our sense of threat is not informed by externalities as pressing and momentous as those faced by our forebears, we perceive Britain's identity to be perhaps less self-assured and coherent today than we believe it seemed then.

The presentations at Malvern 2017 were in the form of 15 minute 'think pieces' and were designed to stimulate further discussion and debate on the categories of public engagement under discussion. The topics and question covered by our keynote thinks touched on the following insights and questions, which then became the basis of subsequent discussions by all the conference participants some of which we have tried to capture in this report. Topics and questions included:

- Economy and Business
 - What is the role of businesses in society?
 - How do we best engage with communities to fulfil that role?
- Media/Policy
 - What role, if any, should the state play in multiculturalising our national identity?
 - Is an 'established' church incompatible with multiculturalism?
 - Would extending multicultural recognition to 3m new Euro-Britons threaten the work of de-emphasising whiteness in our understanding of a multicultural Britishness?
 - How is social media shaping us as a society and as individuals?
 - What is the future for 'serious' journalism and how is it to be protected? How do we create an appetite for it?
 - How are young people in particular to be enabled to make judgements about 'whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right' and to 'think about such things'?
- Theology/Philosophy

- Is it possible to think of common values at the root of public life?
- Can religious traditions inform values in public life in a plural society?
- Is it possible to envisage spaces of shared discourse in which ideas of the common good can be debated?
- Environment/Grassroots Communities
 - Is it possible that concern for the environment/our relationship with "nature" could form the basis for a neutral faith-based entry into political debates so not identified with any one political party as such? Therefore be a unifying factor?
 - Given that environmental campaigning groups now steer away from the "we are heading for disaster" language which turns people off and tends instead towards a focus on enjoyment and celebration – what I would call an appeal to the emotional or pre-rational – and that politicians now use the same tactic through direct and simple messages, what are the ambiguities of such an approach and do faith groups collude with this or challenge it?
 - What are the "assets" or opportunities that faith groups possess which might help to promote the environmental debate – e.g. spaces, buildings, liturgy, schools, a different language through which to articulate relationships between the human and the non-human?
- British History/Religion
 - Can taking the 'long view' of how the Victorians came to terms with diversity within Christianity help us think constructively about religious diversity beyond Christianity?
 - Is British (as opposed to English, Scottish or Welsh) identity in terminal decline? If so, should we regret its passing?
 - Is the monarchy still as significant for national religious identity as it was in the past? What will be the implications of a change of monarch?
- Education
 - From Temple to Gove: what has changed, institutionally and culturally?
 - How do we imagine education? Can we agree how, and at what pace, to reform it? How do our communities, and faiths, value learning, and how is this manifested? What are the 'palaces' of knowledge and civilisation that we can agree to build?
 - How can education change religion?

The discussions following the presentations raised more questions than provided sure answers. At the same time, several distinct themes emerged across topics: the nature of today's multifaith Britain; values (shared or otherwise); the role of business in shaping public good; religious literacy and secular narratives of religion; a sense of place as a powerful component of identity; the need for religious leadership and organisation both inside and outside the church; the perceived role and character of the Church of England; and religion in the public eye (including the idea of 'performative good' – namely that the relevance and attractiveness of religious ideas are more likely in this current age to be communicated through authentic and trustworthy actions in the public sphere – rather than through appealing to set texts or demanding unequivocal loyalty to expressions of doctrine).

Multifaith Britain

How we update the methodology of Temple's political and civic engagement in a context of a more interconnected, diverse, deeply integrated but also deeply fragmented global order as well as nation, was one of the key dilemmas identified as the context for Malvern 2017.

Temple came to his influential axioms after much consultation. Dialogue is the substance; is that dialogue possible now? In the UK today, shaping the nation's sense of itself and the role of religion in public life is not only about the Church of England, but all religious communities finding their public voices and non-hubristic capacity to lead, for the sake of dialogue and community leadership. How can we make sure the Malvern agenda proceeds with all faith communities taking a responsibility to lead that agenda in public life?

It would be helpful to shift away from the 'salad bar' model of faith in which individuals are proffered excerpts and possibilities from many religions, and to aim instead for a resurgence of faith and theology at a higher level which involves self-awareness and conscious discernment. We should work for principles around themes such as 'inclusion' (this was a value that emerged in several of our discussions) which can flow easily and rightfully into good action, and move away from mere lists of values.

We are multi-faith not only in the space of the United Kingdom but also over time, and not only across categories of faith but within them. Christianity in the UK has been recently boosted by different immigrant communities. Evangelical, black-led communities are one area of growth; (largely Eastern European) Catholicism is another.

Meanwhile, many Nones (citizens self-identifying as having 'no religious' affiliation but who, in many cases, nevertheless express interest in religious and spiritual beliefs and alternative forms of belonging) – and others – can't accurately distinguish one branch of Christianity from another, and a new national calendar is emerging independent of the Christian liturgical year: Red Nose Day, Chinese New Year, Holi, Diwali, local civic celebrations, the Olympics, etc. Hallowe'en is almost entirely secularised, with hardly any able to identify it as All Hallows Eve (All Souls); 'Mothering Sunday' is, more and more, 'Mothers' Day'. Working with this, can we view all festivals as outlets for people's desire to give, seek out the line between charity and justice, and work hard there to effect real change?

We see valuable opportunities to include the 'nones' in conversation about the role of faith, and in active good works exemplifying religious values without imposing them, and to engage them about identity and that which is larger than the self. The question is where, and when: is there the infrastructure within religious institutions to support this work, whilst many feel that there is more pressure on personal timetables than in the 1940s.

Today, to the extent that we as Britain continue to self-identify as Anglican, or be aware of its ongoing legacy in terms of national identity, we can perceive Malvern 2017 as a direct lineage from William Temple. In another seventy years, will this be the case? We may well be more religious, but less connected to that past. If our specific credos or practices as religious communities are not, or will not be, the same as they were for Temple – and as we do not find 'lists of shared values' productive of positive transformational action – what is there in Temple's methodology regarding connections with the transcendent and each other that we can adopt towards nation-building? What will be our equivalents of his 'middle axioms'?

Values, shared or not?

The issue of values was integral to all our discussions. If Temple was right and the flourishing of a good social order as the basis of nation-building is dependent, first and foremost, on the identification of deep and timeless principles, ethics and values that generate the political imagination, then the source and provenance of our values in the 21st century becomes a key point of debate. And at the heart of the debate, both then and now, is 'what constitutes a fully-flourishing human being?'

Some conference participants suggested that the ability to generate values, and reflect upon them, remains one of the few distinctive and authentically human activities that remain in a world increasingly dominated by the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). It is unclear how long this human-robot distinction will remain clear. And robots will be able to deal with threatening issues such as – for example – climate change better than we will. If we are only to view ourselves as animate meat, how shall we justify ourselves; what is our role and purpose as human beings?

A recent example of positive national identity was the 2012 Olympics. We spent a great deal of money on the Olympics which some might argue would have been better spent on mitigating the difficulties of the poor. We would then have missed the tremendous uplift to our sense of identity, belonging and pride that the Olympics brought. Did 'the poor' not own this too?

Still, at a time when society as a whole seems in danger of viewing food banks as part of an acceptable solution to poverty, we feel the need to stay focused on correct priorities, and not to allow government tacitly to delegate to the Church its obligations to the destitute. Religion and faith can't be apolitical, because they inherently treat of politicised subjects: social inequality and justice. But in this respect, the values we assert are not unique to our British identity but are shared by religious and moral communities around the world. Should we stop talking about British identities and values, and, separately from Brexit, continue to move forward with discussing values shared more broadly? Some European(ising) processes offer to lead towards a European civilisational nationalism.

Rites of life (i.e. those times when we as individuals or a nation confront deep experiences of joy or loss) continue to be an area of human experience and feeling where religions are commonly acknowledged to know how to do things properly. The anecdote was related of a widower with some, but uncertain belief, who asked for a non-religious funeral for his deceased wife. The celebrant created a moving, 'non-Christian' connection to the divine, with references to the eternal interspersed with appropriate hymns. Thanked privately by an Anglican for the sensitive and inclusive way the service was conducted, the celebrant turned out to be a Scottish Episcopalian. Her faith had not been identifiably visible but was present; the bereaved had self-identified as a perhaps 'no-religion', but had also

apparently wanted something more. Neither faith nor spirituality is the same as religion: but religion is certainly not to be separated from the spiritual.

We might then question, for example, hostile or arms-length secular-media commentary on the 'ritualisation of grief' which implies that such ritualisation is something bad. Ritual emerging spontaneously and from the grass-roots is a strong and authentic response. Mass reactions to Diana's death and to national tragedies underline this point. It remains desirable to plan for foreseeable occasions – whether the Olympics or the next coronation – but we should always also remain ready to respond to unexpected events in a useful, faith-based way without manipulation, because we possess the formalised expressions of the profound that are needed at such times. In this respect faith continues to fulfil a social need for the spiritual, albeit not obviously in a nationally identifiable way.

Is it really the common values that help define public space for the nation? If we feel that we belong, common values can be scanty, but we tend to learn them through disagreement. Pursuing shared objectives or working on a common project allows the sharing of values and explanation of self, and is easier on specific projects than it is in the abstract. Otherwise, one idea of 'common good' can exclude others. A procedural space is needed which is safe, efficient, broad, and robust: a safe space in which constructive disagreement can take place without its then being used wrongly and with unintended adverse consequences. The friction of disagreement moves us forward (as long as we remember the difference between debate and row). Conflict, and its negotiation leading to change, are important.

We can't stick Britain together using tick-box values: diversity has to be facilitated and acknowledged, rather than trying to construct and impose a framework that must be subscribed to. Looking at the differences we do know about helps us think about other differences as they emerge.

Good business

The role of business and economics in generating a flourishing social order was key to the Malvern Conference in 1941, and remains a key area to this day. We heard at the conference how the 2008 crash was a monumental wake-up call concerning the dangers inherent in generating a global economy that divorces wealth-creation from deeper narratives of human and non-human flourishing, and instead puts its 'faith' in the new invisible workings of algorithms and technical innovation.

In business, it is often argued, upholding shareholder value and hard profit properly precludes other ('fluffy') agendas, which are usually associated with religion. A counter-argument is that we get the shareholders we deserve, and to say 'I can't do that because of the shareholders' is an excuse, not a reason. 'Doing the right thing' means, too, talking to shareholders about commitment and sustainability as a distinctive feature so that they buy into the ethos of a good company and help drive its success because it is sustained by values which go above and beyond regular profit motive: 'good business is good business'.

Where the shareholder is the public and government, there can be both too little constructive interest and too much interventionism (as in the closure of 2,500 Post Offices 'to save money'.) By restructuring the organisation and changing the PO model, profits were regained but to little interest from a government which then viewed the issue as 'something solved'. "There was a view expressed at the conference that business should balance the needs and requirements of all stakeholders, which include but are not limited exclusively to shareholders. There was acknowledgement that there would be different challenges in achieving that balance depending on the size and complexity of a business but it was felt important that consideration was given by all organisations".

Another perspective is offered by a straight look at the losses to be made when hard-and-fast, profit-driven values are not buffered by moral considerations about the sustainability of profit and growth; the rising ratio of private debt to GDP over recent decades, and continuing micro-economic profiteering without consideration of the macro-economic environment, should be cause for action.

Aren't 'good' businesses, who are values- and community-oriented, who play by multiple sets of rules, who treat employees well, at risk of parasitisation by less scrupulous businesses poaching their trained staff? In fact, when people agree with a 'bigger thing', they stay around, and so there are good retention rates for good staff in a good organisation. While other local organisations may end up freely using that company as their 'training body', the rising tide lifts all boats for better economic success in the area, and a good or better system mustn't be avoided for fear of imperfection.

Face-to-face communication is good for building trust, but often inefficient. 'Trusted' institutions such as mutuals and coops find it hard to survive without going online and so becoming just as distant as a bank. An archbishop suggested that the Church of England should put pay-day loan companies like Wonga 'out of business', with small loans between individuals at better rates, but in reality the complicated regulation of financial services and the need for trained personnel precluded the possibility of providing such a service. That said, there are business models to automate the inclusion of community values.

All this taken into account, we do not seem to have learned from the financial crisis to pursue community wealth rather than individual wealth or, if we have, we are not applying anything learnt to avoid another similar crisis or worse. We don't retain in-house memory for the terrible crises of history. But when – for example – unexpected, critical media articles appear which have the effect of lowering a company's share value coincident with a big hedge fund attempting to short that company's stock ... such behaviour has to be pointed out and pushed back.

Religious literacy and secular narratives of religion

In the current highly globalised and diverse business and work-based settings, one has to engage with religious norms and values whether you are religious or not. However the knowledge base required for a confident engagement with religious norms and values is perceived to be a declining. However, as well as religious literacy, delegates suggested the need for empathetic literacy, which is the one needed for business inclusivity. The former gives little sense of what it's like to inhabit the skin of the 'other'. This insight is important given the rise in what some conference contributors identified as sensitivity and niceness linked to a renewed sense of equality and fairness that brings with it 'anti-ist-ism' – a vague distaste for religious earnestness or zealotry, and God conceived of at a benign distance, somewhat as a cosmic lifeguard – while those who are religious are (almost too) intense about it. A narrative of 'religion = toxic conflict' is felt by many.

There was a general sense expressed at the conference that the average quality of available information has dropped alarmingly, including reporting and commentary on religion. Also, we tend to choose media sources to inform the different, overlapping identities we possess as individuals, and can end up with jumbled but not necessarily balanced information thereby. Speculation will fill any informational vacuum, and in a culture where we read 'what will happen' often without any follow-up as to 'what did happen', speed of response is key.

How can we get good journalism and commentary? – As an immediate solution, pay for it; and, importantly, find better business models for media organisations so that they can leave big conglomerates and have their audiences pay for content rather than institutions. We need to address the problem of huge news corporations overwhelming smaller competitors, in the same way that the grocery sector giants are challenged to allow smaller groceries to succeed.

Where 'religious' values coincide with 'civic' values – for example, exhibiting respect for another's point of view, acting with kindness and integrity, taking into account a greater good when making decisions – we need to think more broadly about the kind of civic literacy that seems to be lacking in today's angry, self-justifying political sphere. Online comments, and 'dialogue' in Facebook and other social media show how an overlap of public with private modes of communication can result in shallow engagement and aggressiveness. While positive values are already supported and promoted in society through public spaces such as museums and galleries, we have to ensure that such values are accessible and visible in spaces where everyone goes, not just the lucky. Where and how are today's children going to learn the difficult practice of civility under provocation that they need?

There was a call from some at the conference to move to a compulsory, values-centric, religious education for all within the state curriculum (revoking the right for parents to withdraw children from RE classes), with, by contrast, religious instruction separately conceived as (a) optional and (b) likely, the preserve of faith communities.

Religious education in school is difficult to expand. There is only so much time in the curriculum for RE. The basic dilemma, with a pluralist multicultural society of whether to take a 'generalist approach' and instil only a smattering of information about many religions, or adopt a 'partial' one that teaches fewer (or only one) religious tradition in greater depth. At present, Christianity is privileged in the curriculum but is still not as well taught as could be hoped. And the pedagogic case to privilege Christianity can no longer be about numbers but must be made with appeal to its influence upon these islands' history and culture.

Another mode of teaching is to explore 'religion' as spiritual enquiry, through themes of place, practice, text, experiences and understandings, making illustrative reference to people of many different faiths while staying away

from abstract theology and the 'multi-faith salad bar'. The Open University, for example has shifted from 'history of x religion' to more exploratory approaches. This works well at university level, but relies on informational literacy about religion and belief at primary and secondary school already being instilled. To start with the exploratory approach at primary level education will likely result in a knowledge deficit to be filled in later.

In all this, we have to allow for life-long learning, not a fixed quantity of religious education that goes in during primary and secondary school and remains the same for a lifetime. So what is the RE curriculum of the future? Will it examine a variety of 'big ideas' that have influenced society and culture? Could it include more exploration of self-knowledge and enriching activities through, for example, art, and deeper learning in faith backgrounds other than one's own? It's important to distinguish between the academic abstract of what is defined as 'spirituality' from detecting and celebrating it in life. Both are necessary; and it's not clear that any kind of technocratic hegemony focused only on dead information is somehow 'squeezing out' the latter. Moral responsibility, spirituality and empathy are taught in schools and, arguably, are more celebrated and respected now than they were forty years ago.

Sense of place

In contrast to the original Malvern conference, many of the discussions recognised the link between belonging, identity and being rooted in a physical sense of place, rather than a free-floating and values-neutral space. This 'spatial' dimension to what constitutes a good social order and flourishing locality has undoubtedly been driven by a renewed sense of anomie and rootlessness that seems to lie at the heart of our modern epidemics of poor mental health and isolation. Some ideas of place lend themselves to consideration at the level of nation, while others fall 'above' or 'below' this size of territory: Europeanism, for example, and localism. We need a narrative to answer the question: 'Why is Britain important?'

Landscape, cityscape and the arts more broadly deserve more discussion in relation to national identity and membership of the United Kingdom. Emotions and meaning are invested in places. Attacks on cities provoke 'I♥Paris', 'I♥Manchester'. Physical proximity is an important component in grief and other emotional responses.

Shared concerns and responsibilities about the environment show a place to begin for a common set of values from which to work further together (although here, as in so many community efforts, time and volunteers are constraining factors: staffing environmental centres and maintaining bee gardens require local commitment). In Blackpool, for example, the main (current) economic hope is through fracking. Environmental and economic need are in conflict.

Building trust then means that businesses have to find their own ways to connect with real people, whether in real or virtual communities. Then the community will cherish that business at the heart of society because it generates wealth, income and growth. Even building a lounge space that makes the most of a building's assets can connect with a local community so that they respond with presence and ultimately trust towards the business housed there.

Businesses, however, may be constrained as well as enabled by a sense of place. The difficulty is building local businesses once big business has extracted a profit and left. In Newcastle at the moment, the challenge is to get skilled staff. They are found in Edinburgh and London, so the offices have to be there, which means further additions to the staff are obliged to move. We need to reverse the trend by which people work in London, live in Edinburgh: but people follow lifestyle.

On the other hand, integration or lack of it has a lot to do with language and culture. Ugandan Asians arriving in the UK in the early 1970s spoke excellent English and integrated promptly into the commercial scene with the introduction of late-opening shops. Be(com)ing British is not only about appearance and religious affiliation, and involves not only immigrants' view of themselves but others' view of them. There is a challenge for churches in the UK to engage with their own 'natural' constituencies: the Catholic Church with, for example, Polish Catholic immigrants, as a stimulus to give hope and opportunity.

Discomfort about others can arise in part from fear of external, alien control of the place in which one lives, by which the 'others' may be perceived as a fifth column, a community with divided loyalties, 'sleepers' for another polity, etc. In the past, such fears have subsided through declarations and displays of loyalty by the perceived 'others' to the place of dwelling – for example, fear of Catholic uprisings diminished as it became clear that Spain or Rome was not exerting remote control of these islands through their British Catholic population.

Still, if immigrants change Britain's agenda away from its current liberalism – away from, for example, support for assisted dying – to what extent does this change Britain's 'Britishness'? What sort of Britain/s is/are religion/s helping to create? Shall we talk about 'nations-building'?

Leadership and organisation

The theme of leadership emerged throughout several of the sessions. It appeared to be the fundamental vehicle through which (within both religious and secular settings but also across business and civil society) the core values necessary for a resilient and flourishing society were being performed in public life. It is these performances, rather than the espousal of values, that can be appreciated and further reflected on. Charismatic leaders can provoke change through action that feeds back up into doctrine and formal ritual through their own authority: Jesus healing on the Sabbath, for example. Contesting the validity of change, or experiencing the new, then leads to some doctrinal positions loosening, some tightening. The question of the ordination of women is another example.

In the Church of England, the House of Bishops has a responsibility to lead, to consider the 'prophetic future' of the Church, and to foster networks for dialogue. Bishops are not the only leaders. The CoE also inspires leading voices in academia and stakeholders in public life who have no ecclesiastical or diocesan role.

In time, our new monarch's coronation and its wording will assert and shape our nationality, and say something significant about the future relationship between the Church of England and the United Kingdom. Much about the deed of coronation will depend on the specific circumstances and the wishes of the monarch being crowned. Royal ceremony at the time of Queen Elizabeth's coronation included anointing and passages from the Book of Common Prayer. Princess Diana's funeral was more improvisational, to meet a particular wave of popular feeling. Will the next coronation then feature a gentler commitment to national renewal? Or will two ceremonies be required, one religious, one secular – or a newly secularised or multi-faith ceremony in an 'invented tradition' to reflect the diversity of the monarch's subjects? Is there a sense, even, that support for the monarchy through the Commonwealth and at home is, increasingly, non-white?

In business, too, leadership means living one's values even if political manifestos seem not to require it. CEOs with a personal faith who have spoken at Ely Cathedral Business Group (for example) don't seem to see any disconnect between business and their local community, whatever the community; they think in a 'theological' way about connectedness and responsibility, and say that this does not adversely affect their bottom line. The important thing is to demonstrate one's beliefs, not just talk about them. Virtuous actions speak across time and space to inspire further virtue – not among everyone, but there can be a resonance further than the echo-chamber. However, within a 'liberal democratic' society like the UK, we must continue to wrestle with the tension between 'freedom to' express one's core identity; and beliefs and the 'freedom from' having to engage with views and perspectives that jar directly with our own.

The Church of England's character and role

Due to the historic and cultural roots of Malvern 2017, and the overall subject matter of the conference, it was inevitable but also useful, that the current position of the Church of England (CofE) should feature in the discussions, comparing it to the context of 75 years ago. However, the following comments about the future role of the CofE deploying its resources to be active and reflective curators of new spaces of publicly performed ethics and values for the sake of a better common good, clearly apply to other Christian denominations and faith groups.

The Church of England is a complex entity of sixteen thousand churches and forty dioceses, and its organisational complications can baffle communications and common action. Because of this, the CoE has developed a role as a facilitating organisation for many faiths. There is a sense, too, in which Queen Elizabeth II as Supreme Governor of the Church of England has reshaped the role of the monarch away from 'Defender of the [Anglican] Faith' towards defending the right to practise one's faith whatever it might be. The Church of Scotland, Church in Wales, and Church of Ireland open up other dimensions of the multi-faith identity of these islands. It is a paradox that the CoE, by name and origins an English church, should extend any influence into Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; but, while jealous of its role and primacy, the CoE yet has stood as a national guardian of welcoming, inclusive multiculturalism and in doing so has stood for values of the whole United Kingdom, not only England.

Discussions of disestablishment come primarily from Christians – at this meeting, representatives of other faiths expressed a sense that they feel less dispossessed in Anglican territory than they would in, for example, *laïque* France. The CoE as an umbrella 'faiths' organisation can, for example, introduce issues into the House of Lords which

concern other minorities; in faith-based ethical investing, it wears the coat-tails on which other groups can ride in order that they invest well too.

Yet this can't be taken for granted. Multiculturalism requires that our conversations about faith and public life be continually and carefully cultivated – and with a light hand, not a heavy-handed top-down approach according to a one-size-fits-all national script. While the CoE has so far argued for and helped provide a national 'safe space' in which these conversations could develop, some delegates suggested that the Church itself seems, with a general loss of active congregations, to be changing from a support-based to a member organisation, which may become more concerned with 'its own' and so move away from a benignly broad role in public life. However, it was also argued that the CoE despite the pressures it was under, still maintained a fairly outward looking stance towards wider society, even if that vision was not always as expansive as that envisaged and articulated by Temple.

Actions louder than words: religion in the public eye

One irony perhaps of the context we currently find ourselves in, as opposed to the context from which the original Malvern conference emerged in the 1940s, is the extent to which that latter period seems much more straightforwardly secular than today. Indeed, in *Christianity and Social Order*, Temple spends the first third of the book justifying why the church should 'interfere' in public life. This view now seems increasingly out of fashion, even from those who find religion distasteful. There is a general consensus that irrespective of whether or not one likes the term, that the idea that we now live in a post-secular world does seem capture the nature of the current global zeitgeist. Is religion dramatically more visible in the public sphere today than previously? We could cite the (media-amplified) visibility of radical Islam and the much greater, quotidian visibility of mainstream Muslim and other religious communities in the UK; churches and other religious institutions stepping in when government rolls back welfare; the topic of religion exercising policymakers more than it did a generation ago; the observation within some elements of wider academia, that secularism is, historically, something of a blip.

If religion is to take a larger role (again) in providing a variety of social goods, from safe discursive spaces in which to establish multi-faith identity to local delivery infrastructure for social welfare, how comfortable are we with the probability that religious adherents will, in parallel, attempt to take control over 'how the world should be'? What is, or should be, the relationship between public and private – not only in religion? Which set of standards should govern the other?

As a society, we must allow for different relationships between public and private aspects of religion among different communities: for example, choosing to maintain an appearance which signifies religious affiliation, role or observance distinguishes a number of different religious communities in the UK. This in itself constitutes a conscious public communication about identity and faith, and helps characterise the place in which these adherents and others find themselves.

Some politicians and public figures exhibit performative or pragmatic civil engagement: they do good explicitly within the framework of a religious understanding of existence, in order to embody or instantiate word as deed, so also setting an example or making a space for more of the same. A missing element in much moral reasoning is that it has to be embedded in the actions of life. Argument needs to be grounded in praxis. The word 'performative' to describe such activity emphasises practical action and does not imply showboating, but does suggest that doing good by itself is not enough and that the action of doing good should also be public, transparent, and explained as good – 'apologetic' in the original sense of justifying or explaining.

Doing good and not being visible (while not doing good in order to be seen) unfortunately fails to hold the line for religion as a 'good thing'. The media and sociological 'secularism-and-decline' narrative of religion obscures a great deal of good done under the radar. Those who don't manifest their religious agenda for good miss the opportunity to illuminate and foreground issues of social justice, the common good, and shared moral ground, and also to invite others to contribute.

By contrast, we admire examples of how private faith explicitly impels in-public virtuous action, in this post-secular public space, among individuals and groups, and how many are inspired by authentic action. Greg Smith in a [recently published article](#) characterises religion in public life as, or as including: affiliation, institutional belonging, ritual participation, charismatic (emotional) elements, manifest teaching of values, metaphysical belief, and a communicative relationship with the divine. If traditional corporate forms of belonging are in decline, then who and where are the bearers of values that are sustained organically in public? How can we translate that into values, ethics, beliefs, and nation-building in post-secular society? – how can we report the good and make it known?

Where we can find areas of common endeavour in public life we must develop and sustain them. And if we can simply find actions that create a shared space, do we need to spend time thinking about 'where the shared space is'? Possibly yes, in that the actions themselves have to be consciously framed as being owned and shared by many or all. Without a central place for dialogue, there is no sense of belonging.

Modes of address, too, affect the perception of the message. Rather than indicative and imperative moods, let's use the interrogative, subjunctive and optative.

The parachurch networks can help cut through organisational complexities. Assisting small churches to work together helps to share the knowledge that already exists, for which there is good potential in the existing learning network through the Church Urban Fund. The Church of England, and other Christian denominations, may have a valuable and historically continuous role to play in facilitating or brokering shared spaces – both physical and otherwise – for further conversation.

Future Steps

The organisation and recording of more structured conversations and/or polling to obtain thoughts and insights from a more diverse group to feed forward; the William Temple Foundation might design a framework for such conversations; the World Congress of Faiths offers its help

A public statement offering a constructive critique of British values, with reference to existing discursive explorations of British national identity.

We also identified the following policy areas and themes where the conversations around middle axioms and 'lived out' Britishness could be explored in future conversations.

- militarism: the machinery and complex behind military spending and behaviour worldwide which drives many economies and events
- consumerism and the advance of economic liberalism
- health and wellbeing generally; and mental health in particular
- the NHS as a key constituent of British identity
- housing
- family
- our future relationship with Europe
- what religious communities have learned from secular modernity
- business and inclusivity
- medicine

PRESENTATIONS

Economy and Business

I feel very honoured to have been asked to speak at this important conference today. The future of our world and our society are in flux; traditional values are being questioned and inequality is evident throughout civilisation – from third world states to Board room tables.

And, in my view, the Board room has a responsibility to address some of these issues and to build growing economies which are inclusive and fair to everyone. Without businesses there are insufficient jobs. Without businesses there is insufficient taxation to sustain our people and without business our progress is slowed and our competitiveness as a nation falls behind the first world pack.

In my view then, business has never been more essential.

Why, then, at the same time are businesses and business leaders treated with distrust by the media, by politicians and by the people that they represent?

This election campaign highlights this fact more than ever before. Whereas previous politicians and earlier campaigns have canvassed support from business leaders – through publicly avowed letters in mainstream newspapers and through personal endorsements – this election is notable for its lack of business involvement. So far no party seems to have aligned themselves with the business class and this is one of many signs of our changing times and a challenge to established norms and established organisations.

So what has business done to deserve its current fall from grace and lack of trust?

In my view this trend can be traced back over at least a decade to the beginning of the financial crisis in 2007.

Before this time business leaders were lauded as 'Masters of the Universe'. Their ability to create wealth in Western Societies was seemingly unstoppable and created economies that were driven by a few successful business men – for they were predominantly male – whose focus on delivering the bottom line at any cost and whose delivery of win-lose deals made them characters later epitomised in films such as the 'Wolf of Wall Street' and the 'Big Short' – tales of decadence and worse that make salacious viewing but which create a perspective of a Bacchian society of which none of us can be proud.

So, was it really like that? I can speak only from my own experience and, at that point, I was experiencing business culture right at the epi-centre of the looming crisis when I worked, from 2001 – 2006 at the Royal Bank of Scotland and close with Fred Goodwin.

There is no doubt in my mind that Fred was – and probably still is, although I have not seen him for a decade, a good man. Paisley born with a Glasgow work ethic and a focus on doing good business, I suspect that he lived by strong values and I know that he enjoyed his position as a family man and as a respected business leader.

When I joined RBS it was a growing UK bank based in Scotland. When I left in October 2006 it was the biggest bank in the world.

Fred was feted everywhere – by his competitors, by the press and by his staff. He appeared to be able to do no wrong but his focus was clearly on one thing and one thing only – shareholder value.

I remember him telling me one day that this was his only objective – growing shareholder value. It led to bigger deals – and, in the end, less control. And it led to decisions taken for – in my opinion – the wrong reasons.

For example, back in early 2006 RBS rehearsed a cyber attack against the business. I was one of the team training to resolve the imagined crisis. The attack was deemed to come from China and from a group making a point about human rights there which were, regardless of your political view, being abused.

Those of us on the large team wanted to address the abuses. Fred made it clear that this was not the point of the exercise. He wanted to emphasise the case that it was not our role to comment on social injustice or otherwise. Our focus should be only on resolving the issue, maintaining good relationships with our Chinese partners and growing shareholder value.

I was not alone in my strong disagreement although RBS' success and Fred's power at the time meant that this fell on deaf ears.

After I left RBS in 2006 to return to Virgin Money, the business I lead today, Northern Rock fell into crisis as the first run on a UK bank for around a century began, in August 2007.

Northern Rock had been led by Adam Applegarth who was the darling of the financial markets for the financial results he had delivered for a number of years.

But it turned out that the growth had been based on sand as market liquidity dried up and Northern Rock mortgages could no longer be funded.

In both RBS and Northern Rock it turned out that pre crisis successes were not sustainable – and it also transpired that the leaders of these business were not necessarily the upstanding family men that they had once been portrayed.

In both organisations, business calamities and personal behaviours meant that the leaders involved were ostracized and that the share prices of both organisations were eroded – almost to nothing.

For the ordinary shareholder pensions and savings were destroyed. For staff job security was lost – and for our society trust in some of our most respected institutions was eroded – almost literally overnight.

We at Virgin Money tried to save Northern Rock. We enlisted Sir Brian Pitman, erstwhile CEO and Chairman of Lloyds Bank, to help. Initially he was wary of getting involved. But, soon, he agreed to help.

When I asked him why he replied 'well – I remember that, during the miners' strike, Northern Rock forgave the strikers their mortgage repayments. I reckon that a bank that behaves that honourably deserves to be saved.'

It was an epiphany for me. That a great man – and a man of the establishment – could think like that, gave me heart and it is a lesson I have not forgotten.

At the same time, Virgin Money was growing and I was trying to establish our corporate ambition. Having seen everything go wrong at Northern Rock and RBS, I knew that I did not want to win at all costs and I did not want to focus on the bottom line at the exclusion of all else. In the end we decided that our ambition was – and still is – to make everyone better off. We call it EBO and we try to balance our decisions and our business rewards – between customers, colleagues, local communities, our business partners and our shareholders.

It works. It aligns people with us. And, as a small challenger bank with typical – albeit simple and transparent – banking products – I think it is our USP. It is certainly the only thing I can argue has enabled us to have the business success that we have enjoyed since – in the end – we bought Northern Rock – on 1 January 2012.

In my view therefore, businesses that focus first on values, drive sustainable shareholder returns more effectively than those that concentrate solely on the bottom line. In short, good business is – good business.

My views in this respect have been reinforced through my work with Business in the Community – where I was, until recently, a Board Trustee and where the outreach of businesses and their employees into difficult situations in local communities has transformed lives. Indeed, in Scotland at least, the response of BITC's Business Emergency Response Group, known as Berg, was recognised as a key driver to a positive and successful response to the catastrophic floods of New Year 2016.

I stood down from BITC to taken on the deputy chairmanship of Dumfries House in Scotland.

This stately home was saved for the nation by HRH The Prince of Wales ten years ago and, through its regeneration, has developed one of the most deprived areas of the UK – East Ayrshire. Businesses have grown to support the vision of the house and education has thrived. Most importantly, 180 jobs have been created – and are still increasing – making Dumfries House the second largest employer in East Ayrshire, behind only the local council. Interestingly, the Estate stands boundary-less in the East Ayrshire countryside. There are no WALLS to protect us. Yet there has been no vandalism. No security breaches. The community protects us as we invest in them. A sign perhaps of what good business can achieve when it is connected properly to the community it serves.

But not all businesses are so well connected to either the community – or to the social and economic expectations of the times.

In my view, good business today needs to be full of wonderful diversity. Yet gender diversity is not only poor but in many cases, and especially in Financial Services, pitiful. For example, only 14% of jobs above middle management in Financial Services go to Women. This is not only unjust. It is short sighted.

Credit Suisse recently put out a report demonstrating that the returns in businesses with balanced gender representation are a full two percentage points ahead of those without such balance.

I have led a government initiative – the Women in Finance Charter, to remedy this situation – and I am delighted to say that 50% of businesses have signed up to it.

But that means that 50% have not. Some CEO's of these businesses tell me that they are fully supportive of the gender agenda – but they need the best people for the job. As if women are second rate employees. That dismisses 50% of the population who could drive better business outcomes and more rounded business decisions.

Because my experience tells me that rounded business decisions are driven through diversity. I sit on Sadiq Khan – the Mayor of London's – Business Advisory Group. It is the most diverse group that I have had the privilege to be a part of. Men, women, multi-racial, multi-cultural and from diverse backgrounds and different businesses – the conversations crackle. We have dialogue not debate. We make progress.

And we must make progress too, when it comes to pay. There is understandable focus on the amount that CEO's are paid. Some are paid eye watering amounts of money and I understand why there is comment on this.

But we need to look at pay for everyone and make sure that rewards are fair at all levels of every organisation.

That is why I was a big supporter – and one of the first signatories – of Nicola Sturgeon's 'Business Pledge' in Scotland. It required signatories to pledge to pay the living wage to all their employees. Shame on those who do not. Shidiq Khan is attempting a similar commitment for London – that businesses pay the London living wage. How can businesses not commit to this? We cannot build the success of some on the exploitation of the majority. In my view, the distribution of business benefits needs to be fair – not necessarily equal – but fairly allocated based on the job we each do.

Is this all a pipe dream? Well it will be if we don't align together to make clear the responsibility that business has to society, to hold business leaders to account for delivering for social good as well as for the bottom line and to restore trust in business that will once again drive our economy and bring growing prosperity.

For me these businesses need to agree to a few key requirements in order to have the privilege of employing our people and serving their customers. There will be much debate about what these requirements should be, but for me they are:

- Pay your taxes
- Pay your staff the living wage
- Ensure your business meets diversity targets
- Commit your business to a strong community link
- Earn your respected position in society by what you contribute

And only then focus on the economic outputs that drive shareholder value. For I remain convinced that those businesses that operate based on social values will achieve lasting economic success.

To end, I wanted to raise two discussion points that I thought would be helpful to consider in the plenary session and over the coming two days:

1. What is the role of business in today's society?
2. How can businesses best engage the communities they serve, and restore trust?

Policy

Multiculturalism can foster a new kind of post-Brexit Englishness

The Brexit referendum result was a shock. Especially surprising – given that the whole exercise was as a result of the divisions within the Conservative Party – was the fact that about 30% of those who voted Labour in 2015 voted Leave. It is clear that the Leave vote disproportionately consisted of those without a degree and over the age of 45. Equally over-represented in the Leave vote in England were those who say they are more English than British or only English and not British.

There is some reason to suppose that this new and rising English nationalism is anti-immigration, and even worse – given that England is a highly diverse country – anti-multiculturalist. While it is worrying that the Brexit result seems to have led to an uptick in racial abuse and harassment, there is no reason to suppose that English nationalism and multiculturalism must be opposed to each other.

To many, multiculturalism as a political idea in Britain suffered a body blow in 2001. In the shock of 9/11 terrorism and after race riots in some northern English towns, forecast that its days were numbered. If these blows were not fatal, multiculturalism was then surely believed to have been killed off by the 7/7 attacks in London in 2005 and the terrorism and hawkish response to it that followed. But this is far too simplistic.

And today, a multicultural identity among some ethnic minorities could help to create more of a sense of "British identity" among the English.



Early second generation Bangladeshis in Whitechapel, 1986. Al Cane/Flickr.com

Multiculturalism in Britain grew out of an initial commitment to racial equality in the 1960s and 1970s into one of positive self-definition for minorities. One of the most significant pivots in this transition was The Satanic Verses affair of 1988-89, following the fatwa against its author Salman Rushdie, which mobilised Muslim identity in a way that ultimately grew to overshadow much other multiculturalist and anti-racist politics.

It is significant that multiculturalism in Britain has long had this bottom-up character, unlike say Canada and Australia, where the federal government has been the key initiator.

The Labour legacy

Nevertheless, anti-racism and multiculturalism in Britain still required governmental support and commitment.

The first New Labour term between 1997 and 2001 has probably been the most multiculturalist national government in Britain – or indeed Europe.

Its initiatives included the funding of Muslim and other faith schools, the MacPherson Inquiry into institutional racism in the London Metropolitan Police and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, which strengthened previous equality legislation. This agenda continued to some extent in the second and third New Labour governments, primarily with the extension of religious equality in law.

Yet, after 2001, and especially after the 2005 London bombings, there were significant departures from the earlier multiculturalism. But it is inaccurate to understand those developments as the end of multiculturalism. They mark its "rebalancing" in order to give due emphasis to what we have in common as well as respect for difference.

At a local level, this consisted of programmes of community cohesion. This was premised on the idea of plural communities but was designed to cultivate interaction and co-operation, both at the micro level of people's lives and at the level of towns, cities and local government.



Leicester Caribbean carnival. Andrew Norman/Wikipedia

At a macro level, it consisted of emphasising national citizenship. Not in an anti-multiculturalist way as in France – where difference is regarded as unrepugnant – but as a way of bringing the plurality into a better relationship with its parts. Definitions of Britishness offered under new Labour, for example, in the 2003 Crick report, emphasised that

modern Britain was a multi-national, multicultural society, that there were many ways of being British and these were changing. As ethnic minorities became more woven into the life of the country they were redefining what it meant to be British.

The idea that an emphasis on citizenship or Britishness was a substitute for multiculturalism is quite misleading. The 2000 report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain – known as the Parekh Report, after its chair the Labour peer, Bhikhu Parekh – made national identity and "re-telling the national story", central to its understanding of equality, diversity and cohesion. It was the first public document to advocate the idea of citizenship ceremonies, arguing that citizenship and especially the acquisition of citizenship through naturalisation was – in contrast to countries like the USA and Canada – undervalued in Britain.

Questions of Englishness

Yet over the last couple of decades a new set of challenges have become apparent, initially in Scotland but increasingly throughout the UK. In none of the nations of the union does the majority of the population consider themselves British, without also considering themselves English, Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish first.



Wales beat England, Rugby World Cup 2015. Sum_of_Marc/Flickr.com

The 2011 census is not a detailed study of identity but it is striking that 70% of the people of England ticked the "English" box and the vast majority of them did not also tick the "British" box, even though they were invited to tick more than one. This was much more the case with white people than non-whites, who were more likely to be "British" only or combined with English. Multiculturalism, then, may actually have succeeded in fostering a British national identity among the ethnic minorities.

Multiculturalism in this case, then, offers not only the plea that English national consciousness should be developed in a context of a broad, differentiated British identity. But also, ethnic minorities can be seen as an important bridging group between those who think of themselves as only English, and those who consider themselves English and British.

Paradoxically, a supposedly out-of-date political multiculturalism becomes a source of how to think about not just integration of minorities but about how to conceive of our plural nationality and of how to give expression to dual identities such as English-British. It is no small irony that minority groups who are all too often seen as harbingers of fragmentation could prove to be exemplars of the union.

The minimum I would wish to urge upon a centre-left that is taking English consciousness seriously is that it should not be simply nostalgic and should avoid ethnic nationalism, such as talk of Anglo-Saxonism. More positively, multiculturalism, with its central focus on equal citizenship and diverse identities and on the renewing and re forging of nationality to make it inclusive of contemporary diversity, can help strengthen an appreciation of the emotional charge of belonging together.



Jessica Ennis with the UK flag after winning gold in the heptathlon at the 2012 Summer Olympics. Robbie Dale/Flickr.com

This article is based on a piece originally posted at The Conversation.

<http://policybristol.blogs.bris.ac.uk/2016/07/12/multiculturalism-can-foster-a-new-kind-of-post-brexite-englishness/>

Media

At 10.35pm on May 22nd thousands of Mancunians were doing what they do every time of night and day; they were surfing on their phones in their homes. And it was because they were on Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites that many of them then left their homes and went to the area around Manchester arena to offer food, drink, comfort, free car rides and beds for the night and whatever help they could in the wake of the terrible bombing.

The long one minute silence on the Thursday was a media and social media event. The silence pervaded St Ann's Square for days afterwards and was so thick you could almost touch it. Although many people were holding phones aloft, even taking selfies in front of the flowers, it would be difficult for a hardened hack to be completely cynical about it.

There's a lot of despair around social media, the kind of world its creating and the people it is making us into. I have two teenage daughters so I partake in that despair quite a lot, but it isn't the whole picture.

100 years after Edmund Burke said there were four estates of the realm – the Lords Spiritual, Temporal, the Commons and the press - Oscar Wilde was complaining that the first three estates had been gobbled up by the fourth. Today the fourth estate– (which you could say has done a pretty good job of eating away at itself with scandals such as phone hacking) is being gobbled up by the Fifth – social media, blogging, citizen journalism, the web economy. We are ambivalent in our response to it, because at the same time as it is used to undermine dictatorships, get around government censors and give a voice to the voiceless it also allows those who shout the loudest to shout even louder and it makes it harder for its users to identify the sources of what they come across, hold publishers to account. And tell truth from lies.

For all that the mainstream press and broadcasting is excited by the digital world and engages with it to find new ways of telling its stories, there's a concern among many that the way people view, produce and consume information today doesn't sit well with the methods and values learned back in the 20th century.

Being first with the news has always mattered to us; we are human competitive creatures after all. As a young political reporter in Liverpool during last throes of Militant Tendency one of the fun bits of the job was to race my rival from Radio City back from the town hall to our respective newsrooms to get the story on air first. Sometimes I

might dive into a phone box to ring it through or I might have the stations one mobile phone with me, although it was so big and heavy it just ended up slowing me down. Publishing deadlines meant that I didn't have to worry about the Echo or the Morning Post, there was no 24 hour telly news. Winning was easy.

The competition and the financial pressure to be first is far greater now. And so too therefore is the temptation to rush out half baked, under researched stories without fact checks, context, alternative viewpoints or expert comment.

Sometimes stories are written before the events they are describing have actually taken place. A particularly arresting moment in the Leveson enquiry was when the Daily Mail had to explain why it told the world that Amanda Knox had lost her appeal against her conviction for the murder of Meredith Kercher when she hadn't. What had happened was that in his desire to be first the reporter had written two stories outlining two potential outcomes – and inadvertently published the wrong one. The reader wasn't just told the wrong verdict but was told about the emotional reactions of those in court. None of it was true.

In America experiments are underway where robots are being presented with narrative templates and then fed data which will enable them to write the fastest accurate copy on election nights. The advantage of this system is that robots can be programmed to wait for the data.

But- having the story online first means clicks and clicks means advertisers. With one billion people accessing Facebook every day you don't have to ask where the advertisers are.

In 2015 the UK advertising market had its best year for five years, but print advertising fell by 150 million pounds or 11 per cent. The effects have been severe with nearly all newspapers shedding journalist posts. Last year the Guardian announced it was losing 100 of its 725 editorial staff and in the 18 months up to this March 400 local journalism jobs were lost. We should be particularly concerned about cuts in local journalism and local radio.

There's a lot of sniffiness about it from people in the industry who've never worked in it but the local MP knows that it's as important to show up there as in the nationals, and the journalists know that their proximity to the audience holds them to account in a very direct way. Being shamed to your face for being loose with your facts or cavalier with interpretations of them is a humbling experience not easily forgotten.

With resources so tight some newspapers have tried to make the best of a bad job by applauding their use of User Generated Content - aka free copy – as progress. It's no wonder then that one aspiring journalist I was reading recently is now into her fourth year of unpaid internships.

No surprise either that according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency people leaving journalism school are as likely to go into Public Relations than journalism. The UK press Gazette Labour Jobs survey noted that while 6,000 journalism jobs were lost 2013-2015 18,000 were created in PR -

The graduates who go into it will have better paid and more secure jobs. They will also be providing journalist classmates with an alarming amount of oven ready stories. 54% of copy in newspapers on a given day came in or entirely from PR. Cut and paste that press release and you have something else to feed to a voracious 24 hour news culture.

This culture has shrunk the role of journalist who has to spend an inordinate amount of time monitoring the output of rival organisations and social media to make sure nothing is missed.

Arguably the resulting Circular conversations and punditry led to just about everyone being caught out by the results of the EU referendum and the US election.

You probably know that famous American book "When Prophecy Fails" about the crisis end-time cults face when their Domesday predictions failed to materialise. You can draw an analogy with what happened here with Brexit and with Trump's victory - the fact that the pollsters and pundits got it wrong led to bewildered head scratching and then introspective soul searching.

How should they respond?

In the case of Domesday cults they either collapse or simply push the date forward into the future and go on as before. And the journalists? - hands up if you've spotted more humility in the reporting in this election campaign.

Yet I'm sure you are all reading, listening and watching to high quality reporting every day. Long reads you can't put down, radio and TV you can't turn off – content that informs you for all that it may frustrate. For those that want it the quality hasn't gone away although it may be harder to find.

You only have to think of Andrew Norfolk's exposure of child abuse scandal in Northern towns in the Times that formed the basis for the recent BBC 3 Girls drama. Channel 4 serves up weekly excellence in Unreported World, and The Guardian – won 6 out of the 14 awards at the Foreign Press Association in 2015 for its long reads which take a month to write

How much of it are you actually paying for? I don't read the Times online because I won't pay to go behind the pay wall. I haven't yet donated to the Guardian which asks me to do so every time I go onto its website.

The threat Google and friends pose to the financing of serious journalism has led to the growth of not for profit journalism - organisations concentrating explicitly on the stories they believe matter. For example, InsideClimate News, in the US which won Pulitzer prize. ProPublica, founded by the former managing director of the Wall Street Journal, says it focuses exclusively on truly important stories with "moral force." "by producing journalism that shines a light on exploitation of the weak by the strong and on the failures of those with power to vindicate the trust placed in them."

Funding such bodies is harder in the UK because of the difficulty of getting charitable status but there is the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, which partners with broadcast and newspaper journalists to publish its findings. One of its latest projects is to show how UK voters are being targeted online with specific political advertising - so called "dark ads" which spread inaccurate information but which only those targeted will see.

There is also Delayed Gratification, a publication from what's been termed the slow journalism movement. It deliberately opts out of the race to be first and which won't report on an event until at least three months afterwards.

All well and good, but how do we create a demand for this particularly among young people who aren't used to getting their fingers grubby with newsprint and who are used to having their news served up hot and algorithmically?

One of the things we might do (assuming some of you share my prejudices) is to check the knee jerk response that occurs on learning that an A level student or undergraduate is taking Media Studies. Pulp education Niall Ferguson once called it; a mickey mouse subject for students who haven't the aptitude for proper arts subjects such as English or History.

This is a view sadly given some weight by this visitor to the Online Student Room

"I'm applying (to university) next year and was thinking about doing media studies since I don't have the A levels to do anything else. I am mildly interested as well. So should I?"

Recently my daughter's English homework was to watch a youtube clip of a horror film and discuss the effectiveness of the panning and top shots, cut-aways, and other terms I didn't learn until I went into television. I had to bite my lip and not mention "The Merchant of Venice," but actually these skills of knowing how visual media is constructed and how audiences are manipulated to respond in certain ways and believe certain things are exactly the kind of analytical skills they need. Among the various literacies we worry about these days media literacy should be high on the agenda. Maybe year 8s should also watch "Spotlight" or "All the President's Men." We need more dramas celebrating that kind of dogged journalism.

Similarly in History pupils are already being asked to judge between different sources for events, assess their vested interests, appreciate the role of money and ownership, and understand the appeal of a conspiracy theory. I wasn't doing that at 13.

The Oxford Dictionary's word of the year in 2016 was "post-Truth" - 'relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief'.

There's nothing new about this, but could there be space within the curriculum to understand the role emotion and experience play in forming our beliefs and influencing our decision making?

If our young people need that space in their school curriculum how much more is that space needed in our journalist training colleges and in on-the-job training. I only have direct experience of a couple of these – and yes, questions of

editorial values, regulation and the wretched compliance are all raised. But maybe the approach should begin with "virtue ethics," asking the questions about the kind of people we want to entrust the vital job of bringing us our news. We can all think of people who radiate passion for their journalistic vocation, They may not always be reporting on the days biggest news events but the stories they find will shed light on the ones that really matter. They are people – I would suggest – who, though steeped in the knowledge of the best editorial policies and values of their organisations, demonstrate the virtues needed to put them into practice, putting flesh on the bald facts so that they can be understood, telling stories full of transcendent moments, and – in that now rather clichéd but important phrase – speaking truth to power.

They will do this in a very imperfect and very mixed communications economy, an economy which will form the basis of diverse narratives and judgements about the kind of society we want to be. Let their light shine!

The last time I went to a concert at Manchester arena it was to hear an artist whose phrases always resound in the memory. Even so he said of his "Anthem": "I didnt want it to be punchy. I wanted a revelation in the heart rather than a confrontation or a call-to-arms or a defense."

Let's give the final words to Leonard Cohen then.

"Ring the bells that still can ring / Forget your perfect offering / There is crack in everything / That's how the light gets in."

Theology/Philosophy

Without Privilege, Without Prejudice: Mediating Religious Values into the Postsecular Public Square

At the beginning of May, shortly after Teresa May had announced a General Election, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York issued a joint statement (Church of England 2017). It has become customary for church leaders to offer public comment on such occasions, and indeed it represents one, if not the only, variety of what might be called "public theology" (Koopman, 2003; Stackhouse, 2006; Jacobsen, 2012; Graham, 2013). Typically, such statements reflect on what their authors regard as the most pressing political matters of the time, the ways in which they hope political debate will be conducted and what Christians should consider when casting their votes. These stop short, naturally, of telling church members which party to support, although media comment is often quick to identify, and condemn, anything it perceives as political bias.

It is significant for our conversation here that the Archbishops' statement for next week's Election actually puts the question of "values" at its heart. "This election is being contested against the background of deep and profound questions of identity", it says. "Opportunities to renew and reimagine our shared values as a country and a United Kingdom ... only come around every few generations. We are in such a time." (Church of England, 2017, p. 1)

What, then, are the core values from which, at least for the Archbishops, any future conversation and national identity might be forged? "If our shared British values are to carry the weight of where we now stand and the challenges ahead of us, they must have at their core, cohesion, courage and stability." (Church of England, 2017, p. 1)

At first glance, these three qualities – cohesion, courage and stability -- sound rather like the virtues of a nation under siege or in crisis. They invoke the stiff upper lip; resilience in the face of hardship; a determination to 'stand together'. The statement has have received some criticism for its implied endorsement of Teresa May's "Strong and Stable" campaign slogan (Jones, 2017) (Barrett, 2017), although it may be more a matter of poorly-chosen terminology which failed to capture the nuances of the Archbishops' intended meaning. For example, "cohesion" turns out to be more than a matter of unity at any cost, or sticking together, but more to do with what Roman Catholic

social thought might characterise as "social solidarity": as something rooted in a concern for "the weak, poor and marginalised – and for the common good" (Church of England, 2017, p. 1).

"Courage", similarly, signals less the wartime spirit of the Blitz but rather the dynamic, even entrepreneurial, qualities of "aspiration, competition and ambition" and a willingness to address generations of under-investment in education and industry, a strong ethos of internationalism and a commitment to just and accountable financial institutions. "Stability" is not intended to commend a particular style of Prime Ministerial leadership, apparently, but rather the virtue of adapting and living well with change.

The Archbishops conclude, "Religious belief is the well-spring for the virtues and practices that make for good individuals, strong relationships and flourishing communities." (Church of England, 2017, p. 3) Religious traditions do not have a monopoly on those values, they concede, but can have much to contribute to understandings of the common good. Secularism is no longer the default position for understanding our society; consequently, there is an urgent need to enhance our religious literacy (Church of England, 2017, p. 2).¹

I might have further questions to ask of this short statement, such as whether a General Election is really the most appropriate time to engage in far-reaching discussions of national identity and shared value. Similarly, when nearly half – 48.6% -- of those polled in a recent survey (Bullivant, 2017; see also Pew Forum, 2010; Kaufmann and Skirbekk, 2012; Spencer, 2012) are identifying themselves as having "no religion", what does a Christian heritage amount to? And can we really invoke anything approaching "shared British values" when, arguably Brexit and last year's referendum exposed the fractured and contested nature of what as a nation we think we stand for and what the future direction of our society should be.

But nevertheless, the insistence on the part of the Archbishops that "Contemporary politics needs to re-evaluate the importance of religious belief" (Church of England, 2017, p. 2) is noteworthy, not least in religion's disproportionate capacity to mobilise a vast range of Human and physical resources and its reach into most corners of the community. It raises for us the following kinds of questions:

- Is it possible to think of common values at the root of public life?
- Can religious traditions inform values in public life in a plural society in any meaningful fashion?
- Is it possible to envisage spaces of shared discourse in which ideas of the common good can be debated?

It seems to me, as we address these matters, that we are above all in unprecedented and uncharted times. At the beginning of the C21st, against many expectations, religion has not vanished from view. Indeed, it appears to be more influential and prominent than ever; and yet this new currency is often clouded by widespread apprehension and misunderstanding.

This is a world in which we appear to be "troubled" and "fascinated" by religion in equal measure. That is the conundrum that has beset the study of religion and public policy for the past two decades. How, given all predictions regarding the ultimate demise of religion, has religious belief and practice made such a dramatic return to the public stage? (Dinham, 2012) (Hjelm, 2015) Accounts of secularization, decline and marginalization in relation to the public position of religion in Western society have failed to account for the continued vitality and relevance of religion in the global public square (Dinham, 2009) (Strenski, 2010). And yet—in part because of an inherited theoretical mind-set around the inevitable decline of religion and the victory of the secular—we must now reckon for the continued existence of the sacred alongside, and in opposition to, political philosophies that resist the incursion of faith into what is still considered a neutral, secular public sphere (Sweeney, 2008) (Calhoun, 2010) (Gorski, 2012)

Like others, I have chosen to characterize this context as one of a "postsecular" society: an increasingly religiously plural but post-Christian West that has been thoroughly conditioned by the sensibilities of secularisation, but is also coming to acknowledge how the persistence of religion – and its re-invention in many contexts -- has created new, urgent dilemmas for the conduct of public life (Harrington, 2007) (Graham, 2013) (Furani, 2015) (Modood, 2016).

The idea of the postsecular serves to underline the fact that whilst religion has in many respects returned decisively to the public square, this can by no means be considered a simple reversal or restoration of what once went before (Taylor, 2007) (Casanova, 2009) (Voas, 2010). We find ourselves confronted by new waves of religious faith that in their novel and unexpected qualities pose considerable new challenges for the way we think, legislate and behave in relation to religion (de Vries, 2006) (Jenkins, 2014). (Kettell, 2015)

Originally associated with the work of the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, the postsecular has been adopted in a broad range of intellectual and theoretical traditions and has gained widespread currency (Habermas, 2006) (Habermas, 2008) (Dillon, 2012) (Beckford, 2012) (Gorski, 2012) (Graham, 2013). Speaking in 2001, shortly after the attacks on the World Trade Center and other public places on September 11, Habermas said, "If we want to avoid a clash of civilizations, we must keep in mind that the dialectic of our own occidental process of secularization has not yet come to a close." (Gordon, 2011) The shocking events of 9/11 and the emergence of so-called "radical Islam" highlighted the eruption of a new kind of politically-motivated religion and disrupted the narrative on the part of the West as to the hegemony and inevitability of secularisation.

For Habermas, secular modernity has lost "its grip on the images, preserved by religion, of the moral whole—of the Kingdom of God on earth—as collectively binding ideals." (Habermas, 2010, p. 19) Habermas' point is that mere pragmatism is not enough to sustain a global vision of human dignity and to move secular, materialist citizens to an awareness of what is missing: "the violations of solidarity throughout the world (. . .) of what cries out to heaven." (Habermas, 2010, p. 19) Subsequently, the crisis of the global economy during 2008–2009 caused him to consider the ethical underpinnings of 6 global markets and the future of a democratic political economy. The amorality of much of the behaviour of corporate business puts control beyond the reach of the social democratic nation-state. Essentially, the logic of the market has "hollowed out" any normative consideration of social justice.

Habermas concludes that contrary to expectations, religious traditions may actually point to a depth of moral reasoning unavailable to secular understandings. He calls for their reintroduction (albeit mediated or moderated via processes of "translation" into common terms) as a means of enrichment of our social and political imaginary (Habermas, 2008). So the postsecular is, for Habermas, a way of addressing a kind of discursive deficit within public life and a means of incorporating "what's missing"—namely metaphysical terms of reference—into a renewed vocabulary of civic virtue (Gordon, 2011) (Mendieta, 2010) (Habermas & Ratzinger, 2006). His adoption of the language of the post--secular thus entails a re-evaluation of the classic liberal secular (Rawlsian) "firewalling" (Rawls, 1971) (Rawls, 1987) which brackets out religious sources of reasoning.

In the eyes of many of his critics, however, such a proposal verges on functionalism. According to this model, religion is merely mobilised to underwrite the legitimacy of procedural democratic processes rather than rethink the nature of what counts as the most fundamental goods of human flourishing. It becomes the reparative or therapeutic injection into secular reason but "must never be allowed to challenge reason's sovereign domain" (Harrington, 2007, p. 553).

Nevertheless, the postsecular is both novel and challenging, as it requires us to rethink the terms on which religion returns to the public square, both as a source of reasoning and as the motive for renewed public presence and activism. And yet for good reasons, such as the widespread and enduring suspicion of the very nature of those religious motives, and gulf in religious literacy, any incursions into the public square on the part of religion will need to be highly circumspect. How can religion speak into such a fractious and contested public square without privilege, without prejudice in a world which, to quote Terry Eagleton, "is divided between those who believe too much and those who believe too little" (Eagleton, 2014, pp. 197-198)?

It is significant, I think, that as a response many contemporary theologians and social commentators are turning to a "performative" model of religious engagement as one way in which religious values can be mediated into the pluralist public domain (Dinham, 2009) (Cloke, 2012) (Woodhead, 2012) (Tse, 2014) (Bretherton, 2014). So in my own recent work I have talked about "an apologetics of presence" on the part of the Christian churches (Graham, 2013) (Graham, 2017); and Justin Beaumont, Paul Cloke and Chris Baker have variously considered how faith-based social

activism constitutes a "postsecular rapprochement" on the part of agents of local civil society (Beaumont, 2011) (Baker, 2012) (Cloke, 2011) (Cloke, 2012) (Cloke, 2013). In a report published last year the think-tank Theos celebrated its tenth anniversary with a report entitled *Doing Good* in which it, too, pursued a form of performative pragmatic civic engagement (Spencer, 2017). In the face of the incommensurability of forms of public speech, it argues, "an important but largely overlooked element in the discussion of public reasoning is how such discussions are embedded in actual practices and modes of life. Put another way, while it is inevitable that people will argue for and against different positions on these contentious issues, if all they are doing is arguing about them, they risk missing the reality of the lives and situations involved. Arguments need to be grounded in practices." (Spencer, 2017, p. 64, my emphasis). Despite the numerical and cultural decline of the Christian church, its primary impact and significance rests in what the report terms the "social liturgy" of Christianity: "the open, authentic and maybe even distinctive practical manifestation of the love of God" (Spencer, 2017, p. 10). More than simple service delivery, it is a ministry to and from the whole person, a form of accompaniment which seeks to value and uphold the humanity of the other. In short, the future of "Doing God" is one of "doing good" and of mediating the truth-claims and values of religious traditions "through words, actions, attitudes and interactions" (Spencer, 2017, p. 11).

The postsecular is about combining a greater reflexivity towards the claims of secularisation with a greater self-consciousness towards the choices informing one's own religious convictions. It is about "learning to appreciate what [a] faith can mean for people of today" (Prothero, 2007, p. 151) — how it offers meaning, how it represents a credible "action-guiding world-view", how it contributes to the common good. This shows how immersion in particular (faith-) communities of practice might foster virtue and character which, contrary to the expectations of many, embodies a powerful and sustainable bond between the practice of faith and the exercise of citizenship (Smith, 2004) (Reader, 2005) (Ivereigh, 2010) (Baker and Miles-Watson, 2010). And actually, that process often begins with a perennial (and for some, a sacred) question: Who is my neighbour?

Environment/Grassroots communities

Keele Talk March 2017: A Theological Evaluation of Climate Change.

It was early spring 1989. At the time I was priest in charge of 3 small churches between Craven Arms and Bishops Castle – so in South Shropshire and at the back of the Long Mynd, but in Hereford Diocese. Just after lunch there was a torrential downpour and thunderstorm. For the first time the fields on the steep hillside at the back of the village had been sown for crops. The force of the water running off the fields carried the seeds down into the village causing a flash flood, covering people's gardens and penetrating their properties. Cars in garages were moved and had small children been in the way it could have posed a threat to them as well. We began to ask questions, not just about a changing climate and more extreme weather events, but about the wisdom of farming methods. These were live issues in this area. The year before I had become involved in part of the Faith in the Countryside process and my parishes had been visited by some of the commissioners because we had begun a number of projects, one of which was an environmental area attached to a churchyard and with a management scheme drawn up for us by Shropshire Wildlife Trust. One of those volunteers now heads up the Living Churchyards project which is a national enterprise. As a result I was also invited up to London to meet another commissioner, Robin Grove-White, then head of CPRE but soon to be employed by Lancaster University. His idea, which has been at the heart of much of my thinking ever since, was that environmental issues were a conduit or outlet for deeper concerns about what it means to be human – I will come back to that. Between us we organised a private gathering in Lydbury North and then a conference at Ripon College, Cuddesdon in 1990, to look in greater depth at faith engagement with environmental concerns, as a result of which we published a book with SPCK in 1992. All of which is to say that I have been convinced for over 25 years that this is the Big Issue we face, and also that it would lead to theology and doctrine having to be revised in the light of this. Hence when I was given the title of a theological evaluation of climate change, my first response was to put this the other way around – climate change requires a reevaluation and reconfiguration of theology. That is what I will attempt in this talk.

It needs to be noted that we were not alone in theological interest in the issues. The Hereford Diocesan "The People, the Land and the Church" was crucial in raising rural issues within the churches, organisations such as Christian Ecology Link and Christian Rural Concern were getting underway, and the World Council of Churches had started talking about Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation. Moltmann wrote one of his trilogy about Creation. Martin Palmer at ICOREC then based in Coventry was another important figure, and a friend from Shropshire days lead a pilgrimage for him down to Salisbury in 1990. There was a momentum building up then as there has been again in recent years with groups like the John Ray Initiative, CRES and A Rocha, all of these coming from the evangelical wing of the churches. Although they are having a wider impact and becoming more mainstream in church life, there has still to be that rethinking of doctrine as well as practice which I believe is required. What I will argue is that to understand where we as humans now appropriately fit into the wider picture of creation – or the world as it is – demands that we draw upon concepts derived from non-theological sources (mainly philosophical in this case), in order to construct a picture which will motivate us to treat that creation differently and, hopefully, to avoid the worst consequences of the damage that human induced climate change appears to be unleashing upon the planet. That is the positive and hopeful interpretation, but it doesn't always feel that way.

One of the perplexing questions is how and why climate change has now become the metanarrative or perhaps the major environmental issue which is being registered. We know that back in the late 1980s it was depletion of the ozone layer and the move to ban CFCs which got most of the headlines. Did we win that battle, and if so how, and what might be learnt from that if anything? Questions of biodiversity and the loss of many species as another result of human activity is also important, as are issues of genetically modified crops, reduction of water supplies, agricultural methods and damage to the soils, not to forget the possible impact upon human migration of the rising sea levels which may well result from climate change. So there is a raft of interconnected issues but it is climate change which grabs the headlines and drives politicians to engage in international conferences and attempts to draw up binding agreements. I wonder why this is and if there is a danger of distracting us from those other concerns? Do we, as humans, need a clear focus of concern to spur us into action – not that it does – and what might that tell us about ourselves?

I speculate that climate change has become a contemporary form of apocalyptic and functions as such more easily than many of the other environmental issues. It is as if we are now thinking that time itself is starting to run out – or, at least, the time when human life on earth has run its course and what remains of the planet will not be suitable for human survival. We know that apocalyptic ideas have been powerful in the past, notably during the upheavals in the UK during the Civil War period, and that various groups then were anticipating the end time. We also know that there are Christians in the US who have a similar take on matters and believe the Second Coming is just around the corner, and vote accordingly. None of this is reassuring as it stems from times of great uncertainty and confusion – post-Brexit and post-Trump or are those symptoms rather than causes? – and can lead to a refusal to take positive action in the present in the hope that God will decisively intervene to overthrow the existing order, therefore the role of Christians is to hasten that process rather than to forestall it. Perhaps we walk a tightrope between hope and despair and how we respond to the challenges depends upon which side of that we fall? One of the big concerns for evangelical Christians post Copenhagen, for instance, was exactly that of hope, and what grounds for this remained given the failures that time to reach international agreement. Was Paris a more secure source of hope or not? This is a major practical and theological issue I would suggest. Do we believe that there is a final telos or purpose for creation, and if so, what is that, and how do we as humans contribute to or participate in whatever it is deemed to be? Do the insights of either science (whatever version of that we adopt), or even philosophy (and I will come to that) help in this discussion? Much to ponder and struggle with, including different ways in which we conceive of and understand time itself.

Before I take us into the less familiar territory of the contemporary philosophical sources that I want to commend, I think it is important to register two other more high profile contributions to the debate. The first of course must be Pope Francis's "Laudato Si'" which was published in 2015 and seemed at the time to be a decisive intervention by a global faith leader. Along with Naomi Klein's "This Changes Everything" it felt as though the public momentum on the issue might be about to shift and a real awareness of the challenges and willingness to address them politically could be on the horizon. At the moment it feels like yet another false dawn in the light of post-Brexit and post-Trump. Having looked at Laudato Si' I conclude that it is a genuine attempt to address the environmental debate in

some detail but from a basically orthodox Catholic theological position – which is what one would expect. So on P39 we read:

A spirituality which forgets God as all-powerful and Creator is not acceptable. That is how we end up worshipping earthly powers, or ourselves usurping the place of God, even to the point of claiming an unlimited right to trample his creation underfoot. The best way to restore men and women to their rightful place, putting an end to their claim to absolute dominion over the earth, is to speak once more of the figure of a Father who creates and who alone owns the world. Otherwise human beings will always try to impose their own laws and interests on reality.

I am not at all comfortable with this as it sidesteps the issue of the extent to which that whole understanding of God is itself at the heart of the hierarchical approach to and of humans which is then criticised. It is a return to, or reinterpretation of the themes of dominion and sovereignty which, some of us might argue, have got us into this mess in the first place. The significance of the document is that it is the Pope, talking to his millions of followers world-wide, trying to get them to take environmental issues seriously, but without examining let alone critiquing the very assumptions which underlie the debate. That is legitimate, as far as it goes, but doesn't go anywhere near far enough in that reconfiguration of theology which I believe is now required.

The other publication that I think does take the debate further is Michael Northcott's "A Political Theology of Climate Change" published in 2013 and well worth a serious engagement. My main reason for saying that is that Northcott does indeed draw on some of the philosophical sources which I think are of value, notably Bruno Latour and Alfred North Whitehead (associated for theologians with the ideas of Process Theology but that itself is a matter of debate not to be followed up here). Northcott is particularly concerned with what he calls the nature-culture divide or what Whitehead called the bifurcation of nature. In other words, once we interpret reality as being split in that way, we create the very conditions for the exploitation of nature by humans (as separate and distinct from nature) that lie at the heart of the problem. I agree with this, and commend his work as a serious attempt to press the conceptual discussion into new territory which I will now build upon, but I am less convinced by the final sections of the book which use the thought of Carl Schmitt whom we would associate with Right-Wing German pre-Second World War political philosophy. But the book as a whole is well worth serious consideration. One of the key areas he highlights at the close is whether or not individual, small-scale local action is ever going to be enough to counter the problem of climate change, or whether nothing less than international and global responses are going to be adequate. He favours the latter, and it is a point worth debating.

As I continue to draft this on Christmas Eve one of the headlines is that temperatures in the Arctic are 20 degrees above normal and this appears to be a record breaking heatwave brought on by human induced climate change. We are also expecting near record breaking temperatures here on Christmas day as we sit between two Atlantic storms. Perhaps it is the visibility of more extreme weather events that makes climate change the natural focus of environmental concern, not to mention the potentially dire consequences of sea level rises for the millions living close to the coastlines around the planet. But is it already too little too late whatever we can decide to do in response? How much of our response will really have a significant impact upon what is yet to come?

Thinking about such responses, one of the best known ones – although not necessarily in faith circles – is that of the Transition Initiative (formerly Transition Towns) movement. A brief examination of some of the central ideas from this will further illuminate how practical and theological reactions need to change. The movement began in the 2000s as an attempt to help local communities power down and decrease their dependence upon fossil fuels in the light of the growing threats of climate change and peak oil. Totnes in Devon is an early example of this (it now has its own local currency for example), although the original movement began in Kinsale in Ireland. Rob Hopkins, one of the founders, wrote a book (2008) called the Transition Handbook and it is worth a glance at some of its key themes to see what might be learnt from this.

A major objective is to encourage commitment to the cause of energy descent, increased local resilience, more localized economies and generally decreased energy consumption. We note that the term resilience has now been expanded from the original idea of bouncing back from external shocks to that of bouncing forward into a different future – itself, one could argue, a theological theme. The nature of the new commitment demands something like a conversion process for the individuals involved – a metanoia one might suggest – a repentance and willingness to live one's life differently. The handbook talks about this as occurring at 3 levels: the head; the heart and the hands, thus proposing a holistic approach which acknowledges the physical, emotional and intellectual dimensions. Perhaps something like this is essential if humans are to begin to redefine their relationships with the non-human and to

recognise our interdependence upon the wider environment that does not reduce it to human control or exploitation?

The handbook identifies various stages involved in the process of change which begins with an awareness of the need to change; contemplation as one considers the pros and cons; preparation and planning before implementing the plan itself; integrating the changes into one's lifestyle but also accepting that there will be relapses and times when one slips back into old habits. The addiction to fossil fuels is countered by these methods, but only in the context of communal and collective activity. Again this has echoes of attempts to live a life of faith where the demands and sacrifices are laid out, but also the awareness that we won't be able to live up to the ideals consistently. From within the unfamiliar resources that I won't expand upon here, I would argue that this reflects a focus on what is called distributed agency. In other words, how we function is as part of collectives or assemblages which include not just other humans, but also the non-human technological and scientific accompaniments of our life together. We are always already part of these collectives and do not operate as lone autonomous individuals with control over external objects, but within the human and non-human assemblages which make up our shared existence.

Another possible link to the new approach I would argue is required is that the Transition movement has no real equivalent of a faith understanding of transcendence, or rather, it is very much a this-worldly and often local transcendence rather than a vision of a world beyond to which ours compares unfavourably, or which stands as a judgement upon the present world. The objectives are closer to hand and more immediate. The vision is of an existence which transforms the current into a more resilient and responsible context in which humans move away from an exploitative and damaging relationship with the planet. A different form of messianic hope perhaps? It does of course raise again that question of the extent to which largely small scale and local activity is going to be able to counter the most threatening effects of climate change or whether this is simply "a drop in the ocean", but maybe this is to underestimate the importance of encouraging those small steps that one needs to feel make a contribution despite the fact that major decisions and policies have to be implemented at an international level. One can only do so much and it is important to do what we can where we happen to be, not just for our own justification, but to raise awareness of the issues and act as an example to others. Our local environmental project from the 1980s, for instance, which still exists, we saw very much in that light. It was never going to change the world by itself, but it was a sign of hope and a stimulus for further thought and reflection within that locality. People of faith should be used to working in that way.

What faith might learn from these responses to climate change is the need for a redefined notion of transcendence, a different understanding of how humans function as part of both human collectives and human non-human assemblages, and then a vision of the future which relates more closely to the realistic hopes for a world that is both interconnected and resilient where bouncing forward to a different future is as important as bouncing back to where we were before. I could go on to argue that these mean a different understanding of our relationship with God or the divine as well as with creation itself, but that is probably a step too far for this evening. I will just mention though one of the key thinkers in this new approach as it is possible you will encounter references to him in the future.

So, to the work of Bruno Latour as we used it in "A Philosophy of Christian Materialism" (2015), particularly in the context of an engagement with environmental issues. For those unfamiliar with him, Latour is best known as an anthropologist associated with actor-network theory and active in the field of science and technology studies.

Recently however he has been involved in a broadcast discussion with Rowan Williams at the LSE and also gave the Gifford lectures in Edinburgh focussing on his interpretation of the Gaia hypothesis, so he has become better known in the UK and some of us have been using his extensive work to throw new light on our understanding of ourselves. Without getting too technical, the main ideas which are of interest are his interpretation of realism (we call our approach in APCM Relational Christian Realism); his notion of truth as circulating references; his reconfiguration of the relationships between the human and the non-human; his proposal that matters of concern (rather than matters of fact) need to be reassembled slowly, empirically and with attention to detail rather than swiftly and often lazily; finally his understanding that values are always already involved in those matters of concern and not to be added on as some sort of afterthought. He began his explorations with research into the actual practices of science as often contrasted with the claims made about its assumptions and processes, and his latest major work is called "An Inquiry into Modes of Existence" which looks at a whole series of areas of human activity to investigate how they operate in practice, this includes religion.

A final dimension which was referred to earlier and goes beyond even what Latour mentions is that of apocalyptic and our understanding of time. The significance of Latour and the other thinkers whose work I am currently using is that they draw out the relational side of human existence – and I would argue faith as well – but there is another element to faith that is in danger of being neglected in this and that is what is called the apophatic. This refers to the awareness that there is always that which remains beyond articulation – God if you like – and that there are limits to our understanding and awareness. I believe I have found echoes of this in what some have called the Sublime (aesthetics) which can refer to the experiences of the natural world which are overwhelming and terrifying as much as pleasing and beautiful. It is sometimes in response to those experiences or events which create shock and fear that we are moved to appropriate actions. If that is the case, then the enormity of the possible consequences of climate change might be the only factor that will spur us into action. If you will, an apocalyptic dimension. This is not a comforting thought I'm afraid, and I have heard environmental scientists voice the opinion that it is only when a city like New York suffers an environmental catastrophe that the world will really see the light – and then it may already be too late. I am not sure we have either the practical or theological resources to cope with such events, but who knows the full consequences of the climatic changes which we have helped to set in train?

British History/Religion

History, I would argue, can contribute to our current conversation in two main ways. First, it enables us to understand why we are where we are. Whether we want to advocate change or continuity that understanding gives important context for informing realistic actions and recommendations. Second, it provides models for thinking 'outside the box'. Are there historic, but now neglected, ideas and approaches that are relevant to contemporary problems? Does history provide cautionary tales of pitfalls that can be avoided?

There is much that I could say, but given constraints of time I shall limit myself to three points that relate directly to the three questions I sent in in advance.

First, religious diversity. I think there is a significant parallel to be drawn between the gradual and often contested acceptance of diversity within Christianity during the Victorian era, and the mixed responses we see to the growth of diversity beyond Christianity that we have seen since the Second World War. Non-Anglican Christians were given a measure of civil equality, notably entitlement to sit in Parliament, in the late 1820s, but equality in other matters, notably entitlement to take degrees at Oxford and Cambridge, took several more decades. Meanwhile many Nonconformists campaigned energetically for the disestablishment of the Church of England. It remains something of an historical conundrum why disestablishment in England never happened, although it did happen in Ireland in 1871 and in Wales in 1921. But a key explanation is that once practical grievances had largely been removed, the constitutional aspects seemed to matter much less. And indeed much Nonconformist and Roman Catholic opinion came tacitly to welcome the state recognition of Christianity implicit in its continuing residual links with the Church of England.

And as Tariq pointed out yesterday more recently Muslims have come to a similar view. I therefore think there is good historical logic behind the kind of future role he suggests for the Church of England. But the key question is not so much declining numbers of committed Anglicans, but rather whether those who remain want to fulfil that kind of national function as opposed to becoming a church primarily committed to Christian mission and evangelism. If that is the path the church adopts, the long term outcome in a multicultural society is likely to be disestablishment, but probably because the church asks for it rather than because the state requires it.

Nevertheless, as a counterpoint to this advance in toleration, there was much continuing religious prejudice and hostility. In particular the widespread anti-Catholicism prevalent for much of the nineteenth century can be seen as a significant parallel to present day Islamophobia. There was a similar blend of theological and political stimuli, at times in toxic combination with popular xenophobia and folk tradition, especially around 12 July and 5 November

celebrations. There was also a sense of challenge to national security, in part from the activities of Irish nationalist insurgents, which were tracked back to their Catholic confessional identity; in part from a wider sense that the Catholic Church fundamentally opposed to essential British values of religious and political freedom. Moreover as an international organisation centred in Rome, it seemed essentially at odds with the integrity of the United Kingdom state.

It is striking to me that many similar themes recur in present-day polemic against Islam and Muslims, grounded in a slanted understanding of reality, which, crucially, sees the actions and utterances of a small minority as representative of the majority. The parallel is revealing of the extent to which hostile attitudes to Muslims and to a lesser extent other minorities are shaped by underlying prejudices towards 'the other' rather than by rational considerations. I would suggest that public education that gives more currency to such parallels could be constructive in stimulating individuals to recognise and address their prejudices. Meanwhile it is important that those of us with more liberal instincts take into our calculations the need to assuage rather than provoke such hostilities.

This leads, however, directly to my second point which historic nature of Britishness. In an influential book published some 25 years ago, entitled simply *Britons*, Linda Colley argued that Protestantism was during the 18th and early 19th centuries an essential shared ideology that brought the multi-national British state together after the Union with Scotland in 1707. I would agree and see this as a key reason why, in the long term, the subsequent Union in 1800 with Ireland proved unsustainable, except in the north-east, where, as Tariq pointed out, Ulster Protestants continue to assert their Britishness with a vigour now seldom seen in the rest of the U.K.

In the nineteenth century British identity was further overlaid by identification with a global empire, in which Scots in particular became major stakeholders. However since the Second World War, the loss of empire and the decline of Protestantism has substantially weakened that historic kind of British identity. The rise of alternative Scottish, Welsh and indeed English nationalisms therefore comes as no surprise. As this historic form of Britishness had divisive religious implications and its imperialistic cultural and political ones I am not at all sure we would want to mourn its passing. However I would suggest that the challenge of reinventing Britishness in a manner appropriate to the twenty-first century is a very substantial one, especially given the lack of any general consensus as to what it might look like. I suspect for instance that Teresa May's vision of Britishness is significantly different from Tariq's but I do wonder whether either of them are achievable. So a key question for us is whether a positive inclusive Britishness of the kind Tariq advocates is realistically worth campaigning for, or whether it is better to accept the demise of overarching Britishness, accept the medium term inevitability of Scottish and eventually perhaps Welsh independence, and seek rather to ensure that such post-British national, regional and local identities are as inclusive as possible.

My final point though is that one significant pan-British institution remains, namely the monarchy. I am surprised that especially in our current location this has not yet been mentioned in this consultation, as I do think both its past and its future are very relevant to our theme. Historically, at least from the reign of George III onwards the monarchy and the royal family in general have been perceived as embodying ideals of family life, patriotism and undemonstrative religiosity. There are good grounds for regarding the modern British monarchy as a matriarchy, given that for more than two thirds of the last 180 years the sovereign has been a woman, and during the intervening half century successive queens consort played prominent roles in supporting their male spouses. That point also points up the reasons why two women who in rather different ways failed to fit the mould provoked the two greatest crises in the history of the twentieth century monarchy: Wallis Simpson in 1936 and Diana Spencer in 1997.

Nevertheless the monarchy has survived and twenty years on from 1997 republicanism remains very much a minority enthusiasm. Nevertheless with the present incumbent now 91 it seems responsible rather than disrespectful to consider the medium term future. Could Charles III, or George VII as I suspect he might decide to call himself to highlight discontinuity with his own past and avoid an ill-omened name for a King, yet become the catalyst for a revival of Britishness on the lines Tariq suggests? Or would his well-intentioned but unwelcome interventions coupled with his relative unpopularity end up leading the monarchy to rapid disaster? Or, especially if his mother

lives another decade, might he choose to be passed over in favour of William? And whether his accession comes soon or yet many years in the future, would the more emphatic generational change to William V reshape the image of the monarchy in more secular directions? These questions are hard to answer as they depend significantly on contingencies of personality and circumstance, but I would suggest that they are important to keep at least in the background of our thinking. Precisely because of the Queen's longevity, the monarchy seems a fixed point in discussion of national identity: whatever the future holds it is unlikely to remain so for much longer.

There is much more I could say, but I suspect my time is about up, and I look forward to exploring these issues further in discussion.

Education

I'd like to begin by thanking St George's House and the William Temple Foundation for the imaginative and timely convening of this conference on faith and the public sphere. Although we all recognised its importance, when we accepted our invitations, perhaps none of us guessed just how urgently relevant it would become.

What sort of nation (and education system) are we?

My whole career as a teacher has been peppered by 'moments of speechlessness' which have been in some way symbolic, have taken me by surprise, and left me reflecting for long afterwards on how I might have responded. Today I'd like to refer to some of those moments, since they illustrate something about who we are as educators working with faith and belief.

Speechless moment #1: In my training year as an RE teacher, walking along a crowded school corridor to my lesson, passing a more experienced, but non-specialist teacher of RE going to hers. As we passed, she whispered frantically to me: What's the meaning of the parable of the good Samaritan? Quick!!!

How can one respond to that without setting up structures of professional development, accountability, and quality assurance? Yet have we gone as far as we fruitfully can with those structures? Bureaucracy is not new: William Temple recognised it and warned of its dangers. Here he is in 'Our Trust and our Task', his Presidential address given to annual meeting of the National Society, 3 June 1942:

'There is an inherent and inevitable tendency in any bureaucratic control towards mechanical uniformity' (Spencer, 2015, p246).

When Michael Gove was appointed Secretary of State for Education in 2010, he made popular the term 'the blob' (= bloated bureaucracy) and chose a portrait of Antonio Gramsci to hang in his office in Sanctuary Buildings. Gove in that role was a neo-con in a hurry. Following Gramsci, he wanted to dominate the culture and discourse of education, and he chose to do so by destroying its institutions. The inveighing against bureaucracy may have been popular. But the result did not bring the release of energy that could have helped by desperate colleague, quoted above. Looking at the journey we have made from Temple to Gove, we might perhaps coin a shorthand phrase to describe our education system in England now: free in the trivial places, bureaucratised in the important places.

Temple also argued that church schools helped introduce variety, and offered this educational observation:

'All true education must be religious in its basis and texture.' (Spencer, 2015, pp242-3)

Temple believed this because 'the freedom for which we are fighting has religious roots - man ought to obey God, not man'; and because there is no neutrality, no objective place to stand; and as a salutary reminder when schools and heads were often driven primarily by desire get certificates.

Alfred North Whitehead in 1929 had claimed something similar. His claim for the essence of education is a distillation of his belief, shared by many others then and now, that teaching and learning are to be understood as sacred activities – 'the essence of education is that it be religious.' (1929, p14) By this, Whitehead means the duty of knowledge, and the reverence for developing minds working in the present moment.

From this kind of discourse, we have travelled to the 'fundamental British values' proclaimed by the Department for Education (2014) as democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and respect and tolerance for those of different faith or belief. Teachers in my acquaintance are roughly evenly divided who do their best to get on with what they know to be an imperfect discourse, and those who are deeply troubled by the word 'British' and by 'tolerance'.

The Church of England, as the largest provider of schools in England, has renewed its vision and articulation in ways that encompass and radically transcend those values. The C of E is certainly one player that can imagine and provide education which reflects the insights of temple and Whitehead in a non-exclusive way (Church of England, 2016). It has managed to use the language of being deeply Christian and (not but) serving the common good, in ways that exactly capture and meet the challenge described by Craig Calhoun as 'articulat(ing) a sense of purpose greater than self-interest' (Calhoun, 2016, p6).

What sort of nation (and education system) could we be?

In the educational world, this question can be unpacked as: Can we agree how, and at what pace, to reform education? Can we think seriously about levels of trust in public education? We could be a nation that engages in a public conversation about the education it wants and the literacies it looks for.

Temple's *Mens Creatrix*, 1917, suggested that the creative human mind builds 'palaces' of knowledge, art, civilisation, spiritual life. Each edifice is incomplete in a way that threatens its security. Only the creative mind of God provides secure foundation. Christ the incarnate world, ushering in the kingdom, 'has resolved that He will not cajole, He will not coerce, and He will not demonstrate.' (Spencer, 2015, p 29). This is an implied reference to the three temptations in the desert, and to Isaiah 42:2-4, to the one who quietly and faithfully brings forth justice:

He will not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not be disheartened or crushed until He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law.

Does this offer us a useful yardstick for the quality of discourse between, say, governments and Heads, or inspectors and teachers?

What values and beliefs sustain my vision for education?

In education, this question could be unpacked as: How do our communities, and faiths, value learning? How is this manifested? What are the 'palaces' of knowledge and civilisation that we can agree to build?

The values and beliefs I would offer as important for me and, I suggest, for others, are four:

My first value is to speed the development of what I call an 'educational economy' in faith communities. I am using the word 'economy' in the sense of the economic Trinity – as in the way an idea is cashed out – in this case, as a real, unqualified commitment to learning, unfettered by cultural barriers, dogmatism, and premodern nostalgia. This economy needs to influence doctrinal theological structures, as well as actual spending of money. To illustrate the need we all have for an educational economy, speechless moment #2: prayer in a committee. A Christian praying at the start of a meeting, asking God to bless their endeavours 'so that children can learn about different religions and particularly about Jesus.' Is this some sort of negotiated adjustment, essentially acknowledging that we have to go

along with religious diversity for the moment – but we have not really abandoned our claim to superiority and to a monopoly of truth?

Next, a commitment to breaking down false dichotomies, eg local vs national, traditional vs progressive methods, instrumentalism vs human education, knowledge vs skills. In the face of these binaries, a kingdom vision of education clearly requires both. We often complain that we cannot see enough transcendence or spirituality in education, but how would we know? There is a difference between the transcendent, or sacred, and religion. Scruton (2014) argues there are traces of transcendence in personal relationships, moral intuitions, and aesthetic judgements. All carry traces of a transcendent dimension that cannot be understood through science alone. As these dichotomies play in education, the largest offender, I think, is the religious-romantic-human ideal of education against the instrumentalist-technocratic vision: the myth that the former has been squeezed out by the latter. The kingdom of heaven is as much about actual literacy as it is about emotional literacy, as much numeracy as the numinous. Church of England schools by and large recognise this, but there are still too many victim narratives in some parts of the religious world in education.

Thirdly in my list of values: my desire to restore and re-engage two types of theological discoursing: prophetic imagination (Brueggemann, 2001; Hull, 2014) and apocalyptic (Handy, 1990). The prophetic imagination means not conceding anything to pragmatism: it means holding spaces where a different future can be imagined, where binaries can be transcended, and where religious traditions evolve gracefully in changing circumstances, learning from each other and from the secular. Apocalyptic means an underlining of the urgency of change: it is always later than we think; disruptive change is happening because we resisted continuous change things can get worse in this country; for example, simply because we have not had a civil war for nearly 400 years, does not mean we never will. For the churches and all religions in England, one such apocalyptic is the rise of the 'nones', as tracked by Linda Woodhead. The nones, she argues, are rising in Britain—in a slow, unplanned and almost unnoticed revolution. It has been happening for a long time, but the tipping point came only very recently, the point at which a majority of UK adults described their affiliation as 'no religion' rather than 'Christian' (Woodhead 2016, p 1). The implications of the nones for the design of religious education are enormous. Merely because they will not join religion, does not mean they do not wish to take from it. My speechless moment #3 was in teaching a largely non-religious class of 14 year olds the allegorical version of the parable of the sower. The class developed a sudden, vocal desire to be 'typed', each according to one of the four allegorical types. I realised that the slow apocalyptic decline of the institutional churches leaves exposed an abiding spiritual hunger, sometimes urgently expressed, appearing at times and in ways not of authority's choosing.

My fourth value: a conviction that although we in Britain have evolved an interesting and open model of RE, it is in need of radical reform, both pedagogical and structural, if it is to survive. The reform must position theology differently and better, give more intellectual authority to teachers and texts, widen the range of stakeholders, and take syllabus-writing away from faith representatives (Clarke and Woodhead, 2015). The RE machinery is uncomfortable and scratchy when it comes to dealing positively with religious and cultural 'othering'. We should never underestimate the atavistic fear of contamination in the encounter with the other (Hull, 1991). This was vividly shown to me in speechless moment #4, when at a parents' evening I was asked by the parent of an exemplary pupil why I taught other religions. The question was asked with genuine bewilderment and concern. The parent answered their own question by suggesting that my intention (a good one) was to put the pupils off everything other than Christianity. This sense that the other is unclean has grown in our society. It is the dark underbelly of our diversity. We see it in plain view now, after June 2016 and in reactions to terrorism in our midst.

In these voices of apocalyptic and prophecy, we need to talk widely about the aims, purposes and machinery of RE in so-called faith schools and all schools, and we need to pursue change urgently. The wheels are coming off the traditional English muddle in education.

Schooling is a journey, a story. For most young people, it is one of hope, not loss. Yet many narratives of religion in relation to education are stories of loss: the loss of innocence, purity, or power over moral discourses. Some religions

seem unable to envision education as the 'beautiful risk' in the title of Biesta's book (2013). We must therefore hope that education changes religion, as well as the other way round.

NEWS STORY

New report: Faith, Belief and Nation-building

In June of this year, a major 24-hour colloquium was convened by the William Temple Foundation, University of Worcester, St Peter's Saltley Trust, Culham St Gabriels, University of Chester and the University of Warwick at St George's College, Windsor, entitled Malvern 2017 – Faith, Belief and Nation-building – What sort of Britain do we want to build for the 21st century. A year on from the historic referendum vote to leave the European Union, delegates from across business, public sector, grassroots and faith groups, the media, education, NGOs and academia, gathered to address the core questions designed to address the conference's title; What sort of nation are we? What sort of nation could we be? What beliefs sustain that vision? The responses to these questions, and some of the keynote addresses that helped frame the debate, are contained in the conference report released today. <link> The name, Malvern 2017, reminded attendees of the first Malvern conference of 1941, at which Archbishop William Temple and several of his peers across different sectors of public life, re-imagined what a rebuilt Britain might look like. A central feature of the original conference was Temple's pioneering use of middle axioms (i.e. broad areas of policy derived from foundational religious and philosophical principles), out of which emerged his blueprint, in 1942, for a universal and comprehensive welfare state.

At this year's conference, two over-riding themes were expressed most clearly in the proceedings.

Identity

The first was around the problems of national identity which the Brexit and US elections have thrown into sharp relief. The conference noted the paradox that lies at the heart of current debates; that holding fast to a national identity seems inevitably to conflict with being allied to a wider grouping, like the EU, that isn't based solely on trade. This suggests a community and society that is not comfortable in its own skin, and many suggested that religions and beliefs, coming together in public life, had the power to address this situation for the common good. Religions often create spaces and opportunities for human connectedness that bypass top-down pronouncements creating a pressure to conform to a set of 'British values'. They also take the lead in showing what 'doing good' means.

Connectedness

Second was the theme of connectedness, which is often hard to define, but easily observable at the grassroots level. An appeal to 'common values' often misses the intuitive and highly sophisticated ways in which local 'connectedness' takes place. The more 'common values' are pinned down, the more bland and all-encompassing they can become. Faith and belief often however, provide an alternative imagination or worldview that can support these embodied forms of connectedness and challenge the status quo; for example, narratives of radical hospitality, inclusion, solidarity and prophetic justice and lament (as witnessed, for example, in the response to the recent Grenfell Tower tragedy).

Other key contributions that Malvern 2017 attributed to religion and belief in the role of nation-building included; creating a sense of place (as opposed to simply space); inspiring innovative and selfless leadership; challenging narrow and functionalist ideas of education; highlighting the idea of vocation in professional and public life; the return to apologetics (i.e. articulating the foundational reasons for why we are what we are) and middle axioms by which to once again shape and inform a deeper and more sustainable vision of human and environmental flourishing. A series of follow-up events are being planned to further unpack the themes and ideas generated by this conference. See here for some of the agendas that will be featured over the coming months.

Director of Research for the William Temple Foundation, Professor Chris Baker, who chaired the conference steering Committee says; 'The blueprint of the original Malvern conference chaired by William Temple represents one of the highest tide marks in the coming together of religious ideas and government policy. Its legacy and way of working was truly inspirational, and we hope that in the years to come, some of its much needed sense of hope and purpose will be carried on in the future by the events and new spaces of dialogue that we intend to create from it'

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