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Occasional Papers on
Faith in Higher Education

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INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to present the second number of our journal. As a collaborative venture between Whitelands, a Church of England college within a secular university, and Colleges and Universities of the Anglican Communion (CUAC), which is an international network of Anglican-foundation institutions of learning, the *Occasional Papers* will perhaps inevitably be of particular interest to scholars and institutions within the Anglican Communion. Our aim, however, is wide: to provide a forum for scholarly discussion of the role of any religious faith in any aspect of higher education and scholarship. Anyone, regardless of religious or institutional affiliation, is welcome to contribute a paper on any topic relevant to the general theme. Contributions may take a variety of forms (see *Notes for Authors¸* p. 107 below).

This issue of the journal comprises seven articles. The first five, by Stephen Heap, John Gay, Richard Clarke, Peter Green, and Mark Garner, arise from a conference of the European chapter of CUAC, held earlier this year in Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln, UK. The theme of the conference was *The Elephant in the Room: Anglican Responses to Secularism*. In the sixth article, June Boyce-Tillman considers the contribution of music in a church-foundation university, and in the final article, John Switzer discusses the challenge of teaching religious classics to theological students.

We trust that this issue will help to continue the conversation around religion and higher education, and, in particular, to stimulate further contributions in future.

In defence of the secular: Free Church and Anglican perspectives[1]

Stephen Heap
University of Winchester

'Secularism' is, as Rowan Williams says, a 'slippery' term.[2] Williams distinguishes between 'procedural' and 'programmatic' secularism. The former is

> a public policy which declines to give advantage or preference to any one religious body over others. It is the principle according to which the state … defines its role as … overseeing a variety of communities of religious conviction and, where necessary, assisting them to keep the peace together, without requiring any specific public confessional allegiance from its servants or guaranteeing any single community a legally favoured position against others.

Programmatic secularism Williams defines as a situation

> in which any and every public manifestation of any particular religious allegiance is to be ironed out so that everyone may share a clear public loyalty to the state unclouded by private convictions, and any sign of such private convictions are rigorously banned from public space.

Procedural secularism involves the state maintaining a faith-rich public realm. Programmatic secularism involves banning expressions of faith from that realm. The former Williams sees as

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[2] See Williams 2012, pp.2-3 for his discussion of procedural and programmatic secularism.

posing 'no real problems to Christians'. Indeed, Christianity may have helped create it.

Williams' definition of procedural secularism is reminiscent of significant parts of Baptist tradition, which has similarly argued for a faith-rich public realm. For example, one of the early English Baptists, Thomas Helwys, wrote in 1612:

> Men's religion to God, is betwixt God and themselves; the King shall not answer for it, neither may the King be judge between God and man. Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews, or whatsoever it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure.[3]

What Helwys was arguing for was a public realm in which the King, the state, did not decree what people should believe but in which there was freedom to express a variety of faiths. The argument is for a faith-rich and free public realm.

Baptists have followed that line not just for themselves: notice Helwys argues for freedom for Muslims and Jews. They have followed it not out of expediency, but out of convictions based on beliefs about God, what it means to be human, and the nature of faith. In brief, God is a God of liberation who created humankind free. Humankind, created in the image of God, has God-given rights, amongst which is that of liberty, and of faith: 'To be authentic faith must be free. Genuine faith cannot be forced or denied by the state.'[4]

Such views lead to an argument that society should be so organised that human beings are free to decide and follow and *live* what faith they wish—including in the public realm. This is not just about freedom to worship or freedom in the home. It is about freedom to live by faith convictions in the wider community; in

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[3] Thomas Helwys, *A Short Declaration on the Mystery of Iniquity, 1612,* quoted in Bradstock & Rowlands 2002 pp.107-108.
[4] Shurden 1993 p. 49

universities for example. It is lived procedural secularism. Of course, such a position has obvious weaknesses: how to reconcile conflicting freedoms, for example. It also has possible strengths, including helping to keep programmatic secularism at bay. The point for this paper is that within various Christian traditions there are arguments for a faith-rich public realm.

Similar ideas emerge amongst contemporary thinkers. For example, Jürgen Habermas writes about the liberal state protecting freedom of belief and conscience and not demanding 'anything of its religious citizens which cannot be reconciled with a life that is led authentically "from faith".' [5] Habermas, like Williams, suggests a role for the state in maintaining a faith-rich public realm. So have Baptists. John Leland, an eighteenth century Baptist in the USA, wrote,

> Let every man speak freely without fear, maintain the principles that he believes … and let *government protect him* in so doing.[6]

Let government protect the individual that they might live by the principles he or she believes. Government's role is to preserve freedom to live by religious (and other) principles, in the public realm. Against this background, I want to ask this: Are Anglican universities in England today free to live out their faith in the public realm? Are they free to be universities in accordance with their faith?

One thing I note about Anglican universities is that they wish to take faith seriously and be faith-rich spaces. Some Anglicans, I think, see maintaining such spaces as part of establishment. One typical statement from an Anglican university is: the university 'welcomes people of all faiths and none. Together, we aim to explore the mystery of life and to grow in wisdom and love'. This

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[5] Habermas *et al*. 2010

[6] John Leland, *The Rights of Conscience Inalienable*, 1791, quoted in Shurden 1993 p.50 (emphasis mine).

is a move forward from the nineteenth century when Dissenters and others were excluded from the then two universities in England, which sought to maintain a more exclusive Anglican establishment by requiring members to affirm allegiance to the *XXXIX Articles*. Dissenters of various sorts (including Baptists) set up University College, London as the first university in England to aspire to being a faith-rich and inclusive university.

Contemporary Anglican universities tend to express particular views of what it means to be a university, arising from their faith foundation. One says it 'seeks to provide all its students and staff with the education, skills, support and motivation to enable them to develop as confident world citizens and successfully to serve and improve the global communities within which they live and work.' Another says its mission is 'To educate, to advance knowledge and to serve the common good.' They are typical, expressing a view of higher education which says it has to do with creating citizens and serving the good of society.

Does the state give space for Anglican universities to live out their faith and be the universities they seek to be? Is the state maintaining the sort of faith-rich and free space I have discussed when it comes to higher education? I am sure the state with its equalities agenda welcomes a commitment to people of all faiths and none. Though how free religious groups are on any campus is an issue; think of gender-segregated seating, which some faith groups want, and the limited freedom to be thus seated. It is also worth musing on what freedom Prevent gives even for the expression of non-violent views, religious or otherwise. Indeed, freedom more generally may be an issue: think of no-platforming and warnings of sensitive material ahead. The point here, however, is whether Anglican universities are free to be the universities Anglican faith might lead them to seek to be. Are Anglican universities free to be universities in Anglican ways? Or are there things about the state and its policies which limit that freedom?

The above quotes from Anglican universities' web sites express their vision for higher education. Universities are to serve the common good and create world citizens. Higher education is a public, and not just a private, good. It is to do with values, virtues, with holistic development, with encouraging civil discourse including among people with diverse views. It is about how we live with creation. It is about learning to live with God, with the rhythms of the universe, towards the final coming of the Kingdom.

With the exception of the last point, similar views are held by many commentators on the sector and many within it. Where you will not find them, or find only brief glimpses of them, is in recent higher education policy documents in England. Present state policy on higher education embodies very particular views about what it is to be a university. Universities are to enhance success in the knowledge economy and further social mobility, to allude to the title of the recent White Paper.[7] Those themes are clearly expressed from the Browne report[8] onwards, and under the last New Labour government. Policy also says the work of universities will be improved as they adopt market principles. 'Competition generally drives up quality' says Browne[9] in an unevidenced comment, and the recent White Paper says 'Competition between providers in any market incentivises them to raise their game, offering consumers a greater choice of more innovative and better quality products and services at lower cost. Higher education is no exception.'[10] Higher education is a product, students are consumers and competition will raise the standards in universities. Reading such comments, one enters a particular

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[7] BIS, 2016

[8] *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education. An independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance,* October 2010.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422565/bis-10-1208-securing-sustainable-higher-education-browne-report.pdf
(accessed 4.7.16)

[9] *Securing a Sustainable Future* p.2.

[10] *Success as a Knowledge Economy* p.8.

world view; a particular faith, even—faith in the market, a faith which prioritises competition, commodification, the economic.

What impact does such policy, such faith in the market, such particular understandings of the role of universities, have on the freedom and ability of Anglican universities to live out their faith in the way they practise being a university? Is the state maintaining the freedoms it should, or not?

It is likely, I think, that Anglicans will find some things to agree with in the present policy; the social mobility/widening participation agenda for example, and providing skills for work is good. Other things that Anglican universities apparently hold dear, however, are almost entirely missing from policy: things about the common good, citizenship, God. Things we might think society needs its universities to be about for society faces challenges other than the economic; about values, diversity, democracy, living on a fragile planet for example. Policy seems not to value universities' being about such things.

Furthermore, what about higher education as a market; education as a product; students as consumers? Does Anglican faith share the government's faith in marketisation? Or might Anglican faith and the understandings of higher education it produces suggest that the market is distorting and reducing what education is about? The acquiring of skills, social mobility, supporting the economy are important, but to see education almost entirely in those terms is a woefully thin view compared with one which sees it as being about holistic human development, about who we are, not just what we know or what skills we have, and one which sees it as about shaping not just the economy but society towards the good. Such a view of education suggests it is not a product which can be bought off the shelf, whose value is easily measurable; it is, rather, a journey, requiring co-operation with others, involving searching, testing, questioning and crying as old ideas are swept

away in a kind of crucifixion.[11] This kind of journey the policy does not give space for, for it is a journey that is a different, bigger, perhaps more expensive one than that which is only about acquiring skills to get a job.

There are other questions to be asked. What happens to academic freedom when courses are to be designed to fit the needs of the economy? What happens to courses which do not obviously serve the economy—arts and humanities, including Theology and Religious Studies? Well, we know: enrolments decline. A senior manager in an Anglican university reflects in a forthcoming book that the values of the market may conflict with the values of an Anglican university and create tensions for the institution and the individuals within it. Ultimately, maybe, what is wrong with marketisation is that it embodies not just an inadequate view of education but of what it is to be human. We are not simply economic actors, workers, but bearers of the image of God called to live in community towards the good: a starting point that will lead to a very different way of being a university from that in current policy.

Do we have freedom to be the universities we wish to be as we live out our faith? Or does the faith embodied in the policy squeeze out other faiths, leading to programmatic, not procedural, secularism?

As a Baptist I want to make a plea for freedom for Anglican universities to be the universities they feel called to be because of their faith. I want to make a plea for procedural secularism in higher education policy; for the sector to be a truly faith-rich space in which Anglican universities are free to do higher education in an Anglican way. The obstacle may be not secularism as such, but the wrong sort of secularism, and not enough of the right sort.

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[11] See Higton 2012 for an exploration of such themes.

Many within our universities do try to live the faith they hold about what it is to be a university and offer education as big as they can. Long may that continue. I think something else is needed. There is a fairly fundamental issue at stake here: freedom. Freedom for individuals and institutions to live by the principles they believe in. Freedom to resist the embraces of one particular view currently prevalent in HE policy. Freedom to live by a faith which says, yes, the economy and social mobility matter, but so does how we live as citizens, how we treat the planet, how we seek and live towards the good of the public realm. Universities need to be free to address such issues for the good of society. The case for that freedom needs to be put, which we cannot leave to the universities alone with all the pressures on them. Maybe this is a job for CUAC;[12] there is certainly a job for the wider church. There is work to be done in drawing on the resources of our faith to put the case for freedom for our universities.

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Anglican foundation universities: theoretical identities and empirical realities

John Gay
University of Winchester

Background

The history of Anglican foundation universities goes back a long way. Oxford, normally recognised as the first, traces its origins back to the 12th century, and Cambridge followed in the early 13th century. The 19th century saw two further Anglican universities added: King's College London (1829) and Durham (1832). And so the position remained until this century, when the surviving Church colleges of education expanded and diversified, first as colleges of higher education, then as university colleges and finally as fully-fledged universities. It is usually to this group that the designation 'Anglican universities' is given. Within this evolutionary process six of them either had to, or decided to, do deals with neighbouring institutions, thus becoming dual or even multi-mode universities.

Free standing Anglican universities:
Bishop Grosseteste, Lincoln; Canterbury Christ Church; Chester; St Mark and St John, Plymouth; Winchester; York St John

Dual or multi-mode universities with an Anglican element:
Chichester; Cumbria; Gloucestershire; Liverpool Hope; Roehampton; University of Wales, Trinity St David's

Theoretical identities

Taking these Anglican universities as a group, their theoretical identity has been cumulatively constructed by aspects such as:

The reasons they were founded in the first place;

Their histories, many going back over 100 years;

Their common involvement in teacher education;

Their legal documents and especially their memorandum and articles of association;

The composition and role of their governing bodies;

The 'genuine occupational requirements' for the posts of vice-chancellor and occasionally a deputy vice-chancellor;

Statements made in their various plans, documentation and publicity;

Having chapels, chaplains or deans of chapel, religious studies departments and Christian Unions.

But almost inevitably, because there are so many intervening variables, there is a gap, a tension, between aspiration and reality. Furthermore, there is often a reluctance to emphasise the theoretical identity too much lest it have a negative effect on recruitment. Interestingly, this is not the case in relation to Church schools, where the opposite has happened. One might ask why the Church schools have been going in one direction and the Church universities in the other.

Empirical realities

In terms of the empirical realities, a major contextual issue confronting the Church universities is the changing religious landscape within which they are set. Statistics on religion regularly hit the headlines and usually make for uncomfortable reading. This is a whole paper in itself and so I just want to pick out two pointers. The first is the recent growth of the number who say they have no religion. So for example a YouGov poll for the

Times in 2015 found that 60% of all 18-24 year olds said they had no religion, and only 22% said they were Christians.[13]

The second is from a British Social Attitudes survey in 2013,[14] which revealed that whilst Anglicans formed over a third of the over 65s, the figure dropped to just 3% of those aged 18-24—the main student age group. Similar figures for this age group gave Catholics as 6% and other Christian groups as 11%. In the light of these two sets of figures and others from similar surveys, the Church universities might do well to consider emphasising their general Christian credentials rather than their narrower Anglican ones.

Given that it looks as if at least British society has been becoming ever more secular, so the Church universities have been increasingly struggling to relate their foundations to these societal realities. To illustrate this, we can consider four empirical markers from the last thirty years.

Church Colleges Research Project

The first is from the early 1980s when eleven of the twelve Anglican colleges took part in a research project managed by the Culham Institute, the results being published in a report in 1985.[15] All academic staff were invited to complete a fairly long questionnaire, and 60% did so. Nearly three-quarters of those who responded expressed a Christian allegiance (Anglican 51%; Free Church 16%; Roman Catholic 6%; other religious but unspecified allegiance 7%; agnostics 16%; atheists 5%). Furthermore, 68% said that their religious commitment was either moderate or total.

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[13] February 2015 update of polls on religion, *British Religion in Numbers* — www.brin.ac.uk.

[14] June 2015 update of polls on religion, *British Religion in Numbers* – www.brin.ac.uk.

[15] Gay *et al*. 1986

Forty-one percent claimed to attend church most weeks and a further 13% at least once per month.

Some checks were made about the composition of the 40% who did not reply and, whilst there were some who were undoubtedly opposed to the whole nature of a Church college, it did seem that most simply did not receive the questionnaire, or lost it or forgot about it, and therefore were likely to reflect the views and practices of the 60% who completed it.

All first- and third-year students were also asked to complete questionnaires, and overall response rates of 65% and 54% respectively were obtained. Three-quarters described themselves as members of one of the main Christian denominations; well over half professed at least a moderate commitment to Christianity and a third said they attended Church services most weeks.

So, at least in terms of professed religious allegiance and practice, all looked reasonably good. However, there were already warning signs. The research found evidence that staff religious commitment was strongest among the older and the longest serving members and least among the younger and most recently appointed staff and the report concluded:

> If the evidence indicates that committed Christians are forming a smaller proportion of new appointments, and if the religious views and practices of the academic staff have an important impact on the ethos of the college, then as longer serving members of staff retire the characteristically Christian flavour of the colleges could well be diluted.

This was seen as the more likely position.

There was also a concern, although not written into the report, that as the colleges diversified and ceased to be solely teacher training

institutions, so the religious dimension of the student population would weaken, i.e., teacher trainees were seen as being more likely to be more religiously conformist than liberal arts students.

Alumni Voices

This research, carried out between 2004 and 2009 by three Winchester lecturers, [16] involved questionnaires and interviews with former students and staff of Winchester. The aim was to answer the question of how the Church foundation affects the nature of the educational experience, and how it might influence those who come under its auspices.

Respondents were asked for: their views on religion; their personal attitudes towards faith beliefs; what difference they felt this did or did not make to the life of an academic institution; and if they could recognize something distinctive about an institution with a Christian foundation by comparison with secular universities.

The researchers found that the more recent the respondents' experience of the institution was, the less likely they were to describe themselves as regular participants in organised faith activities.

A decrease in formal participation did not necessarily, however, indicate a lack of interest in religion or a devaluing of religious beliefs. There were often references to a sense of spirituality and inner personal belief. Non-believers still expressed appreciation of the pastoral services that a dedicated university chaplain could

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[16] Spenser *et al*. 2015

offer to staff and students, and valued the chapel as a place of contemplation and reflection.

Many identified a gentler and more caring atmosphere than might be found in secular institutions. They felt that the Christian foundation allowed staff to include a concern for students' spiritual and mental welfare as well as for their academic studies. Finally, many described the lasting effect of the values they gained from the institution and how they had taken these values with them into their subsequent professional lives, one aim of which was to share these values with peers and future generations, helping them similarly to grow and develop. Certainly for many at the time Winchester was a high-impact institution.

In conclusion, the researchers were left wondering how Winchester might be able to face all the future challenges whilst still maintaining its distinctive ethos and values.

The National Anglican Identity Project

In 2012, as part of a national project looking at Anglican identity, managed by Stephen Heap, I went round all the Church universities bar one, spending a day in each and carrying out one-to-one interviews with a number of key post holders. These usually included the vice-chancellor, a deputy vice-chancellor, chair of governors, president of the student union, chaplain, dean of students, head of theology and religious studies, and a staff representative. The collated and anonymised report was published in an internal document which was sent to each university.[17]

The overall impression obtained was that, for the majority of staff in all the universities, the Anglican foundation meant little or nothing. It was suggested that older and longer-serving staff

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[17] Archbishops' Council Education Division 2012

tended to see themselves as belonging to a community of academic and support staff based more on foundational ideals, whereas younger and newer staff viewed their university more in managerial and bureaucratic terms, in which the Christian foundation was largely a historical irrelevance.

Whilst many staff saw the foundation as either an irrelevance and/or a nuisance, they tended to put up with it as long as it did not impinge upon them directly. If, however, the foundation aspect started to be ratcheted up too fast in the recruitment process and in other ways, there was a fear that it might cause a backlash. Softly, softly was often quoted as the best policy.

Given that a significant number of the senior positions in most of the universities were held by longer-serving staff who tended to be in greater sympathy with the foundation aims, there was a concern about what happens when they retired. A number expressed anxiety about the lack of a similar cadre waiting to replace them.

For students, the course, the location and the entry requirements were the main deciding factors in their choice of university. Very few appeared to apply because it was an Anglican institution. Indeed, many students managed to go through their entire course without realising the nature of the institution they were attending.

Part of the reason for this may have been a reluctance on the part of the institutions themselves to advertise their foundation. Prospectuses and websites often disguised the Anglican identity through statements focusing on distant historical origins. '*Founded by the Church of England in 18…*', if not backed up by anything more current, implies that the religious dimension is no longer significant. Implicit and coded messages at open days and induction processes may not be understood and if nothing further is explicitly in front of them, at the end of their course perhaps

students can be forgiven for not realising the nature of their institution.

But why has there been institutional reticence? A significant reason is the dominant perception that the foundation is a negative recruitment factor risking images, best avoided, of straight-laced and restrictive communities with compulsory chapel.

It was in the area of institutional style and ethos that many drew a direct link with the Anglican foundation. Words such as 'caring', 'supportive', 'friendly', 'safe' and 'personalised' were frequently used. Good staff-student interactions, in which students were known by name and treated as individuals and staff were readily available, were often contrasted with larger metropolitan universities, which were perceived as being more impersonal.

At one university the student union president commented that since taking office his eyes had been opened as to why the university operated in the ways it did and he now realised the connections between its foundation ideals and how students were treated, respected and cared for. He regretted that this connection was not always recognised by students, and wondered if it could be made more explicit.

The University of Winchester's Anglican Identity Project

The University of Winchester is currently undertaking a project looking at its nature and role as an Anglican foundation university. Part of the project, which Stephen Heap is leading, involves a theological appraisal of the nature and purpose of higher education, drawing on the thinking and writing of British Anglican theologians.

A second part is an empirical study, which I am undertaking, looking at the nature of the university as a Church foundation through its documentation and through the composition and views of its staff and students. As can be appreciated, this is quite a sensitive undertaking, and as I walk into the university I always look up at the facing wall to the sculpture of the welcoming angel and remind myself of the warning about fools rushing in where angels fear to tread.

We are currently collecting and analysing the data, and plan next year to share the methods, the broad results and the wider implications with individual member universities. This is being undertaken through the good offices of the Church Universities Fund. One result can be shared now.

Collecting data on staff and student religion are now part of the process for monitoring equality and diversity within universities. The question on religion which the Higher Education Statistics Agency uses is interesting in itself: it puts at the top of the list 'no religion', and then lists the rest alphabetically—it is apparent what it assumes the most likely answer will be.

One of the options, along with the major world faiths and other religions and beliefs, is 'spiritual', which is often seen as a halfway house between a religion and no religion. But only 1% of the 7,000 students gave this as their position. I was surprised how low this was and would like to follow up why. Perhaps it was because those who might have ticked it got no further than the 'no religion' box.

We are also starting to look at how the foundational ideals of the university might or might not be reflected in what is taught and how it is taught. This is a very important but also a very complex research area.

Final questions

Looking into the future, there are many questions which could be pondered. I would like to highlight three.

First, given the significance of an academic staff's role in upholding the mission and values of the University and communicating them to its students, the size and nature of the Christian component within the staff will have a significant bearing on the extent to which the Church foundation can be sustained and developed. Beyond the vice-chancellor and chaplain, what is the likely minimum critical mass of supportive staff needed?

Secondly, could the government's plans to make it easier for universities to change their foundational documents lead to a watering down or even an elimination of the Anglican elements within them?

Thirdly, the Cathedrals Group of universities, which includes the Anglican universities, states that it is:

> the only grouping in the UK higher education landscape based on ethical principles informed by faith-based values.[18]

To what extent does the current White Paper on higher education sound the death knell for this broader view of the university experience and curriculum?

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[18] www.cathedralsgroup.org.uk

Secularisation and the Irish Church

Richard Clarke
Archbishop of Armagh

I begin with the admission that I am neither a statistician nor a sociologist.[19] Much of what I will say is therefore observational and, if it is seen through any lens at all it will be through that of history and politics, my first academic training that I have never quite shaken off.

Secondly, although my brief is primarily about secularisation in Ireland within an Anglican context (and it will indeed be principally about this), I will at times be broadening the discussion out beyond this, where this seems relevant to the experience of the Church of Ireland.

Beginning, therefore, with the rather unusual contours of secularisation on the island of Ireland, it needs first to be recalled that the Church of Ireland covers the whole island— north and south, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, two political jurisdictions. A number of dioceses have territory and parishes within the two jurisdictions, including the Diocese of Armagh in which I minister. Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland are, to put it mildly, very different from one another; they have, after all, been separated politically for almost one hundred years. The rural and urban cultures of Ireland are also strikingly dissimilar from one another, particularly in Northern Ireland. Hence there are fascinatingly different contours to the process of secularisation in Ireland, much of this to do with history in general, but some to specific events.

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[19] Some of the material in this paper has already appeared under my authorship in other publications.

What we are seeing in the present-day Republic of Ireland is what can only be described as a very sharp-edged secularisation. It has come about remarkably quickly, in that very little more than one generation ago, the vast majority of Irish people were church-goers in a country where Roman Catholicism was the religious faith of well over 90% of the total population. A number of factors seem to have created a truly massive shift, not only away from the Church but also towards a culture in which being *anti-Church* is seen as the new chic. The Europeanisation of the Republic of Ireland has played its part, along with sudden economic and social changes. At one level there has been a rapid change from the Ireland that was culturally a predominantly Roman Catholic country—conservative, obedient to the Church in a society in which this institution held most of the cards of power, whether in education or in health, and even possessed considerable influence in political matters. There has been a sudden and aggressive reaction against this; 'How could we have been so gullible?' seems to be the underlying and angry question of many, and not only the young in society.

Social changes have undoubtedly been exacerbated by clerical abuse scandals, principally although not entirely within the Catholic Church, which came to light in the 1990s. (For years, it seemed to be assumed by the media that child abuse, which was in fact rather widespread throughout the country and in all strata of society, was almost a clerical monopoly.) All the Christian traditions have been caught in the slipstream of an anti-Roman Catholic movement within Irish society, which may now include an open ridiculing of the fundamentals of Christian belief. To pour scorn on the basic stories of Easter or Christmas seems now to be regarded as cool sophistication in popular culture. Even in public discourse on ethical issues, an underlying agenda may often seem to be, 'Is the Catholic Church against it, and if it is, let us support it!' Counter-intuitively, however, most people in the Republic of Ireland will give a religious tradition on a state census form, and

the number of non-religious or humanist funerals is relatively small.

The Church of Ireland is the second largest religious tradition in the Republic of Ireland, but it is still a very small cohort in overall terms. With no triumphalist intent, it may reasonably be noted, however, that it has remained somewhat respected in public consciousness, although probably not as much with younger generations. This residual respect that remains may well be because the Church of Ireland was never seen—certainly in living memory—as a dominant or dominating tradition, and it has in practice even provided a new home for a number of disaffected but thoughtful Roman Catholics who do not wish to unchurch themselves. Hence the Church of Ireland has recently been growing slightly in the Republic of Ireland, to judge by succeeding census returns.

Northern Ireland, on the other hand, is culturally very different from the Republic. Although the 'Good Friday Agreement' came into being nearly twenty years ago, much of Northern Ireland still displays a genuine rawness (particularly in local communities and parishes) after more than a previous thirty years of violent conflict, although there has in reality been relatively little widespread violence since 1998. Northern Ireland can, however, still be understood only as a divided society, and although denominational and political allegiances are not actually coterminous with these divisions, they are closely related.

In rural areas, particularly in Northern Ireland, there is a relatively high adherence to the Church in all its traditions. In November 2013, the Church of Ireland undertook a full census of church-going over three Sundays in that month (excluding Remembrance Sunday, as it was believed that this might have skewed the figures in an upward direction). The census contained a very serious flaw, however, in that it failed to ask people if they been in church on

any of the other previous Sundays under review. In an age in which weekly church-going is sadly unusual, even among regular church-goers, this was a serious mistake in terms of statistical information gathering. In other words, more than the *average* number over the three Sundays (which was all that could be adduced from the returns) may have been in church on fewer than the three Sundays.

Rural Northern Ireland (I have a particular interest in these figures, as the Diocese of Armagh is primarily rural, although it does contain some large conurbations such as Portadown and Dungannon) showed the highest proportion of church-goers; more than 20% of those who had indicated membership of the Church of Ireland were in church on any given Sunday. (This figure is, of course, astonishingly high by mainland Great Britain standards.) Furthermore, the gap between the figures for those who indicated membership of the Church of Ireland on civil census forms, and those whom the parishes noted on their files as Church of Ireland (even if not church attenders), was very small. The relatively high attendance figures for church attendance cannot be entirely attributed to maintaining religious-denominational identity in the face of perceived danger from without, but there can be little doubt that there is some relationship. It would seem also that children and young people are still reasonably engaged in the life of the Church in rural Northern Ireland but there is very high emigration at the stage of third level education, particularly among Protestants (by which in this context I mean all members of reformed Christian traditions). It should be added, and here we are in anecdotal territory, that clergy in the Diocese in which I work would have noticed that a growing number of pupils in those schools that are in the public sector (in other words not in Roman Catholic denominational schools) are being enrolled as 'no religion'.

It would come as little surprise to learn that in urban areas, in both Northern Ireland and in the Republic, there is a far lower engagement with the life of the Church. In what are large dioceses in and around Belfast, it is reported that there are now many instances of three generations of residents in working-class areas that are totally non-churched. In this, urban Northern Ireland would be far closer to rest of the United Kingdom. Dublin Diocese, primarily urban and suburban, indicated very large attendances on Christmas Day but, other than this, relatively small figures of churchgoers relative to census population.

Overall (I reiterate that I am not a statistician and that you will therefore have to draw your own conclusions), the *trends* in church involvement, as distinct from the actual percentages, would seem to be not very far distant from those in Britain.

Throughout the island of Ireland, 15% of those who regard themselves as Church of Ireland were in church on any of the given three Sundays in November 2013. Of those attending worship on at least one of the three Sundays, the proportional distribution by age was: 15% aged 0–11; 7% aged 12–18; 6% aged 19–30; 14% aged 31–45; 19% aged 46–60; 24% aged 61–74 and 15% aged 75+. Perhaps more surprisingly, the proportional distribution of attendance by gender is 57% female, 43% male: more men than one might have expected.

We might therefore conclude that we are witnessing a tide going out, but (to destroy the metaphor of tide completely) not everywhere at the same pace, nor in the same way.

How, then, do we face into the future?

I begin with ways in which I believe that the Church of Ireland has perhaps been tempted to move. Others must decide on how far, if at all, it relates to their own experience.

At the end of the First Word War, the General Synod of the Church of Ireland set up a committee to advise the Church on 'retrenchment and reform', interestingly in that order Retrenchment was then a very topical metaphor, in the aftermath of four years of trench warfare. The Church of Ireland is again tempted to retrenchment. The first approach for any Church may therefore be introspection, where the Church becomes a ghetto, whether or not it is happy with this particular terminology. The word is often used in a pejorative sense and is taken to assume a degree of deprivation (and of persecution from outside), but it need not necessarily carry such a connotation. A ghetto may properly be understood simply as an area which is separated from the outside community, but within which a relatively normal life is carried on, albeit in isolation. The institutional Church could retreat within its walls and order its affairs without much reference to what is happening in a world outside. Indeed, there has always been a necessary aspect of Church life that seeks to maintain itself as distinct from its environment. The etymology of *ecclesia* is after all a 'calling out' from the surrounding world. It is as important that there are a stillness and a separateness at the heart of the Christian community, as that an individual Christian should also grow within a holy space of quietness and solitude. But this is not the total picture.

In the first place, such separateness is not for escape, either for the individual or for the community. This separateness is, in Henri Nouwen's forceful phrase, to be a 'furnace of transformation' where we encounter the living God, and are equipped to speak out of the silence and the frailty to a world of words and noise. The danger for the church is that a self-indulgent separateness would increasingly be that of the ghetto, where we cease connecting with an outside world. We might not even notice our isolation for as long as we continue to do churchy things and keep our churchy structures: to worship in our churches, to hold synods and councils, and even to appoint rectors and bishops. Nobody

beyond the walls of the ghetto would mind, or even notice. The church would be irrelevant to their lives, existing only on the margins of their day-to-day consciousness.

This would not mean that there were no longer be any adherents to the church, but rather that religion would be very firmly privatised, now placed within the Irish culture in the category of hobby, for those who might find it helpful or fulfilling, on a par with the local gym or the yoga class. Some aspects of the church might even be carelessly acknowledged by the wider public as generally therapeutic; Gregorian plainsong has a following among those who find it helpful as a relaxant, particularly after the ingestion of some recreational drug. It has to be said that the tendencies towards parochialism, already well-established within the Church of Ireland in particular, could make a move into total ghettoisation a very natural and smooth progression.Where worship was being done very well, this corner of the ghetto would probably do good business, even among some young people, but a ghetto it would still be.

If we were to move out of the ghetto, a second possibility would be, and has been, to imitate the characteristics of the chameleon. The chameleon, as we know, has the famous ability to change colour, to blend in with its surroundings in a very effective camouflage. The church faces the constant temptation to become part of its surroundings to the degree that its teachings and standards are indistinguishable from current mores and thought patterns. Just as there is one aspect of the ghetto that accords to health in a Church, so also an incarnational church must be, to some degree at least, part of the scenery. As the incarnate Christ was fully within the world, could socialise energetically and enjoy the companionship of the unsavoury and the unlovely, so the Christian community must be at ease within God's world as it is. Where the Church may too easily find its role, however, is in affirming anything and everything that is publicly acceptable (but

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only after it is clearly accepted by everybody else of good will). The church may move stealthily from a vision of the incarnational community to a mere currying of public favour, without even noticing the difference. An image that is often used today is that of the Church in the market place. The Church of the future, as of any generation, must be visible, but perhaps the town square is a better symbol than the market place.

The market is about selling bargains and enticing the casual buyer. It is only too easy to provide a packaged religion, which is cheap and garish, all the time forgetting Bonhoeffer's timeless strictures on the wickedness of purveying cheap grace. The town square, unlike the market place, is traditionally a place of debate and discussion. Furthermore, we must have the courage to accept that when, in the interests of a supposed neutrality or pluralism, the public square is deprived of religious or moral reflection, it remains open to every other kind of influence, including the most vile and dehumanising philosophies ever conjured up by humanity. This is entirely parallel to the New Testament parable of the cleansing of a soul, which merely provides room for new demons. In taking its place within a real world, the Church of the future will have to face the temptation to rob the Gospel of all astringency in the interest of saleability. What is also certain is that the Church of Ireland (and I suspect the Church of England), if it were to follow this path, would attract considerable applause for its reasonableness and humanity from a liberal humanist constituency which, even now, regards 'soft Anglicanism as the acceptable face of the Church in our countries.

Thirdly, another possible route for the Church is to adopt the stance of the scold. In other words, so that the Church may emphasise its distinctiveness (and reinforce its aspiration that it has neither retreated to the refuge of the ghetto nor sold its soul in order to provide attractive bargains in the market place) it may well wish to remind the world of its existence by opposing

everything in the world that is not exclusively Christian. There is indeed a tradition within the Church from the earliest centuries that consciously places itself in the position of permanent and raucous opposition to everything that does not carry the label of Christian (or a particular version of the label).

In the interests of integrity and the maintenance of a prophetic voice, clearly the Church or its prophets must be ready to confront injustice without, and apostasy within, the Christian community. It would however be all too easy to justify our existence and salve our insecurities by devoting our time merely to scolding the world in the name of Christ. Preaching a gospel that is unfashionable should never be mistaken for a constant posture of reprimand. As Richard Niebuhr remains us, there are times when the Church may need to represent Christ against culture, but not as its habitual stance. Ironically this is as much a withdrawal from the world as is the ghetto.

In some respects, the Church as I know it is tempted to fall into each of these temptations. But whether we choose to be ghetto, chameleon or scold (or all three) we are still *self-sealed* against reality, ultimately we are merely a cult. By being self-sealed, we are also sealed against the intrusion of truth, or even the proclamation of truth.

It is now time to look at the culture of the Church, particularly the Church of Ireland, in the face of a growing secularisation, to ask what this culture may be, and how we may best understand it. I have here been heavily influenced by Edgar Schein, the American writer on the culture of business and businesses, who has over the past couple of decades had considerable influence in helping people understand what makes a particular culture work the way it does.

Beginning by a definition of culture, we can best undertand this as

the pattern of *shared assumptions* that a group learns as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that have worked well enough to be regard as valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to feel and think in relation to these issues.[20]

In other words, culture is the way we cope with the world and how we relate our in-group to the world. 'Culture' in this sense may be applied to any grouping, a country, a geographical area, but also a church, a diocese, a parish. All have a culture, or at least a predominant culture.

How can we understand what makes a particular culture work the way it does? Schein suggests that there there are three layers of culture which interact on, underpin, and reinforce one another. These are (1) the *basic underlying assumptions* that lie beneath any culture, (2) the *espoused values* that this culture expresses, whether openly or subliminally, and (3) the *artefacts* (not objets d'art, but those things that we may see visually, or see expressed). They may be benevolent or malign.

To give simple examples of how the culture reinforces and continues its own dynamic: let us assume that there is within a society a basic underlying assumption (not necessarily articulated very often but neverthless an ultimate source of values or actions within the community) that God exists. This basic assumption will influence the espoused values of a society. If God exists he/she should be propitiated and worshipped. This will be turn be expressed in artefacts – the visible structures of religion, churches, temples, clergy. The visible presence of the artefacts in turn will reinforce the basic assumption that God exists, and so a kind of culture wheel continues to circle. Basic assumptions lead to

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[20] Schein 2010 p.18

espoused values, leading to artefacts reinforcing basic assumptions, *etc.*

The circular process may not be so benign. Let us think of a basic underlying assumption that those unlike us are dangerous. This will lead to an espoused value that those unlike us are to be clearly identified and even marginalised. This espoused value will then lead to the expulsion or deportation of those unlike us (and perhaps even their removal to concentration camps). The presence of deportation orders and concentration camps will then reinforce the assumption that those unlike us are dangerous.

In a relatively stable society, this culture wheel can continue circling for a considerable time. Even a blip may not prevent the continuing circling. One meets an unpleasant cleric or two, but can rationalise this by seeing him or her as the exception, and insufficient reason to stop going to church or believing in God. If one meets nothing but unpleasant or mendacious clerics, however, the wheel may come to a juddering halt and even begin reversing. Clergy are bad, therefore worship is a travesty, therefore the existence of God is no longer a given, therefore there will be fewer vocations in society and fewer artefacts— clergy or church buildings to reinforced the assumption that God exists. (It might be added that the removal of a church building from a rural community may insidiously convey the notion that worship no longer matters, and this may in turn undermine a local cultural assumption that there is a God.) It might be added that there is also a time-lag in the effects of the different components of Schein's wheel on each other. If I may be impertinent, might I suggest that in Britain, there seems, in general, to be no strong sense within the overall culture that God exists. Nevertheless, one does not wish to antagonise Him, and clergy and churches are generally respected.

But how can we, as Church, change our culture in relation to the world, in a way that is responsive and nor merely reactive? To return to Edgar Schein for a moment, he sees the ultimate challenge of leadership as being somehow 'to perceive the limitations of one's own culture and to develop the culture adaptively'. How then are we to adapt the culture of a Church that has become frozen solid, through fear or through inertia, as it sees the onward advance of a secularising culture?

Surely we must first challenge ourselves, not into a further paralysis by analysis, but by allowing different and sometimes awkward voices to be heard, listening to all different voices with respect, but also challenging the world around, by ourselves asking the awkward questions. Above all, we must never stop asking questions of ourselves I am a great admirer of the Italian-Jewish writer Primo Levi, one of the few survivors of Auschwitz who were able to write with a degree of both objectivity and compassion about his experiences. In his book of essays , *The Periodic Table*, Levi tells of a Dr Müller who had been in charge of the laboratory in which he, Levi, had worked as a prisoner during the war. Levi had no hatred for Müller, more a curiosity about him, because he was probably, Levi reckoned, typical of many around him. The common technique, Levi writes, was to try to know as little as possible and therefore not to ask questions. Müller, says Levi, had obviously not asked questions of anyone, not even from himself, although from his laboratory window, clearly visible, were the flames of the crematorium at Auschwitz.

Secondly, I am firmly convinced that in the western context as a whole, the Church engages best with the world when it re-asserting its rightful place within culture. In a strange way, I am using the term 'culture' here in both senses: in what is sometimes called 'high culture', the artistic and/or intellectual achievement of a society, and also in the sense of those shared basic assumptions which characterise any group or society. The Church

has a place within both, if it were only to take that place with confidence. They are both connecting points with the world beyond the echo chamber of our own churchy chit-chat.

As Church, we have to a large extent backed out of participation in the cultural life of our country, certainly in Ireland. There are exceptions, notably the cathedrals, in cities, and in some of our universities, but there is a prevailing fear of what is seen as elitism. We are reminded constantly that Christianity is not simply for those who can appreciate the arts or intellectual pursuit, and there is a degree of truth in this: Christianity began very far from the centres of culture. Nevertheless, much of what the western world has become cannot be separated from the tradition of Christendom with its wonderful contribution to the life of every nation.

As we move into a post-modern mode of discourse, we run every risk of opting for the ghetto, but we have in fact no grounds to believe that we have nothing to say or contribute. We must be visible within the town square or the piazza, in the public square with something coherent and intelligent to say that makes sense to a secularised culture around. We are still listened to with respect when we make fresh sense rather than repeat tired truisms.

Thirdly (and almost antiphonally), the Church is most itself when it is contending for justice with an utter and implacable consistency. This requires a great deal of work and equal courage because we are not speaking about the occasional genteel espousal of liberal causes, which have already been taken up by armchair liberals the length and breadth of the land. Consistency and persistence are the keywords. The issues of justice are those which should be uncovered, not only by careful attention to the current issue of *New Internationalist* or even the publications of the Combat Poverty Agency (although there is plenty to learn from both of those sources), but from proper spiritual and physical engagement

with reality under our noses. If the Church were consistently irritating and exasperating the mighty in their seats with a quiet and unswerving independence of mind and soul, it would court unpopularity and perhaps even worse pain, but it would certainly be communicating Kingdom values and it would be heard. It would be heard by many for whom the Church might be the only voice that will ever speak on their behalf.

Finally, we need somehow to understand the confusion of a world which is caught at present between conflicting mindsets and a fusion of mindset. It is fashionable to think of today's western world as a post-modern culture of rampant individualism. But of course today's world is not pure post-modern culture. As Mr Emerson in E M Forster's great novel, *A Room with a View,* would tell us, 'we are in a muddle …'.

Modernism is still rampant, as the culture that science has the answers, that the individual is the real centre of reality, that reason is the only device of final importance, and that 'progress' is desirable and attainable in every direction and can safely be left to get on with it. Globalisation is the very obvious creature of modernism.

Post-modernism continues to exist as a strange reaction to all of this, with no philosophical basis to it except that it sees the limitations of modernism. It does not believe that truth has any objective framework. It is *your* truth, *my* truth and any other truth that happens to suit. But we are also still living with vestiges of pre-modernism, most particularly within the Church. There remain those ideas of 'a sacred canopy', a single over-arching certainty; there are the persisting notions that there is a single world-view that encompasses everything, and that the community, the collective, is prior to the individual. And there is that unduring and underlying suspicion that reason is not the be-all and end-all. We are witnessing in some quarters of religion a

headlong retreat into pre-modernism. Unfortunately it has no questions to ask, only answers to give.

In 2016, we are still living in a setting in which all of these forces, these philosophies, are colliding. Let us be honest: they are probably colliding inside every one of us, and all the time. I have suggested elsewhere and often that the Church has a happy knack of reacting to all of this by pretending that none of this is its business, or simply by responding to one of the siren voices, usually the pre-modern. We have to hear all these voices and have something to say to each of them.

Richard Niebuhr distinguished between two types of proclamation in the revelation of God. The first is what he calls our external history; the other is our internal history. Our external history is the objective data of God's revelation as we encounter it in the inherited tradition of Christianity. It is the story of Creation, of Christ Incarnate, of redemption, and the entire Scriptural tradition. Our internal history, on the other hand, is the impact of Christianity as it relates to our time and to our context. It is a narrative of and for today, of the lived experience, and it is also a moral compass and a spiritual dimension that may be able to provide authentic hope in the midst of a chaos and despair that surround us.

Society today has been well inoculated against any communication of our external history. We must grasp the internal history better, articulate it coherently, and communicate it persuasively. But we should not start with that external history against which people have been successfully immunised. In the society in which we are set, it is only when we have learnt to express the internal history of realism, relevance, and an everyday application that actually works, that we can then point the world to the centrality of the external history on which the internal history is based.

At the end of it all, we must not fear secularisation. Always try to remember that famous message sent to his headquarters by the French general, Ferdinand Foch, at a crucial moment in the Battle for the Marne in September 1914: 'My centre is giving ground, my right is retreating … situation excellent, we advance'.

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Giving Santa the Sack: secularisation and interpassivity in the Church of England and its role in English higher education

Peter Green
Bishop Grosseteste University

The understanding of secularisation and secularism in the English context is in one crucial respect incomplete because it commonly assumes that belief is a function of individual, autonomous choice. In other words, secularisation cannot be explained simply in terms of an increasingly large aggregate of individuals who subjectively assume the common, European secularist position that religion has no place in public life: it must also be partly understood in terms of the reduction in the wider, non-churchgoing community's historic, interpassive delegation of belief to those who are – and who have been – involved in the worshipping life of the Church of England. This gap in the account of the nature of belief includes the way that secularisation and secularism impinge both on Church Universities in England and on the way that the Church of England operates more widely. Sometimes, of course, it is perfectly appropriate to treat belief as an active, autonomous, subjectively assumed position: the mistake is to operate as though this is one of its necessary conditions.

At first sight, it is hardly novel to suggest that belief can be understood as intersubjective. What is less usual is to argue that it can be delegated by getting a proxy to believe passively on one's behalf which gives rise, to use an apparently paradoxical phrase, to 'belief in that in which one does not believe'. To put it another way, part of the phenomenon of 'disavowed belief' — or 'believing without believing' (to twist Davie's famous phrase) — has been one of the crucial underpinnings of the Church of England's position in English society and its depletion accounts for a crucial

dimension of secularisation. But first it is necessary to outline the character of secularism as a subjectively assumed belief.

The drivers of secularism in contemporary England

In one of its most recently introduced Religious Studies modules entitled, *A332: Why is Religion Controversial?*, The Open University encourages its students to examine a number of phenomena, four of which seem to have a greater than average influence on the growth of secularism in the English setting.

First there is the phenomenon of militant Islamism. Secondly there are the perceptions induced by Christian Fundamentalist influences on US educational and foreign policy. The significance of what is happening in the US has a symbolic influence on the English (non-Catholic) setting that is far from irrelevant: amongst other things it has fed the perception that the Fundamentalist position is the authentic expression of Christianity, with the clear implication that theological liberals are therefore not 'being true to their scriptures' (Dawkins, 2006), and that the undertow created by this current of doctrinal authenticity in ecclesiastical politics has contributed to the patriarchal and homophobic attitudes imputed to the Church of England's reluctance to ordain women or to bless homoerotic intimacy and same-sex unions. Thirdly, there is the scandal of the sexual abuse of children by Christian clergy. Finally, there is the shift towards non-institutional forms of spirituality amongst those who might otherwise express a traditional religious affiliation: the phenomenon often labelled as 'spiritual but not religious'.

Taken together, what emerges from these controversies is an image of religion (including Christianity in general) as patriarchal, homophobic, divisive, violently intolerant, anti-scientific, obscurantist, morally bankrupt, authoritarian, and uninterested in the personal realisation of its adherents.

Directly or indirectly, all of these issues (among others) seem to lap up on the shores of Chaplaincy in Higher Education and in the wider academy. However, all of them largely assume that attitudes towards religion are shaped by beliefs that are directly assumed by identifiable individuals – in other words, one can notionally quantify by conventional opinion-polling methods the extent to which these issues affect popular sympathy for secularism. The same can be said of a number of versions of, and responses to, the secularisation thesis. It also includes Grace Davie's hypothesis about 'believing without belonging': when she speaks of 'religious life […] not so much disappearing as mutating [because] the sacred undoubtedly persists and will continue to do so':[21] this too effectively conceives of religion either largely or entirely as something subjectively assumed by individuals who can therefore be enumerated. Even her concept of *vicarious religion* will be seen to be significantly distinct from interpassive delegation because it is haunted by the idea of belief as something subjectively assumed when she describes it as

> [a] religion performed by an active minority […] on behalf of a much larger number, who […] (implicitly at least) not only understand, but, quite clearly, approve of what the minority is doing.[22]

Hidden within all of these is, of course, an ontological assumption: belief is conceptualised as something ultimately rooted in a discrete, homuncular subjectivity, i.e., the classic 'sovereign' individual, whose existence is routinely problematised by theories

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[21] Quoted in Bowman 2009 p.75
[22] Quoted in Collins-Mayo *et al*. 2010 p.8

that directly or indirectly owe a debt to Marxism. However, even though what follows is an application of ideas from an avowed Marxist, it is not logically necessary even to have left-wing sympathies to doubt the viability of the autonomous, Kantian subject that is the ultimate target of this mode of analysis. What is more, the ghost of this assumption sometimes haunts some expressions of Marxist ideology: part of Žižek's account of interpassivity seems to be a critique by implication of the Althusserian assumption that the fourth and final stage of the process of interpellation/subjectivisation requires the implicitly autonomous subject to say, 'Amen'.[23]

The problem with the postulate of homuncular subjectivity

For Pfaller[24] and Žižek, belief cannot be understood simply in terms of a mental state: actions (including what theologians sometimes call 'works') are also manifestations of belief, whether or not accompanied by a conscious assumption of some underlying metaphysical position. This is rooted in Žižek's emphasis on 'the objectivity of belief'.[25] Considered in these terms, traditional Christian theology, whilst replete with assertions that belief can be understood as the expression of a homuncular concept of human subjectivity, is nevertheless predictably ambiguous—indeed, any fundamentally anti-Pelagian theology cannot by definition accept it without qualification. In our Anglican tradition, in the *XXXIX Articles*, the tenth Article on Free-Will states,

> we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us.[26]

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[23] Althusser 1966 p.59
[24] Pfaller 2007 p.35
[25] Žižek 1989 pp.33-35
[26] *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 340

This position is echoed in the Collect for the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity (and in cognate fashion many places elsewhere):

> O God, forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee; Mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts.[27]

Even St Paul's conception of coming to faith as expressed in Romans 10 unavoidably calls into question an autonomous process of subjectively assuming belief:

> How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? (Romans 10.14-15a)

Belief in this account is dependent on the existence of the preacher: it is not wholly centred on the believer; it is, at the very least, decentred, intersubjectively located between the preacher and the believer. Pfaller and Žižek's concept of interpassivity is not identical with this although there is an important overlap between the two. For the purposes of this argument, however, what these quotations show is that conceptualisations of belief as the result of fully autonomous acts of will are not, as already suggested, compatible with an anti-Pelagian theological position: saving faith can never be seen as the act of an entirely discrete sovereign will. To assert otherwise is to reduce the dependence of the believer on grace. So, despite the fact that it is not identical with the anti-Pelagian conception of belief (after all it is a theological rather than a phenomenological postulate) what is interpassivity as articulated by Pfaller and Žižek?

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[27] *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 114

Interpassivity and 'real semblance'

Perhaps one of the clearest examples of interpassivity that Žižek routinely gives is that of the parent who encourages her child to believe in Santa. The parent, of course, does not believe in Santa: she knows perfectly well that it is she who is creeping into the child's room on Christmas Eve to put presents in the stocking. Nevertheless, she derives satisfaction from the thought that her daughter believes. Žižek goes on to point out rather mischievously that the child often spots the parent's satisfaction and continues to act as though she believed after discovering that Santa does not exist, in order not to deprive her parent of pleasure. To render this into the Lacanian jargon favoured by Žižek, the parent delegates onto the child the *passive* state of belief in Santa. In his terminology, the child is the *subject supposed to believe* in Santa. In a society that is being cumulatively disenchanted, one form of resistance seems to have used the mechanism of the delegation of belief on the basis of a 'subject supposed to believe'. In so doing it can serve as a guarantor of a desirable belief that we cannot bring ourselves to assume fully. This goes hand-in-hand with another concept elaborated by Žižek: the idea that mere appearance can also be 'real'.

The concept of *real semblance* which is intimately tied into that of *the objectively subjective* as Žižek denotes it [28] is meant to be understood as a Hegelian paradox. He gives the example of being confronted by a judge who we can see is patently weak and corrupt and yet also appears to us to possess an aura of authority by virtue of the position into which he has been installed. For Žižek, this is indicative of the whole way in which the symbolic order which structures our perception of the world operates. In terms of the Church of England, one can recall the stock figure (so often played in my childhood by Derek Nimmo) of the unworldly comedy vicar who was nevertheless invested with a kind of

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[28] *The Interpassive Subject*, para 23

amused respect and (for some) still possessed an aura of holiness. Again, the depletion of the symbolic underpinning that once bestowed a real semblance on clergy and the devout is a dimension of secularisation that is insufficiently accounted for and illuminated by the application of this concept as developed by Žižek.

Interpassivity and real semblance as they operate in the Church of England and higher education

The concept of interpassivity suggests that we delegate certain forms of (passive) engagement that are either too tiring or too dangerous to implement actively, or, in the case of Santa Claus, beyond our ability to assume subjectively in all of their fullness. These tasks are demanded of us by the way the world into which we have been thrust is invested with symbolic meanings. Parish churches were often confronted by people who, if pushed, might say, in the 'Santa Claus' mode of interpassivity, 'I don't myself believe the stuff you guys claim to believe, but I'm rather grateful that you do'. As part of his elaboration of the interpassivity hypothesis, Žižek also defines 'culture' in terms of *disavowed belief*—'I don't believe it myself, but I participate in this event because it's part of my culture'. For some, the Church of England was part of culture in this sense. Perhaps the most vivid manifestation of this as it bears on secularisation in England was former Prime Minister John Major's evocation, as part of his 'Back to Basics' campaign, of 'the old maids bicycling to communion through the morning mist'—perhaps one of the most specifically identified 'subjects supposed to believe' of recent political history. The fact that Major was not, it seems, trying to encourage an increase in attendance at communion suggests rather potently that he was exemplifying culture in terms of disavowed belief. However, the relevance of this to the environment of Higher Education in England might seem to be less than immediate and

the reason may lie in part in the generational divide that inevitably shapes the average University.

Those who drive policy and teach in Universities are more likely to be in the more secularist Generation X, or have lived within very close proximity to it. They will also be more practised in scrutinising common-sense and implicit beliefs, although this does not exempt them from engaging in their own forms of interpassive delegation as Žižek potently argues.[29] In the case of Generation Y/Millennial students, the story is more complicated partly because, in true postmodern mode, research seems to suggest that there is in those cohorts a less hostile attitude towards religion alongside a higher degree of religious ignorance.[30] But to rely on the mere datum of reduced hostility to religion is of itself another invitation to fall into the trap of assuming that belief subsists in the conscious assent of an aggregate of discrete and autonomous subjectivities. The question for Anglicans seeking to respond to the secularisation process in higher education and the secularist agenda must include some kind of assessment of the way in which delegated belief operates in our setting. For this another theoretical tool from Žižek/Lacan needs to be introduced: deciphering the way that the 'big Other' operates. This is crucial because, for Žižek,

> All concrete versions of this 'subject supposed to believe' […] are stand-ins for the big Other.[31]

The big Other and interpassivity

The 'big Other' is the Lacanian way of speaking about the fantasmatic audience before whom we perform our lives which emerges from the early stages of human development: it follows on from the time when the infant begins to be aware that the way it appears to others is not the same as the way in which it appears

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[29] *The Interpassive Subject,* para 13
[30] Collins-Mayo *et al.* 2010 p.52
[31] *The Interpassive Subject*, para 2

to itself. When we do something that makes us experience intense embarrassment and the people we are with all truthfully and fruitlessly assure us that we have not lost our dignity in their eyes, the one in whose eyes we *have* made a fool of ourselves is the big Other. And, crucially for our purposes, for Žižek as for Lacan, *'l'Autre n'existe pas'* (the big Other does not exist).[32] And because, for Žižek, our conceptualisation of the way in which we appear to others is unavoidably chaotic, interpassivity must be understood as one of the ways in which we try to manage the contradictory and excessive demands of this fantasmatic construct—an entity that is pressingly real in subjective terms but objectively non-existent. And he argues, as an atheist, that one of the many forms taken by the big Other is that which monotheists label with the name, 'God'.

However, 'God' is not the only big Other generated by social existence. Examples of the big Other in the modern world include, for example, the devout communist, back in the day, for whom the big Other might be the Party in its abstract, ideal form. For the *fashionista*, the big Other stares back at the subject through the pages of the fashion magazines. In each case, the big Other plays a crucial role in the way in which real semblance is constructed. In Žižek/Lacanian terms, secularisation can also be explained as a shift in the demands made by the big Other: once upon a time it demanded that people at the very least interpassively delegate the task of believing in God as a kind of ethical guarantor of the community's values, but now it has shifted its gaze. The rescription of the big Others that are dominant in higher education in England has resulted in the fact that the Church of England has long since ceased to be a popular object of the interpassive delegation that underpinned its symbolic role in the educational community in previous generations.

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[32] Žižek, 1997

A telling index of interpassivity in higher education is the use of the chapel. Where universities have them, chapels are sometimes more widely appropriated today as secular exhibition or performance spaces. Or sometimes they are acquiring the aura of a museum of one aspect of the institution's past, and this can be an indication of the identity of new big Others. This too can be explained in terms of a rescription of the real semblance of university chapels. Not only are artistic performance and exhibition some of the most explicit ways in which some communicate with their big Other, there has been a long march for a century or more in which culture (underpinned by disavowed belief) has been rescripted to become the medium of 'spiritual' expression.

More pointedly, it seems possible that a crucial area of interpassive delegation is in the product of academic study itself. Recent research into Christianity and the University experience in England indicates that the religious attitudes of students are barely touched by what they learn in lectures, seminars, or laboratories. Religious attitudes are far more deeply shaped by peer groups.[33] Some of the more obvious objects of interpassive delegation take the form of large piles of library books many of which will be looked at fleetingly but which (in a telltale of interpassivity) need to be on display on or near the student's work space. And inanimate objects as well as people can be the object of interpassive transference: Žižek frequently evokes the examples of the Buddhist prayer-wheel or of his VHS recorder that he sets to record more programmes than he gets round to watching, or the canned laughter on TV comedy programmes that mechanically relieves us of the burden of having to actually laugh ourselves.[34] But books interpassively read on our behalf are nothing new: undergraduates (especially in more textually-based subjects) have been skimming over and filleting books and articles as part of an

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[33] Guest *et al*. 2013 p.196
[34] *The Interpassive Subject*, para 15

academic bluff for many decades. The bluff is also a key symptom of interpassivity: one interpassively delegates tasks demanded by the big Other that one does not have the time or energy to undertake oneself. However, recent decades have seen an important shift in the nature of the employment market that may have subtly shifted the character of this particular object of interpassive delegation.

It is becoming a truism that most of today's graduates from English universities must prepare themselves for at least one change of career in the course of their paid employment. Meanwhile, the big Other demands with a new intensity that we all get degrees with subject specialisms whilst simultaneously expressing only a passing interest in the actual content of the degree and demanding a bundle of transferable skills rather than subject knowledge. This neatly fits the tendency of the big Other to impose contradictory demands on the subject: 'Gain a scholarly grasp of medieval history—your future employment will never require you to have a scholarly grasp of medieval history'. In the face of this many a student is too tired or too distracted or too confused by this increasingly intense and paradoxical demand so, in the manner of many a student of previous generations, they display before the big Other a desk full of books that are sometimes given little more than a desultory glance and we itemise them in a reference list at the end of a written assignment.

Resisting secularism

The real work of resisting secularism in England will most likely consist of a direct engagement with subjectively assumed belief based on a radical improvement in the quality of apologetics (a task in which those who have the relevant academic skills will doubtless play a very important role). However, this should be accompanied by insights from the way that interpassivity works or in an astute reading of the cultural generation of various forms of the big Other. Theologically, an anti-Pelagian Christian would

be clear that any resistance to secularism is ultimately dependent on grace. All of this, broadly speaking, encompasses a field far larger than that of higher education. Nevertheless, given these general presumptions, what can an awareness of interpassivity specifically in the field of higher education yield that may offer a pointer, however tentative, towards the reassertion of a Christian ontology? Almost inevitably the answer will consist partly in something whose real semblance is not at first sight religious.

Perhaps one of the more subversive acts in response to the big Other that increasingly demands that we study subjects in depth for little or no instrumental reason is one that is suggested by the secular scholar of interpassivity, Gijs Van Oenen, and which resonates rather startlingly with the Natural Law tradition in Christian ethics: one of the ways to expose the formation of this big Other might be in the recovery of attention to the *telos* of the activity of higher education. Van Oenen asserts that it is one of the general features of interpassivity that it 'implies a lack of interest in the aims and goals of our actions'[35]—a teleological problem if ever there was one.

It follows that one of the more subversive acts that Christians in higher education can do is to draw attention to the thing-in-itself of study: the championing of education, in whatever discipline, for its own sake. At the most rudimentary level, this can be achieved by doing something strangely anomalous in the experience of many undergraduates of traditional school-leaver age: the act of expressing a genuine interest in the object of study; or by suggesting that developing a genuine engagement with it has a revolutionary potential. For some, albeit for a small handful (perhaps the leaven in the lump), the way back to a faith which they can subjectively assume as opposed to one that they delegate interpassively out of a sense of exhaustion will be symbolically induced by identifiable Christians (who are inevitably supported

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[35] Van Oenen, 2006, para 9

by the real semblance of their credal identity) who point out that the market has little or no interest in the subject specialism named on their degree certificate: it ignores the *teloi* of things and people by encouraging us to become endlessly transferable, and therefore interchangeable. For some, perhaps very few, being reintroduced to the *teloi* of things is a path to the reawakening of the sense of their own divinely ordained *telos* aside of the demands of the market.

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Secularism, sin, and higher education: a Christian perspective

Mark Garner
Whitelands College, University of Roehampton

Secularism

It is a commonplace to describe contemporary Western society as 'secular' and to regard its increasing secularisation as an ineluctable process. These claims are usually welcomed or deplored, depending on one's standpoint, but less frequently challenged. Nonetheless, it is not clear precisely what they mean, or on what grounds the state of affairs they describe is to be approved or disapproved of. Close examination shows that, in fact, *secular* and its related terms are used to express different—at times widely different—things. Fifty years ago, Shiner identified six distinct concepts to which these terms refer, and concluded:

> In both the empirical and interpretive work on secularization today, the lack of agreement on what secularization is and how to measure it stands out above everything else.[36]

It seems that the situation has not been significantly clarified in the intervening years. The philosopher of law, Iain Benson, argued in 2004 that in a landmark ruling the Supreme Court of Canada had erroneously conflated the term *secular*, which is value-neutral with respect to religion, with *secularism*, which is an anti-religious ideology. A recent survey of historical and contemporary literature states that, 'depending on the questions they ask, scholars offer various classifications of secularism':

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[36] Shiner 1967, p. 207

Secularism may indicate a worldview, an ideology, a political doctrine, a form of political governance, a type of moral philosophy, or a belief that the scientific method is sufficient to understanding the world in which we live. Defining "secularism" is additionally complicated because of its proximity to the notion of "secularization." While these terms have distinct analytic meanings and purposes, they are also closely related.[37]

It is essential, therefore, in considering the implications of secularism for Anglican higher education, to begin by clarifying what we are talking about. This is particularly so in the light of the appropriation of these terms by certain theologians of an earlier generation.[38]

The term *secular* and its cognates *secularism*, *secularist*, and *secularisation* have evolved in usage and application over many years. *Secular* and *secularisation* have been in use since the Middle Ages, with reference originally to clerical status and later to the sequestration of religious property. In mid-nineteenth century Britain *secularism* and *secularist* came into being in relation to the political principle that religious teachings and institutions should not have a privileged status in the affairs of the nation-state.[39] In this context, these words became associated with polemic, and continue to carry evaluative baggage in our own times.

The fundamental cause of the ambivalence in both meaning and value of *secular* (etc.) is a subtle but highly significant distinction between views of the status of religion in the life of society. In their polarised forms one view is that the character of the institutions of state, and of what is acceptable public discourse, should not be determined by religious doctrines *per se* (although they may be

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[37] Jakelić 2010, pp. 51 and 49
[38] E.g., van Buren 1963; Mascall 1965
[39] Kiddie 2003

compatible with doctrine). The other is that religion should have no public presence at all. McClay[40] labels these views, respectively, *negative* and *positive* secularism. These terms are slightly unfortunate, owing to their evaluative associations, but they are useful, provided we interpret them as purely descriptive. McClay defines *positive secularism* as the championing of 'established unbelief and [the protection] of strictly individual expressive rights'. It is, explicitly or tacitly, anti-religious.[41]

Secularism and higher education

As far as higher education, at least in modern Western society, is concerned, positive secularism underlies an implicit assumption that insights from religious faith have no place in the world of learning and scholarship.[42] In this environment, religious faith is typically tolerated only insofar as it remains private, on a par, for example, with personal aesthetic preferences. To allow it any role in the scholarly enterprise (with the possible exception of disciplines in which religion is an object of study, such as Theology and Comparative Religions) would be to intrude irrational subjectivity, which would militate against reason and critical inquiry.

> Secularistic thought is committed to indifference to or rejection or exclusion of theistic thought about the entire world, inclusive of human beings.[43]

Powlinson refers to this mindset as 'secularising the data of human experience'[44]:

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[40] McClay 2000, p.63. Williams 2007 employs the terms *programmatic* and *procedural* secularism with very similar import to, respectively, McClay's *positive* and *negative* secularism.

[41] Arthur 2009, p. 232

[42] Experience in Higher Education suggests that, outside of Theology departments, this is a *de facto* pedagogical principle, but as the principle is seldom explicitly stated, such an impression is difficult to validate.

[43] Powlinson 1984, p. 272

The human mind persistently tends to rule God out, as though the person of God were irrelevant to true knowing.[45]

If pressed, most Christians engaged in higher education would reject a view of learning that explicitly excluded the divine, but the intellectual ethos of the academy is so pervaded by positive secularism that it is difficult to avoid adopting its assumptions:

> [W]ithin academia and education more generally, there appears to be an acceptance without question of the philosophical necessity of the secular position.[46]

Furthermore, it is one thing to argue that faith has a contribution to learning; quite another thing to specify what an approach to learning that incorporates faith insights might look like. In what ways would it inform a more engaging, insightful, or intellectually rigorous university education? It is beyond the scope of one article to furnish a comprehensive answer to this question, but any answer must be predicated on an explicit rationale for refusing to adopt the positive secular position: we have to offer a counter-argument, not simply a counter-assertion.

In relation to higher education, secularism adopts certain propositions (or, more frequently, simply makes certain assumptions) which a Christian perspective must challenge. A hard-line, positive secularist position is that religion is inherently anti-intellectual, being irrational and hence contrary to the spirit of scientific inquiry.

> According to a view that has long dominated academic and popular discourse, the history of secularism in the West is a

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[44] Powlinson 1984, p. 273
[45] Powlinson 1984, p. 274
[46] Arthur 2009, p. 228

battle of reason, progress, and modernity against religion, conservatism, and tradition.[47]

A more tolerant position, aligned to negative secularism, is that, whatever its putative value may be to personal psychological well-being, religion is simply irrelevant to scholarship, except perhaps — and some secularists would contest even this — as an object of study in its own right.

Secularism and sin

Critical rebuttals of these claims of secularism have been made by various Christian apologists and scholars, [48] and they are not addressed in this paper. The aim here is to contribute to the discussion concerning a faith-based approach to higher education by drawing attention to the importance to this discussion of the much-neglected Christian doctrine of original sin. There is no place for the concept of sinfulness in a positive secularist[49] paradigm of education, and yet sin is a ubiquitous datum of human experience and endeavour. It is therefore relevant to the pursuit and application of scholarship in virtually any field.

It is probably fair to say that, within Christian thinking, the understanding of the term 'sin' is generally unproblematic, notwithstanding debates in academic theology about specific aspects of harmatological doctrine. It is fundamental that sin is 'original sin' (which may be more revealingly termed 'innate sinfulness'): that all humanity is fundamentally fallen — the concept underlying the Greek *harmatia* is 'missing the mark'. We human beings are unable through our own efforts to attain the standards

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[47] Jakelić 2010, p. 50
[48] E.g., Chesterton 1919; Wolfe 1997; Baker & Miles-Watson 2008; Gillespie 2008
[49] In the remainder of this paper, unless otherwise stated, *secular(ism/ist)* implies positive secularism.

required by God: 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God'.[50] In McGrath's words,

> there is something inherently wrong with human nature, something that makes it self-centred, rebellious, and disobedient'.[51]

This is not a negative, pessimistic doctrine: on the contrary, it provides an explanation for, and a restitutionary response to, the manifest failings—falling short of God's glory—to which our whole race is subject.[52] It teaches the need for repentance and acceptance of God's unfailing readiness to forgive.

No doubt some who adopt a secularist paradigm explicitly reject the doctrine of sin, but the very large majority appear simply to ignore it. Either way, there is no place within secularism for a concept of sin (and consequently no notion of guilt before God, nor of redemption and justification). This absence becomes manifest in various ways, each based on unwarranted assumptions, and occasionally on specious reasoning, because anyone studying human nature and history has to account for the patent imperfections of human beings.

> In this orthodox [Christian] understanding of reality, human nature was fallen and would remain so to the end of history; man's historical experience had always been and would always be a *struggle beset with* error—with passivity, remissness, and malevolence.[53]

It is stating the obvious to say that, for disciplines in which the object of study is humanity itself, pride, greed, duplicity,

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[50] Romans 3[23]
[51] McGrath 1993, p. 152
[52] Chesterton 1919 refers to 'the good news of original sin'.
[53] Beum 1975, p. 56; emphasis original

interpersonal and intercommunal antipathy and the like are basic data of human life. They provide a constant underlying theme to history, art, philosophy, politics, and literature; they are a significant factor in, and often a motivation for, the numerous facets of human behaviour and experience studied across the social sciences.

> It is no surprise that sin should be most evident intellectually when people think about people.[54]

By contrast, the physical sciences do not typically include as objects of study phenomena which so clearly manifest human failings and flaws. Nonetheless, as human activities embedded in and arising from social contexts, these disciplines are subject to the shortcomings of our nature, shortcomings that cannot be explained away or, as is more commonly the case, simply ignored. For, whilst the conduct of scientific research itself may be a paradigm for the disinterested search for truth, history shows it has a dark side. The scientific method has indubitably made extraordinary contributions to knowledge, and its applications have resulted in benefits to human life that can scarcely be overstated. It has also, however, been misused for egregious ends, in which scientists themselves have often been complicit. This is perhaps most evident in totalitarian regimes—historical examples include Nazi Germany[55] and the Soviet Union[56]—but no less deplorable is the improper exploitation of science in liberal societies by the military, the multinational pharmaceutical industry,[57] and others. Against this background, the optimistic notions that of itself science is an untainted model for all inquiry and intellectual achievement, and that it will eventually resolve all philosophical and social problems, are untenable.

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[54] Powlinson 1984, p. 276
[55] See, e.g., Waldinger 2012
[56] See, e.g., Joravsky 2013
[57] See, e.g., Goldacre 2014

Any reasonable educationalist does not deny these facts: they are incontrovertible. Secularism, however, differs from Christianity in what can be inferred from them. If they are not evidence of original sin, they must be given an alternative interpretation. One is that they are unfortunate vestiges of a past that is being superseded by intellectual and socio-political advances. Underlying this explanation is a presumption of human perfectibility and the inevitability of moral and spiritual progress. This naïve view of human nature, espoused by large majority of scholars and social commentators, can be maintained only by focussing on the incontrovertible examples of human successes, whilst overlooking our constantly repeated and sometimes catastrophic failures.

> [Secularist] modernity implies a heterodox but pervasive immanentism in the form of a belief in the progression of history toward a condition of perfection to be brought about by social-political action under the hegemony of science and technics—or of New Left pastoralism or New Pacifist 'love'. The extent of our superiority to the past and the degree of perfection we are going to achieve have occasioned arguments within the ranks of modernity, but the spirit of 'salvation through world-immanent action' remains the definitive bond.[58]

A related approach is to treat sin, wickedness, or moral failure as exceptional, showing no more than that human progress has not yet attained its end state. They are, as it were, outliers on the scatter plot of all human behaviour, and, as such, they are not evidence of universal human proclivities. An individual person or group that perpetrates acts of appalling enormity, such as systematic genocide, is regarded as not only inhumane, but in a real sense non-human. Less atrocious deeds can be explained as equally

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[58] Beum 1975, p. 57

atypical: there is always one (but probably only one) 'bad apple in a barrel'.

This approach contrasts with the Christian doctrine that each of us has the potential to sell his or her soul to the devil. As Chesterton put it somewhere, anyone can fall from any position at any time — specifically, I can fall from my position now. Furthermore, exceptionalism does not take into account the fact that the evil consequences of misdeeds, from the most egregious to the localised and relatively minor, are ultimately possible only through the complicity of others. In Edmund Burke's well-known dictum, all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.

Another approach is to attribute the cause of immoral behaviour (however that is defined) to contextual factors that lie outside any individual's control. The causes may be physical and/or social: poverty, lack of education, a dysfunctional family environment, and the like, in which vice breeds. The person who does bad things is a victim of circumstances; in King Lear's words, 'more sinned against than sinning'. This approach is sometimes buttressed by a relativist position. Much 'bad' behaviour is not, in this view, inherently immoral; merely condemned as such by those with different values, particularly those in-groups with a desire to defend their own socio-political power against the out-group. Like beauty, vice is in the eye of the beholder. A causal contextual explanation, or redefinition, of morality avoids calling into question an optimistic belief in the perfectibility of humanity. If the social-scientific knowledge and political will are applied to ameliorate the context, and to inculcate a more tolerant and inclusive world-view, the problem of what Christians call sin will be finally solved.

Experience suggests that such confidence is unfounded. Media reports show that, even in highly-favourable social and physical

environments, criminality—to say nothing of sinful but non-criminal behaviour and attitudes—is as much a feature of modern life as it ever was, although the specific nature of the crimes and sins may be different. The relativist position assumes an underlying human consensus on what is right and wrong—what McGrath calls a 'moral Esperanto which can be abstracted from the moral traditions of humanity'.[59] In our conflict-ridden, pluralistic world, we are in perhaps a stronger position than our predecessors to argue that such a view is untenable. Intolerance and prejudice may have become less overt in some social groups, but they are remarkably persistent, even increasing, in others.

We cannot, however, simply dismiss *a priori* these secularist interpretations of sin. There is no doubt that poverty and dysfunctional social structures have been, and continue to be, associated with certain forms of immorality. This was a motivating factor for many of the Christian social reformers in nineteenth-century Britain and elsewhere (which, as Erdozain argues,[60] ultimately led to a materialist reinterpretation of sin in the church, with consequences that are still felt in our own times[61]). A Christian perspective is to acknowledge the influence of context without relativising the doctrine of sin.

In everyday discourse, the concept of sins is frequently reconceived in terms of condonable mistakes or understandable misjudgements arising from physical or mental frailty—but not from inherent sinfulness. In this view, many a sinful act is on a par with, and no more culpable than, a miskick in football or a typographical error. Here, too, the church has at times contributed to attenuating its own doctrine of original sin. In the nineteenth century, the theologian HP Liddon warned that

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[59] McGrath 1993, p.155
[60] Erdozain 2011
[61] Kelsey 1993

The tendency to see sin as but 'the action of our sensuous nature, or mere 'weakness' and 'failure', rather than the soul's permanent desire to rid itself of God, was … turning Christianity into a dispensary of fixes and antidotes, obscuring its central message.[62]

The materialist assumption that a 'sin' is merely a mistake (and, equally, a puritanical assumption that a mistake is a sin) is a departure from the orthodox Christian approach. This is evidenced by what is regarded as an appropriate response to the committing of each. The consequences, to oneself or others, of either should be acknowledged to those affected; an apology, and where relevant, restitution should be made. Sin, however, must give rise also to repentance: the Christian response is to admit the sin (even if it has no obvious consequences for others), confess it to God, and claim the grace of God's forgiveness. In the secularist approach, however, there is no conception of a systematic way of moving from the failure to the success, the evil to the good—other than by determined self-improvement. In other words, for neither societal nor personal sin, as secularly understood, is there the ever-present possibility of God's grace—of confession, forgiveness, and righteousness granted through justification. It is secularism, and not Christianity, that is pessimistic.[63]

Without a concept of sin, neither moral education specifically, nor, more generally, higher education that claims to be (in the current terminology) values-based, cannot be fully achieved. Full achievement requires an honest and robust understanding of human nature. I contend that such an understanding is not possible within a positive-secularist, materialistic paradigm (whether implicit or explicit). This is a challenge, therefore, that contemporary thinking about the relevance of the Christian faith to higher education must meet. We must develop an approach to

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[62] Quoted in Erdozain 2011, p. 60
[63] See Chesterton 1919, particularly chapter 2, 'On the negative spirit'.

scholarship and pedagogy that takes seriously the doctrine of original sin.

It is important to stress that this not to advocate a return to the model of Christian, confessional education that, in earlier generations, was conducted in our church-foundation institutions. This is neither desirable nor possible in the contemporary ethos of higher education, which is secular, at least ostensibly, only in the negative sense. Negative secularism holds that the tenets of any faith must not be taken as normative or privileged in any way in education. As we have argued, however, negative secularism has, whether by design or by default, given rise to an all-pervading positive secularism, which holds that the tenets of any faith *must not have any place* within education.

What we can do is to problematise the presumption of inevitable progress and human perfectibility. This is not a straightforward task, but I believe it can be done sensitively and according to the accepted norms of academic inquiry, by including all data about human nature within our field of study. According to this criterion, sinfulness should not be our sole, or even primary, focus, but neither must it be ignored or marginalised. How it influences scholarship and teaching will vary considerably from subject to subject. Nonetheless, it should be at least considered as an explanation of some of the evidence with which virtually any discipline is concerned and by which its academic and/or societal credentials are evaluated.

Implications for education

Although there may be individuals and institutions with ideas and experience to offer in this regard, there is a noticeable gap in the academic literature relating specifically to the relationship of the doctrine of original sin to educational philosophy or practice. A great deal of careful thinking and trialling of teaching strategies

remains to be undertaken, and it is too soon yet to offer practical advice. It may be helpful, however, to finish with some caveats, if we are to avoid simplistic solutions that are no better-founded than the assumptions of secularist education

One pitfall to be avoided is to adopt an outmoded perspective that belonged to a time in our own history in which the Christian faith, if not always practised, was at least largely accepted as morally normative. It was relatively unproblematic then to interpret what was widely regarded as unacceptable behaviour and attitudes as manifestations of sinfulness. For example, sexual intercourse outside marriage was adultery, and therefore morally wrong. The large majority assumed that, and the fact that adultery continued to occur demonstrated the persistence of temptation and the basic sinfulness of human beings. This worldview may have had its uncertainties and contradictions, but it was clear. There may have been disagreement about how, and how severely, a certain adulterer should be judged, but not whether he (or more commonly, given the prevailing gendered hypocrisy, she) was in fact doing anything wrong at all. Teachers could teach accordingly. In the contemporary context, by contrast, it can no longer be taken as a given that adultery is inherently morally wrong. This is a consequence of the more general phenomenon that a concept of sin now has little meaning—and hence salience—for the large majority of students, or their teachers, in higher education.[64] One cannot even presume a consensus about what is meant by terms such as 'good' and 'bad', 'moral' or 'immoral'.

Secondly, particularism or sectarianism must not determine the concept of sin. A recognition of sinfulness must be predicated on the fallibility of human nature itself, and not on temporarily changeable societal values. Nor must it be defined by any specific sin that is for the moment the concern of one group of Christians.

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[64] In a 2002 survey seventy-four percent of Americans rejected the teaching of original sin (quoted in Jones 2011).

Legitimate disagreement over the interpretation of specific instances must not call into question the doctrine itself.

Thirdly, it is important not to undervalue the many undeniable acts of nobility, justice, and love of which all people are capable, or the many remarkable achievements of the human intellect, whether or not these acts and achievements have been motivated by religious faith. Notwithstanding the comments above, there is much to admire and be grateful for in what individuals and societies have accomplished throughout human history. These accomplishments are an important part of scholarship in all disciplines, but any discipline, if it is to be both profound and comprehensive within its field of study, must confront all the evidence of human capacities and proclivities. The argument that evidence of the positive outweighs the negative, and that human beings therefore are fundamentally good, merely demonstrates the *a priori* secularist assumption on which it is based. Moreover, it can paradoxically detract from the merit of virtuous acts, by underemphasising the frailties and temptations that have to be overcome in contributing to the common good.

To conclude, the doctrine of human sinfulness is fundamental to the Christian faith. Its implications for Christian thought and practice in relation to contemporary higher education learning and teaching have yet to be thoroughly explored. Accepting this challenge is essential to making a worthwhile contribution to the on-going conversation about faith and higher education, which is the purpose of the *Occasional Papers*.

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A Christian foundation: the creation of Foundation Music at the University of Winchester

June Boyce-Tillman
University of Winchester

BETWEEN

The grass blades on the landfill,

The shaman and the cleric
The hysteric and choleric

The slaying and the praying
And the coping and the hoping

In the fractured rapture
In the hole in the soul

At the crack
The lack

Might
Bite

The Contradiction of 'both'
Meets
The Paradox of 'and'

Rebirth.

(June Boyce-Tillman)

Introduction

This paper addresses the place of music within the Christian Foundation of a UK university looking at the Christian narrative as a source for interrogating dominant cultural narratives. It will examine how the establishment of a raft of musical activities outside the formal curriculum with inclusive value systems both 'queered' the values of the classical musical traditions[65] and, as the opening poem illustrates, retained a variety of value systems. This was done by including orate and literate traditions[66] alongside one another as equal but different, by abandoning auditions and by concentrating on the power of music to create community and provide meaning.[67] These principles will be set in the context of debates about the role religion can play in Higher Education, interrogating the Christian origins of higher education in the UK.[68]

The background and context of foundation music

The University of Winchester is an Anglican Foundation from the mid-nineteenth century (see below). Since my appointment there in 1989 it has been engaged with what this might mean in the contemporary world. Many strands underpinned my thinking in establishing an extra-curricular raft of musical activities—named because of its relation with the Anglican Foundation—with the following aims:

a. To enrich the student experience at the university by providing a variety of musical ensemble experiences (embracing cultural diversity and including student-led and student-initiated ensembles), and creating a smaller musical community within the wider university community;

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[65] Boyce-Tillman, 2007, 2014

[66] Ong, 1998

[67] Voegelin, 2010; Boyce-Tillman, 2016

[68] Turner 1996

b. To forge links with the local and national community through high profile performance events involving local community groups such as schools and choirs;

c. To represent the Christian ethical principles of the Anglican foundation of the university by serving the needs of the local community through such events as raising money for local charities and performing in venues involving vulnerable groups such as Winchester Community Prison;

d. To support the liturgical life of the university and beyond, including the Church Colleges and Universities Choirs festival, Winchester Cathedral and places of worship in the wider community.

Student involvement grew very quickly, and Foundation Music now includes about 600 students across the whole university. It has at least 25 ensembles including classical choirs, the Sounds of New Gospel Choir (taught orally), African drumming, jazz bands and barbershop ensembles.

Collegiality

The first aim was to enrich the student experience by a variety of inclusive musical experiences. It also explored the role of a small community within the wider university community, particularly for vulnerable students, and contributing to the university's retention of students. For example, one student who had failed a teaching practice, thus ending her aim to become a teacher, said that in this difficult transition period at least on a Monday night the King Alfred Singers was still the same. Thus Foundation Music embraced the idea of an inclusive, supportive community of learners in line with Christian principles. The inclusive nature is represented by the absence of auditions and a nurturing

leadership style[69] that sees mistakes as simply part of a learning journey.[70]

The administrative structure also reflected the idea of collegiality through placing it only loosely in the hierarchies of the university—so 'queering' power-based hierarchies. I set up what Charles Handy called a 'shamrock' structure,[71] in which each ensemble was self-contained and related directly to the centre, the Foundation Music Working Group. This structure proved to be one in which individual initiatives could be quickly enacted, because there was no hierarchy of committees to be navigated. So the development of new ideas was in the hands of those who had initiated them and close to the passion that had generated them.

The common good

The second aim was to forge links with the local and national community, so serving the wider public good. The Foundation Music ensembles fulfil a number of local engagements including weddings, charity concerts, evensongs in the cathedral, and my large scale pieces. This was also represented by the third aim: to represent Anglican ethical principles through raising money for local charities and performing in venues involving marginalised groups such as Winchester Community Prison.

This engagement challenges class, race and gender divides and engenders debates in the realm of ethics and morality. The contemporary philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre,[72] developed a virtue ethics based on a move from a single moral rationality to what constitutes a good or moral person, drawing on the pre-Enlightenment views of Thomas Aquinas. It involves university graduates being able to apply moral principles in the wider world. MacIntyre saw what is regarded as morally good as being worked

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[69] Holzman 2008
[70] Morgan and Boyce-Tillman 2016
[71] Handy 1995
[72] MacIntyre 2007

out by a community of practice not as an abstract intellectualisation. The end of moral theories he saw as finding expression in practice in the life of both a community and an individual. The theologian, David Ford, takes this up in asking that universities offer students 'all round educational formation':[73]

> In a democratic society where all citizens are potentially agents in public life … the most important bit of 'impact' any university course can have is to help people become intelligent citizens.[74]

Rowan Williams suggests that this intelligent citizen needs to develop 'humane imagination' and 'empathy'.[75] Music is well placed to deliver this (Laurence, 2010). One student's regular engagement with the Singing for Wellbeing choir, for example, has led her to develop her skills in empathy and has led her to a career as a community musician.

The Christian heritage

The fourth aim was concerned with Christian ritual. This links Foundation Music with the area of a particular religion which is approached by different students through different perspectives depending on their own faith view. In the interests of hospitality to other faith traditions and representing the rise in the twenty-first century of an idea of spirituality (Illma,n 2012; Boyce-Tillman, 2013), an interfaith ritual was also developed entitled *Space for Peace* (Boyce-Tillman, 2011, 2012) which is described below. This particular event brings together ideas of a spirituality related to the interface between various religious traditions as in the opening poem.

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[73] Ford 2007, p. 319
[74] Williams, 2014, p. 38
[75] Williams, 2001, p. 271

Justice-seeking

Bearing in mind the emphasis on justice in the Christian narrative, I wished to challenge the prevailing classical music ideology (Boyce-Tillman, 2007; 2014), based on my immersion in feminist theological and musical critiques of heteropatriarchy (Boyce-Tillman, 2014). My social constructionist position (Foucault & Gordon, 1980) included examining the impact of political, social, research and knowledge-production on the way in which music has been constructed. I had in my thinking been alerted to:

> the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically.[76]

Much of the literature on Christianity in higher education sees justice-seeking as following the values represented in the Jesus narrative. Carter deals with this in detail as he explores how this shaped the early Christian church as an alternative community to the dominant culture.[77] Jesus was a challenger of the underpinning values of the political systems of his day.[78] There is a considerable literature on the role of education to produce informed citizens who both understand and can also challenge prevailing systems. Some theologians link this with a justice-seeking theology:

> A university is not a Church, but it has historically had something in common with some aspects of Church's life and priorities, including a concern for civic life.[79]

Such an approach links faith and knowledge in a concern for public life:

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[76] Sedgwick, 1994, p. 7
[77] Carter 2001
[78] Grey, 2015
[79] Williams 2012, p. 271

It respects our common places of pluralism and encounter. It recognises that persons of belief must be called to account for their faith and be prepared to justify themselves; but primarily, seeks to pursue a public vocation that is more interested in the well-being of humanity than narrow or partisan self-interest.[80]

So it is an area where students can explore the developing descriptors of 'spiritual but not religious' and 'spiritual' and also 'religious' and, as we shall see below, so develop their own meaning making systems.

Radical musical inclusion

I have drawn on the fields of philosophy, spirituality, ecclesiology and social psychology to construct a theory of radical musical inclusion. It has been influenced by the development of the field of dialogue using music in the work of Illman and Urbain.[81] In 'the plurality of self and other is peace'[82] and this needs more than intellectual tools [83] to provide "incarnating encounter' [84]. I developed structures for the bringing together of a variety of peoples through musicking over a period of 15 years, culminating in 2015 in *From Conflict to chorus - An Intermezzo for Peace* (based on letters, poems and songs from World War One), which included the Singing for Well-being choir (with people with diagnosed dementia) as well as a school for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties, a young man with learning difficulties who is visually impaired singing his own songs, community choirs, Hampshire schools and notated choral and orchestral parts. The challenge with groups of children with severe cognitive impairment and people in the later stages of dementia are the random sounds which they can create. These

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[80] Graham 2014, p. 52
[81] Illman 2010; Urbain (2008
[82] Levinas 1969, p. 203
[83] Illman 2009, p. 168
[84] Illman 2012, p. 60

were built into an event by having a composer working with their sounds on the night. As part of the orchestra, guns were reconstructed into a large human figure sculpture which was played by the children. In such an event the organiser (previously composer) becomes a frame builder that will encompass the skills of a variety of people. Composing becomes the building of a scaffold[85] in which everyone can realise their full potential.

Through such events Foundation Music seeks to embody social justice and develop students who will be prepared to challenge the status quo and have the strength to stand up for what they believe to be true. Responding to my more experimental musical works students often say that I taught them always to think outside of the box. Several have gone on to positions as community music enablers.

I was concerned to challenge, interrogate, and transform the dominant classical music paradigm, into which I had been initiated at Oxford University. I had been closely involved in community musicking, as celebrated by Small, who wanted to include the context and the underpinning value systems within the analysis of musical events:[86] a system based on process rather than product. The development of community music challenged the value systems governing the academy whose pursuit of musical excellence was based on the premise that truth is the same for everyone at all times,[87] resulting in a hierarchical view of singing groups and traditions:

> The worth and status of oral, improvised, informal or amateur music making can be eroded both explicitly … and in more subtle ways, by the use of terminology such as high

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[85] Holzman 2008
[86] Small 1998
[87] Sacks 2002, p. 19

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or low culture, amateur and professional musician, national, or local performer, and so on.[88]

The dominant singing traditions–often called classical—valued products rather than process, individual achievement over community building, challenging entry routes divorced from nurture and unity within its structures rather than the encompassing of diverse traditions and styles. So in the early twenty-first century there are two aesthetics alive associated with singing in UK society:

> The classical perspective on singing emphasizes performance, perfection and virtuosity - the standard or 'taproot' aesthetic that has been recognized in music education since its inception in the mid-1800s. The second aesthetic for singing stresses community building, diversity, group collaboration and relationship.[89]

Foundation Music supports effectively a wide variety of musical styles led by people of a wide variety of experience and expertise. These include orate and literate traditions [90] with differing leadership styles and performance traditions. With limited paid staffing it meant developing students' musical leadership skills and working with the wider community through an effective community engagement policy.

It meant also cooperative and collaborative activity. Kathleen McGill sees improvisatory techniques as drawing on female oral and collaborative culture.[91] She links this with women's desire for forms that enable social co-operation. Women favour forms that do not 'enact difference in oppositional terms'; instead, she sees

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[88] Morgan 2013, p. 29
[89] Pascale 2005, p. 167; author's quotation marks
[90] Ong 1982
[91] McGill 1991, p. 69

women as favouring forms where difference becomes 'multiple, inclusive and highly adaptive'.[92]

So the setting up of collaborative and co-operative ways of leading queers the individualised styles of leadership within the Western classical musical tradition.

Uniformity and unity

This thinking led me challenge the binary divide between the two aesthetics set out above, and to embrace the diversity. The dominant traditions, whether musical or theological, have often set up a positon based on uniformity of belief and/or practice. I wished to set up a unity that included diversity. This involves a respectful encounter with difference which may be a new experience for undergraduates:

> Deep learning is a phenomenon that has been quite widely researched and discussed in the educational literature. In our study it is the response of students who find their theological views have developed in breadth and depth….They become more critical of the accepted wisdom in the traditions from which they come and learn to live with questions and uncertainties with regard to their faith and ethics.[93]

This can include a critique of the church:

> Public theology, as I understand it, is not primarily and directly evangelical theology which addresses the Gospel to the world in the hope of repentance and conversion. Rather, it is theology which seeks the welfare of the city before protecting the interests of the church.[94]

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[92] McGill 1991, pp. 68-9
[93] Garner et al. 2015, p. 93
[94] Forrester 2004, p. 6

By encountering different musical traditions, student's own value systems are often challenged and they are asked to move along their own spiritual journey.

An ecclesiology of music

As I reflected on my experience in forming Foundation Music, I began to realise how I was drawing on my own Anglican roots. I had had a lifelong experience of the Anglican parish tradition in the UK, including the parish church choir which attempted to embrace all who wanted to join. These choirs (and indeed churches) were, in theory, inclusive but, in practice, often exclusive, particularly on grounds such as gender, disability and sexuality. I have theorised my musical philosophy using an ecclesiological frame. The four pillars of the traditional church were:

- Unity
- Holiness
- Catholicity
- Apostolicity

Drawing on the work of Fiorenza and Goss,[95] Steinwert queered these in order to produce a truly inclusive model of church.[96] Unity, she suggests, needs to be transformed from doctrinal uniformity (expressed traditionally in creedal statements) to solidarity, a concept central to the thinking of liberation theologians. In my musical thinking this has become the inclusion of a variety of styles (orate and literate) in the same piece to produce a unity that is not based on uniformity. My role as the composer is that of frame-builder, both rooted in the past and yet alive to new possibilities, often suggested by my interaction with the participants through co-creation.

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[95] Fiorenza 2000; Goss 2002

[96] Steinwert 2003

Holiness, in Steinwert's model, ceases to be individualised piety and becomes justice-seeking. Many of my musical events are concerned with justice like *The Great Turning* (2014)—with its concern for respect for the earth and ecology—and the restoring of respect for traditions and styles that have been downplayed and not honoured.

Catholicity, which is traditionally worked out in a form close to Roman imperialism, both in the so-called Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant traditions, especially in their colonial enterprises, needs to be about radical inclusion and the accepting of difference. My musical policy has been one of including everyone and trying to find a place where they fit.

Apostolicity ceases to be concerned with a patriarchal lineage, and becomes one of working out of what it means to be an apostle; in other words, committed action.[97] In musical terms, this is reflected in the immense stress on wellbeing and commitment through musicking, which is available to everyone, and encouraging students to assume leadership roles. The principles underpinning my work are thus a reworking of these pillars of the Church—unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity[98]—as an ecclesiology expressed through musicking.

Space for Peace

This ecclesiology is most clearly expressed in the project *Space for the Peace*. Its embracing of diversity sets the notion of carnival[99] within a cathedral space. The middle section of *Space for Peace* has been described as a 'musical sweet shop' by one member of the audience, because he could go round and sample a variety of delights as different groups simultaneously sing music from their own tradition. As we have seen, the Church has traditionally been very controlling not only in its dogma but also in its liturgies with

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[97] Steinwert 2003
[98] Boyce-Tillman 2007
[99] Bakhtin 1993

their fixed literate form. The central free improvisatory section has the sounds merging in and out with one another; this is like a carnival procession situated within an enclosed space. In this sense, it is like Charles Ives' *Fourth of July;* but here it is not controlled by the composer but by the performers and the audience. The celebratory improvisational approach enables performers to explore the possibilities of their own chosen style and work out their relation to other styles. The work is about process which is now merged with product. It is this that enabled the rabbi to approach the imam near the end of the piece and sing with him a shared verse.

Many comments following *Space for Peace* showed that a heteroglossaic space had been created by the inclusion of a multiplicity of voices. This term originated with Bakhtin in his analysis of the novel.[100] 'Fragment is the unit; juxtaposition is the method; collage is the result'. [101] It is seen as potentially transformative because of the musicker's power to construct their own meaning, in contrast to the authoritative discourse of religious dogma or the classical music tradition. This enables an exploration of a spirituality that embraces paradox and contradictions. The hybridity of voices was a source of delight to many participants:

> I particularly enjoyed the counterpoints produced by the solo singer and Rabbi Mark Solomon as we were singing in our spaces.[102]

The cathedral proved a space that was well-suited to mixing difference and containing differing voices effectively:

> It was an incredibly brave and innovative venture which worked brilliantly…your inspired idea of removing the

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[100] Bakhtin (1993

[101] http://www.cortlandreview.com/issue/33/hoagland_e.html (Accessed 3rd January 2010)

[102] Unpublished comment, 2009

pews and placing individual choirs in different areas and having them sing spontaneously meant every nook, cranny and nave was filled with the most incredible music. I loved the fact that you could walk around, sampling different styles and interpretations and, along the way, enjoy the surprise of a lone voice suddenly appearing from a balcony or behind a pillar.[103]

The opening of the event was more conventional, with choirs singing individual chants that fitted together as a quodlibet[104] and led those present gently into the idea of carnival:

> To a selection of pieces selected for the occasion by each of the choral groups was added a shared corpus of chants, including chants of forgiveness, and those honouring diversity and the earth, by Boyce-Tillman herself, plus the overarching anthem of *Shalom my friends*. From the chancel steps, where massed voices conducted by the composer delivered these melodies in unison, the performers processed to specific locations within the cathedral. There, as the audience moved around the building, free to join in, pray or listen, the singers were likewise at liberty to choose among their material, answering the music of neighbouring groups or responding spontaneously.

> From the Lady Chapel, a children's choir made fascinating duets with Just Sing It, a London-based peace group. In the nave, cleared medieval-style of all chairs, and maybe some of our preconceptions, the effects were especially rewarding. Amid echoes of Sydney Carter, English folksong and the *Missa di angelis* from beyond the chancel, of Taizé chant and South African Alleluias from the west door, and of Tallis from the aisle, the cantor sang from the pulpit. At one point

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[103] Unpublished comment, 2009

[104] A quodlibet is a piece in which several different tunes fit together effectively. This one is made up of seven short chants, some traditional and some by the author.

he paused to listen to the rich motet harmonies, before resuming his cantillation from Leviticus – a sweet moment.[105]

The event is a shift from the authoritative discourse of the Church with its regular stress on doctrinal uniformity and liturgical control, linked as it is with the classically notated musical tradition, to the creativity of a diverse group of people given freedom to exercise their own choices. It reflects a democratisation of liturgy/concert which frees up a space to give the possibility of greater freedom and celebration of diversity. It is a democratic project designed to foster co-operation (not least between the university and the local faith communities).

Many people talk about a powerful energy generated by the interactions. Because the construction was in the hands of all present rather than a single author, they were able to experience fully the spaces between them - the creative possibilities of chaos (as in the opening poem). A Jewish participant asked the Rabbi to sing Kaddish for a relative for whom it had not been sung. Some members of the audience formed an impromptu choir in an empty chapel. A liturgical dancer danced for quarter of an hour in the north transept. The freeing up of the space liberated the creativity of all present.

Throughout the piece the energy was felt to build with the stones creating echoing loops from the complex soundscape.[106] These are the elements of *communitas* described as a central part of Victor Turner's idea of liminality[107] which can be transformative:

> *Space for Peace* was one of the high points of my life. … The cathedral was cleared of chairs which was wonderful—one great echoing space. It was all about peace—calls for peace constantly mingling and changing. … I was able to sit and

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[105] Williams 2009
[106] Boyce-Tillman 2010
[107] Turner 1974; 1982

meditate on the stone floor in the middle of the North Transept, one of the most beautiful parts. It came to me that 'peace is possible'.[108]

At the end of this section everyone centres on a single note on which they sing a word for peace. So this immense diversity descends into a clear expression of unity. So unity and diversity are embraced within a single musical event.

Liberal education

Where does this approach of both valuing and accommodating difference sit within the context of a liberal education? How does this concept fit with a university with a Christian foundation? Higher education in the UK had a Christian foundation, as in medieval Oxford and Cambridge. This origin was reflected from its outset in three underlying principles:

- Love of Knowledge (*Amor scientiae*);
- Formation in a strong community of learners;
- Usefulness to society.

These formed the ecology of these early universities. The establishment of the teacher training colleges in the nineteenth century led to a tighter link with wider society through their links with schools. The universities, however, were never exclusively Christian. Although they had chapels and regular Christian worship, they were always hospitable to other faiths, notably the pagan traditions of Greece and Rome:

> All religious activities that take place in the university are voluntary activities. … We seek to encourage staff and students to express their beliefs and to engage in dialogue and constructive debate with colleagues on religious issues. We expect all our staff and students to abide by our anti-discrimination, equal opportunities and dignity at work

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[108] Unpublished comment, 2009

policies and would not tolerate the expression of belief that contravened these.[109]

The second principle was the creation of a strong community of learners, based on collegiality and the formation of students within a hospitable, ethical and godly community. The third was the serving of the public good, a vocational vision with the pursuit of knowledge that is useful to society. We have already seen these in the aims of Foundation Music.

Holmes[110] stressed the formation of persons, which he linked with the idea of a liberal education. He wanted education seen, not as the transfer of a compendium of useful knowledge, but as the shaping of persons, suggesting that teachers should continually interrogate the effect that they are having on their students rather than the information they are imparting:

> Liberal learning concerns itself with truth and beauty and goodness, which have intrinsic worth to people considered as persons rather than as workers, or in whatever role, alone.[111]

This would seem to be a Wisdom approach to learning as expressed in Winchester University's motto, *Wisdom ond lar* (wisdom and knowledge). Cardinal Newman clarified the relationship of faith to knowledge:

> If then a University is a direct preparation for this world, let it be what it professes. It is not a Convent, it is not a Seminary; it is a place to fit men [*sic*] of the world for the world. We cannot possibly keep them from plunging into the world, with all its ways and principles and maxims, when their time comes; but we can prepare them against

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109 Unpublished statement from the Foundation Committee of the University of Winchester 2011
110 Holmes 1987, pp. 24-5
111 Holmes 1987, p. 28

what is inevitable; and it is not the way to learn to swim in troubled waters, never to have gone into them.[112]

So the notion of embracing diversity in a collegial community which prepares people for the work of life is central to a liberal education.

Faith, meaning and the formation of the person

Holmes[113] sees that the integration of faith and learning must ultimately take place at the level of worldview which he calls 'a systematic understanding.' Part of the value of universities to society is that they can be independent places of debate and deliberation in the interests of the long-term ethical and intellectual ecology of our civilization.[114] Holmes describes the 'predicament of the modern mind' which is 'at a loss to know what life is all about'.[115] He sees the reason for this as the rejection of the idea of divine revelation, suggesting that universities could be a place where meaning is created rather than discovered.[116] He sees how a religious worldview can give purpose and coherence to people's lives in an age of egotism and materialism.[117] He sees Christianity as offering a different world view—one open to debate and discussion.

John Dewey saw an important place for the aesthetic experience in modern meaning making:

> Together with aspects of artistic doings and contextualism of this doing, the aesthetic aspect of experience means a qualitatively different, fulfilling and inherently meaningful mode of engagement in contrast to the mechanical, the

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[112] http://www.cardinalnewmansociety.net/university.html Accessed 11th May 2014
[113] Holmes 1987, pp. 57-60
[114] Ford 2007, p. 332
[115] Holmes 1987, pp. 3-4
[116] Holmes 1987, pp. 9-11
[117] Holmes 1987, pp. 16-17

fragmentary, the nonintegrated and all other nonmeaningful forms of engagement.[118]

Here music can play the part of an open space in which meaning is not tied too tightly to a single world view and in which meaning can embrace and debate diversity (this can be seen as an antidote to religious fundamentalism). It can set up situations in which students can discover and create meaning for themselves: '[music] does not offer meaning but triggers the effort to produce the meaning'.[119]

There is a considerable literature exploring not only the connection between music and faith traditions,[120] but also seeing music (and, indeed the arts as a whole) as a new faith tradition in itself. This is part of the development in the 21st century of an atheist spirituality in the hands of philosophers like Alain de Botton. This spirituality acknowledges the useful functions of religion, which de Botton sees as fostering community and providing coping strategies for pain and suffering, concluding, 'there might be a way to engage with religion without having to subscribe to its supernatural content'.[121]

De Botton's hope is that that the arts might be as effective as religion in their ability to guide, humanise and console. The arts inform the search for meaning without engaging in superstition.[122] He argues that we no longer need a set of religious or doctrinal beliefs in a God of any kind. However, he suggests that people in this modern age should not feel embarrassed about reappropriating for the secular realm those 'consoling, subtle or just charming' religious rituals that inspire, such as gratitude, beautiful spaces, pilgrimages and singing; all of which he says can nourish the spirit and soul. Here we see again the possibility of a

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[118] Westerlund 2002, p. 191
[119] Voegelin 2010, p. 165
[120] Boyce-Tillman 2016
[121] De Botton 2012, pp. 5-6
[122] De Botton 2012, pp. 32-7

similarity between the place of religious thinking and artistic knowing within the context of a capitalist and secularising society.

The context: the University of Winchester

So, from these theorists, it is possible to see the main role of a university as to enable the wider society to understand itself more deeply. The University of Winchester was founded in 1840 as the Winchester Diocesan Training College to provide teachers for Church of England Schools. Between 1970 and 1990 it diversified its curriculum through the development of the modular degree. In 2005 the Privy Council granted it the title of University and in 2008 it was awarded its own research degree awarding powers. It now offers around seven and a half thousand students a raft of degrees in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

The University of Winchester's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Joy Carter, speaks of 'an inclusive Christianity,' and the evidence is strong of theological, religious and ethical concerns being pursued by the University across a very wide spectrum of disciplines — indeed, it has spirituality in one of its fundamental values. Particularly important in this process was the evolution of the Foundation Committee (a body including staff and governors and advising management and governors on strategic options) into a place where positive and enriching role for its Anglican foundation is debated. The proceedings of this committee have reflected how from the idea of secularisation, favoured in academe for the last half of twentieth century, the wider society has returned to a re-evaluation of the place of religion in society, particularly in the light of the rise of extreme fundamentalisms and the descriptor 'spiritual but not religious'.

The structure of the curriculum

The motto of Winchester University includes wisdom as well as knowledge. Cardinal Newman conceptualised a pluralist,

inclusive curriculum; but saw (not surprisingly) the centrality of the concept of God to all knowledge, giving it characteristics such as universality. However, this was not a purely abstract grasp of facts but the experience of community, especially in the area of the personal influence of teachers on students: the formation of students. So he linked knowledge with experience:[123]

> Whatever the feasibility of Newman's concept, it gives rise to a possible definition of the soul of the university—nothing geographically or temporally fixed, but the mark left on the alumnus's mind, which stays with them all their lives in reminding us that the university has a greater role than just doling out qualifications—that of shaping the whole individual.[124]

Through Foundation Music students can negotiate their own routes, making choices. Students select ensembles that felt right for them. My role as leader was to give the students a safe 'scaffolding' [125] in which they could release their musical and personal potential.

There are so few choice-making opportunities in our university curricula. Yet outside of the curriculum, they can negotiate their own routes and explore Wisdom, which combines 'knowledge, understanding, good judgement and far-sighted decision-making'.[126]

Rowan Williams critiques an educational system 'more and more dominated by an instrumentalist model'.[127] While knowledge may be situated in the controlled environment of the defined modules

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[123] From *Historical Sketches*, Volume III, "The Rise and Progress of Universities," Chapter I, Section 6 http://www.cardinalnewmansociety.net/university.html (Accessed 11th May 2014)

[124] http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/oct/20/john-henry-newman-idea-university-soul. (Accessed 11th May 2014)

[125] Holzman 2008

[126] Ford 2007, p. 1

[127] www,publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansard/text/110811-0001.htm#1108111000300. (Accessed 6th May 2014)

with their declared learning outcomes and the demands of the state, Wisdom is engendered by the wider community of university life especially in the opportunity to make choices[128] and is perhaps best explored through extra-curricular activities:

> Students take responsibility for their own learning when they participate in out-of-class activities and events that enrich the educational experience (e.g. orientation, guest lectures, internships), develop a portfolio of out-of-class learning experiences and associated benefits, and discuss with others their academic progress and how what they are learning in classes applies to other aspects of their life.[129]

This is reflected in many of the narratives collected from students who have been part of Foundation Music.

Steel (2015) looks for a restoration of a Dionysian spirituality within education (in an article primarily concerned with American education) through the medium of music. This he relates to the 'the loss of self-awareness that occurs in the best musical experiences',[130] which might be true of all music freed of the controls of the curriculum. Plato in *The Republic* says that 'the best guardian of the city is argument mixed with music'.[131] In his *Laws* he sees human beings as having the Muses, Apollo, and Dionysius as 'fellow dancers' who have 'given us the pleasant perception of the rhythm and harmony'.[132] These lead us in joyful choruses. To some extent, Foundation Music provides a 'chorus school' for the university as a whole which draws freely of its expertise for a multitude of university celebrations. It is freed from the restraints of the curriculum with its rigid structures and its fixed outcomes.

The setting up of Foundation Music outside of the curriculum with no fixed aims or learning outcomes, no preset agenda,

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[128] MacIntyre 2009
[129] Kuh, et al. 1994, p. xi
[130] Higgins 2011, p. 154
[131] Steel 2015, p. 78
[132] Steel 2015, p. 78

reflected a queering of current curriculum models; students were enabled to make informed choices about the styles they wished to embrace and the amount of leadership they might undertake. Teaching is often in a community context, not individualised lessons, and inexperienced learners are quickly incorporated into ensembles in a way more common in community practice than classical music traditions.

Conclusions

This paper has explored a relationship between music and religion in higher education in the UK. It has related music and meaning-making, including atheism. It has seen how the story of Jesus might be seen as queering the values of the dominant society and how that might be a model of creating active citizens concerned with issues of justice. It has seen how issues of class, gender, sexuality, disability and ethnicity can be addressed by including orate as well as literate traditions and how the principles of a reworked ecclesiology might be found in a radically inclusive music making. It has traced these strands through the development of Foundation Music and how this queered the values of the classical musical traditions.[133] Three strands around the thinking of a Christian university were also threaded through a definition of knowledge involving a Christianity hospitable to difference, a community involving teachers and learners and the service of the public good. The university's motto, Wisdom and Knowledge, is interrogated in the light of the way in which the university curriculum is structured. Wisdom has been identified as decision making, best situated outside a product based curriculum. While knowledge may be seen as situated in the controlled environment of the defined modules with their declared learning outcomes, wisdom is seen to be engendered by

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[133] Boyce-Tillman, 2007

the capacity make choices offered by extra-curricular activities such as Foundation Music.

So the underlying philosophy of Foundation Music has celebrated the meeting of possibilities and opportunities and bringing them together without obliterating their differences. By queering the dominant musical paradigm it has opened up music as a tool for reconciliation and creativity from the concept of the opening poem – *Between* – and a place where spirituality can be celebrated and explored.

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Ancient texts and restless hearts: convincing our students to read those dusty theologians

John B. Switzer
Spring Hill College

The purpose of this paper is to share the positive experience of ten years teaching *Confessions* in an introductory theology class composed primarily of first-year college students in their late teens. I am a theologian teaching in a small, Roman Catholic liberal-arts college located in Mobile, Alabama, where all undergraduates must complete nine hours of theology, including 'Theology 101', the course in which Augustine's *Confessions* plays an important role. The choice to use this classic text is mine, but experience convinces me that it is an effective tool for pedagogy, especially with first-year students. I am certainly not the first to suggest that *Confessions* has the power to speak to every restless heart—even the non-religious. Surely there are few of his readers who have not been touched in some positive way by Augustine's spiritual journey of self-discovery. But the Augustine I wish to introduce to my students is not the supposed saint but the Augustine who is typically human.

I propose that it is this very human Augustine who can best help our students to grapple with who they are and what they believe. Backed by several years of teaching experience, my thesis here is that if we introduce him well, if we connect his experiences and yearnings to those of our students and show them that their construction of life's meaning is in their own hands as his was in his hands, Augustine's *Confessions* can attract college freshmen in such a way as to inspire them, and to motivate them to actually read and learn. But, as teachers on many levels will admit, getting students to read can be the greatest challenge of all. My pedagogic approach bears two prongs: a Pedagogy of Presence and a Pedagogy of Encouragement. I propose here three goals for

student learning. Students must first be convinced that there is something to be gained by reading the *Confessions*, or at least those sections assigned. Then they need the experience of shared reflection upon the dizzying array of moral options and ethical experimentation with which Augustine wrestled. Finally, students must be supported in their need for a growing sense of moral autonomy even in the midst of a world of profound moral plurality. We educators thereby assist our students in claiming the mantle of adulthood by which, according to sociologist Jack Mezirow, they

> become critically reflective of [their] own assumptions as well as those of others, engage fully and freely in discourse to validate [their] beliefs, and effectively take reflective action to implement them.[134]

As a theologian I not only teach the Christian story in a critical way, I also buy into it. I believe that it has life to offer the world. According to the Jesuit theologian Francis X. Clooney, theology 'is distinct from the study of religion' because it is 'an inquiry carried on by believers who allow their belief to remain an explicit and influential factor' in their work and in their teaching. We are 'members of believing communities' and it is those communities that serve as our primary audiences.[135] But does this apply to theologians teaching first-year students in college? Are we really believers teaching in the midst of believers, or was the French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard correct when he described the sometimes baffling characteristics of our postmodern context?

When listening to college students explaining themselves, I cannot help thinking that Lyotard was on to something. The young minds in our classrooms are often completely awash in the experience of postmodernity. Some of them are sinking in it without even realizing it. As a reminder, let me list Lyotard's three

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134 Mezirow, 2000, p. 25
135 Clooney, 1993, p. 4

characteristics for the age in which he says we are situated. As I do so, ask yourself if they sound familiar when dealing with your own students. My point is not to argue over whether the presumptions of postmodern thought are good or bad, but to respond with a pedagogy that is effective in such an environment. Personally, I am not alarmed by the development of postmodern attitudes, but I do think that we who educate must find updated methodologies to handle them.

Lyotard's first postmodern dictate is that truth is understood as relative. If you are a fan of reruns of the TV series called *The X-Files*, you know that each episode begins with the assertion that 'the truth is out there'. This implies that truth is something objective to be discovered and pinpointed. College freshmen often are not convinced of this. Who can blame them? From an early age they are immersed in technological devices on which competing versions of the truth are coming at them with astounding speed. How can any one version of the truth be absolute?

As a derivative of the first characteristic, we arrive at the second. Since truth is relative, the great 'truth stories'—the meta-narratives that show us the way through life—are also relative. Walter Truett Anderson is a political scientist and social psychologist who refers to *The Wizard of Oz* as a way to explain what we are facing in our contemporary culture. Remember the awe expressed by Dorothy and her pals when ushered into the presence of the wizard? He thundered and fussed and belched fire. Seemingly, he knew all things; he possessed all truth. And then Toto, Dorothy's rambunctious little dog, peeled back the curtain to reveal 'a very *good* man, but a very bad wizard.'[136] This is Anderson's metaphor for the experience of discovering that we humans are creators of our own reality. From the gospels to the Qur'an to the Pentateuch and beyond, postmodern attitudes suggest that our grand master

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[136] Anderson, 1990, p. 29

narratives are just the well-intentioned ramblings of those who thought they had found the truth.

The third characteristic that Lyotard offers may be the source for the previous two. Young people today are exposed to extraordinary, unavoidable, and constant experiences of profound moral and cultural diversity. They are forever changed by the experience of what psychologist Kenneth Gergen calls 'social saturation' and the 'fragmentation of self-conceptions'. [137] As technology is constantly updated and more innovative tools devised to stay in touch, our students find themselves in an increasingly more complex web of relationships marked by an astounding collection of behavioral options. All day long, it seems, they are bombarded with value proposals, some explicit, others implicit, through multiple electronic sources.

In the midst of these voices and competing visions that come at a bold technological pace, our students want to find their place. Watch them in the hallways as they pass or even as they dangerously drive their vehicles on our highways. They are tweeting and texting and posting. They may not know where the electronic parade is headed, but they want to join in. Staying in touch seems to have become their primary daily task, more important than academic success, even more important than being present to those in their company—except, perhaps, for sex (which, ironically enough, is becoming more 'virtual,' all the time). As the bits and pieces of data roll in, our students may or may not be able to place them into some sort of meaningful order. Often they fall back on what sounds good, or what feels good. How do we help them assess all of this incoming data in a healthy, critical manner?

Our vocation as educators is to provide what help we can as they struggle to make meaning of this chaos, or as one team of educators has said, as they seek to construct metaphoric 'temples

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[137] Gergen 1991 pp. 6-7

of meaning'. [138] These temples are an absolute necessity. They provide a dwelling from which to view and interpret the world. From multiple sources gathered around them our students are being given building blocks proposed for use in their own meaning-making temples, yet not all the blocks are of equal strength or equal value. How should they choose among them? How should we educators help them to develop the skills they need to choose wisely?

Enter the great Augustine of Hippo, 'father' of Western theology, and principle protagonist in his own classic testimony to God's presence in his life, *Confessions*. I both adore and despise Augustine. Intentionally, I share that fact with my students. But how do I get them to read him? In former times, as a new course instructor whose ego knew no idealistic limitations, I asked my freshmen to read all of *Confessions*. These days I ask only that they read introductory and postscript materials by a trusted commentator along with nine abbreviated sections that carry great significance for understanding Augustine's hermeneutic journey. Included in these sections is the first-page material on human restlessness, of course (Book I). Other portions include the stolen pears, the 'brambles of lust' in his sixteenth year while on break from school (Book II), his unnamed concubine, the magician who wished to be paid for effecting a successful outcome in a speech contest (Book IV), the drunk beggar (Book VI), and the garden conversion scene with Alypius, a lifelong buddy from his hometown of Tagaste (Book VIII). Also included are sections concerning the praise given to the divine by animals and inanimate objects (Book V), the discussion on the nature of evil (Book VII), and my favorite scene among them all, perhaps worthy of a late-night television program: Augustine seen by his father while bathing (Book II). I prefer the Signet Classic translation by Rex Warner for its contemporary language and because of the fine introduction and afterword by Martin E. Marty.

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[138] Seymour et al, 1993, p. 23

These choices are intentional not only for their pedagogic value but also because they are downright interesting. When asking freshmen to read the fourth-century writings of a Catholic bishop we should probably be honest with ourselves. It is a difficult sales job to convince our students to read such ancient texts. I increase the likelihood that they will read the assignments by choosing scenes that can be narrated in interesting human ways. In addition, I administer daily quizzes that are fairly easy to pass if one has read the assigned material. The quizzes include nothing more than a few true-or-false questions about events narrated in the text. My freshmen will not admit to liking the quizzes, but they do admit to reading for my class because they want to pass those quizzes. Their admissions are straightforward every time these students complete their anonymous course-evaluation forms. They not only admit to reading more for my class because of these reading quizzes, they mention *Confessions* by name in their evaluations. Imagine for a moment what a *coup* this is. A twenty-first century millennial has read an ancient text with the goal of understanding at least enough of it to pass a quiz! The first of my pedagogic goals has been met with regard to learning from Augustine.

Clearly, extrinsic motivation works. But it cannot ensure us that the student is personally committed to appropriating the wisdom of the Christian intellectual tradition. For that something further is needed: intrinsic motivation. Barbara Hofer is an educator and psychologist at Middlebury College in Vermont. She writes of the benefits to students of intrinsic motivation when it comes to learning. Those benefits sound like a Christmas wish-list for teachers. 'Intrinsic motivation,' motivation that comes from within and is not contingent upon external reward, 'has been shown to foster conceptual understanding, creativity, involvement, and a preference for challenge.' Even a student who is interested only for extrinsic reasons can be elevated to the plane of intrinsic involvement, she says, 'if the instructor arouses their curiosity,

provides appropriate levels of challenge, and offers them choices that enhance their control.'[139] She argues that extrinsic motivation such as a quiz can eventually lead to an increase of personal interest. She also advises grading quizzes in class together as a learning strategy to increase the motivation of students and to encourage their engagement with the material. Following this advice, my students and I go over their quizzes in class in order to increase comprehension. This activity itself becomes a tool for further questions about Augustine from students, along with some insightful conversation.

Another part of this puzzle becomes clear when Hofer encourages us—the teachers—to share our own intrinsic motivation with students. We should project our motivations for the course material and for why we want to see our students engage with that material.[140] Remember my earlier comment about having a love-hate relationship with Augustine? That is my entrée to explaining how he has changed me as a person. I have struggled with Augustine and I have occasionally cursed him for the things he has revealed in *Confessions*. I have also changed my mind about him from time to time. Sharing all of this acts as a boost to students who may be wondering if their attempts to engage the text and the person it represents could be successful. For ten years, assessment expert Richard Light interviewed students at Harvard University. According to him, 'the most common hope that students express is that each class, by its end, will help them to become a slightly different person in some way.'[141] Reading *Confessions* should be an encounter for the better: with Augustine, with instructor, with fellow students, and more importantly with oneself. My encounter with Augustine has changed me for the better; I want the students to see that. Evidently, if Professor Light is correct, they want to be changed as well.

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[139] Hofer, 2006, p. 143
[140] Hofer, 2006, p. 147
[141] Light, 2001, p. 47

How can we foster an intrinsic motivation that will sponsor a genuine encounter with Augustine or with any other classic theologian or spiritual writer? I believe the answer is self-evident: by showing them that he or she is much like they are. A study of Augustine is a study of self. People adore talking about themselves. Science has proved it. Researchers Diana I. Tamir and Jason P. Mitchell of the Harvard Psychology Department have demonstrated that 'humans get a biochemical buzz from self-disclosure.'[142] In my introductory theology class I spend several days on Augustine. The first day is entirely dedicated to the effort to know him as a person. I begin by telling them that I want them to meet somebody interesting. Then I launch into a classroom conversation that brings nods, laughter, red faces at times, and occasionally indignant, glaring silence. By the end of that class period the students are both proud of the guy and embarrassed by him. These are the very emotions they sometimes feel about themselves. The same is true for me.

This introductory class to Augustine is highlighted by compelling details from the text, some from the portions of text read for class and other parts from those sections we will not have time to explore together. Personality quirks of the various characters in the story take center stage. They may have lived long ago, but these are real people who lived real lives and struggled with the same issues our students face today. Each major character is described, including both strengths and weaknesses. Monica is remembered not only as a doting and devout mother, but someone who early in life had a drinking problem. Alypius was hooked on gladiatorial games and felt guilty about this but as a government purchaser seemed scrupulously honest. Class becomes particularly jovial when we discuss the fact that Augustine lied to his mother about the time of his ship's departure to Italy in order to avoid having her accompany him on the trip. An informative laughter erupts when I ask the young males in

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[142] Luscombe, 2012

class if they would appreciate having their mother present on campus during their college years. This methodology is one that can be accomplished by any teacher willing to explore the faults, fulfillment, and frustrations which accompany every human life—especially those of the great personalities of the past.

Augustine of Hippo was a driven man. James O'Donnell says that in *Confessions*, 'Augustine needs to tell us his conversion story'.[143] I will go one better. Augustine needs to tell the story to himself, even though he cloaked it as a conversation with God. And he needs us to take note of him, to listen in as the conversation proceeds. If the scientists are right, his brain chemistry gave him a hormonal zap when he wrote, the same way our students are zapped when tweeting and posting online. The same is true for us all. The text of *Confessions* is Augustine's version of a Facebook 'wall' where he posts the interpretation of his own life for everyone to see. Like many of our students, his is 'the story of a man who gives his passionate allegiance to one ideology after another.' [144] And, like the world of today's college freshmen, 'Augustine's world … knew lots of different kinds of gods'.[145] In a sense, Augustine flirted with all of these gods. He wants us to understand the details of these dalliances and to learn from them. His experience is being recreated constantly in the lives of our students, albeit in new and electronic ways. If he were alive today, Augustine might have his own take on the phrase 'virtual reality.'

Augustine's cultural environment and that of our incoming students are parallel worlds though divided by nearly sixteen centuries. Each is replete with voices demanding to be heard and gods (or values) demanding to be honored. Now let us remind ourselves of the insight of Professor Hofer, already mentioned. Intrinsic motivation is heightened by 'appropriate levels of challenge' in which students have choices that enhance their

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[143] O'Donnell, 2005, p. 77
[144] O'Donnell, 2005, p. 43
[145] O'Donnell, 2005, p. 7

control of learning.[146] Rather than presenting Augustine as one more voice that needs their attention, or as saint or theologian demanding their respect, my thinking is that we need to present him simply as a person like they are, someone who is a seeker. This means that the challenge and control of the relationship remain with the students. Our job is to present him as someone who attracts their attention, someone in whom an investment of time will offer them the payoff of increased self-understanding.

If students are internally motivated to make time for Augustine, they can share through him something that I call the Pedagogy of Presence. When students identify with Augustine and Augustine's needs, he can become present to them through their own experience. Augustine can become part of their inner life rather than a long-dead theologian from the past. Our students' lives can then mediate Augustine's challenges. In a sense, what I am arguing for is a type of sacramental remaking of his presence which bears some resemblance to the memorial notions that Christians have about Christ in the Eucharist. But the power is not Augustine's. The power remains with the students because they are not just reading Augustine. They are listening to him as he is mediated through their own realities, hopefully leading them to step back from the relentless electronic buzz of their lives to discover that he has some challenging things to say about their own search for life's meaning. At this point we are deeply engaged with the second pedagogic value mentioned at this article's outset: shared reflection on the moral options presented to them, along with the ethical experimentation that often marks human experience.

To accomplish this engagement I introduce numerous methodologies and activities. Lecture serves as the initial introduction to Augustine the person. My demeanour for this lecture is intentionally more laid back, less formal. I begin by

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[146] Hofer, 2006, p. 143

emphasizing that there is someone interesting the students need to meet, and I pique their interest by launching into the types of personal details of Augustine's life that might sound familiar to their own struggles. As explained earlier, emphasis is placed on real-life scenarios in which the characters of *Confessions* sometimes rise worthily to a challenge and other times when they fail. There is the father who had money problems and who could be emotionally distant, a busybody mom, problematic students, a lust for advancement, steamy admissions worthy of HBO programming, a drunk panhandler, even theft and magic.

On another day, after students have read assigned portions of the text and been quizzed, the class is divided into small groups. Each is given a particular section of *Confessions* to discuss. I provide to each group a set of probing questions designed to get them to think like interpreters. These are designed as open-ended questions: What do you think is going on here, why would Augustine say that, what's the point of this story, or why does Augustine use that phrase? In the Warner translation, Augustine's prose is loaded with the kinds of powerful narrative images that provoke conversation: the 'darkness of affection,' those 'swirling mists' and 'brambles' of lust, 'fornication committed by the soul,' and 'the superstition of mind' to which he sacrifices himself. After completing their small-group discussions, the entire class reconvenes together. Each group reports to the wider class as we compose our communal interpretation of Augustine's message. Each student is provided with a resource page on which all the questions are listed. This page is intended to help students gather their thoughts and clarify their insights regarding the text. Any number of pedagogies can be effective if they result in students who read the text, become attracted to it, and then consider its meaning. Students could be asked to rewrite particularly interesting sections of the text so that they include concerns from their own life situations. Or they might be encouraged to present a particular narrative in a manner that they think Augustine might

have used in a Facebook post. Insights could be turned into pithy, theoretical Tweets, followed by classroom sharing. With sufficient time, episodes of *Confessions* could even be acted out in class. The Pedagogy of Presence can be practised in any way that makes Augustine and his challenges real to the students in our classrooms.

'Our hearts are restless O God, until they rest in you.' So writes Augustine in the opening paragraph of *Confessions*. Our students may not be as convinced as he was on this score. Chapel attendance suggests that this is true. But Augustine still has a timeless message for them. That message to our students seems to be this: until they determine life's meaning for themselves and then live that vision faithfully, they also will be restless. It is the nature of human existence. In their egocentric, electronic-driven worlds, our students are experiencing something which has been universal among humans from time immemorial. They are constructing meaning-making perspectives in order to empower themselves to understand the world around them. As Mezirow pointed out, 'our need to understand our experiences is perhaps our most distinctively human attribute'.[147]

As theological educators, our goal is to foster critical reflection upon the values of the Christian tradition in the lives of our students. In other words, we must encourage them to do what Augustine did. As they enter that reflective process we encourage and support them as an expression of my third pedagogic value: encouraging critical reflection on moral options and the development or moral autonomy. This is the Pedagogy of Encouragement that grows out of the Pedagogy of Presence. As a Christian theologian, I would find it ideal if all of my students accomplished this reflection by taking seriously the values enshrined in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Given the backgrounds and moral plurality that marks their lives, this often

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[147] Mezirow, 1991, p. 10

is not possible. For some I function in the manner of a genuine theologian, a believer in the midst of believers, offering the treasures of the tradition in a magisterial way. For others I am more of a religious-studies expert, offering ethical suggestions that carry little or no authoritative weight.

As the ongoing debate swirls around us with regard to the purposes and meaning of Catholic higher education, it may be that my experience offers a step that moves the conversation forward in a valuable way. The proposal outlined here can be utilized effectively by those who think of themselves as theologians and those who prefer the religious-studies model. It lends itself to the study of philosophy and history as well. Our students view us in different ways. If the postmodernists are correct, we not only have classrooms of diverse students, we have audiences who may see the values we trumpet as nothing more than options for consideration. Rather than fret about this fact, we can respond by accepting our position as one voice among many and utilizing the most creative and powerful pedagogies available to us. Students learn best when the material *means something to them*, when it has personal hermeneutic value. Not only should this challenge be our starting point, it should be the bridge that brings theology and religious studies to a shared purpose. Religious and non-religious, each of our students is engaged in the most fundamental of all human efforts: the need to make meaning of their experience. History is replete with those who did likewise. Our job as educators is to mediate their presence to our students and to encourage sustained reflection through that mediation.

My method seems to work, if the multiple forms of evaluation I use in class are accurate. Some of our best class discussions are about Augustine and students do well on tests when answering essay questions about his theology and his understanding of the human experience. Written course evaluations at semester's end mention Augustine by name and students offer their own confession: they liked him and they learned from him. They often

explain with great specificity in their essays and by way of thank-you notes just how powerful an influence Augustine has been on them. They show me that they understand Augustine. They 'get' him. They understand what he struggled with and the things he wrote about. And then there is the occasional Holy Grail of teaching that opens before me as a student leaves the classroom. It goes something like this: 'Hey, Professor, I've decided to keep this book. I want to read the whole thing, maybe during break.'

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Papers should directly address, or be broadly relevant to, the general theme of the place of faith in higher education. Although Whitelands or CUAC are Anglican bodies, the editors invite contributions relating to any religious tradition and from any interested person or group. Papers may take a variety of approaches, including but not limited to:

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