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Faith in Europe?

How did we get here and where are we heading?

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A geo-political approach to the problems of adult Christian education

Everyone agrees that the Christian faith has had an enormous impact on Europe.¹ The degree to which Europe and its empires have had an impact upon the Christian faith is not so widely recognised.² Since Europe is a geo-political concept, practical theology must find a way into this problem through exploring the nature and implications of a geo-political theology of Europe.

From a purely geo-physical point of view, it is not obvious that the concept of Europe should have arisen at all. The concept of Europe implies a concept of the Mediterranean Sea as being a barrier or a border, but in the ancient classical world, the Mediterranean was not regarded as a barrier but as a cultural area which united the various peoples living on its borders.³ The Roman world was a Mediterranean empire and the trade which linked the various parts of the empire was basically a Mediterranean trade. The concept of Europe is not found in the Bible and when Paul dreamt of a man calling him to extend his mission from the Roman province of Asia, it was not a European man who called him but a man from

¹ Kidd, Colin, *British Identity Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood In the Atlantic World 1600-1800*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999; Pagden, A., *Lords of All the World: Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500-1800*, London, Yale University Press, 1995. Pagden states that 'the sometimes stark difference between the ways in which the two major forms of (western) Christianity...approached the question of the beliefs of others was to have a marked impact on the different histories of the modern European overseas empires' (p. 25). For the impact of Christianity on Medieval Europe, see Meyer, J. W. 'Conceptions of Christendom: notes on the distinctiveness of the West', in Melvin L. Kohn, (ed.) *Cross-national Research in Sociology*, London, Sage, 1989, pp. 395-413.

² R. S. Sugirtharajah shows how the Christian faith served the interests of the British Empire in India, and hints at the way in which Christian faith itself was reconstructed in the process. 'The commentators themselves were entrapped by the ideological codes of the time and as a result perverted their gospel' (p. 107). Sugirtharajah, R. S., 'Imperial Critical Commentaries: Christian Discourse and Commentarial Writings in Colonial India', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 73 (1999) pp. 83-112.

³ Heffernan, M., *The Meaning of Europe: Geography and Geo-politics*, Loughborough, University of Loughborough, Arnold, 1998, pp. 9-48 ; and Amin, S., *Eurocentrism*, London, Zed, 1989, p. 15-24

Macedonia (Acts 16: 9). What we sometimes regard as the founding of Christianity in Europe was for the early Christian missionaries merely the extension of the Christian faith from one province of the Roman Empire to another.

Although Europe is mentioned along with Africa and Asia in Herodotus,⁴ Europe does not take on its specific consciousness as a distinct area of Christian culture until the time of the crusades.⁵ Early medieval maps begin to show the world as a circle divided into two spheres, the upper sphere being Asia and the lower sphere being divided into two quarters, one for Europe and the other for Africa. The line on these maps which divides Europe from Africa is the Mediterranean, and this represents an evolution of distinctive European awareness.⁶ The modern concept of Europe as an ideological idea, suggesting the peaceful co-existence of the European nations, pacified by a balance of power, has its origin not much earlier than the treaty of Westphalia of 1648 which brought to an end the wars of religion. The ideological character of the concept can be perceived in the remark made recently by a western politician to his Russian counterpart: "you may be in Europe but you are not European".

Europe is the western peninsula of the Asian landmass, which may be conceived as an enormous triangle with its base in the Pacific and its tip in the British Isles. Both the south-eastern and the north-western corners of the Asian triangle end in a kind of peninsula, but where as the Malaysian/Indonesian archipelago points only in the general direction of Australia and then goes nowhere, the north-western peninsula has the supreme geographical advantage of jutting out into the Atlantic Ocean.

However, the medieval world of Europe was not in a position to realise or exploit its advantageous geographical situation. Indeed, the European mentality in the 10th to 15th centuries was really one of encirclement and claustrophobia. To the north lay the frozen wastelands, to the east the immeasurable tracks of Northern Asia; the menacing grip of Islam was tightening around the south and the southeast and to the west lay the uncharted ocean.⁷ The great centres of power and wealth lay in the main body of Asia, in the Chinese Empire, in the Indian sub-continent and in the Islamic world.⁸ Europe was a contemptible and little known region noted mainly for its tin, timber and white slaves.⁹

⁴ den Boer, P. , 'Europe to 1914: the making of an idea', in Kenneth Wilson & Jan van der Dussen (eds) *The History of the Idea of Europe*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 13.

⁵ The letter from Pope Urban II dated November 1095 calling for a crusade to liberate the Holyland; den Boer, 'Europe to 1914, p. 27.

⁶ Heffernan, M. *The Meaning of Europe*, p. 19, 24.

⁷ E. g. The map by Andreus Walsberger from 1448, den Boer, 'Europe to 1914', p. 33.

⁸ Jones, E. L., *The European Miracle: Environments, Economies and Geo-politics in the History of Europe and Asia*, Cambridge, University of Cambridge Press, 1981, p. xiv.

⁹ 'Any objective survey of the past ten thousand years of human history would show that during almost all of it Northern Europeans were an inferior barbarian race, living in squalor and ignorance, producing few cultural innovations...'. Jones, *The European Miracle*, p. 153. Estimates of the period when Europe began to forge

The story of how the Western Asian peninsula broke out of its medieval confinement and realised its geo-political significance is still controversial. It is significant that the European peninsula was itself composed of smaller peninsulas, and that the various centres of power developed on rivers or river mouths, often strategically separated from other similar centres by mountain ranges or seas, or they developed on strategically situated islands. The story of Europe can be understood at least in part by putting together three factors:

1. The relative poverty of the peninsula compared with the main body of Asia.
2. The African continent as separating the Western Asian peninsula from its main landmass.
3. The competitive character of what gradually came to be the European nations.¹⁰

It is noteworthy that while both the Chinese¹¹ and Japanese empires forbade the continuation of ocean-going trade, competition and greed drove the peoples of Western Europe into exploration. During the 15th century the Portuguese explored the Atlantic coast of Africa, breaking into the Indian Ocean which had long been their objective by the end of the century. It was, however, the discovery of the New World which lay between the Western Asian peninsula and China/India which caused the greatest upheaval in European self-consciousness. A second wave of consciousness occurred in the second half of the 18th century with the exploration of the Pacific.¹²

The centres of power moved from east to west, becoming richer and territorially more expansive with each shift. From the city states of Northern Italy who provided the finance for Spanish imperialism, power moved around the western seaboard of Europe to Antwerp and Amsterdam. The united provinces were substantially larger and wealthier than Genoa. After the Dutch wars in the 17th century power moved to London, a power which was confirmed after the 18th century wars with France, became dominant between 1870 to 1914 and then

ahead of Asia economically vary from the early eleventh to the late fifteenth century. Jones, *The European Miracle*, pp. xiiff.

¹⁰ Jones, *The European Miracle* p.xxxi.

¹¹ Chinese ocean-going trade was forbidden in 1480. Jones, *The European Miracle*, p.168. By 1553 the art of building ocean-going ships had been lost. Jones, pp. 203-5.

¹² Frost, Allen, 'The Pacific Ocean: the eighteenth century's new world', in Anthony Pagden (ed) *Facing Each Other: The World's Perception of Europe and Europe's Perception of the World* [An Expanding World; the European Impact of World History 1450-1800, vol. 31, Part II] Aldershot, England, Ashgate Publishing House, 2000, pp. 591ff.

leapt the Atlantic to find a new basis in the United States of America.¹³ The long Asian triangle pointing to North America had reached its logical, geo-political conclusion.¹⁴

Anthropological studies assure us that the world view of a people is influenced by, if not actually the product of, the geo-political and socio-cultural situation of that people, as molded by relationships with other nearby peoples. As the early Jesus movement evolved into the Catholic Church, and as the persecuted church became the post-Constantinian imperial ideology, the world view and thus the theology of the Christian movement was gradually transformed from a theology of sacrificial service into a theology of power and domination.¹⁵ We may trace the development of this from the sermons of St. John Chrysostom (c.347-407) in Constantinople through the Code of Theodosius (429 C.E.) and into the images of Christ as Pantocrator which adorn the basilica of St Mark in Venice. This gradual theological evolution entered a new phase with the emergence of the modern Western European empires, especially those of Spain, France, Holland and Great Britain.¹⁶ Once again it is worth noticing that while the role of the Christian faith (or Christianity as it was to be gradually reconceptualised)¹⁷ in the formation of the imperial ideologies is well documented¹⁸ the impact upon the Christian faith itself of its new position within these imperial worldviews is less fully recognised.

¹³ Arrighi, Giovanni, *The Long Twentieth Century*, London, Verso, 1994. Arrighi, writing before 1994, can be forgiven for believing that the Eastern progress of capital accumulation would continue by passing over the Pacific and lighting upon East Asia, particularly Japan [pp. 15-18, 332-5]. What actually happened was a leap from the territory of the nation-state into financial globalisation.

¹⁴ Dijkink, G., *National Identity and Geo-Political Visions: Maps of Pride and Pain*, London, Routledge, 1996, p. 42 and see chapter 3 as a whole 'absent because of empire', pp. 36-48. A discussion of the political significance of the imperial western movement during the time of the American Revolution is provided by Kilian, N., 'New Wine in Old Skins: American Definition of Empire and the Emergence of a New Concept', in Armitage, D. (ed.) *Theories of Empire, 1450-1800* pp. 317f.

¹⁵ MacMullen, R., *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries*, London, Yale University Press, 1997; and Castelli, E. A., 'Imperial Re-imaginings of Christian Origins', in Elizabeth Castelli and Hal Tosek (eds) *Re-imagining Christian Origins*, Valley Forge, Pa., Trinity Press International, 1996, pp. 173ff.

¹⁶ Pagden, A., *Lords of All the World*; Cheyfitz, E., *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from the Tempest to Tarzan*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991.

¹⁷ Smith, W. C., *The Meaning and End of Religion*, New York, The New American Library, 1963 [Section 6 of Chapter 3]. Cantwell Smith suggests that it was in the late 17th and early 18th centuries that the name 'Christianity', signifying a coherent set of doctrines or a system of beliefs, replaced the older concepts of the Christian religion or of Christian faith (pp. 7ff.).

¹⁸ Pagden, *Lords of All the World*, shows that by the fifth century the Christian faith was thought of as being co-extensive with the Roman Empire. Leo the Great (d. 461) spoke of the *Orbis Christianus* which soon developed into the *Imperium Christianum* and that it was the notions of utter uniqueness, revelatory authority and exclusivity, which made Christian faith so suitable as a partner of Imperial power. In my opinion, however, it was its role as an Imperial ideology which encouraged Christian faith to think of itself in this way and to adopt these characteristics (p. 24). See also the fascinating study Peter Russell, 'White Kings on Black Kings; Rui De Pina and the Problem of Black African Sovereignty', in Pagden, (ed.) *Facing Each Other*, pp. 503ff.

I will now concentrate upon the development of geo-political imperial religious consciousness in Great Britain.¹⁹ Three factors may be distinguished in the formation of English national consciousness:

1. The impact of the Reformation with its developed antithesis between Protestant and Catholic.²⁰ The geographical position of Britain near to the countries of northern Europe which had adopted the Protestant reformation is significant.
2. The rise of English as the national language replacing Latin and French,²¹ and
3. The competition between England and Spain for the resources of the New World. Once again, we observe the character of western Europe as jutting out into the Atlantic by means of the Iberian peninsula, and also by means of the British group of islands.

We may see these three factors converging in the second half of the 16th century, and the work of the poet Edmond Spenser is the classical expression of this dawning national and even imperial identity.²² However, although the theology of Luther and Calvin had already given an enormous impetus to the growing individualism of English culture and had implanted the seeds of the sense of uniqueness, election and duty which were so brilliantly adumbrated by Max Faber,²³ it was not until the 17th century that the first wave of imperial theological consciousness becomes sharply delineated.²⁴ The sermons of the chaplains to the Virginia Company illustrate this.²⁵ The texts which inspired the colonial adventurers and settlers in their hazardous voyages and which justified their possession of the lands of the indigenous peoples of North America were those authorising migration and

¹⁹ 'The British state was the child of empire. It was created by empire, lived by empire, its iconography, its operational code, the instinctive reflexes of its rulers and managers were stamped through and through with the presuppositions of empire. By the same token, the identity it claimed to embody and helped to create was of necessity imperial, oceanic, extra-European. It could not be anything else...In this sense Britain is one of the most illuminating examples of geography, or rather of a human geographical system, creating an obstinate geopolitical vision.' Dijkink, G., *National Identity* [p.48].

²⁰ Hadfield, A., *Literature, Politics and National Identity, Reformation to Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 78 and n. 7, p.173 [the influence of the Reformation upon the rise of English nationalism].

²¹ Hadfield, *Literature*, p. 9.

²² Hadfield, *Literature*, Ch. 6. Lim, W. S. H., *The Arts of Empire: the Poetics of Colonialism from Raleigh to Milton*, London, Associated Universities Press, 1998, pp. 142ff.

²³ Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, London, Allen & Unwin 1930.

²⁴ Historians of the British Empire often distinguish the first empire, which was an Atlantic community, from the second empire, from the late Eighteenth Century to the period just after the end of the Second World War. The American Revolution of 1776 is usually regarded as the dividing line between the two empires. See Armitage, D., *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp. 2.

²⁵ Symonds, W., *Virginia: a Sermon Preached at Whitechapel*, London, 1609 [*The English Experience: Its Record in Early Printed Books*, New York, Da Capo Press, 1968]; Gray, R., *A Good Speed to Virginia*, London, 1609 [New York, Da Capo Press, 1970]; Donne, J., *Sermon 13 November 1622*; Hayward, J. (ed) *John Donne, Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, 1929. See Merchant, W. M., 'Donne's Sermon to the Virginia Company' in A. J. Smith (ed.) *John Donne: Essays in Celebration*, London, Methuen, 1972, pp. 433-452 and Lim, *The Arts of Empire*, pp. 54ff.

conquest²⁶: Genesis 12: 1; Jos. 17: 14ff; and Is. 42: 4. With the convulsion of the Civil Wars and the foreign policies of Oliver Cromwell a new phase of British colonial expansion arose, concentrating upon the pacification of Ireland,²⁷ but equipped with all the ideological power of empire.²⁸ By the end of the 17th century a new kind of Protestant piety had appeared. It was internal, moralistic, individualistic, non-political and preoccupied with pre and post mundane mythical worlds,²⁹ while at the same time it was nationalistic, identifying the Protestant monarch with the empire of Jesus Christ and beginning the identification of global Christianisation as the legitimisation of world conquest. The poetry and hymns of Isaac Watts are typical of this period.³⁰

As Christendom evolved into Christianity, the beleaguered and constricted mentality of Christian Europe gave way to a broad sense of global mission conceiving of itself as being in competition with other similar world religious systems which by the 17th and 18th centuries had been elaborated.³¹ The competition between the religious systems may be interpreted as the ideological representation of the economic struggle between the European empires. Always implicitly regarding each other as rivals, the religions of the axial period had created the concept of conversion³² and the experience of exclusive identity. Approximately two and a half thousand years of such axial religious development culminated in the 18th and early 19th centuries in the founding of the British missionary societies.³³

With the passing of the first wave of European empires, which were characterised by colonial settlement and wars of liberation, the second wave of empire began to form. This

²⁶ Tinker, G. E., *Missionary Conquest: the Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1993; Drinnon, R., *Facing West: the Metaphysics of Indian Hating and Empire Building*, New York, Meridian Books, 1980; Berkhofer, R. F., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1978.

²⁷ Canny, N. P., 'The Ideology of English Colonisation: From Ireland to America', in David Armitage (ed.) *Theories of Empire 1450-1800* [An Expanding World: the European Impact on World History 1450-1800, vol. 20] Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 1998, pp. 179ff.

²⁸ Lamont, W. M., *Richard Baxter and the Millennium: Protestant Imperialism and the English Revolution*, London, Croom Helm, 1979.

²⁹ Kohen, C. L., *God's Caress: the Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986. We may contrast this with the eccentric but definitely politically significant Fifth Monarchy movement: Capp, S., *The Fifth Monarchy Men: a Study in Seventeenth Century Millenarianism*, London, Faber & Faber, 1972. The intense preoccupation with their inner lives became a characteristic of the persecuted Puritans, who generally abandoned their political ambitions and their political theology after the Restoration in 1660; Keeble, N. H., *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth Century England*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1987; Cragg, G. R., *Puritanism in the Period of the Great Persecution 1660-1668*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1957.

³⁰ Hull, J. M., *The Hymns of Isaac Watts: from Experiential Educator to Theologian of Empire*. Unpublished paper presented to the XII session of the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values, Israel 2000.

³¹ Harrison, P., *Religion and the Religions in the English Enlightenment*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990; Rivers, I., *Reason, Grace and Sentiment: a Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England 1660-1780*; vol. I, *Wichcott to Wesley*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

³² Nock, A. D., *Conversion: the Old and the New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press [1932] 1998.

³³ Stanley, B., *The Bible and the Flag: Protestant Missions and British Imperialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries*, London, InterVarsity Press, 1990.

was based upon economic development and the transformation of the relationship between crown and colony into the relationship between centre and periphery. Only interested in political incorporation when all else failed, the British Empire of the 19th century was fundamentally a commercial enterprise.³⁴ It was during this period that the exclusive individual theology of pre-mundane fall and post-mundane salvation began to evolve into a commercial theology, preparing the way for the money theologies of the late 20th century.³⁵ During this period British theology concentrates upon the death of Christ, which is seen in increasingly commercial and contractual terms.³⁶ Feudal conceptions of sin as dishonouring of God have now given way to bourgeoisie conceptions of sin as the incurring of a debt.³⁷ Salvation through penal substitution became the forensic forerunner of the 'right doctrine Protestantism' which Reubem Alves gave so brilliantly expounded as an ideological embodiment of the capitalist world.³⁸ Pre-millenarian apocalypticism now flourishing on both sides of the Atlantic, gave further theological impetus to the increasing social and political irrelevance of Christian faith and the pre-destined election of the saints typical of early modernity evolved into the uniqueness and superiority of late modern Christianity.

Geo-political theology in the 20th century

It was the geo-political destiny of the Eurasian landmass to point to North America, and the enormous advantages of a huge landmass with vast resources opening upon both of the major trading oceans of the world soon gave the United States a preeminent world position. In order to understand the contemporary Christian spirituality of Britain we need to take a backward look, since its principle manifestation is nostalgia, but in seeking to understand the geo-political theology of the United States, we must be aware of its present dominant world position, and of the theological forms this position engenders.³⁹ Examples of these are the Anglo-Saxon theology of white supremacy in the Christian identity movement,⁴⁰ the prosperity gospel, the optimistic ego fulfillment theology which parallels the ego development and counseling movements, and particularly the missionary aggression which continues to

³⁴ Cain, P. J. and Hopkins, A. G., *British Imperialism*, two vols., London, Longman 1993.

³⁵ For theological critique see Duckrow, U., *Alternatives to Global Capitalism: Drawn from Biblical History, Designed for Political Action*, Utrecht, International Books, 1995; Meeks, D., *God the Economist: the Doctrine of God and Political Economy*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1989 and Gorringer, J., *Capital and the Kingdom: Theological Ethics and Economic Order*, London, SPCK, 1994.

³⁶ Hilton, B., *The Age of Atonement: the Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1988; Selby, P., *Grace and Mortgage: The Language of Faith and the Debt of the World*, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1997.

³⁷ Park, A. S., *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin*, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 1993.

³⁸ Alves, R., *Protestantism and Repression: a Brazilian Case Study*, New York, Orbis Books, 1985.

³⁹ Diamond, S., *Spiritual Warfare: the Politics of the Christian Right*, London, Pluto Press, 1989.

⁴⁰ Barkun, M., *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement*, London, University of North Carolina Press, 1994.

be the ideological expression of capitalist energy.⁴¹ Broadly speaking, just as the first British Empire was founded upon territory and the second upon commerce, the present American geo-political theology is to be regarded as a money theology. In this Christian worldview, the idolatry which was so readily perceived in other religions turns back upon itself in disguised and self-deceptive forms⁴² so that Christian faith becomes the alienated expression of the money-god.⁴³

The oscillation which has been a feature of the North Atlantic Anglo-Saxon world for four hundred and fifty years⁴⁴ is taking a new form today. The money theology of America exercises a tremendous power upon the most westerly parts of the Asian peninsula, and upon those parts which are most culturally and linguistically vulnerable to such possession. Now the nostalgic fragments of the once functional British imperial theology are assembled again like Frankenstein's monster. By means of a kind of secondary elaboration a new but derivative British money theology is formed.⁴⁵ Of course, this is nowhere near as powerful as it is in its country of origin, the United States, but it is attractive and plausible to a people who now find themselves protected by the money-curtain from the ravages of poverty but dependent upon the United States for its maintenance. Within the money-curtain, which is in itself an economic expression of geo-political realities, new forms of money theology continue to proliferate.

Voices of protest

The articulate stage four theology of a creative, historical period, by means of which spiritual insight rises above the confines of the geo-political enclosure, often becomes the synthetic conventional faith of the historical period which follows it, and the concrete narrative faith of the generation after that. It is as if the social and psychological power of the surrounding geo-political environment may be transcended by the insight of a prophet, but gradually the self-interest and the local point of view encouraged by the geo-political context reasserts its

⁴¹ Stoll, D., *Fishers of Men or Founders of Empire?*, London, Zed Books, 1982. For a vivid example of this theology, see Tom White, *The Believer's Guide to Spiritual Warfare*, Eastbourne, King's Way, 1991 and *The Believer's Guide to Breaking Strongholds*, Eastbourne, King's Way, 1994, both first published in the USA.

⁴² Hull, J. M., 'Money, modernity and morality: some issues in the Christian education of adults', *Religious Education*, 95/1 (Winter 2000) pp. 4-22. Theoretically I am dependent upon contemporary ideology theory, especially Cornelius Castoriadis, *Cross-roads in the Labyrinth*, Brighton, Harvester Press, 1984 and *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987.

⁴³ Hull, J. M., 'Christian education in a capitalist society: money and God', in David Ford and Denis L. Stamps (eds.) *Essentials of Christian Community, Essays in Honour of Daniel W. Hardy*, Edinburgh, T & T Clarke, 1996, pp. 241-252 and 'Christian education: sufficient or necessary', *Epworth Review*, Vol. 24, 1997, pp. 38-46, especially Part II. Several of my articles on this subject have been translated into German and are now published as *Gott und Geld*, Zurich, KIK, 2000.

⁴⁴ Bevington, D. W., *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: a History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, London, Unwin Hyman, 1989, documents the mutual influence of American and British religious life.

⁴⁵ Hull, J. M., 'The ambiguity of spiritual values', in J. Mark Halstead and Monica J. Taylor (eds.) *Values in Education and Education in Values*, London, Falmer Press, 1996, pp. 33-44.

control⁴⁶ for whom only the rituals and narratives remain as forms of embedded faith, made irrelevant by the loss of their original context. Again and again, however, the theology of stage five and the transforming prophetic action of stage six breaks out. Leonardo Boff has interpreted St Francis of Assisi as a prophetic figure standing against the commodity culture which was dawning in Europe in the 13th century,⁴⁷ and the theology of Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474-1566) refused to acknowledge the imperialism of Spain in Latin America as the reward given by God to Spain for the eviction of the Jews.⁴⁸ The astonishing openness of Abiezer Coppe (1619-74) towards the poor and his sensitivity towards theological and ecclesiastical oppression are a highlight of 17th century English theology.⁴⁹ Another voice of protest from the 17th century is Gerrard Winstanley (1609-76), the leader of the Digger movement, whose vision of the earth as a treasury and a commonwealth for everyone anticipates the modern theologies of hope and emancipation.⁵⁰

John Wesley (1703-91) is a more ambiguous figure. Although he breaks radically with the doctrines of selection and limited redemption, and thus sets the British religious imagination free from some aspects of exclusion, his universalism may be looked upon as preparing the scene for the second wave of the British Empire. However, Wesley had also the insight of a prophet, as may be seen from his meditations upon the slave trade, one of the earliest examples of such protest literature.⁵¹ In the 19th century an outstanding figure is John William Colenso, Bishop of Natal (1814-83), and his remarkable wife Hariette, who stripped the missionary enterprise of its imperialistic falsifications and became forerunners of the anti-apartheid struggle.⁵² In the 20th century the theology of civil disobedience of Martin Luther King challenges the power theology.⁵³ The question for Anglo-Saxon theology has always been whether Jesus as lord was to take the place of Jesus as servant, or whether the lordship of Jesus would be expressed through service. The contemporary features of this are summed up in the experience of my children in Jerusalem in the summer of the year 2000. Outside the Jerusalem wall they saw a busload of American tourists gathering on the

⁴⁶ Just as James Fowler has applied his stage development theory of individual faith (Fowler, J. W., *Stages of Faith: the Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1981) to collective features of congregational life (*Faith Development and Pastoral Care*, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1986), so I am suggesting that the theory may be applied to the history of religious movements: Elwood, R., *The History and Future of Faith: Religion, Past, Present and to Come*, New York, Cross-road, 1998.

⁴⁷ Boff, L. *Saint Francis: a Model for Human Liberation* London, SCM 1985.

⁴⁸ *Western Expansion and Indigenous Peoples: the Heritage of Las Casas* [9th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences 1973] edited by E. Sevilla-Casas, The Hague 1977.

⁴⁹ Smith, N. *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the 17th Century* London, Junction Books, 1983, pp.39-157.

⁵⁰ Sabine, G. H. (ed.) *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley* New York, Cornell University Press 1941; Bradstock, A. *Faith in the Revolution: The Political Theologies of Munster and Winstanley* London, SPCK 1997; Hamilton, L. (ed.) *The Law of Freedom and Other Writings of Gerrard Winstanley* Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Pelican 1973.

⁵¹ John Wesley *Thoughts upon Slavery* 1774.

⁵² Guy, J. *The Heretic: a Study of the Life of John William Colenso* Johannesburg, Raven Press 1983 and *View Across the River: Harriette Colenso and the Zulu Struggle against Imperialism* London, James Currey 2001.

footpath near the bus. They wore tee shirts with the slogan 'Jesus is Lord' and the same motto was on their baseball caps. In such a context where Christians represent less than three percent of the population of Israel, and where there is such sensitivity towards the dominating power of the Christian west, it would surely have been more Christ-like to have worn tee shirts with the slogan 'Jesus is servant' but this would be ideologically difficult for the people concerned. Thus those whose religious tradition began with the one who said that whoever does the will of God is his mother, his brother and his sister (Mark 3:33-5), who described the Temple as a house of prayer for all the nations (Mark 11:17), and who summed up his mission by declaring that he had come as the servant of all (Mark 10:45) has been transformed by fifteen hundred years of geo-political enclosure within the Euro-Asian and American land masses into an expression of power. The sad thing is that although sometimes this outlook is adopted with a shrewd eye to its economic convenience, usually it invades people in the western churches as a kind of social false consciousness,⁵⁴ of which they are completely unaware, and thus innocent. It is consciousness itself which has become sloganised, and a change of slogan cannot bring about a change of consciousness. This leads us to consider the educational challenge which is presented by this situation, but first we must discuss some theoretical aspects of the general theory.

Some theoretical comments on the possibility of a geo-political practical theology

Large scale hypothesis such as those of Max Weber concerning the relationship between theology and economics, that of Ernst Bloch on the relationship between theology and hope,⁵⁵ and my own attempt to create a relationship between geo-political factors and theology are incapable of verification but may certainly become more or less plausible, convincing to a greater or lesser extent. There are several ways in which a theory about a geo-political theology of Europe might become convincing rather than unconvincing.⁵⁶ This can be done to some extent through the method of the enquiry. If what I have suggested about the geo-political position of Western Europe, the North Atlantic and North America is to be credible, it should be possible to point to other geo-political locations and historical experiences in which a similar connection can be developed but a different theological outcome presented. In other words, if the Western Asian peninsula has generated a certain kind of theological world-view, then the geo-political experience of Christians in Southern Africa, Latin America, Canada, and Australia should be capable of demonstrating similar

⁵³ Carson, C. (ed.) *The Papers of Martin Luther King Jr.*, vols. I-IV, Berkeley, University of California, 1992.

⁵⁴ Gabel, J., *False Consciousness: an Essay on Reification*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1975 and Eyerman, R., *False Consciousness and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, Stockholm, Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1981.

⁵⁵ Bloch, E., *The Principle of Hope* [three vols.] Oxford, Blackwell, 1986.

⁵⁶ I am guided here by Paul Ricoeur's comments about the range of possible interpretations of texts. Ricoeur, P., *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Fort Worth, Texas Christian University Press, 1976.

relationships between geo-political situation and theological formation with different theological outcomes. If geo-political theory can be used to help us to understand some aspects of Western European and North American theology, then geo-political differences elsewhere in the world should similarly illuminate theologies which are different from the Anglo-Saxon theologies. Is this possible?

In the case of Southern Africa, it is quite possible. Awareness of the geographical situation of European Protestant theology, whether Dutch or British, on the southern tip of Africa, would do much to help us to understand the peculiarities of the apartheid theology of former years. It was in the presence of black Africa that Europe had discovered that it was white.⁵⁷ Moreover, the Cape occupied a strategic position in the maintenance of the commercial links of the second British Empire, and later acquired a crucial place in the western economy through its gold and silver. In the case of Latin America, we have a vivid and compelling verification of the geo-political theory, since one only has to contrast the theology of North America with the theology of South America, and to compare the history of colonialism in the two continents of the New World to be convinced about the relevance of the geo-political dimension. In the case of Canada, we find similar features of the general Anglo-Saxon view of the world. It is interesting to notice that the motto of the Dominion of Canada is the text from the imperial Psalm 72: "from sea to sea" (Ps. 8). The Canadian theological worldview is generally speaking that of Britain strengthened with elements of early modern survivals (such as the Mennonite and Hutterite communes of Alberta) but modified through the need to assert geo-political independence against the overwhelming power of the United States and the US dollar. When speaking about the money-culture and the money-god in Canada I find a ready reception, whereas in the United States itself I believe that people are on the whole unaware of the power which lies around them and which has influenced them. Power is invisible to those who wield it.

As for Australia, my native land, there is an interesting formation of an Australian religious consciousness with an accompanying theology, which regards itself as an outpost of the Anglo-Saxon world and is influenced by its position as the extremity of the South East Asian peninsula, together with the mysticism of nature which is so typical of the Australian spirituality.⁵⁸

However, we may obtain a clearer view of the European geo-political theology if we contrast it with the theologies of Russia and of South Korea. Here we have very distinctive

⁵⁷ Comaroff, J., *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*, Oxford, Westview, 1992 and *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness*, vols. I & II, London, University of Chicago Press, 1991, 1997.

⁵⁸ Malone, P. (ed.) *Developing an Australian Theology* Homebush, New South Wales. St Paul Publications 1999; Goosen, G. C. *Australian Theologies: Themes and Methodologies into the Millennium* Homebush, New South Wales, St Paul Publications 2000

theological traditions each of which is amenable to a geo-political interpretation. In the case of Russia, we have a culture which is not obviously contained within geo-physical boundaries. The Russians were exploring Siberia and approaching the Bearing Straits at about the same time as Europeans were discovering and exploring the New World.⁵⁹ In the case of Russia, the place of the ocean is taken by the huge landmass of Northern Asia. This means that Russia lacks the natural borders provided by the structure of the West Asian peninsula. The contrast is particularly striking in the case of Britain where a clear national identity was bordered by the coast “this precious jewel set in a silver sea” whereas in the case of Russia although there were frontiers created by the Black Sea in the south, the Baltic on the north and the relationship with the Tartars, the Mongols and the Chinese to the east and the south-east, there were no clearly defined limits to the national territory.⁶⁰ The imperialism which came from Moscow in the 13th and 14th centuries had to be harsh and brutal because only by political and military will could identity be carved out of the endless tracks of land. This may be why in Russia boundaries were internalised into the sharp contrasts between the atheist and the Christian, the one who sacrifices himself for others and the one who commits suicide (the novels of Dostoyevsky and the territorial consciousness of Tolstoy). The sharp internal boundaries were necessary in the absence of clearly defined external ones. Consequently, the theology of the Russian Orthodox Church became intensely inward, mystical but not in the western individual sense. The mysticism of the Russian Orthodox Church is a corporate mysticism whereas the religious experience described by John Bunyan (1628-1688) is an ecstatic introspective individuality.⁶¹

When we turn to South Korea we find a very different situation. Here we find the eastern extremity of the Asian landmass. Deeply influenced by the Confucian worldview from China and also by Chinese Buddhism, Korea finds itself struggling for its identity between its Chinese and Japanese neighbours. Experiencing the oppression of successive waves of imperialism, first from China, then from Japan, followed by the civil war of 1952 and the ideological pressure from the United States and the succession of totalitarian administrations throughout the 1960s, 70s and 80s, South Korea has produced a distinctive kind of theology, the Minjung theology.⁶² It is in contrast with this Minjung theology that we may distinguish the European theology of the perpetrators from the Minjung and Latin American theology of the victims. The Minjung theology is the theology of a suffering

⁵⁹ Jones, *The Miracle of Europe* [see reference to Bearing Straits]; Heffernan, *The Meaning of Europe*, pp. 79ff.

⁶⁰ LeDonne, J. P., *The Russian Empire and the World 1700-1917: The Geopolitics of Expansion and Containment*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997.

⁶¹ Bunyan, J., *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1987.

⁶² Kim, Yong Bock, *Messiah and Minjung: Christ's Solidarity with the People for New Life*, Hong Kong, Christian Conference of Asia, 1992; Cyris, H. S. Moon, *A Korean Minjung Theology: An Old Testament Perspective*, Mary Knoll, N. Y., Orbis Books, 1985 and Commission of Theological Concerns of the Christian Conference of Asia (ed.) *Minjung Theology: People as the Subject of History*, London, Zed Books, 1983.

church, which has identified with the suffering of the oppressed people, and which has generated a theology not of imperialism but of powerlessness.⁶³ This has produced its own biblical hermeneutics, its own theology of the emotions and its own formation of Christian doctrines. When asked to summarise his theology, a Minjung theologian replied “Minjung theology says that Jesus Christ was born amongst the poor. If you would find him, there you must still seek him”. This is in striking contrast with the theology of Britain which says:

Jesus shall reign where're the sun
Doth his celestial journeys run⁶⁴

These observations and these contrasts do contribute to the plausibility of the geo-political theory of theological production.

Implications for the nature of contextualised theology

The contextualisation of theology not only implies that theology should be influenced by the life context with which it is engaged, nor that theology should be drawn from the implications and actualities of that context but that theology is to some extent the product of that context ie. theology is at least partly paraphenomenal. At this point, it is necessary and helpful to draw upon Marxian theory of the relationship between the base and the superstructure. However, this does not mean that a deterministic model need be accepted. The superstructure is not only the product of the base; it interacts with the base in a system of mutual reproduction.⁶⁵ Moreover, the theological superstructure is not only in dialogue with the base which it interprets and which it reproduces; it is also in dialogue with the transcendent itself which it seeks to replicate, and with the literature, liturgy and traditions of the empirical religious tradition it represents. If this were not the case, theology could never be anything else but the creature of geo-political and anthropological conditions. As it is, however, theology has an ambiguous status.⁶⁶ It is both the expression and the critique of its context. Otherwise, the prophets could never arise. Theology would never have the strength to recognise its geo-political context unless there were historical and biblical dimensions and a holistic environment by means of which to relativise the productions of the

⁶³ Schüttke-Scherle, P., *From Contextual to Ecumenical Theology: a Dialogue Between Minjung Theology and Theology After Auschwitz*, Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 1989.

⁶⁴ Watts, Isaac, *The Psalms of David*, 1719.

⁶⁵ For neo-Marxian theories of the inter-relationship of base and superstructure see especially Goldmann, L., *Cultural Creation in Modern Society*, St. Louis, Telos Press, 1976. Goldmann explored this inter-relationship with special attention to religion in *The Hidden God: a Study of Tragic Vision in the Pensées of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine*, London, Routledge Kegan Paul, 1964; also Baudrillard, J., *The Mirror of Production*, St. Louis, Telos Press, 1975 and Gastoriadis, *Cross-roads*, and *The Imaginary Institution*.

⁶⁶ Hick, J., *An Interpretation of Religion: human Responses to the Transcendent*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1989.

geo-political environment. It is in the light of this that we can distinguish one geo-political theology from another. We can say that this expression of a geo-political reality is an expression of the emancipating gospel of Jesus Christ and thus one is compromised, immersed in the falsifications required by the historical destiny of those whose consciousness was molded by that geo-political reality. Theology is thus both signifier and signified, both stimulus and response, both transformation and convention.

Finding a theological touchstone

The basic theological concept is that of life. God is the God of the living not of (Mark 12: 27) the dead. God the Father is the creator of life (Gen. 1: 20f); God the Son came that we might have life more abundantly (Jn. 10: 10); the Holy Spirit is the Lord, the giver of life (Jn. 7: 38-39). Anything which interrupts or frustrates the fulfillment of life is hostile to the will of God (Matt. 18: 14). Salvation is the flourishing of life (Rm 6: 4; 8: 1). The Mission of God is a mission for life. The Christian faith, as an instrument of the Mission of God, is dedicated to the freeing of life from everything which enslaves, exploits and pollutes life. The norms and standards of life are those offered by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In him was life, and the life was the light of all people (Jn 1: 3f). God gave his only son that whoever trusts in him should not perish but should have everlasting life (Jn 3: 16).

With the help of this touchstone, we can distinguish those elements of the Christian faith which are the productions of a geo-political distortion from those elements which are intrinsic to Christian discipleship. The Christian faith in Europe has been distorted by four or five hundred years of collaboration with the European search for worldwide power. Instead of regarding sin as that which frustrates and distorts life, we have attributed sin to a pre-mundane catastrophe and regarded its consequences as being mainly located in a post-mundane transcendence.⁶⁷ This has served to distract the energies of the Christian faith from the sin, which suffocates life in the here-and-now. In order to provide for social stability and to exhibit the social hierarchy, God has been depicted as the transcendent metaphysical God who stands at the highest ladder of the hierarchy of existence and not as the God who leads human cultures towards the future of freedom. As Ernst Bloch said, the God above has replaced the God in front.⁶⁸ The cross, which is the symbol of life laid down for the sake of more life, has been turned into the symbol of a commercial transaction, and become the

⁶⁷ Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*.

⁶⁸ Bloch, E., *Atheism in Christianity: The Religion of the Exodus and the Kingdom*, New York, Herder & Herder, 1972.

justification for the oppression of others in the name of their so-called eternal salvation.⁶⁹ Instead of sharing in partnership with the rest of God's saving projects, the Christian faith has become proud in its exclusivity, and has wasted its energies on futile competition with other saving projects, instead of dedicating itself to the redemption of the situations in which life is frustrated and crushed.⁷⁰ Many other examples could be given but these are sufficient to show how the dichotomies between faithful faith and distorted faith could be established.⁷¹

The practical implications of this geo-political approach to European theology

The educational difficulty of the situation is created by the fact that although only fragments of the once functional geo-political theology of power remain, they are defended by nostalgia, conservatism and fear, which in itself serves to perpetuate the geo-political power theology by inhibiting positive Christian thought and action. Moreover, in so far as the nostalgic and dysfunctional fragments of the imperial theology are now gathered up and are fed into the American theological money machine, they are defended by the self-interest of those who live inside the money-curtain. Finally, and most difficult of all, the nostalgic fragments whether clung to in mere nostalgia or reassembled into the service of the 21st century money-god, are defended by a kind of collective amnesia and a societal self-deception.⁷² This self-deception exists on the general secular plain of society⁷³ as well as taking particularly entrenched forms within the circle of those adults who still have relations with the church. Thus any challenging attempt to dissipate the fragments of the imperial theology will meet with misunderstanding, and even active resistance.

The following steps thus appear to be necessary.

1. It is necessary to inform church-related adults about the nature of individual and collective self-deception, and to promote the formation of a theology which can cope with the problem of self-deception. Such an approach can be carried out through educational

⁶⁹ Song, C. S., *Jesus, the Crucified People*, Minneapolis, Mn., Fortress Press, 1996 and World Council of Churches, *Sacrifice and Humane Economic Life* [Occasional Study Pamphlet, no. 7: text by Franz-Josef Hinkelammert] Geneva (n. d.).

⁷⁰ Hull, J. M., 'Christian Education: Sufficient or Necessary? [In two parts] *Epworth Review*, vol. 24, 1997, January pp. 40-48, April pp. 38-46.

⁷¹ The main purpose of the present paper is to consider the fruitfulness of a geopolitical approach to understanding British theology. I cannot within the scope of this article thematise this relationship in terms of specific Christian doctrines.

⁷² I have discussed the pedagogical problems of adult Christian education under these conditions in a series of recent articles such as 'Karl Marx on Capital: Some Implications for Christian Adult Education' *Modern Believing* Vol.38, No.1, 1997, pp22-31; 'Christian Boundaries, Christian Identities and the Local Church' *International Journal of Practical Theology* Vol.1, 1999, pp1-13; 'Adult Religious Faith: Some Problems of Definition, of Research and of Education' *Modern Believing* Vol.40, No.4, 1999, pp39-49; 'Money, Modernity and Morality: Some Issues in the Christian Education of Adults' *Religious Education* Vol.95, No.1, 2000, pp4-22

⁷³ Curtis, M., *The Ambiguities of Power: British Foreign Policy Since 1945*, London, Zed Books, 1995, p. 5 and Pilger, J., *Hidden Agendas*, London, Vintage Books, 1998.

material based both on the New Testament references to self-deception, which show that the apostolic church was aware of this problem (1 Cor 3:18; Gal 6:3; James 1:22, 26; 1 Jn 1:8) and carefully selected units from the philosophy, sociology and psychology of self-deception.

2. The Christian education of adults today must offer a dialectical interpretation of the history of the Christian faith in Britain, in which a contrast will be drawn between the major figures of the geo-political power theology and those who have opposed it. In this way an antithetical consciousness will be encouraged in the adult students.
3. It is necessary to show adults that there is a tendency to read the Bible from the point of view of European power. New techniques for uncovering this tendency are urgently required. One such technique might be the way in which a theology of disability can challenge the pre-suppositions of a non-disabled reading of the Bible and can lead adults into the realisation that the taken for granted biblical world can be relativised by contact with other worlds.⁷⁴
4. The enclosed character of the geo-political power theology of Europe can be revealed by comparison and contrast with those theologies which have emerged from situations of suffering and oppression. Prominent amongst these should be the Minjung theology of South Korea, and the feminist and black consciousness theologies of the United States, South Africa and Britain. Women's theology also has an important part to play in revealing the structures of the European power theology.⁷⁵
5. However, the self-deception and resistance inherent in the dysfunctional power theology cannot be dispelled by information and rational discussion alone. Christian adults must be encouraged step by step to engage in social and political action on behalf of the Gospel and to transform their consciousness of faith by participating in such action. In this connection, the education of church related adults occupies a position of central importance.

Conclusion

This paper has presented practical theology in context in two senses. First, it has been argued that the European and especially the British heritage must be placed in its

⁷⁴ Hull, J.M. *In the Beginning there was Darkness: A Blind Person's Conversations with the Bible* London, SCM Press 2001 and 'Blindness and the Face of God: Toward a Theology of Disability' in Hans-Georg Zierbertz et al. (ed.) *The Human Image of God* [festschrift, Johannes A. van der Ven] Leiden, Brill 2000, pp215-229

⁷⁵ From a huge literature, I refer as a good example to Jantzen, G. *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* Manchester, Manchester UP, 1998

historic geo-political context if it is to be understood.⁷⁶ Secondly, it has been suggested that such an understanding provides a useful context for understanding the characteristics of the faith of modern European Christians and for the creation of educational interventions intended to reform and renew the European outlook.

END

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Note:

Professor Hull also told the meeting about Justice Mail, a group of Christian activists based in Anglican churches in the midlands, who respond to requests for actions sent out by email from time to time. Anyone interested in joining the lists or finding out more, is invited to email j.hull@queens.ac.uk

Questions and answers follow on the next page.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Have you any comments about the present geopolitical Near East?

Oh yes. Well, of course, one of the most important contributions to that debate has come from Samuel P. Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*, about the idea of an ideological conflict between Islam and Christianity. His hypothesis is just the very fruit of the Christianity that I've been discussing, and the geopolitical reality of Israel in the Middle East is very largely a product of the geopolitical power of the United States of America.

The news tonight was that Mr Bush has announced the resignation of his Secretary of Defence because of the Democratic victories in the House of Representatives and possibly in the Senate. It is the United States and its extension of geopolitical power throughout the Middle East which has led to these appalling crises. People say that the opposition of Islam is older than that. Well, that is true. You can trace militant Islam back into the 1960s, and of course one of the striking things about our contemporary culture is that we have not seen the growth of secularity as was predicted in the 1960s. What we have seen has been a tremendous, worldwide revival of religion, and all religions have now gone through a renaissance, including to some extent the Christian faith itself. All major world religions are now producing at the razor's edge militant groups of people prepared to use violence, and the problem of how to resist such groups is a tremendous struggle.

But I believe that our own contribution to resolving this is very simple. We have to make friends with our nearest mosque. We have to send Eid cards to our Muslim friends. We have to go on common enterprises with our Muslim friends. We have to get to know them and build up a common trust. Every day I am taken to work by Muslim taxi drivers, and they are such interesting people. On Tuesday my wife said to me, 'Make sure you don't leave the green bin out on the pavement. If the men don't collect it, get your taxi driver to bring it into the house.' So when the taxi came I said, 'Do you mind bringing that bin in for me?' I got out, closed the door; then I said, 'By the way, are all the lights off in my house?' He said, 'No, there's one still on.' I went in. He told me where it was. I turned it off. I then got into the car. In my excitement I forgot to double-lock the door. We went a hundred yards down the road. I said, 'Stop! I haven't locked my door properly. Go back, please.' He went back. I got to the end of my journey. I offered him twice the fare, because, I said, 'It's taken you twice as long.' He said, 'God forbid that I should profit from the needs of a fellow man.' So I thanked him, I gave him a tiny little extra, and we said goodbye to each other and we parted with mutual respect. Thousands of tiny little incidents like that are what we need.

How do you wish President Bush had responded to the events of 9/11?

It's so easy, isn't it, to stand here and say: this is what they should have done! However, I do remember at the time, shortly before the declaration of war against Iraq, writing to Tony Blair and pointing out that if the billions of dollars and pounds that were about to be spent on this illegal and futile war, was

spent on alleviating the world's poverty, by bringing fresh drinking water, on bringing education to millions of children, then the United States would form firm friends. The huge wave of sympathy that went around the world in the weeks immediately after the attack upon the World Trade Towers was so quickly dissipated. You stand on the tail of a giant and the giant lashes out at you. But if the giant instead had moved some of those resources into where they're truly needed, we would have had a vastly different world today.

My view is that Mr Bush has created this metaphor of a war against terror and has deceived himself and many of the American people by taking that metaphor literally and putting the country under a so-called war footing in the name of which so many ordinary principles of human rights and common-law justice have been suspended. I believe that Tony Blair and George Bush will ultimately stand before the bar of history and I think that this has started to happen in the United States yesterday.

How large is the gap between your vision and the realities of the institutional church?

Let's talk about the Church of England. It's very hard to find out what the policies of the Church of England are. In a way the Church of England doesn't have policies. It seems to me that the Church of England is a sort of a loose confederation of quasi-independent structures that's called episcopacy, and trying to get these fellows together is like herding cats. So I don't know really what the values of the institutional church are, but that's not going to stop me having an opinion!

Too much energy in the Church of England is being wasted on completely trivial subjects. Should there be women bishops? Of course there should be women bishops! What a daft question. Should people be treated equally regardless of their sexual orientation? Of course they should! How does it come about that in the Church we dare to do things which are quite illegal in our secular places of work? That's what I think.

Now, I have created a rather naughty little catchphrase. I believe that we've got trapped in a kind of a theology of the orifices: the orifices of the body – what goes in and out. I got this idea from Mary Daley, the great anthropologist, who speaks about purity codes in primitive societies relating to the orifices of the body; what goes in and out of the openings of your body are what constitute your purity. We have this curious theology of Words, Willies and Wafers! I wish to replace that by a Kingdom of God theology which seeks to bring good news to the poor.

What are the implications of your views for the education of the young?

Ah, good one! Yes, now I'm on slightly firmer ground! Well, how much teaching do we give our young people which involves theological thinking skills? Precious little. I have not come across a junior church or church-based education where children and young people are given skills of theological and religious thinking. Instead, too often they are given pietistic moralising. This is

a strange thing, because in religious education in the county schools and in the Church of England schools, many teachers are being trained in thinking skills, so why doesn't it come into the churches? It is not surprising that our young people leave the church because they are too old for it or about the age of nine.

Now, I know it's vastly more complex than that. It isn't 'cool' to go to church, it isn't 'cool' to be committed; but I think that in our education of our children we need to be much more adventurous, much more theological. Of course, we are teaching children about Christian Aid, getting involved in campaigns, training our children to take an interest in the world outside the church on the basis of Christian values. All of those things are important.

I'd just like to add a little PS. I am not against 'fresh expressions of church'. I'm in favour of them. One of my hopes is that soon in Birmingham we will have Britain's first Balti Church – that's when you hire an Indian restaurant to open on Sunday and you invite the refugees and the asylum seekers and nobody pays the bills. You pass around a wooden bowl and people put in what they think it's worth, and you always make money. With that money you pay for the refugees and the asylum seekers. You read Scripture, you pray, you sing before and after the meal. I think it could be done.

I am, however, opposed to the theology of the document called *Mission-Shaped Church*, and have written a little reply to it. That document is basically a lament over a broken Christendom, and it sets out a programme of domination which says Christian faith will fill the earth and subdue it. I am opposed to that because it would leave no standing room for anybody else, and it seems to me that is quite frankly unrealistic.

That, I think, was the last question. I don't know whether you think I've got off lightly or not, but thank you for your questions and thank you for your brilliant participation. I really enjoyed meeting you. Thank you.

Andrew Knowles.