

THERE'S LIFE IN ESTABLISHMENT—BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT

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ABSTRACT

Secularization theory, central to the dominant discourse of modernity, sought to describe a tendency—regarded as ‘inevitable’ by some leading scholars—whereby transcendence was squeezed out of the system by processes of bureaucratization and rationalism, and relegated to the margins of private faith and practice, dying altogether, perhaps. The new Inner Cities Religious Council, set up by the government in 1992 to administer the areas where religious migrants and others live, afforded an opportunity to test the political validity of this theory using discourse analysis of government documents. Startling, if inconclusive, evidence is revealed of a ‘religious’ response by government to minority issues, which reveals secularization to be driven by choices—not inevitable but a power struggle: one to which the Church of England appeared to capitulate, even while it facilitated other faiths in their own pursuit of status claims.

The time may not be far hence, post-September 11, when what is known as secularization will seem an absurdly inadequate and antiquated notion. However, the overt religiousness of immigrants was still so strange a phenomenon to ethnic Europeans in 1998 that a Council of Europe Seminar in Strasbourg on 24–26 November produced a resolution that the term ‘secular’ should be re-examined in light of immigration. The document stated that,

the use of the term ‘secular’, referring to the relationship between the State and religion, should be re-examined and clarified on a pan-european level, with a view to reaching a common understanding. The presence of minority religious communities and the resulting religious pluralism makes it necessary to device [*sic*] new State policies in this field. A further Seminar would be an excellent occasion to define the element of such policies in cooperation with representatives of the religious communities concerned (EC 1998: 4).

This statement, emerging out of a pan-government organization rather than a church synod, represents the tip of an iceberg of change in assumptions about European culture, and is perhaps a defining moment in Europe's changing religious sense of itself. I received this document three years after embarking on my own research into the impact of religious migrants on 'secular' British society. This research took as its focus the Inner Cities Religious Council (ICRC), set up by the Government in 1991, to help administer the inner cities in the wake of riots and unresolvable social malaise. This new organ of Government was run by the new 'Faiths Branch'—as it was then called—of the Department of the Environment and was chaired by a Government Minister. Its membership comprised spokesmen from the five major faiths in the country, and coopted experts. It appears, at face value, to contradict secularization theories about the irrelevance of religion, and the marginalization of belief to the private realm articulated by scholars such as Bryan Wilson (esp. Wilson 1982 and 1996) and most recently, following Wilson in 1999, by Karel Dobbelaere (Dobbelaere 1999). For the purposes of this paper, Wilson's famous comment is the key definition: that secularization 'described the process by which religious thinking, practice and institutions lose social significance and become marginal to the operation of the social system' (1982: 150). It emerges however, that this assessment may be premature. Simon Green, also following Wilson, was also somewhat premature to say in 1996 that 'the state does not construct economic or even social policy with reference to ecclesiastical sentiment' (Green 1996: 301). The State had in fact been doing just that, and in a focused new way, as this article will show, since 1991.

What was of interest initially, in light of these views, was the theoretical implication of the Government's efforts to accommodate the faith of minorities. Why were Qur'an schools funded on the rates, when publicly-funded Sunday schools might not be considered a realistic option for truant youth on council housing estates? Why could libraries about Hinduism be provided by local authorities, when expressions of Christianity in public proved controversial? The tone of the Church about its mission and its claim to truth—evidenced for example in *Faith in the City* (FITC 1985: para. 3.28)—contrasted with the confident demands of migrant groups for public facilitation of their religious reconstruction.¹ Philip Lewis has commented on the uniquely terri-

1. 'There are places where Christian service to the community may take the form of helping others to maintain their religious and cultural heritage in freedom and dignity' (FITC 1985: para. 3.28). This ignores the lack of freedom that many, especially women, traditionally experience in the cultures referred to. As early as the 1970s, the Union of Muslim Organizations of UK and Eire (UMO), representing 150 Muslim groups, sought official recognition of a separate system of Islamic family law, which would automatically be applicable to all British Muslims. They submitted the resolution to various Government ministers throughout the decade, with a view to its being enacted by Parliament.

torial consolidation, often at State expense, of Muslim communities among ethnic groups in Britain during this period (Lewis 2001).² The ICRC found itself bridging a cultural divide ignored by policy makers and the Church for decades—but it did not start with that in mind.

What follows is a case study of the ICRC, to be added to other studies such as those of Sophie Gilliat-Ray (see esp. Gilliat-Ray 2000) on university campus religion, which finds signs of *desecularization* connected with immigration. The present article is a description of why the ICRC was established, and the nature of its achievement during its first six-year period. Four of the shibboleths of secularization theory were held up to scrutiny in light of the ICRC's existence and work. These, crystallized from a considerable literature but perhaps obvious to any 'common sense' view of 'our culture', were:

- Church and State are differentiated.
- Officials do not, cannot or simply would not, use religious language for work purposes.
- Civilian religious identity is not relevant to Government.
- Religion no longer affects policy or its outcomes.

It becomes clear that none of these fairly basic components of classical secularization theory holds water during the research period. Documentary evidence culled from a six-year period of meetings, conferences, book publication and legislation all flowing from the work of the ICRC from 1991 to 1997 raises new questions. Examples of that evidence are given, together with reflection on the precise language used, to see whether *desecularization* appears to be following the same path in reverse that secularization took. Was a return to Christian categories and discourse in public life apparent, or was something new happening? That path—the history of secularization—is not rehearsed in this essay, as the literature is extensive. That secularization, however defined, happened and in accelerated fashion from the 1890s through the 1950s is not contested. This latter decade was the high-water mark of secularization according to Callum Brown's recent work *The Death of Christianity* (Brown 2001); be it Weber's disenchantment, Wilson's loss of transcendence in public affairs, or David Martin's trivialization through bureaucratization of the Anglican mission. (All these authors can be referred to from the selected bibliography at the end of the essay.) Yet, any mono-religious analysis of secularization—and almost without exception, secularization is studied within a framework of Christianity alone—will distort the truth. Space in this essay is used instead to reflect on how the Church apparently colluded in that secularization, but remained sufficient of a critical mass in society and in the State for its residual authority and mechanisms to be re-activated at a time of crisis in the newly emerging *plural* situa-

2. Philip Lewis, Interview, 'Belief in an Ethnic Constituency', *Third Way* 24.5 (July 2001), p. 17.

tion. That the Church was utilized to harness other faiths to the Government machine in which it had so privileged, if muted, a place, is of particular interest.

But before turning to a description of the ICRC, a word about discourse analysis—the method used to pin theory to fact. A full set of Minutes and Conference Reports for the six-year period was supplied, together with associated documents including an important book called *Visions of Reality: Religion and Ethnicity in Social Work* (Patel *et al.* 1998), which was launched by the ICRC. There are various well-developed and productive ways of examining documents. A mixture of discourse and documentary analysis (which involve the study of context) was applied. Meanings (and hence apparent facticity) vary according to the circumstances of their use—a phenomenon referred to by Punch (1998: 231) and Jupp (1996: 305). For example, the expression ‘faith group’ had a new connotation in late twentieth-century England since the emergence of Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus into the perceivable parameters of discourse. A faith group is not simply a hypothetical band of men at prayer in a Middle East mosque but a potentially problematic social and political entity now recognized or partly recognized by British Government in the administrative (and legislative) process, because the groups in question had exerted significant power. Usage depends on power, that is, who uses the ‘knowledge’ implied in the language, what caused that knowledge and with what intent, and that requires of the researcher an understanding of context.

The conclusion reached is that ‘secularization’ is more a discourse than a ‘theory’, a construct than a concept, generated out of a struggle between the processes and ‘flows’ around the ‘truth’ of Christianity, and that truth’s supercession by other possible truths or bodies of knowledge. In the Foucauldian usage, discourse is a body of knowledge, in which power is implicit (McHoul and Grace 1993). For him ‘[p]ower produces knowledge, they imply one another: a site where power is exercised is also a place at which knowledge is produced’ (Smart 1989: 65). One can expect discourses to present themselves as facts. Foucault sought to unmask the struggles at work, but unlike Marx, he asserted that the State was not the only producer of discourse; that there were multiple discourses, competing within a hierarchy of discourses for domination (see Jupp 1996: 305).³ The aim of my thesis (Taylor 2002) was to disclose this struggle, implicit in the discourses and sub-discourses of the different religious groups, and the State.

What is the Inner Cities Religious Council?

The ICRC was, during the research period, a forum of spokesmen (very occasionally women) of the five major faiths, chaired by a Government Minister,

3. ‘In every epoch, the ruling ideas have been the ideas of the ruling class’ (Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, cited by Galbraith (1984: 122)).

which met three times a year. The secretariat also organized two annual regional conferences, initiated a wide range of events and influenced policy, ostensibly on regeneration but increasingly on the politico-religious concerns of the members themselves. It was served by a small secretariat in the Department of the Environment's Regeneration Directorate although there was increasing co-ordination of work with the Home Office. The three consecutive Secretaries have so far all been Anglican clerics. The ICRC's inception was announced at the end of 1991 by Robert Key (himself the son of an Anglican bishop), who was then Under Secretary of State for the Environment, to a fringe meeting of Urban Bishops at Synod in Westminster to which all the mainstream press were invited. The Council concerns itself with those areas of ethnic—and for ethnic, read 'religious', following Modood's extensive research (Modood and Berthoud 1997)—settlement known by the shorthand expression 'inner cities'. Its remit was ostensibly practical: to 'seek to create opportunities for action in the inner cities' by contributing to policy making. After five years, to quote its Five-Year Review (RICRC),⁴ the ICRC's influence had succeeded in 'permeating the culture of Government'. It aided Government in devising and implementing policies on a variety of matters ranging from multi-faith youth events to the Census Religion Question (the first since 1851), Islamophobia and asylum.

Why was the ICRC Set Up?

John Rex uses the expression 'inner city' to cover both problems of physical fabric, and the uncomfortable 'coexistence of...two quite disparate immigrant populations' (Rex 1981: 31) by which he apparently very loosely meant African and Asian. Inner-city problems had a lot to do with policy-making by the post-war governments whose ideological and idealistic intentions to do with post-imperial notions of belonging and citizenship were often unmatched by practical provision, especially in terms of housing. Peoples granted vague rights of citizenship and work were all but abandoned by the State when they arrived in Britain. Little or nothing was done to prepare the native British for immigration either—and many fled or fought a mean-minded racist resistance. By 1981, following 15 years of what G. Rees and J. Lambert called 'truly phenomenal research and policy innovation, directed at the eradication of [these] problems', the Toxteth and Brixton riots erupted, described by the *Guardian* newspaper as 'the most frightening civil disorder ever seen in England' (Rees and Lambert 1985: 1). Secular methods had clearly failed. In 1985, *Faith in the City* (FITC 1985) was published, the Church's somewhat belated but politically

4. 'Review of the Inner Cities Religious Council: A Report of the Review Team' appointed by Hilary Armstrong, MP, Minister for Local Government and Housing. London: ICRC, 1998 [RICRC in text].

spectacular response to the same problems, which merely advocated more of what had exacerbated the problems: big-spend Government intervention (FITC 1985: paras. 8: 12–20). Indeed, by 1994, and the publication of an independent report by Professor Brian Robson of Manchester University, expenditure on the Urban Priority Areas was an annual £4 billion, and things were still getting worse. Robson reported ‘The biggest (and most deprived) of the urban areas have generally experienced a continuing deterioration’.

It is against this background that in 1988, a civil servant in the Department of Trade and Industry, Douglas Hollis, who was also a Non-Stipendiary Minister of the Anglican Church, met with an officer of the Archbishop’s Commission on Urban Priority Areas at Church House literally just down the same road in London. He wanted not just to improve relations between the third Thatcher Government and the Church, but specifically to create a new partnership. Hollis describes a situation of ‘awful angst’ over the inner cities, and unemployment and mutual hostility between many sectors of the system, but especially the churches and the Government.

I looked 150 yards down Great Smith Street to Church House, the entrance, and I can assure you the only thing going backwards and forwards between Church House and the DTI were brickbats; there was no dialogue. And that seemed to me to be generally unsatisfactory. So, after a little while, it seemed to me that the churches, they were doing a great deal in the inner cities, and it would be more productive if Church and Government were to work together than to shout at each other.⁵

Secularization processes of differentiation and rationalization resulting in social fragmentation, alienation and religious privatization—processes already well under way before immigration began at the end of the 1940s—had resulted not just in separation of Government and Church, but much more importantly, Government and the poor. The Church was in the inner cities, the State was not. And the churches on their own were only able to scratch the surface of the immense problems. Playgroups and holiday clubs were not going to change the world. The way forward was seen as the way back: to a partnership of government and governed by a retrieval of the pre-secularized State/Church integrity, informed by shared beliefs.

Hollis had charge of half Mrs Thatcher’s Inner City Task Forces, and was intending to offer strategic financial support to the Church’s charitable work in the inner cities. He believed God had put him in a position to contribute to regeneration; and knew that the churches had at least a useful presence in the target areas. He uses specifically religious language in describing both the sequence of events that led to his appointment and what he believed he had to do.

5. This and other passages that follow are quoted from an interview recorded at the informant’s home, Hayward’s Heath in Sussex on 6 August 1998.

Yet Church House refused his overtures! Hollis had a quarter of a million pounds seed money to offer for inner-city projects. Yet the officer whom Hollis saw at Church House to discuss his financial proposition barely recalls his overture—and the meeting they had was certainly unproductive. A letter from the officer concerned explains the problems.

...it would undoubtedly have been the case that many church people would have been worried about the Church accepting direct financial assistance from the State (irrespective of the complexion at the time of the governing party) as the 'establishment' so-called of the C of E has never been of the same nature as the State Church in some Continental countries. [Letter to author, 20 January 2000]

This view is inconsistent with the fact that prison chaplains are paid out of budgets allocated to prison governors by the State, assistant chaplains who do placements with resident chaplains are paid from the central Home Office prison budget as are chaplaincy staff and the Chaplain General.⁶ And churches are often maintained with grants from the publicly-funded English Heritage. Religious minorities were also receiving considerable funding from various government pots. Ironically, the anti-Thatcherite Church, unable to care for the poor itself in the past decades, was now preventing the Government from doing so—for reasons of protocol or prejudice. The institutional Church at that moment made *itself* irrelevant to 'the system'.

However, Douglas Hollis still had his money to give away—and his sense of calling. He was in touch with another maverick Anglican with a background in Industrial Mission, Revd Chris Beales, already working independently in Manchester with a broad spectrum of private, public and government agencies. Work associated with his project became the eventual recipient of a £2.5 million pound package of aid announced by a Government Minister at the first meeting of the Inner Cities Religious Council. And as a result of this contact, Beales, who had also chaired the Industrial Committee of the Board for Social Responsibility, in 1992 became that Council's first Secretary.

Hollis was also advising the Under Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment, Robery Key, and had a more far-reaching plan. Key had been invited to address Synod Urban Bishops, following riots in Newcastle, and further political fall-out over the deprivation/deprivation debate, skilfully amplified by the Archbishop of Canterbury in an early speech to the House of Lords.⁷ Key consulted his ecclesiastical colleague (Hollis) on what to say to the Bishops. The invitation offered a golden opportunity to Hollis to suggest the Minister present as a *fait accompli* a new Government initiative, which could guarantee closer co-operation between the Church and Government in the inner cities: the Inner Cities Religious Council. Hollis intended to bring the

6. Information supplied by telephone by Prison Service Press Office, 25 April 2001.

7. On 20 September 1991.

churches back into the system, and the inclusion of ‘other faiths’, at the specific suggestion of the Archbishop, was deemed expedient.

An interview with the ICRC’s first Secretary revealed this to be the case:

[The ICRC] was set up not to solve the problem of riots but to mobilize the faith communities in order to enable Government to have better dialogue with people on the ground because in so many inner city areas the faiths were actually the only structures which existed for organizing people. [interview with author]

Here then is evidence of de-differentiation between two of the major ‘spheres’ of society, Church and State. De-differentiation, one of the hallmarks of de-secularization, is seen happening because of the social conscience of two Anglican clerics, working *outside* the Church bureaucracy, which had itself sought to prevent such change.

Analysing the Documents

In the post-Rushdie, post-September 11 world it is harder for us to remember how antipathetic the British system was to overt religiosity. It seems almost unbelievable to us now, that leading policy-makers and Government officials should need telling that people’s religion mattered to them, and that indeed, it may be the most important way they see themselves. So it is timely to remind ourselves of what a long way, albeit superficially maybe, we have travelled, by looking at some specific statements made during the early days of the ICRC. This section then goes on to describe how the research was undertaken and what emerged.

Just three statements may be enough to make the point, two of which are from a report of a Conference for Social Services Managers and Trainers held at the Royal Festival Hall in London on 24 March 1998 to launch the book *Visions of Reality: Religion and Ethnicity in Social Work*. This conference was particularly significant to my thesis, since social work is the arena in which the State and domestic spheres encounter each other in a particularly intimate way, and where tacit assumptions by the State and its agents are particularly in evidence. It is also possibly the most salient sector of the government sphere (using Wilson’s delineation) in that the clients or ‘users’ of State policies are here at their most vulnerable to the rationalizations and assumptions of the State.

The glossy report of the event had a somewhat different title: *Faith, Communities and Social Work: Shifting Identities and Changing Realities* [FCSW] which is in itself revealing. The report was produced by the ICRC in conjunction with the Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work who published the book, and co-sponsored the symposium. Two Government Ministers, Hilary Armstrong and Paul Boateng, attended. The Health Minister John Hutton is cited in the brochure:

In our culturally diverse, multi-faith society, it is important that in the planning, care management and service delivery of social care, managers and practitioners appreciate the importance of religion and faith to people's lives and values. [FCSW]⁸

A second statement of note is made at the same event by David Randolph-Horn, the second Secretary of the ICRC:

We are...concerned to inform key representative groups about the significance of religious perspectives in social work for people who come into the world from a strong faith and see that world through a faith paradigm. I think we find it easier to cope with a race paradigm... [FCSW]

Finally, the words of the West Midlands Regional Director at the Department of the Environment, David Ritchie, to the West Midlands Multi-Faith Conference on Inner Cities at the Centennial Centre, Birmingham on 21 June 1993:

It is a privilege to be addressing such a distinguished gathering. I have had a long-standing interest in religion including two years studying Theology at university. Usually I keep quiet about that, but for the first time in my career I can declare it to a sympathetic audience!

Quite frequently in Government—and no doubt in many other areas of life—if someone says something that is technical, complicated and of little obvious relevance, people accuse them of making a 'theological' point. I have grown tired of challenging this; however to this audience I can say that if someone makes a genuinely theological point, it might or might not be complicated, it should not be technical, but it most certainly should be of the utmost importance.

These three statements all indicate a new self-consciousness about religious belief, and a willingness—even relief—at being able to admit to it in public.

This then sets the scene for the research into the documents which had to be methodical enough not to resemble mere anecdote. It also had to be rigorously enough contextualized to show that what people were saying was more than mere diplomacy or window dressing at a time of ethnic tension, but had outcomes that produced change.

The research took place in two stages; first, the identification of repeated keywords and phrases and the tracing of 'actions' resulting from them. This showed evidence of what I have coined as being a *new religious discourse* (italized throughout to emphasize the point) replacing the dominant discourse of secularity. The second stage was to examine a second set of related documents to delineate this discourse in terms of four specific categories mentioned at the

8. It is important in terms of this thesis to note that the social work profession needs reminding of this fact, since social work itself grew out of the Christian mission, a point made in the book itself.

beginning of this essay. It is to evidence from the latter phase that we now turn, taking each category in turn. All indented paragraphs are verbatim citations from documents, either Minutes of Meetings, Conference Reports or associated documents.⁹

1. *Evidence of de-differentiation of Church/religion and State*

Councillor John Harman, Leader, Kirklees Metropolitan Council and ‘a parishioner in St Patrick’s parish’ opening the West Yorkshire Multi-Faith Conference on Inner Cities at the Brian Jackson Centre, Huddersfield, on 27 October 1992:

On a personal level I was delighted to be asked to open this conference because I think the role of faith communities in regeneration and in community activity in general is a very important one. It has in some respects been undervalued; by statutory agencies, but also by the faith communities themselves who have at times been reticent of entering into the field of community action. It has often been said that religion and politics do not mix but it is certainly true that religion and community *do* mix. I welcome the work of the Inner Cities Religious Council in demonstrating that our beliefs need to be worked out in community action.

The Churches are an integral part of the local community; this recognition is long overdue and very welcome... I can promise you that we in the public sector will do all in our power to encourage this work, and resist all attempts to separate faith communities from society at large or from each other.

Robin Squire, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment, and first Chairman of the ICRC:

But I want to finish by saying this: at our first meeting, last July, people clearly felt that the time has come for this kind of initiative. It represents a recognition by all involved that faith is not just a private, personal matter, [*sic*] but is profoundly important in affecting the hopes and aspirations of many people and communities. So, reaching people through their faith communities, and acknowledging the importance of the values which inspire and guide them—these are now on the agenda of Government.

Paul Beresford, Minister of State for the Environment, and second Chairman of the ICRC:¹⁰

In the past, we have said the faith communities are ‘sleeping giants’, whose strength is not yet fully appreciated. But we recognise that there is knowledge, experience and vision within those communities that needs to be recognised to be fully utilised. [7Conf/1]

9. Detailed references were considered too cumbersome for this article, but can be found in Taylor 2002.

10. Code in brackets refers to individual conference documents followed by page number.

From the Five-Year Review:

The symbolic significance of the ICRC cannot be under-estimated. For the first time, a forum has been created in which the faith communities can meet with Government. The very existence of the ICRC demonstrates that Government has recognised the central importance of faith in the lives of many different people in Britain today, including those from ethnic minorities who often live in the margins of society. [Para. 1.1 RICRC]

2. Evidence of officials using religious language or approving of religion and religious motivation in a public or secular context

Iqbal Sacanie, Conference Chairman and Joint Convenor of the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs:

The ICRC is...a new faith initiative. It has grown out of the conviction that people of faith stand for definite values, which our wider society would do well to heed...People who claim adherence to faith face a real challenge of restoring the faith of the less faithful amongst us. [1Conf./5]

Councillor Patrick Doyle, Leader of Hull City Council:

...the Churches/Faiths do excellent work ... The Churches/Faiths have a proven track record... I sense despair...that is a great sin; we must inject hope... [2Conf./10]

Councillor Arthur Downs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets, welcoming delegates to the East London Multi-faith Conference on Inner Cities on 5 October 1994:

I am proud of this area's history of acceptance of multi-faith groups. I, and the Metropolitan Borough Council, stand for a spirit of love and understanding. [7Conf./1]

3. Evidence that civilian religious identity is now significant or relevant to Government through the work of the ICRC

Shaukat Ahmed, Chairman of Manningham Housing Association, Bradford:

Precisely because of this situation of there only being one ethnic minority Housing Association in our city, our founders felt we needed to meet the housing needs of the wider community be they Muslim, Hindu, Sikh or Christian...in the service of the local community we do understand that people tend to associate/communicate with officers from the same ethnic origin. [1Conf./15]

This means that we have

Pakistani	Muslim	4
Bengali	Muslim	2
Afro-Caribbean	Christian	2
English	Christian	2
Indian	Hindu	1
the Director who is an atheist!		
Indian	Sikh	1

Minister of State Paul Beresford on Multi-Faith Youth Challenge:

In some cases, young people have come together from a single faith group, and in others they have formed a single group from different faith communities. [7Conf./2]

Review 1.2:

Many of the most disadvantaged and least heard people in Britain are members of minority faith communities. While the Government intends that the most needy should benefit from its regeneration programmes, experience has shown that it has been very difficult to target the available funds successfully. Faith communities offer one of the few ways by which these people can be reached and involved as partners. [RICRC]

4. *Evidence of recognition that religion 'delivers' i.e. generates outcomes*

The Chief Executive of Kirklees Metropolitan Council, Rob Hughes, presents the Kirklees Churches Partnership, a regeneration project merging local authority and local diocesan resources:

The Partnership had its origins in the redevelopment of St Thomas's Church at Longroyd Bridge in Huddersfield, to provide a stonecleaned remodelled Church incorporating a community centre and an arts/exhibition centre, earning the nickname 'the Colne Valley Cathedral'. This £250,000 project brought together local enterprise, grant aid from Kirklees Metropolitan Council (for the stone-cleaning and access for the disabled), and external funding from the Church Urban Fund. This further prompted an adjoining £½ million social housing development for young single homeless and people with a disability, now under construction by a housing association on land adjacent to the church.

Building on the experience gained at St Thomas's, consultations have been held with the Bishop of Wakefield's Social Responsibility Adviser on the potential for a jointly planned regeneration strategy and programme. This liaison has led to the proposal to establish a Kirklees Churches Partnership... [Conf.1/18]

Ishwer Tailor, President of the Gujarat Hindu Society:

...I would like to share our experience of being involved with a voluntary organisation, where faith and people are working together. In 1975 we were fundraising to buy premises for a 'place of worship' in Preston. Having approached all the banks for finance we were refused financial support. Then a devotee from London, unknown to us, rang us and offered a 'blank cheque' towards the establishment of the Centre. Another example is when we organized a discourse in Preston in 1988, we raised about £200,000 for drought relief in India. It is evident that the community do have faith and with willpower good deeds can be attained. Tasks such as these are not easy and a lot of hard work, time and effort are required but we have achieved a great deal through having faith in God. [2Conf./15]

He explained that the Society's aims included:

- 1 To promote religious, cultural and social activities [*sic*] for the members
- 2 To assist the members in time of grief, for families and individuals
- 3 To provide community [*sic*] language, for example Gujarati, and support services
- 4 To extend welfare, social and other services
- 5 To develop and guide young people to be future leaders through youth activities

...The Gujarat Training and Resource Centre has come about through the Home Office's Ethnic Minority Grant funding made available to voluntary organizations via the Training and Enterprise Council.

Richard Compton, Head of Policy and Finance, Government Office for London:

Richard Compton stressed the importance of the human dimension in regeneration. The Single Regeneration Budget is people-driven and demand-driven. Local faith leaders are the people 'on the spot' able to give advice.

Mr Compton offered six [*sic*] specific suggestions about the contribution of faith communities:

Helping to build up local capacity, so drawing on their own skills, knowledge and experience.

Interpreting local needs and aspirations to local councils and other players in their contract and output-based language; including those of faith communities with a major constituency drawn from ethnic minorities.

Providing out reach to disadvantaged groups such as ethnic minorities, the young or the elderly.

Encouraging high aspirations in young people, particularly in seeking the higher qualifications increasingly necessary for the world of work.

Helping to create the moral dimension and the value base of programmes. These will include: discouraging crime and drug abuse; encouraging mutual help. [9Conf./5]

Review 2.5b:

The discussion and analysis of a wide range of policy matters by Council members including asylum law, the census, crime, housing, planning and religious discrimination. Furthermore, if a Department receives a Ministerial invitation to a Council meeting, that may prompt departmental reflection on matters which it might not otherwise have addressed. Equally, the Council has on occasion been able to inform specific changes; for example, ensuring that single sex wards are retained in national health trust hospitals... [RICRC]

A fifth 'problem' category, which attempted to identify the limits of the new discourse, was also explored. One interesting comment was the following by Robin Douglas of the Office for Public Management:

If we only struggle with individual cases it is difficult to generate a bigger vision about how society would look if people took the faith dimension seriously in

service planning and service response... We could ask those questions [about investment, training and partnership] much more readily if we had the bigger picture. (FCSW 1998: 12)

Perhaps the most significant limit to the discourse was the failure, over the review period, of the ICRC's regeneration remit itself, crowded off the agendas by political issues:

Review 2.7:

The review team found that the Council has had a considerable impact through the subtle permeation of the culture of Government, a process which is slow-acting but effective nonetheless. However, those objectives with a practical focus have not been so successful. [RICRC]

Review 2.8:

We have been made aware that members have differing views on the role and purpose of the ICRC, and the range of activities which it should cover. In the absence within Whitehall of any other mechanism for consulting faith communities, it is not surprising that more general 'faith issues', such as religious discrimination, asylum and immigration, and the inclusion of a question on religious belief in the 2001 census, should come to dominate the agendas of the ICRC. [RICRC]

The reviewers had to remind the Council of its remit, and call it back to its primary focus, leaving the politico-constitutional and identity issues to other Government bodies such as the Social Exclusion Unit and the Home Office's new Race Relations Forum (RICRC: para. 2.9).

The discourse therefore offers complexity instead of answers, least of all theological ones, to administrative dilemmas. Doctrinal particularity, Christian or otherwise, though not overt in the discourse, *is* affirmed (i.e. placed on the agenda—and described in Minutes) when it motivates a show-case regeneration project. It is not, however, regarded as a resource for civil servants to draw on in shaping a vision, for example for social work, by which to establish and apply policy. Neither is faith malleable to Government design even if a common purpose appears feasible.

Findings

Only a selection of material has been able to be demonstrated in this essay. Taken as a whole, it appeared that whatever documents were used in the context of ICRC analysis, even an EU seminar paper concerning religious pluralization in Europe in which the ICRC is only marginally involved, the same features of a *new religious discourse* were found. These are: (1) It encompasses actual or perceived deprivatization of faith and dedifferentiation of the State and religious spheres. (2) It is used by public officials—or religious officials in public—who discuss theology, or religious values or who evidence awareness

that they are so doing, thereby rebutting the colloquial notion that ‘faith is a private matter’. Indeed, the governing body of the European Union is required to redefine religious and secular categories, because of the bearing the one has on the other, in the light of the changed demography of Europe. (3) People are now spoken of in religious, not just secular, terminology; and (4) Religion is represented as effective in social programmes. These latter encompass care of the poor and homeless; employment generation; skills training; confidence building and community consolidation. However, all religions were already active in this work, and there was no evidence that the ICRC had directly affected what was already being funded from various Government purses under different rubrics. The ICRC did, however, focus on what was already the case, and began indirectly to effect a more widespread religious literacy.

The old dominant discourse of modernity had disallowed the use or relevance of religious signifiers in public (‘God’; ‘the spirit’)—religion was regarded as purely private and personal. It had disallowed the expression or validity of religious or theological meanings in reality and in public. Any referring of ethical conundrums back to a religious root (‘the Bible says...’; ‘the Bhagavad Gita says...’) was disqualified, as was the identification of people principally by their religion. *New religious discourse*, on the other hand, now appears to indicate change in all these respects. Religious language at least is no longer embarrassing nor is faith professionally stigmatizing. Religious groups are officially designated as valued partners in regeneration, and religious affiliation seen as a reasonable basis on which to legislate group concerns. Government has been subtly permeated by the work of the ICRC.

Evidence of religiously motivated regeneration pre-dates the ICRC. And any judgment based solely on the data about the social impact of the ICRC is likely to have been premature, given that the research spanned only six years. However, the existence of major initiatives focused religiously on the inner cities that occurred subsequently, with ICRC involvement, is instructive.¹¹ A conference, chaired by the third ICRC Secretary, Revd David Rayner, called ‘Faith Makes Communities Work’ was sponsored by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DTER) and hosted by Shaftesbury Christian Care in Action on 12 September 2000 at Goldsmiths College in London. A second conference called ‘Inter Faith Co-operation, Local Government and the Regions: Councils of Faiths as a Resource for the 21st Century’ was held by the Interfaith Network for the UK in association with the ‘ICRC

11. Two that cannot be directly attributed to the ICRC, but that indicate the new mood were the Conservative Christian Fellowship’s one-day conference *Religion and Welfare*, on 22 June 2000 which platformed Muslim, Jewish and Christian speakers, principally George Bush’s adviser on ‘faith-based welfare’, Marvin Olasky. The other was the Christian Socialist Movement’s event *Faith in Politics* at Westminster Central Hall on 29 March 2001, addressed by the Prime Minister Tony Blair.

of the DETR' and with support from the Active Community Unit of the Home Office at Austin Court, Birmingham, on 12 June 2000. In a further development, the Greater London Authority Act (2000) gave a discretionary duty for the authority and the Assembly and Mayor to consult various constituencies in London. Among these were 'religious groups'. Rayner, who addressed the Birmingham conference, told them: 'To the best of my knowledge, it is the first time that faith communities have been specifically named in legislation and are therefore legally part of what might be called "civil society"' (Rayner 2000: 63). The Urban White Paper, *Our Towns and Cities: The Future*, published the following November 2000,¹² went even further, and for the first time gave 'faith communities' a key role in urban regeneration. In a three-paragraph section entitled 'Faith Communities' it said:

3.47 The Government is committed [*sic*] to the involvement of faith communities [*sic*] and supports the Inner Cities Religious Council in DETR. This multi-faith Council acts as a forum for consultation across government departments with a particular focus on regeneration and the drive for inclusion.¹³

The push for a Religion Question in the 2001 Census came from the ICRC, which commissioned papers and provided an otherwise unavailable forum for lobbying, particularly by the Muslim spokesman Iqbal Sacranie.

Analysis¹⁴

The *new religious discourse* attempts to embrace—or absorb—difference in the interests of social integration and moral renewal, while professing to accommodate and even celebrate difference. Faith is often used as a self-explanatory concept, not one requiring an object, that is, 'faith in something'. Rather it is 'faith-in-itself'. 'Faith and faiths' are used interchangeably by Douglas Hollis because '[A]ll faith adherents share that kind of perception of life' (ch. 3.5). This unitary stance was observable throughout the survey period and is best encapsulated in a remark reported from 'group discussions' at the first conference: 'Separation is problematic for religions are divisive, but faith and ideals unite, by sharing values' (1Conf./22; ch. 8.3). This statement characterizes aspects of the early interfaith movement, and is a thread which runs through the *new religious discourse*. It recalls the endeavours of key thinkers in the movement, such as Dr Radhakrishnan who occupied the first Chair in Comparative Religion at Oxford, endowed by H.N. Spalding whose Union for the Study of the Great Religions was founded at Oxford in 1951. A leaflet promoting the Union declares: 'just as European civilization achieved unity in

12. Published by The Stationery Office.

13. For full text see www.regeneration.detr.gov.uk/policies/ourtowns/cm4911/05.htm

14. Chapter references in parentheses are to Taylor (2002).

diversity on a basis of Christianity and Hellenism, so a world culture could be built up and a world renaissance made possible if educational institutions throughout the world were inspired by a common study of the spirit of man as reflected in his approach to God' (Braybrooke 1980: 15). The assumption is that there is a unitary spirit and a divine being beyond or other than any one already extant revelation of it. Wilfred Cantwell Smith's ambition to create a 'world theology' (Smith 1981) has considerably influenced this thinking—sometimes known as 'interfaith' (see below). Such a theology would embrace the new political consciousness of religious plurality, he believed, and so avert what he was convinced was impending global catastrophe.

Such an approach is suited to the ICRC since it minimizes 'the all-important but problematic inner experience' as well as what Hick calls 'the cumulative and divisive self-understanding of each religion' (Hick 1978: xvii). Yet Wach believed that such an approach ran the risk of serving political rather than religious ends (Wach 1944: 391)—which, of course, suits the theocratic tendencies in some religions.

Public life in the modern State has up to now been run according to the notion that no religion has an overt contribution to make to public life, and indeed, should, such as it is, remain private. The word 'faith', left vague, and regarded as 'a good thing', lends itself to the new mood of collective exhortation. Iqbal Sacranie, as we saw in the excerpt above, declared from a conference chair before a Minister and Government-invited audience that people who claimed adherence to faith faced a real challenge of restoring the faith of the less faithful.¹⁵ The word 'faith' in the discourse disguises a struggle over meaning in the ICRC context.

Conclusion

The dominant English discourse of the social-political irrelevance of religion has given way to a *new religious discourse* that affords a religious identity to people as citizens, and a significance to their contribution in the workings of 'the system'. This phenomenon appears to contradict Bryan Wilson's thesis of increasing insignificance, mirroring changes in the economic and demographic profile of the nation.

The minutiae of discourse data make it possible to see that the effort to dragoon all identity markers into the simplistic polarities of the class—and derived from it the race—struggle collapsed in the 1990s. A context where religious language can be used is necessary in order partly to understand but principally to bureaucratize (societalize) the new religious citizenry, and this is likely to be the case for the foreseeable future, despite—or perhaps because of—globalization which makes all identities to some extent unstable.

15. Sacranie was awarded an OBE in 1999 for 'services to community relations'.

Up to a point the Church as an institution colluded in the stories society told about its own religious demise, while other faiths forced the re-sacralization of the discourse. Individual Christians—and then the Church itself—harnessed this re-sacralization process to Government procedures by engaging the other religions, and inviting them into its privileged arena—the new Council—thereby expanding Establishment. Religious identification, so it was believed, afforded Government a means to harness community energies, but this could not have happened without Church structures—particularly the old Catholic parish base—and churchmen (*sic*) for whom self-understanding and motivation involved some measure of traditional religious service. Religious networks meant there was a pre-existing structure (and plant) the Government was able to utilize for knowledge about the inner cities, and for building links with other ethnic groups. The religious mind and discourse of churchmen and women initially provided a basis for a broader discourse with ethnic minorities for whom religion is still natural and whose liminality renders it vital: the Church provided the linguistic framework and references within which the ICRC conducted its business. Religion had not been extinguished from the system by the processes of secularization. The Church's language was adapted to the inclusive requirements of 'interfaith' and instrumentalized throughout Government. The Church during the research period was crucial to the machinery of Government in terms of its structure, its language and its orientation to others, but the trajectory of de-differentiation was not a mirror image of the *status quo ante*.

Further work on secularization therefore and the socio-political axis needs to be multi-religious in scope. Religions do not exist in isolation from the consequences they have on society or on each other—although they are largely studied as if this were the case. The Church facilitated the participation of other religions. Islam in particular prevented the Government from carrying out its regeneration programme, by casting regeneration in terms of discrimination and rights—a problematic not foreseen by Ministers, but one to which others of all religious persuasions on the ICRC assented. This in turn undermined the Christian cultural hegemony across a swathe of issues, not least being Anglican constitutional privilege.

A combination of individual religious motivation and individual political acumen led to the identification of the potential in the political harnessing of religious structures and energies to improve life in the inner cities. The locale of privatization is therefore actually individual conscience. Two radicalized Anglican churchmen chose to subvert the 'separation' of the spheres because for both men unemployment and social misery were theological issues that the State could address. This was much as Lesslie Newbigin envisioned it: 'I hope it is clear that Christians ought not to hope for a society controlled by bishops or church synods... It is through the presence and activity of committed and

competent Christian men and women in the various areas of the common life of society [including the Government] that the Christian vision for society could become effective in practice' (Newbiggin 1998: 157, parenthesis added).

However, the enhancement of Establishment for the well-being of society was problematized by religious competition: political or religious status issues all but crowded regeneration off the agenda. The data suggest that the *new religious discourse* is not sufficiently theologically nuanced to address the constitutional issues or bureaucratic dilemmas of pluralism, largely because it is diffident about the specific, Christian impetus that gave that discourse birth.

However, a Christianity less cowed by the propagandists of secularity's inevitability might be able to build on the logic of these findings, calling the secularists' bluff, and offering a more robust contribution to the workings of the State.

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