



Barriers Bridges Paradox

*Reflections on the Gospel
in a world become 'post...'*

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EUROPE AND THE GOSPEL
Influences
Developments
Mission Challenges



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1. Angle of Secularisation: Why God?

Apologetic response

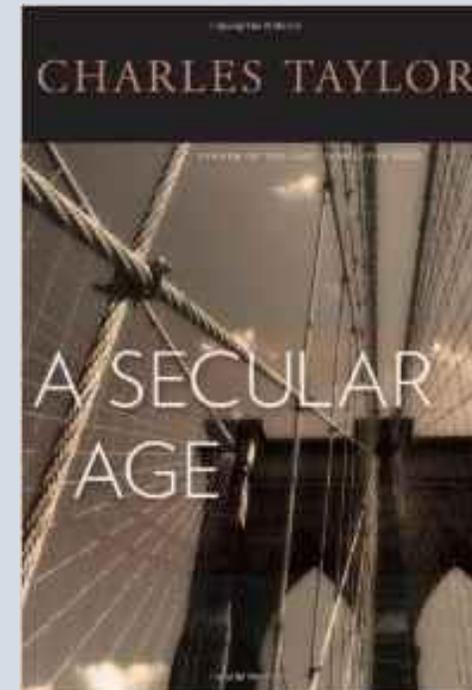
Showing the plausibility of believing in God

Building bridges

Entering into the world of secular people

Charles Taylor (*A Secular Age*):

Secular belief is a shutting out, the door is barred against further discovery. In the secular waste land people will explore beyond the boundaries.



1. Angle of Secularisation: Why God?

Secular-3

Believing is an option, but many secular people contest religious beliefs and find them unbelievable, so it is difficult to believe in God.

'Exclusive secular humanism', a vision of life in which anything beyond the immanent is eclipsed

Unquiet frontiers of Secularity

Our age is very far from settling into a comfortable unbelief.

Many moderns are uncomfortable with death, giving up of everything.

Woody Allan: *I continue making films in order not to think about death*

Existential experiences

When secular explanations do not satisfy

- a) Finitude (death) – What is the sense of our existence if one day everything will be all over?
- b) Failure – Where does our sense of shame and/or guilt come from? What about our (bad) conscience?
- c) Good things in human existence – How to explain beauty, happiness, force, resilience, peace, love, progress, community, freedom, liberation, justice?
- d) Insight in reality, human wisdom – While this takes the effort of study and reflection, this is often experienced as being ‘given’
- e) Evil and suffering – Why can’t we accept suffering from fellow-humans and from natural disasters if life is just a struggle for survival?

2. Angle of postmodernism: Why Jesus Saviour of all?

Apologetic response:

Showing the plausibility of Jesus' claims to truth (Newbiggin)

Building bridges:

- (a) Usually, emphasis on dialogue and respect for other ways of life.
- (b) Marie H el ene Robert: granting liberty combined with charity and witness

Postmodern cultures adapt easily to charity and liberty, but they do not consider the truth as Christianity presents it, neither the objective truth (its divine origin and universality), nor the subjective truth (its human reception and translation).

Evangelism is the proclamation of a real liberty: man is free to respond in love to the offer of love. On the basis practical love and granting others this liberty, we can witness to the truth of salvation

2. Postmodernism: Why Jesus (Saviour of all)?

(c) Elaine Storkey: postmodern points of contact

- *A new involvement in spirituality*
- *The fascination with the narrative*
- *Cultural openness to worldview questions - film, novel, music*
- *Shared issues of justice, meaning, compassion and suffering.*
- *One can be postmodern and practice a religion – as long as one remains tolerant of other forms of ‘truth’..*

3. Angle of Post-Christendom: Why Church?

Apologetic response:

Correct the false image of the Church and its history (several RC authors)

Show the plausibility of the Church as it was 'originally' meant (Evangelical approach, free Church model)

Building bridges:

Missionary Church, relevant to society (Johannes Reimer)

New ways of being Church (Murray, Fresh Expressions, Emerging Churches...)

Paradox of Europe and Christianity

Societies and cultures

...have been exposed to and marked by Christianity

longer and more intensively than anywhere else in the world

...are marked by the abandonment of Christianity

longer and more intensively than anywhere else in the world

Europe is marked simultaneously by:

- a) An enormous variety of expressions of Christian faith and a rich cultural, liturgical and spiritual heritage of European Christianity
- b) A variety of alternative, secular worldviews and ideologies, a secularised public sphere and the spread of secular lifestyles

The two go together, are intertwined. Barriers are at the same time bridges

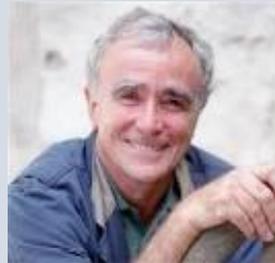
The paradox applied - secularism

There is so much Christianity in it!

Let's talk about the origin of values and ideas that are dear to secular Europeans!

Debate on foundational values for cohesion in multicultural society

Jean-Claude Guillebaud: where do our 'humanist' values come from?



Luc Ferry: secular spirituality based on Christian 'love'

The paradox applied - secularism

Human rights

A 'hangover of Christianity'? (John Gray)

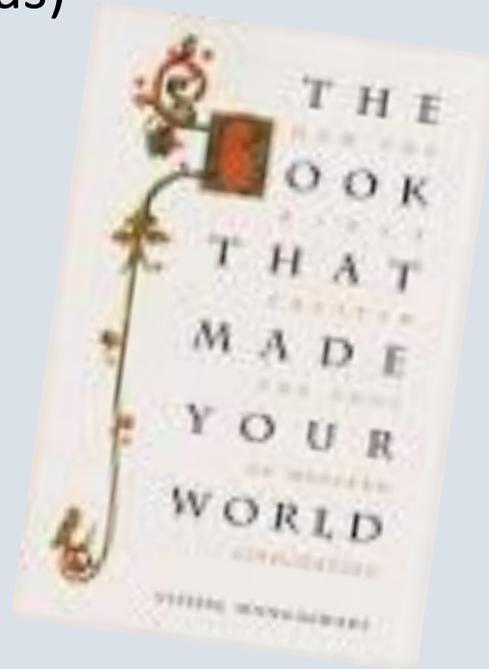


The question of religious or secular foundations

The paradox applied - secularism

Christianity represent 'the major moral and intellectual roots of Europe'
(Jürgen Habermas)

Vishal Mangalwadi



This happened, even in the time of Christendom!

The paradox applied – Postmodernism

Postmodernism also develops some Christian and Biblical notions I have no time to develop this

The paradox applied – Post Christendom

- Churches in Europe have left us with a rich heritage
 - Arts, culture, social customs, names, infrastructure...
 - The marks of Christianity are everywhere
 - Many are ignorant and illiterate – who will be their guides?
- Efforts to create new kind of Churches, and value the traditions, the forms and the ‘treasure of many ages’ of Churches in Europe because they offer bridges for secularised people to connect with Christian faith