

Introduction

Entering the New Space of the
Blurred Encounter Between Faith,
Politics and Community

Christopher Baker and John Reader

The genesis of this book of collected essays emerges from a number of theories and methodologies already developed by the editors of this volume. John Reader's book *Blurred Encounters*¹ represents a systematic attempt to reflect on his experience of the fragmentation and yet also creative reworking of his identity as a parish priest ministering to four village communities on the edge of the West Midlands conurbation. He found himself working within a fluid and shifting space in a number of different spectra, the fixed points at either end of which have hitherto been interpreted as normative.

Three examples of 'blurred encounter' from Reader's book will suffice to illustrate this different type of space. The geographical location in which he was working was technically rural in that the group of villages in which he ministered were on average five miles from the outermost suburban fringes of the West Midlands conurbation. However, recent immigration into these four villages from largely younger, middle-class, affluent and globally mobile workers had within half a generation impacted upon the socio-economic and cultural identity of those communities. Many homes in the village were family accommodation for those who could afford to commute to Birmingham and beyond. Some recent residents had come for the perceived health and safety advantages of living away from increasingly congested, diverse and so-called 'dangerous' urban and suburban spaces.

Reader recalls that conflicts arose when the new incomers were perceived to have different expectations of what local services (especially concerning childcare) should provide. They tended to have higher expectations of existing services which cut across the longer-term traditions of the older village communities. This 'village' space therefore is neither local, rural nor suburban; rather it is an in-between exurban space (i.e., a quasi-rural identity beyond the fringes of the current suburbs), in which local attitudes, customs and behaviours are as much influenced by globally produced patterns as indigenous ones.

¹ John Reader, *Blurred Encounters: A Reasoned Practice of Faith* (St Bride's Major, 2005).

Another blurred encounter emerges from Reader's then voluntary role as a board member of a local housing association, which was seeking to provide affordable housing for local families on low incomes who were priced out of their own housing market by the pressure for exurbanised homes from highly mobile professionals. Thanks to the growing political importance of housing associations as intermediate hubs offering a wide range of local services as well as housing (e.g., training and education), Reader found himself increasingly inundated with information and statutory obligations as a board member. These new governance obligations placed on him required not only greater professional training and time commitment, but also the possibility of being remunerated for the level of knowledge, expertise and accountability now expected. Whilst not necessarily considering this a negative development, Reader was concerned at the creeping professionalising of the community and voluntary sector which could impair its independence and integrity. He thus found himself with a 'limbo identity', no longer a volunteer in the traditional sense of the word, but never likely to be trained or qualified to what might be considered a professional standard in an area of work that was only a part of his own full-time commitments

A third encounter emerges from the different languages and discourses surrounding local crises such as the foot-and-mouth outbreak of 2001, in which he was pastorally involved. Language and discourse represent the world view held by a particular individual or group. When the mass culling of infected sheep occurred within his parish, Reader was confronted with the internalised pain of those farmers forced to witness the destruction of their stock; internalised because the farming community feels rather than articulates the deep bond between animal and human. This pain however, was doubly repressed by the official discourse of the then Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF), which expressed the situation in terms of rational science and spoke the discourses of culls, vaccinations and exclusion zones. Reader, as the priest, as someone who is both an insider and an outsider, and as someone who was caught in the midst of both human and non-human suffering, found himself in the blurred encounter of what he terms the pre-autonomous and the autonomous levels of human functioning. The former is the level of emotional response and basic trust which we need as the basis for any rational decision (the autonomous). It forms one of the spaces between faith and reason, the relationship between which he depicts as being 'stood on mountain tops facing each other and occasionally shouting using words that the other cannot understand'.² However, his solution to this traditional polarising of pre-autonomous and the autonomous is to suggest the possibility of a third type of autonomy – namely the post-autonomous, which is a space where new possibilities for the future can be imagined based on open rather than closed identities and in which 'notions of justice, of care for the whole of the created order, of respect between different beings and different orders of being' are allowed expression.³

² Ibid., p. 22.

³ Ibid., p. 112.

Reader sees close parallels between this space and Manuel Castells's idea of a 'project identity' in which social actors (e.g., the environmental movement, feminism, civil rights movements) consciously attempt to establish new and changed identities that redefine their condition and aim to transform structures as a positive force for change.⁴

Meanwhile, Christopher Baker in his book, *The Hybrid Church in the City: Third Space Thinking*⁵ developed similar ideas of a new and fluid space lying at the intersection of two polarities, also based on pastoral praxis. His book outlines research carried out by the William Temple Foundation which analysed qualitative based data on the experience of nine church communities engaging with both the rhetoric and methodology of urban regeneration in Manchester in the early 2000s.⁶ The themes and experiences that emerged showed that many of these churches were either strategically or intuitively working in a number of in-between spaces. Here are some case studies showing what he is referring to.

In terms of its structure for example, one church community was creating community empowerment networks, and indeed presenting itself as a network of networks, whilst at the same time being resourced by an ecumenical consortium of institutional churches and trying to feed its learning and experience back into the institutional sector. It was therefore working at the interface of both network and institution. Another church, which ran a drop-in centre for the elderly frail and those suffering serious mental illness, in a highly marginalised community awaiting demolition and re-gentrification, offered free aromatherapy and reflexology via a small amount of health grant funding. The nurse's massage table was set up in the middle of the church building, which was also awaiting demolition itself, and yet was the only public space the client group concerned felt confident enough to enter. The space of the church was made available for an unconditionally free health and healing service which deployed both voluntary and professional personnel and crossed over some thresholds of what traditional Christian expectations of healing might conform to: namely an excursion into practices commonly associated with more Eastern and pagan religions and philosophies. In other words this project was

⁴ Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity: The Information Age: Economy, Culture and Society*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1997).

⁵ Christopher Baker, *The Hybrid Church in the City: Third Space Thinking* (Aldershot, 2007).

⁶ See Christopher Baker and Hannah Skinner, *Faith in Action: The Dynamic Connection Between Spiritual and Religious Capital* (Manchester, 2006); Christopher Baker, 'Entry to Enterprise: Constructing Local Political Economies in Manchester', in John Atherton and Hannah Skinner (eds), *Through the Eye of a Needle: Theological Conversations Over Political Economy* (Peterborough, 2007), pp. 191–206; and Christopher Baker 'Blurred Encounters? Religious Literacy, Spiritual Capital and Language', in Adam Dinham, Robert Furbey and Vivien Lowndes (eds), *Faith in the Public Realm: Controversies, Policies and Practices* (Bristol, forthcoming).

an excursion into the fluid space between sanctuary, healing, religion, spirituality and professional healthcare.

Meanwhile a black-majority church (BMC), whilst often expressing an explicit theology of God's love and redemption within public settings, also recognised the need for a more implicit approach as part of their overall contribution to civil society. They set up an umbrella organisation called the Grace Incorporation Faith Trust (GIFT) which combined four existing community-based organisations into one loose entity in order to attract greater pots of funding and combine resources more effectively. The projects included initiatives providing counselling, mentoring and support to vulnerable young black people and supporting victims of gun crime. This intra-partnership approach is designed to connect with secular agencies more effectively than projects with an explicit church-based identity. This form of 'arms-length initiative' was designed to present an implicit Christian identity for the sake of becoming more deeply involved in civil society initiatives. The deliberate and strategic use of implicit identities also recognised what this church community called the 'bad press' some BMC churches had with some of their potential clients and partners based on perceptions of over-moralising and judgemental attitudes.

Indeed, the fluid but strategic use of explicit and implicit identities was a feature that many churches deployed in the pursuit of partnerships with other faith-based and secular partners, in order to achieve the pragmatic outcomes they desired for their local communities. The shift towards increased partnership working (a classic space for blurred encounters which we will explore later in this book) reflects the Third Way of the current policy field (i.e., partnerships between government, business and the community and voluntary sector for the sake of achieving nationally set outcomes and targets at the local neighbourhood level). It also reflects a realistic assessment by most churches and other faith groups that the problems often encountered at the local level are too intractable and complex to be resolved by single agencies in isolation.

The theoretical framework identified by Baker which helps to understand and recommend this continuing type of praxis is the concept of the hybrid or Third Space. Borrowed from literary criticism and postcolonial literature, the concept also found its way into political analysis, thanks to the writings of Homi Bhabha whose text *The Location of Culture* became a seminal contribution to this field.⁷ The Third Space is thus the space that exists in the middle of any set of binary opposites. Bhabha (after Said)⁸ notes that binarism is the method most closely associated with the projects of modernism and colonialisation, whereby the Other (the unfamiliar culture or ethnic identity encountered in the course of colonial/missionary activity) was labelled and catalogued within a category of inferiority depending on perceived cultural or ethnic proximity to the white, male, Christian, Western, European norm. With the collapse of Empire from the 1940s onwards

⁷ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York, 1994).

⁸ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978).

however, many former colonised peoples resisted the pressure to return to a purist and imaginary identity that existed before ‘the white man’s rule’, but retained the right to forge a new identity made up of both modern and pre-modern identities: European and indigenous and beyond.

Postcolonial theory and literature thus reinforces what other disciplines, particularly postmodern philosophy, have said previously: that the present epoch is never predetermined, but comes as a result of ever fluctuating developments in culture and language. In other words, culture, language and identity are never static (fixed) or teleological (moving inexorably towards a preordained, evolutionary and developmental end point) but constantly fluid and changing. In simple terms therefore, the Third Space between the either/or spaces of binarism is the *space of the both/and*, a space that constructs a pragmatic response to local conditions based on any number of resources (local/global, present/past, etc.). Politically it is also the counter-hegemonic space of partnership or coalition, where a number of different partners, each with their own world views and methods of working, come together to forge an alternative space where the rights of all are respected and heard. However, by definition, this Third Space is constantly evolving and changing: if it were to become too static, it would end up at either end of an existing spectrum and so lose its genuinely creative and disturbing power. Thus Bhabha is probably right when he says that the Third Space (especially politically) is more ‘interrogatory’ than strategic in its outcomes, since many partnerships and coalitions are short-term and so disband once their objectives have been partially or wholly achieved.

The thesis of both Reader’s *Blurred Encounters* and Baker’s *The Hybrid Church* therefore is that theology and ecclesiology ought to be engaging in Third Space/hybrid theory as a way of connecting with the rapidly changing, diverse and pluralising context of the early twenty-first century, some twenty years after their development in other disciplines. Both volumes attempt to construct a theology of the ‘blurred encounter’ and the Third Space (which there is not space to go into at this point). However, since the contributions in this book will seek to develop further ideas about both the theory and praxis of this kind of new theological space, it is probably worth putting down at this early point what we think a church method based on Third Space/blurred encounters might look like.

The churches and communities we journeyed with in our respective books are, in the words of Baker, ‘operating in the spaces between the local and the global, between the explicit and the implicit and between the solid and the liquid’.⁹ He continues:

This blurring of boundaries emerges from a growing recognition of the need to adopt flexible, multidisciplinary ... spaces, and achieve solutions that work in the absence of overarching methodologies and ideologies ... However for some churches, this hybrid way of working cannot be restricted to that of methodology.

⁹ Baker, *The Hybrid Church*, p. 132.

The hybrid encounter has also wrought a significant change in outlook and identity, characterised by an expanding of boundaries and a deepening of understanding ... through a willingness to take risks, an openness to learning and a conscious relinquishing of power, being changed by their encounter with the Other.¹⁰

This is the new theological space we want to map and delve more deeply into.

Other Forays into the New Theological Space

If we take the principle ideas emerging from blurred encounter/Third Space theory as applied to practical theology and the role of the church – namely the mapping of shifting and fluid spaces between hitherto fixed but increasingly contested norms and binary polarities, then writers from other disciplinary perspectives are also beginning to identify similar dynamics. We explore briefly just three of them.

First of all, an important new contribution to the sociology of religion literature in the UK paints an increasingly blurred and complex account of the place of religion in the twenty-first century.¹¹ The collection of essays within the volume seeks to ‘break out of the constraints’ of an uncritical and teleological account of a triumphant secularism that ‘predicts the eventual collapse of organised religion and the disappearance of Christianity in the public domain’.¹² Its main thesis is that this secular meta-narrative of inexorable decline has always associated rapid social change as a crisis for the church, and defined Christians only as those people it can count in attendance and membership statistics. What this meta-narrative underestimates is the ability of Christianity, as both a cultural system and an institution, to mutate and reform itself in surprisingly robust and relevant ways.

Redefining Christian Britain offers three different perspectives by which this mutation can be described and assessed. The first is the idea of authenticity. The book suggests that questions of authenticity may have moved away from concerns about doctrinal purity to concerns about cultural relevance and performance of faith, but these questions can still represent a force for renewal rather than a slide into irrelevance. Several chapters in our volume reflect implicitly on this theme, in particular the chapter by Martyn Percy on local parish baptisms, and the chapters by Jonathan Miles-Watson and Ian Ball on the contemporary understanding and experience of pilgrimage.

Second, is the theme of generation. Callum Brown’s thesis that the early 1960s saw the breakdown of cultural transmission between Christian values and secular

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Jane Garnett, Matthew Grimley, Alana Harris, William Whyte and Sarah Williams (eds.), ‘Introduction’ to *Redefining Christian Britain: Post 1945 Perspectives* (London, 2007), pp. 1–19.

¹² Ibid., p. 1.

society is challenged by the ongoing Christian framework that informs ethical, cultural and public discourses. These range from the dialectical impact of Christian art within the apparently neutral and secular setting of the art gallery (such as recent El Greco and *Seeing Salvation* exhibitions) to the Christian metaphysical cosmos that underpins Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy. This idea is developed implicitly in Clare McBeath's chapter in this volume which reflects on the liturgy as space where for example, cinematic representation of the Dementors in the popular Harry Potter films serves as a trope by which to explore the pervasiveness of mental health and depression within deprived and industrialised communities on the edges of urban gentrification.

Finally there is the idea of virtue, by which is included the persistence of Christian-inspired ethics and values at the heart of postmodern searches for redefined ideas of the common good and understandings of political economy. For example, there is a sustained discussion within *Redefining Christian Britain* on the inherent tension between a liberal, secular vision of public reason (as enshrined in legal frameworks such as the 1998 Human Rights Act) and the need/right of religions to express themselves from the perspective of their comprehensive doctrines (i.e., their transcendent, theological world views).¹³ Within this collection of essays, both John Atherton and John Reader, from the perspectives of economics and science studies respectively, reflect on other areas of public debate where the standpoints of religion and Christian theology are making positive and substantial contributions to what were hitherto perceived to be purely secular areas of competence. Indeed, all the essays in this book are a testament to the ongoing adaptability and robust mutability of Christian thought and the church (in both its solid and fluid forms) posited by Garnett et al. as evidence of new 'currents, cross-currents, shallows and sustaining depths' rather than the predicted 'melancholy, long withdrawing roar' of faith and religion from public life.¹⁴

Our second case study of mapping increasingly blurred and overlapping religious and faith-based spaces concerns present thinking on the shape and application of the discipline of practical theology itself. This is outlined in a two-volume work by Elaine Graham, Heather Walton and Frances Ward.¹⁵ In the introduction to their first volume, the authors chart the historical development of practical theology over a series of six phases since the earliest development of Christian communities, culminating in what (following Tidball's typology) they describe as the shift from a therapeutic model (whereby Christian ministry attempts to mimic secularised notions of professionalism and technical ability) to a hermeneutical model in which the activity of theological reflection takes

¹³ Raymond Plant, 'Liberalism, Religion and the Public Square', in Jane Garnett et al. (eds), *Redefining Christian Britain: Post 1945 Perspectives* (London, 2007), pp. 254–66.

¹⁴ Garnett et al., 'Introduction', p. 2.

¹⁵ Elaine Graham, Heather Walton and Frances Ward, *Theological Reflection: Methods* (London, 2005); and Elaine Graham, Heather Walton and Frances Ward, *Theological Reflection: Sources* (London, 2007).

centre stage.¹⁶ It is during this phase (from roughly the 1980s to the present day), profoundly influenced by educationalists such as Donald Schon and David Kolb, together with earlier theorists such as Paulo Freire, that theology becomes more 'reflexive, problem-based, intuitive and synthetic'.¹⁷ Graham, Walton and Ward, whilst extolling the virtues of this new hermeneutical phase (not least because it has 'democratised' the understanding of what theology is and who 'does it'¹⁸), are nevertheless realistic enough to list its shortcomings.¹⁹ The point in relation to the task of entering and mapping the new theological space is that in their 'seven models of theological reflection' typology, they are keen to promote a wide variety of epistemological approaches that combine the canonical, scriptural, empirical and narrative. In other words, practical theology and theological reflection are no longer a case of either/or, conferring a false dichotomy (which has existed up to now) between systematic and practical approaches. Rather it is a both/and activity in which human experience and narrative is triangulated within a public and empirically based scrutiny but also by its 'faithfulness' to the ongoing and evolving tradition of the church and its doctrines. In short, theology (as it always has been) is understood as a critical reflection on faithful practice in a variety of settings, and it is precisely this task, undertaken with an integrated and multi-disciplinary methodology, that constitutes an accurate reflection of the aims and methodologies of this book as it attempts to combine theoretical, narrative and praxis-based reflection on what it means to engage in the new blurred spaces of a postsecular, postindustrial society.

A third area of shifting and fluid space, following on from the sociological and theological fields identified above, is the legal/political domain; in particular the search for a new political and legal dispensation that reflects the current pastoral paradox that has emerged so powerfully in the first decade of the twenty-first century, namely the emergence of the postsecular. Anyone present in the UK in early February 2008 would have been only too aware of the heightened sensitivity and profile of this issue when Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, suggested the theoretical possibility that certain aspects of Sharia law (operating in those areas of specific cultural sensitivity such as arrangements for marriage and divorce) be allowed to operate within the continuing protection offered to citizens within a universal and secularised legal system based on notions of equality and human rights. The subsequent political furore was immense, and the tone of the condemnation of Williams in the tabloid sections of the UK press in particular, verged on the hysterical. However, despite the glare of publicity, Williams has been determined in public lectures to map out the new space between religion and secularism, by attempting to describe certain concepts and ideas that provide the

¹⁶ Graham et al., *Theological Reflection: Methods*, p. 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

basis renewed debate about how a multicultural and diverse society like Britain might recognise and negotiate the existence of multiple discourses and identities.

The first theme Williams explores is the distinction between programmatic and procedural secularism. Programmatic secularism creates an empty public square because it presupposes an ‘almost value-free atmosphere of public neutrality’.²⁰ It therefore functions as ‘shorthand for the denial of the public legitimacy of religious commitment as a partner in political conversation’ and is thus potentially a “totalising” spirit which stifles critique by silencing the other’.²¹ Procedural secularism, by contrast:

is the acceptance by state authority of a prior and irreducible other or others; ... it can move into and out of alliance with perspectives of faith, depending on the varying and unpredictable outcomes of honest social argument, and can collaborate, without anxiety with communities of faith in the provision for example of education or social regeneration.²²

Procedural secularism is thus one concept by which a diversity of voices can be accommodated within the public square. Other concepts Williams employs to describe the possible relationship between faiths and secularity is to develop the Rawlsian notion of overlapping consensus to argue for the right to overlapping jurisprudential services, whereby ethnic and religious minorities would be able to benefit from certain culturally specific and sensitive legal services within a liberal and overarching universal framework. In a world of multiple identities, citizens in a postsecular dispensation should be seen as having more than one set of defining relationships with the law, and should therefore have the right to properly recognized ‘supplementary jurisdiction’.²³ Other concepts he uses are clustered around notions such as ‘multiple affiliations’,²⁴ and ‘transformative accommodation’ which he defines as ‘a scheme in which individuals retain the liberty to choose the jurisdiction under which they will seek to resolve certain carefully specified matters, so that power-holders are forced to compete for the loyalty of their shared constituents’.²⁵ Finally, he uses ‘interactive pluralism’²⁶ as a concept which avoids putting ‘a gun to the head’ of minority faith communities by making them choose between loyalty to one’s culture (including religious practice and belief) and loyalty to the state. All these concepts are suggestive of a

²⁰ Rowan Williams, ‘Secularism, Faith and Freedom’, *The Archbishop of Canterbury* (23 November 2006), para 9, <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/654> (accessed 20 June 2008).

²¹ *Ibid.*, para. 20.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, para. 10.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 20.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 21.

new vocabulary by which one might begin to understand the new religio-secular landscape of civil society and public governance. At the heart of this new type of language, however, is the concern to ‘provide a moral energy for a properly self-critical society’:²⁷ a moral energy that Williams believes is sapped by secularism’s universalizing stress on instrumental views concerning the maximizing of individual happiness.

Having reviewed some of the other areas of discourse which are starting to map the new theological space of the blurred encounter/Third Space, we now move on to describe briefly the structure of this volume.

Structure of the Book

The aim of this book is to map the new theological space by means of a triangulation between narrative, praxis and theory. The purpose of this method is not only to give a 360° perspective, but also to offer some idea of the complexity and interdisciplinarity associated with this new space. Working with a variety of different voices also allows us to identify new clusters of experiences and themes which will develop further the thinking that began with our two volumes (which is what is attempted in the final chapter). All the contributors to this volume perceive themselves to be working in the new space of the blurred encounter, and have chosen to emphasise one or other of the components of *narrative*, *praxis* and *theory*.

However, most of our contributors also bring into their primary mode of analysis, strong elements of the other two components. To that end therefore, rather than group the contributions within clusters according to the primary mode of analysis, we have decided to opt for a simple alphabetical order. We hope that this will allow the reader to follow a path that crosses over into the different modes of experience and analysis on a fairly regular basis, thus creating a cumulative effect of what it means to map and enter the new theological space.

It is clear however that much of the ground covered by our contributors conforms to Reader’s levels of analysis for understanding the significance of blurred encounters. These levels include the changing nature of geographical space, the changing nature and status of professional and voluntary work, the contested and evolving relationship between faith and reason and science, between religion and spirituality, between the local and the global and between the institution and the network.

So for example, many of the contributions chart the changing nature of both rural and urban locations with a view to reflecting on how these changes have wrought significant alterations in notions of time, space, belonging and identity. These alterations in turn are forcing the church to develop increasingly fluid and experimental forms that nevertheless reflect the ongoing significance of stability,

²⁷ Ibid., para. 9.

faithfulness and continuity in some way. David Grimwood and Jane Winter locate their discussion of the pressures facing the church to retain an authentic faithfulness and seek to define a theology of God's kingdom or presence within the rapidly changing landscapes of Kent, now predicated on the twin drivers of retailing and mobility.

Philip Wagstaff unpacks similar themes in his odyssey through a series of rural pastoral callings but is perhaps more optimistic than Grimwood and Winter that the church can negotiate its way into new expressions of identity and being without losing its core mission values, and the ever-increasing significance of its physical place in a rapidly evolving landscape. Malcolm Brown maps the changing face of London's traditional suburbs and seeks to find out within them, 'the extent of social atomisation, the attenuated anthropology bequeathed by consumerism and the spiritual implications of rootlessness'. He concludes by asking paradoxically, whether the early history of the suburban church offers clues as to how to generate new social ties in relatively displaced and rootless communities.

Owain Bell reflects on the shifting identity and purpose of former industrialised towns in the West Midlands such as Kidderminster and the impact this has had on the public space in these communities. He charts the role and identity of the Bangladeshi community in Kidderminster since the earlier decades of immigration, and how a research project designed to help identify the needs of religious and ethnic minority communities actually exposed deep fault lines within that community. His chapter raises important questions about how multi-faith and interfaith space is constructed and engaged with sensitively and creatively.

Clare McBeath returns us to the heart of the inner-city and those communities on the eastern flank of Manchester waiting in a strange liminal state of destruction and construction, but whose citizens are essentially disempowered from any decision taken about the future of their communities. The depression and inertia created within these formerly proud but now forgotten communities is often reflected in the lives of those who still remain and those who are sent to live in them, usually temporarily housed refugees and asylum seekers. Those churches that still remain in these spaces therefore find themselves negotiating the blurred encounter between mental illness and spiritual insight, depression and hope, and working with people's bodies as well as their minds, and in spaces in which the barriers between what is liturgical and non-liturgical space are ultimately broken down to form a holistic entity.

Moving away somewhat from a location-based perspective, other writers focus on the new spaces opening up between faith-based and secular economics from a more theoretical perspective. John Atherton takes a walk down the Royal Mile in Edinburgh and reflects on key religious sites that have historically been locations of encounter between faith and politics, literature and economics. He moves on to show how in more recent years, thanks to the growing influence of faith-based economics such as Drop the Debt and Fair Trade campaigns, issues of virtue and ethics, that were marginalised by mainstream economics in the latter half of the twentieth century, are now becoming a central part of economic theory, driven in

part by the current debate on human happiness and well-being. This contribution by religious traditions to economics is what Atherton calls 'faithful economics' and inhabits a fluid space on a continuum between ethical economics and theological economy. Meanwhile, Phillip Jones, from his long experience as an industrial chaplain in the West Midlands, reflects on the changing nature of work from the solidity of industrially based manufacturing within the cohesive communities which it created, to the 'weightless' identities we now inhabit within postindustrial communities. As human society in the West becomes more mobile and consumer-oriented, and values themselves, like prices, become more fluid and less fixed, Jones asks rhetorically, what it means to function as an industrial missionary, and (by implication) as the church, in this new gravity-free environment. Jones seems less optimistic than Atherton that religion or the church can provide a sufficient counter-cultural force by which to shape economics towards more pro-ethical and human happiness ends.

A cluster of other chapters analyse the new interface between religion and spirituality, or between what Martyn Percy in his chapter calls (after Wade Clark Roof) 'received' and 'operant' religion. Ian Ball and Jonathan Miles-Watson offer contrasting perspectives on the way in which understandings of pilgrimage have evolved in the postindustrial, postsecular era. Ball reflects on the emergence of what he calls the 'developmental' pilgrimage. This type of pilgrimage seeks to provide an educational activity (i.e., providing historical and geographical notes for those walking through what for them might be a new part of the country) and personal and interpersonal skills (the sharing of communal tasks but also the framework for personal space and reflection). It also however, provides the opportunity to reflect critically on the meanings of sites (both religious and secular) that through their association with historical events or people, allow resonances to be created for understanding present issues such as Fair Trade, the Iraq war, global warming and so on. In other words, this is a new blurred space that appeals to the postmodern sense of the reflexive and autonomous individual who is nevertheless held within a wider sense of critical enquiry and solidarity with the sharp political and economic questions of the day. In this way Ball hopes that the art of making pilgrimage does not fall into a solipsistic or narcissistic exercise.

Jonathan Miles-Watson meanwhile reviews a wide variety of perspectives on the phenomenon of pilgrimage from an anthropological perspective, featuring the work of Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner and Edith Turner and Mary Douglas, and focusing on the significance of liminality, thresholds and rites of passage as helpful concepts by which to understand the significance of blurred encounters. We develop further some of his important thinking in our chapter at the end. Martyn Percy, in his chapter on the rite of baptism, enquires into the nature of the cultural forces that still prompt its request from non-churched families. This enquiry not only takes us to the blurred encounter between institutional and folk religion, but also to the significance of understanding the rite as part of a cultural dialogue. He encourages us to develop a theology of culture as a tool for mapping the new theological space because it enables us to see the infusion of religion in

culture and vice versa; especially in those increasingly significant spaces outside institutional religion where people, stirred by the significance of the birth event, need to connect with their sense of what he calls ‘the rumour of God and the sense of the numinous’. For this to be capitalised on, Percy argues, the institutional church needs to be more willing to offer a sensitive yet purposeful hospitality to this implicit religion for the sake of a deeper reconnection with secular culture.

The renegotiation of Christian identity within secular culture is also the theme of Karen Lord’s chapter, but argued from the perspective of faith-based individuals seeking to express their religious identity within secular workplaces. This highly topical debate uses both psychology of religion theory and recent high-profile legal case studies involving the right to wear religious symbols at work. The chapter concludes by recognising the frequently painful complexity involved in trying to handle the multitude of identities now offered within diversified and pluralised societies, and the importance of negotiating face-to-face with the person behind the mask.

The pain of finding and maintaining identity is also starkly examined by Margaret Goodall in her chapter on dementia. The first half of Goodall’s chapter relates the differing medical models of approach to this degenerative mental illness, before describing some of the emerging theological reflection on the experience of those suffering and caring for those with this condition. A key motif to emerge from this reflection is the significance of the blurred space between death and resurrection – between loss and redemption – namely Holy Saturday, which in Christian theological terms is the liminal space of emptiness and non-being before the threshold of new life and identity is reached. Holy Saturday is the new theological space poised between powerlessness and power, again themes that we will return to at the end of this book.

Our final two contributions map at a fairly theoretical level, (but again, rooted in case studies) other dimensions to the blurred encounter/Third Space of the new theological field. John Reader describes the way in which science acts like ‘faith’ in the way it offers propositional and public statements about its ability to exercise control over the spread of viruses such as foot-and-mouth disease, or potential nuclear fallout from damaged reactors. Reader focuses on the work of Bruno Latour and his theory of ‘circulating reference’ whereby the language of scientific breakthrough, rather than being separated from the non-scientific discourses of the rest of civil society, actually engages and deploys other public discourses (for example the media) for the sake of credibility. The more connected the scientific discovery or claim can be in relation to other discourses (many of which are based on affective rather than empirical criteria) the more credible and ‘accurate’ it is perceived. This raises profound questions, reflected upon by Slavoj Žižek and others, as to the nature of truth and the references we make about it – the ultimate question in respect of epistemological blurring.

Helen Cameron traces the ambiguity of an organisation such as the church in respect of organisational and network theory. Cameron carefully makes the case for seeing the church as a blurred identity in its own right – a hybrid organisation

that occupies the interface between a variety of points between institution and network; between bureaucracy and association – and to see this hybrid identity as a useful mechanism for blurring what Cameron calls the ‘rationales of the institution and the market’.

It is with these ideas in mind that we now make the journey or pilgrimage into the new theological space – the blurred encounter between faith, politics and community.

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