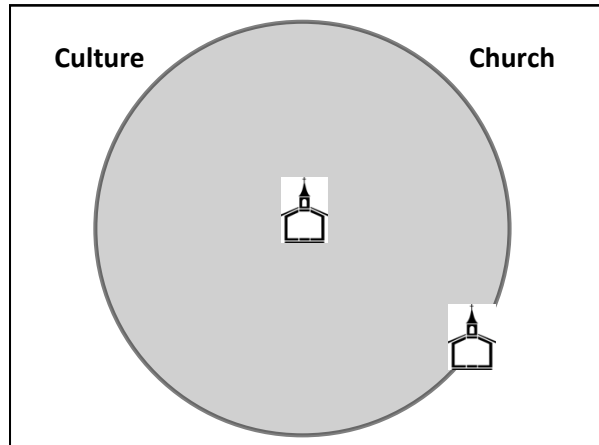

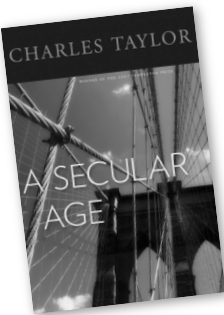


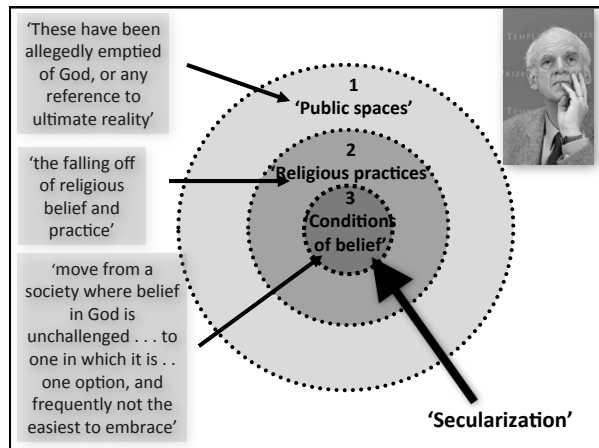

**LESSLIE NEWBIGIN**  
SUMMER INSTITUTE

**'Newbigin and the Idea of Public Truth' (1)**

*Revd Dr Paul Weston*  
13 July 2015







Charles Taylor *A Secular Age* (2007)


**Charles Taylor**

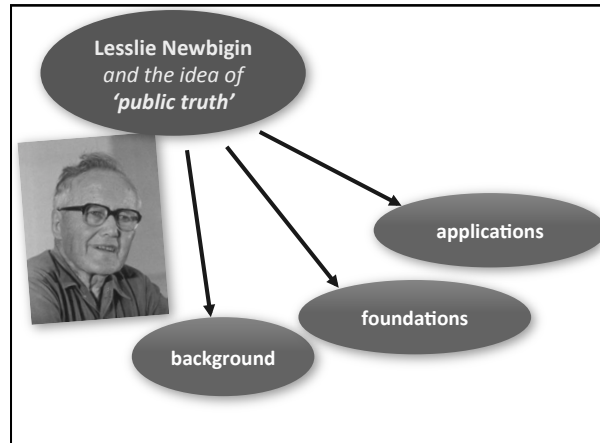
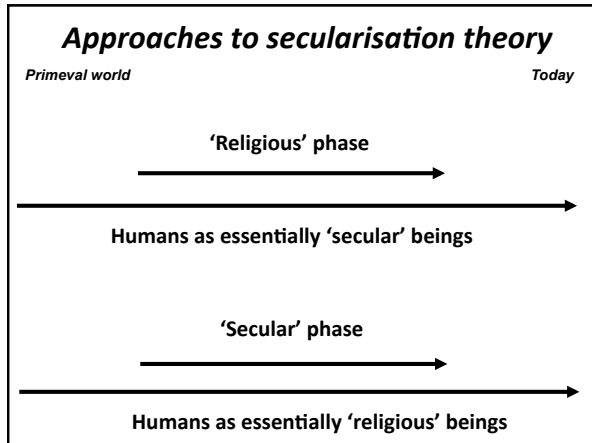
... for many people in our day, the answer seems, at least in its general lines, fairly obvious. Modernity brings about secularity, in all its three forms. This causal connection is ineluctable, and mainline secularization theory is concerned to explain why it had to be. Modern civilization cannot but bring about a 'death' of God.

**Charles Taylor**

... I will be making a continuing polemic against what I call 'subtraction stories'... stories of modernity in general, and secularity in particular, which explain them by human beings having ... liberated themselves from certain earlier, confining horizons, or illusions, or limitations of knowledge.





Lesslie Newbigin and the idea of ‘public truth’

**1928-31 Queens’ College Cambridge**

They were committed to their faith and ready to talk about it, but also open to difficult questions and ready to take me as I was – interested but sceptical and basically unconvinced. I never felt that they were trying to ‘get at’ me, as I did about the evangelical group.

background

Lesslie Newbigin and the idea of ‘public truth’

**1928-31 Queens’ College Cambridge**

I went back to Cambridge at the end of that vacation a committed Christian, and threw myself with enthusiasm in to the work of the SCM.

background

Lesslie Newbigin and the idea of ‘public truth’

**William Temple**  
(1881 – 1944)

**John Mott**  
(1865 – 1955)

background

Lesslie Newbigin and the idea of ‘public truth’

**1931-33 SCM secretary  
SCM Edinburgh Quadrennial Meeting 1933**


**J.H. (‘Joe’) Oldham**  
(1874 – 1969)

‘profound and prophetic address’

background

Lesslie Newbigin and the idea of 'public truth'

**1931-33 SCM secretary  
SCM Edinburgh Quadrennial Meeting 1933**




background

From a perspective of nearly half a century later I would dare to say that missionary thinking in Europe and North America has not yet met the challenge which Edinburgh gave to develop a genuinely missionary encounter with post-Enlightenment civilization.


*Unfinished Agenda (1993)*

Lesslie Newbigin and the idea of 'public truth'

**Barmen Declaration (1935)**




background



Lesslie Newbigin and the idea of 'public truth'

**Barmen Declaration (1935)**




background

'We repudiate the false teaching that there are areas of life which do not belong to Jesus Christ but to other lords, areas in which we do not need justification and sanctification through him.'

Lesslie Newbigin and the idea of 'public truth'

In 1935 led a study group on 'The Kingdom of God in History' in his final year of theological training in Cambridge, and tried to 'get leaders of the University political societies involved'.


He describes this initiative as 'the focus of my most passionate theological interest'



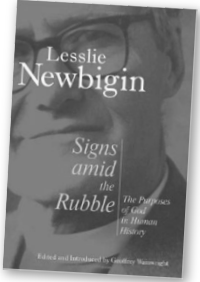
background

Lesslie Newbigin and the idea of 'public truth'

**1970s**



background




'The Kingdom of God and the Idea of Progress' (Four Lectures, Bangalore 1941)

Lesslie Newbigin and the idea of 'public truth'

'Foundation for the Study of Christianity and Society', sponsored by the British Council of Churches, which was designed to stimulate thinking about 'a vision or visions of the future of Britain shaped by the Christian faith'.

Though this group failed to achieve what he and others had hoped, he 'continued to wrestle, very ineffectually, with the problems of relating the Christian faith to public issues'





background

**Lesslie Newbigin and the idea of 'public truth'**



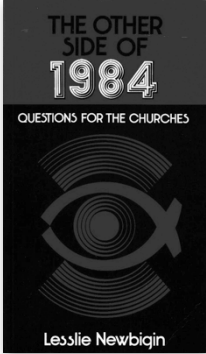
**1980s**

1984 Conference planned by the British Council of Churches



Newbigin suggested that the conference be postponed and that instead a study process (inspired by J.H. Oldham's work in the 30s) be set in motion. Newbigin was commissioned by the organising committee to write a draft pamphlet 'raising the questions which needed to be discussed'.



**Lesslie Newbigin and the idea of 'public truth'**




**Lesslie Newbigin and the idea of 'public truth'**

**foundations**




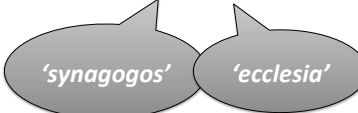
**foundations**

The Gospel is an account of things which have happened. It is not a proposition in metaphysics or a programme for ethics and politics, though it has implications in both these spheres. It is narrated history . . . .

'Conference Call' (1992)

**foundations**

'Cultus *privatus*'

'Cultus *publicus*'

**foundations**

... the early Church did not see itself as a private religious society competing with others to offer personal salvation to its members; it saw itself as a movement launched into the public life of the world, challenging the *cultus publicus* of the Empire, claiming the allegiance of all without exception.

*Your Kingdom Come* (1980)

**divine action**

**J.H. ('Joe') Oldham**

The Christian faith ... implies that events took place which changed fundamentally the relations between God and [humanity] and instituted a new era in human life. History now possesses a centre. From this centre it derives its ultimate meaning.

*The Church and its Function in Society* (1937), p.103f.

**foundations**

The Gospel is an account of things which have happened. It is not a proposition in metaphysics or a programme for ethics and politics, though it has implications in both these spheres. It is narrated history...

**divine action**

**human purpose**

**foundations**

... and (like all narrated history) it is told with a belief about its meaning. This belief is that the story tells what God has done for the redemption of all creation and its reconciliation to the source of all being.

'Conference Call' (1992)

**divine action**

**human purpose**

**foundations**

We believe that the truth about the human story has been disclosed in the events which form the substance of the gospel. We believe, therefore, that these events are the real clue to the story of every person, for every human life is part of the whole human story and cannot be understood apart from that story.

*Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (1989)

**divine action**

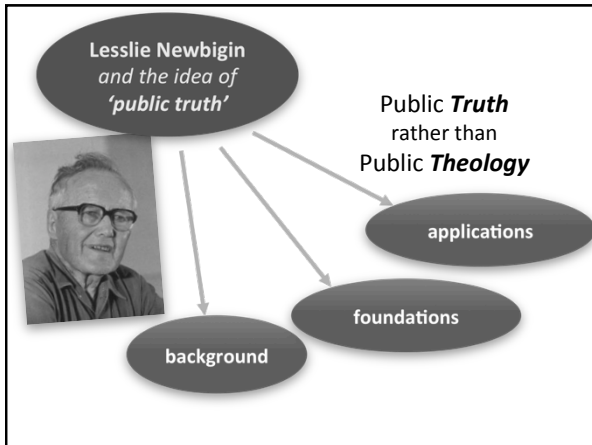
**human purpose**

**Lesslie Newbigin and the idea of 'public truth'**

**background**

**foundations**

**applications**



For the Church simply to be free to do its own thing is not freedom. The proper freedom of the Church is inseparable from its obligation to declare the sovereignty of Christ over every sphere of human life without exception.

*Truth to Tell* (1991)

Our culture has acknowledged and protected the right of individuals to hold [religious] faith as a private option. But it has drawn a sharp distinction between this private option and the principles which govern public life.

*Other Side of 1984* (1983)

What is now being proposed is that not just in the private world but also in the public world another model for understanding is needed; that this in turn requires the acknowledgment that our most fundamental beliefs cannot be demonstrated but are held by faith;

that it is the responsibility of the Church to offer this new model for understanding as the basis for a radical renewal of our culture; and that without such radical renewal our culture has no future.