

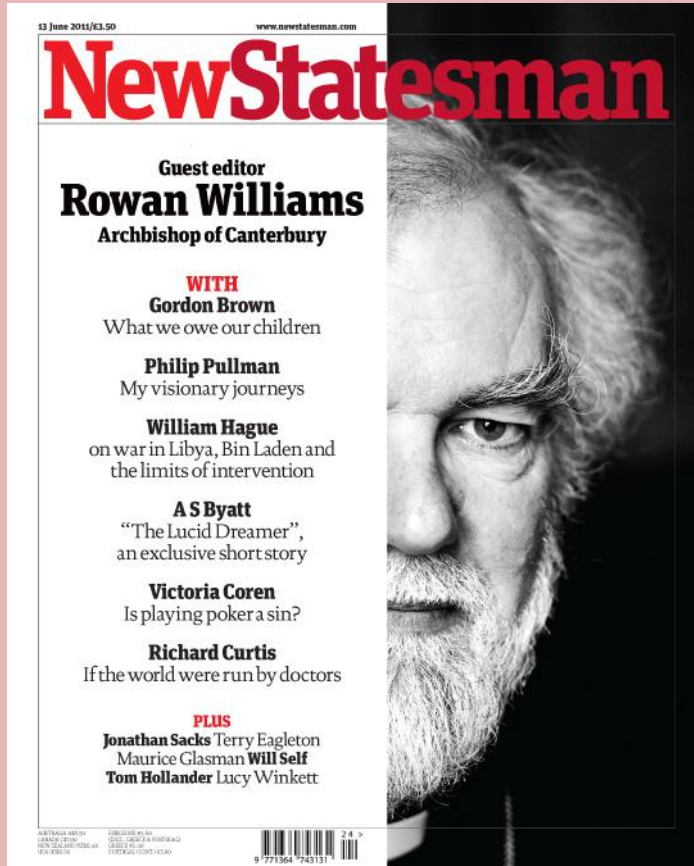
The Richard Hooker Lecture 2011

**“The Archbishop Speaks, but
who’s listening? The dilemmas
of Public Theology today”**

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Introduction



Archbishop turns political editor,
June 2011

Debate over Government
welfare reforms, especially
'Big Society'

An example of 'Post-Secular'
public theology ?

How do the churches speak into
a contested public arena?

Who are the public theologians
today?

“Archbishop criticises Government”

- Proposals for reform of welfare system
- Public spending cuts
- Restructuring of relationship between State, market and civil society
- A moral, as much as a political, intervention: ‘what politics might be based on, and what democracy is for’ (Andrew Brown)

The Tabloid Newspapers Speak ...



... and what gets silenced

- The moral issues behind the party politics
- Global civil society and ethical foreign policy
- Ambivalence towards legitimacy of religion in public – increasingly contested and paradoxical

Big Society, Big Idea?

A 'shorthand for developing a civic society where voluntary and non-governmental organisations take over the provision of care and services, previously entrusted to the state.'

1. Social Action by the voluntary sector
2. Public Service Reform
3. Community Empowerment

Faith in the Big Society

Religion is rich in social capital, embodies virtues of localism, practises philanthropy

But does (local, national) government pass the test of 'Religious Literacy' when it comes to faith-based organising?

Will the Big Society nurture active citizenship or entrench social inequalities?

Theological Comment

Anglican social theology:

“With remarkable speed, we are being committed to radical, long-term policies for which no one voted. At the very least, there is an understandable anxiety about what democracy means in such a context.”

Pauline vision of community

The common good – and the role of the State

Speaking truth to power

Changing times, changing theologies?

Archbishops' public statements: distinctively Christian, often counter-cultural: 'what it means to be human' (Daniel Gover)

***Christianity and Social Order* (1941) and the *Beveridge Report* (1942)**

Much post-war Anglican social thought still in the shadow of William Temple

Time to rethink the relationship between the State, the market and civil society?

Roman Catholic social thought

What is the relationship between the State and the rest of society?

The virtues of active citizenship and a healthy civil society

The principles of Subsidiarity and Solidarity in pursuit of the 'Common Good'

Government exists to promote 'authentic human needs' and 'the flourishing of all'

The Paradox of the Post-Secular

A world where religion is returning from the margins – newly relevant but still controversial and problematic

1. The limits of secularization theory and the resurgence of faith

2. Persistence of secular and ‘new atheist’ voices

Beyond Christendom: a third alternative

Emergence of neo-orthodox and radical ecclesial theologies

Rejecting mainstream churches' and liberal theology's accommodation with secular State

- 1. Grass-roots organizing in a post-secular society**
- 2. Church as performative alternative body politic**

But is it truly 'public'? Does it take apologetics seriously?

Who are the public theologians?

Internationalism of faith that is local and global in focus; Jonathan Sacks – faith as social capital

Ian Duncan-Smith- the im/morality of ‘welfare dependency’

Terry Eagleton – Organic Intellectual turned Christian Apologist:

“Secularisation is a lot harder than people tend to imagine.”

