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Religion in the Public Sphere: The Role and Function of Military Chaplains

Philip McCormack[1]

ABSTRACT

The focus is the specific question of religion in the public sphere and the role and function of military chaplains. These will be explored in three distinct sections. In *Religion in the Public Sphere* the key issues will be examined by looking closely at what some of the leading international thinkers have contributed to the debate. The second section *Aspects of Societal Change and the Implications for the Military* will consider: a, the increasing fluidity of ideas and concepts; b, the hollowing out of traditional ideas; c, morality, moral beliefs and moral reasoning among emerging adults; and d, some implications for the military. The third section *The Role of and Function of Military Chaplains* will consider two specific areas: a, *Religion provides substance for moral thought*; and b, *the theology of chaplaincy and basic human rights*.

KEY WORDS

Religion, secularism, the public sphere, morality, chaplaincy.

The role of religion in modern, twenty-first century life is contentious and generates significant discussion. It is hoped that this article will provide a modest contribution to the overall dialogue.

RELIGION AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

There is a diversity of views on exactly what is meant by the word religion even when people of faith gather together. The situation is no less precise in academia. For example, in one approach 'the reader is simply asked to accept as 'religious' any phenomena which the author happens to select for treatment under this heading. The second type treats 'Religion' as referring to a class of metaphorical statements and actions obliquely denoting social relationships and claims to social status. The third type treats the term as referring to commerce with a specific class of objects, i.e., 'Religion is the belief in spirits' or 'Religion is the

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[1] Rev Prof. PHILIP McCORMACK, MBE BD (QUB) MTh (Car) PhD (QUB) PhD (Cran) PFHEA FCMI; Principal of Spurgeon's College, and Recognised Teacher, University of Chester; Visiting Professor of Ethics at the University of Worcester.

belief in the supernatural'.[2] The situation is no more precise even in the realm of International Law. TJ Gunn argues that 'although many international and regional human rights instruments guarantee rights related to freedom of religion or belief, none attempts to define the term "religion''… 'the term "religion" remains undefined as a matter of international law'.[3] The use of language is complex and this article is not the occasion to explore in depth how it is constructed or used in any particular cultural setting. It is worth noting, however, that the 'normal' use of language in everyday life is underpinned by certain shared assumptions. For example, when a word or phrase is used in a specific cultural setting, the speaker frequently assumes those present will understand its basic meaning and any of its subtle nuances. For the purpose of this article, the word religion is used as a reference to the major world faiths in general but the central focus will be upon Christianity in particular. The reason for this focus is derived from the writer's understanding that the tension surrounding religion in the public sphere is particularly intense in the West, whereas the rest of the world is much less concerned about the separation of the public and the private spheres.

In the book *Religious America, Secular Europe*[4], the American sociologist Peter Berger notes that while Europe had become increasing secular in the twentieth century (we will explore the idea of secular shortly) he also observes that 'most of the world today is characterized by an explosion of passionate religious movements'.[5] Like most sociologists Berger accepted the idea that modernity brings about a decline of religion, 'a notion' Berger comments was, 'dignified by the term ''secularization theory'''.[6] He accepted this theory until, he says, 'the data made it increasing difficult to do so', rendering it empirically false.[7] Other eminent sociologists, like Steve Bruce (*God is Dead: Secularization in the West*), still hold to the contention that religion in the United Kingdom is in terminal decline.[8] He rejects the idea that there was a single secularization theory and maintains that the significant decline in church attendance is unlikely to change its downward trajectory. In contrast the equally eminent British sociologist Grace Davie contended that 'believing not belonging' was the likely

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[2] R Horton, 'A Definition of Religion, and its Uses' in *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* (1960) Vol.90, No2, p201.
[3] TJ Gunn, 'The complexity of religion and the definition of religion in international law', in *Harvard Human Rights Journal* (2003) Vol. 16, p189.
[4] P Berger, G Davie, E Fokas, *Religious America, Secular Europe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008).
[5] Ibid., p10.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] S Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

future of religion in the UK.[9] The main trust of her argument is that 'a large majority of people in contemporary Britain continue to believe but have ceased to belong to religious institutions in any meaningful sense'.[10] Church attendance across the United Kingdom is varied. In the official census figures, 59.3% of the population described themselves as Christian. There are positive signs that the rapid decline has bottomed out and in cities like London, there has been growth. For example, '700 places of worship sprang up in London between 2005 and 2012, of which more than half have black majorities'.[11]

What role, if any, should religious faith have in the life of a modern, Western society, especially when religious attendance has demonstrated a pattern of decline through the later part of the twentieth and early stages of the twenty-first centuries? The former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams began his address at the Pontifical Academy of Social Science in Rome by saying that:

> Most people who would call themselves secularists would probably defend their position with reference to certain ideals of freedom and equality in society. They are opposing, they say, any kind of theocracy, any privilege given to an authority that is not accountable to ordinary processes of reasoning and evidence.[12]

This is echoed on the National Secular Society's website:

Secularism is a principle that involves two basic propositions. The first is the strict separation of the state from religious institutions. The second is that people of different religions and beliefs are equal before the law.

The separation of religion and state is the foundation of secularism. It ensures that religious groups don't interfere in affairs of state, and makes sure the state doesn't interfere in religious affairs.

If Britain were truly a secular democracy, political structures would reflect the reality of changing times by separating religion from the state.[13]

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[9] G Davie, 'Believing without Belonging: Is This the Future of Religion in Britain?', in *Social Compass* (1990) Vol 37, No 4, p455-469.

[10] Ibid., p457.

[11] B Juda, 'London's religious awakening' in the *Catholic Herald* (10th March 2016) available from http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/issues/march-11th-2016/londons-religious-awakening/ (accessed 27 Jan 17).

[12] R Williams, Rome Lecture: 'Secularism, Faith and Freedom' (Rome: Thursday 23rd November 2006) available from http://rowanwilliams.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1175/rome-lecture-secularism-faith-and-freedom (accessed 27 Jan 17).

[13] See http://www.secularism.org.uk/what-is-secularism.html (accessed 27 Nov 22).

The Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor argues that 'one of our basic difficulties in dealing with these problems is that we have the wrong model, which has a continuing hold on our minds. We think that secularism (or *laïcité*) has to do with the relation of the state and religion; whereas in fact it has to do with the (correct) response of the democratic state to diversity'.[14] This reference to diversity is important, and we shall return to it shortly. Many who argue for a secularist position contend that it is one marked by neutrality and equality. Taylor's observation, however, that at the time of the Separation in France (1905) 'the notion stuck that *laïcité* was all about controlling and managing religion' is instructive.[15] As a philosopher he sees no intellectual reason to single out religion as against nonreligious or atheist viewpoints.[16] Despite the references to freedom from those who proclaim the merits of secularism, it is difficult not to ask the question: 'is the secularist agenda still essentially about controlling religion?'

At this point, it is important to define what is meant when the word secular(ism) is used in this article. I am indebted to the work of the Indian political theorist Rajeev Bhargava.[17] Bhargava distinguishes three senses of the term secularism: 1) secular humanism; 2) ethical secularism; and 3) political secularism.[18] It is political secularism, he contends that is 'usually thought of as involving the separation of state and church', which he observes is 'true of the French and American versions'.[19] 'A crucial requirement of a secular state,' he argues, 'is that it has no constitutive links with religion and that the ends of any religion should not be installed as the ends of the state'. For example, it cannot be the

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[14] C Taylor, 'Why We Need a Radical Redefinition of Secularism' in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, ed., E Mendieta and J Vanantwerpen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) p36.

[15] Ibid., p40.

[16] Ibid., p37.

[17] Bhargava was a Professor at the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He took his BA in economics from the University of Delhi, and MPhil and DPhil from Oxford University. See https://www.csds.in/secularism_and_ post_secularism_podcast_ rajeev_bhargava (accessed 27 Nov 22).

[18] Rajeev Bhargava, 'How Secular is European Secularism?' in *European Societies* (2014) Vol 16, No 3, p330.

[19] Ibid. The situation with regard to India, according to Bhargava is more nuanced. 'Indian secularism does not erect a wall of separation between religion and state. There are boundaries of course, but they are porous. This situation allows the state to intervene in religions in order to help or hinder them without the impulse to control or destroy them' (p334). 'In short, Indian secularism interprets separation to mean not strict exclusion or strict neutrality but what I call principled distance, which is poles apart from one-sided exclusion, mutual exclusion, strict neutrality, and equidistance' (p344).

constitutive objective of the state to ensure salvation.'[20] Saying there should be 'no constitutive links with religion' means, in effect, that religion should have no power to appoint or establish the distinct functions of government.

The classic discussions on the separation of powers within a government or the state are those contained in John Locke's influential work *Two Treatises of Government*[21] (1689) and the equally influential work of the French jurist Montesquieu,[22] *L'Esprit des Lois* (*The Spirit of Laws*; 1748)[23]. Locke 'claims that legitimate government is based on the idea of separation of powers.'[24] The familiar articulation of this principle, however, comes from Montesquieu[25] who gives the division or separation of functions/powers of government as legislative, executive and judicial.[26] Both Locke and Montesquieu held that the legislative was the supreme power (function) of the state;[27] any difference between Locke and Montesquieu is more about terminology than concepts.[28]

In the United Kingdom, for example, the church has no power to appoint or establish the distinct functions of government. Locke's principle concerning the sovereignty of the people[29] in choosing their government is the constitutional reality; the people choose the government they wish to govern and to make laws. The church in contrast, does not choose the government; neither does it establish

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[20] Ibid., p330.

[21] J Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (1689) available from http://www.efm.bris.ac.uk/het/locke/government.pdf (accessed 3 July 14).

[22] E Barendt, *An Introduction to Constitutional Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p14. Although simply known as Montesquieu, his full name was Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu.

[23] Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de La Brède et de Montesquieu, *L'Esprit des Lois,* (1748) trans. T Nugent (1752) available from http://www.efm.bris.ac.uk/het/montesquie u/spiritoflaws.pdf (accessed 3 July 14).

[24] A Tuckness, 'Locke's Political Philosophy' (2010) http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/ win2012/entries/locke-political/ (accessed 27 Nov 22) '6. Separation of Powers and the Dissolution of Government'.

[25] Barendt, *An Introduction to Constitutional Law*, p14.

[26] Montesquieu, *L'Esprit des Lois,* '6. Of the Constitution of England': 'In every government there are three sorts of power: the legislative; the executive in respect to things dependent on the law of nations; and the executive in regard to matters that depend on the civil law' (p173).

[27] See Locke, *Two Treatises*, Essay 2 Chapter XI 'Of the Extent of the Legislative Power'. He states that, 'This legislative is not only the supreme power of the commonwealth, but sacred and unalterable in the hands where the community have once placed it' (p162); Montesquieu, *L'Esprit des Lois,* '6. Of the Constitution of England' where he argues that 'As in a country of liberty, every man who is supposed a free agent ought to be his own governor; the legislative power should reside in the whole body of the people' (p176).

[28] Tuckness, 'Locke's Political Philosophy: 6. Separation of Powers and the Dissolution of Government'.

[29] Locke, *Two Treatises*, Essay 2 Chapter II 'Of the State of Nature' (p106).

its functions or operate as a secular judiciary. Rowan Williams refers to this as 'procedural secularism', which he distinguishes from 'programmatic secularism'. The German political theorist Jürgen Habermas also makes a clear distinction between the secular functions of the 'state' and any attempt to politically manipulate or push through by law a social change.[30] 'The secularization of the state', he contends, 'is not the same as the secularization of society'.[31] Williams maintains that it 'is possible to imagine a 'procedurally' secular society and legal system which is always open to being persuaded by confessional or ideological argument on particular issues, but is not committed to privileging permanently any one confessional group.'[32] Programmatic secularism in contrast involves the creation of a public sphere that has been emptied of any religious voice as a result of the deliberate privatisation of religion. José Casanova, the Spanish sociologist, has argued that the secularisation of Western Europe has become a self-fulfilling prophecy:

> Western European societies are deeply secular societies, shaped by the hegemonic knowledge regime of secularism. As liberal democratic societies they tolerate and respect individual religious freedom. But due to the pressure towards the privatization of religion, which among European societies has become a taken-for granted characteristic of the self-definition of a modern secular society, those societies have a much greater difficulty in recognizing some legitimate role for religion in public life and in the organization and mobilization of collective group identities.[33]

For Williams, programmatic secularism threatens to end up in political bankruptcy. To appreciate the strength of this warning, it is necessary to explore the concept of the public sphere or as it is sometimes referred to, the public square.

The public sphere, according to Taylor, 'is a common space in which members of society are deemed to meet through a variety of media: print, electronic, and also face-to-face encounters; to discuss matters of common interest; and thus to be able to form a common mind about these.'[34] It is '''*a* common space'' because although the media are multiple, as well as the exchanges which take place in

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[30] J Habermas, 'Notes on a post-secular society' available from http://www.signandsight.com/features/1714.html (accessed 27 Nov 22).

[31] J Habermas, 'The Political' in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, ed., E Mendieta and J Vanantwerpen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) p23.

[32] Williams, 'Rome Lecture'.

[33] J Casanova, 'Religion, European secular identities, and European integration', in T Byrnes and P Katzenstein (eds), *Religion in an Expanding Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) p65-92.

[34] C Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap, 2007) p185.

them' those active in the common space are understood, as a matter of principle, to be activity communicating or intercommunicating.[35] According to Taylor and Habermas[36] the concept of the public sphere began to emerge in the seventeenth century, developed in the eighteenth century and was a significant feature of the nineteenth century. Habermas comments that 'the state-governed public sphere was appropriated by the private people making use of their reason and was established as a sphere of criticism of public authority.'[37] In a very real sense, it is inextricably bound up with the emergence of social contract theory that placed a much greater requirement of consent at a more fundamental level. Political society had to be derived from the consent of those bound by it.[38] Although the public square was the locus of a discussion potentially engaging everyone, in reality it was more closely associated with the idea of the 'World of Letters'[39] or a Republic of Letters.[40] According to Taylor, 'government is then not only wise to follow opinion; it is morally bound to do so,' in other words, 'governments ought to legislate and rule in the midst of a reasoning public'.[41] It is important to note that the public sphere was self-consciously understood as being outside power. Power does not own it. Power should listen to it, but the public sphere is not an exercise of power.[42] As the significance of this to the question of religion in the public sphere is unpacked, it is critical to grasp that the public sphere is extrapolitcal.[43]

Political freedom, according to Rowan Williams, 'must involve the possibility of questioning the way things are administered - not simply in the name of self-interest … but in the name of some broader vision of what political humanity looks like, a vision of optimal exchange and mutual calling to account and challenging between persons.'[44] Liberty cannot simply be reduced to the notion of consumer choice.[45] If the Enlightenment ideal of liberty is reduced to consumer choice, it becomes mere instrumentalism. Instrumentalism is a 'philosophical approach which regards an activity (such as science, law, or

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[35] Ibid.
[36] J Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991).
[37] Ibid., p51.
[38] See, C Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004) p87.
[39] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, p51.
[40] See, http://republicofletters.stanford.edu/ (accessed 27 Nov 22).
[41] Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, p88.
[42] Ibid., p89.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Williams, 'Rome Lecture'.
[45] Ibid.

education) chiefly as an instrument or tool for some practical purpose, rather than in more absolute or ideal terms.'[46] The philosopher John Dewey supposed that thought is an instrument for solving practical problems, and that truth is not fixed but changes as the problems change.[47] In other words, we have no need of fixed absolutes and neither is there any requirement for the idea of a divine Being or universal principles derived from that Being. Programmatic secularism, maintains Williams, assumes 'that any religious or ideological system demanding a hearing in the public sphere is aiming to seize control of the political realm and to override and nullify opposing convictions. It finds specific views of the human good outside a minimal account of material security and relative social stability unsettling, and concludes that they need to be relegated to the purely private sphere. It assumes that the public expression of specific conviction is automatically offensive to people of other (or no) conviction.'[48]

Those who advocate that religious views have no place in the public sphere, will often strenuously maintain that they will defend an individual's right to believe what they want, as long as it is kept firmly private and harms no one. On this account, although it is rarely expressed in quite these terms, there is public reason and private prejudice, with no means of negotiating or reasonable means of exploring real difference.[49] Many philosophers and commentators have challenged the premise of this argument. Habermas, for example, observes that 'the liberal constitution itself must not ignore the contributions that religious groups can well make to the democratic process *within civil society*' [emphasis original].[50] It is not at all obvious why the demand is made only of one specific group of citizens to keep certain deeply held beliefs private and removed from the public sphere. The idea of the public sphere was that it was an open environment where ideas could be discussed, out-with power. It is this idea of exclusion that lies at the heart of Williams' lecture in Rome. Programmatic secularism (to use Williams' phrase) or the secularization of society (to use Habermas' phrase) can exclude or prohibit minority voices whose understanding of life cannot be reduced to a secular instrumentalism. This concept of exclusion runs contrary to the very premise of the social contract theories that underpin modern Western liberal democracy. The situation where only one worldview is permitted genuine or meaningful access to the public sphere, sails dangerously close to approximating totalitarianism. For Habermas, 'secular and religious

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[46] See https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/instrumentalism (accessed 28 Jan 17).
[47] Ibid. See also P Singer (ed) *A Companion To Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001) p154.
[48] Williams, 'Rome Lecture'.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Habermas, 'The Political' p24.

citizens must meet in their public use of reason at eye level.'[51] It is worth hearing what this secular philosopher says about the value of religion in the public sphere:

> The insight that vibrant world religions may be bearers of ''truth contents'', in the sense of suppressed or untapped moral intuitions is by no means a given for the secular portion of the population. A genealogical awareness of the religious origins of the morality of equal respect for everybody is helpful in the context. The occidental development has been shaped by the fact that philosophy continuously appropriates semantic contents from the Judeo-Christian tradition.[52]

In other words, Habermas is concerned that moral concepts that come from religion will not be heard in a purely secularized public sphere and that this would be to the detriment of society itself. To his credit, and this is not always recognised whenever the question of religion in the public sphere is discussed, Habermas not only recognises but publically states that philosophy continually appropriates ideas from the Judeo-Christian tradition. The danger involved with the programmatic secularization of the public sphere is not only will certain minority voices be rendered increasingly silent through their inadmissibility, but that the very intellectual basis upon which Western liberal democracy has been built may be hollowed out. Individual religious, civil, political, and moral liberty is, the author would contend, one of the greatest achievements in human history. If liberty has been reduced effectively to consumer choice, it not only commodifies human beings, it reduces this immensely rich and sustaining concept to a largely empty hollow husk.

ASPECTS OF SOCIETAL CHANGE AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MILITARY

Few would disagree that the pace of change since the 1950s has been a phenomenon. In the iconic 1973 American film Serpico, starring Al Pacino, it is striking that there are no personal computers and needless to say, there are no mobile phones and everything is done manually by the characters in the film. In police dramas set in our contemporary world, there is a computer on almost every police officer's desk and every character has their own personal mobile phone. Popular programmes like NCIS would have the viewer believe that 'the police system' stores vast quantities of data on every citizen, easily accessible by the average agent.

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[51] Ibid., p26.
[52] Ibid., p27.

The history of humanity is intertwined with the historical development of technology. The argument that to be human is to have some form of relationship with technology, regardless of whether that is a flint knife, bladed farming tool, sword or clock is difficult to resist.[53] Andy Clarke in his book *Natural Born Cyborgs* argues forcefully that humans are natural-born cyborgs.[54] 'When our technologies actively, automatically, and continually tailor themselves to us and we to them – then the line between tool and user becomes flimsy indeed'.[55] In his book *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century* Peter Singer comments that 'a knight of the Middle Ages could go their entire life with maybe one new technology changing the way they lived.'[56] The rapid development of technology and questions regarding humanity's ability to cope with, let alone master, these changes is not the main focus of this section. While it may be true that computers 'are now re-wiring our minds in subtle but important ways,'[57] other less obvious aspects of societal change and some practical implications for the military will be the main focus.

2a. *Increasing fluidity of ideas and concepts*. The sociologist Zygmunt Bauman introduced the idea of *Liquid Modernity*.[58] Mark David comments that 'Bauman has employed the metaphor of 'liquidity' in order to capture the dramatic social changes taking place in our everyday lives. In this way, he seeks to convey the increasing absence of 'solid' structures that once provided the foundations for human societies.'[59] Bauman argued that Modernity melted those foundational 'solids' that gave pre-modern social structure its essential character in-order-to reshape and mould them to fit its needs. In this late-modern period, as a consequence of the interaction between globalisation and individuality, Bauman maintains that 'the solids whose turn has come to be thrown into the melting pot and which are in the process of being melted at the present time, the time of fluid modernity, are the bonds which interlock individual choices in collective

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[53] T Taylor's, *The Artificial Ape: How Technology Changed the Course of Human Evolution* (London: Palgrave, 2010), p77.

[54] A Clark, *Natural-Born Cyborgs: Minds, Technologies, and the Future of Human Intelligence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p3. In this book he seeks to establish one of his main points in the first few pages. 'The human mind' he states, 'if it is to be the physical organ of human reason, simply cannot be seen as bound and restricted by the biological skinbag' (p4).

[55] Ibid., p7.

[56] PW Singer, *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21st Century* (London: Penguin, 2009) p101.

[57] C Coker, *Warrior Geeks: How 21st Century Technology in Changing the Way We Fight and Think About War* (London: Hurst, 2013) p131.

[58] Z Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006).

[59] Mark Davis, 'Liquid Sociology – What For?', in *Liquid Sociology: Metaphor in Zugmunt Bauman's Analysis of Modernity*, ed., Mark Davis (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2013) p1.

projects and actions - the patterns of communication and co-ordination between individually conducted life policies on the one hand and political actions of human collectivities on the other.'[60] In other words, the same process that overtook pre-modern life has been increasingly active in the second half of the twentieth and accelerating in the twenty-first century. This time rather than new 'solids' taking the place of that which had been melted and reshaped, concepts like love, fear, social structure resemble the characteristic of a liquid in that they do not stand still for long and keep its shape for long.[61]

One visual example of how modernity took aspects of the pre-modern world and fundamentally reshaped them is the transformation of a rural-based economy to an industrialised economy. What suited a small-scale, cottage industry based approach to commerce was unsuited to the increasing demands of modernity. Enormous sociological change reshaped the lived experience for millions. This pictorial imagery helps to visualize how a concept could be melted and remoulded into a new solid, to meet new needs. The idea of liquidity modernity can be illustrated in the topical issue of gender fluidity. Today, many believe that there is an enormous array of gender identities.[62]

The women's liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s, also described as second wave feminism,[63] had as one of its principle projects the application of a deconstructionist methodology with the intention of undoing gender or what Gardiner calls a 'feminist degendering movement.'[64] Mary Evans contends that 'the influence of Michel Foucault was pivotal in determining arguments which accounted for sexual identity in terms of constructed "discourses" rather than naturalistic givens.'[65] For many feminists, gender itself was a socially constructed discourse and many of the gender inequalities evident in Western societies were the result of men and women being socialised into different roles.[66] Since gender does not exist outside of history and culture, argues Brittan, both masculinity and femininity are subject to a process of reinterpretation.[67] 'Rather than seeing sex as biologically determined and gender as culturally

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[60] Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* p6.
[61] Davis, 'Liquid Sociology' p2.
[62] See https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20220914-gender-fluidity-the-ever-shifting-shape-of-identity (accessed 27 Nov 22).
[63] JK Gardiner, 'Introduction', in *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory*, ed JK Gardiner (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) p2.
[64] Ibid., p3.
[65] M Evans, *Gender and Social Theory* (Buckingham, Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2003) p84.
[66] A Giddens, *Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006), p460.
[67] A Brittan, *Masculinity and Power* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p1.

learned' we should 'view both sex and gender as socially constructed products.'[68] Older binaries, comments Gardiner, seem simplistic and potentially distorting.[69]

2b. *The hollowing out of traditional ideas*. The striking idea, associated with the eminent sociologist Ulrick Beck and 'zombie categories' in twenty-first century life, offers a critical clue of what is meant by the hollowing out of traditional ideas.[70] Beck explained his idea of 'zombie categories' in an interview with Jonathan Rutherford in London on the 3rd of February 1999. Beck uses what he describes as 'individualization' to explain what he refers to as 'disembedding of the ways of life of industrial society', for example class, family, gender and nation. Individualization does not, he maintains, mean individualism.[71]

> Individualization liberates people from traditional roles and constraints in a number of ways. First, individuals are removed from status-based classes. Social classes have been detraditionalized. We can see this in the changes in family structures, housing conditions, leisure activities, geographical distribution of populations, trade union and club membership, voting patterns etc. Secondly, women are cut loose from their 'status fate' of compulsory housework and support by a husband. Industrial society has been dependent upon the unequal positions of men and women, but modernity does not hesitate at the front door of family life. The entire structure of family ties has come under pressure from individualization and a new negotiated provisional family composed of multiple relationships — a 'post-family' — is emerging.[72]

'The liberated individual becomes dependent upon the labour market and because of that', he argues, 'is dependent on, for example, education, consumption, welfare state regulations and support… Dependency upon the market extends into every area of life.'[73] It is because of individualization people live with a number of zombie categories which are dead and still alive.[74] When asked for illustrations of 'zombie categories' Beck cited family, class and neighbourhood as examples. It is striking to think that one of the most distinguished sociologists of our age, described institutions, traditionally

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[68] Giddens, *Sociology*, p461.
[69] Gardiner, 'Introduction' p12.
[70] U Beck & E Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences* (London: Sage, 2001), chapter 14 'Zombie categories: Interview with Ulrick Beck' p202-213. See also Ulrich Beck, 'The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies', in *Theory, Culture & Society* (2012) Vol 19 (1-2), p17-44.
[71] Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization*, p202.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

understood as being critical to modern life, as husks whose life has been hollowed out: transformed into the living dead.

c. *Morality, moral beliefs and moral reasoning among emerging adults*. In this sub-section we will focus on the work of Christian Smith, Kari Christoffersen, Hilary Davidson and Patricia Snell Herzog and their book *Lost in Transition: The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood*.[75] The main conclusion from this research and subsequent book 'is that – not withstanding all that is genuinely good in emerging adulthood – emerging adult life in the United States today is beset with real problems.'[76] For the purpose of this article, the focus will specifically be on the work that Smith and his colleagues did on how emerging adults understand moral questions and morality in general. Who are emerging adults and why is a ten-year study in the US into the lives of American young people relevant to those outside of the US? In essence, it is that period in an individual's life between 18 and 30. Sociological studies have demonstrated that 'the transition to adulthood today is more complex, disjointed, and confusing than it was in the past decades.'[77] Smith and his colleagues choose the phrase 'emerging adulthood' from the array of labels that have been variously used to describe this phase in the lives of young men and women. One example of the social changes crucial to the rise of emerging adulthood is the delay in marriage by young people. 'Between 1950 and 2006, the median age of the first marriage for women rose from 20.3 to 25.9 years old. For men during that same time the median age rose from 22.8 to 27.5 years old. The sharpest increase for both took place after 1970.'[78] The figures for the UK in 2013 are higher,[79] with the average age for a woman getting married being 30 and 32 for a man.[80] While one should exercise caution in transposing an academic study from one country to another, the themes are, it could be maintained, identifiable in the UK and quite possibly, in other Western democracies.

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[75] Christian Smith, et.al., *Lost in Transition*: *The Dark Side of Emerging Adulthood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[76] Ibid., p3.
[77] Ibid., p15.
[78] Ibid., p13.
[79] For a detailed breakdown see, *Marriage in England and Wales: 2013*, Office of National Statistics (April 2016), available from https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity /birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships/bulletins/marriagesinengl andandwalesprovisional/2013 (accessed 28 Jan 17).
[80] See http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/love-sex/marriage/a-young-persons-guide-to-i-do-whats-it-like-to-get-married-in-your-mid-20s-9496937.html (accessed 28 Jan 17).

The first thing that struck Smith and his team was how strongly individualistic most emerging adults were when it came to morality.[81] 60% of those interviewed thought that morality was a personal choice, entirely a matter of individual decision. Moral rights and wrongs were essentially a matter of individual opinion.[82] The majority also expressed the belief that it is wrong for people to morally judge other people.[83] What became very clear to the researchers was that the majority had a live-and-let-live lifestyle, underpinned by a profound moral relativism.[84] Despite this, more than half of emerging adults wanted to resist moral relativism.[85] What Smith and his team realised, however, is that they appeared 'to possess few moral-reasoning skills with which to do that'.[86] This became evident whenever the sociologists asked questions on the source of morality. 'Where does morality come from? What is morality's basis'?[87] 34% of emerging adults interviewed said that '*they simply did not know what makes anything morally right or wrong* [emphasis original]. They had no idea about the basis of morality'.[88] Some of those questioned did not understand the question. For others it was framed by their understanding of what other people might think about their action or choice,[89] or whether or not it functionally improved their situation (like cheating in an exam).[90] Emerging adults demonstrated a clear distinction between hurting individuals, which they thought was wrong, and organisations, such as a business or social groups.[91] Smith and his team also noted that 'the majority of emerging adults report that they believe that people ought to do what they think is the morally right thing in any situation and obey the law, and that they usually try to do that themselves – to the extent that they understand morality.'[92]

Smith and his team are at pains to stress that are not suggesting that all or most emerging adults are reprobates.[93] Rather, they contend that emerging adults live in a world where very little counts as moral and where their moral blindness has

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[81] Smith, et.al., *Lost in Transition*, p21
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid., p23.
[84] Ibid., p25.
[85] Ibid., p33.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid., p36.
[89] Ibid., p37.
[90] Ibid., p38.
[91] Ibid., p40-41.
[92] Ibid., p47.
[93] Ibid., p68.

been learned.[94] Emerging adults are not therefore morally corrupt, but they are morally lost. Smith argues that 'they do not adequately know the moral landscape of the real world that they inhabit. And they do not adequately understand where they themselves stand in that real moral world.'[95] What they need, according to Smith, are 'better moral maps and better equipped guides to show them the way around.'[96] They lack, and neither have they been, given sufficient moral tools with which to make genuine moral choices. In their concluding summary and explanation the sociologists quote Charles Taylor and his magisterial *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*. Taylor observes that 'we have to fight uphill to rediscover the obvious, to counteract the layers of suppression of moral consciousness. It's a difficult thing to do.'[97]

The use of Taylor's descriptive imagery of having to fight uphill to rediscover the obvious, to counteract the layers of suppression of moral consciousness, is helpful. While the language used to describe critical aspects of social life have been retained, there has been a hollowing out of substance. Concepts like family, neighbourhood and society are still in wide use but they have become either fluid or malleable or they have become zombie categories. The language has been largely retained but not the deep underlying foundations that gave rise to them taking on the characteristic of being 'obvious.' The irony is that the 'obvious' needs to be rediscovered. The author's experience of delivering hundreds of lectures on ethics or running ethics training days, for a wide variety of public groups, has impressed upon me the nature of the uphill struggle that lies ahead. People enjoy discussing and debating ethics and they are quick to share their views. This is good and positive. When pressed, however, to explain why something is good or right, it is clear that strong opinions are not derived from normative reference points. There is a profound shallowness.

This shallowness is hemmed in, at least to some degree, by the residual moral consciousness contained in societal behavioural norms, although this residual moral consciousness cannot survive, in my view, without a rediscovery of the substance that once provided moral authority. There is a profound practical implication here for Western militaries and uniformed organisations. Emerging adults are the demographic that uniformed organisations draw their manning from. While military personnel operate within, or in close proximity to, the residual moral consciousness that is still located in societal behavioural norms,

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[94] Ibid., p60.
[95] Ibid., p69.
[96] Ibid.
[97] C Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) p90.

the vast majority of military personnel will conduct themselves appropriately and professionally. The problem of learned moral blindness is mitigated by societal pressures. What about situations that involve deployments into unfamiliar societal environments, where behavioural practices of the indigenous population appear strange or confusing? In the recent Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts the conduct of the overwhelming majority gave little cause for concern. My concern is based on the idea that when travelling downhill the law of physics would indicate an increase in velocity and that sliding downhill usually takes a lot less time than the hike back up. Smith's observation of emerging adults being morally lost with no adequate understanding of the moral landscape of the world they inhabit was of young people living normal civilian lives. Reasons to imagine that the situation will improve without significant intervention are not plentiful. What is more, it is these young people that are recruited into militaries and will be in the vanguard of the forces deployed in service to their country, possibly in places of extreme danger. The question is will they deploy with sufficient moral resources to enable them to navigate complex moral situations?

THE ROLE OF AND FUNCTION OF MILITARY CHAPLAINS

Shortly after the start of hostilities in the first Gulf War, President George Bush delivered his famous 'New World Order Speech.'[98] However, far from an anticipated and hugely optimistic 'New World Order', following on from the hoped for peace dividend at the end of the Cold War,[99] the general consensus today is that the trend is towards increasing instability and opportunity for confrontation and conflict.[100] 'Arguably, the world is becoming more complex

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[98] For a copy of the full text, see http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/bush-war.htm (accessed 12 Apr 13). In it Bush contends that:

> This is an historic moment. We have in this past year made great progress in ending the long era of conflict and cold war. We have before us the opportunity to forge for ourselves and for future generations a new world order -- a world where the rule of law, not the law of the jungle, governs the conduct of nations. When we are successful – and we will be – we have a real chance at this new world order, an order in which a credible United Nations can use its peacekeeping role to fulfil the promise and vision of the U.N.'s founders.

[99] See D Braddon, *Exploding the Myth The Peace Dividend, Regions and Market Adjustment* (Bristol: University of the West of England, 2000). Braddon maintains that, with few notable exceptions, the expected peace dividend after the end of the Cold War failed to materialise (p182).

[100] See DCDC, *Future Character of Conflict* (MOD UK, 2010) p4; DCDC, *Global Strategic Trends – Out to 2040* (MOD UK, 2010) p15.

with, *inter alia*, the rapid movement of ideas, people, capital and information.'[101] As a consequence, national governments and world bodies, such as the UN, face what scholars refer to as 'wicked problems'[102] that defy simplistic answers or approaches. The reality in many instances, according to Christopher Coker, is that they cannot be solved, only 'managed until someone finally decides to stop managing it, or the managers run out of resources, time or money.'[103] We live in an age of substantial financial pressure upon public finances and spending on defence has come under intense scrutiny in many Western democracies. Military chaplaincy is not immune to these forces or the pressure to justify to an increasingly vocal secular voice why the state should fund spiritual and pastoral support. This section will set out two roles or functions that military chaplaincy offers to the military community in the twenty-first century.

3a. *Religion provides substance for moral thought.* As an ethicist, I have been asked many times if a purely secular, non-religious moral ethic is possible. My answer is that of course it is possible. Notable thinkers like Emmanuel Kant, Jeremy Bentham and John Sturt Mill sought to achieve just that. Kant's formulation of his categorical imperative was based on reason and logic. It was rationally necessary and an unconditional principle that he believed must always be followed despite any natural desires or inclinations we may have to the contrary.[104] Bentham and Mill's consequentialism / utilitarianism is considered one of the most powerful and persuasive approaches to normative ethics in the history of philosophy.[105] It is generally held to be the view that the morally right action is that which produces the 'most good.' It is also distinguished by impartiality and agent-neutrality; in other words, everyone's happiness counts the same. When thinking about the good, it is 'good' impartially considered.[106] But there are a few problems. The first problem, is the intellectual criticism of the whole Enlightenment project in regard to ethics.

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[101] DCDS, *Joint Concept Note 2/12: Future Land Operating Concept* (MOD UK, 2012) p2.

[102] See HWJ Rittel and MM Webber, 'Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning', in *Policy Science* (1973) Vol 4, p155-169 and C Coker, *War in an Age of Risk* (Cambridge: Polity, 2009) p128-129.

[103] Coker, *War in an Age of Risk* p156.

[104] See, R Johnson, and A Cureton, 'Kant's Moral Philosophy, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), forthcoming URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/ spr2017/ entries/ kant-moral/ (accessed 30 Jan 17).

[105] See, J Driver, 'The History of Utilitarianism', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = https://plato.stanford.edu /archives/win2014 /entries/utilitarianism-history/ (accessed 30 Jan 17).

[106] Ibid.

In 1981 the Scottish philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre published his well-known work *After Virtue*.[107] The 'Disquieting Suggestion' of chapter 1 used by MacIntyre is an allegory to explain the impact of Enlightenment philosophy, from his perspective, upon moral theory. He maintained that this project was doomed from the start precisely because it used ethical language that had been detached from its source, namely Aristotelianism with its teleological idea about human life. This, according to MacIntyre led to the fragmentation of moral language and its detachment from the substance it was derived from. A significant contributory reason the project was doomed to failure was, for MacIntyre, the invention and role of the individual in moral discourse. He contended that the individual moral agent 'conceives of himself and is conceived of by moral philosophers as sovereign in moral philosophy.'[108] This inevitably led, he argued, to moral emotivism. I would like to contend that not only has the process of fragmentation continued, even the ethical frameworks created by the Enlightenment philosophers and their successors are now largely unknown by members of the general public. What little knowledge of them that remains, among the general public, is disjointed at best.

This 'unknownness' of Enlightenment moral frameworks is part of the second problem we will discuss briefly. It is not simply that Christianity provided the intellectual and philosophical background to Enlightenment ideas, which scholars like Habermas recognise, it was the cultural *Sitz im Leben* or life setting from which they sprang. Take John Stuart Mill's superb work *On Liberty*. In this, Mill sets out what he describes as the struggle between the liberty of the individual over against the authority of the government and what he famously described as 'the tyranny of the majority.'[109] It is one of the great explorations of individual liberty within a democracy. What is often overlooked, however, is that Mill's individual liberty existed in relationship to the community within which the individual was socially located. He states that 'there are many positive acts for the benefit of others, which he may rightfully be compelled to perform; such as, to give evidence in a court of justice; to bear his far share in common defence, or in any other joint work necessary to the interest of the society of which he enjoys the protection.'[110] Or to use theological language, his cultural world understood that the Royal Law 'to love our neighbour as yourself' was a

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[107] A MacIntyre, *After Virtue: a study in moral theory* (London: Duckworth, 2007).
[108] Ibid., p62.
[109] J S Mill, *On Liberty* (London: Penguin, 2010) p9. *On Liberty* was first published in 1859.
[110] Ibid., p19.

part of the 'obvious' that Charles Taylor talks about and would have been a profound societal ideal.

The fragmentation of ethical knowledge and its increasing 'unknownness', in my view, is directly related to the programmatic secularisation increasingly evident in Western democracies. I believe that there is a direct correlation. The learned ethical blindness identified in emerging adults did not occur in a vacuum. There is a history to that process. I contend that, the fragmentation of ethical knowledge is as a result of the dislocation of those ethical concepts from a Christian tradition that provided the rich soil from which they could be expressed and grow. Separated from that soil, they have faded and become largely forgotten. Military chaplains are for the most part, representatives of faith groups and as such come from religious communities whose moral foundation is derived from that faith. As such their religious training and formation is derived from the substance that once infused and gave life to basic moral goods.

3b. *The theology of chaplaincy and basic human rights*. In a well-known episode of Hard Talk by the BBC, the moral philosopher Peter Singer dismissed talk of a human right to life as essentially deriving from a religious basis and that such talk should be challenged.[111] The following is an extract form the UN Declaration of Human Rights:

Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,

Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

The UN Declaration of Human Rights is not a Christian document. Singer is correct, however, in his recognition that the idea of the sanctity of human life, formulated as a human right, is derived from a deeply held religious belief; a belief shared by each of the major World Faiths. Rowan Williams makes the same basic connection between religious faith and human rights.[112] In a lecture at the London School of Economics, he seeks to ground human rights thinking

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[111] See http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b07f49hs (accessed 30 Jan 17).
[112] See, R Williams, 'Religious Faith and Human Rights' available from https://www.lse.ac.uk/assets
/richmedia/channels/publicLecturesAndEvents/transcripts/20080501RowanWilliams_tr.pdf
(accessed 27 Nov 22).

so that it did not descend into moral relativism or political utility. Williams agrees with Alistair MacIntyre that human rights cannot be allowed to become a list of entitlements 'dropped into the cradle.'[113] 'Equal liberty is at root inseparable from the equality of being embodied. Rights belong not to the person who can demonstrate capacity or rationality but to any organism that can be recognised as a human body, at any stage of its organic development.'[114] Williams argues that our human bodies are a means of profound moral communication. By this he does not simply mean, what someone says. Rather, it is the body itself, regardless of the ability of the individual to physically speak or express thought that communicates in a profound manner to another who themselves possess a human body.

It does not matter whether it was in the trenches of the First World War or at a Forward Operating Base or a Check Point in Afghanistan, one aspect of the chaplain's ministry is to see the soldier as a person; someone with a dignity and a value because they are and not because of any concept of utility. In Helmand Province, Afghanistan 2009, I spoke to a young soldier keeping guard at the very outer edge of the location the company had just recently captured and then occupied. What really struck me was that he wanted to talk to me about his family. He had been involved in heavy fighting and a significant number of British soldiers had been killed or injured. Yet what this particular young soldier wanted to talk about was his family. I am certain that this has always been a consistent feature of the chaplain's ministry with soldiers.

Why is this important? In a context where societal norms begin to become distorted, there is real danger that individuals can become morally disorientated and begin to contemplate the notion that the 'norms' they have lived by their whole lives do not apply in that context. Locating the humanity of the individual within the context of their human relationships, which have shaped their sense of themselves, is, I contend, absolutely vital. The soldier must always understand themselves in terms not simply of what they do but who they are: a son, a brother, a husband, a father, a daughter, a sister, a wife and a mother. However, imagine the situation where someone has behaved in a manner in which they had, in effect, set their humanity aside and allowed themselves to be shaped by situational forces in opposition to the societal norms that had shaped their lives up to that point. How do they deal with that narrative part of their evolving life story?

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[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.

The interrelationship between the human body and our most basic human rights is, at least in seems to me, a powerful idea. I fully accept that non-religious people can hold the same or similar position. What Singer, albeit in a negative sense, and Williams recognise is that there is a demonstrable link between faith and a human rights ethic. The theological concept of incarnational ministry, of being with people where they are, offers a deep and substantial basis for military ethics, precisely because man is made in the image of God. The presence of religious chaplains with military personnel in barracks, on operations or on the battlefield provides a living link for the humanity of the individual and a basic human rights ethic.

CONCLUSION

What is role of religion in the public sphere? I would contend it is absolutely vital if our most precious ideas are to be secured for future generations. The former President Ronald Regan memorably said that:

> Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children what it was once like in the United States where men were free.[115]

The creation of a free society is a moral achievement and owes it origin to the Judeo-Christian tradition. It did not happen overnight and took hundreds of years to evolve. One vital contribution to the creation of a free society was the role of the public sphere. Programmatic secularism has as its goal the radical privatisation of religion and its exclusion from the public domain. Not only is this a fundamental denial of the freedom democracy which emerged from, it is in great danger of excluding any alternative voice. This is not a plea for special privilege; it is plea for the public sphere to be public and remain separate from power.

Incredible social changes have taken place since the 1950s and the implications of these are profound. I believe that religion in general, and Christianity in particular, can assist in any attempt to 'fight uphill to rediscover the obvious.' My own view is that the hill facing us is considerable because what was once 'the obvious' has become largely forgotten and fundamentally dislocated from

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[115] R Regan address to the annual meeting of the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce (30 March 1961).

the substance that gave it meaning. I do not think that uniformed organisations have much of a choice. Either they address the learned blindness of emerging adulthood or face the likely consequences. I am not advocating some form of return to compulsory religious instruction. That would be counterproductive. What I am suggesting is that an important role and function of military chaplains can be located in the moral education of emerging adults because of their grounding in the theology from which the major forms of normative ethics emerged. There is a direct link between a human rights-based ethic and religious belief, specifically that mankind was created in the image of God. For Christian chaplains, the theology of the incarnation underpins their ministerial conviction to be with service people wherever they may find themselves and to face whatever they must face. It is the love of God for humanity that compels military chaplains to a ministry of self-sacrifice and from that encounter with their people to help locate a basic human ethic even on the battlefield.

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