



University of Chester



This work has been submitted to ChesterRep – the University of Chester's
online research repository

<http://chesterrep.openrepository.com>

Author(s): Elaine L Graham

Title: The 'virtuous circle': Religion and the practices of happiness

Date: 2011

Originally published in: The practices of happiness: Political economy, religion and wellbeing

Example citation: Graham, E.L. (2011). The 'virtuous circle': Religion and the practices of happiness. In J. Atherton, E. Graham, & I. Steedman (Eds.), *The practices of happiness: Political economy, religion and wellbeing* (pp. 224-234). London, United Kingdom: Routledge

Version of item: Author's post-print

Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10034/236457>



18 The ‘virtuous circle’

Religion and the practices of happiness¹

Elaine Graham

Growing prosperity since 1945 in developed economies is now being shared increasingly by developing economies. Yet experience and research widely recognize that above certain income levels, greater prosperity is not matched by greater happiness, but is accompanied instead by greater social and individual distress, manifested, for example, in increasing crime and ill-health, such as depression. Much evidence now also suggests that such trends are exacerbated by high levels of inequality in society. This so-called ‘Happiness Hypothesis’ is explored across a range of disciplines in a field of ‘overlapping literatures’ from the 1990s onwards (Atherton, 2008). They all confirm that increasing economic prosperity in Western economies is not matched by greater levels of recorded happiness. These literatures serve as a multidisciplinary ‘entry-point’ for the excavation of further layers of debate about the relationship between global economic change, social capital, human behaviour and political institutions, as well as their ethical and religious aspects. It is notable that the various literatures on wellbeing are mindful of these latter dimensions, and increasingly are focusing on the importance of values and beliefs in human satisfaction or quality of life.

Alongside these developments has been the re-emergence of religion globally, including into public life, and more recently matched by the growing interest, especially in the West, in the religious contribution to ‘social capital’, or the capacity to build social networks within and across various parts of civil society. It is the potential link between this latter development and the growing concern over the paradox of prosperity and human wellbeing that forms the basis of this chapter, which will focus on interacting this so-called ‘happiness hypothesis’ with a consideration of the potential role and contribution of religious values and organizations. It has further resonances with emerging interest in faith-based economics and ethical aspects of development, debt relief and poverty reduction: with the morality of the market, if you will, and the question of values, not just in terms of informing the ‘moral compass’ (Brown 2007; see also Davis *et al.* 2008: 13) of individuals as they chart their course through life, but raising questions about the very purposes and ends to which political economy as a whole should be directed.

If the question of happiness and wellbeing (especially in relation to economic prosperity) is multidisciplinary and multidimensional, then the question of reli-

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50



1 religion emerges as one, not insignificant element of that. Given that such a broad-
2 based debate raises questions of meaning and value, this opens new doors for
3 theological input, and there are significant overlaps between philosophical think-
4 ing about the good life, particularly around virtue ethics, and moral theology.
5 My intention here is to trace these convergences and offer some ways forward.

Religion and the pursuit of happiness

What the literature on wellbeing acknowledges time after time is the significance
for individuals of what Richard Layard terms a strong philosophy of life. This is
not identical with organized religion, even though Layard at one point does
indeed declare that ‘people who believe in God are happier’ (Layard 2005: 72).
Nevertheless, some kind of correlation does seem to be evident. For example,
the Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health at Duke University publishes
digests of research in this area, and reports on a series of clinical studies which
suggest, among other things, that rates of recovery of cancer patients may be
better among those who report involvement in faith communities, as well as
better longevity among those who attend synagogue, slower rates of cognitive
decline in those experiencing the onset of dementia, and some, marginal, impact
on aspects of coping strategies in relation to recovery from serious illness
(Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health 2007). The evidence is varied but
rich, therefore, although clearly such research raises important questions of
method and interpretation. For example, is the incidence of better mental health
among religious people due to divine influence or human solidarity? Do differ-
ent religious traditions deliver different degrees of wellbeing? What about reli-
gious traditions that stress individual practices, such as meditation, in comparison
to more corporate ones? What is the relationship between ‘religion’ and ‘spiritu-
ality’ – organizational, formal dimensions of observance, say, as opposed to a
more subtle appreciation of existential or transcendent dimensions to life?

In terms of explaining the correlation between religion and wellbeing, the
consensus seems to be that there is powerful ‘added value’ in religion (Coyte *et*
al. 2007; Eckersley 2007). It appears to be down to a combination of factors,
among which social support and membership of a faith community is pre-
eminent, but which extends to other forms of religious practice, such as prayer,
reading one’s sacred Scriptures, a sense of meaning and existential belief system
and a well-articulated moral code. While other (secular) activities might provide
some of these elements, commentators such as Richard Eckersley argue that reli-
gion ‘packages’ these components effectively and accessibly (Eckersley 2007).

More specifically, John Swinton (2001: 64–92) postulates various tangible
mechanisms by which religious affiliation might contribute to greater mental and
emotional wellbeing:

- Regulation of lifestyle and behaviour – such as restriction of intake of alcohol.
- Provision of resources, such as social support and networks.

- Promotion of positive self-esteem.
- Acquisition of specific life skills and coping resources – such as a framework of understanding illness, stress or loss.
- Generation of positive emotions – cultivation of disposition towards forgiveness, hope, transformation.

All in all, wellbeing comes from being connected and engaged, from being suspended in a web of relationships and interests. This gives meaning to people's lives (Eckersley 2007: S54).

Social capital, religion and wellbeing

What is interesting is how much of the social capital literature intersects with the literature on happiness, in terms of offering insights into the devices by which individuals are able to feel a greater connection to the wider community – in other words, the very kinds of networks which seem to engender a better quality of life. So, one policy document identifies some of the positive benefits of strong social capital: high GDP; higher educational attainment; lower levels of crime (as a result of strong social norms and levels of trust); better health; and more effective institutions of democratic participation in terms of linking citizens with government. If we look at those alongside Layard's Big Seven, considered elsewhere in this volume, we see an interesting degree of correlation.

But a further dimension to this is the significance of religion for engendering forms of social capital. Robert Putnam has probably led the way in charting how religious values and organizations serve as rich sources of social capital which foster precisely those networks and relationships that seem to contribute most decisively to healthy social networks, and thus to our quality of life. As Putnam reports, churchgoers were 'substantially more likely to be involved in secular organizations, to vote and participate politically in other ways and to have deeper informal social connections' (Putnam 2000: 6). The distinctiveness of churchgoers' values and attitudes – the theological wellspring of their motivations – has variously been described as 'faithful' or 'spiritual' capital (Commission on Urban Life and Faith 2006).² The Commission on Urban Life and Faith used this term to describe the effect of churches on the life of their neighbourhoods: quantitative but also qualitative. It is intended to link the sense of strong values that guided and informed the activism – and that the two are indivisible.

If religion is one of the most potent sources of strong values and principles that appear to make the difference as people steer their way through the world, then this is precisely because it represents a powerful synthesis of beliefs and action. We might term this 'performative' faithful capital: where belief and practice are indivisible, something also encapsulated well in understandings of *praxis*, as value-driven, value-directed action, or of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom. This only serves, however, to highlight the question of the relationship between values and practices: the literature on religious/social capital, or faithful capital, is increasingly converging on the impossibility of separating the two. It

resists, therefore, a straightforwardly functionalist reading of the contribution of religion to wider society, that faith merely ‘delivers’ social goods and should be evaluated on its efficiency or effectiveness in so doing, as any other organization.

‘Virtuous capital’

As John Atherton argues, this establishes a strong continuity between ethics and religion, or between market economics and welfare economics (Atherton 2008: 131). It also resonates powerfully with other literatures on the foundations of healthy social capital, and especially the role of religion in nurturing bonding, bridging and linking the social relationships and networks that appear to be so crucial in fostering wellbeing. This then takes us further still into the territory of virtue ethics and teleology, because they form part of the realization within the happiness and wellbeing literature of the centrality of people’s goals and values. It is about being able to establish some basic criteria of human flourishing – of what actually constitutes a life well lived – in order to be able to make some judgements about what is good for us. Insofar as virtue ethics represents different accounts of the ‘good life’ and especially in theologically derived virtue ethics, the idea that the good is related to the ends for which humans are believed to have been created, it occupies a prominent position.

In Aristotle’s thought, the good life was defined in terms of the pursuit of happiness, or *eudaimonia*. This entailed the achievement of one’s ultimate goal, or *telos*, which was essentially about shaping one’s life according to the virtues of excellence, learning and pleasure. Christian theologians such as Augustine and Aquinas put that in a Christian framework, in which virtue was about conforming to God’s purposes, a goal that could only be fully fulfilled in the after-life. This became adapted in later medieval times to a conformity to the precepts of natural law. So there is an ontological as well as a moral dimension to the normative basis of happiness and wellbeing: we are most fulfilled when becoming and attaining our highest calling and our most authentic being, which in traditional Christian theology is to become what God has created us to be, by practising the virtues of faith, hope, love and charity with the assistance of divine grace.

Eudaimonia is traditionally translated as happiness, although the philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe has preferred the term ‘flourishing’, a concept that has also recently re-entered moral discourse with the work of Grace Jantzen, who explicitly contrasts it and the worldview it embodies with the language and terminology of ‘salvation’ (Jantzen 1996). The aim of the ‘good life’ in virtue terms for Jantzen is not to seek rescue from a fallen and corrupt world, but to promote the values of new life, creativity and justice in ways that propel us towards ‘becoming divine’ (Jantzen 1998). Other philosophers and theologians have emphasized the importance of moral agency and choice: the good is something that has to be chosen, there has to be an element of freedom, it is not about simply following a predestined life-course, or following prescribed rules. Arguably, what makes any

action moral is the necessity of choosing between conflicting goods, or even lesser evils. In that respect we return to a useful strand in virtue ethics, which is about how one cultivates the gifts of moral discernment: seeking and attaining the good and our own wellbeing and that of the planet is not only about following a path, but acquiring the map-reading skills by which one ‘navigates’ one’s course through life.

The life which cultivates virtue is preferable for many to alternative traditions of moral reasoning, such as Kantian ethics (rule-governed), or utilitarianism or consequentialism. The alternative of ‘right action’ versus ‘good consequences’ may be resolved by an emphasis on the qualities of the moral agent – but we cannot escape the question of what nurtures and sustains the practical wisdom of that moral individual; nor the need to consider whether in fact it is not about individual virtue but an ecology of virtue in which the individual’s participation in a community’s shared ethos is what cultivates the practical wisdom of discernment.

The revival of virtue ethics in theology could usefully connect with this literature on wellbeing therefore, since it offers a way of reconciling the potential conflict between law and grace, while indicating such a framework in the public domain: a ‘more dialogic approach to Christian ethics [which] attempts to maintain the integrity of religious traditions, while drawing out the potential for mutual understanding between them – both within Christianity and between Christianity and other faith or non-faith-based groups’ (Garnett *et al.* 2006: 201). This takes us into debate about how questions of value and how notions of the good can be negotiated in pluralist societies, and what role is afforded to any religious traditions. Can religion be taken seriously as a wellspring of public values, or is it to be seen purely as a sectional, fiduciary language only for the faithful?

The point is that religious people do have a long history of thinking about values, many of which they share across traditions and many of which have actually informed the cultural worldviews in which secular people find themselves. So it is that dialectic, that sense that Christian identity, like that of other religious and cultural traditions, has always developed in particular contexts and through constant processes of change and revision, interacting with other worldviews, religious and secular, that needs to be affirmed: a convergence of theologically-grounded notions of virtue with those of others.

Yet equally, it may be asked whether Christians should be more wary of having anything to do with a concept as banal and self-seeking as ‘happiness’. The strong counter-cultural and eschatological nature of early Christianity would suggest that new life in Christ and the task of entering the Kingdom have little or nothing to do with living happily ever after, with contentment with one’s lot or settling for social conformity. The Church’s memory of Jesus is of one who preached no cheap grace, but rather warned of the hatred, persecution and abuse they would encounter (Matt 10: 24–39). If this is the corporate memory of a persecuted community, then it also reflects the shared conviction that Christian discipleship is a process of constant struggle towards the *parousia* that speaks of

1 God's radical intervention in human affairs, rather than the ameliorative gradual-
2 ism of history, as the ultimate goal to which the faithful should aspire.

3 This idea is that happiness is to be found in a struggle within a world which is
4 governed by the dynamics of tragedy rather than comedy, of suffering in the face
5 of overwhelming moral complexity rather than the restoration of order and
6 stability. It is also present in the Aristotelian teleology in which a life virtuously
7 lived is constantly tested against notions of the good and excellent which involve
8 ends and values that transcend mere self-interest or subsistence. Yet 'being
9 good' is not necessarily synonymous with 'being happy': admittedly, the Aristo-
0 telian tradition, later taken up by natural law theory, teaches that virtue and
1 goodness are all about orientating ourselves towards that which will authentically
2 fulfil our true natures. Surely, then, we should be happy if we are becoming
3 truly ourselves; but Christian theology would also teach that if we live in a fallen
4 world in which the limitations and flaws of sin are an ever-present reality, then
5 we can never be complacent about simply following our own desires.

6 It also propels us towards some of the more communitarian traditions, repre-
7 sented by theologians such as Stanley Hauerwas, in which the emphasis is on
8 inhabiting the *habitus* of a community which tells the stories by which the good
9 life is to be guided: this again is about cultivating habits of discernment in the
0 context of particular practices of virtue (Hauerwas 1981). It is through *participa-*
1 *tion* in community that we learn to consider and evaluate the lives of others; in
2 communities of faith, there is the (perhaps unique) opportunity to connect with
3 the lives of those in other cultures (by virtue of the global nature of many faiths)
4 as well as across many generations and historical epochs. This constitutes a
5 unique brand of 'cultural capital'. We need communities as schools of virtue, as
6 the places that nurture us. This is not only characteristic of Hauerwas and other
7 forms of post-liberal Christian ethics, but is reminiscent of Alasdair Macintyre's
8 famous evocation of 'practice' as inherent to moral action (Macintyre 1985).
9 Practices and virtue are mutually reinforcing, in that seeking the good may only
0 be attained by participating in the specific practices that enable us to achieve
1 excellence or virtue in that very pursuit. If certain traditions or communities are
2 the bearers of standards of excellence or virtue, then cultivation of the goods
3 which they embody may only be reached by means of *participation*:
4

5 After all, if being trained in virtue is like learning the skills for practising a
6 craft, or for making and appreciating good music or art, or becoming aware
7 of how to eat healthily, then Christianity can provide teaching, practices and
8 disciplines, mentors and communities in which to be so trained.

9 (Harris 2006: 210)

0 This makes the link between this tradition of virtue and communitarian ethics,
1 since it is essentially arguing that people cannot be schooled in virtue in abstract.
2 These values have to be embodied and located, because essentially virtue, good-
3 ness and wellbeing are what might be called 'performative' values. It is therefore
4 the respect to which virtue ethics is not only about a *vision* of the good, but about
5

the *practice* – cultivating and embodying – of particular *ways of life* by which the good may be realized. In that respect, it does not need to be heavily prescriptive or abstract but quite concrete. It is about how practices shape our moral selves and build lives well lived, whether that is framed in terms of a *telos* or life goal. Yet it also suggests that this needs to be quite a reflective task, in which the twin elements of the vision of the good and the enactment of the life well lived need to be brought into active correlation. It suggests that virtue and cultivation of virtue also rest on the cultivation of what we might call ‘practical wisdom’ – as a form of theological reflection, or moral discernment.

Towards practical wisdom

‘Practical wisdom’, or practical reasoning, has tended to be regarded as inferior to more lofty forms of knowledge, which perhaps reflects a split in the Western intellectual tradition between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’. If the former is about generalizable, universalizable knowledge, which models an ideal type or representation of the world, then the latter is the field of action which may certainly be used to test out theories or hypotheses, or develop them, or find exceptions, or even disseminate knowledge; but it is rarely seen as the place which prompts research or generates theory. There is a sense that practice is the place of ‘application’ of theoretical constructs formulated elsewhere; it is secondary, inert. However, this division or configuration of ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ itself has a history (Gumbrecht 2004).

So there has been a return to Aristotle’s definitions in the *Nicomachean Ethics* in which he places *phronesis* (or practical wisdom) alongside *Sophia* (wisdom). If *Sophia* is the ability to speculate on universal truths, then *phronesis* is more strategic, as the form of knowledge geared towards achieving specific goods. But this is, for Aristotle, a reflective and deliberative skill, and not just simple technique. More recently, with the revival of ideas of practical wisdom, not least in the training of many professionals, this is strongly linked with notions of virtue and the good, insofar as practical wisdom is concerned with producing right action, ‘bringing about a good end for humans in general and for each unique individual’ (Lauder 1994: 93). As some voices in professional education have argued, such practical wisdom may not necessarily involve rule-based or Kantian behaviour, but a complex interrelation of thinking and doing – or even being – by which implicit values guide discernment in relation to specific contexts, networks or relationships. ‘The goal is not some pre-determined end but is instead a result of affirming oneself in spite of the events and circumstances which might prevent an individual achieving their potential or finding some meaning in life-health experience’ (Lauder 1994: 95).

As Harriet Harris argues, virtue theory always has to transform itself into practice, since it is concerned not with virtue in abstract but with particular virtues (Harris 2006: 212). Similarly, paralleling the literature on happiness and wellbeing, it is in the context of relationships, ways of life and institutions – in the corporate traditions we inhabit and help to form, reflexively, as they are shaping us – that the virtues are forged and demonstrated:

1 Virtuous living is learned by being practised. It is nurtured ... in the com-
2 munities and institutions that shape our lives, especially families, schools,
3 churches, and other religious institutions, colleges, places of work, com-
4 munity groups, and political and charitable organizations.

5 (Harris 2006: 210)

7 The concept of theology as 'practical wisdom' has achieved prominence in
3 recent years, especially in liberation (Gutierrez 1973) practical (Graham 1996)
) and systematic theology (Charry 1997). In their various ways, such sources
0 claim that theology has what Ellen Charry terms an 'aretegenic' function, as dis-
1 course aimed towards the formation of Christian character or identity. Know-
2 ledge of, or talk about, God is intended to cultivate virtue; but – echoing
3 Macintyre's model of moral reasoning – it is more than *scientia*, or dispassionate
4 knowledge, and is better characterized as *sapientia*, or the wisdom that comes
5 from relationship. In more postmodern versions of practical theology (Graham
6 1996), practice itself is the primary medium of truth, but this is not simply to
7 reduce the nature of God or God-talk to human action. Instead, it is to argue that
8 by fixing their attention on the goodness of God, Christians shape their perform-
9 ances and 'practise what they preach' as words are enacted in faithful action. It
0 is essentially a 'virtuous circle' from practice, to theology to practice. From the
1 practical, everyday dilemmas of faith comes the need to articulate guiding prin-
2 ciples, stories, images and values which can constitute the practical wisdom –
3 the grammar – of discipleship. In turn, practical activities of healing, nurturing,
4 sustaining and transforming are normatively shaped by the tradition. Amidst the
5 necessarily unsystematic character of human action and relationships, Christians
6 uphold the essentially *theological* nature of human practical wisdom, informing
7 faithful and transformative practice. The primary language of theology is articu-
8 lated in the practical wisdom of human care; only as a second stage does it find
9 expression in systematic doctrinal propositions. This is not to reduce all theol-
0 ogy-in/as-practice to human pastoral care, however. Without the horizon of
1 divine wisdom, such practice becomes self-referential or reducible to ethics. This
2 understanding of theology as practised, however, refuses such a division between
3 theory and practice, and insists that God is both immanent and transcendent:
4 apprehended in, but never reducible to, human experience.

5 This is not unfamiliar within public theology. Heinrich Bedford-Strohm
6 (2007) speaks of 'bilingualism', capable of giving an account of its own roots
7 and sources, but capable of addressing a wider audience too.³ Yet my point is
8 that such dialogue is not propositional but performative. This notion of the con-
9 tribution of theology is essentially a form of wisdom that is enacted and commu-
0 nicated in the life of its practitioners, yet is accessible to a wider public not by
1 virtue of its ability to understand the finer points of doctrine but by its ability to
2 'read' and witness the lived reality of that community: 'By their fruits shall ye
3 know them.' Such a performative theology, enacted in the practical wisdom of
4 the community, is weighty in terms of its value-ladenness, but tangible in the
5 public nature of its demonstration.

I have been asking to what extent should Christians be called to a self-contained life of virtue that rests exclusively on the narratives of faith and mores of the internal community, and to what extent can their inherited values overlap with those of other worldviews? Would we agree with ethicists such as Hauerwas that ‘Christian social insights cannot be shared with others except with those who participate in the faith from which they come’ (Atherton 2008: 7)? This is to some extent what underlies a principal fault-line in contemporary public theology today, namely between the communitarian or holiness traditions represented by thinkers such as Stanley Hauerwas or John Milbank, versus the liberal perspectives of Reinhold Niebuhr, Duncan Forrester or Charles Taylor. The reality is that people draw their concepts of the good life from a variety of sources, Christians being no exception; the point of contention is what aspects of such influences – Scripture, the corporate narrative of tradition, secular reason, experience – should prove ultimately binding. Understandings of happiness are lived out and formed in a variety of settings – and the complexity of modern life is such that any mature adult will inevitably encounter a plethora of such messages in the course of a single day, just by watching a television soap opera, passing advertising billboards, reading a bedtime story to their children, listening to politicians, let alone reading the sacred texts of their tradition (which are not in themselves monolithic in their visions). These are the raw materials out of which practical wisdom is negotiated; but ‘Christ’ and ‘culture’ are to be held in tension, and neither collapsed nor assimilated in the process.

William Cavanaugh provides a helpful metaphor for this when he returns to Augustine’s idea of the ‘city of God’ to examine how Christians are to manage the balance between religious faith and public reason, the tensions of discipleship and citizenship. He describes the two realms not as separate self-contained worlds, as almost virtual spaces, overlapping each other; but they are primarily performative spaces, in which different narratives (in our case of wellbeing and human fulfilment) are lived out:

Envisioning the two cities as performances helps us to avoid some serious problems with the way the church is imagined. The church as God sees it – the Body of Christ – is not a human institution with well-defined boundaries, clearly distinguishable from the secular body politic. The church is not a *polis*, but a set of practices or performances that participate in the history of salvation that God is unfolding on earth ... The church is not a separate enclave, but ... it joins with others to *perform* the city of God.

(Cavanaugh 2006: 318, emphasis added)

The Church is not preaching to the world or delivering generic moral principles; it is, primarily, demonstrating its distinctive ethic within the world, creating a shared space in which some views of the good life are mutually discovered and celebrated, but also able to create an alternative *oikumene*, or household or political economy, in which different models of human flourishing and unconditional regard – an economy of grace rather than reward – may also be practised. But

1 prompted by Cavanaugh's terminology of space, performance and boundaries, I
 2 am inclined to characterize public theology as a liminal discipline, which locates
 3 itself at the threshold, which encourages traffic from the sanctuary into the street,
 4 fostering the secular vocation of those who need to be articulate in the vernacu-
 5 lars of production, consumption and citizenship as well as the dramas of grace,
 6 redemption and sacrifice.

7 To conclude: the happiness literature stresses the importance of values and
 8 plentiful, rich social capital such as networks of friends, intimacy, meaningful
 9 and rewarding (in all sense of the word) pursuits. It is also pointing to evidence
 0 which suggests that religion and participation in organized religion is effective at
 1 fostering that kind of social capital. While I have been arguing, however, that
 2 Christianity may have some distinctive insights to offer in terms of a particular
 3 practical wisdom of human flourishing, this still needs to be accountable and
 4 accessible to a wider world. The Christian theological contribution is drawn to
 5 some kind of bilingualism, or mediation between the many sources and visions
 6 of happiness and goodness on offer. It is a balance of faith and reason, engage-
 7 ment in the world and immersion in tradition, but then, as Kathryn Tanner says,
 8 theology has always been dependent on 'borrowed materials' (Tanner 1997:
 9 61–92). A high theology of creation and incarnation requires that it is within this
 0 world, and in the vernacular of human affairs, that effective discipleship is
 1 undertaken. There is a tension, but no ultimate contradiction, between the imper-
 2 atives of 'citizenship' and 'discipleship'. In the words of the Sri Lankan theolo-
 3 gian Wesley Ariarajah, 'At the global level, there is an increasing recognition
 4 that the world's problems are not Christian problems requiring Christian
 5 answers, but human problems that must be addressed together by all human
 6 beings' (Ariarajah 1998: 327).

7 Similarly, it is a question of 'happiness' being both of this world and beyond
 8 this world, which is a perfectly theologically orthodox perspective, given the
 9 Christian dispensation which acknowledges both the promise of the Kingdom in
 0 the light of the resurrection and the gifts of the Spirit at the same time as knowing
 1 that such promises remain to be fully inaugurated this side of the eschaton. This
 2 reflects a perennial tradition of living at the threshold between sacred and secular;
 3 the 'now' land, the 'not yet' and between the Gospel of 'common grace' and *meta-*
 4 *noia*. This may permit us to conceive of overlap, if not convergence, of many
 5 worldviews and value commitments, in order that Christians can occupy the same
 6 space as others without compromising a theologically robust vision. If Christian
 7 faith and practice has anything to teach the world about happiness and the life well
 8 lived, such wealth and wisdom must be offered in the name of a common human-
 9 ity and a shared concern for its ultimate flourishing.

Notes

- 1 This chapter is a revised version of an article (Graham 2009a) which first appeared in a
 2 special edition of the *International Journal of Public Theology* entitled 'Faith, Welfare
 3 and Well-being: New Directions', edited by Francis Davis and Andrew Bradstock.
 4
 5



234 *E. Graham*

- 2 I would defend the term ‘faithful capital’ against its critics because of its ability to hold together in synthesis the dimensions of religious (as in practice-based outcomes) and spiritual (as in values or beliefs). ‘Faithful’ is performative, praxis-oriented, in terms of values enacted and embodied in their outworking, where the actions themselves point toward their point of transcendent origin.
- 3 Elsewhere, I have spoken of this process as one of ‘mediation’ (Graham 2009b: 146).

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
1
1
1
1
1
1
1
1
1
1
2
2
2
2
2
2
2
2
2
2
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
3
4
4
4
4
4
4

