



Our default instinct is to look at the issue of values in personal terms. "What is it for me to be good?" - that's a very reasonable question. But the reality is that we are nurtured in values by everything from the household or households in which we grow up, to our schools, friends, employment, social lives, churches, and a myriad of other communities of different sizes and cultures.

What they teach us explicitly and implicitly is likely to shape both us as individuals and also, to go the other way and shape the values of the country. The institutions shape us. Long, long ago, when I was working in the oil industry, when we were going out to an industry party we had a game - could you spot which company someone came from before they told you, simply by the way they spoke. And very often you could. People were shaped by the particular set of values of their company and you could often tell from how they'd unpack a problem in discussion. So the community and institutions are what give us resilience - the capacity to keep going on.

The passages I want to start with this evening are a day early, but demonstrate the formation of community, with the declaration and practise of values and virtues in a way that still shapes us today. These are two things Jesus did, which together set a foundation for human flourishing.

From Matthew 26:26-29:

26 While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."
27 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; 28 for this is my blood of the[a] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

And then another passage from John 13:12-14:

12 After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?
13 You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. 14 So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

These are two of the formative passages of Christian life. One could read them forever and still not begin to penetrate the extraordinary riches they hold. They turn our world the right way up.

The first creates the worshipping foundation for a community that lives by gift, grace and sacrifice. The values have been learned incarnationally by travelling with Jesus. The practices are embedded through celebrating the nature of true goodness, found in Jesus Christ. In the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, Holy Communion. Community here is centred on the life and death of Jesus. This action sets a beginning to something that shaped the western world. Dom Gregroy Dix says this about the Eucharist:

"It is because it became embedded deep down in the life of the Christian peoples, colouring all the via vitae of the ordinary man and woman, marking its personal turning-points, marriage, sickness, death and the rest, running through it year by year with the feasts and fasts and the rhythm of the Sundays, that the eucharistic action became inextricably woven into the public history of the Western world."

Practice becomes value, and value becomes public history. One could almost say that the Eucharist reimagines Western values. The Eucharist shapes us, and shapes us as the church to be an offering in the world, for the world, with the world. It is this, in our Eucharistic offering, that is amongst the central features that call the church to speak of values and practices with assurance.

But of course, Jesus does something else, which is to wash feet. There are books written in reflection on this passage alone. Just over a year ago, below us in our Lady Undercroft, we had an extraordinary service. It was a Eucharist at the end of the Anglican Primates' meeting. We'd survived the week through the miracle of prayer. And down in OLU where the altar is we had the Augustine Gospels - that I have kissed and every predecessor has kissed. And on the other side, in the corner, the actual crozier that Pope Gregory the Great had when he sent Augustine. Quite apart from the power and beauty of these symbols, they hadn't been in the same room since 597!

And when we got the crozier out, it was so beautiful. But those two objects were not the things that caught us. In the middle, sitting between them was Jean Vanier. His great lesson has been that where those with disabilities meet those who think themselves strong, the strong find themselves taught by the weak. That morning, without warning anyone, he said, "So now we're going to wash one another's feet." It was one of the greatest moments you can imagine.

It must be taken with the others concerning the Eucharist, because it says not only that the church is to be God's community, but what it's calling should be, which is to serve, to be humble, not to lecture or to judge, but in loving service to accept the lowly position we have. In that we must be determined. I shall speak in this lecture of other intermediate groups, but I do not want us to forget that in Eucharist and foot-washing, God in Christ sets the pattern for the church to be the transformative intermediate institution, the one that has the deepest call, the greatest

commission, because it is at once created as a bulwark against evil, and a servant to the fallen world.

A friend put it better when he wrote to me in January, after we had been on a visit with 60 clergy to Auschwitz/Birkenau. He was mulling over the statement of Burke that “for evil to triumph all that is necessary is for good men to do nothing”. He had looked it up and found that before the soundbite which many of us know, what Burke was saying was that the evil-intentioned combine well, and all we need for evil to triumph is for those of good will to do nothing: not to combine, not to get together, not to be institutions, communities - not to resist in any way. He ended by commenting:

“Popular images of desultory social forces today focus on unpleasant soundbites, demeaning remarks, outrageous tweets, intolerant attitudes. But the Holocaust was about exhaustive planning, painstaking detail, astonishing organization. There was nothing reckless, narcissistic, or cavalier about it. Edmund Burke’s words could be sent to anyone who thinks you can be a Christian without the church, a right-thinker without political association, a Christmas-letter-lamenter without sustained combination and coalition-building with friend and stranger. For the triumph over evil, it is necessary that the good never underestimate the energy of their enemies, and prevail not by the rightness of their cause but by the faithfulness of their implementation and the relentlessness of their detailed planning.”

I quote the letter because the argument of this talk this evening is that for the common good, for solidarity, for cohesion, courage and continuity - my three groups of values - in a re-imagined Britain, we need a Common Effort, Courageous coalition, Cohesive and generous working, patience, endurance and continuity amongst the actors who are crucial to the future of our country.

There are powerful foundations for hope in our historic Christian culture, but they rely on builders to build on them, and the culture of dependency that is so often part of human nature is the principle barrier to building on the foundations that we have in our heritage. It cannot be done for us. It must be done with and by us - and 'us' is almost everyone.

The common good, for example, is not something legislated or mandated by parliament, but is the sum of innumerable small and large actions by every participant in society. It requires every part of Government at every level, businesses, other intermediate institutions and individuals. It assumes a certain amount of abuse and free-riding, because within the concepts of the common good, and cohesion generally is the understanding that human beings are by nature prone to failure, illegality, selfishness and what the bible calls sin: the centring of the world on oneself, rather than God, or others.

The nature of each human being, and most of all human beings en masse - for example in anything from a company to a whole nation, let alone the world - is that the sense of responsibility diminishes in proportion to the size of the group. A clear example of this is the extreme situation of military personnel in combat. It is a well-known truism that in battle they fight for those around them - not, primarily, in the heat of the moment, for Queen and Country, or even the honour of the regiment, or such other examples as come out. In conditions of stress those closest to us are what matters most.

To the extent that this is true, it sets a pattern of conflict within society which is one that we observe today as we become more and more individualistic, but that leads inexorably to disaster. Most people will struggle for their own advantage. Many will give everything for the advantage of their household. Patronage networks, tribes, social groups or local communities exert a powerful hold. Political parties are a tool of power. Companies engage loyalties to some extent, but they grow the sense of responsibility diminishes. To use a phrase, in the market state in which we live in the UK there is a fear (I think unjustified - but always a danger) that the loyalty of people is limited by the extent to which they think that they will have some advantage from loyalty.

To quote another passage from Hobbes in the 17th century, he wrote in Leviathan, "...in the first place, I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death." He lived through the period of the English Civil War and the Commonwealth (1649-1660), and saw clearly the natural impetus to power, and the fear of anarchy.

Reinhold Niebuhr looked at the conditions for virtue in a society, analysing the possibilities of a just society, and concluded that the heart of the issue is power struggle. The historical circumstances of his time, with the rise of Hitler in Germany, and the newly founded Soviet Union seeming to be the only countervailing force, mean that such a view was not surprising in his context. Marx's own theories have as a foundational principle that power is only surrendered to greater power. Human selfishness means that elites resist the loss of influence and position, and thus the loss of wealth and security.

The answer to this conundrum is to have a strong element of society which is between the state and the individual, where the practises and values that we admire are developed and strengthened in settings where accountability is strong, so that they may become part of the natural functioning of the whole of society where accountability is less strong. And these groups of people are intermediate institutions.

The threat of society being dominated by power struggles between different groups, and the need for an antidote, remain the case as much in the 21st century as in the 1930s. It is easy to make the case that power groups are what control our lives - and to some extent it's underpinned

the case made by those advocating Brexit, by the so-called populist movements across Europe, and by President Trump during his campaign in 2015-2016. Expressions such as 'drain the swamp' - referring to the lobbyist dominated political culture of Washington DC - and similar attacks on lobbying in Brussels and other EU centres, play on a suspicion that the system was rigged. Power and wealth and security could only be acquired by underhand means, by being in the loop and at the centre. There was no sense of justice, fairness and equal opportunity. And thus the Brexit campaign focussed, apart from immigration, on returning power to the UK. Of course it's an illusion - to a large degree. The moment you think you've hit on the inner circle you discover there's an even more inner-circle that you didn't know about.

Manifest and noticeable inequality of treatment feeds these suspicions of an unfair system. And there are manifest inequalities. Take an example, in 2008, at the height of the banking crisis, when the then Chancellor of the Exchequer found himself compelled to commit approximately £250 billion to support the banking industry. Many of us will remember that awkward October weekend. Even those banks which needed rescue with tax payers' money seemed to be able to continue to pay large salaries and bonuses, and to argue strongly against the tighter regulation that followed the crisis. In if we go forward nine years to this year, the inauguration of President Trump, the new administration (heavily staffed from Wall Street at the most senior level) began to roll back much of the regulatory system that was put in place after 2008. In the EU there has been a similar process.

By contrast, in the north east of England, in Greece, in Portugal, in Liverpool, in the rust belt states of the USA, and in many other places it was obvious that a fraction - a fraction - of the same commitment of funds would have saved whole economies, or, for example, major employers such as steel, coal and heavy manufacturing. They too employed hundreds of thousands of people, but those people had less voice and influence.

It feels unfair - it is unfair - and that sense of unfairness, of free riders being not just a small proportion of the system, but being at the heart of the system, indeed sometimes seeming to control it, leads to the breakdown of ideas of cohesion, courage and continuity.

The actors in society today are complex, and the British habit has been not to simplify a complex system with elementary principles but to seek to make it work in practice, even if in theory - like our constitution - it is incomprehensible. Try explaining to a foreigner how we choose Archbishops of Canterbury.

Intermediate institutions, including business, are the actors essential to a society's capacity to reimagine itself. In the small and local the skills of the practise of values are learned more easily and rooted more deeply. The church in the parish, the school in the community, the Housing

Association tenants' group, the residents' association, are all actors reimagining our values. William Temple called for a reinforcement of intermediate institutions, and the need remains more than 75 years later. They require a benevolent ecosystem of regulation and encouragement - not the oppression of suspicion and difficulty.

The key issue in reimagining is not top down or even bottom up or middle out, but a solid understanding of the demands of being part of society, and a rejection of attitudes of exchange and equivalence, of zero sum games, of 'if you gain, I lose,' while accepting the vision of mutual flourishing being possible in an atmosphere of abundance and grace. That kind of atmosphere is not developed by over-heavy control but by genuine subsidiarity, incitements to aspiration, encouragement to develop resilience and sustainability. It is developed in intermediate institutions.

Perhaps the greatest example of failure to nurture subsidiarity in intermediate institutions has been in the approach to local government during this age of austerity. I was rung up not long ago by the Mayor of Liverpool - the poorest city in the country. Since 2010 cities like Liverpool have seen a 50% or more cut in revenue, without a concomitant shift in the obligations they are meant to meet. The crisis in local government funding in the UK is essentially one of philosophy and values. When you run local government as a department of state, not locally elected and accountable bodies, and the reason for such treatment is that the vast majority of their funding comes from the centre. Their constraints deny the common good and cohesion, make aspiration second to mere survival and destroy resilience and sustainability in local communities.

Reimagination is not a central government or voluntary sector or church thing, but an essential for all the actors in our national life. It begins with reimagining the relationships between the actors on the stage of Britain. And yet, the church has a divine mandate to be an example of service and sacrifice, to liberate virtuous reimagining.

Intermediate institutions create social capital by being with their communities, at every level and in every place. The reality of being 'with' is shown in what they experience and in the responsibility they feel.

Historically, companies and businesses did not count as intermediate institutions. They were seen as something else, the corporate sector. But Pope St John Paul II commented: "A business cannot be considered only as a "society of capital goods"; it is also a "society of persons" in which people participate in different ways and with specific responsibilities, whether they supply the necessary capital for the company's activities or take part in such activities through their labour."

Companies and businesses amongst the actors on our stage not only have societal responsibilities; but the last thirty years have shown that it is

in such bodies of all sizes that much development happens. They are places of learning about relationships, about creativity and courage, about sustainability and cohesion in a changing and diverse world.

Taking seriously intermediate institutions requires thought and planning in order to encourage them. Much has been accomplished. Schools, clinics, hospitals, charities, churches and clubs are often the glue that hold local communities together. Yet much more is needed, for they are frequently staffed by volunteers, and are far less robust than they may appear. Above all, their nurture requires space in which regulation is minimised to the essentials (for example such things as child protection) and weight of administration is kept manageable. Anyone who has tried to maintain charitable accounts knows the irritation of the annual changing of statements of practice and increased demands on the people who are trying to do it.

The actors in the drama of our country, those whose practices set our values, have grown in number and diversity since the last major reimagining of our future after 1945. In addition to government at all levels, the churches and the private sector of companies, there is now a large civil society component, great institutions like the NHS and a diverse multiplicity of faith groups, such as we've never seen before in our history. They are no longer held together by a single story (however true or false) of what it means to be British or by a widely held set of values; these varied actors have to seek ways of interacting powerfully and effectively. And there needs to be that recreation of a common value, a common narrative.

Even going through values which have held and guided this country at our best, we can see that they call for nerve. Bumbling along is safe. Reimagination is risky. The common good takes the risk of self-giving, aspiration and creativity always involve failure. Subsidiarity will mean some people will go badly wrong. Resilience can slip into obstinacy; reconciliation open us to being taken advantage of.

But the challenges are far more complicated than even the diversity and complexity of 21st century society. The issues which confront us after thirty years or more of globalisation have become more numerous and less susceptible to response. Nothing can be done by one country, not by one actor, not the church or even government. It is in the kind of efficient collaboration that Sam Wells was describing that we can be effective in reimagining Britain. The church must be as ready to be in partnership as anyone else.

The limits of the applications of our values are at the heart of the debate on immigration, foreign interventions, the use of hard power, the extent of the deployment of soft power whether it be the BBC, international aid finance, or even the operations of the Anglican Communion, and much more besides.

The question being asked about all of these things, about how they're used, are often put in economic and interest terms. Palmerston in the mid-19th Century famously said that Britain has no eternal allies, only eternal interests. But to put the question in this way is wrong. The question that challenges what I have called the deep values, or the deep magic, that will make this country flourish or flounder are the questions about where 'us' stops and 'they' begins. Where do we draw the line between us and them?

The questions of identity become more and more difficult at the individual but also at the national level. Identity is at the root of so much that divides us, but the accession to common values needs to be at the centre of what unites us. Jo Cox's famous words - "There is much more that unites us than divides us." The issues that confront us cross identities, require alliances, demand friendships and do so across cultural and value boundaries, which can lead us into confusion unless we know who we are.

Issues Temple and his friends never faced, nor for that matter Wilberforce and the 19th century reformers, include the current scale of global immigration and integration with more than 60 million displaced persons. We have an incoherence of foreign policy where every crisis is known on social media but the solutions are as difficult as ever; an economy entirely dominated by financial services that have lost touch with serving; radical changes in the nature and understanding of human identity, especially in the family or household, and climate change. These are not new issues, but they are new in how they confront us, and they are not well dealt with by old ways of looking at our values, or old ways of setting the boundaries between us and them. Climate change does not respect the colour or shape of your passport.

The family or household is a good example. Cohabitation today is normal, same-sex marriage a matter of accepted law in the majority of the country, and challenges to the very basis of the family or household as the base community of society; such challenges are numerous. And remember that the household is the intermediary institution par excellence. Reimagination of values must not mean abandoning all ideas of what we have been, but it must deal with the world as it is, not with self-deceit about reality.

The limits of us and them are very evident in questions of international aid, and even more so around immigration and integration. And perhaps the biggest challenge is that of climate change, where we are asked to reimagine duty to neighbour not only in global terms today, but in terms of time as well. I am going to conclude by looking at climate change as an example, because it illustrates the challenging of reimagining Britain, of the interaction of values and practises, and most of all the limits of identity-based decision making on ethics.

Burke's dictum that we have a contract with those yet to be born is especially relevant when we come to climate change. We have historic values established by long standing practices of sustainability in our politics, economy and culture - values which have given us great resilience to huge

change, and have enabled this country to enjoy the rare blessings of long term stability. Remember, we are one of the very few countries in Europe that has had no major internal conflict in around 300 years. Resilience is an essential basic value for Britain in the future, facing a world of rapid change in which a capacity to adapt without losing identity will be at the heart of national flourishing. Yet our identity is becoming more elusive as time passes.

The questions around the future cost of climate change are essentially unquantifiable. Everyone tries to calculate it, but a materialistic approach to measuring them will come up with a guess of a future value or cost combined with a discount rate that is mere estimation to arrive at a figure for today that is as likely to be accurate as it is to be next week's lottery numbers. But it doesn't mean climate change isn't going to happen, or isn't a great danger. It just means that we don't really know what it's going to look like.

The natural brakes of the past came from a common adherence, in the UK at least, to the form and values, if not the reality, lived and exhibited, of Christian faith. Yet even the form, without the reality of the living encounter with Jesus Christ, gave sufficient weight to ideas of solidarity, the common good and the universal destination of goods for those ideas to become embedded within European political culture, and in the end to be foundational in the formation of what was to become the European Union, as well as in the drive for liberation of eastern Europe from the grip of Communism. All that happened with Christian ideas deeply rooted, even if not consciously believed.

At the same time moral virtues of creativity in commerce and industry grew more powerful within Europe in the 19th century, finding many of their routes in Protestantism on both sides of the Atlantic. For much of the post World War II era these two groups of values, the ones that stick us together and the ones that drive growth and entrepreneurial activity, have been values that seemed to clash. When I worked in France, the French spoke dismissively of the Anglo-Saxon model of the economy. Germany holds up a combination of Christian or Social Democracy, against the perceived red-in-tooth-and-claw capitalism of the USA imitated slightly palely by the UK.

All of it is to a large degree polemical exaggeration and stereotyping. In all its variants economic growth has been the dominant expression of successful government, and the aim of full employment and a more or less capitalist approach to international flows of trade and capital has been a more or less implicit objective of policy. The emphasis on regional or national economic success has gained more traction in the last two are three years with the breakdown of the World Trade Organisation's Doha trade negotiation round, the rapid growth first in Japan and then in the last thirty years in China and India, and the obvious need for economic development in parts of the world missed out until recently, although

they're growing rapidly now, especially sub Saharan Africa.

Given problems with world trade, and the resistance and uncertainty around issues of climate change, the success of the Paris climate talks was astonishing. The agreement reached at Paris, achieved in December 2015, came into effect on 5th October 2016, only ten months later, when 132 countries had ratified - astonishing. But within five weeks the election of President Trump cast doubt on the continuation of the process, given that his campaign had included much doubt about the reality of human generated global warming, and set as a higher priority the protection of American jobs in the coal industry and the development of American continental sources of oil and gas. In other words, the limits of us and them changed - very subtly.

The most difficult issue in climate change is the question of the limit of solidarity. Because it is solidarity not just about us and them now - but it's also a question about the limits in time. What responsibility do we have for our great grandchildren? Do they matter? We don't even know that they'll exist?

We know that the arguments over climate change are profoundly complicated by time and consequent uncertainty, as well as geographical distance. Some people argue that the levels of uncertainty make drastic action now wrong, in that it damages those we can see relative to the uncertain benefit of those who are yet to be born, whose very existence is not yet assured. Lord Stern, by contrast, not only presents a 'green economy' as a huge economic opportunity to create wealth now (on the assumption that the world buys into the necessity of a green economy now), but also argues forcefully for the need to protect future generations from our actions now and in the past.

Resilience and sustainability are values that are implicit in our national history, albeit not in environmental terms. They combine with solidarity and the common good to make a powerful political and moral argument for the demands of climate change mitigation to be built into all our practices and values. Resilience and sustainability redraw the answer to 'who is my neighbour' in terms of time, demanding that our neighbour includes those who will need our help given now for their lives in the future to be assuredly enduring.

The intrinsic worth of human beings in moral terms is not affected by discount values. A life in a century is worth exactly what a life is worth today.

Combine that extension of the time range of the common good and solidarity with the uncertainty of exactly what is happening or will happen in climate change (albeit something is certainly happening) and the infinite value of each human being alive today or in the future, and the requirements of values of resilience and sustainability, even at cost today, become clear. We need cohesion with those in the future as well as those in the present. We need courage to face uncertainty, and we need consistency to maintain our policies over time.

All these values are part of who we are at our best.

All are found in the extraordinary community called the church, founded on sacrifice and humble service, on Eucharist and foot-washing that has endured change in every form and yet remains resilient, relatively united in the context of the thousands of languages and cultures it covers, and courageous in the face of intellectual challenge, persecution and endless forecasts of its death.

For those who put their trust in Christ, we know always the overwhelming grace of God.

23 min read

Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/archbishops-3rd-holy-week-lecture-building-resilience>