



In his Church of Ireland Theological Lecture last night, the Archbishop said that to realise the vision of a world in which violence justified on the grounds of religion is eliminated, we need to build a new “narrative of beauty” based on love, hospitality and human flourishing.

***Read a transcript of Archbishop Justin's lecture:***

It's a great privilege to be asked to be here. I feel very grateful to have been invited, but also to come to such a place as Queen's, with its extraordinarily distinguished history, and to Northern Ireland and particularly the reality of its own struggles and developments with which it is teaching the world in many places about peacemaking and reconciliation. I have much more to learn than to say.

I'm not going to talk about Northern Ireland and reconciliation. And the reason for that is very simple: that there is a long history of people from elsewhere, outside Northern Ireland, coming and telling you how to do it – and actually you are, quite rightly, telling the world a great deal about what you've learned over many years, and it would simply be arrogant. And so I want to reflect on the nature of religiously-justified violence, and as a case study, on the nature, particularly, of the conflict we are facing with Daesh, or ISIS.

The Paris attacks of last year, the atrocities in Istanbul, in Burkina Faso and many other places, and the horrors of Daesh in the areas that they control, more recently in Northern Libya, have made it clear that we have moved into a new era. For the first time in centuries, we have been facing major and global conflicts which have a very clear religious content.

For many years we've faced conflicts which have religious content locally, but not this same sense of global conflict. And, however evil it may be - and it is profoundly evil - we are facing such conflict in many parts of the world.

Over the last three years, with my wife, we've traveled to all 38 provinces of the Anglican Communion, and we've come across Islamic violence, Christian violence, Hindu violence, Buddhist violence. So both the Abrahamic and the Dharmic religions are deeply involved in a growth of radicalisation.

In Parliament at the beginning of December, the House of Commons voted to extend military operations in the Levant and Mesopotamia into Syria, in addition to the air campaign that was already going on in Iraq. And I spoke in the House of Lords at the same time on that debate and supported the extension.

But I've since been reflecting on that and thinking hard about it with my colleagues, and what I want to say this evening is a continuation in that debate that's going on within myself and within the Church about the legitimacy of armed action and intervention. What I would say is that where an action is developed as a quasi-policing intervention against a group that is committing great crimes under international law, and where the objective is peace building and the resumption of stable communities to which refugees and IDPs can return, then, within the Christian tradition, I would suggest that it is justifiable.

As the UK Government has said repeatedly, however – most recently last week at the Syria Humanitarian Conference in London – bombing cannot by itself resolve this conflict in the Levant, or any conflict. Armed action is only a small part of any struggle, and it is a deeply tragic, albeit the most dramatic, part at that. If warfare and armed action are the sole, or even the primary, tools we use then what we are doing will become utterly wrong, and we will fail. We are in a struggle at the moment globally - we, the global community - in which we must engage in the right way, or we will ourselves sow the seeds of future conflict. In a struggle which is deeply ideological and theological, the response that we give must be based in a narrative of relationship, of protection, of order and of human flourishing that overwhelms the demonic narrative of disintegration and monolithic demonisation of the other, which is what faces us.

The Christian answer is very simple. Let me quote Sam Wells, Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields, in his excellent book *A Nazareth Manifesto*. He says this: “Reconciliation *is* the gospel. There is no gospel other than the one that requires and makes possible restored relationships with God, with one another, and the creation. God has no ambitions and seeks no final goal beyond restored relationship. That relationship is the telos of creation.”

To be Christian, we must include; we must be reconciled. Where our present condition leaves us today is with a war rumbling on, humanitarian crises multiplying, and an unbreakable link between what is happening internationally and domestically, which means that domestic policies on dealing with radicalisation will constantly be disrupted by overseas events.

I was speaking to someone recently involved in counter-radicalisation measures, and they said very firmly: “I can’t deal with international: it’s only the national that matters.” And I said: “That’s about as sensible as pushing the floodwater out of your kitchen without raising the barriers of the river. It won’t work.”

The crisis we are facing – as church, as nation, as international community – is global, is generational, and it is theological. And we have not faced that for many years.

Much of the debate has been about the nature of just war, especially within the Church and also in Parliament. As far as I see, in the action in the Middle East, the historical tests of a just war have been met. But although they are necessary they are not sufficient, especially in this case.

As we all know, they consist of saying a number of things: the war must be for a just cause; it must be declared by a lawful authority; the intention behind the war must be good; all other ways of resolving the problem should have been tried first; and there must be a reasonable chance of success.

There has been much discussion of especially the last – that there must be a reasonable chance of success – and it is essential to remember that they are not precise. For example, most historians would say there is a very strong argument to put that after Dunkirk there was no reasonable

chance of success for the United Kingdom. Or indeed, after Austerlitz in 1805. But few people would argue that the Second World War was an unjust war after Dunkirk. The nature of war is deep uncertainty.

But that does not mean that just war theory is sufficient: it is insufficient. And the insufficiency arises from the change in international relations.

The difference between the eras of Augustine and Aquinas, when the main initial thinking in the Christian tradition was done (incidentally at the very same time Islamic thinking was developing very similar ideas of just war); the difference lies principally in the development of international humanitarian law since 1945. Such a body of law adds a new element – the prevention of crimes against humanity – to the classic tests of when it may be right to go to war. It was the underlying justification for intervention in Sierra Leone and Kosovo. Tony Blair, in his famous Chicago speech in April 1999, set out the case for liberal interventionism on this basis.

Just War theory is essential to decision-making. But in the 21st century, and in Christian terms, it must include many other goals – including human flourishing.

It's worth saying in addition, as a further general point, that we – that is, the miscellany of those involved in the fighting – are not struggling with a state (which is nowadays an entity not merely holding territory, but which also has legitimate and widespread international recognition). We are struggling with a terrorist force of extreme evil. I have to meet - and some of you will have met - those who are compelled by their jobs to look at some of the ISIS videos, and it scars them most profoundly. The cruelty is calculated, imaginative, endless and beyond human description.

We are fighting with a group that has taken an area, several areas around the world. A parallel is with the police action in Paris at the Bataclan theatre. That same group has occupied not just a theatre, but parts of three states, within which it is exercising terror and war crimes. And that is why I refer to a quasi-police action. This is not a normal war.

As a final, general point, the underlying issue about which I wish to speak is religiously justified violence. (I am very careful not to say 'religious violence', but the use of religion to justify violence.) Our **political** vision of what reconciliation in this struggle would look like must include the idea of a world in which religiously justified violence is eliminated. That must be a dream; it must be a hope and an expectation. It was almost true a few years back, and it is being reversed around the world in many places. We are falling backwards.

The reasons for our fall are many: economic, sociological, political, cultural, environmental and demographic, with a little religion in the midst.

Religion is most often not the principal cause of a conflict. But if you say to a group of young men, "You are ethnically disadvantaged by 19th-century struggles, further set back and marginalised through the colonial period, economically and educationally discriminated against because of the education system, economically part of a globalising, commercial process..." – you've lost them, as much as I've lost you, halfway through

that sentence. If you say, "You're this faith and therefore you're good and they're that faith and therefore they're bad," it's pretty straightforward.

And if you use the hook of religion for long enough, as a pretext, sooner or later it begins to become the reality. This is what we're seeing.

We must overcome this upsurge in religiously justified violence, which by its nature, in *all* of the great world faith traditions, perverts and abandons its original host by exempting itself from ethical principles, and caring nothing for human life.

Theologically, we need to start by accepting first that we live out what we are facing in the world, in every area of our lives, as fallen human beings in a fallen world. As Christians, I believe profoundly we must recapture and rename the theology of the Fall. The effect of the Fall is that we are consumed by fear of the other, and we cannot name things well. In Genesis chapter 1, Adam and Eve, before the Fall, name everything. And they are not afraid of each other. By the time they fall, they are incapable of seeing each other transparently.

We need, therefore, to name and develop truth, as part of the theological narrative of reconciliation, not merely to condemn violence. I'm often asked, if there's some terrible event, to say something in 140 characters on Twitter or a couple of sentences on Facebook that adequately and completely describes a bomb explosion that has killed 200 people. It's absurd. How do we name truth? Condemning violence by itself is not good enough; there must be something positive that we can say.

Truth is seen in practise, it's seen at community level. In England we have something called the [Near Neighbours](#) programme – funded largely by government, led largely by the Church of England – in which different faith communities are brought together to encounter and work together for the benefit of their local community. You will be doing very similar things in different contexts here.

In those actions we create community. We integrate people when the demonic nature of Daesh and other groups is seen in the disintegration they seek. As was said recently: "Friendship is a counter-terrorism strategy."

We need to be honest and name truly history and global relationships – naming things well, identifying past failures. In the work that I've done overseas, travelling in many parts of the world with Muslim majorities, it's often pointed out to me that only one Muslim country was not colonised by the Western powers in the 19th century: Saudi Arabia. By 1920, the world's principal ruler of Muslims was King George V.

We see, and it is often mentioned to me with savage and bitter anger, the characterisation of the Prophet, the media perception of the Muslim community.

We see, economically, a global trade system that was set up so it is impossible to engage in it without using interest, or usury. Since World War Two, American culture and products are pervasive and dominant. People like them. Postmodernity has become the global philosophy, with its abandonment of the concepts of absolute truth.

The environmental crisis affects many countries and is out of their control. Polynesia, Bangladesh, and throughout Africa. And socially, we seek – even through aid budgets – to impose rights. Rights for women, for LGBTI people, are good rights to uphold. At the recent Primates meeting of the Anglican Communion, we condemned criminalisation of gay people, and quite rightly. But it is also, as it is put to us quite often around the world, experienced as an imposition. Human rights, in the language in which it is often couched, may be good, but are presented in and on Western terms.

The effect of these and many other aspects of global relationships is for those who are the objects of them – whether they are good or bad and many of them are good – the effect is humiliation; and that leaves the invisible wounds which reconciliation is called to bind, and the invisible needs that reconciliation is called to meet.

Humiliation and disrespect are the most corrosive things we can experience. They last for centuries, as you know very well, in groups, and lead to feelings of unfairness that are transmitted from generation to generation. Foreign affairs becomes viewed through the prism of humiliation – as does identity. Minority and identity and humiliation lead to special vulnerabilities.

One third of all Muslims in the world live as minorities in non-Muslim countries, so domestic policy is viewed through the prism of threat and humiliation. I was rung late at night by a Muslim friend a couple of weeks ago who started - unusually, because he is so courteous and polite - just with the words: “You know, not *every* Muslim school is trying to turn out terrorists!” He interpreted counter-extremism policy as about saying that his school was trying to turn out terrorists.

As is classically true with humiliation, even when not intended, as is largely the case today, young people don’t always feel that their leaders represent them. They need role models, not manifestos. They need to touch those role models, as Jonathan Sacks says, “viscerally and virally”.

Jesus addressed such fears and showed the triumph of the love of God in the parable of the Good Samaritan. In the Good Samaritan, the lawyer interrogating Jesus is seeking personal justification. In our western society we seek justification for the consumption of resources, for the luxury of stability, for the military capacity that has guarded us since 1945. We justify ourselves by talking of our relative purity, our absence from corruption, our attention to human rights, and our creed that there are no absolutes except the statement that there are no absolutes.

The response of Jesus to people seeking justification, to this lawyer – who probably was himself a good man by most objective standards – is to point to the goal of breaking barriers through love that defies enmity; and in so doing offering a way of justification through accepting the unconditional grace of God. In the parable, Jesus *is* the Good Samaritan, who breaks the barriers that divide us.

We will be transformed Christians, and transforming Christians, when fear of the other is most overcome. The Good Samaritan overcomes humiliation with unconditional love. Think how the wounded man on that road felt when he knew that he’d been rescued by, of all things, a

Samaritan. What a scandal and a disgrace.

When I came to faith in Christ just over 40 years ago, I prayed a prayer of commitment to Christ late one night in someone else's room at university, and he said, "What do you want to do now?" And I said, very quickly: "Tell no one. It's too embarrassing."

I walked out of the room and walked round the corner and bumped into a friend of mine in the Rowing Eight, and he said, "How are you?" And I said: "Oh, fine." He looked at me and he said: "Have you just become a Christian?" I said, "What? How do you know?" He said, "I don't know." Well that was the end of that one.

If, in the UK, we are going to show that unconditional love, it leads us to the most basic things. To prayer for one another. I was very struck talking with someone earlier this evening about a hundred days of prayer for a hundred years of history. Praying for Northern Ireland in the run up to the 1916 anniversaries – that's a wonderful thing to do. Praying for neighbours, praying for each other. It calls for commitments of love across faiths, to common action and shared griefs, especially grief at radicalisation.

I've seen the horror that it causes to Muslim contacts of ours, and friends, when something happens that shows them that someone else has been radicalised. It is as bad as any bereavement, as costly – and if you cannot weep with them, you clearly don't care.

It is so much more effective to weep with someone than to judge and condemn. And to do that it will be costly because we are in a fallen world and we are fallen people. The Good Samaritan pays and takes risks. The risen Christ appeared to his disciples with the scars of his suffering. To be sent as reconcilers in peace is to anticipate receiving the stigmata.

Secondly, in addition to these questions of identity, we must reassert solidarity theologically, which has been vastly expanded in its potential scope by the development of information networks, and deeply undermined through our response to the refugee crisis in the short term, and through social media in the long term.

The refugee crisis and social media bring presence without relationships. We see all and know no-one. Through the smartphone in my hand I can go anywhere in the world. I can see stories that I would never have dreamed of and that my grandfather, or my father, would never have imagined he could ever find out about - and if he did, they would have been sterilised through weeks for the news to travel and through it being in print without photographs. But now it's here, in my hand, and yet I don't know the person, I have no relationships, and it is rare that I weep. And so when we have all of this coming at us out of a screen, or through the news, of refugees, as we see across Europe today, threatened we retreat, rather than finding the sign of the Spirit of God at work, as with Peter and Cornelius in Acts 10.

Solidarity is lived out in the essential human dignity of every individual in creation and in salvation, and its demands increase in inverse

proportion to the weakness of the person with whom we show solidarity.

At an international level it pushes the church towards supporting the 0.7% of GNI aid target. And praise God, because I don't often say nice things about politicians, that we have reached that and held it against all temptation, in the United Kingdom.

In domestic policy, solidarity led Temple, Tawney and Beveridge to an effective benefits and welfare system. It led Bevan to form the NHS; it led Butler to his work in education. And since Locke and Hume, it has led to the maintenance of law and order at the public expense.

It is, of course, most wonderfully expressed by John Donne: if no one is an island, and we grieve for all for whom the bell tolls, then grief must lead to response. Solidarity is a theological concept springing out of Catholic social teaching that we must not lose sight of. We must recapture it into the daily discourse of our society.

But thirdly – to limit the random expression of solidarity when applied even to impossible situations – is my third theological principle: that of wisdom. Wisdom, as a call to live out properly the call of God, tells us that we cannot be everywhere doing everything. Intervention that tries to stop all injustice will inevitably fail everywhere through overstretch (and, by the way, is terrible theological anthropology, because it assumes our perfect knowledge and denies our fallenness, the first principle). Wisdom also takes into account human sinfulness by recognising that not all situations are resolvable, and that human evil is pervasive and powerful.

Wisdom tackles the lost nuances of theology, a curse of our age in many faith traditions, and enables us to engage theologically with the other across faiths, without hatred and without syncretism.

The loss of nuance in theology is seen in the idolatry of violence. It is found in a vain search for perfect purity; it is theocratic, it is often apocalyptic, and it is no coincidence that the search for a perfectly pure state for theocracy, and the use of the apocalypse as the guiding theological principle, is central to the thinking of Daesh. Recent research has shown that above all they expect this to be the last period of human existence - that God will return and sweep their enemies before them when they are on the point of extinction.

The loss of theological nuance leads to conflict which changes and perverts religion. We become dualistic. Jonathan Sacks, again, commented that modern fundamentalism is a theologically illiterate variant of dualism. And perversely, it is doctrinally weak religion, uprooted from context, full of religious ignorance, and not sustained by an inter-generational process of transmission that is most violence prone.

It is perfectly normal for those going to Syria to carry the book *Islam for Dummies*. It is not out of a passionate, knowledgeable, thoughtful, developed, nuanced-filled, effective, hermeneutically sophisticated faith that they go. 'Stronger' religious identities ride the surf.

Wisdom recognises history and context (ignored by fundamentalism); both the history of the action of God in human events and the history of



human actions. History recognises that the situation in Syria and Iraq is artificially aggravated by the Sykes-Picot line, which is no more than a line in the sand drawn by those dividing up the Ottoman Empire towards the end of World War I. 1916, as it happens. History looks to the consequences of two Gulf wars, to the layers of complexity radiating from the history of Palestine and Israel since 1948, and to the complexity and background of motivations of those countries currently involved in the region.

And there seems to me to be a considerable amount of wisdom in the Government's approach to the region. Complexity and the absence of quick, simple or conclusive outcomes are recognised. The extent of rivalries and conflicting motivations amongst those opposed to Daesh is seen as requiring extensive and lengthy diplomatic work. The unpleasant choices of allies and outcomes are addressed. They seem to take account of the sinfulness of human beings, although possibly, within the Foreign Office, the idea of original sin is often not often spoken of.

This struggle against religious extremism, as I have said, found in both the Abrahamic and the Dharmic traditions, requires an international coalition that in this country must be supported by all the focus necessary for overcoming in such a conflict. A merely regional, purely defensive, or only armed response will fail, and is unjust and immoral. In the last week we have seen the sadly failed peace talks in Geneva, and also the humanitarian conference in London. They take place at a time when Russian bombs hit refugee camps, with Assad's regime adding barrel bombs and killing those a few minutes later who are digging in the rubble.

The complexity of the situation which we face is often seen in only two dimensions: place and time. And we, as those of faith, Christians, must maintain our focus on the third dimension, which is theological and ideological, taking account of the overlaying layers of economics, sociology, history, ethnicity and so forth. The result is untidy and protracted, requiring a significant global counter-narrative to counteract the narrative of radicalisation, a counter-narrative expressed in action, which is more beautiful theologically and ideologically than anything the extremists put forward. And I use the word 'beautiful' calculatedly. What we do and say in answer to this challenge has to have more intensity, more beauty, more capacity to capture dreams and visions and hopes and expectations than anything that Daesh can do.

Where do we look for historic parallels? One example is what Philip Bobbitt, in his wonderful book *The Shield of Achilles*, calls 'the long war', the titanic struggle between different ideologies which began in 1914 and ended in 1989.

There are no quick fixes, no short-term answers. We must recognise that a generational conflict is underway between the extremist and un-nuanced beliefs that have led to terrible violence, set against the hope of light and life which as Christians we believe comes from Jesus Christ and is offered freely and without ambition of power or desire of profit to a dark world.

Our starting point, in building this narrative, should be giving voice to the people who experience humiliation: asking what can we do for them and how can we give them hope?

We must start relationships of love, which aims for human dignity and flourishing. And in practice this brings us to identity, to hospitality and generosity.

Religious communities are essential to identity. More can be done to recognise that religious communities often provide the stability that weak communities need. Why is it that St Benedict, in the 6th century, set out to create a 'school for the Lord's service', as he calls it in his Rule, and more or less accidentally saved western civilization over the next thousand years? Reinvented the universities, the hospitals, the schools? Reinvented diplomacy? It was because, somehow by the grace of God, the Benedictine communities provided oases of stability, stabilising the communities around them, providing a point of hope that showed a beauty of life that few could resist.

Religious communities can be safe channels of expression, of legitimate grievances and the starting point for the building of bridges between opposing sides. You know that very well here. But broaden it out. When you see a mosque, a religious community, do you see it through a counter-terrorism lens or as a potential partner for schooling?

Justice is the twin sister of peace – there is a role for religious communities in helping society to be just by naming injustices in foreign policy now and in history, especially, in the Middle East, Palestine, with Christian fundamentalist perceptions of Israel (which must not collude with a monopoly over grievances). We must demonstrate how to use proper, democratic methods of expressing disagreement. We must affirm, as Christians, actions which are just and wise. Often we only criticise.

A fresh and ideological approach to international relations will empower a younger generation with visions and dreams of new identity. We can acknowledge our unintentional collusion and lack of internal challenge, we can be honest about such issues as financing.

Theologically, we must be confident in pointing towards God whose arms are open on the cross. We must affirm the indivisibility of incarnation and justification, of salvation holding together manger, cross and empty tomb. The faith of Irenaeus was guided by the conviction that the creator God, unseen and unknowable, so loved humanity that he became a human being. It is encapsulated in the famous phrase, "Life in a person is the glory of God; the life of a person is the vision of God." The glory of God is that God becomes a living person. *That* is how we find identity, and *that* is what our Christian communities must live out, to provide this narrative.

And such theology of identity calls us to love that gives of oneself, as demonstrated to us by God in Jesus Christ. In practice this love looks like hospitality. Hospitality has implications for how we treat each other. I do not hold onto my identity by denying yours: I don't need to humiliate someone else in order to protect what I am. Hospitality is the point at which identity stops becoming a zero-sum game of exchange and equivalence, where if I give you something, I lose and you gain. But a world of hospitality is a world of abundance and flourishing. Secularism is deeply wrong here. To love my impure neighbour is better than to preserve my purity by keeping them at a distance.

Ironically, what we are missing is not something we need to find, collect, preserve or protect. What we are missing can only be found by giving everything up. This self-giving love finds its identity by first losing it in hospitality.

Identity happens in relationship through hospitality. Wisdom tells us that identity issues are often at the heart of conflict and change in conflict is neither quick nor easy.

In a recent lecture, Lord Alderdice highlighted three things.

Refugees and migrants suffer from trauma from events a long time in the past which are experienced as in the present. In other words, it is not quick; hospitality is not a magic wand. The process of healing is slow. Our expectations of one another do not change at the pace that reality changes around us. So what we are doing in the Middle East is going to be a matter that will affect our children and grandchildren. An inclusive society, he said, is not a reconciled society: reconciliation requires active engagement with diversity. Hospitality that brings people face to face.

And these three statements create a demand for hospitality, of risking identity in love for the weak and suffering. Hospitality is the second of the key elements of a more beautiful narrative. Both the giver and receiver of hospitality risk identity loss, so all hospitality must be accompanied by social dignity.

Hospitality is a powerful cure for challenging the right not to be offended. We give social dignity without taking away the freedoms in which we believe. Hospitality is lived in relationships of facing and conversation. That has practical demands.

In practice, hospitality means an effective use of social media. Compare the long-term Daesh social media recruitment strategy, building individual relationships, to government press releases and political speeches. Daesh has a \$1bn communications budget. We might challenge some of our richer Christians to match *that*.

We need listening relationships in hospitality, to give dignity and challenge humiliation. Longfellow, in 'The Fire of Driftwood', said: "If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility."

Through hospitality we need the dignity of good disagreement in which we view diversity as a blessing and not a threat

None of this is easy: peacemakers are usually seen by both sides as the enemy. A very good friend of mine was an Archbishop in Northern Nigeria. He was known as 'Mr Dialogue'; it was not intended as a compliment. He was then known as 'the Muslim bishop'; his crime was that he studied Islam in order better to engage with the majority of the people in his diocese.

Heroes of peace are victims of their own people; shaking hands with the enemy is seen as the ultimate disloyalty. Fear is the greatest enemy of any dialogue, hospitality attracts suspicion. Hospitality to Islamic finance alternatives in the City of London as alternatives to being consumed by

the prevalent culture, are often criticised as giving in to the enemy.

The third aspect of the new narrative is flourishing, human flourishing. We need a new theological dialogue, based in wisdom, expressed in solidarity, giving in love like the Good Samaritan, which focuses on human flourishing. It must turn oversimplification into complexity, because conflict is complex. It must welcome the richness and wealth of what God has created, and not try to put it in neat and few boxes.

Such a dialogue is one not of denial but offering a better option. It names violence in religious texts – denial only aids extremism. A text may be sacred, interpretation is not. Dialogue names the perpetrators of violence as part of their faith tradition. Srebrenica was done by Christians, as are many of the atrocities in the Central African Republic. They may be bad Christians, they almost certainly are bad Christians, but they are Christians. Daesh are Muslims. Naming must be done carefully, avoiding authenticating extremist interpretation as this closes down the space for the legitimate forms of the faith tradition to flourish.

Human flourishing requires religious-led track 2 diplomacy, today bringing together religious leaders from the 60-country anti-Daesh coalition. There must be a religiously motivated peace, articulating a religious response that addresses the underlying political motivations.

Flourishing requires us to challenge the religious illiteracy of much secularism. We need political recognition of the role of religion. A friend who is a secondary school history teacher in France wrote to us a couple of years ago and said, 'In the state school where I teach, under the rules of laïcité, I have to teach the history of 16th-century Europe without mentioning religion.' I'll give you a moment to think about that one; it's a little complicated.

Our culture has forgotten how to deal literately with religion. There is a right kind of secularism, understood properly there is no real religious/secular divide, but interpretation and translation is needed between the two: religious people and secularists who support human rights should work together to teach common values using a hermeneutics common to both. That is for human flourishing.

Religious literacy is not propositional knowledge but emotional intelligence that enables us to understand the place of faith in other people's lives. Speaking recently to a political leader, I won't say where, they said, 'I won't deal with such and such a person', an Islamic leader I know. I said, 'Why not?' He said, 'He's an extremist. Do you know, he puts the demands of his faith above those of the law?' I said, 'Oh dear. Because you're talking to another one at the moment.'

That is religious illiteracy. European Islam and Christianity in Europe have met extreme secularism and have learnt how to deal with it. We may have something to teach our faiths in the rest of the world.

So let me end where I began by applying some of these principles to the present conflict in the Levant and Mesopotamia.

Our actions in Mesopotamia and the Levant must be holistic, building the narrative of beauty of which I have spoken, with religious literacy, with human flourishing, with hospitality and with dignity given to identity.

So any extension of bombing needs a clear objective of being part of the process of establishing safe havens and secure areas to avoid the need for refugees fleeing the whole region. Speaking to a Christian leader a couple of weeks ago from that region, he said, 'We welcome that the churches call for more space for migrants, for refugees; but, please, wouldn't it be better to do something so as not to drain the Middle East of every Christian?' And this must especially be true for minorities such as Christians and Yazidis, but also others. Hospitality can be expressed in protection as well as in opening our homes - as well as, not instead of.

To preserve dignity, ground forces should be trained and equipped and **local**. The impact of foreign boots on the ground will unite and motivate far more people in favour of Daesh. Bombing creates a false sense of crusade - a false sense; extensive troops on the ground would be worse by far. We need to train, with our coalition partners, knowing that such a training process would be the work of at least a decade and possibly much more.

The supply of refugees should further be restricted by a focused and deliberate effort to renew and revive local economies, especially in Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Iran. All ground taken should be part of that effort which must involve micro-finance as well as large scale macro-economic rebuilding. The UK Government is already doing this on a vast scale and putting large sums in. The God-given gift of work and an economy brings social dignity in a powerful way and eliminates the need to hazard the Mediterranean.

The hospitality that we offer to refugees should be more generous, but always with a clear strategy, incentive and aim of enabling return. To empty the Middle East of Christians removes diversity and sows trouble for the future.

And then there must be clear support for mainstream religious leaders of all faiths, in which the theological and ideological aspects of the struggle, which in the end are the only ones that will enable the supply of fighters to extremist groups to be cut off, are pursued and promoted relentlessly. Religious leaders have to own the problem and develop the solution.

The struggle must be seen as global and not narrowly focused on the one head of the Hydra that is Daesh. We must aim, as I said earlier, for nothing less than chasing religiously motivated violence out of every tradition.

And that means there must be overt, active and relentless diplomatic effort to put together such coalitions as may be necessary, and eventually to restrict and defeat extremism in the ways set out above. The actions of nations like Russia, seeking primarily their own good, will cause generations of conflict for all of us.

And we have to face the fact that, because we are in a fallen and broken world, we will have to deal with some very unpleasant people in order to avoid succumbing to those who are even worse.

The scale of the struggle is huge, our focus must be clear. It is global, it is generational and it is theological. We need to dig into our theological resources to find the narrative to confront it. And in confronting it we must name things properly.

The reality of state sponsorship, ideologically and/or financially, from such states as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, must be recognised, named and challenged, even when it is unintended. In the same way, our own responsibilities must be faced and acknowledged, especially those arising out of the history of the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the time of the British and French mandates, as well as more recent wars and events.

And it is easy to call for Government action. The Church has its own responsibilities. We must lead in prayer, in love, in hospitality, in seeking human flourishing, in gracious and courageous action that demonstrates the beauty and hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, through religious communities that stabilise and serve. In this struggle, our lives must respond to the Spirit's call and equipping. The result is that we may pray with integrity the collect that we use in the Church of England during Advent. And I end with this prayer:

Almighty God,  
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness  
and to put on the armour of light,  
now in the time of this mortal life,  
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;  
that on the last day,  
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead,  
we may rise to the life immortal;  
through him who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

30 min read

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