



**The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, delivered the annual [William Temple Foundation Annual Lecture at Lambeth Palace](#) last night on the theme: 'Reimagining Britain: Faith and the Common Good'. Read the text of the lecture below.**

As an oil executive in a previous life, I know a fair bit about oil rigs. An oil rig, as you might have guessed, is an offshore construction which drills to explore for oil. There are various forms, but what I am referring to is a semi-submersible rig which is kept in place by four legs, which are filled with water to the right degree and therefore give it stability, and with advanced GPS technology ensure that it remains in the right place through stormy seas and bad weather.

It is anchored as well usually in most depths of water but not all, and it needs to have the right balance between anchors and movement. It needs to find the right tension point between flexibility and stability.

I would want to suggest this evening that at this time, facing storms, buffeted by waves and sometimes, it might feel, out on our own at sea, our own nation and a number of others across Europe seem a lot like one of those oil rigs.

Finding the balance between anchors and movement. And not always doing it very well.

It leads us to two questions then: first, what are our anchors? What will keep us rooted and stable in our traditions and heritage? And secondly, what is the movement? Where can we be flexible and innovative, adapting to our modern challenges with courage and creativity?

But to continue this metaphor, before you can approach those questions, you have to understand the weather itself. What are the storms that we are facing? Are the waves coming our way just 'weather', or are they a more existential threat such as climate change?

Are they a storm that will pass, or are they indicative of a new global pattern? We will need to identify and name these storms, these troubles we face. We see remarkable changes in the political climate, as we know not only in the UK but across much of the Global North. There is nothing that exceptional in this country.

New parties are emerging, the memories of world war and genocide are fading. If you landed on D-Day at the age of 18, as my wife's uncle did, you would now be 92. That's a very long time. None of our leaders have the memory of global and total war.

And as is widely recognised, in this country we are at a pivotal moment in the life of our nation, on a scale which we haven't seen perhaps arguably since the end of the World War II.

Or in peace time since long before that. We face many choices about what kind of country we want to be. Like all such times the way we respond will show whether these are threats or opportunities.

In other words, at moments of great change we can make the weather, but to do so, we also have to see what weather is coming our way. We also grapple with the reality of rapid social, cultural, economic and technological change which offers great potential for our country and community but also major risks if not handled with care and managed appropriately.

For example, the loss of Christian faith as a principle basis of morality was first welcomed by John Maynard Keynes and then recognised by him as leading to unmanaged change; he refers to the possibility of such change in a letter to Virginia Woolf in 1934.

He says this: “Our generation – yours and mine .... Owed a great deal to our fathers’ religion, and the young, who are brought up without it, will never get so much out of life. They’re trivial: like dogs in their lusts.” (He had a way with words.) “We had the best of both worlds. We destroyed Christianity yet had its benefits.” Extraordinary quotation!

So change is something that can unbalance everything, or something that can be managed and seized as opportunity.

There is, to some degree, ‘natural’ change in response to globalisation and rapid social change. The world we live in today is different – and in many ways, most ways I would say, far better - from the world of ten, fifty or a hundred years ago, and we need to acknowledge and adapt to that. It is a blessing that things continue to change, but our institutions need to change with them if they are to be effective in our modern world.

The success of the post-Second World War economic Bretton Woods settlement, and the implementation of the Beveridge report, have made for a far more civilised, caring and compassionate society both internationally and domestically. But also perhaps for a less resilient one. Decades of relative calm – at least compared to the first half of the century - have led to complacency about the structures which maintain us.

To some extent, perhaps, some of the waves we face aren’t worse, but they’re different, and we need different approaches to acknowledge that.

What is new is that the storms arise from the calms, especially the relative calm we felt after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and subsequent end of the Cold War and the discrediting of the collectivised economies.

They are storms today which are a challenge, as we know well, to the rule-based order. They are a challenge to liberty, in the sense of the human dignity of individuals, and they are a challenge to our relationships, both in our communities and globally.

They threaten either to disable the stability of the rig, or if there is not enough flexibility, to render the structure incapable of bearing the strains.

And the origin of these storms is not principally economic but ethical. The victory of market-based capitalism in the 1970s and 1980s, which in the end was a massive contribution to the collapse of the USSR, and the welcome liberation of central and eastern Europe, in some ways had within it the seeds of its own destruction.

In some places, such as the USSR, 70 years of avaricious atheism meant that any sense of ethical foundations to markets had long since passed.

In others, such as the USA and the UK, the invisible hand of the market identified by Adam Smith was misunderstood as the market being a *deus*

*ex machina* which would sort things out at the right moment.

Smith's understanding was that markets could only function as invisible hands when they were in a rule-based world, the rules coming from elsewhere. Moral rules, ethical rules. Once it has been turned into a deity the market has all the morals of Zeus and all the mercy of Pluto.

As a result, as we have seen through the work of economists such as Thomas Piketty, wealth inequality has soared, as has income inequality to a much lesser extent, although that has diminished since 2016, at least in the UK.

The problem is not merely income inequality though, but more fundamentally inequality of outcome, of hope, of aspiration, of consequences. These inequalities were revealed in the global recession of 2008 and following.

In 2008, the UK Government, in September I think it was, announced a bank rescue package one weekend, that totalled £500 billion. That was necessary because the costs of letting the banks fail were magnitudes greater than the costs of rescuing them.

Yet after a couple of years the financial services industry absorbed the subsidies that could have renewed entirely had they been available on that scale earlier, the ex-mining or heavy industry areas of this country.

According to the National Audit Office, the outstanding support to banks stood at £46 billion still in March 2018. While I know the old saying that a billion here, a billion there and you're soon talking about serious money, but nevertheless, £46 billion is still a lot of money.

In addition, it is often forgotten there are subsidies which continue today in the form of unconditional Government backing of the balance sheets of the biggest banks, the ones that are too big to fail. And even they estimate that those are worth some £30 billion a year to them in saved interest payments.

Combine wealth inequality – which by the way, lest you think I'm only hitting at capitalism, is also a hidden feature of many so called socialist systems – combine wealth inequality with the power of the certain sectors to socialise losses and retain profits, and you have a serious threat to the system.

Many would add, a serious threat that is justified. Injustice by itself may be managed: inequality by itself is a containable threat. The two together deny the dignity of the human being made in the image of God, reject the ancient ideas of what is right, and provoke fury.

Such, in over compressed and simplified form, were the alterations to the systems of weather, which like the proverbial butterfly's beating wings in the Pacific lead eventually to a hurricane in Florida.

The world economic structure is not a system, even a chaotic one: it is rather a part of something infinitely more complex of which it is

paradoxically both master and servant.

Yet there is one more aspect, and this one is genuinely unprecedented. That is the speed and form of modern communication through the web and social media.

At the Archbishops' Council last week, we had another presentation from the Head of Digital Communications for the Church of England – who is brilliant by the way – who made comments about the impact of social media.

At its best it connects people. It provides spaces for people to explore and discuss, which they might not have access to in real life. For many, many people social media has provided solace, connection and community. The housebound, the disillusioned, the lonely... and many other groups.

Meanwhile, social media has helped people build powerful, effective and hope-filled social movements. It has enhanced people's ability to hold power to account. It has given consumers a voice to challenge unfair or unethical behaviour by businesses of many kinds.

The Church of England has seen the positive impact of social media in engaging millions with the Christian message at major moments in the year such as during Lent, Advent and Christmas.

Digital plays a key role in encouraging people to think about attending one of our 16,500 local churches for a baptism, a wedding, a funeral or an Easter or Christmas service.

It has a capacity to give a voice to the voiceless, that great call to action in Proverbs chapter 31 verse 8, the writer says, speak out for those who cannot speak – says this to the king. For the rights of all the destitute, speak out, judge righteously, defend the poor and needy. Words often used by the church, and not so often practiced.

But in the world of social media, difference can all too quickly become enmity, diversity can be seen as mere menace, disagreement can be a threat. Mistakes can be unforgiveable.

The online world can be very exposing. People can reveal details of personal struggles which they may later regret, but it's there forever. And we know many examples of individuals who have been subjected to vicious personal attacks – there seems to be a lack of accountability online which people think somehow gives permission to be more vicious than perhaps they would be in real life.

And the hermeneutics of social media have scarcely been addressed. We have not yet developed a framework to hold all of this – the good and bad– and it is something that does need to be addressed urgently.

Yet this entirely new form of interaction, international, engaging across cultures, without the translation of relationship, does not address the hermeneutical conundrums thrown up by the hyper modernists, does not allow for reader response, even though they are written and read, and gives no time for horizons of understanding.

Any yet, and yet... there is this risk that, at its worst, social media enables people to exchange information and communication without relationship.

And yet, and yet again .... Social media also allows for protest to be heard, for failure to be detected. In this country people have identified the pain of those who the establishment of vested interests ignores.

In the United States, President Trump and Senator Bernie Sanders did the same. They and many others - populists, nationalists, right and left - have recognised the capacity of social media to give that voice to the voiceless.

We may disagree with them and especially with their solutions, but we need to listen for we have been caught flat aback by the squall as the wind has backed and veered in the coming storm.

So, as one did on a rig, watching the barometer fall, we turn to think about our anchors. What will restore justice and challenge inequality of power and voice?

There is a narrative that says only apocalyptic change can make a difference. On several occasions last year I quoted from a very interesting book, which Chris may know, published in 2017 called "The Great Leveller".

The author, Walter Scheidel, proposes this pessimistic thesis that inequality and injustice have only ever been addressed through war, famine, disease, revolution or natural disasters.

Quite rightly on some editions they have the four horsemen of the apocalypse on the front cover. He gives an example of privileged societies; among many he looks back to the Aztec elite who, as he put it, "wore feather-work and jade ornaments, lived in two-storey houses, ate the flesh of human sacrifices, drank chocolate...and did not pay taxes."

Well, if you will excuse a sarcastic remark, thank goodness we're not like that. By the way, I like chocolate and, in that area, alone I have every sympathy for the Aztec elite. But we have not yet resorted to human sacrifice here at Lambeth Palace.

Yet, apocalypse is not the answer of the church, the church was started not with power but incarnation and crucifixion, not with dominance but with washing feet, not with ambition for Empire, but with service to the Kingdom of God. T

he horsemen of the apocalypse are in the hands of God alone, not the response to market forces, and when we are told in the Gospel of Luke that,

“He has shown strength with his arm;

He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.

He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,

And lifted up the lowly;

He has filled the hungry with good things,

And sent the rich away empty.”

We are not told to do it ourselves with violent revolution, hatred or the destruction of our enemies, but with love and faith and hope.

Mary’s song is indeed revolution in immortal verse. However, it is describing God, not human action, and says that righteousness and justice are at the heart of the very nature of God (Psalm 89:14).

They are not merely what God does, they are who God is. Who God is sets the pattern for who we should be, and what our society should be.

But if not apocalyptic ,many would say that our first anchors are strong leaders. Leaders who will do what is right, even when it is not necessarily easy or popular.

And, of course, there are many kinds of leaders in our society. Not just politicians, but teachers, priests, CEOs, from our local communities, intermediate organisations, to the MPs making decisions in parliament, often so unfairly attacked.

Indeed, we do need leadership. We need leadership that isn’t in the Yes Minister "I am their leader, I must follow them" style, but people who are willing to forge bold new paths, make decisive choices.

Yet there are many powerful leaders in our world, always have been, but being human, and therefore sinful,their leadership is or was too often based in self-interest, conceit, narcissism and manipulation. Leadership must be based on eternal principles and values – honesty, duty, service, inclusion, compassion, confidence.

Nelson Mandela, for example, whose leadership ended apartheid, was brave enough to call for peace, justice and freedom when many wanted revenge. We need leaders that are able to unify people around a shared vision of a just society that enables all to flourish. We need leaders who

are servants.

Jesus' words in Mark 10:44-45 – "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve."

While most who choose to be public servants enter politics to make a positive difference in the world, there has never been a golden age of perfect public service. You only have to read Trollope's political novels or a good biography of Disraeli to see the reality of how politicians were viewed historically.

Disraeli famously brought down the government, when he was leading the opposition, for their introduction of a second reform bill, took office and introduced a more radical one. Now that is certainly how to turn on a sixpence!

Yet there is a pattern of seeking the common good that has been eroded, not by the politicians – I'm really not against the politicians – but by the ideological climate shift since the 1970s. By the breakdown of Bretton Woods and that climate change has made room for what Philip Bobbitt, in his superb book *Shield of Achilles*, rightly calls the emergence of the market state, where justification of the ruler springs from the ever-growing prosperity of the ruled.

It is worth remembering that Bretton Woods sprang from the ever fertile, eclectic and supreme genius of John Maynard Keynes, who was caught up by the idea of the Common Good, both after World War I, during the Depression, and after World War II. His ethical base set his economic trajectory, and it is manifest providence that he reached the height of his powers at the same time as Beveridge, Temple and Tawney.

The failure of market capitalism, however we identify either the disease or the symptoms, left a great gap in the hubristic triumph of so-called 'western values', or as some might call them, money and financialisation.

The nihilism of hypermodernity was itself challenged not only by those like MacIntyre and Thiselton (respectively writing on ethics and hermeneutics). But it was challenged also superbly by my predecessor, who, along with Temple was the greatest intellect to sit on the Throne of St Augustine for some centuries, and is wildly underestimated for the brilliant work he did as well, incidentally, for his personal holiness.

I want to suggest that one part of the heart of the issues before us is not the economics. That is a symptom. But it is a question of identity, or to be exact, how we form identity. Before turning to responses from faith to the need for the common good I want to point to two trends. They could be summarised in the fashion for Nietzsche and Schmitt – or how we find identity through wielding power.

In this gathering I am not going to say much about Nietzsche – because you all know more than I do probably anyway -except to remark that misunderstandings of his views continually surface, especially his phrase 'the will to power'.



In its simplified and I suspect wrongly explained form it speaks of the will to power as a means of establishing identity, indeed a necessity for identity.

For the purposes of this lecture it does not matter whether that has any truth in it, for it is what is often understood. It also influenced someone less familiar, Carl Schmitt (I am grateful to an article in the FT some months ago for pointing this out).

Carl Schmitt was a jurist and political philosopher of the Nazi era, and went out of fashion, perhaps not unsurprisingly, more or less exactly 74 years ago last week. He died in 1985.

Yet there are increasing mentions of him, especially by the thinkers of the far right. He seeks the formation of identity through the necessity of an enemy, and he rejects liberalism.

Let me quote: "The essence of liberalism is negotiation, a cautious half measure, in the hope that the definitive dispute, the decisive bloody battle, can be transformed into a parliamentary debate and permit the decision to be suspended forever in an everlasting discussion" (Political Theology, 2nd Edition, 1934, Chapter 4).

"The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy" (The Concept of the Political 1927, 2).

I could go on at length, but suffice to say at present and for these purposes only, that Schmitt is much influenced by Hobbes, and of course by Hegel.

The outcome of the revival and reinforcement of these ideas is a solidly political philosophical basis to the politics of extreme nationalism, to the end of a liberal rule-based order, and to the authoritarian overthrow of elites and establishments, who seek their own power and privilege without accountability. To overthrow them at any point of weakness.

And the conclusion I want to draw at this point is simple. The storm of 2008-2009 global recession challenged the idols of finance, materialism and market-driven consumerist hyper-autonomy.

Nothing could withstand the strain, and there is thus a free-for-all in the search for identity and a new weaponizing of public discourse through communications.

So how does faith respond, can it be an anchor in an uncertain time? Where can we find the basis for a new idea of the Common Good?

First, churches and faith communities must adapt to the changing times and circumstances. 'Traditioned Innovation', a phrase used by the

theologian Greg L. Jones, is an act of remembering while continuing. Adapting without abandoning. In times of change we need to find the balance, just like the semi-submersible, of change and stability. Calling for radical change without being aware of or having respect for the traditions that make up the foundations of our structures and institutions will inevitably leave our society drifting. So, one mistake would be to try and change everything.

The second mistake, however, would be to try not to change anything. Bishop Michael Curry, the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church whom you might remember from the Royal Wedding last May, said recently in an interview – and this is a short quote, not the thirteen minute one:

"Often change is not so much about discarding the past as about reinventing it in a new way for a new time. You need to go back to the real original mission of an institution or a tradition, not just how it manifested itself at one time. Ask what was driving this tradition at its best, and then ask what that would look like now. It won't look the same, but there you'll find the energy that can give it new life."

So, we need to return to our mission, our core aim as we reimagine and reconsider and reinvent our vision for the role of faith in service to our country and the world in the 21st Century and beyond.

This kind of 'traditioned innovation' appears again and again in scripture as the Israelites struggled to remain faithful to God through exodus and exile, the kingdom united and divided, under foreign rule and in foreign places. It is a story of constant adaptation to change while maintaining their unique Jewish identity. And identity is essential. It requires us to have a history and a heritage, as does innovation. We cannot innovate or reimagine from a vacuum, and we have the blessing of being able to draw on the wisdom and work of our predecessors.

The concept of 'Traditioned innovation' reoccurs in scripture and reoccurs in church history. It has happened most often in the church in response to crisis – when the cracks have deepened and the structures of society shown themselves as fragile - God has shone through.

When the Western Roman Empire collapsed, when the Eastern Roman Empire was overrun, when the Church had divided in the Great Schism and again in the Reformation and in innumerable times since, on each occasion new life has sprung up when Christians have found ways of 'traditioned innovation'.

Perhaps our understanding of faith to tradition and ongoing lively discernment in each new generation have something to say to how our nation adapts now?

Perhaps our changes during the industrial revolution from the agrarian revolution – what Bobbit calls the long war of the 20th century from 1914 – 1989 – the advent of science and technology in a new way, the enlightenment. Perhaps those changes can inspire us.

So what is the role of faith in establishing the common good? The Christian faith is lived in the constant response to the call of the Spirit through

the word of God and the history of the Church and its methods of understanding the word. As Christians and as a Church, there is a constant interaction between scripture and circumstance.

There is first the simple act of prayer. We recognise God as the one who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, whose intervention in history is decisive and whose judgement is final. We may be a minority in this land, but we are not around the world. To speak of the role of prayer is not to believe in fairies, but to relate the common good as we experience it to the source and origin of all good. Christians must pray.

The Christian faith puts social affairs within the overarching framework (2nd Peter) of a loving God, a God of justice, mercy and redemption, demonstrated most powerfully in Jesus Christ. It places our relationships with each other in the context of our common humanity – so greatly needed in these times when divisions exist both within and between societies.

Faith communities place social affairs into a new realm. They are fundamental intermediate institutions. They place social affairs into a new realm - one where the marginalised are central, and the leaders are servants.

They lift it into a framework of love and faith, as we have respect for the human dignity of all people as made in the image of God. Isaiah 58 talks of the hypocrisy of fasting on the sabbath, whilst exploiting our workers and quarrelling with one another. The kind of fasting God has chosen is not piety on a Sunday, it is 'to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke'.

Social justice is a fundamental part of the radical message of the Gospel. When prosperity and justice go hand in hand, every part of society benefits and they should be seen in the community life of the church. First we pray, second we live rightly as community.

We need to recognise ourselves in community, not just as atomised individuals, but, as we read in 1 Corinthians 12:27, 'You are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it'. We may perform different functions with the gifts given to us by the Spirit, but 'the eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"

Jean Vanier, who as we know died a week ago, the founder of L'Arche communities, was a visionary who took hold of this - living out the idea that we are strong in our weaknesses and in our human relationships with one another.

As Christians, we must recognise that it is not in our independence but in our interdependence that our strength and humanity is found.

We need to love the whole more than ourselves. There is too much of a tendency in our world, and even in the church, that we would sometimes prefer to rule over the ruins than to serve in the intact structure. As Desmond Tutu wrote, 'We are different so that we can know our need of one another, for no one is ultimately self-sufficient.'

If the first action of Christians must be prayer and basing what we do in the source of love, and in the expectation of the presence of God, the

second is therefore to be a visible community of diversity and disagreement that yet loves one another.

Christians are anchored by the certainty of that which cannot be shaken. We are the recipients of the unshakable kingdom, as we read in Hebrew 12:28, an eternal kingdom of heaven.

Governments may come and go - people...Archbishops thankfully - but the Kingdom of Heaven cannot be shaken. That is what sustained St Benedict and drew him to the creation of communities of obedience to God, and thus incidentally communities that transformed of society.

Monasteries, like all Christian community today, are among the primary exhibitors of interdependence, without destroying individuality. They demonstrate, at best, liberty in service and service as the way to identity.

And we also believe in Christ who calms the storm. And not only that – he asks his disciples ‘why are you afraid? Have you no faith?’

We fear when we do not feel in control of our lives, when we do not know our identity, when we do not understand our circumstances, when we feel isolated and alone. We fear when we think there isn’t enough – money, love, life.

But in Christ we are offered the gift of faith to replace fear, through Him who was resurrected and transformed death into life, and scarcity into abundance. Out of the Christ who calms the waters of the storm to become the waters of baptism arises new life and new possibility. Out of chaos, there is new creation.

This exemplary role for faith communities is often underestimated as we look for grand magic solutions, perhaps in Harry Potter style with a correct whisk of the wand and a new spell that JK Rowling has not yet invented - perhaps “Pacificus” or something like that.

Thirdly, after prayer and community, there is the aspect of faith of prophetic word and action. Communities that love but do not engage become pietistic. People who simply shout are ignored, even if they are prophetic. The well-known verse from Proverbs tells us that ‘Without a vision the people perish’.

Christians are called to be a people of hope. The role of the Church is not piously to wring our hands or preach self-righteously, but to live out our faith in Christ, putting the vulnerable and marginalised at the centre of our ministry, as did Jean Vanier.

The Church and other faiths have a role to play now, in opening doors, modelling good ways of disagreeing well, helping people feel like they belong, providing welcome and love to all, and speaking and challenging injustice.

The Church can lift up the voices of the voiceless, speak truth to power and love all unconditionally, as God loves each one of us.

Pope Francis understands better than any other global leader the power of symbol, as we saw at the South Sudan peace talks a few weeks back,

at the Vatican.

When at the end of an extraordinary address on the gaze of Christ, he got up, walked to the four political leaders, the president and the four vice presidents engaged in a six year civil war where 400,000 have died and 2.5 million are refugees, and fell to their feet. Kissed their feet and implored them to make peace.

That three minutes had more impact because of its symbolism, its active prophesy, than perhaps all the words of the previous 24 hours.

In the Church of England, we are part of the work done by churches, temples and mosques all over the country. We participate in over 30,000 social action projects, from foodbanks to debt counselling. All these are a tangible sign of the community of faith at work in the world, not to be seen to be 'doing good', but because they are compelled by Christ to act.

Faith communities have the long view, the effective example and the eternal courage to be self-critical, constantly in reform, always active in service without seeking recognition, and always concerned with the common good.

So in conclusion, there are no easy answers to the challenges we face. We can, however, know the steadfastness of God's love, He who promises never to leave us or forsake us. The promise of Jesus to return to make all things new. We are given the gift of the possibility of bringing about something of that on earth.

Faith commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves, challenges us to pray and thus deepen our understanding of God, inspires us to act prophetically and challengingly.

As we navigate the challenges over the next few years, there is a need to find the balance between anchors and movement, between tradition and change, between flexibility and stability.

Ultimately, facing storms out at sea, we can nevertheless know that, somewhere out there, there is something precious to be found. Like the oil platform, at least until electricity takes over (that metaphor doesn't really work anymore when you're going to have stranded assets all over the North Sea does it?) We can help create a vision for our country that overflows with hope and brims with promise. Something that makes it worth braving the storm.

Thank you very much.

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