



This morning the Archbishop took part in a panel on how all the world's major faiths can take a common stance against extremism.

The other panellists in the discussion, which was chaired by Christiane Amanpour, were the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Shawki Ibrahim Abdel-Karim Allam, and the president and executive director of the Center for the Study of Islam and the Middle East, Ahmad Iravani.

The Archbishop said that the West will fail to tackle extremism until it addresses its ideological and theological elements. He said currently the narratives that are "parasitic on our traditions rather than being a mainstream part of them" are overwhelming Western materialism.

Asked how Western societies can prevent an "inter-faith crisis" between Christianity and Islam, the Archbishop said progress is being made, but that Europe needed to regain the capacity to use theological language to counter extremism.

"I think we're making progress. There is a great deal more honesty coming into our conversations than in the past, where the debate was quite often at the rather banal level of 'wouldn't it be nice if we were all nice.'"

"What we've lost the capacity to do – and Muslims and Christians are at one on this – we have lost the capacity in Europe to use theological values to discuss our differences in society generally. It's become confined to the religious world, which means we no longer have a way of answering the challenge of the extremists. We no longer have the vocabulary.

"We say better materialism will help us: nobody goes to Syria because they think they'll get a better car next year. It just isn't the way their thinking is. It's a theological and ideological problem, and until we regain the capacity to use theological and ideological vocabulary, we will not be able to counter extremism effectively."

This afternoon Archbishop Justin joined a panel discussion on how open societies can respond to the spread of extremist ideologies and terrorism. The other panellists were the author, political scientist and activist Elif Shafak; the CEO of the Kuwaiti Danish Dairy Company, Sir Mohammad Jaafar; the Executive Director of the UN's Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate, Jean-Paul Laborde; and the Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, Rowsch N. Shaways. The panel was chaired by L. Markus Karlsson, business editor at the French news channel France 24, which broadcast the event.

During the discussion the Archbishop said that the phenomenon of ISIL and other extremist groups was portrayed as a primarily religious conflict "because it's an easy hook to hang things on".

"It simplifies things down. It means you can identify who's bad and who's good very quickly. You have a clear enemy. And the people who make the most of [that kind of] identification in religious conflict are those who want to manipulate those within the religious communities.

He continued: “Of course it has very clear religious aspects, and that’s one of the things we completely forget, very often, in the way we analyse the problem. You hear a lot about the sociology and the economics and many things like that – and those are absolutely crucial, I don’t want to understate them at all. But what you don’t hear – but what I’m hearing in this panel, which is very striking – is the narrative, and particularly the cultural, ideological and theological narrative, and how that presents something that is much more attractive than the extremism.

“We need to remember it’s not just Daesh. In all the major world faith traditions, including Christianity, there is a group that cannot tolerate diversity, cannot tolerate difference. We have it in Christianity, you find it in every major world faith. What is it that is bringing that out in restored violence in a way that arguable we’ve not seen, and certainly we’ve not seen in Christianity, since the end of the wars of Reformation?”

The theological narrative, he added, is “filling a vacuum left by an alternative narrative.”

The Archbishop also said the answer to bad religion was “not no religion but good religion”. “As a Christian I would say that our role is to present the faith of Christ in a way that is so clearly full of the love and grace of God that it is an effective counter-narrative in and of itself.”

Over lunch today the Archbishop took part in a discussion on how faith communities are responding to the challenges of the 21st century – including the technology revolution, inequality and how to inspire young people to faith.

Arriving in Davos this morning, the Archbishop said: “It’s a privilege to be invited to attend the World Economic Forum this year, and I’m looking forward to speaking with political, business and religious leaders about how we can come together to tackle violent extremism - and how faith communities are adapting to the disruptions and innovations of the 21st century.

“Please pray for all those taking part – that this will be a time for new and innovative answers to the complex global issues that so desperately need thoughtful and just solutions. Now, perhaps more than ever, we need to work collaboratively and unselfishly for the common good.”

- The video of the event 'Violent Extremism: Global Threat, Local Solution?' will be [available to view here](#) from 23:00 on 23-01-2016.

5 min read

Source URL: <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/archbishop-canterbury-speaks-davos-responding-extremism>