



*Read the lecture below.*

## **Part One: The Problem**

Vice-Chancellor, thank you so much for the great privilege of being elected an Honorary Fellow of Liverpool John Moores University. I'm extremely grateful and it really is an honour that I had never foreseen and I am full and overwhelmed by it.

I am very, very grateful to Lord Alton for the invitation to speak at this most distinguished of lecture series. When I had the great privilege of being Dean of Liverpool - and, I want to add, the greater privilege of being replaced by a much better Dean, who I respect hugely and for whom I pray daily - a city that gave the whole family four of the happiest years we have had in ministry in the Church of England, I attended these lectures, but I never thought I would have the privilege of speaking at them.

My subject today was chosen months ago and this lecture written some days ago. By a very remarkable coincidence its subject is not the same as the Prime Minister's speech in Birmingham this morning, but is very similar indeed. It is the subject of religiously motivated violence (RMV), and the need for the world to develop capacity to face radicalisation effectively. It is an issue of immense complexity, and in one lecture cannot be adequately addressed.

The Prime Minister, in his speech in Birmingham, has set the terms of the debate in an important way. No-one can doubt the severity of the challenge facing those of many faiths and none, a challenge aimed at the heart of the acceptance of diversity which in Europe is the fruit of our failures from the 15th until the 17th century.

In some ways this lecture, by an unforeseen coincidence of diaries, seeks to contribute to the debate, and sets a different emphasis to the reported content of what the Prime Minister said. I must emphasise that such difference is based on my respect both for his office and for him personally. He sees the intelligence. He has to make the hard decisions.

I particularly welcome the statement from Number 10 that came out with his speech in Birmingham, that "the new cohesive communities programme will seek to lift the horizons of some of the most isolated and deprived communities in the UK and increase opportunity for young people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities ...." These are massively demanding issues, and I call on all Christians to pray sincerely for him and his Government as they find themselves confronted with these problems. None of us, on the sidelines, could claim we have the answer.

It is a challenge, though, that we must take up. As Archbishop, and also in previous roles, I have spent years engaged in it, seeing the results of the violence first hand, aimed at both Muslims and Christians, and in the last couple of years hearing of similar patterns around the world as, with my wife Caroline, I visited all 37 other provinces of the Anglican Communion. I will return to that in a moment.

It is important to say that, in common with other Christian denominations, with other faith traditions, and with those of no faith, the Anglican

Communion has bitter experience of RMV. In the last 18 months Anglican dead have been certainly in the hundreds, even into the low thousands. Around the world we face the reality and deal with it. Our Bishops are in dialogue with those who attack, risking their own lives in the dialogue. This is not academic.

In this country, as well, the churches are acting, not just speaking. The Church of England has invested huge resources of people and time, with welcome Government support on the remarkably successful Near Neighbours programme. We are neither naive about the evil of those involved in RMV, nor despairing of dealing with it. On the contrary, it is clear that with this is a challenge that can and will be met. It requires a careful approach, an understanding of each other's traditions, a clear approach to reconciliation in which we seek to transform destructive violence into good disagreement.

Let me be clear. People recently, including the French Prime Minister a few weeks ago, used that phrase, which is a dangerous myth, a 'war of civilisations'. Christians and Muslims disagree passionately, in other parts of the world Christians disagree with Buddhists, with Hindus, Muslims with Buddhists, and so on. On numerous and fundamental understandings of the very basis of our identity which is given by our understanding of who God is. Nothing matters more.

So Islam is not our enemy, but a faith with whose theology, as a Christian, I disagree profoundly. The experience of 180 years of European religious war is that theological difference, or ideological difference, however, is not dealt with by force, but by dialogue. That is the most important lesson of the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.

And, to answer one more question in advance. Of course ISIL, that perverted terrorist group, must be faced and contained, in the sort of quasi police action that the United Nations has authorised. Their appalling attacks on so many of all faiths and none are a lethal danger to the human values on which civilised life depends.

As you will hear, we must contain, as I argued in the House of Lords in the September 2014 debate on intervention. But in my Prospect article of October 2014, I set out a broader strategy for more than containment: global, generational and holistic. This lecture draws on those reflections, but I want to stress is by no means a complete answer. That would require far more time than we have And far more wisdom than I possess.

So, to turn to the core of the matter, let us start with reflecting on the nature of electronic media. Electronic media makes everything local. The global has been abolished, which is why I nicked the title of the great Capital of Culture year in this city in 2008: 'The world in one city.' There is a saying in American politics, most closely associated with the former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Tip O'Neill, that "All politics is local."

It is personal issues – the mundane and everyday concerns of individuals and their neighbourhoods – that matter most to people - as Joe

[Anderson, Mayor of Liverpool] here knows very well indeed. Our own politicians are invariably aware of this, as we see when they campaign, and rightly.

Yet the advent of electronic and social media has shifted these boundaries. What was once something happening to some stranger on the other side of the world is now happening to a friend of a friend on Facebook. And I comment on it through an image I have seen on my hand. Perhaps not just the world in one city, but the world in one phone.

We now live amidst streams of information and opinion, an overwhelming excess of diverse and incommensurate world-views that collide in devices that we hold in our palms.

### **Facing each other**

The result is diversity but without facing each other. Liverpool is a city that deals brilliantly with diversity, it always has done, it always will do - it seems to be in the DNA of the city that it manages to bring people together. That was one of the huge pleasures of being here. But they do it here - they, the citizens of Liverpool - because everyone sees each other, face to face.

But electronic media gives us diversity in front of us without facing each other. Is it a good thing that we are brought so close to the global community? Or is there something crucial about face-to-face encounters that we are missing in this new type of diversity?

The power and the challenge of face-to-face encounters are described by Professor David Ford, Regius Professor of Divinity in Cambridge, as being of salvific value, of something that brings salvation. The self, he argues, is symbolized by the dynamics of human facing. "We live before the faces of others,"<sup>[1]</sup> he says.

And this facing confronts us with the many facets of what it means to be a self, to be a person: Biology. The five senses. History. Ethics. Gender. Communication. Politics. Institutions. The arts.

Sin. Evil. Salvation. God.

Are all brought to us by facing each other.

And most importantly, facing each other enables us to perceive selfhood in others. To see that the person we're looking at is a human being of infinite dignity.

In the Church of England we're going through what are called shared conversations around the issues of human sexuality. The point of shared conversations is to get people of radically different views, not communicating through email, website, Facebook, statement, newspaper column.

But to sit in the same room, in a chair across from somebody with whom you disagree profoundly, and to listen to them and to talk to them. The

effect is remarkable.

Facing each other is complex and subtle, but it is also deeply simple.

David Ford notes, “It is in such face-to-face meetings, deeply resistant to adequate description, that many of the most significant things in our lives happen.”<sup>[2]</sup> Not many of us propose to our life partner on Facebook or by Twitter. David goes on to quote the *Hymns on Paradise* by the celebrated early Christian poet and hymn writer St Ephrem the Syrian. And in this stanza he meditates on the impact of facing God. Listen to this early medieval monk, writing from the area now occupied by ISIL. He says:

“The Lord of all

Is the treasure store of all things:

upon each according to his capacity

He bestows a glimpse

of the beauty of His hiddenness, of the splendor of His majesty.

He is the radiance who, in His love,

makes everyone shine

– the small, with flashes of light from Him,

the perfect, with rays more intense,

but only His Child is sufficient for the might of his glory.

Accordingly as each here on earth

purifies his eye for Him,

so does he become more able to behold

His incomparable glory...”<sup>[3]</sup>

When we face each other, deeply and sincerely, we begin to catch a glimpse of our creation, our Creator, and thus our shared humanity.

Now, with the abolition of the global, we are inundated with images of faces. And yet, we rarely *encounter* them in this way. Rarer still

accountable before them. The *quality* of our facing one another has deteriorated because it is so fleeting and so removed.

### **Diversity in the absence of presence**

Because we are failing to experience these encounters, we are failing to deal with diversity. Historically, diversity has been dealt with by a recognition of interdependence based on locality, be it tribe, village, city, even nation. In Liverpool people need each other, the city works when they recognise they need each other. It's the only way any community works. In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates argues that a city is bound together the more its citizens are unified in their identification of the pains and pleasures, successes and failures, and feel those of each other as important as their own. The greatest good is for all the citizens to see everyone and everything as being in common between them, for them to use such words as 'mine' and 'not mine' in unison.

This interdependence based on locality even applies to national unity – epitomised by the speeches of Winston Churchill in 1940, in which he sought to rally British citizens to unite behind the war cause by appealing to “all that the British Empire has stood for”.

But we have not developed the tools for dealing with diversity *in the absence of presence, of facing*.

The consequences can be bad enough when we do have these encounters and fail to see the other behind the other's face. When we misconstrue a word or a glance, or in a moment of frustration misinterpret a remark. It is much worse when can't even see the Other except via the sometimes partial and false reports we read on Twitter.

### **Facing and religious violence**

One consequence of the abolition of the global, without replacing it with a proper approach to facing a world that is now entirely local, a world in one city, or rather one smart-phone, is that we are seeing a rise in religiously motivated violence and suppression of religious freedom around the world.

We can point to Myanmar, south India and Sri Lanka, where the persecution and violence directed at the Muslim population has been indescribably severe. We can look to the Central African Republic, where violence between Christian and Muslim militias is more brutal and inhuman than we can begin to imagine. These are but a few, partial, examples around the world. There are many more that I could list and elaborate on. And they are contagious and spread, because they are seen without seeing human beings.

As I said, my wife Caroline and I have travelled to all 37 other provinces of the Anglican Communion since I became Archbishop. In almost half of these provinces, the Church is living under persecution and the threat of serious violence. They fear for their lives every day.

Not only do many groups feel marginalised in their own countries and communities, but there is a broader, global, challenge. Many religious traditions – essential to the vast majority of the world – are feeling marginalised by the hegemony of Western liberal market capitalism. Such a

system is often seen as a Christian, especially Protestant, innovation. We may not think it so, but the concept of secular and sacred divides is distant in many parts of the world.

Where other systems are failing to innovate, these faith groups come to feel as though they are on the outside, falling or fallen behind, rather than full and welcomed members of the global community. To trade, they must buy into market capitalism, to develop economically, to engage at a global level. Even more than that there is now a western led, capitalist emphasis on the environment - a right one, I hasten to say. But some sense that their historic values, or global leadership, which they saw in the past, is undermined, and in a holistic view of the world that becomes a threat to the self-identity that they receive from their faith<sup>[4]</sup>. Seemingly, one answer is violence.

Let me, slightly in the spirit of "1066 And All That", give a potted view from an Islamic angle. I need hardly say, but will, that these views are **not** mine, and more than that, these views are **not** held by many Muslims, but they represent things said to me around the world, by particularly radicalised groups in the last 12 years. This is a sort of collection of sayings:

"From the 7th-12th century Islam dominated Europe, conquering vast areas including Spain and parts of south west France, creating the golden age of Cordoba, leading in the arts, in medicine, in science, in diplomacy, preserving the classical knowledge of Greece. By 1900, though, the person who ruled the most Muslims was the Queen Empress, Victoria, in London. By 1990, to do anything in international trade one had to accept the payment and receipt of interest. From 1990 to 2003, two Islamic nations were invaded by the Christians, one of them twice. That one was left in social and moral ruins. Another was isolated for asserting its sovereignty and seeking to develop the weapons that the big nations have had since the 1940s."

And the person I was talking to ended by saying: "And you call us the problem?"

As I say, I am not in agreement with that reading of history. But you can understand, with that glorious past embedded in your understanding of the world, how you would feel that you had lost out and needed to recover.

The effect we are witnessing is twofold.

First, a bunker mentality develops. Extreme defensiveness and self-justification.

Marginalised groups retreat in search of holiness and purity. They say to themselves, and we see this in all faiths: 'Our failures must be because of lack of proper attention to God, we must reform. We must turn away from those who are impure.'

This is, dangerously in my view, combined with Golden Age Syndrome. That is the desire to return to a mythological age where power and strength were demonstrated on a grand scale, and where we might seek to please whatever deity or belief structure we embrace.

At its worst, this separation from the world, this bunker mentality, and this myth of a golden age, in our own group's narrative, is leading to a global rise of religious and fundamentalist violence in defence of a tradition that has little evidence of ever having existed in the form now imagined.

The philosopher and politician – perhaps an unusual combination in today's soundbites and poll-led politics - Edmund Burke argued in *Reflections on the French Revolution* that society has an intergenerational covenant.

It binds us by an imaginative connection with past and future generations. He said: "a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born". Which, by the way, incidentally, is the justification for the importance of the environmental movement.

But the violence that emerges when our idea of the past is myth, or ISIL's idea of the past is myth, can be understood as a warped defence of those very covenants, quite different from the conservative social development sought by Burke.

Let me elaborate.

ISIL certainly appeals to the tradition of a religious society to justify their violence.

They root themselves in an interpretation of the traditions and teachings of early Islam, reviving traditions that have been dormant for hundreds of years, whilst at the same time, ignoring and violating 700 years of Muslim scholarship and jurisprudence that at points was the most sophisticated system in the known world. For them, any supposed innovation that conflicts with their worldview and tradition is a denial of its initial perfection; any deviation is apostasy. And the punishment for apostasy is death.

The journalist Graeme Wood described an ISIS recruiter that he had met as “living out a drama that looks, from an outsider's perspective, like a mediaeval fantasy novel, only with real blood.”[\[5\]](#)

The recruiter was obsessed with Islamic apocalypticism and convinced that he was part of a pre-ordained battle to bring about the caliphate, which he believes is itself a vehicle for salvation.

As I will touch on later in this lecture, such a view is not only deeply troubling in itself, but requires from those involved in leadership a far higher level of faith literacy than our current national and international political rhetoric calls for.

When a U.S. State Department spokesperson goes on primetime news television and states that: “We’re killing a lot of them and we’re going to keep killing more of them” – there is a level of religious illiteracy that is fundamentally damaging to the entire situation.

In ISIL we have a most extreme form of the bunker mentality, driven in part through electronic media's effects, and an incapacity to see humanity



in the Other. There is a sense of being under siege.

Individuals are encountering difference - difference that appears to be threatening - and finding themselves unable to respond to it, unable to engage with it at a human level. They are encountering it because of the abolition of the global.

Could this be something something that all forms of extremism have in common?

Combine this with socio-economic and geopolitical realities that further complicate the situation - and I cannot begin to repeat often enough how complicated it is, which is why we must pray for those in responsibilities of leadership over us - but combine socio-economic and geopolitical realities with what I've said, and the result is horrific violence and grave danger at a time when the world is at great risk both from conventional forms of conflict, and from more recent threats like climate change, which will drive conflict and already is.

## Part 2: Approaches

### Face each other

Faced with such challenges, how then can we learn, at every level, to live together well? First, wherever possible and at all levels, but especially as religious and political leaders, we need to face each other.

It has got to be possible to use both traditional and electronic media constructively to find new ways to approach our new global neighbours - to help rather than hinder our encounters.

We now have at our disposal the IT tools to implement such encounters and we should reflect on how this can be done well, to develop relationships where there were previously only caricatures of individuals.

In partnership with the Tony Blair Faith Foundation and Coventry Cathedral's Community of the Cross of Nails, we have brought together two groups of Christians and Muslims from Nigeria, a country I know well and love deeply. First, a group of influential Imams and Pastors, and second a group from universities where radicalisation is strongly suspected to occur. Some of them had never met face to face with someone of the other faith before, but they had met them electronically and hated.

One Muslim lawyer, whose name I cannot mention because of threats that have since been made to him, admitted that he now realised that his speeches at the Muslim Students Society had encouraged antagonistic attitudes to Christians. As a direct result of his encounter with Christians, he now uses speaking engagements as opportunities to appeal to thousands of Muslim students to embrace Christians as their fellow Nigerians. Those two groups between them, 30 in each year, have so far communicated personally with 60,000 Nigerians.

We need to turn face to face with other religious leaders, other politicians, with integrity and generosity.

## Outward-looking action together

And once we have faced each other and begun to break down the barriers of self-preservation, we can start to look outwards, side by side, and take action together.

It is not good enough to make decisions to suit our own local context. This challenge we face at the moment is global. It is not good enough to make changes that only improve the lives of a small handful of people, because the outside world is now just as much a part of each of our own localities. The global is abolished, all live in the world in one city.

The deprivation and inequality that remains unchanged elsewhere will come rushing in to fill the space. Look at the consequences in the Mediterranean of the combination of high visibility of the global in the local.

There are practical actions that can be pursued through our country's foreign, defence and development agendas.

For example, different religious communities, or different states separated by religions who may disagree on doctrinal matters, could seek out areas of common ground on public policy, through face-to-face conversations. I may not see eye to eye with my Muslim friends - and I have many Muslim friends - on the divinity of Christ, but there is plenty of scope for us to work together to combat climate change and poverty.

When we look outward, to issues of mutual concern, rather than inward to our differences, we can change the narrative on issues of development and power, which hold us back as a world. These are not zero-sum games. Nobody *has* to lose when it comes to our efforts to mitigate climate change or end extreme poverty.

Through face-to-face dialogue – by making the localisation of the global work for mutual advantage across different groups – we begin to chip away at the walls that have been erected to separate us.

Such an approach must be accompanied by realistic and pragmatic considerations when it comes to security. Openness and vulnerability must not be allowed to become naiveté.

Our response must also involve the renewal of the mandate for a United Nations equipped for a new age of facing, its members pulled out of an increasingly entrenched and Cold War-rooted mind-set.

We must also prioritise development, and always work in favour of the poor, domestically and internationally. The imminent arrival of the Sustainable Development Goals, the successor framework to the Millennium Development Goals, and the forthcoming negotiations on a global agreement on climate change, are watershed moments for the global community, in ways that many cannot imagine.

Pope Francis' recent encyclical *Laudato Si'* demonstrates the centrality of faith in Jesus Christ to care for the environment. And his many other

statements, the centrality of love for the poor to be love for Jesus Christ.

Ending extreme poverty and mitigating the changing climate, which disproportionately affects the poorest in our world, are important parts of the new age of facing. They bring us together, and tackle much of the underlying marginalisation and dispossession felt by those who are attracted to fundamentalist causes.

As with tackling poverty and climate change, governments - and only governments – can also play a significant part in tackling the corruption and money laundering that finances violent organisations. This is especially true in the greatest financial centres in the world, the ones where volume of activity makes hiding the illicit easy.

### **Developing a common language**

Finally, we need to recognise that this all requires a shift in the narrative - from a transactional language to a relational one. This shift in the narrative is underpinned by a commitment to human flourishing.

Not Christian flourishing.

Or Muslim flourishing.

Or even humanist flourishing.

But a flourishing that is open to all, offered to all and available to all.

We can draw on the deeply significant encyclical published by Pope Benedict in 2009, *Caritas in Veritate* – a document that has had a profound impact on my own thinking in this area – for some insight into how this might be achieved. I could quote extensively from the encyclical, and if you have not read it, I would highly recommend it.

Towards the end of the document, Benedict challenges our assumptions, individually and corporately, on how we understand the world – with and without a conception of gratuity and human flourishing.

“When technology is allowed to take over”, he says, “the result is confusion between ends and means, such that the sole criterion for action in business is thought to be the maximisation of profit, in politics the consolidation of power, and in science the findings of research.”[\[6\]](#)

The transactional approach to life and language can only be overcome with gratuity, generosity and a relational approach.

We must give, and not expect anything in return.

In our face-to-face interactions, we give of ourselves, and in doing so, open up the possibility of a new dialogue and new relationships based on

common humanity, rather than on power.

And this shift in *language* requires a shift in *literacy*.

At the middle, governmental level, we need to ensure that we are equipping our decision-makers with faith literacy that has the power to improve our global situation.

We must find a common language that can be understood and used by political and religious leaders to talk about religious belief in their own contexts.

We must greatly improve the quality with which leaders understand the cultures and beliefs of others, so that dialogue and decisions can take place through genuine understanding rather than poorly nuanced preconceptions and prejudices. I am not referring to the Prime Minister's speech today, for the avoidance of doubt.

I return to the example I gave earlier of the State Department official's remarks.

Had he engaged at all in the ideological theology of ISIL, he would have understood that the promise that 'we're killing a lot of them' would be heard as the fulfilment of prophecy and further proof of the legitimacy of this perverted group that claims fraudulently to be a caliphate. For they believe that a sign of the imminent arrival of the End of Days is the death of a large number of the caliphate's fighters in a great battle against 'the armies of Rome'. That's not Rome, Italy, that's us.

In other words, it would not have been perceived as a threat but as an opportunity.

Effective faith literacy requires not only knowledge but an emotional intelligence that enables us to understand the place of faith in other people's lives.

## **Conclusion**

Above all, as I have said, these actions need to be taken through genuine face-to-face encounter. Echoing our metaphor of facing, we read in 2 Corinthians 3.18: "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." But for that to happen we must face each other.

As Christians, we believe in the transformational power of coming face to face with Jesus Christ. When we turn to face him in faith we are changed by this encounter. The challenge - Christian, atheist, any other faith tradition - is to strive for genuine encounter, with the difference that we now find surrounding us in our hands. In this way, we will be better able to recognise the diversity and value of each and every human face.

And I will say, as a Christian, to recognise the face of God.

Thank you.

[1] D Ford, *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed*, 17

[2] *ibid*, 18

[3] St Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise*, Introduction and translation by Sebastian Brock (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press; Cresstwood, NY 1990), Hymn IX, pp.138ff, quoted in D. Ford *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed*, 25-29

[4] I am indebted to Professor Bernard Haylek of Princeton for a conversation that set me thinking about these ideas.

[5] G Wood, 'What ISIS Really Wants', *The Atlantic*, March 2015

[6] Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009), 71. [http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_enc\\_20090629\\_caritas-in-veritate.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html)

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