



Smith Institute

Reinvigorating Communities: Regaining a big vision for Britain

Most Revd & Rt Hon Dr John Sentamu, Archbishop of York

A lecture given on Tuesday 13th January 2009

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I'm going to begin with a quotation. After all, as the writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes (often referred to as the Royal Philosopher or Preacher) says, **“There is nothing new under the sun”**.

(Ecclesiastes 1:9b) So here goes:

“This is the first time anybody had set out to embody the whole spirit of the Christian ethic in an Act of Parliament”.

These words were William Temple's in 1942.

He was then the Archbishop of Canterbury and he was responding to the publication of the Beveridge Report in December 1942. I hope, in my lecture to show you why he believed it was so important “to embody the whole spirit of the Christian ethic in an Act of Parliament”; and what we could learn from this.

I have called my lecture tonight, *‘Regaining a big vision for Britain’*. In it, I wish to do three things. First of all, to explore the ‘big vision’ that Beveridge and others had for Britain in the 1940s. Then I will argue that, for a variety of reasons, we have lost that vision and why understanding this loss matters. In the final part of my lecture, I will put the case why we need to regain a **‘big vision’** for Britain today and how we might achieve this.

I The Big Vision of Beveridge

Forty years before Archbishop Temple's affirmation of the Beveridge Report, three young men first met at Balliol College, Oxford. Between them, they were to develop and realise a major vision for Britain. They were the selfsame William Temple, son of Frederick Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, Richard Tawney and William Beveridge.

One man in particular, had a major influence over the whole Balliol student community at that time. He was the Master of the College, the eminent Scottish philosopher Edward Caird. Deeply influenced by the poverty he had witnessed in his native Glasgow, he had campaigned for social reform.

At Balliol he encouraged his undergraduates to become involved with the university settlements in the East End of London in Bethnal Green, Whitechapel and Bermondsey, in South London.

Whilst at Oxford the three young men were challenged to go to the East End of London to ‘find friends among the poor, as well as finding out what poverty is and what can be done about it.’ In the East End their consciences were pricked by **poverty: visible, audible, and smellable**.

After Oxford, both Tawney and Temple were involved in the founding and running of the W.E.A. (Workers Educational Association). This was to have a big impact on widening educational opportunities to adult workers and involving them in planning it.

The experience in the East End of London had a lasting impact of opening their eyes to the often grim realities of life for many of their fellow citizens. William Temple reported on meeting,

“A dear boy from Luton in the London Hospital – aged 13 and reading Lubbock's book on Ants and Bees – son of a railway clerk and doomed to become one himself, but wishes to be a clergyman, for choice a missionary in China”.

William Temple was struck by the boy's intelligence but also realised he was unlikely, because of his background, to be able to use it. This encounter, along with others, helped

plant the seeds which later in life led him, Tawney and Beveridge to seek radical reform – each in their own way were to build a new vision for Britain..

Tawney an eminent economic historian criticised what he called “the religion of inequality” in England. In his *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism (1926)* he condemned the fundamental assumption of both leaders and reformers that “the attainment of material riches is the supreme object of human endeavour and the final criterion of human success” (P286).

William Temple was increasingly troubled by the poverty and deprivation he had witnessed as Bishop of Manchester and latterly as Archbishop of York and then of Canterbury. In his seminal work *Christianity and the Social Order (1942)*, he called on the government to set themselves six objectives to address the crisis.

These were (1) proper housing for children, (2) decent education, (3) a proper income for workers and the unemployed, (4) opportunities for workers to have a voice in the running of their firms, (5) adequate leisure and (b) liberty.

Many of the reforms which William Temple had called for were realized in the Beveridge’s Report. The Report offered three guiding principles for its recommendations:

First, proposals for the future should not be limited by “sectional interests” in learning from experience and that “a revolutionary movement in the world’s history is a time for revolutions, not for patching”. Not sowing a new cloth on a worn-out garment. It is a time for setting aside personal agendas, encouraging the change of heart and empowering all people to tear down the walls of fear, cruelty and hatred.

Second, social insurance is only one part of a “comprehensive policy of social progress”. The five giants (taken from John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*) which were obstacles on the road to reconstruction were: **Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness**. All five giants had to be tackled together. A piecemeal approach was inadequate to create a fire-break.

Thirdly, policies of social security “must be achieved by co-operation between the State and the individual” with the state securing the service and contributions. The state “should not stifle incentive, opportunity, and responsibility: in establishing a national minimum, it should leave room and encouragement for voluntary action by each individual to provide more than that minimum for himself and his family”.

The social reforms implemented by the Labour Party after the 1945 General Election, led to the creation of the Welfare State. The range of Acts including the Family Allowances Act 1945, the National Insurance Act 1946 and the National Health Service Act 1946, addressed the five giants of deprivation.

It’s hard for us today to take in the full impact of these Acts. For the Beveridge reforms transformed the lives of millions. They virtually became a touchstone of what Britain was about. For the first time, everyone was entitled to a reasonable income if they were unemployed, a proper pension, paid holidays and above all, free healthcare. If you became sick, the state would care for you. There are many countries in the world that still do not enjoy these entitlements today.

Built into these reforms was a strong conviction that the state should provide support as needed. However it was not to encourage dependency. Beveridge envisaged that workers could and should seek to improve conditions for their families.

The reforms which Tawney, Temple and Beveridge achieved in the 1940s represented the apogee of a shared 'big vision' for Britain in the last century. Intellectuals, church leaders and government agreed both on the big vision and on the ways in which it could be delivered.

It is a tragedy that we have increasingly lost this big vision.

In the following section, I will explore how it happened and what the results have been. Memory is important. For any community that loses its memory becomes senile. Memory loss has made Britain sleep-walk on streets supposedly paved with gold, but sadly littered with promissory notes whose cash value is the credit crunch and the economic downturn as well as becoming a country that is not at ease with itself.

We have all contributed to this. Blaming it all on the Government confirms in my mind that we are truly a BSE nation: B.S.E = Blame Someone Else!

II How we lost the big vision

How have we lost the big vision and how has it affected us? These questions are important because we live in a radically different world today. Increasingly we are living in a society which is ill at ease with itself. The reason for this is, I believe, because we have lost our vision of what we are about. We have also lost our confidence to develop a new vision. Consensus and magnanimity are no longer national characteristics. Why is this and why is it so serious?

Let me start with the Beveridge's reforms themselves. Some would argue that they have failed, and it has become increasingly difficult for our governments to deliver these objectives. My judgement is the opposite. I believe that Beveridge succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. Britain achieved a National Health Service which became a model for Europe and the rest of the world.

As someone who spent 7 days seriously ill in the University College Hospital in London three months ago, I give thanks for the rebuilding programme and the spending on health in the past 11 years.

The United Kingdom has provided income and support to those who are sick, unemployed or incapacitated in many other ways. And at long last we have the minimum wage. Courage is now required of all of us to turn this into a **living wage**. Britain has developed an educational system which provides a free and full education for all. But sadly, until recently top-up fees at universities were unheard of!

So what has gone wrong? Well, our expectations have risen exponentially as we have seen with the NHS. Also, the NHS success has meant that we are all living longer – much longer in fact. As a result, we need far more medical services and pensions. We are victims of our own success!

The problem we face today is that things have become more complicated. The hydra has grown more heads; and sadly all of us unwittingly continue to feed it instead of starving it. It is becoming harder and harder both for those who govern and those who speak out on behalf of us to see the problems clearly or to identify the right solutions.

We have also become a more self-absorbed society. I believe that one of the key factors which has contributed to our loss of **the big vision** for our country, has been the loss of the Empire. I am aware that this is a controversial view. But whilst Britain had an Empire, a large merchant navy, a large manufacturing industry and commerce, and significant numbers engaged in armed forces, and an expatriate Civil Service in the colonies, it encouraged an outward-looking perspective.

As the vision for Britain became more introspective, I believe we became more self-absorbed. Hugh Montefiore, in his Installation Sermon as the sixth Bishop of Birmingham on 4 March 1978 said that, *“No-one can lead a fully human life unless he has a worthy aim in life. I sometimes fear that the people of this great country, having shed an Empire, have also lost a noble vision for their future. How can we rediscover our self-confidence and self-esteem as a nation? What do we really want for our beloved land? Man cannot live by bread alone, nor yet by cash alone. We need a nobler aim in life than an annual increase in take-home pay. What we need are new ideals, a new sense of self-esteem, which will unite us, energize us and unleash those excellencies of character and creativity latent within us all. I believe it is the task of the Church not so much to condemn our failures as to help towards the acceptance of common goals which uplift the heart. Certainly there are no signs these may come from any other source*

Such worthy aims will not come from economics or from sociology, not from science or from politics, but from the Spirit of God welling up in the hearts of men.” (An Installation Sermon, p.20 in *‘Taking Our Past Into Our Future’* Hugh Montefiore, 1978, Fount Paperbacks UK).

As the winds of change were blowing the British Empire away, the United Kingdom was rapidly becoming what has come to be termed a multi-cultural society.

It is important to see this within its historical context. Britain has always been a place of refuge to those seeking asylum and also for those seeking a new economic life here. For example, there were over 250,000 Jews living in Britain at the start of the First World War. They integrated and in the main, were accepted.

What happened after the Second World War was a different phenomenon. For the first time, significant numbers of immigrants from a non Judaeo-Christian background came to settle in the UK.

There have been different models put forward by governments to deal with these developments. The Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks describes the two main approaches used to date in his latest book, *The Home We Build Together*. He compares immigrants to this country up to the 1950s to guests in a country house. They were treated with courtesy, given what they needed. However, it was very clear that they were guests and were expected to fit in with the dominant British, Judaeo-Christian model of government and society. It was a model based on assimilation in which minorities were expected to lose their identities in order to belong.

With the decline of the empire and the growth of significant immigration to England from the Commonwealth, Chief Rabbi Sacks discerns a new approach which he compares to a hotel. Guests are entitled to stay if they can pay their way, are free to choose their hotel and receive basic services in return for their payment. But they are guests – they do not belong. In the same way, migrants to Britain from the 1960s onwards have made their home with their cultural rights protected under legislation framed under a multi-cultural perspective. Consequently any sense of a shared common culture is eroded risking increasing segregation.

In all these developments, the lack of a common ‘big vision’ and the implications of this are becoming increasingly evident. I believe this has been characterised by over-cautious policy-formation, fear and irritation.

Since 2001, the government has tried hard to address the problems born of a multi-cultural approach through social cohesion. There have been no less than five major government reports on social cohesion since 2001. Although worthy, few have managed to fulfil their stated aims. The main reason for this is because, despite the rhetoric, governments have been reluctant to delegate real powers to local communities.

There has also been a reluctance to acknowledge the strong Judaeo-Christian heritage which has shaped our language, our laws, our education and our hard-won civil rights.

The Church of England also lost its nerve during this period. It acted prophetically in 1985 with the publication of *Faith in the City*. By 'prophetically' I mean that quality of acting and speaking in a visionary way to the powers that be. In the Bible, the prophets had three characteristics. They spoke what they believed to be the truth i.e. that God was calling his people to become what they were called to be. They modelled that truth as far as possible in their own lives, often by means of a symbolic act. The prophets spoke out, on behalf of their people, against injustice and oppression.

We see this prophetic quality in *Faith in the City*. In the conclusion, the authors quoted a damning submission they had received which stated:

'The exclusion of the poor is pervasive and not accidental. It is organised and imposed by powerful institutions which represent the rest of us.'

The authors went on to proclaim:

'The critical issue to be faced is whether there is any serious political will to set in motion a process which will enable those who are at present in poverty and powerless to rejoin the life of the nation' (Faith in the City, 15.6).

This was a real and courageous witness of Christians standing up and proclaiming the value and rights of those who were weakest in our society. In many ways, it was the high point both in vision and witness by the church since the big vision of Tawney, Temple and Beveridge in 1942.

But, on facing savage attack by not only those in government but other powerful figures in society, the Church of England lost its nerve. Stung by the accusation that the Report was 'Marxist', the Church of England turned inwards and failed to maintain a big vision.

It focused on pastoral and social projects, and did not pursue the other two characteristics of prophetic wisdom: speaking out what the Church believed God was calling England to become as well as speaking out on behalf of the voiceless and the unheard in the market square. And embodying in practice what God was calling England to become. Late in the day, both government and church leaders have sought to develop a concept of 'Britishness'.

In a speech in 1997, Gordon Brown described the qualities which 'add up to the British genius' as 'a passion for liberty anchored in a sense of duty and an intrinsic commitment to fair play'. He refers frequently to 'a golden thread' running through British history 'of the individual standing firm against tyranny and the arbitrary use of power'.

Mr Brown also argued that there is also a strong tradition of the ethic of community. In a 2006 speech, he referred to, "men and women who did not allow liberty to descend into a selfish individualism or into a crude libertarianism"....who 'chose solidarity in preference to selfishness; thus creating out of the idea of duty and responsibility, the Britain of civic responsibility and the public realm'. This has led him to argue that British values were best carried out 'by local clubs, associations, societies and endeavours – from churches and trade unions to municipal initiatives and friendly societies'.

In many ways, the Prime Minister's vision of Britishness has much to commend it. It is rooted in our history, particularly in its understanding of liberty and freedom of the individual. This is balanced by the concept of civic responsibility, of care for each other, of neighbourliness.

However, this vision of Britishness flounders if it does not allow for participation, involvement and commitment from individuals and communities, which Gordon Brown recognises as vital to our ethic.

The Government needs to bridge the gap between its rhetoric of devolving power to local communities and what is happening in practice. Mark Chapman has pointed out in his recent book *Doing God – on religion and public policy in Brown's Britain* that, 'The greatest problem, it seems to me, is the sheer force of government centralism and the lack of trust in local communities and local government to organise things as they see fit' (Chapman 2008, P 48).

And, sadly that lack of trust has, too often, led to over-hasty responses to panic headlines on immigration and asylum, on crime, on safety, and to an impulse towards the creation of legislation rather than towards consultation and dialogue.

The use of the Statute, as a means of giving new assurance and confidence to the public, is doomed to failure. The attempt, for example, to extend imprisonment without trial to 42 days is a recent example of this encroachment on some of the freedoms which have formerly been entrenched in our laws.

However, I believe that British people still have a strong perception of themselves as a tolerant people, defenders of just causes and supporters of the underdog. The vision for our country will be served much better if the Government is able to show that it trusts the people, and has confidence in communities to demonstrate this sense of 'fairness' and 'charity'. We need to encourage the Government to believe that they can indeed carry out the values contained in Brown's concept of Britishness in their policies.

Most importantly therefore, in order to provide the big vision we need, Brown's vision of Britishness must engage with what is happening to people in their daily lives. The huge gap between the vision and the reality needs to be bridged.

In many places our sense of community has been weakened not only by the centralism of successive governments, but by the determinedly individualistic ethos of the past decades. Communities are far weaker in our country than they were sixty years ago when Beveridge, Tawney and Temple implemented their reforms. Fear and unfamiliarity with our neighbours has meant that there is far less sense of fraternity, of commitment and of playing a role in our local communities.

I am aware that the Government's New Opportunities White Paper, which was published today, contains within it the outline of a new policy which aims to create "Inspiring Communities" where schools, businesses, local agencies, parents and the wider community will be involved in working together to help young people to achieve their aspirations. I have had only a little time to consider the proposals in detail, but let me use this opportunity to broadly welcome this attempt to see community working as part of the solution to our wider problems.

In this situation we need to be sure that that the call to 'Britishness' is not in fact a call to exclusiveness rather than inclusiveness. It is important for us to identify and celebrate the values and commitments we share rather than requiring people to 'opt into Britishness'.

The devolution of power to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is also relevant for our concept of Britishness. We will need to consider how this affects our sense of belonging and our sense of what it is to be English in the English nation.

But these recent developments are also an indication that the sense of national identity is not as dead as some people might fear, and that there is a place for the big vision. Indeed

there are numerous indications that there is a return to the desire for a coherent and inclusive cultural identity, and an ethic of society.

So how do we regain a big vision for Britain? How do we regain a vision such as that which Beveridge, Tawney and Temple developed so successfully?

For it is essential that we have a big vision for 'without a vision, the people perish' (Proverbs 29:18).

III Regaining the big vision for Britain

I think the answer lies in going back to this original vision and seeing what lessons it has to teach us. In particular, I believe that the principles that inspired William Temple are highly illuminating.

In his *Christianity and the Social Order*, William Temple identified three core social principles.

These were seminal and were to inspire the reforms he called for and which were largely realised in the Beveridge Report. They were:

First, Freedom: the person is primary and not the state. The first aim of social progress is to give fullest scope to personal powers of which the highest is the power to choose. Freedom therefore is the goal of politics. Power to the people. However, it should be freedom *for* as well as freedom *from*. In other words, **people are called to contribute as well as receive liberty.**

Second, Social fellowship: we are social beings and belong in community. The family and local community are of paramount importance. The government must recognise the importance of voluntary groups such as churches, trade unions, etc.

Third, Service: we should continually ask ourselves, '**where can I give my best service?**'

These principles give a framework in which we can begin to build up a big vision for our time. Let me show you why I believe this is the case.

William Temple's first two principles that the person is primary and that we are social beings remind us of an important truth.

That is: that any analysis of society which treats people either as just individuals with no collective responsibility or on the other hand, as mere objects of economic and social forces is bound to fail. We are not just individuals confronted by the state. Instead, we belong to society through many different communities, geographical, ideological, faith and in many other ways.

Any big vision, therefore, must recognise both the primacy of the individual and the fact that we belong together in community. But is it still relevant and pertinent that our new vision for Britain have a faith and ethical undergirding as Beveridge's did?

Of course I am going to say yes! Just let us bear in mind our current context. We live in a society in which there is still a strong faith tradition. The 2001 census showed that just over three quarters of the UK population reported having a religion.

More than seven out of ten said that their religion was Christian, that is 72% - some 38.4 million people. The next largest group was Muslim (1.6 million) followed by Hindus 559 thousand), Sikhs (336 thousand), Jews (267 thousand) and Buddhists (152 thousand). This is the important statistic and not opinion polls of a thousand plus people!

I believe that reclaiming our faith heritage is central to regaining our big vision for Britain. Over the past fifty years, we have become less confident as a nation and as faith groups to talk about faith in God in public life.

Some secularists have argued that faith is declining and should therefore no longer be tolerated in public life.

The classic example of this is Alistair Campbell's intervention in the middle of Tony Blair's interview with *Vanity Fair* in 2003. When the interviewer asked Blair about his faith, Campbell intervened, "Is he on God? We don't do God. I'm sorry, we don't do God". This example shows the extent to which it is hard to integrate religion into public policy discussion in Britain today. However, the 2001 census figures show us that we should be less fearful of claiming our religious heritage. Religion is a core aspect of people's identity and will not be relegated to the private sphere.

Our new vision for Britain must not just be political but ethical as well. Aristotle regarded politics as 'ethics writ large'. The political arguments in Britain today about the management of the economy and public services do not seem to live up to this principle. We need to re-assess the relationship between ourselves and government.

For the real issue is not just what our government can do for us but what we can *all* do. This was the enormous strength of the Beveridge Reforms. They brought together concerns of the people, the vision of religious and other leaders in society and those of the government. This is why they began by being such an outstanding success.

What we need to do today is to re-engage people in the whole process of how we plan and live together as a nation. Quite often over recent years we have seen the coming together of communities and the development of new strong bonds of unity in response to some tragedy or threat: groups which formed during the troubles in Northern Ireland to commit themselves to reconciliation and peace; community organisations which were set up to help bring inter-faith understanding in the Northern Towns; mothers against guns and knives in South London, and many others.

We need to recognise, however, that communities are no longer the same kind of close-knit homogenous groups and extended families, portrayed in such studies as *Family and Kinship in East London*.

The Government, local authorities and businesses must find ways of relating to them built on expectations which are appropriate to present realities.

We can see that a political vision alone won't work. What we are experiencing is an increasing gap between where the people and the politicians are. It is not about what governments can do for us but what we can *all* do. Unless we are all involved in developing and achieving a new vision, it will not work. As Jonathan Sacks has pointed out, "we need to build our home together".

It is here that religious communities can make a special contribution. They can do so because each has as its foundation, a big vision which acts as a moral framework and starting point for all they do. In the case of the Church, I believe it can do this by acting prophetically. This means helping to proclaim the big vision, living it out in practice and witnessing, where necessary against injustices which desecrate that vision.

Let me explain in more detail what I mean. As Christians, we believe that we are made by God, in his image and likeness. Each person therefore is important and sacred. What is more, each person needs the other. St Paul described this in his famous analogy, when he compares the community to the human body.

He wrote, 'If there were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you" nor again

the head to the feet, “I have no need of you”. On the contrary, the members of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable”. (1 Cor. 12: 20-22) .

This is the starting point for the big vision and it expresses those principles which William Temple described in *Christianity and the Social Order*. Each person matters and we need each other for our society and communities to flourish. We do this by focusing our concern not so much on how we help ourselves but how we can help others.

This brings me onto the second aspect of living prophetically which is the attempt to live these principles out in practice.

One of the key ways the Church and all religious communities can contribute here is by helping people to rediscover the quality of fraternity. We have focused, particularly in the last fifty years, on liberty and equality. But we have tended to underestimate the importance of fraternity. Yet without fraternity neither true liberty nor true equality can be achieved.

For fraternity is about learning to live together using the family as model. We don't choose our families any more than they choose us. One of the great lessons of growing up is learning to live together, to accept, tolerate, negotiate and love each other. Our churches when they are working well, are good models of this. For in them, we find all ages and people from all walks of life learning to worship, share their faith and serve the community together. Yes, when they are truly living the Good News of God in Jesus Christ they are communities of reconciliation: confronting the four great issues of St Paul's day and still the great issues of our day – idolatry, class, ethnicity and sex.

The Church has the power to overcome idolatry and then work for the reconciliation of class, ethnicity and sex; especially for trust, confidence, respect and reconciliation.

This community of forgiven and forgiving sinners (a fraternity) is also modelled in the parish system in the Church of England where the priest serves and is available to help each person who lives in that parish, whether or not they are a churchgoer or even a Christian.

Fraternity serves as model for living together in our local communities. It is not about choosing who we care to live with but about saying, “how can I learn to live alongside and contribute to our common life in this community?”

This is so important for it is only by building real and effective communities at a local level that we shall achieve a new and lasting vision for our country. How can we do this?

One way is, as we have seen, for the government to live up to its rhetoric and to return power to local communities. In this way, people can make real choices about how they can live together and make a difference.

Another way is by encouraging the development of the voluntary sector. The church and all religious communities can make a real contribution because they are already doing this work on the ground. They can provide models and advice as how this can be done.

The Church of England Report *Faithful Cities: A call for celebration, vision and justice* (2006) argued that there is more to life than economic and social regeneration. The well-being and renewal of our cities should be grounded in a vision of justice and human dignity. It pointed out that what makes a good city is that people are generous, creating safe and well-functioning communities through their volunteering. It also showed how the Church was playing an enormous role in helping to build up faithful capital in local communities. They do this in two ways: by helping achieve community cohesion and urban regeneration but also by speaking out on behalf of those suffering as a result of the intended consequences of successive government policies.

The scale of the Church's contribution in the voluntary sector was highlighted in a recent report by the Von Hügel Institute. This showed, for example, that members of Church of England congregations were giving 23 million hours of voluntary service to their communities each year. The report identified that congregations, clergy and volunteers were running an enormous range of services from asylum rights centres, homeless outreach, job creation and economic regeneration programmes, youth clubs and projects to help developing countries.

In their work, they were also doing a great deal to build up the 'faithful capital' and skills of the communities they served.

So we need to rediscover again that quality of fraternity as a key to rebuilding our big vision for Britain.

It is urgent we do so. For we face, at present, a crisis but also a unique opportunity. With the global financial crisis, we have seen a sudden and traumatic impact on our banks, on businesses and in so many of the things we have taken for granted for so long. It has brought home to us in a powerful and painful way that we have been tempted to put our trust in false securities (and I would argue false gods) and the need to think again.

Governments and individuals are both radically reassessing their priorities and values as a result and so are the religious communities. Because of this, I believe it is also a unique opportunity. Remember that the great reforms proposed by Tawney, Temple and Beveridge were achieved precisely because there was consensus amongst people, community leaders and government that the prevailing position was unsustainable and there needed to be radical change.

The Church again can help by acting prophetically in that third sense of speaking out against injustice. It has done so in the past against slavery and more recently against apartheid and poverty. It continues to speak out against injustice shown to asylum seekers and others in need. Now at a time when we face unprecedented crisis in our economic systems, it is a call for the big vision we build together, based on respect of the individual, care for each other in the community through fraternity and service to one another. And speaking prophetically is not the same as condemning other people's failures. But rather one of helping us all towards the acceptance of common goals which uplift the heart.

We can go two ways today. Either we can degenerate into a more self-absorbed, more frightened, more desperate society in which it is 'dog eats dog' and each person must fend for themselves. But there is no future in this. Or we can decide to work together to build a new vision for Britain based on the recognition that we all belong, we all matter and we can all make a difference. We can all adopt as our motto that of the Scouts and Girl Guides, ***Duty to God, duty to the Queen, and duty to the neighbour.***

We must also do this in the wider context of our world. It makes me proud to live in a country where the people and the present Government are spending almost three times on poverty reduction programmes in developing countries than in our recent past. Through DfID, Poverty, Health, Education, Aid and Debt Relief are being imaginatively addressed. The commitment to the Millennium Goals is a top priority for the Government and we must hold them to it.

I want to end with another quotation this time from one of my favourite story-tellers, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry who expresses perfectly the essence of what I have called for tonight:

*If you want to build a ship
Don't herd people together to collect or buy wood*

*Don't summon them to prepare tools,
And don't assign them tasks and work;
But rather teach them and inspire in them a yearning for
The endless immensity of the sea*

Let us all do it. Let us all do it now.