



***FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT
TO SOCIAL JUSTICE***

**A series of talks given to the
London Churches Group for Social Action
at its quarterly meetings in 2003**

minuted by Elizabeth Simon, Executive Officer

The London Churches Group for Social Action consists of representatives of church leaders of the various Christian denominations in London and their social responsibility advisers. It is the social policy arm of the London Church Leaders and meets quarterly to share information and action on social policy concerns.

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FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Speaker: Dr Andrew Bradstock

Secretary for Church and Society for the United Reformed Church
(*Andrew is now Director of the Christian Socialist Movement*)

Revd Roberta Rominger welcomed Dr Andrew Bradstock, the Secretary for Church and Society for the United Reformed Church, who would be giving the first in a series of talks, organised by the Executive to mark the Group's twentieth year, examining the foundations of the Christian commitment to social justice. Future talks would cover spirituality, ideology and praxis. Dr Bradstock was the author/editor with Christopher Rowland of *Radical Christian Writings*.

Dr Bradstock said that justice is a central theme in Scripture. God is the God of justice. It is curious that people think of Christianity as essentially about charity; the Biblical imperative is more about instituting structures that even out inequality. Among biblical passages he highlighted were:

- **Exodus**, which was about total liberation not just ameliorating the current condition;
- **Deuteronomy 15**, which enjoins the Jubilee principle; **verse 4** (“there will be no poor among you. . .”) suggests a social structure instituted with mechanisms to ensure that there is no accumulation of inequality;
- **Proverbs 31 v 8 and 9** – speak out for the rights of the needy;
- **Isaiah 58** – the real worship demanded by God is not fasting and other religious practices but to “loose the bonds of injustice and let the oppressed go free”;
- **Jeremiah 22 v 13-16** – recommends those leaders who “judged the cause of the poor and needy . . . is not this to know me?” In other words, to know justice is to know God (not vice versa).
- **Amos 5 v 21-24** “let justice roll down like waters” – this is preferable to empty worship: it is not enough just to pray for needy people, we must engage and act;
- **Micah 6-8** “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice . . .” – the emphasis is on action;
- **The Gospel narrative** – an early example of the justice theme is of course the **Magnificat**. Jesus introduces his mission in the synagogue at Capernaum (**Luke 4 v 16-21**) with the words from Isaiah 61: “he has sent me to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (i.e. a Jubilee year). Jesus' commitment to justice is found in the total witness of his ministry – turning social values upside down by his actions and vision of the Kingdom.

Dr Bradstock reminded members of Jim Wallis' demonstration that if you tear out of the Bible all references to justice there is not much left. At the same time, Dr Bradstock did not think there was a clear, coherent theory of justice in the Scripture (for this you had to look to secular writers). God's justice goes beyond fairness and includes mercy etc. It cannot mean the same thing in different contexts. It is expressed in conceptions rather than concepts. If we accept this we are freed from spending time on theorising about justice and can concentrate on doing it. This is the one certain theme of these justice scriptures, that we are called to mirror God's justice in our actions. Unfortunately, too often when the church moves from charity to justice, from relieving symptoms to addressing causes, it is accused of being political: “When I give food to the poor they call me a saint, when I ask why the poor have no food they call me a communist” (Archbishop Helder Camara of Brazil). We must not forget that crucifixion was a political punishment.

What does this mean for us today? Dr Bradstock suggested three models of working:

- The prophetic model – follow the example of the Old Testament prophets and stand and speak from the margins;
- The incarnate model – live out the call to justice; this is what churches try to do in their communities;
- Work from inside power structures – like Joseph of Arimathea – and inject values from inside.

Specific ways in which these models might be practiced include:

- Consciousness-raising and involvement in campaigns; Jubilee 2000 was a good example of the successful and influential role of churches; it helps sympathetic politicians if we lobby and increase public pressure for action;
- Creating a safe space for dialogue; the URC has done this on water privatisation in Ghana, where they have encouraged stakeholders to come together and listen to and discuss with each other; JustShare is seeking to do this with members of the business and financial communities; local churches can do it in their communities.

Churches have a responsibility to try to build bridges across religious and faith divides.

In discussion, various points were raised:

- Is it possible to come to worship of God through seeking justice? What is the relationship between worship, spirituality and justice?
- Is our present Christian culture based on a false religiosity, as described in Isaiah 58 and Amos? Do we need to go back and rediscover true religion built on pillars of justice?
- Church congregations spend a lot of effort in simply keeping themselves going – is this the best use of their time? Yet don't they need to build up this mutual resource in order to serve outwards?
- We must be careful not to dismiss charity, which is about a lot more than money: it is about giving time, a word, a smile.
- “Love is the adequate estimate and supply of someone else's need” – justice emerges from love.
- Is justice a sufficient basis for action? Take ‘just war’, for example: is this anything more than a war we think it is right to wage?
- Where does justice connect with the modern rights culture? Perhaps we should be seeking something which goes beyond a legalistic justice – perhaps the concept of ‘shalom’?
- We should be concerned about structures which may oppress, distort and hurt. But what are desirable structures – in the West democracy is the model. If we look at the quotation from Proverbs is the emphasis on the rich defending the rights of the poor rather than the poor claiming them?

Dr Bradstock suggested that the essence of human rights is that people should be able to live in a way which reflects their status as created in the image of God. Responding to an earlier question he said that what Scripture has to offer those who will never have justice is – hope?

18 March, 2003

FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS

A Spirituality for Social Action

Speaker: Revd Chris Brice

Adviser for Social Justice in the Diocese of London

Revd Chris Brice introduced a selection of extracts from spiritual writers by reminding the Group that the world of spiritual writings of all masters and mistresses of all faiths is the world in which we do our spiritual action. To ignore their teaching is to navigate at night without compass or light. Spirituality arises out of unmediated study of Holy Scripture, of the Holy Spirit and of the contributions of spiritual advisers and companions. As John Ruskin said: “No limit can be set to the importance . . . of mere thought and feeling”. Time set aside for this is productive work; time spent on spiritual study has material, significant and productive outcomes. It is a fundamental insight that God is the God of justice. Doing justice is the essence of Christianity. Without justice there is no Gospel and no Judaeo-Christian God. Our lives and actions are set in the context of this world and man’s inhumanity to man.

Chris then highlighted five spiritual writers, providing extracts from their writings (reproduced behind this note of his talk, with Chris’ elucidations in square brackets):

- **St Ignatius Loyola**, from the fifteenth century, helps us to discern a personal call from Christ and to consider choices. He taught three steps to understanding what Jesus was requiring from the individual. One should start by recalling the general history and state of the world to which Christ came, then move to the particular, historical places where Christ ministered, which would help to personalise Christ’s challenge, and finally study and seek inner knowledge of Christ in order to love and follow Him most closely. Social action requires decisions on the choices available. Ignatius moves from broad contemplation of the distress of the world to the very personal act of the individual. His message is to be alert to God’s call and to dedicate oneself to His service.
- **William Gurnall** was a Puritan writer who taught that we can do nothing without God’s help (God can act without us but we cannot act for good without Him). Even the ability to will what is right, let alone the power to do something about it, is dependent on God. Time and preparation are necessary to be grounded in the Gospel and the tenets of the faith so that God can use us. But head knowledge though essential is not enough – following Christ is primarily a matter of the heart. Evil is not just evil manifested in particular people but is an overarching power of evil – structural, institutional sin.
- **Meister Eckhart** in the middle-ages taught that God’s work is His nature. It takes a long time for God to prepare us for His work. Suffering can be testing but necessary in God’s service. Chris commented that this is a universal language of obedience before service. Holiness is doing the will of God (pursuing love and justice) with a smile – an example would be Mother Teresa of Calcutta. The children of Israel thought that this could simply be achieved by hearing and knowing, then they would be bound to be able to obey the will of God. They had to learn that it is only the presence, the nearness and the power of God the Holy Spirit humbling us and consecrating us that can conquer the power of sin and give us the will and the power to obey – teaching us to love what we would otherwise not even want.
- **St John of the Cross** (sixteenth century) wrote of how God infuses His love into us when we offer ourselves in prayer. How we achieve justice is crucial: we must love those who contradict and fail to love us. Love transforms but it depends on God’s grace. Chris compared Gandhi and Martin Luther King –

non-violent resistance and satyagraha (truth force or love force). 'As I delved deeper into the philosophy of Gandhi, my scepticism concerning the power of love gradually diminished, and I came to see for the first time its potency in the area of social reform. Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. Love for Gandhi was a potent instrument for social and collective transformation. It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and non-violence that I discovered the method for social reform that I had been seeking' (Martin Luther King).

- **St Teresa of Avila** taught that, however demanding a life of prayer might be, to give it up made life worse.

In discussion questions were raised about how helpful some of these older spiritual texts are today: their language could be alienating and perhaps does not speak helpfully to people rooted in family life and the modern world, with all their commitments, rather than the celibate life of the monastery/convent. Among contemporary thinkers Dorothy Sölle was praised as being perhaps more helpful to modern audiences. Nevertheless, Chris felt that many of the teachings of the past do speak to the evil many people experience today and can help strengthen us in our confrontation with evil.

Among other points made were:

- Reference was made to the doctrine of justification and the dialogue between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches on the role of the Holy Spirit. In the orthodox understanding the Holy Spirit was an agent of justice within us. While best expressed in action with others, our sense of social justice grows out of our personal spiritual understanding and commitment.
- Justice could be defined as right action – reflecting the character of God in any situation.
- It was good to hear an emphasis on the need to work at spiritual study and prayer; this is an aspect of the religious life which is often neglected. Being a Christian is not easy.

17 June, 2003

Extracts from Spiritual Writings featured in the Revd Chris Brice's talk to the London Churches Group in June 2003 on the subject *A Spirituality for Social Action* [Chris' elucidations added in square brackets]

ST IGNATIUS LOYOLA

The first prelude is to recall the history of the subject to be contemplated: in this case how the Three Divine Persons were looking down upon the face and circuit of the world filled with people, and how on seeing all were going down into hell, they decreed in their eternity that the second person would become human to save the human race.

The second prelude is the composition made by seeing the place. Here it will be to see the vast extent and circuit of the earth with its many races; and then, in the same way to see the particular house of Our Lady and its rooms in the town of Nazareth in the province of Galilee.

The third prelude is to ask for what I desire: here it will be to ask for inner knowledge of the Lord who became human for me so that I might better love and follow him.

The first point is to see in turn the various persons: first those on the face of the earth, in all their diversity of dress and appearance, some white and some black, some in peace and others at war, some weeping and others laughing, some healthy and others sick, some being born and others dying etc.; secondly, see and consider the three divine persons as though on the royal seat or throne of the Divine Majesty, how they look down upon the face and circuit of the world and on all its people, living in blindness, going to their death and descending into Hell; thirdly to see Our Lady and the Angel who greets her. I will reflect in order to draw profit from what I see.

The second point is to hear what the persons on the face of the earth are saying – the way they talk to each other and how they swear and blaspheme etc; in the same way to hear what the Divine Persons are saying, namely: ‘Let us bring about the redemption of the human race etc.’; then what the angel and Our Lady are talking about – I will then reflect in order to draw profit from their words.

The third point is to watch what the persons on the face of the earth are doing, for instance killing and wounding one another, and going to Hell, etc.; and in the same way, what the Divine Persons are doing, namely, bringing about the sacred Incarnation, etc; and similarly what the angel and Our Lady are doing, the angel fulfilling his role as legate and Our Lady humbling herself, and giving thanks to the Divine Majesty. Then I will reflect in order to draw profit from each of these things.

At the end I will think about what I should be saying to the Three Divine Persons, or to the eternal Word who has become human or to His mother Our Lady, making prayers and petitions, according to my inner feelings, so that I may better follow and imitate Our Lord thus newly incarnate. I will say an Our Father.

The Call of the Earthly King

The first prelude is the composition, made by seeing the place. Here it will consist in seeing with the eyes of the imagination the synagogues, villages and castles where Christ our Lord went preaching.

The second prelude: to ask for the grace I desire. Here it will be to beg Our Lord for grace not to be deaf to his call, but alert to fulfil his most Holy will to the best of my ability.

The first point is to put before myself a human king chosen by the hand of God our Lord, to whom all Christian leaders and people pay homage and obedience.

The second point. To see the way this king speaks to his people: ‘It is my will to conquer the entire land of the infidel [injustice etc]. Therefore, all who wish to come with me must be content with the same food as I have, the same drink, the same clothing etc. Such persons must also labour with me by day, and keep watch by night, etc., so that they will afterwards partake with me in the victory, as they have done in the labour.’

The third point. Consider the response that good subjects must make to so liberal and kind a king.

The second part of this exercise consists in applying the above example of the earthly king to Christ our Lord, following the three points mentioned:

Regarding the first point, if such a call made by an earthly king to his subjects claims our consideration, how much more is it worthy of consideration to see Christ Our Lord, the eternal king, with the entire human race before him, as to all and each one in particular his call goes out: ‘It is my will to conquer the whole world and every enemy [injustice], and so to enter the glory of my father. Therefore all those who want to come with me will have to labour with me, so that by following me in my suffering they may also follow me into glory.

The second point: to consider that everyone possessed of judgement and reason will offer their whole selves for this labour.

The third point: Those who wish rather to respond in a spirit of love, and to be outstanding in every service of their commitment to their eternal king and universal Lord, will not only offer themselves for the labour, but even going against their own sensuality and their carnal and worldly love they will make offerings of greater moment and greater importance. These could be expressed in this way:

‘Eternal Lord of all things, before your infinite Goodness, and before your glorious mother and all the saintly men and women of the court of heaven, I make my offering, with your favour and help. My resolute wish and desire, and my considered determination – on the sole condition that this be for your greater service and praise – is to imitate you in enduring every kind of insult and abuse, and utter poverty both actual and spiritual, if your most holy majesty wishes to choose me and receive me into that life and state.’

WILLIAM GURNALL

The Christian In Complete Armour

The strength of an earthly general lies in his troops – he flies upon their wings. If their feathers get clipped or their necks broken, he is helpless. But in the army of saints, the strength of the whole host lies in the Lord of hosts. God can overcome his enemies without help from anyone, but his saints cannot so much as defend the

smallest outpost without his strong arm.

One of God's names is 'Strength of Israel' He was the strength of David's heart. With Him, this shepherd boy could defy a giant who defied a whole army; without God's strength, David trembled at a word or two that dropped from the Philistine's mouth. He wrote 'Blessed be the Lord my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight' (psalm 144.1) The Lord is likewise your strength in your war against sin [injustice] and Satan [the sower of injustice].

'Without me you can do nothing' (John 15.5) Paul says, 'To will is present with me [but only in Christ – ed] but how to perform that which is good I find not' (Romans 7.18). Both the will to do, and the action which follows are of God. 'it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure' (Phil. 2.13) God is at the bottom of the ladder, and at the top also, the Author and Finisher, assisting the soul at every rung in its ascent to any holy [just] action. And once we have begun a work [some social action], how long will we stick to it? Only as long as we are held up by the same hand that empowered us at first. We quickly deplete the strength He gives us. So to maintain the permanence of a holy [just] course, we must have a renewing strength from heaven every moment.

An established knowledge of God

An established knowledge of God's Truth

He who has only a nodding acquaintance with the king may easily be persuaded to change his allegiance, or will at least try to remain neutral in the face of treason [injustice]. Some professing Christians have only a passing acquaintance with the Gospel [God's core justice values]. They can hardly give an account of what they hope for, or whom they hope in. And if they have some principles [of justice] they take kindly to, they are so unsettled that every wind blows them away, like loose tiles from a housetop.

When Satan buffets and temptation washes over you like a tidal wave, you must cling to God's truths. They are your shelter in every raging storm. But you must have them on hand, ready to use. Do not wait until it is sinking to patch the boat. A feeble commitment [to a just cause] has little hope of safety [being accomplished] when caught in a tempest [of opposition]. While that flounders and drowns, holy determination, grounded in the word, will lift up its head like a rock in the middle of the highest waves.

Scripture promises 'The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits' (Dan 11.32). An angel told Daniel which men would stand up and be counted for God when tempted and persecuted by Antiochus. Some would be taken in by the bribery of corrupt men; others would fall victim to intimidation and threats. But a few, who were firmly grounded in the tenets of their faith, would do great things for God. That is to say, to flatteries they would be incorruptible, and to power and force, unconquerable.

Head knowledge of the things of Christ is not enough; this following Christ [to establish God's justice] is primarily a matter of the heart. If your heart is not fixed in its purpose, your principles, as good as they may be, will hang loose and be of no more use in the heat of battle than an unstrung bow. Half hearted resolve will not venture far for Christ.

MEISTER ECKHART

God's work [Love and justice] is His nature, His being, His life, His happiness. Thus indeed, for the Son of God, a good man, in so far as he is a son of God, to suffer for God's sake, to work for God's sake, is his life, his work, his happiness [in pursuit of God's work].

One should also know, however, that in nature the impress and inflow of the uppermost nature and of the highest [justice and love] is to everyone more blissful and joyful than his own [fallen human] nature and being.

Water flows downhill of its own nature, and its being depends on this. Yet owing to the impression and influence of the moon in the sky above, it denies and forgets its own nature and flows uphill, and the flood-tide is much easier for it than the ebb. From this man should know whether it would be right that he should be happy and joyful to leave and to forsake his natural will and to forsake himself entirely in everything that God wills that man should suffer.

This is the meaning, in the good sense, of our Lord's words 'If any one will come to me, let him deny himself and take up his cross (Matt 16.24). That is, he should lay down everything and get rid of everything that is a cross and a sorrow. For indeed if anyone had forsaken himself and denied himself altogether, nothing could be a cross or sorrow or suffering to him.'

Why God has so few friends!

There is further consolation. St Paul says that God chastens all those whom He accepts and receives as His sons and daughters [in his service of justice and love] (Hebrews 12.6,7). In order to be a son [or daughter – serving God in pursuit of justice and love] it is essential that one should suffer. As the Son of God could not suffer in the Deity, nor in eternity, the heavenly Father sent him into the world that He might become man and that He might suffer. If then you would be a son or daughter of God [in the pursuit of love and justice] and yet you are not willing to suffer, you are quite in the wrong.

In the book of Wisdom it is written that God examines and tests to find out who is just, as one examines and tests gold in a furnace (Wisdom 3:5,6).

It is a sign that the king or a prince trusts a knight completely if he sends him into the battle. I have seen a nobleman who sometimes, when he had accepted a person as a member of his retinue, sent him out at night and rode out to attack him and fought him. And once it happened that he was very nearly killed by a man whom he wished to put to the test in this way, and he afterwards esteemed this retainer very much more highly than before.

We read that St Anthony in the desert on one occasion in particular suffered cruelly because of evil spirits, and when he had overcome his trials, our Lord appeared to him visibly and blissfully. Then the holy man said: 'Ah, dear Lord, where wert thou just now, when I was in great distress?' Then our Lord spoke; 'I was here, just as I am now. But I wanted and had a desire to see how brave you were.'

A piece of silver or gold is indeed pure but when one wishes to make a goblet out of it, from which the king is to drink, it is smelted much more carefully than another piece. Hence it is written that the Apostles were glad to be found worthy of suffering dishonour for the sake of God [and his service of love and justice]. Acts 5.41

ST JOHN OF THE CROSS

The dark night is a certain inflowing of God into the human creature, which purges it of the ignorances and imperfections belonging to its very nature [and which prevent it from serving God in the pursuit of love and justice]. It is identified with infused contemplation or mystical knowledge of God, whereby God teaches the human creature in a strange, secret way, educating it to perfect love [and justice]. He does this himself; the creature can only be lovingly attentive, listening, receptive, allowing itself to be enlightened [about love and justice] without understanding how.

Have a great love for those who contradict and fail to love you. For in this way love is begotten in a heart that has no love [or justice]. God so acts with us, for He loves us that we might love by means of the very love he bears towards us (St John of the Cross – final letter).

TERESA OF AVILA on the outcome of Prayer

Having received this kind of prayer the soul becomes so courageous [in the pursuit of love and justice] that if at any moment it were cut in pieces for God, it would be greatly consoled. Such prayer [of union/contemplation] is the source of heroic promises, of resolutions, and of ardent desires; it is the beginning of contempt for the world [and its values] because of a clear perception of the world's vanity. Its humility is deeper because it sees plainly that through no diligence of its own did it receive that very generous and magnificent gift and that it played no role in obtaining or experiencing it.

It begins to be of benefit to its neighbours almost without knowing it or doing anything itself. They recognise

it because now the fragrance of the flowers [of virtue and justice and love] has reached the point in which it attracts others. The soul's neighbours see the desirable fruit of its virtuous actions. They would like to eat this fruit. If the soil is well cultivated by trials, persecutions, criticisms, and illnesses – for few there must be who reach this stage without them – and if it is softened by living in great detachment from self-interest, the water [of God's grace and his gift of prayer] soaks it to the extent that it is almost never dry.

I say that no one who has begun to practice prayer should become discouraged by saying 'If I return to evil then matters can only get worse if I continue the practice of prayer'. I believe on the contrary, that matters become worse if one abandons prayer and doesn't amend one's evil ways.

FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

Speaker: Professor Len Doyal

Professor of Medical Ethics, Institute of Community Health
Sciences, the Barts and Royal London School of
Medicine and Dentistry;
author of the double prize-winning book,
“A Theory of Human Need”

The Chair, Revd. Roberta Rominger, warmly welcomed Professor Len Doyal, who gave a challenging talk using power point. He also circulated a copy of an article *A Theory of Human Need* (which appeared in *Necessary Goods* – editor Gillian Brock, published by Rowan and Littlefield), which elaborated on some of the theory. Copies of the power point slides are reproduced on the pages following as a report of the talk.

In discussion which followed Professor Doyal’s talk, the following points were made:

- What is the trigger to make people love each other? - Prof Doyal suggested that self-interest could help by demonstrating our dependence on others; role models by showing love in practice were also important.
- What is the relationship in medical ethics between objective and subjective needs – people could define as a need (e.g. cosmetic plastic surgery) what was essentially a strong desire: does society have a duty to meet such “needs”?
- The theory emphasises autonomy but not all cultures give this value, for example African culture emphasises the collective not the individual. The theory is in danger of being too based on modern Western values. - Prof Doyal said that he was not arguing that autonomy equals individual rights but any collective culture must offer individuals the freedom to contribute creatively to it. One test of a culture is whether it is so closed that individuals are prevented from leaving – there must be choice in a fully human life.
- Does the theory demand that the rich must end the poverty of the have-nots? – Yes, absolutely.

16 September, 2003

FOUNDATIONS OF CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

POLITICAL PRAXIS

A Christian Democracy: The role of the Church in the democratic regeneration of London

Speaker: Dr Maurice Glasman

Senior Lecturer in Political Theory, Dept. of Law, Governance
and International Relations, London Metropolitan University

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you. I am grateful for and appreciate the opportunity to present my arguments. I understand that Len Doyal has already spoken to you on the subject of justice. I thought it appropriate, therefore, to stress the other side of the coin, the fundamental condition of ethical social action itself, democracy. This is the idea that a community can govern itself on the basis that each person is of equal value, and the solidarity generated by this common status facilitates the most appropriate way of pursuing the common good. The reasons for addressing this intently is not only due to the present realities of democratic disenchantment and civic degeneration that are manifest in the lives of all who live in London as a daily reality. A reality that is sometimes wearying and sometimes threatening, but nonetheless manifest in all areas characterised by activities in which dependence on other people is unavoidable, whether this be traveling by public transport, going to hospital, working or educating ones children. Solutions, in the present environment, are exclusively founded on the principle of charismatic leadership, new management with more expert techniques of manipulation, communication and motivation. The new Mayor of London, for example, is a lonely figure, there is no London parliament as there was with the LCC and GLC, just a chief executive and Board of Directors functioning in an ill defined no mans land between a watchdog and an advisory committee. I will return to this at the end of my talk.

I read in the information sheet enclosed with my invitation that for the London Churches Group the ultimate emphasis is always on action rather than talk. It also mentions that speakers are invited to give a theological perspective on the chosen theme for the year. I will try to honour both instructions. My concerns are intensely practical and boil down to how to generate and preserve the institutions necessary to conserve a humane conception of the person in opposition to the relentless demands of commodification and manipulation. This is so that London may achieve the sense of solidarity necessary to create a sense of the common good. I thought, however, that you may be interested in the philosophical and theological resources that I have brought to bear on this issue because these theoretical resources could be of practical value in the pursuit of the goods of association and liberty.

My argument is that democracy has a moral status as a procedure of not only public decision making on issues where co-operation and dependency are necessary features of the activity in question, but also as a constitutive element of the type of civil encounter that should characterise civic life. Further, the church has a vital and necessary part to play in defending the idea of each person having a moral status irreducible to their market status or utility alone. The practice which embodies that ideal is a democratic one. I will mention ways, in my conclusion, in which democratic regeneration could also benefit the church as an institution with a role in society which does not threaten non-Christians. This is done by concentrating on processes and practices rather than specific outcomes.

The relationships between democracy, London and the church are important, especially for those, like myself, who following Rawls and Doyal, accept that the state is a distinctive institution, capable of oppression due to its control of a repressive apparatus unrivalled by any other institution. If, as John Rawls argued, the state should be based upon the priority of the right over the good, of rights over democracy, then we can ask what legitimate space there is for democracy as a meaningful and moral social practice? If elite management is

more efficient at delivering public goods than democratic institutions then that is an important reason for rejecting democracy as a central aspect of civic reform. The priority of rights also inhibits collective action as a transformative power, partly due to the injustice and terror implicit in mass populism.

I will argue that democracy is necessarily central to civil government and that it is in the democratic sphere that Christianity is the source of a vital resource for society as a whole. There is a congruence between the moral conception of the person necessary for democracy, and that carried within the Christian tradition, whether it be Presbyterian, Catholic, Anglican or Dissenting.

One area where democracy is necessary and appropriate, I will argue, is at the local and civic levels. At this level democracy is the right way to decide matters of the common good. In the conception of liberal-democracy presented here, the state is the defender of our rights, and quite correctly prohibits forced marriage, female circumcision, muti murders and all practices which violate the physical and moral autonomy of the individual person, no matter how popular such actions would be. In short the State prohibits violence, intimidation, fraud and threats against the person by using its coercive apparatus to uphold rights. In relation to those with whom we live and work, however, democracy is the means of making collective decisions relating to matters where co-operation is essential.

As concerns the regulation of the environment; traffic policy; pollution; the allocation of resources; urban planning and design; a strong democracy is desirable, as a means and as an end of civic association. Universal human rights and strong local democracy can be seen, in this way, as mutually compatible ends. Rawls wrote that 'rights draw the line, but the good makes the point.' The point being that the pursuit of a meaningful good life is often realised in relationship with others in pursuit of common goods. Many aspects of our working and civil life, from marriage, to worship, to football are at their most fulfilled when they are based upon communion. The idea behind this paper is that democracy is a fundamentally Christian idea, or rather an idea consistent with several important strands within each Christian tradition, and touches centrally on a commitment both to the common good and each citizen having an equal moral status in their power as a participant in civil life, capable of choice and responsibility, of participating in the reciprocity of just association.

Whatever one's view of the role of religion as a means of achieving individual or collective redemption of the soul of people or peoples it is of great importance that religions generally, and Christianity certainly, defend the idea that people have souls at all. Further, the idea has often been promoted that such souls as people have, while an aspect of the eternal, is also a fragile and precious thing, nurtured through education, love and other aspects of a good life. In other words there are great pressures exerted against the idea that people have a soul, and in the modern world they can be reduced to two, commodification and utility. The first is the idea that people can be reduced to their status as consumers, defined entirely by their spending power and taste, the other is that they only exist as service providers. Both posit an entirely instrumental and manipulative conception of the person. In other words Christianity promotes an idea of the person which is irreducible to their economic value alone. The sanctity of human life, the idea that each person is capable of being and doing good, and that the circumstances of life should nurture and strengthen their potential goodness have always compelled religions to address the fundamental ethical question of how we should live. How WE should LIVE? You can see, in the most profound way, how this plays out as a political question, how we should live together, under a common law and common institutions in pursuit of the common good. It may or may not be of interest to you that one of the main connections made here is between Aristotle and Aquinas, both of whom understood and stressed the role that institutions, as embodiments of ethical purpose, play in sustaining the conditions of a viable community. In this sense the Augustinian duality of the City of Man and the City of God is not shared by Aquinas, who stressed the potential of cities to be expressions of the divine through their associative intensity and the possibilities they open up to achieve a more human, and therefore, more divine, form of association. The holiness of association plays a central role in this tradition.

In the sense of having a moral conception of both the person and of association, religious institutions, such as

each of the different churches represented here, are examples of what the historian Karl Polanyi called 'embodiments of ethical purpose', carrying and promoting the idea that each person is capable of receiving wisdom, achieving grace, which in all cases is a transcending of self-interest in order to grasp a more elevated, noble and beautiful reality. A reality in which, potentially, each person is a carrier of the divine spark, which in religious terms is God, and in secular enlightenment terms, is humanity.

The idea that humanity is divine is one particularly resonant for Christians. In very brutal theological terms Jesus was god made flesh, the embodiment of the humanity of god, and by that token, also the god of humanity. I mention such theological fundamentals in order to stress that Christianity is constitutively involved with the question of humanity and how we should live. The universal, god, and the particular, each person, culture, city, have a necessary relation, one with the other. Christianity is entangled with each society within which it has institutions. It is always an external universal force, demanding obedience to the Ten Commandments, and a particular internal force, an expression of the divine form of each community of people.

What is important in this reflection is the idea that Christianity is not only constitutive of the culture and identity of our society, in which it has been the dominant religious tradition for more than a thousand years. Christianity is also a resource, a tradition of moral reasoning, a sanctuary from violence, a defender of human life and the human good. The Church is a treasury of values that are at the service of society, especially at times of crisis. I am arguing that we are in such a time of crisis now. In this, the storm of commodification, initiated by the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, intensifies pressures promoting self-interested rational behaviour at the expense of any notion of the common good. The maximisation of income becomes an imperative of survival.

The policy consensus of the past 25 years, whether New Right or New Labour, works within a framework within which the market economy should be generalised in order to create a market society within which all institutions should work according to market principles. This is the nature of the crisis we are living through; the institutions that are supposed to protect us are themselves subject to the same pressures of financial rationalisation. Partnership with other institutions in crisis only compounds the problem. The Church of England is in a financial, constitutional and social crisis, the London Boroughs are in a permanent state of crisis management, compounded by the sheer financial impossibility of meeting their statutory responsibilities when confronted with the insatiable multiplicity of human demands. Democracy itself is in crisis in terms of party membership, voter turn-out and public trust. The financial imperative effects all institutions in the fulfillment of their ethical purpose. We are reminded regularly, in my University for example, that the students are consumers, and we should provide them with services. Where that leaves the pursuit of truth is ambiguous.

This is not a new problem. There have been crises in society and its institutions of protection before, each characterised by a storm of commodification, when there is a refusal of the state to resist the market with the result of moral degeneration, corruption and the debasement of human life. In the 1780s, in the 1840s, in the 1870s, in the 1920s, in the 1940s, in each storm of commodification that besieged Britain, and then each country in Europe, the church was always at the forefront in resisting commodification and its allies were invariably the emerging forms of the Labour movement, as Trade unions were also institutions which resisted an entirely commercial definition of the person. Together they created new political movements and parties which slowed the trend towards the commodification of all societal relations.

Yesterday, as I was writing this section of the paper I saw the story on the Ten O Clock News of a man who was trying to sell his kidney on e-bay in order to pay for the physiotherapy required by his daughter, who has cerebral palsy. When people consider it necessary to sell their own organs in order to pay for the treatment of their brain damaged children, and that is argued to be a moral good, you will understand what is meant by the concept of commodification. This means the selling of things in the market that were not produced for sale. The human kidney was not made for sale, neither were school playing fields and public libraries. It is the

selling of assets for which there is no equivalent replacement. Human beings are very obviously not produced for sale on the open market, although the legal capacity to buy a wife from Malaysia or Indonesia on the world wide web would indicate that the purchase of the body of another person is becoming acceptable. Within the present policy making framework the prohibition on prostitution should be lifted in order to harmonise with other laws and in recognition of the impossibility of enforcement in the new realities of the global market place. In such a scheme, underage prostitution would be wrong, but a voluntary exchange of body for money between adults could become an important source of tax revenue, ring-fenced for investment in the poorest communities. I am arguing that the same reasons which underpin the rejection of prostitution, that there are some things that are not for sale and are a degradation of human potential, also underpin the arguments for democracy, namely that people are not commodities and can reason with each other in pursuit of the common good.

I think it is necessary for the Church to take on its traditional responsibility once more in order to redeem London from degeneration, commodification and a vicious cycle of violence and distrust. The principal way it can do this is by actively pursuing democracy as the fundamental principle of civic association.

I am certainly not the first person to point out the link between Christianity and Democracy.

The term Christian Democracy (Democratie Chretienne) was first used to designate a unified political philosophy and social movement during the Paris uprising of 1848. It drew upon the works of Lamennais and his moral affirmation of democracy as based on Christian teaching. The role of democracy, as a procedure of negotiation between conflicting organisations and interests in society, became one of its distinctive features; the affirmation of civil rights the other. The reconciliation with the principles of the French Revolution by Catholic activists was not unconditional. The Revolution of 1789 was argued to have a moral quality as an institutional fulfillment of freedom and equality, both of which were based on Gospel teaching. The Revolution, however, was unfinished, for it allowed a social inequality incompatible with citizenship. The old networks of Church, vocational and elite charity had broken down without an effective system of poor relief emerging to replace it. The principle of fraternity, they argued, provided the link between liberty and equality in the form of vocational, professional and welfare associations. This offered the possibility of the Church, which was an extended form of plural voluntary association based upon the concept of fraternity, renewing its pastoral mission to the poor in defending democratic associations and the political priority of right.

Christian Democracy was based on developing an initially dissident interpretation of Catholic teaching which opposed the indissoluble tie to the monarchy and sought to incorporate the modern idea of citizenship with a moral conception of civil association. Its doctrine may be summarised as the subordination of both state and market to a self-governing society through the cultivation of solidarity.

It was an ideology founded upon the resistance to 'Proletarianisation', defined as the unmediated dependence on a wage for survival. Drawing upon the idea that the person is a social rather than a political being they argued that ethics were best preserved within the organisations of society. The ideology that had been condemned in 1834 by Pope Gregory XVI as 'false, calumnious, rash, anarchic, contrary to the word of God, impious, scandalous and erroneous' had become mainstream Church teaching by 1944.

The following five assumptions distinguished Christian Democracy by 1848. The first was the primacy of society to the state. The second was the complementarity of human rights and civic duties. The third was a rejection of Classical Republicanism by affirming the limits of state sovereignty through upholding rights of association, worship and expression. The fourth commitment was to decentralised associations that mediated between the individual and the state, an idea that was initially expressed through the idea of fraternity and later developed into the ideas of solidarity and subsidiarity. The fifth idea was that the conflict between capital and labour could be mediated through the democratic organisation of work and the preservation of the status of the worker in defiance of Proletarianisation. The term *proletaire*, referring to the lowest class of Roman citizens whose only duty was to offer their children to the state, was first used in its modern form by

Lamennais in the 1820s to describe the condition of labour in the early-nineteenth-century towns. Christian Democracy was distinguished by the method of balancing conflict within society through democratising the relationship between employers and workers, rich and poor. Democracy was affirmed as having a moral status and the definitively Christian mode of civic association.

The important theological work undertaken by Christian Democrats was the link they established between the Catholic theory of the person and social order through the development of the institutional arrangements required for facilitating the reciprocal development of personality and association. The person, defined as a subjective, rational, purposive agent, could only realise their potential through active association with others. The associations necessary for the development of personality are plurally conceived. Territorially they range from the locality through the municipality, city, region, state and ultimately international institutions.

Christian Democracy, in its modern form, is based on the value of solidarity, which is sustained by subsidiarity and organised through the preservation of status. The priority of solidarity is based on the argument that the anonymous distribution of misfortune resulting from the creation of unplanned markets can be generalised in the provision of guarantees against calamity in the form of welfare. This is justified by defending the proposition that society is characterised by a dependence on others for survival which requires a shared responsibility for their fate. Solidarity stresses the constraints on freedom resulting from dependency and the institutions necessary to prevent this from becoming a form of domination. A person without institutional protection in the form of legal and democratic rights had no power in negotiating fair terms of social co-operation. Solidarity was thus institutionalised through the generalisation of risk in the form of welfare guarantees justified by a conscious sharing of the hazards and burdens of collective association. This was achieved through the distribution of rights to all citizens as members of a state and the sharing of material burdens as members of society. The demand of justice was to provide the material preconditions of effective participation in society as well as equal status before the law.

The subsidiarity principle, is the idea that power should be decentralised and decisions made at the most immediate level possible and only become further removed if they are impossible to fulfill. This was institutionalised in Germany through regional federalism, the vocational organisation of insurance and the democratic organisation of the enterprise. The role of the state was to subsidise the smaller organisations of society and cultivate decentralisation through sustaining existing groups. Large authorities supplement smaller ones rather than incorporate or direct them. Transfer payments replace direct state administration as the obligation of justice does not specify the instrument of administration. The practice of subsidiarity was a means of renewing decentralised democracy. Subsidised subsidiarity renews the threatened institutions which underpin societal solidarity. Christian Democrats thus opposed unmediated dependence on the state by developing institutions which could resist market sovereignty.

Status was preserved in the industrial sector through partnership in the democratic organisation of industry in terms of collective bargaining, representation on the boards of management, factory-level works councils and the democratic administration of pension funds. It was further expressed through the protection of artisans by means of the enforcement of licensed apprenticeships as a condition of market participation, as well as the idea of citizenship as a generalised status demanding rights and duties and a means of strengthening the authority of civic community. Subsidiarity, the preservation of vocational status and the defense of individual rights became an important aspect of Christian Democratic ideology by 1948. In the case of Germany, Italy, Holland and Belgium, no force within the Church successfully challenged Christian Democracy as its political representative. It fostered a set of practices, institutions and values that served as strong cultural determinants of the political and economic organisational forms of the Federal Republic and then the European Union.

Putting the resources of the church at the service of a process, rather than an outcome, could be seen as precisely the distinction between social and political action. Political action is oriented towards claiming power and retaining it, social action with the institutions and rules necessary for the preservation of society, as a form of ethical association. It provides the condition of politics. Democracy, in this sense, is the gift of

Christianity to society, and it is always better to give than to receive.

Christian Democracy is based on reformism. The Jesuit Mallinckrodt wrote that the most suitable form of political state was: *One which does not ignore the well defined articulation [Gliederung] existing in every civil society, but which takes that articulation as its point of departure.*

Traditional institutions, he argued, have a functional necessity and rationality. Their role is that of facilitating a gradual adaptation to changed circumstances, stressing the importance of institutional continuities as a means of preserving meaning and authority. The Catholic Church was cited as an example of the importance of institutions in preserving virtues. The church itself was constitutively pluralist as it was made up of different orders based upon the principle of subsidiarity as well as territorial groupings with national and international authority. The church understood renewal as necessary for survival and was thus amenable to the principle of reformism as new orders were constantly being founded and new practices instituted within the church. It was inclined to the adaptation of existing organisational forms rather than revolution. The political philosophy of Christian Democracy retained a notion of traditionalism, the idea that durable institutions responded to human needs and thus had a functional rationality.

The existing institutions of civic governance in London, do not provide an inspiring starting point for any kind of regeneration. The history of London is itself a degenerate one in civic terms, characterised as it is by the longest continuous civic democracy in the world which has been inherited in its entirety by the financial interest. The Corporation of the City of London is the inheritor of all the rights, customs, institutions and assets, which in any other city in Europe would have been the common civic inheritance of all the citizens of the city. The City of London still retains, alone in London, the right to call itself a city. London has not yet even reached the status of a city, it is an agglomeration of boroughs, most of them larger than most other British cities, recently united, under a Mayor. One directly elected individual and twelve elected 'authoritarians' replace an entire democratic structure built up by the LCC and then the GLC, which as we know was abolished in its entirety by Margaret Thatcher's government, seemingly, for trying to reduce the cost of public transport. The move from the GLC to the GLA entailed the rejection of council based, or parliamentary democracy in favour of a directly elected chief executive. Democracy becomes a system of appointment rather than a principle of governance. It is entirely alien to London's civic inheritance.

For the first 1500 years of its civic life, London conformed to the European pattern of urban development as a self-governing city, free from feudal Lordship and hospitable to the civic virtues of legality, trade, democratic self-government and professional association. Founded and inhabited by the Romans, it is unsurprising that Roman law and practice became the basis of its institutions and political language. The status of citizen was established by the Romans and retained throughout each subsequent era. The City also adopted through its democratic ward system and court hustings many aspects of Saxon civic practice. The 'folk-mote', for example, was a regular meeting of all Citizens at St Paul's Cross, called by the ringing of the bells where matters of common concern would be discussed and voted upon. This formed the basis of the Corporation of London and founded its position in the Ancient Constitution.

By 1066 the City of London had durable institutions, established legal and democratic procedures and enjoyed a unique status within the body politic. Its importance within the polity can be gleaned from its claim to appoint kings as well as elect its own officials. It was also the only institution to survive the Norman conquest with its civic inheritance intact and its customs undisturbed. While laying waste to the rest of the country, the Conqueror 'came friendly' to London, recognised the liberties of its Citizens, pledged himself to the defense of their freedoms and fortified the City against barbarian attack. The Tower of London was built as a reminder of the consequences of rebellion but London's special status within the constitution was upheld by a stream of charters and privileges that protected the City of London from external interference and recognised the antiquity of its customs.

In Magna Carta, not only are the rights of the 'whole body' of Citizens respected but the Mayor of London

was designated as one of two guarantors charged with ensuring that the Crown kept its side of the bargain. The Corporation of London, which announced itself as a 'commune' in 1191, was recognised as one of the great institutions of the Ancient Constitution, a guarantor of the liberties of 'free-born Englishmen' with a place only one step below the Sovereign. The combination of wealth, functioning democratic and legal institutions, as well as an effective system of civic militias meant that the Crown could never subordinate the City of London to its rule. London taxed itself, judged itself and governed itself. In this way the most cosmopolitan city in England, carved out of a forest by the Romans as their Imperial Capital, became the custodian of the ancient liberties of the English People and the champion of common law against encroachment by the State.

London also became, once again in accordance with general European development, a city which recognised crafts, guilds and professions as central institutions in the body politic. The Corporation was built upon the guilds as democratic units of the city and it was in the twelfth century that the Guildhall itself became the centre of London Government. The crafts had a professional status in that market entry was dependent on completing an apprenticeship, the reward for which was the granting of citizenship.

In the late 16th and 17th centuries, however, London began to diverge drastically from other comparable European cities.

From the 1580s, London became home to ten thousand internal refugees each year, most of them displaced by enclosure in the North and Midlands. By 1625 London had four hundred thousand inhabitants making it twenty times larger than any other English City. In 1632 the Crown asked the Corporation to extend its ancient privileges and institutions to the new areas of London but the Corporation refused the offer. Instead of expanding and extending its democratic practices and legal protections to the new inhabitants living without civic status in the suburbs of Westminster, Clerkenwell, Whitechapel and Southwark, the City of London turned its back on London as a City. The 'great refusal' of 1637 defined the modern history of London as a Tale of Two Cities. Instead of seeking to integrate the new arrivals, the Corporation put large resources into transferring its unwanted excess population to the Ulster Plantation and the Corporation of Londonderry which were established for that purpose. The Bowler hats and umbrellas of the Orange Orders are derived from their sponsorship by the Corporation of London.

The 'great refusal' was the most important moment in the history of London as a City. From that point on the people of London lacked any democratic unitary municipal authority. Business, and most particularly finance, in contrast, had the most ancient political institution in the kingdom at their disposal.

Not only political institutions. The annual fund of one hundred million pounds at the personal discretion of each Lord Mayor, known as the City Cash, is based upon the inherited assets bequeathed to the City by our civic ancestors, or on the basis of lands that fell to the common wealth. This one hundred million is based on the interest accruing on only one of the Corporation of London's accounts, there are two others which yield similar amounts. Sixty million pounds worth of it was used recently to underwrite the building of offices on the site of Spitalfields market. There is a saying in the Talmud, to cite another religion entirely, that there is no mistake that can't be corrected, as there is no sin that can't be redeemed. Such correction and redemption is dependent, however, on a recognition of error and sin.

If the civic inheritance of London is to be redeemed by its citizens, if the theft of our civic inheritance is to be corrected, if London is to be reconstituted as a single political body, it is vital that the institutions, rights, customs and assets of the Corporation of London be the foundation of that great democratic institution. What would the consequences be of such a move?

Consistent with the reformist of Christian democracy it would take the inherited institutions of the Corporation of London as its starting point. There would be the establishment of meaningful local units of municipal self government according to the boroughs and wards of the pre-GLC councils. In other words the

break-up of the big boroughs as not in conformity with either the word local, or the word authority, and the re-establishment of the borough councils as units of strong local government, as is consistent with the principle of subsidiarity. In such a scheme, the London Borough of Hackney, for example, would be broken down into its original units of Stoke Newington, Hackney, Shoreditch and Clapton. Elections would take place to the local council, and there would be one representative from each borough in the Common Council, London's Parliament, which would assemble in the Guildhall, elected by all the localities of London. The Mayor of London would live at Mansion House, the Guildhall would be London's Parliament, as it was before.

The theft of our civic inheritance by the same people who stole the common lands was sinful and wrong, its re-appropriation in the form of a single city incorporating all its citizens within its inherited ancient democratic structures would be an act of justice, and in all its different meanings, one of redemption.

Conclusion

The Church, as an institution, or set of institutions, embodies a set of values of far greater intensity and meaning, or in the language of political philosophy, far thicker, than the state, as the collective enforcer of a singular law can allow. Concepts of love, brotherhood, mercy and community are difficult to reconcile with equal rights, respect for persons and neutrality. The resolution for the Catholic Church came in distinguishing the collective demands of the state from the social, or societal responsibilities of the church. The Church, therefore, could continue to resist atomisation, individualism, collectivism and the free market by supporting mediating institutions that became entangled between the state and the market. It is in the creation of a genuinely civil society that the Catholic Church found its vocation in the modern world. It offers possibilities for renewal to all faiths that seek to disentangle the pursuit of justice from that of salvation and that seek to find their moral place in the life of London without threatening the liberty of its citizens. Where the teachings of the church and the demands of citizenship converge is in the shared ideal that the human being has a moral status and that status as a person capable of reason and rationality needs institutional support.

By reclaiming our democratic inheritance each citizen of London can share the hazards of association and generate a sense of solidarity as a community of fate, to which we all, by necessity, belong.

9 December, 2003