

St Paul's Institute

Work and Human Flourishing

Tuesday 13th October 2009

Panel Discussion, St Paul's Cathedral

Transcript

Draft Copy (contents may be amended)

PANELLISTS

Phillip Blond, former Director of the Progressive Conservatism Project

Mary Chapman, Chairman of the Institute of Consumer Service

Giles Fraser, Canon Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral

Julia Neuberger, Rabbi and member of the House of Lords

Chaired by Richard Chartres, Bishop of London

Bishop of London: Good evening, and on behalf of the Dean and Chapter I'd like to welcome you – although I see so many old friends in the gathering – to St Paul's Cathedral for this second in the series of conversations about the moral and spiritual dimensions of our present financial turbulence.

Tonight, the theme is work and human flourishing; and we have a very distinguished set of panellists, and I shall introduce them in a moment. But, just in case you have not been to one of these debates before, let me explain the format. I'm going to ask each member of the panel in a few moments an opening question, which will give them an opportunity to deploy some of their thinking about this theme. Then, for the last part of the evening, it would be very good if we could have some questions from you. If you have got a question, please write it on the back of your leaflet, hold it up to be collected, and we will collect questions until about 7.20pm. So, pithy, pointed questions and we will try and work through as many of them as we possibly can.

Our contract is that we end promptly at eight o'clock, but before you leave do visit the bookstall at the back and also if you wish please give to the retiring collection. This will be going to the City of London Social Investment Fund, a new venture based on St Mary-le-Bow and it aims to support microfinance projects in Mozambique and Tanzania. There are more details in your programme, and there is also more information about this evening in there; as well as further events in this series. If you would like to find out more, please fill in the form on the leaflet and hand it in at the back. Also, we would like to hear any feedback.

We know that the acoustic is difficult, and as I sit here I feel I am literally eating my words. So, please feel free to move if you can't hear perfectly. The knave, curiously enough, is a good place if you sit close to one of the long speakers.

I'd also like to take this opportunity of thanking our sponsors, Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank Corporation who have supported this series.

Now, it gives me very great pleasure to introduce our panel.

Starting with Phillip Blond; political thinker, theologian, philosopher, director of the think tank ResPublica and he will allow the description of himself – a rather oxymoronic description – as a 'radical Tory'. He has a strong interest in local economies, putting them at the forefront of economic growth; and he is currently working on two new books *Red Tory*, and *The Eyes of Faith*. In addition to all this, *Prospect Magazine* named him this year as the 'British Thinker to Watch'.

Baroness Julia Neuberger – well we go back a very long way, to her days at the King's Fund which has done the most stimulating and influential work on health care, not least here in London. She sits in the House of Lords as a Liberal Democrat. She was appointed by the Prime Minister in 2007 as the Government's Champion of Volunteering. She was the first woman rabbi – I was going to say in this country, but she tells me it's actually in the world – to have her own synagogue. She is the President of the Liberal Judaism Movement in the UK, and the author also of numerous books including *The Moral State We Are In*.

Mary Chapman, Chairman of the Institute of Customer Service. A commissioner for the National Lottery. Previously the founding Chief Executive of Investors In People UK, as well as the Chief Executive of the Chartered Management Institute. Like Isaac Newton, she is a Director of the Royal Mint and has a very rich career in marketing, HR and management.

Last, and certainly not least, Giles Fraser: Canon Chancellor of this cathedral church and Director of St Paul's Institute. His doctoral studies were on the notable 19th century atheist, Friedrich Nietzsche. He was a lecturer in philosophy at Wadham College, Oxford, and a regular broadcaster and contributor through his columns in *The Guardian* and *The Church Times*. His books include, *Christianity with Attitude*.

Would you welcome our panel?

[Applause]

I am going to start, if I may, with Mary Chapman. As an opening question: how can work be a part of individual human flourishing?

Mary Chapman: I think that anyone in this room who has experienced the joy of seeing an idea come to fruition, the satisfaction of achieving a difficult task, the warmth of praise or the real pleasure of seeing a member of your team do something well, will readily acknowledge that work can be part of human flourishing. Unfortunately, and equally, anyone who has woken up on a Monday morning with a heavy heart; anyone who has struggled to meet targets that seem unreasonably demanding and bizarre in the way that they have been set; anyone who has

experienced the shock and depression of redundancy, will also acknowledge that there is a relationship between work and human flourishing – but, unfortunately, a negative one.

The negative aspects, I suggest, occur most often for those who work in employment as opposed to pursuing some individual endeavour. There is a sacrificing, to a degree, of independence and personal space – personal judgement – in employment that sometimes stands in the way of human flourishing. The costs of that are enormous. The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health published a report only in 2007 where they had estimated that £26 Billion is the estimated annual cost, to employers, of mental ill health. Now, it's not just the economic cost of ill health. It's not just the economic cost of unemployment. It's what it means in terms of human cost. So, for work to lead to individual human flourishing, organisations – and when I say organisations I don't actually mean companies or businesses, I mean the people who lead those organisations; the leaders, the senior managers, the boards – have to be able to create the right climate to achieve what their organisation is trying to achieve, but in a way that enables individuals within that organisation to flourish as well.

That's been an area of my interest for many years. Through Investors in People, through the Chartered Managers Institute – and actually we do understand now quite well what we should be doing in theory. People want a sense of purpose, a feeling of some clarity about what they are trying to achieve as well as a belief that it is worthwhile trying to achieve it. They want some control and self-determination in their working lives over where, and when, they work. Over decisions related to their job. They want the confidence that comes through recognition, and they want growth. Growth through training and development – not just of themselves, but sometimes the opportunity to develop others as well – and they want career progression. They want to be part of a team of people with trust and respect for each other and for the leadership of the business, and they want to work in an organisation with values and an ethical approach that they share. This is increasingly important for the younger generations, the so-called 'generation Y', who have a lot less time for affiliation to organisations and a lot more time for affiliation to values and the people they work with.

Now, you notice I haven't mentioned two things very much. I haven't talked about financial reward, and I haven't mentioned hours – time working – in absolute terms. Money is enormously important if you don't have any, and relatively important in certain competitive situations. But actually, only 11% of managers in a very big national survey said that it was the most important factor for them in choosing a job. So, individual flourishing comes through many of the other things; not just through money. Nor need long hours be a barrier to individual flourishing, although they sometimes are. They are of relative importance. The Working Hours Directive, for example, ensures that people are not exploited by working too long hours. But many people choose to do that because their flourishing comes through doing that. In the papers just this week, we hear the doctors speaking about the damage that is done through working shorter hours and shift changing all the time.

So, individual flourishing comes when people are able to work in a way where they sense that there is trust in them to fulfil their potential. Surprisingly, although it is not always recognised, that's also good for their employers. Businesses do best when they engage people properly in the organisation. Over the last ten years, I would say, there has been a recognition – an evidence – that employers are

taking that seriously and have been trying to bring about something of a convergence between what's needed for human flourishing and what makes for successful businesses and public services.

HR directors, and some other senior managers, are busily developing their employer brands; creating talent management programmes; introducing more flexible working arrangements; reflecting on corporate values, and investing in leadership development. All of those things are helping work to support individual flourishing. I think though that the test will be, now that we are in recession, to see whether or not these initiatives are sustained. Or whether they were simply a response to the fact that we've been experiencing a labour market where the power, for a long time, has very much been in the hands of those selling rather than those buying. So, the next five or ten years will show an unfolding of that and whether we are truly supporting individual flourishing at work or not.

Bishop of London: Mary, thank you very much indeed. Phillip, do you think that capitalism has made us happier or has it just led to a situation in which we are working harder?

Phillip Blond: Well, I think it's very clear that capitalism – at least in the last thirty to forty years – has made us work harder. For many people, it has made people work harder in order to stay still. For instance, the median wage in America is roughly the same as it was in 1974. After adjusted for inflation, the same 50% of the population are earning roughly what they did some thirty-five years ago. Secondly, we certainly do work far harder than we used to. Not only do individuals put in more working hours per week, but their spouses work as well. So now we have the phenomenon that a two-person household has to have both parties working and work harder, often for less money, in order to maintain the basic goods.

Another indicator of that is the rise – the awesome rise – in personal debt. British households, for example, are twice as indebted as their EU counterparts. Many people – I think it's the majority of the population, some 70% - have no savings and would essentially be run out of money within three weeks should they lose their job. So you can see that in terms of our assets and our resources people really have been stripped of any ability for long-term resilience. The only reason we have got through the past thirty years is the drop in consumer durables, the price thereof, due to more and more people coming on-stream within the global economy. But it's not so clear that will continue either. So, we certainly have worked harder and some of us have gained more money; but many of us, in terms of the basket of goods that we buy, have not.

Has it made us happier? Well the evidence for this is, well, no. Once you're above \$15,000 a year, happiness in relationship to income basically flat-lines. The increases you get for every extra tranche of income - \$5,000 or \$10,000 – is infinitesimally small. Other factors kick in as far more important. I also think we need to distinguish between human happiness and flourishing as Aristotle did. Happiness itself is short-term, it's transitory. Junk food, alcohol, drugs, meaningless sex can all count as making you happy within a nodal point. But human flourishing is long-term happiness, human flourishing is distinct from happiness. Often what makes people happy cuts them off from fruition, stops them moving onto other goods. It's like junk-culture. Once you become addicted to junk-culture you can't do high-culture. Once you can only listen to pop music, or once you only experience pop music, you can't listen to classical music - whereas if you listen to classical music you can enjoy pop music.

Gradually then, one could argue that actually all of the accounts that we have of what would constitute happiness – particularly in the Anglo-Saxon economies – have attenuated. I had a wonderful discussion this morning with Danny Dorling, who is Professor of Human Geography at Sheffield, and in that discussion he was saying to me that actually British households are now more fragmented, more alone, more segregated by class than at any time since 1918. I sort of thought that the model of British society was where we concertenored in the middle, we were all very similar, and it was only the bottom and the top that were accelerating away from each other. But no, on research what has been discovered is actually each class has got smaller and smaller. Your network of people – your network of friends, those you care about and those who care about you – has got smaller and smaller. More and more concentrated, more and more narrow and has less to do with those just above it and those below it. In an atomised world, each of these increasingly small groups that we all live in is spinning further and further away from each other. Apparently, the only space where most classes now meet, the greatest melting point, is Glastonbury. Outside of Glastonbury, British people are becoming more and more self-absorbed and they are self-absorbed with people very like themselves.

I needn't go onto all the UN Indexes where British children are at the bottom, though we're very wealthy. Where how we treat children, the life experience of children, is at the bottom of all the developed nations. I won't talk about abortions, STDs, family breakup, divorce. You'll all be pleased to know that we are at the top of those indicators.

So, given that we're in a self-evident social crisis – I'm quite optimistic here [Laughter] I'm not trying to be pessimistic here, these unfortunately are factual truths that we should talk about – and 'Broken Britain', which I think in a way shouldn't be just cast within political terms, is a reality. We're also in a broken economy, and what is that broken economy? It's a capitalism that only works for those at the very top. The bottom half of our society in 1976 owned 12% of the non-liquid wealth, that's your saving and capital, the bottom 50% of the population had 12% of the wealth to save for their children, to start businesses, and as some sort of resource against a crisis such as the car breaking down or something like that. Now, that figure in 2003 is 1%. The bottom half of the population have been decapitalised, it has no assets. We embarked upon this neo-liberal model because we were promised prosperity for all. What has it delivered us? Massive debt for those at the bottom, middle class insecurity, inability to finance where people are and huge gains – not at the top 10%, not at the top 1% - at the top 0.1%.

At this crisis point is where we should rethink the condition of capitalism, and the condition of society. It's a very exciting time to be a theologian, or as it were to have left the world of theology for politics. I left theology just as it became important. This is evinced in the latest Papal Encyclical - which is the most important socio-economic document, certainly produced by the church and I think is vying to be with the most important socio-economic document of this period – and in this encyclical the Pope essentially privileges society above all else and says that both state and market should serve society. It's the social good; what makes us happy, what flourishes us. Actually, if you look at the index, what makes us happy – top of the list – is relationships with other human beings that are stable; long-term human relationships. Second, is having a garden. Now what that suggests, is that actually that key factor for human happiness are relationship with other human beings and relationship with the world; relationship with creation. So we need to, in some sense, build a world where that is true; where that is the true value, that is what we foster. Because our

flourishing is all that we do, we don't live very long so the least we can do is live well. Work, I would argue, is the gift that we give to both those two goals. Work is how we create wealth, and wealth is the increasing of human relationships and increasing and deepening our relationship to the world. It's fundamentally productive and aesthetic.

So, to conclude, what I want to suggest to you is that we need to profoundly rethink what human happiness and human flourishing is; and then we need to back into economy and society from that perspective.

Bishop of London: Thank you very much Phillip. I'd point out that Glastonbury only meets once a year, you can come here to St Paul's every Sunday. It's a very good advertisement, I must say. But it's a way of looking at this subject that leads very much into a question I'd like to ask Julia, which is do you think our jobs are costing us too much in terms of other parts of our humanity?

Julia Neuberger: Well, I think it depends on what the jobs are and, rather like Mary, I think it depends on how much control you have over them; what targets you set or are set. Indeed, there is a great deal of research, done by a very distinguished public health doctor Michael Marmot, that shows that, although very senior people in organisations always complain about how much stress they are experiencing, actually the people experiencing the greatest amount of stress are the people who have least control; who are at the bottom of the organisation. So, what position you hold and how much freedom you are given to carry out your job as *you* see fit is key to the amount of human flourishing in work. But I do have to say, I think I take a different view and maybe it's being Jewish here, I think human beings *need* to work. We may not always need to work for money, but we need to work. The word in Hebrew for worship and for work and the same – Avodah – loosely translated as service. You give service in your work, and you take part in a service when you pray. Those two are closely related.

Now, most of us work for money - at least part of the time – and we do that in order to keep body and soul together, dare I say it, but also to acquire the things that we want in order to make us happy. Phillip is absolutely right to say that happiness flat-lines at \$15,000, but happiness only flat-lines at \$15,000 if you have no control. Happiness grows if you gain more control in your work; it's not about money, it's about how much say you have in what you do.

But we are human beings who are social, our relationships are absolutely of paramount importance to us – we are social beings. That's why many people volunteer. Before I became the Prime Minister's Champion for Volunteering, I chaired the Independent Commission on the Future of Volunteering. We did some polling, asking people why they volunteered. Until that point, I had foolishly thought that people volunteered because they wanted to make the world a better place or because they wanted to give something back to society. Those things are true, but they are not alone. People volunteer because they want a reason to get up in the morning. Many men who have retired volunteer because their wives tell them to - one of the most entertaining elements of the research that came out. People volunteer because it gives them a social network. As we increasingly live alone, volunteering with a group of other people gives you, if not permanent relationships, at least long-term relationships and new friends. People also volunteer to get a whole variety of experiences. Some of the motives for volunteering are the same as the motives for working for money, the difference with working for money is that you are doing it for the money. But quite often you are volunteering for the recognition and the network it gives you.

So, what's this about? I think it's about a human need to be needed, to have a purpose. We know that older people, when they are no longer feeling needed, often get depressed. We worry in this country enormously about the suicide rate amongst young people, actually there is a huge suicide rate amongst older people; and even more worryingly, one in four of the older people who try to commit suicide actually succeed which is far higher than among younger people. Older people feel isolated, not needed, they are often thrown out of paid work, and they are often not allowed to volunteer.

So, what do we need to do? We need to recognise that we need to be needed for human flourishing, and that this probably does mean work *and* service in a whole variety of different terms. We need to ask people to do things for us. We also need to encourage people with poor mental health – and we have a huge mental ill health crisis in this country – to do things in work, because that, of its very nature, often makes them feel better. But the last thing we need to understand, is something about work itself giving us a sense of meaning. I was going to say something about it, but as I was thinking about what to say this evening I found a wonderful quotation from that American social commentator Studs Terkel – who died earlier this year and if you don't know his work please read it –and this is what he said:

“Work is about a search for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life, rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying.”

Bishop of London: Thank you very much indeed. I was very interested in the echoes in the Hebrew, and that of course is paralleled in the tradition of the church with the word 'liturgy'. Because liturgy, of course, both describes what goes on in this place; but also is derived from the public liturgies, the work of the citizen body in the ancient world, typically to build a road or a temple. Liturgy has this very profound resonance with work and labour.

Well, since we are looking at the spiritual dimension of this, could I ask you Giles whether you think that we've been damaged by what has often been described as the 'Protestant work ethic'?

Giles Fraser: Yes, I do think we have been damaged by over work certainly. Can I start with a few lines from a great poem from Philip Larkin, you may know it, Toads:

Why should I let the toad *work*
Squat on my life?
Can't I use my wit as a pitchfork
And drive the brute off?

Six days of the week it soils
With its sickening poison -
Just for paying a few bills!
That's out of proportion.

Lots of folk live up lanes
With fires in a bucket,
Eat windfalls and tinned sardines-
they seem to like it.

Bishop of London: Well, he was a librarian after-all. I gather from a lot of what's been said, that the panel are fairly unanimous – well, perhaps Mary isn't – on the fact that we are living in a broken society. But, that idea has been fairly derided in newspapers and by commentators. Is this derision merely self-interested, or is the talk of a broken society very much the talk of intellectuals? Mary...

Mary Chapman: Well where I would challenge slightly, I think, is the immediate linking of work and a broken society. There are aspects in which there are a number of undesirable things, and indeed Phillip has already listed some of them so I won't do so again, which have tended to isolate more people than perhaps was the case in the past; and isolation does bring stresses, particularly if it is not what you seek. People are essentially social being, and those social networks and family networks are an important part of the support and flourishing of individuals. However, I would it is a step too far to put that all down to work; which I believe potentially is actually a legitimate expression of people's being, of the identity that people have, the way people see themselves. So, it is not work per se that is a problem or an impediment to human flourishing. It is the way work is managed; the way people are sometimes forced to become engaged in work for which they have a really poor fit. There is something about people being able to find the right role, the right kind of activity, where in fact they will flourish.

I'd also challenge slightly Giles' comment about overwork. When you talk about individual flourishing there are certain circumstances where overwork, long hours, a complete focus on the job has destroyed families and that is painful - Painful for the families, and probably painful for the individual when they recognise it. But there are also individuals for whom work is their life, where they express themselves through their life, and I think there has been a little bit of a knee-jerk reaction to say that everybody working long hours is bad simply because working long hours does have some negative effects for some people. It's this polarisation of the debate that I would challenge.

Bishop of London: Julia, were things really better when people worked on the land; worked in factories until their minds were destroyed?

Julia Neuberger: Absolutely not. I don't hold with the view that we are living in a broken society. Certainly in so far that if we are living in a broken society I wouldn't put it down to work, or at least not wholly down to work. Mary is right that overwork can destroy families, but doesn't necessarily do so. Equally, overwork can be very bad for people because they lose any distance; they lose any objectivity and can't look at what they're doing and judge themselves, and we all need to judge ourselves as well as be judged by others.

Incidentally, by the way, in Phillip's great long list of social ills you left out teenage pregnancies, of which this society comes out top.

Phillip Blond: There are many others.

Julia Neuberger: There are many others you would add? Okay fine. But, of course, one of the things that people never say about this country is that we do volunteer. We, as a society that people are describing as broken, in a way that the Americans do not, give of our time to others and it is absolutely astonishing. We come out very near the top of the international table. People keep saying, we're so busy and people are overworked, but the people that have the most calls on their time – the group of people between the ages of 35 – 44 – who probably have children and may also have aging parents, are the group of people who are increasing in their numbers of volunteering most. So something interesting is going on, and I think it comes back to people's need for relationships and need to be needed. I don't believe our society is broken. There are lots of things

wrong with it, but that doesn't mean it's broken. Indeed, I suppose as somebody who is fundamentally optimistic and believes human beings can and should make the world a better place, I think there are lots of things wrong with it - lots of things we could do about it – and I think that between us here we ought to be able to make an extremely good list of where to start.

Bishop of London: So do you think you've been too gloomy, Phillip?

Phillip Blond: Well, I'm not by nature a pessimist. Everything I have said is true. These statistics aren't invented, therefore they name something. If Britain, for example, comes bottom of the UN Index in terms of where it is good to bring up children; that's not something that can be dismissed. Now, the notion of a broken society doesn't mean we are Afghanistan. It doesn't mean that all things are fatal and we give up, and actually I completely agree with Julia. I think there are very positive signs there around the civic rebirth that I do agree with. I also agree that work is a good; I think that meaningful work is one of the great sources of human happiness. But I really think that too many people, especially on the liberal Left, think that saying Britain is a broken society is to some sense to pander to the Right. I think nothing of the case. I think that actually if you transplanted people from the Left in the 19th century into this culture they would find it profoundly problematic, and what I am interested in generating is a cross-partisan consensus – I'm not making a partisan political point – about 'gosh, we really have gone wrong'. There are really sources of great atomisation.

What I'm interested in doing is – as I said – privileging what genuinely makes human beings happy. The interesting economic and political question is how do we run a market economy – a successful, capitalist economy – based on making people happy? Well, what you do is price in the externalities of making people unhappy. So on the environment, you price in real food miles for the transmission of food-stuffs across the world. On the environment, you price in the real value of people's well-being; their relationship with the land. You include the work of caring, the work of parenting, you include all the work that makes human beings happy. You produce a tax and spend plan that values all the activity that human beings do, that creates the society that we want. From that proper evaluation of the work of care, the work of nurture, the work of education, the work of caring for our environment, out of that new sort of matrix that talks about destructive economic growth and productive economic growth you can then produce a system, I think, that can produce the right sort of market economy that can actually serve human wellbeing and human happiness.

Bishop of London: Thank you very much indeed. We've got some really very good questions here, and perhaps can I try them on the panel? Does the idea of a vocation, to a particular occupation, have meaning today? What does the panel think about the concept of vocation?

I mean, if we are talking about the Protestant work ethic we are talking about somebody like Calvin on the fact that every human being should be able to discern some kind of 'calling', rather than exercise choice perhaps?

Giles Fraser: I think that the number of people who would describe their paid employment as vocational is remarkably small. I think the whole business about the Protestant work ethic, which creates anxiety for me, is the way in which people define their own value too narrowly in terms of what it is that they do rather than the sum total of their relationships and who they are. That it's a question of I work therefore I am. So, vocation in one sense as a calling is an attractive idea; but the idea that we're all persuaded to see our work as central to our identity I think is a dangerous idea for many people. The use of vocational language if you work in offices and banks, and so forth, is another way of persuading you to give more of yourself over to the company.

Though I'm in a job which is clearly vocational, as much as it is something which comes out of conviction, I'm anxious about the language of vocation when applied across the board.

Bishop of London: You're sounding rather like my grandfather, who always used to say 'work is the curse of the drinking classes'. [Laughter]

Phillip, what about vocation in your world?

Phillip Blond: I taught for ten years at a university in the North, so I had – literally I think – thousands of students that I dealt with, and what strikes you is that nobody is without vocation. I've yet to meet a human being who is without vocation. But the trouble is that all of our society only has one account of status, one account of meaning, and yet the people you meet are utterly plural in what their account of vocation is. As I was saying to colleagues earlier, what has gone wrong with our society is our status – what it is to succeed in our society is progressively narrowed. Since the 1940s, our status of what it is to succeed is money. Increasingly, as all the other ways of which we used to value people becomes just money, fewer and fewer people can succeed. As fewer people can succeed and we only have one playing field, those who are well positioned or already asset rich are the only ones who win at that game.

Everything we do, all of which is inherently valuable because we do it – or the meaningful activity we do because it is inherently valuable – isn't valued. Professor Marmot, who was quoted earlier, I think has quite an important insight. He said that status is the fundamental deliverer of human happiness, the feeling of worth. Because we don't have plural accounts of status, the person who runs the cubs in the North, or the person who looks after his wife, or the woman who runs a voluntary organisation unrecognised have no status within their communities and they become worthless. A truly democratic and plural society has to relocalise status, redistribute status so that everything that human beings do that is meaningful is valued. We all need to recognise that, instead of living under a totalitarian status culture that says there is only one way of being successful. If you're not totally beautiful you're ugly, if you're not hugely rich you are without value. It's that which is the cause of depression and human anxiety, and it's that which we have to end.

Bishop of London: Julia, have you got anything to add?

Julia Neuberger: I would wholly agree with that. I completely agree Phillip, I think that everybody has some form of vocation within them. We would say in Judaism, that everybody has a choice to make as well. That everybody can choose, if you like, between their good inclination - the desire and drive to do the good things – and the evil inclination – the Yetzer Hara – which says just follow the money and follow what the outside world gives status to. I think it is even more worrying than Phillip was describing, because I think it's also worth thinking that in the 1940s and 1950s we gave huge status – not much money, but huge status – to teachers, to nurses, to social workers – although they weren't called social workers, a lot of them were called 'Lady Almoners' in those days – and I think what we've done is devalued, in status terms and actually quite often we've increased the salaries of, a whole group of people who were the people who professional helped and guided either our young, or our old or whoever. I think there is something terribly wrong with the value that we have subscribed - both in status and in money - to a whole variety of people.

There's one particular group that I think it is worth talking about. If you look at who provides most of the hands on care to very frail and disabled older people, they are care workers who are often very skilled but have not had much training. We pay them the minimum wage, we squeeze the amount of time they are allowed to spend with older people, the time in the conversation which would give meaning to their work. What a lot of them do, a lot of the time, is what I would call 'bum

wiping'. That's what they do. They physically clean people up. They get them out of bed; they toilet them; they feed them; they put them back to bed. We need to think about how we value the people who provide the care for the most vulnerable, and we need to give status to that. I would say, take some of it away from the people who just make the money. So, you're right, it is a cross-party view.

Bishop of London: So this is a very undesirable situation, that we have levelled status and just focused on one thing only; the acquisition of money. How did we get into this situation? Because of course if we can understand that we can perhaps do something about it. That brings me to another very interesting question that has come from the audience, and that is: through our education system, are we breeding people to be work machines?

What's your view on that Mary?

Mary Chapman: Well, I speak as someone who has an eighteen year old daughter and a very strong involvement with one of the largest groups of schools in this country; so I declare that first of all. Speaking to young people at that age, and it goes a little bit back to the question about vocation, it is quite clear that those who have a sense of vocation or who feel driven into a particular area of work are regarded as the lucky ones. The ones who have a sense of 'I will need to go out and earn my living at some point, and I'm not sure how or in what way' are the ones who have a sense of impending burden, but who do not feel equipped to address it. Whereas I wouldn't necessarily say we are educating people to be work machines, I think we are failing to educate young people to understand how to identify how they might create some sort of match between their personalities – not just their A-levels or very obvious qualifications – their values and behaviours, and the jobs that they might then take. Because we have that failure, people are very ill-equipped, in terms of career guidance, to think about finding a good fit where they will be able to flourish.

Bishop of London: Do you think, Giles, that our education system is breeding people to be work machines?

Giles Fraser: I do, and I think it is communicating an anxiety that many parents have to children. I think particularly middle-class parents. Some of the suburbs of London that I know quite well, you see many of the children and the lives that they lead and everything has to be quality time. Even their time outside of school has to be doing something important, like going to another lesson – another horse-riding lesson, another violin lesson – or having extra tuition and so forth. What's happened to dossing about with children? Making dens and playing with each other? Those sorts of terribly important things which I think are essential for the flourishing of children. I think we have actually communicated our anxiety about work and getting on, doing what you have to do, even to our smallest ones and we are robbing them of their childhood.

Mary Chapman: If I could just come back on that one. I think we have to ask ourselves the question of is that education, or is that parental pressure? Because I think that, in some ways, parents are bringing about that kind of incredibly crowded agenda for young people maybe more than schools. If you talk to teachers, I don't think that that is what they see as their role at all.

Giles Fraser: But exams, because you are constantly having to do more and more exams ups that pressure from education considerably.

Bishop of London: I'm very interested in this whole question of relocalising status, because one of the things we seem to be agreeing about is that recognition, status, gives life piquancy and meaning. Now, there is a question here which asks us to think how precisely you might do that. The question

is: what about the unskilled, low paid worker with no control who is unhappy; but without whom society cannot flourish because someone has to do this kind of work?

Now, that's the question. I remember of course in the old days, when I was a frequent visitor to the Soviet Union, the somewhat risible attempts to solve this problem of relocalising status by having 'Hero Worker of the Week' photographs on the streets, and a good deal of rhetoric about the most overachieving dustman of the year. How do you actually cope with this problem, Phillip Blond, of relocalising status?

Phillip Blond: My think tank just published its first report last week. In that, I argued that most of our public sector provision should become employee bought out businesses. That all employees should become owners and stakeholders of public service delivery, and that the groups they were serving should have veto powers – a type of ownership – over them. I think that we really can no longer live in a society where we are served at the bottom by low paid workers, who are managed out of existence and have no other stake in the world. I think we need to radically recapitalise these workers, we need to give them ownership and equity stakes in the businesses they serve. For instance, in central Surrey there are district nurses now running their own business; as district nurses. I think this is wonderful, and I want to see this scaled up for all workers period. I think that if you do that, if you create a situation where workers are shareholders and stake-owners, what you do is you speak to the innate talents - that their poor schooling and their upbringing that has shut them out from opportunity - can reawaken in them. They can be re-skilled in the workplace and build up a new 21st century model of mutualism, and that model of mutualism – which is what, by the way, empowered 19th century labour movements – needs to be rediscovered for a kind of economy for us all.

I think this is why the new civic agenda, which again is the emerging agenda between Left and Right and is not the possession of either, is so exciting. People on the Right need to develop a critique of the market, far more radically than has been done. People on the Left need to develop a critique of the state, and then they will both end up in the same place; which is that we need to defend civil society, which is the idea of intermediate associations made up of those who have got a stake in that outcome. Once you have that, you've already localised the economy and therefore you have already localised status. That's the future. By the way, much of the origin of that lies in old Christian thinking; so it resonates very deeply with institutes such as this.

Bishop of London: Do you find that a plausible recipe, Julia Neuberger?

Julia Neuberger: Not wholly, but mostly yes. I think that the district nurses in Surrey and in Kent, setting up essentially a co-op, a social enterprise, setting that up I think is brilliant. I think the care-workers I was describing, the 'bum wipers', they would be very well served by doing just that. We have to be realistic. There will be some people who will not do that, and that's not what they will want and not in fact perhaps what the Irish would say 'they are able for'. In which case, what do you do? Well the Soviet system used to have the 'Worker Hero of the Week' and that was a nonsense, but certainly in the United States – and there are many things there that I do not feel comfortable with – when I go into a hospital or university, what they would call 'not for profit', you do see the 'Receptionist of the Week' and you do see that that receptionist has not only been regarded as being the best of the week and in some sense a hero or heroine, but has received training and recognition for what they do. I think what we are bad at, because of our obsession with status at the top and particularly with money, is according to status to people who do whatever it is that they do. It may be very unskilled, but it doesn't mean that people can't receive training. Even if they start off unskilled, they can become more skilled at what they do. We deny them the opportunity for growth, I would argue, at our very great peril.

Bishop of London: There is a very moving question here, and a very troubling one. It says, I have a touch of Asperger's Syndrome and I don't 'do' relationships very well. How do I fit into what you have been saying about human flourishing?

Phillip Blond: I think that we, all of us, are born with problems. This is what it is to live in a human society. All of us must recognise the limits and flaws that we have, and that's physical, it's mental, it's cultural. I think that until we can build up a well of sympathy and affection for one another it's a kind of an everyday disaster between us. So I think actually that being able to ask the question, and phrase it like that, shows that you have no problem in forming relationships with other human beings.

Bishop of London: Another question. What do you do? It's the first question you are asked when you meet someone new. To what extent do we work to justify ourselves to other people?

Well, that's the question. I suppose we might ask ourselves what our opening gambits should be, in order to stop enforcing this tyranny on people. Giles?

Giles Fraser: I think it's a terrible tyranny, and I think it is the sort of thing that middle-class people ask each other actually. I think that people who work as dustman don't say to each other 'what do you do?' and that's why I'm slightly anxious about the consensus that is going on here – that it is terribly easy for people to find value out of any job that they are able to do. There are some people for whom that is not going to be the source of their value, and that's the realism. The source of their value is going to come from many other places in life and not from the thing that they get their money from. Which is why, in a way, I am really anxious about the more in which you want to invest in people's work value is the more those people who feel that their value isn't work are going to be excluded from that whole pattern.

I remember very much those forms of exclusion happen with women who give up work to look after children, and so forth. When my wife did that, we were living in Oxford at the time and the only real answer to 'what do you do?' was 'I'm a fellow of x'. So, when my wife was at a party and asked what she did she said 'I'm only a mum' – you know how people sometimes reply 'only a mum' in some terrible way, which is a shocking statement on how we value things. I think that whole pressure is that we have this mono framework for valuation which comes far too much through work, and I think we need to split it up and have our valuations in a much more mixed economy.

Julia Neuberger: Can I come back on that?

Bishop of London: What do you do, Julia?

Julia Neuberger: I do a mixture of things. But can I come back on that, because it is really important to know that I did absolutely not say that people should only get their value through their paid work. But the giving of service, and the providing of care, are things which give value. They give *you* value, and they provide value to others; and they ought to be rated as equal. I absolutely recognise the middle-class dinner party, and when asked I used to say 'I am just a housewife' and people would say 'really?' – to which I would say 'well, actually not but I think it's a perfectly reasonable thing to say that one is'. I have never been very good as a housewife, to be absolutely brutally honest, but I do think it is the nature of the service you give. It is work, although it may not be your paid work. I think it is really important that we recognise that. You get your value from something you do, I suspect rather than just being, but it may not be your paid work.

Bishop of London: It is rather sinister, isn't it, that being a mum – which demands more intelligence, more imagination, more stamina, more physical strength than almost anything you could imagine – because it isn't remunerated people are forced into the position of saying 'I am *only* a mum'. That is a sign of something wrong, isn't it?

Julia Neuberger: As it would be to say 'I am only an advice worker in a CAB', for which one is not remunerated either. The difference, of course, is that you're trained to be an advice worker if you're a volunteer. Nobody trains you to be a mum, and the organisational skills you need to be a mum are something else. Most managers would kill for those skills.

Bishop of London: And your impact on the future, of course, is enormous. What do you do Mary? Do you think we ought to try and get away from this way of assessing people?

Mary Chapman: It's a question I've had to answer in the last year or two, since I stopped doing one single thing and now do a range of things, and it's an answer I usually try to avoid. I think the fact that people ask the question, and it is as you say very much a dinner party thing, is a reflection actually of our own lack of skills in communicating with people; rather than anything more sinister. But I wanted to agree with Giles' point, in that not everyone gets their sense of satisfaction from work – paid or otherwise – in that there are some people who, perhaps, adore gardening and their sense of fulfilment comes from winning the flower show, or growing a wonderful marrow. For other people, it's playing chess and doing well in chess tournaments. I think it would be mistaken to limit the sense of flourishing purely to work, whether voluntary or paid. For those people, recognising that most of us have to earn our living some way or another, that's why it is really important that there is the legislation and the protections that are in employment that ensure that people whose fulfilment comes in other ways are not abused at work.

Bishop of London: Now, here's another question. The panel have been talking about recognition and relationships, but isn't the market a solvent of relationships? I think that perhaps lies behind this question: employers are less paternal to employees, less loyal, leading to shorter term work relationships – is this good for society?

Phillip Blond: Well, it can be for certain groups of people but for many groups of people no. It also depends where you are on the age ladder, as it were. Lots of people in their twenties like working like that. The main point is, there is no set rule whereby human happiness is obtained. What has to be asked is, within any situation what is most productive of the good? What is most productive of the good will vary, because circumstances vary and the world varies. Really, what we could say though is that within that there are general norms that happen to be true; and it, generally speaking, happens to be true that a long period of temporary work is very bad for human beings. Human beings need security, and only with security can they begin to fructify and form all the other relationships and connections that lead to human happiness.

So I think that what we have to do is accept variation, but also accept normative structures – what most people want. In many ways, we've been leading a collective politics of minorities. By that, I mean that we have these endless business magazines that fetishise power; that fetishise your dominance over others or the deals you strike. But 99.9% of people don't live lives like that, and don't generate their income like that. So we, in some sense, need to reintegrate our lives with how they are actually lived and start talking about normative cultures, whilst allowing flexibility, all governed by the good. Everything, everywhere, has to be governed by the good.

Bishop of London: But actually, of course, our supreme value seems to be choice doesn't it? Not what we choose.

Phillip Blond: But the point is that choice begs the question, it doesn't answer it. If people say I believe in choice, well in some sense that is the moral reality. But too many people think that the act of choosing is in itself moral, and nobody thinks that you can choose terrible things. You can say that I choose in these woods in Lithuania to assassinate these human beings because they are from a different group to me. That's a choice, and it leads to total evil. So choice by itself is morally neutral, and actually the more sophisticated theologians say that the mere fact that you entertain choice and don't know already what is good and evil is an example of The Fall.

So, I think choice is very compromised as a moral category. It is necessary for human freedom but, as it were, since – to quote Augustine – 'time is an image of eternity' we already in some way know what the good is and we have to have practices around the good. Along with conscience and all the other traditions we have, phenomenology, and how violated people look violated and not just different tells us that objective truth is in the world and in us and we can recognise it. Choice, in so far as it denies that, is a problematic category.

Bishop of London: Now, as a Liberal Democrat Julia, could you possibly subscribe to that?

Julia Neuberger: Well, no. But actually I have more problems with it as a Jew than as a Liberal Democrat. I don't think it's a Liberal Democrat problem, I think it's a Jewish problem. Where's this Fall then? We don't go for Fall. We really believe in the fact that you *do* have a choice, and you have a choice that has been set before you. I actually do think that, you have a choice before you all the time. Do you want to do the good thing, or do you want to do the thing that is bad?

Phillip Blond: But the very fact that you are able to frame it in terms of good and bad, means that in some sense you know the options and that is in front of you. You don't choose neutrally, and certainly not in Judaism.

Julia Neuberger: No, you don't choose neutrally. I don't think you choose neutrally in any religious faith actually. You don't choose neutrally, but the fact that you have the choice is quite an important thing; and I think one of the problems about using choice – it's a kind of political mantra – all the time, saying that people must have choices; well, most of those choices aren't real. You choose which hospital you are going to go to? What does that mean? I want to go to the doctor who is most experienced, and knows most about the condition that I have. I don't care which hospital that doctor is in if I can get there. A lot of this stuff about choice is nonsense, but what *is* important is that we say to people you do have choices in your life. You do have a conscience, and you ought to listen to it. That is actually quite important in creating a society in which people can flourish, in work or elsewhere; Liberal Democrat or not.

Bishop of London: This idea of the common good, Mary, sounds awfully hegemonic doesn't it? It might suggest that we really have some social norms.

Mary Chapman: Only if we are absolutely certain about the definition of the common good. Most of us, and most thinkers, are reaching towards some concept of the common good. Those of us who are Christians have that basis to our definition of the common good, and people bring a whole of variety of other views. So I think there is a shared view of some of the elements that make up the common good without having something which is quite as clearly defined and applied as you are maybe suggesting.

Bishop of London: But how do we arrive at any agreed common decisions about the common good? There is this postmodern attitude of diversity, how do we actually arrive at any notion of the common good that could be put into law, for example?

Mary Chapman: Through debate. It's going on in a number of think tanks, it's going on politically, it's going on within churches. Perhaps one of the real problems or challenges for us, is that it isn't brought together in anyway. Certainly, one could argue that the Church has not been explicit enough in its view and influence on the definition of the common good.

Giles Fraser: Can I say something here about the relationship between capitalism and flourishing that has been stalking this conversation and I think is very important? It's a complex relationship, because on the one hand capitalism creates wealth. I won't back off how important that is, as it creates wealth for some of the poorest people and it underscores freedom; which I think is also important. But, because it is such a strong agent of change often, it can undermine traditional communities where people have stayed in one place for a long time and whose values have stabilised. I think the way in which it can undermine tradition and community, in the name of a more individualistic ethic, is part of the problem here because the whole notion of the common good grows out of an agreed sense of what is right and wrong that is there in shared values. When you are in an individualistic culture, any discussion you like is not going to bring that sort of coming together of a common mind; or it's going to be so anemic it's useless.

I think we need to build up our sense of community in which these values can flourish. For me, although capitalism is terribly important in generating wealth; people have to get on their bike and move, jobs are destroyed and created here and somewhere else, and what that does to the traditional thick community is to deeply undermine it. That, I think, is part of the real problem as it creates a relativism that means we have a real problem with the idea of a common good and shared values.

Julia Neuberger: I don't feel that, not completely anyway. I agree that if people have to, as it were, 'get on their bike and move' that is incredibly constructive to communities – I have no doubt about that. But I don't think that it is a corollary of that that you can't have a debate about shared values, and indeed one of the things that I think is extremely optimistic at the moment is that people increasingly, across social groupings, seem to want to have more space for debate and very often debate about these sorts of issues. What is the common good? What does matter?

Look at Intelligence Squared, an organisation that organises debates of considerable importance. They pack them in, people are paying to go to those debates to talk about these issues.

Giles Fraser: That's because they don't know what they are anymore.

Julia Neuberger: No, it's because they are actually interested in them and they want to tease it out. Do you think people ever really knew, they just accepted authority didn't they? I think people are thinking, and I think that somebody who is liberally religious – with a small 'l' – have to be given the teachings and the opportunities and encourage them to do that thinking. I think that this is a wholly good sign that people are debating these issues at the moment.

Phillip Blond: If there was no common good, if the common good wasn't available to human beings we would still be in small family kin groups – not developing but fighting with each other. Historically, all the great faiths were examples of the fact that people very clearly saw there was a common good. Judaism was the first religion to talk about equality, to confer equity regardless of social status – women, so on and so forth. Christianity universalised those dictates across the world.

The very fact is that people saw what was virtuous and true and were persuaded by it. Otherwise we would still have Aztec mass-executions in Mexico City. The point is that the very fact of historical change, the very fact of being persuaded by other movements and other cultures, tells you that debate is what allows the perception of the objective truth that is present in reason, present in the world, and present in us, to be verified.

The point about postmodernists, not only is it intellectually ridiculous; it's historically false, even as a historical thesis. If it was all just arbitrary then we wouldn't even move beyond our own individual autistic mindsets. Yet, the history of the world is the history of an increasing sense of the common good. The environmental crisis, the notion of human rights, this tells you that the common good is real and actually one of the disasters of Britain is that we haven't followed the politics of the common good. But I think that is changing, and I think it is changing on Left and Right and I thoroughly welcome that development.

Bishop of London: How can you see and be convinced by the virtuous life in a media order which is focused on celebrity? I'm actually looking at another question here, does the media have a role in creating or changing for the better perceptions of the common good and what makes a human being valuable?

Phillip Blond: For instance, the BBC is one of our great British institutions. It has been a huge gift to the world, but it has been partially destroyed by the fact that the original Reithian vision has been lost – remember Reith who founded the BBC said 'I don't believe in choice, but I believe in equal access to things that are great'. It's dictated now by an easy, one degree level, postmodernism that doesn't believe in the common good. And yet, it's crucial that we develop mass media institutions that believe in the common good. Otherwise, we just have the politics of individual celebrity; and celebrity is just the fetishisation of a life you can never enjoy, it is a voyeurism and a type of autism. It is something we should strongly resist because it deeply corrupts our culture. It gives us an education that, as we said earlier, has no critical element to it and just offers an intensification of the status quo.

Bishop of London: I once heard a Bishop say: 'I've got my truth; you've got your truth'. It's absolutely amazing. Now, I'm going to ask all members of the panel to offer concluding reflections – but perhaps with this final question in mind. Which is obviously not something that is pressing any members of the panel now, but it might later. How can we live a good working life that prepares us for a good retirement?

Giles, your concluding thoughts?

Giles Fraser: I've just been thinking the last couple of minutes about the story in Exodus where manna comes down from heaven and we are fed, as it were, by gift; and then the other part of that story, where you can't collect it all up. If you collect too much up – you try and store it all up like the Egyptians stored it up in their big barns to keep their wealth together – it all melts away and goes rotten. So the question is, what do you do for the rest of the time? You receive life as a gift, and you celebrate it as a gift, and there isn't more wealth to store up. So the rest of the day, what's going on? Well, the rest of the day is to celebrate life and it seems to me to be to celebrate the source of life. That is where our values and our hearts should be, and my reluctance to share the same enthusiasm of my colleagues here on the panel for work is that it seems like it is the sort of toiling that the lilies of the field are told not to do. That actually, we should be enjoying the gift that is God's to us.

Bishop of London: Final reflections Mary?

Mary Chapman: The lilies of the field...it's interesting because that part of the sermon of the mount, and the birds of the air, used to irritate me, frankly, in that it seemed to be an excuse for idleness. It took a long while before I realised that the message was actually about not being over anxious, and not placing undue value on material things acquired through labour. The fruits of labour were also in my mind, because we were challenged in my parish this year to think about what we would do if, in this world and certainly in a suburb of London that is not remotely agricultural, we wouldn't normally bring the fruits of our labour in the forms of apples and pears and bags of pasta. So, if we were to try and express at harvest thanksgiving the fruits of our labours, what would we bring? That sort of reflection is the answer to the last question that you pose. As one approached retirement, how can I be in a position to say that there are some fruits of my labours. While it is easy to look to lawyers or politicians to create circumstances for individual flourishing, I think too that we have a very personal responsibility to think about work and what it brings. Not just to ourselves and our own flourishing, but in terms of contribution.

Bishop of London: Thank you very much indeed. Well Julia, what would you bring? White papers, interdepartmental memos? What do you think?

Julia Neuberger: I don't think I would bring white papers or interdepartmental mental memos. What would I bring? Well, we've just had a harvest festival and we have been bringing the bags of pasta and the bowls of fruit – the fruit of our labours. I think that if you take the view - as I do and I think it is a Jewish, Christian and Muslim view - that what we are here for is to make the world a better place. If you take this view, then in your working life – whether in your paid work or elsewhere – you are doing something and making some contribution and when you retire you may continue to make some contribution. You will produce something, you will bring something. In the end, how we are judged, our immortality, is really by the legacy that we leave. That may be our children, we may have been 'just a mum'. It may be something we said, or something we grew, or something we painted, or just some culture that we left. If we were dustman, for instance, the culture of the working environment in which we worked. In the end, I would hope that one's paid working life takes into retirement and then takes one towards one's end.

Bishop of London: Phillip, final reflection?

Phillip Blond: The saddest people in the world, by universal measure, are women whose husbands have died and who spend the last ten, fifteen, or twenty years of their lives radically alone. If you did a global survey of which group in the world was most unhappy, it would be that group. This is particularly accentuated in the West. The lesson of this, is that what makes these women who are widowed – because we men are rather more fragile creatures and die much earlier – what makes these people so unhappy is not enough human relationships. The real source of human wealth is each other. The real thing we need to do is fall in love with each other. If we can and the circumstances allow, have children. Develop and fructify all of our human relationships. Because it is our human relationships that sustain us, that is the true source of our retirement. If we can in some sense secure the other necessities of life, that is what deeply enhance our life. If we can go into old age and in some sense still be a relational being, still helping and sustaining those around us, then that's the real wealth. To end with Ruskin – there is no wealth but life.

Bishop of London: Could we thank the members of our panel.

[Applause]

END.