

**"The Commonwealth @ 60: Serving a New Generation
The Twelfth Commonwealth Lecture
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It was only a few weeks ago that Archbishop Desmond and I met in Lewisham where, along with the late Spike Milligan, a one-time resident, we had all once been honoured with the Freedom of the Borough.

As a young student, over 50 years ago, I used to visit the Church of St Augustine Grove Park in the Borough of Lewisham, to be instructed by the Vicar in the basic elements of Pastoral work. I have long forgotten the details of the learned cleric's lectures, but I have remembered two things about those visits.

The first was that the Vicar had a very beautiful daughter who alarmed her father by announcing that she intended to go to Paris and join the Bluebell Girls - a renowned dancing group. After her father had met Miss Bluebell in France, and satisfied himself that his daughter would be in safe hands, she left home and alas I never saw her again.

The second was that the young cleric Desmond Tutu also found himself serving for a time at the very same Church. He of course did not make a career out of dancing, although he has enlivened many an ecclesiastical gathering with an impromptu African two-step, if one may call it that!

When recently we both met for tea in the house in Grove Park where Desmond had his lodgings many years ago, we reminisced about the past. He reminded me of the time when, for some reason or other, long forgotten by me, we both appeared on the front page of a leading South African Newspaper. The six-foot-seven Terry Waite alongside the five-foot-something Desmond Tutu. The sub editor could not resist the Comment: 'Why is Bishop Desmond kneeling!'

Unlike the Vicar's daughter, my pathway through life has frequently crossed that of Archbishop Desmond. When working as an advisor to the late Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury, I was frequently sent to South Africa to give first hand support to Desmond when he was deep in the difficult and dangerous waters of the Apartheid years.

I have sat with him in his home with Leah, his quiet and deeply supportive wife, when he has been the recipient of the most dreadful threatening and abusive telephone calls.

I travelled with him to the Delmas treason trial in South Africa when, after the judge adjourned the case for the day, Desmond conducted the marriage ceremony for one of the accused in the courtroom.

When he was serving with the South African Council of Churches, an investigation - known as the Eloff Commission - was launched into the activities of that body. Many believed that the investigation was an attempt to render the Council impotent, and in the bargain totally discredit the Bishop (as he then was). Robert Runcie sent me to appear in the courtroom as a character witness for the Bishop.

I was by Desmond's side when he visited the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to plead with her to impose a sporting ban on South Africa, as he believed that such a ban would certainly be a powerful tool to bring about change. She listened politely, but no ban was imposed.

When he travelled to Oslo to be the worthy recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, his troubles were not over. A bomb scare disrupted the proceedings, something quite foreign to Norway in those days, and I spent an hour or so driving round town with him until the King decided that we should all go back into the Hall to resume proceedings. By this time the official musicians had fled in terror, but Desmond called his South African supporters up onto the platform, where they sang as only South Africans can sing.

Alas, I was not with him when apartheid finally came to an end. By then I was in solitary confinement in Beirut without books or papers, or any contact with the outside world. After many years, I eventually established contact with captives in the cell next to mine by tapping on the wall in code. One for A. Two for B and so on. It is then that you regret that your name begins with a "W"!

They had what I did not possess, a radio, and one night they tapped out the most amazing message. A message that I never believed I should hear in my lifetime. Apartheid was over.

Without question Desmond Tutu is one of the truly great world figures of our time. He is an outstanding son of the Commonwealth, and it was entirely appropriate that he should have been invited to deliver this lecture celebrating 60 years of this great family of nations. I am sure you will join with me in wishing him a speedy recovery to full health.

The Commonwealth

"Despite its astonishing diversity of peoples, cultures and beliefs, the Commonwealth remains united in working to uphold the fundamental values that are common to us all - democracy, good governance, human rights, more equitable global trade, respect and understanding, where all too often there has been suspicion, fear and conflict."

Those are the words uttered by the British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, to commemorate the 60th anniversary of this remarkable voluntary association of 53 countries.

Although the roots of the Commonwealth may be traced back to the 1870s, it was reconstituted in the wake of India's Independence, and, as Archbishop Desmond intimated in his note to us, India played a formative role in shaping the Commonwealth then, as indeed it continues to play such a role today.

It is worth remembering that the Commonwealth is home to two billion citizens of all faiths and ethnicities, of whom half are under 25 and a quarter of whom are under five.

The Commonwealth is bound by one language, but still home to several thousand. The association spans six continents from Africa to Asia, the Americas, the Caribbean, Europe and the South Pacific. Having myself visited and worked in some 40 of the 53 Commonwealth countries, I can testify not only to its remarkable diversity but also to the wealth of talent present within it.

Unlike many other global associations the Commonwealth is not held together primarily by trading between members. It is held by sharing common values and by democracy, freedom, peace, the rule of law and opportunity for all. In an association as diverse and varied as indeed the Commonwealth is, it is not easy to maintain unity around such values. But when such unity is achieved and experienced, it is infinitely more valuable than economic ties alone.

At the heart of the Commonwealth lies a vision. A vision of a world where men and women of all cultures may live together equitably and in peace. A vision in which countries large and small, rich and poor, can talk as equals, share common ground, commit to helping each other.

The Commonwealth has always looked out for its small states, and for its vulnerable - its young people, its women, its poor, its diseased. In today's world such an association is as needed as it ever was. It is needed to inspire and to help the whole world keep that vision bright, and to translate it into actions that transform individual lives as well as transforming cultures and societies.

If one wishes to see the ideals and aspirations of the Commonwealth localised within a particular individual, then one need look no further than Desmond Tutu.

In the 60 years since the formation of the modern Commonwealth there have been many achievements. I have already mentioned one: precisely no organisation did more to fight racism everywhere - and to dismantle apartheid in South Africa in particular - than the Commonwealth. But it is not my intention to relate these many successes to you in this lecture. Rather, I would wish to address myself to some of the challenges that face us today as we step forward to pursue the vision so eloquently expressed by those who have given shape to the Commonwealth in the past 60 years.

Addressing youth

This evening, I want to address myself to the leaders of tomorrow. To the young man in an African village who tomorrow will be the leader of his country, and who will face all the developmental challenges that will bring.

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To the young woman in Jamaica or St Lucia who will enter the legal profession, and engage in the battle for justice and the rule of law. To the students in Pakistan who will directly face the issues of terrorism, conflict and extremism.

To the young men and women of so many countries who are going to have to face the severe, and in some cases catastrophic, consequences of climate change.

You are the ones to whom the Commonwealth looks at this time. You are the ones who will carry forward what your forefathers have established. And we are the ones who now at this time must ensure that you are properly supported and equipped for the tasks that lie ahead.

At this juncture may I simply flag up one way by which support may be given by the Commonwealth, and that is through the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Programme. Supported and constantly reviewed by Education Ministers from across the Commonwealth it is one means by which some of tomorrow's leaders can get support now for the huge tasks that lie ahead. I salute the 'CSFP' in its 50th year in 2009, and with its 25,000 alumni and counting. I am delighted to hear of a new anniversary endowment fund widening the scope of the scheme, with £1.5 million already received to fund new South-to-South and North-to-South scholarships, on top of the usual South-to-North ones.

One might also add that one of the greatest educational innovations in recent years has been the Open University started by the British Prime Minister Harold Wilson and ably developed by the MP Jennie Lee. The Commonwealth, too, has brought both education and skills training to millions through the Commonwealth of Learning, based in Vancouver, through a virtual hub for distance learning programmes in small and remote states. This work is second-to-none.

The decision makers of today are now laying down the agenda for tomorrow, and it is vital that correct and wise decisions are taken. Wrong or delayed decision will literally mean disaster for countless millions of people.

Climate change

Top of the agenda I put the forthcoming climate change conference in Copenhagen.

I have been told on good authority that as long ago as 1987 the President of the Maldives, President Gayoom told a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting that unless urgent action was taken to deal with the issues raised by climate change, his country was in acute danger of disappearing under water. It is said that his remarks were received with amusement by some in the audience. The new President Nasheed's recent plea that the islanders might have to evacuate their homes is taken much more seriously.

Nowadays, these threats are not so easily dismissed. The predictions made by scientists are proving to be uncomfortably true, or even over-optimistic. The

Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon, recently said in relation to the Copenhagen conference, and here I quote: 'If we get it wrong we face catastrophic damage to people and to the planet'.

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Kiribati and the Maldives, not to mention Bangladesh, are just three of the Commonwealth Countries facing potential disaster.

There are many who think that the chances of getting a comprehensive treaty at Copenhagen for a new climate change deal are increasingly small.

Michael Levi, the senior fellow for energy and environment at the Council for Foreign Relations, has said that even if rich countries managed to reduce their emissions to zero and all other nations held theirs steady, the world would still miss the 2050 target. However, there is hope, for in a recent article in the journal Foreign Affairs, he indicates a way by which the conference might be salvaged. His argument is well worth reading.

Just imagine some of the consequences of not dealing properly with this issue. Migration has always taken place, as people have moved from one part of the world to another in pursuit of trade or more favourable opportunities for themselves and their families.

Migration of huge numbers of people fleeing in terror from disaster is quite another thing to contemplate. The civil conflicts and strife that could arise from such events are frightening to think about.

Those who are concerned about the welfare of this planet, and who want to give our children and grandchildren a chance of a decent life, must urge our elected leaders to take Copenhagen seriously.

Your leaders went part of the way to doing so when they met in Kampala two years ago. They need to go much further when they meet in Port-of-Spain in November. I am recalling the power of 53 countries calling 'as one' for a fair, rules-based international trading system, literally days before a big WTO meeting in Hong Kong in December 2005.

All signed up to the fact that the rich must help the poor. The parallel with 2009 is obvious, with CHOGM taking place just a week before the Copenhagen Summit. Its voice must be heard on climate change, loud and clear.

And if its voice is heard, it must say that all voices must be heard - including the voices of the smaller and the poorer countries, who are every bit as much a part of the deal as the wealthy ones. It is invariably they who do the least environmental damage, but who are so often the worst affected by climate change.

So - if they are going to speak collectively and powerfully, it is vital that all Commonwealth leaders have a thorough understanding of the issues. Sadly, I am not convinced that this is the case.

Recent civil disturbances in Uganda - concerning the decision of the President to give one third of the Mabira forest for the development of a sugar cane plantation - is

a case in point. As I understand it, this plan is now on hold due to the strong objections raised by environmental organizations and local people. This particular event also points to the fact that those who have investments in business do

not always put environmental concerns to the top of their agenda. It requires a thorough understanding of the issues, and a firm commitment to clear policies if the necessary emission reductions are to take place.

The Stern review on climate change speaks very clearly about deforestation, when it states that the loss of natural forest around the world contributes more to global emissions than the whole of the transport sector.

Well, I understand the necessity for economic development and for poor countries to do everything possible to work their way out of poverty. However, it is becoming increasingly vital that independent nations, both industrialized and developing, recognize how essentially linked they are one with another, and how the actions of one impinge radically on the welfare of another. On this issue, politicians have to think beyond the next election and consider the long term issues. If the threat of climate change teaches us anything, it teaches us that.

So here, as I said, a clear call goes out to the Commonwealth leaders. It is not overstating the case to say that many of the decisions they take are critical in shaping the future of every person on the planet. That is true of course for all countries, rich and poor.

As I am speaking today in the City of London, a place where so much influence is and can be exercised on world affairs, may I say that I was delighted to hear that the new Lord Mayor of London - when he assumes office later this year - is to put major effort into promoting carbon reduction. May I be one of the first to congratulate him, and the City, on this inspired initiative. I trust that the city will also keep a sharp eye on the whole matter of deforestation.

The major issues which face the Commonwealth today are inextricably linked together, and in an address such as I am delivering this evening, one can only highlight certain points whilst keeping in mind the complexity of the issues.

Democracy, Governance

Earlier I spoke about Commonwealth Values. amongst which were democracy and good governance. As I am going to be very blunt in what I say, I shall begin with my own country first before commenting on any other Commonwealth country.

In doing so, I am saying that democracy is a journey, wherever it is. It's about more than elections, votes and institutions - it's about a deep-set culture of fairness and giving a people a say in how their societies are run. My country has been doing it for hundreds of years - many Commonwealth countries have been doing it for less than 50. But it bears a bit of inspection now.

Here in the United Kingdom, we pride ourselves on our parliamentary system of government and our democratic institutions. However, there is no doubt whatsoever

that at this stage in our history British Parliamentarians are held in low esteem to put it mildly.

It is quite unfair to tar all politicians with the same brush, but it is true to say that Parliament in the UK does not at this time enjoy the full confidence of the British Public.

The recent expense scandal simply brought to the surface frustrations with Parliament which have been building up for a long time. Many voters feel that MPs are duplicitous. For example, it is often said that when speaking privately - outside Parliament - the elected representative expresses an opinion, but when it comes to the vote in parliament and the individual is subject to the party whip, then he or she votes in exactly the opposite way to which they previously claimed to subscribe.

To call all MPs duplicitous is clearly unfair, but this is what many people believe, and it leads to a lack of confidence in government. It is often said that in politics perception is reality.

There is widespread feeling across the country that the Nation is being burdened with far too much legislation. The attitude from government seems to be that if there is a problem in society, then formulate a law to deal with it, and introduce a penalty if that law is not obeyed.

Many would also say that Parliament has become too remote from the ordinary voter, and would quote the decision to go to war in Iraq when it appears that the vast majority of the people of this country were against such an action - at least until every other option had been thoroughly explored.

I realise the complexity facing Government in a rapidly changing society, and I do not believe that there are easy solutions to the problems that face us. I could go on, but I won't. I am however obliged to recognize some of the frustrations with governance in my own country, and to acknowledge that all is not right in the United Kingdom if I am going to dare to comment about elsewhere.

Greed, corruption and the lust for power are not the prerogative of any one particular group or Nation. They are endemic to the human species, and are manifest to a great or lesser extent in most of us. They are however deeply corrosive and, as we have witnessed in the recent banking crisis, where greed, closely related to corruption, has the power to bring the world to its knees.

The rules of good governance are drawn up to protect us all, and where they are breached then we all suffer. Across the Commonwealth many Parliamentary institutions are still far too weak, and in some cases deeply corrupt.

I can understand completely the frustrations experienced by certain African leaders in Zimbabwe when they experienced what was virtually a feudal system of land management. However, their way of dealing with that situation was deeply flawed, and the seeming inability of other Commonwealth leaders in Africa to work constructively with the issue reveals serious gaps in relationships and understanding.

The Commonwealth says it is committed to grappling in depth with the highly complex issue of the relationship between a democratic system of government and local culture. The 1991 Harare Commonwealth Declaration commits to democracy 'which respects national circumstances', and there are many examples - particularly in Africa and the Pacific - of attempts at fusing what-you-might-call the 'Westminster model' with the role of the traditional authority of tribes and chiefs. But then I ask a question: how many leaders supposedly democratically elected for a defined and limited term seek to expand that term once it has expired? Far too many would be my answer.

Now is the time for the young people of the Commonwealth to be seriously studying in depth the relationship between democratic structures and culture. Perhaps there could be a study course that could be introduced in all schools across the Commonwealth to encourage deeper understanding in this area.

However, I return to my earlier and most fundamental point. What counts is a thorough grasp of values - the values which the Commonwealth holds dear, and which need to be not only assented to in words, but lived out in actions.

No one in the more developed areas of the Commonwealth can be content with the poverty experienced by so many of its members. I read that over two-thirds of a billion of its citizens live in dollar-a-day poverty.

Here, I think it is appropriate to congratulate the many statutory and voluntary agencies, along with some major businesses, who have made and continue to make bold and imaginative attempts to deal with the issues of poverty and disease.

However, there are questions in my mind which need to be faced. Governments of the richer nations of the Commonwealth put substantial sums of money to one side to grant to the countries of the Commonwealth that experience acute poverty. One reason for that is the absolute interconnectedness of our modern world. We know that altruism sits alongside self-interest. And we know too that the richer countries receive back in the form of contracts and orders as much if not more than they donate.

We also know that when money is given, government to government, substantial sums disappear into private bank accounts. Many political leaders, (and the UK is no exception) do very well out of holding public office.

Recently substantial deposits of oil have been discovered in various parts of Africa and one can immediately see what a blessing this must seem to countries struggling to feed and educate their people.

Yet one must urge people to look at what has happened in Nigeria. Environmental damage and corruption on a massive scale have been some of the unfortunate fruits of oil exploitation in that country. The vast majority of the population have not benefited from the discovery, and one fears this might well be the case in other places. What can the Commonwealth do about such matters to ensure that old mistakes are not repeated? It is a question I ask and I am afraid that I don't have

a satisfactory answer.

Conflict, terror – peace

Having spent a lifetime working in parts of the world where severe conflict is the order of the day, the search for peace and stability in the world is always to the front of my mind.

The rise of terrorism has given many States acute problems to deal with, and in some instances has meant that they have impinged very deeply on an essential freedom: the freedom of expression. The Commonwealth has said as much, and I would urge people to read two Commonwealth documents which came out of the last Commonwealth meeting in Kampala in November 2007. First, Realising People's Potential, a powerful statement from the entirety of Commonwealth civil society, drawn together by the Commonwealth Foundation. Second Civil Paths to Peace, the ground-breaking report from the Commonwealth Commission on Respect and Understanding, chaired by the great economist Amartya Sen. I have long argued that terrorism is symptomatic of much deeper disorders within society, and the way to deal with the problem is to tackle the deep underlying problems.

In dealing with a medical condition, a practitioner uses the symptoms as a guide to the underlying problem. So it is with terrorism.

The lack of or failure of democratic institutions; the ignoring of minority groups; the failure to understand cultural differences; poverty and inequality. All these, and more, are roots from which terrorism springs.

May I for a moment simply comment on one of these issues: cultural difference. Recently, in the company of my extended family, I returned to Uganda where I had lived and worked almost 40 years ago. There I met my former colleague, whom I had trained to take over from me when I left the country. He accompanied me on a journey that had deep significance for us both, and that was when I went with my son, daughters and grandchildren to receive our African names.

We stood before the clan leader and listened carefully as he instructed us to follow the rules of good hospitality. As I listened to this old African leader I was struck by the strong ethical position he was advocating.

There were tears in the eyes of my former colleague as we embraced following the ceremony.

It would be easy to cynically dismiss this event as nothing but a sideshow. I certainly do not.

The ceremony made me realise afresh that if we truly listen to those who come from backgrounds very different than our own, then we shall often be surprised at the ground we have in common. This may sound over simplistic, but I am convinced that if we work hard at improving understanding between people we shall be making a valuable contribution towards peace. The Commonwealth - with its emphasis on

shared values and a shared vision - is certainly the arena which ought to provide continued opportunity for listening to and sharing with each other.

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If the fundamental issues I have mentioned are faced and dealt with to the satisfaction of any given community, then the terrorist has no place to shelter and the local population will realise that it is certainly not in their interest to protect terrorists in any way. This is a clear lesson we may take from Northern Ireland. Allow grievances to grow, and inevitably that will eventually result in violence in one form or another. Millions are spent each day on fighting symptoms when at the end of the day it is the causes that need to be addressed.

If Archbishop Desmond were giving this lecture today, I have little doubt that he would make reference, in his own natural way, to the importance of faith in helping us shape and form values.

In the Commonwealth, those who do have a religious faith, and those who do not, have an equal place. We also share values and aims, and some of the most vital are detailed in the booklet I recommended earlier: Civil Paths to Peace. I like the way the report stresses our multiple identities - not just those of our faith or our ethnicity, but also those of language, geography, profession - as much as shared passions for music, or art, or sport, which transcend boundaries and which are part of a common humanity.

Civil Paths to Peace points to some of the ways in which we can reinforce that common humanity. Such things as:

- The Promotion of Dignity and Dialogue
- The commitment to Civil Paths, which should not be displaced by
- Military Initiatives
- Addressing grievance and humiliation
- Political participation and inclusion
- Enhancing the role of women
- And finally, supporting young people in their growth and development.

Noble aims and objectives indeed, but they are the essential elements of the Commonwealth today.

This great association celebrates its 60th anniversary this year, with the very apt slogan that it is 'serving a new generation'.

There is a mountain of evidence to show that it is doing just that. I know that a very successful youth development programme has been in operation for nearly 40 years now, each with its own separate budget, and with different regional centres around the world, each a global resource in matters of global importance - in areas like youth work education and training, or the role of young people in local governance, or in HIV/AIDS, or in peace-building. Young people have been used in election monitoring

missions and they have been consulted on issues such as climate change and 'respect and understanding.

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But that is never enough. All of the things I have talked about tonight - like climate, democratic values, fractured societies – are issues where young people can teach us, and in which they will inherit the mess we leave them. We had better involve them now. We are a young Commonwealth - it is the fortunes of our young which will decide if the Commonwealth continues to be in rude good health in another 60 years' time.

I began this address on a personal note, and so perhaps I may conclude in the same way.

Some time ago a hostage was captured in Iraq by the name of Ken Bigley. His family asked me to meet with them, and I went to see Ken's elderly mother in Liverpool. She lived in an ordinary terraced house, and when I arrived she was in bed, and understandably feeling the appalling strain of events. She had just received news that her son had been brutally killed by his captors. 'Nothing,' she said, 'nothing, can express what I as a mother feel at this time.'

But then she went on to express something that I regarded as truly remarkable. 'But my suffering is no different than the suffering of an Iraqi mother who has lost her child as a result of warfare or insurgency.'

To display that degree of compassion and understanding at such a time struck me as being truly remarkable.

Tonight I have touched on some of the great issues of the day, which face the Commonwealth and the world.

Inevitably there will be always be reports and commissions and high level politics and delegations. It is vital that in all our endeavours we keep in mind that our basic aim is to enable men and women of all faiths and beliefs to enjoy a quality of life in peace and harmony with their neighbour.

The Commonwealth needs people of compassion and commitment to come forward to lead it into the next 60 years. People who are not afraid to take a stand, and to face directly the major issues of our day. I can do no better than conclude with a quote from the one who ought to have been on this platform tonight: Archbishop Desmond. 'If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.'

Terry Waite CBE