

Sermon for Sunday 4th November – in attendance The Fuellers' Company

It's lovely to see The Fuellers' Company in church this morning. I'm looking forward also to our next meeting here – for our joint Carol Service with the Water Conservators' Company. I remember your last year's Carol Service. A wonderful effect: the Water Conservators on one side of the church in their blue robes and the Fuellers on the other in their red and yellow. I said at the time, it evoked the ending of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* when Tamino and Pamina go through fire and water together – a lovely dreamlike sequence, like sleepwalking.

The image is appropriate for the state we find ourselves in England today. Sleepwalking to disaster. And you know what dreams are like – they're a bit mad aren't they? And the mood of madness has surely descended on our society. Politicians of all parties are neglecting to do the things which are within their capacity and they are instead bombarding us obsessively with fanciful policies concerning those things they can do nothing about whatsoever.

So, for instance, no party has a rational policy for the schools, a policy that might remedy the disgrace that nearly half our children leave after eleven years' fulltime *education* unable to read, write and count properly. This is a scandal. Standards of literacy are now actually lower than they were in the 19th century, before the state made education compulsory. Again, politicians have it in their power to improve the health service, but they do nothing except pour billions into an ever-deepening bureaucratic black hole. Gesture politics. Cowardly politics operated not by politicians who seek the nation's good, but wish only to save their own majorities. Meanwhile, our hospitals remain filthy and thousands die each year from MRSA and Clostridium Difficile because doctors and nurses don't wash their hands properly.

This is the madness. Instead of clearing up the mess in our schools and hospitals, our politicians fire relentless propaganda at us about things they cannot possibly alter: solving the obesity pandemic and the pagan fantasy of global warming. The latest hysterical gibberish was thrust at us only this week: if we want to be healthy we must *never* eat bacon, frankfurters and steak pies; and of course we should have no more drink than the whiff of the barmaid's apron. And we're supposed to believe all this rubbish. As if my butcher on Smithfield were forever trying to murder me with a beefsteak.

May I remind you that it was pagan societies which were obsessed with ritual food laws? And it was the coming of Christianity which swept them all away. Now there is a proposal that we should all drink only that disgusting UHT milk. Why? Because fresh milk requires too many cows, and cows are farting too much – thus contributing to global warming. I'm not joking. People are being encouraged not to fly – because that too is said to increase global warming. But when The British Airline Pilots and the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators offered to debate this issue with the rent-a-mob Green activists who were spoiling our holidays by cluttering Heathrow, the Greens said they were *too busy*. Let me tell you something: Green is the new Red.

Every day a fresh government announcement. It's like the daily statistics of tractor production in Stalin's Russia. All utopian. All lies. The other day the proposal to construct twenty new *ecotowns*, each with a population of 20,000. Towns where

people would be forced to eat healthily, where there would be weighing machines on every street corner and, I quote, *more accessible GPs*. I'm not making this up. But if people in the ecotowns are to be so damned healthy, what will they want with *more accessible GPs*? The same morning a government think-tank advocated abolishing Christmas. The last person to try that was Oliver Cromwell.

Our politicians ought to read the Prayer Book: *We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us*. Neglect of public administration, contempt for the public allied to a vacuous utopianism were all marks of pagan society at its most decadent. It was the reasonableness of Christianity – together with the Christian sense of public obligation and duty – charity – which flushed away pagan decadence with its ridiculous and irresponsible wishful thinking. We inhabit today a form of corporate lunacy. It makes your head spin: *Tumid apathy with no concentration; men and bits of paper...distracted from distraction by distraction...*

The really pressing needs of society are not being answered by those we elect to answer them. The difficult problems – health, education and criminal justice – are all neglected as politicians occupy themselves instead with the modern equivalent of Gnostic myths: *targets* and *initiatives*. But they miss all the targets – because they have no initiative. And so we continue to sleepwalk towards disaster.

There is another aspect to this sleepwalking which I haven't mentioned yet. It is immigration and future demography. We continue to allow into this country hundreds of thousands of people who have no sympathy with our way of life, who have no desire to integrate but prefer to regard Bradford, Oldham and Tower Hamlets as if these places were suburbs of Karachi.

I was asked recently to write something for a theological magazine. The editor asked me first to discuss my article with a friendly Muslim scholar, Abdal Hakim. This thoroughly decent man told me that the overwhelming majority of Muslims are rational and peaceable. True, but it is the vigorous minority of Islamic irrationalists who are causing the trouble. Whatever Abdal Hakim might say in favour of Islam as a religion of peace and love, the Muslims currently wielding most influence are the jihadist terrorists – and they are operating their terror in the name of Islam. He quoted figures to demonstrate that only 16% of Muslims in Britain believe in suicide bombing the British population.

Should I be comforted by this fact? Only 16% of indigenous Muslims want to murder me. *Only*. There are two million Muslims in Britain. 16% of two million is 320,000. Let us suppose there were as few as 10% who want to kill us. No let's make it just 1%. 1% of two million is 20,000. How many does it take? *Three* were enough on 7th July 2005. Add to the immigration figures the fact that while the birth rate among non-Muslim British people is declining, it is increasing rapidly among Muslims.

Add to that the number of British people who have finally had enough and are going to live abroad and you have the picture of a very large Muslim minority in Britain in twenty-five years time, living cheek by jowl with an increasingly disaffected and yobbish white underclass. When Enoch Powell predicted this catastrophe in 1968, he was dismissed from the Cabinet. Now what Powell said is being said with even more

urgency by Trevor Phillips, the Head of the Commission for Racial Equality. And still we sleepwalk into disaster.

What, if anything at all, is the answer to the corporate and societal lunacies which beset us? It is not just a coincidence that our homegrown idiocies – among them the obsessions with obesity and global warming – and our weakness in the face of resurgent and militant Islam have all come about during a period when we have as a nation turned our back on the Christian faith.

It is Christianity which brought rationality, a sense of proportion and a decent set of political liberties to our country: courtesy, politeness, respect for others; and in our own lives restraint, deferred gratification, self-examination, repentance - self-criticism in other words. And the attempt to fashion our lives according to the model given us in the Holy Gospel. I have lost count of the number of times that I have said from this pulpit that we cannot throw away our Christian faith and expect that all these good things will somehow remain. They won't. In fact it's worse than that. We look around us and we see already *they haven't*. Christian society no longer exists.

There is no other cure except the everlasting cure: the cure of our souls. *In returning and repentance ye shall be saved*. Only the Gospel of repentance and return can bring us through the present peril. But is there time? Is there time and do we have the will?

*Much to cast down, much to build, much to restore;
Let the work not delay, time and the arm not waste;
Let the clay be dug from the pot, let the saw cut the stone,
Let the fire be not quenched in the forge*