faith in the future

Working towards a brighter future

A report by a cross-party Committee of Inquiry

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1 / FOREWORD

Who are we?

We are a cross-party group of practical Christian politicians who have gathered the experts and thinkers named in the appendix around us for the purposes of this project.

We have taken evidence from various witnesses over an eighteen-month period.

Why have we done this?

The origins of this work lay in our recognition that, despite all of our legislation, all of our welfare and all of our material wealth, our country (like all western nations) faces significant, perhaps unexpected, challenges about human well-being which politicians alone cannot solve.

The report sets out some of the issues facing our wealthy society. Given all of the advances of recent years, we seek to understand why a sense of human well-being - happiness if you like - is not more widespread.

What did we conclude?

Our analysis leads us to the conclusion that the absence of certain key values, rather than material things, is the primary cause of so much discontent.

Our solutions, therefore, do not involve yet more law or increased taxes, but rather a call to re-examine the decisions taken in every sector of society in the light of crucial life-changing principles.

These principles would apply to every government department, corporation, charity, employer, faith group and organisation whose decisions and actions help to shape our culture. We set the challenge of applying a five-fold test before any new action is taken. Hence, the five defining questions set out in the main body of the report about relationships, responsibility, trust, self-esteem and potential. We consider that if these values were to have greater emphasis in the decisions made by a whole range of stakeholders, the well-being of every member of our society would increase.

This is an optimistic report full of hope about what the future of the country could be.

We hope you will join us in a debate about these issues.

This report has benefited enormously from the insight, wisdom and support of many people to whom we are indebted. They are named at the end of this document. It should go without saying that the success or otherwise of the arguments within the report is due to the authors alone.

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May 2008

2 / INTRODUCTION

The happiness debate

Walk into any high street bookshop and the chances are that within a short period of time, and without intentionally looking for one, you will stumble on a book about happiness.

Over the last two years alone we have seen *Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill* by Matthieu Ricard; *Happiness: Lessons from a New Science* by Richard Layard; *Stumbling on Happiness* by Daniel Gilbert; *Happiness Hypothesis: Putting Ancient Wisdom to the Test of Modern Science* by Jonathan Haidt; *Happiness: The Science Behind Your Smile* by Daniel Nettle; *Making Happy People: The Nature of Happiness and Its Origins in Childhood* by Paul Martin; and *Affluenza* by Oliver James.

Collectively we are not happy, or at least not as happy as we think we should be.

These works are not the province of quacks peddling 'get rich and successful today' remedies (Richard Layard, for example, was founder/director of the London School of Economics' Centre for Economic Performance). In fact, they speak to the fact that collectively we are not happy, or at least not as happy as we think we should be. For all our material and social progress, as a nation we are still radically dissatisfied. We explore this theme in the first half of the paper.

Doing something about it

Of course, as Oliver James argues, 'affluenza' is precisely a product of material wealth: the perpetual promises of the consumer society, coupled with serious inequality, predictably leave us wanting more than we have. We argue, however, that this sense of disaffection and dissatisfaction is connected with other underlying problems in our society. In our understandable pursuit of economic growth[1] we have prejudiced - even sacrificed - our commitment to relationships, care for the local and global environment, transparency in our institutions, respect for each other and the education for a good life.

With this in mind, in the second half of this paper we propose a social audit and argue that our actions should be informed and shaped by five defining questions: does my action encourage people to develop positive relationships in their families and communities? Is it socially and globally responsible? Does it promote a climate of trust and hope? Does it promote self-esteem and respect for others? And does it encourage people to fulfil their God-given potential?

Future challenges

During our inquiry we spent a considerable amount of time thinking about the future. Although this material does not appear in full in this report, our discussions, ably led by Dr Michael Moynagh of the Tomorrow Project and Dr Patrick Dixon, Chairman of Global Change Ltd, impressed upon us the impact of technological development and fast paced social change on life satisfaction and wellbeing. People's lives are increasingly affected by the so-called 'BANG' technologies - Bits (information technology), Atoms (nanotechnology, which holds the potential to create new materials and products through the manipulation of molecules and atoms), Neurons (cognitive science) and Genetics. Over the next 20 years, these technologies will hugely increase human capacity, which may be used for good or ill. The point is not that these technological developments, or the social change which accompanies them, are either good or bad in themselves. Rather, like everything else, they ought to be analysed in a nexus of people-focussed values. This poses interesting questions: for instance, does online gaming, where every individual is free to create and recreate his or her own identity as they interact with others, improve or impair the quality of our relationships? What does the growth in this practice say about levels of self-esteem in our society? Whatever the answers, there will be a continuing need for theological reflection on wider trends and on the ethical issues raised by individual technologies or clusters of technology.

Can we do anything?

Above, we have suggested five core principles which should guide everyone in our society today, whether government, business or the 'third sector'. We believe that these principles are unchanging and are relevant to the challenges we face in Britain today.

Sociological studies do not tend to offer solutions to societal challenges - they simply locate them. Such studies must always be interpreted, and remedies identified, by decision makers. The problem is, our ideas tend to be limited: throwing money at the problems doesn't work. Casting off our traditionally repressed, stiff-upper-lip attitude and *talking* about them doesn't

achieve anything unless coupled with action. If successive education reforms, improved health care, the growth of the economy, funding for the arts, protection of the environment or any of the other state-led initiatives that purport to be 'the answer', have not made us happy then we will rightly be modest about what we can be achieved through the agency of the state. What, then, should we hope for?

In this report we want to encourage the outlook that not only is the proverbial glass half-full, rather than half-empty, but that there are ways within our reach of filling it still further.

We want to encourage the outlook that not only is the proverbial glass half-full, rather than half-empty, but that there are ways within our reach of filling it still further.

This is, of course, not to claim that things will invariably get better, or that progress is inevitable. Such beliefs are complacent and lazy, paying insufficient attention to the reality of human nature, politics and society. It is, instead, to claim that they *can* get better. We must not be overly pessimistic, thinking that everything is worse than it was once and that we are 'going to the dogs' as never before; nor must we be overly optimistic, wedded to a vision fuelled by naive progressivism.

In this regard, ours is a counsel of hope rather than optimism, a distinction recently made by the Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks, in his excellent book *The Dignity of Difference*:

> Optimism is the belief that things will get better. Hope is the faith that, together, we can make things better. Optimism is a passive virtue, hope is an active one.

He continues:

> Hope does not exist in a conceptual vacuum, nor is it available to all configurations of culture. It is borne of the belief that the sources of action lie within ourselves. We are not unwitting products of blind causes: the selfish gene, the Darwinian struggle for existence … Hope is the knowledge that we can choose; that we can learn from our mistakes and act differently next time…

He goes on to point out the debt hope owes to religious faith:

> Hope is a human virtue, but one with religious underpinnings. At its ultimate it is the belief not that God has written the script of history, that He will intervene to save us from the error of our ways … but simply that He is mindful of our aspirations … [and] that He has given us the means to save us from ourselves…[2]

It is these twin convictions - of hope and of the faith in God in which that hope grows - that support and drive our report. It is a hope that our poverty - whether material, emotional or spiritual - can be alleviated, and that we can spend a little less time buying books on happiness and a little more actually experiencing it.

3 /WELL-BEING AND DISAFFECTION

One impetus behind this project was our sense that there is a strong feeling of disaffection among the inhabitants of these islands. It seemed to us that our national sense of well-being is at a low ebb; people are wanting something more out of life.

A useful study, however, cannot be based merely on the 'hunches' of a small group of individuals. We considered it important to begin by considering whether this perceived disaffection is real or simply a media construct - a tale told and retold, accepted as credible, until it has become part of the accepted national story, without ever actually being questioned or robustly investigated.

As we began to examine this 'disaffection story', we quickly became convinced of its veracity and that the existing reporting of well-being is based on serious, empirical studies. Some of these studies are subjective, such as quantitative research surveys. Others are objective, such as reports into levels of psychological ill-health and medication, rates of suicide and crime.

No single one of these is beyond dispute. Suicide figures, for example, thankfully represent a tiny sample of society. Concepts of what constitutes psychological ill-health change as, accordingly, do habits of medication prescription. Long-term crime statistics are also problematic; ways of reporting, measuring and punishing crime change over time. Nevertheless, taking this last as an example, the fact that since 1950 the number of offences reported per 100,000 people has risen nearly ten-fold and the number of violent offences twenty-fold, *despite* fifty thousand more police officers and a three-fold rise in the prison population is, at the very least, suggestive of something not being right in our society.

Taken together, these different factors paint a recognisable picture. And it is a picture which has been borne out further by two recent studies.

Well-being in childhood

In February 2007 *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries* was published by UNICEF. It presented 'a comprehensive assessment of the lives and well-being of children and

adolescents in the economically advanced nations,' and it made for sobering reading.[3]

Examining a total of forty indicators from six categories - material well-being, health and safety, educational well-being, family and peer relationships, behaviour and risks, and subjective well-being - it found that children in the UK fared worse than in any of the twenty other industrialised countries studied. Last in two categories ('family and peer relationships' and 'behaviour and risks'), the UK also came 20th in 'subjective well-being', 18th in 'material well-being', and 17th in 'educational well-being'. Only in 'health and safety' did it do notably better, although even here it remained in the bottom half of the table. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Child poverty in perspective:

		Dimension 1	Dimension 2	Dimension 3	Dimension 4	Dimension 5	Dimension 6
Dimensions of child well-being	Average ranking position (for all 6 dimensions)	Material well-being	Health and safety	Educational well-being	Family and peer relationships	Behaviours and risks	Subjective well-being
Netherlands	4.2	10	2	6	3	3	1
Sweden	5.0	1	1	5	1	5	7
Denmark	7.2	4	4	8	9	6	12
Finland	7.3	3	3	4	1	7	11
Spain	8.0	12	6	15	8	5	2
Switzerland	8.3	5	9	14	4	1	6
Norway	8.7	2	8	11	10	13	8
Italy	10.0	14	5	20	1	1	10
Ireland	10.2	19	19	7	7	4	5
Belgium	10.7	7	16	1	5	19	16
Germany	11.2	13	11	10	13	11	9
Canada	11.8	6	13	2	18	17	15
Greece	11.8	15	18	16	11	8	3
Poland	12.3	21	15	3	14	2	19
Czech Rep	12.5	11	10	9	19	9	17
France	13.0	9	7	18	12	14	18
Portugal	13.7	16	14	21	2	15	14
Austria	13.8	8	20	19	16	16	4
Hungary	14.5	20	17	13	6	1	8
U.States	18.0	17	21	12	20	20	-
U.Kingdom	18.2	18	12	17	21	21	20

Source: UNICEF, *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries* (OECD countries with insufficient data to be included in the overview: Australia, Iceland, Japan, Luxembourg, Mexico, New Zealand, the Slovak Republic, South Korea, Turkey.)

The United Kingdom did not perform uniquely poorly, of course. The United States came 20th of the 21 countries overall, doing particularly badly in 'health and safety', 'family and peer relationships' and 'behaviour and risks'. Nonetheless, the findings were worrying, provoking a great deal of comment and analysis in the media.

Had a study like UNICEF's been conducted 100 or even 50 years ago, popular and political concern would have coalesced around material poverty. Far too many children lived in degrading, humiliating poverty, poverty that marked them for life, wrecking their educational, emotional and physical health before they were even aware of it, let alone in a position to fight it. The current UNICEF report reminds us, however, that although child poverty remains an important issue, it is no longer by any means *the* issue. Indeed, its conclusions state baldly that:

> There is no obvious relationship between levels of child well-being and GDP per capita. The Czech Republic, for example, achieves a higher overall rank for child well-being than several much wealthier countries including France, Austria, the United States and the United Kingdom.

Moreover, as critics were not slow to point out, what high-income countries called poverty in 2006 looks rather different from what they called poverty in 1956, let alone 1906.

This theme of 'well-being' has been taken up elsewhere, including the Children's Society in their national enquiry, *The Good Childhood*. Their launch report from July 2006 rehearses the argument:

> Research suggests that our wealth has not bought us the kind of childhood we want for our children. While average incomes in the United Kingdom have doubled in the last 50 years, people are no happier today, on average, than people were 50 years ago (Layard, 2005). In fact, for young people in particular, there is evidence to suggest that the opposite is true: that improved economic conditions seem to be associated with increasing levels of emotional problems. Depression and anxiety have increased for both boys and girls aged 15-16 since the mid-1980s, as have what are called 'nonaggressive conduct problems' such as lying, stealing and disobedience.

Research suggests that our wealth has not bought us the kind of childhood we want for our children.

Given the recent publication of the *Children's Plan*, it is worth giving some consideration to the thinking of the British Government on children and young people, and the extent to which it is beginning to reflect this agenda. The plan is a mix of existing government policy and genuinely new measures, ranging from those intended to improve the environment for play (new money for playgrounds and proposals to reduce speed limits in residential areas to 20 mph) to those intended to improve educational attainment (review of primary curriculum, more 'extended' schools, and foreign language teaching for all primary pupils).

It is of some interest that in an interview with the *New Statesman* in December 2007, Secretary of State for Education Ed Balls conceded that, as a father of three, he worried 'about the way in which commercial pressure - TV, the internet, sexualisation - impacts on self-esteem'. He also conceded that he did not understand the processes involved.[4]

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Plan promises that 'an independent assessment will be commissioned to understand the impact of the commercial world on children's well-being.' Critics have variously argued that the Plan offers no unifying vision for childhood or children's services at all, and that its promise to look at how to make children happy, healthy and safe represents an overreaching of the state's capabilities. These criticisms may or may not be well founded, but it is significant that such a document effectively concedes the potentially negative effects of the prevailing commercial and cultural environment on children.

Material poverty

Statistics from the Institute for Fiscal Studies' 2007 paper *Poverty and Inequality in the UK* show that poverty, both in its absolute and relative forms, has been in steady decline for the last ten years. (See Figures 2 and 3 on the next page.) (It should be noted that the statistics for 2005/06 show higher levels of poverty than the previous year, but it is not possible to state categorically whether this marks the beginning of a reversal of the downward trend, or merely a temporary 'blip'.)

Poverty, both in its absolute and relative forms, has been in steady decline for the last ten years.

In 2005/06, the number of people living in absolute poverty (calculated as the percentage of individuals in households with incomes below 60 per cent of 1996-97 median AHC (After Housing Cost) income) stood at 7.4 million or 12.6 per cent of the population, a figure which included 2.1 million children and 800,000 pensioners.[5]

Relative poverty, though more widespread, also shows a significant drop since 1996/97; the number of people living in households with less than 60 per cent of the current median income (the calculation of relative poverty) fell from 14 million to 12.7 million (again measuring incomes after housing costs), with the greatest improvement being in the number of pensioners living in relative poverty.

Figure 2: Absolute poverty: percentage of individuals in households with incomes below 60% of 1996-97 median AHC income:

	Children		Pensioners		Working-age parents		Working-age parents		All	
	%	Million	%	Million	%	Million	%	Million	%	Million
1996 - 97 (GB)	34.1	4.3	29.1	2.9	26.6	3.3	17.2	3.5	25.3	14.0
1997 - 98 (GB)	32.4	4.1	27.7	2.8	25.1	3.1	15.4	3.2	23.6	13.2
1998 - 99 (GB)	31.7	4.0	26.0	2.6	24.4	3.0	14.8	3.1	22.7	12.7
1999 - 00 (GB)	29.0	3.7	21.1	2.1	22.6	2.8	14.4	3.0	20.7	11.6
2000 - 01 (GB)	24.6	3.1	16.2	1.6	19.6	2.4	14.0	3.0	18.0	10.1
2001 - 02 (GB)	20.7	2.6	11.6	1.2	17.1	2.1	12.1	2.6	15.0	8.5
2002 - 03 (UK)	18.2	2.4	9.7	1.0	15.4	1.9	11.9	2.7	13.6	8.0
2003 - 04 (UK)	17.4	2.3	8.6	0.9	14.9	1.9	12.2	2.7	13.3	7.8
2004 - 05 (UK)	15.9	2.0	6.8	0.7	13.6	1.7	11.3	2.6	12.0	7.1
2005 - 06 (UK)	16.3	2.1	7.0	0.8	14.3	1.8	12.2	2.8	12.6	7.4
Changes										
Total:1996-97 to 2005-06	-17.8		-22.1		-12.3		-4.9		-12.7	
Labour I:1996-97 to 2000-01	-9.5		-12.9		-7.0		-3.2		-7.3	
Labour II:2000-01 to 2004-05	-8.7		-9.3		-6.0		-2.7		-6.0	
Latest year:2004-05 to 2005-06	(0.4)	(0.0)	(0.2)	(0.0)	(0.7)	(0.1)	0.9	0.2	0.6	0.4

Notes: Reported changes may not equal the differences between the corresponding numbers due to rounding. Changes in parentheses are not significantly different from zero at the 5% level. Changes in the number of individuals in poverty are only shown where these can be calculated consistently at the UK level. All figures are presented using the modified OECD equivalence scale. Source: Authors' calculations based on Family Resources survey, various years.

Figure 3: Relative poverty: percentage and numbers of individuals in households with incomes below 60% of median AHC income:

	Children		Pensioners		Working-age parents		Working-age parents		All	
	%	Million	%	Million	%	Million	%	Million	%	Million
1996 - 97 (GB)	34.1	4.3	29.1	2.9	26.6	3.3	17.1	3.5	25.3	14.0
1997 - 98 (GB)	33.2	4.2	29.1	2.9	25.9	3.2	15.9	3.3	24.4	13.6
1998 - 99 (GB)	33.9	4.3	28.6	2.9	26.3	3.2	15.5	3.2	24.4	13.6
1999 - 00 (GB)	32.7	4.2	27.6	2.8	25.5	3.1	16.1	3.4	24.0	13.4
2000 - 01 (GB)	31.1	3.9	25.9	2.6	24.7	3.0	16.2	3.4	23.1	13.0
2001 - 02 (GB)	30.8	3.9	25.6	2.6	24.5	3.0	15.6	3.4	22.7	12.8
2002 - 03 (UK)	29.8	3.9	24.2	2.5	24.1	3.0	16.5	3.7	22.4	13.1
2003 - 04 (UK)	28.7	3.7	20.6	2.2	23.5	2.9	16.6	3.7	21.5	12.6
2004 - 05 (UK)	28.4	3.6	17.6	1.9	23.0	2.9	16.1	3.6	20.5	12.1
2005 - 06 (UK)	29.8	3.8	17.0	1.8	24.8	3.1	17.5	4.0	21.6	12.7

Source: Institute for Fiscal Studies, Poverty and Inequality in the UK

Although clearly 7.4 million Britons living in absolute poverty and 12.7 million in relative poverty is far too high, there is also no avoiding the fact that, as a nation, we are materially wealthy in a way that is unparalleled in history. GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per head, the economist's standard measure of production, has increased three-fold since World War II and five-fold since 1900.

Not only do we have more money, we have more possessions. For example, 99 per cent of UK homes have a TV and the average household has about 2.5. The vast majority have a video and/or DVD and/or CD player, over half have a home computer, and nearly as many have satellite, cable, or digital TV. Virtually all homes have a telephone, most of these have (at least) one mobile phone, and at least half have domestic internet access. (Figure 4)

Figure 4: Households with selected information and communication technology:

United Kingdom *Percentages*

	Mobile phone	CD player	Home computer	Internet	DVD player
1996/97	17	5	27 9	-	-
1997/98	21	6	29 3	-	-
1998/99	27	6	33 8	10	-
1999/2000	44	72	3	19 8	-
2000/01	47	77	44	32	-
2001/02	65	80	50	40	-
2002/03	70	83	55	45	31
2003/04	76	86	58	49	50
2004/05	78	87	62	53	67
2005/06	79	88	65	55	79

Source: Family Expenditure Survey and Expenditure and Food Survey, Office for National Statistics

Refrigerator/freezers are ubiquitous, as are microwave ovens. Out on the drive, three quarters of households have a car, a quarter have two, and five per cent have three or more.

Although vaunted as the solution to all our problems, and despite having clearly revolutionised the way we interact with our homes and our world, the societal evidence demonstrates that ownership of more 'things' - even time-saving, labour-reducing ones - is not the route to emotional or physical well-being.

The societal evidence demonstrates that ownership of more 'things' - even time-saving, labour-reducing ones - is not the route to emotional or physical well-being.

Surveys asking people to rate their own satisfaction with life, for example, have been conducted in the UK for decades. The most robust one asks 2,000 people every year, 'On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the life you lead?' It has found that despite an exponential rise in our personal wealth, the response has remained almost entirely consistent since the 1970s. (Figure 5) It records not so much that we are getting significantly less happy with life (as is reportedly

the case with the populations of some other high-income countries) but that all our efforts to live more contented lives are coming to naught. Our strenuous 'getting and spending' has not made us any happier. Any link that may once have existed between increases in income and in rises life-satisfaction appears increasingly tenuous.

Figure 5: Happiness and Life Satisfaction: The proportions of people giving different life-satisfaction answers in Great Britain 1973-98:

O th whole, aee you very satisfied, fairly satisfied,
not very satisfied, or not at all satisfied with the life you lead?

	1972-1976	1977-1982	1983-1987	1988-1993	1994-1998
All - not at all	4%	4	4	4	3
All - not very	11	1	1D	1D	1D
A - fa l i	54 r	54 l	55 y	55	57
All - very	31	32	31	31	31
M - n t abal o l l4	e 4	4	4	4	4
Male - not very	11	1	0 1	0 1	0 10
Male - fairly	55	55	57	57	58
M - ve y a r l 30	e 31	29	29	29	29
Female - not at all	4	4	3	3	3
Female - not very	12	10	10	11	9
Female - fairly	53	53	54	54	55
Female - very	32	34	32	32	32

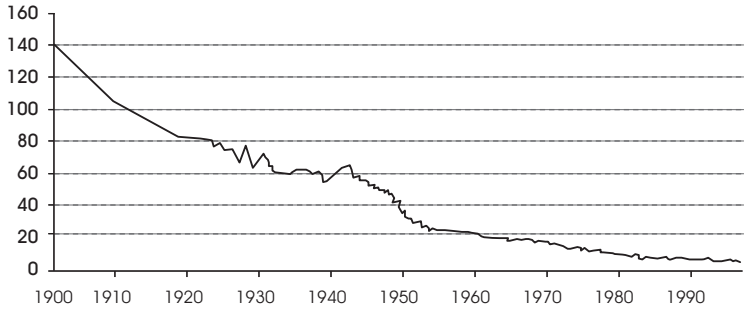
Source: Eurobarometer, quoted in David G Blanchflower and Andrew J. Oswald, Well-Being Over Time in Britain and the USA

Subjective measures such as these inevitably beg questions. Not least of these is how truthful or accurate are people being in their answers? Analyses of the findings, however, suggest that they are more reliable than the sceptics claim.

So, we have more money and more possessions, *and* we live longer lives in which to enjoy both; over the last century life expectancy has risen by around thirty years for both men and women. Moreover, notwithstanding the issues of obesity, Type-2 diabetes and other illnesses caused or exacerbated by our self-indulgent lifestyles, we are generally more healthy than ever before.

Infant mortality fell from around 150 to under 5 deaths per 1,000 births in the twentieth century. (Figure 6)

Figure 6: Infant Mortality per 1,000 births in the 20th century:



Source: A Century of Change: Trends in UK statistics since 1900, House of Commons RESEARCH PAPER 99/111

Medical progress and improvements in sanitation, hygiene, living conditions and nutrition combined to contribute to a dramatic fall in the number of deaths by infectious disease. Operations that would have seemed literally miraculous to people a century ago are now considered routine.

We are liable to take these developments for granted, but they are genuine and inspiring. This combination of greater wealth, more possessions, longer life expectancy and better health is a powerful one, to be celebrated rather than dismissed.

But it has made our sense of disaffection all the more perplexing.

Poverty of hope

In 1996 Tony Blair said:

> This is a new age, to be led by a new generation. My generation enjoy a thousand material advantages over any previous generation. And yet we suffer a depth of insecurity and spiritual doubt they never knew … Mine is the generation with more freedom than any other, but less certainty in how to exercise it.

There is clearly an emotional, relational and spiritual disaffection that marks contemporary culture, a disaffection that, ironically, can often feed off the supposed solution to the problem of poverty - economic growth. As Oliver James wrote in his best-selling 2006 book, *Affluenza*:

To fill the emptiness and loneliness, and to replace our need for authentic, intimate relationships, we resort to the consumption that is essential for economic growth and profits. The more anxious or depressed we are, the more we must consume, and the more we consume, the more disturbed we become.

Mine is the generation with more freedom than any other, but less certainty in how to exercise it.

Just as this report is motivated by hope rather than optimism, it is earthed in a realistic analysis of the facts rather than a pessimistic bemoaning of them. The material progress we have enjoyed in the post-war period is a genuine cause for celebration. However, not everyone has participated in it in the way they should and even those who have done so have not necessarily benefited from it in the way or to the extent one would have expected. It is this analysis of life in Britain today that has shaped and directed our project and our final report.

4 / THE DEFINING QUESTIONS

There are no 'magic bullets' for addressing the deep and complex social problems which we have described above.

Too often a subtle and thoughtful analysis of important issues can be followed by a blunt or ham-fisted set of solutions. We have resisted that temptation.

This report does not call for extreme or simplistic measures. Indeed, its purpose is not to identify policy options or prescribe a political blueprint. Rather, it is based on a belief that a deeper and more profound shift in thinking is required.

The evidence presented to us during the eighteen months of our inquiry has led us to identify some guiding principles for what it means to flourish as a human being. We have formulated those principles into a number of defining questions to be asked of society's various 'stakeholders'.

As everyone recognises, the quality of our lives today is shaped by the national and international institutions, but it is also influenced in significant and long-term ways by a whole range of other bodies: local government, business, the 'third sector', families, neighbourhood and local organisations and associations - all play a role in strengthening (or weakening) our sense of security, opportunity and well-being.

We propose that the following defining questions should be considered by, and applied to, all of these different 'stakeholders', and that their actions should be assessed against them.

The principles underscoring each question are, at one level, unexceptional. We expect that most people will agree with them. However, each question contains a challenge with regard to the way we answer it, the priority we attach to it and the means by which we achieve it. We do not wish to ignore the disagreements that inevitably arise, but these need to be set in the context of a shared commitment to achieving the goal of a better future for our children.

In what follows, we start with some theology (in order to explain our world-view, where we are coming from), consider the challenge confronting our culture and end by examining possible responses to this challenge.

DEFINING QUESTION 1: DOES MY ACTION ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO DEVELOP POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS IN THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES?

Theology

Christianity is, first and foremost, a relational religion, in which people exist and can only flourish in relationships.

This fundamental fact pervades both the biblical story in which the Christian faith is expressed, and subsequent theological and ethical reflection on that narrative.

The Christian understanding of God is as Holy Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in an eternal and perfect relationship of love. Human beings are made in that divine image of relational love, having a capacity for generosity and faithfulness that reflects God's nature. Christianity says that relationships are fundamental to what it means to be human. This should underpin our interactions in society.

The relational nature of human beings is commonly ignored and abused (the basis of the Christian doctrine of sin) and so the crux of the Christian message is the incarnation of God the Son, as a human being, and his reconciliation of humanity, and with humanity all creation, to God: a fundamentally relational action.

The theme of relationships goes beyond these central pillars of Christianity, however. The word 'covenant', central to (and indeed an alternative translation for) the Old and the New 'Testament', describes a particular kind of long-term committed, faithful relationship. The word 'righteousness', similarly central to the biblical story yet almost incomprehensible to modern ears, derives from a Hebrew word (*tsdq*) which is primarily about being in right

Christian ethics is summarised by the injunction to love God and one another: a call to generosity and sacrifice in relationship.

relationship. Christian ethics is summarised by the injunction to love God and one another: a call to generosity and sacrifice in relationship. St Paul famously says that the Christian lifestyle should not be concerned primarily with prophecy or financial-giving or even martyrdom for the cause, but with love.

Much else could be said about the Christian understanding of relationships, but the key fact should be obvious: relationships are foundational to the Christian faith and to what that faith has to say to our modern society.

Challenge

The challenge before Britain today is that we are relationally impoverished. Too many of us experience relationships that have been damaged or even broken by the pressures of everyday life. The rate of divorce in the UK has increased very significantly over recent decades. (Figure 7)

Figure 7: Divorces in England and Wales, 1961-2005:
Source: ONS, Population Trends 127, Table 9.3 Note: *Divorces per 1,000 married population

	Divorces	Rate*
1961	25,400	2.1
1966	39,100	3.2
1971	74,400	5.9
1976	126,700	10.1
1981	145,700	11.9
1986	153,900	13.0
1991	158,700	13.6
1996	157,100	13.9
1997	146,700	13.1
1998	145,200	13.0
1999	144,600	13.0
2000	141,100	12.7
2001	143,800	13.0
2002	147,700	13.4
2003	153,500	14.0
2004	153,400	14.1
2005	141,800	13.0

Sadly, as was recognised by the UNICEF report cited above, it is children who suffer most when relationships break down. The proportion of children living in single-parent households tripled between 1972 and 2004 and now stands at 24 per cent. Almost 1 in 4 children born in 1979 had experienced divorce by the age of 16.[6] The link between relationship breakdown and poverty and

social exclusion is complex, but what is beyond dispute is that children who are brought up in single-parent households (compared with those with two adults) are at greater risk of living in a low-income household themselves or experiencing depression.[7] According to the Labour peer Richard Layard:

> If by 16 you are living with only one of your biological parents, you are more likely to suffer from multiple disadvantages, compared with other children. You are 70% more likely to have a criminal conviction by the age of 15; you are twice as likely to leave a school with no diploma; you are twice as likely to have a child in your teens; you are 50% more likely to be doing nothing by the age of 20. You are no better off if your mother remarries or if your grandmother moves in. As adults, people from single parent families are more likely to die young and to get divorced themselves.[8]

Such challenges, as observed, are now well-recognised. But the issue of relational poverty is even more pervasive.

Our interest in relationships as a Committee has extended to the complex web of social interactions in which all of us live, and which contributes to human well-being in subtle but important ways.

The common mistake made by commentators and policy-makers has been to define human relationships too narrowly, limiting them to immediate or, at best, extended, family situations.

Our interest in relationships as a Committee has not been confined to the nuclear family. It has extended to the complex web of social interactions in which all of us live, and which contributes to human well-being in subtle but important ways.

Peer and friendship relationships

Adult friendships are a vital form of support for many people. Despite this fact, 20 per cent of people say that they have neither a 'satisfactory friendship network' nor a 'satisfactory relatives' network'.[9]

Data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing suggests that levels of loneliness are the best indicator of life-satisfaction. For example, 50 per cent of older people with no friends said that they often or sometimes felt lonely, compared with 20 per cent of those with 7 to 10 close friends.[10]

Peer relationships are especially important for the learning and development of children. The UNICEF report mentioned above highlighted the problem of poor relationships for UK school children. It noted that less than half of children described their peers as kind or helpful, the lowest percentage in any OECD nation, a significant contributory factor to their overall low levels of well-being.

Neighbourhood and community relationships

Neighbourhood and community relationships represent a third of people's direct experience of relationships. The General Household Survey Social Capital module has reported that over 80 per cent of people speak to their neighbours at least once a week.[11]

As an indicator of the extent of 'social capital' the British Social Attitudes Survey has posed questions over a number of years about the extent to which people are comfortable asking neighbours for help. As Figure 8 shows, the proportion of respondents who said they would be 'very comfortable' asking a neighbour for help in certain scenarios has not changed significantly over the last ten years.

Figure 8: Percentage of people who feel very comfortable asking neighbour:

	1998	2000	2003	2005
To borrow plunger to unblock sink	53	60	53	52
To collect prescription when ill	47	54	45	40
To borrow £5 to pay milkman	18	22	18	19

Source: BSA

Relationships between ethnic groups

Relationships between members of different ethnic groups can contribute to feelings both of belonging and of exclusion. The Cantle Report, published after riots in a number of UK cities in 2001, warned against the dangers of ethnic, religious and cultural polarisation within British cities. 'Segregation', 'parallel lives' and a lack of any meaningful concept of citizenship bred an atmosphere of mutual misunderstanding and mistrust which, itself, bred disaffection at best, and open hostility at worst.[12]

Relationships within the workplace

It has long been recognised that there is a positive relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction. According to a study by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit:

> [A] range of factors influence work satisfaction including: personal control, variety, income, job security, skill use, physical security and job demands.[13]

Within this mix, workplace relationships (with managers, colleagues and clients) provide an important opportunity for social interaction, for developing personal identity and for promoting self-esteem.

The Relationships Foundation has noted that:

> [p]urposeful work, opportunities for personal development, job security, employee welfare, health and safety, as well as provision for old age, incapacity and unemployment are all important considerations for well-being.[14]

Relationships within welfare service provision

The provision of services involves a complex set of relationships, such as those between users and providers, and between different providers. The death of Victoria Climbie in February 2000 highlighted what can happen when information is not shared and relationships in neighbourhoods are marked by confusion or disorder.

Relationships can, therefore, be seen to affect every aspect of our lives. They are central to who we are and how we live together: *the* dominant factor in our well-being.

Response

The now-unavoidable evidence of the importance of positive relationships has meant that they are, at least, on the agenda in a significant way. It is increasingly accepted by academics, social commentators and politicians across the political divide that positive relationships are fundamental to human well-being.

In *Life Satisfaction: the state of knowledge and implications for government*, published by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit in 2002, it was noted that:

> a consistent theme of research into life satisfaction is that social relationships are very important. Having friends, supportive relatives, workmates are all correlated with satisfaction either with life overall or with one's job.

Similarly, in their paper *Beyond Money: Toward an economy of well-being* Ed Diener and Martin Seligman argued that:

It is essential, therefore, that government, business and the 'third sector' act to encourage a social environment where positive relationships across population can flourish.

> the quality of people's social relationships is crucial to their well-being. People need supportive, positive relationships and social belonging to sustain well-being. Evidence [shows] that the need to belong, to have close and long-term social relationships, is a fundamental need and that well-being depends on this need being well met. People need social bonds in committed relationships, not simply interactions with strangers, to experience well-being.[15]

In addition to their obvious intrinsic benefits (e.g. practical support, a sense of belonging), it is clear that positive relationships can directly lead to a wide range of beneficial outcomes for people, including personal development, physical health, opportunity and access, and social development.

It is essential, therefore, that government, business and the 'third sector' act to encourage a social environment where positive relationships across the population can flourish.

This will mean recognising and tackling the wide range of political, economic, social and cultural factors that act against good relationships and, in certain instances, require positive intervention to support specific relationships.

One example of this could be the workingtime directive, or legislation to promote flexible working. The number of hours worked, when those hours occur, and the length of daily commutes all impact on the quality of relationships both in and outside of work.

Of course, the argument against this is that such an approach would create an unnecessary and burdensome demand on businesses, which are already under great pressure to be as lean and focused as possible. However, it is important to emphasise that this is not a one-way equation and that there are very real, if less obvious, costs to not offering such flexibility.

Long working hours can affect relationships both directly (e.g. parents arriving home after children are asleep), and indirectly (e.g. through stress or tiredness). They pressurise families and can, ultimately, help break them. Similarly, there is an impact on wider society. In his seminal book *Bowling Alone* Robert Putnam noted that every ten minutes of commuting cuts all forms of civic engagement by ten per cent.

The problems of difficult or broken family lives and of wider civic disengagement have a price tag, both directly - through the financial cost to the state of supporting children impoverished by separation or divorce, or the financial cost to companies through stress, sick leave and absenteeism - and indirectly - through the emotional cost to everyone involved of divorce, or the civic cost of living in atomised 'communities'. Although harder to detect in balance sheets, these indirect costs are significant, and must not be ignored.

As has been noted above, it is debatable how far public policy can lead to a sustained improvement in subjective well-being. We are not suggesting that government can legislate good relationships into existence. However, government can provide the framework for such relationships to develop, and addressing our work-life imbalance is one way of doing this.

DEFINING QUESTION 2: IS MY ACTION SOCIALLY AND GLOBALLY RESPONSIBLE?

Theology

Human beings, according to Christian teaching, are very much 'this-worldly' creatures.

According to the Christian faith, humans are the stewards or 'servant-kings' of creation - not its owners.

Although Christianity has sometimes earned itself a reputation for being 'spiritual' in an 'other-worldly' sense of the word, the reality is that human beings, according to Christian teaching, are very much 'this-worldly' creatures. Our well-being is dependent on that of our social and natural environment. Conversely, the well-being of creation is itself dependent

on human flourishing. Individuals are part of a single human family and have a shared responsibility to work for the common good. If humans fail in their God-given duty of care, which extends to the creation over which they have been granted dominion, not only will they suffer, but creation will too. The biblical story has numerous warnings about how the 'land' will suffer if people arrogantly do their own thing, ignoring the moral obligation that has been placed on them.

The biblical story has numerous warnings about how the 'land' will suffer if people arrogantly do their own thing.

None of this is to suggest that humans are responsible for building Utopia or bringing about heaven on earth. Christians live in anticipation of a renewed universe and are called to treat the world in light of its promised future, but they are also called to be aware that the completion of this new creation is not in their hands, but rather in God's.

In the life of Jesus, Christians see *the* example of what it means to sacrifice oneself for others or for the greater good. The parable of the Good Samaritan, familiar to many even in an age when biblical literacy is no longer the norm, graphically illustrates an aspect of that responsibility, in which narrow nationalistic or religious loyalties are 'trumped' by the call to attend to the needs of a vulnerable 'other', irrespective of his origins.

Less well-known, but still evident in biblical ethics, is the call to look after the rest of creation. This is rooted in the same obligations that are revealed by the story of the Good Samaritan. The value of creation is grounded in God's love rather than creation's usefulness to mankind. Stewarding the earth is an aspect of 'loving God'. Similarly, because humans are earthly beings, who cannot divorce themselves from creation even if they want to, stewarding the earth is an aspect of 'loving our neighbour'. As one of Jesus' earliest followers said, 'anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen'.[16]

The value of creation is grounded in God's love rather than creation's usefulness to mankind.

Linked, therefore, with the relational idea of the first principle, is the second: being human demands exercising responsibility, both to those in your immediate environment and - by caring for that environment - those beyond it.

Challenge

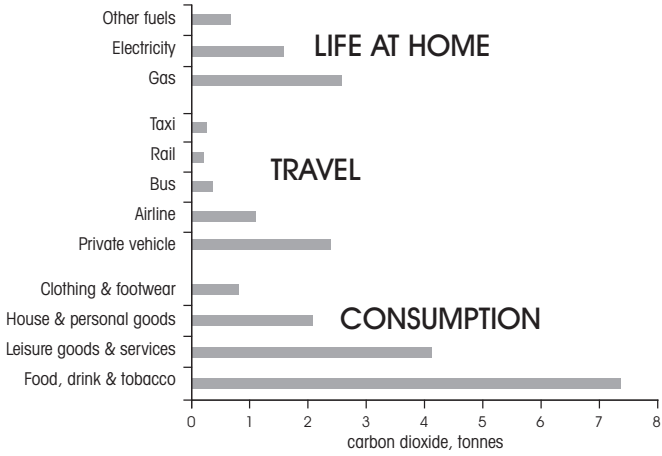
It is a commonplace complaint that today we demand rights without responsibilities. Whether or not this is true, the rise of economic, political and cultural globalisation has clearly forced upon us a recognition that we are faced with very serious global responsibilities that we ignore at our peril. The Report of the Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future*, back in 1987 highlighted the clear connection between human actions and the deterioration of the human environment. It also pointed to the consequences of that deterioration for economic and social development.

Today, climate change is generally considered to be the most obvious challenge confronting us. Whereas the very phrases 'climate change' and 'global warming' evoke images of melting ice caps, vanishing atolls, ruinous hurricanes, inexorably rising tides, droughts and heatwaves, the reality is that climate change is not one vast, impersonal challenge, but rather billions of tiny, personal ones. Rather than being one big, intractable, technical problem, it is billions of tiny, manageable, personal ones. It is about the way we in Britain and other high-income nations travel, consume goods and services, and use energy at home. Ultimately it is about personal responsibility. (Figure 9)

Climate change is not one vast, impersonal challenge, but rather billions of tiny, personal ones.

Figure 9: Greenhouse gas emission by activity for average UK household (expressed in carbon dioxide equivalent):

The average UK household emits around 24 tonnes of CO_2 when a sustainable level is probably around 3.5 tonnes



Source: The impact of UK households on the environment through direct and indirect generation of greenhouse gases (ONS, 2004)

It is not only the challenge of climate change that confronts us. We also make a significant impact on the environment through our attitude to the things we no longer want or have a use for.

About 44 million working toys are discarded in the UK every year - 13 million of which are relatively new. Research shows that by the time he or she reaches 16, a child in the UK will have owned £11,000 worth of toys.[17]

The UK generates up to 30,000 tonnes of discarded batteries every year.

The charity Waste Watch estimates that the UK generates up to 30,000 tonnes of discarded batteries every year. This presents a significant disposal problem. Rechargeable batteries last 10 to 50 times longer than disposables, but it seems that they have not been adopted as readily as could be hoped.

Ethical Consumer magazine states that the majority of toys produced outside Europe are manufactured in China, where excessive working hours are damaging the health and safety of workers.[18]

The choices companies make have very significant social and environmental impacts. From the type and the amount of packaging used, to a decision to close a factory, invest in a country, or, in the infamous words of Lawrence Summers, then Chief Economist of the World Bank in 1992, to 'dump a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country', corporate action exerts a profound influence on our well-being and the state of the world that our children will inherit.

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Corporate and Social Responsibility (CSR) is an increasingly popular concept in the business world. It refers to the voluntary actions that businesses can take, over and above compliance with minimum legal requirements, to address both their own competitive interests and the interests of the wider society. CSR thinking encourages businesses to maximise the benefits and minimise the downsides of their work.

As part of CSR, companies are encouraged to undertake social and environmental auditing. This is a process that enables organisations to evaluate and demonstrate their social, community and environmental benefits and limitations. It is a way to measure the extent to which an organisation lives up to the shared values and objectives it has committed itself to promote. This 'triple bottom line' accounting means expanding the traditional reporting framework to take into account environmental and social performance in addition to financial performance.

'Triple bottom line' accounting means expanding the traditional reporting framework to take into account environmental and social performance.

The Government sees CSR as the business contribution to its sustainable development goals. Sustainable development is development that 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,' and can be conceptually broken into four constituent parts: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability, social sustainability and political sustainability.

The concept of social and global responsibility does not stop with governments and corporations, however. Ultimately, it is just as much about individuals and communities - that is, ourselves - as it is about official institutions and businesses. There is often a disconnect between the things we consume and the people who make them. When we buy a product we hand power to the business that produces it. A purchase of petrol, coffee, clothing or any other consumer product constitutes a vote for the makers of those products. And if they, in turn, exploit labour in a low-income country or damage the environment in the process, then we as purchasers must share some of their culpability. Consumers have the power to shape the global economy and corporations, but it will take organisation and agreement among themselves in order to do so. As Rhidian Brook has noted:

> The market may help create the illusion of a consequence free purchase. As long as the dismal story behind the making of my T-shirt is out of sight, it is out of mind. But the reality is that a purchase binds me in a complex chain of moral and spiritual relationships. And if the cheapness of the product cheapens the life of the person who makes it, then the relationship is already imbalanced. The purchase is immoral.[19]

Governments are the largest purchasers of goods and services in the world. That means that their buying power can help build the market for socially and environmentally fair products, by convincing institutional buyers to commit to purchasing ethically produced goods.

It is important, therefore, that the actions of government, business and the 'third sector' are socially and globally responsible in terms of investments made and products and services purchased.

Response

The 'carbon footprint' is now an accepted part of the political lexicon. This is a measure of the amount of carbon dioxide (CO_2) emitted through the combustion of fossil fuels, in the case of an organisation, business or enterprise, as part of their everyday operations, or in the case of an individual or household, as part of their daily lives.

Carbon footprints are usually expressed as 'tonnes of CO_2 emitted', commonly on a yearly basis, and can be calculated (or at least estimated) with relative ease. In themselves, carbon footprints are essentially a subset of the broader class of eco-footprints, which seek to quantify the impact of our actions on the environment. But even these will be inadequate, as they fail to capture in any real sense our impact on our immediate or wider social environment.

The extent of our CO_2 emissions or our consumption of natural resources is important, but it is only one part of a larger and still more complex picture, in which we 'use' social capital (e.g. informal community networks) as well as natural capital, and make 'emissions' into our shared social 'atmosphere', as, for example, when building or eroding mutual trust.

The poverty footprint

Because awareness of the complete social and environmental footprint - and with it our social and global responsibilities - is so important, we wish to propose that a 'poverty footprint' is developed, enabling people to calculate the effect that an action has on an individual or community, both in the UK and the two-thirds world. It is increasingly possible to check the origins of supermarket products by electronically recording in their tags every step of the supply chain. Using this technology will allow us to calculate the impact that our actions have on the world's poorest.

It is crucially important to think about how our actions impact others, especially the poorest.

It is crucially important to think about how our actions impact others, especially the poorest. This is not only a question of doing good to others; it is also a matter of self-interest. Extreme poverty can help create the conditions which allow discontent, social disorder and terrorism to flourish. If we act in socially and globally responsible ways we can help improve the lives of others and reduce some of the conditions which encourage conflict:

> Our quality of life must be questioned if it is built upon the slow suffocation of someone else's. What we spend our money on, and how we treat people in that process, is a spiritual issue… Think how different our consumption might be if the things we bought could tell their stories. Let's use the communication technology we have to hear the stories of the things we buy. Let's see the faces of the people that make them. As well as asking what the carbon footprint of a product is, let's see the human fingerprints that got it here. I may not meet the person who made my T-shirt, but at least I can acknowledge their presence in the market place and their dignity in it.[20]

DEFINING QUESTION 3: DOES MY ACTION PROMOTE A CLIMATE OF TRUST AND HOPE?

Theology

Closely intertwined with the concepts of relationship and responsibility are those of trust and hope.

As outlined in the introduction, hope lies at the heart of Christian faith and this report. It should not be confused with naïve optimism - a conviction that things are bound to get better, that humans progress morally in tandem with their increasing knowledge and ability.

Instead, it is a hope founded in God's revelation of himself and his intentions through Jesus Christ. Christians look to a renewed creation, secured through the actions of Christ and anticipated by his resurrection. The Christian story is rooted in the past but lived in expectation of the future.

Hope lies at the heart of Christian faith.

This hope is, therefore, dependent on trust. Rather than being grounded in an empirical observation of human nature (which would not necessarily fuel such hope) it is earthed in God's nature as revealed by Jesus Christ. If God is not trustworthy, then Christian hope is futile and dangerously misleading.

Christians look to a renewed creation, secured through the actions of Christ and anticipated by his resurrection.

The Christian understanding of trust is itself shaped by a number of key factors. It is bound up with a particular understanding of human nature which is relational (as noted), realistic (humans are inclined towards self-interest just as much as, if not more than, to self-sacrifice), and redeemable (having the capacity for evil does not make people irredeemably evil: just because we *have* 'selfish genes' it does not follow that we *are* selfish genes).

It is also bound up with the mechanisms for encouraging and building trust in the biblical story, not least the idea of covenant. Covenant, as mentioned earlier, is a fundamentally relational idea, which therefore has a particular meaning. The root of the Hebrew word for covenant, *berit*, suggests a 'bond', giving an indication that the principle of covenant involves a commitment to persevere with a relationship when difficulties occur and even when trust is betrayed.[21]

Covenants thus differ from contracts in that they are open rather than closed. Whereas both establish mutual obligations and privileges for the parties involved, contracts define responsibilities and rights that are specific and temporary. Failure to discharge the relevant duties usually leads to the dissolution of the contract. Covenants, on the other hand, 'encourage attitudes rather than define actions'. They *describe* rather than *prescribe* duties and are marked more by a shared vision and purpose than by a detailed list of conditions.

It is covenants of this nature that shape the biblical narrative, describing how God deals with human beings often in spite of themselves, and showing how humans should deal with one another accordingly.

Ultimately, hope and trust are primarily located in human relationships. It is out of these relationships that hope and trust can be built into the structures of society.

Challenge

It has become fashionable over recent years to claim that UK society is suffering from a trust deficit. In place of the trust that our grandparents apparently willingly placed in one another, the British today are portrayed as corrosively cynical, suspecting everything and everyone.

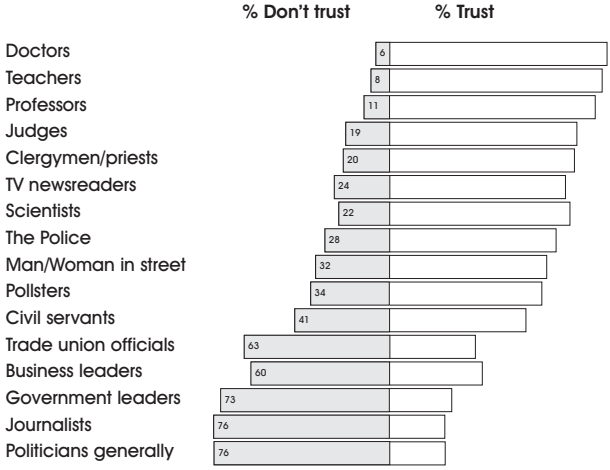
Social surveys purport to offer some evidence for this stereotype. (Figure 10) Many institutions and professions are trusted less today than twenty years ago, with journalists and politicians faring the worst.[22] According to MORI, just 18 per cent of people trust journalists to tell the truth, while 75 per cent do not, a figure exactly comparable to 'politicians generally' and only slightly worse than 'government leaders'.[23]

In place of the trust that our grandparents apparently willingly placed in one another, the British today are portrayed as corrosively cynical, suspecting everything and everyone.

Only business leaders fare anything like as poorly. For instance, 28 per cent of people trust 'business leaders' to tell the truth as opposed to 60 per cent who do not. For 'directors of large companies' this becomes 11 per cent versus 80 per cent.[24]

Figure 10: Trust in Public Institutions, 2003:

Q Now I will read out a list different types of people. For each, would you tell me whether you generally trust them to tell the truth or not?



Source: MORI/Audit Commission, *Trust in Public Institutions*

Just 18 per cent of people trust journalists to tell the truth, while 75 per cent do not, a figure exactly comparable to 'politicians generally' and only slightly worse than 'government leaders'.

The same poll shows that 1 in 4 people agrees with the statement, 'companies can be trusted to honour their pension commitments,' compared with 63 per cent who disagree. However, 82 per cent of people say they can envisage a 'British Enron' whereas only 8 per cent cannot.

Although these figures spell bad news for certain sectors, the picture is not as bleak as it may first appear. Evidence from the annual British Social Attitudes Survey suggests there has not been any significant change in the proportion of people who say they are inclined to trust other people. Around 45 per cent have consistently said that 'most people can be trusted' since the survey started monitoring this in 1997. (Figure 11)

Figure 11: Trends in social trust 1997-2005:

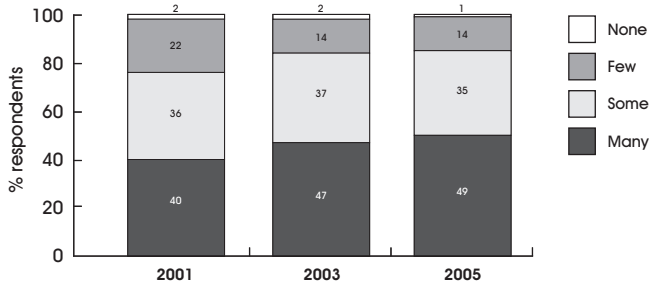
Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?

	1997	1998	2000	2002	2005
% think most people can be trusted	42	44	45	39	45

Source: British Social Attitudes 2006/7 p.249

Moreover, data from the Department for Communities and Local Government's Citizenship Survey suggest that rates of trust in other people in the community are actually rising. (Figure 12)

Figure 12: Number of people who can be trusted in neighbourhood, 2001, 2003, and 2005:



Source: Department for Communities and Local Government's Citizenship Survey

Perhaps this should not surprise us. The sociologist Niklas Luhman once wrote that 'a complete absence of trust would prevent [one] even getting up in the morning.' The reality, as Onora O'Neill remarked in her 2002 Reith Lectures on trust, is that, while we claim to mistrust journalists, we still buy newspapers in our millions. Similarly:

> Even if we have some misgivings, we go on placing trust in medicines produced by the pharmaceutical industry, in operations performed in NHS hospitals, in the delivery of letters by the post office, and in roads that we share with many notably imperfect drivers.[25]

Nevertheless, even if claims of a trust meltdown are hyperbolic, they do point to a genuine phenomenon. Professed mistrust in politicians is not simply a case of sceptical posturing. Recent years have witnessed low voting turnouts, declining party membership, decreased political viewing figures, and a growing tendency on the part of the public to eschew mainstream politics altogether in favour of single issue campaigns.[26] There are several reasons for these trends, but mistrust of politics and politicians is foremost among them.

Recent years have witnessed low voting turnouts, declining party membership, decreased political viewing figures, and a growing tendency on the part of the public to eschew mainstream politics altogether in favour of single issue campaigns.

In a similar, if less pronounced way, professed lack of trust in public services has led indirectly to the rise of league tables, a growing demand for choice in public service provision, and an increasingly litigious culture. The number of qualified lawyers in the UK has increased from 17,053 in 1950 to 92,752 in 2003.[27]

However serious the breakdown in trust is, there is an increasing consensus that trust is a basic commodity in any social interaction. Without trust societies fall apart. As the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, has noted:

> [T]here's clearly quite a lot to that little word trust. And the more you examine it, the more important it becomes to our overall sense of security - the sense that we are standing on solid ground.

Linked to this perceived breakdown of trust is the claim that there is a climate of fear in society, a fear that seems to be the mirror image of hope. In the past our politicians offered us dreams of a better world. Now they promise to protect us from nightmares.[28]

Some of those nightmares are global, like climate change, international terrorism and bird flu. Others are local: MRSA, C-difficile, crime and antisocial behaviour, job insecurity and the prospect of recession. Between them they all lead to the same thing: a fear of the future.

There is an increasing consensus that trust is a basic commodity in any social interaction.

This has provoked a backlash from some quarters, with a number of commentators pointing out that there is more talk than reality here and that fear of crime, for example, has in fact fallen over recent years. Thus, the British Crime Survey shows that in 2006 around 1 in 8 (13 per cent) respondents had a high level of worry about burglary or car crime, and 1 in 6 (17 per cent) about violent crime, whereas five years earlier, around 1 in 5 (19-21 per cent) respondents had high levels of worry about burglary and car crime and 1 in 4 (24 per cent) about violent crime. (Figure 13)

Figure 13: Fear Of Crime 1992-2005:

Worry about crime, 1992 to 2005/06 BCS

Percentage very worried — BCS

	1992	1994	1996	1998	2000	2001 /02 ints	2002 /03 ints	2003 /04 ints	2004 /05 ints	2005 /06 ints	Statistically significant change 2004/05 to 2005/06
HIGH LEVEL OF WORRY ABOUT:											
Burglary	19	26	22	19	19	15	15	13	12	13	*
Car crime	n/a	n/a	n/a	22	21	17	17	15	13	14	
Violent crime	n/a	n/a	n/a	25	24	22	21	16	16	17	*
Unweighted base	10,044	14,502	7,973	14,925	19,388	8,964	36,891	37,891	45,089	47,713	

1. See glossary for more information on the defintions of the fear of crime indicators.
2. Worry about car crime based on car owners only.

Source: BCS

Nevertheless, as with the issue of trust, even if there is more smoke than fire around the joint issues of hope and fear, there is still reason for concern. To take two examples: in 2003 Age Concern published research indicating that older people were becoming prisoners in their homes because of a fear of street crime. The survey of 4,000 older people revealed that almost half of those aged over 75 were too afraid to leave their homes after dark because they believed they would be subject to verbal abuse or mugging. Two thirds said they believed they would inevitably become victims of crime as they got older - while a fifth said this fear had contributed to a sense of loneliness and isolation. Whether this fear is justified or not and whether the risks are anything like as high as the respondents thought is beyond the point. Too many old people live in a climate of fear.

Response

If the Christian message points towards the central importance of hope and trust to our well-being, and if that sense of hope and trust is running dangerously low, the nature of the challenge before us is simple: what practical steps can we take to rebuild it?

As with the issue of working hours above, the cost of rebuilding a sense of trust and hope may seem, at first, to be prohibitive, but the benefits of doing so, though harder to quantify, will be even greater.

In *Trust, a Radical Manifesto*, Steve Chalke notes that:

> For government, achieving a greater sense of trust will reduce the extent to which they are viewed with suspicion; rumours and scandals will carry less weight and the electorate will be less apathetic and more engaged politically. For businesses, increased trust will keep customers, partners and staff loyal; ultimately a trustworthy business is a profitable business. For the Church, when and where she is trusted, the public, the government and funders will be more receptive to working with her and therefore, of course, far more open to her message. And for individuals, where we are trusted our relationships will be easier, deeper and more open;

The survey of 4,000 older people revealed that almost half of those aged over 75 were too afraid to leave their homes after dark because they believed they would be subject to verbal abuse or mugging.

> people will be more likely to think the best of us, forgive us when we get it wrong and consider our needs more readily.[29]

What might rebuilding trust entail? In a paper on rebuilding trust in business, Nick Spencer outlines four features that would be evident in a trusted and trustworthy company.[30]

The cost of rebuilding a sense of trust and hope may seem, at first, to be prohibitive, but the benefits of doing so, though harder to quantify, will be even greater.

Firstly, there would be a public and serious system of values for which the company stands and to which employees and/or suppliers would be expected to consent - a kind of modern, business equivalent to a covenant.

Secondly, there would be the prevalence of open, ongoing and transparent communication processes within and between organisations. This would not mean breaking confidentiality, but it would call for honesty in communication and for an end to the rumours, gossip, leaks and anecdotes that destroy trust and have so damaged the public opinion of politics over the last ten years.

Thirdly, there would be a sense of ownership among employees and even, to some extent, suppliers: an arrangement that reflects the element of self-interest in human nature recognised in Christian thinking. While there is, of course, no reason not to encourage selfless attitudes and behaviour within a company, a corporate structure that recognises our inclination to self-interest by encouraging stakeholding is more likely to bear the fruit of trust and loyalty.

Fourthly, there would be in place structures that treated employees as people rather than just as drones: structures offering family-friendly policies, time as well as - or sometimes over - money as a reward for service, and structures that embedded social responsibilities within a company.

These four principles are aimed mainly at business (although they can and should have wider implications) and do not claim to be anything more than a 'tentative and incomplete analysis of and response to the growing and damaging mistrust in business'. However, between them they point towards a useful standard against which actions and attitudes can be measured.

DEFINING QUESTION 4: DOES MY ACTION PROMOTE SELF-ESTEEM AND RESPECT FOR OTHERS?

Theology

Christians believe that every person has an inalienable dignity and worth because each one is created by and in the image of God. In the words of Rowan Williams:

> For the Christian believer, human dignity … depends upon the recognition that every person is related to God before they are related to anything or anyone else; that God has defined who they are and who they can be by his own eternal purpose, which cannot be altered by any force or circumstance in this world … This means that whenever I face another human being, I face a mystery. There is a level of their life, their existence, where I cannot go and which I cannot control, because it exists in relation to God alone - a secret word he speaks to each one … The reverence I owe to every human person is connected with the reverence I owe to God's creative Word … I stand before holy ground when I encounter another person - not because they are born with a set of legal rights which they can demand and enforce, but because there is a dimension of their life I shall never fully see, the dimension where they come forth from the purpose of God into the world, with a unique set of capacities and possibilities.[31]

This is more than simply a theoretical idea or 'mere theology'. It has practical consequences for our behaviour. As Rowan Williams went on to say in the same lecture:

> [This] means that there are no superfluous people, no 'spare' people in the human world … It means therefore that a human person is worth extravagant and lasting commitment. A human being deserves complete attention and care whether rich or poor, whether they will live for a day or for six decades. It is typical of Christian practice, for example, that the dying receive expensive care, that those who do not have productive mental capacities as we usually understand them are treasured - and that children and even the unborn are regarded with respect. And it is also typical of Christian practice when it is vital and energetic that people feel able to make the lifelong commitment of marriage to each other - because the beloved person will never be completely understood

Every person has an inalienable dignity and worth because each one is created by and in the image of God.

> or 'captured', even in decades of relationship … It means that no-one's value is ever measured simply by how successful or how productive they are…

For a nation born into and nurtured by the Christian faith, and which has recently formally accepted the notion of human rights, these claims might not seem unexceptional. The areas in which they do appear contentious today tend to be those that cluster around the start and end of life.

In everyday life, where the idea that we are all special (and therefore deserve special attention) is something of a cliché, they appear less contentious.

And yet, as we shall note later, the ideas of dignity, respect and self-esteem that flow from this foundational Christian understanding are looking decidedly fragile at this juncture of human history.

It is important to emphasise that this crucial Christian understanding of human dignity is not blind to human faults. Rather it is alert to human failings, to our broken and self-centred nature, but insists that although 'fallen' we are not abandoned as worthless or beyond redemption.

God himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, gave himself for us. We are to see and treat others as God sees and treats us.

The New Testament points to a Church in which that treatment is realised, in which the weakest and most vulnerable are afforded the greatest dignity, and the self-esteem and respect of all is protected and nurtured.

That the Christian community fails in this, sometimes horrifically, hardly needs mentioning. But the fact remains that it is intended to be a body marked by true, inalienable dignity and respect for all and, in being such, to serve as a model for society as a whole.

Challenge

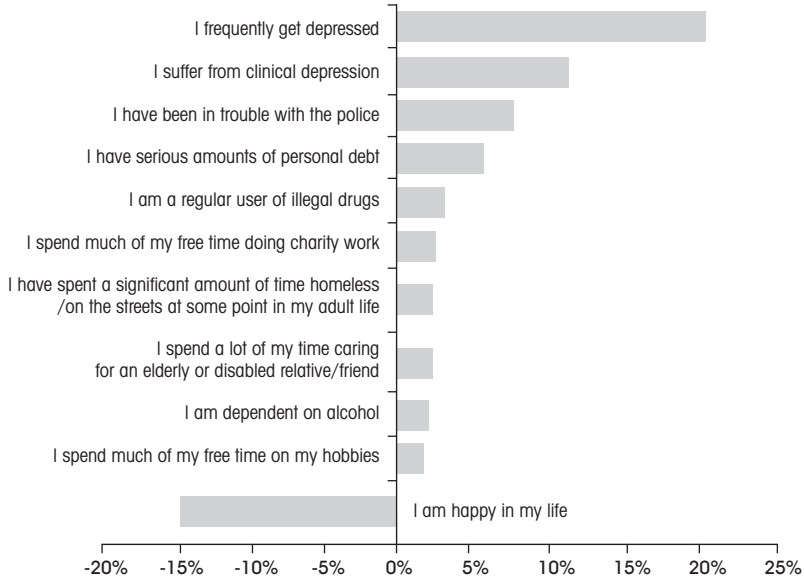
If the Church has problems in protecting and nurturing this human dignity, society has more. As the American Psychological Association report showed, the highly sexualised culture in which children are being raised makes girls more likely to experience body dissatisfaction, depression and lower self-esteem.

The problem of low esteem among girls is not, of course, limited to America. In March 2006 a study of 5,000 women and girls revealed that girls in Britain have lower levels of self-esteem than in the USA, Brazil and China.

Moreover, the problem of self-esteem is driven by many more factors than simply our highly sexualised culture. Educational failure, which is closely connected to child poverty, is also a cause of low self-esteem, as the chart below suggests:

Figure 14: Which of the following applies to you?

(Asked of 'respondents suffering from educational failure')
The 0% line represents the national average.



Source: Breakdown Britain, Report 2: 'Educational Failure'

Accordingly, 'improving self-esteem' is now one of the key aims of much social policy. There is, of course, disagreement about the precise nature of self-esteem, and about its causes and its effects.

Research tends towards the view that low self-esteem is a risk factor for suicide, suicide attempts and depression, for teenage pregnancy, and for victimisation by others. It is thought that girls who have low self-esteem or who are depressed engage in sexual activity as a way of trying to make themselves feel better. Perhaps not surprisingly, therefore, the UK has the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in Europe, with teenage pregnancy being both a cause and a consequence of social exclusion.

Girls in Britain have lower levels of self-esteem than in the USA, Brazil and China ... low self-esteem is a risk factor for suicide, suicide attempts and depression, for teenage pregnancy, and for victimisation by others.

The problem of low self-esteem is not limited to individuals. It can be an issue for communities too. In his evidence to our Committee of Inquiry, the Rt Revd James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool, stated that:

> One of the things which I think is needed is what I call the L'Oreal-factor. This happens when you get involved and invest in deprived communities. It means telling people they're worth it. This of course takes a lot of believing when for years these communities have suffered from top-down solutions, solutions being imposed upon them, people coming and going, nobody staying the course and them becoming very disillusioned.

It would, however, be wrong to cast low self-esteem as the root of all evil. Sometimes its opposite can be just as damaging. In 2001 a report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation indicated that the widely-held belief that low self-esteem drives children to commit violent crime and take drugs is a myth. In a blow to those psychologists who for decades had blamed low self-esteem for a range of social ills, the report argued that overly confident children can pose a greater risk to the public and should be offered treatment. They are more likely to be racist, fail at school, bully others and engage in drink-driving and speeding.

Overly confident children can pose a greater risk to the public and should be offered treatment.

Response

As noted above, self-esteem is firmly on the political and social agenda. However, this is not always for the most helpful reasons.

The *Sunday Times* columnist Brian Appleyard has written that:

> Most people in the developed world now seem to believe that self-esteem is the key that will unlock their soul. More than 2,000 books have been published offering readers ways to improve their self-esteem. Self-esteem is the religion of the age, the one sure way to salvation. In agony columns, chat shows and self-help books, in psychology and psychotherapy, in academic conferences and local education authorities, self-esteem is pursued as the Holy Grail that will free us from criminality, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, depression, discrimination - in fact, from everything that makes us unhappy.

The discussion about self-esteem can end up sounding like an unhealthy fixation on the part of the relatively affluent. Despite this, it clearly can be a serious problem, especially in some of Britain's most deprived communities. We need, therefore, to empower those with low self-esteem to make real choices about themselves and their futures while, at the same time, insisting on a change of attitude from those who demand respect without respecting others.

DEFINING QUESTION 5: DOES MY ACTION ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO FULFIL THEIR GOD-GIVEN POTENTIAL?

Theology

Along with the assumption of its 'other-worldly' focus, the other great misunderstanding of Christianity is that it is essentially a static religion: God is perfect and therefore cannot change, and humans, made in his image, are therefore also called to eternal, changeless perfection.

In reality, this idea owes more to Greek philosophical ideas of what God can and cannot be, than to Christian thought.

Humans are created in the image of a loving, relational God and are called back to that image throughout their lives. In creation God gave gifts and responsibility to humans, the correct use of which is not only critical to the health of creation, but also to the flourishing of humans themselves.

Within the Church the Holy Spirit gives gifts for the service of the community. Individual Christians are to help each other grow into the image of God in Christ, and, as a community, Christians aspire to live the life of which Christ spoke and which he has secured and will bring to fulfilment.

As with the previous principle, it hardly needs saying that the Church often fails in this task, ignoring, misunderstanding and misusing the Spirit's gifts. Yet, once again, the principle remains that humans have a responsibility to help each other to grow into the likeness of a relational God, thereby revealing and fulfilling their true potential as loved creatures.

Humans have a responsibility to help each other to grow into the likeness of a relational God.

Challenge

The issue of social mobility exercises Britain today. In June 2007 the flagship BBC Radio 4 current affairs programme, *Today*, broadcast a week of reports exploring the lack of social mobility in Britain, with John Humphrys, the programme's best-known presenter, 'set[ting] out to find the answers to why the politicians' dream of the "classless" society hasn't become a reality.'[32]

This was not a media-generated story but rather the response to a report published by the Centre for Economic Performance, which found that mobility had fallen markedly over recent decades in Britain, 'with there being less mobility for a cohort of people born in 1970 compared to a cohort born in 1958'.[33] The findings were underlined by the fact that no similar change had been observed in the USA.

Thus (see Figure 15), for the cohort born in 1970, 37 per cent remained in the poorest quarter as adults, while only 16 per cent made it to be among the most affluent as adults. Likewise, far more of the most affluent quarter remains in the top quarter in the next generation than would occur with perfect mobility.

Figure 15: Transition Matrix for Britain, Sons Born in 1970

	Sons' earning quartile aged 30 in 2000			
Parental average income quartile (average of incomes measured when son aged 10 and 16)	Bottom	2nd	3rd	Top
Bottom	.37	.23	.23	.16
2nd	.30	.30	.24	.16
3rd	.20	.24	.29	.27
Top	.13	.23	.24	.40

Source: Intergenerational Mobility in Europe and North America (Centre for Economic Performance). Data drawn from the British Cohort Study of 1970

This did not compare well to the cohort born in 1958 (see Figure 16), in which fewer people born into the bottom income quartile remained there, more made it to the highest quartile, and in which, accordingly, there was less chance that if you were born into the top quartile you would necessarily remain there.

Figure 16: Transition Matrix for Britain, Sons Born in 1958

	Sons' earning quartile aged 33 in 1991			
Parental income quartile when son aged 16	Bottom	2nd	3rd	Top
Bottom	.31	.28	.23	.17
2nd	.30	.28	.23	.19
3rd	.22	.25	.25	.28
Top	.17	.20	.28	.35

Source: Intergenerational Mobility in Europe and North America (Centre for Economic Performance). Data drawn from the National Child Development Survey

As the *Today* programme put it:

> If you are born poor in Britain today you're more likely than your parents were to stay poor. The country's richer than it's ever been but social mobility has stagnated and is at its lowest point for decades.

If you are born poor in Britain today you're more likely than your parents were to stay poor. The country's richer than it's ever been but social mobility has stagnated and is at its lowest point for decades.

The reasons for this may be complex, but at root the Centre for Economic Performance identifies a strong and intensifying link between household income and educational attainment.

Social changes may exacerbate the problem. The percentage of children growing up in a one-parent household increased from 7% per cent in 1971 to 24% per cent in 2005. (Figure 17)

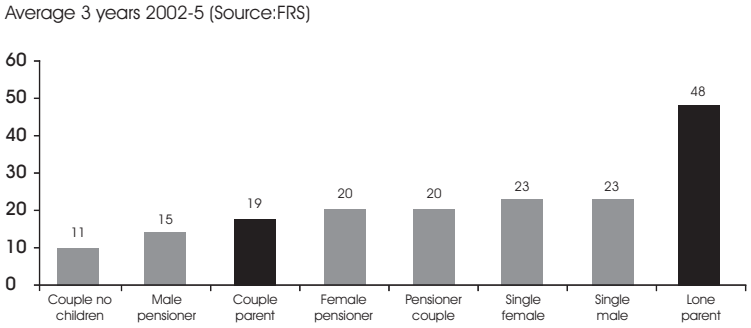
Figure 17: Dependent Children by family type:

	1972	1981	1992	2001	2005
Couple families					
1 child	16	1	187	1	178
2 children	35	4	318	3	273
3 or more children	35	41	38	37	23
Lone mother families					
1 child	2	3	5	6	7
2 children	2	4	6	8	9
3 or more children	2	3	5	6	6
Lone father families					
1 child		1	1	1	1
2 or more children	1	1	1	1	1
All children*	100	0	10100	0	10 100

* Excludes cases where the dependent child is a family unit, for example, a foster child.
Source: General Household Survey

This matters not simply for the obvious emotional and relational reasons of not having a father around, but materially as well, as lone-parent families are at a far higher risk of poverty. (Figure 18)

Figure 18: Risk of poverty (below 60% of median income):



Source: Breakdown Britain, Report 1: 'Fractured Families'

In *The Unfinished Revolution*, John Abbott and Terry Ryan have offered a critique of the post-war education systems of the west. Following American social critic William H Whyte, they argue that humanity has been systematised - society has become centrally planned and organised at the expense of the flourishing of the individual. The resulting trap - one which our education system has already fallen into - is to apply the criteria of economic efficiency to all spheres of human activity, even when it is not appropriate. Abbott and Ryan, and Whyte before them, argue that all organisations and wider society need to create space for uniqueness and creativity, even at the expense of short-term economic efficiencies. These qualities will spawn advances in the common good, and in the good of individuals, while the logic of economic efficiency applied in an educational context can only ever lead to conformity and mediocrity.

The logic of economic efficiency applied in an educational context can only ever lead to conformity and mediocrity.

Response

The problem of social mobility - of people in general and children in particular not having an opportunity to fulfil their God-given potential - has certainly been noticed. Beneath the debate about whether and how much the situation has improved or worsened over the last ten years, there is a consensus that things are not as good as they should be.

In the Government's 2003 Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*, the importance of enabling children to fulfil their potential was a major theme. The paper stated:

> We all share a duty to do everything we can to ensure every child has the chance to fulfil their potential … Our aim is to ensure that every child has the chance to fulfil their potential by reducing levels of educational failure, ill health, substance misuse, teenage pregnancy, abuse and neglect, crime and anti-social behaviour among children and young people.

The Government consulted children, young people and families, with the goal of setting out its aims in terms of a positive vision of what, as a society, we want to achieve for our children. It wanted an approach that was less about intervening at points of crisis or failure, than about creating a culture of encouraging and helping every child to achieve his or her potential.

This potential must be understood in terms beyond narrow educational and material success. Education is not, properly speaking, about getting grades, still less is it about getting grades in order to get on. It is, therefore, important to work with a broader and more holistic definition of human potential.

Education is not, properly speaking, about getting grades, still less is it about getting grades in order to get on.

In her evidence to our Committee of Inquiry, Dr Ruth Deakin-Crick said:

> One of the challenges to our current schooling system is to create a culture for learning in which personalised learning and achievement will be most successfully stimulated and optimised. To do this, we think that greater attention needs to be given to the person of the learner than is currently the case in a system still dominated by the standardised outcomes of summative tests and assessment. The drive to raise standards, important though it is, limits and puts a ceiling on the development of the sorts of values, attitudes, dispositions and skills which are essential for life in the 21st century.

Moreover, in order to achieve their potential, it is important that children are allowed to take reasonable risks. The idea of a risk-free world is a fantasy and although every parent wishes to extend the utmost care and protection to their child, attempts to remove risk altogether are not only futile but threaten

The idea of a risk-free world is a fantasy.

to stifle the spirit, imagination, innovation and creativity of young people - the very things that are most critical in developing their potential.

As Anne Evans, the Chief Executive of Heads, Teachers and Industry, said in February 2007:

> Political correctness that bans failure, and risk aversion that limits opportunities for play and adventure stifles entrepreneurial spirit. The ability to judge risks is learned through carefully managed exposure to hazards - not avoiding them altogether.

This need to embrace risk to some degree also extends to the issue of decentralisation. If low self-esteem - on both an individual and a corporate level - is to be fought, then genuine autonomy needs to be extended to the level in question.

This may entail financial remuneration to those working to achieve these ends. In his evidence to the Committee of Inquiry, the Bishop of Liverpool, the Rt Revd James Jones, said:

> How do we empower local leaders? I'm afraid that we are still working with an outdated class model of the unpaid volunteer. That has got to fundamentally change. We can pay professional regenerators anything from £30-50,000 a year to day-trip into local communities but we do nothing to reimburse and support the people who actually live there. They are committed to turning it into a better place to live and work because local people have the knowledge and the skills of survival. They also know many of the solutions. What they lack are the nutrients and the soil to turn the thing around. Just as people or a firm is reimbursed when someone does Jury service, why shouldn't a person be reimbursed if they do some accredited community activity, like serving as a Governor of a school, like being on a citizen's panel? I think we've got to find new ways of using the tax and benefit system. There's already been talk by politicians of using the benefit system to punish people if they are socially irresponsible, but can we not be positive and use the benefit system to reward people if they engage in community activity? The moment we start reimbursing local people we start spending money through the community rather than on the community.

5 / CONCLUSION

The five core principles we have outlined in this report, though necessarily limited are, we believe, absolutely key to the transformation of our society. If every person, every policy-maker, every opinion-former from the occupant of 10 Downing Street to the humblest 'man or woman in the street' were to orient his or her life and actions and business practices around these five defining questions, would we not automatically begin to find ourselves living in a better world?

We have talked already about hope. This document does not form a call to arms, a summons to muster around some new set of top-down policies imposed and enforced by elected officials. Rather it is a call to hope, an invitation for all stakeholders in our nation's future to something new, something fresh, a positive, hopeful working towards a brighter future.

The process is as much about rhetoric and metrics as it is about public policy. The way we talk and the things we measure in society profoundly influence the content of that society. Thus, we need to change our rhetoric and talk more about these values of relationships, responsibility, trust, self-esteem, respect and potential that have formed the basis of this report. We must not weigh happiness in pounds sterling, nor measure success in university degrees. It matters what we measure because what we measure ends up mattering. Developing and implementing metrics for the principles discussed in this report is imperative.

It is our belief that all people, of every faith and of none, can find in these principles a common ground on which to build. We wish to offer up that ground into the public square. We wish to stimulate debate on these questions, and we wish to create an environment in which individuals and groups, stakeholders and policy-makers, the disenfranchised and the discontented and the weak can begin to wrestle with these notions so that we can discover and present the ways forward.

It matters what we measure because what we measure ends up mattering.

We are hopeful that a commitment to these principles will make a real difference to the society in which future generations are to be born.

The task before us remains a significant one, but it is not impossible. We have faith in the future.

APPENDIX / ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Committee members

- Tim Anderson (City Life Church, Cambridge)
- John Ashcroft (Relationships' Foundation)
- Alistair Burt, MP
- Rt Revd Graham Cray (Bishop of Maidstone)
- Canon Ann Holt OBE (Bible Society)
- Dr R David Muir (Evangelical Alliance)
- Andy Reed, MP
- Caroline Spelman, MP
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- Dame Suzi Leather (Chief Executive of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority at the time of the Inquiry)
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- Dr David Smith (Leader, Peterborough Community Church)
- Roger Smith (former Head of Public Policy, CARE)
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Faith in the Future
Working towards a brighter future

Faith in the Future has been produced by a cross-party parliamentary Committee of Inquiry.

Despite unprecedented levels of legislation, welfare and material wealth in the UK, this country faces significant challenges about human well-being that politicians alone cannot solve.

This report sets out some of these challenges and concludes that the absence of certain key values is the primary cause of so much discontent.

Our solutions do not involve more law or higher taxes but rather a call to re-examine the decisions taken in every sector of society in the light of crucial life-challenging principles.

These principles are set out as five defining questions: Does my action encourage people to develop positive relationships in their families and communities? Is my action socially and globally responsible? Does my action promote a climate of trust and hope? Does my action promote self-esteem and respect for others? Does my action encourage people to fulfil their God-given potential? This report sets the challenge of applying these questions before any new action is taken.

This document does not form a call to arms, a summons to muster around some new set of top-down policies. Rather it is a call to hope, an invitation for all stakeholders in our nation's future to something new, something fresh, a positive, hopeful working towards a brighter future.