

CIGB Commissioning Service 24th November 2013
Address: Carole Parkes

The theme for today's address is **Workplace Wealth and Worship**. The workplace is for most of us a place that we spend a very large proportion of our lives. This can be a place of happiness and a rewarding and fulfilling experience but we also need to recognise that for others (and at different times) it can also be a place of uncertainty, stress and for some real distress. I also want us to think about worship in different ways because we all may have our own views on this and different interpretations of what worship means.

I first became aware of the work of the CIGB and the chaplains through the Birmingham Centre for Business Ethics and its co-founder Denis Claringbull (vicar of St Pauls in the jewellery quarter and leader of industrial chaplaincy). This was at the time of Bishop John Sentamu and I received an invitation to speak about faith and work at a Diocesan synod. It was after the synod that I was approached to become a member of the management council of CIGB. I have been both impressed and humbled by what I hear and see of the creative and redemptive way in which chaplains fulfill their role in the workplace and this way of worshipping God.

My own professional background is in **Human Resource Management** working in the NHS and in retail but it was in these roles that the issues of fairness and justice, particularly in relation to employees that has really led to what I do today.

For the last 10 years I have been teaching ethics, responsibility and sustainability, first in the **MBA programme at Aston Business School** and more recently in ensuring the integration of these issues into the business and management curriculum at Aston and beyond.

My whole approach to teaching ethics and responsibility in business has been to start **with surfacing the values of students, to explore where these values come from and then explore where these values may have been brought into conflict**. On the Aston MBA we have students from over 35 countries with very different cultural, philosophical and religious traditions, so this raises a number of interesting discussions. At the end of the course students are asked to write a reflection on their values the issues we have raised during the module and how this may affect their future actions and decision making. A few years ago I did an analysis of 300 of these reflections and found that students felt this had given them the vocabulary and confidence to be able to raise these issues and some had even made actual changes in their workplaces.

When I take classes with first year students, I often start with simple question: What is the Purpose of business?

Many of them respond straight away with the expected answer TO MAKE PROFIT but then I challenge them as to what they mean and whether this is the only purpose and how much profit is enough profit etc. We then discuss the wider purpose of business.

If we go back to the **origins of corporate social responsibility** and the early social reformers, the original corporate responsibilities were 3 fold: To produce goods and services, treat employees well and pay taxes to contribute to the society in which they operate.

Today, the behaviour of business organisations (locally and globally) is also subject to constant scrutiny through the **24/7 media** communication channels and that places expectations on business organisations not just to behave ethically but also to provide visible evidence that they are acting responsibly.

Even though there have been many ethical crises including those we see every day in the press involving large transnational organisations, (including the financial collapse in 2008), business and management today is still largely constructed in line with **norms established during the 1950s** by the Carnegie and Ford Foundation. This includes the notion that shareholder value is the only responsibility of business and generally minimizes any other responsibility. This is largely what business and management schools have been teaching ever since.

Perhaps the **greatest challenge faced by the world today is how can we improve human existence for all (the global common good) in the context of a resources constrained planet.** The social, economic and environmental state of the world demands fundamental change in many of these areas and continuing with 'business as usual' is no longer an option.

In 2000, along with the millennium development goals that called for the eradication of poverty, primary education for all, maternal health, protect the environment, eradicate diseases, the UN set up the Global Compact.

This consists of agreements between business and the UN on 4 key areas; Human Rights, Labour Standards, the environment and anti corruption.

In 2007, the current secretary general Ban Ki Moon asked what was happening about the education of future business leaders? This led to the establishment of **the UN backed Principles of Responsible Management Education. (PRME)** and a call to Universities across the world to sign up to the Principles. Aston was an early signatory to the Principles and we now have over half the Universities in the UK signed up. In May 2013, Aston hosted the foundation meeting of the UK & Ireland Chapter of PRME and in September 2013, Aston Business School was invited by the UN to be a **Champion school, (one of 25 schools world wide) as part of a Global Leadership team.**

Our stated aim (as part of the University Strategy) is to produce Social Responsibility and sustainability literate graduates by 2020 by integrating these issues across the curriculum

We also have an in MSc Social Responsibility & Sustainability (full time and part time).

In teaching these issues we do not see **corporate social responsibility as a narrowly defined activity** because it includes labour standards. Legal compliance, human rights, the environment etc.

CSR (& Sustainability) is not about what a company decides to do with its profits at the end of the year but about how the business is run etc..

The problem is that for some business's it is about PR and marketing
Which brings us to the issue of **Authenticity and the difference between
Espouse and Enacted CSR** policies and practices.

Locally, following the disturbances in 2011, a multi agency (including City Council, Community Groups, Businesses, Emergency, Education and Health services) steering group for the Bham **Social Inclusion process was set up under the chairmanship of Bishop David Urquart - Giving Hope Changing Lives** to try to make the city more inclusive. My role on the steering group was to work with the Inclusive Economic Growth key line of enquiry. A number of initiatives have taken place to encourage recognise and encourage business involvement in their communities. At Aston, we have held CSR summit to highlight many good examples of this. We have welcomed the Public Services Social Value Act (2012) that has provided some leverage in this direction together with City council initiatives such as the Bham Charter that calls for (inter alia) the living wage, local suppliers and companies demonstrating social value in procurement.

It should be recognized, that in calling for organisations to be show more humanity, **we are not looking for perfect organisation.** We need to acknowledge that organisations are made up of human beings and as such are likely to make mistakes but it is how those errors arise and importantly what intentions were behind the actions in the first place and then how the response to any 'mistake/mishap' that is important e.g. In outsourcing its production to a particular part of the world, does a company have any intentions of helping the community to develop their enterprise for the benefit of the local community or is it only about a race to the bottom and to get the cheapest deal?

There are also wider social issues that are important. In a world when we can source goods from any where in the world and sell goods anywhere in the world, the key competitive advantage any organisation has is the ability of its people /employeees to innovate

In a global context the UN is now working on the post 2015 agenda beyond the Millennium development goals Sustainable Development goals and has published the **strategic architecture** of how business and government s can work together with the UN to address some of the most difficult challenges we have ever faced

In teaching ethics we often refer to the concept of the **moral imagination** so I return to the question I ask of first year students: **What is the purpose of business?** and respond by quoting from Nick Main Global Sustainability Director of Deloitte;

- **'imagine a world** where business is celebrated for its contribution to society' (rather than the continual stream of corporate scandals)
- 'business should be based on the broad foundation of the ethical good: the delivery of benefits (products and services) that improve the human existence in the context of a resources-constrained world'

In looking to create a better, more just and more inclusive world we are looking to all of us to take responsibility for our part and this is where the idea of **sphere of influence** comes in. Students often think that they have no power but they need to think about what their sphere of influence is and may be in the future, what can they do within their own lives and roles to make a difference?

Industrial chaplains are a shining example people using their sphere of influence. The work in supporting and nourishing people in organisations whether that is people of different faiths or of no faith demonstrates a Christ like approach to pastoral care, delivered with compassion and genuine humanity. The nature of the work of Chaplains means that they may not be highly visible or have power in the traditional sense of the word but they use their 'sphere of influence' to shine Gods light and provide a listening ear to those who may not see themselves as having a voice and to bring a greater sense of humanity and care to workplaces across Birmingham and Solihull.