



A CONVERSATION WITH LORD GLASMAN AND SOME REFLECTIONS

Maurice Glasman and Martin Robinson were in conversation on the terrace of the House of Lords complete with all the background noise of a helicopter and a speed boat playing a theme from one of the James Bond movies at full volume. This was not an ivory tower or a remote retreat but a location deeply rooted in the vibrancy of London life.

The opening question posed by Martin revolved around the simple observation that communities, societies and even nations are having difficulty in finding ways to hold the centre ground. There seems to be a fracturing and a dividing of communities, people groups, ethnicities, cultures and identities as

fear of the “other” grows. So, in those circumstances how does the centre hold and how do we create ways of living together that speak of creative connections as compared with fearful withdrawal?

Maurice responded by speaking about the problem in terms of the danger of a polarization that signals that we have given up trying to live with others. In turn that means that we are thinking only of a withdrawal into the immediacy of our present situation – trapped in the ‘now’ – as compared with making an investment in an imagination about what a different future might look like.

Part of the reason why this has happened is that capitalism has reduced our sense of who we are as human beings and the State has reinforced a sense of our powerlessness and these have contributed to the breakdown of social relationships.

We therefore need institutions that are strong enough to encourage ‘the small accommodations that make life possible’. The church is one of the institutions that can encourage a generosity in our relationships that helps to make participation in one another’s lives possible. In particular that is possible because the church is committed to place and to the people that give place its distinctive character and social narrative.

Other institutions are also important, schools, universities, mosques and volunteer associations of many kinds. In that context politics with a generous attitude also matters and so government and the way it operates locally is important.

The church has found it difficult to make that contribution in recent years and because it has lost its confidence it has found it harder to speak up for marriage, family life and the other social relationships that help community to function well. The desire to contribute in this way remains, as does a commitment to place and its significance. We are incarnated beings and we have a faith that speaks of the importance of God incarnate.



Lord Maurice Glasman

Lord Maurice Glasman is an academic who also worked as a community organizer with *London Citizens* for 10 years. He launched *Blue Labour* in 2010, a Labour Party pressure group which emphasizes the place of responsibility and relationship in politics. A Labour Life Peer from 2011, Lord Glasman is associated with the attempt to help the UK Labour Party discover its Christian roots. In January 2013 he helped us launch the Journal of Missional Practice at the House of the Lords.

