

## DAVID WILLIAM GOLDING DCL

Mr Chancellor,

During a few heady months in the summer of 2005, it really felt like the world had finally been turned upside-down: suddenly, it was positively fashionable to advocate debt relief. A white wrist-band emblazoned 'Make Poverty History' became *the* must-have accessory for all ages. Amidst the excitement of those days, it was easy to forget that it was the dedicated efforts of a minority of committed activists which had finally seared the conscience of the rich countries. One of the most devoted of these activists now stands before you: Dr David Golding.

The Gospel of Luke relates how Jesus visited his home-town synagogue, and read the following text:

“... The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour ...”

This 'year of the Lord's favour' is none other than the 'jubilee' of the Old Testament: a year in which debts are cancelled. This same prophetic aspiration motivated David Golding to begin working against world poverty with the British relief and

development agency, Tearfund, during the 1980s. Fifteen years later, he helped establish the Tyneside branch of ‘Jubilee 2000’, a campaign to cancel the debts of developing countries by the turn of the Millennium.

The exhortation to ‘think globally and act locally’ neatly summarises the *modus operandi* of David Golding. Never flagging in his academic day-job, he somehow found the energy to orchestrate much of the Jubilee 2000 campaign regionally. On campus, he coordinated support from the Students Union and the staff unions, enlisted an enthusiastic patron in the figure of Mr James Wright, our Vice-Chancellor at the time, who then obtained extraordinary authority from the Senate to sign debt campaign letters in his official capacity.

Back to Jesus in the synagogue for a moment: after he read that sonorous scripture proclaiming the jubilee, he went on to add: “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing”. It was then that the mood turned sour: the congregation began to bicker, and Jesus was fortunate to slip away unharmed. Two millennia later, as the year 2000 drew to a close without any remission of debt for the poor countries, controversy also began amongst Jubilee 2000 campaigners; the movement was poised to splinter into factions. To their eternal credit, David Golding and other regional campaigners refused to stand by and let this happen. With fervour worthy of John the Baptist, they castigated the

doomsayers, encouraged the faithful, and pleaded for unity, insisting that a true jubilee year was almost within reach.

Only days later their optimism was overwhelmingly vindicated at a meeting in Westminster, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer (here present!) committed the UK to cancelling 100% of debts owed by many of the world's poorest countries. David Golding was among the first to their feet in the tumultuous celebration which ensued. Animated anew, the national coalition was reconstituted as the Jubilee Debt Campaign, with David on its board. In 2002, David organised the "Queen's Jubilee Petition", which was submitted to the Palace in 2003. This petition drew support from an extraordinarily broad coalition, prompting the memorable headline: "Mothers Union and 65 Professors Unite for Debt Relief"!

The Jubilee Debt Campaign never eased the pressure on decision-makers for a moment. In 2002, David broached the idea of World Debt Day, which was marked for the first time on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2004, drawing public messages of support from prominent Church leaders including the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. President Benjamin William Mkapa of Tanzania (also here present!) delivered a generous eulogium on the campus-wide campaign, commending it as a model to all other Universities. He also reported on the tremendous advances in primary education in his country resulting from

resources freed up by the recent cancelling of a significant proportion of Tanzania's debt.

Where Helen of Troy was renowned as the face that launched a thousand ships, David Golding was introduced to an Oxfam meeting in York as "the man who has booked a thousand coaches!". (In reality, it was a thousand coach *seats* he had booked, ensuring an enormous Tyneside delegation to the Make Poverty History rally in Edinburgh on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2005).

David shares with many here a deep frustration at the lack of progress towards trade justice. He is also immersed in a new strand of campaigning on the problems which climate change is causing to poor countries. But it is in recognition of his extraordinary efforts alongside many dedicated companions, his visionary leadership and tireless persistence in a most righteous cause, that I now ask you, Mr Chancellor, to bestow upon Dr David Golding the Degree of Doctor of Civil Law *honoris causa*.

**Citation by Professor Paul Younger**