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# Anglican Communion in Crisis: the Windsor Report – solution or part of the problem?

Melvin Tinker

## Introduction

Any attempt to summarise a carefully worded document of over 80 pages long is liable to lay itself open to the charge of simplification, generalisation and so misrepresentation. That, however, is a risk we will have to take. We hope to offset such tendencies by quoting the findings of the commission itself, whilst always being careful to pay due regard to the context in which those statements are made. However, in order to avoid tedium and simply reproducing large chunks of the report *en masse* we will summarise parts of the document to convey the salient points being made.

## The Current Crisis

The great cause for concern for many is the degree of disunity, hurt and frustration that exists at present, resulting from action taken by certain parts of the Anglican Communion over the issue of homosexuality. The immediate background is the 1998 Lambeth Conference and resolution 1:10 which clearly states that same sex genital acts are seen as sinful and require repentance and a change in direction. The Primates unanimously upheld the resolution as the standard of Anglican teaching on the matter in their statement of October 16, 2003—

We also re-affirm the resolutions made by the bishops of the Anglican Communion gathered at the Lambeth Conference in 1998 on issues of human sexuality as having moral force and commanding the respect of the Communion as its present position on these issues.

Yet running alongside this are two controversial issues which have not been laid to rest by such resolutions:

1. Whether or not it is legitimate for the church to bless the committed, exclusive and faithful relationships of same sex couples.
2. Whether or not it is appropriate to ordain to the Episcopate persons living in a sexual relationship with a partner of the same sex.

The unilateral action of two Dioceses in this direction precipitated the present crisis. The Diocese of New Hampshire in the United States proceeded with the consecration of Gene Robinson, a divorcee and practicing homosexual. The 74<sup>th</sup> Convention of the Episcopal Church (USA) also declared that—

local faith communities are operating within the bounds of our common life as they explore and experience liturgies celebrating and blessing same-sex unions (General Convention 2003, Resolution C 051).

The Canadian Diocese of New Westminster formally approved the use of public rites for the blessing of same sex unions. What is more, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada issued a statement affirming the integrity and sanctity of same sex relationships. To the dismay of many, this development occurred *after* the Windsor Commission had been set up and after there had been a call from the Archbishop of Canterbury for there to be a time of calm for quiet reflection. These actions have simply been presented to the wider Anglican Communion as *a fait accompli* with no theological justification at all, a point made by the Commission—

The first reason therefore, why the present problems have reached the pitch they have is that it appears to the wider communion that neither the Diocese of New Westminster nor the Episcopal Church (USA) has made a serious attempt to offer an explanation to, or consult meaningfully with, the Communion as a whole about the significant development of theology which could justify the recent moves by a diocese of a province (Para. 30, p. 20).

The seriousness of these actions has been recognized by the Anglican primates. ‘It is feared that these actions “might tear the fabric of our communion at its deepest level”,’ (Statement by Primates, Lambeth 16 October, 2003), thus underscoring the point made earlier that the crisis is being perceived mainly as one which threatens the unity of the worldwide Anglican Communion.

But of course, there was disunity and consternation being caused at the local level by such actions. This is how the Windsor Report describes the situation—

Within the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Diocese of New Westminster themselves, several moves have been made by dissenting parishes and groups

to distance themselves, in a variety of ways, from the dioceses, bishops and provinces within which they are geographically located. In some cases this has involved them in appealing for help to the Archbishop of Canterbury; in others, in seeking Episcopal oversight by bishops or archbishops from other dioceses and/or provinces. In many cases, it has simply meant bewilderment and uncertainty as to the present and future Anglican status of those who dissent to the innovations (Para. 29, p. 18).

Following these events some Primates and other bishops took it upon themselves to 'intervene in the affairs of other provinces in the Communion' (Paragraph 123, p. 51). This action was deemed by the Commission to contribute to the breakdown of relationships within the Anglican Communion, although it does recognize that 'The overwhelming response from other Christians both inside and outside the Anglican family has been to regard these developments (New Hampshire and New Westminster) as departures from the genuine, apostolic Christian faith' (Para. 28, p. 18).

The upshot of this sorry state of affairs is that it has left some Anglican parishes and Provinces in impaired communion with these two Dioceses. As we shall see, it is the question of unity and what is considered to be due process operating within the worldwide Anglican Communion, which is the main burden of the Commission.

### **The Windsor Commission's Mandate**

In the introduction to the report by Archbishop Eames, we are told that

This Report is not a judgement. It is part of a process. It is part of a pilgrimage towards healing and reconciliation. The proposals which follow attempt to look forward rather than merely to recount how difficulties have arisen (p. 6).

More specifically the mandate given was

to examine the legal and theological implications flowing from the decisions of the Episcopal Church (USA) to appoint a priest in a committed same sex relationship as one of its bishops, and the Diocese of New Westminster to authorize services for use in connection with same sex unions...

as well as looking at

the ways in which provinces of the Anglican Communion may relate to one another in situations where the ecclesiastical authorities of one province feel unable to maintain the fullness of communion with another part of the Anglican Communion (Para. 1, p. 8).

However, it is also important to stress, as does the report, what lies *outside* the mandate—

We repeat that we have not been invited, and are not intending, to comment or make recommendations on the theological and ethical matters concerning the practice of same sex relations and the blessing or ordination or consecration of those who engage in them (Para. 43, p. 24).

As we shall see, it is a combination of faulty premises and inadequate parameters which determine the conclusions drawn by the Commission and expose its most fundamental weaknesses.

We now turn to some of those premises which relate to the theological undergirding of the report and its understanding of the nature and functioning of the Anglican Communion.

### **Theological framework and ecclesiological understanding**

Key to the Commission's understanding of the nature of the Anglican Communion is its ecclesiology—its doctrine of the Church. This is what the report says.

The communion we enjoy as Anglicans involves a sharing in double 'bonds of affection': those that flow from our shared status as children of God in Christ, and those that arise from our shared and inherited identity, which is the particular history of the churches to which we belong. This is a relationship of 'covenantal affection'; that is, our mutual affection is not subject to whim and mood, but involves us in a covenant relation of binding mutual promises, with God in Christ and with one another. All those called by the gospel of Jesus Christ and set apart by God's gift of baptism are incorporated into the communion of the Body of Christ (Paragraph 45, p. 26). ...'the Anglican Communion' describes itself as

such, it is self-consciously describing that *part* of the Body of Christ which shares an inheritance through the Anglican tradition...(Para. 46, p. 26).

Prior to this the Commission seeks to root its theology in Scripture with special reference to the letter to the Ephesians and confidently asserts that

The church, sharing in God's mission to the world through the fact of its corporate life, must live out that holiness which anticipates God's final rescue of the world from the powers and corruptions of evil (Eph 4:17-6:20) (Para. 2, p. 11).

Even more emphatically—

It assumes...that this unity and communion are meaningless unless they issue in that holiness of life, worked out in severely practical contexts, through which the church indicates to the world that a new way of being human, over against corrupt and dehumanising patterns of life, has been launched upon the world. In other words, unity, communion and holiness all belong together. Ultimately, questions about one are questions about all.

This, therefore, makes it surprising to many that homosexual practice is still open to debate. This is just one example of the many inconsistencies and double thinking we find in the report.

What, then, is the Anglican Communion? The Lambeth Conference has described the Anglican Communion as 'a fellowship of churches in communion with the See of Canterbury' (Para. 48, p. 25). This leads to the question being asked: how are the various members of this body to relate to each other and do theology?

The Commission does stress that the supreme authority is Scripture, (Para. 43, p. 23). It goes on to describe what it understands by the term 'authority'—

The phrase 'the authority of Scripture', if it is to be based on what scripture itself says, must be regarded as a shorthand, and a potentially misleading one at that, for the longer and more complex notion of 'the authority of the triune God, *exercised through* Scripture' (Para. 54, p. 27).

A further attempt to elucidate what this means is later made—

it must be seen that the purpose of Scripture is not simply to supply true information, nor just to prescribe in matters of belief and conduct, nor merely to act as a court of appeal, but to be part of the dynamic life of the Spirit through which God the Father is making the victory which was won by Jesus' death and resurrection operative within the world and in and through human beings (Para. 55, p. 28).

As we shall see, this is a rather mischievous and inadequate understanding of the nature and purpose of Scripture.

Who is responsible for teaching the Scriptures to ensure that we can 'discern the will of God' on any particular matter? The answer: the church's leaders and especially the Bishops.

The place of Christian leaders—chiefly within the Anglican tradition, of bishop—as *teachers of scripture* can hardly be over emphasized. The 'authority' of bishops cannot reside solely or primarily in legal structures, but, as in Acts 6:4, in their ministry of 'prayer and the word of God' (Italics mine—Para. 58, p. 29).

However, the way the Bishops who made up the Commission handle Scripture in the report does not give us cause for confidence in this area. For example, much is made of what is called *adiaphora* (literally 'things of no consequence') to explain why there is a degree of variety of belief and practice within the Anglican Communion. It is rightly stated that this does not mean a 'free for all' interpretation so that the Scriptures can be relativised and we become captive to the spirit of the age—

Paul is quite clear that there are several matters—obvious examples being incest (1 Corinthians 5) and lawsuits between Christians before non-Christian courts (1 Corinthians 6)—in which there is no question of saying 'some Christians think this, other Christians think that, and you must learn to live with the difference. On the contrary: Paul insists that some types of behaviour are incompatible with inheriting God's coming kingdom, and must not therefore be tolerated within the Church. (Para. 89, p. 39).

One cannot help but notice the most glaring omission which could have been mentioned—homosexual practice (1 Cor. 6:9). One wonders why ‘incest’ is an ‘obvious example’ but not same sex genital relations? Later a window is left open for those who would argue that homosexual practice within a committed same-sex relationship *is* permissible when it is stated—

When we put the notion of *adiaphora* together with that of inculturation (*that is the legitimate cultural expression of our faith which will vary*), this is what we find: ‘in Paul’s world, many cultures prided themselves on such things as anger and violence on the one hand and sexual profligacy on the other. Paul insists that both of these are ruled out for those in Christ. Others prided themselves on such things as justice and peace; Paul demonstrated that the gospel of Jesus enhanced and fulfilled such aspirations. The Church in each culture, and each generation, must hammer out the equivalent complex and demanding judgements. Even when the notion of *adiaphora* applies, it does not mean that Christians are left free to pursue their own personal choices without restriction. Paul insists that those who take what he calls the ‘strong’ position, claiming the right to eat and drink what others regard as off limits, must take care of the ‘weak’, those who still have scruples of conscience about the matters in question—since those who are lured into acting against conscience are thereby drawn into sin. Paul does not envisage this as a static situation. He clearly hopes that his own teaching, and mutual acceptance within the Christian family, will bring people to one mind. (p. 39ff).

One does not have to be a prophet or a son of a prophet to see how this will work out in practice. Those in favour of the revisionist agenda will argue that it is precisely a matter of justice that gays should be made bishops for not to do so is rank discrimination. They can claim they are ‘strong’ and so if they were to hold back from taking things further, it is not because their position is not theologically acceptable, but it is not the right time because of the position of the weaker brethren—those who are currently orthodox.

This possibility is given more force when we see how the Commission sets out its view on how the members of the Anglican Communion are to relate to each other and may come to a common mind on matters of doctrine and practice.

It is recognised that there is legitimate autonomy within the Anglican Communion



but what this autonomy consists of is carefully explained by the report—

A body is thus, in this sense, ‘autonomous’ *only in relation to others*: autonomy exists in a relation with a wider community or system of which the autonomous entity forms part. The word ‘autonomous’ in this sense actually implies not an isolated individualism, but the idea of being free to determine one’s own life within a wider obligation to others. The key idea is autonomy-in-communion, that is, freedom held within interdependence (Italics mine—Para. 76, p. 35).

According to the Commission what binds the Anglican Communion together, and so facilitates interdependence, are its historic episcopate, the so called instruments of unity; namely, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council (which involves the laity) and the Primates meeting, as well as its synodical life, with Scripture being the constant factor (Para. 70, p. 33). The way in which fresh developments are then to be dealt with in terms of proper procedure involving the above structures, is by way of applying what is called the *principle of reception*. The sequence to be followed is: theological debate, formal action and increased consultation to see if the formal action settles down and makes itself at home. (Para. 68, p. 33).

But the Commission does declare—

We should note, however, that the doctrine of reception only makes sense if the proposals concern matters on which the Church has not so far made up its mind. It cannot be applied in the case of actions which are explicitly against the current teaching of the Anglican Communion as a whole, and/or of individual provinces. No province, diocese or parish has the right to introduce a novelty which goes against such teaching and excuse it on the grounds that it has simply been put forward for reception. (Para. 69, p. 33).

It is a failure to follow this procedure which is seen to be the real sin of the revisionist dioceses. For example, showing how this principle worked itself out in terms of the ordination of women priests the Commission writes,

The precedent that could have been set by this procedure has not, unfortunately, been followed in the matters currently before the

Communion. This, we conclude, lies *at the heart of the problems we currently face.*" (Italics mine—Para. 22, p. 16).

The implication is that if the revisionist dioceses had only 'played the game' we would not be in this position.

There is also the further implication that if only they were to resume playing the game then their position might well be acceptable in due course. This implicit possibility running throughout the report is made explicit in the recommendation at the end when it says that the Episcopal Church (USA) should

be invited to effect a moratorium on the election and consent to the consecration of any candidate to the episcopate who is living in a same gender union *until some new consensus in the Anglican Communion emerges* (Italics mine—Para. 134, p. 54).

### **Recommendations for action**

First, there are recommendations regarding the Instruments of Unity. It is proposed that there should be a clearer understanding over what is expected in the way provinces relate to these. It is also proposed that the Archbishop of Canterbury should play a more central role within worldwide Anglicanism and, to assist him, a Council of advice should be set up. To both clarify and strengthen these instruments an Anglican Covenant is proposed which could deal with—

the acknowledgement of common identity; the relationships of communion; the commitments of communion; the exercise of autonomy in communion; and the management of communion affairs (including disputes) (Para. 118, p. 48).

This would be implemented by a short domestic 'Communion law' for each Province.

Whilst all that is very much focused on the future to avoid similar situations occurring again, recommendations are made with regard to the present crisis. As far as the election to the Episcopate is concerned, it is proposed that—

the Episcopal Church (USA) be invited to express its regret that the proper

constraints of the bonds of affection were breached in the events surrounding the election and consecration of a bishop for the See of New Hampshire, and for the consequences which followed, and that such an expression of regret would represent the desire of the Episcopal Church (USA) to remain within the Communion. Pending such expression of regret, those who took part as consecrators of Gene Robinson should be invited to consider in all conscience whether they should withdraw themselves from representative functions in the Anglican Communion. We urge this in order to create the space necessary to enable the healing of the Communion (Para. 134, p. 54).

Also, as we have already noted, a moratorium should be introduced on such further consecrations until a new consensus has been reached within the Anglican Communion. Turning to the matter of the blessing of same sex unions we read—

We call for a moratorium on all such public Rites, and recommend that bishops who have authorised such rites in the United States and Canada be invited to express regret that the proper constraints of the bonds of affection were breached by such authorisation. Pending such expression of regret, we recommend that such bishops be invited to consider in all conscience whether they should withdraw themselves from representative functions in the Anglican Communion (Para. 144, p. 57).

The difficulties facing dissenting groups are recognized and appropriate action called for, namely—

In these circumstances we call upon the church or province in question to recognise first that dissenting groups in their midst are, like themselves, seeking to be faithful members of the Anglican family (*an over-charitable assumption if ever there was one!-author*); and second, we call upon all the bishops concerned, both the ‘home’ bishops and the ‘intervening’ bishops as Christian leaders and pastors to work tirelessly to rebuild the trust which has been lost. In only those situations where there has been an extreme breach of trust, and as a last resort, we commend a conditional and temporary provision of delegated pastoral oversight for those who are dissenting. This oversight must be sufficient to provide a credible degree of

security on the part of the alienated community, so that they do not feel at the mercy of a potentially hostile leadership. While the temporary provision of pastoral oversight is in place there must also be a mutually agreed commitment to effecting reconciliation (Para.s 149-51, p. 58).

Then we come to part of the report which has understandably outraged the Nigerian Bishops, that those bishops who have intervened to assist the disenfranchised orthodox parishes, should

1. Express regret for the consequences of their actions.
2. Affirm their desire to remain within the Communion.
3. To effect a moratorium on interventions (Para. 155, p. 59).

In conclusion, the Commission calls upon all parties involved to seek ways of reconciliation in order to heal our divisions. However, it does go on to offer this warning—

There remains a very real danger that we will not choose to walk together. Should the call to halt and find ways of continuing in our present communion not be heeded, then we shall have to begin to learn to walk apart. We would much rather not speculate on actions that might need to be taken if, after acceptance by the primates, our recommendations are not implemented. However, we note that there are, in any human dispute, courses that may be followed: processes of mediation and arbitration; non-invitation to relevant representative bodies and meetings; invitation, but to observer status only; and, as an absolute last resort, withdrawal from membership. We earnestly hope that one of these will prove necessary (Para. 157, p. 60).

### **Critical reflections**

In a report of this length from a group made up of diverse views it will not be surprising to find much with which one can agree as well as disagree. But as a *whole* the report is highly unsatisfactory and we hope to show why.

Earlier we mentioned that the basic premises with which the group has worked, as well as the parameters within which it operated, have to a greater or lesser extent determined the conclusions reached and consequently the

recommendations made. Let us unpack this further.

One major premise which is stated from the outset concerns the Commission's ecclesiology.<sup>1</sup> As is evident from the Commission's use of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the Anglican Communion in general and each province in particular is being viewed as a 'church'. In the case of the Anglican Communion it is stated that it is a 'communion of churches' (p. 12) and 'part of the Body of Christ' (p. 25). What is more, it is an 'organic body' (p. 14). Accordingly, the high theological language the Scripture uses when it speaks of the church together with all its associations, when applied to this international ecclesiastical structure inevitably draws from us the responses which the Scripture deem appropriate—maintaining unity, avoiding dissension, showing charity to one another and so on. Therefore, it is not surprising that the main concern of the Commission is with unity and procedures which will enhance and facilitate that unity. If, as the Commission states, all Anglicans are 'children of God' (p. 24) incorporated by baptism into 'the communion of the Body of Christ', then this adds further pressure to treat each other in a certain way which would not pertain if things were to be viewed differently. So given this outlook, even if a Bishop denies some of the basic tenets of the Christian faith and has a lifestyle incompatible with that faith, he is still to be thought of as a Christian rather than as an unbeliever. Acceptance of this immediately takes us a long way down the road of having to concede that certain practices are to be at least *considered* acceptable by some Christians, rather than raising the uncomfortable suspicion that such people may not, in fact, be Christians at all which would explain their behaviour.

What we have in this report is an example of 'theological inflation'. Concepts and ideas which are applied in the Bible in one context are taken and illegitimately applied in an entirely different context. The result is that certain views are given a high theological credence they should not have.

Of course *if* the Anglican Communion is part of the Body of Christ, and all that the apostle Paul says in Ephesians applies to the Anglican Communion to a large and specified degree, then disunity *is* a terrible thing and the most strenuous efforts must be made to offset that. Consequently, the tendency will be to focus on those parts of Scripture which deal with those issues to the neglect of other parts of Scripture which deal with other matters (such as fidelity to the truth). This is what the report in fact does. For example, in its

treatment of 1 and 2 Corinthians we read—

Whatever problems there are in the community—and Corinth had more than its fair share, from personality cults and social divisions to immorality and unbelief—Paul begins by addressing them as those who are, despite some outward appearances, already set apart by and for the love of God. This does not hold him back from administering severe discipline in the case of scandalous behaviour (ch. 5); but this too, as 2 Corinthians 2 indicates, is held within the larger context of pastoral and reconciling intent. At the climax of this letter, after dealing with all these problems, we find Paul's longest exposition of what it means to live as the Body of Christ, united in diversity (ch. 12), with that unity characterised not by a mechanistic or formal structure but by that all-demanding and all-fulfilling virtue which the early Christians called *agape*, love (ch. 13). As we Anglicans face very serious challenges to our unity and communion in Christ—challenges which have emerged not least because of different interpretations of that holiness to which we are called, and different interpretations of the range of appropriate diversity within our union and communion (p. 2).

But it is obvious from reading 1 Corinthians that Paul did not view the members of the church as being in Christ by virtue of their baptism, as do members of the Commission (1 Cor. 1:17), but by their being united to Christ after responding in faith to the apostolic Gospel (1 Cor. 1:1) as well as *maintaining* that clearly defined faith (1 Cor. 15:1ff).

But what if the Anglican Communion is *not* part of the Body of Christ and its provinces and dioceses are not churches? Then a massive paradigm shift occurs. Maintaining such unity will be seen as not being such a big deal from a spiritual standpoint. Then one can allow for a messier situation with parallel jurisdictions (which the report strongly speaks against). It enables different parts of the Communion to sit lightly with other parts and to work more closely with those who are of an orthodox frame of mind as well as those outside the Anglican fold. The disunity which is of such great a concern to the Commission then becomes no different from the tensions and fragmentations which can occur within a purely secular body like the United Nations. It may be distasteful and more than a little unhelpful in terms of function, but it is hardly disastrous to the Kingdom of God. We may prefer it to be more

harmonious but it has none of the connotations Paul speaks of when he talks about destroying the body of Christ as he does in 1 Corinthians 3.

We would argue that the ecclesiology of the Commission is fundamentally flawed and this in turn leads to flawed recommendations. The church of which the apostle Paul speaks as the Body of Christ is not a transworld denominational structure, it is a congregation. By definition, that is what the word ‘church’ (*ekklesia*) means. Without going into all the details, the biblical view is that a *gathering* of believers is church (as an event) which is **the** Body of Christ in that place at that time (1 Cor. 12:27) and is itself an expression of **the** heavenly Body of Christ, the church gathered around Christ’s throne (cf. Heb. 12:18ff; Col. 3:1). It is this heavenly invisible Church which is the one, holy, catholic, apostolic church of which each local church is a visible manifestation in space and time. This is where the organic nature of the unity of believers is to be displayed (1 Cor. 12).

This means that the *congregations* of faithful believers and their welfare become our primary concern. This is what the Nigerian bishops saw so clearly and why they felt they had to respond to the call of individual churches and groups of churches faithful to the gospel. What is a scandal is not that the Anglican Communion is dysfunctional in that its instruments of unity have not been used properly, it is that good Christian people, local congregations, are being abused by powerful non-church groupings (read ‘diocese and synods’) masquerading as churches. These are people who are being threatened with the confiscation of their property and the denial of biblical ministry. It is precisely the body of Christ understood in this sense, as a local congregation that the apostle Paul is concerned to jealously guard, such that to destroy this—God’s temple—is to run the risk of being destroyed oneself (1 Cor. 3:16). It is because the *local church* is the Body of Christ, witnessing to a watching world that the apostle Paul, unlike the Commission, focuses not upon proper procedures, but purity of practice and the need to watch out for deceivers *within* the church. We should note what he says in Ephesians 5:3, ‘But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality....No immoral, impure, or greedy man—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.’ The Commission not only allows us to be partners with such folk but insists upon it

for the sake of unity. It is therefore understandable that Bishop Gene Robinson being interviewed for the BBC “Sunday” programme in October, 2004 could say that the Anglican Communion has always put unity above heresy.

Interestingly enough, the Windsor report on several occasions quotes with approval the Lambeth quadrilateral which was originally made in 1888 and later modified in 1920 within the context of denominational reunion. It was Dr. D. B. Knox<sup>2</sup> who ably demonstrated its fundamental weaknesses which are simply repeated here. Knox remarks—

We have three great errors which underlie the Lambeth contribution to the ecumenical movement.

1. A mistake about the nature of the visibility of the church.
  2. A mistake about the nature of the unity of the church and in what it consists.
  3. A mistake in thinking episcopacy is the unifying principle of the church.
- ...a fourth great error...from which all the other errors flow is to mistake the nature of the church and, a consequence, to mistake the nature of the visibility of the church, and the nature of the oneness of the church. When the essential nature of the church is apprehended from Holy Scripture (*in the way we have briefly outlined*) the whole ecumenical movement will be seen to be wrongheaded and mostly irrelevant. (Italics mine.)

That judgement can also be applied in the case of the Windsor report.

In short, the Windsor Commission has made a fundamental category mistake, attributing to the Anglican Communion what can only rightly be attributed primarily to the local church and the heavenly church. If the commission saw the church as the New Testament sees it, then it would have concentrated its efforts on the root of the problem which is perverse belief issuing in perverse behaviour.

This leads us on to consider the parameters of the commission. As with the premises, which we have shown to be faulty, the commission has been consistent to some degree in following through their brief which is how the members of the Anglican Communion are to relate properly to each other. By excluding from their brief at the outset the theological and ethical considerations of those practices which *de facto* have given rise to the present crisis, namely, same-sex genital relations, the Commission (or at least those who



set it up) are guilty of a serious dereliction of duty. It is like a doctor who from the outset refuses to consider cancer to be the main cause of the symptoms being displayed in a chronically ill patient but who instead chooses to focus on management of the symptoms alone. Such a doctor would be hauled before the General Medical Council and disciplined. How much more serious a situation when, at least in the opinion of many, a spiritual cancer is not being considered?

It strains credulity to the limit to see how the Commission studiously avoids all biblical references to same-sex relations (as we have seen with the deliberate stepping over of 1 Cor. 6:9) and subtly engages in a theological softening up process by linking the present debate with other debates such as polygamy and the remarriage of divorced persons (p. 16) and the ordination of women to the priesthood; the implication being that since we have learned to live with these differences why not this one too? Here we have the opposite of what happened with the Commission's handling of the doctrine of the church, namely, theological *deflation*. Matters considered of primary importance in Scripture are minimized.

The way in which the authority of Scripture is treated is all part of the softening up process which appears to present a high view of Scripture with the one hand only to snatch it away with the other. Certainly it is the case that 'the purpose of Scripture is not simply to supply true information, nor just to prescribe in matters of belief and conduct, nor merely to act as a court of appeal...' but surely it is no *less* its purpose to do these things. If it pronounces negatively against same-sex genital relations then no amount of hermeneutical sleight of hand should be allowed to silence that. For all the Commission's talk about authority, it is the homosexual issue which exposes that this is the underlying problem which needs to be addressed as is highlighted by the present crisis.

This is an issue of biblical authority. Despite much well-intentioned theological fancy footwork to the contrary, it is difficult to see the Bible as expressing anything else but disapproval of homosexual activity. The only alternatives are to try to cleave to patterns of life and assumptions set out in the Bible, or to say that in this, as in much else the Bible is simply wrong.<sup>3</sup>

It is not enough to speak highly of Scripture; the Pharisees did and Jesus roundly condemned them because they failed to put it into practice by allowing the traditions of men to effectively silence the Word of God (cf. Mark 7).

If the members of the commission were to have followed Scripture rather than the traditions of Lambeth, they may have asked themselves the question, 'How, according to the New Testament, is fellowship (*koinonia*) expressed between churches?' And so the follow up question, 'How should we follow suit?' Had they done so they would have discovered at least two things.

First, there was the sending of apostolic delegates with a teaching role to ensure the maintenance of the spiritual health of the congregations (men like Timothy and Titus). What they were to teach was 'in accord with sound doctrine' (Titus 2:1). It could be argued that this was a means of facilitating contact between the networks of churches which were being established in relation to specific apostles: the Pauline churches, the Johannine churches, the Petrine churches and so on, whilst also recognising a certain degree of interdependence between them all. A parallel could be drawn with the way within the Anglican network or federation bishops could function. But it is to be noted that it is not the individuals like Timothy or Titus themselves or their association with Paul which gives them their authority, it is the teaching they bring. A major part of the problem facing the Anglican Communion is a refusal to deal with those who, when allowances have been made for *adiaphora* and inculturation, are allowed to teach things contrary to the apostolic tradition. Therefore, until the matter of discipline is willing to be faced, it would seem quite proper as a means of expressing fellowship within the Anglican network of churches for orthodox bishops from elsewhere to exercise oversight through teaching without having to seek the approval of the revisionist bishop's who by their teaching and example have forfeited their spiritual position. Also, given the need for pastor-teachers within congregations (Titus 1:5), it would be right and proper for such bishops, acting in concert with other bishops, to ensure that such ministry is provided for, where needed and where requested.

Secondly, fellowship was expressed through the giving of aid (Phil. 4:10ff; 2 Cor. 8 and 9). It would be highly appropriate therefore for individual churches or associations of churches to express fellowship in this way by giving money to those who, because of their orthodox stand, are suffering. This may include the offer of assistance for those churches which are under financial pressure because of the tyrannical actions of their revisionist bishops or those churches in Africa which have refused to receive aid from ECUSA as a mark of their break in fellowship.

Given that the Commission goes out of its way to acknowledge the ‘hurt’ and ‘strength of feeling’ that is around because of the present crisis, the degree of pastoral insensitivity displayed by the report is simply staggering. The Commission writes—

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of our current difficulties is the negative consequence it could have on the mission of the Church to a suffering and bewildered world. Even as the Commission prepared for its final meeting the cries of children in a school in southern Russia reminded us of our real witness and ministry in a world already confronted by poverty, violence, HIV/AIDS, famine and injustice (p. 6).

Think of the irony contained in that statement. Christians in Nigeria and Pakistan for example, are subject to the most appalling acts of violence committed against them by Muslims. Such anti-Christian sentiment is inflamed when statements are made and actions taken which promote homosexual practice. This places effective anti-Christian propaganda material right into the hands of their opponents. The ‘hurt’ caused here is physical and spiritual not merely emotional.

What is more, it is incontrovertible that homosexual men are at a significantly higher risk of HIV/AIDS as a result of their sexual activity. Therefore, not to address this is to add duplicity to hypocrisy. On the one hand, high sounding ‘concern’ statements are made about the needy world and yet by refusing to state categorically that immoral behaviour is a major contributory factor to that state of affairs is simply to make the situation worse. We would therefore, agree with the Commission when it says, ‘Perhaps the greatest tragedy of our current difficulties is the negative consequence it could have on the mission of the Church to a suffering and bewildered world’, but not in the way the Commission envisages.

However, insult is added to injury by the way the Commission presents the damage caused by the actions of the revisionists and the perceived ‘hurt’ caused by those who have transgressed ecclesiastical polity by offering Episcopal oversight to the alienated churches in ECUSA, as being of equal weight. Both parties are called upon to express their regret for the consequences of their actions, affirm their desire to remain in the Communion and effect a moratorium. But this is the logic of the faulty premise and the wrong parameters

with which the Commission began. The primary concern throughout is with order not with the substantial moral and doctrinal issues which precipitated the present crisis in the first place. Even if one were to follow the Commission's own deliberation on the question of what constitutes *adiaphora*—~~matters~~ of no consequence—surely the matter of irregular episcopal intervention would fall into this category, whereas it is the contention of the majority within the Anglican Communion that the matter of same-sex genital relations and appointing to leadership those who are in such relations is a matter of first order importance—a salvation issue according to 1 Corinthians 6 and Ephesians 4.

A consequence of this is the inappropriateness of the language used by the Commission. Whereas it may be appropriate to ask those who have been forced to intervene in another province to express 'regret' (in that it is regrettable that such action had to be taken at all, not that it was morally reprehensible), in the case of ECUSA and New Westminster, what is required is 'repentance'. Of course, if the primary problem is one of procedure (Para. 22, p. 16) the repentance language has no place but has to be replaced with weaker words such as 'regret'.

Even on its own terms it is difficult to see how the recommendations of the report will succeed, especially with its emphasis on the principle of reception, that through a process of theological debate, reflections and prayer a consensus of the faithful can be reached. There are two reasons to cast doubt upon the likely success of following this route.

First, there is a contradiction in the Commission's own understanding of the principle. As noted earlier, the writers state—

the doctrine of reception only makes sense if the proposals concern matters on which the Church has not so far made up its mind. It cannot be applied in the case of actions which are explicitly against the current teaching of the Anglican Communion as a whole, and/or of individual provinces.

Many would be of the view that the Church had made up its mind on this issue long ago and that the actions of the revisionists are explicitly against the current teaching of the Anglican Communion if, at the very least, Lambeth 1:10 is to be given any credence.

But, secondly, even if this were matter for further consideration, at what point is a decision made that it is *not* acceptable? Who will blow the final whistle and call the process to an end? One suspects that it will either simply be a matter of attrition until a revisionist minority changes the long held view of the majority or, as is more likely the case, some will go ahead and implement the revisionist agenda whilst others will withdraw from it and there will be a realignment within world-wide Anglicanism.

### Conclusion

If a patient is ill and the diagnosis proffered is incorrect then it is inevitable that the treatment will be ineffectual. Indeed, it may exacerbate the problem. The Windsor report fails at this most fundamental level of diagnosis. It is difficult to see how it can succeed with the provision of an unstable gentleman's agreement in the form of a covenant to enable the Anglican Communion to remain intact. One fears it will be little more than a piece of paper ensuring, 'peace in our time' and will eventually suffer the same fate as the Munich agreement. One also suspects that the time required to set up the structures suggested by the Commission will be of such a length that the Communion will be overtaken by events which will further escalate the crisis. It is also very doubtful that an appeal to the central role of the Archbishop of Canterbury will be of any value given that he holds views on homosexual practice which are at one with the revisionists and at odds with the majority of Anglicans which now lie in the South. A procedural rearrangement as being suggested by the report is woefully inadequate, a spiritual reformation, however, is absolutely vital.

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### ENDNOTES

1. See Melvin Tinker: "Towards and Evangelical View of the Church" in *Evangelical Concerns*, (Mentor, Christian Focus Publications, 2001), p. 223ff. Also, Melvin Tinker, "Reforming the Reformers: a Theological Response to 'The Anglican Understanding of the Church'," *Churchman* 116/2, p. 137ff (2002).
2. D. B. Knox, "Lambeth and Reunion," (*Churchman*, 1988, Vol. 102 p. 344ff).
3. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Reformation*, (London: Allen Lane, 2003), p. 705.

## Honouring Jesus Christ

Peter Adam

*The following article is an adapted version of a talk given at a colloquium held in Melbourne in July, 2004. The colloquium was chaired by Archbishop Peter Carnley of Perth, Primate of Australia, the author of a recent book denouncing Sydney Anglicans as 'Arian'. Also present at the colloquium was Kevin Giles, an author whose critique of Sydney Anglicans follows lines very similar to those employed by Archbishop Carnley. (Editor)*

### Theology as politics

Theology is often political, and this colloquium is as much politics as it is theology. Indeed, I suspect that politics predominates, and that it is both the driving force and the not-so-well-hidden agenda of the day. Sadly, we have become all too accustomed to a game frequently played by Anglicans of every school of thought. It can be summarized as: 'I am more Anglican than you are' or in a more extreme form: 'I am a true Anglican and you are not.' This colloquium, however, is playing for higher stakes than this. The game we are playing today is not: 'I am more Christian than you are' but: 'I am a Christian and you are not.' For to suggest that some past or present members of the Diocese of Sydney are Arian is to imply that they are not Christians at all.

In his recent book, *Reflections in Glass*,<sup>1</sup> Archbishop Peter Carnley of Perth described his own writings as representing 'discovery and learning and of ever-deepening communion together as we enter into the truth of Christ'.<sup>2</sup> Alas, this colloquium does not seem to me to be an example of 'ever-deepening communion'. It feels more like an attempt to drive even stronger divisions between the tectonic plates that form the Anglican Church of Australia. May I ask bluntly: is this appropriate behaviour for an archbishop or primate? Should not someone in the role of primate try to hold the church together? Is attacking people and their ideas a very good way to do this? Is this not divisive? To what purpose? To engage in public attacks of this kind looks very much like an attempt to pull the church apart.

In *Reflections in Glass*, Archbishop Carnley writes approvingly of Rowan Williams' warning that those who engage in building theological systems may

use their body of clear and distinct truth as a weapon of power to browbeat and bludgeon others.<sup>3</sup> Is this not a description of what is happening in this colloquium? Is this not what the Archbishop is doing in continuing this discussion? Is he not, in fact, using his position as Primate and his theological system as a way of bludgeoning others? It seems bizarre to attack other believers on details of their inner-Trinitarian doctrine, when the Archbishop himself holds the view that ‘God remains a mystery, beyond our understanding’.<sup>4</sup> If that is true, how is it possible to attack any particular view of the relationship between the Father and the Son? If our God is an unknown God, how is it possible to lay down the law about the internal relations of the Trinity? To be blunt, if God is a mystery, how can anyone be sure that Sydney is wrong?

Rowan Williams has written of the difficulty of formulating precise language about God: ‘We cannot say what God is in himself; all we have is the narrative of God with us.’<sup>5</sup> He explains why it is necessary to follow the *via negativa* in our quest for God: ‘It is ‘negative’... because [we are] obliged to be suspicious of its recurring temptation to theoretical resolution and conceptual neatness.’<sup>6</sup> I am not as pessimistic about the reality of the language we use about God as Rowan Williams is, because I believe that in the incarnation of Christ, God not only lived a human life but also spoke in human language, so that at least some of the words we use come from God and, as John Webster has recently pointed out, they are common earthly realities made ‘holy’ in order to achieve God’s revelatory purpose.<sup>7</sup> I imagine though that Archbishop Carnley would sympathize more closely with Rowan Williams on this point, and I would therefore ask him to heed Archbishop Williams’ warnings about the danger of ‘theoretical resolution and conceptual neatness’; at the very least, this must point to the conclusion that attacking others on the finer points of theological discourse is unwise.

I was particularly distressed to discover that Archbishop Carnley chose this occasion to launch an attack on the late T. C. Hammond, a figure of virtually iconic significance in the Diocese of Sydney. To ask whether Hammond was an Arian is to spread ill-will and resentment, without even trying. Maurice Wiles has shown us that the label ‘Arian’ has become a general term of abuse within the church, but if that is so, then we must be even more reluctant to use it of people with whom we disagree.<sup>8</sup> Attempts to construe modern debates in terms more appropriate to ancient enmities is misguided, and to describe a modern opponent

as an Arian is to use an ill-defined and general term of abuse which makes a mockery of the discipline of theology and is an insult to those being attacked.

This is particularly unfortunate, given that as recently as the year 2000, Archbishop Carnley wrote the following in a very helpful chapter on ‘Incarnation and the Humility of God’—

That is why the cross reveals the heart of God more fully than any other event in the life of Jesus, and why the cross is so central to the Christian tradition. At the end of the day, the cross is the clue to the right understanding of the incarnation. For this reason, the human limitations of Jesus are not to be seen as a curtailment of divinity, but as a positive expression of true divinity.<sup>9</sup>

If humility is indeed the expression of true divinity, then Archbishop Carnley develops his argument logically when he concludes: ‘The self-emptying [of the Son of God] did not obscure his divinity like the undercarriage of the aircraft in flight, but rather revealed the true divinity of the Father in the Son.’<sup>10</sup> If this is so, then the consequence is either that self-emptying constitutes divinity *tout court*, or that it is a particular feature of the divinity of the Son. The notion that self-emptying constitutes divinity may be true, but it is difficult to assert this without, at the same time, asserting other complementary truths about God. In that article, the Archbishop seems to assert that the eternal Word is perfectly expressed within his human limitations, which means that his humiliation was not a temporary stage in salvation history but the permanent content of his divinity. Is this not close to Arianism?

I believe that it was G. K. Chesterton, the staunch lay defender of catholic Christianity, who coined the phrase ‘Any stigma to beat a dogma’. Today we observe the reverse approach ‘Any dogma to create a stigma’. Archbishop Carnley’s attacks on Sydney Anglicans seem even more bizarre when we remember that as recently as July, 2002, he used the same theological assumption—that of a hierarchy within the Trinity—to assert the authority of bishops within the church.<sup>11</sup> I am told that he has since retracted that idea, but it is clear that he was teaching it publicly as recently as 2002. Was he then an Arian because of that? If not, why does he now use the term as a way of abusing others?



In his book on Arius, Rowan Williams refers to John Henry Newman's attempt to characterise the Protestants and Evangelicals as the Arians of the nineteenth century, on the ground that they demonstrated a narrow biblicism and a carnal, self-indulgent religion. Rowan Williams describes this historical reconstruction and misuse of Arius to discredit those whom he regarded as his opponents as 'built upon a foundation of complacent bigotry and historical fantasy'.<sup>12</sup>

I am forced to conclude that this colloquium does not honour Jesus Christ, the head and Saviour of the church. You may well feel that this criticism is an impertinence, but the days are long gone when a bishop could act without any accountability to the people of God, and so I must ask the Archbishop to reflect on the wisdom and appropriateness of his words and actions in this matter. Some of you may object that I should play the ball and not the man. But my comments are directed to the political significance of this event, which has been organized by the Primate of our church. Try as we may, we cannot ignore the significance of the Primate's role in our meeting today.

### Kevin Giles

It seems clear that Archbishop Carnley's remarks were based, at least to a significant extent, on similar attacks made against Sydney Anglicans by Kevin Giles.<sup>13</sup> Giles' basic claim is clear. It is that no 'subordination' of any kind will be found in the operations of the Triune God, except that in the incarnation the human Jesus is subordinate to the Father. In his view, this has always been the position of historical Christian orthodoxy, but that recently some conservative Evangelicals have fallen into heresy by straying from this doctrine. The discussion here is not what is objectively true about the Trinity, but rather about what the historic orthodox doctrine of the Trinity really is. Giles wants to exclude from it all of the following forms of subordinationism—

- a. Arian subordination, where the Son is begotten in time.
- b. Derivative subordination, where the Father is seen as pre-eminent as the *fons* or *principium* of a diminished Son and Spirit.
- c. Numerical subordination, where the concept of rank is seen to derive from the listed (and/or derived) order of father, Son and Spirit.
- d. Nineteenth and twentieth century subordinationism, which ranks the

persons according to being and function.

e. Operational subordinationism, which grounds the order of the persons in a temporary covenant or compact.

f. Eternal role subordinationism, in which the persons simply act as if they were ranked, but without any ontological underpinning.

There are three aspects of Giles' method which weaken his argument, which we shall deal with in turn.

1. It appears that Kevin Giles has devised a theory, and then read through some mainline theologians in an effort to find evidence which supports that view.

The problem with this method is that it may not do justice to these theologians, since they may also have expressed other views which complement the ones cited by Giles, and which also need to be taken into account. A theologian may well make clear statements about the absolute equality of the three persons of the Trinity, but he may also make other statements which make distinctions between the persons of the Trinity which imply or assert some kind of asymmetry. His intention is that both statements should be held in tension, and this must be respected.

This technique is by no means a recent one and can easily be found in the writings of some of the most classic representatives of historic orthodoxy. Let us look at Athanasius and Thomas Aquinas, both of whom demonstrate this tendency on numerous occasions. Of Athanasius, Alvyn Pettersen writes—

central to the understanding of the divine community...is the philosophical belief that the Son is 'second' to the Father, in the sense that the Father is the eternally uncaused cause and the Son is the eternally caused cause, or as Athanasius traditionally puts it, the Father is unbegotten and the Son is the only-begotten.<sup>14</sup>

Again, he quotes Athanasius: 'The Logos is related to God as radiance, thereby signifying both his being "from the essence", proper and indivisible, and his oneness with the Father.'<sup>15</sup> Pettersen comments: 'Not only is this image used to stress God's indivisible co-eternity, but also the Father and Son's asymmetrical distinction.'<sup>16</sup>

In his magisterial study of divine substance, Christopher Stead writes of how *homoousios* is used in Athanasius: ‘The analogy of human paternity, of father and son; the analogy of continuous natural processes, fountain and stream, source and ray of light, vine and branches; the analogy of two men; and the analogy of mind and word.’<sup>17</sup> Fountain and stream are one *ousia*, but this does not mean that together they constitute one reality. For Athanasius asserts: ‘Not just equal dignity, but shared or communicated substance’ although the Father initiates and the Son responds—not *vice versa*. Therefore, for Athanasius, there is both ‘asymmetry and distinctiveness of function’, so that ‘We cannot claim that there is any consistent suggestion of numerical identity in the strict sense’.<sup>18</sup>

Turning to Thomas Aquinas, we find the following on the asymmetrical relationship between the father and the Son: ‘So the Son has the same omnipotence as the Father, but with another relation, the Father possessing power as *giving* signified when we say that he is able to beget, while the Son possesses the power as *receiving*, signified that he can be begotten.’<sup>19</sup> Likewise in the twentieth century, Rowan Williams writes of ‘the *arche* of the Father, the ultimate source’.<sup>20</sup> Giles cites Karl Barth as an example of what he regards as the orthodox tradition of Trinitarian doctrine, and yet Barth clearly asserts asymmetry as well as equality:

We have not only not to deny, but actually to affirm and to understand as essential to the being of God, the offensive fact that there is in God Himself an above and a below, a *prius* and a *posterius*, a superiority and a subordination. And our present concern is with what is apparently the most offensive fact of all, that there is a below, a *posterius*, a subordination, that it belongs to the inner life of God that there should take place within it obedience. We have to reckon with such an event even in the being and life of God Himself... His divine unity consists in the fact that in Himself he is both the One who is obeyed and Another who obeys.<sup>21</sup>

Or again:

In His mode of being as the Son, He fulfils the divine subordination, just as the father in his mode of being as the Father, fulfils the divine superiority.<sup>22</sup>

Or again:

We have to draw no less an astounding deduction that in equal Godhead the one God is, in fact, the One and also Another, that He is indeed a First and a Second, One who rules and commands in majesty, and One who obeys in humility. The one God is both one and the other.<sup>23</sup>

How does this relate to Giles' summary of Barth: 'In this Christocentric Trinitarianism, subordination in the end is excluded absolutely by Barth. The Son reveals the Father.'<sup>24</sup> Obviously it does not, and Giles, it seems clear, has misunderstood Barth. He thinks that Barth held his own view and repudiated the view of his opponents. He understands Barth to be a defender of that interpretation of what historic orthodoxy is, which he claims is the only correct one. In fact, Barth held the view which Giles is now trying to marginalise, for Barth managed to combine both the equality of the persons of the Trinity and their asymmetry, a sophisticated and subtle theological position which Giles seems to be quite unable to grasp.

Ivan Head comments that Karl Barth provides a statement of fundamental importance for this vocabulary in Church dogmatics IV, 1: 'The way of the Son of God into the far country,' p. 209. He writes—

The one who in this obedience is the perfect image of the ruling God is himself—as distinct from every human and creaturely kind—God by nature, God in his relationship to himself, i.e., God in his mode of being as the Son in relation to his mode of being as the Father, one with the Father and of one essence. *In his mode of being as the Son he fulfils the divine subordination, just as the Father in his mode of being fulfils the divine superiority.*<sup>25</sup>

'I assert that this quoted passage...show[s] that the vocabulary of superiority and subordination is a legitimate part of a major modern theology of the Triune God—indeed, in one of the theological giants of the twentieth century. The use of this vocabulary by Karl Barth should cause a hesitation in any hand poised over the heresy button. It is clear that for Barth there is a precise use of these terms that does not run into the waiting arms of Arius, but on the contrary, is required to fully express the better and orthodox doctrine of God.'<sup>26</sup>

Barth's theology is more subtle than Giles imagines. He certainly rejects a false

notion of subordination, describing it fully in *Church Dogmatics*, IV, 1, p. 196, but shortly afterwards he affirms his own form of eternal subordinationism, which he describes as follows—

The second idea we have to abandon is that...there is necessarily something unworthy of God and incompatible with His being as God in supposing that there is in God a first and a second, an above and a below, since this includes a gradation, a degradation and an inferiority in God, which if conceded excludes the *homoousia* of the different modes of divine being...Does subordination in God necessarily involve an inferiority, and therefore a deprivation, a lack? Why not rather a particular being in the glory of the one equal Godhead, in whose inner order there is also, in fact, this dimension, the direction downwards, which has its own dignity?<sup>27</sup>

Colin Gunton comments—

In Barth's way of putting it, there is in God both superordination and subordination, both command and obedience. It is in his very difference from God the Father that God the Son is divine—God in a distinct way of being God.<sup>28</sup>

It is not just that Kevin Giles has missed vital evidence within the writings of those whom he quotes as supporting his view. I suspect that he has done this because he does not think that it is possible to combine belief in the equality of the persons of the Trinity with their asymmetry. But this subtle tension is well represented in Trinitarian theology, and it is unfair to exclude those who espouse it.

2. Kevin Giles appears to have a habit of misquoting and misreading those quotations from his sources which he makes use of.

In another quotation, Giles makes a number of mistakes, with the result that Barth's original meaning is the exact opposite of what Giles asserts. As Giles quotes it, it reads—

We have to draw no less an astounding deduction that in equal Godhead the one God is, in fact, the One and also Another, that he is indeed a First

and a Second. One who rules and commands in majesty and the one who obeys in humility. The one God is both...in perfect unity and equality.

But the original passage actually reads—

Therefore we have to draw the no less astounding deduction that in equal Godhead the one God is, in fact, the One and also Another, that He is indeed a First and a Second, One who rules and commands in majesty and One who obeys in humility.<sup>29</sup>

In this quotation, Giles has put ‘he’ instead of ‘He’, and the last sentence is misleading because he makes the phrase: ‘in perfect unity and equality’ refer to the Father and Son, whereas Barth’s reference is to the equality of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, in this quotation, Barth is actually supporting the notion of an asymmetrical relationship—God the Father, who rules and commands in majesty, and God the Son, who obeys in humility. Giles comments that here Barth is asserting a ‘subordination in God’ and not ‘the subordination of the Son’, when in fact, and contrary to Giles’ statement, he is doing both.<sup>30</sup>

Again, Giles claims that Barth believes that any idea of subordination occurs only within ‘the forecourt of the divine being’. But a few pages later on, Barth clearly refers to ‘One who rules and commands in majesty and the one who obeys in humility’.<sup>31</sup> Or again ‘That is the true deity of Jesus Christ, obedient in humility, in its unity and equality, its *homoousia*, with the deity of the One who sent Him and to whom He is obedient’.<sup>32</sup> Or again ‘In His mode of being as the Son He fulfils the divine subordination, just as the Father in His mode of being as the Father fulfils the divine superiority’.<sup>33</sup> So I think it is fair to say that Giles has missed some vital evidence in the sources which he has quoted and used.

3. Kevin Giles has slanted the evidence he cites in order to give a misleading impression of the isolated position of his opponents, and of the extent to which they are and should be marginalised.

Giles seems to want to give the impression that the view which he abhors is only held by a small fringe minority of conservative Evangelicals, and that it is not found anywhere in mainline orthodox Christianity. But in actual fact, he