

Lectures in Contemporary Anglicanism

George Whitefield College, Cape Town, May 2014

Credo: Shadow and Substance in Contemporary Anglicanism

'They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace.'
Jeremiah 8:11

Lecture 1

1. Introduction

I am very grateful to your Principal, Dr Mark Dickson for the opportunity to deliver these three lectures on Contemporary Anglicanism and it is a great pleasure to return to George Whitfield College again. The Anglican Communion is undergoing a fundamental realignment and I believe that this college has a vital role to play in resourcing those who are becoming aware of the need for theological depth as global Anglicanism recovers its confessional roots in the theology of the Reformers. Since the 1998 Lambeth Conference of bishops, which I shall enlarge upon shortly, the Anglican Communion has been in crisis and there are some who argue that what they call 'the Anglican experiment' of Cranmer and the reformers has failed. I do not believe this. In fact I think we are seeing the very reverse; a crisis which will prove the resilience of Cranmer's vision and the dynamic of a communion submitted to the Scriptures free from the political and cultural imperatives of the English state. I realise that not all of you here today are Anglicans, so thank you for turning up anyway and remember that Anglicans do not have a monopoly on sinful compromise, complacency and false teaching. I hope that you will profit in your own contexts.

When I refer in the title of these lectures to the 'credo', the 'I believe', I am not elevating the creeds above the Scriptures. This is simply a way of saying say that Christian faith is inherently and necessarily a confession, rather than a mere collection of propositions or a statement of the current consensus. These are revealed truths on which I stake my life, here and for eternity, and this simple insight provides a way of exposing what I believe is the illusion of Canterbury's 'middle way' response to the false gospel which has become increasingly entrenched following the Lambeth Conference of 1998.

It has to be admitted of course that the Church of England and the Anglican Communion have always been marked by conflict to a greater or lesser extent, but the battle we see today is of a different order. Over the past thirty years or so, the homosexual agenda has been the point of leverage for a profound change in Western culture that in my view has been the final tipping point

from a Christian to a post-Christian culture and these changes have powerfully shaped the Anglican Churches of the West which have, in their different ways, been accustomed to articulating a mainstream morality.

The Lambeth Conference of 1998 marks the point at which those secularising pressures were decisively manifested and this is where my analysis of contemporary Anglicanism begins. The story of the Anglican Communion since then can only be understood if we recognise it as the relentless effort of revisionists to undermine the collegial mind of the Communion, expressed by the overwhelming majority of its bishops at the Lambeth Conference of 1998. They reaffirmed the biblical understanding of sexuality positively and negatively, affirming that the Conference 'upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage' and also 'rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture'.¹ At stake here was not just an aspect of sexual ethics, but also primary questions of the authority of Scripture and human identity. But rather than settling the issue, Lambeth 1998 simply became the trigger for sustained conflict. With the consecration of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire in 2003, a man in an openly homosexual relationship, the Episcopal Church of the United States, to use an oft-repeated phrase, tore the fabric of the communion at its deepest level.

Lamentable though this action was, it stung orthodox leaders into action. The emergence of this radical revisionism has become the catalyst for a recovery of confessing Anglicanism which takes us back to our Reformation title deeds. As a movement, it took shape following the first Global Anglican Future Conference of 2008 held in Jerusalem. The conference formed a Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans and gave recognition to the Anglican Church in North America as an orthodox Province rather than The Episcopal Church of the United States (TEC) and the Anglican Church of Canada (ACoC), both of which had decisively rejected the authority of Scripture and historic biblical teaching about sexual morality. In practice GAFCON has become an alternative way of drawing together a world wide Anglican community on confessional rather than ecclesial grounds. As a result, Anglican ecclesiology now has to be considered with a seriousness unprecedented for some four hundred years and it is becoming possible to think about being Anglican in a much more radical and interesting way than bland 'best boat to fish from' pragmatism.

My personal story has been closely bound up with these momentous events. What you will hear from me is not just the product of academic study. The church of which I was incumbent in England was the first after the Lambeth 1998 Conference to act on the biblical principle that fellowship cannot be continued with leaders who persistently and publicly contradict core truths of Christian

¹ Lambeth Resolution 1.10 (d) <http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1998/1998-1-10.cfm>

doctrine and morality. In February 1999, my diocesan bishop likened the Lambeth Conference to a Nazi Nuremberg rally and claimed that those bishops who had affirmed the historic biblical understanding of sexuality were a manifestation of the demonic powers and principalities of Ephesians 6:12.

After a period of prayer and reflection, my Church Council declared that it could not receive the ministry of the bishop. The result was that after some two years, I lost the parish church, the vicarage and my stipend. I did not however lose the congregation. We met in schools and community centres and the church is now part of the Anglican Mission in England (AMiE), a body sponsored by the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) Primates which allows orthodox Anglicans in England to remain in the Anglican Communion even when for pressing reasons of conscience or mission they are forced to operate outside the formal structures of the Church of England.

The point of this brief personal history is so that you know what I am going to present is not theological reflection abstracted from the world of ministry, but flows out of life decisions my wife and I have made. Some have been costly, but we have seen the Lord's gracious blessing and protection, not least in bringing us to Africa where I serve as the Archbishop of Kenya's Officer for Anglican Communion Affairs and Theological Adviser. He is also Chairman of the GAFCON Primates Council, so the issues I once had to deal with on the micro level of a parish, I am now involved with on the macro level of a global realignment.

So taking the Lambeth Conference of 1998 as my starting point, the aim of these three lectures will be to survey the contours of two very different Anglican ecclesiologies as they have emerged out of this recent history. One is what I think we can most accurately describe as conversational ecclesiology; the other is the recovery of a confessional ecclesiology.

Confessing or Conversing?

To describe an ecclesiology as 'conversational' may seem to be prejudging it as insubstantial and even as a parody, but terms like 'conversation' and dialogue are frequently on the lips of apologists for the new 'middle way'. Indeed, those Primates who attended the last Primates Meeting to be chaired by an Archbishop of Canterbury in 2011 described themselves in their 'Statement of Purpose' as 'passionate about conversation'² This is a short hand for the belief that truth emerges out of the 'community of faith' in a constant process of dialogue with Scripture, the culture and one

² Dublin Primates 'Statement of Purpose'

http://www.aco.org/communion/primates/resources/downloads/prim_scpurpose.pdf

another. The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, has been the most interesting and sophisticated exponent of this view and we shall we take a close look at his work.

Inevitably, conversation with itself means that converting conversation with the world takes second place in the Church's life and in any case the message inevitably becomes confused because the church is debating its own proclamation. In contrast, a Church with a confessing ecclesiology should be by definition be a witnessing Church. Confessing ecclesiology is firmly anchored in biblical revelation and has for many a conscious echo of the Confessing Church of 1930's Germany so helpfully illuminated by Eric Metaxas' recent biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.³ Its basic expression in contemporary Anglicanism can be found in the GAFCON Jerusalem Statement and Declaration of 2008. Much work remains to be done on fleshing it out. These lectures are offered as a modest ground clearing contribution to that project, but the work of rebuilding must be based on an accurate understanding of what has gone wrong so that the mistakes of the past are not repeated or simply glossed over. Much of these lectures will therefore be concerned with essential clarifications that emerge from the diagnostic task of Anglican pathology. The words of the prophet Jeremiah speak as powerfully to our time as they did to the people of Jerusalem 2,600 years ago. 'They have healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace.' (Jer 8:11).

As we have already noted, the trigger for the current crisis was the aggressive revisionism of The Episcopal Church of the United States and the Anglican Church of Canada, but I do not believe they represent the main danger, practically or theologically. Their lamentable decline from orthodox Christianity has been well documented by others, but to remind you of the scale of the catastrophe, let me quote from Archbishop Robert Duncan of the Anglican Church in North America in a sermon preached at the enthronement of the current Archbishop of Uganda, Stanley Ntagli, in December 2012. Speaking of his own consecration as Bishop of Pittsburgh in 1996 he said,

'The Episcopal Church of the United States was in great danger, we all knew that, but what was to happen we could not have imagined. Standing and leading would cost friends and relationships, would see my diocese and four others separate themselves from our once great Church, would bring me the pain of a purported defrocking, along with over a thousand other bishops and clergy. None of this could have been imagined.'⁴

³ Eric Metaxas Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy, Thomas Nelson (2011)

⁴ http://www.anglicanchurch.net/media/Enthronement_Sermon_12.16_.12_.pdf

According to America canon lawyer Allan Haley, TEC alone has spent nearly⁵ US\$ 22 million on its scorched earth litigation policy and he estimates that this figure will rise to over US\$40 million by the end of 2015.

Appalling though this is, even more serious because of its insidious nature has been the way in which the institutions of the Anglican Communion, the four so-called 'Instruments of Communion'⁶, have reacted to the crisis by trying to claim a supposed middle ground. The 'conversational ecclesiology' I have briefly introduced you to is ideally suited to this strategy. It creates a role for the Archbishop of Canterbury as the reconciler who draws participants in the conversation together around a middle way that he personally represents. He is himself an 'Instrument of Communion' in virtue of his office and presides over the three others, namely, the Lambeth Conference of Bishops first held in 1867 and then the more recent inventions of the Anglican Consultative Council (1969) and the Primates Meeting (1978). The Anglican Communion Office in London, led by a General Secretary, Canon Kenneth Kearon, coordinates the work of these bodies.

Despite the fact that two of the four are very recent inventions, the association with Canterbury and the Church of England as the Mother See lends them an air of hallowed history. In comparison to the radically revisionist churches of North America with their incoherent combination of very liberal theology and a fundamentalist approach to canon law, used as a weapon against the orthodox, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Instruments of Communion present themselves as an expression of the classic Anglican 'via media' between hard line traditionalists on the one hand and those close to jettisoning historic Christianity on the other. A recent example comes from a sermon preached by Archbishop Justin Welby in Mexico last August in which he likened the Anglican Communion to

'a drunk man walking near the edge of a cliff....ever nearer to the edge of the precipice.... on one side is the steep fall into an absence of any core beliefs, a chasm where we lose touch with God, and thus we rely only on ourselves and our own message. On the other side there is a vast fall into a ravine of intolerance and cruel exclusion. It is for those who claim all truth, and exclude any who question.'⁷

⁵ <http://anglicanink.com/article/40-million-legal-expenses-episcopal-church>. Grand total, 2000-2012: US\$ 21,858,714

⁶ They were only formally recognised as such in the Virginia Report of 1988.

⁷ <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5124/walk-in-the-light-with-each-other-archbishop-justins-sermon-in-mexico>

Our suspicions should be alerted of course by the highly coloured language and I shall argue that this 'via media' conversational ecclesiology is actually the embodiment of a shadow gospel. Its energy is not derived from the Lordship of Christ and obedience to the Great Commission, but from a corporatist⁸ commitment to maintaining power and influence for which institutional unity and a dominant narrative are essential. In contrast, the Confessing ecclesiology of the GAFCON movement is a commitment to recover the substance of the gospel not merely as one interpretation among others, but also as that which actively reshapes Anglican Communion structures because of the disastrous breakdown of Communion discipline and identity since 1998.

To sum up, the model I am working with is not to see TEC and the ACoC as the villains and GAFCON and Canterbury as two alternative orthodox responses, but those two radically liberal Churches as a catalyst for the emergence of two competing ecclesiologies, on the one hand, GAFCON as a confessing movement which returns us to the substance of Anglican belief and, on the other hand, Canterbury as a corporatist reaction. While the mode of its ecclesiology is conversational, its underlying nature is a corporatist preoccupation with its own institutional survival which has conditioned a version of Anglican belief that is a mere shadow of the reality. The future is a choice between the confessing substance and corporatist shadow...and shadows by their nature do not last.

The 1998 Lambeth Conference and its aftermath

So let us now turn to look more closely at the Lambeth Conference of 1998 that set the pattern for the events that have unfolded subsequently. On Thursday 6th August that year, the London Times carried the front page headline 'Liberal bishops routed in vote on homosexuals' and the figures did seem convincing – 526 in favour, 70 against and 45 abstentions. But achieving a majority for Resolution 1.10 was one thing; making it stick would be quite another. Constitutionally speaking, as some were quick to point out, the resolutions of the Lambeth Conference do not have any legal status and now a concerted effort was made to dilute the moral force of the resolution. I want now to look closely at what happened in the weeks following because there has been a remarkable consistency ever since in the corporatist response of the Canterbury based Instruments of Communion. Here the detail helps us to understand the broader narrative.

⁸ By corporatist, I mean an ideology where the primary concern is for the corporation itself and all other obligations and values are bent to this end.

The beginnings of this process are evident when the commentary in the Official Report on Section 1 is compared to the Resolution 1.10 itself.⁹ In clause (d) homosexual practice is described as ‘incompatible with Scripture’, but the Official Report entitled ‘Human Sexuality’¹⁰ fails to mention this key phrase and merely observes ‘It appears that a majority of bishops is not prepared to bless same sex unions or to ordain active homosexuals’ and then states ‘We have prayed, studied and discussed these issues, and we are unable to come to a common mind on the Scriptural, theological, historical and scientific questions that are raised. There is much we do not yet understand’. While it was obviously the case that there was not total unanimity, 81% of the bishops present voted in favour of Resolution 1.10 and such a majority would normally I think be taken as a pretty good indicator of a ‘common mind’.

Resolution 1.10 is then quoted where a request is made to the Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council to ‘establish a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality’ (clause f).

⁹ The full text is as follows:

This Conference:

- a. Commends to the Church the subsection report on human sexuality;
- b. in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage;
- c. recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ;
- d. while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex;
- e. cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions;
- f. requests the Primates and the ACC to establish a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality in the Communion and to share statements and resources among us;
- g. notes the significance of the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality and the concerns expressed in resolutions IV.26, V.1, V.10, V.23 and V.35 on the authority of Scripture in matters of marriage and sexuality and asks the Primates and the ACC to include them in their monitoring process.

see <http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1998/1998-1-10.cfm>

¹⁰ The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998, Called to Full Humanity, Section 1 Report, p17.

Coupled with the commitment to ‘listen to the experience of homosexual persons’ (clause c) an officially recognised space was created to keep the question of legitimising homosexual practice open. This was to be fully exploited by the American Church with encouragement from Canterbury and the Anglican Communion Office.

Even before the Lambeth Conference had finished the ground was being prepared for a liberal fight back with the publication of a Pastoral Statement to Lesbian and Gay Anglicans,¹¹ drafted by Rowan Williams, then Bishop of Monmouth,¹² which played on the ‘listening’ theme. While stating that not all the signatories were persuaded about the rightness of homosexual practice, it apologised that ‘it has not been possible to hear adequately your voices’ and pledged ‘We must not stop where this Conference has left off’.¹³

Then on August 30th 1998, just three weeks after the Conference, Archbishop George Carey travelled to the United States on a fund raising tour to promote the recently formed Anglican Communion Fund¹⁴ [aka Compass Rose?] and joined with ECUSA’s Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold in conducting a service of Holy Communion in Greenwich, Connecticut. Among the congregation were fifty gay activists, many of them drawn from ‘Integrity’¹⁵ that styled itself as ‘the leading grassroots voice for the full inclusion of LGBT persons in the Episcopal Church and our equal access to its rites’.¹⁶ Griswold had already made it quite clear in a “A letter to the Episcopal Church” of August 14, 1998 where he wanted the debate to go, writing: ‘It is my hope and prayer that the Lambeth Resolution commitment “to listen to the experience

¹¹ http://www.archive.changingattitude.org/lambeth_conf_pastoral_statement.html

¹² Giles Fraser refers to Williams as the writer in the context of the Jeffrey John affair: ‘Back in 1998, as bishops from around the world met at the Lambeth Conference and voted through a condemnation of gay sex as incompatible with Scripture, Dr Williams – who abstained from the vote – wrote an open letter to gay Christians promising to work for their full inclusion in the life of the Church. It was a promise he would fail to keep’. From the foreword to ‘Against Innocence: Gillian Rose’s Reception and Gift of Faith’ Andrew Shanks SCM 2008 p x

¹³ By the end of October 1998 the letter had attracted the signatures of 182 bishops, including that of Rowan Williams as Bishop of Monmouth.

¹⁴ This fund was formed in 1997 and as an American charity and its full title is ‘The Friends of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Anglican Communion Fund, Inc’ and is referred to as ‘his Anglican Communion Fund’ on the Archbishop of Canterbury’s official website <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/106>. Between 1997 and 2008 it made total grants of over £1.6m <http://www.abcfriends.org/>

¹⁵ Among them was the founder of Integrity, Louie Crew, who Rowan Williams was to later honour by inviting him and his male partner to his enthronement as Archbishop of Canterbury.

¹⁶ <http://www.integrityusa.org/WhatIsIntegrity/index.htm>

of homosexual persons” will lead to a broader conversation which will more fully reveal God’s lived word of grace at work in the lives of gay and lesbian Anglican Christians.’¹⁷

In his sermon, Carey restated his personal commitment to orthodox sexual morality, but went on to give the gay activists in his audience hope that Resolution 1.10 could be changed, reassuring them ‘that the resolution from Lambeth calls upon all to listen to one another and I am committed to that, for my experience tells me that in giving hospitality to the ‘stranger’ we may be entertaining angels unknowingly.’¹⁸ Astonishingly, Carey was now colluding with a strategy to neutralise a position he had courageously defended at the Lambeth Conference just three weeks earlier.

On 10th September, Carey followed up the Greenwich service with a letter to Louie Crew, the Episcopal Church’s leading gay activist, which is worth quoting in full:

I was glad that you and others representing Integrity were able to be present at Christchurch Greenwich earlier in the month during my visit. I was grateful to you all for your gentleness! I was sorry that I didn't have the opportunity of a personal conversation with you, but I do want you to know I am committed to dialogue with gay people, and I have already had a discussion with the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church about how we can ensure that the Lambeth Conference resolution is pursued in this respect.

I have tried to write to each of those people whose letters were handed to me at Christchurch, recognizing the pain which they are feeling and inviting them to recognize the positive elements of the resolution. I hope that you will recognize that what I said in my sermon at Christchurch is what I believe. It is perfectly possible for us to have a wide range of views on this subject, as on any, but that does not require us to go our own way, denying so much which we hold in common in other areas. To be truly the Church, we must stay together and wrestle with the issues over which we disagree. In the process, pain is likely to be experienced by us all. Each one of us is challenged by new insights and new experiences to confront deeply held beliefs and test them, and that is painful. I am sure, however, that out of the apparent confusion will eventually come a fresh sense of unity as we allow the Holy Spirit to work amongst us.

¹⁷ <http://www.lambethconference.org/1998/news/acns1763.cfm>

¹⁸ <http://arc.episcopalchurch.org/episcopal-life/SexReact.html>

I hope there will be a moment at some time in the future when we shall be able to meet and talk about these issues which are so important to us both. In the meantime, let me say again how much I appreciated your presence in Greenwich and may God bless and strengthen you.¹⁹

This letter is highly significant for four reasons:

Firstly, it shows beyond any shadow of doubt that the 'listening' commitment of the Lambeth Resolution had now been wrenched right out of its original context. The commitment to listen to those with a homosexual orientation who were nonetheless struggling to be faithful to the teaching of Scripture had now been completely eclipsed by the need to listen to those actually engaged in homosexual practice.

Secondly, the warm tone of the letter and the insistence that 'It is perfectly possible for us to have a wide range of views on this subject, as on any, but that does not require us to go our own way', renders discipline inappropriate. It is a tacit admission that what the Lambeth Resolution really meant was by 'incompatible with Scripture' was 'incompatible with how a majority of bishops currently read Scripture in their contexts'!

Thirdly, the implication that Scripture is not clear or not authoritative is reinforced by the fact that Carey's hope for unity is found not in an appeal to Scripture but to the work of the Holy Spirit. He writes 'I am sure, however, that out of the apparent confusion will eventually come a fresh sense of unity as we allow the Holy Spirit to work amongst us.' This is very dangerous ground because the revisionists set the Holy Spirit above and even against Scripture. In the previous year, Griswold gave an interview in which he frankly admitted that 'Broadly speaking, the Episcopal Church is in conflict with Scripture. The only way to justify it is to say, well, Jesus talks about the Spirit guiding the church and guiding believers and bringing to their awareness things they cannot deal with yet. So one would have to say that the mind of Christ operative in the church over time . . . has led the church to in effect contradict the words of the Gospel.'²⁰

Fourthly, homosexual practice is implicitly shifted from the category of sin to adiaphora. It is only possible to express confidence in the work of the Spirit to bring unity if we believe that the Spirit is at work in all concerned. But he is addressing people who are involved in lifestyles which he must have known would be regarded as sinful and therefore grieving the Holy Spirit by the overwhelming majority of Anglican Communion bishops. This impression is reinforced by the fact that there is no evidence of

¹⁹ <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/lambeth98/lambeth102.html>

²⁰ <http://www.touchstonemag.com/archives/article.php?id=11-05-006-e>

any trace of doubt in Carey's mind about whether or not it was appropriate for Louie Crew, as someone openly in a same sex union, to receive Holy Communion.²¹

On 19th September 1999, Carey formally initiated the 'listening process' with a meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) in Dundee, but one Anglican Primate had already seen the dangers. Moses Tay, then Bishop of Singapore and Archbishop of South East Asia courageously boycotted the meeting because he feared for the consequences of this process for the Anglican Communion. In an impassioned letter to Carey in early September, he set out the position of his province, that 'At our recent House of Bishops Meeting, we reaffirmed our position on Biblical Authority and Morality, adding that 'those who have gone against the Lambeth position on Biblical Authority and Morality are deemed to have departed from the faith'. He then challenged the shallowness of the listening project reminding Carey of 'the patronizing and racist statements boldly made against African and Asian bishops' and 'the horrendous and heretical statements made by those who conveniently hide behind the bankrupt pleading of a different interpretation of Scripture. 2 Peter 3: 15 -16²² is still spot on today.'²³

Despite this challenge, and the warning of patronising Global South bishops, Carey told the press after the Dundee meeting that it had initiated 'a conversation where we will look at how we understand the Bible and hear what homosexuals are saying. There will be no time limit, it may take many years. We need to get the African bishops and their churches to discuss this and not be fearful of the issue.'²⁴

This script has not changed in essentials over the past sixteen years. In fact the current Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, who, like Carey, has an evangelical background, repeats it faithfully when he urges us to find what he calls 'good disagreement'. At his first press conference in November 2012 he said "I need to listen very attentively to the LGBT communities, and examine my own thinking prayerfully and carefully. I am always averse to the language of exclusion, when what we are called to is to love in the same way as Jesus Christ loves us."²⁵ Earlier in the year, while still Bishop of Durham he paid a visit to the TEC House of Bishops in Camp Allen, Navasota, Texas and in sentiments that echoed those of Carey, he observed "Reconciliation within the Communion is a huge challenge and

²¹ Crew describes himself as 'married' to his male partner since 1974. <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/index.html>

²² ¹⁵Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him¹⁶He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

²³ Letter reproduced in 'Born for Blessings: An Autobiography of Moses Tay', Genesis Books, 2009 p195

²⁴ Daily Telegraph, London, September 25, 1999, Victoria Combe.

²⁵ <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/5003/bishop-justin-welbys-opening-statement>

comes for all of us with working as you are, with grace, through Indaba, through generosity of spirit and above all with long suffering and patience. Being here reminded me again that we in England and elsewhere need to find a better way of doing things in how we disagree. I am well aware that you too have had very rough passages, some of which continue. But I think you are a little ahead of us".²⁶ Needless to say, this is not a picture of TEC that the ACNA and many Global South Anglicans would be able to recognize.

That Justin Welby was able to speak in these terms even before he became Archbishop of Canterbury tells us something about the way that a corporatist ecclesiology had become ingrained in the Church of England and, by extension, in the Instruments of Communion. It is important to recognise that although this may look like managerial pragmatism (and I believe that is what it ultimately is) the intervening years under the ministry of Rowan Williams as Archbishop of Canterbury were very significant.

Williams was able to bring a theological sophistication to the corporatist strategy, but, ironically, it was during his tenure of office that the corporatist model broke down, most notably with the absence of over 200 Global South bishops and Primates from the Lambeth Conference of 2008, the subsequent withdrawal of many Global South Primates from the Dublin Primates Meeting of 2011 and the failure of the Windsor Covenant project which was rejected even by the Church of England itself in March 2012. The credibility of the Instruments of Communion has been much diminished and the GAFCON movement is emerging as a new instrument of unity which restores the primacy of Scripture.

The paradox of theoretical sophistication and practical failure under Williams' leadership was not, I shall argue, simply a matter of organisational incompetence. It was due to a fundamental flaw in the ecclesiological model. This is important because Justin Welby is working with the same model, but as a former oil executive rather than an academic may well believe he has the ability to succeed where Williams failed. If the analysis of these lectures is correct, he cannot succeed – or if he does, the Anglican Communion will have repudiated its historic and biblical identity and condemned itself to decades of denial and slow death. So we need now to explore the theology of Rowan Williams and the legacy it has left.

The Significance of Rowan Williams

I have already written a study of the theology of Rowan Williams which I entitled 'Shadow Gospel'²⁷ because it seems to me to be something which bears a strong resemblance to the real gospel, yet

²⁶ http://www.virtueonline.org/portal/modules/news/article.php?storyid=16779#.UXK_a7WG2wA

²⁷ Charles F Raven *Shadow Gospel: Rowan Williams and the Anglican Communion Crisis* Latimer Trust 2010

on investigation is found to be a shadow, defined by Samuel Johnson in his great dictionary of the English language as ‘an imperfect and faint representation; opposed to substance’. This brings out both the subtlety and the seriousness of what we are dealing with – it is something which looks like the gospel, but is actually opposed to it. That is quite a large claim, but I believe it has a certain explanatory power and it is not crudely ad hominem because the theology of Dr Williams does not exist in a vacuum. His thought articulates and gives credence to the mind-set that pervades the London based institutions of the Communion, not to mention much of the Church of England’s hierarchy.

Dr Williams was at the heart of these institutions for ten years. By virtue of his office he was himself an ‘instrument of unity’ and had a decisive role in the other three. He is also a resourceful theologian whose prodigious output gave theological plausibility to the overriding pursuit of institutional unity. That avoidance of closure which we might otherwise dismiss as the prevarication of the academically minded or, less kindly, as mere opportunism, is for Dr Williams the expression of a sophisticated theology. Moreover, what makes him particularly interesting from a diagnostic point of view is that his need to live with contradiction is a personal as well as institutional necessity. It seems clear that in 2002 his record as a leading advocate of the gay lesbian agenda helped to make him the favoured candidate for Archbishop of Canterbury with the London metropolitan establishment, yet this risked alienating not only the orthodox in England, but also Anglicanism’s numerical centre of gravity in the Global South.

The new Archbishop responded by internalising this tension. He committed himself to recognising Anglican teaching on sexuality as set out in Lambeth Resolution 1.10 in his official capacity, while in a personal capacity he refused to renounce his opposition to that teaching. So at the most senior level of leadership in the Communion there was established what one of Dr Williams’ liberal critics has called a form of ‘false consciousness’²⁸ in which institutional necessity overrides personal conviction. This splitting of theological personality degrades biblical truth because it is a precedent for treating the Church’s teaching like mere house rules, maintained not because they are intrinsically true, but for the sake of some extrinsic reason such as custom or mere institutional necessity.²⁹

If the problem with Rowan Williams had been simply a combination of incompetence, opportunism and the lapse into ‘false consciousness’ his liberal critics allege, then his departure might have been

²⁸ Bishop Peter Selby *When the Word on the Street is Resist*. Address to Inclusive Church’ conference, Swanwick, England 7 October 2009. <http://www.inclusivechurch2.net/When-the-Word-on-the-Street-is-Resist-Peter-Selby-7b0f1dc>

²⁹ E.g. Bishop of Gloucester Michael Perham May 2010 ‘*the Church of England’s current stance is not tenable long term, but while we engage, struggle, with these issues, it must be the task of the bishop to uphold our agreed policy.*’ <http://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk/archives/004366.html>

grounds for hoping a new start could be made. Unfortunately, the problem his theological legacy represents for orthodox Anglicans is much deeper than a doubtful distinction between the public and the personal spheres. That is just a symptom. It concerns the nature of theological truth itself and it is to this we will turn in my next lecture.
