

2004-03 Report to General Synod

DOCTRINE COMMISSION

Membership

The Most Reverend Dr PF Carnley AO, BA, PhD, DD.

The Most Reverend Dr PF Jensen, MA, ThL, BD, DPhil.

The Right Reverend Dr GN Davies, BSc, MDiv, ThM, DipA, PhD.

The Reverend Dr S Cowdell B.Sc., BTh, BA. (Hons), PhD.

The Reverend Dr D Edwards BD (Hons), GradCertEd, PhD.

The Reverend Dr JDS Dunnill, BA, DipTh, CertEd., PhD.

The Reverend Dr G Garrett BD, BSc, ThD.

The Reverend Dr C Thomson BA, DipEd, DipPS, BTh, PhD.

Dr Muriel Porter OAM, BA, LittB, PhD,

The Reverend S Hübner, BA, GradDipTh, BTh (Hons) acted as minute secretary

The Reverend Dr C Thomson resigned in 2003 and the Standing Committee of General Synod approved the appointment of Ms L Hallahan as a member from 1 May 2004. The Most Reverend Dr P F Carnley AO will remain chair and a member of the Doctrine Commission until his retirement in May 2005. The Reverend P Adams has been appointed theological consultant to the Doctrine Commission for 12 months from 1 May 2004.

Meetings

The Doctrine Commission conducted a teleconference in February 2003, met in Melbourne in September 2003 and in Sydney in February 2004.

Agenda

As requested by the last General Synod (Resolution 03/01), following the publication in 2001 of its report entitled Faithfulness in Fellowship, the Doctrine Commission continued to examine the issue of human sexuality, and developed a study book for parishes based on this report. The study book was published by Broughton Publishing in 2003, and commended to the Australian Church for study and reflection. The contents page is added to this report as an appendix.

As highlighted on the General Synod webpage, “The papers developed in the report were not only the result of the personal study, reflection and prayer of the individual authors, but also of discussion, debate, and criticism from the entire Commission. The report shows briefly the points of agreement and divergence amongst members of the panel particularly over the blessing of same-sex unions and the ordination of gay and lesbian people who are involved in committed, sexual relationships. Although no consensus emerged amongst its members, the Commission indicated that no legislative action in the Church should be taken and so recommended that further study and prayer be undertaken.”

During the course of the work undertaken on this issue it became apparent to the Doctrine Commission that serious study needed to take place over the issue of how Anglicans ‘read, mark, learn and inwardly digest’ the Scriptures. It was felt that division over hermeneutical issues relating to the interpretation of the Scriptures was at the heart of many of the difficulties currently dividing the Anglican Church both nationally and internationally.

As a consequence, much of the past eighteen months has been taken up by members of the Doctrine Commission writing and drafting papers on various issues concerning this matter. A small book entitled *Lost in Translation: Anglicans, Controversy and the Bible* is included with the papers for 2004 General Synod. [A list of the contents follows] The Doctrine Commission commends this work to the members of the Anglican Church for careful reading and reflection.

The Doctrine Commission looked at the issue of the marriage of non-baptised people following an interesting paper presented by Bishop Glenn Davies of North Sydney. This paper and another view written by the Primate, Archbishop Peter Carnley may be read on the General Synod website.

The Doctrine Commission has commenced a study of theological issues raised by the recent experience of the Church in relation to sexual abuse and the need for child protection, the development of and the professional standards for a safe and healthy Church.

Archbishop P F Carnley, AO Chair of the Doctrine Commission

APPENDIX 1: Contents Page Of Faithfulness In Fellowship Study Book

Introduction Peter Carnley

- Section 1 How we read the Scripture
 - Human sexuality and the Bible – 1 Glenn Davies
 - Human sexuality and the Bible – 2 Cathy Thomson
- Section 2 What does the Scripture say about Homosexuality
 - Homosexuality in the Old Testament John Dunnill
 - Homosexuality in the New Testament Glenn Davies
 - Human sexuality and its purpose John Dunnill
- Section 3 Homosexuality – Perspectives from Science and Family Relationships
 - Science and the meaning of homosexuality Sean Mullen
 - A personal reflection Graeme Garrett
- Section 4 Homosexuality and Christian Tradition
 - Historical overview Muriel Porter
 - Is homosexuality ‘unnatural’ Cathy Thomson and Don Edwards
 - Anglican moral decision-making and the challenge of same-sex unions Scott Cowdell
- Section 5 Homosexuality and the Church
 - Homosexual relationships: ‘marriage’ or ‘friendships?’ Peter Carnley
 - Ordination and the practice of homosexuality Peter Jensen