

Churchspeak

Official website release from the Church of England:

As the Church of England's Representative to the EU, Gary Wilton will be responsible to the Europe Bishops' Panel for promoting the Church of England's engagement on European social, political and environment issues. Gary will be an Associate Staff Member of the Conference of European Churches' Church and Society Commission and a Canon to the Pro-Cathedral Church of Holy Trinity Brussels.

Commenting on his appointment, Gary Wilton said: "The creation of this new post marks a significant development in the Church of England's relationship with the European Union. The Church has important things to contribute to the life of the European Union—important things to say about how we should develop community, how we should relate to the wider world and how we should care for the planet. I am very excited about representing the Church of England to the EU Institutions and working alongside colleagues at the Conference of European Churches."

This excitement in parsons is mighty offensive, even more so than if it were genuine. The Church of England has *nothing* to say about developing community, how we [who, the Church of England?] should relate to the wider world, how we should care for the planet, or about European social, political and environmental issues. Why should it have? Must not such excited mouthfuls of non-meaning suggest that the C of E has nothing to say at all, even about God, and should take itself off out of the world?

"Whenever he heard anyone holding forth: the landlady, this doctor, the spokesman at the miners' meeting—or the all-benevolent newspaper—his soul curdled with revulsion as from something foul." That is Lawrence's Aaron Sisson. It is the proper critical response to churchspeak.

Another excited parson, the Revd Peter Moger, the Church of England's National Worship Development Officer [*sic*], is reported by *The Church of England Newspaper* to have said, about a new Church of England website, "The Commission is very excited about this site. It will not only help point people in the direction of exciting resources to enliven and transform worship, but also open up new possibilities for joined-up thinking in the area of training and formation in worship. There are some great resources out there, and a lot of people delivering quality training: this site pulls it all together." The soul curdles with revulsion.

The [Anglican] Bishop of Liverpool changed his mind about whether homosexuality is sinful and apologised for his earlier opinions; which, of course, he is entitled to do, provided only that he has a mind to change.[1] The Bishop himself refused to be interviewed, but his office did the necessary. The Bishop was "asking us to find a new and more open way forward that doesn't compromise people's convictions, respects conscience and understands people's hurts." (8 February 2008) As fluffy and vacuous as the secular equivalent, but worse because *godless* where something godly might be expected.

The *Adviser in Leadership Development and Evangelism, Diocese of Southwark* had an especially important letter (in a grayscaled box) published in the same *Church of England Newspaper* (20 March 2008): "In my view we need more people focussed on managing our Clergy, drawing them out of isolation and into a wider vision, reviewing monitoring and motivating, creating teamwork." If a comma were inserted after *reviewing* the reviewing would be general not of

monitoring. Would it make any difference? People with nothing to say should keep their mouths shut.

Churches used to be accused of using a special sacral language unintelligible to the man in the street. Here we have churchmen talking in a lingo absolutely disconnected from the language as spoken by anybody, but also from the Bible or any liturgy including *Common Worship*, a language not of God but not of men either. How could there be any room for either God or human beings in churchspeak?

From another direction: Churchspeak is the scarcely modified ecclesiastical version of Blairspeak. Interview a politician on radio or television, ask a question, and out instantly pours an effortless stream of nonlanguage. This is the ordinary state of affairs in our democracy, of which creation a prime mover was Tony Blair. Mr Blair has now apparently grasped an opportunity this presents for him to start a new career in apologetics. We have not yet been able to see the text of his speech, 3 April 2008, at Westminster Cathedral. One report tells us that “Blair’s speech at the cathedral is meant to herald the opening of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, the goals of which are to ‘promote respect, friendship and understanding between the major religious faiths’.” He is reported to be in favour of faith—almost any faith, as reported—as an important ally of progress. *Progress* is certainly a word thoroughly at home in churchspeak though not the Bible. That Mr Blair’s faith was unable to connect politics and actual religion is surely demonstrated by his record in office. What effect had his faith on any policy or decision? For instance the Christian doctrine of the just war was explained clearly to Mr Blair by several people including the Pope, and he took no notice.

Mr Blair was received into the Church of Rome with great publicity. Why ever did he feel the need to leave the Church of England, where his politics and religion are perfectly at home? Newspeak at prayer. Poor old Rome!

NOTE

1 His *new reasons* for wanting to apologise were just those for which Christopher Marlowe was charged with blasphemy in the sixteenth century, including the old story that David and Jonathan, Jesus and the Beloved Disciple, were homosexual partners. If so, David was at least not exclusive in his preference for the same sex, and when as an old old man he gat him no heat they tried to revive him by means of the fair damsel Abishag the Shunammite, not a boy (1 Kings 1).

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