

Dear Sir,

You accuse the Church of England of dishonesty [column 20, 25 July 2008], on the rather arcane grounds that a recent decision by the General Synod effectively contradicted the doctrine of Reception of the 1990s. Dishonesty can be encountered without going so far. A group of bishops defended the Archbishop of Canterbury after the recent confirmation that in private life he is not in agreement with the official doctrine of the Church of England as to loving homosexual relationships.

They were:

The Right Rev Dr Tom Wright, Bishop of Durham
 The Right Rev David Urquhart, Bishop of Birmingham
 The Right Rev Nicholas Reade, Bishop of Blackburn
 The Right Rev David James, Bishop of Bradford
 The Right Rev Graham Dow, The Bishop of Carlisle
 The Right Rev John Gladwin, Bishop of Chelmsford
 The Right Rev Geoffrey Rowell, Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe
 The Right Rev Anthony Priddis, Bishop of Hereford
 The Right Rev Jonathan Gledhill, Bishop of Lichfield
 The Right Rev Graham James, Bishop of Norwich
 The Right Rev John Pritchard, Bishop of Oxford
 The Right Rev Kenneth Stevenson, Bishop of Portsmouth
 The Right Rev John Packer, Bishop of Ripon and Leeds
 The Right Rev George Cassidy, Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham
 The Right Rev Nigel Stock, Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich
 The Right Rev Stephen Platten, Bishop of Wakefield
 The Right Rev John Stroyan, Bishop of Warwick
 The Right Rev Michael Scott-Joynt, Bishop of Winchester
 The Right Rev John Inge, Bishop of Worcester

The letter included: “The Archbishop has said repeatedly, as he did in one of the letters, that there is a difference between ‘thinking aloud’ as a theologian and the task of a bishop (let alone an Archbishop) to uphold the church’s teaching.”

There certainly was a difference in this case, and a quite straightforward one. If an archbishop speaks his mind as a theologian and then upholds contradictory church teaching as a bishop, he is, as bishop, insincere and hypocritical. In the bad old days, and with what justice to the great Society of Jesus I will not guess, this would have been called Jesuitical.

The bishops’ letter was meant to be a *defence* of the Archbishop.

What hope can there be for a church so far gone in untruth?

A. N. Ecclesiastic

P. S. “Dr Williams said in an interview that most Africans had more important things on their mind than gay sex. ‘The overwhelming concern of most Africans is clean water, food, employment, transparent governance.’ ” (Ruth Gledhill, *Times* religious correspondent, reporting a survey by Religious Intelligence www.timesonline.co.uk 2 August 2008) Whether the Church of England has anything to do with “gay” sex is debated within the Church of England. That the Church of England has no responsibility for clean water, food, employment and transparent government is logically certain to the extent that the Church of England is a church at all. What is that extent?