

Church and Schism

J. I. Packer

Delivered at Oak Hill School of Theology, 2009 (transcribed)

From: www.oakhill.ac.uk/downloads/video/packer/media/jim_packer_oak_hill.pdf

Video of presentations: www.oakhill.ac.uk/downloads/video/packer/index.html

Recent changes

When I lived and ministered in England I used to tell folk who asked my identity that I was an Anglican standing for Anglicanism in the Church of England. In those days I collaborated in certain matters with the late, great, Martin Lloyd-Jones and he, I will tell you, put me under pretty heavy pressure to stop being an Anglican. I would tell him that I should continue an Anglican, certainly until the Church of England denied the authority of the Bible and the terms of the gospel in an explicit way, or of course until the Church of England threw me out.

Well, since I have emigrated to Canada all of that has happened. In the diocese of New Westminster in Western Canada the authority of the Bible and the terms of the gospel have been explicitly denied by the bishop, basing his action on what I shall call a decision of the Senate, which the Senate aimed on making. And as for being thrown out, well, I have been thrown out. Last year the bishop circularised the episcopate of the Anglican Church of Canada to say that I had abandoned the ministry, a ministry of word and sacrament to which I was ordained. Of course that was poppycock: a bishop can revoke your licence, but he cannot negate your ministry. Those who are ordained, are ordained as ministers of word and sacrament in the Church of God - and the diocese of New Westminster, is not the whole of the Church of God, whatever the bishop might think. Suffice to say that I have been re-licensed, and when I recount these things I think of the well known words of Mark Twain, "The reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated."

1 Definition of Schism

Now, my hope is to talk to you today about the Church and Schism. Let me begin at once by raising the question, "What is Schism?". And my reply is, "The word Schism is the English rendering of the great word *Schisma*." It is a word that the Church has been using, a term of reproach and censure, at least since the innovationists withdrew on moral grounds, from the one worldwide Christian fellowship in the third century, following Novation's own excommunication for opposing the restoration to fellowship of those who had dissembled their faith under persecution. That was an issue that was to recur in the case of the Donatist Schism, about which Mike Ovey spoken today. *Schisma* literally means a tear, tear in cloth or some other material.

Mark 2:21 uses the word for Jesus reference to what happens when a patch of new and un-shrunk cloth is used to mend a rip in an old garment. As the patch shrinks it pulls away at the edges of the hole which it has been used to cover and so the tear gets worse. Paul uses *Schism* in 1 Corinthians three times, in 1.10, 11.18, and 12.25, to signify a party division with the congregation leading to rivalry, alienation, hostility and un-co-operative un-love on both sides. But note, this word is being used for relationships and their quality, rather than over a matter of doctrine and its accuracy.

In the world-wide physical Church, however, the word has regularly been applied to any withdrawal of any group, from the full fellowship of other congregations, which they shared before. And it's been broadened, so that the withdrawal maybe triggered by questions of belief, as well as the behaviour or discipline. But the common core of meaning remains, so that those who withdraw will certainly be called 'Schismatic' by those from who they separate. And the use of this word in this way will imply that their withdrawal was unjustifiable, needless, irresponsible and mischievous, and has split God's church at a point where previously it was united and undivided. That's the concept that the word Schism now carries, and I move into my subject in light of that awareness. Because the word is predicative and its vibes are wholly negative, those who separate never plead guilty to being Schismatics. Get that clear at the start.

Rather than that, they accuse those from whom they withdraw of having so offended their own consciences as in effect to have driven them out, made them refugees. That is to say, the visible Church's power brokers, so it is alleged, have created a situation in which loyalty to our divine Lord makes it impossible for the withdrawers to remain. In their own estimate they cannot stay faithful to God if they stay put. So they have to go. Thus for instance, spokesmen for the Protestant Reformation have always repudiated the Roman Church's historic view that withdrawal from the jurisdiction was a schismatic action. Instead they have insisted that it was a conscientious necessity, due to the Roman refusal to correct unbiblical doctrine at key points. It was that which caused, and indeed compelled the split, and without going into more details I will tell you that we who for conscious reasons had to withdraw from the diocese of New Westminster gave similar reasons for our action.

2. The Church: God's New Creation

Against that background, what I hope to do in this paper is to clarify not just the sociology of Schism, but the theology of it. And I can only do that on the basis of a full scale theology of the Church as such.

Where does one go if one wants a full scale theology of the Church as such? To find such a theology we cannot do better than turn the letter to the Ephesians, where from one standpoint the Church is the highlighted theme throughout. It is said that the best way to learn something is to teach, and that is my own story here. Though an odd set of circumstances, before I ever started studying theology academically I found myself set here in Oak Hill to teach a class of ordinands how to translate the Greek text of Ephesians in preparation for an exam they had to pass before being ordained. They did all pass I am glad to say ,and through this experience I became the Ephesians man to my fingertips that I am today. Ephesians is a tremendously powerful piece of writing, and that you can prove for yourself by thoughtfully reading it through ten times without stopping. Is that a challenge? Yes. The twin themes that bind its two halves together, the praise and prayer half in chapters 1 to 3, and the practical faithfulness and obedience half in chapters 4 through 6, are the Grace of God and the Church of God. The former theme, Grace, frames and undergirds the latter, the Church. And the latter theme, the Church, putting the former, the grace of God, on large scale display.

Follow Paul now as he zeroes in on grace, which is the most direct way to an understanding of the Church. What is grace? It is a word that in Greek is a Christian technical term. Its pre-Christian meaning was gracefulness, elegance and charm, and it wasn't a word of importance. But in Paul's letters in particular (as evidentially also in the regular vocabulary of the first century Christians to whom he wrote, otherwise they wouldn't have understood him) it had become the standard label for the loving attitude and action of God, in saving sinners. That was something of course that the world knew nothing of until Christianity arrived on the scene. So, because it carried a new meaning it becomes in effect a new word, with a meaning that goes right to the heart of the gospel message.

Let me spell this out now in the way that Paul does. God sees the human race living, so to speak, with their backs to him: offending him right, left and centre, ignoring his instruction, and practicing self service according to their - I had better say *our own* - fantasy. Deep rooted egocentricity is an infection that no one living escapes. And since we do not have in it us to respond positively to any divine word, whether law or gospel, and are in fact totally in the grip of the devil, God counts us as spiritually speaking dead as of now (Ephesians 2:1, 5). But some of us, like Paul himself and those to whom he was writing, both Jews and non-Jews together, are now alive to God. Through God's grace, where by love he chose us to be his eternal companions, his sons and his heirs, and so sent his divine son into the world to die for our sins. So he secured for us our new status of eternal reconciliation and forgiveness and acceptance. He brought us to life, that is to personal, spiritual responsiveness, by uniting us to the Son in his resurrection life . That is regeneration, as we call it. And he bonded us with each other in and through Christ as well. That bonding was integral to the fulfilling of his purpose.

This is the reality of becoming a Christian. We are led to acknowledge the love of God, the Father, the Son and the Spirit, and to realise the reality and presence with us of the Son, Jesus Christ, in the power of his atoning death and rise of life. We are led to trust him and his sacrifice for the cancelling of our guilt, and we embrace him in submission to be our Lord and master from now on, and to love and serve our fellow believers as our brothers and sisters in Christ. Integral I say again, to the whole plan is this corporate dimension. For when we become Christians we are not alone and must never think of ourselves as being alone. We are saved individually, one by one, that is true. But we are not saved for a life of solitary and still self-centred individualism. None of us is the only pebble on God's beach. On the contrary, we have been brought into a new solidarity: that of being, first, adopted children in the Father's family and then, with that, linked units in God's new creation, through union with the risen Christ by the Holy Spirit. So we are children in the family and limbs in the body. And this new creation, the new humanity is the reality that is called the Church.

Observe now how Paul presents the Church in Ephesians. He begins to shine the light on it after declaring that God, in grace, "because of the great love with which he loved us, has given us spiritual life here and now and has set before us a glowing future destiny by sovereignly uniting us to the risen Lord. For by grace, you have been saved through faith It is the gift of God, for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus

for good works...” you know how it goes. Those are the key phrases from Ephesians 2:4-10. The word ‘workmanship’, is sometimes over-translated as ‘masterpiece’, which is an English word that signifies both more and less than Paul is expressing. That word ‘workmanship’ is carrying two thoughts. The first is of creation, in the sense of construction, as a poem, a painting of a piece of music, is a creative artist’s construction. And the second thought is of conjunction, construction, conjunction, solidarity, resulting from the togetherness of people permanently involved with each other. ‘Workmanship’ is a singular noun, which announces that what God has done for us individually has welded us into a single unity by virtue of the uniting links that each of us has with Jesus Christ, as I said above.

a. The building, the body and the bride

Having said this Paul now deploys three basic images, or analogies, each illustrating some ongoing aspect of the divine workmanship. These are the familiar images building, the body and the bride. Each needs to be looked at separately however to focus its distinct meaning.

The first image is of a building, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with the Lord Jesus as the cornerstone, or keystone in the building. Gentile and Jewish believers are being built together, as so many building blocks, or shaped stones, laid side by side to become, “A Holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling place for God by the Spirit,” (2:21-22). As in Old Testament times, the temple was where God made people most vividly aware of his self-revealed reality and teaching, and where they in turn knew themselves closest to him. That is most clearly expressed in the Psalms. So it is, and will ever be, in the Church. This is a fact that all Christians should face.

The second image is that in a human body, the head, meaning the mind sustained by the brain inside the skull, animates, controls, directs and integrates the action of the entire organism, in its various parts. Just so the Church, which is one body under Christ its head, grows and builds itself in faith and love through the harmonious operation of each particular part, as each believer seeks to attain total Christ likeness in ethic and service. And as the Holy spirit of Christ promotes each to corporative work and ministry, out of love to God, to neighbours and to the body of Christ as such, the Church moves forward into “The unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God, to the measure of the fullness of Christ” (4:13). The vision is of divinely managed coordination of all who compose the body, with diversity of ministry within the unity of the body, and developing discernment of the truth and wisdom of God by the body corporately. That is a goal that all Christians should understand and embrace.

In the third image, as the bride is prepared by willing helpers for her wedding day, so Christ himself, the Church’s bridegroom’ works to prepare the Church, the object of his love, for the glory that he has in view for her. As Paul puts it, “That he might present the Church to himself in splendour, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing that she might be Holy and without blemish” (5:25-27). Ongoing sanctification for all Christians, separately and together, through a vast variety of events, circumstances

and conflicts is accordingly the Church's present experience, while the approaching, corporate consummation of fellowship with Jesus, is the Church's abiding hope, and the assurance of Jesus' unfailing love remains its constant support. This is an outlook and an upward and a forward look that all Christians must cherish and keep intact.

b. One, holy, catholic and apostolic

So this is the Church, the Church that according to the Creeds every Christian should believe in. That is, that every Christian should recognise and confess as real according to the word of God. The Nicene Creed uses four adjectives in fact to describe it, 'One, holy, catholic and apostolic'.

'One', is the word that declares that the Church is a single, global community in, through and under Jesus Christ its Lord. A community in which social, racial and cultural differences between human individuals and groups are transcended, just as Paul says in 3.26- 28.

'Holy' is the word that points to the Church's consecration and commitment to the worship, obedience and service of God, which is the central dimension of the active image of Christ, the Son of God in all his disciples individually and in the Church corporately. Yes we are to bear the image of Christ individually, but as the Church grows into that image, that is the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ corporately. And we are to have both those perspectives clear in our mind.

'Catholic' means of course not Roman Catholic, but simply 'worldwide'. The word is there as a reminder that the Church is in the world for the world, and with a mission to the world. And thus the word stands as a roadblock against all forms of sectarianism and social or racial exclusiveness, or anything less than a global outlook. Increasingly in recent years the word 'Catholic' has been understood qualitatively as well, to signify holding to the fullness of the faith, as distinct from a diminished and distorted version of it, as well as to the fullness of the mission. This double development does seem right and good.

And then finally the word 'apostolic' asserts authenticity of believe and purpose. On the one hand it announces that the Church holds to the doctrine taught by the apostles and the body is based on different beliefs. The Unitarian Church for instance, or the Mormon community, are no part of Christ's Church, despite the fact that they claim the name. And then on the other hand the word 'apostolic' declares that the Church's abiding goal is to disciple all the nations, according to the Great Commission that the risen Lord gave the apostles.

Such now is the Church as God sees and knows it, and it is set forth in the New Testament for us to see and to know in this way too. It is the centrepiece of God's plan to display his mindboggling wisdom and goodness to all the angelic powers (Eph. 3.8-11). And it ought to be the central focus of our own thoughts, as we seek to fulfil our vocation of glorifying God, that is of honouring and praising and thanking him for his praiseworthiness, as we contemplate the blessings of our creation, preservation and salvation.

3. The Church: Christ's Prayer Fulfilled (John 17:22-23)

This corporate dimension, I say once more, is integral to our understanding of the plan of God, and it needs to be said that Christians who do not recognise that the Christ-centeredness of their calling requires of them Church-centeredness as a habit of mind, are at that point really substandard. One is sorry to have to say it, but it's true - substandard. In John 17, particularly versus 22 and 23, Jesus prays that his people by his grace maybe one, even as he and the Father are one. And when he prays in that way, surely he is thinking first that his own relation to the Father within the godhead is a model for the way in which all his disciples are to be related to the Father, in the family in which he himself is the elder brother. And here may I say, although I have no time to expand it, that the provenance in Paul's thinking of the image of adoption, whereby we are taken into the divine family, sinners though we are, shows that Paul himself was constantly thinking along this line. God has formed a family and that is one vital way of looking at the Church. And in the family there is to be unity, as the Son and the Father are one. There is to be an intellectual unity of truth, there is to be a moral unity of Holiness and love, and there is to be a vocational unity of mission.

When the saviour prayed in these terms he was thinking of the way in which he and his Father are bonded in truth, in holy love, and he is praying quite specifically that this pattern is to be reproduced and reflected in the life of all God's people, all those who are to be united with him, by the Holy Spirit and so to become units in the new humanity. And part of the purpose of Jesus' prayer is that the Church may thus gain credibility, looking and acting like one family, the one family that it really is, so the world will be impressed with the recognition that something supernatural really is happening here and thereby ought to be believed.

That's the vision of the Church and the overall theology of the Church in terms of which I am doing my thinking about unity and about Schism. Let me move on, for one question arises and needs to be faced, "How do local Churches, individual congregations relate to the big reality of the Church as a whole?" And surely we need to recognise at this point that whereas our own thinking about the Church habitually takes off from local gatherings and situations and experiences, Paul's regular starting point was God's great plan for the Church universal, and he related local congregations to that reality and to that plan as a habit of mind, a habit of mind which is basic to the true apostolic faith. How did he do it? Well his letters indicate how. In Romans 12: 4-5, explicitly addressing everyone among them, he says, "As in one body we have many members (he means body parts), and the members do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually members one of another, having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them and so on." A list of capacities for ministry, gifts of speech and of service and of lifestyle then tumbles out of his mind in haphazard order, but all directed to the inner health of the Roman congregation.

Then again writing to the Church in Corinth, Paul says, "For just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1

Cor. 12:12). Do you see what is happening? Paul is applying to the local church, the same theology that he developed for discussing the life of the Church as a single global unit, life that is of the universal Church, as he does in the passage I was quoting just now Ephesians 4:11-16, and other places too. And this is very significant because it means that for Paul the local Church is called to be a miniature, visible presentation of what the universal Church is called to be. The universal Church is an object of faith, but the local Church is an object of sight. It is to appear as a microcosm, a sample and a specimen of the larger reality. Each local congregation must understand itself as a subset of the global fellowship, a small scale embodiment of that fellowship's life for all to see. And it is first and foremost by being a worthy embodiment that each such gathering, each local Church, brings glory to God.

From the human standpoint, as we know of course, the local Church is a group of believers who and together to meet on a regular basis and do all the things that according to the New Testament the Church actually does. They praise and pray together, maintain ministry of the word and sacraments, practice pastoral care and pastoral discipline towards each other, give and help where there is need and reach out for the gospel to the neighbourhood and beyond. Every member has a ministry in which all the gifts that God gives are put to work.. It's rather important that we remember that as we focus our minds on the thought of every member of ministry, on at least an occasional basis.

The New Testament pattern is also for there to be servant leaders for each congregation, who have a stated role of preaching, teaching and pastoral oversight, and have personal responsibility, both to the congregation and to God for faithfulness in that task. In fact this shepherding ministry is essential for congregational health and strength.

4. The Church and the Churches

a. Universal and Local

Alright you say, where then do worldwide denominational families and geographically defined groups of connected local assemblies like Anglican provinces come into the picture? That is a fair question. These are of course post-biblical developments, but they are not anti-biblical. These units, these complex units made up of a group of lesser units, these larger units are intermediate connectional structures that work by agreed relational and procedural cooperative patterns. They are there to facilitate the various forms of inter-congregational fellowship and support and enterprise that the Holy Spirit generates. And they are desirable and defensible just in so far as this is what they actually do, but they are always under the corrective judgement of the Word and Spirit of God. They should neither therefore be idolised, nor demonised, but regularised under the authority of the written word. That I think is something very important for all of us to grasp these days.

b. The Anglican Communion

So, what is Anglicanism? Well in broad terms of course we know, basically it's the way of being and doing Church that was shaped in England in the 16th century, as one

of the fruits of Western Europe's Reformation. The key planks in the Anglican platform at that time were submission to the authority of Holy Scripture as God's word written, to quote Article 20, and acceptance of the doctrine of the 39 Articles of 1563 with their stress on justification through Christ alone, by faith alone and on salvation by grace alone. The Church of England was and is a federation of some 10,000 parishes organised into episcopally-led dioceses, divided into two provinces with the Archbishop of Canterbury as the primus. It is unique in being established by law as the Church of the nation. Wales, Scotland and Ireland of course are separate provinces, each are smaller than their English counterparts. By contrast, the USA is one huge province, geographically and so is Canada. Devoted missionary work has birthed further self governing provinces all around the world. The Anglican Communion, that is the association of all these provinces together, has getting on for 1,000 bishops and 80 million members.

So what marks the communion out, and gives it a sense of identity distinct from that of other Protestant church families? First is its worship style, rooted in or at least developed from, the Reformation and Restoration prayer books of 1549, 1552 and 1662. Secondly, its retention of bishops as the head persons, for leading leaders of dioceses. What has kept it together thus far? It is a sense of unique richness of its heritage, plus goodwill all around. The richness of the heritage remains, but whether, or in what form it can stay together in light of the current internal pillages, which are making good-will all around so difficult is, as of now, anyone's guess it seems to me.

There have long been different types of Anglicans, with divergent opinions on many matters. But, please note this, in the past all the groups have characteristically shown a strong sense of Christian and historical proportion, and of mutual respect, and of the need for credible, outward expression of the Churches given unity in Christ. And this mindset has made Anglicans down the centuries into ecumenical pioneers. Until recently it was understood that Anglicans were patient people who sought consensus and waited for each other and took no action that might marginalise or disenfranchise anybody of responsible Anglican opinion. Now allow me to say rather brutally, it is the current change at this point that threatens the togetherness of the Anglican communion, what I call a "damn your eyes" habit of mind has taken over in certain quarters and it is apparent that the end is not yet.

What are bishops? Clergy leaders appointed to manage dioceses. And thereby hangs a tale which centres off a cloud of bafflegab - which I will tell now in the simplest terms I can.

When the New Testament members of the appointed groups of leaders of local Churches, they are called both elders, as in the Jewish Synagogue, and bishops: *episkopos* was a functional word, meaning those who oversee others. In the second century however, in most Churches, if not all, the title of 'bishop' was being reserved for the leadership groups leader. This was a natural development, though we know nothing of how it actually happened, for you will agree, leaderless groups tend to drift, find themselves drifting and having a group leader under those circumstances, having a team captain as you might say, always makes sense. So the primitive

episcopate was formed. And then in the early 4th century, as part of his policy to make Christianity the most favoured religion, Constantine divided the empire into administrative areas called 'dioceses' for bishops to run in the way the civil governors, the praetors, ran Rome provinces. So the bishop of the major city in each diocese became the area manager, overseeing all clergy and congregations within his jurisdiction as the chief disciplinary officer of the diocese. Again a Roman provincial model is the guide. To keep out heretical bishops who were very much part of the fourth century scene, the rule was established that each bishops jurisdiction in his own diocese was exclusive and with the authority of custom, custom of course regularly imposes a false sense of permanence, and with the authority of custom this rule still holds, where some Anglican bishops treat it as unchangeable like the laws of the Medes and Persians. But change here is now becoming imperative, for what do you do with this system when it is the bishop no less who embraces the heresy? I will let that hang in the air.

In the middle ages the belief developed that bishops were carriers and transmitters of an apostolic commission stemming from Jesus himself, without which neither the Episcopal ordination of priests, nor the sacraments that priests administered, would be valid, - that is would be used by God as a channel of grace to the recipients. The Roman Catholics as we know, still main this concept of Episcopal succession and so indeed do some Anglicans. But it is no part of Anglicanism self-definition, and John Wesley once wrote of it as, "A fable that no man ever did or could prove."

Is this set up biblical? If you mean is it mandated or exemplified in the bible, the answer is 'no'. Although its ancestry and reflection of the ministry performed by the apostles and the deputies as we see it in the Pastoral Epistles is clear. But if you mean, 'Does it express New Testament principles and priorities regarding the local Churches life? And does it meet the New Testament requirement that everything in the Church be geared for edification?', then the answer is surely 'yes', and the incidence of bad bishops from time to time does not invalidate that answer. The Episcopal ministry and idea, if not always in reality, embodies the connectional link between congregations that are given unity in Christ demands and can provide unifying leadership for the diocese, just as the consultations of the house of bishops should do for the province and the primates meeting should do for the Anglican communion as a whole.

The demands of Anglican defined Episcopal office, if taken seriously, will drain the energy of its occupants, but those whom they lead will be enriched so that their dioceses will have every reason to thank god for them. But, this is a big but, if Anglican dioceses are to be blessed with a steady flow of bishops of this kind, a condition has to be met. What condition you say? Well many dioceses in many places languish for lack of realistic Episcopal accountability. That I think is the problem point. I hope you agree that mutual accountability enters into all healthy Christian relationships without exception, and the effect of its absence is ordinarily, to say the least, less than happy. So to exempt bishops from this accountability does no favour either to them, or to us. The problem here is lay apathy I am afraid, which lets bishops once in place do pretty much what they want to do without challenge. And this is to

say in effect that Anglican Episcopalianism, all the world over as it seems to me, is at this point an undeveloped institution. And that until change comes Anglican congregations are more likely than not to suffer from this fact.

5. The Worldliness Virus

The New Testament as we know teaches us to think of this world as the human community organised explicitly without God, and implicitly against God, as the devil leads, and it teaches us to define worldliness as conformity to the world's ways. Anglicanism, by reason of its historic involvement with national community life in so many places, is constantly vulnerable to worldly influence, which operates as do viruses, both in the human blood stream and in the electronic brains of computers, infecting, damaging and threatening to destroy the whole system. The perfect large scale instance of this seems to me, is the current inclination of leaders in what we may call old western Anglicanism, that is Anglican dioceses and provinces in Britain, North America and Australia, to rate gay unions under certain conditions as a form of holiness, parallel to marriage and pleasing to God. This reflects of course the affirmative attitude towards homosexual behaviour that has come to mark secular society in the countries mentioned.

We label this view 'Liberal', and what that means is that it's a view embraced by those who believe, following the mantra of the World Council of Churches 40 years ago, that the world should write the agenda for the Church. And we label the opposite view 'Conservative', or better, 'Conservationist', that's what I like to call myself. Conservationism implies that you have looked at the past and selected what is worth holding on to, and therefore made an intelligent choice of what you are going to hold on to, rather than embracing what is old as such for its own sake.

Since time is going on, I will only say as I finish making this point, that it has been said, mainly by persons who desire to lead all of Anglicanism along the liberal path, that this difference of opinion, however distressing, should not be seen as Church dividing, that is as requiring or permitting withdrawals, realignments, or any restricting, or restructuring of Anglicanism's present internal communion, part with part.

Time doesn't allow me to discuss that thesis here, but I must point out I think that any Church body that deliberately and publically embraces approval of gay behaviour in any form, *prima facie* undercuts its own claim to be Holy, Catholic and apostolic. It undercuts the claim to be Holy in biblical terms, at least in the sexual realm. It undercuts the claim to be Catholic, since in fact this affirmation of gay behaviour is a minority view which Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and most of the Protestant world sees as heretical. And it negates the thought of the Church as apostolic, since Paul the apostle specifically rules out homosexual relationships in all forms, as being incompatible with Kingdom of God living. Thus lining up with the total testimony of scripture from Genesis, literally to Revelation. So, there is a problem there, which is not my problem, but it's the Anglican Communion's problem and we have to face it.

6. Is Anglican Realignment Schismatic?

So to the final question and a very brief answer, is an Anglican realignment Schismatic? That word 'realignment' is pointing to something that is actually happening in North America. as perhaps you know. We who have been thrown out of the diocese of New Westminster, we clergy that is and other clergy who have felt that the moral drift at this point in the Anglican Church of Canada, north of the border, and the Episcopal Church south of the border, has become intolerable, we have realigned, along with five American dioceses, under the protection and jurisdiction of the Archbishop of the Southern Cone. Yes, the Church looks less like a single body than it did before it happened. But the problem was the doctrine embraced by certain dioceses, which made it imperative, so our conscience told us to withdraw from those dioceses. And that is where we are today. Realignment is the name of the game, and further realignment is in process, because a new North American diocese, ACNA, the Anglican Community in North America, is in process of being formed and will be up and running by the end of the year, with all those of us who currently are under the protection of Archbishop Greg Venables of the Southern Cone becoming members of it.

Is this Schism? Short answer, no it is not Schism, if you take the word Schism in its New Testament sense, as no less a theologian than the great Puritan John Owen begged the universal Church to do. Schism is a matter of brotherly love and cooperation, rather than of doctrine. If you take the word Schism in the broader sense in which it is used to day, then indeed doctrine arises, but when the doctrine that has been introduced is of such a sort that one cannot maintain loyalty to Jesus Christ whilst embracing it or tolerating it, and therefore realignment becomes a conscious necessity, then you should not talk about Schism as if it were unnecessary separation. You should talk about the sad duty of separation for the sake of the gospel, for the sake of the truth. And it seems to me that I believe I speak here as a representative evangelical don't I? That, as it seems to me, is most certainly the number one obligation, a preservation of the gospel to which all of us disciples of Jesus Christ and doubly so, as teachers of the Church are committed. 'Guard the gospel' is the word of wisdom, which must ever be our mantra and set our course. When the authority of scripture is abandoned and a particular pattern of behaviour, from which the gospel explicitly calls men and women to repent, is tiered as a mode of holiness, well how can one not, however regretfully, take some form of action?

I am talking, remember, about North America. I am not implying anything about the British situation, which I don't now know well enough to pontificate about; you must decide if anything I have said applies to the British situation as you yourselves are living through it. But I am saying this kind of realignment forced on the faithful is not Schism, whatever its critics may say. And the proper way for us to behave when that accusation is bought against us is to give the reasons why we think it's misdirected. God bless his Church in these days. God guide us as members and ministers of his Church in these days. God glorify his name in his Church in these days. Amen.