

Foreword

THE BROKEN PROMISE OF SCRIPTURAL REASONING
The Politics of Abuse in Anglican-led Inter-religious Engagement

IT IS MY HONOUR to be appointed by The Reverend Dr David Isiorho and the Anglican Foundation, in the normal course of its business, for the purpose of contributing this foreword to his book on Church of England power politics relative to a multifaith clergy trades union.

As a courageous and prophetic Christian voice in Black Theology over decades, David has engaged these issues both from his deep scholarly knowledge and his lifelong personal path of racial struggle and suffering in obedience to the God who rules both conscience and righteous action. The total solidarity of David and his gracious wife, The Reverend Linda Isiorho, with injustices faced by victims of discrimination, abuse and bullying has been a rare example of uncompromising Christian integrity in the face of corrupt ecclesiastical power. They together have been a shining and godly teaching example in my little life.

My home is in the Irish-speaking Gaeltacht of County Donegal, whose vast green loveliness is redolent with the odour of the same English religious and racial oppression, echoed by the many souls of *An Gorta Mór*, the Great Hunger, which famine spirits still wander the derelict churches and cottages of this emptied land. In the townland of Ray outside Falcarragh, the 8th century cross of St Colmcille stands fractured but resplendent within the ruins of the church. Here, in 1650, a platoon of Cromwell's Protestant soldiers burst in upon the Catholic congregation during Mass and slaughtered them in a massacre known as *Marfach Raithe*. Today's memorial sentinels

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which gaze westward over the Atlantic breakers testify to the mass emigration that was driven by such colonial genocide and starvation, in which the Church of the British Empire was at best passive onlooker, at worst active collaborator, as in so many other lands of occupation.

As I drive the twisting lanes by the mighty Blue Stack Mountains which cleave the county in two, the mist shrouding its highest peak, Croaghgorm, seems heavy with these generational tears of grief and sacrifice. Here for me is Ireland's Mount Moriah, where the majestic handiwork of the Creator collides with the inexplicable ruthlessness of God's demands upon his faithful children.

'*Aqēdat Yītzhāq*, the binding of Isaac upon the mountain in the land of Moriah, is narrated in *Genesis* 22:1–19, and represents a pre-eminent and foundational scripture in Jewish belief, as well as in Islamic and Christian teaching. The 11th century rabbinical commentator, Shlōmō Yītzhāqī, known better by his acronym "Rashi", expounds this extraordinary passage. In 22:1, pursuant to foregoing affairs: *ve-ha-Ēlōhīm nissāh et- Avrahām*,

"And God tested Abraham", wherein the root *n-s-h* "to test, try" also connotes "to pull up", namely raising up Abraham to a higher spiritual level through this trial. God specifies fourfold in 22:2: *qach-nā et-binkhā et-yehīdekhā asher-āhāvā et-Yītzhāq*, "Please take your son, your only one, whom you love, Isaac", which Rashi identifies as divine assertions in the face of Abraham's repeated retorts that both Ishmael and Isaac are each "only son" of their respective mothers, and moreover that he loves them both. God shockingly requests Abraham to journey to Moriah: *ve-ha'ālēhū shām le-'ōlāh*, "And bring him up there as an offering", in which the root '*l-h*' signifies "to go up, elevate, ascend" and applies both to the raising of Isaac upon the mountain and the whole burnt sacrifice that he is to become at the hand of his father. Rashi comments on this verse that God did not say to Abraham: *le-shachātō*, "to slaughter him", but rather: *le-ha'ālōtō*, "to bring him up".

Both at 22:1, in God's call to Abraham, and 22:7, in Isaac's address to his father, the reply is: *hinnēnī*, "Here I am", which Rashi views as a response of piety and an expression of gentle humility in the face of such unimaginable horror. *Mōrīyāh* has resonance with the cognate Hebrew and Arabic roots for myrrh and bitterness, which in 22:12 stand as sentiments consubstantial with God's triumphant proclamation at the conclusion of the trial: '*attāh yāda'ī kī-yerē Ēlōhīm attāh*, "Now I know that you are God-fearing".

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The same story is referenced in *Quran* 37:100–108, where the son of Abraham is not named. In 37:101, the boy is described: *fa-bashsharnāhu bi-ghulāmin halīmin*, “We gave him tidings of a gentle lad”. The 9th century father of Islamic exegesis, Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī, cites oral traditions of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad to identify the son, arguing that the gentle description of the boy as conveyed by the root *h-l-m* denoting “forebearance, longanimity” was an attribution to none except Isaac and Abraham.

In 37:102, Abraham declares that he has seen in a dream that he is to sacrifice his son, and asks him: *fa-ndhur mādhā tarā*, “So look you, what do you think?”, to which the son replies: *if'al mā tu'maru satajidunī in sha' Allah min al-sābirīn*, “Do as you are commanded; you will find me, God willing, of the patient”. The root *s-b-r* used here to describe Isaac’s patience is held by the Arab lexicographers itself to connote “restraint, tying, confinement, withholding”. In his commentary, al-Tabarī presents Isaac’s words of utter obedience at the point of sacrifice, “Strengthen my bonds that I do not flounder, and avert from me your raiment that nothing of my blood spatters upon it, and Sarah sees it and grieves; and quicken the passing of the knife upon my neck lest I shame the death upon me”. The Arabic cognate term to the Hebrew, *‘aqīdah*, thus signifies both the tethering of the covenant upon Moriah, and the binding Islamic creed arising from God’s holy writ.

In the New Testament, the Christological symbolism of the passage is evident, and *Hebrews* 11:17 states: *Pistei prosenēnochen Abraam ton Isaak peirazomenos*, “By faith Abraham offered up Isaac, being tested”. Kierkegaard’s characterisation of Abraham’s actions as the zenith of faith in heaven’s providence over human conscientious doubt is given in his term, “teleological suspension of the ethical”. By contrast, rabbinical scholars such as the 14th century exegete, Joseph Caspi, repudiated the suggestion that God could demand Abraham to commit such a deplorable act, which is also reflected in Buber’s view, based on Hasidic precedents, that the actual test was for Abraham to overcome the inclination to obey God’s command and act instead in godly love and compassion.

Disturbing, even disgusting, this Abrahamic paradigm of sacrifice in perfect vulnerable submission to suffering spans all three of the patriarch’s daughter religions, and has been used and misused in every exemplar of heroic martyrdom and blind act of obedience to heaven’s decree. At the same time, however, this story is the lived theology of victims of Shoah and genocide, persecuted minorities of belief and race, of survivors of

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sexual abuse in churches and faith-based institutions, and of every devout whistleblower-prophet exposing the godless wrongdoings within religious structures of power. The *'Aqēdah/'Aqīdah* binds us all in our sacrificial ordeal and our hopes of redemption.

What is clear in relation to the above is that the deep exploration and mining of our sacred texts for novel seams of meaning, precious gems of wisdom, has since early medieval times been at the heart of an enlivened intellectual conversation between Muslim and Jewish philologists of Quranic Arabic and biblical Hebrew. These were the architects of *exegesis traditionis*, the deep interpretation of Scripture through detailed linguistic analysis and under the authority of received oral traditions. Both Islamic *tafsir al-Qur'ān* and *sharh al-hadīth* as well as Judaic *midrāsh* and *gemara* study represent ancient and meticulously-crafted disciplines of interrogation of the written and oral revelation, with exegetical rules set by medieval scholars such as Ibn Hazm and Sa'adia Gaon.

What is important to recognise is that these traditions of wisdom reading are native and indigenous to their congregations of piety and learning, and are living and thriving praxes of dialectical small-group disputation around Scripture—such as Jewish *havrutā-shī'ūr* study. While both Judaism and Islam are themselves houses splintered by internal sectarian division and strife, these varied intra-faith factions have each earned their right to authenticity, to legitimacy, by the longevity of the devotion of their followers and the jealous guardianship by their sages of these sacred exegetical practices which have been crafted and embedded over generations into the lifeblood of their communities of belief.

The modern interfaith industry, in the United Kingdom often dominated by leadership of the Church of England, is in many ways the very antithesis of Judaeo-Islamic attachment to deep communal scripturalism. For it could be argued that, from its Tudor inception, the Anglican relationship with religious truth has been shaped far less by habits of deep biblical study than by the power politics of holding together complex national institutions of monarchy, empire and church in the face of the people's deeply-held and sometimes conflicting Christian convictions. This so-called "Anglican Way", of old boy network fudging of theological integrity in order to safeguard national or institutional unity, is to an outsider like me perhaps the CoFE's most distinctive trademark.

In contrast to traditional Judaeo-Islamic communities of interpretation, the Anglo-Saxon Church is usually able to read the original Hebrew

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Bible and Greek New Testament only in King James English translation. It is a Church whose pre-Christian beliefs in *Blut und Boden*, the “blood and soil” of English ethno-national destiny, synthesise uneasily with the foreign teachings of a darker-complexioned Palestinian rabbi. Between 1922 and 1945, the German Protestant churches openly sought to address this problem of race through the new theology of *Positives Christentum* or “Positive Christianity”, remaking the Jewish Jesus as an Aryan antisemitic Christ-hero. *Positives Christentum* lives on powerfully in the muscular patriotism of the American megachurch, where sometimes I find it difficult to discern in the service where the Cross ends and “The Star-Spangled Banner” begins. Equally, it finds expression in the Church of the British Empire’s ceremonial alignment of God’s will with the Crown’s colonial policy and violence.

This reflects the essential problem of Western Christianity since the Constantinian conversion of 312, and the adoption of a dissenting Judaean sectarian movement of slaves and the poor as official state cult of pagan Roman Empire. With Palestinian Christianity’s co-option over successive centuries into the apparatus of European kingly power, this resulted in its incongruous fusion with the warrior tribal religions which were already indigenous to the continent, and thereafter the enrolment of state terror to liquidate heterodox groups. The Western Church thus constitutes an ethnic pagan-Christian syncretism, whose dual ancestry finds expression Janus-like in congenital traits of scholarly Christian pietism and rapine Nordic conquest of inferior peoples—both these held concurrently.

The churches of the Anglosphere are thus veiled from the Aramaic Galilean world of *Yēshū’a/Yehōshū’a* by cumulative historical removes of Patristic Hellenisation, Imperial Romanisation, Protestant Germanisation, Tudor Anglicisation and industrial Americanisation, which expresses in white Protestant “patrician disdain” toward the alien, and concurrently a staggering lack of self-awareness as to its own un-Christian illegitimacy. As the borders of both Englishness and Anglicanism grew in the British Empire’s expansion to continents of coloured races and non-Christian religions, scholars of Black Theology such as Isiorho and Reddie have commented how the Church of England emphatically became as much a signifier of white Anglo-Saxon normative identity as of Christianity. And from this, the theology emerged of the divinely-ordained mastership of Protestant Christian whiteness in the benign civilising mission to conquered peoples.

As was frankly asserted to me by a former Bishop of Winchester some years ago over dinner in Oxford, the global Anglican Communion is an

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outworking of Britain's colonising history. As such, he explained the candidature at that time of the Pakistani-origin Michael Nazir-Ali for appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury would be problematic for the African bishops who, in his view, would expect the man in the "top job", as he put it, to be of "English stock". The reality for black and Asian clergy of race prejudice and discrimination at the hands of both female and male officers within the Church of England has been extensively documented by Isiorho and others.

While most of England's former possessions are now sovereign and independent states in a Commonwealth of equals, the Anglican Communion appears in some instances not to have caught up with the idea. For in the celebrated description by Bishop Riah Hanna Abu El-Assal, Emeritus Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem, of Canon Guy Wilkinson as "the cancer at the heart of Anglicanism", is encapsulated a whole narrative of the venal culture and conduct of Church of England senior bureaucrats. I first encountered Wilkinson in his office as Secretary to the Archbishop of Canterbury for Inter-Religious Affairs in one of his controversial projects to create a state-funded Christian Muslim Forum under Lambeth Palace control.

When I started to raise concerns, shared both with Muslim and Christian colleagues of various denominations, I started to experience criminal harassment from Wilkinson for which the Metropolitan Police issued him with a Harassment Warning. I subsequently received reports from a diverse breadth of Catholic, United Reformed Church and Muslim clergy and lay colleagues of their parallel experiences of Wilkinson's expansive bullying and threats—misconduct that was truly ecumenical with testimonies of multiple victims. Bishop Riah's detailed account records how Wilkinson and Lambeth accomplices spared no ruthless effort to recolonise the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East and replace senior indigenous Palestinian clergy with ones approved by Head Office.

With Guy Wilkinson's public support for former prime minister, Tony Blair, in the latter's controversial attempts to enter the arena of inter-religious peace-making, it was inevitable that the imperialist hubris exhibited in the affairs of an overseas Anglican province would one day cross the red line into Church of England interference in the sovereign internal affairs of other religions. Thus, one of the most notorious instances of Church of England interfaith colonialism was the attempt several years ago by Guy Wilkinson and Lambeth Palace to disrupt an independent Anglo-American conference of rabbis and imams in the House of Lords, which the head

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of the rabbinic seminary where I was lecturing described as “appalling chutzpah by these Christians”, and was met with defiance by the Jewish and Muslim clergy participants. In a notable and very oft-repeated tactic, when Wilkinson’s bullying of the principal of the Jewish seminary did not achieve the desired outcome, he escalated the matter by going over the head of this professor to the trustees of this Jewish rabbinical college.

What is important to distil from the documentary evidence of this history is how the arrogance of religious-national imperialism, in this case white Anglican, generates for its perpetrators like Wilkinson both ruthlessness and sheer lack of any shame or boundaries in open violation of the autonomy of other communities of belief. And it is this paradigm of entitled bullying and violence for sake of defence of the institution that also speaks to the story of the Church of England’s proxy colonialist interference in the multifaith clergy union, the Unite Faith Workers’ Branch.

The Church of England’s articulation with non-Christians is institutionally embodied in interfaith structures and appointment of dedicated bureaucrats, like Guy Wilkinson, within Lambeth Palace and Church House. The national Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom (IFN) is a political-religious conglomeration of largely self-appointed “faith community representative bodies” and interfaith groups, which over the year has been funded in millions of pounds by the taxpayer and enjoys privileged lobbying access to government. Throughout its history, the IFN has been chaired by a largely static Church of England bishop or senior Anglican cleric, and a more frequently rotating non-Christian co-chair—invariably the important business of the Annual General Meeting is chaired by the Anglican co-chair. Since its creation by its lifetime salaried directors, Harriet Crabtree and Brian Pearce, the IFN has embodied the vested interests of a monetised interfaith industry and the project of the Church of England hierarchy to reinvent itself as a *primus inter pares* “head boy of Eton” for all UK faiths, just as England’s bishops chase continued political relevance in the face of the CofE’s own terminal decline in congregational numbers.

Satish Sharma, General Secretary of the National Council of Hindu Temples bluntly describes the Inter Faith Network as being, “From the outset a colonialist project to enforce and reinforce the ascendancy of the established Church of England over non-Christian faith communities in engagement with the British state. And in this, Crabtree and Pearce have acted as ruthless controlling agents and self-appointed gatekeepers”. Sharma continues on to describe his experience of the Lambeth-sponsored

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Hindu-Christian Forum as, “Informed by a British Raj colonialism and thinly veiled racism, where liberal Church of England bishops handpick compliant Indian Anglophiles, and manipulate language of ‘harmony’ in order to tone police and impede honest debate. Behind the scenes, the Lambeth gatekeepers obstruct those Hindus who speak out and, in this, conservative black Christians are as much brothers in arms since they, like me, refuse to speak Anglican”.

What is less immediately visible is the extent to which the controlling Crabtree-esque politics of these Anglican-led faith and interfaith organisations are realised through the systematic abuse and bullying of whistle-blowers, as a routine *modus operandi*. Sharma further writes that the Anglican IFN Executive Director, Harriet Crabtree, routinely interfered in internal Hindu community discussions around officer appointments, and how, despite his holding office as a Hindu trustee of the IFN, Crabtree refused to disclose to him correspondence that pertained to such alleged conduct by her.

When I myself publicly raised concerns on the record at the IFN Annual General Meeting about the membership within this government-funded charity of groups which were known to be linked to overseas Islamist organisations involved in genocide, it was Julian Bond, the Methodist Director of the Lambeth Palace-sponsored Christian Muslim Forum, who demanded that my remarks as a Muslim cleric about Islamist extremism be expunged from the minutes of the meeting. There followed a fraught correspondence in which the Anglican Executive Director of the IFN, Harriet Crabtree, and her colleagues stonewalled my insistence that my words be recorded truthfully and not censored.

And the whistle-blower’s retribution for me means to this day, that every time I say, give a conference lecture or teach a scriptural seminar with my rabbi friend, Natan Levy, my clergy colleagues report to me on the record how Harriet Crabtree and other officials from the Inter Faith Network and beyond start phoning round and applying bullying pressure upon my academic and personal life.

In July 2019, when I wrote a doublet of articles in the *Church of England Newspaper* on the bullying of whistle-blowers of clergy abuse and malfeasance within Anglican, Muslim and interfaith bodies, this unleashed a tempest of political pressure from Church House upon the Unite Faith Workers’ Branch, online smear from Peter Broadbent, a London suffragan bishop, and further harassing telephone calls to the newspaper from the

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former Lambeth Palace interfaith bureaucrat, Guy Wilkinson. Even my Jewish rabbi friend received calls to his workplace with threats around his organisational funding, simply because he and I work together.

My own interfaith trauma arose in the context of a project at St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace in the Diocese of London of "Scriptural Reasoning" (SR), the practice of Jews, Christians and Muslims meeting to study their sacred books allegedly in order to foster a better quality of disagreement. This Quran and Bible study group at St Ethelburga's Centre was led by Church of England vicars who had no knowledge of Biblical Hebrew or Classical Arabic, nor any fluency in New Testament Greek.

My first area of dismay was the inability of such Anglican leaders to engage at all original language biblical texts and traditions of interpretation, and my variously needing to dig deep into my fading schoolboy Greek to assist. David Ford, who claimed to be one of the "founder-leaders" of Scriptural Reasoning, I discovered in SR study sessions to have a poor knowledge of the Hebrew Bible and its native language and no education at all in Islamic Studies. The Jewish poet, Haim Nachman Bialik's asseveration, "Reading the Bible in translation is like kissing your new bride through a veil", firmly embodies the centrality of Hebrew and Arabic grammar and philology in meaningful Judaeo-Islamic text study.

Pursuant to the foregoing, my second concern arose with what was Anglican-led SR's failure to respect indigenous ways of reading Islamic Scripture, namely alongside hadith and classical commentaries, which stand analogously to the rabbinic dialectical method. Among the controversial claims made by Scriptural Reasoning's Christian and Jewish founder figures is that of SR being a practice which challenges the binarism of modernist and fundamentalist approaches to religion by its re-engaging deep ancient traditions of sacred text study, in the pursuit of authenticity and novel shades of meaning.

American Jewish philosopher and SR co-founder, Peter Ochs, articulates this intention, "For the founders of Scriptural Reasoning, the original purpose was to repair what they judged to be inadequate academic methods for teaching scripture and scripturally-based religions, such as the Abrahamic religions". He asserts, "Many movements labeled 'fundamentalist' display tendencies to a modern Western-style binarism that has been written into the tissue of traditional religious practices and discourses". Ochs goes

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on to claim that Scriptural Reasoning “has not only the capacity, but also the authority to correct ‘modernist reason’”.

The counterfeit nature of this Fordian-Ochsian claim for SR’s authority to correct extant interpretations of sacred texts through the engagement with ancient traditions of wisdom is vividly apparent in Anglican-led Scriptural Reasoning in the UK. Here, the hosting Church of England organisations that have co-opted SR for themselves and declare their personnel and their websites to be “official” are ones which have no *minhag/minhaj*, no timeless established Judaeo-Islamic discipline of dialectical *exegesis traditionis*, of thickly-reading holy books using instruments of philology, grammar, received oral tradition and sensitive exposition of concentric layers of literal through to allegorical readings of a verse.

Instead, Ford’s Anglican-led SR becomes merely a poor kind of interfaith Protestant Bible study fashioned within the competency limitations of its self-appointed leadership, where ancient and subtle exegetical principles become supplanted by the one dominant hermeneutic of the Anglican-led interfaith industry and UK government community cohesion agenda.

Thus, thirdly, over time I became increasingly offended at the manipulation and instrumentalising of biblical and Quranic materials for political and funding agendas. Matters came to head when I discovered that the Director of St Etherburga’s Centre had without my knowledge or my permission used Scriptural Reasoning text packs which I alone had prepared, with my own Arabic, Greek and Hebrew glosses and footnotes, as part of an application for thousands of pounds of government funding and salaries. For the record, no one has ever contested that the entirety of these resources were my work.

In my protesting such fraudulent behaviour with respect to sacred texts of God, I was instructed that, far from democratic parity of control in the project between the three participating faith houses, there was instead what David Ford claimed as “the asymmetries of hospitality” arising out of Anglican hosting and ownership in this initiative. This was followed up with the written proposal from St Ethelburga’s that David Ford chair a “Scriptural Reasoning Reference Group” which would thereon exercise authority in relation to the proper usage and handling in SR of sacred Islamic and Jewish texts—matters which for centuries have been the sovereign and autonomous prerogative of jurists respectively of Islamic *shari’a* and Jewish *halakhah* alone.

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This scandal led Islamic authorities at Regent's Park Mosque to issue a *fatwā* on Scriptural Reasoning, demanding equality of the faiths round the table and prohibiting the use of *harām* or profane money in conjunction with sacred texts. While various ordinary SR participants from different faiths expressed solidarity with my blowing the whistle and/or began themselves to desert the group, I also started to receive threatening letters initiated by St Ethelburga's personnel.

As the colonialist outrages multiplied in this corrupt project, I began to discuss with other Christian and Jewish academics including my friends, Professor Kurt Anders Richardson, Professor Gareth Jones and others who had been present in the early meetings at the inception of Scriptural Reasoning at conferences of the American Academy of Religions. It was through these investigations that I learned of the history of cruel academic politics that had excluded Kurt, Gareth and other scholars in the beginnings of SR, and damaged their careers.

Over time, there emerged further bizarre Fordian manifestations of "invitation-only Scriptural Reasoning" meetings and even so-called "performance Scriptural Reasoning" of select SR grandees on a stage playing to an audience. These complemented David Ford's international SR roadshow events at the World Economic Forum and programmes for global politicians and monied sponsors. In a spirit evoking the builders of the Tower of Babel these represented for me a disturbing prostitution of sacred books of God for the profane egos of men and their material gain. The proposed collaboration by Ford's Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme with Tony Blair in the building of international Abraham House centres for the practice of SR among other things was in many ways a culmination of that profanity.

In a microcosm of much Church of England-led interfaith industry, Scriptural Reasoning's genesis is thus evidenced from an early juncture as a history of ungodly political manoeuvring and colonialist control. These are men, some of whom have neither textual scholarly *minhaj* or pedigree nor ethical reverence for the sanctity of sovereign religious traditions and their treasured holy books, just as surely as SR has been characterised by instances of financial dishonesty and victimisation of whistle-blowers. All of this taken together convicts some expressions of Scriptural Reasoning as *'amaliyya fāsida*, a "corrupt practice", which desecrates the very sanctity of what it purports to pursue in reverent study of Holy Writ.

In his celebrated essay, the Talmudist and theoretician, Joseph Soloveitchik, elaborates a biblical philosophical anthropology of three progressive

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levels of existential confrontation of humankind, and thereby articulates a rabbinical position on Jewish-Christian dialogue. While some have asserted that Soloveitchik's paper prohibits discussion by Jews with Christians other than on non-theological matters, in fact he asserts that dialogical encounter is one of subject-with-subject in parity of esteem and relationship, not subject-with-object after the Anglican "asymmetries of hospitality" model: "We shall resent any attempt on the part of the community of the many to engage us in a peculiar encounter in which our confronter will command us to take a position beneath him while placing himself not alongside of but above us . . . "We are not ready for a meeting with another faith community in which we shall become an object of observation, judgment and evaluation, even though the community of the many may then condescendingly display a sense of compassion with the community of the few and advise the many not to harm or persecute the few".

The Catholic theologian, Michel Schooyans, offers a withering critique of the attempt by certain World Economic Forum interfaith globalists like Blair to encroach upon the sovereignty of Christian doctrine: "This project threatens to set us back to an age in which political power was ascribed the mission of promoting a religious confession, or of changing it. In the case of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, this is also a matter of promoting one and only one religious confession, which a universal, global political power would impose on the entire world".

Furthermore, the Church of England has been rocked by scandals of sexual abuse, nationally unmasked in damning reports of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), the Elliot Review and the Gibb Report into vulnerable adult abuse. Yet concurrently with Archbishop Justin Welby's televised expressions of tearful regret, the Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, and other leaders of the Church of England continue to employ scandal management companies such as Luther Pendragon Limited, which malignant entity also undertakes reputation management for the tobacco industry, the arms industry and the nuclear waste industry.

Luther Pendragon has been implicated in the cover-up of Anglican sexual abuse as well as scandal management of other malfeasance within the Church of England, and was summoned by the parliamentary Public Administration Select Committee for its refusal to come under regulation of the Association of Professional Political Consultants. In July 2015, I met in a delegation of leading abuse survivors with Justin Welby at Lambeth Palace to raise our concerns about the Bishop of London's

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determined use of this company to threaten and disrupt a parliamentary meeting on clergy abuse.

In surveying this history of the behaviour of officers in the Church of England, the events related by Isiorho in his narrative of the Unite Faith Workers' Branch should thus be lucid and fully consonant with all we have come to learn about the organisational culture that frames the established church. In 2020, the national press reported extensively how Steven Saxby, Anglican vicar and Chair of the Unite Faith Workers' Branch and Officer of Church of England Clergy Advocates (CECA), was suspended as a candidate for the Labour Party for alleged sexual harassment, and further dismissed in disgrace by the Church for repeated adultery. National organisations for survivors of clergy sexual abuse have expressed the most grave concern at the harmful positions adopted by CECA relative to reform of the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003.

In conclusion, I can only raise up in prayer the providence of heaven in opening the heart of readers to David's courageous and honest exposition, and that honesty and truth may prevail in the wake of such persecution and suffering.

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