

reviews

Obedience?

THINKING ALOUD:

Responding to the Contemporary Debate about Marriage, Sexuality and Reconciliation

By Martin Davie

Latimer Trust. 104 pages. £5.99

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Given present challenges, Martin Davie's *Thinking Aloud* is a must-read!

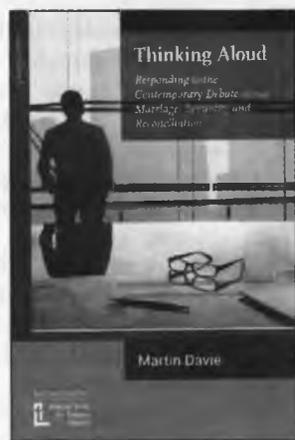
The days of Facilitated Conversations, 'Good Disagreement' and the upcoming Primates Meeting in January focus Anglican minds on issues of human sexuality.

Holy Crusade?

Growing numbers of evangelicals have enlisted in (for them) a Holy Crusade: Make the church gay-friendly! Others, still orthodox in their sexual ethic, ignore the elephant in the room. Deflecting attention to more politically-correct or evangelistic initiatives seems safer.

The role of silence is key in facilitating this revolution: campaigners engulf our institutions and shut down debate, while their opponents play it safe and try to do business as usual.

For those who realise it is too late for that,



Davie's book is a gift. His masterful job of leading the reader through biblical and theological minefields, with their ecclesiological challenges, has been done with clarity, concision and compassion.

Davie bookends his work with two important Church of England Statements: the St Matthias (2012) and St Andrews (1995) Day Statements on the church, the Bible and homosexuality.

The middle sections concentrate on examination of key arguments in three Anglican texts, two on same sex relationships (Alan

Wilson's *More Perfect Union* and Robert Song's *Covenant and Calling*) and one on 'reconciliation' (Phil Groves's *Living Reconciliation*). Davie's chapter on marriage, though basic, was useful, while his section on same sex marriage, justification by faith and Anglican polity was not personally as helpful.

SS relationships & reconciliation

Davie deals well with the key arguments Wilson deploys in the realms of science, theology, the Bible and marriage. In his handling of Wilson's evidence, Davie shows how the former either distorts or ignores clear biblical teaching and research. At times Wilson's facts are simply wrong. Song's 'covenant partnerships' relativises marriage and procreation while privileging 'covenant-ed' gay sexual unions. Davie demonstrates the failure of this 'progressive' model, though he could have emphasised the fact that there were adult same sex lovers in Graeco-Roman times (as now) and Paul would have known of their existence.

Groves's plea for reconciliation, though arguably meritorious, has little biblical and theological justification, focussed on institutional unity and accepting ethical 'diversity' (i.e. heresy) because one is 'family' (Justin Welby, pp. 87-88). That the Bible insists obe-

dience to its commands is part of the family 'package' is ignored by CofE leadership.

The latest

However, for many, the action is now elsewhere. Claims there are evangelical 'experts' on both sides mean one can pick-and-choose. However, which option is taken is increasingly determined by relationship. It trumps all. This phenomenon is observable in Straight Allies (SA) such as US evangelical leaders Tony Campolo and most recently David Gushee.

For these SA, holding traditional views condemns those they love to bitter, empty lives (think Barrow of *Downton Abbey*). In the main they have not chosen this fate and experience it as a curse: they believe they were born and will die gay. How is that just? This narrative is rarely challenged in the church, which ignores approaches dealing with the psychological issues involved and the potential for resolving the underlying causes of same sex attraction.

So perhaps Latimer will produce a companion on pastoral and psychological aspects. However, for those who have held onto their orthodoxy, Davie's book is a gift.

Dr Lisa Nolland, Bristol