

OutRage! Hypocrisy, Episcopacy and Homosexuality in 1990s England

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The brief but bitter campaign to expose the hidden homosexuality of Anglican bishops in the mid-1990s was framed as a contest about hypocrisy, with bishops – whether suspected of homosexuality or not – condemned as hypocrites, and the Church of England as hypocritical. However, the activists behind this ‘outing’, and the media which covered the story with such enthusiasm, were similarly attacked for hypocrisy. A neglected moment in recent ecclesiastical history, it reveals the ongoing importance of hypocrisy in debates about the nature of faith and the authority of the church. Still more, it sheds light on how contemporary assumptions about authenticity both intensified the perceived importance of hypocrisy and increased the chances of being accused of acting hypocritically.

On Friday 30 August 1968, a thirty-two-year-old Anglican clergyman was arrested in a Hull public lavatory. A fortnight later, on 13 September, he pleaded guilty in the local magistrates' court to committing an act of gross indecency with another man, a Yorkshire farmer. He was given a twelve-month conditional discharge and ordered to pay a small amount in costs. A married, ambitious minister, already on his way up the hierarchy of the Church of England, he had been unwise in his choice of location. Like many port cities, Hull had a long history of prosecuting such offences.¹ He was also unlucky

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¹ Helen Smith, *Masculinity, Class, and Same-Sex Desire in Industrial England, 1895–1957* (New York and Basingstoke, 2015), 37.

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in his timing. Although private homosexual acts had been decriminalized a year before, the very same legislation reinforced a prohibition on sex in public lavatories. In fact, convictions for just that increased quite significantly after 1967.²

And yet, if this criminal act was both ill-timed and ill-placed, the clergyman proved more fortunate in its immediate aftermath. With his conviction barely noticed by the wider community, he remained chaplain to Donald Coggan, archbishop of York. He would, indeed, be supported by the primate for the rest of his career, and go on to write Coggan's entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.³ Despite his offence, he was appointed Chief Secretary to the Church Army in 1976, archdeacon of Rochester in 1984, bishop of Rochester in 1988, and then named bishop of Durham in 1994.⁴ Such was the general amnesia about the event in Hull all those years before, that this latter preferment to the third most senior post in the Church of England was greeted by one newspaper with the headline: 'Durham's next bishop eschews controversy'. Following a contentious predecessor, who had provoked much criticism for his liberal theology and left-wing politics, his was evidently an appointment designed to calm nerves and soothe brows. It would be seen, observed one knowledgeable commentator, 'as putting a stop to the excitements previously generated' in the diocese.⁵

Quite quickly, it became apparent that this was a very poor piece of prophecy. Interviewed as part of the media announcement of his move, the bishop-elect was certainly careful to avoid saying anything likely to provoke dissent. 'Unlike his controversial predecessor

² Sexual Offences Act 1967 s.1 (2) (b). See also Kate Gleeson, 'Freudian Slips and Coteries of Vice: The Sexual Offences Act of 1967', *Parliamentary History* 27 (2008), 393–409, at 409; Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London, 1990), 176.

³ Michael Turnbull, 'Coggan, (Frederick) Donald, Baron Coggan', *ODNB*, online edn (2004), at: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/74124>>, accessed 18 December 2023. Coggan was President of the Church Army when Turnbull was appointed Chief Secretary. He also supported his publications. See Donald Lynch, *Chariots of the Gospel: The Centenary History of the Church Army* (Worthing, 1982), 125–34; Michael Turnbull, *God's Front Line* (London and Oxford, 1978), v–vi.

⁴ *Church of England Newspaper*, 14 October 1994, 6.

⁵ Andrew Brown, 'Durham's next Bishop eschews Controversy', *Independent*, 3 February 1994, online at: <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/durham-s-next-bishop-eschews-controversy-michael-turnbull-believes-in-the-virgin-birth-and-in-hell-writes-andrew-brown-1391605.html>>, accessed 18 December 2023.

Dr David Jenkins,' observed *The Times* in a front-page story, this avowed evangelical believed 'in the Virgin Birth, the Bodily Resurrection of Christ, and eternal damnation.'⁶ He was, at the same time however, equally keen to dismiss any suggestion that he greatly differed from the previous incumbent. As the questions went on, noted the *Independent*, it became clear that 'The only substantial area on which he disagrees with Dr Jenkins appears to be the treatment of gay clergy. Dr Jenkins has protected men in his diocese against pressure from parishioners who disapproved of their boyfriends.' The future bishop of Durham, by contrast, when 'asked what his policy would be, replied that, "An admitted and open lifestyle is incompatible with full-time ministry."⁷ It was a statement that both outwardly conformed to the official teachings of the church and prudently avoided reference to any particular sexual act. In that sense, it was very cleverly crafted – perhaps in anticipation of any further questions about his past. It was, however, almost certainly a mistake to say even this much, because it invited investigation of the bishop's own experiences.

On Sunday 25 September 1994, a mere month before his enthronement was scheduled, the *News of the World* broke the long-dormant story of Bishop Michael Turnbull's conviction more than a quarter of a century before. The tabloid had a long-standing interest in such revelations about the outwardly respectable, whether schoolmaster, scoutmaster or church leader.⁸ It was, of course, also a disclosure that drew on a still longer history of high-profile clerical scandal, from the Regency bishop of Clogher discovered in flagrante with a guardsman in 1822, to the disgraced rector of Stiffkey defrocked for immorality with 'loose women' in 1932.⁹ But this particular exposé would prove more important than most, because

⁶ *The Times*, 3 February 1994, 1.

⁷ Brown, 'Durham's next Bishop eschews Controversy'.

⁸ Adrian Bingham, *Family Newspapers? Sex, Private Life, and the British Popular Press, 1918–1978* (Oxford, 2009), 174.

⁹ As such, it finds its place in the popular history by Matthew Parris, *The Great Unfrocked: 2000 Years of Church Scandal* (London, 1998), 174–6. See also Anne-Marie Kilday and David S. Nash, 'The Rector of Stiffkey: "The lower he sinks, the greater their crime": Clerical Scandal, Prurience, and the Archaeology of Reputation', in Anne-Marie Kilday and David S. Nash, eds, *Shame and Modernity in Britain: 1890 to the Present* (Basingstoke, 2017), 53–66.

it induced a deluge of further coverage, campaigning, protests and problems, and not just for the bishop himself.

The revelation that Michael Turnbull had committed a homosexual act and yet condemned homosexual activity was the prompt for a furious and genuinely international debate about sexuality and religion. It would encourage activists to name other bishops they believed to be gay. This disclosure, in turn, would lead to further fury at what the *Daily Telegraph* described as ‘homosexual terrorism’, and what one writer in the *Observer* dubbed ‘homofascism’.¹⁰ More sympathetic commentators remarked on the astonishing and sudden upsurge of interest in the subject. Given the number of clerics being identified as gay, wrote one, there soon would not ‘be a single priest, vicar, canon or bishop left in hiding.’¹¹ The whole affair encouraged some, and terrified others, to think that the Church of England – and perhaps even the worldwide Anglican Communion – would soon radically change its views on sex and sexuality.¹²

Underlying this furore was a contest about hypocrisy. At the most basic level, many thought that Bishop Turnbull’s ‘opposition to gay clergy’ was ‘extremely hypocritical in view of his previous conviction.’¹³ There was a wider sense, too, that the church as a whole was behaving hypocritically; that it was acting according to the principle that ‘The 11th Commandment of the Anglican Church is, apparently, *Thou Shalt not be found out.*’¹⁴ As the controversy burned more brightly and consumed still further people within its blaze, the charges of hypocrisy also became more widespread. Even many of those who supported gay rights were struck by the sight of campaigners apparently bullying bishops about their alleged homosexuality.¹⁵ ‘It’s so palpably vengeful’, observed the openly gay actor Simon Callow. The activists, declared Michael Cashman, himself a prominent spokesman for gay equality, had turned themselves into ‘the

¹⁰ *Daily Telegraph*, 1 December 1994; *Observer*, 4 December 1994.

¹¹ Terry Sanderson, ‘De-frocks Tactics’, *Gay Times* 196 (January 1995), 41–2, at 41.

¹² George Carey, *Know the Truth: A Memoir* (London, 2004), 306.

¹³ Glenn Halton of OutRage!, quoted in Jon Gallagher, ‘Pastoral Offender’, *The Advocate*, 29 November 1994, 27–8, at 27.

¹⁴ London, London School of Economics [hereafter: LSE], HCA/TATCHELL/1994/2, Peter Tatchell, Speech to the Durham Union, 21 October 1994. Italics original.

¹⁵ Stephen Bates, *A Church at War: Anglicans and Homosexuality* (London, 2004), 101.

sex police of the gay world.’¹⁶ This was, claimed journalists, simply ‘hypocrisy’ on their part.¹⁷ That the press benefitted from this scandal, whilst also claiming to condemn it, appeared to reveal them as hypocrites too.¹⁸ Hypocrisy, in this history, is and was everywhere. In that sense, re-examining what happened as a result of that event in Hull presents a good opportunity to think about the church and hypocrisy in 1990s Britain and beyond.

Surprisingly, this is not a story that has so far attracted much sustained attention. It is, in truth, largely overlooked in most accounts of the contemporary Church of England and ignored even in those that focus on the issue of homosexuality and Anglicanism.¹⁹ Yet the scandal and its consequences generated a substantial quantity of material at the time, all of which testifies to its impact on those involved and on the wider community, whether Christian, gay, or both. The agitation, claimed one leading figure, had truly ‘put the hypocrisy and homophobia of the Establishment at the centre of public debate.’²⁰ It was discussed widely in the press, on television, in meetings and synods, and in churches across the world. It also helped shape the campaigning tactics of both gay rights activists and evangelical Anglicans thereafter. Subsequent silence on the subject is consequently very revealing, highlighting the fact that this cause célèbre grew out of a very particular conjunction of events in the mid-1990s. Examining the case further can thus illuminate that moment as well as wider debates about the church and sex, the boundaries between the public and the private, and how accusations of hypocrisy were strategically mobilized for very different ends.

None of this was predictable. Even after the *News of the World* had revealed Bishop Turnbull’s arrest, it seemed unlikely that much more

¹⁶ Terry Sanderson, ‘Moral Cowardice and the Demon Tatchell’, *Gay Times* 200 (May 1995), 57.

¹⁷ *Independent*, 4 December 1994.

¹⁸ Terry Sanderson, ‘Closet Case Histories’, *Gay Times* 198 (March 1995), 40–1.

¹⁹ ‘Outing’ is briefly mentioned in Bates, *A Church at War*, 101, and Monica Furlong, *The Coffe: The State It’s In* (London, 2000), 142. It is absent from Andrew Brown and Linda Woodhead, *That Was the Church That Was: How the Church of England Lost the English People* (London, 2016); Stephen Hunt, ‘The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement in Britain: Mobilization and Opposition’, *Journal of Religion and Society* 4 (2002), 1–14; William L. Sachs, *Homosexuality and the Crisis of Anglicanism* (Cambridge, 2009); idem, ‘Sexuality and Anglicanism’, in Jeremy Morris, ed., *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, 4: *Global Western Anglicanism, c.1910–Present* (Oxford, 2017), 93–116.

²⁰ Peter Tatchell, ‘Outing’, in *Pink Paper*, 21 April 1995.

would follow. Noting the story in his diary, one campaigning clergyman remarked on the unfairness of a church that was still condemning ‘gay clergy with loving partners and forgiving blowjobs in lavatories’. He also noted the irony that, in the past, ‘Michael, whom I have known since university, took a very hard line on homosexuality when I asked him to lunch at the Athenaeum.’²¹ But the clerical diarist nonetheless evidently assumed that the storm would blow over. Nor was he alone. The evangelical *Church of England Newspaper* observed that ‘most clergy appeared relatively unmoved’ by the disclosure.²² Reporting for a wider audience, the headline in *The Times* was simply: ‘Bishop shrugs off indecency revelation.’²³

Writing to the archbishop of Canterbury in 1991, campaigners rather dubiously claimed that ‘There are approximately the same number of practising Christians in the United Kingdom as there are practising homosexuals. Both groups embrace the support of large numbers of clergy’.²⁴ The figures might have been speculative, but the claim was not wholly ill-founded and the importance of gay men and lesbians to the institution of the church was undeniable. There had always been gay clergy in the church: some open about their sexuality, and others less so. Estimates at the turn of the twenty-first century suggested that perhaps one in five clergy were gay.²⁵ There were also gay bishops. One, for instance, was universally addressed as Mildred by those in the know.²⁶ The central administration of the Church of England was also largely run in the 1970s and 1980s by Derek Pattinson, the Secretary General of the General Synod, who lived out his retirement with a male partner, a man who had publicly declared his own homosexuality during a meeting of synod.²⁷

²¹ Johnson, *Diary of a Gay Priest*, 144.

²² *Church of England Newspaper*, 30 September 1994, 1.

²³ *The Times*, 27 September 1994, 2.

²⁴ London, Bishopsgate Institute, LGBTM 715, Outrage 1990–6, OutRage! to George Carey, 12 March 1991.

²⁵ Timothy Willem Jones, *Sexual Politics in the Church of England, 1857–1957* (Oxford, 2012), 162–82; Bates, *A Church at War*, 7.

²⁶ Johnson, *Diary of a Gay Priest*, 167.

²⁷ Brian Hanson, ‘Pattinson, Sir (William) Derek (1930–2006), church administrator and Church of England clergyman’, *ODNB*, online edn (2010), at: <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/97466>>, accessed 18 December 2023; Andrew Brown, ‘Questions over Churchman’s Charity Trip’, *Independent*, 4 December 1992.

There had also been occasions in which clergy who asserted that they were heterosexual nonetheless found themselves accused of homosexual offences. That Michael Turnbull was not alone in confronting such issues can be seen in a comparison with one of his brother bishops, Frederick Stephen Temple, who experienced something similar at about the same time as Turnbull. Freddy Temple was arrested, 'soliciting for immoral purposes', in a Portsmouth public convenience less than a month after Turnbull's apprehension in Hull. Successfully persuading a court that he had been engaged in an act not of criminality, but of profound empathy as he sought to understand the compulsions that led some men to seek sex in lavatories, Temple was found not guilty. To be sure, the episode almost certainly frustrated his ambitions of becoming bishop of Birmingham, but it did not prevent him being elevated to the episcopate as suffragan for Malmesbury five years later, in 1973.²⁸ Although Temple had risked public disgrace by insisting on a jury trial, rather than the more discrete option of the magistrates' court, no mention of his arrest ever made it into the press. He was able to be consecrated to the episcopate without a word of his previous history becoming more widely known.

One man had, of course, been found guilty and another judged innocent. Accepting the truth of the charge against him bought Michael Turnbull time and a degree of privacy in 1968, but left him more vulnerable when the truth later came out. Yet there was more going on than just the difference between one bishop accused of soliciting for immoral purposes, and another bishop convicted for gross indecency. Despite the fact that their arrests were widely known within the church – at least among the hierarchy – both had been able to cover up their embarrassments in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Why, one might ask, did Turnbull's conviction become public knowledge in the 1990s? Why did it spark such storm? What had changed to make his case suddenly precipitate such a drama?

In some respects, the attention Turnbull drew was the product of the high-profile position that he had reached. The bishop of Durham was an important figure, and the role was one that had become more public under his predecessor. To some extent, too, Turnbull's episcopal embarrassment also resonated with a wider set of concerns about

²⁸ Christopher Dobb, *Freddy Temple: a Portrait* (Calne, 2006), 208–10.

‘sleaze’ at the top of British society in the 1990s.²⁹ His exposure was just one of what a well-informed contemporary described as an ‘almost constant barrage of scandal stories’ in the press.³⁰ In hindsight, indeed, *The Times*’ headline announcing Turnbull’s preferment would come to seem strikingly prescient. ‘Jenkins’ successor goes back to basics,’ it proclaimed.³¹ The echoes of Prime Minister John Major’s disastrous campaign of the same name, which had unleashed a torrent of bad news about the sexual peccadillos of Conservative MPs, are hard to ignore, and proved ironic, to say the least.³²

Most importantly, what had changed, and what made Turnbull’s case seem so salient to so many people, was an increasingly impassioned debate about homosexuality within Anglicanism.³³ Some assumed that this new emphasis on sex and sexuality would simply emphasize a commitment to traditional values. At General Synod in 1987, John Taylor, the bishop of St Albans, argued that ‘the Church would gain popularity by taking a firmer line against homosexuality.’³⁴ Many conservative evangelicals also seized on the issue as a way of challenging, confronting – and defeating – liberalism within the church.³⁵ Homosexuality was first discussed in any depth by the worldwide gathering of all Anglican bishops, the Lambeth Conference, in 1978.³⁶ In the years that followed, the subject would assume a truly global significance, with wealthy American conservatives funding those African Anglicans who condemned same-sex

²⁹ Terry Sanderson, *Mediawatch: The Treatment of Male and Female Homosexuals in the British Media* (London and New York, 1995), 95–7.

³⁰ Roger Mortimore, ‘Public Perceptions of Sleaze in Britain’, *Parliamentary Affairs* 48 (1995), 579–89, at 582; David Leigh and Ed Vulliamy, *Sleaze: The Corruption of Parliament* (London, 1997), 149–51.

³¹ *The Times*, 3 February 1994, 1.

³² David M. Farrell, Ian McAllister and Donley T. Studlar, ‘Sex, Money and Politics: Sleaze and the Conservative Party in the 1997 Election’, *British Elections & Parties Review* 8 (1998), 80–94.

³³ Although focused on the U.S. scene, James K. Wellman, Jr, ‘Introduction: The Debate over Homosexual Ordination. Sub-Cultural Identity Theory in American Religious Organizations’, *Review of Religious Research* 41 (1999), 184–206, offers some interesting insights.

³⁴ Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulations of Sexuality Since 1800*, 3rd edn (London, 2012; first publ. 1981), 378.

³⁵ Brown and Woodhead, *That Was the Church That Was*, 49.

³⁶ But see in this volume, Mark D. Chapman, ‘Enjoying what comes naturally: The Church of England and Sexuality in the 1930s’, which points to a mention of this issue at least in 1930.

desire. Building up as a backdrop to all Bishop Turnbull's sufferings was preparation for the 1998 Lambeth Conference which would condemn homosexuality as 'incompatible with Scripture'.³⁷

At the same time, there were growing calls from gay Christians and their allies for greater liberalization, and the Lambeth resolution of 1998 would also commit the church 'to listen to the experience of homosexual persons'. The advent of Queer theology and the development of campaigning organizations seeking to create more 'inclusive' churches offered a challenge to seemingly settled notions of sexuality and sin.³⁸ The result was a fevered debate about homosexuality, about the nature of the Church, about the authority of Scripture, and about individual Christian life. Tellingly, the news about Turnbull's conviction would prompt both conservative evangelicals and campaigners for gay rights within the church to call for his resignation. Equally revealing was the fact that both groups believed the story helped their cause. A society-wide development, it was one that swiftly acquired a particular importance for global Anglicanism, which had, until relatively recently, largely ignored the topic.

Giving form to this Anglican argument was a set of wider changes. The 1970s had been critical in shaping a gay identity, and the experiences of the 1980s – especially the AIDS crisis – had radicalized many who identified as gay.³⁹ Social attitudes were slow to shift: a poll in 1988 showed that over fifty per cent of those questioned were opposed to the legalization of homosexual relations.⁴⁰ At precisely the same time, however, the gay community was generating a series of increasingly successful lobbying groups. What the archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, would in retrospect call 'The Challenge of Homosexuality' was becoming harder for the government, the churches and other authorities to ignore.⁴¹

This was also an inherently international movement. The largest and most prominent of the British organizations, Stonewall, was

³⁷ See, for instance, Resolution I.10.d, Lambeth 1998; Charlotte Methuen, 'The Lambeth Conference, Gender and Sexuality', *Theology* 123 (2020), 84–94, at 90.

³⁸ Sean Gill, *The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement: Campaigning for Justice, Truth, and Love* (London and New York, 1998); Hunt, 'The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement in Britain'.

³⁹ Chris Waters, 'The Homosexual as a Social Being in Britain, 1945–1968', in Brian Lewis, ed., *British Queer History: New Approaches and Perspectives* (Manchester and New York, 2013), 188–201, at 189; Weeks, *Coming Out*, 185.

⁴⁰ Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society*, 379.

⁴¹ Carey, *Know the Truth*, 293–313.

established in 1989 and named after the riots in New York twenty years before that had sparked the gay liberation movement. Their more radical rivals, OutRage!, came together in 1990. OutRage! owed much to ACT-UP, the British faction of a global movement, and was closely modelled on the American campaigners Queer Nation.⁴²

These groups differed in their methods and often disagreed. Stonewall sought to influence through high-level lobbying; OutRage! preferred protest and direct action. Yet both quite quickly began to focus much of their attention on one particular objective: the equalization of the age of consent. Although male homosexual acts in private had been decriminalized back in the 1960s, it had remained the case that such activity was illegal below the age of twenty-one, while heterosexual sex was permitted at sixteen. Huge efforts were made to achieve a change in the law, especially by Stonewall, who hoped to show that constructive engagement was more effective than the shock tactics of outfits like Outrage!.

It was rightly seen as a considerable setback to the movement – and to Stonewall in particular – when Parliament resolved on 21 February 1994 to reform, but not fully equalize the age of consent for male homosexual acts.⁴³ This was set instead at eighteen, two years above the legal age for heterosexual sex.⁴⁴ Sceptical of Stonewall's establishment credentials, doubtful of their likely success, and undoubtedly envious of their media profile, Outrage! was well prepared for this disappointment. Even before the vote, its members had agreed that, in the event that full equality was not achieved, they would 'announce a campaign of non-violent civil disobedience'.⁴⁵ They were also looking, as agreed at a meeting in June

⁴² Kelly Kollman and Matthew Waites, 'United Kingdom: Changing Political Opportunity Structures, Policy Success, and Continuing Challenges for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Movements', in Manon Tremblay, David Patternotte and Carol Johnson, eds, *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State: Comparative Insights into a Transformed Relationship* (Farnham, 2011), 181–96, at 186–9; Ian Lucas, *Outrage! An Oral History* (London and New York, 1998), 55–8, 63; Lucy Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left in Post-War Britain: How the Personal to Political* (Manchester 2008), 175–9.

⁴³ Lucas, *Outrage!*, 171–2; Robert Crampton, 'Inside Outing', *Sunday Times Magazine*, 20 May 1995, 135–8, at 136.

⁴⁴ Michael Brown, 'The Age of Consent: The Parliamentary Campaign in the UK to Lower the Age of Consent for Homosexual Acts', *Journal of Legislative Studies* 2 (1996), 1–7. There was no age of consent for female same sex relationships.

⁴⁵ Bishopsate Institute, LGBTM 715, Outrage 1990–6, Minutes, 17 February 1994.

1994, to find ways to provide a 'counter-offensive to neutralize the Stonewall propaganda machine.'⁴⁶

OutRage! were already pretty creative in their campaigns. They stripped off to protest against a ban on nude sunbathing in Hampstead Heath. They dressed up – sometimes in T-shirts adorned with provocative slogans, occasionally in drag – to disrupt events of which they disapproved. They were known for these 'zaps', as they were called, and frequently focused their ire on the establishment. In 1991, some members of OutRage!, calling themselves the Whores of Babylon, had resolved that one of their primary targets would be the Church of England, choosing it 'as the most prominent religious group in the UK.' To that end, they attempted to disrupt the enthronement of George Carey as archbishop of Canterbury just a few months later in April 1991, with a man dressed as the primate 'flaying a group of lesbians and gay men with a bull whip, then burning these martyrs at stakes.'⁴⁷

The failure of the campaign to equalize the age of consent in 1994 gave renewed energy and impetus to this sort of protest. Inspired by developments in the United States, OutRage! wanted to force public figures to acknowledge their own, previously hidden, homosexuality. 'Outing', as it was called, was highly controversial. It was deeply disapproved of by more moderate organizations like Stonewall. It was guaranteed to attract attention, far more so than any zap.⁴⁸

Once again, it turned out that Michael Turnbull was unlucky in his timing. OutRage! activists had planned to begin their campaign by 'outing' gay MPs, a beguiling target given that several known to be gay had voted against reforms to the age of consent. The revelations about the new bishop of Durham, however, seemed to provide the perfect opportunity to combine a zap with something even more assertive. His enthronement in October 1994 was consequently marked by a protest. Members of OutRage! wielded placards: 'From Glory Hole to Glory Be'; 'From Cottage to Cloister'; 'He Had Gay Sex But He Won't Allow Gay Clergy'. Peter Tatchell, a leading figure in the group, was described by a fellow member as

⁴⁶ Bishopsgate Institute, OUTRAGE/94, Minutes 1995[*sic*]-97, 23 June 1994.

⁴⁷ Bishopsgate Institute, OUTRAGE/28, CofE/George Carey, Methodists, 'Whores of Babylon', 3 March 1991; Lucas, *OutRage!*, 73, 75.

⁴⁸ Paul Reynolds, 'In Defence of Outing', in Paul Bagguley and Jeff Hearn, eds, *Transforming Politics: Power and Resistance* (London and New York, 1999), 260–76, at 263–4, 268–70; Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left*, 176.

‘running towards the bishop like some sort of frightened rat.’ He was rugby-tackled to the ground by the police, but not before he had been heard shouting: ‘The bishop is a hypocrite. He condemns gay people but has gay sex.’⁴⁹ It was undeniably chaotic, but it was effective. Images of the zap found their way to the front pages of numerous newspapers and magazines.⁵⁰

More momentous, though in some ways equally chaotic and certainly less widely noted, was something that had occurred the day before. At the University of Durham Union, a debate was staged on whether Bishop Turnbull should resign. His side won, and convincingly so. The Union affirmed its support of his position by 110 to 90, with 47 abstentions.⁵¹ It turned out, however, to be a pyrrhic victory. In advance of the debate, Peter Tatchell had publicly announced that ‘There are at least eight closeted homosexual bishops. Most of them are hypocrites.’⁵² During the debate, another speaker named three of them. It was the first outing, as it were, for ‘outing’ in a British public forum.

The man who crossed this Rubicon was Sebastian Sandys. He had briefly been a Franciscan friar and then became a leading figure in the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence: a group of gay men who dressed as nuns; who believed themselves, in fact, to be an international order of gay male nuns.⁵³ Sandys was, as such, usefully distant from those members of OutRage! who were still anxious about whether ‘outing’ was a sensible or even defensible tactic, but he was also not necessarily the ideal vehicle to convey authority. Moreover, his speech at the Durham Union was delivered too late to make the morning newspapers. Small wonder that this important event was less widely covered than the more ostensibly dramatic scenes outside Durham Cathedral the next day.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ LSE, HCA/TATCHELL, 1994/2; Reynolds, ‘In Defence of Outing’, 260; Lucas, *OutRage!*, 188–9.

⁵⁰ LSE, HCA/TATCHELL/1994/2, contains copies of many. The relationship between press and campaigners will be among the themes discussed in George Severs, *Radical Acts: HIV/AIDS Activism in Late Twentieth-Century England* (London, 2024).

⁵¹ *Church of England Newspaper*, 28 October 1994, 1.

⁵² LSE, HCA/TATCHELL/1994/2, Press release, 17 October 1994.

⁵³ Interview with Sebastian Sandys by Rebecca Odell, 19 October 2019, online at: <<https://museum-collection.hackney.gov.uk/object-2018-56>>, accessed 19 May 2022. See also Melissa M. Wilcox, *Queer Nation: Religion, Activism, and Serious Parody* (New York, 2018), esp. 2, 21.

⁵⁴ Lucas, *OutRage!*, 188; Terry Sanderson, ‘Vicars ruined as Rent Boys cruise the Street of Shame’, *Gay Times* 195 (December 1994), 48–9.

Yet once ‘outing’ was out, everything changed. Peter Tatchell later observed that ‘information about the closeted gay bishops came to us in torrents.’⁵⁵ In November 1994, both a press conference announcing the agenda for the forthcoming General Synod of the Church of England and the award of an honorary degree to Michael Turnbull enabled further pressure to be put on him and on the wider church. OutRage! protesters disrupted the press conference and picketed the degree ceremony. A placard at the latter read: ‘Eight Gay Bishops! Hypocrites!’⁵⁶ An *Evening Standard* headline about the former simply reported: ‘Shamed Rev under siege.’⁵⁷ The meeting of General Synod on 30 November provided further opportunities to draw attention to the issue. In a press release and on the picket line outside Church House in Westminster, OutRage! named no fewer than ten bishops – including Turnbull – whom it claimed were gay and hiding the fact.⁵⁸

The effect of this disclosure was explosive and the media coverage extraordinary. Nor was the impact merely confined to the press. Although he denied there was any link between his decision and the OutRage! action, one of the ten bishops swiftly stepped down, retiring to a monastery at the age of fifty-nine.⁵⁹ Other bishops expressed a hitherto unsuspected interest in dialogue with the gay community. ‘Following General Synod and the activities of OutRage!’, recorded a meeting of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, ‘the Standing Committee of Anglican Bishops would give consideration to the place of gay people in the Church.’⁶⁰ In March 1995, a retired bishop chose to come out voluntarily. ‘The priesthood as a whole is a haven – no, an attraction for gay men,’ he reflected.⁶¹

Not everyone was impressed by such developments. The novelist A. N. Wilson observed that, in his experience, ‘most bishops would hardly register as sexual beings at all’.⁶² Others were horrified to

⁵⁵ Lucas, *OutRage!*, 190.

⁵⁶ *Capital Gay*, 18 November 1994. Italics original.

⁵⁷ *Evening Standard*, 16 November 1994.

⁵⁸ Bishopsgate Institute, PTA/6, Peter Tatchell 1994, Press release, 30 November 1994.

⁵⁹ Andrew Brown, ‘Bishop in “Outing” Row retires to Monastery’, *Independent*, 31 January 1995; *The Times*, 31 January 1995, 9.

⁶⁰ LSE, HCA/LGCM/1/209/1, 10 January 1995.

⁶¹ Valerie Grove, ‘I realised I loved him. I was in real turmoil’, *The Times*, 10 March 1995, 16.

⁶² Bishopsgate Institute, OUTRAGE/41, Synod 1994, Press cutting.

witness what they thought was a move towards liberalization. sixty-four per cent of readers polled by the evangelical *Church of England Newspaper* in April 1995 agreed that the bishops were ‘taking the Church in the direction of gay priests’, with only twenty-five per cent believing the opposite was true.⁶³ Conservative figures seized on the contretemps as an opportunity to mobilize. One influential group announced that they planned to leave the Church of England unless it returned to what they saw as the traditional teaching on sexuality. ‘We are talking peace, but preparing for war,’ exclaimed a leading figure in the conservative pressure group Reform.⁶⁴ Large numbers of gay campaigners were ambivalent – if not hostile – about the whole affair, with many condemning OutRage!’s tactics and distancing themselves from any sort of ‘outing’ campaign whatsoever.⁶⁵ There were also splits within OutRage! itself. Although pleased that ‘printed coverage of the action had been superb’, one anxious member voiced his fear that ‘the debate was going to move on to the politics of outing, rather than the issue of homosexuality in the church.’⁶⁶

He was right to worry. Among those bishops who had been identified as gay by OutRage!, but not named in their list of ten announced at General Synod, was the bishop of London, David Hope. Nicknamed ‘Ena the Terrible’ when head of the Anglo-Catholic and famously gay-friendly seminary St Stephen’s House in Oxford, Hope was known as a quiet supporter of gay priests. It was as such that Peter Tatchell hand-delivered a private letter to him on 30 December 1994. ‘We believe that you are, or can be, a person of honesty and courage’, Tatchell wrote. ‘You have the potential to play a very special role, both morally and historically. It is our sincere hope that you will find the inner strength and conviction to realise the importance of *voluntarily* coming out as gay’.⁶⁷ Nothing happened for several months. Then, discovering that he was likely to become the focus of press interest, David Hope released the letter and made his own statement: ‘I am not a sexually active person’, he

⁶³ *Church of England Newspaper*, 13 April 1995, 1.

⁶⁴ *Church of England Newspaper*, 31 March 1995, 1.

⁶⁵ *Pink Paper*, 9 December 1994.

⁶⁶ Bishopsgate Institute, OUTRAGE/94, 1 December 1994.

⁶⁷ Bishopsgate Institute, PTA/6, 30 December 1994; *The Times*, 14 March 1995. Italics original.

declared. But nor was he gay: 'I am talking about being more ambiguous about my sexuality.'⁶⁸ Pictured on the front page of *The Times* 'clutching a radiantly golden cross', as one journalist put it, there was 'No doubt who was being cast as the martyr' in this story.⁶⁹

David Hope's 'outing' was, in some respects, as ambiguous as his sexuality. He had not in fact been outed by OutRage! at all. It was the threat of the press, rather than the demands of the campaigners, that led to his disclosure.⁷⁰ What he disclosed was not homosexuality, but something else. For some in the gay press, this was evidence of his 'moral cowardice'. For the overwhelming majority of commentators, however, this apparent bullying was proof of just how unspeakable OutRage! had become.⁷¹ Writing of Hope, the Executive Director of Stonewall – no less – called on *Times* readers to 'applaud his integrity and oppose the intimidation to which he has been subject.'⁷²

In any event, the outing campaign was encountering other problems. Peter Tatchell promised to name two Roman Catholic bishops as gay, but no names ever emerged.⁷³ A list of MPs believed to be gay was drawn up, but then, fearing legal action, it was 'vetoed' and 'never issued'.⁷⁴ There were rumours that one Unionist MP had died of a heart attack after receiving a letter from OutRage!.⁷⁵ Tatchell, to be sure, claimed that 'Our plan has worked like a dream'.⁷⁶ OutRage! also continued to zap in all sorts of inventive ways.⁷⁷ Towards the end of 1995, David Jenkins, former bishop of Durham, emerged from retirement to defend 'outing'. 'Enforced hypocrisy', he said, 'especially within the Church is very worrying. If this action changes the symptoms of fear, it will have done a lot of good.'⁷⁸ But the truth was that David Hope's announcement ended this short-lived, if dramatic, campaign. For his part, Hope would soon be translated from London to become archbishop of York.

⁶⁸ *The Times*, 14 March 1995, 1.

⁶⁹ *Scotland on Sunday*, 19 March 1995.

⁷⁰ David Smith, 'Bishop of London, bounced out by the press, not by OutRage!', *Gay Times* 201 (June 1995), 26.

⁷¹ Sanderson, 'Moral Cowardice', 57.

⁷² *The Times*, 18 March 1995, 19.

⁷³ *Guardian*, 3 December 1994.

⁷⁴ LSE, HCA/TATCHELL/1995/9, 21 February 1995.

⁷⁵ Lucas, *OutRage!*, 199–201.

⁷⁶ *Pink Paper*, 21 April 1995; *LGCM Members Newsletter*, June 1995, 2–3.

⁷⁷ Lucas, *Outrage!*, 204–8.

⁷⁸ *Scotsman*, 3 November 1995.

The contrast between Hope, who spoke out, and Turnbull, who was outed, is in some respects a telling one. Hope took control of his story; Turnbull became the subject of other people's narratives. Hope went public, while Turnbull tried in vain to keep things private. The extent to which 'outing' was always about breaking down the barriers between the public and the private is undeniable. Writing 'In Defence of Outing' a few years after these events, one scholar described it in precisely those terms. 'Outing', he asserted, 'challenges the private/public divide It removes sexuality from the private'. Instead, 'sexuality becomes a subject of public discourse'.⁷⁹ In that sense, this whole episode bears out Lucy Robinson's contention that among the goals of the gay rights movement was to 'reconceptualize the relationship between the public and private', making 'the personal political'.⁸⁰

Certainly, the countervailing desire to maintain strict boundaries helps explain the discomfort some commentators expressed about the whole affair. Initially, the *Church of England Newspaper* was unwilling even to name Turnbull's crime, describing it only as a 'public lavatory offence'.⁸¹ To be sure, even this description assumed some knowledge of just what that might amount to. But it was revealing that, when asked, thirty-seven per cent of its readers disagreed with the proposition that there should be 'an open debate' on the issue of clerical homosexuality. Another reader wrote in, threatening to cancel his subscription because the newspaper was choosing to use the word 'gay'.⁸² In an editorial about David Hope, *The Times* was equally clear – and entirely representative of the more mainstream press – in its condemnation of 'the pernicious assumption that sexuality is essentially a public matter'.⁸³

Hope's open ambiguity posed two further questions: who was being outed and for what? He, for one, refused to accept that he was gay, but did admit he was not straightforwardly heterosexual. He asserted he was celibate, but recognized 'that there is a whole spectrum of experience out there'.⁸⁴ When asked how they knew that

⁷⁹ Reynolds, 'In Defence of Outing', 269.

⁸⁰ Lucy Robinson, 'The Bermondsey By-Election and Leftists Attitudes to Homosexuality', in Matthew McCormack, ed., *Public Men: Masculinity and Politics in Modern Britain* (Basingstoke, 2007), 165–86. See also Robinson, *Gay Men and the Left*, 154–64, 175–9.

⁸¹ *Church of England Newspaper*, 30 September 1994, 1.

⁸² *Church of England Newspaper*, 13 April 1995, 1 and 5 May 1995, 6.

⁸³ *The Times*, 14 March 1995, 5.

⁸⁴ *The Times*, 14 April 1995, 16.

Hope was gay, OutRage! activists were unable to provide any evidence; and, in any event, it was not at all clear what evidence could be produced definitively to substantiate someone's homosexuality. When asked whether it was 'actually more liberating' to accept the somewhat fluid definition of sexuality that Hope seemed to articulate, at least one member of OutRage! agreed, although he swiftly added that 'Leaders of society should give an example.'⁸⁵

Something similar might have been said about Bishop Turnbull. With the possible exception of a curious – and ostensibly fictional – account of a young, ambitious, over-worked clergyman whose unhappy marriage was saved by Librium and the Church Army, he never gave any explanation for what happened in Hull to occasion his arrest.⁸⁶ When Turnbull wrote of 'an instinct we are ashamed of and try to keep under control', it was prayer rather than gay sex to which he referred.⁸⁷ Although convicted for a homosexual act, Bishop Turnbull denied being homosexual. Indeed, he asserted his heterosexuality, adducing as evidence the fact that he was married with three children.⁸⁸ For critics, this was simply further demonstration of his hypocrisy, but they struggled to prove that beyond reasonable doubt. At the Durham Union on the eve of the bishop's enthronement, Peter Tatchell sought to build up the case for the prosecution. 'How is it possible for a man to get aroused with another man if he is *not* gay?' he asked. How, too, Tatchell wondered, would a straight man know how to find sex in a public lavatory? 'Only a *seasoned* gay man', he concluded, 'would know about the ins and outs of glory-holes.'⁸⁹

Well, perhaps.⁹⁰ But Tatchell did not convince the majority of his audience that evening, and the difficulty of proving these charges conclusively was apparent in other people's comments too. Turnbull's

⁸⁵ Crampton, 'Inside Outing', 136. On the ongoing difficulty of overcoming binary distinctions, even within the gay rights movement, see Martha Robinson Rhodes, 'Bisexuality, Multiple-gender-attraction, and Gay Liberation Politics in the 1970s', *Twentieth Century British History* 32 (2021), 119–42.

⁸⁶ Turnbull, *God's Front Line*, 79–87. That the 'pace was unremitting' for Donald Coggan's chaplains is recognized in Margaret Pawley, *Donald Coggan, Servant of Christ* (London, 1987), 167.

⁸⁷ Michael Turnbull, *Learning to Pray* (London and Oxford, 1981), 2.

⁸⁸ *Church Times*, 30 September 1994, 1; *The Times*, 28 September 1994, 4.

⁸⁹ LSE, HCA/TATCHELL/1994/2, 21 October 1994. Italics original.

⁹⁰ Laud Humphreys, *Tearoom Trade: Impersonal Sex in Public Places* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2008), provides some evidence that might back up Tatchell's inference. See also

defence, argued Richard Kirker, General Secretary of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, was unconvincing: ‘The fact he was married at the time, doesn’t make him any more or less of a homosexual than he may be now.’⁹¹ That was true. However, as his verbal confusion suggested, even Kirker seemed unclear whether the bishop should be seen as a homosexual at all.

This conceptual problem was made all the more intractable by the different ways in which sex, sexuality and personal identity were described. As I have argued elsewhere, there was a fundamental incompatibility between the ideas of gay rights activists and those of more conservative – and, especially, evangelical – Christians. Their disagreement was not just about the morality of homosexuality, but also about its definition.⁹²

For conservatives, it was vitally important to distinguish between identity and behaviour. ‘Nowhere does the Bible condemn homosexual orientation, homosexual feelings, or homosexual temptation’, observed Nicky Gumbel, the driving force behind the evangelical Anglican Alpha course, in 1994. It was only ‘homosexual practice’, he went on, that was forbidden by the Christian faith.⁹³ For many gay people – whether Christian or not – such a distinction was anathema, however. Indeed, the process of ‘coming out’ was conceived of as one in which an individual achieved wholeness by bringing identity and practice together.⁹⁴ ‘Coming out’ as gay was, in that way, not unlike an evangelical conversion experience: ‘a life-giving choice’; ‘a reliving of Good Friday and Easter’; a decision ‘to align oneself with the deeper reality and reject the everyday expectations of our world’, as one preacher put it at the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement annual meeting in 1994.⁹⁵ Stripped of its explicitly Christian trappings, this was the understanding of ‘outing’ that OutRage! advocated. Yet Bishop Turnbull was one of those who continued to

Paul Johnson, ‘Ordinary Folk and Cottaging: Law, Morality, and Public Sex’, *Journal of Law and Society* 34 (2007), 520–43, at 536.

⁹¹ *The Times*, 28 September 1994, 4.

⁹² William Whyte, ‘Performance, Priesthood and Homosexuality’, in Jane Garnett et al., *Redefining Christian Britain: Post-1945 Perspectives* (London, 2007), 84–91.

⁹³ Nicky Gumbel, *Searching Issues* (Eastbourne, 1994), 79–84.

⁹⁴ Richard Cleaver, *Know My Name: A Gay Liberation Theology* (Louisville, KY, 1995), viii, 32, 42; Weeks, *Coming Out*, 191.

⁹⁵ LSE, HCA/LGCM/1/19/1, Bill Countryman, Address, 15 April 1994.

insist on a sharp distinction between an individual act and a personal identity. Hence, after all, his insistence that ‘An admitted and open’ gay lifestyle was ‘incompatible with full-time ministry.’⁹⁶

Was this hypocrisy? In many respects, it was something much more complex. Yet throughout the fevered few months of the ‘outing’ campaign, every complexity did tend to be reduced to an accusation of hypocrisy, and the roll call of hypocrites grew ever larger as a result. Within the church, it was not just those few bishops named by OutRage! who came to be condemned. The whole hierarchy was attacked for hypocrisy. Senior figures had known about Turnbull. They must also have known about other individuals. They preached a gospel of love, but punished loving homosexual partnerships.⁹⁷ ‘Kiss, but don’t tell,’ was the ‘approach adopted by a number of bishops,’ as one writer put it.⁹⁸

Increasingly, the attack from gay campaigners encompassed the church as a whole, as they argued that current practice compelled hypocrisy. ‘Is it moral’, asked Richard Kirker, of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, ‘to have a life in the closet when your professional duties involve upholding standards of honesty and integrity?’⁹⁹ ‘Outing’, claimed one of its originators, Sebastian Sandys, was ‘the inevitable result of the Anglican inability to tell the truth.’¹⁰⁰ Not least of the ironies of this whole affair was the fact that their conservative opponents agreed completely; they just differed about the solution, preferring ‘the re-imposition of clerical discipline’ to the acceptance of homosexuality.¹⁰¹

It was not just the church that was beset by claims of hypocrisy. There was a widespread sense that the press was also playing a double game. The tabloids had a long and notorious history of ‘outing’ gay men.¹⁰² Other, seemingly more respectable sources were far from blameless either. True, it was the *News of the World’s* revelations about Bishop Turnbull that sparked the whole furor. But it was the threat of exposure in the *Daily Telegraph* that prompted David

⁹⁶ Brown, ‘Durham’s next Bishop eschews Controversy’.

⁹⁷ LSE, HCA/TATCHELL/1995/9, John Jackson to George Carey, 3 January 1995.

⁹⁸ Gill, *The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement*, 61.

⁹⁹ ‘Better Blatant Than Latent?’, *Movement* (Spring 1995), 8–9, at 8.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Daily Telegraph*, 1 December 1994.

¹⁰² Justin Bengry, ‘Profit (F)Or the Public Good? Sensationalism, Homosexuality, and the Post-war Popular Press’, *Media History* 20 (2014), 146–66, at 146–7, 152–4.

Hope to issue his statement.¹⁰³ Derek Rawcliffe, the one bishop who did choose to ‘come out’ as gay, even claimed to have been ‘outed’ by the *Church of England Newspaper* in 1993, although it is an index of his relative anonymity and the low readership of that particular publication that very few people appear to have noticed.¹⁰⁴ At the same time, for all this, there was a near-universal hostility from the press towards the campaign waged by OutRage!.¹⁰⁵ That the media ‘outed’, but at the same time condemned ‘outing’; that some parts of it expressed horror at homosexuality and nonetheless profited from exposing homosexuals: all this looked somewhat hypocritical.¹⁰⁶ Even the left-leaning *Guardian* was complicit. It was both vociferous in its attacks on ‘outing’ and one of the very few papers to publish the names of the ten bishops who had been ‘outed’.¹⁰⁷ ‘Do I detect double-standards?’, asked a columnist in the *Gay Times*.¹⁰⁸ Many people did.¹⁰⁹

Still others discerned hypocrisy in the act of ‘outing’ itself. Here were gay campaigners seemingly victimizing other gay men. Here were activists who attacked the press, and yet were utterly dependent on them, for, as one well-informed and sympathetic journalist noted, ‘without the aid of the mass media, outing would be almost totally ineffective.’¹¹⁰ The figure of the OutRage! campaigner Peter Tatchell became totemic in that respect. He had come to public prominence as the Labour candidate in a notoriously nasty by-election in Bermondsey in 1983. Not least, his sexuality had been used against him both by political opponents and by the right-wing media.¹¹¹ Nonetheless, and despite the urging of the gay press,

¹⁰³ Smith, ‘Bishop of London’, 26.

¹⁰⁴ Derek Rawcliffe, ‘A Gay Bishop’s Experience’, in Cristina Sumner, ed., *Reconsider: A Response to Issues in Human Sexuality and a Plea to the Church to Deal Boldly with Sexual Ethics* (London, 1995), 18–20, at 18. Rawcliffe, who had been bishop of Glasgow and Galloway in the Scottish Episcopal Church, was at that time in retirement honorary assistant bishop in the diocese of Ripon.

¹⁰⁵ Gill, *The Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement*, 101.

¹⁰⁶ Sanderson, *Mediawatch*, 86–212.

¹⁰⁷ *Guardian*, 2 December 1994.

¹⁰⁸ Sanderson, ‘De-frocks Tactics’, 41.

¹⁰⁹ See also ‘Better Blatant Than Latent?’, 8.

¹¹⁰ Terry Sanderson, ‘Outing: The Press Can, Gays, Can’t’, *Independent on Sunday*, 4 December 1994.

¹¹¹ Paul Bloomfield, ‘Labour’s Liberalism: Gay Rights and Video Nasties’, in Jonathan Davis and Rohan McWilliams, eds, *Labour and the Left in the 1980s* (Manchester and New York, 2018), 69–89, at 73–4; Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth*

Tatchell chose not to ‘come out’ publicly at the time.¹¹² ‘In our hearts,’ he wrote afterwards, ‘most of us felt that to be open and honest about my sexuality was ideally the best policy. However, we were not in an ideal situation.’¹¹³ The glaring contradiction between his decision to dissemble in 1983, and his insistence that anyone in public life was fair game for ‘outing’ just over a decade later, proved irresistible for his opponents. *The Sun* was only just a little bit ruder than the others in claiming that Tatchell had ‘squealed like a stuck pig’ when his own sexuality was revealed, but was now backing ‘a spiteful campaign’ to do just the same to others.¹¹⁴ Nor was it only the right-wing media that saw Peter Tatchell in this way. Other gay rights campaigners were equally ambivalent about his record and its implications for his subsequent plans. They, too, dubbed him ‘a hypocrite’.¹¹⁵

Writing as Bishop Hope’s adroit media management drew the ‘outing’ campaign to its close, the conservative columnist Janet Daley cheerfully observed that ‘hypocrisy has had a good week’. ‘Single-handedly,’ she went on, Peter Tatchell had ‘rehabilitated it as a minor virtue – or, at least, as the most benign of vices.’¹¹⁶ This was to go too far. But Daley was not wrong to suggest that, in some respects, any campaign based primarily on the accusation of hypocrisy was always vulnerable to failure. For her, this was because the English had never placed much value on directness and frank speech. There was, perhaps, something in that. Certainly, there was a long tradition of defining hypocrisy as a characteristic English trait.¹¹⁷ Still more, the universality of the accusation rendered it less and less compelling. If everyone was a hypocrite, then no-one was. In

and *Death of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford, 1995), 192; Jonathan Dollimore, *Sexual Dissidence* (Oxford, 1981), 234–7; Robinson, ‘The Bermondsey By-Election’, reprinted in eadem, *Gay Men and the Left*, 154–84.

¹¹² Stephen Brooke, *Sexual Politics: Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day* (Oxford, 2011), 242; Robinson, ‘The Bermondsey By-Election’, 180.

¹¹³ Peter Tatchell, *The Battle for Bermondsey* (London, 1983), 63.

¹¹⁴ Sanderson, ‘Outing’.

¹¹⁵ Robinson, ‘The Bermondsey By-Election’, 181.

¹¹⁶ Janet Daley, ‘Oh Why can’t the English Learn to Speak – Straightforwardly’, *The Times*, 16 March 1995, 16.

¹¹⁷ Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven, CT, and London, 2006), 57, 190.

such a context, indeed, it could come to seem that hypocrisy hardly mattered; or, as Daley argued, it might even be better than ‘full-frontal honesty’, enabling ‘you to treat people decently even when you feel no affection for them.’¹¹⁸

All this begs the question of why hypocrisy had become such a point of contention in the mid-1990s. To some degree, recourse to that register was almost inevitable. As we have seen, arguments about sexuality in the church necessarily raised issues about the relationship between the public and the private, the institution and the individual, the claims of authority and the imperatives of personal identity. These discussions inevitably drew on the language of hypocrisy and the tensions between being and seeming to be.¹¹⁹ It was a tendency heightened by the fact that hypocrisy had always played such an important part in debates within and about the Church. The danger of hypocrisy had scriptural authority.¹²⁰ Many church people would also have been aware of the long-standing popular assumption that Christians were more, rather than less, likely to be hypocrites.¹²¹

In that respect, it is illuminating to compare the rhetoric employed by OutRage! when speaking about clergy and when attempting to ‘out’ politicians. The gravest accusation levelled at the church throughout the campaign was always that of hypocrisy. When communicating with MPs they believed to be gay, however, OutRage! avoided this term and focused instead on the language of ‘honesty’.¹²² It was a deliberate tactic from a group that always attempted ‘to use the Church’s own language and symbolism against itself.’¹²³ It was also an adroit move. ‘This hypocrisy we’ve been accused of,’ observed one ‘senior figure’ within the Church of England, ‘we’ve got to take it very seriously.’¹²⁴

More than that, Janet Daley was right to see this emphasis on hypocrisy as a by-product of something more particular and period-

¹¹⁸ Daley, ‘Oh Why can’t the English Learn to Speak’.

¹¹⁹ Reynolds, ‘In Defence of Outing’, 268.

¹²⁰ Matt. 23: 15, 33, is especially damning, in every sense. Condemning hypocrisy, Jesus exclaims, ‘You snakes, you brood of vipers! How can you escape being sentenced to hell?’ [NRSV].

¹²¹ Sarah Williams, *Religious Belief and Popular Culture in Southwark, c.1880–1939* (Oxford, 1999), 113–15.

¹²² Bishopgate Institute, PTA/7, Letter from ‘Outrage!’ to ‘Nigel Shirtlifter’, 27 January 1995.

¹²³ Lucas, *Outrage!*, 75.

¹²⁴ *Church of England Newspaper*, 11 November 1994, 1.

specific: what she termed an ‘ethic’ that owed its origins to the 1960s.¹²⁵ Both the gay rights movement and the development of much contemporary Christian thought had their origins in that decade and the emphasis on ideas about authenticity that it helped bring to birth.¹²⁶ As Bernice Martin was perhaps the first to observe, it was indeed in the 1960s that a revival of Romanticism brought about an ‘expressive revolution’: one that placed a premium on self-discovery and self-realization.¹²⁷ Living authentically – becoming truly one’s real self – increasingly became understood as one of the chief goals of a good life.

This ‘ethic of authenticity’, as Charles Taylor has argued, did not mean abandoning collective identities; rather, it required the individual to choose the groups they would join and the identities they would assume with care.¹²⁸ ‘Coming out involved a struggle for authenticity,’ as Steven Seidman and Chet Meeks have observed.¹²⁹ So, for that matter, did the choice of religious life. Some, of course, chose both.¹³⁰ Indeed, no one in this story had a single identity. There was never only one way of being authentic, and there was always the possibility of being perceived as something rather less. The pursuit of authenticity, in other words, provoked many questions and provided few, if any, definitive answers.

Representing the conjuncture of long-standing anxieties within the church about hypocrisy, newer ideas about the moral imperative to be true to oneself, and a short-lived upsurge in gay liberationist activism,

¹²⁵ Daley, ‘Oh Why can’t the English Learn to Speak’, 16.

¹²⁶ Garnett et al., *Redefining Christian Britain*, 12, 84–91. See also Sam Brewitt-Taylor, *Christian Radicalism in the Church of England and the Invention of the British Sixties, 1957–1970: The Hope of a World Transformed* (Oxford, 2018), 178–202.

¹²⁷ Bernice Martin, *Sociology of Contemporary Cultural Change* (Harmondsworth, 1981), 15, 184. The term was one she borrowed from Talcott Parsons: see Bryan S. Turner, ‘Talcott Parsons’s Sociology of Religion and the Expressive Revolution: The Problem of Western Individualism’, *Journal of Classical Sociology* 5 (2005) 303–18.

¹²⁸ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1991), esp. 81–92.

¹²⁹ Steven Seidman and Chet Meeks, ‘The Politics of Authenticity: Civic Individualism and the Cultural Roots of Gay Normalization’, *Cultural Sociology* 5 (2011), 519–36, at 527. Although a U.S. study, the themes are recognizable from a British perspective.

¹³⁰ Andrew Yip, ‘The Self as the Basis of Religious Faith: Spirituality of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Christians’, in Grace Davie, Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas, eds, *Predicting Religion: Mainstream and Margins in the West* (London, 2003), 135–46. For an interesting Australian account, see Bronwyn Fielder and Douglas Ezzy, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Christians: Queer Christians, Authentic Selves* (London, 2018), 2.

the 'outing' campaign was consequently forced to contend with an array of ambiguity and potential contradiction.¹³¹ In that sense, Bishop Turnbull's experience in Hull in 1968 is a good image of this unresolved dilemma. Here was a seemingly ordinary man doing something unexpected in the city from where Philip Larkin watched the sexual revolution. Here was a single surprising act in a year of global upheaval and rebellion. Here was an unanswered mystery that perhaps even he could not quite explain himself.¹³²

¹³¹ Michael Lovelock, *Reality TV and Queer Identities* (London, 2019), 33–62. See also Seidman and Meeks, 'The Politics of Authenticity', 519–36.

¹³² On the unspoken and the intersection of religion and queer history, see George Severs, 'Reticence and the Queer Past', *Oral History* 48 (2020), 45–56, esp. 50–1.