

GENERAL SYNOD 2009

BILL No 1 – Declaration relating to Historical Formularies

The Right Reverend Dr Michael Jackson, Bishop of Clogher

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

All of us are aware of the importance of the Historic Formularies of the Church of Ireland in the Book of Common Prayer. If I take the XXXIX Articles themselves, *assent to* them is required of those being ordained deacon, priest or presbyter, bishop. They are not, however, to be the focus of *belief in* as such. Belief, in our understanding, is a category appropriate to God Almighty, the Three in One and One in Three. Already we can see that there is subtlety and nuance. Already we can see that in relation to what is taught – and that is fundamentally the meaning of the term: *doctrine* – there are shadows as well as strip-lighting.

I wish to support this BILL – and for a particular reason. When The Hard Gospel Report was presented to and debated in our own Diocesan Synod in Clogher, one of the clergy came to the rostrum and said: When I was a child I was happily shouting on my doorstep: *I hate Catholics! I hate Catholics!* when my mother gently took me aside and said: *Son, I do not want to hear you say that you hate anyone!* This interchange, I would suggest, taught all of us present an important truth which propels me to speak in support of this BILL and to repudiate any who would today wish to align the Church of Ireland of 2009 with those who actively *hate* those for whom the XXXIX Articles express what I might call: an acute theological distaste, of whatever tradition they be within the Body of Christ.

BILL NO 1, ladies and gentlemen Members of Synod, seeks to respect the historical importance of our Historic Formularies. It seeks also to respect the Church of Ireland's organic development within the Body of Christ to the point where it does not need any longer to tell itself: *I hate Catholics*. We have committed ourselves to incorporating into the lifeblood of the Church of Ireland the best insights and the good practices of The

Hard Gospel process. It is out of such gestation that this BILL emerges. It was with courage that The General Synod of 1999 undertook the Hard Gospel Educational Project, and we were the first institutional church in Ireland to do so. Those were difficult times and our strength of purpose and confidence in God then have proved to be marks in the sand in the carving out of a *fresh expression* of who the Church of Ireland is, of who it wants to be in witness to the oneness of Christ in a world of division and exclusivity.

I support the BILL before this House because, for my part at least, I want this Synod and this Church to be able to say unblinkingly: *In the doctrine of my church, I hate **nobody**.*