

**ANGLICAN CONSULTATION ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING**  
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A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE CHURCH'S RESPONSE

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I'd like to follow up on some points Phoebe Griswold remarked upon in her reflection and connect them to today's theme on the Church's response to human trafficking.

Phoebe has rightly identified that we -- individuals, communities, and the Church -- are caught up in a profound social change. And whether we like it or not, we are part of that movement. Some of us welcome this change, others find it confusing, yet others experience it as a destruction of dearly held norms. But, whatever our reaction, change thrusts us into a time of transition. And transitions are times of great personal and collective anxieties. The Church is no exception.

There are several ways we can react to anxiety. We can run away from it -- this is the *flight* reaction. Carrie and Sirirat explained this so cogently yesterday when they stated that "the Church does not want to hear about human trafficking." Another way is to be so overwhelmed by human trafficking that we become paralyzed -- this is the *fright* reaction. We hear this a lot from people who say, "it is such a huge problem, what can I possibly do about it" and use it as an excuse to do nothing. These two reactions -- silence and inaction -- are tantamount to collusion with the perpetrators of human trafficking. When the Church reacts in either of these ways, it is colluding with evils of trafficking. Then, there is yet another way and this is by confronting and naming human trafficking for what it is -- this is the *fight* response. And it is what we are about in this consultation.

Phoebe reminds us also that the Anglican Communion is a culturally diverse body representing 165 countries; and because of our history, we are ideally poised to tap into all the resources necessary to tackle the issue of human trafficking. Yesterday we

reflected on the moral warrant for our work in the scriptural command to love our neighbor. Today we look at our Church's tradition and history of commitment to social justice.

In 1942, William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, by taking on the war against the five giants of want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness vindicated the Church's right and duty to intervene on these issues and showed that the Church had something worthwhile to say (*Christianity and Social Order*). He further reiterated that the Church had the right to challenge social injustice on moral grounds because the suffering caused by existing evils makes a claim upon our sympathy, which the Christian heart and conscience cannot ignore (p.32, 36). Like Temple before him, Archbishop Rowan Williams has shown the same commitment to social justice by charging us here with doing the necessary work required to bring an end to human trafficking.

As we focus on the Church's response to human trafficking today, let us remember that **WE** are the Church and that when we critique the institution, it is ourselves we are critiquing. Let us invite God into our work as Phoebe has suggested. That is the only way in which we can be bold enough to name the evil that human trafficking is. Our keynote speakers and experts working in this field have been helping us to better understand the complexities of human trafficking. It has helped me to see that we cannot define it as an activity of leisure. An activity of leisure is going for a walk. Nor can we assign its motive to economic gain. An economic gain is working harder to earn more in order to help your child get through school. Human trafficking is most closely associated with lasciviousness, exploitation, and greed – all deadly sins. Let us name human trafficking for what it truly is.