

(b) There are three possibilities:-

- (i) The police can decide to take no action. This is possible. The police will only lay charges if they think that there is a reasonable prospect of their securing a conviction. We do not know the strength of the evidence against PB, but NT is clearly a disturbed young man, and might not be able to offer evidence. PB's lawyers think that the possibility of the police taking no action is slight - perhaps 20%.
- (ii) The police can administer a formal caution. A caution is a statement by the police that they consider that they have sufficient evidence to lay charges, but, in the public interest, they have decided not to do so. PB will be warned as to his future conduct, and the matter will remain on police records for three years. PB's lawyers hope, indeed almost expect, that this will be the outcome. I hope that they are right, and that they have made sufficient allowance for the fact that PB was in a position to influence NT.
- (iii) The police can lay charges against PB. PB can then either plead guilty to the charges, or defend himself when the case comes to court. In either event it is likely to be 8/9 months before the matter comes before the court. If PB pleads guilty, or is found to be guilty, there is a risk of a custodial sentence being imposed. This is likely to be heavier if there is a not guilty plea. PB's lawyers will have some difficult decisions to make if he is charged. We have to accept that there is a real possibility of this happening and of PB being found to be guilty.

(c) There are arguments for saying that PB should resign even if there are no charges. A bishop should not put himself in a position where matters such as these can even be contemplated. By his own admission he has been "foolish", and we are aware of behaviour that most people would regard as being unacceptable by a bishop. There is always the risk of the Press rising up in judgment and trying to force a resignation if PB does not resign. His ministry in Gloucester will now be impaired - there will always be smirks and nudges. Against this there is the fact that it is unfair that PB's ministry should end as the result of a complaint by a disturbed young man, and some will think that he has been unfairly treated. These could well

include PB - and, perhaps, MB.

- (d) If there is a police caution then the arguments for PB's resignation are strong - almost overwhelming. It is true that the Church consists of saints and sinners; that a Church that preaches repentance and forgiveness should also demonstrate it, and that in submitting to a police caution PB will be accepting only that he has committed a technical offence. The arguments set out above all apply, but there is the additional argument that if nothing is done the Church will be thought to be soft on sin, and it will reinforce the view that such behaviour ie. improper homosexual behaviour, is rife in the C of E.
- (e) If PB is actually charged the possibility of his going back to be Bishop of Gloucester must be slight, whatever the outcome. The diocese will have suffered enormously - especially if there has been a trial - and his ministry must be much impaired. The question is surely only when should he resign? There is an argument for saying that he should resign immediately. This will avoid a hiatus in the life of the diocese whilst the trial is awaited, and it is probably the case that the Church will suffer less if he is tried as "the former Bishop of Gloucester", rather than as a diocesan bishop. I can understand the reluctance of PB and his advisers about this, but they (at least the latter) look at the matter personally, and do not take the wider view.
- (f) If PB is charged, is found guilty and receives a custodial sentence then the question of deprivation and disqualification will have to be considered, and it will be difficult for the Archbishop to avoid making a declaration.
- (g) Further enquiries need to be made about pension, and PB's advisers made aware of the outcome. What effect will (a) a police caution, (b) a guilty verdict, and (c) a declaration of deprivation and disqualification have upon PB's chances of obtaining a disability pension? Will the position be different if PB is awarded the pension before any of these things happen?

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