

The Episcopal Church: A Half Century of Turmoil and Transformation

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It is incumbent upon us as disciples to do our best to follow Jesus in the increasing experience of the leading of the Holy Spirit. We fully understand that others in the Communion believe the same, but we do not believe that Jesus leads us to break our relationships. . . .

We proclaim a Gospel that welcomes diversity of thought and encourages free and open theological debate as a way of seeking God's truth. If that means others reject us and communion with us, as some have already done, we must with great regret and sorrow accept their decision.

With those words, the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church on March 20, 2007, began listing reasons for rejecting the Primates' Pastoral scheme for alternative primatial oversight summarily presented to it in the Dar es Salaam Communique. I have been asked to speak to the subject of the events within the Episcopal Church USA which have led to the present and still-unfolding debate both about the nature and structures of the Anglican Communion and the limits of diversity within it. The communique from Texas sharpens the debate.

The present apparent confrontation between various provinces of the Global South and the Episcopal Church -- and potentially your own province as you vote at General Synod in June -- cannot be understood simply or primarily as differences over human sexuality and the interpretation of scripture, though clearly those are the presenting issues. We face a more fundamental difference of opinion about the structure of Anglicanism, and what it means to be in communion.

Neither the Anglican Communion nor the Episcopal Church bear much resemblance to the bodies which were in place at the end of the second world war. I entered Trinity College in Connecticut in early June of 1945. The war was winding down; VE day had been declared in April; the surrender of Japan would follow in September. Within weeks of my matriculation, two events took place which have shaped global history ever since. On June 26, representatives of the nations signed the Charter of the United Nations in San Francisco, an event which tapped into the vision and urgency for peaceful ways of settling international disputes. On August 6, the Feast of the Transfiguration, the Enola Gay dropped its lethal cargo on Hiroshima, in one stroke

matching the destruction which required entire squadrons of B-29s to level Cologne and Tokyo. If it may be said that global Anglicanism has its roots in the colonial expansion of the Church of England, the significant development of its instruments of unity cannot be understood apart from the radical reordering of the globe in the decades following World War II.

The roughly ten-year cycle of Lambeth Conferences which began in 1867 was broken by the War, and the first to be held since 1930 met in the summer of 1948. Its theme, *The Meaning and Unity of the Anglican Communion*, focused on the nature of authority within the communion, and the gathering offered a classic description which has prevailed over the decades since.

It is a dispersed rather than a centralized authority having many elements which combine, interact with and check each other; these elements together contributing by a process of mutual support, mutual checking, and redressing of errors or exaggerations to the many-sided fullness of the authority which Christ has committed to His Church. Where this authority of Christ is to be found mediated not in one mode but in several we recognize in this multiplicity of God's loving provisions against the temptations to tyranny and the dangers of unchecked power.[1]

A significant if unofficial vehicle promoting the development of the Communion emerged early in the post-war period, in the shape of a journal, *PAN-ANGLICAN*, which flourished from 1950-1970. Funded independently and edited initially by Bishop Walter Gray of Connecticut, it offered an international vehicle of discussion and commentary on the work of the communion, focusing initially on the new missionary challenges faced by the communion.

Lambeth 1948 was composed of bishops from the then-existing 16 Anglican Churches (England, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, Canada, India, Pakistan, Burma, Ceylon, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, West Africa, the West Indies, Japan, and the USA). It created the first central agency of the Communion, an Advisory Council on Missionary Strategy, which seems to have had a shadowy existence in the 10 years following, until it was reorganized by Lambeth 1958 with a new organization, the establishment of a modest working budget, and the appointment of an executive secretary. The position-description for the newly-created Anglican Executive Officer, was limited in scope: "to collect and disseminate information, keep open lines of communication and make contact when necessary with responsible authority." The first incumbent appointed shortly thereafter was Bishop Stephen F. Bayne of the US, whose extensive travels and articulate writing forged bonds of communication across the communion, and demonstrated the importance of an on-going structure beyond the

limited and largely symbolic role of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Lambeth 1968 called for the setting up of an Anglican Consultative Council, a step which had to be ratified by two thirds of the Provinces. In fact all of them gave consent, and the title of Anglican Executive Officer was changed to Secretary General, reflecting the greater scope of the new structure.

The new instruments of communion and mission developed by the Anglican Communion in the early decades after World War II reflect challenges posed to those provinces traditionally understood as *sending* churches, and those *receiving* mission support. After the War, Great Britain the dismantling of the empire, and the US its need to relinquish its dependent so-called overseas missionary districts in Mexico, Brazil, and the Philippines. It is instructive that the Anglican Communion secretariat has to date been drawn entirely from North America and Great Britain, which have provided most of its support. Bayne was succeeded in turn by Ralph Dean of Canada, John Howe of Scotland, Samuel van Culin and John Peterson of the US, and most recently Kenneth Kearon of Ireland. Bishop Howe the first to wear the title of Secretary General, hardly a description borrowed from ecclesiastical hierarchy, ancient or modern.

However, when a listening post for Anglicanism at the United Nations in New York was created in 1991, it may be more than symbolic that the position of Anglican Observer was offered to Bishop Paul Reeves, a Maori from New Zealand, and subsequent appointments, apart from brief interim ones of Bishops Paul Moore and Herbert Donovan of the US, drawn from Central America, the islands of the Pacific, and Africa. What could not have been predicted in 1945 was the rapid shift of the center of Christian global presence from Europe and North America to churches from the southern hemisphere, and a consequent change of priorities of global justice and development. Since 2003, the Anglican Church's Office at the UN has sponsored a significant Anglican Women's Empowerment, an initiative drawing women from nearly all provinces across the communion in support of the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the needs of women and children outlined in the Millennium Development Goals. In 2003, that conference successfully petitioned the Anglican Consultative Council to ask its Administrative Committee to find ways of insuring that an equal representation of women and men, clergy and lay, serve in its decision-making structures.

A comparable dynamic may be seen in the rise and subsequent shift of leadership in the ecumenical movement. Many of us found our way into church life through the World Student Christian Federation and its counterpart national bodies. As Anglicans our Christian experience was honed in settings which crossed historic national and

denominational boundaries. The first Assembly of the World Council of Church took place in Amsterdam in 1948, culminating more than a half century of efforts to bring together the churches of the Reformation, Anglicanism, and the Orthodox. The energy for this came for obvious reasons from Europe and North America. Colonial structures of relationship to the emerging churches of Africa and Asia were collapsing, traditional church institutions everywhere seemed obsolete, and church attendance in Europe was dropping precipitously.

Nonetheless, the post-war period exploded with promises of new life, and the theologies to accompany it. New forms of mission abounded in the old Christendom. Hendrick Kraemer and Yves Congar wrote persuasively about the ministry of the laity.. Germany saw the development of ecumenical academies, lay centers of dialogue, and the annual bazaar called Kirchentag, a major week-long festival of worship and mission. France spawned a movement for reinvigorating exhausted city churches called France Alive which honored the work of such figures as Abbe Michonneau. The ecumenical community of Taize was beginning to draw young swarms of young people from across the continent to its center of dialogue and innovative worship. In Britain, Ted Wickham established the Industrial Mission movement, Ernest Southcott famously sought to bring to new life to a typical English urban parish, and Sir George MacLeod took teams of workmen from Glasgow to rebuild the abbey at Iona and launch a ministry of renewal and prayer. In the early 1960s, Pope John XXIII responded to the ferment for renewal and gave the ecumenical cause encouragement by summoning the Second Vatican Council with a ringing plea for *aggiornamento*. Theologians such as J. A. T. Robinson and Harvey Cox promoted a theology of the secular city, one which sought to put a positive face on the retreat of allegiance to traditional Christian faith and structures in a secularizing culture.

In retrospect, the post-war ecumenical movement seems to represent both the culmination of a century-long vision and implementation of Christian unity and a defense against the marginalization of the churches in the countries in Christian Europe and North America. A symbolic denouement of this period took place at a major conference on church and society sponsored by the World Council of Churches in the summer of 1966. This event meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, took place at the height of the nuclear confrontation between the Soviet Union and the West. It was widely feared that the conference would be shape up as a struggle in the Cold War between East and West, one dominated by representatives from the Orthodox Church in the USSR, who were seen as subservient to the Kremlin, and spokesmen from the churches in the Eastern European countries controlled by the Soviet Union. To the surprise of all, the contest turned out to be one between North and South, as articulate

voices from the emerging churches of Africa stood up against patterns of domination by those who had brought Christianity to that continent. An echo of that struggle would erupt at Lambeth 1988 and 1998.

Let me return to the chronology of the emerging instruments of unity in the Anglican Communion. As early as the beginning of the 20th century, it was realized that the pattern of holding Lambeth Conferences at intervals of roughly ten years or more provided insufficient opportunity to take counsel on rapid changes in church and society. Inasmuch as lay persons and priests shared responsibility with bishops in most of the national churches of the Communion, an appeal was made to convene a Pan-Anglican Congress. One was held in 1908. Something like ten thousand delegates assembled in London, a body far too unwieldy to produce results, but the spirit engendered led to a decision to meet again in ten years. That meeting failed to materialize because the world was at war in 1918.

In 1945, the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church USA raised the prospect of another Congress, one to be held in the ten year interval following Lambeth 1948. The proposal was presented to the Conference by Bishop Walter Gray of Connecticut to the Conference, who carried major responsibilities in the decade after the war within the church's Overseas Department.

Lambeth 1948 in the end accepted the proposal, though with misgivings by some, and a year later, the Episcopal Church's General Convention voted to invite the Congress to meet in the United States. In the summer of 1954 this second Anglican Congress assembled in Minneapolis. The delegates came from all of the then-17 provinces, as well as many extra-provincial dioceses, and represented approximately two-thirds of those eligible to attend. Attending were 201 bishops, 242 priests, 149 laymen and 65 laywomen, the bishops outnumbered by a ratio of more than two to one. Reports from the meeting stress that the deliberations sought to give shape to the Communion as a genuine unity of established national churches bound together by common worship in a missionary fellowship.

Lambeth 1958, in addition to the structural and staffing steps it initiated, called for another Anglican Congress. Two men made the 1963 Anglican Congress in Toronto a pivotal event in the development of the Anglican Communion. Archbishop Michael Ramsey said it well in his *Summons* to the meeting, a plea "to every part of the Communion to realize more vividly its brotherhood with the other parts and its own place within the whole." The fruit of that call was the adoption of the declaration "Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ," of which Bayne was the driving force and principal author. MRI was a vision developed in recognition that "in our time the Anglican Communion has come of age. Our professed nature as a

world-wide fellowship of national and regional churches has suddenly become a reality." A vision, yes. A reality, no.

Ian Douglas, unquestionably the leading missiologist of the Episcopal Church, observed to our House of Bishops in 2001:

The vision of MRI remains a goal to be achieved rather than a reality that is lived. The real question for Anglicans today is how does this mutual responsibility and interdependence play itself out in a community of 38 equal, and autocephalous, churches.[2]

I will return to a review of later developments in the emerging Anglican Communion, the forces which enhance and those which stand in the way of a genuine embrace of the vision. I want now to turn your attention to the way in which the Toronto Congress offers a point in time to survey briefly how the Episcopal Church changed in the decades since World War II.

Contrary to the European experience after the war, the churches in the US had flourished. The war opened a generation to global society as nothing before. Generous provision through the GI Bill for higher education flooded the post-war suburbs with men and women who helped shape a burgeoning and dominant world economy. The Episcopal Church grew rapidly in this context; for well over a decade adding to its membership at a rate double the rate of growth in the population as a whole. National euphoria about the society began to erode when a Supreme Court decision in 1953 mandated the desegregation of public education, and the nation descended into bitter social strife. The promise of post-war security and prosperity to its citizens had failed to address the legacy of racial segregation..

An unnoticed event took place in Toronto during the early days of the 1963 Anglican Congress. I think it may be held up as the beginning of the serious turmoil which has characterized the Episcopal Church ever since, turmoil which has transformed us from a quasi-established and elitist church into a prophetic body on the margin of American life, including what might be described as the marriage of convenience between the present Bush administration and the Christian Right.

As the Congress was opening, Presiding Bishop Arthur Lichtenberger called a special meeting of the Episcopal bishops present in Toronto. The civil rights struggle in the United States had reached a dangerous point in the Spring of 1963, with increasingly violent confrontations against civil rights demonstrators in a number of southern cities. In May, at a special meeting of its General Board, the National Council of Churches established a Commission on Religion and Race, and gave it extraordinary freedom to act outside its structures. Staff for the Commission would consist of

persons seconded by the various member churches, and was soon in place; I was appointed as the lead Episcopal staff officer.

Although an increasing number of clergy and laity had begun to support the largely southern and largely-black movement for racial change, these events signaled a shift to outright institutional support for the goals of desegregation and guarantees of voting rights for black Americans. Earlier, on Whitsunday, Bishop Lichtenberger had addressed a pastoral letter to the Church supporting the right of non-violent demonstration in support of the goals. The vote at the Toronto meeting placed the support of the House of Bishops behind these initiatives. A few days later, at the celebrated March on Washington on August 18, a half-page advertisement in the Washington Post recorded the support given in Toronto by the House of Bishops, and thirteen bishops in rochet and chimere sat on the platform at the Lincoln Memorial.

It is true that General Conventions of the Church from 1955 onwards had sparred over civil rights, but the focus was on whether to give or withhold support to the efforts of government to desegregate southern schools. The commitments made in 1963 put the church in the heart of the struggle to desegregate American life, one in which the church had to come to grips with its own complicity in racism. This struggle was only the first of several protracted encounters which have challenged its colonial past, its elitist and paternalist assumptions, its cultural captivity. Although there have been instances in which change has been initiated by the bishops, acting collectively as in Toronto, the reshaping of the Episcopal Church USA has proceeded through its synodical structures, its national and diocesan conventions, and the voice of lay persons and clergy has frequently pressured the bishops to move.

As an institution, the Episcopal Church has been in turmoil for a half century, from the civil rights struggle to conflicts over Vietnam, the nuclear arms race, Prayer Book revision, the ordination of women, the election of a first woman to the episcopate, response to the HIV-AIDS crisis, and more recently to the public affirmation of gay and lesbian clergy and same-sex blessings. As a community of faith, these challenges have been leading the Episcopal Church to a wider consciousness of global reality and global ministry, one which calls us to live more deeply into the MRI vision. This transformation has not come without cost. It is well-described by Ian Douglas in the address I quoted earlier:

The majority of Anglicans in the world today are able to live in multiple realities, both the Western Enlightenment construct as well as their own local contexts. It is important to emphasize here that marginalized people in the West, especially women, people of color, poor people, gay and lesbian individuals, have always lived multiple realities; their own particularities and

that of the dominant culture. It is only those in power, historically white, financially secure, heterosexual males in the West that are ordained, who have the privilege of believing and acting as if there were only one reality, ours! The movement within Anglicanism from being a Church grounded in modernity and secure in the Enlightenment, to a postmodern or extra-modern reality is as tumultuous as the shift from colonialism to a post-colonial reality.[3]

To describe in detail this journey of the Episcopal Church USA is beyond the scope of this conference. I suspect that the broad outline of our struggle is familiar to you, because the Canadian Church have shared something of the same journey. history. It is important to cite a few incidents which need to be accepted as a call to deeper faith and commitment, and not as detractors claim regrettable episodes of conflict, disarray, and betrayal of the faith once delivered. In the summer of 1964, for example, as part of an effort to register voters in the Deep South, a surge of student and church-related volunteers traveled to Mississippi and Alabama under ecumenical church auspices to assist the drive. Bishops of the two dioceses challenged the move as an inappropriate crossing of diocesan boundaries. Are not diocesan and provincial boundaries sacrosanct? When do compelling issues sanction intervention from beyond the local church? The forum for deciding the matter in 1964 was the Executive Council of the Church, an extension of the triennial General Convention, and made up of clergy and laity as well as bishops. No comparable structure exists in the Anglican Communion with such a constitutional or canonical mandate.

In 1964, the church's General Convention met in St. Louis, an election year in which Senator Barry Goldwater ran for the presidency on a conservative platform. Two events are worth noting. Lay theologian and author William Stringfellow challenged the social positions espoused by Goldwater, who was a practicing churchman, claiming that they repudiated long-standing social policies espoused by the church. Stringfellow was publicly condemned for his views. When are the actions of individuals, groups, indeed national churches, accountable and to whom or which authority?

Later in that same meeting, the Convention was presented with a resolution which would have endorsed the traditional stand that non-violent disobedience to civil authority or religious tradition is justifiable as a matter of conscience if carried out with full acceptance of possible consequences. The House of Deputies defeated it, after which the leader of the New York diocesan deputation, civil rights attorney Thurgood Marshall, led the delegation out of the meeting in protest. The statement was later adopted as a "Mind of the House" resolution by the bishops. Both incidents

raise the question, "How binding are the deliberations of representative bodies, be they a national or diocesan synod or the meeting of bishops at Lambeth?"

Events in the civil rights struggle came to a head in April, 1965, when Alabama national guardsmen violently dispersed a group of marchers in Selma, Alabama. In the subsequent march from Selma to the state capital at Montgomery, as many as 900 or 1,000 Episcopal clergy took part -- that was my estimate at the time -- with similarly impressive numbers of laity. The importance of this cannot be underestimated. Although the goal was the passage of voting rights and public accommodations legislation, for many in the church, the march became a time of conversion or expiation. The Selma events gave the church a martyr, seminarian Jonathan Daniels who was shot in cold blood in August 1965. It is a sign of transformation that Daniels' witness is now celebrated annually by a pilgrimage to the site of his death led the Diocese of Alabama which had adamantly resisted voter registration drive which occasioned the Selma march.

Changes in the '60s did not end the hold of racism over American life. Efforts by the Southern Christian Leadership Council to take its tactics to northern cities collapsed after King's death, and President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty ground to a halt as the war in Vietnam replaced race as our national obsession. De facto segregation is entrenched and expanding as a reality in public schools in northern cities. American society may have declared an end to the separate but equal doctrine, but the bitter legacy of slavery and its children segregation and discrimination remain to haunt our society..

There is another outcome to this chapter. Resistance to the involvement of scores of northern, largely-white church leaders came not just from reluctant southern dioceses. During the so-called civil rights era, African-American clergy and laity in the Episcopal Church frequently found themselves bypassed as national leadership flocked to support the civil rights organizations.. This frustration came to a head in 1967 when Presiding Bishop John Hines, responding to serious urban upheavals in northern cities, proposed a significant flow of church financial resources to inner-city community organizations. The program was short-lived, brought to a close in the early 1970s. An important reason its demise was that it had significantly by-passed African-American parishes and clergy. With new militancy, the Union of Black Clergy and Laity, later renamed the Union of Black Episcopalians, was organized in 1968 to represent the interests of black Episcopalians and to challenge the Episcopal Church to clean up its own life. It would not be until the 1990s that the General Convention accepted the challenge to confront its own history and mandated that leaders at all levels of church life be required to participate in anti-racism training.

In March, 1965, the movement for civil rights was jolted when Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., preached a sermon at Riverside Church in New York linking the war in Vietnam to the domestic struggle over race. King was denounced by supporters as well as critics, and the issue of the war, with all its racial overtones, came increasingly to divide the nation and the church. Public marches and other demonstrations marked an increasingly fractious society, and the radical confrontations of groups such as Students for a Democratic Society and the Black Panthers disrupted cities and university campuses. Their political and social agendas in many instances became indistinguishable from challenges over free speech, a growing relaxation of sexual mores, and widespread discrediting of civility in public life. The term WASP (white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant) became a sign of opprobrium in many places. The era of a prosperous and forward-moving society which had emerged in 1945 gave way, all the while seen under the shadow of the escalating competition with the Soviet bloc defined by the acronym MAD, *Mutual Assured Destruction*. Issues of war and peace, support for conscientious objectors to military service, the flight of draft-eligible men to Canada and elsewhere, and in the 1970s and '80s the campaign for nuclear disarmament have made for an uneasy national life. It goes without saying that as the US enters the fifth year of a disastrous war in Iraq, our government's justification of torture and rendition (including a notable case which has divided the US and Canada), the frequent incursions of the US militarily in Latin America throughout the twentieth century, our rejection of the Kyoto treaty and other international agreements have increased US isolation in

the global picture. The Episcopal Church and other main-stream Protestant bodies have moved from being establishment elites to politically-marginalized critics of the government.

We may not a similar dynamic present in each of the changes which directly affect the inner life of the church -- Prayer Book revision, the ordination of women and sexual minorities, how scripture is read. Each has been a challenge to expand the parameters of the church's understanding of its faith and the boundaries of its inclusiveness. It is important to remember that they have occurred in an era in which the vision of a world of peace and a society of order and abundance have been seriously compromised by violence and war. How many anguished letters or manifestos have any of us read which start with a premise that something important to belief and church life has been taken away? If anything, what surprises me is how few congregations, how few members have left the church, how many have remained and come to acceptance and transformation. An entire cottage industry has grown up, aided in the recent past by the internet and the prospects of blogging, which seeks to discredit the changes in our midst..

For example, the 1979 *Book of Common Prayer*, adopted after more than a decade of experimentation, was soon assaulted for its emphasis on the celebratory theology of the Eucharist representative of the early church, described as a sinister move away from the traditional texts of Anglicanism and a heavily-penitential Reformation theology, and a rejection of the faith itself. Few congregations actually left the Episcopal Church, though a handful continue in defiance of the mainstream to use the *Book of Common Prayer* 1928.

The resistance to the new liturgies was furthered by strident societies, organized and funded in part by individuals and groups on the fringe of the church. In the mid-1980s, for example, the vestry of one of our parishes in the Diocese of Connecticut was taken over by a group of lay people who proceeded to spend down a major portion of the parish endowment, and re-register it with the Connecticut Secretary of State as an independent Anglican congregation. After a costly suit filed by the Diocese against these individuals, a circuit court affirmed the hierarchical nature of the Episcopal Church, a decision later upheld by the state Supreme Court after an appeal by the schismatic group. The court based its opinion on the fact that congregations are accepted into union with a diocese on the basis of their commitment to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Episcopal Church outlined in the constitution and canons, as by analogy dioceses are admitted to union with the Episcopal Church by vote of the General Convention.

Alongside the struggle about liturgy was that over the ordination of women. The problems posed by irregular ordinations in 1974 did not deter the 1976 General Convention from moving ahead to admit women to the priesthood, by a simple ruling that the masculine pronouns in the ordination canons were held not to discriminate against the ordination of women. Various strategies of resistance developed, including a special gathering of the House of Bishops.. Protests took place at the earliest services of ordination, though no woman ordinand was actually turned back. Several dioceses by Convention action or initiative of the bishop declined to ordain women. In a couple of instances, a subsequent change of bishop has reversed this ban.. In others women seeking holy orders have been supported in that quest through provision for ordination elsewhere, and ordained women have in some instances been permitted to accept calls to otherwise non-conforming dioceses.. Today only four dioceses do not ordain women. Despite efforts at General Convention and within the House of Bishops to require the non-ordaining dioceses to conform, no sanctions have been taken against any non-compliant bishop or diocese..

It is argued by detractors that such reluctance to punish non-conforming bishops is of a piece with the failure of the House of Bishops in 1967 to condemn Bishop James

Pike of California for heresy and later challenges to do the same with Bishop John Shelby Spong of Newark for their alleged heresies. Or is it closer to the truth that the Anglican ethos is tolerant of wide differences of conviction, even to the level of appearing indecisive or lacking conviction? This is clearly one of the issues driving some within the Anglican Communion to interpret the Windsor Report and discussion of the adoption of an Anglican Covenant as a mandate to impose new instruments which impose communion-wide magisterial bodies to enforce standards of conformity where none exist.

I became bishop in Connecticut in 1979, when there were only a handful of women ordained to the priesthood. Gathering them together informally twice a year in the Bishop's house, I quickly became party to the obstacles put in their path to acceptance, including instances of verbal and occasional physical assault. Over the fourteen years of my service, the numbers of ordained women increased exponentially, and opportunities for wider and more responsible ministries have steadily increased. Global concerns raised by women's ordination at Lambeth 1988, leading to the appointment of a select committee chaired by Archbishop Robin Eames, seem simply to have dissipated with the incremental expansion of the number of Provinces which now permit such ordination. Women bishops who attended Lambeth 1998 report indignities similar to those facing the small groups of newly-ordained priests who met with me twenty years previously, but I find it hard to imagine -- if and when we get beyond our present crisis in the Communion -- that the matter will not simply go away in a characteristic Anglican fashion.

Reluctance to discipline non-conforming clergy and parishes has been a mark of the Episcopal Church's handling of controversy. As the focus of debate shifted to gender issues and the ordination of non-celibate gay and lesbian ordinands, a resort to disciplinary procedure preoccupied the church as a presentment was made in 1996 by Bishop James Stanton of Dallas on behalf of a group of his colleagues against the Rt. Rev. Walter C. Righter, former Bishop of Iowa and an Assistant Bishop of Newark. Righter, who had ordained to the priesthood a non-celibate gay man in a public relationship with a partner, was charged with "the offense of holding and teaching. . . a doctrine contrary to that held by this Church." The Theological Court for the Trial of a Bishop, on which I served as one of its nine members, ruled that although the matter at hand was doctrinal in nature, it was not part of the core doctrine of the church, of creedal or kerygmatic teaching. On the strength of this conclusion, the Court declined to bring Righter to trial and the matter became moot. Although our decision bears on the question of same-sex blessing which must be answered in the vote at your June General Synod, you clearly have had opportunity for deeper reflection on the subject that was available to us in 1996, and I am grateful for the opportunity to see the

various papers which have been drafted over what you are asked to conclude, what constitutes *doctrine*?

Which brings us to the recent past, the election of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire, his confirmation and consecration, and the recent turmoil. Resistance to his confirmation at the 2003 Convention brought about a greater coalescence of disgruntled individuals and groups than we had previously seen, though the numbers in no way represent the level of opposition claimed in the media. In some respects I think we confront what may be described as *a convergence of the unhappy*, some who still cling to theological and liturgical issues raised by the new Prayer Book, some opposed to the ordination of women, some genuinely committed to alternative ways of reading scripture, as well as those opposed to ordination of gays and the blessing of gay unions. A new element in the equation is the linkage to overseas provinces and therefore to Anglican identity, mostly but not exclusively from Africa, and the open and distinctly un-traditional crossing of provincial boundaries to intervene in the life of the Episcopal Church. A piece of this jigsaw puzzle is the active lobbying by such groups as the Institute of Religion and Democracy, a frankly-political body linked to the Christian Right, and the considerable financial support for its outright effort to discredit the leadership of mainstream Christian bodies in the US, and to foment schism within them.

Let me bring my discussion a close. In visiting the history of the Communion since World War II, I earlier stressed the creation of an Anglican executive office after 1958, the two Anglican Congresses of 1954 and 1963, and the creation of the Anglican Consultative Council in 1968. First meeting in 1971, the Council represents be the only one of the four instruments of unity made up of all orders in the church, laity and clergy as well as bishops. It has without much fanfare plied its responsibilities of supplying a continuity of consultation and guidance on policy and program which the Communion previously lacked., and in its 1984 report gave us the graceful phrase "bonds of affection" to describe the nature of Anglican relations, "which were simply that, bonds of *affection*, not legally binding, legally enforceable parameters of thought and conduct," as one US bishop recently commented..

Lambeth 1998 called for an Anglican Gathering, something resembling the earlier Anglican Congresses, to be held in South Africa in 2008, and the US General Convention in 2003 gave it enthusiastic support and requested that financial provision for it be included in the next triennial meeting. Plans for the Gathering and for holding the next Lambeth outside England did not materialize, as the committee charged with the planning began work too late to make the necessary hotel and other arrangements. This represents a great loss. The recent TEAM conference in South Africa (*Towards*

Effective Anglican Mission) was convened in place of the hoped-for comprehensive Anglican Gathering. It nevertheless provided a significant occasion for Anglicans to come together around service to the Millennium Development Goals, bridging the divisions which marked the Primates meeting in Dar es Salaam .

The question before the Communion is Which vision and implementing structures of Anglican community will prevail?. Will they be based on the work of an Anglican Consultative Council with its inclusiveness of all orders with the Church? Will the evident commitment among provinces north and south be to work together on the global realities embodied in response to the Millennium Development Goals or the more limited agenda of human sexuality? Or will the next chapter be limited to initiatives by the other three instruments of unity -- the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, and the Primates' Meeting -- all of which consist of bishops alone? And which vision will inform further developments of the Windsor Report and the Covenant process?

Against the background of that question, the grounds on which the bishops of the Episcopal Church responded on March 20th to the Dar es Salaam communique are unambiguous, all the more impressive because they mustered nearly unanimous support, and flowed from a dialogue shaped by prayer and genuine bonds of affection:

With great hope that we will continue to be welcome in the councils of the family of Churches we know as the Anglican Communion, we believe that to participate in the Primates' Pastoral Scheme would be injurious to the Episcopal Church for many reasons.

First, it violates our church law in that it would call for a delegation of primatial authority not permissible under our Canons and a compromise of our autonomy not permissible under our Constitution.

Second, it fundamentally changes the character of the Windsor process and the covenant design process in which we thought all the Anglican Churches were participating together.

Third, it violates our founding principles as the Episcopal Church following our own liberation from colonialism and the beginning of a life independent of the Church of England.

Fourth, it is a very serious departure from our English Reformation heritage. It abandons the generous orthodoxy of our Prayer Book tradition. It sacrifices the emancipation of the laity for the exclusive leadership of high-ranking Bishops. And, for the first time since our separation from the papacy in the 16th century, it replaces the local governance of the Church by its

owns people with the decisions of a distant and unaccountable group of prelates.

Most important of all it is spiritually unsound. The pastoral scheme encourages one of the worst tendencies of our Western culture, which is to break relationships when we find them difficult instead of doing the hard work necessary to repair them and be the instruments of reconciliation.

I close with a definition written by John Knox, a professor of New Testament at Union Seminary, quoted by Professor John Booty in his study, *The Episcopal Church in Crisis*.^[4]

The Church has its own particular way of being relevant to the order (or disorders) of the world. It may not take this way, but there is no other way for it to take and still be relevant as the Church. The fuller realization of the Church's own nature and the fuller discharging of its own mission in the world are really one thing. For the Church is by definition a fellowship in the love of God, and its mission is to be a constantly growing sphere of a constantly deepening reconciliation.

[1] From the Report prepared under the chairmanship of Archbishop Philip Carrington of Quebec, presented to and adopted by the Lambeth Conference, 1948.

[2] "The Gift of Communion - Reflections from the Standing Commission on World Mission," Report of the Standing Commission on World Mission, February, 2006

[3] Ibid, page 2.

[4] Quoted in John Booty, *The Episcopal Church in Crisis*, Cambridge, Cowley Press, 1988, p. 22

Some quotations for the paper which I chose not to include:

Robert Runcie's opening address to the 1988 Lambeth, *The Truth Shall Make you Free. The Lambeth Conference 1988 reports etc*, p. 13.:

I want to say that we must never make the survival of the Anglican Communion an end in itself. The Churches of the Anglican Communion have never claimed to be more than a part of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Anglicanism has a radically provisional character which we must never allow to be obscured. One of the characteristic features of Anglicanism is our Reformation inheritance of national or provincial autonomy. The Anglican

tradition is thus opposed to centralism and encourages the thriving of variety. This is a great good. There is an important principle to be borne witness to here: that nothing should be done at a higher level than is absolutely necessary.

From the report of the Section on Mission and Ministry, Lambeth 1988, *ibid.* p.31

"The aim of Jesus' ministry was not to build or create the Kingdom by carrying out some sort of plan or programme. Rather, his mission was to announce and signify it -- to open people's eyes to the fact that God was with them in a new way for grace and judgment." Quoted from a report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission of the ACC, 1986

We see signs of the Kingdom's presence, as Jesus promised:

when men and women, being justified by faith, become a new creation in Christ;

when women and men are being healed at their deepest spiritual, physical and emotional levels;

when the poor are no longer hungry and are treated justly as God's beloved;
when the Church takes seriously the formation of women and men into the likeness of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit;

when unjust structures of society are changed into structures of grace.

Elizabeth Templeton of the Church of Scotland, in her response to the opening address of the Archbishop, *Ibid.*, pages 289, 290, 292.:

My first conviction is that there are no outsiders, or that all "outsiderness" is to be regarded as provisional, since God's lively and inviting love is without bounds. The Church exists to represent, cradle, and anticipate the future of *all* our humanness, which is hidden, with the healing of creation, in the love and freedom of God.

To put it a little provocatively, the Church is the-world-ahead-of-itself. It is not a separate enclave, not separable. As Hooker so gently puts it in his 'Sermon on Pride':

God hath created nothing simply for itself: but each thing in all things, and of everything each part in each other have such interest, that in the whole world nothing is found whereunto any thing created can say, 'I need thee not.'

This lovely and haunting understanding of the Church, making real and concrete the relatedness of all things in love and freedom, is wonderfully deep

in Anglican tradition, and will, I trust, be what sets the agenda for our attempts at inter-Church relationships, as well as for our 'mission', our 'ethics' and our 'spirituality.'

I have been constantly struck by the best generosity of your recurrent insistence that across parties, camps, styles and dogmas, you have need of one another. Both internally and in relation to other evolving life-forms, you have been conspicuously unclassifiable, a kind of ecclesiastical duck-billed platypus, robustly mammal *and* vigorously egg-laying. That, I am sure, is to be celebrated and not deplored.

Remarks by Prof. Katherine Grieb of the Virginia Theological Seminary, to the House of Bishops, March 19, 2007, from an ENS reprint:

The term "covenant" itself is fluid: it can range anywhere from an informal agreement to a solemn oath to a formal contract that is legally binding and enforceable. Covenants can be used for a variety of purposes: to invite or to impose, to include or exclude, to summarize a hard-won consensus or to set a limit beyond which the parties to the covenant may not go. The idea of a covenant is neutral: an agreement can be for good purposes or bad. One biblical example concerns the plot to kill Paul in Acts 23:12ff where a group of men bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. On the other hand, Paul and the Philippians are bound together in "koinonia," a business partnership or covenant for the proclamation of the gospel. He writes to them from prison precisely because they are bound to one another in covenant relationship.

In Scripture, the great majority of uses of the term "covenant" refers not to these agreements between people, but to the covenants that God has made: with humanity, with Israel as a whole, and with particular representatives of Israel: Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, etc.

You all know better than I do whether a clear majority of you would be willing to promise to withhold consent to a candidate for episcopal orders living in a same-sex union. But it may be a long time indeed before "some new consensus on these matters emerges across the Communion" and who knows whether the bishops elected in subsequent years will consider themselves bound by your promises or whether some of you will become convicted to renounce your promises? All indications from the Primates' Communiqué are that the words will be interpreted very literally and without much concern for matters of our polity. Personally, I think it is only a matter of time before we would be placed

on probation anyway. Archbishop Eames had suggested that the Episcopal Church had already responded adequately to the Windsor Report even before General Convention 2006, but apparently the head of the Windsor Report Commission himself cannot interpret the Windsor Report. The Primates do the interpreting for the Anglican Communion and the Primates are very angry at the Episcopal Church.

The *conclusion* of a paper on "The Windsor Report: A Paradigm Shift for Anglicanism", by Esther Mombo, Academic Dean of St. Paul's Theological College, Limuru, Kenya, in an issue of the *Anglican Theological Review* devoted to the Third International Conference of Afro-Anglicanism, Winter 2007, p. 78:

The Windsor Report challenges the Anglican Communion, especially Anglicans in the African Provinces, to reflect critically on the missional priorities of the church. It challenges Christians to re-think the hermeneutics of sin, salvation, and reconciliation. More importantly, it challenges the worldwide communion to re-define its organic structure and ask itself whether to be a monolith or a confederation of diverse organizations.

An excerpt from a paper by Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane on "The Heartlands of Anglicanism," based on one written by him to the primates on July 10, 2006.

The degree of autonomy we enjoy in our provinces has allowed hugely productive expressions of mature Christian faith appropriate to various regions of the world, from which others have learned. And because we are a church this is both episcopally led and synodically governed, these provincial structures provide effectively for full participation of clergy and laity alongside the episcopacy in deliberation and decision-making. Thus in major questions of order and common life, it is the provinces that have the final say, through their constitutional processes and their deliberation. This is ultimately where the future of Anglicanism lies.

A comment of Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, speaking during the meeting in Tanzania, as reported by Religious News Service, and quoted in *The Christian Century*:

There was a great saint who said God was evident when bishops are silent.