

THE SERVANT



195

Epiphany 2005



INCH BY INCH

One day two caterpillars were slowly moving down the street, inch by inch. As they saw a butterfly overhead, one said to the other, "You'll never get me up in one of those."

Growth for anything worth doing takes planning, work and effort. We must plan for the present by being prepared for God's plan for the future. We all hope and pray for success in many ways. We hope and pray that what we do is acceptable to God and that what we do will be for his glory and honor. We aim high—though sometimes we fear to aim as high as we could if we had full confidence we were doing God's will.

Is all we do filled with this purpose? Do we really strive to allow God to work in and through us? Or do we only make the plans and presume that God will support us with his acceptance, as if planning were the end and not the beginning of the task? Success must be pursued and the goal reached in the same way that the caterpillar covers the ground, inch by inch. We can take the same course that members of AA use: "One day at a time." The inch-by-inch or day-by-day approach allows for a reflection as we move along the road.

This approach is inherent in the way the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory has developed and changed over the last decade, moving step by step for ten years. There were ups and downs but by using each event as a testing, as a searching of God's intentions, we have come this far inch by inch. Being, planning, working, doing: all these are be filled with a slow and precise moving forward—into the realm of God's plan for us.

Each delay—in some cases each abrupt stop!—is an opportunity for reassessment and contemplation, a moment to reorient and gain a sense of where the call is drawing us to the future. In Matthew we read: "Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour." The moment when we will be asked to make the next step or move ahead another inch is never really known until it happens. We may even have already gone some distance, before we realize God has moved us ahead. In some cases, what we may perceive as a step backward is really a step forward. This is so when we are pushed back in order for God to make available a more fruitful opportunity. God may be the friendly foot that nudges the caterpillar away from the edge of a sheer drop; or maybe the gracious hand that plucks us up and transports us across the chasm we don't even know is there.

So whether in the setting of the religious life or in the midst of a secular world, we move along inch by inch—slowly and patiently—with the knowledge that the promises of God are certain and sure. If we allow God's hand to guide us along the path, sometimes maybe even picking us up, we can be sure the way will be traveled under God's grace and in God's care.

—RTB (Note: This essay first appeared in *The Servant* in February 1979)

COMMUNITY NOTES

Manhattan

As the saying goes, “All good things must come to an end.” Such an end did come at the end of July—the 22 years of service Richard Thomas Biernacki gave to the church through his work at the Episcopal Church Center in New York. In early September he was called back to the Center for a gala reception to thank him for his stalwart service, and many who had served with him over the years stepped forward to add a word of praise. The master of ceremonies was Canon Carlson Gerdau OGS, the Canon to the Presiding Bishop, with whom Richard Thomas had worked during the current administration. Canon Gerdau was assisted by the Rev Dr Clayton Morris, head of the Liturgy and Music Office where Richard Thomas worked most recently. Numerous staff colleagues gave testimony to his abilities and warmth, including the Presiding Bishop’s Chancellor, David Booth Beers, who spoke of his personal experience with the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory and praised Richard Thomas for founding the community. Many people who could not attend in person sent letters of congratulation, including bishops and diocesan staff members, and especially our Bishop Visitor, Rodney Michel, and the Brotherhood’s Minister Provincial of Province 2, James Mahoney. Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold closed the festivities with his presentation of a stunning hand-calligraphed citation of gratitude on behalf of the Episcopal Church, and sealed with the Presiding Bishop’s personal crest. Both James Teets and William Francis Jones were present throughout this event; after the festivities they were sure to remind their Minister General that they knew him before he was on staff at the Episcopal Church Center and that they planned to continue that relationship for many years to come. They thought it best to leave the public speaking that day to bishops and other staff colleagues who wanted to say “goodbye” to Richard Thomas—and neither James or William Francis considered themselves in that category!

A meeting of representatives of three canonically recognized Christian Communities also took place at the Episcopal Church Center in mid-October. Br Carle Griffin OCP, Treasurer of the Community of the Paraclete, called together a small group to discuss the possible revitalization of the National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities—NÆCC. Bishop Rodney Michel, Chair of the Standing Committee on Religious Communities of the House of Bishops, was consulted and, though he could not be present for the meeting itself, gave his enthusiastic blessing upon its intention. The meeting brought together Br Carle; the Rev Masud Ibn Syedullah TSSF, Minister Provincial of the Third Order American Province of the Society of Saint Francis; and James Teets and William Francis Jones represented the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory. Much was discussed and preliminary agreements were reached toward attempting to reorganize the NÆCC since its last meeting in Tempe, Arizona in 2001, and the fellowship was greatly enjoyed by all present.

Nine brothers from Province 2 converged on the General Theological Seminary in September for a retreat entitled “Peace & Justice and the Interior Life: Spirituality on its Feet” sponsored by the Center for Christian Spirituality. This popular seminar se-

ries draws people from across the city, and on the first Saturday of autumn it was a perfect way to spend a day of reflection on the gifts of Carmelite spirituality.

In early November, seven brothers attended a workshop entitled “The Peace of God It is No Peace: The Gospel of God and Human Conflict,” sponsored by the Spirituality Committee of the Diocese of New York at the Church of the Intercession in uptown Manhattan. Noted speaker and retreat leader Douglas Brown OHC, Prior of Holy Cross Monastery in West Park, New York, gave the keynote address, which touched on the Windsor Report and human sexuality, and our own Tobias Stanislas Haller preached at the liturgy that day, commemorating Blessed Richard Hooker. Approximately 30 people from around the diocese attended and participated in this excellent and topical workshop.

The Bronx

Following the two-day meeting of the Brotherhood’s Council (see below, Vails Gate NY) Thomas Bushnell stayed in the Bronx before returning to California, and served as guest preacher at Saint James’ Fordham. While he is no stranger to this venerable parish church, this was his first opportunity to preach there, and the sermon was well received by an attentive congregation.

Yonkers

The Ninth Anniversary of Br Bernard Fessenden House took place on the feast of the Martyrs of Memphis. The celebrant was the Rev S Burtner Ulrich, Rector of Saint John’s Church, a long-time friend of Fessenden House and of the Brotherhood; the preacher was our own Christopher Stephen Jenks, Executive Director of the facility. In his sermon, Christopher Stephen gave an overview of the heroic efforts of the Martyrs of Memphis during the yellow fever outbreak of 1878, tying those Christian heroes to the recent history of Fessenden House, and summing up with the message of the day’s gospel reading: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” We were very glad to see Patrick Ignatius Dickson assisting at the mass and feeling new energy after his Life Profession this past summer; and the musical accompaniment of Br Randy Horton was much appreciated. A number of the residents of Fessenden House also assisted or were present, as was one of the original staff members: William Francis Jones. James Teets also represented the Brotherhood’s long association with this care facility, and following worship a reception provided opportunity for staff, residents and friends to renew and make acquaintances.

Tarrytown NY

Delegates to the 228th Convention of the Diocese of New York elected Tobias Stanislas as Delegate to the Province II Synod and Deputy to General Convention 2006. While Tobias Stanislas has attended numerous previous meetings of the General Convention as a staff officer of Presiding Bishops John Maury Allin and Edmond Lee Browning, and was elected an Alternate (and seated as a Deputy during the last days of the 2003 Convention) this will be his first General Convention as Clerical Deputy N^o 3. At this same meeting of the Convention of the Diocese, James Teets served once again as Deputy Inspector of Elections, assisting Sanders Davies in this important task.

Vails Gate NY

The Brotherhood Council held its fall meeting in the beautiful Vails Gate convent of the Order of Saint Helena. At this meeting Council interviewed its first international applicants, from Australia and Wales, and is happy to report that both of them will attend this year's Annual Convocation as postulants-prospective. David Battrick is a recently ordained priest from the Diocese of Perth, and Michael Elliott a retired priest now living in Brecon Wales. The Brotherhood welcomes this opportunity to strengthen the "bonds of affection" within the Anglican Communion. Tobias Stanislas preached at the Saturday Holy Eucharist on the feast of Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley, and the example they offer for when the church gets too sure of itself!

Massena NY

River Respite, a retreat center on the Saint Lawrence in upstate New York, was recently completed by novice Richard Matthias and his wife, the Rev Nancy Matthias, and it has officially opened to receive retreatants. The first guest was an ELCA pastor from Wisconsin who came in October for a week of reflection and prayer. Both structured and silent retreats of any length are welcomed; inquiries and reservations may be made by phone at 315-764-7676 or by writing to River Respite, 288 Crescent Drive, Massena NY 13662-4111. Your soul will be grateful for the experience!

Nashville

Friars from across Province 5 attended a mid-September weekend retreat in this historic Tennessee city at the invitation of novice Thomas Lawrence Greer. They came from as far away as Texas (novice William Henry Benefield), Florida (Mark Andrew Jones) and Chicago (Gordon John Stanley, Joseph Basil Gauss and novice Nathanael Deward Rahm). Christ Church Cathedral was the locus for the event, beginning with Morning Prayer and continuing with lunch and the Holy Eucharist celebrated by Thomas Lawrence's rector, the Rev Lisa Hunt of Saint Ann's, Nashville, who also led the group in a discussion of church unity and current events. On Sunday the brothers attended Saint Ann's, where Gordon John served as deacon—no rest for the wicked! The congregation warmly received the Gregorian friars, and after a busy coffee hour all went to lunch accompanied by a parishioner who is a member of the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis. When all had returned home, Joseph Basil provided an overview of the event to the community via email; this was certainly an endorsement of "Southern hospitality" and the great variety of culinary opportunities, as our brother spent more words on those facets than all else!

Chattanooga

Ron Fender preached at Saint Paul's on the life of the Brotherhood and his ministry at Saint Matthew's Shelter. (see text of his sermon beginning on the next page.)

San Francisco

Stephen Storen attended the annual meeting, Service of Rededication and Investiture and the fund raising dinner of The Priory in the United States of America of The Most Venerable Order of The Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem. Karekin Madteos Yarian also attended the liturgy.

COUNTER-CULTURE GRACE

I am deeply honored to be standing in this hallowed spot this morning. It is a perspective that I find truly humbling, and I must tell you that the view is magnificent. I bring you greetings from the Brotherhood of Saint Gregory, the people of the Community Kitchen, and the men of Saint Matthew's Shelter, where I live.

One of the great joys of the life of service is the conscious and deliberate retreat from our so-called culture. Bishop vonRosenberg has labeled my calling to the Brotherhood as "counter-cultural." This is true; but, as a novice, I am still learning a great deal. I never dreamed that the vow of poverty could enrich my life so abundantly. I never imagined that the vow of chastity would allow me to love so many and with such passion. I never thought that the vow of obedience would grant me such freedom. As I approach these vows in two years, I embrace them.

In the noise and confusion of our chaotic world, the life of service allows me to find the quiet and assuring presence of the living Christ. It is a sweet and peaceful way to live. As we approach the national elections in November, mud is flying in all directions, and everyone is getting soiled. We live in frightening times, with terror and confusion all around us. And today's reading from Ecclesiasticus is very clear: "Sovereignty passes from nation to nation on account of injustice and insolence and wealth. The Lord lays waste the lands of the nations and destroys them to the foundations of the earth. He removes some of them and destroys them, and erases the memory of them from the earth."

Perhaps it is time for us to ask ourselves why these words should not apply to us. My mother, in her mountain wisdom, would warn us not to get "too big for our britches." I recently asked some high school students whom they saw as heroes. I was curious whom they looked to as role models. I was inspired as a boy by my heroes, especially Dr King and Bobby Kennedy and Cesar Chavez and the exiled baseball player, Shoeless Joe Jackson. But these students facing me told me that heroes were a thing of the past. They had none. This seemed impossible to me, and very sad. But these young people assured me that they didn't really look to anyone as a hero, although some admitted a deep respect for Jennifer Lopez and the rapper Snoop Doggy Dog. Some aspired to the wealth of Bill Gates. But not one of them aspired to emulate a national leader or champion of any cause. They only aspired to wealth.

In a nation obsessed with wealth and status, the streets are filled with the homeless and hungry. The average age of a homeless American is nine years. At the Community Kitchen, the numbers are exploding. For the past five years, the Kitchen has consistently fed 100,000 meals per year. This year we project an increase of at least twenty-five percent. The Chattanooga Food Bank tells us that their numbers correspond almost exactly. The woods and junkyards and abandoned buildings of our city are filled with society's orphans, the homeless, the hungry, the broken. Under the bridges of our city, people live like rats. They wander our streets like ghosts. And every day I witness their struggle to survive just one more day. Many of these people work. Many are disabled and sick. Some have simply given up. But this is America.

We have so much, we are so blessed, so rich. Why must we endure this impoverishment? Thomas Wolfe, the amazing voice of our times, writes:

I believe we are lost here in America, but I believe we shall be found. And this belief is for me, and I think for all of us, not only our own hope, but America's everlasting, living dream. I think the true discovery of America is before us. I think the true fulfillment of our spirit, of our people, of our mighty and immortal land, is yet to come. I think the true discovery of our own democracy is still before us. And I think these things are certain as the morning, as inevitable as noon. I think the enemy is here before us, too. I think the enemy is here before us with a thousand faces, but I think we all know that all his faces wear one mask. I think the enemy is single selfishness and compulsive greed. I think the enemy is old as Time and evil as Hell, and that he has been here with us from the beginning. I think he stole the earth from us. I think he took our people and enslaved them, that he polluted the fountains of our life, took unto himself the rarest treasures of our own possession, took our bread and left us the crust, and not content, tried finally to take from us the crust.

And so it is that we have seen the enemy, and the enemy is our own selfish greed. And we are told, "The king of today will die tomorrow." It is apparently so human, so natural for us to want so much and need so little.

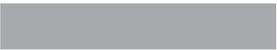
And yet Christ opens wide his arms in love and forgiveness and mercy and grace. His compassion for us flows like water over our sin and lust and greed, and we are healed by his sacrifice. There is joy in our life for him and we dance in his light. And as a family of believers here at Saint Paul's we are united in a vision of giving. We are hosting a perpetual banquet; so let us invite all the right people. Open wide the doors and ask the honored guests to our table: the homeless and hungry, the sick and lame, the lost and crying children of God. Today, in this special offering, you are tending to their feet and giving them new socks. "And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." Christ tells us this.

Carl Sandburg, the vagabond poet, writes:

The people will live on.
The learning and blundering people will live on.
They will be tricked and sold and sold again.
And go back to the nourishing earth for rootholds,
The people so peculiar in renewal and comeback,
You can't laugh off their capacity to take it.

And, so, let us be the America we ought to but have not been, a land of promise and Jeffersonian ideals. Let us have the compassion of Lincoln and the optimism of Kennedy. Let freedom ring, not for the few, but for all: the freedom from want, the freedom from hunger, the freedom from isolation, the freedom from dirty, blistered, stinking feet. Let us open wide our arms to gather paradise. Amen.

—Ron Fender



AN APPREHENSION OBSERVED

Following his wife's death, C S Lewis drew upon the rage and despair and wrote a short book called *A Grief Observed*. In the very first sentence he says, "No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear." In my own case it's not grief that feels so much like fear, but apprehension. One might say that apprehension is fear, but there's more to it than that. Fear may be part of some people's apprehension, but not with the apprehension I have. I'm not afraid, although the sensation is like being afraid.

Five and a half years ago I died. Maybe I'm being melodramatic, but I had a massive heart attack during which I went into cardiac arrest. Obviously the medical people revived me, but while I was unconscious to the world, I had a death experience. Not a near-death experience, but the real McCoy. As everything faded to black, I felt like I had jumped off a cliff. As I was falling somewhere, suddenly God was there. God's arms wrapped around me and embraced me while I fell. "You brought me up, O Lord, from the dead; you restored my life as I was going down to the grave." When I came back I found that I have nothing left to fear.

For five and a half years, God has shed grace on me. Now I have this little problem. The main symptom is that I run out of gas so easily. What does it mean? Well, I know enough to be dangerous to myself. This symptom is consistent with congestive heart failure, but I don't have most of the other symptoms of congestive heart failure. It might be coronary arteries beginning to occlude, especially the left anterior descending artery—the widow maker. But I have no angina. How can arteries be so occluded that the heart pumps so inefficiently without causing angina? It could be cardiomyopathy. Well, that could be fatal. But so what? I've already been there. Dying is easy. God is there.

In speaking of his grief, Lewis says,

On the rebound one passes into tears and pathos. Maudlin tears. I almost prefer the moments of agony. These are at least clean and honest. But the bath of self-pity, the wallow, the loathsome sticky-sweet pleasure of indulging it—that disgusts me.

Amen, brother! Then he goes on to say,

... where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing Him ... if you remember yourself and turn to Him with gratitude and praise, you will be—or so it feels—welcomed with open arms. But go to Him when your need is desperate ... and what do you find? A door slammed in your face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. ... There are no lights in the windows. It might be an empty house. Was it ever inhabited? It seemed so once. And that seeming was as strong as this. What can this mean? Why is He so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble?

Yes, this is the crux of the situation: to discern where God is in all of this. Indeed, isn't this part of our call as beings created in the image of God—to discern God? And isn't this apprehension that I have now just plain silliness—this making such a big deal out of a physical symptom that will undoubtedly turn out to be some little thing

corrected by something as simple as a change of meds or losing some weight? Maybe it's silly—but it's not fear. And maybe it's not silly.

But it's not grief. My encounter with grief happened sixteen years ago, almost eleven years before I died. My son died. I spent ten years alternately in rage and depression. I shook my fist in God's face and screamed, "O.K. you big son-of-a-bitch, you have proved that you can kill a baby. Now show me what you can do with a grown man." And God did just that. I began to discern God. It took a while, but that was my stiff neck, not God's.

As Robert Service put it in his poem, *The Quest*,

I sought Him on the purple seas,
I sought Him on the peaks aflame;
Amid the gloom of giant trees
And canyons lone I called His name;
The wasted ways of earth I trod:
In vain! In vain! I found not God.

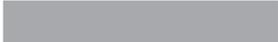
I sought Him in the hives of men,
The cities grand, the hamlets gray,
The temples old beyond my ken,
The tabernacles of to-day;
All life that is, from cloud to clod
I sought. . . .Alas! I found not God.

Then after roamings far and wide,
In streets and seas and deserts wild,
I came to stand at last beside
The death-bed of my little child.
Lo! as I bent beneath the rod
I raised my eyes . . . and there was God.

Gradually it began to dawn on me that God hadn't done anything to me, but God was working in what had happened. God had taken the most hellish experience in my life and was transforming it into a blessing that I couldn't even have hallucinated. If my fist hadn't been always in God's face like a thundercloud blocking the light of the sun from reaching me, I would have understood sooner that I was being given the grace to understand the agony God also feels over the loss of a child. I would have been able sooner to see the tears streaming down God's face too—and we could have comforted one another.

God is present and working in everything whether we recognize it or not—whether we even wish it or not. So there must be some grace being given to me right now. Could it be that I am being given the grace to become what Henri Nouwen calls a "wounded healer"—to bring healing through my Eucharistic ministry and ministry of presence to people in the hospital where I work? In his book *The Wounded Healer* Nouwen writes that we are called to recognize the suffering in our own hearts (an ironically appropriate metaphor for me!) and make that the beginning of our own ministries. In the image of Christ we are, to paraphrase Isaiah, to heal others by our own wounds.

Bill Curnutte, a/BSG



THE WINDSOR KNOT

The essay beginning this issue includes the story of the caterpillar who on seeing a butterfly says, “You’ll never get me up in one of those.” I am struck by the relevance this protest has to the church’s present predicament. How often do we fear the very thing we might one day be? Faced with the colorful butterflies of diversity we might become, some in the Anglican Communion seem to want to commit forever to creep as caterpillars towards who knows what future, or at best to remain in a secure cocoon, wrapped with the silken cords of restraint, fearful of our own metamorphosis.

Having begun to digest the Windsor Report (WR), I would like to thank the Lambeth Commission for what must have seemed at times a thankless task. While I have reservations about some of its assumptions and recommendations, and deprecate its tendency towards restraint (or worse, constraint), the WR may help us to harness the energy and will to move in a direction beyond the one the authors may have intended: to more rapid transformation away from an institutional ecclesiastical culture and more faithfully into the likeness of Christ, whose Body’s many members cannot circumscribe his oneness nor express his infinite variety.

Club or Communion

At times the WR seems to wish that the problems we face never would have arisen in the first place, expressing a longing for a peaceful church untroubled by controversy. In addition to noting that, like it or not, the church has never worked that way, I also found myself thinking of a group of schoolmates wanting to be best friends and promising never to do anything any of them wouldn’t like. The report, particularly in paragraph 69, reflects the perishable nature of this hope, since it is precisely matters that appear to be “settled” that have and will become unsettled, and the process proposed for dealing with this seems to be geared towards peer pressure rather than Gospel values. Moreover, since we know how quickly school chums turn upon the outsider or (even worse) the member who takes a stand against or apart from the group, it is vital that the voices of novelty or protest not be forced out of the discussion—driven from the table or disinvited from the gathering.

There is a clear inconsistency in warning the church (citing the Primates) that “to turn from one another would be to turn away from the Cross” (157) while suggesting that the bishops who were out of step in the area of sexuality might absent themselves from representative gatherings, presumably in the interest of not further offending those already offended. A similar restraint is not asked of the bishops who violated the Lambeth resolutions and church tradition and law on invading other dioceses (155), which only goes to show that, as Orwell might have said, some bishops are more equal than others. In addition to the practical question—How do we discuss matters when the “loyal opposition” is disinvited from the meeting?—the simple question of human relationship arises. How can you have Communion with people with whom you will not meet? This also reinforces the feeling of the church as a club with members who are out of favor and hence unworthy of full participation.

The worst features of a club are the tendency towards force and constraint. The WR (118) wants the churches of the communion to adopt a covenant that will “make explicit and forceful the loyalty and bonds of affection which govern the relationships between” them. If loyalty and affection have to be forced, I am afraid we are not talking about love but coercion; and the threat of the withdrawal of affection, and the use of force to ensure it, is very far from the Gospel, and not too far shy of abuse.

Doctors of the church

I am also wary of the therapeutic language which makes an early appearance: we hear of “a healthy communion” (6) and diagnoses of various “symptoms of illness.” (22) As Archbishop Ramsey noted: “Those who see themselves as patients to be healed are less ready to see themselves as sinners to be forgiven.” It puts us in the mode of “fixing” each other instead of all of us submitting ourselves to the Lordship of the one who, while a Great Physician, is also the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. The therapeutic approach risks applying the metaphor of illness to others, neglecting the truth that while only some may be ill, all are sinners in need of forgiveness. In dealing with the “illness” this approach may seek merely to protect the church from pain or difficulty, when Scripture shows us not only that a certain amount of pain is inescapable, but that it also is more often than not the sign of doing the right thing. Transformation is not easy; it is often painful, and some of the solutions proposed in WR are rather more palliative than curative.

It seemed important at the time. . .

The WR is rather seriously flawed in the section dealing with *adiaphora*. First of all, it seems to take this term to refer to matters upon which there is difference of opinion but “about which one can disagree without dividing the Church.” (87) But this is not what is meant by *adiaphora*, either in the Pauline sense (noting that Paul never uses the word) or in the sense in which it was used in the controversies of the 16th–17th centuries. It wasn’t that the matters under discussion made no difference to the *church* (and hence ought not have impact on it), but that they made no difference to *salvation*. And that is a very different matter. It was precisely because some segment of the church thought this or that doctrine *was* essential to salvation while the rest of the church didn’t that division came any number of times—and only those who survive have the privilege of saying, “Oh, that’s a matter of indifference.”

For example, the “matter of indifference” cited in paragraph 88—the various opinions concerning the nature of Christ’s presence in the Holy Eucharist—was not considered a “matter of indifference” at the time of the Anglican settlement; far from it, as the Articles of Religion are at pains to point out. Now that four hundred years later the Roman Catholic Church has, for the most part, come around (essentially) to the Anglican point of view on this matter—in addition to adopting the vernacular liturgy and the common cup, other matters far from indifferent at the time—we may all well look back and say it was a tempest in a teapot. But people were burned at the stake at the time, and you can be sure it made a difference to them.

Surely it is also ironic that the WR cites this tolerable disagreement on the Holy Eucharist, one of the Sacraments in every sense of the word, while at present we seem to be unable to tolerate differences of opinion on who may be the subjects of Matrimony

and Orders—“rites and ceremonies” which Anglicans have never classed as essential to salvation, and in which considerable leeway has always been explicitly allowed. The issues of pastoral and moral theology raised by the actions of New Hampshire and New Westminster have never in Christian history been held to be at the core of the Christian faith.

Which brings me back to Saint Paul. The report cites Romans 14–15 and 1 Corinthians 8–10, but fails to bring to light the most important Pauline text on matters of indifference, Galatians 5:1–6. Circumcision or uncircumcision makes no difference to salvation, but if you insist it does make a difference then you have “cut” yourself off from Christ. And while Paul had the Apostolic Council on his side on circumcision, his claim that eating meat offered to idols was indifferent challenged the decision of that same Council. Those who insist that obedience to a particular moral code (or set of Council resolutions) is salvific (thereby relying on what Paul called “the flesh”) are in error; and those who stand in opposition to Councils that wrongly declare that certain matters are of the essence of the faith are relying on what Paul called “his gospel.” If you take something indifferent and try to make it a “core doctrine” you risk cutting yourself off from Christ.

In addition, in the process for determining whether a matter is indifferent (90), the paper alludes (perhaps unconsciously) to Galatians, but neglects to note that in addition to matters that separate Jew and Gentile, Paul also declared Christ to have set aside (for the baptized) all that separated slave and free, and male and female. This too has relevance for the present discussion and ought not be omitted. If “gender” is truly a matter of indifference in Christ, then it is wrong to make matters involving it core values of the gospel.

I certainly have no wish to see the end of the Anglican Communion, as a historic reality based on inherited traditions (see WR 47), allowing for considerable differences of opinion on matters not laid out in the Creeds of the Undivided Church. But “the Anglican Communion” is not coterminous with either the “instruments of unity” (which only began to function as such in 1789, 1867, 1968 and 1978, and which can hardly therefore be held to be either “foundational” or “essential”), nor with any proposed future synodical body. It is clearly of the *bene esse* to remain in communion, but only to the extent that it serves the mandates of the Gospel, via (if need be) an agreement to abide by the principles of spiritual fellowship fundamental to the well-being of the church, rather than through a form of legal constraint which will inevitably lead to division. The choice between Spirit and Law is the same one faced in Galatia. I see no reason to choose differently now than Paul counseled choosing then.

Consensus

The WR (134-135) bids a moratorium on the ordination of bishops who live in same-sex unions until a greater consensus on the appropriateness of such a manner of life can be reached. It then asks for an explanation of how this is consistent with the traditional understanding of bishops as moral exemplars to the flock of Christ.

By leaving the door open for such a development, the WR reveals that this is not a matter of fixed and immutable doctrine. One could scarcely imagine the church issuing a document calling for further study of the Incarnation, for example. The WR therefore reveals that the ordination of bishops in same-sex relationships, while in its

view inadvisable at present, is not a matter of doctrine: the old consensus *is no more*, even if a new one has not yet emerged. (143)

The difficulty with the moratoriums called for by WR is that they require a *de facto* acceptance of a consensus that no longer exists, and submission to an authority that has yet to establish either its legitimacy or its trustworthiness. It is surprising to hear the WR state (127) that the “Communion has made its collective position clear” when only Lambeth and the Primates and the bishops of a number of Provinces have spoken. This is an illegitimate and arrogant (in the strictest sense of the word) assertion. It echoes the inaccurate claim that bishops “in the Anglican tradition” somehow have a particular role as “teachers of scripture.” (58) As even a cursory look at the Anglican ordination rites will show, the office of teaching lies with the presbyters; the task of the bishops is to preserve the unity of the church, and Lambeth seems not to be adept at this task. It is, after all, one thing for a club to enforce rules that all its members have agreed to; but it is quite another for gatherings of bishops meeting in bodies which specifically and historically state they have no power to legislate on matters of doctrine suddenly to begin to do exactly that, calling for obedience to a constitution that does not now and never has existed. This is not consensus.

When we more closely review the history of Lambeth’s positions on sexual morality, a clear pattern emerges. Three such issues have come before Lambeth over the years (divorce, birth-control, and polygamy), and on all three Lambeth first upheld and later reversed or radically amended its recommendations as the consensus changed. Is this trip really necessary? Isn’t it rather pointless and divisive to continue to draw line after line in the sand that time and tide will only wash away?

When it comes to offering an explanation in defense of this manner of life, since there are an unknown but real number of Anglican bishops living in same-sex relationships (all but two of them surreptitiously), and they are all serving (or retired from having served) as exemplars to the flocks they lead, isn’t that sufficient evidence of the rightness of their lives and a better proof than further spillage of ink? Do not the gifts of the Spirit count for anything? Do not actions speak louder than words? They were enough to convince Peter, and through him the church, that Gentiles were worthy of salvation. When John’s disciples sent to know if Christ was the expected One, he did not offer them a reasoned point-by-point from scripture, but rather his acts—liberation from blindness, brokenness, and death. He ended with telling words, “Blessed are those who take no offense in me!” (Luke 7:19-23)

Ultimately the burden of proof (as the Articles of Religion require) lies upon those who wish to make strict adherence to this one aspect of a traditional sexual morality a matter of salvation. Although they may have the tradition on their side, those same Articles point out that tradition is often in error. At the same time, contemporary biblical scholarship is clearly tending towards limiting the scope of the negative judgments on same-sex acts to the same range of relationships and circumstances as mixed-sex acts: infidelity, rape and idolatry. The “reasserters” (as they call themselves) deny this, but they must do more than simply reassert, and to date they have been unable to make their case—and it *is* the responsibility of the “prosecution” to do so. The “defense” need only demonstrate a reasonable doubt and show “how what is now proposed not only accords with but actually enhances the central core of the Church’s faith.” (WR 60)

Finally, while much of the draft covenant is reasonable, there remains a tone of provisionality that makes it seem more of a prenuptial agreement than a marriage. The coercive language, and the threats of being cast out if the line is not toed, emerge in both the report and the draft. It lays down conditions, rather than calling for the unconditional love demanded by the gospel. And the latter is what we want: not a vain promise we will never disagree (but with provision for divorce if we do), but a commitment to stay together even when we do disagree. Constraint will not protect the church from error, but the freedom of a living communion, coupled with the patience counseled by Gamaliel (Acts 5:33–39), will allow for reception (or rejection) of novel developments over time.

The proposed covenant seems focused too much on the institution and too little on the gospel the institution is meant to serve. So we return to the cocoon and the butterfly. Biblical images for this come to mind as well, principally that of the tower of Babel—an effort to exalt a human “instrument of unity.” Communion is not to be based on human instrumentalities but upon the unity we share in Christ. If we are to have a covenant, let it be the Baptismal Covenant. If greater specificity is wanted, throw in the Lambeth Quadrilateral! But let that be enough.

Clearly the reform and good order of the institution better to serve the mission of the church is important. Yet the Primates of the West Indies and Southern Cone speak of “mending the net”—which is fine when you plan to catch fish; but what Jesus said was, “Follow me, and you will fish for people!” If the Episcopal Church (and some of the other provinces of the Communion) choose to follow Jesus rather than staying with Zebedee in the boat mending nets, we do so in the belief that we are doing as Jesus would have us do, which is not to ensure the survival of an institution but to preach the gospel.

In addition to the biblical images, I am also reminded of the medieval fixation on the Holy Grail instead of Christ, and especially Percival’s failure to ask the crucial question: Whom does the Grail serve? What would the church be like today if the Lambeth Conference had never met? Or, if having met, passed no resolutions, but merely shared the Bread and Wine and fellowship of the Body? Unable as they have been to abide by their own mandate, look at the resolutions they’ve adopted through the years: how timely have they been in speaking to the needs of the church and the world, and then acting actually to meet those needs? To what extent have the “instruments of unity” in recent decades not rather been the seedbeds of division?

The Anglican Communion has been a good place to be; but it is up to us now whether (to use yet another biblical image) we will follow Peter’s inclination to build three booths, or follow Jesus Christ into the valley of engagement with the world’s woes. The Anglican Communion will be with us if it chooses. If it does not, we will not, whatever some may think, be walking alone. Like the man born blind whose healing so scandalized the orthodox of his day, the Episcopal Church and a few others may end up thrown out of the synagogue because of what we have seen and known. But we will not, believe me, be alone.

—TSH

INTERCESSIONS

The Brotherhood
 Episcopal Visitor *Sun*
 Rodney R Michel

Episcopal Visitors Emeriti
Horace WB Donegan d 11.11.91
Paul Moore, jr d 5.1.03
Walter D Dennis d 3.30.03

Life and Annual Professed
 Richard Thomas Biernacki
John Nidecker d 6.20.88
 James Teets
 Luke Anthony Nowicki

John Peter Clark d 2.25.94 *Mon*
 William Francis Jones
 Stephen Storen
Thomas Joseph Ross d 12.18.01
 Tobias Stanislas Haller
William Bunting d 10.12.88
 Edward Munro

Charles Kramer *Tue*
Bernard Fessenden d 8.10.93
 Donovan Aidan Bowley
 Michael David Elvestrøm
 Edward Riley
 Christopher Stephen Jenks
 Ciarán Anthony DellaFera

William Edward Orce *Wed*
 Damian-Curtis Kellum
 Richard John Lorino
 Ronald Augustine Fox
 Maurice John Grove
 Charles Edward LeClerc
 Virgilio Fortuna

Gordon John Stanley *Thu*
 Karekin Madteos Yarian
 Patrick Thompson
 William David Everett
 Thomas Bushnell
 Thomas Mark Liotta
 James Mahoney
 Patrick Ignatius Dickson

Robert James McLaughlin *Fri*
 Peter Budde
 John Henry Ernestine
 Francis Sebastian Medina
 Aelred Bernard Dean
 Joseph Basil Gauss
 Mark Andrew Jones
 Emmanuel Williamson

Novices *Sat*
 Richard Matthias
 William Henry Benefield
 Nathanael Deward Rahm
 Thomas Lawrence Greer
 Enoch John Valentine
 Ron E Fender

Postulants Prospective
 David Battrick & Michael Elliott

The Associates and Friends of the Brotherhood

Religious Communities
 Sisters of St Gregory
 Sacramentine & Visitandine Nuns
 Society of the Atonement
 Order of Agapé & Reconciliation
 Camaldolese Benedictines
 Society of St John the Evangelist
 Community of the Paraclete
 Companions of St Luke~
 Benedictine
 Anglican Oblates of St Benedict
 Community of the Transfiguration
 Order of Julian of Norwich

For healing
 Luke Anthony, Charles, Edward
 Munro, Damian-Curtis,
 William Edward, Edward Riley,
 Patrick Ignatius, William David,
 James Mahoney
 Ian, Mary, David, Dennis, Marie,
 William Henry, Johanna,
 Virginia, Nancy
 Lillian-Marie
 Anthony, Larry, Bryan
 Ervin & Devon
 Mary & Lloyd
 Martha & Willis
 Sheila & Lance
 Terrell
 Neil
 Doris & Virginia
 Linda & Charlotte
 Bernard
 Ralph
 Jon, Keith and Randolph
 Bill, Griffin & Chad
 Lois
 Michael
 Samuel Luke
 Susan & Anna
 Larry
 Bill
 Tyrone
 Al
 Janet
 Patrick & Tobin
 Mike
 Tommy, Nick and Steve

Departed
 Charlotte Morgan, Arsene &
 Louise Lemarier
 Norman Hall, George Koerner,
 Henry Fukui, J Steward Slocum
 and James Gundrum
 Jill, Bob and Doris
 Cindy Crain
 Eric White

Jason Wolfe
 Jonathan T. Glass
 Nila Earle
 Timothy McGrath
 Edna Swankhouse
 Stan Willis
 Clarence Denton
 Bill Borre
 Elsie Whitmore
 James L Freutel
 Monica Hyacinth Lopez-Hunter
 Peres Metembo
 Christopher
 Paul Sime
 Carlos Vasquez
 Toby Calloway
 Jane Bowley
 Marian MacRae Budde
 Paul Ignatius Carden Sr

Intentions
 Joseph Richey House
 Fessenden Recovery Ministries
 Dove House
 Baltimore Int'l Seafarers' Center
 Saint James Fordham; Trinity,
 Stoughton MA; Christ Church,
 San Antonio; Saint John's,
 Brooklyn; Saint Peter's, Chicago;
 Grace, Norwalk
 Brothers Karekin Madteos,
 William David, William Francis,
 Thomas Bushnell
 Aldersgate UMC Dobbs Ferry, St
 Christopher's, Kileen TX
 Church of the Advent of Christ
 the King, SF, and rector Paul
 Matthew & Ruth Jenks
 David as he cares for his parents
 Chris, Larry & Norland
 Jim White
 OC, Kim & Cathy
 Bill & Karen
 Susan, Tom, Allison & Frances
 Peter
 Jane Willis
 Irene & Tim
 Faye
 Nell, Chris & Bob
 Regina
 Mike
 Tamia & Tyra
 Bo & David

Thanksgiving
 William Henry & Christopher in
 witness to the Gospel
 The birth of Madison Sierra and
 Kylie Rose Heckathorn
 David's passing the Illinois Bar
 Exam
 The Institution of Mark B
 Pendelton, Dean of Hartford