



REVELATION, MISSION AND DIALOGUE

A Resource for Anglican Christians

by

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Contents

Contents	ii
Introduction.....	4
I. Revelation.....	8
Chapter One: The Nature of Revelation	8
Speculation and Revelation.....	8
Revelation and History	9
Revelation and Community	9
The Event of Revelation	10
Revelation and Continuity	11
Chapter Two: Revelation and Authority.....	12
The Reformation Debate.....	12
Anglican Views.....	12
The Limits of Authority	15
Provisional Faith and Eschatology.....	16
Christian Liberty and Democracy.....	16
Confession, and Communion.....	17
Using the Sources of Authority.....	18
Chapter Three: The Revelation of God, the Father, the Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth	21
The Image of God	21
The Unity of Humankind.....	23
Israel among the Nations	24
Holiness and Righteousness in Israel.....	25
The Worship of God	28
Chapter Four: The Revelation of Jesus Christ	30
The Identity of Jesus Christ	30
The Coming of Jesus.....	31
The Suffering of Jesus	32
The Death of Jesus	33
The Resurrection of Jesus	34
The Ascension of Jesus.....	34
The Second Coming of Jesus.....	34
Chapter Five: The Revelation of the Holy Spirit.....	35
Confirmation of the Apostolic Testimony	35
The Gifts of the Holy Spirit	37
The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit	37
Worship in the Power of the Spirit	38
The Righteousness of Faith.....	39
II. Mission.....	43

Chapter Six: The Mission of the Church	43
Evangelism and Mission	43
Mission and Eschatology	45
The Church in the World	45
The World in the Church	47
The Priesthood of the Family of God	47
III. Dialogue	49
Chapter Seven: The Sexuality Dialogue in the Anglican Church.....	49
Why Us?.....	49
Why Now?	49
Sex and the Church in Post-Christendom	50
Holiness and Righteousness in the Church Today.....	56
The Teaching and Pastoral Authority of the Church	58
Appendix A.....	61
The Case of David and Jonathan	61
Appendix B	63
A Statement by the Primates of the Anglican Communion meeting in Lambeth Palace	63
About the Author	66

Introduction

The 74th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, meeting in Minneapolis in the summer of 2003, confirmed the election of The Rev. Gene Robinson as Bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire. Bishop Robinson is an openly homosexual man living in a relationship with another man. The confirmation of his election by the General Convention therefore set off a controversy within the Church. The Convention was also widely covered by the press and media. The interest in General Convention left no doubt that the Episcopal Church was engaged in a debate of importance to those well beyond the membership in the Episcopal Church. Indeed, it has proven to be important to the Anglican Communion, to Christians in other Churches, and to society at large.

This paper is an attempt to set the discussion of human sexuality within the larger context of the Christian faith, as it is understood by Anglican Christians. As Anglicans, we believe that we are one branch of the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church” of Jesus Christ. Our journey of faith has its own path, which is shared by seventy million Christians throughout the world, and which stretches back through the Reformation in England to the days of the Apostles. We are heirs of a great tradition that is in some ways a unique expression of the Christian faith.

The debate on human sexuality is not unique to the Episcopal Church. Other Communion of the Church are wrestling with the same issues, in light of their own understanding of the Christian faith and the authority of the scriptures. Secular people, including scientists, social commentators, and politicians are also engaged in the discussion. This paper is intended only to give an account of the Anglican view of the Christian revelation, and the nature of the sources of authority to which Anglicans look for guidance, as we seek to live our life in Christ. It is not intended to answer specific questions of policy, but to provide a resource for those wishing to engage in the dialogue with other Anglicans, as well as Christians from different communions.

The sexuality debate has raised profound questions about the nature of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, which the Church proclaims. It has called into question the nature of God, the call to holiness, the demand for righteousness, and the character of scripture’s authority. It has also called into question the way in which Anglicans discern God’s will, and how we live together within the Church, until His coming again. Beyond the general questions about revelation, the authority of the Bible and our life in the Church, there are certain texts of scripture that must be confronted in any discussion of human sexuality, and especially of homosexuality.

The Bible does not have much to say about the issue specifically, and as with any Biblical text, those dealing with homosexuality must be viewed in the wider context of the Bible as a whole, and the historical setting in which the Bible was written. Nevertheless, specific texts must be engaged in any serious discussion by Anglicans. The most difficult, because most explicit, are certain passages within *Leviticus* and the first chapter of the letter of Paul to the *Romans*. What do these texts mean? Are they merely culturally conditioned relics of their time, or are they related to the Biblical witness to revelation?

This paper attempts to deal with those texts, by examining them in relation to the nature of revelation, the Anglican view of scripture's authority, and the wider witness of Scripture to the event of revelation in Jesus Christ. It also seeks to place the dialogue about human sexuality in the larger context of the Church's mission. Finally, it offers some suggestions for continuing the dialogue within the Communion of the Church, by relating the questions of holiness and righteousness to the teaching and pastoral authority of the Church.

Certainly, no one can hope to find universal approval when addressing of controversial subjects. Not all Anglicans will agree (the sentence could stop there) about Anglicanism, as presented here, much less about sexuality. I can nevertheless assure those who are disturbed by my findings that I did not set out to offend, or to advance a pre-conceived opinion. Where there are errors in my understanding of Anglican tradition or Biblical texts, it is only a result of my incompetence. Where I have drawn incorrect conclusions, or failed to take into account other texts or teaching of the Church, I shall be happy to be corrected by those more able to deal with a vast and deep subject than I.

I have for years been engaged in the sexuality dialogue within our Church. Several years ago, during the trial of Bishop Righter, I was asked to contribute a paper for a symposium at Holy Sacrament Church, in Hollywood, Florida. For the past few years, I have also been a member of the Bishop's Council of Advice on Human Sexuality in the Diocese of Southeast Florida. This is a diverse group of clergy whom the bishop has asked to reflect with him on the issue, and advise him on the Church's pastoral response to those issues.

I have come to believe (as the astronomer, Sir Alfred Eddington once said about the universe) that the matter is not only "queerer than we think, but queerer than we can think." Indeed (to borrow again from science) a contemporary physicist has said that anyone who tells you they understand quantum mechanics has not understood it. I believe the same is true of human sexuality.

Human sexuality engages us at the most deeply personal and private levels of ourselves. Yet, it is also at the heart of our very existence as a human society, and indeed goes beyond the limits of our humanity, as sexuality is woven into the very fabric of Nature. Moreover, according to the Biblical witness, human sexuality also is reflective of the very nature of God.

One of the frustrating things to me, in fact, about the present debate is that it has been largely uninformed by serious theological reflection, but is too often an expression of gay pride, or heterosexual prejudice. Mostly, it is argued in terms of inclusivity, or morality. To be sure, each side is able to quote scripture, but the Bible can always reinforce our own pre judgments. If the Bible condemns homosexuality, it also condemns loaning money for interest, tolerates slavery, and commands tithing.

When framed as a matter of inclusiveness, the Church is clear. Homosexual persons are children of God. Our motto stands, "The Episcopal Church welcomes you." Or, as Jesus says in the Gospel reading appointed for the Sunday after the vote in Minneapolis,

Everything that the Father gives me will come to me, and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away;³⁸ for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent

me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.¹

When framed as a matter of morality, we find ourselves quickly embroiled in the murky ambiguity of human experience. Soon, we are in another gray area that includes divorce, co-habitation, social mores, and human frailty. The Church has always chosen to deal with these things pastorally and compassionately, rather than by legislative action, or administrative fiat. As Paul says in the Epistle reading for the same Sunday, “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.”²

The Church always has to struggle with the open inclusiveness of the Gospel, and the call to holiness. Indeed, over the last several years, the Church has been consistent in affirming the dignity of the individual, regardless of condition, or orientation, while upholding the norm of the Church’s traditional teaching that marriage is the only sanctioned context of sexual intimacy.

This has not settled the issue for us in the Episcopal Church, for us in America, or for Anglicans and others around the world. It has only created the framework for a continuing dialog. It is just at this point that the action of the Church in Minneapolis is most challenging, and may be one of endangerment to the Anglican Communion. For it seems to have acted in contradiction to prior statements of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, previous statements by General Convention and the House of Bishops, and recent pronouncements of the Anglican Primates, made just prior to Minneapolis.

Nevertheless, the dialog continues within our Church, throughout the world. It is a reminder that we are members of a worldwide body, and part of a continuing historic tradition of faith. Indeed, we are more than a global village. We are members of the Household of God, which is an extended family throughout the world. The action of the Diocese of New Hampshire engages us where we live, in our most intimate relationships, in our several cultures. In some ways, the debate on human sexuality is only one more facet of the wider issue of multi-culturalism within the Church.

African Bishops, in particular, have resisted any attempts to relax the Church’s teaching on homosexuality. Not that they have not also had to wrestle with the Church’s traditional teaching on marriage. For them the issue, however, is not homosexuality, but polygamy. Many African societies are traditionally polygamous. African Christians, moreover, are actively engaged in a missionary struggle with Islam. As the Bishop of Kenya told the Lambeth Conference, “Muslims have a saying, ‘Christians want you to have one wife and three Gods. As a Muslim, you can have four wives, but only one God.’” Moreover, African bishops view our own views on marriage as hypocritical. Liberal western divorce laws, they claim, amount to “serial polygamy.”

It is all the more urgent, therefore, for us in America to engage in the dialogue on human sexuality at the deepest level of theological reflection, in terms recognized by Anglicans throughout the world. For, there is deep suspicion that we have acted more as Americans than as Anglican Christians. To some, the actions of General Convention are just one

¹*The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1989. Jn 6:37-39. Unless otherwise noted, all citations are from the *NRSV*.

² Eph 4:32.

more instance of American cultural imperialism that is willing to act unilaterally without regard for world opinion, when it suits our purposes.

This paper can not pretend to have met that need. It is at best an outline of certain issues that must be explored at greater length by others. I hope, nonetheless, that it may be a resource for Anglican Christians who wish to engage in the conversation.

I. Revelation

Chapter One: The Nature of Revelation

We begin with an assertion: we believe in God. From pre-historic times, in virtually every human society belief in powers “beyond” the visible world has been a part of human awareness and intuition.

Yet, the existence of God, or gods, is not self-evident, and is beyond proof. It is a mystery, which is not simply paradox, contradiction, or unexplained, but inexplicable and irreducible to definition and demonstration. In the words of a Christian hymn, God is

Immortal, invisible God only wise
In light, inaccessible, hid from our eyes.

So, belief in God presents us with a problem: How can we know God? That is, how can we know that which is beyond our knowledge? How can the gap between the immortal and mortal be bridged? How can the veil between the invisible and visible be removed? How can the light, which is inaccessible to our darkness, be revealed?

Speculation and Revelation

We can imagine two ways in which this gulf and chasm might be bridged. In the first instance, we can “look up” (or “out,” or “within.”) The Latin word for “look” is *speculo*. We get the word “speculation” from it. In Greek, the word for “see” is *ideo*. We get the word “idea” from it. Ideas are things seen. Speculation produces ideas. Ideas can form a basis for belief, or understanding. They can “stand under” our perceptions of our experience. A comprehensive understanding, formed on the basis of ideas derived from speculation can result in “wisdom.” The Greek word for “wisdom” is *sophia*. The Greek word, *philosophia*, means “love of wisdom.” The Western philosophical tradition, as well as much Eastern mystical wisdom, is a speculative tradition.

The Judeo-Christian and Muslim religions take a different approach. They proclaim, not that we have looked up (or out, or within) but that God has “come down.” In the book of *Exodus*, God tells Moses,

I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings,⁸ and I have come down to deliver them³

The Nicene Creed asserts, “For us, and for our salvation, he *came down* from heaven.” Muslims assert that God came down to Mohammed, and delivered the revelation of the *Koran* to him.⁴

³ Ex 3:7.

⁴ The case of Islam seems different from Christianity and Judaism, which both look to historical events. The dictation of the Koran seems closer to the idea of revelation in Homer’s *Iliad*, which begins, “Sing Goddess...”

In these traditions, the gap between us and God is bridged by God in an event of revelation. We did not discover God. God has revealed Himself to us. The Hebrew word for “event” is *dabhar*, which is also translated by the word, “word.” God’s Word is known in an event of revelation. The book of *Amos* announces,

The words of Amos, who was among the shepherds of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of King Uzziah of Judah and in the days of King Jeroboam son of Joash of Israel, two years before the earthquake.⁵

Revelation and History

An event of revelation takes place in history, but not every event is an historical event, much less an event of revelation. Philosophy may speculate about whether a tree that falls in the forest with no one to witness it makes a sound. But, to be truly historical, an event must impact a human community. Yet even so, not every historical event is an event of revelation. An event of revelation must be an historical event, which is witnessed, interpreted, and proclaimed, as an event of revelation.

Because witnesses to an event of revelation have not simply looked up into a timeless eternity to behold new truths, the event of revelation can never be completely severed from its historical context. The ideas of Euclid also emerged in time, but ideas, as Plato recognized, have a timeless and eternal quality. The Pythagorean Theorem is always true, within the parameters of its mathematical system of ideas.

Because God has come down, an event of revelation “takes place.” It is unique and unrepeatable. Its truths must always be interpreted in the context of its historical situation, and must continually be reinterpreted in each new historical context. The Covenant Renewal ceremonies of the Old Testament, such as those in *Deuteronomy 26.1ff* and *Joshua 24* bear witness to this element in an Old Testament community context. Similarly, within the community of the New Covenant, the Church rehearses the events of “the night in which he was betrayed” when it gathers to celebrate the Eucharist. By retelling the story of the event of revelation, successive generations appropriate it for themselves, in an act of historical memory, or *anamnesis*.

Revelation and Community

An event of revelation thus pre-supposes and includes a community, which witnesses, interprets and proclaims the event of revelation. The wisdom of philosophy may be written and shared. Adherents of philosophies may form schools. Yet, speculation is an essentially private endeavor, and philosophical schools are not the inevitable or necessary product of speculation. The communities, which witness, interpret, and proclaim an event of revelation, on the other hand, are essential to the event of revelation. The historical event of revelation must be witnessed, interpreted, and proclaimed in order for it to be an event of revelation at all. This is why the Bible, for example contains no essay on the nature of God, but speaks rather of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Israel; and of the Father of Jesus Christ and the Church. It is why the Christian creeds include belief in the Church, as an article of faith. God is known by those to whom He has “come down” and made Himself known in an event of revelation.

5The Holy Bible : New Revised Standard Version. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1996, c1989. *Amos 1:1.*

The Event of Revelation

For the Christian community, the event of revelation to which it bears witness, and which it interprets and proclaims, is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. These events are celebrated in the great festivals of Easter and Pentecost. They correspond to the events of the Exodus and the Giving of the Law, which are the events of revelation, to which the Jewish community bears witness, interprets and proclaims.

As with all events of revelation these, which form the basis of the Hebrew and Christian religions, occur within history, and are witnessed by a community. The revelation of Yahweh, the LORD, came to Moses, and to the people of Israel who were slaves in Egypt. Jesus suffered “under Pontius Pilate,” and the Risen Christ appeared to Peter and the Apostles.

Each event also includes a “subjective” or interpretive element, as well as a declaration of historical fact. The events of Sinai and Pentecost are revelatory, because they complete the interpretation of the event of revelation. Without them, the events of the Exodus and the crucifixion of Jesus would cease to be revelation, and would remain simply historical events that took place within a particular historical context.

The lasting significance of the Exodus is given in the Law, “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.”⁶ . Without Pentecost, the resurrection of Jesus would be “good news” for him, but would not necessarily have taken place “for us, and for our salvation.” Indeed, it is more appropriate to speak of Exodus/Sinai and Easter/Pentecost than to speak of each, as if they could be separated from the other.

Deliverance from Egypt *and* the Law of the Covenant are the event of revelation for Israel. The death and resurrection of Jesus *and* the outpouring of the Holy Spirit constitute the event of revelation which creates the Christian community. The Christian community claims that the revelation that took place in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit took place “once and for all.” That is, it is a historical event of universal and ultimate significance. It took place “under Pontius Pilate.” Yet, it was “for us, and for our salvation.”

The Church itself is also an element of the event of revelation, as the creeds also make clear in the article concerning the Holy Spirit. The Church is the community to which God “came down from heaven” in the coming of Jesus Christ, and upon which the Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost. As such, the Church, as the community, which witnesses, interprets, and proclaims the event of revelation is also an element in the revelation, which it proclaims. It stands also within the historical conditions of existence defined by the creation, its Old Testament antecedents, and its historical circumstances.

The Church is also the community of the New Covenant, which receives baptism “for the forgiveness of sins” and looks “for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.” The Church therefore confesses its provisional character as an element of revelation. It claims its life through the forgiveness of sins, and acknowledges that its true life is still to come. The Church must therefore bear witness to its faith, which is not sight,

⁶ Ex 22:21.

and live in expectation of the Second Coming of the One is to “judge the living and the dead.”

Revelation and Continuity

The historical character of revelation presents a problem for the community that witnesses, interprets and proclaims the event of revelation, which is not shared by philosophical schools. Ideas, which are the result of speculation, are timeless. The axioms of Euclid are timeless. They are also relative. They may be tested against other ideas, and modified or qualified, as necessary, as in fact has happened with the rise of non-Euclidean geometry.

Events of revelation take place “once and for all.” Although they are mediated within an historical context, they can not be modified without losing their original meaning and significance, which is not to say that they remain fixed in time. Rather, their meaning and significance may be further illuminated with the passage of time. New meanings and new perspectives may illuminate events of revelation, but the events themselves remain events which took place in a unique and unrepeatable event. The test of events of revelation is in fact the ability of the original event to cast its light on new historical circumstances.

The historical community, which witnesses, interprets and proclaims the historical event of revelation must therefore hand on its witness to the continuing historical community. This is similar to the situation of a traffic accident, or any historical event. The testimony of witnesses is crucial, and foundational, to all future inquiry.

Chapter Two: Revelation and Authority

The Early Church developed four sources for preserving its original witness to the event of revelation: the Canon of Scripture; the Creeds; the Sacraments; and Holy Orders. These sources were understood and applied by means of reason. Thus, scripture, tradition and reason emerged as threefold sources of authority for the Church, because they preserved the original witness, interpretation and proclamation of the event of revelation.

These sources of authority existed in an uncritical, mutually reinforcing, association for centuries. Gradually however, with the rise of the Papacy in the West, it became necessary for the Church to clarify their relationships, character, and importance. In the West, this critical examination came to a head at the time of the Reformation.

The Reformation Debate

Against the assertions of the Church of Rome for the primacy of tradition, the continental reformers asserted the sole authority of scripture, as a source for our knowledge of the event of revelation in Jesus Christ. Anglicans agreed with the Reformers about the primacy of scripture, but insisted on retaining tradition and reason, under the authority of scripture.

The character of scripture's authority was also a matter of debate. For Luther, the character of scripture's authority was that it contained the message of the Gospel, which he understood in terms of the doctrine of Justification by Faith, or more precisely, as justification by grace through faith. Luther, in fact saw an opposition not only between "faith" and "works," but also between "gospel" and "law." For Luther, the Bible is "the manger in which the Christ child is laid (in which there is also much straw.*)" Luther's formulation made it difficult for him to recognize the value of much of the Old Testament, as well as for parts of the New Testament, such as the Letter of James, which he pronounced, "an epistle of straw."

This led Calvin to seek to salvage the authority of the Old Testament, and those parts of the New Testament dismissed by Luther, by means of the concept of the Word of God. The Old and New Testaments, Calvin reasoned, were the Word of God. They contained Law and Gospel. As the Word of God, the Law and Gospel continued to be binding upon Christians, for all time. Calvin rightly noted that the New Testament contained commandments, as well as the Old Testament. Yet, Calvin sought to preserve the Reformation insistence on justification by grace through faith. He reasoned that the cultic, or ceremonial, laws of the Old Testament had been fulfilled by the sacrifice of Christ. Yet, the moral laws of the Old Testament and the New, as the Word of God, continued in effect. The result of Calvin's views was the experiments of Geneva and Salem, among others, as attempts to found human communities on Biblical laws.

Anglican Views

Anglicans took an altogether different approach, which nevertheless drew on the ideas of Luther and Calvin. Anglicans accepted Calvin's concept of Scripture as the "Word of God." Yet for Anglicans, the character of the Bible, as the Word of God, was not Law (or

prophecy) since all law and prophecy was fulfilled in Christ. The character of biblical authority for Anglicans was in fact that it bore “witness” to Christ. Therefore, as the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments “contained all things necessary for salvation.”⁷

The Anglican emphasis on witness to Christ, as the basis of Scripture’s authority, pointed to the Person of Christ, not simply to the message of the Gospel. In the explanation of Richard Hooker, the Old Testament bore witness to the Christ to come. The New Testament bore witness that Christ has come, and is Jesus of Nazareth.⁸ The Anglican view thus succeeded in recognizing the continuing authority of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, without falling into Calvin’s reliance on the concept of law. Both the Old and New Testaments bore witness to the Person of Christ.

The character of scripture’s authority as witness to the Person of Christ helped Anglicans to elucidate the authority of Scripture as “the Word of God containing all things necessary to salvation.” Hooker explained this claim by contrasting the Anglican view of Scripture with what he called the “schools of Rome” on the one hand and those of “radical Protestants” on the other. Rome erred with regard to Scripture’s authority by claiming that Scripture did not contain all things necessary to salvation, so that the witness of scripture needed to be supplemented by the tradition of Church teaching. Hooker, along with Anglicans generally, believed that if a teaching was not contained in Scripture, it was not necessary to believe it, in order to be saved.⁹ The error of radical Protestants, conversely, was to believe that scripture contained not only “all things necessary to salvation,” but “all things” generally.¹⁰ The Church and society were not bound by laws of the Old Testament. The Church and society were therefore free to enact laws that were appropriate to historical conditions. London would not become Geneva, in spite of Puritan efforts.

By identifying the character of scripture’s authority with the concept of witness, Anglicans implicitly claimed a derivative authority for the Bible, as the Word of God. That is, the Bible derived its authority from its reliable witness to Christ, the Incarnate and Living Word of God. By understanding the term Word of God in terms of Law, Calvinists would soon be drawn to assert the inerrancy of the words of scripture, as the Word of God. Anglicans, on the other hand, could assert their confidence in the “reliable witness” of the scriptures to the Person of Christ, Who remained over and above the words of the Bible, and present to the Church through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The place of tradition among the sources of authority for our knowledge of the event of revelation was ignored by Protestants who sought all knowledge of revelation within the scriptures. Roman Catholics argued, however, that Tradition was the primary source of authority. The Church, after all, had written the Bible, and Jesus had given the keys to the Kingdom to Peter, the first Bishop of Rome. Anglicans understood the meaning of tradition in light of Vincent of Lerin’s statement that the authority of tradition represented

⁷ *The Book of Common Prayer*, (New York, The Church Hymnal Corporation) 1979. p.868.

⁸ Hooker, Richard in Moore, Paul Elmer and Cross, Frank Leslie, *Anglicanism: The Thought and Practice of the Church of England, Illustrated from the Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (London, SPCK, 1962) p. 91.

⁹ *BCP*, p.868.

¹⁰ Hooker in Moore and Cross, *Op Cit*, p. 89.

what had been believed “by all, everywhere.” Thus, rather than representing a continuing claim of authority for the Church, the Anglican understanding of tradition grounded it in the “undivided faith” of the Early Church, which under the authority of scripture, as the primary witness to the event of revelation, represented a reliable rule and guide for our knowledge of Christ.

The word “reason” has undergone a shift in meaning since the Seventeenth Century. For the Early Church, and for Anglicans in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century, the word “reason” was understood in relation to truth. “Reason” in Greek is *logikos*, which is derived from *logos*, “word.” In John’s Gospel, the Logos becomes flesh in Jesus Christ. Jesus also promises the Gift of the Spirit to lead the disciples into all Truth. Thus, in Christian understanding, “reason” or “logic” is the human capacity to know the “truth” or *logos*, which is Christ, when guided by the Holy Spirit, within the community of the Church. This differentiates the Christian use of the word “reason” from the speculative reason of philosophers.

With the advent of Descartes and the coming of the Enlightenment in the Eighteenth Century, the word “reason” underwent a shift in meaning. Descartes understood reason not to be an instrument of faith, but of doubt. By radically doubting all authority derived from tradition or scripture, Descartes arrived at the single clear and distinct idea of his own existence. From this starting point, Descartes was able to “reason” the world into existence, although only in such a way as resulted in what Alfred North Whitehead has described as a “bifurcation of nature” into thinking and extended substances, and which produced, in the words of T. S. Eliot, “a dissociation of sensibility.”¹¹

A result of Descartes’ use of reason as an instrument of doubt was to orphan the faith and experience of the community as a source for our knowledge of the event of revelation, when informed by scripture and tradition, and inspired by the Holy Spirit. It was this loss that led John Wesley to add the word “experience” to the triad of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason, during the Eighteenth Century Evangelical Revival, which was itself partly a revolt against the Enlightenment’s redefinition of the word “reason.”

Historic Anglicanism has thus relied upon Scripture, Tradition, and Reason for its knowledge of the event of revelation. Yet, it is important to understand not only the relationships, but the character of authority which Anglicanism has claimed for each of the sources of authority. Scripture is the primary source of authority. It is the Word of God, and contains all things necessary for salvation, through its faithful witness to the Person of Christ, the Living Word of God. Tradition is the faith of the undivided Church, which is a reliable guide in understanding the scriptures. Reason, as William Laud emphasized, is grounded in the scriptures as mathematical logic is grounded the given axioms of geometry, and leads the Church to knowledge of Christ, guided by tradition, and inspired by the Holy Spirit.¹²

¹¹ Whitehead, Alfred North, “Theories of the bifurcation of Nature”. Chapter 2 in *The Concept of Nature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1920): 26-48. Eliot, Thomas Stearns, “The Metaphysical Poets” (1921.)

¹² Laud, William in Morre and Cross, *op cit*, p. 97

The Limits of Authority

The character of Scripture, Tradition and Reason's authority was not the only issue raised by a critical examination of the sources for our knowledge of revelation. The Reformation and the Seventeenth Century also provoked a debate about the reach and limits of the sources of authority for our knowledge of revelation, and therefore also of saving truth.

Roman Catholics asserted, though not yet formally, the infallible authority of the Church, as the embodiment of tradition in all matters of faith and morals. Their argument again was based on the two-fold promise of the Keys of the Kingdom to Peter, and the Gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. Protestants, particularly within the Calvinist tradition, which came to identify the Word of God with the words of Scripture, argued for the inerrancy of the Scriptures, though again not yet formally.

Anglicans, on the other hand, came to what Paul Elmore Moore has termed "the axiomatic denial of infallibility."¹³ There is a limit to our knowledge. Ambiguity is an essential element of our experience. According to the witness of scripture, the ambiguity of experience is set within the eschatological context of the Parousia, or Second Coming of Christ. Perhaps its understanding of the character of scripture's authority as witness to the Person of Christ reminded Anglicans that Christians not only lived within the framework of the New Covenant with its gospel message of justification by faith, but in the presence of the Risen Christ, who will come to judge the living and the dead.

Nevertheless, this side of the Second Coming of Christ, "we see through a glass darkly."¹⁴ We must "walk by faith, and not by sight."¹⁵ Or again, in the words of scripture, "It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."¹⁶ Anglicans therefore rejected the terms "infallibility" and "inerrancy" when applied either to the Church, or to the Scriptures. They preferred instead the word "reliability." Scripture offered a reliable witness to the Person of Christ. Tradition and Reason were reliable guides.

The rejection of infallibility and inerrancy unseated the Church and the Bible as the final arbiter of moral decision making. This was also a corollary of the Anglican faith that scripture bore witness to Christ, who is not only Jesus who lived and died for our sins, but also Jesus who rose from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Father, and who continues to be the Risen Lord of the Church. Anglican moral theologians therefore, stressed the role of conscience in moral decision making. The Holy Spirit continued to be poured out on the Church, which Anglicans understood to be a "society," not simply a hierarchy.

The emphasis on conscience did not mean, of course, that each individual was free to do as he or she pleased. Rather the conscience was to be "informed" by the study of scripture, which Anglican Christians were to pray daily, and by tradition and reason in prayer. Individual Christians, moreover, continued to live in the society of the Church, and to be supported by the "Common Prayer" of Christian society.

¹³ Moore, Paul Elmer, "The Spirit of Anglicanism" in Morre and Cross, *ibid*, p. xxviii.

¹⁴ *KJV*, I Cor. 13.7.

¹⁵ II Cor. 5.7.

¹⁶ *The Revised Standard Version*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1971. 1 Jn 3:2.

Provisional Faith and Eschatology

The ambiguity of experience led also to recognition of the provisional character of all decisions. The uncertainty of “it does not yet appear what we shall be” was completed by “we shall be like Him.” Anglicans therefore found it natural to draw upon the Biblical imagery of the “Journey” in seeking to understand the character of Christian life. English Christianity was aided in this by its own historic journey and Celtic beginnings.

The Bible uses many metaphors in describing our relationship to God. Roman Catholics could identify the Church with the Kingdom of God, and the Bishop of Rome as the Vicar of Christ, holding the keys to the Kingdom. Luther had drawn on the legal metaphor of justification in understanding the Gospel. Calvin emphasized that Jesus is Prophet, Priest and King.

Anglicans turned instead to the pastoral imagery of the Bible for its understanding of the Church and its authority. Celtic Christianity had drawn on this imagery in the earliest days of English Christianity. While continental Christianity, from Tertullian to Gregory the Great, from the Second through the Seventh Century, was codifying the penitential disciplines of the Church along institutional and legal lines, Celtic Christianity had continued to speak of our life in Christ in Pastoral terms. Our life is a journey with God. In sin, we do not so much break a law, as “err and stray from thy ways, like lost sheep.” The imagery of the 23rd Psalm bore witness to the Good Shepherd, whose rod and staff offered pastoral assistance in our journey “through the valley and shadow of death” to the “table” prepared “in the presence of mine enemies.” In the Holy Communion of the Lord’s Supper, the pilgrim Church received a foretaste of the Heavenly banquet, and was strengthened by the Body and Blood of Christ for the journey of faith.

It is not therefore surprising that John Wesley found the teaching of sanctification to be a necessary corrective and supplement to the Reformation doctrine of justification. For all its emphasis on the eschatological perfection wrought by the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of sanctification emphasizes the continual process of growth in Holiness within the continuing historical existence of the Church. As we are brought into a right relationship with God through faith in Christ, so the Holy Spirit continues to perfect us by grace during our journey of faith.

We must therefore “walk by faith and not by sight” in a journey which leads to the City of God. Rejecting inerrancy and infallibility, the Church must be guided by the witness of Scripture to Christ and by Tradition and Reason as reliable guides along the way. Within the society of the Church, differences of opinion in all things not pertaining to salvation, i.e. to Christ as the event of revelation, but to things “indifferent” must be provisional, and adapted to historical circumstances.

Christian Liberty and Democracy

The emphasis on the role of conscience gave rise not only to recognition of the provisional character of moral judgments. It led also to liberty. By affirming the role of conscience, Anglicanism led inevitably to democracy. Since each Christian received the Holy Spirit in Baptism, and the Church continued to pray for God to confirm the faith of the baptized by the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, conferred by the laying on of hands by a

bishop in Apostolic succession, it followed that the conscience of the individual was sacred.

To be sure, the implications of this faith were not immediately apparent, and would emerge only through the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the American Revolution a century later. Yet these political developments are implied by the Elizabethan Settlement, and by the Queen's insistence that she did not desire to peer into every subject's private conscience. By recognizing ambiguity as an element of experience, and the role of conscience in morals, English Christianity laid the foundations for the secret ballot.

This is true even of the worship of God, as the Preface to the first American *Book of Common Prayer* in 1789 aptly expresses.

It is a most invaluable part of that blessed "liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free," that in his worship different forms and usages may without offence be allowed, provided the substance of the Faith be kept entire; and that, in every Church, what cannot be clearly determined to belong to Doctrine must be referred to Discipline; and therefore, by common consent and authority, may be altered, abridged, enlarged, amended, or otherwise disposed of, as may seem most convenient for the edification of the people," according to the various exigency of times and occasions.¹⁷

Anglican Prayer Books, like the constitutions of English speaking democracies, are necessarily amendable. This is not simply a matter of historical or political necessity. It is essential to the nature of Christian faith and experience, as understood by Anglican Christians. Germany, Italy, and Spain, like Geneva and Salem before them would strive to establish dictatorships based on infallible or inerrant truths, but Anglican Christians would meet in conventions, parliaments and congresses to amend their constitutions, and citizens of Christian societies in the English speaking world would exercise the vote of conscience by secret ballot, as an act of faith, until His coming again.

Confession, and Communion

The English Reformation was in its very essence political, and this gave to Anglicanism a markedly different character from continental Christianity, whether Roman Catholic, or Protestant. In Europe, the Reformation began with Luther's dramatic challenge to the Church at the University of Wittenberg. In taking his stand, Luther in effect drew a line in the sand across the map of Europe. Christians in Europe, both Catholics and Protestants, were forced by historical necessity to draw up confessions of faith. The Confession of Augsburg, The Confession of the Synod of Dort, and the pronouncements of the Council of Trent all sought to give detailed definitions of the faith, so that each side could know where it stood on the issues that divided the Church.

The situation in England was different. There, the king declared all English Christians members of the Church of England. The English Church therefore faced a different challenge. Since English Christians had to live together, the Church had to figure out how Catholic minded Christians and Reformed minded Christians could get along. Anglicans found it necessary to distinguish between the "fundamentals" and "accidentals" of the

¹⁷ *BCP*, p. 9.

faith. The fundamentals were included in Scripture's witness to the Person of Christ, and in the traditional creeds of the Church, which had been believed by all, everywhere. Bishop Jewel's *Apology for the Church of England* (1562) identified the fundamentals as those which have become familiar to us from the *Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral*.¹⁸ They represented the "substance of the faith" which must be "kept entire."

The political character of the English Reformation also led Anglicans to stress the role of community in the Christian faith. Against the Roman Catholic Church's claim that Jesus had said that he would build the Church upon the rock of Peter, the first Bishop of Rome, Luther had argued that it was Peter's Confession that was the true rock of faith. Anglicans tended to locate the rock of faith in the community of the disciples. The Church was a society. Anglican Bishops followed the Cyprianic model of episcopacy, which emphasized the collegial character of the Episcopate, as opposed to the Roman hierarchical model. The principal tool of Anglican reformers was not the Confession of Faith, but *The Book of Common Prayer*.

From the island of England, the religious civil wars on the continent were viewed from a theological, as well political, perspective as an evil to be avoided, and as a failure of the Church to discover the mind of Christ. Anglicans therefore stressed the *Via Media* as a goal in every dispute. The *Via Media* was not so much compromise, as it was an affirmation of faith that Truth must be large enough to comprehend the assertions of both sides in a dispute.

Such a faith led to the recognition that within the community of the Church, communion must be larger than confession. Opposing sides could live together in one Holy Communion of Saints, despite confessional differences. Such communion was evidence of the Peace of God, "which passes all understanding," as well as a recognition of the ambiguity of experience, and the provisional character of all moral judgments made by the community in its journey of faith. The wider Communion of Saints could include majorities and minorities, which exercised their vote of conscience in matters of dispute. In Holy Communion all could come within the saving embrace of Christ. Thus, the Anglican assertion that communion must be larger than confession provided the foundation for the democratic institutions that English Christians would build.

Using the Sources of Authority

The presence of factions within the Communion of the Church, in which each side appeals to the same sources of authority, raises the question of the proper uses of the sources of authority, within the Church. The scriptures, for example, are not self explanatory. The texts of scripture have different meanings to different communities. For Jews, the scriptures remain the Law and the Prophets, and their authority is the authority of law and prophecy. Jews do not understand the authority of scripture to be that of witness to Christ. Thus, Saint Paul writes that a veil remains over the reading of scriptures in the synagogue.¹⁹ Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anglicans understand the scriptures differently. Furthermore, as the saying goes, "the devil can quote scripture for his own purposes."

¹⁸ *BCP*, pp. 876-877.

¹⁹ II Cor. 3.14-14.

For Anglicans, the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the primary source for our knowledge of the event of revelation in Jesus Christ, but not the sole authority. The authority of the Bible for Anglicans is its witness to the person of Jesus Christ, as the Christ who is to come in the Old Testament and the Christ who has come in the New. Implicit in this understanding is the recognition that not everything in scripture is of equal significance. Luther's quip that the Bible is the manger in which the Christ child is laid, "in which there is also much straw" remains valid for Anglican Christians, as well.²⁰

The discipline of hermeneutics seeks to discover the interpretive center of Biblical texts. For, the interpretation of the scriptures depends upon the "center" that the community identifies within the scriptures. By seeing its witness to Jesus Christ as the hermeneutical center of the scriptures, Anglicans were able to comprehend the authority of the Old and New Testaments as a witness to the Christ to come, and to Jesus, the Christ who has come. Because Anglicans locate the authority of Scripture in its witness to the Person of Christ, Anglicans did not find it necessary to add confessions of belief to the Church's historic creeds, which served as a rule and guide in understanding and stating the significance of the Scripture's witness to the event of revelation. The Creeds, in fact are the true starting point in locating the center of the witness of scripture.

The creeds of the Church make clear that the coming, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit are the event of revelation, which the Church interprets and proclaims. The creeds also place the event of revelation in Christ in the historical context of the early Roman Empire with the phrase "under Pontius Pilate." Yet, the Creeds also make clear that the event of revelation in Jesus Christ is not a "bolt out of the blue." Rather, Jesus died "according to the scriptures." Thus, despite the claim that the Law and the Prophets are fulfilled in Christ, the Old Testament continues to have authority for the Church, as a witness to the Christ who is to come.

The Church, which bears witness to, interprets and proclaims the event of revelation, of which it is itself an element, also has reason to guide it, as it walks by faith. This is not the speculative reason of the philosophers, but the inspired reason, which is led into all truth, as it is revealed in the Scriptural witness to the event of revelation in Jesus Christ. It remains human reason, but it is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and grounded in the witness of Scripture. It is reason that takes its start from the axioms of revelation, and which finds its end in the Logos, which "became flesh and dwelt among us." It is exercised in prayer, within the community of faith.

The Church must therefore use the tools of reason, including historical and critical study, to understand the historical context of the event of revelation, as well as to interpret and proclaim the event of revelation in Jesus Christ to itself, to each successive generation. It

²⁰ The difference between the Anglican and Lutheran "Christo-centric" theology of scripture is of course that Lutherans view scripture's authority in reference to the message of justification, or work of Christ, whereas Anglicans view it in reference to the person of Christ. The implications of this for ethics can be profound. Luther's exhortation to "sin boldly" (and rely on the grace of Christ) reveals a shortcoming in Luther's view, which Calvin tried to correct by including Biblical laws within his understanding of the Word of God. By looking to the person of Christ, Anglicans are able to make room for ethical imperatives in their theology of scripture. The Risen Christ can continue to guide and command the baptized, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

must understand the historical situation of New Testament, the Old Testament, and the parameters of creation. It must also understand its own present situation, since the Church that witnesses, interprets and proclaims the event of revelation is itself a community to whom the revelation comes in the preaching of the Gospel, the forgiveness of sins, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter Three: The Revelation of God, the Father, the Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth

Very early in the life of the Church, the question had to be asked concerning the God who had raised Jesus from the dead. Clearly, the God who had raised Jesus was the God Jesus had prayed to, and taught his followers to pray to, as the Father. The Church also recognized that the Father is the God who is revealed as The Almighty of the Old Testament. Thus, the creeds make clear that the event of revelation in Jesus Christ must be understood not only in the immediate context of its historical situation under Pontius Pilate, but also in the context of God's revelation of Himself to the People of Israel.

Nor was the resurrection of Jesus such a radical act of new creation that it could be considered in isolation from the creation in which it took place. For, the Almighty of the Old Testament, who is the Father of Jesus Christ, is also the Creator of heaven and earth. This statement within the Church's Creed locates the revelation, which takes place in Christ within the context of the creation. It also asserts that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is an act of the God who created the heaven and earth, and therefore does not happen apart from, or in place of, the act of creation. Indeed, the Christ who is raised is also the one "through whom all things were made."

So, the resurrection of Jesus is not in contradiction to the nature of God the Creator, in its finality and also in its revelation of a New Creation. The New Creation, which takes place in Christ, is a resurrection from the dead. Christian hope, therefore, is not for another world, but for the redemption, sanctification, and salvation of this one.

The Image of God

The Biblical witness to creation is set forth pre-eminently in the first two chapters of the *Book of Genesis*. As is well known from centuries of historical-critical study, these two chapters come from different sources, and have different aims. *Genesis, Chapter One*, is the work of Priestly editors of the Pentateuch, toward the end of the Old Testament era. According to the noted German Old Testament scholar, Gerhard von Rad, Chapter One contains Priestly doctrine, whose significance can scarcely be over emphasized.²¹ In this account, God creates the heaven and earth in six days, and rests on the seventh. The act of creation reaches its climax on the Sixth Day with the creation of humankind (Hebrew *Adam*.)

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

²⁷ So God created humankind in his image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.²²

21 Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis*, (Philadelphia, Westminster) 1972, p.47.

22 *Gen 1:26-27*.

Verse 27 is an example of Hebrew parallelism, or thought rhyme, in which the terms create parallel meanings. This can be seen in the following construction.

God	created	humankind	in his image
God	created	them	in the image of God
He	created	them	male and female

In this verse the Priestly writer makes several significant points. Humankind is the pinnacle of the creation, the culmination of God's creative act. No image can be made of God, for humankind is the true image of God. Humankind exists as a unity, which includes male and female. Men and women are therefore equal, and each images God. Yet, no single man or woman can completely image God, although male *and* female do image God. In our created existence as male and female, humankind images God.

In the following verse, the procreative function is set forth as a blessing.

God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."²³

The account of the first Six Days concludes with the statement, "These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created."²⁴

The Priestly writer uses the concept of generations to show the continuing creation through sexual generation, as in his frequent lists of descendents in subsequent generations. The generations of the heavens and earth are followed by the generations of Adam, which restates that God created Humankind male and female in the image of God.

This is the list of the descendants of Adam. When God created humankind,^a he made them^b in the likeness of God. ² Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them "Humankind"^c when they were created.²⁵

Thus, God shares his creative nature with his creation through the generations. The list of the descendents of Adam is followed by similar lists for Noah and his sons, and for Terah, the father of Abram. It is also noteworthy that in the Priestly account of the Covenant with Abraham, the original blessing of fruitful generation is repeated.

As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram,^b but your name shall be Abraham;^c for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after

²³Gen 1:28.

²⁴ Gen 2:4a.

^a Heb *adam*

^b Heb *him*

^c Heb *adam*

²⁵ Gen 5:1-2.

^b That is *exalted ancestor*

^c Here taken to mean *ancestor of a multitude*

you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring^d after you. And I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan, for a perpetual holding; and I will be their God."²⁶

In this way, the Priestly Writer affirms that the Covenant with Abraham is a renewal of the blessing pronounced upon humankind "in the beginning." As sin had threatened to plunge the creation back into chaos, as seen in the story of the Flood, so God's faithfulness to His creation continues through the continuing creation of the generations.

Thus, the Priestly Writer affirms that humankind is the only proper image of God. Male and female image the nature of God. Male and female are equal in the capacity to image God. Yet, each is an incomplete image. The fullness of the image of God can only be seen in the totality of humankind, as male and female. Further, the generative capacity of humankind through sexual reproduction images the creative nature and power of God throughout the generations. This is a blessing, which God pronounces on humanity in creation, and renews in the Covenant with Abraham.

The Unity of Humankind

The second chapter of the book of *Genesis* comes from another source, and has another purpose. In this account, attributed by scholars to the J writer, whose epic forms the foundation of the Pentateuchal narrative, the creation of humankind is presented in mythic form. We need hardly recall that a myth is not an untrue story, but a story that is always true. By setting timeless truths in narrative form, myths are able to draw upon familiar imagery to create symbolic statements that resonate at multiple levels of our awareness and understanding.

In the J writer's story, humankind is not created last, but first.

Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground,^b and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.²⁷

In Hebrew, there is a suggestive pun in the story. The word for "humankind" is *adam*. The word for "earth" or "soil" is *adamah*. Thus, humankind is created from the earth. Adam is adamantine. In order for humankind to live, God must breathe his breath into Adam. Humankind is placed in a garden to tend it for God. Humankind is the steward of creation.

In this story the creation of male and female takes place, because "it is not good that humankind should be alone."²⁸ Therefore, God causes a sleep to fall upon humankind (Hebrew *adam*) and makes Eve from Adam's rib. The Hebrew word for "male" is *'ish* and for "female" is *'ishshah*. This story asserts that man and woman constitute two halves of an original unity. Humankind (*adam*) is originally male and female. In order for human-

^d Heb *seed*

²⁶ *Gen 17:4-8.*

^b Or *formed a man* (Heb *adam*) *of dust from the ground* (Heb *adamah*)

²⁷ *Gen 2:7.*

²⁸ *Gen 2:18.*

kind not to be alone, God divides the original unity of humankind into separate parts, as male and female. This essential and underlying unity is expressed in Adam's cry,

“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,^d
for out of Man^e this one was taken.”²⁹

It is also the explanation of heterosexual desire, as stated by the J writer in the following verse, “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.”³⁰ According to this story, the original unity of man and woman is the basis for marriage, and marriage re-constitutes, as it were, the original unity of humankind. This verse, which Jesus quotes, is the basis of the statement in the marriage service of *The Book of Common Prayer*, which says that “the bond and covenant of marriage was instituted by God in creation.”³¹

The following verse states that “the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.” From the same source, however, we learn in *Genesis, Chapter Three*, that such created bliss will not continue. In the story of the fall, Adam and Eve succumb to the temptation “to be like God”³² determining good and evil for themselves, by eating of the fruit of the Tree in the middle of the Garden. The result is the loss of innocence, and the fall of creation. In other words, whenever we choose to make ourselves the center of creation and determine good and evil from our self-centered perspective for our own benefit, we fall from the created innocence and harmony that God intended for us.

Israel among the Nations

It is important to remember that the bulk of the Bible takes place after *Genesis, Chapter Three*, indeed after *Genesis, Chapter Ten*. In other words, the Old and New Covenants, from the Promise to Abraham through Pentecost, take place in the context of a fallen creation within the constraints of history characterized by faction, empire, and the consequences of the fall.

We should therefore be careful to view the laws and norms, which Israel and the Apostles derived from God's revelation, within their own historical context. Furthermore, God's revelation of Himself to Israel is, according to Christian faith, a provisional revelation which points beyond itself to “the One who is to come.” Even after the resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which is the event of revelation for Christians, the revelation of God in Christ still points beyond the limits of historical reality to the Heavenly City of the New Jerusalem, and the Second Coming of Christ. The Bible is a book that begins in a Garden and ends in a City. It is also the story of the pilgrimage of the People of God from the Wilderness to a Heavenly Kingdom.

^d Heb *ishshah*

^e Heb *ish*

²⁹ *Gen 2:23.*

³⁰ *Gen 2:24.*

³¹ *BCP, p. 423.*

³² *Gen 3:5.*

Genesis, Chapter Ten, contains a table of nations. The table, in which the generations of the sons of Noah are set forth by the Priestly Writer, marks a transition from the realm of pre-history into history. It is followed by the story of the Tower of Babel, in which the pride of empire is humbled by the confusion of speech, and the emergence of cultures, as mutually incomprehensible divisions within the human family. Henceforth, the story of humankind must be a story of nations and empires. Abraham and Israel are to be God's people among the nations of the earth. They are to be "a royal priesthood" and a "holy nation," but they are also a nation among nations, within the context of a fallen creation.

The calling of Abraham came to a nomadic people in the ancient Near East. The event of the Exodus took place around 1290 B.C. The books of the Old Testament are written over a period of a thousand years, and are composed of different sources. They address the needs of the community during that time in various cultural contexts.

Prior to the entrance to the land, the cultural context was that of tribal nomadic life. Hospitality and clan loyalty were cultural norms, which insured the survival of the tribe. The tribes of Israel gathered at local sanctuaries to tell the stories of their journey with God. In Egypt, Israel lived as slaves, and longed for freedom. As Israel settled into Canaan, nomadic customs gave way to an agrarian way of life. Fertility of crops and herds — prosperity — became a focus of concern. The egalitarian structure of nomadic culture faded, as classes of rich and poor developed.

The sexual practices of the nations around Israel included the cultic prostitution of Baal worship. Homosexual acts were not unknown to Israel, either in Egypt, or in Canaan. Polygamy and slavery were facts of life in Israel, as well as in the nations around Israel.

Holiness and Righteousness in Israel

The story of Israel is the story of God's Promise to Abraham to become the father of many nations. The promise is to be fulfilled through a descendent of Abraham through whom all the nations of the earth will be blessed.³³ Abraham and his descendents are set upon an historical journey that includes the descent into Egypt, the Exodus and Covenant at Sinai, wandering in the Wilderness, and entrance into the land of Israel. Israel knows God as the one who has called, and claimed Israel for himself. Israel is thus set apart to be holy and just among the nations, reflecting the nature of God who created and redeemed the people of God.

You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.⁵ Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine,⁶ but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.³⁴

In the event of the Exodus, Israel learned that God hates oppression, and saves the oppressed. Israel was to be just, because God is just. The demand for justice is thus grounded in the act of deliverance, whereby God saved Israel from slavery for freedom within the Covenant. The demand for Israel to be just is revealed pre-eminently in the

³³ Ge 12.1ff.

³⁴ Ex 19:4-6.

Mosaic Covenant Code, within *Exodus*. Its essence is expressed in *Exodus, Chapter Twenty Two*, “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.”³⁵

Thus, Israel comes to understand the righteousness demanded by God within the Covenant in terms of justice. The identity of the terms “justice” and “righteousness” is illustrated by the “Song of the Vineyard” in the book of *Isaiah*. The oracle was composed during the Eighth Century, B.C. when the Kingdom of Judah was enjoying a period of peace and prosperity. It begins as a conventional love song, sung on behalf of a bridegroom in praise of his bride, using conventional romantic imagery that compares the bride to a vineyard. Soon, however, it becomes an accusation of unfaithfulness. The climax comes when the bridegroom is revealed to be the LORD. The song concludes with these words, which contain puns unavailable in translation.

For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts
is the house of Israel,
and the people of Judah
are his pleasant planting;
he expected justice, (Heb. *mishpat*)
but saw bloodshed; (Heb. *mishpach*)
righteousness, (Heb. *tsedeqah*)
but heard a cry!³⁶ (Heb. *tse'aqah*)

The Hebrew parallel verse structure reveals that justice || righteousness and bloodshed || cry. The word for “cry” is used of Abel’s blood that cries to God from the ground and for the “cry” that God tells Moses He heard arise from Israel in Egypt. God looks for grapes of justice/righteousness from Israel, but finds only the sour grapes of bloodshed/oppression.

This is how we are probably to understand the stories of Sodom and Gomorrah (*Genesis, Chapter Nineteen*) and the rape of the Levite’s concubine (*Judges, Chapter Nineteen*.) Both are stories of violence against strangers. Both violate the law of hospitality. In both stories the local men demand to have intercourse with the male guests of the householder. In both, a woman is offered instead. In both, God’s judgment falls on the perpetrators of the violence. In the case of the Levite’s concubine, it is clear that the sin of the oppressors is in no way mitigated, because in the end they raped a woman, and not a man. It is clear that the sin in both stories is the sin of violence and oppression, which expresses itself through sexual appetite.

In his classic study, *The Idea of the Holy*, Rudolf Otto identifies the holy with the universal human awareness of the “wholly other.”³⁷ Thus, the basic meaning of “holy” is set apart. Such awareness expresses itself in a sense of awe and dread. Israel experienced God as “the Holy One of Israel.” The story of the call of Isaiah is a classic instance of the encounter with the Holy.

³⁵ Ex 22:21.

³⁶ Is 5:7.

³⁷ Otto, Rudolf, *The Idea of the Holy*, (London, Oxford University Press) 1923.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. ² Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. ³ And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

⁴ The pivots^a on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. ⁵ And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”³⁸

Encounter with the Holy creates a sense of awe and dread. It also creates an awareness of sin. In the encounter with the otherness of the Creator, humankind is aware not only of the otherness of God, but of our sinfulness, as well. To be called, claimed and possessed by the Holy God is thus to be set apart, and inevitably, to be transformed. This does not so much produce a sense of superiority, but of humility. The one who has been called, claimed and possessed by the Holy can only become a servant.

Thus, Israel was set apart from the nations. As God is Holy, Israel was called to holiness. The concept of holiness is therefore inherently counter-cultural. It is neither purely cultic, nor ethical, although it includes both cultural purity and morality.

The demand for holiness is set forth pre-eminently in the Holiness Code, within the book of *Leviticus*. The demand for holiness is grounded in the nature of God, “You must be holy for I the LORD am holy”³⁹ The counter-cultural sense of otherness in the idea of holiness is most clearly seen in the laws concerning sexual behavior in the Holiness Code, *Leviticus, Chapter Eighteen*, which are announced by contrasting the behavior expected of Israel with the practices of the Egyptians and Canaanites.

You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt, where you lived, and you shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan, to which I am bringing you. You shall not follow their statutes. ⁴ My ordinances you shall observe and my statutes you shall keep, following them: I am the LORD your God. ⁵ You shall keep my statutes and my ordinances; by doing so one shall live: I am the LORD.⁴⁰

The Holiness Code is derived from the Priestly circle of writers, which composed *Genesis, Chapter One*. Like all of the Biblical writers, the Priestly writers also ground Israel’s laws and statutes in the saving event of the Exodus. The Priestly writer, however, also seeks to relate them to the creation. This is true of the Sabbath. It is also true of sexual behavior. According to the Priestly tradition, humankind is created male and female in the image of God, and share in the creative power of God through the blessing of sexual generation. The Holiness, or otherness, of God is therefore particularly imaged in humankind by the otherness of male and female, and sexual relations are sacred for Israel, and fall within the code of holiness. In this connection, it is worth noting that many of the

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

³⁸Is 6:1-5.

³⁹Le, 19:2.

⁴⁰Le 18:3-5.

sexual prohibitions in *Leviticus, Chapter Eighteen*, have to do with preserving the ‘otherness’ of sexuality, by maintaining degrees of separation. This applies to the prohibitions against incest, as well as to those against homosexual behavior.

The themes of holiness and righteousness (or justice) are the twin pillars of Israel’s relationship with God. Yet, they are not entirely separate. The demand for holiness, to be sure, includes cultic purity, sacrifices, and above all the exclusive worship of the LORD, but it also includes much that we would consider matters of ethics and morality, particularly in its prescription of sexual practices. Nevertheless, justice is not divorced from holiness. Indeed, the Prophets make clear that true worship expresses itself in justice. For the concept of justice, like that of holiness, is rooted in the experience of the event of revelation, in which God heard the cry of Israel in their oppression, and came down to deliver them.

The Worship of God

Worship, in fact, provides the common ground for understanding holiness and righteousness in their relation to the God of Israel, and Israel’s own sense of its calling within the covenant. Worship is the response to the holy. The English word, “worship,” preserves the sense of the Biblical concept. It is derived from the Old English word *worþship*, which means to ascribe worth or value to something, or someone. Possibly, Paul Tillich had this in mind when he defined the term “god” as the object of our ultimate concern. In other words, whatever is of ultimate concern to us is god to us, and we show what is ultimately important to us by ascribing to it ultimate worth. That is, we worship it.

A corollary of the idea of worship, as the ascription of ultimate worth, importance and significance to something, is the idea that we become like the thing we worship. If we worship God, in whose image we are created, we become like God, and most truly ourselves. Because God is just, worship of God produces justice in us. Idolatry is a substitution of a false image of God for the true God, whose only image is humankind, as male and female. Idolatry, therefore leads inevitably to a distortion of our humanity. Since, moreover, the God in whose image we are made, is the God of the Exodus, idolatry will inevitably lead to injustice.

So, for example, if power and wealth are ultimately important to us, we will worship them. We will “dress for success.” We will act according to the dictates of power and wealth, above all else. We will value our own gain above every other good. We will

sell the righteous for silver,
and the needy for a pair of sandals—

⁷ [and]... trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth,⁴¹

This was in fact the meaning of the Prophetic struggle that engaged Israel from the time of David to the Fall of Jerusalem in 587 B. C. in the form of the contest with the Baals. The Baals were the local Canaanite fertility gods. In the mythology of Baalism, male “father” sky gods rained their seed upon female “mother” earth gods, and brought forth fruit and crops, flocks and herds. In Baal worship, cultic prostitutes imitated the behavior of the gods in order to bring about the blessings of prosperity.

⁴¹Am 2:6.

When Israel had settled in the land, and become “like the nations” a settled agricultural community, the old god of the Exodus seemed irrelevant to some in Israel. The Prophets recalled Israel to the God of the Exodus, who is a God of Justice and Holiness. To put their message in contemporary terms, the Prophets warned that the pursuit of wealth as an ultimate concern produces oppression, and courts national ruin. To pursue justice will produce peace and security. True worship of the God of the Exodus, the Holy One of Israel, means to “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.” Justice is the true basis of national security, because the LORD of history is just.

Worship involves sacrifice. It involves giving up a lesser for the greater good of the thing we worship. It involves offering ourselves to the god we worship. It involves serving that God. Other goods involve sacrifice, too. Athletes sacrifice their bodies through rigorous training for the sake of the contest and the sport. Musicians give themselves to the practice of their instruments for the sake of performance and art. Success demands hard work and perseverance. The sacrifices of Hebrew religion were the ritualized offerings of the people’s life and labor to the LORD, their Creator and Redeemer, for the sake of holiness and righteousness.

Chapter Four: The Revelation of Jesus Christ

The creeds of the Church identify the coming, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the hermeneutical center of the Christian faith. It is worth noting that the creeds pass over the career and teaching of Jesus. This is not to say that Jesus' teaching and his actions are unimportant for Christians, but only to note that they derive their authority for Christians from the Christian conviction that Jesus is the Crucified and Risen Christ. We do not believe that Jesus is the Christ and Son of the Father on the basis of His teaching and career. Instead, because we know Him to be Christ and Son of the Father, we pay attention to his words and deeds.

The creeds also make clear that the event of revelation in Jesus Christ takes place "in accordance with the scriptures." The "scriptures" here, of course, refers to the Old Testament. Thus, God, the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead, is the Almighty of the Old Testament, and the Creator of heaven and earth. The phrase, "according to the scriptures," means more than the Bible predicts the events of Jesus' trial and death. Rather, it is an assertion that the revelation of God in Christ is consistent and congruent with the revelation of God to Israel. The reference to the scriptures insures that the meaning and significance of Jesus Christ is not to be understood apart from God's prior self revelation.

The creeds also insist that "for us, and for our salvation, he came down from heaven." That is, the Son, "eternally begotten from the Father" became flesh, and dwelt among us. In Jesus Christ, the Word, through whom all things were made, enters the creation, within the conditions of historical existence, in an act of divine mercy and compassion. We can again recall the parallel words of God to Moses,

"I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings,⁸ and I have come down to deliver them."⁴²

As the Old Testament event of revelation is an act of deliverance and salvation from oppression, so the event of revelation in Jesus Christ is an act of divine mercy and compassion, which liberates humankind from bondage to sin and death.

The Identity of Jesus Christ

The Nicene Creed identifies Jesus Christ as:

the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father.
Through him all things were made.

The statements represent a development of the Apostles' Creed, which identifies Him only as "his only Son, our Lord." The statements in the Nicene Creed were added in the Fourth Century, when the Church was forced to reflect on the relationship of the Father to the Son, prior to the incarnation. The witness of scripture makes clear that the Word was

⁴² Ex 3:7-8.

“in the beginning” with God, and that “all things came into being through Him.”⁴³ Some argued, however, that although pre-existent, the Word was nevertheless a creature of God. God had used the Word to create the world, they argued, much as a craftsman might use a tool to make something. The Church, drawing on Platonic philosophical insights, replied by saying that the Son was related to the Father, as light is related to its source.⁴⁴ The Son was therefore, “Light from Light,” and thus, “true God from true God.” The Son was no creature, but “eternally begotten of the Father.”

At stake in the debate, as Athanasius, the Bishop of Alexandria, showed in his essay *On the Incarnation*, was the Church’s claim that the event of revelation in Jesus Christ was a revelation of ultimate significance, i.e. of salvation. There could be no further “word” to be spoken, beyond the word of forgiveness and mercy in Jesus Christ. No word of condemnation could stand undisclosed behind the word of reconciliation spoken in Christ. All judgment had been given to the Son.⁴⁵

The Coming of Jesus

Thus, when the Creed states that it was “For us and for our salvation [that] he came down from heaven” it claims the event of revelation in Jesus Christ to be of ultimate and universal significance. It was an event, moreover, which could not be explained in human or historical terms. The coming of Jesus Christ was not the inevitable result of historical development, or human evolution. Rather, “by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.”

Nevertheless, the event of revelation in Jesus Christ took place “under Pontius Pilate,” within the conditions of historical existence. The birth narratives of the Gospels also bear witness that Jesus’ birth took place within historical circumstances of poverty, as an outcast. There was no room for him. He became poor that we might become rich. Jesus also comes to the multitude, proclaiming the Kingdom of God. His ministry is among tax collectors and sinners. In coming in poverty, and in ministering among the outcast, He comes not to be served, but to serve, and His disciples, who would be great, must become servants of all.

Yet, Jesus also identifies with those whom he has come to serve. He is baptized by John, which is a baptism for the forgiveness of sins, and in as much as the nations feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, they do so to Him.

On the other hand, Jesus does not simply associate with the outcast, nor identify himself with them. He calls sinners to repentance, heals the sick, and casts out demons. He announces the coming of the kingdom with the cry, “Repent and believe the Gospel.” He describes himself as a physician sent to the sick. His is a ministry of teaching and healing. His words heal, restore, and reconcile. His miracles proclaim the nearness of the Kingdom. His healings, exorcisms and pronouncements of forgiveness are expressions and demonstrations of divine compassion, and they are acts of redemption, which reclaim a fallen creation.

⁴³ Jn 1:1-2.

⁴⁴ Plato, *The Republic*, Book VI,

⁴⁵ Jn 5:22.

Jesus calls twelve disciples. The Twelve represent the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus is over them, as their master and teacher. He thus reconstitutes Israel, and claims a special authority over Israel for Himself. He calls for his disciples ‘to be perfect/merciful, as your heavenly father is perfect/merciful.’⁴⁶

Jesus’ coming is therefore also a “fulfillment.” The time is fulfilled. The Kingdom of God is at hand. He has come, not to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it. He does not dispute the summary of the law, offered by the lawyer. He affirms it, “Do this, and you shall live.” Instead, he reveals the beaten and battered weakness of the human condition. His righteousness is not a matter of how low we must stoop to help our neighbor, but of accepting the grace that comes to us from above, even from outcasts and sinners.

Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?”³⁷ He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”⁴⁷

He recognizes the provision of divorce made by the Law, “because of your hardness of heart,” even while affirming the original intention of God in creation. Yet, he insists that those in heaven neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels.

Jesus is also recognized as holy. The demons identify him in Mark’s Gospel as “the Holy One of God.” In the account in Luke’s Gospel of the miraculous draught of fish, *Chapter Five*, Peter’s response to Jesus recalls that of Isaiah in the Temple,

⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!”^{9 48}

The Suffering of Jesus

The creeds recall that Jesus “suffered under Pontius Pilate.” His suffering took place under Pontius Pilate, in the third decade of the First Century, within the Roman Empire. To be sure, the primary reference of this recollection is Jesus’ trial and death. Yet, it must also have a wider reference to the historical realm of revelation. Jesus suffered under the conditions of existence within history. When the Word became flesh, Jesus entered the human condition. To be human is to be in the flesh. It is to be creature, not Creator. Mortality is the ultimate expression of creaturely powerlessness. In the flesh, we are born to die.

Yet, Jesus’ suffering is more than suffering in the flesh. The story of Jesus is a story of confrontation, rejection, and crucifixion. From the decree of Caesar Augustus, which declared that “all the world shall be enrolled,” to his exorcisms, to His entry into Jerusalem and final appearance before the Sanhedrin, Herod, Pilate, and the people of Jerusalem — Jesus confronts the powers of the world with his absolute authority. His suffering is a the consequence of this confrontation. He is the Suffering Servant of God, by whose stripes we are healed.

⁴⁷ Lk 10.36-37. We expect Jesus to say, “Which of the three recognized his neighbor in the ditch?” This is of course the answer to the question the lawyer asked. He is trying to decide how low he must stoop, i.e. how far the law extends. Instead, Jesus’ question shows that we are in the ditch, and in need of grace.

⁴⁸Lk 5:8.

The Death of Jesus

Jesus was crucified, died and was buried. His death was more than the inevitable end of human suffering under the conditions of existence. It was a rejection by the world of the Light that shines in the darkness. It was a judgment made by religious and political leaders and by the people who voted for his crucifixion that his claims amounted to blasphemy and treason. It was a betrayal and denial by his closest disciples. It was abandonment by all, in which He identified with those forsaken by God.

It was also, according to the tradition that Paul received and which he handed on to the Church in Corinth, the sacrifice that inaugurated the New Covenant. According to the witness of Scripture and the Tradition of the Church, Jesus interpreted his own death, “on the night in which he was betrayed.” The death of Jesus is a pronouncement that God has made a New Covenant with His people. The New Covenant is

not like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband,^g says the LORD.³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.³⁴ No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.⁴⁹

The New Covenant is for the forgiveness of sins. The New Covenant is a pre-emptive act of divine compassion that reaches past human pride and rebellion to the weakness, ignorance and sinfulness of the human condition. “Father, Forgive them. They know not what they do.” On the Cross, he stretched forth His hands in love that everyone might come within the reach of His saving embrace.

Jesus spent the night before he died in prayer in a Garden. He was tempted in every way, as we are, yet unlike Adam in the Garden, did not sin. He did not seek to become like God and determine what is good and evil from his own center. He prayed, “Not what I want, but what you want.”⁵⁰

Jesus was arrested and tried under the Law. “By oppression and judgment he was taken away.”⁵¹ On the cross, he was numbered with the transgressors, between two thieves. Yet, he made intercession for the transgressors, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.”⁵²

In his death, Jesus fulfills the Sabbath in the Garden tomb. His death is thus the completion of the Creation, a Sabbath rest. The work of creation and redemption is “finished.”⁵³ The old creation has passed away.

^g Or *master*

⁴⁹Je 31:32-34.

⁵⁰Mk 14:33

⁵¹RSV Is 53:8.

⁵²Is 53:13, Lk 23:34

⁵³Jn 19:30

The Resurrection of Jesus

The resurrection of Jesus is a reversal of human judgment. Jesus is not guilty. He did not deserve death. His resurrection is thus a disclosure or revelation of God's mercy. The righteous died for the unrighteous. The innocent Jesus died. Those guilty of his death, live. He died in their place. He was raised for our justification.⁵⁴

In His confrontation with the powers of the world, the world said, "Stop, or we'll kill you." The Law had brought death. In His resurrection, the righteousness of God was revealed "apart from the Law."⁵⁵ Life triumphed over death, unity overcame estrangement, forgiveness healed guilt, and joy conquered despair. Therefore, nothing is "able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."⁵⁶

The resurrection is also an act of New Creation an Eighth Day. Behold the new has come. So if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.

The Ascension of Jesus

Jesus is "seated at the right hand of the Father." That is, the resurrection of Jesus is not simply a past event, which took place within the confines of a particular history, within time and space. Jesus did not simply rise from the dead. He lives. He has entered the eternal presence of God. He no longer suffers under the conditions of existence. The power of his presence is no longer limited by time and space. He continues to intercede for us. He is free to be, as He will be. For freedom, Christ has set us free.

The Second Coming of Jesus

The creeds affirm of Jesus that "He will come again to judge the living and the dead." The Second Coming of Jesus is grounds for Christian hope. The Final Judgment will be based on the mercy and forgiveness of God.

Yet, it also implies a "not yet" to the Christian revelation of "already." In Christ, God has already revealed His judgment and salvation, but it is not yet complete. Christians have died to sin in Baptism, but have not yet attained the resurrection. Instead, they have been raised to "walk in newness of life." It does not yet appear what we shall be. We must walk by faith, and not by sight.

⁵⁴ Ro 4.25.

⁵⁵ Ro 3.21.

⁵⁶Ro 8:39.

Chapter Five: The Revelation of the Holy Spirit

The Greek word for “spirit” is *pneuma*, which is the same as the word for “wind” and “breath.” In the Old Testament, *Genesis* records that God breathed into Adam, and he became a “living being.” The Holy Spirit is thus “the Lord and Giver of Life.”

The Spirit is associated with power, and is contrasted with “flesh.” In the Bible, the word “flesh” refers to creaturely existence in its weakness and mortality. Flesh is powerless, apart from the power of the Spirit. Thus, the parallelism of *Isaiah* declares,

The Egyptians are human, and not God;
their horses are flesh, and not spirit.⁵⁷

According to the witness of Scripture, John the Baptist announced the coming event of revelation. All four Gospels testify that John’s message consisted of two parts: After me comes one mightier than I; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.⁵⁸ God had promised Abraham that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him. Old Testament expectation thus came to include the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as an element of the revelation of God that would take place in the Last Days.

Then afterward
I will pour out my spirit on all flesh;
your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
your old men shall dream dreams,
and your young men shall see visions.
²⁹ Even on the male and female slaves,
in those days, I will pour out my spirit.⁵⁹

According to the witness of Scripture, Pentecost was the beginning of the fulfillment of this Old Testament Expectation. So, Peter explains Pentecost by saying, “This is what was spoken through the prophet Joel...Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”⁶⁰

Confirmation of the Apostolic Testimony

According to Luke, the Risen Jesus told the disciples that he would “ send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high.”⁶¹ The Holy Spirit therefore also plays an integral role in the Church’s proclamation

⁵⁷ Is 31:3.

⁵⁸ The Church Year recognizes the two-fold character of the event of revelation in its division of the year into two roughly equal parts. Easter to Pentecost (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent and Easter) proclaim The Word of God in Jesus Christ, as the One mightier than John. The six months of Pentecost Proclaim the Spirit of Jesus in the Church, which is the fellowship of those who have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

⁵⁹ Joe 2:28-29.

⁶⁰ Ac 2:16, 21.

⁶¹ RSV, Lk 24:49.

that Jesus is Lord, as is illustrated in the story of Peter's preaching at Pentecost.⁶² Peter proclaims,

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.³³ Being therefore exalted at^g the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear...³⁶ Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah,^h this Jesus whom you crucified."

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers,ⁱ what should we do?"³⁸ Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.³⁹ For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him."⁶³

The Apostolic community of witness to the event of revelation interprets and proclaims the event of revelation. Those who hear the testimony of the apostolic community of witness, become members of the community by hearing in faith, repentance and baptism, and by receiving the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the seal God places upon the Apostolic Testimony, and the down payment, or pledge of eschatological salvation.

In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit;¹⁴ this^d is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.⁶⁴

The Holy Spirit confirms the apostolic testimony and the faith of believers by signs, wonders, miracles and spiritual gifts. So, the writer of the *Letter to the Hebrews* writes of the Gospel,

It was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him,⁴ while God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will.⁶⁵

The "longer ending" of Mark's Gospel also reports that the Apostles, "went out and proclaimed the good news everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompanied it."⁶⁶ So also, Paul writes to the Corinthians,

I give thanks to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus,⁵ that in every way you were enriched in him with all speech and all knowledge—⁶ even as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among

⁶² Peter's speech at Pentecost has been widely studied, as an example of Apostolic preaching. Although it can not be said to be the *ipsissima verba*, "very words," of Peter, it may be taken to represent the *ipissima vox*, "very voice," of Apostolic preaching.

^g Or *by*

^h Or *Christ*

ⁱ *Gk Men, brothers*

⁶³ Ac 2:32-39.

^d Other ancient authorities read *who*

⁶⁴ Eph 1:13-14.

⁶⁵ Heb 2:3-4.

⁶⁶ Mk 16:20.

you—⁷ so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ;⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.⁶⁷

Thus, the Church bears witness that Jesus is Lord, while God confirms the Church's testimony by the Gift of the Holy Spirit, which is the Promise of the Father.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

It needs to be said that in speaking of the Holy Spirit, the distinctive emphasis must fall upon "Holy" not upon "Spirit." To our modern, post-modern and 'New Age' ears, the 'spiritual' element of the New Testament worldview is alternately alarming, fascinating, or incomprehensible. Yet, New Testament era people were well aware of the spiritual dimension of the world, and indeed of many 'spirits.' They knew, too, of the emotionalism of the mystery cults. Thus Paul writes, "You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak."⁶⁸ The distinctive feature of the Holy Spirit was not that it was spirit, but that it was holy. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus. It is the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, and gives life to the Church.

Paul discusses the varieties of spiritual gifts in *Chapter Twelve of First Corinthians*. In this discussion, the gifts fall into three categories of knowing, speaking and doing. Knowledge, Wisdom and Discernment enable us to know God's will. Tongues, Interpretation of Tongues and Prophecy enable us to say God's will. Healing, Miracles, and Faith enable us to do God's will.⁶⁹ The Gifts of the Holy Spirit thus empower the Church, as the Body of Christ, to know, say, and do the will of God.

The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit

The Church is thus a creation of the Holy Spirit, and included in the creed, which professes belief in "the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church." The Church, as a creation of the Holy Spirit, is a radically new community. It is characterized by *koinonia*, which is fellowship or communion that is created by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit has been poured out on "all flesh." Therefore, in Christ, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."⁷⁰ That is, every distinction based on ethnicity, economic status, or sexual differentiation has been done away with. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which creates the Church, represents the beginning of the gathering of the nations, and the reversal of the divisions of humanity that are a consequence of the fall.

This is not to say that there are no distinctions in the Church. The Holy Spirit gives a variety of gifts for the common good. Similarly, the gifts of Christ include apostles, prophets, teachers, pastors and evangelists, for the building up of the Body of Christ. There is also a distinction between those who are "in Christ" and those who are not. That is there

⁶⁷RSV. 1 Co 1:4-7.

⁶⁸1 Co 12:2.

⁶⁹Faith is here the Gift of faith, which may be called "entrepreneurial faith" in contrast to the saving faith of trust in God's Promise, which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. It is the "mustard seed" faith that enables us to move mountains.

⁷⁰Ga 3:28.

is a distinction between the Church and Judaism, and between the Church and the world. Those who are in Christ are those who have been “baptized into Christ.” Christians are therefore a “new humanity” and a “new creation,” and are called to “walk in newness of life.”⁷¹ For, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.”⁷² To be guided by the Spirit is above all to “walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”⁷³

Worship in the Power of the Spirit

The Creed states that the Holy Spirit, with the Father and the Son, is worshiped and glorified.” There is, as we have seen, an intimate relationship between holiness and righteousness in worship. In the Old Testament, worship is the response to the Holy, which brings forth justice and righteousness. So, in the New Testament, worship brings forth love. Therefore, the language of worship informs the ethical imperative of the Christian life, because “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”⁷⁴

In worship, as we have seen, we become like what we worship. Thus, “speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.”⁷⁵ Such transformation, brought about by the Spirit of Holiness in worship through love, is also inherently counter cultural. So, Paul appeals to Christians in Rome,

to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual^b worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world,^c but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.^{d76}

The transformation brought about by worship, as well as the counter cultural nature of Christian worship underlies Paul’s discussion of idolatry in *Romans, Chapter One*. The *Letter to the Romans* is widely recognized to be the most complete presentation of Paul’s theology in the New Testament. It is the only letter of Paul not written to a church he had founded. It is also the only letter not written to address a controversy in the Church.

From *Chapter One, verse 16*, Paul presents the Gospel as

the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.”^{e77}

⁷¹Ro 6:4.

⁷²Ga 5:25.

⁷³*The Revised Standard Version*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1971. Eph 5:2.

⁷⁴Ro 5:5.

⁷⁵Eph 4:15.

b Or *reasonable*

c Gk *age*

d Or *what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

⁷⁶Ro 12:1.

e Or *The one who is righteous through faith will live*

⁷⁷Ro 1:16-17.

For Paul, the idea of righteousness is intimately bound up with worship. His argument in *Chapter One* is that the true nature of God is revealed in creation. For, God's "eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made."⁷⁸ Underlying Paul's argument is the Priestly tradition of the Old Testament that humankind is created male and female in the image of God. Idolatry is the substitution of a false image of God for the true God, whose only image is humankind.

Therefore, as in true worship we are transformed "by the renewing of [our] minds," so in idolatry, we are "conformed to this world." The result is an inevitable distortion of our humanity. For, since we are created male and female in the image of God, our humanity is confirmed, as we are conformed to God through the worship of God, in whose image we are made. Idolatry, leads to a deformation of our humanity, because we seek to be conformed to a god in whose image we are not created. Paul's version of the fall in *Chapter One* is one of decline into lower and lower depths of idolatry from "images resembling a mortal human being or birds or four-footed animals or reptiles."⁷⁹

The deformation of the image of God through idolatry leads, for Paul, to unrighteousness, just as the Prophets saw the roots of Israel's oppression of the poor in the worship of the Baals.

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves,²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.⁸⁰

It is natural for Paul to include relations among the sexes in his catalog of the distortions brought about through idolatry, since he believes that we are created male and female in the image of God, and our true humanity can only be confirmed through the worship of God in whose image we are made. To worship false images of God is to be "conformed to this world." It is to exchange the truth about God for a lie, and to worship and serve the creature, rather than the Creator. To worship the true God, in whose image we are made, is also to present "your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God." It is to be "transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect."

The Righteousness of Faith

Paul presents the Gospel to the Romans as the righteousness of God, which is "revealed through faith for faith." As a Pharisee, Paul had seen what the Church had not been able to see: the Church could not continue, as a sect of Judaism. Jesus had been accused under the Law. He had been tried under the Law. He had been judged under the Law. He had been condemned under the Law. He had been sentenced under the Law. He had been executed under the Law. He had even been cursed under the Law.⁸¹ If Jesus were the Messiah, God must have acted "apart from the Law."

⁷⁸Ro 1:20.

⁷⁹Ro 1:23.

⁸⁰Ro 1:24-25.

⁸¹ Deut.21.22.

Paul therefore set out from Jerusalem to stamp out the Church. Paul's encounter with the Risen Christ on the road to Damascus struck him blind. When he regained his sight, he retreated into the desert for two years. He returned a changed man. He saw that Jesus is Lord, and the Church is the Body of Christ.

Intellectually, Paul's breakthrough came when he saw that the Old Testament had never been about law, but about promise. In shifting the hermeneutic center of the Old Testament from the Covenant with Moses to the Promise to Abraham, Paul also redefined righteousness. In terms of the Covenant with Moses, righteousness is shown by obeying the laws of the Covenant. God's righteousness also consists in punishing law breakers. Once righteousness is viewed in terms of promise, it must be defined in terms of faith. God shows his righteousness by being faithful to his promise that through a descendent of Abraham the nations would be blessed. Abraham showed his righteousness by believing that God could and would keep his promise. Christians show their righteousness, by believing in Jesus, through whom God has kept his promise to Abraham.

The promise of God was fulfilled through the death of Jesus, sentenced under the Law, who had died in place of the guilty.

God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.⁹ Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God.^{e 10} For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.¹¹ But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.⁸²

Therefore, "the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it,"^{22 83} For, "the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith."⁸⁴ So, "The law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith."⁸⁵

To be justified by faith means to be reconciled to God. It means to be made righteous by trusting that that we shall be saved. It does not mean, of course, that we are to continue to sin that grace may abound. Nor, does it mean that we are already perfected by grace. It is instead to be brought into a right relationship with God, so that the process of sanctification may continue in us. For, Paul is convinced that Jesus who died, and was raised, is seated at the right hand of God, and continues to intercede for us.⁸⁶ Therefore, he is also convinced

^e Gk *the wrath*

⁸² Ro 5:8-11.

⁸³ *The Revised Standard Version*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1971. Ro 3:21.

⁸⁴ Ro 4:13.

⁸⁵ Ga 3:24.

⁸⁶ Ro 8.34.

that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.⁸⁷

So, Paul can not demand anything of the Romans. He can only appeal to them. His appeal is to allow God's grace to continue to transform them through worship.

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters,^a by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual^b worship.² Do not be conformed to this world,^c but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.^d

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.⁸⁸

Thus, Paul's presentation of the Gospel to the Romans ends where it began, with worship. The ethical injunctions that follow Paul's appeal to the Romans to present their bodies to God as a "living sacrifice" draw out the consequences of worship, by exhibiting the character of the transformation that worship brings about. They are exhortations to love: "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.⁸⁹ ." They are also injunctions, which recognize that worship involves transformation, and transformation involves time. Therefore, the Romans are urged not to demand perfection of one another. "Welcome those who are weak in faith,^a but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions⁹⁰ ."

For, although Paul does not say so, it does not appear what we shall be. We only know that we shall be like Him.⁹¹ So,

Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister?^c Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister?^d For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God⁹² .

In the meantime, the Church is the Body of Christ, and a Fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, "pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding."⁹³ And finally,

⁸⁷ Ro 8:38.

a Gk *brothers*

b Or *reasonable*

c Gk *age*

d Or *what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God*

⁸⁸ Ro 12:1-3.

⁸⁹ Ro 13:8.

a Or *conviction*

⁹⁰ Ro 14:1.

⁹¹ I Jn 3:2.

c Gk *brother*

d Gk *brother*

⁹² Ro 14:10.

⁹³ Ro 14:19.

“Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.”⁹⁴

⁹⁴Ro 15:7.

II. Mission

Chapter Six: The Mission of the Church

The Church, as the continuing community to the event of revelation and an element of revelation through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, carries out its mission in light of the witness of Scripture, the tradition it has received and hands on, and through reason guided by the Holy Spirit. According to the witness of Scripture the event of revelation in the coming, suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is that “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself,^d not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.”⁹⁵ In the Great Commission, given by Jesus to the Apostles, according to Saint Matthew’s Gospel, the Church is to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”⁹⁶ Thus, the “Outline of Faith” in *The Book of Common Prayer*, “The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.” The “Outline of Faith” also says that “The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love.”⁹⁷

The Church is therefore committed to holiness and righteousness, as it lives its life in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This commitment is expressed in the daily prayer of the Church,

And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies,
that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise,
not only with our lips, but in our lives,
by giving up our selves to your service,
and by walking before you
in holiness and righteousness all our days;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,
be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.⁹⁸

Evangelism and Mission

The catechumenate of the Early Church, which is reflected in the structure of the Church Year, was a response to the Great Commission. The Church, “through the ministry of all its members,” is sent to all “who seek God, or a deeper knowledge of Him,” to form them as disciples of Jesus, to baptize them into the death of Christ, and to teach them the faith. The catechumenal structure of the evangelical task was recognized by the

^d Or *God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself*

⁹⁵ 2 Co 5:19.

⁹⁶ Mt 28:19.

⁹⁷ *BCP*, p. 855.

⁹⁸ *BCP*, p.101.

goals of the Decade of Evangelism, 1990-2000, announced by General Convention and adopted by the Lambeth Conference.

Our goal is to learn to evangelize in such a way that every decade will be a decade of evangelism.

By 2000 A.D., we want:

1. Every Episcopal congregation to be seeking out non-church people and inviting them to explore the Christian way;
2. Forming them as Christ's people when they come;
3. Sending them back to their daily places -their work, their homes and communities, their citizenship, and their leisure as well as their church -as conscious agents of Jesus Christ's reign among us;
4. and we want to offer continuing support and mutual accountability for them in small groups.

In the Early Church, the period of formation might last three years. The "season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism,"⁹⁹ which typically took place on Easter, during The Great Vigil of Easter. In this rite, Candidates for Baptism were baptized, presented to the Bishop for laying-on-of-hands, and prayer for God to confirm their faith and the testimony of the Church through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, and admitted into the Holy Communion of the Church. From Easter to Pentecost, the Bishop instructed the newly baptized in the faith of the Church, in order that they might continue in "the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."¹⁰⁰ Thus, the sacraments of the Church were the missionary rites through which the Church celebrated and carried out the Great commission in its ministry of reconciliation, as "ambassadors of Christ."

As we have seen, the Anglican Divines understood the authority of Scripture in terms of the Word of God, as a witness to the Person of Christ. Anglicans thus have understood and affirmed that Jesus Christ continues to lead us into all Truth, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We are not people of a book, but of a risen Lord. For Anglicans then, evangelism is not simply the proclamation of a message, but

The presentation of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit in such ways that people are led to confess Him as Savior, and follow and obey Him as Lord, within the Church.¹⁰¹

Because Anglicans recognize that evangelism leads to a relationship with the Risen Savior and Lord of the Church, we also understand that Evangelism involves more than justification by faith. It also involves sanctification, or growth in holiness and righteousness. Thus, the sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation, as well as Baptism, are as integrally related to one another, within the mission of the Church. For, we are not simply baptized into the death of Jesus, to live within the Baptismal Covenant. We are also nurtured by His Body and Blood in the Holy Communion of the Church, and sent forth "in the name of Christ," "to love and serve the Lord," "rejoicing in the power of the Spirit," Who con-

⁹⁹ *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 265.

¹⁰⁰ Ac 2:42.

¹⁰¹ The definition of evangelism proposed by William Temple, and adopted as the official definition of Evangelism for the Decade of Evangelism by the Episcopal Church.

firms our faith and the Apostolic testimony by the signs and wonders of His grace through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The Sacrament of Confirmation deserves special mention. Although included among the Rites of Initiation in some Church publications, Confirmation is listed as the first of the Pastoral Offices of the Church in *The Book of Common Prayer*. In the sacrament of Confirmation, the Bishop, as a successor of the Apostles and representative of the Community, lays hands on the baptized, and prays for God to confirm the Apostolic Testimony by conferring the Gifts of The Holy Spirit. Confirmation is thus an expression of the Pastoral ministry of the Church. That is, the Church prays for the Risen Christ to be present in the lives of its members within the Holy Communion of the Church, and for the Holy Spirit to lead and guide them into all Truth, within their life in the ‘Church Militant.’ Confirmation thus implies recognition of the continuing journey of our life in Christ.

Mission and Eschatology

Such an understanding of evangelism, and of mission, acknowledges the eschatological dimension of the Church’s life. It understands that the Great Commission includes the promise, “I am with you always, to the end of the age.” The eschatological perfection of grace remains a promise and a hope. We can therefore say with Saint Paul,

Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal;^g but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.¹³ Beloved,^h I do not consider that I have made it my own;ⁱ but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly^j call of God in Christ Jesus.¹⁰³

Within our life in the Church there continues to be a “not yet,” as well as an “already.” We have not yet obtained the perfection promised in Christ, but we have already been made his own. We must walk by faith, and not by sight, within the Communion of the Church.

The Church in the World

The process of evangelism and the mission of the Church take place in an historical setting, within the world. The world is not an indifferent arena for Christians.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.¹⁰⁴

Yet, the world is not the Church, which is the Body of Christ. Those in the Church are those “in Christ,” a new creation.

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!¹⁰⁵

^g Or *have already been made perfect*

^h Gk *Brothers*

ⁱ Other ancient authorities read *my own yet*

^j Gk *upward*

¹⁰³ Php 3:12-14.

¹⁰⁴ Jn 3:16.

The setting of the Church, as a new creation in Christ, within the world means that the evangelistic mission of the Church must involve renunciation, as well as affirmation. Specifically, candidates for baptism are to renounce

- Satan and all the spiritual forces of wickedness that rebel against God?
- the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?
- all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God?

They are also to

- turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Savior?
- put their whole trust in his grace and love?
- promise to follow and obey him as your Lord?

For, in baptism, “we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”¹⁰⁶ We must die to the world, in order to be born again by water and the Spirit.

Our new life in Christ is reflected in the Baptismal Covenant, which includes an affirmation of the Apostles’ Creed, and

- continuing in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers,
- perseverance in resisting evil,
- continuing repentance,
- proclamation by word and example the Good News of God in Christ,
- Seeking and serving Christ in all persons,
- Love of neighbor,
- striving for justice and peace among all people,
- and respect for the dignity of every human being.

Therefore, the Church also pursues its mission as it “promotes justice, peace, and love.” The worship of God “in the beauty of holiness” is lived out in the world through efforts to establish justice, work for peace, and walk in love. For, we

who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.¹⁴ For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.¹⁵ He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile both groups to God in one body^c through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.^{d 107}

The Church supports the baptized by re-affirming its own baptismal covenant, and by praying for the baptized,

¹⁰⁵2 Co 5:17.

¹⁰⁶Ro 6:4.

^c Or *reconcile both of us in one body for God*

^d Or *in him, or in himself*

¹⁰⁷Eph 2:13-16.

- that they may be delivered from the way of sin and death,
- that their hearts may be opened to God's grace and truth,
- that they may be filled with the Holy Spirit,
- that they may be kept in the faith and communion of the Church,
- that they may be taught to love others in the power of the Spirit,
- that they may be sent into the world in witness to God's love,
- that they may be brought to the fullness of God's peace and glory,
- that they may live in the power of the resurrection and look for Christ to come again in glory.

The Church's prayers for the baptized make clear that life in Christ within the Church includes a continuing need for deliverance, openness, guidance by the Holy Spirit, instruction, support, witness, and completion. Christians are to live already "in the power of his resurrection," but must continue to "look for Christ to come again in glory."

The World in the Church

The situation of the Church in the world, which involves renunciation and affirmation, includes a recognition that the world continues to exist within the Church. Conversion means a change in direction, but not the end of the journey. Baptism is a sacrament of New Birth, not of maturity.

The Church continues to be transformed by grace, as it celebrates the Eucharist, "until His coming again." The Church prays for the Holy Spirit to confirm its testimony and the faith of the baptized through the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Its members continue to be in need of the sacramental grace of Unction, and of Reconciliation. The Church continues to need to confess its sins, as well as its faith. The process of dying and rising with Christ, begun in Baptism, is not yet complete.

The Church is therefore a mixed society. It includes tares among wheat. It is "like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind."¹⁰⁸ Yet, the final determination is not its own to make. It is a judgment that takes place "at the close of the age" when "the angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous"¹⁰⁹

Christians are not therefore to pass judgment upon one another, but to "welcome those who are weak in faith,^a but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions."¹¹⁰ Rather, "Welcome one another...just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."¹¹¹

The Priesthood of the Family of God

The Church "carries out its mission through the ministry of all its members."¹¹² Thus, in the Celebration of Baptism, the baptized are welcomed into the Church, as the household of God and a royal priesthood.

¹⁰⁸Mt 13:47.

¹⁰⁹Mt 13:49.

^a Or *conviction*

¹¹⁰Ro 14:1.

¹¹¹Ro 15:7.

¹¹² *BCP*, p. 855.

We receive you into the household of God. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in his eternal priesthood.

In the Old Testament, the priesthood interceded for the people, entered the Holy of Holies, offered sacrifice, and returned to pronounce God's blessing upon the people. As the High Priest of Christian confession, Jesus intercedes for the people upon the Cross and at the Right Hand of the Father, offers Himself as a "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the world," and sends the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Christians exercise their royal priesthood as they intercede for the Church and the world in the Prayers of the People within the Eucharist, offer their life and labor to the Lord to be united to the sacrifice of Christ, and are sent back into the world, as those entrusted with the message of reconciliation, to pronounce God's blessing upon a world reconciled to God in Christ,.

Christians therefore present their bodies to God, as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable through worship. In the process they are not conformed to the world, but transformed by the renewing of their minds so that they may discern the will of God. Renewed by Word and Sacrament, they are then sent to the world "in the name of Christ," "to love and serve the Lord," "rejoicing in the power of the Spirit."

Yet, "it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry"¹¹³ Christians have no claim to virtue or reward. We are saved by grace, not by law. As unworthy servants, we can not call attention to ourselves. "For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake."¹¹⁴ Even though the light of Christ has pierced our darkness, "we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us."¹¹⁵

The Church therefore is careful to present every baptized Christian, "when they are ready and have been duly prepared" to the bishop, as a successor to the Apostles, so that they can receive laying on of hands, with prayer for God to confirm the Apostolic testimony and their own faith by conferring the Gifts of the Holy Spirit upon them. For the Gifts of the Holy Spirit manifest the "extraordinary power" that gives life to the Church, and enables us to know, say and do the will of God. So, we, the household of God and an eternal priesthood, do not lose heart. For, "I am with you always, to the end of the age."^d

¹¹³2 Co 4:1.

¹¹⁴2 Co 4:5.

¹¹⁵2 Co 4:7.

^d Other ancient authorities add *Amen*

III. Dialogue

Chapter Seven: The Sexuality Dialogue in the Anglican Church

Why Us?

When the 74th General Convention of the Episcopal Church met in Minneapolis in August, 2003 and confirmed the election of Fr. Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire, it set off a crisis within the Church, which has attracted the attention of the world. Some are shocked. Some are elated. Some are confused, by the Convention's action. Some are asking, Why us? Why should we be the ones to be engaged in such a public debate on this issue? Surely, Anglicans are not the only ones to have had to deal with issues of sexuality.

The most immediate answer to the question is a deceptively simple one. We are having this debate, because we can. Roman Catholics can't have it, because debate is precluded by Papal decree. At the time the General Convention was meeting, the Roman Catholic Church in fact issued a Papal decree, which dictated the position Roman Catholics were to have on the issue of homosexuality in the Church, and in society. Reformed Protestants can't have it. Because they view scripture's authority as law, rather than witness, they are forced to try to apply even Old Testament laws to the Church, a process that is always selective. In many Protestant Churches, moreover, the correct interpretation of Scripture is dictated from the pulpit, which only tends to create congregations of like-minded people.

Anglicans can have the debate, because Anglicans have rejected the infallibility of the Church and the inerrancy of the scriptures on the basis of a recognition of the ambiguity of historical experience, in light of eschatological hope. Also, Anglicans understand the Word of God in reference to the scriptures in terms of witness to the Person of Christ, rather than in terms of law. This has led Anglicans to value the continuing guidance the Holy Spirit gives to the Church, and to the sacred choice of conscience. As we have seen, this has led to the development of democratic structures within the Church, and within societies influenced by English spirituality. The collegial understanding of the Episcopacy within Anglicanism has also led to a relational autonomy within the Anglican Communion. Each diocese can act on its own, but its actions affect all other dioceses.

Why Now?

Even if Anglicans can have such a debate, it does not mean that we need to have it. Why now? The answer to this question arises out of the nature of the Church's mission. As we have seen, the Church is sent to the world, as ambassadors of Christ, bearing the message of reconciliation. Because the world is the context of the Church's mission, the Church must be in continual dialog with the world. Furthermore, baptized Christians, although justified by grace through faith, are also set upon a journey of sanctification. The incompleteness of the process of sanctification means that the Church will always have to "discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect." Nevertheless,

such discernment continues to take place within the ambiguities of historical experience, and once again, “it does not yet appear what we shall be,” and “we see through a glass, darkly.” We must walk by faith, not by sight.

The fascination of the nation with the Church’s debate was an indication that our Church is openly confronting a major social issue of our times. Several commentators in fact made the point that our Church was serving a wider national debate, which could benefit us all. To be faithful to its mission, the Church must engage the world in a dialog about issues that are important to all seekers of God.

Sex and the Church in Post-Christendom

The latter half of the Twentieth Century saw great changes in the church and society. Western culture could no longer be considered Christendom. In Christendom, the Church was a religious institution that served a Christian society. In Post-Christendom, the Church once again became a missionary community in a multi-cultural world. The rise of an urban culture and new modes of transportation broke down traditional extended families, as children moved to cities. The birth control pill gave women reproductive freedom. People lived longer than ever before. Women entered the work force. Universal education extended adolescence, and delayed the age of marriage. Pre-marital sex became a cultural norm. Divorce rates rose, and homosexuality emerged into public view, with scientific evidence presenting a confused picture of its nature and causes. The Church was forced to confront issues, long held to have been settled by the Biblical witness, and traditional teaching of the Church, as its members reflected these emerging social trends.

The missionary expansion of the Church also presented the church with challenges arising from preaching the gospel in non-Christianized environments. One example concerned marriage. Many African cultures were polygamous. At the Anglican Congress of 1967, held in Toronto, African delegates pleaded with the Church to recognize polygamy. For an African man to divorce any of his wives, would consign the divorced woman to poverty and prostitution. The Church responded by affirming the traditional teaching of the Church regarding monogamous marriage, but recognized that pastoral sensitivity required flexibility and a time of transition, until monogamy could become the cultural norm. The mission of the Church required recognition of ambiguity.

In developed countries, the first issue to be addressed was the issue of divorce. The Church had never recognized divorce, or allowed re-marriage. As recently as the 1960’s if a priest was divorced, and remarried he was often forced to leave the ministry, or move to another diocese. Many divorced people felt the Church added to their pain and suffering by blaming them, and withholding its blessing from a second marriage.

Eventually, the Church responded to the new cultural realities much as it had when confronted by polygamy in its missionary ventures. It affirmed the Church’s teaching that “Christian marriage is a solemn and public covenant between a man and a woman in the presence of God.”¹¹⁶ The vows of husband and wife continued to say, “until we are parted by death.”¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ BCP, p. 422.

¹¹⁷ BCP, p.427.

Yet, the Church also agreed that divorce was to be treated pastorally. The Church found that it could recognize the sin of divorce, without assigning blame, or judging those hurt by its effects. Divorce was evidence of sin in marriage, and often the lesser of two evils. In any case, the Church felt called to support God's redemptive love by its pastoral resources. This often required counseling, and the Church's blessing of a second, and sometimes a third marriage.

To some Christians outside the Anglican Church this approach seemed incomprehensible. Roman Catholics simply refused to recognize divorce. A divorced person was excommunicated. Marriages outside the Church went unrecognized, and broken marriages made in the Church could only be annulled. Some Protestant denominations also could find no way of ministering to divorced persons, because they felt bound to Biblical texts, which clearly represented divorce as contrary to God's original will.

The Anglican view of the authority of Scripture encouraged Anglicans to look for scripture's witness to the redemptive love of God in Christ, and to discern the redemptive activity of God in the lives of divorced people. So, in spite of specific Biblical texts, Anglicans could celebrate and bless the redemptive and renewing work of God in the lives of people who had been broken and hurt by sin in a fallen world. No sin was beyond the reach of the loving forgiveness of Christ, and no one was beyond the possibility of renewal and redemption. The Church existed not to judge, and blame, but to heal and restore.

Changing sexual mores in society also required the Church to question its teaching about human sexuality in contexts other than divorce. Many congregations found that it had members who lived faithfully committed lives outside of marriage. Young persons lived together, prior to marriage. Some mature adults lived together with no thought of marriage, in life-long relationships. Elderly people also sometimes chose to live together outside of marriage. Homosexual couples sought God in the Church.

The sexual revolution also affected the place of women in society. In many societies, particularly in the West, women were no longer confined to traditional roles. In these cultures, the Church was forced to come to terms with the place of women in the Church. Thus, some provinces of the Anglican Communion chose to ordain women to the priesthood and the episcopacy. Others did not. The Church was forced to recognize a period of receptivity in the life of the Church. The principle of Receptivity acknowledges that from time to time the Holy Spirit does a new thing in the Church. Yet, not every new thing is the work of the Holy Spirit. There is, therefore, a period of receptivity, during which the Church seeks to discern the mind of Christ. In this time, some provinces may adopt the new thing, and others reject it, until it is either universally adopted, or abandoned, and the mind of Christ discerned.

The case of homosexual persons presented the Church with a special challenge. The testimony of many homosexual persons was that they had not chosen their condition, but discovered it. The traditional teaching of the Church recognized marriage as a vocation, which required a special grace of God. Celibacy was also recognized as a special vocation, which also required a special grace of God. Homosexual persons were not given the grace of marriage, and some could claim no special grace of celibacy.

In 1976, the 65th General Convention resolved that “homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church...” The resolution did not seek to affirm homosexual behavior, but only to insure that that the condition of homosexuality did not negate the humanity of homosexual persons.

In 1979, the 66th General Convention addressed the question of the ordination of homosexual persons. It concluded:

There are many human conditions, some of them in the area of sexuality, which bear upon a person’s suitability for ordination;

Every ordinand is expected to lead a life which is “a wholesome example to all people.”¹¹⁸ There should be no barrier to the ordination of qualified persons of either heterosexual or homosexual orientation whose behavior the Church considers wholesome;

We reaffirm the traditional teaching of the Church on marriage, marital fidelity and sexual chastity as the standard of Christian sexual morality. Candidates for ordination are expected to conform to this standard. Therefore, we believe it is not appropriate for this Church to ordain a practicing homosexual, or any person who is engaged in heterosexual relations outside of marriage.

This statement is the Church’s official position on the ordination of homosexual persons. There have, however, been instances of Bishops who have acted outside of terms of the resolution. These actions have been well publicized, and have caused strains within the House of Bishops itself. One such action resulted in a presentment brought against a bishop.

In 1991, the General Convention stated:

Physical, sexual expression is appropriate only within the lifelong, monogamous union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity and, when it is God's will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord, and . . . that this Church continue to work to reconcile the discontinuity between this teaching and experience of many members of this body

The Convention also asked the House of Bishops to conduct a study of Human Sexuality. The Report was published in 1994, as a Bishops’ Pastoral Letter entitled, “Continuing the Dialogue.” The report investigated Biblical and traditional teaching, as well as scientific, and anecdotal evidence on a wide range of human sexual behaviors, including adolescent sexuality, domestic violence and homosexuality. The report re-affirmed the traditional teaching of the church on sexuality, including previous statements of General Convention. It called on the Church to continue in dialogue about the “discontinuities” that exist in the church between the church’s teaching and the experience of some members of the church, and offered the following guidelines:

¹¹⁸ (BCP, pp. 517, 532, 544)

Community life in our Anglican Communion includes the need to respect both the unity and the diversity of our communion. Respect means that the Episcopal Church will maintain recognizable, faithful Anglican norms in our teaching regarding sexuality. Diversity means understanding with pastoral sensitivity the different experiences of people within our own Church and within other Churches of the Communion. During the continuation of the dialogue and discussion in the Episcopal Church on human sexuality and the Christian response, we are particularly called to live and act in a manner which is both open to the leading of the Spirit and grounded in our historic faith. To that end, and mindful of our collegiality in the House of Bishops, we commend the following guiding principles for our actions as a Church during this period.

1. We recognize that, while our sexuality is a very important part of who we are, it is not all of who we are, or even the most important part of who we are. In fact, it is not necessary to be sexually active to be fully human. It is also the case that moral behavior bears upon the question of sanctity and whether our sexual behavior is or is not consistent with the gospel life.
2. We recognize that while there are a variety of approaches to sexual ethics in the Bible, the standard found in the New Testament of lifelong, monogamous, heterosexual union as the setting intended by God for sexual relationships between men and women is the foundation on which the Church's traditional teaching is built.
3. We acknowledge that standards or norms have existed for our sexual conduct, and that these standards or norms--as approved, modified, and amended--are understood as faithful guides for Christians in matters related to sexuality. These standards and norms exist to enable us to act in accordance with the ethical and moral implications of the Christian faith and to shape us, given our natures and circumstances, into the fullness of the stature of Christ.
4. We continue in study and dialogue, seeking to reconcile, to the extent possible, discontinuities which may exist in the area of human sexuality between Scripture, tradition, and informed reason on the one hand, and our human experience on the other.
5. We are convinced through our study of human sexuality that a significant minority of persons are homosexual. Therefore it is necessary for the Church to articulate appropriate moral and ethical guidelines for homosexual as well as heterosexual Christians.
6. We believe sexual relationships reach their fullest potential as healthy relationships and minimize their capacity for ill when in the context of chaste, faithful, and committed lifelong union between mature adults. There are those who believe this is as true for homosexual as for heterosexual relationships and that such relationships need and should receive the pastoral care of the Church.
7. We view as contrary to the baptismal covenant, and therefore morally unacceptable, sexual behavior which is adulterous, promiscuous, abusive, or exploitative in nature, or which involves children or others incapable of informed, mutual consent and understanding the consequences of such a relationship.

8. We acknowledge that certain discontinuities exist, in human sexuality as well as in other areas, between the standards and norms set forth by the Church's teaching and the experience of a number of the Church's members. Those discontinuities, of necessity do not interrupt the communion we share. Therefore we recommend that the Church:

a. Respond pastorally to those persons whose sexual behavior does not conform to the traditional standards and norms of the Church.

b. Continue in trust and **koinonia** ordaining only persons we believe to be a wholesome example to their people, according to the standards and norms set forth by the Church's teaching.

c. Hold paramount the belief that we are all loved equally by God and are called to love one another.

d. Commit to ongoing consultation concerning these matters with the wider Anglican Communion and with our ecumenical partners.

In 1998, the Bishops of the Anglican Communion met at the Lambeth Conference, held every ten years. It addressed the issues of human sexuality, and published a statement entitled, "Called to Full Humanity." The statement called upon the Church to "listen to the experience of homosexual people," and said that homosexual persons were "full members of the Body of Christ." It also condemned "irrational fear of homosexuals," but called for "abstinence" for anyone not married.

The 73rd General Convention, meeting in Denver in 2000 was asked to adopt a liturgical form for the blessing of relationships, outside of marriage. The form would have applied to heterosexual, as well as homosexual relationships. The Convention defeated the resolution in both the House of Deputies and the House of Bishops. It passed instead the following resolutions.

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the members of the 73rd General Convention intend for this Church to provide a safe and just structure in which all can utilize their gifts and creative energies for mission, and be it further

Resolved, We acknowledge that while the issues of human sexuality are not yet resolved, there are currently couples in the Body of Christ and in this Church who are living in marriage and couples in the Body of Christ and in this Church who are living in other life-long committed relationships, and be it further

Resolved, We expect such relationships will be characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication, and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God, and be it further

Resolved, We denounce promiscuity, exploitation and abusiveness in the relationships of any of our members, and be it further

Resolved, This Church intends to hold all its members accountable to these values, and will provide for them the prayerful support, encouragement and pastoral care necessary to live faithfully by them, and be it further

Resolved, We acknowledge that some, acting in good conscience, who disagree with the traditional teaching of the Church on human sexuality, will act in contradiction to that position, and be it further

Resolved, That in continuity with previous actions of the General Convention of this Church, and in response to the call for dialogue by the Lambeth Conference, we affirm that those on various sides of controversial issues have a place in the Church, and we reaffirm the imperative to promote conversation between persons of differing experiences and perspectives, while acknowledging the Church's teaching on the sanctity of marriage.

The resolutions of General Convention on human sexuality over the past three decades reflect the Church's efforts to grapple with an issue of deep personal concern to its members, within the framework of the Anglican view of authority within the Church. They have appealed to scripture, tradition, and reason. They have also sought to discern the redemptive Christ in the witness of scripture, not simply to compile a list of biblical texts, or apply scriptural laws, or norms of the past to the present circumstances. They have recognized the inherent ambiguity of the human condition, and they have viewed the Church as a communion of baptized persons of "all sorts and conditions," to use a phrase of the Anglican Reformation.

The results of this effort so far have been to affirm traditional Anglican teaching on human sexuality, to recognize "discontinuity" between this teaching and the experience of some in the church, and to urge the church "to continue the dialog" about human sexuality. The most recent resolutions have sought to insure that the church can be a safe place for the dialog to continue.

In Minneapolis, the bishops and delegates were asked to confirm the election of a duly constituted convention of the Diocese of New Hampshire. For some, the action of the Convention in New Hampshire was in defiance of statements of Lambeth and prior General Conventions. For others, it was another instance of Receptivity, like the case of women's ordination. To have failed to confirm the action of the New Hampshire convention, some claimed, may have been to grieve the Holy Spirit. Whatever the case may be, it was not the faithless action of a minority. It was not a conspiracy championed by a few. It was not a clandestine operation. It was not an act of hierarchal hubris. It was a democratic decision that ratified the democratic decision of a diocese in our Church.

The 74th General Convention also "recognized" that some dioceses were already blessing same-sex unions. This statement of fact has been seen by some as license for each local diocese to set aside prior statements of policy adopted by prior General Conventions, and by Lambeth. Indeed, some delegates to the Convention enthusiastically greeted the recognition as an endorsement of the "local option," which the Church had previously not been willing to endorse.

Whether such is the case is hard to tell. We are in the middle of historical ambiguity, and can not claim to have clearly discerned the will of God. The Primates of the Anglican Communion have asked the Archbishop of Canterbury to establish a commission that will aid us in our efforts to continue the dialogue within the communion of the Church. For now, the Church continues its dialog on human sexuality.

“Therefore,” in the words of the *Letter to the Ephesians* appointed for the Sunday following the vote in Minneapolis,

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. . . And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.¹¹⁹

We must continue to pray, as we did on that Sunday, for God to grant us

the spirit to think and do always those things that are right, that we, who cannot exist without you, may by you be enabled to live according to your will.”¹²⁰

In the meantime, we must speak the truth, as we know it, to one another in love, and plead with one another, “Please be patient, God is not finished with me yet.”

Holiness and Righteousness in the Church Today

Holiness and righteousness are, as we have seen, the twin pillars of our relationship with God. Holiness is grounded in the nature of God, the Holy One of Israel. Jesus is the Holy One of God. The Holy Spirit indwells Christians, and confirms our life in Christ, within the Holy Communion of the Church. Israel is called to be holy, because “I the LORD your God am Holy.” Christians are also called not to be conformed to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. The call to holiness is a call to be set apart, and to be transformed by the worship of God.

Righteousness also arises out of our awareness of God, and of His salvation. Israel was called to become a just nation, because God had saved them from slavery. Christians are called to “love one another” as Christ has loved us. The righteousness of faith arises from the fact that “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Christian righteousness therefore goes beyond demands for justice. It calls for us to recognize that God’s grace often comes to us from above in the outstretched hand of the outcast, and to “go and do likewise.”

Holiness and righteousness emerge as ethical imperatives out of worship. In worship, we ascribe ultimate worth to God, by presenting “our selves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable holy and living, sacrifice.”¹²¹ In the offering of our life and labor to the Lord, we pray that the Holy Spirit may “sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace.”¹²² By walking before God in holiness and righteousness all our days, we show forth God’s praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to God’s service.¹²³

In the present circumstances, the divisions within the Church represent the efforts of factions to separate holiness and righteousness. Some believe that the election of Bishop Robinson, and his confirmation by the 74th General Convention, represents a betrayal of orthodoxy, and its witness to the counter-cultural aspects of the Church’s call to holiness.

¹¹⁹*The Holy Bible : New International Version*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984. Eph 4:25,30-32.

¹²⁰ *BCP*, p. 232.

¹²¹ *BCP*, p. 334.

¹²² *BCP*, p.363.

¹²³ *BCP*, p. 101.

Others believe the ethical imperative to do justice and walk in love are absolute. We can not, however be faithful to the witness of scripture if we imagine that the call to holiness can be expressed without justice and love. Nor can we forget that according to the witness of scripture the ethical imperative of love and justice is the righteousness of the Holy God, in whose image we are created, male and female.

The ethical imperatives of holiness and righteousness are always set within the constraints of historical existence. They bear witness to the already and not yet character of the event of revelation. As we are already made righteous (justified) by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, so we are not yet perfected in grace (sanctified.) We are therefore to be “imitators of God, as beloved children,² and live in love, as Christ loved us^d and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”¹²⁴

Yet, the constraints of historical existence are also set in the light of eschatological hope. The righteousness of faith is a righteousness that is revealed “apart from the Law,” although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it.¹²⁵ It is the righteousness that comes to us by grace. It can therefore never be assumed, or earned. It comes through trusting that the One who promised is faithful. It rests in the confidence that Jesus who died, and lives, intercedes for us.

As the Church continues its dialog on human sexuality it will be important to recognize a distinction between *ius distributiva* (distributive justice) and *ius salutaris* (justice of health and salvation.) Distributive justice is the justice of an absolute norm. Stop sign justice is an example of distributive justice. In stop sign justice, it doesn't matter who you are, or where you are going. If you run a stop sign, you have broken the law. The justice of distributive justice in fact depends upon the law making no distinctions among those who violate the law. The righteousness of distributive justice is the righteousness of the Law.

The justice of health and salvation is different. It could be termed, ‘Parental Justice.’ In parental justice, everything depends upon the parent taking the welfare of each child into account, and giving to each what will be most helpful to them, as they grow up. This is, of course, why children are always accusing their parents of being unfair. For, a good parent knows each child, and what may be helpful to one, may be harmful to another. In parental justice, everything depends on knowing who the child is, and where he or she is going. The righteousness of Parental Justice is the righteousness of promise and faith.

Jesus is not afraid to teach us to pray to God as to our parent. Christ has also given the Church gifts,

to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,¹³ until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.”¹²⁶

So, “speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.”¹²⁷ *Ius salutaris* therefore depends upon faith. It is in fact the righteousness

^d Other ancient authorities read *you*

¹²⁴Eph 5:1.

¹²⁵Ro 3:21.

¹²⁶Eph 4:12-13.

of faith that does not depend upon law. For, as the child must trust the parent, Christians must trust that as we have been reconciled to God through the death of Christ, we shall also be saved by Him.

To live by faith is therefore to transform the demands of the Law into the assurances of Promise. It is to hear Jesus' words, "You must be perfect," not as an impossible demand of the Law, but as an assurance of comfort in the 'higher righteousness' of Promise. In other words, we must, in the End, be perfect, because our Heavenly Father is perfect. We are growing up to be like the Old Man.

The Teaching and Pastoral Authority of the Church

The ambiguities of historical existence, as well as the incompleteness of the process of sanctification, create an inevitable tension between the Church's responsibility to bear witness to the event of revelation in which it stands, and which it interprets and proclaims, and its responsibility to shepherd the People of God in the Way that leads to Eternal Life. The writings of the New Testament, as well as the history of the Church are replete with examples of this tension. Thus the writer of the *Letter to the Ephesians* in the passage just quoted immediately follows his exhortation to love with the following admonition:

But fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed, must not even be mentioned among you, as is proper among saints.⁴ Entirely out of place is obscene, silly, and vulgar talk; but instead, let there be thanksgiving.⁵ Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.¹²⁸

Thus, it is always necessary when examining the witness of scripture, as well as the tradition of the Church, to discern when the writers of scripture are bearing witness to the event of revelation, and when they are seeking to guide the witnessing community, "according to the various exigencies of times and occasions."¹²⁹ We have seen, for example, that the Holiness Code of *Leviticus* addresses the needs of Israel in terms that are relevant to the historical context of the times. Yet, it also contains counter-cultural elements that are derived from its witness to God, the Holy One of Israel.

Like the twin pillars of holiness and righteousness that uphold our relationship to God, the teaching authority of the Church is inseparable from the Pastoral Authority, when it comes to the mission of the Church. Neither can be compromised or forgotten. For, if the Church fails to bear faithful witness to the revelation, then all pastoral direction is lost. Yet, if the Church fails to take into account the needs of the people, and their capacity for grace — "the measure of faith that God has assigned" — then the Church betrays the Good Shepherd whom it proclaims as the Holy One of God.

Jesus has given us a model of the love He expects of us in His life and death which is a sacrifice for our sins, and for the sins of the whole world. He prays for our forgiveness at the right hand of the Father, from before all time, and before we are even aware of our

¹²⁷Eph 4:15.

¹²⁸Eph 5:3.

¹²⁹BCP, p. 9.

own sinfulness: “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.” For, God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us¹³⁰

As risen Lord of the Church, Jesus continues to act out His reconciling love for us, as is shown by His conversation with Peter at the end of John’s Gospel. His grace is also our example.

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love (*agape*) me more than these?”
 He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love (*phileo*) you.”
 Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love (*agape*) me?”
 He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love (*phileo*) you.”
 Jesus said to him, “Tend my sheep.” ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, “Simon son of John, do you love (*phileo*) me?”
 Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, “Do you love (*phileo*) me?”
 And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love (*phileo*) you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.” ¹³¹

Jesus calls us beyond ourselves, and settles for what He can get. He calls us to love one another with the same *agape* love with which He has loved us, and which Paul tells us has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which has been given to us. Yet, He also accepts us, as we are, enters into our sinful condition, and begins His transformation of our lives, by reconciling us to Himself. The tension then, between the Teaching Authority of the Church and its Pastoral Ministry arises out of the already and not yet character of Christian life. It is a reminder that righteousness is a term of relationship, directed toward an eschatological norm.

The Anglican Communion is uniquely suited to hold up the standard of parental justice as an example of Pastoral Authority for the Church. For, Anglicans carry out their mission to “reconcile all people to God and one another in Christ” by presenting “Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit in such ways that people are led to confess Him as Savior and follow and obey Him as Lord, within the Church.” We believe we can do no better for each child of the Family of God than to send the Bishop, as our Chief Pastor and Successor to the Apostles, to every baptized Christian, to pray for God to confirm the Apostolic Testimony and their own faith by conferring the Gifts of the Holy Spirit upon them.

For, we are confident that the Word of God is more than written and proclaimed. We believe that the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. We believe that the Crucified Christ is the Risen Lord. We believe that He is seated at the right hand of God, and continues to intercede for us. We believe that he continues to pray for our forgiveness, even when we know not what we do. We believe that “wherever two or three are gathered together in His name” He is among us. We believe that He is able to fulfill our desires and petitions, as may be best for us, us; granting us in this world knowledge of His truth, and in the age to come life everlasting.¹³² We believe that the Holy Spirit continues to confirm the testimony of the Church, and the faith of the baptized, by the signs and wonders

¹³⁰Ro 5:8.

¹³¹Jn 21:15-17.

¹³²BCP, p.101.

of His presence within the Holy Communion of the Church. We believe in one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Appendix A

The Case of David and Jonathan

There is one instance in the Old Testament which might be adduced as an example of a homosexual relationship, which is neither exploitive nor condemned. It must be added immediately, however, that even if it is a sexual relationship, (which is not clear) it may not address the issues of homosexuality, as we know them in our own time. For it is not a question of orientation, but of a unique friendship. It is not a relationship entered into instead of, or in terms of marriage.

The *Book of I Samuel* recounts the friendship of David and Saul's son, Jonathan.

When David^a had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.² Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house.³ Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul.⁴ Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt.¹³³

I Samuel recounts that Jonathan warned David of Saul's plots against him.

Thus Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD seek out the enemies of David."¹⁷ Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him; for he loved him as he loved his own life.¹³⁴

Saul, however, learns of the help his son is giving to his enemy.

Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan. He said to him, "You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame, and to the shame of your mother's nakedness?"¹³⁵

The next morning David and Jonathan arrange to meet. They have arranged for Jonathan's servant to fetch arrows that Jonathan shoots into a wood.

As soon as the boy had gone, David rose from beside the stone heap^e and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. He bowed three times, and they kissed each other, and wept with each other; David wept the more.¹³⁶

The last phrase is difficult in the Hebrew. The *New Revised Standard Version* and most modern translations take it as a reference to David's weeping with Jonathan. The *King James Version* and the *American Standard Version*, however, employ what may be a more literal translation.

a Heb *he*

¹³³1 Sa 18:1.

¹³⁴1 Sa 20:16.

¹³⁵1 Sa 20:30.

e Gk: Heb *from beside the south*

¹³⁶1 Sa 20:41.

And as soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of *a place* toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they kissed one another, and wept one with another, until David exceeded¹³⁷

This translation is suggestive, but obscure. The translations of the *Septuagint* and the *Vulgate* seem to support the *NRSV*.

When Saul and Jonathan die in battle, David tells us in his own words of his love for Jonathan.

Jonathan lies slain upon your high places.
²⁶ I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
 greatly beloved were you to me;
 your love to me was wonderful,
 passing the love of women.¹³⁸

Beyond this, we can not go. We do know that David was married to at least three wives, Michael, daughter of Saul, Abigail, and Bathsheba. He also kept a harem. We know that his relationship to Bathsheba was kindled by desire, and was adulterous. We can not be sure of the meaning of the “covenant,” by which David and Jonathan bound themselves to each other. Neither can we be sure of the reason Saul viewed it as bringing shame to Jonathan, and to his mother’s “nakedness.” Nor, if we knew the answers to these questions, can we be sure that they would shed light on our present circumstances.

¹³⁷*The Holy Bible : King James Version*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995. 1 Sa 20:41.

¹³⁸2 Sa 1:25. David was known to be a musician, and there are a number of Psalms attributed to him. Nevertheless, we can not know for certain that the Lament for Saul and Jonathan is his own composition, or the imaginative invention of the author of *I* and *II Samuel*.

Appendix B

A Statement by the Primates of the Anglican Communion meeting in Lambeth Palace

16 OCTOBER 2003

The Primates of the Anglican Communion and the Moderators of the United Churches, meeting together at Lambeth Palace on the 15th and 16th October, 2003, wish to express our gratitude to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, for calling us together in response to recent events in the Diocese of New Westminster, Canada, and the Episcopal Church (USA), and welcoming us into his home so that we might take counsel together, and to seek to discern, in an atmosphere of common prayer and worship, the will and guidance of the Holy Spirit for the common life of the thirty-eight provinces which constitute our Communion.

At a time of tension, we have struggled at great cost with the issues before us, but have also been renewed and strengthened in our Communion with one another through our worship and study of the Bible. This has led us into a deeper commitment to work together, and we affirm our pride in the Anglican inheritance of faith and order and our firm desire to remain part of a Communion, where what we hold in common is much greater than that which divides us in proclaiming Good News to the world.

At this time we feel the profound pain and uncertainty shared by others about our Christian discipleship in the light of controversial decisions by the Diocese of New Westminster to authorise a Public Rite of Blessing for those in committed same sex relationships, and by the 74th General Convention of the Episcopal Church (USA) to confirm the election of a priest in a committed same sex relationship to the office and work of a Bishop.

These actions threaten the unity of our own Communion as well as our relationships with other parts of Christ's Church, our mission and witness, and our relations with other faiths, in a world already confused in areas of sexuality, morality and theology, and polarised Christian opinion.

As Primates of our Communion seeking to exercise the "enhanced responsibility" entrusted to us by successive Lambeth Conferences, we re-affirm our common understanding of the centrality and authority of Scripture in determining the basis of our faith. Whilst we acknowledge a legitimate diversity of interpretation that arises in the Church, this diversity does not mean that some of us take the authority of Scripture more lightly than others. Nevertheless, each province needs to be aware of the possible effects of its interpretation of Scripture on the life of other provinces in the Communion. We commit ourselves afresh to mutual respect whilst seeking from the Lord a correct discernment of how God's Word speaks to us in our contemporary world.

We also re-affirm the resolutions made by the bishops of the Anglican Communion gathered at the Lambeth Conference in 1998 on issues of human sexuality as having moral force and commanding the respect of the Communion as its present position on these issues. We commend the report of that Conference in its entirety to all members of the Anglican Communion, valuing especially its emphasis on the need "to listen to the experience of homosexual persons, and...to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ"; and its acknowledgement of the need for ongoing study on questions of human sexuality.

Therefore, as a body we deeply regret the actions of the Diocese of New Westminster and the Episcopal Church (USA) which appear to a number of provinces to have short-circuited that process, and could be perceived to alter unilaterally the teaching of the Anglican Communion on this issue. They do not. Whilst we recognise the juridical autonomy of each province in our Communion, the mutual interdependence of the provinces means that none has authority unilaterally to substitute an alternative teaching as if it were the teaching of the entire Anglican Communion.

To this extent, therefore, we must make clear that recent actions in New Westminster and in the Episcopal Church (USA) do not express the mind of our Communion as a whole, and these decisions jeopardise our sacramental fellowship with each other. We have a particular concern for those who in all conscience feel bound to dissent from the teaching and practice of their province in such matters. Whilst we reaffirm the teaching of successive Lambeth Conferences that bishops must respect the autonomy and territorial integrity of dioceses and provinces other than their own, we call on the provinces concerned to make adequate provision for episcopal oversight of dissenting minorities within their own area of pastoral care in consultation with the Archbishop of Canterbury on behalf of the Primates.

The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church (USA) has explained to us the constitutional framework within which the election and confirmation of a new bishop in the Episcopal Church (USA) takes place. As Primates, it is not for us to pass judgement on the constitutional processes of another province. We recognise the sensitive balance between provincial autonomy and the expression of critical opinion by others on the internal actions of a province. Nevertheless, many Primates have pointed to the grave difficulties that this election has raised and will continue to raise. In most of our provinces the election of Canon Gene Robinson would not have been possible since his chosen lifestyle would give rise to a canonical impediment to his consecration as a bishop.

If his consecration proceeds, we recognise that we have reached a crucial and critical point in the life of the Anglican Communion and we have had to conclude that the future of the Communion itself will be put in jeopardy. In this case, the ministry of this one bishop will not be recognised by most of the Anglican world, and many provinces are likely to consider themselves to be out of Communion with the Episcopal Church (USA). This will tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level, and may lead to further division on this and further issues as provinces have to decide in consequence whether

they can remain in communion with provinces that choose not to break communion with the Episcopal Church (USA).

Similar considerations apply to the situation pertaining in the Diocese of New Westminster.

We have noted that the Lambeth Conference 1998 requested the Archbishop of Canterbury to establish a commission to consider his own role in maintaining communion within and between provinces when grave difficulties arise . We ask him now to establish such a commission, but that its remit be extended to include urgent and deep theological and legal reflection on the way in which the dangers we have identified at this meeting will have to be addressed. We request that such a commission complete its work, at least in relation to the issues raised at this meeting, within twelve months.

We urge our provinces not to act precipitately on these wider questions, but take time to share in this process of reflection and to consider their own constitutional requirements as individual provinces face up to potential realignments.

Questions of the parity of our canon law, and the nature of the relationship between the laws of our provinces with one another have also been raised. We encourage the Network of Legal Advisers established by the Anglican Consultative Council, meeting in Hong Kong in 2002, to bring to completion the work which they have already begun on this question.

It is clear that recent controversies have opened debates within the life of our Communion which will not be resolved until there has been a lengthy process of prayer, reflection and substantial work in and alongside the Commission which we have recommended. We pray that God will equip our Communion to be equal to the task and challenges which lie before it.

"Now I appeal to the elders of your community, as a fellow elder and a witness to Christ's sufferings, and as one who has shared in the glory to be revealed: look after the flock of God whose shepherd you are." (1 Peter 5.1,2a)

About the Author

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