

# Rediscovering Christian Orthodoxy in Episcopal Anglicanism

Rev. George F. Woodliff, III

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## I. Introduction

We are a church divided—within the Anglican Communion, within the Episcopal Church, and within the Diocese of Mississippi. This last division became painfully obvious during the 177<sup>th</sup> Annual Council in Hattiesburg, particularly during debates over the budget and different resolutions. The depth of the division was captured by the vote by orders on Resolution 6 which I had submitted and which, as amended, stated that “the Diocese of Mississippi by majority vote formally states that it disagrees with and deeply regrets the action of the 74<sup>th</sup> General Convention of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America (ECUSA) in consenting to the consecration of Canon Gene Robinson to the office of bishop....” The clergy in the diocese voted against the resolution by a lopsided margin of 34 in favor and 77 against, but the laity voted strongly in favor by a vote of 106 to 62. If the vote had not been by orders, the resolution would have passed by one vote. The division was also captured in the language of a resolution which did pass, Resolution 27-1, which acknowledged that “our church is deeply divided over seemingly straightforward issues around human sexuality which are actually complex combinations of issues....”

The way forward is not to ignore or to gloss over this deep division, but rather, in the words of my CPE supervisor, “to go into the pain” of this division, to acknowledge with candor its reality, to explore the reasons for the divisions—the premises which underlie our respective positions, and to provide a place to stand in good conscience for all as we seek to discern God’s will for us in these difficult times. In short, it is to go “through” rather than “around” the division.

This is not to suggest that the work of the Church be put on hold while we do this painful work. That work must of necessity continue. However, the nature of this division raises fundamental questions about that work. What, for example, is the gospel of Jesus Christ? What is the mission of the Church? If there is any light at the end of this very long, very dark tunnel, it is the hope that we shall all become stronger and more effective disciples and witnesses on the other side.

To its credit this diocese saw this division coming several years ago and began to take steps to address it. For several years I had the privilege of working with a committee which designed two theological convocations for the priests in the diocese. The committee had its origin out of a sense of frustration experienced by some of the more theologically conservative clergy during a presbyters conference over the discussion of the subject of homosexuality. This committee was then appointed by Bishop Marble and was very intentionally balanced in terms of theological positions with three conservatives, three liberals, and one moderate. Bishop Marble and Bishop Gray also met with the committee.

Because this committee was so evenly represented, there was an intentional effort made to be as evenhanded as possible in the design of the convocations. We also worked diligently to create a safe environment where opposing views could be expressed and explored.

The work of that committee has become a model for me of how this diocese should proceed in discussing the aftermath of the last General Convention. It is extremely important that conservatives, liberals, and moderates have input from the beginning and at every stage of the conversation.

While working on the committee, I gained a deeper respect for the other members—Chip Davis, Ann Heinemann, and Chris Colby, and especially those representing the liberal side of this controversy—Mike Dobrosky, David Christian, and my sister, Ruth Woodliff-Stanley. I believe that the positions they hold on this issue arise from deeply held convictions. Particularly with respect to Mike, David, and Ruth, I

admire the Christlike love which they have shown to homosexual persons over the years. My disagreement with them stems from my own deeply held convictions, but I do not honor them any less. In fact, I seek to emulate their Christlike love and compassion in my own life. The question is how are we best to do that, and this requires an honest exploration of our differences.

## II. The Current Crisis

Four years ago when this diocese was engaged in the election of a bishop coadjutor, I commented to a group of clergy that I viewed the Episcopal Church as a ship that was steaming straight toward an iceberg and that one of the characteristics I was looking for in a new bishop was some apprehension of that danger and the wisdom and judgment to attempt to avoid it. I believe that we chose such a bishop, but unfortunately he was unable to prevent the collision which occurred at the General Convention in August of 2003.

I was by no means the only one who could see the impending danger. There were repeated warnings which went unheeded. At the last Lambeth Conference in 1998, the bishops of the Communion addressed the issue of human sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular. Resolution 1.10 entitled Human Sexuality reaffirmed the historic orthodox Christian sexual ethic: "This Conference... in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage...." With respect to homosexuality, the Conference made the very important distinction between *orientation* and *practice*: "This Conference... while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation...." With respect to the actions subsequently taken by the General Convention of ECUSA, the Conference stated its position with absolute clarity: "This Conference... cannot advise the legitimizing or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions..." [Emphasis added] [Resolution 1.10, XIII Lambeth Conference (Summer 1998)] Resolution 1.10 was adopted by the Anglican bishops by a vote of 526 to 70 with 45 abstaining, or 82% of the bishops of the Anglican Communion. There can be no doubt that this resolution declares the mind of the Communion pertaining to human sexuality and homosexuality.

In May of 2003, *only three months before the meeting of the General Convention*, the Primates, the leaders of the 38 provinces of the Anglican Communion, met in Brazil and issued a statement "that the 38 provinces and united churches in the Anglican Communion are irrevocably called into a special relationship of fellowship with one another." The Primates then made the following unequivocal statement pertaining to same sex blessings:

"The question of public rites for the blessing of same sex unions is still a cause of potentially divisive controversy. The Archbishop of Canterbury spoke for us all when he said that it is through liturgy that we express what we believe, and that there is no theological consensus about same sex unions. Therefore, we as a body cannot support the authorization of such rites." [Emphasis added] [Statement by the Primates, May, 2003]

The Archbishop of Canterbury was also very clear about the very serious dangers inherent in a province taking unilateral action in this area. He stated in a letter to the Primates one year before General Convention:

“The Lambeth resolution of 1998 declares clearly what is the mind of the overwhelming majority in the Communion, and what the Communion will and will not approve or authorize. I accept that any individual diocese or even province that officially overturns or repudiates this resolution poses a substantial problem for the sacramental unity of the Communion.” [Emphasis added] [Archbishop of Canterbury, Letter to Primates, July 23, 2002]

*One month* before General Convention the Archbishop of Canterbury in a letter to the Primates posed the question of what it meant to be a Communion:

“What does it mean to be a Communion rather than a federation?...It means that we have ways of being accountable to each other, so that decisions in any one local church are not taken without consultation and awareness of the consequences a decision may have for other churches.” [Emphasis added] [Archbishop of Canterbury, Letter to Primates, July 23, 2003]

The fourth locus of authority within the Communion, The Anglican Consultative Council, in a meeting held in Hong Kong in 2002 also cautioned “provincial authorities to have in mind the impact of their decisions within the wider Communion...” [The Anglican Consultative Council, Resolution 34 of the 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the AAC, September 15-26, 2002, Hong Kong]

Thus, all four instruments of unity within the Anglican Communion—the Lambeth Conference, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates, and the Anglican Consultative Council—all issued pleas and warnings, in so many words, to individual dioceses and provinces: **WARNING! DO NOT BLESS SAME SEX UNIONS! DO NOT DO THIS! YOU WILL DAMAGE THE COMMUNION IF YOU DO!**

In the movie *Titanic*, even though there were known reports of icebergs in their vicinity, the owner of the ship influenced the captain, against his better judgment, to go full steam ahead into the night in order to reach New York in record time to impress the media. The ship was, after all, unsinkable. As with the *Titanic*, the warnings to ECUSA were clear but unheeded. By the actions of General Convention in consenting to the consecration of Gene Robinson, a man who had divorced his wife and was living in an open homosexual relationship with another man, and in recognizing and affirming the local use of same sex blessings, ECUSA struck the iceberg. As with the *Titanic*, it was not immediately obvious what the extent of the damage had been, but with the passage of time, anyone can now see the crisis that has been caused by the actions of General Convention.

Does anyone still doubt that we are in the midst of a genuine crisis? Are there still those who honestly believe that “this is no big deal”? Consider the following. Immediately after the convention, the Archbishop of Canterbury called an unprecedented emergency meeting of the Primates of the Anglican Communion to meet at Lambeth in October, 2003. Thirty-seven of the thirty-eight Primates attended that meeting and issued a unanimous statement which specifically addressed the “controversial decisions by the Diocese of New Westminster to authorize a Public Rite of Blessing for those in committed same sex relationships, and by the 74<sup>th</sup> 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” and made the following statements:

“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 polarized 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....

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....

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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 jeopardize our sacramental fellowship with each other....

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If his [Gene Robinson's] consecration proceeds, we recognize 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 recognized 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 divisions 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)." [Emphasis added] [A Statement by the Primates of the Anglican Communion meeting in Lambeth Palace, October 16, 2003]

Can anyone seriously doubt the extreme gravity of the crisis precipitated by the actions of General Convention after reading this statement? In a BBC interview on October 18, 2003, the Archbishop of Canterbury stated that "undoubtedly there is a huge crisis looming" over the impending consecration, and when asked specifically whether he believed that Canon Robinson should become a bishop, he replied, "No, I don't because I believe that on a major issue of this kind the Church has to make a decision together and one of the things that has emerged most painfully and with such difficulty in the last couple of days in our conversations is the large number—the very, very large number—of Anglican provinces who feel that, quite simply, a decision has been made which commits them or involves them in some way and yet in which they have had no part at all." [Emphasis added] [BBC Radio Interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury, October 18, 2003]

In this diocese Bishop Gray stated very clearly his views about the imminent consecration of Gene Robinson:

“I believe that the consent given by our General Convention was an action of considerable arrogance in our relationship within that same one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. Our Anglican brothers and sisters spoke to us of the difficulties, even life threatening circumstances that would be imposed upon them were the church in this country to approve Canon Robinson’s election. Our Archbishop of Canterbury counseled us against such unilateral action. Many minimized the impact that this action would have on our brothers and sisters throughout this world and have been oblivious to the considerable pain and confusion inflicted on our own people. In the actions of General Convention and in the proposed consecration of Canon Robinson the bishop as symbol of unity and as an icon of the catholicity and universality of the faith seems severely compromised.

I believe General Convention erred in August. I believe it today.” [Emphasis added] [A Statement to the Diocese of Mississippi by the Rt. Rev. Duncan M Gray III, October 23, 2003]

In spite of these repeated pleas and warnings, the consecration of Gene Robinson proceeded on November 2, 2003. The Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, Frank Griswold, who had signed the Primates Statement of October 16 that this consecration would “tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level,” presided over the consecration and thus with his own hands began the tearing.

The terrible yet very predictable results of that tearing were felt immediately. The next day, November 3, 2003, the Primates of the Global South who represent *over fifty million Anglicans or approximately two-thirds of the entire Anglican Communion* issued a strongly worded statement which contained the following points:

“We are appalled that the authorities within the Episcopal Church USA (ECUSA) have ignored the heartfelt plea of the Communion not to proceed with the scheduled consecration of Canon Gene Robinson. They have ignored the clear and strong warning of its detrimental consequences for the unity of the Communion which was contained in the Statement from the Primates’ Meeting of October 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> which was unanimously assented to by the thirty-seven Primates present including the presiding bishop of ECUSA.

The consecration of a bishop, who divorced his wife and separated from his children now living as a non-celibate homosexual, clearly demonstrates that authorities within ECUSA consider that their cultural-based agenda is of far greater importance than obedience to the Word of God, the integrity of the one mission of God in which we all share, the spiritual welfare and unity of the worldwide Anglican Communion, our ecumenical fellowship and inter-faith relationships. The overwhelming majority of the Primates of the Global South cannot and will not recognize the office or ministry of Canon Gene Robinson as a bishop.

We deplore the act of those bishops who have taken part in the consecration which has now divided the Church in violation of their obligation to guard the faith and unity of the church. A state of impaired communion now exists both within a significant part of ECUSA and between ECUSA and most of the provinces within the Communion. By its actions, ECUSA is held solely responsible for this division. In addition to violating the clear and consistent teaching of the Bible, the consecration directly challenges the

common teaching, common practice and common witness within the one Anglican Communion.

As ECUSA has willfully disregarded the strong warnings given at Lambeth that such an action would ‘tear the fabric of the communion at its deepest level’, we can now have no basis whatsoever for any further confidence that ECUSA will pay any regard to the findings of the recently announced Commission set up by the Archbishop of Canterbury.” [Emphasis added] [Statement of the Primates of the Global South in the Anglican Communion, November 3, 2003]

After the release of this statement, numerous provinces declared themselves to be in “impaired” or “broken communion” with all or part of ECUSA. Archbishop Bernard Malango of Central Africa wrote Bishop Griswold on November 12 and said: “In charity and heartbreak, I call you to repent. Until that time, you have broken our fellowship. To sit with you and meet with you would be a lie. We are not one. We do not share the same faith or Gospel. You should resign and let someone else lead; someone who shares the faith of the Communion—the faith of the church catholic.” [Emphasis added] [“Anglican provinces declare ‘impaired’ or ‘broken’ relationship with ECUSA,” Anglican Communion News Service, December 9, 2003]

When an archbishop in the Anglican Communion tells us that “we do not share the same faith or Gospel,” we should not glibly dismiss it. We are facing an issue that touches the very core of the Gospel. It is not trivial, and it will not go away. Our brother and sister Anglicans in other parts of the world see this controversy clearly as a Communion-dividing issue, and the depth of their conviction is obvious as we can see in this letter of reply from Archbishop Livingstone Mpalanyi Nkoyoyo on behalf of the Anglican Church of Uganda to Presiding Bishop Griswold:

“Considering those things, we were shocked to receive a letter from you informing us of your decision to send a delegation to the enthronement of our new Archbishop in January, and your intention for the delegation to bring aid and assistance for the people who live in desperate conditions in the camps in Gulu that you have ignored for years. Recent comments by your staff suggesting that your proposed visit demonstrates that normal relations with the Church of Uganda continue have made your message clear: If we fall silent about what you have done—promoting unbiblical sexual immorality—and we overturn or ignore the decision to declare a severing of relationship with ECUSA, poor displaced persons will receive aid. Here is our response: The gospel of Jesus Christ is not for sale, even among the poorest of us who have no money. Eternal life, obedience to Jesus Christ, and conforming to his Word are more important. The Word of God is clear that you have chosen a course of separation that leads to spiritual destruction. Because we love you, we cannot let that go unanswered. If your hearts remain hardened to what the Bible clearly teaches, and your ears remain deaf to the cries of other Christians, genuine love demands that we do not pretend that everything is normal. As a result any delegation you send cannot be welcomed, received, or seated. Neither can we share fellowship nor even receive desperately needed resources. If, however, you repent and return to the Lord, it would be an occasion of great joy.” [Emphasis added] [Letter of Archbishop Livingstone Mpalanyi Nkoyoyo to Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold as quoted in First Things (March 2004), pp. 68-69]

The tearing has not been confined to within the Anglican Communion. According to an article in The

Washington Times, “top-level talks between the Roman Catholic Church and Anglicans collapsed yesterday [December 2, 2003] due to the U.S. Episcopal Church’s consecration of the world’s first openly homosexual bishop last month.” This development led to Bishop Griswold’s decision to resign as the co-chairman of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), the organization which has been working for 33 years on exploring the theological issues which divide the two churches. In addition to the actions of the Roman Catholic Church, several Orthodox churches, including the Russian, Armenian, Syrian, Coptic and Ethiopian churches have suspended ties. In referring to Gene Robinson and “those who consecrated him,” the Russian Orthodox Church issued the following statement on November 17:

“We shall not be able to cooperate with these people not only in the theological dialogue, but also in the humanitarian and religious and public spheres. We have no right to allow even a particle of agreement with their position, which we consider to be profoundly anti-Christian and blasphemous.” [Emphasis added] [“Vatican cancels Anglican talks over gay bishop,” The Washington Times, December 3, 2003]

The tear has affected many other ecclesiastical bodies within the Universal Church. On November 3, 2003, the executive officers of the National Clergy Council, representing more than 5000 church leaders from Catholic, Evangelical, Orthodox and Protestant traditions, released the following statement:

“The executive officers of the National Clergy Council today express deep sadness over the actions of some bishops within the Episcopal Church to break with universal Christian moral teaching and in so doing close their doors to Christians who remain faithful to church and biblical tradition.

We find that it is now impossible for traditional Christians to feel welcome in fellowship on any level with the radical bishops, priests and members of the Episcopal Church who condoned and participated in this supremely immoral act.

We humbly and prayerfully call on those responsible for Mr. Robinson’s elevation to acknowledge their wrongful actions, immediately undo them, repent of their sins, and reunite with the historic Christian church.” [Emphasis added] [National Clergy Council, Statement on the elevation of Gene Robinson to bishop coadjutor of the New Hampshire Diocese of the Episcopal Church USA, November 3, 2003]

Can anyone still doubt the catastrophic consequences of the actions of General Convention? Can anyone seriously believe that the Episcopal Church is not, in the words of the Archbishop of Canterbury, in “a huge crisis”? Does anyone really think that this is a trivial matter which will all soon blow over?

In 1996, two years before the Lambeth Conference of 1998 and seven years before the actions of General Convention of 2003, Wolfhart Pannenberg, one of the most respected and renowned theologians in the world, spoke prophetically of the consequences of a church that crossed the boundary line and did what the Episcopal Church has now done:

“Here lies the boundary of a Christian Church that knows itself to be bound by the authority of Scripture. Those who urge the church to change the norm of its teaching on this matter must know that they are promoting schism. If a church were to let itself

be pushed to the point where it ceased to treat homosexual activity as a departure from the biblical norm, and recognized homosexual unions as a personal partnership of love equivalent to marriage, such a church would stand no longer on biblical ground but against the unequivocal witness of Scripture. A church that took this step would cease to be the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” [Emphasis added] [Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Christianity Today*, November 11, 1996, as quoted in *True Union in the Body?*, A Paper Commissioned by the Most Reverend Drexel Wellington Gomez, p. 45]

The Episcopal Church has now tragically taken that step.

### III. The Fault Line

For many years I have sensed what I term “the fault line” which runs through the old mainline Protestant churches in America, including the Episcopal Church. It is quite difficult to perceive, because believers on either side of the fault line in each denomination worship together in the same services, attend the same church meetings, and use the same Scriptural, theological, and ecclesiastical terminology. These similarities, however, mask profound differences in theologies and world views which have been brought to the surface, to continue the metaphor, by the current ecclesiastical earthquake. Someone who has observed these profound differences is Dr. Robert S. Munday, Dean of Nashotah House:

“I have just returned from the Episcopal Church’s General Convention where I served as a member of the House of Deputies. The appropriate committees of the General Convention held two hearings where deputies and bishops heard several hours of testimonies in the days prior to the votes on the consent to the election of the Bishop-elect of New Hampshire and the resolution concerning the blessing of same sex unions. What struck me as I was listening to the hours of testimonies is that I was not listening to members of one church in dialogue with each other, I was listening to members of two different religions in dialogue with each other—two different views of Holy Scripture, two different theologies—two different understandings of God and His ways in the world.” [Emphasis added] [Letter of The Very Rev. Robert S. Munday, Dean of Nashotah House, to the Archbishop of Canterbury, August 19, 2003]

If Dean Munday is right (and I believe that he is), what we are facing in the Episcopal Church is far more serious than a debate over human sexuality. We are facing *the gravest threat to our church in her history*. Moreover, we are facing the gravest threat to the Anglican Church and the Anglican Communion in their history. I believe that we have to go back to the Reformation to find a fault line of this magnitude in the church. It is perhaps one of the ironies of history that at the moment when the Universal Church stands on the threshold of reconciling the divisions of the Reformation, another division, equally momentous, should be manifesting itself. In that light, Bishop Griswold’s resignation as co-chairman of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC) is hugely symbolic of the more immediate and pressing modern fault line of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in contrast to the fault line of the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century which ARCIC seeks to address. I would define the current division as the result of a collision between, on the one hand, Christian orthodoxy and, on the other hand, modernity and post-modernity. It has taken centuries to arrive at this moment, but we are here. I also believe that the same means of diagnosis and prescription of treatment which were used by the Reformers in critiquing the Catholic Church and thereby precipitating the Reformation and which are

now being used by Catholics and Protestants in an effort to reconcile those differences and divisions should now be used by us in the present crisis—*ressourcement*, i.e., returning to the roots of the faith.

There are certain similarities and differences between these two divisions—the Reformation and the modernist divisions. In both instances what was really at stake was the authority and primacy of Scripture. During the Reformation, the issue was the primacy of Scripture over Tradition, in particular the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church pertaining to indulgences and the forgiveness of sin. In our time the issue is the primacy of Scripture over Experience, particularly the experiences of certain homosexual persons. In both instances the very core of the Gospel as it pertains to sin and forgiveness was and is at stake. In the Reformation the “forgiveness” side of the equation was compromised by the practice of indulgences which perverted forgiveness by making it a *de facto* monetary transaction. In our time the “sin” side of the equation has been compromised by making what constitutes sin the result of political power and majority vote in an ecclesiastical body. Both represent human usurpations of divine prerogatives. Only God can define sin, and only God can forgive sin. Therefore, both are, at bottom, idolatrous.

How divided we are is evident from the very different way we view the present crisis. For purposes of shorthand, I shall use the terminology in current usage—revisionists and orthodox. The revisionists do not even see the current situation as a crisis but as the normal development in the history of our church as guided by the Holy Spirit. Immediately after the Primates Meeting in October, Bishop Griswold issued a statement to the Church in which he stated: “I believe that what has occurred in the Episcopal Church is the work of the Spirit.” [A Word to the Church from Bishop Griswold after the Primates Meeting, October 17, 2003] This belief was repeated a week later in his letter to the Primates: “As hard as it might be for sisters and brothers in Christ in other contexts to understand and accept, please know that broadly across the Episcopal Church the New Hampshire election is thought to be the work of the Spirit.” [Bishop Griswold’s Letter to Anglican Primates, October 23, 2003]

The revisionists also view the actions of General Convention as manifestations of compassion and justice. This perspective was recently articulated by Bishop C. Christopher Epting, Deputy to the Presiding Bishop for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations:

“The shortest answer to ‘How could you possibly have done this?’ is ‘Compassion and justice.’ Compassion because, like Jesus, we are to suffer with and stand in solidarity with all those who suffer and are outcasts in this world. Justice because, like Jesus, we are to treat other people as God treats them—equally, fairly and with a constant awareness of the dignity of every human being, since we are created in the image and likeness of God.” [“Compassion and justice,” *Episcopal Life*, (January 2004), p. 29]

Furthermore, the revisionists see the recent action of General Convention as based upon a legitimate interpretation of Scripture and analogous to the evolution of the Church’s understanding of other matters, such as slavery, civil rights for African Americans, the ordination of women, and the like. The actions of General Convention are merely the next step in the Church’s journey toward greater inclusiveness and serve as a positive example of the distinctiveness of Anglican comprehensiveness and the *via media*.

The orthodox view of the current crisis is diametrically opposed to the revisionist view. They do not perceive the actions of General Convention as constituting the next logical step in the Church’s evolution to a more inclusive, compassionate, and just church that is being guided by the Holy Spirit but

rather as a radical break from the Historic Faith and Order of the Anglican Communion and the Universal Church. The swift response from the other branches of the Universal Church—Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical, Charismatic, and others—has confirmed the prediction of Wolfhart Pannenberg. The orthodox see the actions of General Convention as the willful flouting of the authority of Scripture, the Tradition of the Church, the Episcopal Church’s own Constitution and previous resolutions as well as, by an overwhelming majority, the mind of the Anglican Communion. The orthodox do not see the current direction of the Episcopal Church as being guided by the Holy Spirit, since the Spirit does not lead in a direction contrary to the Word of God.

The orthodox also do not view the current crisis as another example of the distinctiveness of Anglican comprehensiveness. First, it is difficult to view the current action of the Episcopal Church as “the Anglican way” when the overwhelming majority of the Anglican Communion has decisively repudiated it. Second, the current crisis touches not so much on the nature of Anglicanism as the nature of orthodox Christian beliefs. By the actions of the last General Convention, the Episcopal Church has gone, in the words of Pannenberg, outside of the “boundary of a Christian Church.” Thus, for orthodox Episcopalians, the actions of the Episcopal Church have placed them in an untenable position: They can no longer be obedient to their Lord and to their Church. To remain in the Church and say and do nothing would constitute complicity with disobedience.

Dr. Ephraim Radner, theologian, author, and Episcopal priest, has clearly articulated the reasons why he believes this division is so serious and different from such issues as women’s ordination and Prayer Book revision:

“First, the extreme novelty of recent revisionary teachings on sexual behavior is unique in our church’s development, and more than anything else offers up a seemingly culturally-driven rejection of Scriptural authority that has no precedents. This strikes at the core of our Biblical faith. Secondly, the kinds of reasonings that seem to lie behind the revisionary trend in our denomination—reasonings based on controlling definitions of ‘justice’ and ‘love’ and ‘inclusion’ and so on—are so distant from the particularistic and defined words and actions of Jesus and the Christian tradition’s acknowledgment of His person, that the revealed Christ appears to have become the servant of a greater principle that stands beyond Him. This contemporary and perhaps only implicit form of the ancient Arian heresy strikes at the core of our catholic confession of Christ. Thirdly, so many other Christians around the world perceive this threat clearly, and yet a significant and powerful part of our denomination seems oblivious to and even unconcerned at their pleas and warnings. This evidences a chilling lack of charity that strikes at the core of Christian communion.” [The Rev. Dr. Ephraim Radner, An Open Letter to the Conservative Clergy of the Diocese of Colorado, March 23, 2003]

The fault line, although often difficult to detect, is real and deep and wide and now, at least in the Episcopal Church, unmistakably visible for the entire world to see.

#### **IV. How the Episcopal Church Came to the Current Crisis**

In the movie, The Lion in Winter, Henry II of England and his estranged and imprisoned wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, plot and scheme and verbally lacerate each other with appalling cruelty. At one point Eleanor muses, “How from where we started did we ever get to this Christmas?” Henry responded

immediately, “Step by step.” The Episcopal Church has likewise arrived at this place in its history step by step.

Dr. Philip Turner, former Dean of the Berkely Divinity School at Yale and current Vice President of the Anglican Communion Institute, spoke at the first theological convocation for the priests of this diocese. He has done an excellent job of tracing those steps in an article entitled “The Episcopalian Preference.” [First Things, (November 2003), p.28-32] In the mid-1960s the Episcopal Church began aligning itself with “new learning and new experience” that was “attuned to the latest trends within the liberal culture.” [Turner, p.28] A pivotal moment occurred when the House of Bishops, although voting to censure him, refused to inhibit Bishop Pike in the exercise of his episcopal office after he had announced that “the Church’s classical way of stating what is represented by the doctrine of the Trinity is...not essential to the Christian faith.” [Turner, p. 29] The minority report which expressed indignation over even the consideration of something as reactionary as heresy articulated the position which has since become the majority position within the Church: “We believe it is more important to be a sympathetic and self-conscious part of God’s action in the secular world than it is to defend the positions of the past, which is a past that is altered by each new discovery of truth.”[Turner, p. 29]

In a very real sense, a boundary line was crossed at that time, and what has recently occurred in Minneapolis is simply the logical working out of that first step. When “God’s action in the secular world” is divorced from His Self-revelation in Scripture, then who is to say whether that action is truly of God or not? When the doctrine of the Trinity is merely a “position of the past” which “is altered by each new discovery of truth,” then the Episcopal Church is no longer guarding “the good treasure entrusted to” it [2 Timothy 1:14], but rather has willfully chosen a very different path.

Step by step the Episcopal Church continued on this new path in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1977 Bishop Paul Moore of the Diocese of New York ordained a practicing lesbian. The next General Convention in 1979 adopted a resolution which stated that “it is not appropriate for this Church to ordain a practicing homosexual or any person who is engaged in heterosexual relations outside of marriage.” In defiance of the clear language of this resolution, twenty dissenting bishops issued a letter stating that they considered the resolution to be only “recommendatory and not prescriptive” and announced that they would not abide by the resolution in their dioceses. [Turner, p. 30]

Once again, in time, the minority position has become the majority position. The 1979 resolution obviously had no force and effect whatsoever in the actions taken in 2003, but then that resolution had already been openly defied by ordinations of practicing homosexuals in 1989, 1990, and 1991 in the dioceses of Newark and Washington, D.C. These ordinations were proclaimed as “prophetic” and “justice issues.” Turner observed that “it is perhaps not surprising that charges of heresy later brought against Bishop Walter Righter of Newark were turned down on the grounds that the Bishop’s action was not contrary to the ‘core doctrine’ of the Episcopal Church.” [Turner, p. 30] Of course, after the “Pike affair,” one wonders just what *is* the “core doctrine” of the Episcopal Church.

Step by step the General Conventions of the Episcopal Church passed resolutions which eventually led to the actions taken in 2003: 1976–resolution (A068) calling for study and dialogue on sexuality (including homosexuality) and resolution (B101) calling for study of homosexual ordination; 1985–resolution (D082) calling to “dispel myths and prejudices” against homosexuals; 1988–resolution (D102) calling for the continuation of consultation and dialogue on questions of homosexuality; 1994–resolution (D049) calling for the preparation of a report considering rites for same sex commitments; 1997–blessings of same-sex marriages defeated by one vote; 2000–resolution (D039) on human sexuality

that affirms a legitimate place in the church for non-marital sexual relations; 2003—consent to election of Gene Robinson and resolution (C051) which recognized that “local faith communities are operating within the bounds of our common life as they explore and experience liturgies celebrating and blessing same-sex unions.” [American Anglican Council, “Time line on Homosexuality Debate in the Episcopal Church 1976-2003, October 8, 2003]

Two of the resolutions called for “dialogue” on the subject of homosexuality. Dr. Stanton L. Jones, provost and professor of psychology of Wheaton College, and Dr. Mark A. Yarhouse, assistant professor of psychology at Regent University in Virginia Beach, Virginia, wrote a book in 2000 entitled The Use of Scientific Research in the Church’s Moral Debate, in which they exhaustively analyzed the scientific data which was being used to justify the radical change in the Church’s historic position on human sexuality, including homosexuality. They also examined the quite biased materials used by various mainline denominations, including the Episcopal Church, in this so-called “dialogue.” [Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, The Use of Scientific Research in the Church’s Moral Debate (InterVarsity Press 2000), pp. 24, 49-50, 96] An example was an official leader’s manual promulgated by the Standing Commission on Human Affairs of the Episcopal Church:

“The same line of reasoning appears in church documents promoting the view that homosexual behavior is moral. For example, the leader’s manual for a recent Episcopal ‘sexuality dialogue’ process presents four views on the morality of homosexuality. The first position, the one that is supposed to represent the traditional position, is a partial caricature: ‘All homosexual acts are sin, first, because they violate the strictures of Scripture and, second, because they are a willful perversion of the natural order.’ It is certainly true that most conservatives ground their opposition to changing Christian morality in the clear teaching of Scripture. The important phrase here, though, is ‘willful perversion.’ The implication seems to be that traditionalists must believe that all homosexuals have willfully chosen to be perverted. If traditionalists can be caricatured as saying that homosexuality is immoral because it is a ‘willful perversion,’ then any evidence that suggests that homosexuality is neither ‘willful’ nor a ‘perversion’ will undermine the traditionalist’s credibility. If science can show that a homosexual orientation is not chosen but is a ‘given’ in a person’s life, then the traditionalist loses credibility for arguing that homosexuality is always a willful perversion.” [Jones and Yarhouse, pp. 49-50]

Another example of such biased materials used in the “dialogue” was the booklet entitled “Christian Discipleship and Sexuality” by Bishop Frederick H. Borsch, who was a speaker for the revisionist side at the second theological convocation for priests in this diocese. The booklet contains its own Study Guide by M. R. Ritley. The section of the booklet on “Gay and Lesbian Sexuality” makes the assertions that “most studies agree that between four and ten percent of people are so oriented” which is “a very large number of people” and furthermore that “a solid percentage has the dominant gay or lesbian orientation which, on present evidence, is rarely changeable.” [Borsch, pp. 31-32] Jones and Yarhouse devote an entire chapter of their book to the prevalence of homosexuality and how the figure of 10% which is from the Kinsey studies of the 1940s and 1950s has been thoroughly discredited. More recent studies reveal a rate of between 2% and 3%. [Jones and Yarhouse, pp. 34-39; see also, Judith Reisman, Ph.D., “Kinsey and the Homosexual Revolution,” The Journal of Human Sexuality (1996) ed. George A. Rekers, Ph.D., pp. 25-26] Moreover, as will be discussed later, the flat assertion that homosexuality is “rarely changeable” has been repeatedly refuted. [Jones and Yarhouse, pp. 117-151]. The Study Guide was based solely on the readings from this booklet. These were some of the discussion questions to be

asked: “Would it make a difference if science proved that being gay was a natural and unchangeable trait, like being left-handed? Would it or should it change how you or the church deal with gay persons? What does or should ‘inclusion’ of gay persons mean? Welcoming them at services? Inviting them to serve as lectors, vestry members, etc.? Including gay couples at a parish ‘family’ weekend? Are there limits to this inclusion? What are they, and why?” [Borsch, pp. 61-62]

If you control the study material of the “dialogue,” then you control the direction that the “dialogue” will take and the conclusions that will be drawn. The truth of the matter is that the Episcopal Church has never had a truly open, fair, impartial, unbiased debate or dialogue on this issue. It has instead controlled and managed the so-called “dialogue” from the very beginning with utterly predictable results.

Step by step the Episcopal Church has followed and mirrored the culture and has proclaimed that it is God at work, and now we live in a culture where the imperial Self reigns supreme. David B. Hart, an Eastern Orthodox theologian, has given this trenchant description of that culture in which we now live:

“We live in an age whose chief moral value has been determined, by overwhelming consensus, to be the absolute liberty of personal volition, the power of each of us to choose what he or she believes, wants, needs, or must possess; our culturally most persuasive models of human freedom are unambiguously voluntarist and, in a rather debased and degraded way, Promethean; the will, we believe, is sovereign because unpremiered, free because spontaneous, and this is the highest good. And a society that believes this must, at least implicitly, embrace and subtly advocate a very particular moral metaphysics: the unreality of any ‘value’ higher than choice, or of any transcendent Good ordering desire towards a higher end. Desire is free to propose, seize, accept or reject, want or not want—but not to obey. Society must thus be secured against the intrusion of the Good, or of God, so that its citizens may determine their own lives by the choices they make from a universe of morally indifferent but variably desirable ends....And so, at the end of modernity, each of us who is true to the times stands facing not God, or the gods, or the Good beyond beings, but an abyss, over which presides the empty, inviolable authority of the individual will, whose impulses and decisions are their own moral index.” [David B. Hart, “Christ and Nothing,” First Things (October, 2003), p. 47]

A striking example of this ethos in the Episcopal Church is Bishop Spong’s “Service for the Recognition of the End of a Marriage,” which he has created out of whole cloth and has justified as a liturgical means of recognizing the reality of divorce and allowing the parties and their friends to feel good about it. In his monumental work on Christian ethics, The Moral Vision of the New Testament, Dr. Richard Hays, professor of New Testament at Duke Divinity School, comments on the outright bizarre nature of this rite:

“In our cultural setting, where such thinking has become commonplace, it requires a disciplined effort of the historical imagination to realize how strange and un-Christian such an argument would have sounded to virtually all Christian thinkers before, say, 1950. Only in a culture that exalts the therapeutic ideal of individual fulfillment over the binding character of covenant promises—and over the authority of Jesus’ word—would such a line of thought be conceivable. [Emphasis added] [Richard B. Hays, The Moral

Vision of the New Testament (HarperCollins 1996), pp. 370-371]

Hays describes the service and then asks this question which may also be asked of bishops performing same-sex blessings: “By what authority does the bishop say, ‘We affirm you in the new covenant you have made?’” He then answers his own question: “The answer is clear: it is by the authority of *experience*, overriding everything in Scripture and tradition.” [Hays, p. 371]

Experience is supreme. Personal preference is supreme. Note the similarity between David Hart’s description of our culture and Philip Turner’s description of the Episcopal Church:

“Here is *the* theological projection of a society built upon preference—one in which the inclusion of preference within the common life is the be-all and end-all of the social system. ECUSA’s God has become the image of this society. Gone is the notion of divine judgment (save upon those who may wish to exclude someone), gone is the notion of radical conversion, gone is the notion of a way of life that requires dying to self and rising to newness of life in conformity with God’s will. In place of the complex God revealed in Christ Jesus, a God of both judgment and mercy, a God whose law is meant to govern human life, we now have a God who is love and inclusion without remainder. The projected god of the liberal tradition is, in the end, no more than an affirmer of preferences.” [Emphasis added] [Turner, p.31]

The Episcopal Church, in service to this new god, has become merely the affirmer or blesser of preferences.

## V. The Homosexual Movement

The theological deterioration of the Episcopal Church has not occurred in a vacuum. It has reflected the general coarsening of the culture, but, with respect to the blessing of same-sex unions, it must be seen against the backdrop of an extensive movement or campaign characterized by determination, perseverance, political acumen, revolutionary tactics, and tremendous financial resources. We now have eye-witness accounts from persons who saw first hand what happened. One of these is Dr. Charles W. Socarides, clinical professor of psychiatry at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and Montefiore Medical Center in New York. He is past president of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) and author of Homosexuality: A Freedom Too Far. He recounts the strategies and tactics that were employed to change American public opinion with respect to homosexuality in his article provocatively entitled, “How America Went Gay”:

“How did this change come about? Well, the revolution did not just happen. It has been orchestrated by a small band of very bright men and women—most of them gays and lesbians—in a cultural campaign that has been going on since a few intellectuals laid down the ideological underpinnings....

It was all part of a plan, as one gay publication put it, ‘to make the whole world gay.’ I am not making this up. You can read an account of the campaign in Dennis Altman’s The Homosexualization of America.

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Gays said they could ‘reinvent human nature, reinvent themselves.’ To do this these reinventors had to clear away one major obstacle. No, they didn’t go after the nation’s

clergy. They targeted the members of a worldly priesthood, the psychiatric community, and neutralized them with a radical redefinition of homosexuality itself. In 1972 and 1973 they co-opted the leadership of the American Psychiatric Association and, through a series of political maneuvers, lies and outright flim-flams, they ‘cured’ homosexuality overnight—by fiat. They got the A.P.A. to say that same-sex sex was ‘not a disorder.’ It was merely ‘a condition’—as neutral as lefthandedness.

This amounted to a full approval of homosexuality. Those of us who did not go along with the political redefinition were soon silenced at our own professional meetings. Our lectures were canceled inside academe and our research papers turned down in the learned journals. Worse things followed in the culture at large. Television and movie producers began to do stories promoting homosexuality as a legitimate lifestyle. A gay review board told Hollywood how it should deal or not deal with homosexuality. Mainstream publishers turned down books that objected to the gay revolution. Gays and lesbians influenced sex education in our nation’s schools, and gay and lesbian libbers seized wide control of faculty committees in our nations’ colleges.” [Charles W. Socarides, “How America Went Gay,” The Journal of Human Sexuality (1996), pp. 29-30]

A more detailed description of the takeover of the American Psychiatric Association can be found in the incisive book by Dr. Jeffrey Satinover entitled Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth, which the Congressional Record of May 1996 described as “the best book on homosexuality in our lifetime....” Dr. Satinover practiced psychoanalysis and psychiatry for more than twenty years and is a former Fellow in Psychiatry and Child Psychiatry at Yale University and past William James Lecturer in Psychology and Religion at Harvard University. He holds degrees from M.I.T., Harvard, and the University of Texas. Dr. Satinover flatly states that “the APA vote to normalize homosexuality was driven by politics, not science.” [Jeffrey Satinover, M.D., Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth (Baker Books 1996), p. 32] The intimidation began at the 1970 meeting when an eminent psychiatrist was interrupted and threatened while presenting a paper on homosexuality. The threats and intimidation were far more organized at the 1971 meeting with “a detailed strategy for disruption....” [Satinover, p. 33] At one meeting a protesting psychiatrist grabbed a microphone and turned it over to an outside activist who warned: “Psychiatry is the enemy incarnate....You may take this as a declaration of war against you....” [Satinover, p. 33] No one objected to these tactics, and the activists then demanded to appear before the APA’s Committee on Nomenclature. The chairman then “allowed that perhaps homosexual behavior was not a sign of psychiatric disorder, and that the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) should probably therefore reflect this new understanding.” [Satinover, p. 34]

These tactics of intimidation were entirely successful as Dr. Satinover recounts what then happened in the 1973 meeting:

“When the committee met formally to consider the issue in 1973 the outcome had already been arranged behind closed doors. No new data was introduced, and objectors were given only fifteen minutes to present a rebuttal that summarized seventy years of psychiatric and psychoanalytic opinion. When the committee voted as planned, a few voices formally appealed to the membership at large which can overrule committee decisions even on ‘scientific’ matters. [Emphasis added]

The activists responded swiftly and effectively. They drafted a letter and sent it to the

over thirty thousand members of the APA, urging them to ‘vote to retain the nomenclature change.’ How could the activists afford such a mailing? *They purchased the APA membership mailing list* after the National Gay Task Force (NGTF) sent out a fund-raising appeal to *their* membership.” [Emphasis in the original] [Satinover, p. 34]

The mailing campaign was successful although only a third of the membership responded. However, a survey conducted four years later showed that 69% of psychiatrists disagreed with the change in the DSM and still considered homosexuality a disorder. [Satinover, p.35; Jones and Yarhouse, p. 97] Thus, the official change in the American Psychiatric Association was effectuated not through scientific studies, new discoveries, and reasoned discourse, but through a well-organized and well-financed campaign of disruption, intimidation and mass mailing. The campaign worked. A significant shift in public opinion began to occur, but most people are probably unaware of the *means* used to effect that change:

“For in response to the explicit efforts of the activists, a mass change in opinion in accepting homosexuality as normal *has* occurred. But it remains unsupported by the very sources the activists manipulate for their own ends. Such ‘disinformation’ seems to arise partly from a deliberate campaign, especially given the willingness of some to use ‘any means necessary’ to convert public opinion. ‘Any means necessary’ is no exaggeration. Eric Pollard formerly belonged to the prominent homosexual organization ACT-UP and founded its Washington, D.C. chapter. In an interview with The Washington Blade, a major homosexual newspaper, he stated that he and other group members learned to apply ‘subversive tactics, drawn largely from the voluminous Mein Kampf, which some of us studied as a working model.” [Satinover, p. 38]

After the takeover of the American Psychiatric Association and later of the American Psychological Association, the campaign moved on to other influential institutions in the country. This broader campaign has been exposed in the recent book, The Homosexual Agenda, in which the authors, Alan Sears and Craig Osten, president and vice-president, respectively, of the Alliance Defense Fund, have posed these important questions: “What has caused such a radical shift in public attitudes toward homosexual behavior? And how did this shift happen in less than a generation?” The answers, once again, point not to chance or natural cultural evolution, but to careful design and planning:

“The reason is a well-thought-out strategy that was devised by homosexual activists Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen and publicized in two publications: a 1987 article entitled ‘The Overhauling of Straight America’ and a 1989 book titled After the Ball. When one reads both of these works, one sees how radical homosexual activists have implemented the strategy laid out in these publications almost to the letter.

The homosexual activists laid out a six-point strategy to radically change America’s perception of homosexual behavior. Their six points were:

1. Talk about gays and gayness loudly and often as possible.
2. Portray gays as victims, not aggressive challengers.
3. Give homosexual protectors a ‘just’ cause.
4. Make gays look good.
5. Make the victimizers look bad.
6. Solicit funds: the buck stops here (i.e., get corporate America and major foundations to financially support the homosexual cause). [Alan

Sears and Craig Osten, The Homosexual Agenda (Broadman & Holman 2003), p.18]

Kirk and Madsen understood that a very important aspect of the campaign was to downplay any references to actual homosexual behavior while emphasizing the whole notion of rights: “In the early stages of the campaign to reach straight America, the masses should not be shocked and repelled by premature exposure to homosexual behavior itself. Instead, the imagery of sex should be downplayed and gay rights should be reduced to an abstract social question as much as possible....First, let the camel get his nose inside the tent—and only later his unsightly derriere!” [Sears and Osten, p. 20] This campaign has been systematically, thoroughly and successfully implemented in the media, public schools, universities, corporations, and governmental bodies. Just one example is the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) which boasts over thirty prime time television characters who are openly homosexual and the Alliance’s “control” over Hollywood with “full script approval over the portrayal of homosexual behavior.” [Sears and Osten, p. 39]

Although the homosexual campaign is being waged on many different fronts in America’s institutions, the ultimate goal is the same: the redefinition of marriage and the family. One example of this objective can be found in the organizing manual of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force which is used to change the corporate policies of American companies:

“If possible, an employer should offer benefits to same-and-opposite sex couples, both romantic and nonromantic, as well as the partner’s children. By crafting an inclusive policy such as this, *the employer allows the employee to define his or her own family* and responds to the family’s needs. Moreover, an inclusive policy is more flexible and *can adapt to employee family structures as they continue to change.*” [Emphasis by Sears and Osten] [Sally Kohn, “The Domestic Partnership Organizing Manual for Employee Benefits,” Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, p. 6 as quoted in Sears and Osten, p. 151]

The particularities in this and other institutional campaigns further the overarching agenda. An activist named William Eskridge hopes that gay marriage “will dethrone the traditional family based on blood relationships in favor of families we choose.” [William N. Eskridge, “The Case for Same-Sex Marriage” (1996) as quoted in Sears and Osten, p. 96] Another activist, Michaelangelo Signorile, has encouraged fellow activists “to fight for same-sex marriage and its benefits, and then, once granted, redefine the institution of marriage completely...to debunk a myth and radically alter an archaic institution...The most subversive action lesbians and gay men can undertake...is to transform the notion of ‘family’ entirely.” [Emphasis added] [Michaelangelo Signorile, “Bridal Wave,” OUI (December-January 1994) as quoted in Sears and Osten, p. 96] Of particular significance to the current controversy is the underlying notion that marriage, sex, and families are not objective realities given by God but rather mental constructs which can be reshaped and reinvented according to individual whims. Thus, an employee can “define his or her own family,” and “family structures” will “continue to change.”

The campaign has also been waged in the churches, and thus in addition to the Gay Rights Movement, there is also the Gay Christian Movement. “The battle in the churches is an extension of [the] cultural war but, given the role of religion in public life, it is also an effort to capture the church’s moral authority in that larger conflict.” [Richard John Neuhaus, The Best of The Public Square (The Institute on Religion and Public Life 1997), p. 68] The history of this movement in the churches has been recounted by Joe Dallas, a former practicing homosexual who later left the homosexual lifestyle behind

and served as president of Exodus International, an organization dedicated to helping other homosexuals leave homosexuality. His story and a history of the movement are told in his book, A Strong Delusion. In 1968 the first openly homosexual denomination, The Metropolitan Community Church, was founded by a former Pentecostal minister named Troy Perry, and in the 1970s numerous homosexual advocacy organizations were formed in a number of the major denominations—Lutherans Concerned, Affirmation (United Methodist), Integrity (Episcopal), Dignity (Catholic), and Kinship (Seventh Day Adventist). [Joe Dallas, A Strong Delusion (Harvest House 1996), pp. 65, 76] For a while Dallas himself found love and acceptance in the Metropolitan Community Church where he met “gay and lesbian Christians” who were “obviously devoted to God” and were “comfortable with themselves....” [Dallas, p. 15] By the 1980s “there was an identifiable body of work, from a variety of sources promoting the pro-gay theology.” [Dallas, p. 83] There were books, journals, articles, and caucuses in traditional churches. Liberal churches were targeted first for a very good reason:

“Churches of a more liberal bent were also influenced toward a pro-gay position. Troy Perry, when explaining how easily liberal churches accepted his beliefs, made an interesting admission: I knew I would have few if any problems with the so-called liberal churches. Liberal churches do not usually deeply involve themselves with Scripture.” [Emphasis added] [Dallas, p.84]

The more conservative churches that hold a high view of Scripture will be handled differently according to the master plan as set forth in After the Ball: “[In regard to those] who feel compelled to adhere rigidly to an authoritarian belief structure (i.e., an orthodox religion), that condemns homosexuality...our primary objective regarding die-hard homophobes of this sort is to cow and silence them.” [Emphasis added] [Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen, After the Ball (Doubleday 1990), p. 176 as quoted in Sears and Osten, pp. 186-87]

It is regrettable but true that the Episcopal Church, as one of the liberal churches identified by Troy Perry, as a result of its Scriptural and theological vulnerability to the strategies and tactics of this relentless campaign, has become the first major Protestant Church to make Troy Perry’s prediction come true.

## **VI. Homosexuality: The “New Learning”—Arguments and Evidence**

Because of the decision of the Episcopal Church to sever its ties with Christian orthodoxy (“the positions of the past”) in order to “preach an enlightened religion attuned to the latest trends within liberal culture” [Turner, pp. 28-29], and because of the coordinated and relentless campaign of the homosexual movement to change American culture and churches in America, including the Episcopal Church [Satinover, *passim*; Dallas, *passim*], many Episcopalians now understandably and quite sincerely believe the revisionist position to be true. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the merits of this position.

The essence of the revisionist argument is this:

“If research can persuasively show that the homosexual state is caused by factors beyond the individual’s control, especially if the causative factors are biological/genetic in nature, then it would be wrong for the Christian church to condemn homosexual

action or lifestyle.” [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 180]

A variant of this position was set forth in an official document of the Episcopal Church:

“Expert opinion is largely agreed...that a sexual orientation is not, in the vast majority of cases, voluntary in the sense of self-conscious choice....If it is granted that a homosexual orientation is involuntary...it is unjust to present celibacy as a calling.” [“Standing Commission on Human Affairs,” Blue Book of the Episcopal Church General Convention (New York: The Episcopal Church General Convention, 1991), pp. 199, 202 as quoted in Jones and Yarhouse, p. 24]

This is the heart of the “new learning:” “We now know what Christians did not know before—that certain people are born homosexual probably as a result of their genes; that this orientation is involuntary and fixed; and that to continue to deny legitimate sexual expression to homosexual persons would be unjust.” This “new learning” is supported by the experience of many homosexual persons who have testified that from a very early age they felt different with no attraction to persons of the opposite sex but with strong attractions to person of the same sex and that these attractions later led to homosexual experiences and that eventually they came to the conclusion that their condition was unchangeable and that this was essentially who they are. [Satinover, pp.222-226] Their homosexuality became an essential part of their identity. [Hays, p. 379] This position, in fact, is called “essentialism...[which] is the view that sexual orientations are deep categories of human nature...” Moreover, “much of the current ecclesial argument for revising the Church’s teaching presupposes an *essentialist* understanding,” and this is the “apparently foundational rock on which much ‘revisionist’ argument builds...” [True Union, pp. 13-14; Jones and Yarhouse, pp.25-26] This essentialist position is supposedly supported by recent scientific studies which have been loudly trumpeted by the media. [Satinover, p. 39; Jones and Yarhouse, p. 48] A careful examination of the evidence and arguments of this position, however, will reveal that it is premised on both *factual* and *theological* errors.

Before examining the evidence which supposedly supports the essentialist position of the so-called “new learning,” it is necessary first to consider the matter of the burden of proof. In any contest, such as a lawsuit or debate, it is usually the one who is proposing a change from the status quo that must carry the burden of proof. How much more is that true in the current controversy given the mind of the Anglican Communion on this issue by an overwhelming margin which is consistent with the position of the overwhelming majority of the Church Universal today and for the past unbroken two thousand years (Tradition), given the univocal position of the Bible, both Old and New Testaments (Scripture), and given the already obviously extremely destructive consequences of such an innovation. [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 23] Under these circumstances, it seems prudent to suggest that the proponents of such a radical change must carry a very heavy burden of proof, which I would suggest should at least be equivalent to the legal burden of clear and convincing evidence. It is accurate to state that such a burden has not even come close to being met. [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 23]

The revisionists’ argument for this radical change in the traditional Christian sexual ethic is based largely on new scientific studies, particularly in the field of genetic research. The claim is that homosexuality is genetically caused based upon certain studies. This claim has been widely reported in the secular press as the discovery of the so-called “gay gene.” (e.g., National Public Radio, the Wall Street Journal, and the New York Times). [Satinover, pp. 109-110] An example of this type of reporting can be found in an article in Time magazine entitled “Search for a Gay Gene”:

“[G]ays and lesbians welcome [research on genetics] because it supports what most of them have long felt: that homosexuality is an innate characteristic, like skin color, rather than a *perverse life-style choice, as conservative moralists contend*. And if that is true, then gays deserve legal protection similar to the laws that prohibit racial discrimination.” [Emphasis by Jones and Yarhouse] [Larry Thompson, “Search for a Gay Gene,” Time, June 12, 1995, p. 61 as quoted in Jones and Yarhouse, p. 48]

This article sets forth the basic revisionist argument—*if...then*. If science has proven that homosexuality is genetically determined, *then* we are faced with “new learning” unknown to the writers of the Bible, and it would, therefore, be unjust for the Church to withhold the blessing of committed same sex unions. Jones and Yarhouse examine the implications of this position:

“Without even looking at the quality of the genetic research, the writer has presented the reader with an *either-or* view of the homosexuality debate: homosexuality is *either* an innate characteristic (deserving legal protection and, by implication, full acceptance) *or* a perverse lifestyle choice. Since ‘conservative moralists’ are caricatured as saying that homosexuality is a ‘perverse life-style choice,’ then any research that appears to support a genetic hypothesis for homosexuality will make any conservative position (that is, any position that fails to be pro-gay) look scientifically naive, unformed and, most importantly, false.” [Jones and Yarhouse, pp. 48-49]

A careful examination of the principal studies which were the bases for these media headlines about the discovery of the so-called “gay gene” do *not* support the argument that homosexuality is genetically caused. One of these studies was conducted by a scientist named Dean Hamer and his colleagues and reported in Science magazine in 1993. A follow-up article by Hamer was conducted in 1995 and published in Nature Genetics. These studies examined the chromosomes of homosexual brothers who had some homosexual relatives on their mothers’ side and found a shared chromosomal marker or genetic sequence in the area of the chromosome known as Xq28. In the first study this marker was found in 83% of the brothers, and in the second study it was found in 67% of the brothers. In the first study Hamer concluded that “one form of male homosexuality is preferentially transmitted through the maternal side and is genetically linked to chromosomal region Xq28.” [Dean Hamer, et al., “A Linkage Between DNA Markers on the X Chromosome and Male Sexual Orientation,” Science 261 (1993) 321-27 as quoted in Robert A. J. Gagnon, The Bible and Homosexual Practice (Abingdon Press 2001) p. 399]

The problems with these studies are numerous. The results were not checked against a heterosexual control group. A young researcher on Hamer’s team who accused Hamer of not reporting some of the findings that undermined the conclusions of the report was fired. [Gagnon, p. 400] A later study in 1999 conducted by Canadian researchers failed to replicate the findings in Hamer’s study even though they had a larger sample. [Georgy Rice, Carol Anderson, Neil Risch and George Ebers, “Male Homosexuality: Absence of Linkage to Microsatellite Markers at Xq28,” Science 284 (April 1999): 665-67 as quoted in Jones and Yarhouse, p. 80] These researchers found “no significant relationship of homosexual orientation to this genetic region despite examining four separate chromosomal markers.” [Emphasis added] [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 80] The size of Hamer’s sample was also criticized in an article in Science written by genetic researchers from Yale, Columbia, and Louisiana State University: “Small sample sizes make these data compatible with a range of possible genetic and environmental hypotheses....” [Risch et al., “Male Sexual Orientation and Genetic Evidence,” Science as quoted in Satinover, pp. 111-112] Jeffrey Satinover reported Hamer’s response to this criticism:

“Nonetheless, regarding the failure of their most important ‘findings’ to achieve even statistical significance, they themselves agree—in a rather awkward circumlocution—that: the question of the appropriate significance level to apply to a non-Mendelian [that is, polygenic, multiple factors influencing expression] trait such as sexual orientation is problematic. [D. H. Hamer et al, “Response to N. Risch et al.,” Science 262 (1993), p. 2065.

In lay terms, this translates as, ‘we have no idea how significant this finding is or indeed whether it is significant at all.’ [Satinover, pp. 112-113]

One very significant aspect of the study does need to be noted:

“[T]he researchers found that this chromosomal pattern was neither necessary nor sufficient to cause homosexuality. If it was necessary to the homosexual condition, then they would not have found the 7 out of 40 homosexual brother pairs who did not share this characteristic (these 7 brothers did not have the chromosomal pattern but were gay anyway). If it was sufficient to cause homosexuality, then they would not have found, in their second study, nonhomosexual brothers who shared the genetic characteristic but not the sexual orientation (these brothers did have the marker but were not gay). Having the genetic marker does not mean you are a homosexual (not sufficient), and not having the genetic marker does not mean that you are not a homosexual (not necessary).” [Jones and Yarhouse, p.81]

Finally, Hamer himself has acknowledged that “We have not found the gene—which we don’t think exists—for sexual orientation.” “There will never be a test that will say for certain whether a child will be gay. We know that for certain.” [Emphasis added] [Gagnon, p. 400] As Jeffrey Satinover wryly observed, “Needless to say, none of the disclaimers were given equal time in the press as the original overblown claims.” [Satinover, p. 113]

The other hugely influential study positing the genetic causation of homosexuality was conducted by researchers, Michael Bailey and Richard Pillard, in 1991. This study was also touted by the national media:

“It would be hard to overestimate the broad influence of the Bailey and Pillard studies. They were widely trumpeted in the secular and religious media. To many they are definitive proof that homosexuality is genetic. When a member of the lay public states with confidence ‘Homosexuality is genetically caused,’ it is almost always the Bailey and Pillard studies they have vaguely in mind.” [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 73]

Bailey and Pillard studied male homosexuals who had identical twins to determine the so-called “concordance rate” and determined a rate of 52% for identical twin pairs which meant that “in 52% of the identical twin pairs studied the co-twin was also homosexual” and a rate of 22% for non-identical twins. [Gagnon, p. 403] They concluded that “genetics explain a significant amount of the reason why people have a homosexual orientation.” [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 73]

The first observation which needs to be made about this study is that even if the results were accurate, they would not prove that homosexuality is genetically caused as explained by Jeffrey Satinover:

“If ‘homosexuality is genetic,’ as activists and their media supporters repeatedly claim, the *concordance* rate between identical twins—that is, the incidence of the two twins either both being homosexual or both being heterosexual—will be 100 percent. There would *never* be a *discordant* pair—a pair with one homosexual twin and one heterosexual twin. When we say that ‘eye color is genetically determined,’ that is what we mean. That’s why identical twins *always* have the same eye color.

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If accurate, this finding [by Bailey and Pillard] alone argues for the enormous importance of *nongenetic* factors influencing homosexuality, because, as noted above, in order for something to be genetically *determined*, as opposed to merely *influenced*, the genetic heritability would need to approach 100 percent.” [Satinover, pp.83, 85]

The study itself, however, was flawed, because the samples were not obtained randomly but through seeking volunteers in homosexual magazines, thereby creating the strong possibility that homosexual twins with homosexual co-twins were more likely to respond. [Gagnon, p. 404; Jones and Yarhouse, pp. 73-74] Moreover, a similar study was conducted in Britain by Michael King and Elizabeth McDonald who found considerably lower concordance rates of 25 percent for identical twins and 12 percent for non-identical twins. The conclusions they drew were quite different from the conclusions drawn by Bailey and Pillard: “Discordance for sexual orientation in the monozygotic pairs [identical twins] confirmed that genetic factors are insufficient explanation for the development of sexual orientation. [Emphasis added] [Michael King and Elizabeth McDonald, “Homosexuals Who Are Twins: A Study of 46 Probands,” quoted in Satinover, p.87]

The King and McDonald study also revealed “a relatively high likelihood of sexual relations occurring with same-sex co-twins at some time, *particularly in monozygotic pairs.*” [Satinover, p. 88] Satinover then comments on the significance of this finding:

“The fact that *identical* twins in particular tended to have sexual relations with each other also suggests that the experience of twinhood (a developmental peculiarity) itself can cause an increase in homosexuality as a factor in its own right, apart from the shared genes.” [Satinover, p. 88]

The most compelling refutation of the Bailey and Pillard study, however, has come from a separate study conducted by Bailey himself. The problem with sample bias was eliminated by utilizing the Australian Twin Register. Bailey sent out 9,112 surveys and tabulated responses from 4,901 completed questionnaires. This time he found a concordance rate for male identical twin pairs of *only 11%*. [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 74-77; Gagnon, p. 404] The conclusion drawn from this study was dramatically different from the earlier study with Pillard: the study “did not provide statistically significant support for the importance of genetic factors” for homosexual orientation. [Emphasis added] [J. Michael Bailey, Michael P. Dunne and Nicholas G. Martin, “Genetic and Environmental Influences on Sexual Orientation and Its Correlates in an Australian Twin Sample,” Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 78 (March 2000) 534 as quoted in Jones and Yarhouse, p. 78] Bailey himself now admits that “concordances from prior studies were inflated due to concordance dependent ascertainment bias.” [Emphasis added] [Bailey, Dunne and Martin, p. 533 as quoted in Gagnon, p. 404] Jones and Yarhouse raise the same question that Satinover raised about the media: “The original Bailey and Pillard studies made a huge splash in the popular media; only time will tell if Bailey’s follow-up Australian study is ever brought to the public’s awareness with the same forcefulness.” [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 79]

The scientific studies ballyhooed by the media as proving that homosexuality is genetically caused upon closer scrutiny do no such thing. Two researchers at Columbia University, William Byne and Bruce Parsons, decided to examine all of the published scientific literature on the subject of the biology of homosexuality, including genetics. They reviewed 135 research studies, books, academic summaries, prior reviews—basically the entire literature—and published their conclusions in an article in Archives of General Psychiatry. In this, the most comprehensive review of the status of the research in this area, they conclude:

“Recent studies postulate biologic factors [genetic, hormonal] as the primary basis for sexual orientation. However, there is no evidence at present to substantiate a biologic theory, just as there is no evidence to support any singular psychosocial explanation. While all behavior must have an ultimate biologic substrate, the appeal of current biologic explanations for sexual orientation may derive more from dissatisfaction with the current status of psychosocial explanations than from a substantiating body of experimental data. Critical review shows the evidence favoring a biologic theory to be lacking.” [Emphasis added] [William Byne and Bruce Parsons, “Human Sexual Orientation: The Biologic Theories Reappraised,” Archives of General Psychiatry 50 (1993) 228 as quoted in Satinover, p. 114]

Therefore, the evidence simply does **not** support the assertion of the homosexual movement that homosexuality is genetic. If the evidence for genetic causation of homosexuality is lacking, what are we with left with? What is the cause? There is “a growing consensus within the scientific community that homosexuality is likely the product of both inheritance and environment. Rather than determining sexual orientation, biology provides the predisposition; biological influences increase the probability that under certain environmental circumstances a person will engage in homosexual behavior.” [Stanley J. Grenz, Welcoming But Not Affirming (Westminster John Knox Press 1998)] p. 24. This view is echoed by Gerald Coleman:

“There is a general consensus today that no one theory of homosexuality can explain such a diverse phenomenon....There is no single genetic, hormonal or psychological cause of homosexual orientation. There appears to be a variety of factors which can provide a ‘push’ in the direction of homosexuality for some persons. The complex of factors which result in the orientation toward homosexuality probably differs from person to person. While we do not know what causes the orientation, we undoubtedly know that the forces that go into the creation of a homosexual person are more complex and mysterious than most had earlier appreciated. There is, then, substantial reason to approach the scientific topic of homosexuality with caution, respect and humility, as the overwhelming complexity of the issue merits.” [Gerald D. Coleman, Homosexuality: Catholic Teaching and Pastoral Practice (Paulist Press 1995), p.54 as quoted in Grenz, p. 24]

The psychological theories focus on the arrested development of the homosexual person who has suffered in childhood from a deficient relationship with the parent of the same sex. [Grenz, p. 16-17] This deficiency leads to a longing to compensate with a relationship with a person of the same sex which becomes eroticized. [Grenz, p. 17] Michael Saia explains how this process occurs:

“Most homosexually oriented men do not enter into relationships with other men just to have sex. Rather, they are trying to fulfill their needs for unconditional love and a sense

of identity. But sex often plays a part in these relationships, and after a while confusion may occur. The man may begin to think sex will meet his basic needs, so he attempts to satisfy his needs in that way. Since sex is such a powerful, pleasurable experience, it can quickly reinforce any behavior associated with it. This is how the patterns of thinking (sexualization) and behavior (promiscuity) can so quickly become entrenched in the homosexual's life." [Michael Saia, Counseling the Homosexual (Bethany House 1988), p. 56 as quoted in Grenz, p. 17]

If, according to the essentialist position, homosexuality is a genetically determined fixed condition in a certain percentage of the population, we would expect to find this so-called "naturally occurring phenomenon" at the same rate in different cultures throughout history. In fact, we do not. The most comprehensive transcultural study of homosexuality throughout history is The Construction of Homosexuality, a 500 page tome, by David F. Greenberg. This book proves conclusively that homosexual practice and the conceptual categories used to understand homosexuality vary greatly from society to society. Therefore, "the contemporary Western concept of homosexuality as a fixed, biologically based sexual orientation that is 'normal' for a select group of people is in fact the product of a constellation of ideas present in our society and not the transcultural reality proponents assume it is." [Grenz, p. 29] As opposed to the "essentialist" view, this is known as the "constructionist" view. Greenberg "regards as indefensible the position of 'essentialists' who view homosexuality as an immutable, genetic condition." [Emphasis added] [Gagnon, p. 415] Greenberg also believes that homosexual behavior is learned within a specific social context and that cultural conditioning is more important than any innate factors in a particular person's life. According to Greenberg, "Where social definitions of appropriate and inappropriate behavior are clear and consistent, with positive sanctions for conformity and negative ones for nonconformity, virtually everyone will conform irrespective of genetic inheritance and, to a considerable extent, irrespective of personal psychodynamics." [Emphasis added] [David Greenberg, The Construction of Homosexuality (University of Chicago Press 1988), p. 487 as quoted in Grenz, p. 30 and Gagnon, p. 415]

Greenberg's massive study refutes the essentialist position from transcultural evidence. The essentialist position is also refuted by evidence of significant elasticity in sexual behavior within our own society. Robert Gagnon cites three separate studies—the 1992 National Health and Social Life Survey (NHSLs), the 1983 nationwide random survey of 4,340 adults in five U.S. cities conducted by the Family Research Institute, and the 1970 study by Alan Bell and Martin Weinberg—all of which show a fluidity in sexual orientation at different times in the lives of those surveyed. [Gagnon, pp. 418-20] For example, in the Family Research Institute survey, "sixty-seven percent of homosexual women and 54% of homosexual men reported current sexual attractions to the opposite sex." [Gagnon, p. 419] In the Bell and Weinberg survey, "half of all 'exclusive' homosexuals had at one time or another experienced orgasm while having heterosexual sex. Nine out of ten homosexuals (97% of women and 84% of men) and one out of every five heterosexuals (15% of women, 29% of men) shifted along the Kinsey categories of sexual orientation at least once during their lives." [Gagnon, p.420] "A second shift was reported by 60% of homosexual males, 81% of homosexual females, 10% of heterosexual males, and 2% of heterosexual females. A third of homosexual males (32%) and half of homosexual females had a third shift." [Emphasis added] [Gagnon, p. 420] Moreover, a study conducted in Great Britain in 1994 entitled Sexual Behavior in Britain, which surveyed nearly 20,000 randomly selected Britons, reported that over 90% of the men who had had any homosexual experience at any stage in their lifetime had also had a female sexual partner, indicating a huge incidence of bisexuality. "The Report concluded that exclusively homosexual behavior is rare." [Peter May, "The Significance of Bisexuality," The Church Times (February 18, 2004)]

Therefore, the essentialist position is contradicted *both* by evidence of transcultural variations of homosexuality *and* by evidence of fluidity in sexual behavior among professed homosexuals. It is also refuted by evidence of homosexuals who have undergone a change in sexual orientation:

“To claim that ‘homosexual orientation is immutable’ is to make a universal claim: there has never and will never be any instance whatsoever of a person changing a homosexual orientation. Framed in this language, even one case in all of history would falsify this universal claim; one healed homosexual makes it *not true* that homosexuals cannot change.” [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 120]

The evidence is overwhelming that change is possible and has occurred many times. A survey of treatments from 1930 to 1986 reveal a composite success rate of 52% “where success is defined as ‘considerable’ to ‘complete’ change. These reports clearly contradict claims that change is flatly impossible. Indeed, it would be more accurate to say that *all the existing evidence suggests strongly that homosexuality is quite changeable.*” [Satinover, pp. 185-86]

In 1997 the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) conducted a survey of 882 clients who had undergone some change in sexual orientation. The changes reported are shown below:

Kinsey Rating	BEFORE	AFTER
0 - exclusively heterosexual	0%	15%
1 - almost entirely heterosexual	0%	18%
2 - more heterosexual than homosexual	0%	20%
3 - equally heterosexual and homosexual	9%	11%
4 - more homosexual than heterosexual	22%	23%
5 - almost entirely homosexual	31%	8%
6 - exclusively homosexual	36%	5%

“Those surveyed also reported significant decreases in homosexual thoughts.” [Gagnon, p. 421] “An overwhelming 99% reported believing that homosexual orientation can be changed.” [Jones and Yarhouse, p.139]

Other studies have confirmed “expectations of long-term significant change in behavior and perhaps even orientation for 30 percent to 50 percent of homosexual persons who undergo therapy. Some reports suggest that the figure may be as high as 65%.” [Grenz, p. 25]

The most unexpected and significant recent study on successful therapy for homosexuals was conducted by Dr. Robert Spitzer, a prominent psychiatrist and gay activist who played a pivotal role in the removal of homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual in 1973. His findings were published in the Archives of Sexual Behavior in October of 2003 and summarized in a NARTH article. The findings challenged “the widely-held assumption that a homosexual orientation is ‘who one is’—an intrinsic part of a person’s identity that can never be changed....Testing the hypothesis that a predominantly homosexual orientation will, in some individuals, respond to therapy were some 200 respondents of both genders (143 males, 57 females) who reported changes from homosexual to heterosexual orientation lasting 5 years or more.” The significance of this study cannot be missed:

“...the majority of participants did report change from a predominantly or exclusively homosexual orientation before therapy to a predominantly or exclusively heterosexual orientation in the past year as a result of reparative therapy. These results would seem to contradict the position statements of the major mental health organizations in the United States, which claim there is no scientific basis for believing psychotherapy effective in addressing same-sex attraction.” [Roy Waller and Linda A. Nicolosi, “Spitzer Study Just Published: Evidence Found for Effectiveness of Reorientation Therapy,” NARTH.com., p. 1]

Thus, we see that the revisionists’ claim that “new learning” from science justifies the radical revision of the traditional Christian sexual ethic of the past 2000 years is based upon a *factual* error. Science has not proven that homosexuality is a genetically caused and unalterably fixed condition naturally occurring in a certain percentage of the population. The evidence is actually to the contrary. The revisionists have come nowhere close to meeting their burden of proof.

But, even if they had met their burden of proof based upon the scientific evidence, their case for a revision of the Christian sexual ethic must fail because of a far more serious *theological* error. This error is brilliantly explained by Richard Hays, an expert on New Testament ethics and Pauline theology:

“The biblical analysis of the human predicament, most sharply expressed in Pauline theology, offers a subtle account of human bondage to sin. As great-grandchildren of the Enlightenment, we like to think of ourselves as free moral agents, choosing rationally among possible actions, but Scripture unmask[s] that cheerful illusion and teaches us that we are deeply infected by the tendency to self-deception. As Jeremiah lamented, ‘The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?’ (Jer. 17:9, RSV) Romans 1 depicts humanity in a state of self-affirming confusion: ‘They became futile in their thinking, and their senseless minds were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools...They know God’s decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die—yet they not only do them but applaud others who practice them’ (Rom. 1:21-22, 32). Once in the fallen state, we are not free not to sin: we are ‘slaves of sin’ (Rom. 6:17), which distorts our perceptions, overpowers our will, and renders us incapable of obedience (Rom. 7). Redemption (a word that means ‘being emancipated from slavery’) is God’s act of liberation, setting us free from the power of sin and placing us within the sphere of God’s transforming power for righteousness (Rom. 6:20-22, 8:1-11, cf. 12:1-2).

Thus, the Bible’s sober anthropology rejects the apparently commonsense assumption that only freely chosen acts are morally culpable. Quite the reverse: the very nature of sin is that it is *not* freely chosen. That is what it means to live ‘in the flesh’ in a fallen creation. We are in bondage to sin but still accountable to God’s righteous judgment of our actions. In light of this theological anthropology, it cannot be maintained that a homosexual orientation is morally neutral because it is involuntary.” [Hays, p.390]

When viewed in this light, heterosexuals and homosexuals are all under the bondage of sin, only in different ways. In the end, scientific research does not change this theological fact:

“In any case, such research is fundamentally irrelevant to the Christian ethical case. The only way to exempt homosexuals from the demands of God’s Law is to show that they

are incapable of responsible choice regarding their actions because of the influence of causative factors—that they are subhuman robots acting without choice because of their condition. Few gay activists would accept such a description of their condition.

Even if the homosexual condition of desiring intimacy and sexual union with a person of the same gender is caused in its entirety by causal factors outside the personal control of the person, that does not constitute moral affirmation of acting on these desires. If it did, the pedophile who desires sex with children, the alcoholic who desires the pursuit of drunkenness, and the person with Antisocial Personality Disorder who desires the thrill of victimization and pain infliction would all have an equal case for moral approval of their exploits. At the broadest level all humans are heirs to a predisposition that we have not chosen and that propels us toward self-destruction and evil—our sinful nature. The plight of the homosexual who has desires and passions that he or she did not choose is in fact the common plight of humanity. We all face the same challenge: how are we to live when what we want is out of accord with what God tells us we should want in this life? [Emphasis added] [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 181]

No scientific study can negate the call of God to lead lives of holiness. We are all sinners but with different predispositions which make us vulnerable to different temptations, and yet we are still responsible for our actions irrespective of our predispositions. Both heterosexuals and homosexuals as well as bisexuals and “pansexuals” are all equally prone to powerfully destructive desires and to self-deception. It is the Word of God that reveals to us how God views these desires and how we may be liberated from them. Ultimately this issue, as with all issues in our lives, is about fidelity to that Word.

## VII. The Word of God

The current crisis in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion finally comes down to the authority of the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God. “Why do we call the Holy Scriptures the Word of God? We call them the Word of God because God inspired their human authors and because God still speaks to us through the Bible.” [Emphasis added] [An Outline of the Faith, The Book of Common Prayer, p.853] The question facing us at this hour is this: What is God speaking to us through the Bible about human sexuality and homosexuality?

We know the mind of the Anglican Communion on this matter, since 82% of the bishops at the last Lambeth Conference in 1998 endorsed Resolution 1.10 in which the Conference “in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage” and rejects “homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture....” [Resolution 1.10, XIII Lambeth Conference (Summer 1998)]

In adopting this resolution, the Anglican Communion did no more than restate the orthodox Christian sexual ethic for the past 2000 years. [Hays, p. 402] The House of Bishops Theology Committee also recognized this as the traditional teaching:

“These questions are controversial in part because they challenge the Church’s traditional understanding of human sexuality which can be summarized as follows: Holy Scripture nowhere condones homosexual practice; in fact, a few passages of Hebrew Scripture and of letters of Paul explicitly condemn homosexual acts; marriage is defined

as the joining together of a man and a woman; marriage is the only appropriate setting for genital sexual intimacy; the norm for singleness, as for marriage, is chastity; but in the case of singleness that norm means abstinence.” [House of Bishops Theology Committee Report, The Gift of Sexuality: A Theological Perspective, p. 4]

Both of these statements of the traditional, orthodox Christian position on human sexuality and on homosexual practice appeal to the authority of Holy Scripture. If the actions of General Convention are allowed to stand, they will constitute a radical deviation from this orthodox Christian teaching in two dramatic ways: 1) blessing an act which Scripture does not condone but rather condemns; and 2) blessing genital sexual intimacy outside the bounds of marriage defined by Scripture as the joining together of a man and a woman.

Two questions must now be addressed. Do these statements of the Christian teaching on human sexuality and homosexuality truly state the will of God as expressed in Scripture? Do they continue to do so in our day? The answer of the Anglican Communion and the Universal Church to both questions is yes. The answer of the Episcopal Church, at least to the second question, is no. If “God still speaks to us through the Bible,” then this is a very grave disagreement. Unless we drastically alter our understanding of God, He does not speak one word to the Episcopal Church and the exact opposite word to the Anglican Communion, and if the Anglican Communion is right in its answer to both questions, then the Episcopal Church is in a state of disobedience against God.

This section relies on the works of numerous scholars but is particularly indebted to two monumental works—The Moral Vision of the New Testament by Dr. Richard B. Hays, professor of New Testament at Duke University Divinity School, and The Bible and Homosexual Practice by Dr. Robert A. J. Gagnon, assistant professor of New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. It is important to note the quite remarkable accolades and endorsements both of these books have received from some of the most respected scholars in the academy. The list is a veritable who’s who in biblical scholarship: for Dr. Hays’ book: James D. G. Dunn, Lightfoot Professor of Divinity, University of Durham; George Lindbeck, Pitkin Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology, Yale University Divinity School; Luke Timothy Johnson, Robert W. Woodruff Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins, Emory University; Graham Stanton, professor of New Testament Studies, King’s College, University of London; Victor Paul Furnish, University Distinguished Professor of New Testament, Southern Methodist University; and William Klassen, visiting research professor, Ecole Biblique, Jerusalem, and visiting scholar, Toronto School of Theology; for Dr. Gagnon’s book: John Barton, Oriel and Laing Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture, University of Oxford; Brevard S. Childs, Sterling Professor of Divinity (Hebrew Bible), Emeritus, Yale Divinity School; C. E. B. Cranfield, Professor of Theology (New Testament), Emeritus, University of Durham; C. K. Barrett, Professor of Divinity (New Testament), Emeritus, University of Durham; Bruce M. Metzger, George L. Collard Professor of New Testament, Emeritus, Princeton Theological Seminary; and James D. G. Dunn, Lightfoot Professor of Divinity, University of Durham. And these were not all; there were other scholars who endorsed both books. A representative review of Dr. Hays’ book was this one by N. T. Wright, New Testament scholar and Bishop of Durham: “This book isn’t just a breath of fresh air. It’s a hurricane blowing away the fog of half-understood pseudo-morality and fashionable compromise, and revealing instead the early Christian vision of true humanness and genuine holiness. If this isn’t a book for our time, I don’t know what is.” A representative review of Dr. Gagnon’s book was this one made by James Barr, Distinguished Professor of Hebrew Bible, Emeritus, Vanderbilt University: “This is a brilliant, original, and highly important work, displaying meticulous biblical scholarship, and indispensable even for those who disagree with the author.” It is extremely important to realize that the positions taken by Dr. Hays

and Dr. Gagnon on this issue are not “fringe” positions but are indisputably within the mainstream of respected biblical scholarship.

The Holy Scriptures reveal God’s plan and will for the world and for humanity. That revelation encompasses our relationship to God and to one another. The Bible also reveals God’s plan for human sexuality which is a divine gift given in the specific context of marriage. This is the starting place for all Christian teaching on sexuality, and all prohibitions against forbidden sexual acts, including homosexual acts, should be seen within the context of the divine endorsement of marriage as the only ordained setting for sexual intercourse. Homosexual acts are contrary to God’s will, because they do not occur within the institution of marriage and they are expressly forbidden by the Word of God. Therefore, contrary to revisionists’ arguments, the Church’s prohibition against homosexual acts is not based solely upon a handful of passages in the Bible but on the entire canon as it reveals God’s will for sexuality within the context of marriage.

God’s plan for marriage and sexuality is revealed *ab initio* in the first two chapters of Genesis. This is an extremely important point. Marriage is not a human construct but a significant part of God’s created order. It is a divinely ordained institution and unqualifiedly good in its prelapsarian state. An essential element of creation is the creation of male and female as complementary beings. Woman was made from man and thus is one with whom “he longs to *reunite* in sexual intercourse and marriage, a *reunion* that not only provides companionship but restores *adam* to his original wholeness.” [Gagnon, 61] It is this reunion that has God’s unreserved blessing: “Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.” [Genesis 2:24]

Sexual intercourse, the man and the woman coming together as one flesh, is clearly within the context of marriage. The Bible reveals God’s good purposes for sexual intercourse in marriage. The first purpose mentioned is *procreation* in accordance with the command to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it...” [Genesis 1:28; Jones and Yarhouse, p. 163] Thus, sexual intercourse within the context of marriage is inextricably linked to God’s plan of humanity governing creation. Moreover, “a procreative purpose for marriage avoids a detachment of sexuality from stable family structures...” [Gagnon, pp. 57-58] The second purpose revealed is *union*, powerfully conveyed by the expression “one flesh.” The sexual act unites the husband and wife. This union is supposed to happen only in marriage; however, as St. Paul warned, it also occurs even when a man has so-called casual sex with a prostitute. [1 Corinthians 6:16; Jones and Yarhouse, p. 163] The third purpose revealed in Scripture is *physical pleasure and gratification*. St. Paul speaks of husbands and wives meeting each other’s sexual needs [1 Corinthians 7:1-9], and The Song of Solomon celebrates romantic love. [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 163] The fourth purpose is to *instruct* us about our relationship with God and with Christ in the coming together with someone who is “the Other” in order to be truly ourselves. [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 163]

The act of sexual intercourse derives its meaning and moral significance from these divine purposes for it in marriage. The act itself conveys symbolic meaning of the exclusive commitment of husband and wife to each other, of the mutuality of the relationship, and of the openness to the creation of new life. [Grenz, p. 108] The objective reality of the act is to unite the husband and wife, two complementary beings, into one flesh. That is what it symbolizes, and that is what it does. It matters, therefore, whether the actual sexual act being committed is in conformance with God’s divine purpose for the act. Lewis Smedes explains the importance of the reality of the act:

“It does not matter what the two people [who are having sex] have in mind....The *reality* of the act, unfelt and unnoticed by them, is this: It unites them—body and *soul*—to each

other. It unites them in that strange, impossible to pinpoint sense of ‘one flesh.’ There is no such thing as casual sex, no matter how casual people are about it. The Christian assaults reality in his night out at the brothel. He uses a woman and puts her back in a closet where she can be forgotten; but the reality is that he has put away a person with whom he has done something that was meant to inseparably join them. This is what is at stake for Paul in the question of sexual intercourse between unmarried people.

And now we can see clearly why Paul thought sexual intercourse by unmarried people was wrong. It is wrong because it violates the inner reality of the act; it is wrong because unmarried people thereby engage in a life-uniting act without a life-uniting intent. Whenever two people copulate without a commitment to life-union, they commit fornication.” [Lewis Smedes, Sex for Christians (Eerdmans 1994), pp. 109-10 as quoted in Jones and Yarhouse, p. 172]

Sexual fidelity in marriage expresses the covenant of lifelong, committed union of husband and wife, but it also is a metaphor for the committed relationship between God and His people. [Hosea 1-3; True Union, p. 11] This metaphor is also applied to the relationship between Christ and the Church. [Ephesians 5:25-33; Jones and Yarhouse, p.164] The metaphorical significance of marriage runs throughout the canon even to the coming again of Christ in Revelation: “Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” [Revelation 19:9; Jones and Yarhouse, p. 164] Therefore, sexual fidelity in marriage is a means given by God by which a husband and wife can symbolize and bear witness to the fidelity of Christ to His Church. Given this mysterious spiritual reality, the sexual act itself can never be considered morally insignificant. “Marriage is not an incidental human construction but a creational reality.” [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 164]

Therefore, the context of the right expression of sexual intercourse throughout the Bible is marriage. References to any other kind of sexual practice must always be viewed against that backdrop. The Bible also presupposes heterosexual sex throughout the canon:

“On a prescriptive level, every regulation that affirms the sexual bond affirms it between a man and a woman—without exception. In addition, every proverb or wisdom saying refers to heterosexual—not homosexual—relationships as fitting for the lives of the faithful. There is an abundance of Old Testament laws and proverbs regulating and establishing proper boundaries for sexual intercourse between male and female (e.g., regarding virginity, mate selection, engagement, marital fidelity). By way of contrast, there are no laws distinguishing proper homosexual conduct from improper homosexual conduct, because in every law code homosexual conduct is presumed to be forbidden *in toto*....Likewise, every discussion in the New Testament about marriage or sexual unions always and only seek to regulate heterosexual unions because there is no conception of a proper homosexual union. There was no need to talk about fidelity and loving concern in same-sex unions because it was universally understood that homosexual unions were abominable. The relationship between Yahweh and Israel and between Christ and the church is imaged as a marriage between a husband and a wife. It would have been absolutely unthinkable for any prophet or New Testament author to conceive of this relationship in homosexual terms. The universal silence in the Bible regarding an acceptable same-sex union, when combined with the explicit prohibitions, speaks volumes for a consensus disapproval of homosexual conduct. To say that there are only a few texts in the Bible that do not condone homosexual conduct is a

monumental understatement of the facts. The reverse is a more accurate statement: there is not a single shred of evidence anywhere in the Bible that would even remotely suggest that same-sex unions are more acceptable than extramarital or premarital intercourse, incest, or bestiality.” [Emphasis added] [Gagnon, 438-39]

Biblical prohibitions against various other sexual acts should be seen against the background of the consistent approval and blessing of sexual intercourse within the context of marriage. The prohibition against homosexual practice should also be seen in this broader context:

“The sexual behaviors and patterns judged immoral in Scripture are, in rough order of their appearance: adultery (Ex 20:14 and many other passages), incest (Lev 18:6-18; 20:11-22), homosexual intercourse (Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9), bestiality (Lev 20:15-16), rape (Deut 22:23-29), lust (Mt 5:28) and fornication (Acts 15:29; 1 Cor 6:9).” [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 168]

Homosexual intercourse is sinful and contrary to the will of God in the first place, because it is not sexual intercourse within the context of marriage between a man and a woman. Homosexual intercourse is sinful and contrary to the will of God in the second place, because it is specifically and unambiguously prohibited in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The principal text in the Old Testament is Leviticus 18:22: “With a male you shall not lie as though lying with a woman; it is an abomination.” It is the *act* of male homosexual intercourse, “lying with a male as with a woman,” that is unconditionally forbidden. There is no reference to motives. [Hays, p. 381]

This prohibition is located in that part of the Holiness Code in Leviticus that also prohibits “incest [18:6-18], adultery [18:20], child sacrifice [18:21], and bestiality [18:23]. These prohibitions continue to have universal validity in contemporary society.” [Gagnon, p. 113]

The word “abomination”—*toeba*—which is specifically applied to this prohibited act suggests “a particularly revolting and conspicuous violation of boundaries established by God.” [Gagnon, p. 113] The term is closely associated with the threat of idolatry, particularly pertaining to a reverse of the created order which constitutes an affront to the integrity of God. [Grenz, p. 45] The fact that the term appears in the Holiness Code of Leviticus does not automatically render it irrelevant to Christians today:

“The word is generally applied to forms of behavior whose abhorrent quality is readily transparent to contemporary believers. Worshiping other gods, child sacrifice, incest, bestiality, adultery, theft, oppressing the poor, false testimony in court against another person, and deceit are not oddities of a superstitious, pre-Enlightenment people whose sole function was to keep the people of God separate from the surrounding culture. It is contextually clear that what is generally meant by *toeba* is something ‘*Yahweh* hates’ (Deut 12:31; Prov 6:16)” [Gagnon, p. 120]

Although many of the laws in the Holiness Code of Leviticus, particularly of a civil and ceremonial nature, have no binding effect on the Christian Church today, the laws which are considered moral are timeless and universal and still authoritative. [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 169] These would include many of the prohibitions contained in chapters 18 through 20 related to the Ten Commandments, such as the commandments against adultery, incest, stealing and lying as well as homosexual intercourse. [Gagnon, p. 121] In particular, all of the laws in Leviticus 18:6-23 prohibit sexual practices which are contrary to God’s created order. [Gagnon, p.136] The continuing binding authority of moral laws in distinction to

civil and ceremonial laws is recognized by Article VII of the Articles of Religion. [The Book of Common Prayer, p. 869]

The prohibition against homosexual intercourse was carried forward into the New Testament in three separate passages. Two of these, First Corinthians 6:9-11 and First Timothy 1:8-10, contain a list of vices or behaviors that are inconsistent with the Christian life:

“Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes (*malakoi*), sodomites (*arsenokoitai*), thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” [1 Corinthians 6:9-11]

“Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it legitimately. This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, fornicators, sodomites (*arsenokoitai*), slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching ...” [1 Timothy 1:8-10]

The continuity of the prohibition against homosexual intercourse between the Old Testament and the New Testament is evidenced especially by the use of the Greek word, *arsenokoitai*, in both of these passages, because it is a word coined from the Greek version of the prohibition in Leviticus:

“The word *malakoi* is not a technical term meaning ‘homosexuals’ (no such term existed either in Greek or in Hebrew), but it appears often in Hellenistic Greek as pejorative slang to describe the ‘passive’ partners—often young boys—in homosexual activity. The other word, *arsenokoitai*, is not found in any extant Greek text earlier than 1 Corinthians. Some scholars have suggested that its meaning is uncertain, but Robin Scroggs has shown that the word is a translation of the Hebrew *mishkav zakur* (‘lying with a male’), derived directly from Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 and used in rabbinic texts to refer to homosexual intercourse. The Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) of Leviticus 20:13 reads, ‘Whoever lies with a man as with a woman [*meta arsenos koiten gynaikos*], they have done an abomination’ (my translation). This is almost certainly the idiom from which the noun *arsenokoitai* was coined. Thus, Paul’s use of the term presupposes and reaffirms the holiness code’s condemnation of homosexual acts.” [Emphasis added] [Hays, p. 382]

The third and most important passage in the New Testament indicating that homosexual intercourse continues to be contrary to God’s will is Romans 1:24-27 which is part of a larger argument by Paul that all people, both Jews and Gentiles, are under judgment for sin and in need of salvation from Jesus Christ. The relevant passage is in the first part of the argument designed to demonstrate the utter depravity of the Gentiles:

“Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, 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. For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women

exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameful acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.” [Romans 1:24-26]

Paul was very intentional in his taking as an example of Gentile depravity homosexual practices involving both men and women. At the very heart of this particular sin is the rejection of the created order:

“It is certainly true that Paul’s portrayal of homosexual behavior is of a secondary and illustrative character in relation to the main line of argument; however, the illustration is one that both Paul and his readers would have regarded as particularly vivid. Rebellion against the Creator who may be ‘understood and seen in the things that he has made’ is made palpable in the flouting of sexual distinctions that are fundamental to God’s creative design. The references to God as Creator would certainly evoke for Paul, as well as for his readers, immediate recollections of the creation story in Genesis 1-3, which proclaims that ‘God created humankind in his own image..male and female he created them,’ charging them to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ (Gen. 1:27-28). Similarly...Genesis 2:18-24 describes woman and man as created for one another and concludes with a summary moral: ‘Therefore a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.’ Thus the complementarity of male and female is given a theological grounding in God’s creative activity. By way of sharp contrast, in Romans 1 Paul portrays homosexual behavior as a ‘sacrament’ (so to speak) of the antireligion of human beings who refuse to honor God as Creator. When human beings engage in homosexual activity, they enact an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual reality: the rejection of the Creator’s design. Thus, Paul’s choice of homosexuality as an illustration of human depravity is not merely random: it serves his rhetorical purposes by providing a vivid image of humanity’s primal rejection of the sovereignty of God the Creator.” [Emphasis added] [Hays, p. 386]

It is very revealing to see this passage in Romans through the eyes of Christian Anglicans who are not part of the modern West. One of the great advantages of being part of a global communion is to share in another very different perspective:

“This global perspective casts a fresh light on one of the key texts in this debate—Romans 1. Paul’s words are primarily an analysis *not* of individuals and personal psychology, but rather of cultural and societal disintegration. To those living in poorer parts of the globe, this makes perfect sense. Is it a coincidence that the gay movement has arisen in a Western culture that is post-Christian, highly sexualized and, to them, politically and economically imperialist? There is here an uncomfortable correlation between what Paul saw in the ancient Roman Empire and what they sense in the modern West—oppression and exploitation on the frontiers, but moral innovation at the centre. From such a perspective, some ‘Western’ responses to those experiencing same-sex attraction seem, however sincere, to be driven by a consumerist mentality providing ‘whatever sells best’. Those of us living within Western culture need to hear such uncomfortable questions raised from outside.” [True Union, p. 9]

All three of these passages in the New Testament make it very clear that homosexual intercourse is still

considered sinful and contrary to the will of God. Although Jesus made no mention of this particular sin, “it is notable that, unlike his observances (or lack thereof) and teaching on the ceremonial law, our Lord *never modified any portion of the moral law dealing with sexuality other than to raise the expectations on us.*” [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 22] In Mark 7:21-23 Jesus tells his disciples that a person is defiled by the evil things that come out of his heart such as theft, murder and adultery. The first sin in that list is the Greek word *porneiai*. “No first-century Jew could have spoken of *porneiai* (plural) without having in mind the list of forbidden sexual offenses in Leviticus 18 and 20 (incest, adultery, same-sex intercourse, bestiality). The statement underscores that sexual behavior does matter.” [Gagnon, pp. 191-92] Moreover, when Jesus was asked a question about divorce in Mark 10:1-12, he appealed to God’s design in creation of two complementary creatures, male and female, and of their coming together as husband and wife as one flesh. “The whole point of Jesus’ stance in Mark 10:1-12 is not to broaden the Torah’s openness to alternative forms of sexuality but rather to narrow or constrain the Torah’s sexual ethic to disallow any sexual union other than a monogamous, lifelong marriage to a person of the opposite sex.” [Gagnon, p. 194] Jesus did not dilute the Jewish sexual ethic; he intensified it as evidenced by his saying that “everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” [Matthew 5:28] “It is not enough to refrain from fornication and adultery. One must also refrain from actively imagining one’s sexual involvement with another woman.” [Gagnon, p. 205] Jesus did not expressly condemn homosexual intercourse or incest or bestiality, but considering all of the evidence, his silence can hardly be interpreted as approval of any or all of these sexual sins.

The foregoing examination of the relevant Scriptural passages supports the conclusion that the traditional orthodox teaching on human sexuality and homosexuality is strongly supported by the Word of God. In fact, there are no dissenting voices within the canon:

“Though only a few biblical texts speak of homoerotic activity, all that do mention it express unqualified disapproval. Thus, on this issue, there is no synthetic problem for New Testament ethics. In this respect, the issue of homosexuality differs significantly from matters such as slavery or the subordination of women, concerning which the Bible contains internal tensions and counterposed witnesses. The biblical witness against homosexual practices is univocal.” [Emphasis added] [Hays, p. 389]

The question posed at the beginning of this section of whether the teachings set forth in Resolution 1.10 on human sexuality and homosexuality “truly state the will of God as expressed in Scripture” can be answered in the affirmative. The second question posed was: Do they continue to do so in our day? By its actions the Episcopal Church has answered no to this question. It is apparent from the following letter that this is also the stated belief of the Presiding Bishop. In this letter Robert Gagnon, whose exhaustive 500-page book on the texts and hermeneutics relating to homosexual practice in the Bible, a book widely acclaimed by the *creme de la creme* of Biblical scholars, answers this question decisively:

“Dear Presiding Bishop Griswold,

The following remarks were attributed to you in an Associated Press interview published yesterday (‘Episcopal Leader Defends Gay Bishop,’ by Rachel Zoll, AP religion writer):

He said that in biblical times there was no understanding that homosexuality was a natural orientation and not a choice. ‘Discreet acts of homosexuality’ were condemned in the Bible because they were acts of lust instead of the ‘love, forgiveness, grace’ of committed same-sex

relationships, he said. 'Homosexuality, as we understand it as an orientation, is not mentioned in the Bible,' he said.

With all due respect, if these remarks are correctly cited, you are in error on all counts.

First, there were many theories in the Greco-Roman world that posited something akin to modern sexual orientation theory. Philosophers, doctors, and moralists often attributed one or more forms of homosexual behavior, at least in part, to congenital factors. And some of the same persons could still refer to such forms as 'contrary to nature'—that is, given by nature but not in conformity with embodied existence or nature's well-working processes. Lifelong, exclusive participants in homosexual behavior were also widely known in the ancient world. Indeed, Paul's reference to the *malakoi* ('soft men,' men who play the sexual role of females) in 1 Corinthians 6:9 is one such instance.

Second, you assume that the absence of 'choice' regarding sexual impulses absolves one of moral responsibility for the behavior arising from such impulses. Numerous sinful desires, sexual and otherwise, are not 'chosen' in the sense of being manufactured wilfully. That doesn't make them any less sinful—though it can and should inform our pastoral response. Who would choose to be a pedophile if it were a simple matter of choice? Some people find it extraordinarily difficult to be limited to a single sex partner; do they choose their sexual impulses? Some people grow up without an instinctive aversion to sex with close blood relations and then fall in love with one such relative; do they simply manufacture such feelings? Paul describes sin itself in Romans 7 as an innate impulse, passed on by an ancestor figure, running through the members of the human body, and never entirely within human control. The very nature of sin is that it generates biologically related impulses. Why do you think a biological connection disqualifies an impulse from being sinful? Such thinking is patently un-biblical.

Third, biblical writers were certainly not limiting their condemnation of same-sex intercourse to particularly exploitative forms. Non-exploitative forms were known in Paul's day and had Paul wanted to limit his condemnation to exploitative forms he certainly could have done so. The wording in Romans 1:24-27 is quite clear as regards what Paul found objectionable about same-sex intercourse: its same-sexness, persons seeking integration with a non-complementary sexual same, persons erotically attracted to what they intrinsically are as sexual beings. This is sexual narcissism and/or sexual self-deception: a desire either for what one is or for what one wishes to be but in fact already is. The intertextual echoes to Genesis 1:27 ('God made them male and female') and Genesis 2:24 ('For this reason a man shall...be joined to his woman/wife and the two shall become one flesh') in Romans 1:24-27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9, respectively, confirm that Paul had in view the male-female prerequisite ordained by God at creation. (Incidentally, so did Jesus when he appealed to the same two texts from Genesis as normative and prescriptive texts for human sexual relations [Mark 10:6-8]). The beautiful image put forward in Genesis 2:18-24 is that of an original binary human split down the side into two sexually differentiated beings. If sexual relations are to be had, 'one-flesh' sexual wholeness requires a re-merger of the two constituent parts produced by the splitting. By 'nature' in Romans 1:24-27 Paul meant the complementary structure of males and females still transparent in material creation—a category of thinking that

transcends issues of love and commitment. The description in Romans 1:27 of males mutually gratifying themselves with other males does not suggest exploitation. Nor does the mention of female-female intercourse point us in the direction of a particularly exploitative form of same-sex intercourse. The language in Romans 1:24-27 of being 'given over' to preexisting desires and forsaking any heterosexual relations certainly suggests innate and exclusive passions for members of the same sex. Scripture is clearly condemning every form of same-sex intercourse. Biblical authors would no more have accepted a committed and loving homosexual union than they would have accepted a committed and loving adult incestuous union. Both types of unions are structurally incompatible: sex with sexual or familial sames.

Much more could be said about each of the points above but what I have written should suffice for now.

Even some pro-homosex biblical scholars such as Bernadette Brooten and William Schoedel recognize that 'sexual orientation' and commitment would have made little difference to Paul's indictment of same-sex intercourse. My book, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* (Abingdon) which has been out for a full two years, also makes this clear (see especially pp. 347-60, 380-95). See also now my more condensed discussion in *Homosexuality and the Bible* (Fortress), just released, and a forthcoming article in an edited volume entitled *Christian Sexuality* (Kirk House), which deals extensively with orientation theory in antiquity.

There really is no excuse any more for making the kinds of false statements about Scripture that you made in the AP interview. It is especially inexcusable for a presiding bishop—an office that has guarding the faith as a chief concern—to be making such inaccurate representations of the biblical witness. I urge you to read more widely, and more carefully, as regards recent work on the subject of the Bible and homosexual behavior.

Sincerely,

Robert A. J. Gagnon, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of New Testament

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary"

[An Open Letter to the Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold, September 30, 2003]

Some revisionists have also suggested that the authority of Scripture is not in issue but only its interpretation and that the Episcopal Church's treatment of the Biblical texts pertaining to homosexuality is analogous to the Church's treatment of slavery and women. In a review of Robert Gagnon's book, Walter Wink, Professor of Biblical Interpretation at Auburn Theological Seminary, accused Gagnon of avoiding these analogies. In his reply to that review, Gagnon stated:

"The key question is: What are the best analogies? The analogies of slavery, women and divorce have great defects. In particular:

\* There is tension within the canon itself on these issues. There is no tension regarding homosexual behavior.

\* The Bible's stance on slavery and women's roles looks liberating in relation to the broader cultural contexts out of which the Bible engaged.

The exact opposite is the case for the Bible's stance on homosexual practice.

\* Neither scripture nor the contemporary church celebrates divorce as part of the glorious diversity of the body of Christ. Divorce and same-sex intercourse share in common the fact that both are forgivable sins for those who repent. The church works to end the cycle of divorce and remarriage, just as it ought to work toward ending the cycle of serial, unrepentant same-sex intercourse.

The best analogies are those that most closely correlate with the distinctive elements of the Bible's opposition to same-sex intercourse: sexual behavior proscribed strongly and absolutely by both Testaments and pervasively within each Testament (at least implicitly), with the proscription making sense. Here one would include the Bible's opposition to incest, bestiality, adultery, and prostitution." [Robert A. J. Gagnon, "Gays and the Bible A Response to Walter Wink," Christian Century (August 14-27, 2002)]

In responding to a paper from the Diocese of New York entitled Let the Reader Understand: Principles of Scriptural Interpretation (January 2002) which made similar comparisons between the Bible's position on slavery and women and its position on homosexuality, Dean Peter Moore of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry made the following points:

"Interestingly, there is no effort in "Let the reader understand..." to unpack the actual texts of Scripture that do refer to homosexuality. Nor is there any consideration of the whole tenor of Scripture in relation to sexuality, and the place of homosexuality within that larger framework. The paper simply relativizes any and all specific Scriptural texts by declaring that if they can be shown to our modern consciences not to be in concert with the Great Commandment to love God and to love one's neighbor, they are no longer relevant. The paper thus invites the church to move beyond the most normal and likely meanings to be found in the text of Scripture, and to expect God to say something new and different to us because we have come of age.

"Let the reader understand..." is a variation of the position we have heard consistently in the homosexuality debate: there is development in the Bible, new situations require new duties, God appears to change his mind, what was once forbidden is now permitted, and so forth. There appears to be no embarrassment at the fact that, if these claims are true, we really have no clear access to the Divine will on these matters. Hence, if Scripture is revelatory at all, God must be seen as contradicting Himself.

But let's take the point of development within Scripture. We all know that the civil and ceremonial laws of the Old Testament were set aside by Jesus Christ. We all know that Jesus modified certain commandments, or at least applied them differently than the Pharisees of his day. We all know that many Christians thought for centuries that slavery was OK, but discovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that it was immoral. We also know that the Church forbade women in leadership for centuries, based on certain texts of Scripture, but in many places now permits women to be ordained. We all know that divorce was once held to the letter of the law, but now those Scriptures that speak of abandonment are interpreted more broadly than they were in the past.

Would any of this really surprise the bishops at Lambeth? Does any of this surprise those of us who, with those bishops, believe homosexual acts are still wrong today?

The idea that there is development, growth, change in the Bible, and that God does a new thing when it pleases Him, has been a fundamental principle of Scriptural interpretation from the earliest times. No one thought, however, that that meant that God contradicted Himself. Clearly the Bible is a living document; and therefore we see development, movement and growth in the whole process of revelation.

But the really important thing is that when you come to the matter of homosexuality there is no development or change in the Bible.

Contrast the Bible's teaching on homosexuality with its teaching on slavery. Slavery was tolerated in both Testaments; but never seen as a positive good. The Jews regulated slavery along humane lines. But the Bible's overall message undermined slavery almost from the start. In the Old Testament, the motif for salvation was freedom from slavery. In the New Testament it was freedom from bondage to sin. Paul urged slaves who could secure their freedom to seek it (1 Corinthians 7:21). He sent Onesimus back to Philemon not just as his slave but as his 'brother.' And he taught that in Christ there was neither slave nor free, but all are one (Galatians 3:28).

Contrast the Bible's teaching on homosexuality and on the role of women. Women made great advances in the Bible from more primitive times. By restricting sex to marriage, as happened in the sexual revolution God instituted among the Jews, women's status was dramatically lifted. In the New Testament women become objects of special attention by Jesus. In the earliest churches they are in responsible positions of leadership. Perhaps there was even a woman among the apostles (Romans 16:7)? Women are the first witness to the resurrection. Also, as Galatians 3:28 says, in Christ there is neither male nor female.

Contrast the Bible's teaching on homosexuality and on the food laws, such as eating meat with blood in it. While it is true that the Jerusalem church sought to impose this on gentiles (out of charity towards weak Jewish consciences, we presume), this regulation does not seem to have been enforced. Furthermore, eating bloody meat could not compare in its potential for spiritual contamination with eating meat that had been offered to idols. But Paul sees no problem in eating meat offered to idols. Why the change? In Peter's vision in Acts, we read that God declares all foods clean (Acts 10:15; Mark 7:19).

So there is a trajectory in Scripture in each of these areas. Even with divorce, while God 'hates divorce' according to Malachi 2:16, there is the Mosaic permission, 'for the hardness of your hearts' (Matthew 19:8), the Matthean exception, 'except for adultery' (Matthew 5:32), and the Pauline consent, 'If the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so' (1 Corinthians 7:15). These indicate that the modern church may not have gone against the will of God in adapting basic principles to new situations. The same might be said to be true in regard to lending money at interest. Old strictures yield to new situations.

However, there is no such trajectory in the Bible with regard to homosexuality. Homosexuality is considered a particular abomination in the Holiness Code of Leviticus and Deuteronomy (Leviticus 18 & 20). The Sodom and Gibeah stories may have been primarily about rape (Genesis 19, Judges 19), but the horror in the text implies that the homosexual nature of the intended behavior was repugnant. When you turn to the New Testament, homosexual acts are also condemned. You see this in Romans 1, 1 Corinthians 6, 1 Timothy 1, and Jude. Furthermore, while the Old Testament doesn't mention lesbianism, the New Testament explicitly expands its prohibition to include lesbianism." [Emphasis added] [Peter C. Moore, Homosexuality and the Great Commandment (November 1, 2002), pp. 4-6]

In addition to his argument about the analogies to slavery and women, Walter Wink has also made the argument that in reality there is no Christian sexual ethic. While acknowledging that Christians still reject rape, incest, adultery, and bestiality, he mentions sixteen "sexual mores" in the Bible, such as concubinage, polygamy, and prostitution, that no longer are authoritative for Christians today. Robert Gagnon has cogently refuted this argument:

"Quite apart from the fact that Wink misreads some of the biblical data and/or the contemporary stance of the church on many of the sixteen sexual mores (e.g., the Bible nowhere approves of prostitution, nowhere requires celibacy), what Wink fails to do is to weigh truly comparable sexual issues from a biblical perspective. What makes the biblical mandate concerning homosexuality so hard for Christians to ignore or downplay are seven considerations.

First, it is *proscribed* behavior, which as a minimalist approach to ethics is less demanding than a positive prescription and therefore more doable (or, better, 'non-doable') and fundamental—a sin of commission rather than omission. For example, a command not to harm another is a minimalist expectation in relation to the Golden Rule and thus its violation constitutes a more severe infraction.

Second, it is proscribed *behavior*, not proscribed thoughts, theories, or worldviews. As such, the ethic is again more 'bottom-line,' more doable, and more basic for human social interaction.

Third, it is behavior proscribed *by both Testaments*. The change of salvation-historical dispensations sometimes results in shifting assessments of what is expected of God's people, especially as regards ritual requirements or civil law for a state theocracy; hence, the preeminence of the New Testament. Yet the Old Testament, because of its sheer size and unique experiences of God, can also balance out or fill in gaps in the New Testament. When the two Testaments are in complete agreement that a given action is morally wrong, the biblical witness is hard to circumvent.

Fourth, it is behavior proscribed *pervasively within each Testament*. There are no dissenting voices anywhere in either Testament. All the inferential evidence that we have for authors who do not speak explicitly to the issue confirms the supposition of pervasive opposition. The best that Wink and others can do is attempt to appeal to the 'big picture' of the Bible, by which they mean some general statements about love and tolerance—none of which any of the biblical writers, or Jesus, found to be in conflict with opposition to homosexual conduct. The 'big picture' consists not of this

misunderstood application of love but rather of the heterosexual model for sexual intercourse provided in Gen 1-2, consistently affirmed throughout the history of Israel and the church.

Fifth, it is *severely* proscribed behavior. The revulsion expressed for homosexual intercourse, across both Testaments, is as strong as it could possibly be, given the different parameters for each Testament: grounds for the death penalty in the Old Testament and grounds for exclusion from the kingdom of God in the New Testament. In Rom 1:26-27, it epitomizes the height of gentile depravity and folly in the ethical sphere.

Sixth, the proscribed behavior is proscribed *absolutely*; that is, the proscription encompasses every and any form of homosexual behavior. The proscription is not limited, for example, only to select types of exploitative homosexuality.

Seventh, it is proscribed behavior *that makes sense*. The complementarity of male and female is a clear indication in the natural order of God's will for sexuality—much clearer than the urges homosexuals experience. Contrary to Wink's view, such urges or 'orientation' can never be *natural* in the sense Paul uses the term since they (a) manifestly contradict God's creation design of male and female; (b) arise at best from only a partial and indirect genetic influence; and (c) have no more validity than orientations toward bestiality, incest, multiple partners, sadomasochism, or any of the sinful orientations cited in the vice list of Rom 1:29-31.

When these seven tests are applied to the lists of sexual mores collated by Wink, the first four mores he mentions—those which believers still adhere to—provide much closer analogues than the allegedly sixteen others that differ from contemporary Christian standards.” [Gagnon, pp.448-51]

Related to the argument that there is really no Christian sexual ethic is the position that all moral obligations for the Christian are subsumed under the concept of love. Richard Hays has explained the inadequacy of this word in isolation from the crucifixion of Jesus. “What the New Testament means by ‘love’ is embodied concretely in the cross.” [Hays, p. 202] Apart from the cross of Jesus Christ, the concept of love has become vague, infinitely elastic, and ultimately meaningless:

“Love covers a multitude of sins in more ways than one. The term has become debased in popular discourse; it has lost its power of discrimination, having become a cover for all manner of vapid self-indulgence. As Stanley Hauerwas has observed, ‘The ethics of love is often but a cover of what is fundamentally an assertion of ethical relativism.’ One often hears voices in the church urging that the radical demands of Christian discipleship should not be pressed upon church members because the ‘loving’ thing to do is to include everyone without imposing harsh demands—for example, disciplines of economic sharing or sexual fidelity. Indeed, love is sometimes invoked even to sanction sexual relations outside of marriage or the use of violence. Surely in such cases the term has been emptied of its meaning. The biblical story teaches us that God's love cannot be reduced to ‘inclusiveness’: authentic love calls us to repentance, discipline, sacrifice, and transformation (see, e.g., Luke 14:25-35; Heb. 12:5-13). We can recover the power of love only by insisting that love's meaning is to be discovered in the New Testament's

story of Jesus—therefore, in the cross.” [Hays, p. 202]

Consideration and reflection of all of the relevant biblical texts must always take place within the broader context of the Christian doctrines of creation, fall, redemption, and glorification. Richard Hays analyzes some of the underlying assumptions of those arguing in favor of a radical revision of the Church’s teaching on homosexuality:

“Many of the advocates of unqualified acceptance of homosexuality seem to be operating with a simplistic anthropology that assumes whatever is must be good: they have a theology of creation but no theology of sin and redemption. Furthermore, they have a realized eschatology that equates personal fulfillment with sexual fulfillment and expects sexual ‘salvation’ now. The Pauline portrayal of human beings as fallen creatures in bondage to sin and yet free in Christ for the obedience of faith would suggest a rather different assessment of our sexuality, looking to the future resurrection as the locus of bodily fulfillment. Thus, eschatology looms as the crucial question that divides the traditional position from those who would revise it.” [Hays, p. 402]

This eschatological perspective sheds much light on the theological fault line that lies at the bottom of this deep division between the orthodox and revisionist positions. We are indebted again to Philip Turner whose article, “Sex and the Single Life,” First Things, May 1993, pp. 15-21, is discussed by Stanton Jones and Mark Yarhouse:

“The astute arguments of Philip Turner give us valuable insights about the implications of glorification for our daily living out of our sexuality. Turner begins with a chilling depiction of the assumptions that are replacing a Christian view of persons, sexuality and morality. Drawing on the work of the philosopher Charles Taylor, Turner argues that we are increasingly assuming, at the deepest level, that who we are as selves is defined (1) inwardly, by our human subjectivity, rather than by anything outward or objective; (2) by how we live in everyday life, rather than by visions of virtue and possibilities; and (3) by the possibilities we possess for successfully wringing personal satisfaction of various sorts from life (i.e., of ‘self-actualizing,’ of pursuing and attaining happiness and fulfillment). Morality then becomes secondary to this view of selves, and the most basic moral principles then become the obligation to act to enhance growth and gratification, to protect each person’s rights to such pursuit of happiness and growth, and to eliminate suffering since suffering is always an obstacle and frustration of one’s rightful growth. Turner then points out how our view of sexuality is transformed. He notes the widespread acceptance of the view that our sexuality ‘in some way defines the inner depths of the self’ and that our sexuality is thus fundamental to the very ‘powers and abilities [of the self which] the self is to discover, develop, and exercise in the course of daily life.’ It then follows that ‘denial of one’s ‘sexuality’ is akin to denial of ‘oneself’ and so also one’s basic ‘identity.’

Turner contrasts two essential elements of Christian understanding against this prevailing view...: (1) that a self, in the Christian view, is not defined solely or primarily by subjectivity but rather by meanings given by God by revelation and worked out in a community beyond the autonomous self, and (2) the belief that our sexuality, particularly the act of sexual intercourse, has meanings and implications that exist independently of what we might think we mean by such acts and that are intrinsic to

those acts. This argument...strikes at the heart of popular essentialism.

Now, finally getting to glorification, Turner argues that we will deal properly with sexuality only when we see it in the context of all of life, which must, in the biblical understanding, include our ultimate and eternal context. “The ethics of sex ought to be placed within the full context of the Christian life and the churches’ pastoral ministry....To place sexual relations in this full and more adequate context, Christians ought to understand them as part of the undertaking that encompasses all aspects of their lives. That undertaking is holiness of life and its end is not repression but joy unconfined.’ As opposed to subjective undertakings defined by the autonomous self’s desire for self-actualization, Christians believe that God places before us an objective pursuit defined by him—holiness. Holiness in this life is a calling, in part, of preparation for and partial realization now of what will eventually be ours forever in glorification. To pick up one earlier thread: to the secular mind, suffering is a frustration of a person’s rightful pursuit of satisfaction; but to the Christian, suffering (such as the real suffering of sexual disappointment and frustration, and their deeper root, loneliness) is integral to our questing after a goal that only begins when this life ends—holiness, purity, Christlikeness and giving glory to God. In short, we live our sexuality properly only when we live it in light of eternity.” [Emphasis added] [Jones and Yarhouse, pp.165-67]

The Word of God reveals to us the plan of God for our lives, including our sexual lives. It also reveals to us the objective reality of God’s world to which we should conform, including the objective reality of the sexual act, as well as the end to which we are called: “to be holy and blameless before him in love.” [Ephesians 1:4] It is this Word and the Church’s theological reflection on that Word that illumines the path that we are to take and that should inform us in all of our actions, including our ministry to persons with homosexual desires.

## VIII. The Church’s Ministry to Homosexual Persons

It must be candidly admitted that, by and large, the Universal Church has failed homosexual persons. Liberal churches are offering affirmation without transformation, and conservative churches are offering condemnation. “Naturally the gay Christian movement looks so appealing to the woman or man struggling with homosexuality. It offers the acceptance and understanding that they may never have found in the church.” [Dallas, p. 24] The Church first needs to become aware of the inherent dangers of living the homosexual lifestyle and then develop new ministries that will meet homosexual persons at their point of need.

Richard Hays, Professor of New Testament at Duke University Divinity School, at the beginning of the chapter on homosexuality in his book, The Moral Vision of the New Testament, recounts the story of Gary, his best friend from his undergraduate days at Yale. Gary was a Christian and a homosexual who was dying of AIDS. In the summer of 1989 Gary traveled to Hays’ home for one last visit before he died. The two of them had long conversations about Christianity and the Bible and homosexuality. Gary “was angry at the self-affirming gay Christian groups, because he regarded his own condition as more complex and tragic than their apologetic stance could acknowledge.” [Hays, p. 379] “However much he wanted to believe that the Bible did not condemn homosexuality, he would not violate his own stubborn intellectual integrity by pretending to find their arguments persuasive.” [Hays, 380] Gary was concerned about the growing pressure being exerted on the churches to legitimate homosexual relations,

and he shared Hays' misgivings about the exegetical and theological arguments which were being offered by the revisionists. "As a homosexual Christian, Gary believed that their writings did justice neither to the biblical texts nor to his own sobering experience of the gay community that he had moved in and out of for twenty years." [Hays, p. 380] Gary wanted to write an article about his struggles as a homosexual Christian and his belief that homosexuality was incompatible with Scripture but was unable to accomplish it because of his weakened condition. He died in May of 1990.

Now go back about ten years to 1981. A young physician working at a hospital in New York City examined a young man with a terribly wasting disease which had affected his immune system. The young man's arms were covered with purple welts which the physician recognized as Kaposi's sarcoma, a very rare form of cancer. The young man died within the week, and other young men with similar symptoms began showing up. The disease was referred to at the time as GRID, "gay-related immune disorder," which reflected the reality that it occurred disproportionately among male homosexuals. The young physician was Jeffrey Satinover, who saw GRID as another example of the medical consequences of the sexual liberation of the previous decades, consequences which included syphilis, gonorrhea, and herpes. Satinover had thought at the time that this new terrible disease would put the brakes on the dangerous homosexual lifestyle. In the introduction to his book, Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth, he recounts what actually happened:

"In fact, the reaction in the gay community was indeed swift, but startlingly unexpected. Not only did the gay community mobilize to attack GRID, they worked to ensure that GRID would not be perceived—by either the medical profession or the public—as in any way related directly to their sexual way of life. Homosexuals indeed needed protection from illness, but that became only a third priority. The second priority was to keep gays from straight disapproval and hatred, and the first priority was to *protect homosexuality itself as a perfectly acceptable, normal, and safe way of life*. Massive interventions were designed and funded to a greater extent than with any other illness, but none were allowed to target the number-one risk factor itself, homosexuality. Even treatment to help those homosexuals who fervently wished to change came under fierce attack, regardless of the dramatic—indeed, potentially life-saving—benefit afforded by even modest success.

So the first move in the early eighties was to eliminate the earlier name of the condition. Because under the right circumstances the virus was transmissible to anyone, pressure was swiftly generated to rename 'gay-related immune disorder' to AIDS: 'Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.' Though the connection to homosexuality is universally understood to be valid and medical literature still speaks of homosexuality as the major risk factor for AIDS, the fact that gay male anal intercourse and promiscuity created the American reservoir for HIV (the pathogen that causes AIDS)—and continues to preserve it—quickly became an unspeakable truth." [Satinover, 15-16]

Satinover observed this campaign first and while he was gaining experience in the treatment of AIDS. He was invited to be a speaker at a medical conference on AIDS in Connecticut, and because of his speech there, he was invited to speak at a New England conference on AIDS which was sponsored by the Episcopal Church. What he witnessed at that conference disturbed him deeply:

"The program included numerous healing services and all the speakers spoke of 'spirituality.' But apart from me, none mentioned the word 'sin' (of any sort, not just sexual), for in the name of not being 'judgmental' it had been made taboo. Problematic

and dangerous aspects of the gay life were never discussed, nor was the tragedy of the women addressed from the point of view of ethics in sexual relationships. The clergy who ran the conference belonged to ACT-UP—the ‘AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power,’ a militant activist group. Following communion they distributed ‘solidarity’ pins to the conference attendees—condoms encrusted with glue and glitter.

The denial at this conference was so dense that self-examination was entirely precluded. How could healing possibly take place without an honest facing up to the realities of the situation? I returned from the experience saddened by the depth of suffering I had seen but angered as well. Churches and synagogues were influential in the politics and pastoral care of those caught in homosexuality and AIDS, but their influence could be destructive as well as constructive.” [Satinover, p.25]

Satinover raises the question about the moral responsibility of the activists: “We can only wonder how many twenty-year-olds (who were only five when AIDS first appeared in America) might have been spared had activists made it their number-one priority to protect individual lives rather than the gay lifestyle.” [Satinover, p. 22] What about Richard Hays’ friend Gary? What about all the other Garys, and what about the moral responsibility of the Church? These personal encounters with the tragedy of young lives being snuffed out by AIDS became the genesis for Satinover’s book. In the first part of his book, he discusses the brute medical facts of homosexuality:

“What would you think if a relative, friend, or colleague had a condition that is routinely, even if not always, associated with the following problems:

- \* A significantly decreased likelihood of establishing or preserving a successful marriage
  - \* A five- to ten-year decrease in life expectancy
  - \* Chronic, potentially fatal, liver disease—hepatitis
  - \* Inevitably fatal esophageal cancer
  - \* Pneumonia
  - \* Internal bleeding
  - \* Serious mental disabilities, many of which are irreversible
  - \* A much higher than usual incidence of suicide
  - \* A very low likelihood that its adverse effects can be eliminated unless the condition itself is eliminated
  - \* An only 30 percent likelihood of being eliminated through lengthy, often costly, and very time-consuming treatment in an otherwise unselected population of sufferers (although a very high success rate among highly motivated, carefully selected sufferers)
- [Satinover, p. 49-50]

Satinover then adds:

“We can add four qualifications to this unnamed condition. First, even though its origins are influenced by genetics, the condition is, strictly speaking, rooted in behavior. Second, individuals who have this condition continue the behavior in spite of the destructive consequences of doing so. Third, although some people with this condition perceive it as a problem and wish they could rid themselves of it, many others deny they have any problem at all and violently resist all attempts to ‘help’ them. And fourth, these people who resist help tend to socialize with one another, sometimes exclusively,

and form a kind of ‘subculture.’

The condition which Satinover was describing is alcoholism. It is a form of addictive behavior which most people believe is worth treating, because of its terribly adverse consequences on a person’s life. Then Satinover poses a similar situation in which a friend or colleague had a condition associated with the following problems:

- “\* A significantly decreased likelihood of establishing or preserving a successful marriage
- \* A *twenty-five to thirty*-year decrease in life expectancy
- \* Chronic, potentially fatal, liver disease–infectious hepatitis, which increases the risk of liver cancer
- \* Inevitably fatal immune disease including associated cancers
- \* Frequently fatal rectal cancer
- \* Multiple bowel and other infectious diseases
- \* A much higher than usual incidence of suicide
- \* A very low likelihood that its adverse effects can be eliminated unless the condition itself is
- \* An at least 50 percent likelihood of being eliminated through lengthy, often costly, and very time-consuming treatment in an otherwise unselected group of sufferers (although a very high success rate, in some instances nearing 100%, for groups of highly motivated, carefully selected individuals)

As with alcoholism: First, even though its origins may be influenced by genetics, the condition is, strictly speaking, a pattern of behavior; second, individuals who have this condition continue in the behavior in spite of the destructive consequences of doing so; third, although some people with this condition perceive it as a problem and wish they could rid themselves of it, many others deny they have any problem at all and violently resist all attempts to ‘help’ them; and fourth, some of the people with this condition—especially those who deny it is a problem—tend to socialize almost exclusively with one another and form a ‘subculture.’

The condition is homosexuality. Yet despite the parallels between the two conditions, what is striking today are the sharply different responses to them.” [Satinover, p. 51]

Why does the Church do everything possible to help the person with alcoholism to leave that condition because of its terribly adverse consequences but does nothing to encourage the person with homosexuality to leave that condition even when the medical consequences are far worse? Does not the Church have an obligation to learn of these adverse consequences, especially if it is encouraging people to engage in the behavior that leads to the consequences? What should be the Church’s ministry to homosexual persons?

The Church’s ministry to homosexual persons at the outset should be to welcome them into the Church as it should do with all persons. That is the emphasis in Stanley Grenz’s book, Welcoming But Not Affirming in which he quotes Richard Hays:

“We live, then, in a community that embraces sinners as Jesus did, without waiving God’s righteousness. We live confessing that God’s grace claims us out of confusion

and alienation and sets about making us whole. We live knowing that wholeness remains a hope rather than an attainment in this life. The homosexual Christian in our midst may teach us something about our true condition as people living between the cross and the final redemption of our bodies.” [Richard B. Hays, “Awaiting the Redemption of Our Bodies: Drawing on Scripture and Tradition in the Church Debate on Homosexuality, *Latimer* 110 (June 1992) 29-30 as quoted in Grenz, p. 133]

The Church can minister so much more effectively if its teaching on sexuality is clear. The Church should strive to strike the right balance between theological clarity and pastoral sensitivity:

“As Jesus’ own ministry demonstrates, this offer of welcoming grace is a difficult tightrope to walk. It is often misunderstood and may scandalize some. Paradoxically, if the public and official stance of the Church is clear and uncompromising, this would enable a greater flexibility at the local level. Clear public principles can be married to pastoral sensitivity. So, as helpfully noted in a recent report from the UK, there is a call here to:

welcome and accept sexually active homosexual people, but to do so in the expectation that they will come in due course to see the need to change their lifestyle in accordance with biblical revelation and orthodox Church teaching.

The Body of Christ is the place in which all of us sinners *learn together* from God what constitutes faithful discipleship of Jesus Christ and are empowered by His Spirit to keep in step with the Spirit and be conformed to the image of God’s Son. All who confess Christ as Lord need the encouragement and guidance of his people to discern and walk that path in penitence and faith, keeping God’s commandments and living in love. This is not easily done on one’s own: fellowship and friendship is a vital God-given resource that we remove from people at great cost. So, if the Church is called to be the place of generous welcome, this is precisely in order that she may offer people an ongoing and life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ, who is alive today and still welcomes people into his fellowship—what might be called his distinctive community of ‘transforming inclusivity.’” [*True Union*, p. 34]

Thus, on a general level, the ministry of the Church to homosexual persons is the same as to all persons: welcoming, preaching the gospel of salvation, inviting into a living relationship with Jesus which involves repentance and confession and baptism and discipleship and the call to a holy life. The ministry on a more particular level should involve encouragement toward leaving the homosexual lifestyle based upon the Church’s teaching as well as on information of the destructive consequences of the behavior. This information should include physical consequences of particular diseases, such as AIDS, “Gay Bowel Syndrome,” trauma, enteric diseases, and classical sexually transmitted diseases. [Satinover, p. 68] The information should also include mental consequences, such as significantly higher rates than in the heterosexual population of depression, substance abuse, anxiety disorder, conduct disorder, nicotine dependence, suicidal ideation, and suicidal attempts. [Jones and Yarhouse, 105-106; Gagnon, p. 476-78; Satinover, p. 194] Finally, the information should include inherent relational problems including numbers of partners and problems with sexual fidelity. For example, the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study found that a significant majority of homosexual men reported having 50 or more lifetime sexual partners. The best researched study on stable homosexual pairs found that

out of 156 couples, one hundred had been together for more than five years but none of those had maintained sexual fidelity. According to the report, “The expectation for outside sexual activity was the rule for male couples and the exception for heterosexuals.” [Satinover, p. 55; Jones and Yarhouse, p. 110]

One of the most important ministries which the Church can offer to homosexual persons is the ministry of listening to them and going into the pain of their lives. This ministry is specifically called for in the Lambeth 1998 Resolution 1.10: “We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptized, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ.” This listening is to be part of a process leading toward transformation: “Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God’s transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships.” [Resolution 1.10, Resolutions to the XIII Lambeth Conference (Summer 1998)]

The Church must, above all, be to the homosexual person a place where the transforming love and power of Jesus Christ can be experienced in his or her life. Robert Gagnon devotes the final word in his book to this crucial role of the Church in the ministry to homosexual persons:

“The core proclamation of the gospel declares that God made amends for human sin while humans were still ungodly and hostile sinners, that God experienced the pain and agony of offering Christ up to death in order to rescue the maximum number of people from sin and transform them into Christ’s image. To denounce same-sex intercourse and then stop short of actively and sacrificially reaching out in love and concern to homosexuals is to have as truncated a gospel as those who mistake God’s love for ‘accepting people as they are’ and who avoid talk of the gospel’s transformative power. It is to forget the costly and self-sacrificial work of God in our lives, past and ongoing.” [Gagnon, p. 492]

In light of this goal of transformation, the Church’s ministry to homosexual persons should involve helping find the best treatment for them. Jeffrey Satinover has devoted separate chapters in his book to secular and Christian treatments. In chapter 12 he discusses psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. His study of these secular treatments has revealed that “the treatment of homosexuality has evolved out of eighty years of clinical experience, demonstrating approximately the same degree of success as, for example, the psychotherapy of depression.” [Satinover, p. 180]

The type of transformation that any particular homosexual person experiences is to be left into the hands of God, but Christian healing ministries should be made available to all:

“The ‘healing’ ministry of the church, though recently brought to the fore through the charismatic movement and Christian interaction with modern psychology, is rooted in the gospel and has always been a treasured part of the Church’s sacramental and spiritual life. Radical transformation of life, including sexual desires, must, therefore, never be ruled out. The gracious God we worship is not just an academic idea but a living God, covenantally involved with the life of His people with the purpose of bringing us into ‘conformity with his Son’ Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29). In this present age we must affirm the active presence of God’s Spirit, yet at the same time we ‘groan inwardly’ and await the ‘redemption of our bodies’ (Rom. 8:23). Because of this

eschatological tension, it may be wisest pastoral practice to focus ‘transformation of life’ on controlling homosexual desire and living a life of sexual abstinence—but only so long as due allowance is also given for God’s active grace to bring other transformations in whatever ways He sees fit.” [True Union, p. 35]

Several Christian healing ministries are described in chapter 13 of Jeffrey Satinover’s book. Homosexuals Anonymous (HA) is based upon the methods of Alcoholics Anonymous. “The strength of HA lies in its emphasis on building up self-discipline and mutual accountability.” [Satinover, p. 200] Exodus International is an umbrella organization for over two hundred different ministries to homosexuals. “Most have integrated the insights of depth-psychology (psychology of the unconscious) into their approach, some with great sophistication and discernment. Alien as such a formulation may appear to secularists and others outside the charismatic tradition, this belief in the potential transformation of even extremely intractable problems is repeatedly borne out by experience.” [Satinover, p. 201-202] Desert Stream/Living Waters is a ministry led by Andrew Comiskey, a former practicing homosexual himself. “His long-term experience reveals that approximately 25 percent of the homosexuals in the program marry within eight years and have marriages that last at least as long or longer than the current national average.” [Satinover, p. 204] Redeemed Life Ministries founded by Mario Bergner, another former practicing homosexual, “combines depth-psychology in a primarily group setting with healing prayer. Participants make an eight-month minimum commitment to a small group, which is focused on sexual redemption in Christ. For individuals who continue on and remain committed to the process for the long haul, Bergner reports success rates of over 80 percent.” Pastoral Care Ministries founded by Leanne Payne emphasizes the importance of the healing of memories:

“When the memories are healed, these wounds and our sinful responses to them are remembered, acknowledged, understood for what they are, and *presented to God for forgiveness and healing*. Thus the retrieval of our wounds and sins by using a depth-psychological approach is a way to deepen the process of confession. But these activities are not themselves curative; they are preparatory. Healing of the memories therefore departs from secular psychological theory in two critical ways: healing is, first, made far more likely because of openness to God; and, second, healing itself is effected by God.” [Satinover, p. 206]

Satinover believes that “of all the approaches to the healing of homosexuality, the approach of Pastoral Care Ministries, and other similar ministries..., incorporates the best of the secular psychological approaches into its vital, spiritual, orthodox Christian healing.” [Satinover, p. 209] Interestingly, one of the most important events in Satinover’s life leading up to the writing of his book was his attendance of a conference sponsored by Pastoral Care Ministries. He described his hesitancy as a Jewish psychiatrist educated at MIT, Harvard, and Yale attending a conference in Wichita, Kansas. Nevertheless, he went and was astounded by what he experienced and how profoundly it differed from the Episcopal-sponsored conference in New England. A new world had been opened up to him:

“What I found was that about two hundred of the three hundred people in attendance were homosexuals, male and female, struggling to emerge out of their homosexuality. And among the conference leadership a large number were *former homosexuals*, some now married and with children, all devoted to helping others out of the gay lifestyle. They were remarkable, tender human beings, enviable in their humanity and humility and in their longing for and connectedness to God. From out of the cosmopolitan desert that offers itself as the best that life has to offer, I had stepped directly into an oasis with a

rushing torrent—not just a well—of living water.

Nothing in my experience prepared me for this third conference. The professional and personal circles within which I normally moved are oblivious to such phenomena. If they note their existence at all, it is as a hazy blob at the periphery of mainstream, ‘enlightened’ vision or as the butt of media jokes. With rare exception, *I had never once heard from others within my own profession any mention at all of such people as these healed homosexuals*. Clearly, communities of faith could be not only constructive and caring but healing.” [Satinover, p. 26]

One of the most respected figures in Christian healing ministry is Dr. Francis MacNutt, a Harvard graduate who holds a Master’s Degree from Catholic University of America and a doctorate from the Aquinas Institute of Theology. He is the author of the best-selling book, Healing, and the founder of Christian Healing Ministries in Jacksonville, Florida. He is an internationally recognized leader in the field, and in his book, Homosexuality Can It Be Healed? (2001), he describes the methods he has used in healing homosexuals:

“The most important thing to realize is that God can truly transform the wounds of our past when we pray for inner healing. This is an extraordinary secret that some Christians have discovered, but that most have never even heard about. Sadder yet, the leaders of most churches—the bishops, the district superintendents, etc.—have for the most part not heard about the power of inner healing prayer to transform the deepest wounds, the pains that shape our lives without our even knowing it.

In the simplest form of prayer for inner healing we do two things:

- 1) We talk with the person who desires to be free of the wounds of the past which still influence the present. We ask him simply to share whatever he can remember about his childhood, about his relation with his father and mother. What does he know about the circumstances of his birth. Did his parents want him or was he unplanned, a ‘mistake’? When did he first experience his homosexual orientation? What were his experiences then and later? How and when did the sexual activity begin (if it did)?

We can make the answer to each of these questions (and many others that the Spirit may prompt) into the subject of an entire prayer session.

- 2) We spend the last part of each session in prayer, asking our compassionate Lord and brother, Jesus, to be present to that time in the past and to transform it.

In the experience of the prayer ministers I have worked with (such as my wife Judith, who is also a psychotherapist), the homosexuality almost always changes. But it does take time. And it takes patience because the real change comes at a very deep level as layer after layer of the personality becomes transformed.” [Francis MacNutt, Homosexuality Can It Be Healed? (Christian Healing Ministries, Inc. 2001), p. 64-65]

Later in the book, Marlin Moore, a former practicing homosexual who now runs a center for recovery

from homosexuality, spoke to the importance of healing prayer in churches:

“The church is going to have to learn how to deal with these issues. They need to learn that homosexuality is a learned behavior; it has been ingrained in us from an early age and we just need inner healing—which God can do—and to make a decision to walk out of the lifestyle. In one church they have found that it takes three years to walk out of the homosexual lifestyle, provided they are given love and healing prayer. We have to learn to pray, with the laying on of hands.” [MacNutt, p. 71]

There are many moving stories of men and women with homosexual desires who have through prayer and counseling been able to transition to a heterosexual lifestyle. Richard Cohen, a former practicing homosexual, is the founder of International Healing Foundation, Inc., which offers counseling services to practicing homosexuals among other persons. In his book, Coming Out Straight, he includes several personal stories of persons who have left the homosexual lifestyle. One of these is by a man named Christian:

“It was July 1995 and I had come to the end of a very long, long road. I was gay; a homosexual. It was time to give up the charade I had been playing for 44 years. It was a deep dark secret I had hidden from everyone. This feeling of gayness had been a part of every aspect of my life and I could no longer tolerate the incredible pain. I supposedly had it all. I had a great job and social life. I had the suburban lifestyle. I had a beautiful devoted, loving wife of over 20 years and the greatest daughter and son a father could ever hope for. Ultimately, however, I always felt trapped as a homosexual pretending to be a straight man in a straight world where I just didn’t belong. It was time to come out as a gay man.” [Richard Cohen, Coming Out Straight Understanding and Healing Homosexuality (International Healing Foundation 1999), p. 64]

Christian told his story of his attraction to boys and men from an early age and of his first sexual encounters with other men. He told of going to different counselors who were unable to help him. Finally, his wife learned about Richard Cohen, and she insisted that he go to see him or get a divorce. He described his therapy with Richard which involved reliving painful childhood memories of not being loved and hugged by his parents and reparenting sessions where he was held in a safe way by other men and women. Listen to Christian describe in his own words the change that has taken place in his life:

“In July 1995, I started a therapy course that changed my life. I had individual therapy, sometimes twice a week, for a little less than 2 years. I was in a support group for the same amount of time. At the end of this time, it became apparent that I was living a wonderful, productive life with my wife, children and friends. I had and have the tools necessary to continue to grow as the man I have become. My darkness and anxiety are completely gone. I really enjoy sex with my wife. I do not have homo-emotional feelings for men. I am not, nor ever was gay. I had addictive homo-emotional feelings for men. I feel fantastic because I had a choice made available to me. I believe strongly that I had to make a choice for me. A choice I believe. I chose to transition and it is possible.

I no longer identify with the man I was before July 1995. That was a lifetime ago. I feel reborn. At the beginning of my therapy I felt so alone. A friend in my support group said, ‘If you think you’re alone, then you are wrong. You are not alone anymore.’ I

have God, my wife, my two children and the great prospects of what life holds for me each day! [Emphasis in the original] [Cohen, p. 66]

The ministry of the Church should be to lead the homosexual person into the healing presence of Jesus, but the way that transformation looks for a particular person must be left in the hands of God. Richard Hays examines the question about whether homosexual Christians should expect to change their orientation and then leaves the last word to his friend Gary:

“This tough question must also be answered in the critical framework of New Testament eschatology. On the one hand, the transforming power of the Spirit really is present in our midst; the testimonies of those who claim to have been healed and transformed into a heterosexual orientation should be taken seriously. They confess, in the words of the Charles Wesley hymn, that God ‘breaks the power of cancelled sin; He sets the prisoner free.’ If we do not continue to live with that hope, we may be hoping for too little from God. On the other hand, the ‘not yet’ looms large; the testimonies of those like Gary who pray and struggle in Christian community and seek healing unsuccessfully for years must be taken with no less seriousness. Perhaps for many the best outcome that is attainable in this time between the times will be a life of disciplined abstinence, free from obsessive lust. (Exactly the same standard would apply for unmarried persons of heterosexual orientation.) That seems to be the spiritual condition Gary reached near the end of his life:

Since All Saints Day I have felt myself being transformed. I no longer consider myself homosexual. Many would say, big deal, you’re forty-two—and are dying of AIDS. Big sacrifice. No, I didn’t do this of my will, of an effort to improve myself, to make myself acceptable to God. No, he did this for me. I feel a great weight has been lifted off me.”  
[Hays, pp. 402-403]

The Church must stop its complicity in encouraging people to engage in behavior that is not only immoral but also inherently destructive, both physically and mentally. The Church instead should minister to homosexual persons by offering to them Christ’s forgiveness and Christ’s transforming power through the indwelling Holy Spirit in their lives in order to lead lives of holiness and faithful obedience to our Lord. Why should they be denied what the Church offers to all others?

## **IX. The Current Crisis in its Anglican Context**

Many of the arguments surrounding the controversy over homosexuality would be equally applicable in any ecclesiastical body; however, the controversy has reached a critical stage in one particular church, the Episcopal Church, which is part of the world-wide Anglican Communion, an ecclesiastical body with its own history and polity and way of interpreting Scripture. Therefore, we need to consider the current crisis within its distinctive Anglican context.

The Episcopal Church is one of thirty-eight provinces in the Anglican Communion. According to the preamble to its Constitution, the Episcopal Church “is a constituent member of the Anglican Communion, a Fellowship within the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted Dioceses, Provinces, and regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury,

upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer.” [Constitution and Canons of the Episcopal Church, p. 1] The current crisis has arisen, because the Episcopal Church acting through the General Convention of 2003 has taken two actions which are in direct conflict with the mind of the Communion as expressed in a resolution adopted at the Lambeth Conference in 1998.

The two actions taken by General Convention which have precipitated the crisis are these:

- “1. Consent by both Houses (finalized on August 5, 2003) to the election as Bishop of New Hampshire, a self-professed homosexual man, living openly in a sexual partnership with another man for 13 years, having divorced his wife and left the family home.
2. Passage of Resolution (C051) that included in its 5<sup>th</sup> Resolve the following: ‘we recognize that local faith communities are operating within the bounds of our common life as they explore and experience liturgies celebrating and blessing same-sex unions.’ Other portions of the resolution recognized sexual partnerships outside of marriage and called on the church to exercise appropriate pastoral care in their regard.” [Claiming our Anglican Identity: The Case Against the Episcopal Church, USA, A Paper Commissioned for the Primates of the Anglican Communion by The Most Rev. Drexel Gomez, The Most Rev. Peter Akinola, and The Most Rev. Gregory Venables (2003), p. 2]

These actions of General Convention place the Episcopal Church in direct conflict with the Anglican Communion, because of their violation of the pertinent portions of Resolution 1.10 passed at the Lambeth Conference of 1998 by a margin of 526 to 70 with 45 abstaining, or 82% of the bishops voting: “This Conference...in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage;” ...rejects “homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture...” and “cannot advise the legitimizing or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions...” [Resolution 1.10, XIII Lambeth Conference (Summer 1998)]

The violation of this resolution could not be more flagrant in that the Episcopal Church *both* endorsed the “blessing of same sex unions” *and* ordained a person “involved in [a] same gender union.” Moreover, in taking these radical steps, the Church violated the theological underpinning of these prohibitions based upon “the teaching of Scripture” pertaining to sexual fidelity in marriage and abstinence outside of marriage.

Because of the structure of the Anglican Communion, the authority of this resolution is more *moral* than legislative:

“At present it is the Lambeth Conference that has the moral (if not strictly legislative) authority within the Communion. It is this authority that must be recognized in national decisions and which must be the final arbiter of whether what is being proposed by a national church is in keeping with or contrary to God’s Word. In relation to the question of blessing of same-sex unions this is focused on Resolution 1.10 at Lambeth 1998 which clearly rejects such innovations. It is not as though the wider Communion has not yet been consulted or has been unable to reach a considered opinion on the issue. No, it has expressed its mind—and not by a marginal majority. A decision and

choice has already been made.” [Emphasis added] [True Union, pp. 42-43]

In other words, within the Anglican Communion, *this is a settled matter*. The bishops who hold the teaching authority within the Church have spoken unambiguously. We have already determined that this resolution is supported by Scripture, and we now consider whether it is consistent with Anglican tradition and methods.

The fundamental test applied to actions of church councils has been conformity to Scripture, tradition and reason as articulated by Richard Hooker, the great apologist of the Elizabethan Settlement and expositor of Anglicanism. It is crucial to understand the sense in which Hooker originally used these terms in his monumental work, Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity:

“In contemporary Anglican theology, Richard Hooker is known most famously for his ‘three-legged stool’ of scripture, reason, and tradition. However, the classic passage in Hooker is misinterpreted if it is understood to mean that Hooker viewed scripture, reason, and tradition as three equal ‘legs’ of authority. Rather, the passage has to be understood in the context of Hooker’s more central concern—how the Church decides which areas of scripture are permanently binding and which can be modified. The crucial principle of the so-called three-legged stool is actually Hooker’s own affirmation of the principle of the sufficiency of scripture already endorsed by Jewel. The original context of the passage is the distinction Hooker makes between doctrine and morals (which are unchangeable) and matters of church order and polity (which are changeable). Hooker stated: “The Church hath authority to establish that for an order at one time, which at another time it may abolish, and in both it may do well. But that which in doctrine the Church doth now deliver rightly as a truth, no man will say that it may hereafter recall, and as rightly avouch the contrary. Laws touching matter of order are changeable, by the power of the Church; articles concerning doctrine not so.” This appears immediately before the frequently cited passage and is the key to its interpretation: ‘Be it in matter of the one kind or of the other [i.e., doctrine or order], what scripture doth plainly deliver, to that the first place both of credit and obedience is due; the next whereunto is whatsoever any man can necessarily conclude by force of reason; after these the voice of the Church succeedeth.’ (Laws 5.8.2) The order of authority is clear. In matters of doctrine and morals, the Church has no authority to make any changes from the plain teaching of scripture. In matters of church order and ceremony, the Church is authorized to change its structures, but, even here, the proper order is that the plain teaching of scripture is primary. It is only when scripture does not speak clearly, that reason and tradition must weight in. Reason, for Hooker, follows in the tradition of Anselm’s ‘faith seeking understanding’ (*fides quaerens intellectum*) or Augustine’s earlier ‘I believe that I might understand’ (*credo ut intelligam*). It is not the autonomous reason of post-Cartesian modern and post-modern thought. Hooker appeals to the plain sense of scripture in matters necessary for salvation: ‘Some things are so familiar and plain, that truth from falsehood, and good from evil, is most easily discerned in them, even by men of no deep capacity. And of that nature, for the most part, are things absolutely unto all men’s salvation necessary.’ (Preface 3.2) When scripture does not speak clearly, reason, must apply itself, but reason’s function is to understand and apply scripture; it is not an autonomous source of authority.

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Lambeth’s appeal to scripture was not based on a ‘simple application,’ but rather echoes

the classic Anglican understanding that the Church when making dogmatic decisions is bound ultimately to the plain teaching of the biblical text. The Church does have authority to make changes in matters of ceremony, ecclesial order, and canon law, but it has no authority whatsoever to alter the plain teaching of scripture on matters of doctrine or morals. Accordingly, the Church cannot alter the teaching of scripture that sexual relationships must be confined to exclusive life-long heterosexual marriage because heterosexual marriage alone expresses God's intention in creating humanity as male and female...It is clear that, for Hooker, life-long exclusive heterosexual marriage is rooted in natural law—God's intentions for human nature in creation—and cannot be abrogated or altered without violating its essential structure.”[Emphasis added] [Northeast SEAD (Society of Ecumenical Anglican Doctrine), Response to Let the Reader Understand, Appendix IV: The Anglican Reformers on the Sufficiency of Scripture (December 9, 2003)]

Thus, in matters of doctrine and morals (which would certainly encompass sexual practices, including homosexuality), Hooker believed that Scripture was *the* source of authority. Philip Turner presents a similar exposition of Hooker's understanding of the right use of Scripture, tradition, and reason:

“Through the ages Scripture has been a necessary source to which those in authority and those under authority must refer to justify either its exercise or an objection to that exercise. Until recently, Scripture has not been considered either first among equals or simply one point of reference among others (say tradition or, more recently, experience). It has been the primary and sufficient source for testing the stewardship of those who have been given authority and office within the churches, be that authority used to safeguard the unity of the church or to protect its teaching and sanctity. It has also been the primary and sufficient source for those in authority to show that their exercise of office has in fact been in God's name.

In recent years other legitimating points of reference for the exercise of authority in the church have been added and used in ways Richard Hooker would neither recognize nor approve. For Hooker, doctrine was to be established on the basis of Scripture. Reason was thought to yield moral truths open to all people of good will. These truths were in no way thought to be opposed to the witness of Scripture. Rather, they were simply ‘republished’ by its authors. For its part, tradition was a minor matter, referring as it did to those aspects of the life of the church which had a venerable history and were not to be changed unless shown to be contrary to the witness of Scripture or contrary to the light of universal human reason. Experience, our current favorite source of moral and religious knowledge, was not a category Hooker would have separated from reason. This separation is, in fact, a product of the romantic movement. Experience, as something independent of these other sources of moral and religious knowledge, is a category Hooker would have had trouble even recognizing.

Thus, the reference to Hooker's three-legged stool that is currently so popular with Anglicans is both anachronistic and misleading. When they refer to its various legs as having a certain independence one from another, when they assign them more or less equal weight or when they appeal to one or another of them over against Scripture, they show that they have engaged in a form of argument he would have rejected out of hand.” [Emphasis added] [Philip Turner, “Episcopal Authority in a Divided Church

On the Crisis of Anglican Identity,” Pro Ecclesia (Winter 1999), pp. 44-45]

If we apply this Anglican test as articulated by Richard Hooker to the Lambeth 1998 Resolution 1.10, we see that it is definitely in conformity with Scripture in its plain sense and as reasonably interpreted. As we have already seen, Scripture speaks unambiguously and with one voice on this matter. There is no dissent within the entire canon. Furthermore, what is at stake is not the *interpretation* of Scripture but rather the *authority* of Scripture:

“The problem before us is not the interpretation of scripture but the authority of scripture, that is, when the teaching of scripture should be set aside. LRU [Let the Reader Understand: Principles of Scriptural Interpretation] appears to us to argue that because of the cultural context in which the scripture arises and the cultural context in which the scripture must be applied, the plain teaching of the scripture in the area of sexual practice does not apply with regard to homosexuality. Rather than a difference of interpretation, this appears to us as straightforward rejection of the authority of scripture based upon the conviction that in light of current American cultural understandings of sexuality the clear teaching of scripture favored by the whole history of the tradition and the overwhelming consensus of the contemporary world-wide Church is wrong.” [Northeast SEAD, p. 2]

Since homosexual practice is a matter of morals, appeal to tradition, according to Hooker, is unnecessary. This is also true of the provisions advising against the blessing of same-sex unions and ordaining those who are involved in same gender unions even though these matters touch on areas of church order and rites, because the underlying matter with respect to both is a matter of morals. [True Union, pp. 40-43] Nevertheless, it is instructive to know that the voice of tradition in this matter is equally unequivocal:

“Far more emphatically than Scripture itself, the moral teaching *tradition* of the Christian church has for more than nineteen hundred years declared homosexual behavior to be contrary to the will of God. As Boswell’s study amply documents, the mainstream of Christian ethical teaching has been relentlessly hostile to homosexual practice. Only within the past twenty years has any serious question been raised about the church’s universal prohibition of such conduct. It is extremely difficult to find in the tradition any firm point of leverage against the New Testament on this issue.” [Hays, p. 397]

This consistency in the tradition was constant even though the expressions of homosexual practices differed:

“This suggests that Christian ethicists from the second century to the twentieth forge an unbroken chain. Their teaching, which condemned a variety of behaviors, occurring as they did in differing social contexts, nevertheless connects all such actions together. The Christian trajectory draws together the varieties of pederasty prevalent in pagan Roman society; the conduct of medieval clergy, monks, and nuns, who expressed their deep affection through sexual acts; certain acts of sexual licentiousness prevalent among heterodox groups in the Middle Ages; and the homoerotic activities present in post-Reformation Western society. In each era, Christian moralists rejected the same-sex practices of their day. And they consistently found the basis for such condemnation in the several scriptural texts in which the biblical authors appear to pronounce divine

judgment on the homosexual behavior with which they were confronted.” [Grenz, p. 80]

The tradition of the Church, therefore, strongly bolsters the position of Scripture on homosexual practice. Furthermore, the application of reason, as understood by Hooker, would also support this position. Even if reason in its post-Enlightenment sense is employed, the weight of the evidence, as we have seen, further supports the voice of Scripture. If all truth is ultimately from God and God is One, then this concord should not be surprising. The authority of Scripture in matters of faith and practice was reaffirmed at the last Lambeth Conference:

“This Conference

- (a) affirms that our Creator God, transcendent as well as immanent, communicates with us authoritatively through the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; and
- (b) in agreement with the Lambeth Quadrilateral, and in solidarity with the Lambeth Conference of 1888, affirms that these Holy Scriptures contain ‘all things necessary to salvation’ and are for us the ‘rule and ultimate standard’ of faith and practice.” [Emphasis added] [Resolution III.5, XIII Lambeth Conference (Summer 1998)]

Therefore, the Lambeth 1998 Resolution 1.10, particularly as it speaks to homosexual practice, is clearly and undoubtedly consistent with Anglican tradition and methods.

The same, however, cannot be said for the actions of General Convention. The opposite, in fact, is true.

The actions of General Convention of 2003 pertaining to the consecration of Gene Robinson and the blessing of same-sex unions defied every instrument of unity of the Anglican Communion as set forth in Section II of this paper. It has acted in flagrant defiance of Resolution 1.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference. It has also violated previous Lambeth resolutions pertaining to mutuality and collegiality:

“Member churches of the Anglican Communion have committed themselves to the ‘guiding principle of collegiality’ as the means by which they shall relate to each other (Lambeth 1968, Resolution 55), a form of ‘mutual loyalty sustained through common counsel’ (Lambeth 1930, Resolution 49). This moral responsibility of member churches to remain accountable to each other includes the concrete call to restraint from any ‘action regarding issues which are of concern to the whole Anglican Communion’ apart from ‘consultation’ with Lambeth and the Primates’ Committee (Lambeth 1978, Resolution 11). ECUSA’s 74<sup>th</sup> General Convention neither consulted nor listened to these groups, both of which were on record as opposing actions that might legitimate same-sex partnerships or the ordination of practicing homosexuals.” [Claiming Our Anglican Identity, p. 10]

Not only were the actions of General Convention in open defiance of the Anglican Communion, they also violated the Constitution, Book of Common Prayer, and resolutions of the Episcopal Church. The case for the violation against the Constitution is based upon the following:

“ECUSA’s Constitution contains in its Preamble the church’s self-definition as ‘a

constituent member of the Anglican Communion, a Fellowship within the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church [...] in communion with the See of Canterbury, upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer'. If General Convention's actions have violated the teachings of Scripture, including the 'apostolic' writings, if they have violated the stated bonds of the Anglican Communion, both in terms of collegial commitments and common doctrine, if they have violated the framework by which its own Book of Common Prayer is bound to Scripture and to these common commitments..., then General Convention has clearly violated the terms of its own Constitution." [Claiming Our Anglican Identity, p. 13]

Although the Episcopal Church is an autonomous province within the Anglican Communion, its authority is not unlimited but restrained by the conciliar structures of the Communion:

"In reaching such decisions, national churches (including ECUSA) are often bound explicitly by their own constitutions to recognize that they are members of the Anglican Communion and that they have no power to make decisions contrary to the mind of the wider Communion. This legally requires them to recognize the conciliar structures of that Communion before introducing disputed innovations in doctrine, discipline or worship. Their own constitutions therefore place a brake on their freedom to develop local options." [True Union, p. 42]

In anticipation of General Convention's potentially unconstitutional actions, four Episcopal theologians articulated with specificity the reasons that the "explicit permission or promotion of same-sex blessings and behavior" would constitute a violation of the Episcopal Church's Constitution:

"Such permission or promotion would appear to be a clear violation of the Anglican Communion's understanding of the 'historic faith' as interpreted by the church in the past and by the Communion itself. While the Episcopal Church's Constitution and Book of Common Prayer do not refer explicitly to this matter, the conciliar economy that stands as the fundamental constitutional principle of the church demands that any such decision regarding same-sex unions accept the constraints by which the Episcopal Church's corporate identity is defined. The nature of these constraints on this particular issue are well known, having been frequently defined, and therefore any decision contrary to them would be an intentional contradiction of their force.

The conciliar constraint of scripture is primary. In this case, the interpretation of scripture on questions of sexual morality, while not unanimous in some parts of the Communion, is consistently upheld in a way that would forbid the permission or promotion of same-sex unions. To ignore the constraining authority of this consensus requires rejecting the conciliar economy. For the Episcopal Church in particular, ignoring this constraint would be unconstitutional because it would:

- a. violate the principle of uniformity of doctrine, discipline and worship within the Communion, represented by the teaching and practice of the vast majority of Anglican dioceses throughout the world;
- b. violate the principle of conciliar approbation, that is, that the decisions of General Convention cohere with the decisions of other councils of the church;

c. violate the principle of universal acceptance, since not only within the Episcopal Church but around the Anglican Communion such decisions would be rejected by large numbers of the faithful;

d. violate the principle of historical continuity, since it would constitute an innovation of scriptural interpretation, ethical understanding, and church discipline, contrary to two millennia of Christian witness and teaching.

It cannot be stated too strongly that General Convention has no authority, within the framework of its own constitution and its basis in the conciliar economy, to make decisions either promoting or permitting same-sex unions. As such, any decision in this direction would clearly violate the constitutionality of the convention itself. [Emphasis added] [R. R. Reno, Christopher Seitz, Philip Turner and Paul Zahl, “The Authority of General Convention,” The Living Church (January 2, 2003)]

The General Convention has also violated provisions within the Book of Common Prayer, including Article 20 of the Articles of Religion:

“XX. Of the Authority of the Church

The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation.” [Emphasis added] [“Articles of Religion,” Book of Common Prayer, p. 871]

The violation of this article is clear:

“Above all, however, she must continue in faithful listening to the voice of Scripture and, because the Body of Christ is ruled by the Word of God, the Church cannot bless that which God in Scripture has declared wrong. From this perspective, no part of the Anglican Communion could bless same-sex unions without thereby acting against Scripture and rejecting its authority by ordaining something ‘contrary to God’s Word written’ (Article 20).” [Emphasis added] [True Union, p. 29]

One of the most repeated justifications for the actions of General Convention was that they were guided by the Holy Spirit. Bishop Griswold asserted to the Anglican Primates “that broadly across the Episcopal Church the New Hampshire election is thought to be the work of the Spirit.” [The Presiding Bishop’s Letter to the Anglican Primates, October 23, 2003] Consequently, another part of the Book of Common Prayer which has also been violated by these actions is the following teaching on the Holy Spirit in the Catechism:

“Q. How do we recognize the truths taught by the Holy Spirit?

A. We recognize truths to be taught by the Holy Spirit when they are in accord with the Scriptures.” [Emphasis added] [An Outline of the Faith, Book of Common Prayer, p. 853]

We have seen that the actions of General Convention are unquestionably *not* “in accord with the Scriptures.” If there were any doubt on this issue, we have this startling admission by Bishop Griswold himself:

“Broadly speaking, the Episcopal Church is in conflict with Scripture. The only way to justify it is to say, well, Jesus talks about the Spirit guiding the church and guiding believers and bringing to their awareness things they cannot deal with yet. So one would have to say that the mind of Christ operative in the church over time...has led the church to, in effect, contradict the words of the Gospels.” [Philadelphia Inquirer Magazine (December 28, 1997) as quoted in Claiming Our Anglican Identity, p. 20]

Thus, the Episcopal Church is espousing a pneumatology which is not only completely alien to orthodox Christianity but also contradicts the teaching of its own Prayer Book.

The actions of the General Convention of 2003 violate the Episcopal Church’s *own resolutions* passed in previous General Conventions:

“ECUSA’s House of Bishops in 1977 resolved that ‘the Church is right to confine its nuptial blessing exclusively to heterosexual marriage. Homosexual unions witness to incompleteness.’ The 66<sup>th</sup> General Convention in 1979 went on to affirm “the traditional teaching of the Church on marriage, marital fidelity, and sexual chastity [as] the standard of Christian sexual morality’, and that ‘it is therefore not appropriate for this Church to ordain a practicing homosexual, or any person who is engaged in heterosexual relations outside of marriage’. ECUSA has never repealed these interpretations.

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On the specific issue of teaching and discipline regarding sexuality, its own 70<sup>th</sup> General Convention, in 1991, made a commitment (Resolution B020) that ‘these potentially divisive issues should not be resolved by the Episcopal Church on its own’. Instead, the Convention voted that the ‘office of the Presiding Bishop’ initiate a ‘broad’ process of ‘pan-Anglican’ and ‘ecumenical’ consultation so as to avoid unilateral action. This commitment was never followed through, for the Presiding Bishop never took the steps asked of him.” [Emphasis added] [Claiming Our Anglican Identity, pp. 9, 11]

Having defiantly flouted the numerous resolutions, pronouncements, and warnings of the Anglican Communion, having violated its own Constitution, Book of Common Prayer, and previous resolutions, the 74<sup>th</sup> General Convention of 2003 even ignored the warnings of The House of Bishops’ own Theology Committee which had been established by the 73<sup>rd</sup> General Convention. The Theology Committee appointed by the House of Bishops to study and report on homosexuality issued its report in early 2003 *before the General Convention*. The report was “the product of an eighteen-month study” by the committee which consisted of “six bishops and seven academic theologians of the Episcopal Church who represent diverse theological viewpoints.” The title of their paper is The Gift of Sexuality: A Theological Perspective. In spite of the diversity of theological viewpoints represented, the committee as a whole clearly and unambiguously warned against proceeding at this time with the blessing of same-sex unions:

“[6.4] Those who argue against the Church’s blessing believe it is a contradiction in

terms to bless relationships that involve behavior proscribed by God. More broadly, they object that changes in the Church's moral teaching on this question will impair the larger witness and mission of the Church.

[6.5] Liturgy provides cohesion for the Anglican Communion, and it is through our liturgies that we define what we most deeply believe as Christians. Because at this time we are nowhere near consensus in the Church regarding the blessing of homosexual relationships, we cannot recommend authorizing the development of new rites for such blessings.

[6.6] For these reasons, we urge the greatest caution as the Church continues to seek the mind of Christ in these matters....

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[8.1] For these reasons, we believe it is imperative that the Episcopal Church refrain from any attempt to 'settle' the matter legislatively. [Emphasis added] [House of Bishops Theology Committee Report, The Gift of Sexuality: A Theological Perspective, pp. 6-7]

A fair question to ask is this: What was the point of forming this committee if after eighteen months of hard work, their recommendations were just going to be totally ignored anyway?

Based upon all of the evidence, the conclusion is inescapable: the actions of the 74<sup>th</sup> General Convention of the Episcopal Church in consenting to the election of Gene Robinson as bishop and in approving the local option of same-sex blessings were completely and utterly contumacious.

As we have seen, the consequences of these actions have been catastrophic in so many ways. In addition to rending the fabric of the Communion, lives have been placed at risk. Bishop Gray alluded to this in his October letter: "Our Anglican brothers and sisters spoke to us of the difficulties, even life threatening circumstances that would be imposed upon them were the church in this country to approve Canon Robinson's election." [A Statement to the Diocese of Mississippi by The Rt. Rev. Duncan M. Gray, III (October 23, 2003)] This is particularly true in countries such as Nigeria that have a very large Muslim population. For many years Muslims in Nigeria and throughout Africa have pointed to the moral decadence of the Christian West. Christians in these countries face the very real threat of persecution and jihad which will be exacerbated by the recent actions of the Episcopal Church. Peter Akinola, the Primate of Nigeria, believes that these actions jeopardize the very survival of Christianity in his country. [Philip Jenkins, "Defender of the Faith," The Atlantic Monthly (November 2003), pp. 46-49]

If the actions of General Convention were indeed lawless, contumacious, and contemptuous of the wider Communion, a legitimate question to ask is: why? What is wrong with the Episcopal Church? Four years before the General Convention of 2003, Philip Turner explored this question in a very insightful article which focused on a crisis of authority. [Philip Turner, "Episcopal Authority in a Divided Church On the Crisis of Anglican Identity," Pro Ecclesia (Winter 1999)] In his careful examination of the Episcopal Church, he finds a church that "is being politicized all the way down and the result of this process is erosion of the church's communion." [Turner, p. 28] He finds a church which mirrors the surrounding society in that what is sought is not authority but rather power to further the agenda of various special interest groups. [Turner, p. 31] He finds a church where the principal task

of the leaders is to protect the rights of, and to manage conflict between, persons of different beliefs and where the “job description of the new authority is best summed up in the words *pluralism* and *inclusivity*.” He finds a church where “‘inclusivity,’ interpreted as the amalgamation of people with vastly differing beliefs and ways of life, becomes not only the method but also the end of the exercise of authority.” [Turner, p. 31] He finds a church where, as a result of this new authority, “doctrine is gone and in its place there has appeared a Babel of theological opinion, none of which is privileged unless those who support a particular theological fashion are in power.” [Turner, p. 33] At the bottom of the current crisis is the very meaning of the Christian faith: “Buried beneath the moral issues that now divide the church and the crisis of authority those divisions have surfaced, lies a more profound question—the content of the Christian gospel itself.” [Turner, pp. 32-33]

The current crisis of authority has followed the demotion of Scripture as the primary locus of authority and the concurrent elevation of other sources of authority, principally experience. Until recent decades, Scripture “has been the primary and sufficient source for testing the stewardship of those who have been given authority and office within the churches, be that authority used to safeguard the unity of the church or to protect its teaching and sanctity.” [Emphasis added] [Turner, p. 45] The reason that the Episcopal Church is at its present impasse is that Scripture has been displaced as “the primary and sufficient source” of authority while other sources of authority have been elevated to equal status and that there is no agreed methodology of assigning relative weight to the competing sources of authority:

“It is true that Scripture, tradition, reason and experience are incessantly referred to as people seek to justify either authority’s exercise or their objections to it, but the references are without effect. They are without effect because there are no agreements about their relative weight or their interpretation. If there is conflict between experience or modern learning, on the one hand, and the received interpretation of Scripture or the traditional teaching of the church, on the other, which takes precedence and on what basis? These are questions to which no common answer has been found and, as a result, conflicts never seem to be settled. Indeed, it is now difficult even to have a reasonable discussion. The various parties in the contemporary church either square off like contending armies or pass like ships in the night.

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Once more, it appears that the crisis of authority now present in all the churches is tied to a more fundamental rupture in the *koinonia* of the church—a rupture whose presenting symptoms are an inability to agree about the basic sources and content of that communion. How shall the Scriptures be interpreted and what weight should be assigned past interpretations? How shall modern learning and our own experience be weighed and interpreted? These are issues about which the churches do not agree.” [Turner, p. 46]

The “overarching authority” for acceptance of homosexual behavior is personal experience. [Grenz, p. 88] That is, in fact, the standard by which all other authorities, including Holy Scripture, are judged:

“We lesbian and gay believers have the right and the duty to carefully scrutinize all religious belief systems and distinguish between those belief systems that support our need to achieve healthy self-acceptance and those that are destructive of our psychic health and maturity.” [John J. McNeill, Taking a Chance on God: Liberating Theology for Gays, Lesbians, and Their Lovers, Families, and Friends (Beacon Press 1988), p. 21 as quoted in Grenz, p. 88]

This elevation of personal experience as the principal source of authority leads to personal autonomy as being the highest good:

“The gay/lesbian criterion leads many activists to place high value on personal autonomy. Comstock, for example, describes salvation as the promotion of autonomy: ‘Salvation is ‘to choose *your* self,’ not to ‘be afraid of yourself,’ to ‘live your individuality to the full—but for the good of others.’ [Gary David Comstock, Gay Theology without Apology (Pilgrim Press 1993), p. 131] This, in turn, allows Comstock to look within himself, and not to the external norms of scripture and tradition, in his quest for acceptance: ‘I skirt established Christian Scripture and tradition to gain autonomy, to locate myself within my own life, to escape an external authority and find an internal authority, to respond to my own need for the company of others.’ In Comstock’s estimation, so doing does not entail an act of ‘rebellion,’ but a bold step of ‘independence.’” [Comstock, p. 108 as quoted in Grenz, p. 88]

With these ideas we have entered into a very different thought world which is quite foreign to orthodox Christianity. Instead of being under the authority of the Word of God, one is guided by one’s own personal experience. Instead of seeking to be transformed into the likeness of Christ, one strives for complete personal autonomy. In orthodox Christianity, experience does have value but “as a hermeneutical lens for reading the New Testament rather than as an independent counterbalancing authority.” [Hays, p. 399] This is the point where the analogy of the acceptance of the Gentiles by the early church in Acts breaks down:

“Only because the new experience of Gentile converts proved *hermeneutically illuminating* of Scripture was the church, over time, able to accept the decision to embrace Gentiles within the fellowship of God’s people. This is precisely the step that has not—or at least not yet—been taken by the advocates of homosexuality in the church. Is it possible for them to reread the New Testament and show how this development can be understood as a fulfillment of God’s design for human sexuality as previously revealed in Scripture? In view of the content of the biblical texts summarized above, it is difficult to imagine how such an argument could be made.” [Hays, p. 399]

Reliance upon personal experience as a separate source of authority within the Church is contrary to the understanding of both Richard Hooker and John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury and early expositor and defender of Anglicanism:

“Perhaps anticipating the post-modern church’s appeal to ‘experience,’ Hooker speaks disparagingly of those who claim a special spiritual illumination that enables them to find meaning in scripture that is not in the plain text. To the contrary, there are only two ways in which the Holy Spirit leads people into truth, either through direct revelation, or by reason: ‘If the Spirit by such revelation have discovered unto them the secrets...out of scripture, they must profess themselves to be all...Prophets.’ If we do not claim the special revelation belonging to inspired prophecy (and Hooker presumes that we do not), then we have the moral obligation to justify our interpretation of scripture by sound reasoning in a manner that is open and evident (Preface, 3.11). Jewel stated that to put aside the plain teaching of scripture and to appeal directly to ‘God himself, speaking in the Church and in Councils’ is to follow one’s own opinions. It is a

way of ‘uncertainty’ and ‘hazard,’ the path of ‘fanaticism.’” [Northeast SEAD, Appendix IV]

The effects of these radical developments within the Episcopal Church—the derogation of Scripture, the elevation of experience, and the exaltation of personal autonomy—are not confined to the boundaries of this province but impact other provinces within the Anglican Communion, especially those in the global South. This interconnectedness among the provinces as well as a growing awareness that what one province does affects the others is now just as an important part of our Anglican context as the words of Richard Hooker. What Episcopalians need to understand is the crucial significance of Scripture in establishing the boundaries of the Anglican Church in these countries in the global South as they seek to define themselves over against their surrounding pagan societies:

“In forming this Anglican identity, the non-Western world needed to address boundaries of the Church in relation to the culture in which it lived. It had to develop a world view that nurtured and matured its new identity. The appeal to the authority and teaching of the Bible became paramount. At the heart of non-Western Anglican identity is the authority and teaching of scripture. The scripture defined the *boundaries* of the Churches, situated as they were in pagan cultures. Scripture identified the *boundary markers.*” [Emphasis added] [Canon Vinay Samuel, “Voice of the global South,” Church Times (November 11, 2003), p. 1]

By its action at General Convention, the Episcopal Church has effectively moved the boundary markers of Scripture, something that no province, acting on its own, has any right to do. In acting unilaterally they have by analogy violated an ancient proverb: “Do not remove the ancient landmark that your ancestors set up.” [Proverbs 22:28] The clear boundaries of Scripture in the Anglican churches of the global South have enabled the Church to be a powerful agent of transformation within their respective societies. The moving of these boundaries threatens the “Christian identity” of these churches. [Samuel, p. 3] Moreover, the concept of personal autonomy which supposedly justifies the removal of these ancient Scriptural landmarks directly conflicts with the Anglican South’s view of freedom in Christ, which is also the orthodox Christian teaching. The contrast between these two opposing views of freedom could not be more striking:

“The Christian who finds such freedom submits, as Paul did, to become a bond slave of Christ. Paul teaches that true freedom is experienced and expressed in a relationship of submission to Christ, not in an autonomous experience of self. This biblical understanding of freedom shapes Christian moral teaching in the Anglican South.

The Western Church lives in a culture in which the highest moral value is set on the absolute freedom of the individual. The power to choose what one desires, as long as it does not harm others, and to be able to will the good we define ourselves, is at the heart of the moral vision of Western cultures.

The Anglican South, however, finds that the language of rights used in promoting acceptance of homosexual practice in faithful same-sex relationships masks the underlying understanding of freedom as autonomy, self-expression and self-definition. Such an understanding of freedom has its roots in the enlightenment, and is not supported by biblical teaching.

The struggle is not between freedom and authoritarian conformity, but between different views of freedom—one biblical and the other modern Western. Binding oneself to what one chooses is not the biblical view of freedom and accountability. Biblical freedom is also not about binding oneself to general rational criteria of justice. It is about being bound to the imperatives of scripture and its moral framework.” [Emphasis added] [Samuel, p. 2]

Thus, the crisis of authority within the Episcopal Church has spilled over into the entire Communion. We have seen that the crossing of boundaries—Scriptural and natural—can cause repercussions far beyond what we may have imagined:

“To ‘grasp beyond ordained boundaries’ may initially speak of freedom but in the end destroys that freedom. No, we need boundaries, both as individual persons and also in our corporate life....”

For many the issue of officially blessing same-sex unions is precisely a boundary issue. Confusion here massively affects our identities both as sexual beings and as a public body. For, as Paul so insightfully grasped right at the outset, what we do with our bodies is not immaterial but truly affects the Body of Christ. The union of physical bodies can affect the union of the ecclesial Body. Something which seems so small and immaterial can evidently have an explosive effect. Policy about sexual behavior is not just a private matter.” [Emphasis added] [True Union, p. 46]

The crisis of authority which has led to the transgressing of boundaries has its roots in the inception of Anglicanism in the initial conflict of the authority of the king over the pope and later within the Church the opposing factions of Catholicism and Protestantism which resulted in the distinctively Anglican *via media*. In the following centuries, ecclesiastical parties developed—Evangelicals, Anglo-Catholics, and the Broad Church—which still constitute factions within the Church today. Out of the conflict of these contending factions grew another distinctively Anglican concept known as comprehensiveness:

“Of course, it is quite understandable how the notion of comprehensiveness developed out of the Elizabethan settlement, at a time when the limits of such comprehensiveness could be set by agreement on the articles of the creed. The exacerbation of the conflict between evangelical and anglo-catholic in the nineteenth century gave rise, again understandably, to the theory of complementarity of both viewpoints to a greater truth. It was a theory with an irresistible attraction for bishops endeavoring to achieve a modus vivendi between warring groups in their dioceses.” [Stephen Sykes, The Integrity of Anglicanism (Mowbray 1978), p. 34 as quoted in Class Notes, Dr. Mark Chapman, “Church and Society, Lecture One—Is There Such a Thing as Anglican Theology?” (Ripon College Cuddesdon, Michaelmas Term 1993), p. 5]

Anglican comprehensiveness is believed by some to be able to encompass the opposing parties in the current controversy over homosexuality. [*E.g.*, Letter of Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold to the clergy of the Episcopal Church (August 20, 2003); Letter of Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold to Anglican Primates (October 23, 2003)] However, a quarter of a century before the present crisis the inherent weakness and inadequacies of this notion had already been discerned:

“Coined at a time when internal party strife was at its most acute, [comprehensiveness]

apparently offered a non-partisan refuge for that large body of central Anglicans who properly speaking belonged to no party....Theologically speaking, however, the effect of the proposal has been disastrous. It must be stated bluntly that it has served as an open invitation to intellectual laziness and self-deception. Maurice's opposition to system-building has proved a marvelous excuse to those who believe they can afford to be condescending about the outstanding theological contribution of theologians from other communions and smugly tolerant of second-rate theological competence of their own; and the failure to be frank about the issues between the parties in the Church of England has led to an ultimately illusory self-projection as a Church without any specific doctrinal or confessional standpoint." [Emphasis added] [Sykes, p. 19 as quoted in Chapman, p. 5]

Comprehensiveness or tolerance has proven especially vulnerable to the dangers inherent in the current climate of pluralism:

"Ecumenical tolerance represents an impressive moral and religious gain, a step towards love and understanding. But it has its own deep risks, and one of them is the spectre of relativity, this loss of any place to stand, this very elimination of the very heart of the religious as the ultimate concern." [Emphasis added] [Langdon Gilkey, "Plurality and Its Theological Implications," in John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, The Myth of Christian Uniqueness (London 1987), p. 44 as quoted in Class Notes, Dr. Mark Chapman, "Church and Society, Lecture Fifteen: The Church, Pluralism and Truth" (Ripon College Cuddesdon, Hilary Term 1994), p. 4.]

The unilateral, *de facto* demolition of unequivocal Scriptural landmarks recognized for two thousand years by the Universal Church has now brought the Episcopal Church to that very terrifying place—"this loss of any place to stand, this very elimination of the very heart of the religious as the ultimate concern." The one man who now stands at the very epicenter of this global ecclesiastical earthquake foresaw this terrible day with extraordinary prescience:

"The contemporary theological situation is that in which 'there may have been no strictly theological criteria immediately available to discriminate among varieties of "Christianity"'....It is not surprising, then, that in one way or another the question is continually raised of the limits of pluralism—or, rather less starkly, of how pluralism avoids becoming 'repressive tolerance', an intellectually idle and morally frivolous prohibition against raising uncomfortable questions about Christian truth. Pluralism as a strategy...can look like a betrayal of what most Christians would still see as a central affair in their commitment—the conviction that there is a common hope and a common vocation for human beings, such that the welfare or salvation of one section of humanity cannot be imagined as wholly different from or irrelevant to that of the rest of the race." [Emphasis added] [Rowan Williams, "The Unity of Christian Truth," New Blackfriars (1989), p. 85 as quoted in Chapman, Lecture One, pp. 5-6]

The Episcopal Church has transgressed far beyond the outer limits of Anglican comprehensiveness. To assert it now at this hour of the rending of the Body of Christ known as the Anglican Communion is to rely on a feckless shibboleth that masks an "intellectually idle and morally frivolous" position. Reliance on the *via media* at this critical hour likewise provides no solace. The *via media* was originally an intellectually defensible and faithful position between Catholicism and Protestantism, both of which

were and are legitimate expressions of orthodox Christianity. The *via media* today, however, would be a position between orthodox Anglicanism and something which has moved outside the bounds of orthodox Christianity. Given the dynamism and limitless expression of personal experience and autonomy, the *via media* in this new context will be forever moving farther and farther away from its Scriptural foundation and the orthodox faith. Unorthodoxy is too high a price to pay to occupy the middle way.

What, then, is the way forward through the present crisis? Discipline—godly discipline exercised by the Anglican Communion against the Episcopal Church. Although the mechanism for such discipline has not yet been established, the Communion has been taking preliminary steps in that direction:

“The 1998 Lambeth Conference noted ‘the need to strengthen mutual accountability and interdependence among the Provinces of the Anglican Communion’. It therefore reaffirmed a 1988 Lambeth resolution which encouraged ‘a more collegial role for the Primates’ Meeting under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, so that the Primates’ Meeting is able to exercise an enhanced responsibility in offering guidance on doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters’. This was supplemented by a request for the Primates’ Meeting to include in its responsibilities ‘intervention in cases of exceptional emergency’ and the ‘giving of guidelines on the limits of Anglican diversity in submission to the sovereign authority of Holy Scripture and in loyalty to our Anglican tradition and formularies’ (Resolution III.6).

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If any province or national church rejects the moral authority of Lambeth 1998 and establishes the blessing of same-sex unions, other Anglican provinces would be acting faithfully within the Tradition if they declared such an action as ‘schismatic’. This would be even more justified if innovation occurred without clearly providing the necessary theological justification (6.10-12) or appropriate discussion with the on-going instruments of unity (6.13). Other provinces would then have the right both to withhold communion and to ask whether indeed the church in that province should be entitled to label itself as ‘Anglican’. Is this not an act which effectively establishes a new church, with some liturgical affinities to historic and worldwide Anglicanism but essentially and theologically at odds with it? Regrettably for the revisionists, the Anglican Church through its missionary endeavor has become a global Church. That wider Church now has the moral justification for questioning the orthodoxy of its ‘mother provinces’ and refusing to allow the treasured currency of ‘Anglicanism’ to be debased in this way. With the rise of Internet technology and jet travel ‘global’ Anglicanism is no longer a theory but a practical reality that needs coherence to survive.” [Emphasis added] [True Union, pp. 40, 43] [See also, Claiming Our Anglican Identity, pp. 24-28]

At the request of the emergency meeting of the Primates as set forth in the Statement by the Primates of October 16, 2003, Archbishop Rowan Williams has appointed a Study Commission to be chaired by the Most Reverend Robin Eames, Primate of Ireland. “The Commission’s main task would be to offer advice on finding a way through the situation which currently threatens to divide the Communion.” The mandate from the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Commission includes the following:

“Therefore, as soon as practicable, and with particular reference to the issues raised in Section IV of the Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998, to make recommendations

to the Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council, as to the exceptional circumstances and conditions under which, and the means by which, it would be appropriate for the Archbishop of Canterbury to exercise an extraordinary ministry of episcopate (pastoral oversight), support and reconciliation with regard to the internal affairs of a province other than his own for the sake of maintaining communion with the said province and between the said province and the rest of the Anglican Communion.” [Archbishop of Canterbury’s Appointment to Study Commission, October 28, 2003]

This Commission’s report will be due by October 2004. Regardless of the recommendations of the Study Commission and the particular disciplinary actions taken or not taken by the Archbishop of Canterbury, it is clear that the Episcopal Church stands at the most important crossroads in her history. Two very different paths lie before her.

## **X. The Present Destructive Path**

The Episcopal Church has essentially capitulated to the sexual revolution over the past three decades, but the actions of the 2003 General Convention amount to a final surrender, for now any remaining Scriptural foundation for critique has been abandoned. The Church should expect other groups seeking the blessing of their alternative sexual lifestyles probably sooner rather than later. In the same month that the General Convention was meeting, another group of Christians was meeting in Philadelphia at the WOW (Witness Our Welcome) 2003 convention, an ecumenical gathering for “sexually and gender inclusive Christians.” One of the sponsoring groups was Episcopal Divinity School. At the convention Debra Kolodny led a workshop entitled “Blessed Bi Spirit: Bisexual People of Faith” in which she spoke reverently about polyamorous relationships—committed sexual relationships involving three or more persons: “I am a strong ally of those in healthy, polyamorous relationships....There can be fidelity in threesomes. It can be just as sanctified as anything else if all parties are agreed.” [Mark Tooley, “Sexually Inclusive Christians’ Celebrate Victories, Push for More,” The Institute on Religion and Democracy (August 22, 2003)]

And why not? Who in the Episcopal Church is now to say that such relationships are wrong? On what grounds? If personal experience trumps Scripture, then on what basis will the Episcopal Church limit its blessing to only homosexual couples? Moreover, polyamorous activist groups will be able to mount a much stronger Biblical argument to support their claims. The title of the above article is very instructive: “Sexually Inclusive Christians” Celebrate Victories, Push for More.” There will be many more victories celebrated in the Episcopal Church, and the push will go on and on and on, because what is really at play here is not so much “homosexuality” as “pansexuality.” [Satinover, p. 61] Once the Judeo-Christian sexual boundary has been crossed by one group, the pressure will be relentless to cross it by others. How many more WOW conferences will it take to claim the blessing for polyamorous groupings in the Episcopal Church? Three? Six? Nine? The Unitarian Church, which has already embraced same-sex blessings, is now actively considering the blessing of polyamorous relationships. The Unitarian Universalists for Polyamory Awareness (UUPA) is organized and working to “seek the same kind of affirmation and acceptance that Unitarian Universalism has granted to many others who sought liberation from the strictures of the societal ideal of one man marrying one woman until death do them part, forsaking all others.” [3076 Uuism and Polyamory: Many Traditions, Many Loves ([www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org))]

Similarly, bisexual persons are also organizing and planning. The Bisexual Organizing Project, a bisexual advocacy group, will be holding the Eighth International Conference of Bisexuality at the University of Minnesota, August 5-8, 2004, where they are expecting “to attract about 400 academics, educators, and community members from throughout the world.” [www.bisexual.org] What type of blessing will bisexuals seek from the Church? On what grounds can the Episcopal Church deny them this blessing?

And as disturbing and as improbable as it may seem, there is another organization waiting in the wings, the North American Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA), “which actively promotes homosexual pedophilia as an acceptable alternative form of sex. Their contentions as to the naturalness, normalcy, unchangeability, and ubiquity of pedophilia mirror precisely the arguments used to support the naturalness, normalcy, and so on of homosexuality....” [Satinover, p. 63] Already articles in professional journals are advocating changes to more “neutral” terminology “to describe freely chosen, nonharmful sex between adults and children” and arguing that “adult-child sex” is a “value neutral term” to be used in cases where there is a “willing encounter with positive reactions.” [Jones and Yarhouse, p. 111] This is not fiction. This is really happening, and the groundwork is already being laid as witnessed by this excerpt from a respected professional journal written *fourteen years ago*:

“In recent years the general trend has been to label...intergenerational intimacy [as] ‘child sexual abuse....’ [This] has fostered a one-sided, simplistic picture....Further research...would help us to understand the ...possible benefits of intergenerational intimacy.” [Emphasis added] [G. P. Jones, “The Study of Intergenerational Intimacy in North America: Beyond Politics and Pedophilia,” Journal of Homosexuality 20, nos. 1-2 (1990), pp. 275-95 as quoted in Satinover, p. 64]

Scientific evidence buttressed by personal stories will be presented. Having jettisoned Scripture and tradition, the Episcopal Church will have no place to stand to resist these claims, these rights, this justice.

The Church should anticipate the proposal of new liturgies justified by alien theologies and spiritualities similar to Bishop Spong’s rite of blessing a divorce. A ritual which blesses a woman’s abortion has already been suggested by one author:

“Our culture needs new rituals as well as laws to restore to abortion its sacred dimension....I’ve heard women address their fetus directly...and explain why it is necessary to separate now. Others write a letter of farewell and read it to a friend, a spouse, or indeed to their whole family. Still others invent their own farewell ritual, inspired perhaps by rituals from other cultures, like offering a little doll to a divinity as a symbol of the aborted fetus.  
...the pro-lifers see the spiritual dimension but keep it imprisoned within official orthodoxies, as if no other form of spirituality existed. What if my religious beliefs are pagan?” [Ginette Paris, The Sacrament of Abortion (Dallas: Spring Publications 1992) as quoted in Satinover, p. 243]

And what will be the effect of these radical innovations on marriage itself—on the husbands and wives and children remaining in the Church? There will be consequences here as well:

“Any decision by the Church to confer legitimacy on same-sex unions cannot be viewed *solely* in terms of pragmatic, pastoral responses to our cultural and missionary context or

embraced as simply the practical outworking of the inclusiveness of divine love. No, such a decision has significant *theological* and pastoral implications. This is equally true whether it is accomplished by creating some *third quasi-marital* way of holy living (in addition to marriage and singleness) or by *reconfiguring the understanding of marriage* so as to embrace couples of the same sex. The former *undermines* the institution of marriage by presenting an alternative form of sexual relationship as legitimate for humans made in the image of God; while the latter strictly *destroys* marriage as removing from its definition the bringing together of male and female. As yet, revisionists are not agreed as to which of these they are proposing. Significantly, neither path has authorization from within Scripture or the Christian Tradition. Instead arguments are based on an appeal to experience—despite the fact there is no consensus (even among revisionists) about how that experience is to be explained (whether scientifically, psychologically or culturally).” [True Union, p. 19]

We begin to glimpse the destructiveness of the path we are now on and perceive why the overwhelming majority of the Anglican Communion and the Universal Church will have no part of this rebellious heterodoxy and will shun us until we come to our senses and return to the faith once delivered. Until that time we can expect continued internal division, isolation from other Anglicans and Christians, unorthodox liturgies and spiritualities, and steady decline in members and power.

Some of these developments may take years to occur. However, the loss of members has already begun and will continue. One of the foremost experts in church growth and development in the Episcopal Church is the Rev. Kevin Martin, who served as Canon for Congregational Development in the Diocese of Texas and is the founder and executive director of Vital Church Ministries. From the 840,000 members who regularly attend church in the Episcopal Church, he predicts a loss of 100,000 in just the next year. The Episcopal Church has been in decline for the past forty years, both in actual numbers and as a percent of the national population. It is not true that ECUSA will gain members as a result of these actions: “If we would, why would the dioceses that already embrace these positions not be growing? They are demonstrably the fastest declining part of the Church.” Where will all of this lead? The following comparison is definitely a reality check: “Today, more people believe that aliens have abducted them than are members of ECUSA. What is the difference between these groups? The abduction people have growing numbers of believers and adherents. We do not.” [Rev. Kevin Martin, “The Future of the Episcopal Church A Hard Look at the Numbers,” [www.vitalchurchministries.org](http://www.vitalchurchministries.org)] I am personally aware of key lay leaders—former vestry members and wardens—who have had enough and have left the Episcopal Church to join the Anglican Mission in America. Others like David Warren, a popular columnist with the Ottawa Citizen, have become Roman Catholic. He observes that it is “the characteristic doctrine of utopian revolutionaries and violent heretics from many centuries—this idea that God is speaking to them directly, and that they may now ignore Scripture, history, and tradition, and do whatever feels right.” He concludes wistfully with this sentiment which could speak for many who have already left and who will leave in the near future:

“Yet I do not look back in anger, but in heartbreak, at the wreckage remaining from what was a fine four- or five-century run. Within the ruin of the Anglican Church, we will find so many beautiful things, embodying noble aspirations. We will not find, however, the Catholic succession—for Anglicanism has become one of those channels of history that runs out, as so many of the churches of the past, which lost their way, and sank into the sands.” [David Warren, “On Becoming a Catholic,” Ottawa Citizen (September 9, 2003) as quoted by Richard John Neuhaus, “The Public Square,” First

Things (December 2003), p.74]

Will the Episcopal Church, headstrong and oblivious to the wreckage it is causing, stay on this present path of destruction while the hemorrhage of the faithful continues apace?

## **XI. Rediscovering Christian Orthodoxy**

The Episcopal Church in the course that it has been on for the past forty years and that has been confirmed and officially endorsed by the actions of General Convention of 2003 prides itself on being an enlightened church founded on “new learning” and a church that is preeminently inclusive and tolerant. One of the great ironies of this tolerance is that everything can be tolerated except Christian orthodoxy, because Christian orthodoxy makes universal truth claims which constitute a permanent affront to this easy toleration. As with the Roman Empire in the first centuries that was tolerant of many different religions, the scandal of the Christians was that their sole allegiance was to the Lord Jesus Christ, and they, therefore, refused to offer “incense on a pagan altar” and to swear “an oath by the emperor’s genius.” It was this refusal which led to their martyrdom. [The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity (Oxford University Press 1990) ed. John McManners, p. 41] When the Episcopal Church jettisoned orthodoxy in the 1960s, orthodoxy itself then became optional. As time has gone on, however, orthodoxy has become more and more an offense. After the actions of the 2003 General Convention, Kevin Martin asked those in the majority who agreed with the actions what someone like himself with orthodox beliefs should now do. He reported being “fascinated by the consistency of the responses” which he received. They fell into these three categories: 1) “get over it;” 2) “get therapy;” or 3) “get out!” [Kevin Martin, “The Dissenter’s Paradox,” The Vital Church Newsletter (January 8, 2004), p. 2] We may be rapidly approaching the day when the truth of this maxim becomes operative in the Episcopal Church: “Where orthodoxy is optional it will, sooner rather than later, be proscribed.” [as quoted by Richard John Neuhaus, “The Public Square,” First Things (April 2003), p.84]

Another exquisite irony of the moment is that just when the Episcopal Church was spurning orthodoxy, orthodox Christianity was experiencing an unexpected and exhilarating rebirth. It has emerged at the dawn of the third Christian millennium with renewed intellectual and spiritual vigor and confidence to face the challenges of a new era. This renaissance has been superbly chronicled by someone who has experienced this rebirth in his own life—Dr. Thomas Oden, Henry Anson Buttz Professor of Theology and Ethics, at Drew University—in his splendid book, The Rebirth of Orthodoxy. Dr. Oden asserts that the ideologies which constituted the presuppositions of Western modernity—“the Marxist-Freudian-Nietzchean-Bultmannian” systems have “passed over, like an angel of death.” [Thomas C. Oden, The Rebirth of Orthodoxy (HarperCollins 2003), p. 8] The collapse of these ideologies has created an intellectual and spiritual vacuum into which has stepped orthodox Christianity. “What is happening amid this historical situation is a joyous return to the sacred texts of scripture and the consensual guides of the formative period of Judeo-Christian scripture interpretation.” [Oden, p. 11] Dr. Oden defines orthodoxy in this way:

“Orthodoxy itself is nothing more or less than the ancient consensual tradition of Spirit-guided discernment of scripture. The church’s book—the canon of holy writ received by believers of all times around the world—remains the crucial criterion for orthodox doctrine, polity, ethics, and social teaching. There is no way to validate the orthodox tradition, according to its own self-understanding, without constant reference to canonical scripture. The canon of scripture is merely the list of sacred texts read in

services of worship. The four gospels and Paul's letters were in the list from the earliest Christian decades. The list was largely defined long before Athanasius, whose list was widely received after the fourth century. All that is meant by *tradition*, then, is the faithful handing down from generation to generation of scripture interpretation consensually received worldwide and cross-culturally through two millennia." [Oden, pp. 31-32]

What stands behind this resurgence of Christian orthodoxy is a renewed confidence in the Word of God who stands behind and guarantees the Word of God written. "Jesus promised the faithful of each generation and of all cultures that the Holy Spirit will 'teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.' [John 14:26] The Holy Spirit has a perfect memory of the truth, even when we remember imperfectly." [Oden, p. 45] The Holy Spirit guides and protects the Universal Church through time:

"Thus the Spirit protects the continuity of the Word in history, ensuring that the whole church does not at any given time completely err, and that it does not err in the foundation, even if in temporary and nonessential ways it may. This is a defining ecumenical doctrine: the community of faith, enabled by the Spirit, is ultimately sure and certain (*asphales*) insofar as it clings to the revealed Word." [Oden, p. 46]

Dr. Oden concludes his book by marveling on the extraordinary endurance of Christian orthodoxy through time and space:

"This stubborn fact remains: a single cohesive deposit of faith, formed and shaped by the Spirit, and confirmed by free mutual consent to revelation, has persisted for two millennia. Translated into many tongues, this consensus has formed (and been affected by) many cultures without losing its core identity. The Spirit has enabled mutual general consent on key points of interpretation of canonically received holy writ in ways that are sufficient not only for eternal salvation but also for better life in this world. In this cohesive teaching lies special power to transform societies.

This Spirit-led process has defined, remembered, and safeguarded consent to apostolic testimony over many centuries. The laity, quite capable of understanding and assessing the fairness of this process, should be given every opportunity to study how the great consensual teachers have fairly gained uncoerced consent from generation to generation over two millennia. Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestants can, despite diverse liturgical and cultural memories, find unexpected common ground ecumenically by returning to classic interpreters of scripture texts that still stand as authoritative for teaching today." [Oden, p. 186]

In addition to his encouraging book, [The Rebirth of Orthodoxy](#), Dr. Oden has also provided the Church with another excellent resource in further assistance of the rediscovery of orthodoxy in the [Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture](#) of which Dr. Oden is the general editor. This commentary enables the modern student of the Bible to draw on the insights of the great minds of the ancient Christian writers from the first seven centuries of the Church's history. The series has been widely praised by scholars like Avery Dulles, S.J., Bruce Metzger, William Willimon, Timothy George, and others. Eugene H. Peterson, James Houston Professor of Spiritual Theology of Regent College and author of the splendid, modern translation of The New Testament, [The Message](#), gave this assessment:

“Chronological snobbery—the assumption that our ancestors working without benefit of computers have nothing to teach us—is exposed as nonsense by this magnificent new series. Surfeited with knowledge but starved of wisdom, many of us are more than ready to sit at table with our ancestors and listen to their holy conversations on Scripture. I know I am.” [Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Inter Varsity Press 1998) ed. Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, p. iii]

The Universal Church now stands on the threshold of one of the greatest moments in church history. Through the rediscovery of the common orthodox faith, the way now lies open for the potential emergence of a new unity which has not been experienced for a thousand years. The Church in the West, no longer cowed and intimidated by the failed ideologies of the past centuries, can draw deeply from the well of orthodoxy in order to proclaim with renewed vigor and boldness the saving power of the Gospel. However, in order for the Episcopal Church to be part of this momentous opportunity and grand adventure of faith, it must stop going “limping with two different opinions.” [1 Kings 18:21] The Episcopal Church must do what Christians have always had to do when they have gone astray and gotten off the true path:

“The time has come to be done with the self-congratulatory apologetic to which Anglicans are addicted and to call for both a searching review of their common life (or lack thereof) and an attitude of repentance. The churches of the Anglican Communion, particularly those in England and North America, can renew their common life only after a long period of self-examination and repentance. Only from a stance of profound sorrow and humility can Anglicans live as faithful communion of saints who stand in the tradition of the apostles, prophets and martyrs.” [Emphasis added] [Turner, “Episcopal Authority in a Divided Church,” p. 47]

The words spoken by the Lord God to Solomon and the nation of Israel speak now to the Episcopal Church: “if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” [2 Chronicles 7:14] Even if the Episcopal Church cannot now acknowledge that it has acted contrary to Holy Scripture, it is beyond dispute that the actions of the 2003 General Convention have caused deep division within the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. That alone should initiate “a long period of self-examination and repentance.” Without genuine repentance the Episcopal Church will continue on its present destructive path and will drift farther and farther away from the rest of the Anglican Communion, the Church Universal, and the faith once delivered.

But for those in the Episcopal Church who will turn and rejoin the Anglican Communion and the Church Universal, an immersion in Christian orthodoxy will equip the saints to be the Church Jesus intended the Church to be in at least three vital ways.

“*Ego eimi he bodos...*” Jesus said, “I am the Way.” [John 14:6] The earliest Christians were identified as those who followed a Way. Paul admitted to having “persecuted this Way up to the point of death...” [Acts 22:4] When Apollos came to Ephesus, he was recognized as someone who “had been instructed in the Way of the Lord...” [Acts 18:25] Although he spoke with great boldness and eloquence, there were still things he needed to learn, and so Priscilla and Aquilla “took him aside and explained the Way of God to him more accurately.” [Acts 18:26] In carrying on this instruction, Priscilla and Aquilla were simply being obedient to the words of Jesus: “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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.” [Emphasis added] [Matthew 28:19] Jesus had previously taught his disciples the importance of both *hearing* his words and *acting* on them. [Matthew 7:24-25] And he spoke this stern warning to them: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.” [Matthew 7:21] St. Paul, throughout his life and even when he was actually a prisoner of Rome, saw himself as a *doulos*—a slave or servant—of Jesus Christ. [Romans 1:1; Philippians 1:1] He understood that we are all either slaves of sin or slaves of Jesus: “Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” [Romans 6:16] He stressed the importance of total obedience to Jesus even in our thoughts: “We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.” [2 Corinthians 10:5] This total allegiance and total obedience to Jesus means turning over to him those things which we cling to most dearly:

“No one is ever united with Jesus Christ until he is willing to relinquish not sin only, but his whole way of looking at things. To be born from above of the Spirit of God means that we must let go before we lay hold, and in the first stages it is the relinquishing of all pretence. What Our Lord wants us to present to Him is not goodness, nor honesty, nor endeavor, but real solid sin; that is all He can take from us. And what does He give in exchange for our sin? Real solid righteousness. But we must relinquish all pretence of being anything, all claim of being worthy of God’s consideration.

Then the Spirit of God will show us what further there is to relinquish. There will have to be the relinquishing of my claim to my right to myself in every phase. Am I willing to relinquish my hold on all I possess, my hold on my affections, and on everything, and to be identified with the death of Jesus Christ?” [Oswald Chambers, My Utmost for His Highest (Barbour and Company 1935), p.49]

Orthodox Christianity is a Way of life. It involves total allegiance, total commitment, and total obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. It means trusting in Jesus and following Jesus in every aspect of our lives, including our sexual lives. It requires absolute fidelity, but it sees this fidelity as a noble calling and a “high adventure” in following “the vibrant orthodoxy of the radical call to holiness”:

“Fidelity requires change and, yes, innovation in obedience to the truth of the faith. Fidelity is the excitement of discovering and living the living tradition of the saints, past and present. Fidelity is the surrender of self to Christ and his Church. Fidelity is the courage to be different, to lovingly engage the culture and, when necessary, to be countercultural and even *contra mundum*...Fidelity is conversion.” [Richard John Neuhaus, “The Public Square,” First Things (January 2003), p. 76]

“*Ego eimi...he aethia.*” Jesus said, “I am...the Truth....” [John 14:6] Fidelity to following the Way of Jesus Christ will lead us into truth: “Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, ‘If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’” [John 8:31] Disciples of Jesus Christ are “established in the truth” that has come to them. [2 Peter 1:12] It is possible for followers of Jesus to “wander from the truth.” If that happens, other believers should bring them back from wandering. [James 5:19]

Orthodox Christianity proclaims that Jesus is the Truth for the world and is the standard, the plumb

line, by which we know right from wrong, truth from falsehood. “Serious truth claims require clear denials.” [Oden, p. 127] Orthodox Christianity is not afraid to draw definite boundary lines: “Some would prefer that the Christian tradition be endlessly plastic, flexible, malleable, with no boundaries at all. But such plasticity can be accomplished only by constantly twisting the sacred texts of the tradition, forcing interpretations, and resorting to bizarre speculations.” [Oden, p. 132]

One of the most exciting developments in recent years in the upholding of truth in Christian orthodoxy has been the coming together of Christian scholars from diverse ecclesiastical backgrounds in seeking to bridge the divisions which stemmed from the Reformation. “In the spring of 1994, a group of Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants issued a much-discussed statement, ‘Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium’ (FT, May 1994). That statement, commonly referred to as ‘ECT,’ noted a growing ‘convergence and cooperation’ between Evangelicals and Catholics in many public tasks, and affirmed agreement in basic articles of Christian faith while also underscoring the continuing existence of important differences.” [“Your Word Is Truth,” *First Things* (August/September 2002), p. 38] ECT published a second statement entitled “The Gift of Salvation” in 1998 and a third entitled “Your Word Is Truth” in 2002. These statements can provide an excellent resource to the Episcopal Church as it embarks on this journey toward rediscovering the fundamental truth of the orthodox faith. A valuable example is the following statement from “Your Word Is Truth”:

“Together we affirm that Scripture is the divinely inspired and uniquely authoritative written revelation of God; as such it is normative for the teaching and life of the Church. We also affirm that tradition, rightly understood as the proper reflection of biblical teaching is the faithful transmission of the truth of the gospel from generation to generation through the power of the Holy Spirit. As Evangelicals and Catholics fully committed to our respective heritages, we affirm together the coinherence of Scripture and tradition: tradition is not a second source of revelation alongside the Bible but must ever be corrected and informed by it, and Scripture itself is not understood in a vacuum apart from the historical existence and life of the community of faith.” [“Your Word Is Truth,” *First Things* (August/September 2002), p. 40]

Another valuable resource for the Episcopal Church can be the official documents and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church under the papacy of John Paul II. One of the most recent of these was the Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, published by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, August 6, 2000. The Declaration “recalls that no one can enter into communion with God except through Christ and the Spirit together (#12)” and “that Christian faith requires acknowledgment of Christ as the one Mediator (1 Tim 2:4-6).” [Avery Dulles, S.J., “*Dominus Iesus*, A Catholic Response,” *Pro Ecclesia* (Winter 2001), pp. 5-6] Active intellectual engagement with this and other statements can assist the Episcopal Church in the quest of rediscovering the truth of the orthodox faith, as we can see from this response of Ephraim Radner:

“I speak as an Episcopalian Anglican: would that we could be so clear and faithful by a half.

*These Roman Catholics ought to make us jealous.* Jealous for the clarity of vision; jealous for the integrity of their historically maintained commitment; jealous for their continued and coherent adherence to Scripture; jealous of the courage and freedom to let ‘yes’ and ‘no’ be stated and stand for what they are in Scripture’s consistently interpreted light.” [Ephraim Radner, “*Dominus Iesus*, An Episcopalian Response,” *Pro Ecclesia* (Winter

2001), pp. 10-11]

“*Ego eimi...be zoe.*” Jesus said, “I am...the Life.” [John 14:6] Jesus imparts to his followers the gift of eternal life: “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.” [John 3:16] Jesus gives the gift of abundant life now: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” [John 10:10] Followers of Jesus are promised “newness of life.” [Romans 6:4] It is the very “life of Jesus” that is to live inside and to “be made visible” in the lives of believers. [2 Corinthians 4:10] Having Jesus in one’s life is really a matter of life and death: “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” [1 John 5:12]

Orthodox Christianity testifies to the truth that Jesus is Life and has the power to transform lives and societies. “The real significance of the rebirth of orthodoxy lies in how it is transforming lives.” [Oden, p. 82] Malcolm Muggeridge, Leslie Newbigin, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, and Richard John Neuhaus have all written “narratives of transformation, detailing how orthodoxy has changed their life and faith....They tell the story of the power of classic Christianity to transform modern lives.” [Oden, p. 82] Dr. Oden has added his story of transformation to these others, of how, as an academic theologian, he gradually left his revisionist presuppositions and eventually embraced Christian orthodoxy. He relates how after seminary he had “learned to treat scripture selectively” to serve his own “political idealism.” He candidly admits having “adapted the Bible” to his own ideology. [Oden, p. 85] He confesses:

Like all broad-minded clergy I knew, I tried hard to reason out of modern naturalistic premises, employing biblical narratives narrowly and selectively. I could plead for social change and teach hearers to take pride in their good intentions and works; but I was not prepared to communicate the saving grace of God on the cross, which I experienced only at some vague and diffuse level and would never have thought of personally attesting publicly.

For years I tried to read the New Testament entirely without the premises of incarnation and resurrection—something that is very hard to do. I habitually assumed that truth in religion would be finally reducible to economics (with Marx), or psychosexual factors (with Freud), or power dynamics (with Nietzsche). I was uncritically accommodating to the very modernity that pretended to be prophetic, yet I did not recognize modernity’s captivity to secular humanistic assumptions. That accommodation lasted until I personally experienced the collapse of modern values.” [Oden, pp.85-86]

In his process of transformation, Dr. Oden came to an entirely different attitude toward Holy Scripture: “Rather than interpreting the texts, I found the texts interpreting me.” [Emphasis added] [Oden, p. 88] “Once blown by every wind of doctrine and preoccupied with therapeutic fads amid the spirit of hypertolerance, I came to grasp the consensual reasoning that occurs so effortlessly within classic Christianity.” [Oden, p. 89] The joy and excitement of Dr. Oden in having undergone this transformation and now being solidly within orthodox Christianity cannot be missed: “I now stand within the blessed presence of the communion of saints of all generations. In that company I experience greater, not diminished, cross-cultural freedom of inquiry.” [Oden, p. 90]

The power of orthodox Christianity to transform lives is also evident on a much larger scale by the phenomenal growth of Christianity in Africa. In his remarkable book, The Next Christendom, Philip Jenkins has chronicled the explosion of Christianity in the global South, including Africa where the

number of Christians increased from 10 million in 1900 to 360 million in 2000. [Philip Jenkins, The Next Christendom – The Coming of Global Christianity (Oxford University Press 2002), p. 4] This phenomenal growth has accelerated in recent decades and continues to this day:

“It was precisely as Western colonialism ended that Christianity began a period of explosive growth that still continues unchecked, above all in Africa. Just since 1965, the Christian population of Africa has risen from around a quarter of the continental total to about 46 percent, stunning growth for so short a period. To quote the 2001 edition of the *World Christian Encyclopedia*, ‘The present net increase on that continent is 8.4 million new Christians a year (23,000 a day) of which 1.5 million are net new converts (converts minus defections or apostasies).’ Sometime in the 1960s, another historic landmark occurred, when Christians first outnumbered Muslims in Africa. Adrian Hastings has written that ‘Black Africa today is totally inconceivable apart from the presence of Christianity.’” [Jenkins, p. 56]

A number of these African countries have large Anglican populations. “Nigeria alone claims 20 million baptized Anglicans.” [Jenkins, p. 59] In Uganda, “Anglicans make up 35 or 40 percent of the total population. There are twenty dioceses and 7,000 parishes, and by any measure of church attendance and participation, Anglicanism is considerably healthier in Uganda than in what was once the mother country.” [Jenkins, p. 60] As we have seen, the Anglican churches in Africa place a very high premium on maintaining the boundary markers of Scripture. “Cultural boundaries may be crossed, but scriptural boundaries cannot be changed unless the whole Church comes to a common mind about a deeper truth concerning the existing order.” [Samuel, p.3] It is obvious that the Episcopal Church can learn so much about the transforming power of the Gospel within entire societies from our fellow Anglican Christians in Africa.

Orthodox Christianity is alive and well in most of the Anglican Communion and the Universal Church. Rediscovering Christian orthodoxy in the Episcopal Church will not require reinventing the wheel but submitting to the moral and teaching authority of the Lambeth Conferences and the Primates of the Anglican Communion. Orthodox Christianity has so much to offer the Episcopal Church. It provides a disciplined and holy and loving and joyful Way of life. It proclaims the Truth about Jesus Christ, God, ourselves, and our world. It offers new Life in Jesus Christ, abundant life now and eternal life beyond death. In turn, the Episcopal Church has so much to offer to the spiritually hungry people of this country if it will only return to its orthodox roots.

The essence of Christian orthodoxy is “the ancient consensual tradition of Spirit-guided discernment of Scripture.” [Oden, p. 31] With respect to human sexuality and homosexual practice, the Church, both the Historic Church and the present Universal Church, has spoken. Human sexuality is to be expressed only within marriage which is defined as heterosexual, monogamous, and lifelong. All other expressions of sexuality, including homosexual practice, are sinful and contrary to the will of God. With respect to human sexuality, this is the Church’s interpretation and defines the boundaries of orthodox Christianity. The Universal Church, which includes the Anglican Communion, has declared this position to be the Word of God. This is not now a matter of Scriptural interpretation but of Scriptural authority which the Episcopal Church has flagrantly rejected.

The Episcopal Church’s claim that its actions were guided by the Holy Spirit is untenable in light of its own outline of faith that truths are “taught by the Holy Spirit when they are in accord with Scripture.” [An Outline of Faith, Book of Common Prayer, p. 853] The Holy Spirit has patently not led the

Anglican Communion or the Universal Church in this new direction. Does the Episcopal Church honestly believe that it is in the spiritual vanguard on this issue and that the rest of the Church will one day “see the light”? Almost every work cited in this paper was written in 1996 or later. The arguments against the position of the Episcopal Church are becoming stronger and stronger while the arguments for their position are becoming less and less tenable. At some point the Episcopal Church must come to the sobering realization that it has not been the Holy Spirit in charge of this unfortunate misadventure but rather the *zeitgeist*—the spirit of the age.

In addition to flouting the Word of God, the gravamen of the Episcopal Church’s error is its rejection of the created order pertaining to human sexuality and its denial of the transforming power of the cross to restore that order in individual lives and the making of that flouting, rejection, and denial into official church policy. This is not a trivial matter that can be overlooked but one that goes to the very heart of the Gospel.

I close with a personal *cri de coeur*. I desperately need what only orthodox Christianity has to offer. I need the authority and the trustworthiness of the Word of God. I am a sinner. I am a sexual sinner. I need definite, unmistakable boundaries in my life. I need the Church to be clear on what is right and what is wrong. I need to know what is sin and what is not. I need the forgiveness of Jesus Christ when I fall short and transgress those boundaries. Most of all, I need the power of the Holy Spirit, the very life of Jesus living within me, to cleanse and to purge and to transform those parts of my life that are not of God and to give me the strength, which I do not possess of my own power, to resist the temptations that daily cross my path. I need this, and I cannot live without it. It is my fervent hope and prayer that I may have this orthodox faith within the Episcopal Church, “but if not,” I shall follow the Lord Jesus Christ to the end of my days, and I shall meditate on, hold fast to, and unashamedly profess and proclaim these words: “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” [[John 14:6](#)] Amen.