The Episcopal Church and the Hope of Communion

by

Revd Carl Walter Wright

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Approved:

[Signature]
Adviser

[Signature]
Second Reader

Date:

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Abstract

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REVD CARL WALTER WRIGHT

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This thesis suggests that, by virtue of its history and polity, The Episcopal Church in the United States of America (TEC) is uniquely positioned to advance the role and reach of the worldwide Anglican Communion. While the Episcopal Church began its life as a seventeenth century colonial outpost of the Church of England, over time, out of necessity, it began to organize and govern itself quite differently from the “mother church.” Yet, in spite of the unique polity it developed, TEC remained loyal to Anglicanism in the seventeenth century; it vigorously pursued new ways to strengthen its relationship with the Church of England in the nineteenth century; and it was instrumental in making the Anglican Communion a global church in the twentieth century. Therefore this thesis will argue that because The Episcopal Church has been a prominent leader in the Communion and a catalyst for its expansion, this role need not be relinquished. Instead, The Episcopal Church might well be indispensable to the Communion’s future.
Table of Contents

Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 4

Chapter One: The History of Communion: How the relationship between The Episcopal Church (TEC) and the Anglican Communion began ................................................................. 7

Chapter Two: The Tension of Communion: How TEC sees itself in relation to the Anglican Communion today ............................................................................................................................. 29

Chapter Three: The Threat to Communion: How homosexuality is both the focus of conflict and the key to the survival of the Anglican Communion (Moral Theology) ................................................................. 64

Chapter Four: The Hope of Communion: How TEC can play a helpful role in shaping the future of the Anglican Communion ..................................................................................................... 94

Bibliography ....................................................................................................................... 108
**Introduction**

The Episcopal Church in the United States of America (TEC) is uniquely positioned to advance the role and reach of the worldwide Anglican Communion in the twenty-first century. This thesis will explore some reasons why this notion is true.

TEC is one of thirty-eight constituent churches (called, provinces) of the Anglican Communion, which is a fellowship of nearly eighty-million adherents, the third largest Christian body in the world. The Communion is at a crossroads in its one hundred and seventy-two year existence. Historically held together by common prayer, allegiance to the See of Canterbury, and “bonds of affection;” and politically held together by the strength of the former British Empire (c.1607-1940), this unique “church” now seems to be seriously fraying around the edges if not unraveling altogether. This should come as no surprise. Since its inception the Communion was challenged first by the idea that there could be Anglican churches apart from the English crown - an idea which had been previously unthinkable. Further challenges came with the demands for local, indigenous clergy to replace English missionaries and commissaries, and the inevitable acculturation of the Anglican faith, especially the *Book of Common Prayer*, to the diverse cultures in which the church was planting itself. But these were only the earliest tensions that threatened a unified Anglicanism. They pale by comparison to what the Communion faces today.

No longer bound by the same prayer book, or membership in the Empire or Commonwealth, or even loyalty to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and facing unprecedented change, the Anglican Communion is more vulnerable than it has ever been. Its future is insecure. What was once a tidy fellowship of Christians as loyal to Anglo-Saxon culture as they were to Christianity is now an untidy and seriously divided communion that can barely agree on what it means to be Christian, let alone Anglican. Some of the present divisions can be attributed to
outside influences. For example, the Communion has had to reckon with accelerated social change, the information/technology explosion, the role of women in society, and the legitimization of homosexuality. Other divisions are within the Communion: phenomenal growth in the churches of the Global South (especially, Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya), religious pluralism, cultural diversity, and most significantly, theological differences.

The central focus of the Communion’s present predicament is without question the issue of homosexuality, a topic the churches rarely discussed in the past, except to condemn. Now led primarily by TEC and by the Anglican Church of Canada (although this paper will not focus on the Church of Canada) the Communion has been breaking new theological ground and, some would say, violating two thousand years of church history, with teachings on human sexuality unacceptable to most of the provinces. To use common parlance, TEC has brought homosexuality “out of the closet,” and this is troublesome to many.

Worse still is a recent proliferation of schismatic groups, opposed to these new teachings, some unrecognized by Canterbury, yet still claiming to be Anglican. All these changes, external and internal, social and theological are almost too much for the Communion to bear. It seems to have no built-in mechanism(s) for responding to the changes or handling them efficiently. Whether traditionalist or progressive, the Communion’s children in Christ, (that is, its provinces) finally are becoming adults who each may find it necessary to go their own way.

In spite of this troubling state of affairs, this thesis wants to argue that TEC can find a way to preserve and strengthen the Anglican Communion. Since TEC is at the center of the Communion’s divisive conflicts (and has often been the instigator of them), then it could similarly play a leading role in resolving them. Additionally, since TEC played a pivotal role in
the creation of the Anglican Communion in the first place, it probably has a unique responsibility in helping to secure its future.

The inspiration for this thesis was an extremely well-reasoned book on this subject written by Ephraim Radner and Philip Turner titled, *The Fate of Communion: the Agony of Anglicanism and the Future of a Global Church*.\(^1\) The paper will analyze the problem first by describing the history of the relationship of The Episcopal Church to the Anglican Communion. The following chapter will deal with the tensions caused by the lack of a well-defined authority in Anglicanism and by the unique polity of TEC. Attention here will be given to recent resolutions, of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church, regarding its allegiance to the Anglican Communion; its reluctance to support the Windsor Process; and its participation in the Anglican Communion Covenant. The third chapter will show how homosexuality is the focal issue, the matter that must be resolved. It is at the heart of the Communion’s theological disagreements; and although many would prefer not discussing it, yet it may be the single most important issue for defining the Communion’s future, perhaps even the key to its salvation. This chapter also will review recent General Convention resolutions, this time regarding TEC’s support of gay and lesbian Christians. The chapter also will show how *To Set Our Hope on Christ*, TEC’s response to the Windsor Report, reveals TEC’s views on homosexuality. The conclusion will suggest that TEC can be a vital partner in the amicable resolution of this defining moment in Christian history. Perhaps the theological disagreements in the Anglican Communion are not so much problems that need to be solved as they are different, but equally valid, ways of reading the signs of our times.

Chapter One: The History of Communion: How the relationship between The Episcopal Church (TEC) and the Anglican Communion began

A Collect for the Church

Gracious Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in anything it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

(Archbishop William Laud’s prayer in A Summarie of Devotions 1677, adapted for the Book of Common Prayer 1979)

It is difficult to identify the precise date when the ecclesiastical relationship between The Episcopal Church (TEC) and the Anglican Communion began. However, when telling a story, it is always a good idea to start at the beginning. This chapter begins with church history and relies heavily on well-known Episcopal Church historians Robert Prichard, David Holmes, Edward Bond, and the team of David Hein and Gardiner Shattuck, Jr., all churchmen and chroniclers of TEC’s very human history. It intends to set the stage and provide the context for the more primary research-based chapters to follow. It is a composite portrait of the standard histories and secondary sources used. The chapter will also show how TEC was instrumental in the founding of the Anglican Communion.

The Colonial Church

We start with a thumbnail sketch of TEC’s beginnings. According to Robert Prichard, “following a series of exploratory visits (Florida, 1565; California, 1579; Newfoundland, 1583; etc.) the English made their first attempt at American colonization at Roanoke Island (1585-87). They named the colony Virginia after Elizabeth the Virgin Queen (1558-1603), though the island
is in what is now the state of North Carolina. This is a reference to the so-called “Lost Colony” of English settlers who accomplished some memorable things before they vanished: for example, the baptism of baby Virginia Dare, the first recorded Anglican baptism in the New World, and the baptism of Chief Manteo of the Croatan/Algonquin tribe, first Native American convert to Anglicanism – both events in 1587. Prichard continues, “The Roanoke effort was unsuccessful, but twenty-two years later an English mercantile company (the London Company) did plant a permanent colony further north, which was named Jamestown after James I (James VI of Scotland), who had followed Elizabeth to the English throne.”

It is also well documented that with the London Company came Revd Robert Hunt (1568-1608), chaplain in Jamestown, who celebrated their first Communion Service (Holy Eucharist) in what is now Virginia Beach, Virginia, in May 1607.

Hein’s and Shattuck’s version is that “the initial claim to North America [had been] established by John Cabot, sailing under the auspices of Henry VII, in 1497. [Note, this is a half-century earlier than Prichard’s claims.] While it is likely that an English priest accompanied Cabot’s voyage and celebrated the Latin mass when the explorers reached land, the honor of conducting the first English Protestant service in North America belonged to [an unknown] clergyman who celebrated communion at Hudson Bay in 1578.”

David Holmes describes the beginning this way. “The Church of England was the first denomination to come permanently to the original thirteen colonies. Though Anglican clergy accompanying English expeditions held services in the sixteenth century on the coasts of

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California and North Carolina, the settlement of Jamestown in 1607 by the London Company (after 1609, the Virginia Company) marked the permanent beginnings of the Church of England in America.\(^5\)

With these three accounts, we see that the Anglican faith in the New World began with a business relationship, not a religious one. Yet, as Holmes points out, while “commercial purposes were primary for the Virginia colony...[their] charter also expressed a concern for the evangelization of the Native Americans, typical of English religious attitudes of the time.”\(^6\) (Presumably no Africans came to the New World till 1611.) Again, while it is true that England’s primary motives for American colonization were mercantile and imperial, as evinced by the prosperous trade established by the Virginia Company, Prichard surmises the main motive of Virginia colonists (as opposed to the colonizers) to have been religious. He gives two key reasons why Virginia Anglicans “believed that their day-to-day struggle to found a settlement was religiously significant...First, they could preach the gospel to an Indian population that had not yet heard the good new of Jesus Christ...[and second,] By spreading the gospel [they] helped to unfold God’s plan for the world, thereby hastening the coming of the kingdom.”\(^7\)

This form of religious conviction and missionary zeal was characteristic not only of European imperialism but also of Puritan/Calvinist theology. It would not be inaccurate to characterize the early Virginia settlers as Calvinistic Anglicans. Holmes writes, “The influence of the Puritans [i.e. radically conservative Calvinists] was pervasive in the first decades of the colony, although their clergy followed the liturgical and ceremonial directives of the Church of

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\(^7\) Prichard, *A History of the Episcopal Church*, 5.
England."⁸ In his doctoral dissertation Edward Bond supports this theory and characterizes the faith of colonial Virginians this way: their "religious life emerged out of England's mythic national religion, a national Protestantism born of the Reformation. The colonization of Virginia began as a national 'good work' and symbolized England's own reformed faith as visible and tangible evidence of the nation's challenge both to Satan and to Roman Catholicism."⁹ The "Protestantism born of the Reformation," the idea of "national good works," and rabid anti-Roman Catholicism are sure signs of sixteenth century Calvinism.

Some might say that the Puritan/Calvinist influence in early Episcopalianism persists to this day; but is probably more accurate to describe TEC as soundly Anglican, as seen in its Book of Common Prayer which contains distinctly Anglican liturgies and the historic creeds (Apostles', Nicene and Athanasian).¹⁰ Although the Calvinist influence is seen in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion (Book of Common Prayer (BCP) 1979, 867-876), most scholars agree that the Articles are in the present Prayer Book(s) more to preserve Anglican history than to be taught catechetically. The Articles may have been compulsory under certain monarchs, such as the boy-king Edward VI (1537-1553), raised by the Calvinist Seymour family, but in fact they never have been normative in the Anglican Communion. Some Anglicans have subscribed to them. Many have ignored them. Marion Hatchett writes, "From the time of Elizabeth [who reigned from 1558-1603] Puritans resisted subscribing to the Articles just as Latitudinarians were later to oppose them in 1689. At the American [General Convention] in 1785 a revision of the Articles, based upon an anonymous work, Reasons Humbly Offered for Composing a New Set of Articles

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⁸ Holmes, A Brief History of the Episcopal Church, 20.
of Religion (1751), was approved for the Proposed Book of 1786. At the convention of 1789 the bishops proposed to include the Articles, but the deputies postponed consideration."\textsuperscript{11} Hatchett goes on to describe successive General Conventions (1799, 1801, and 1804) which proposed omitting or altering certain Articles. Thus, it remains that mandatory subscription never has been required by the General Convention of TEC. For teaching purposes, "The Catechism or Outline of Faith" is provided (\textit{BCP 1979}, 845-862).

Another formulary, the "Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral" (\textit{BCP 1979}, 876-878), is generally believed to be a more succinct, though not all-inclusive, statement of what Episcopalians believe and evidence of their adherence to Anglicanism. More will be said about the Quadrilateral in Chapter Two.

Hein and Shattuck agree that the theology of the Colonial Church was soundly Anglican and write, "the Puritan migration from England did not begin in earnest until 1630...Because of momentous political changes that occurred in England [i.e. the English Civil War], however, the situation in Virginia began to improve significantly after 1660. With the end of Puritan supremacy and with the restoration of the monarchy under Charles II, Anglican leaders were able to gain much greater control over ecclesiastical affairs in Virginia."\textsuperscript{12} Regardless of how TEC theology was characterized, they continue, "...cities and towns along the eastern seaboard of what is now the United States displayed a distinctly religious character in the eighteenth century...It was also axiomatic in political thought that social stability and orderly government depended upon the guardianship of the public morality by a single state church," and Calvinism remains an important ingredient in the evolution from the colonial Church of England to the

\textsuperscript{12} Hein and Shattuck, Jr., \textit{The Episcopalians}, 16.
Episcopal Church. It was also a theological seed that would grow into a tenaciously-held American belief in democracy in religion.

Holmes provides a balanced description of early Episcopalian theology when he writes, “From New England to Georgia, the Anglican churches and colleges in the colonies produced few writers who could be called theologians. Although Thomas Bray’s (1658-1730) *Catechetical Lectures...Giving an Account of the covenant of Grace* and his *Short Discourse Upon the Doctrine of our Baptismal Covenant* were published in the years that Bray was commissary of Maryland [an appointee of the Bishop of London] and were widely used by Anglican parish libraries and SPG [Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts] clergy in America, they were written in England. [These would have been the parishes influenced by the high church theologies.] In Massachusetts, John Checkley (1680-1754), a publisher-bookseller and lay member of Boston’s King’s Chapel, wrote influential pamphlets and tracts advocating the doctrine and government of the Church of England. Opposed to the Puritan belief that God alone possessed freedom in matters of salvation or damnation, Checkley emphasized that men and women possessed the free will to accept or reject God’s offer of grace.”

We may conclude that the early colonists were distinctly Anglican, but heavily influenced by Calvinism.

**The Church in the Revolutionary Period**

The preceding section is descriptive of TEC in its earliest form: a state church, theologically Anglican and politically democratic. By the time of the American Revolution (1776), however, the Church of England in America ceased to exist. There was a break in which now former Anglicans who were also patriots were orphans with no ecclesiastical affiliation (1776-1789). Therefore, Prichard writes, “it was from the middle colonies [e.g. New York,

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13 Ibid., 15.
Pennsylvania, and Maryland] that the initial leadership for the reorganization of the Anglican Church came. Anglicans in the region were accustomed to a pluralistic, non-established religious setting, a setting of the sort that would increasingly become the rule following the Revolution. Anglicans there could also draw upon their experience with local institutions: the College of Philadelphia, King's College [later to be known as Columbia University], the provincial synods of the 1760s, and the Society for the Relief of Widows and Orphans of Clergymen. Anglicans in other regions would soon lend a hand, but it was those in the middle colonies who led the way."

The leading “state” in the formation of the new religious denomination was Maryland. According to Prichard, “Beginning in 1780 [four years after the Revolution and nine years before the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, the Revd Dr. William Smith, 1727-1803] convened gatherings of Episcopal clergy and laity…By1783 they had already taken a number of concrete actions. First, they chose the name Protestant Episcopal Church to replace the no longer favored Church of England…Second, they planned a state convention that would exercise the authority for the church. They drafted a charter that the legislature approved in August 1783, granting them title to church property and a government by a synod of laity and clergy…Third, they identified candidates for the ordained ministry and sent two of them – Mason Locke Weems (1759-1825)…and Edward Gantt, Jr. (1760-1810) – to England for ordination to the priesthood…Fourth, they elected William Smith [himself] as candidate for bishop.”

Notably, these actions reflect TEC theological and ecclesiological priorities to this day: loyalty to

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15 Prichard, A History of the Episcopal Church, 82.
16 Ibid., 83.
Anglicanism, authority by convention of clergy and laity, and the priority of Holy Orders. The first three of these proposals were accomplished, but Smith’s ordination was not to be.\textsuperscript{17}

Though this is immaterial to Prichard’s point above regarding the origins of the Episcopal denomination, it should be noted that Maryland, though a middle colony was not a “non-established” one. Maryland originally had been established by Charles I (1600-1649) as a Roman Catholic colony (1634), and named, “Mary,” for his Catholic consort, Queen Henrietta Maria. But by 1692, The Church of England was the established Church of Maryland, under the Protestant William II (1650-1702) and Mary II (1662-94). It can be assumed that this is how, following the Revolution, the new Maryland State General Assembly could so easily grant a charter giving the Episcopal Diocese title to church properties. Also, Prichard’s mention of the charter’s creation of a bicameral church government of laity and clergy is an important first and a departure from previous Anglican polities. This will be discussed further in Chapter Two.

By convening in 1780 and 1783, Maryland started a movement that literally saved Anglicanism in America. Next, the pioneer Smith’s vision was captured by the Revd William White of Pennsylvania (1748-1836), sometime Chaplain to the American Continental Congress, and Rector of Saint Peter’s Church and Christ Church, Philadelphia. Prichard notes, “Learning of [his mentor] Smith’s work in Maryland, White became convinced that similar actions were needed in other states. On August 8, 1782, he published a pamphlet titled, The Case of the

\textsuperscript{17} William Smith, founder and first provost of the University of Pennsylvania, was elected first Bishop of Maryland in 1783, but never approved by England’s Privy Council on the grounds that he was “too fond of the grape.” See James R. Powell’s biography of Smith, \textit{A Tour of the Old Manse at 507 Washington Street, Huntingon, Pennsylvania}, (Portage, Michigan: Grammaphone Adventures, 2003). See also Hein’s and Shattuck’s amusing account: “Although a Maryland convention elected him bishop in 1783, rumors of public drunkenness undermined his position in the church, and the General Convention never approved his consecration. In many ways an able man, he was also an exceedingly complex figure who was often said to be irritable, overbearing, slovenly, avaricious, and intoxicated.” Hein and Shattuck, Jr., \textit{The Episcopalians}, 298
*Episcopal Churches in the United States Considered* in which he suggested that other states form conventions like that in Maryland. These “general vestries” would elect presiding clergy, who—at least until the nation gained the episcopate—would exercise some of the function of bishops. The presiding clergy and elected representatives of the general vestries would attend annual district and triennial national conventions. In all three levels of organization, presiding clergy, other clergy, and lay persons were to meet together in unicameral bodies.”

Interestingly, the idea of general vestries survived, and is now known as diocesan conventions; but the suggestion of traditional synodical meetings of clergy and laity together—which Prichard describes as “unicameral”—was not heeded: from the beginning, General Convention has met in two separate bodies. The fledgling denomination still had work to do.

The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, 1789

Robert Prichard writes, “By 1787, American Episcopalians had, in effect, established three denominations: a middle and southern states’ church with English lines of consecration and a representative clerical and lay convention; a New England church [closely resembling the mother Church of England] directed by a bishop [Samuel Seabury, 1729-96] with Scottish consecration and governed through a clergy convocation; and a Methodist Episcopal Church with a form of government [without bishops] drafted by John Wesley (1703-1791).”

It would be up to the political genius of William White to consolidate these disparate Anglicans into a cohesive American denomination. Unfortunately, the Methodist Episcopalians parted with Anglicanism in 1784—TEC’s first large numerical loss.

The official birth of TEC is 1789, not coincidentally the same year as the nation’s Constitution. In that year, the General Convention assembled in Philadelphia for two sessions

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(July-August and September). As fate would have it, Samuel Provoost (1742-1815), a bitter enemy of Seabury, was unable to attend. Prichard records, "White, taking advantage of [Provoost’s] absence, used the two sessions to make concessions that appeased Seabury and healed the breach. The first session affirmed the validity of Seabury’s orders, created a separate House of Bishops with a partial veto (which the House of Deputies could override with a three-fifths vote)...and amended the constitution to make participations of lay deputies optional...The General Convention made further concessions at the second session in September. It gave the House of Bishops the right to originate as well as act upon legislation, and a stronger veto (the deputies [now] needed a further four-fifths majority to override. In 1808, the General Convention raised this to a full veto.)"

The creation of a separate House of Bishops in 1789 is very important to the TEC story. Either intentionally or unintentionally a separate House of Bishops made General Convention bicameral instead of “three unicameral bodies,” meeting together synodically, envisioned by White’s Case and practiced by the Church of England. On the other hand, it is nothing short of a miracle that TEC emerged with a House of Bishops at all since the idea of bishops was extremely unpopular in the new Republic.

Prichard continues, “After the approval of these final changes, Seabury and the clerical deputies from Connecticut and Massachusetts took [their] seats...By 1792, the Episcopal church was finally established as an American Denomination. It had a governing body, a prayer book a national constitution, and a mechanism for the creation of new bishops.” Notably, in that same year, Bishop White (Pennsylvania), together with Bishops Seabury (Connecticut), Provoost (New York) and Madison (Virginia), consecrated a country parson called Thomas Claggett

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20 Ibid., 97.
21 Ibid., 97.
(1743-1816) the first Bishop of Maryland, thus co-mingling the non-Juror succession (of Seabury and New England) with the English succession (of the middle and southern states). Now there was an Anglican Church outside of Great Britain: The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. Now there was arguably a new branch of Christ’s One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

The Episcopal Church Ethos

Quoting church historian Frederick V. Mills, Sr., David Holmes describes TEC’s new ethos this way: “the church [i.e. TEC] clearly displayed its American character in 1789 by removing most medieval and hierarchial [sic.] trappings from the episcopal office and making bishops subject to the laity within their dioceses. ‘American bishops were in every way more democratic than their English counterparts.’”22 But in TEC’s ethos a weakened episcopate is not nearly as unique as the General Convention of the Episcopal Church. Prichard and earlier church historians, such as James Addison and Raymond Albright, go to great lengths to describe the securing of the American succession of the historic episcopate, as if that were essential to an “episcopal” church. It should be remembered, however, that authority in the new denomination would not in the end lie with bishops but with the General Convention – another first. This ecclesiastical peculiarity is a part of TEC’s Calvinist (as opposed to its Catholic) heritage.

Archbishop Desmond Tutu half-jokingly refers to TEC as a “congregational church with bishops.” Also half-jokingly, successive Presidents of the House of Deputies of the General Convention (for instance, Charles Lawrence and Pamela Chinnis) have taken delight in publicly stating the House of Deputies is “the older house,” not so subtly implying that they have a greater claim to authority than do the bishops. Curiously, the “older house” was known as “The

22 Holmes, A Brief History of the Episcopal Church, 56.
House of Lay Deputies,” although it has always had clerical members as well. Episcopal humor and semantics aside, Prichard confirms that it was Bishops White’s Case that gave General Convention this unprecedented authority, and it was General Convention that created the House of Bishops and gave them the right to originate and veto legislation. Thus, the “sovereignty of General Convention” may now be added to the “first Anglican Church outside of Great Britain” and a “bicameral legislature” as unique features of the new denomination called The Protestant Episcopal Church.

Another aspect of the TEC ethos could be described as a type of reverent agnosticism. This less than evangelical aspect of Episcopalianism can be traced to the turn of the nineteenth century. By this time, the new America had experienced a Second Great Awakening, had given birth the several strong Protestant denominations (e.g. Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, et. al.), and had become distinctly evangelical. By contrast, the Protestant Episcopal Church had become an official American denomination, but in a seriously weakened state. Because of Anglicanism’s identity with England and resistance to the Great Awakenings (in spite of the fact that George Whitefield and John Wesley were Anglicans), Episcopal Church membership quickly dwindled; its church pews emptied out; and the denomination was almost dead on arrival. Holmes writes, “By the start of the Revolution the Church of England was the second largest denominations in America (behind the Congregational Church), with over four hundred regularly meeting congregations and perhaps three hundred clergy.”

But by the time TEC had securely come into existence this was far from being the case. Here is the young ordinand William Meade’s (1789-1862 – later to be the third Bishop of Virginia) description of the new denomination, according to Holmes:

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23 Ibid., 37.
On the Sunday of his ordination in the pivotal year of 1811, Meade surveyed the conditions around Bruton Parish Church — symbolic of the conditions of the new denomination as a whole — and 'dismay again crept in' Meade's mind. 'Duke of Gloucester Street abounded with groups of William and Mary students. With guns on their shoulders and dogs at the heels, they were using that crisp Sunday morning to go hunting.' Wending its way through the students and dogs, [Bishop Madison's] carriage arrived at Bruton Parish Church — once the place of worship for the royal governors of Virginia and the leaders of the American Revolution. Meade would later describe the church as being in a 'wretched condition.' The congregation inside numbered about eighteen, including two William and Mary professors — both, by Meade's account, adherents of deism, the rationalistic religion of the time. Most of the other worshipers were either relatives or acquaintances of Meade.²⁴

In a later chapter, Holmes gives another ominous description. He writes,

In the first decades after the General convention of 1789, the future appeared dark to many Episcopalians. Disestablishment had taken the revenues of the church in the colonies where it had been established; evangelical denominations had drawn away its poorer members; Deism had disaffected its male gentry; and death had taken many who remained faithful. In a nation of four million, the Episcopal Church had perhaps ten thousand adherents...Although the church's leadership now centered on the episcopate, New Jersey lacked a bishop until 1815, North Carolina had no bishop until 1823, Georgia was in want of one until 1841, and Massachusetts possessed one only for six of the twenty-two years between 1789 and 1811. Attendance at General Conventions was so sparse that the House of Bishops held its meetings in a small bedroom in 1808. Convinced that the Anglican tradition would die out with the old colonial families, Samuel Provoost, first bishop of New York [himself rumoured to have fallen into Deism], became so discouraged that he resigned his office.²⁵

Hein and Shattuck note, "in spite of the achievements of Episcopal leaders in restoring stability to their denominational affairs, the church's prospects at the end of the eighteenth century seemed uncertain — even dismal."²⁶ They add, "The church's [i.e. TEC's] theological position was equally unsettled at this time. Samuel Provoost and James Madison, the bishops of New York and Virginia respectively, were virtual deists who were highly suspicious of the historic creeds of Christianity. Samuel Seabury, on the other hand, was staunchly committed to retaining use of all the ancient creeds in worship; militant in his anti-Protestant views, he disliked

²⁴ Ibid., 37.
²⁵ Ibid., 59.
²⁶ Hein and Shattuck, Jr., The Episcopalians, 59.
both Calvinism and evangelical teachings on conversion...[and worse,] the leadership of the Episcopal Church...was little affected by [the] resurgence of spiritual zeal [brought on by the Second Great Awakening, 1795-1810]."\(^{27}\) This was the sad state of affairs after the Revolution. Holmes says, "It was the winter of 1811; it was also the winter of the Anglican tradition in Virginia."\(^{28}\) TEC’s ethos immediately following the Revolution was that of a denomination weak in its membership and in its beliefs, but resolutely Anglican, determined to survive, and proud of its beautiful buildings. We will see this again in the twenty-first century.

One more thing that needs to be said about the TEC ethos is that throughout its four-hundred year history, with the possible exception of slavery times, it has never been able to attract poorer Americans in large numbers. Prichard and Holmes speak of this often. And at key times in its history, such as mentioned by Holmes above, following the Revolution most of the common Anglicans fled to more Protestant denominations. Thus the TEC ethos consistently has been middle- and upper-middle class, well-educated Americans, though now becoming less affluent and more diverse.

Back to the turn of the nineteenth century, one could say there was a second TEC wilderness period of twenty-two years (1789-1811), in addition to the previous thirteen years of having no identity (1776-1789), in which The Episcopal Church languished. That amounts to thirty-five years of being on “life support.” Metaphorically speaking, the new denomination barely survived infancy and its earliest years. Yet, the leaders of TEC kept the Anglican vision. They hoped for communion. Thus it was left to the generation that followed the patriots – men such as Meade and John Henry Hobart (1775-1830) – to work out how TEC could be officially Anglican and faithfully Christian. Holmes and Prichard single out 1811 as the turning-point year

\(^{27}\) *Ibid.*, 60.
\(^{28}\) Holmes, *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church*, 59.
when TEC began to come to itself – to paraphrase the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:17). Thanks to the Second Great Awakening and to this new generation of visionary leaders, TEC began to renew itself. Now we may turn to its restored relationship with the Church of England.

The Nascent Anglican Communion

David Holmes would probably argue that the Anglican Communion began in 1789 when TEC became the first Anglican “church” outside of Great Britain. However, Mark Chapman writes, “Although [the Anglican Communion] might be dated from the separation of the American Episcopal Church from the Church of England, the term was not used before the 1850s, when the first colonial churches became independent provinces. The “Communion” began to develop some form of organization from the first Lambeth Conference of 1867.” This date of the first Lambeth Conference is convenient, but the Communion clearly predates Lambeth. For the purposes of this paper: 1789 marked the separation of TEC from the Church of England; then there was a hiatus (roughly 1789-1840) in which there was no official connection between the two “churches.” Then, in approximately the 1820s, high churchmen, on both sides of the Atlantic, began to talk seriously about the hope for a “Communion.”

If we must fix a time certain, 1841 is the best candidate for the start of the Anglican Communion, largely at the instigation of the Americans. According to Stephen Sykes, John Booty, and Jonathan Knight, in their revised Study of Anglicanism, “in 1841, the Colonial Bishoprics Fund was created, inspired by Charles James Blomfield (1776-1857), Bishop of London. This greatly speeded the expansion of the overseas episcopate, so that by the first Lambeth Conference in 1867 there were nearly fifty bishops in British colonies and thirty-five

29 Ibid., 56.
dioceses in the USA. Three years earlier (1838) Samuel Adjor Crowther (1806-1891) had become the first African bishop, consecrated for Nigeria.”

Further, in the mid-nineteenth century several social forces happily conspired to increase the desire for an Anglican Communion. First the idea of episcopal synods was in the air: the Vatican convened all Roman Catholic bishops for a celebration of the Conversion of Saint Paul and gain for a Commemoration of the Martyrs of Japan (1866). Second, the high church Anglican bishops, many of whom were new missionary bishops, were increasingly desirous of discussing ways in which the church Catholic could be universally opposed to slavery. Third, following the unsuccessful “Indian Rebellion” against the British East India Company, the entire Indian subcontinent was added to the already vast British Empire (1857), making Queen Victoria Empress of India (VRI), and making the empire the largest ever known to man, covering one-fifth of the world’s population and one-fourth of its land. Thus it followed that many bishops began to see a need for the Church of England – a state church – to reflect its country’s new status and to be everywhere England was. Fourth, this revived missionary mood suited the theology and ambitions of low church/evangelical bishops as well. And, finally, the idea of an Anglican Communion fit nicely with TEC’s desire to retain its Anglican identity. Chapman mentions that William Gladstone (1809-98, Liberal, high church Anglican, an unequalled four-times Prime Minister of England) uses ‘Anglican’ in his Church Principles of 1840 when he talks about the validity of Anglican orders.” It was no longer accurate simply to refer to a Church of England when it had become international and imperial.

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32 Chapman, Anglicanism: A Very Short introduction, 4-5.
W.M. Jacob, in his book, *The Making of the Anglican Church World-wide*, devotes a chapter to the “beginnings of the Anglican Communion.” In it he argues that the Communion really got going in the period from 1840-1860. During this period, Jacob says, Bishop Samuel Wilberforce, in addition to being a great abolitionist and foe of Darwinism, was the greatest force in arguing for missionary expansion (as opposed to isolationism) in the Church of England. Wilberforce, together with his friend Bishop John Henry Hobart of New York, whose correspondence survives, re-established the rudiments of a close Church of England-Episcopal Church relationship in the 1820s and 30s. Due to the spade work of these two visionaries, the TEC House of Bishops “took steps to regularize relations between the Anglican Churches in 1838.” Additionally the evangelical-leanng Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the high church-leaning Society for the Promotion of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG) strongly promoted “indigenous episcopacies,” particularly in America, and supported “establishing missionary bishoprics,” such as those of Jackson Kemper (1789-1870, TEC’s first missionary bishop (who also was originally ordained in the pivotal year of 1811), and Daniel S. Tuttle (1837-1923, remarkably a bishop for fifty-seven years, longest serving in TEC history). Thus, Jacob argues the Anglican Communion began through the work of devoted churchmen who were interested in abolishing the slave trade and, like the first generation of American clergy, spreading the Christian message in stately Anglican fashion – which means bishops were missionaries.

The Lambeth Conference of Bishops

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34 Ibid., 108.
Not much later, Jacob writes, “The sense of a world-wide network of Anglican dioceses began to grow in the 1850s, and from the time of the SPG Jubilee in 1851, and the TEC General Convention of 1853, the term ‘Anglican Communion’ began to be used to describe a world-wide Anglican Church.” Following too many events and too much political intrigue to include in this paper, “the first proper Lambeth Conference of bishops took place on 24 September 1867, with seventy-six Anglican bishops from around the world in attendance.” Archbishop of Canterbury Charles Longley (1794-1868) presided.

In a recent lecture, Mark Chapman describes the events that led to the first Lambeth Conference of Bishops. Apart from the desire (on the part of Wilberforce, Hobart and others) to organize Communion and establish Missionary bishops, the main catalyst for Lambeth I was “the Bishop Colenso Affair.” Briefly, John Colenso (1814-1883), a low church evangelical, was Anglican Bishop of Natal in 1853. Bishop Colenso felt strongly that it was “the duty of the missionary to find parallels between Christianity and the native religions. Meanwhile, Robert Gray (1809-1872) had been appointed Bishop of nearby Capetown, and like fellow high church Bishops Selwyn of New Zealand and Broughton of Australia, saw himself as a ‘Metropolitan,’ or ‘Primate,’ in modern Anglican parlance. As Colenso’s missionary theology grew more liberal, even to the point of supporting polygamy, Gray ‘summoned a meeting of [local] bishops to try Colenso [for heresy]…Colenso was found guilty in his absence and sentenced to be deposed.”

A long legal process ensued with Colenso’s refusal to accept Gray’s supposed authority as metropolitan. Instead, Colenso appealed to the Privy Council in England who, in turn, refused

\[37\] Mark D. Chapman, Vice-Principal of Ripon College Cuddesdon, University of Oxford, England, at a Lecture at the School of Theology/The University of the South, 21 June 2012.  
to act on the grounds that colonial churches were now beyond their jurisdiction. If anything the colonial South African government could have passed judgment, but presumably no one suggested that possibility. Because any resolution of the Colenso Affair would actually turn on the resolution of rights between two bishops with jurisdiction, Gray, among many other bishops, “called for a synod of colonial churches, which in turn resulted in the Canadian bishops, in 1865, formally requesting the Archbishop of Canterbury to convene a synod of all the colonial bishops. This should be expanded [they suggested] to include the independent churches of Scotland and America.”

It is important to note that whatever the outcome would be, the Colenso decisions would also de facto reflect an Anglican theology of episcopacy and an Anglican ecclesiology of the autonomy of its “churches” (provinces). Chapman said the “Colenso ruling was absolutely clear. Where there was self-government [as in the case of Natal, Capetown, the United States, Canada, and other parts of the British Empire] the English Crown had no rights to interfere with the colonial (and former colonial) churches.” While this groundbreaking decision referred to the Crown colonies, it has ever since been honored in reference to all of the Anglican Communion provinces. The Archbishop of Canterbury never meddles in the affairs – theological or otherwise – of the provinces of the Anglican Communion. The Colenso Affair set that precedent.

For Chapman the first Lambeth Conference, September 1867, was summoned under less than pleasant circumstances and Archbishop Longley was understandably “cautious: his jurisdiction and power [were] unclear...The Archbishop of York [thinking the conference had only to do with colonial matters] refused to attend. [There was] great anxiety about high church colonial bishops. [Thus it was a] highly circumscribed meeting [with] no hope of establishing a

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39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
form of spiritual court, or even a definition of what sort of ‘church’ was represented by the assembled bishops. Seventy-six bishops attended, without reporters. Colenso [was] not on the main agenda [but] thirty-five bishops supported Gray. Interestingly [although this was not supposed to be a synod or council] an Encyclical letter was published. And the Archbishop of Canterbury functioned as *primus inter pares* but certainly not as an Anglican Pope."

A word about the ecclesiastical expression *primus inter pares* would be relevant to this paper. *Primus inter pares* literally means primary amongst peers. It is a commonly used expression in the Church Catholic, although each branch seems to mean something slightly different when using it. In the Eastern Orthodox churches, for instance, the phrase is used (in various languages) for the Patriarch of Constantinople in his capacity as Ecumenical Patriarch for all the Orthodox. Similarly, *primus inter pares* is one of the titles for the Bishop of Rome (the Pope of the Roman Catholic Church) in the sense that although theologically he is but a bishop like any other bishop (and there is no ordination higher than that of bishop); yet, ecclesiastically the unity of the church demands that there is a functional head; hence, “first among equals.” (But in another sense, in Roman Catholic ecclesiology the Pope is “Supreme Pontiff,” the highest bridge and therefore the head of the Roman Church.) In The Episcopal Church the Presiding Bishop and Primate is also considered *Primus inter pares*. But the Episcopalians use the expression solely in an administrative sense: the “PB” is chief executive officer of the denomination and President of the House of Bishops, not the senior bishop or the spiritual head of an ecclesial hierarchy of bishops. Further it is arguable whether the “PB” is considered a Metropolitan or not, as this was never the intention of the 1789 constitution.

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Thus we see that even at the beginning the Anglican Communion was a collegial but politically impotent fellowship of bishops. Even at the beginning the communion was theologically divided between the high church and low church parties whose bishops saw their roles differently. Event the Archbishop of Canterbury’s role was not totally clear, although all present seemed to have a certain sentimental allegiance to him. Such has been the Anglican legacy ever since. It could be argued that Archbishop Charles Longley forfeited a golden opportunity to set certain precedents with respect to exercising metropolitical authority – similar to the way General George Washington could be said to have set many precedents for the exercise of the American presidency. On the other hand it could be argued that, in reserving his judgments and resisting any temptation to exalt his position, Longley actually strengthened the so-called “bonds of affection” that grew deeper and deeper over the following century.

Chapman’s assessment is that the first Lambeth was unfortunately “a collection of bishops without laity. [While the bishops’] role was magnified, a victory for the high churchmen, there was little effective central control to protect national churches from despotic or heretical bishops. Provinces had to do whatever they could to ensure their own checks and balances. And history has shown that these have not always been successful.”

Although the first Lambeth Conference was informal, imperfect and, some would say under-attended, it was a good beginning. Jacob mentions that, although bishops represented many different countries, they were surprisingly homogeneous, all white and mostly Oxford or Cambridge educated. (Of course, this type of homogeneity of bishops was rather short-lived. It would not continue into the twentieth century.) Also, it is important to note that, even at the

\[42\text{Ibid.}\]
Anglican Communion’s birth, there was no talk of legislation, organization, polity, or authority—no notion of creating an Anglican Church.

American attendance at Lambeth I was a portent of things to come. It is remarkable that, along with John Henry Hopkins, President Bishop [sic.] of TEC, eighteen other American bishops attended were signers of the Encyclical.43 Their participation in such relative large numbers was significant. Apart from the Conference itself the presence of the American bishops was the most outward and visible sign that Anglicanism had turned an important corner. It had grown into an international fellowship comprised, not mostly of colonial possessions, but of individual “churches,” each of which represented its unique culture.

In sum, by 1867, The Episcopal Church had established itself as an influential American Protestant denomination and an indispensable player in the nascent Anglican Communion. Having all of the above in mind, we could say that the seeds of a collegial relationship between two like-minded and strong-minded bishops (Wilberforce and Hobart) and the impact of significant world events broadened the Church of England’s understanding of what Anglicanism could be. Those seeds evolved into the present-day world-wide Anglican Communion of thirty-eight autonomous provinces with nearly eighty-million members.

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Chapter Two: The Tension of Communion: How TEC sees itself in relation to the Anglican Communion today

A Collect for the Church
O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things that had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(The Collect for Episcopal Ordinations and for the Solemn Collects on Good Friday, translated from the Seventh century Galesian Sacramentary, the Book of Common Prayer 1979)

After the American Civil War TEC found itself, far from being a colonial outpost of the Church of England or a mere fledgling Protestant denomination, a leader in American society and in the newly formed Anglican Communion. Where the Chapter One discussed TEC’s role in the founding of the Communion, Chapter Two will shift the discussion to TEC’s role in shaping the Communion as it exists today. In order to do so, the chapter will begin by using prominent church historians once again to summarize the rapid expansion of the Anglican Communion; then by using primary texts to discuss Anglican and Episcopal ecclesiology. The chapter will then follow the Anglican ecclesiology discussion with a more in-depth analysis of TEC’s unique polity, and show how that polity defines TEC’s role in the Communion.

The Growth of Communion

The rapid growth of the Anglican Communion in the nineteenth century derives from the missionary zeal of that period. According to Perry Butler, “The missionary impulse was an important feature of nineteenth-century Anglicanism. For instance, the CMS [the Evangelical-leaning Church Missionary Society] arrived in Sierra Leone in 1804 to bring the gospel to the freed slaves of the colony, and in 1858 the Universities’ Mission to Central Africa, the most
Anglo-Catholic of the missionary societies, answered David Livingston’s call to evangelize up
the Zambezi. An interesting aspect for UMCA strategy was the use of the bishop as missionary
pioneer, an idea sparked off by Archdeacon Grant’s Bampton lectures of 1843. C.F. Mackenzie
(1825-62) was consecrated in Cape Town in 1861 to lead a missionary party to Lake Nyasa."44

A rather dramatic example of the missionary zeal of the period happened in 1821. While
TEC retained its constitutional name, the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of
America, it symbolically changed its corporate/legal name to the Domestic and Foreign
Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America and was
incorporated by the State of New York as such. This move stressed mission (i.e. spreading the
gospel of Jesus Christ) as TEC’s highest priority. All baptized members were to be considered
missionaries. (By 1979, however General Convention would drop Protestant in
acknowledgement that the meaning of the word had changed significantly since 1789. The
denomination is now officially The Episcopal Church. But General Convention retains the
Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United
States of America, while at the same time acknowledging the entire Episcopal Church as a
missionary society.)

Anglicanism grew exponentially in the nineteenth century. Additionally, this growth was
a story of parallel, sometimes competing missionary efforts; most on the part of the Church of
England, many on the part of TEC. As the Church of England’s missionary efforts eclipsed with
the close of Empire, so TEC’s mission grew with the rise of what arguably could be called the
American Empire. (The United States has never used the term empire with regards to its

44 Perry Butler, “From the Early Eighteenth Century to the Present Day,” in The Study of
Anglicanism, ed. Stephen Sykes, John Booty, Jonathan Knight (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress
Press, 1998), 41.
twentieth century expansion. Instead the media dubbed it a superpower, a name that stuck and took on deeper meaning after the collapse of its chief rival, the Soviet Union. Superpower is nevertheless a euphemism for empire.) Mirroring the influence of the American Superpower, at its height in the mid-twentieth century TEC included dioceses in the United States, the Convocation of American Churches in Europe, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, the US Virgin Islands, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Venezuela, Mexico, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Guam/Micronesia. Three of these countries (i.e. Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippines) were known as U.S. possessions, a euphemism for colonies. They are now known, in more politically correct language as protectorates. By the turn of the twenty-first century, in a move that mirrored the secular government’s divestiture of previous protectorates like the Philippines and the Panama Canal Zone, however, TEC divested itself of as many of these dioceses as possible and empowered Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico and the Philippines to become independent provinces (as in the case of Mexico) or dioceses in other provinces of the Anglican Communion.

Yet to this day TEC is an international denomination comprised of one hundred-eleven dioceses in nine so-called provinces, including: the United States, the Convocation of American Churches in Europe, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador Central, Ecuador Litoral, Haiti, Honduras, Puerto Rico, Taiwan and Venezuela.45

This global nature of TEC raises a couple of interesting issues. First, it makes TEC an international and multicultural “church,” not merely an American denomination. Second, it almost puts TEC in competition with the Anglican Communion, which is even larger and, in some sense, TEC’s parent body. For example the American Convocation of Churches in Europe

is co-located with two other Anglican provinces: the Church of England Diocese of Europe and the Reformed Episcopal Church of Spain – both constituent members of the Anglican Communion. Or, again, TEC’s diocese of the U.S. Virgin Islands overlaps with the British Virgin Islands who are a part of the Church of England. One could describe TEC as a global church within a global church (the Anglican Communion). This, in part, is why there are communication and boundary problems within the Communion.

Anglicanism is still growing; but modern growth is not due to empire or politics. Butler continues, “Subsequent missionary expansion has increasingly owed its impetus to the efforts of indigenous Anglicans. The twentieth century saw the Anglican Communion rooted in all continents. No longer is its membership perceived as culturally British. Especially since World War II there has been a rapid movement towards provincial autonomy, beginning with West Africa in 1951. Bishops and clergy are mostly natives of their country, worship is in local languages [or, as the BCP1662 puts it, “a language understood of the people”] and reflects local cultural styles.”

Ecclesiology

Having discussed the ill-defined nature and porous borders of Anglicanism, we will now attempt to define the equally complex Anglican and Episcopal ecclesiologies. Roughly speaking an ecclesiology is a theology of the church. Prichard writes, “Episcopalians increasingly came to see their church as in a category by itself…Early in the nineteenth century, most Episcopalians would have agreed with John Lawrence Mosheim’s Ecclesiastical History [which was] suggested by Bishop White and used in Episcopal seminaries [and] classified the Anglican

46 Butler, “From the Early Eighteenth Century to the Present Day,” 41.
Church as part of the Reformed tradition.” However, he adds, “William I. Kip (1811-93) captured this new Episcopal self-understanding in his *Double Witness of the Church* (1843). Apologies earlier in the century, such as John Henry Hobart’s *Apostolic Order*, had identified the Episcopal Church chiefly in terms of the apostolic succession and the latitude on the Arminian-Calvinist debate that distinguished it from the Congregationalist and Presbyterian churches. By midcentury, however, Kip felt it necessary to contrast the Episcopal Church not only with Protestantism but with Roman Catholicism as well. For him, the Episcopal Church was a separate entity that had a witness to make to both traditions.”

Twentieth century Episcopalians would therefore describe themselves as the “bridge church” between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. This is an intentional word play on the ecclesiastical term, “pontiff,” Latin for bridge, used by Roman Catholics to describe the Pope’s role as a bridge that connects all those of catholic belief. Kip’s emphasis on the uniqueness of the Anglican/Episcopal ecclesiology survives to this day.

In his *Introduction to Ecclesiology*, Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen assigns the Anglican Communion to his chapter titled, “The Church as One: The Ecumenical Movement Ecclesiologies”; and rightly so, since the Communion and TEC were pioneers in the ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches of Christ in the twentieth century. Kärkkäinen writes, “For the Anglican Communion, as explicated in the ‘Thirty-nine Articles’ (#19 and #34) of 1563 and 1571, the unity of the churches is...based on the preaching of the Word of God and the sacraments [duly preached and rightly administered]. However, the later ‘Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral’ from 1870 went further in its specifications regarding unity and outlined four

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aspects: Scripture, the Apostles' Creed, the two [dominical] sacraments and the historic episcopate. Whereas the Reformation churches leave the leadership question open, for Anglicans the unity of the church requires the presence of a bishop.\textsuperscript{50} That is, \textit{Ubi escopam, ibi ecclesiam} – Latin for "where the bishop is, there the church is," (Saint Ignatius of Antioch, c.107 CE).

The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral is an important Anglican formulary. Originally written and published significantly in 1870, soon after the horrors of the American Civil War, the Revd William Reed Huntington's (1838-1909) \textit{The Church Idea} dared to suggest that no cause was more urgent than Christian unity; that The Episcopal Church (TEC) was uniquely positioned to unify American denominations; and that there were four essential ingredients for Christian unity, as mentioned by Kärkkäinen above. In staking these claims, Huntington became a pioneer of the church unity movement that far outlasted him; he foreshadowed the number one priority of mainline American Christian denominations in the twentieth century.

Thus, Kärkkäinen helps us to understand that, for Anglicans in the twentieth century, ecclesiology has been inextricably bound to Christian unity. He writes, "...the unity of the church is not primarily a human effort but rather is given from God and as such mandatory for all Christians."\textsuperscript{51} Further, as Kärkkäinen notes, in the Quadrilateral, a result of William Reed Huntington's ideal of a national (ecumenical) church, we have four conditions under which the Anglicans assert God's desire for unity could be restored. It is also helpful that Kärkkäinen chose to use formularies; but unfortunately they are two of many Anglican formularies, adopted and revised over the years, that tend to be more signs of their times than definitions of Anglican ecclesiology.

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Ibid.}, 81.
It must be stressed that Huntington did not intend that the four essentials form an exhaustive or systematic ecclesiology; only that they were a starting point for ecumenical discussion. Prichard comments, "While the quadrilateral did not lead to immediate incorporation with other denominations, it did open the door that had been closed for two centuries. From the time that Thomas Bray’s Society for the Propagation of the Gospel [in Foreign Parts] had popularized Anglican covenant theology in America, a significant portion of Episcopalians had refused to participate in ecumenical associations with Protestants who lacked the historic episcopate. For most Episcopalians, the quadrilateral offered a way around this roadblock. By designating apostolic succession [or, more precisely, historic succession] at the outset as a necessary element in any reunited church, Episcopalians felt that they could both safeguard their tradition and engage in dialogue with others."\(^52\) Holmes, adds, "The quadrilateral...is still the official ecumenical platform of the Episcopal Church."\(^53\) Moreover, it was adopted, both by the General Convention of The Episcopal Church in 1884 and by the Lambeth Conference of Bishops in 1886, as an official formulary expressing Anglican self-identity.

Kärkkäinen is helpful in locating Anglican theology but not in defining it. Another source that may not be particularly helpful for definition, but still well worth exploring, is The Virginia Report (TVR). TVR is "The Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, 1997," convened in response to a previous report of the Eames Commission (1988-1993), which had convened to deal with the unprecedented ordination of a woman, the Revd Barbara Harris, to the episcopate (1989). TVR reports that the Eames Commission "offered guidelines on how Anglicans might live together in the highest degree of communion possible while different views and practices concerning the ordination of women continued to be held

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\(^53\) Holmes, *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church*, 125.
within the Communion.” TVR is as admirably self-deprecating as most modern Anglican theological documents and admits, “The 1988 [Lambeth Conference of Bishops] recognized that there was a need to describe how the Anglican Communion makes authoritative decisions while maintaining unity and interdependence in the light of the many theological issues that arise from its diversity”; but, upon reflection, it never describes how the Anglican Communion does so.

TVR opens with an elaborate, Orthodox-sounding Trinitarian ecclesiology. Rather than defining the Anglican Communion in terms of a confessional statement, or the British Empire, or the Commonwealth churches, or Lambeth Conferences, TVR attempts to define it in Trinitarian terms. For instance, “While we are aware of the significant challenges to our unity as a Communion we recognize that we have received the gracious gift of God the Holy Trinity.” Or, this “Commission has centered its study on the understanding of Trinitarian faith.” Or, “The instruments of communion which are a gift of God to the Church help to hold us in the life of the triune God.” TVR’s ecclesiology is that the Church is communion, and the Anglican Communion is a church of the Triune God. This theology is radically different from all earlier definitions of the Communion. It elevates our conversations about radically differing interpretations of scripture and what it means to be Christian. It is good theology.

In addition to the sections on the Holy Trinity (the centerpiece of the document), TVR contains chapters on: (a) the Anglican Communion as it is now; (b) a chapter on Subsidiarity and Interdependence; (c) a chapter describing koinonia, which says, in part, “The purpose of all structures and processes of the church [that is, the Anglican Communion] is to serve koinonia, the Trinitarian life of God in the Church, and to help all the baptized embrace and live out

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Christ’s mission and ministry in the world”; and, (d) a final chapter summarizing the Instruments of Communion [in other places called, the Instruments of Unity] together with suggestions for improvement. For example, TVR reports, “The special position of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Communion raises questions that need to be addressed. Are there mechanisms by which tasks may be shared within the fellowship of Primates, without weakening the symbol of unity provided by one person? Is the Archbishop of Canterbury adequately resourced as Primate of the Communion?” TVR also helpfully asks if “Greater clarity should be placed on the relations between the instruments of communion themselves [and would that] make for creative, effective and sustainable relations within the Anglican Communion.” A cynic might add that perhaps the relative inability of each individual Instrument to meet the demands placed upon the Communion at various times could have given rise to the creation of the next Instrument. For example, TVR implies that this is why the Anglican Consultative Council was created in 1968 and why Lord Donald Coggan (101st Archbishop of Canterbury) called for more frequent Primates’ Meetings in 1978. Nevertheless, these are obviously recommendations tastefully cloaked as questions so the medicine will go down more easily due to historical Anglican resistance to any notion of centralized, as opposed to collaborative, authority.

They are also the recommendations of a later study, commissioned by the 103rd Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey: To Lead and To Serve, written by a commission chaired by the Rt Honorable Lord Hurd of Westwell, CH, CBE. Dr. Carey, in commissioning the Hurd Report, writes, “the range of archiepiscopal involvement and responsibility has

56 Ibid., 29.
57 Ibid., 17.
58 Ibid., 18.
widened greatly in recent years, especially with regard to the Anglican Communion.\textsuperscript{60} The Hurd Commission suggests, "Although the Church of England’s political influence has declined over the last century, the spiritual role of the Archbishop of Canterbury has arguably never been more significant."\textsuperscript{61} This is classic Anglican understatement. It is more accurate to say that the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury, like that of the Bishop of Rome or the Dalai Lama, is \textit{inarguably} more significant during these precarious times. Although the Western world is becoming increasingly secular, religious leaders are ironically more visible and revered.

The Hurd Commission acknowledges that the role of the Archbishop has evolved. "It has tacitly come to be recognized that to be in communion with the See of Canterbury and its Archbishop is the practical test of membership in the Anglican Communion. The Archbishop’s actual jurisdiction is limited to the Church of England and as Metropolitan for the few remaining extra-provincial dioceses overseas. Yet his office has a spiritual and moral influence extending far beyond the limits of his [legal] jurisdiction."\textsuperscript{62} Further, this paper would suggest that, in addition to what the Hurd Report describes above, the Archbishop’s role as Spiritual Leader of all Anglicans has evolved, not by Britain’s former imperial authority or any one bishop’s desire for increased power, but by the will of the Communion at large. While the Office of Archbishop of Canterbury is the most commonly recognized Instrument of Communion, it needs to be further strengthened if the Communion is to continue. This is a very important point both for attempting to define Anglican ecclesiology and for strengthening the Anglican Communion, as will be discussed more in Chapter Four.

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid.}, 6.
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Ibid.}, 8.
\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Ibid.}, 9.
Primarily aimed at Great Britain’s Parliament, the authority to whom the Archbishop of Canterbury is ultimately responsible, Lord Hurd’s study made thirty-one recommendations for improving the efficiency of the Archbishop’s Office. Those relevant to this paper are as follows. First, “ordinary diocesan duties [should] be devolved permanently to a ‘Bishop of Canterbury,’ so styled...[Secondly,] “the Archbishop...should conduct a strategic distancing from the current degree of his day-to-day involvement in the detailed administrative affairs or management of the Church of England in England...[Thirdly,] the “Anglican Communion should be encouraged to do more to develop its own forms of subsidiary leadership both at the regional level and in respect to the Anglican Communion Office.”63 Fourthly, the communion should establish a Bishop for Anglican Communion Affairs. These four (of thirty-one) recommendations are important to the survival of the Anglican Communion. Whether defined spiritually, politically or pragmatically, every organization needs a recognized leader. For Anglicans the Archbishop of Canterbury is that person. Unfortunately, the recommendations of the Hurd Report have been largely ignored.

It is also unfortunate that authority in Anglican ecclesiology is not easily defined. While the Archbishop of Canterbury is spiritual head of the Communion, he has no canonical authority. To Lead and To Serve mentions that there is a “strong resistance to any weakening of the principle that ultimate legislative authority lies with the Provinces rather than with any Communion-wide body,” such as the Anglican Consultative Council.64 This idea that the Provinces are ultimately sovereign is called subsidiarity, curiously, a word that itself implies that bodies that lie beneath the head are the final authority. Subsidiarity may be contrasted with the centralized authority of the Roman Catholic Church, on the one hand, and the congregational

63 Ibid., 10.
64 Ibid., 17.
authority of the Free Churches on the other. When we say that authority in the Communion polity is subsidiary we mean that the Archbishop of Canterbury has somehow permitted his fellow bishops to be juridical heads of their respective provinces. This devolution of spiritual authority probably began when the Anglican Communion began, as discussed in Chapter One. Recalling the first Lambeth Conference, in 1867, Archbishop Longley either prudently or unwittingly refused to exercise any primatial role over his fellow bishops, probably to the relief of the members of Parliament who would rather reserve him for England only; yet, at the same time, the bishops from around the world quite naturally looked to him as spiritual leader. However, he is seen as spiritual leader only; the subsidiary authority of the provinces increased more speedily as colonial “churches” gained their independence, beginning with the Church in South Africa in 1951.

The Hurd Report goes on to say that the lack of clear, canonical authority in the Anglican Communion “does not mean that the so-called ‘Instruments of Unity’ – the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference of Bishops, the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates’ Meeting – have no authority. [They do.] But it is an authority of moral suasion, not of juridical control. The authority of an Archbishop of Canterbury is real, but it is an authority of influence, not of decree.” \(^{65}\) The Hurd Report’s contribution to this discussion is not merely recommendations for strengthening the Office of the Archbishop, but more importantly the recognition that that Office, by virtue of its historicity, spiritual leadership, and position in the world, is essential to any definition of Anglican ecclesiology and perhaps the most important strength of the Anglican Communion.

However, as with Veli Kärkkäinen and TVR, the Hurd Report gives a location, not a definition for Anglican ecclesiology: Church is communion, and the Anglican Communion is a church of the Triune God. This ecclesiology, undoubtedly the fruit of years of ecumenical dialogue with the Orthodox churches, is radically different from all previous formularies of the Communion. It may elevate our conversations about various interpretations of sacred scripture, as most Christian bodies are in favor of the Holy Trinity; but it does not ultimately give us a workable Anglican ecclesiology.

How can we pragmatically define Anglican and TEC ecclesiology? Here we may turn to a theologian outside of the Anglican tradition. Writing in the years immediately following the Second World War, H. Richard Niebuhr, in his classic *Christ and Culture*, speaks of Christian groups who subscribe to the “synthesis of Christ and Culture” ecclesiology, and places Anglicans in this group.\(^\text{66}\) Niebuhr writes, “There is in the synthesist’s view a gap between Christ and culture that accommodation Christianity [e.g. liberal Protestantism] never takes seriously enough, and that radicalism [e.g. Puritanism, Quakerism] does not try to overcome…”\(^\text{67}\) It is convenient that Niebuhr places Anglicans in a gap. This idea, in addition to the scriptural praise of the faithful man who “stands in the gap” (Ezekiel 22:30), is consistent with Anglican self-definition as the *via media* (Latin for “the middle way”) between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, as William Kip had said earlier.

In a clear and credible explanation of the Anglican position, Niebuhr writes,

The commandments of Christ to sell everything for the sake of following him, to give up judging our fellows, to turn the other cheek to the violent, to humble ourselves and become servants of all, to abandon family and to forget tomorrow, cannot, as the synthesist [e.g. the Anglican] sees it, be made to rhyme with the requirements of human


\(^\text{67}\) *Ibid.*
life in civilized society by allegorizing them or by projecting them into the future, when
changed conditions will make them possible, or by relegating them to the sphere of
personal disposition and good intention... We cannot say, ‘Either Christ or Culture,’
because we are dealing with God in both cases. [Then again we] cannot say, ‘Both Christ
and Culture,’ as though there were no great distinction between them; but we must say,
“Both Christ and Culture,” in full awareness of the dual nature of our law, our end, and
our situation...  

Later Niebuhr cites Anglican Bishop Joseph Butler (1692-1752), an anti-Deist preacher,
Enlightenment philosopher, and Christian apologist, as a good example of the Christian
synthesis, “who in his Analogy of Religion and in his sermons on ethical subjects sought to relate
science, philosophy, and revelation, the cultural ethics of rational self-love – so prevalent in
eighteenth century England – and the ethics of Christian conscience, of the love of God and
neighbor.” Thus we learn from H. Richard Niebuhr that Anglican theology walks gingerly
between the traditional, historic teachings of the Church and the new and revealed lessons of
science and human experience. It is a sign of Anglican pragmatism.

This interpretation of Niebuhr’s synthesis and transformation is not the classic definition
of the via media, as was defined by Richard Hooker, but it is a result of it. (Joseph Butler is an
heir of Hooker.) Anglican ecclesiology walks several “middle roads:” Christ and culture; Roman
Catholicism and the Reformation; Christianity and science; and so on.

Reaching further back in time, the nineteenth century Oxford fathers (i.e. Revd Edward
Pusey, Revd John Keble, and the Venerable John Henry Newman) appealed to sixteenth century
theologian Richard Hooker for the definitive Anglican ecclesiology. (It is believed that
Anglicans first adopted via media when Newman wrote his Tracts for the Times in 1833 and
following.) Like its predecessor, John Jewel’s Apology for the Church of England, Richard
Hooker’s Lawes of Ecclesiastical Polity is basically a defense for the established Church, with

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68 Ibid., 122.
69 Ibid., 140.
the Monarch as Head; which is why Hooker writes, “the several societies of Christian men [sic], unto every of which the name of a Church is given with addition betokening severality, as the church of Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, England, and so the rest, must be endued with correspondent general properties belonging unto them as they are public Christian societies. And of such properties common unto all societies Christian, it may not be denied that one of the very chiepest is Ecclesiastical Polity.” Further, for Hooker, the Monarch is another of the “chiepest properties” or signs of the legitimacy of the Church of England. In the *Lawes*, as Newman rightly points out, Richard Hooker argues that Anglican ecclesiology is a happy median between autocratic Roman Catholicism on the one hand, and predestinarian and individualistic Puritanism on the other. It should be noted that the Tractarians adapted Hooker’s views to their own; but, Hooker was not Anglo-Catholic; he was anti-Papist with a high view of the Church.

**The “Church”**

Perhaps a basic *definition* of “church” is now called for. When Anglicans use the term “church,” what exactly do they mean? Obviously, for Hooker, “church” comprised “the several societies of Christian men,” i.e. national ecclesiastical bodies governed by a Monarch. But, generally Anglicans, whether they be creedal Calvinists or high churchmen, think of the church as “Christ’s One Holy Catholic and Apostolic church” mentioned in the Creeds. Unfortunately they also use the term interchangeably with the Anglican Communion itself. (For example, see Archbishop Rowan Williams’s remarks in Chapter Three). To complicate matters further, many of the thirty-eight provinces (or, national “churches”) of the Anglican Communion refer to themselves, each individually, as “the church.” Worse still, Episcopalians not only commonly refer to TEC as “the church,” but also at General Convention 2006 changed its legal name to

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“The Episcopal Church,” as if other provinces of the Communion were not episcopal (and, churches) as well. It is not the case that this loose use of the term “church” among Anglicans is a sign of confusion (although it may be confusing to others); it is more likely a sign of the high regard Anglicans have the Church in general – another strong clue to Anglican ecclesiology.

As mentioned earlier, the present-day Anglican Communion’s ecclesiology is heavily influenced by the nineteenth century Oxford/Tractarian Movement (1833). Generally the movement’s founders (especially, Pusey, Keble and Newman), sometimes called the “Oxford fathers,” would have agreed with Saint Hippolytus, who affirmed in his Traditio apostolica, that “whatever in the Creed follows the words ‘The Holy Ghost’ should be understood without reference to the preposition ‘in,’ so that our belief about the Holy Church...is said as part of our appeal to God. This means we believe that these things have been ordered by God and derive their existence from him.”

In other words, the Oxford fathers “believe the Holy Ghost; believe the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic church”; and so on. These Oxford fathers would have defined “church” in primitive in apostolic terms; and would have emphasized the corporate nature of living out the Christian faith over and against the Evangelicals’ emphasis on the need for personal salvation and individual relationship with Christ. Most Episcopalians, regardless of churchmanship, tend agree with this theology.

Perry Butler describes Anglicanism’s emphasis on Incarnational theology. “The publication in 1889 of Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation inaugurated a new era in Anglican theology. The book was by a group of young Oxford scholars who aimed to unite the theology of the Tractarians with modern critical scholarship. Significant elements in the Lux Mundi synthesis were the stress on God’s immanence, the use of

71 Kärkkäinen, An Introduction to Ecclesiology, 10.
evolutionary ideas, a critical attitude to the Old Testament and acceptance of some limitations of our Lord’s knowledge by way of ‘Kenotic’ Christology.” 72 This is a reference to Christ’s self-emptying upon the cross as sung about in Philippians 2:5-11. Thus the Anglican Communion, at its best, is a self-emptying “church,” at the same time holy and human. Incarnational theology is another example of Anglican pragmatism. A constant in Anglican ecclesiology is its willingness to adapt itself to the culture and to the times in which it finds itself, while simultaneously preserving the best of its catholic heritage. Sykes, Booty and Knight quote Revd Canon Paul Avis of Exeter who wrote about Anglicanism’s Incarnational nature in his essay, “What is Anglicanism?” They quote Avis, while “Anglicanism may be said to consist of the faith, practice and spirit (or the doctrine, order and worship) of the churches of the Anglican Communion...[it] is not merely the decadent legacy of unprincipled Anglo-Saxon imperialism; it is able to take its stand on, and find its justification in, the essence of Christianity, the Christian gospel.” 73 Strictly speaking the Anglican Communion is not a church, but it functions like one and is seen as one by the world.

The Book of Common Prayer 1979 says the Church is first “the community of the New Covenant,” that is, the Church of Jesus Christ; second, it is “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic”; and third, it is called by God “to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ”: nominal; adjectival; and verbal. 74 It remains, then, that while they regularly use the term “church” in many ways, the Anglicans ultimately mean the Church Universal, the Church Catholic.

72 Butler, “From the Early Eighteenth Century to the Present Day,” 43.
73 Sykes et al., The Study of Anglicanism, 459.
For the Oxford fathers, the Anglican Communion was one of three main branches of the Church Catholic, which also included the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church. While there are additional smaller branches, again, most Episcopalians and Anglicans still believe this idea to be true. Of course this poses a small problem for TEC because it is also sometimes seen as a Protestant denomination (or, in Anglo-Catholic terms, a Protestant sect). As indicated in Chapter One, TEC is a bit schizophrenic on this subject and has never definitively resolved the incongruity. It has tilted one way or the other at various times in its short history.

So far in this chapter we have seen Anglican ecclesiology defined in terms of ecumenism (Kärkkäinen), Trinitarianism (The Virginia Report), Episcopal Authority (The Hurd Report), Synthesis and Transformation (Niebuhr), Apostolicity (Oxford Movement), and establishmentarianism (Hooker). Additionally, we have mentioned the historic Creeds and two Anglican formularies essential to its identity: the thirty-nine Articles and the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral. Does Anglicanism have an ecclesiology apart from these? No, they are all necessary ingredients (and there might be others) that contribute to what the Anglican Communion and The Episcopal Church have become. We must conclude this section with an unclear answer to the original question. There is no systematic theology or definitive ecclesiology in Anglicanism, no Aquinas, Calvin or Barth. Instead there is an illustrious history of adherence to the historic Creeds, common worship (lex orandi, lex credenda), and pragmatism and flexibility when dealing with newly revealed truths. With this imperfect definition of Anglican ecclesiology, in general, we now turn to The Episcopal Church (TEC), in particular.

The Sovereignty of General Convention

Returning to another promise from Chapter One, TEC has an ecclesiology inherited from Anglicanism, and an ecclesiology all its own. This is due to its unusual history. It was born of
eighteenth century Enlightenment and American Revolutionary principles. It is rooted in Hooker’s Elizabethan settlement theology and in Newman’s and Keble’s Tractarian theology. And, it has evolved, over two hundred years, from an establishment religion to an egalitarian one, while simultaneously retaining its historical beliefs. TEC is many paradoxes: Protestant and Catholic, hierarchical and reformed, traditional and progressive. Its ecclesiology embraces so much of Christian history that it is almost indefinable.

However, no discussion of TEC’s ecclesiology would be complete without looking at its most distinctive feature: the General Convention of The Episcopal Church. David Holmes asks, “What would a political scientist say about the constitutional structure of the Episcopal Church that emerged from [the General Conventions of the 1780s and 90s] and was added to over the years? Although several interpretations are possible, the Church’s government can probably best be described as ‘unitary.’ In a unitary form of government, a central government holds legal supremacy over all other exercisers of government. It can keep and exercise much of that power itself – and so be highly centralized. Or, it can distribute those powers to the forms of government that are subordinate to it – and so be decentralized.”\(^{75}\) Unitary government seems to be what William White envisioned and it seems to be what is codified in the Constitution of TEC.

Church constitutional scholar James Dator agrees that TEC polity is unitary. On the subject of General Convention’s authority, Dator noted, “Sovereignty in the Episcopal Church is in the General Convention. General Convention [alone] possesses legal supremacy over all other governing bodies in the Episcopal Church. The dioceses and parishes, and the provinces, may enjoy a certain independence guaranteed by the Constitution, but the General Convention alone

\(^{75}\) Holmes, *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church*, 54.
alters the Constitution...The basis, or locus, of governing authority in the Episcopal Church is one of the most vexing problems in connection with its polity. While it is admitted by all that the ultimate sources are Christ and the Scriptures, is it believed that these find temporal manifestation in the bishops themselves, in the diocese with its bishop, clergy, and laity, or in the congregation of the faithful as a whole?"\textsuperscript{76}

What, in other words, is TEC's ecclesiology? To be sure each church party would answer Dator's question differently: the high churchmen, such as Samuel Seabury, would say temporal authority should rest ultimately in bishops; Evangelicals, such as William H. Wilmer (1782-1827), William Meade (1789-1862) or Alexander Viets Griswold (1766-1843, whose episcopate notably began in 1811) might answer in "the congregation of the faithful as a whole," reflecting TEC's Calvinist roots. But, pragmatic Anglicans, such as William Reed Huntington, William Augustus Muhlenberg (1796-1877) and John Henry Hobart (1775-1830), who arguably would exercise the greatest influence over TEC affairs in the nineteenth century, may answer Dator by saying authority should rest in "the diocese with its bishop, clergy, and laity." In other words, it rests in the Church. As Hobart proclaimed in his opening sermon at General Convention 1814, in what would become known as his \textit{Hobartian Synthesis}, TEC is "a system, which exhibiting the faith once delivered unto the saints and bearing the stamp of apostolic authority, must be best calculated...to extend in its purity the Kingdom of the Redeemer, and to advance most effectually the salvation of man."\textsuperscript{77} Hein and Shattuck add, "In [Bishop Hobart's] estimation, the Episcopal Church was not simply one among many American denominations; it was the true church that had been safeguarding the doctrine, ministry, and worship of apostolic Christianity for eighteen

\textsuperscript{77} Hein and Shattuck, Jr., \textit{The Episcopalians}, 64.
hundred years."78 A bit more precisely, Bishop Hobart, and his fellows, taught that TEC was a branch of the true church. Where Bishop Seabury had had a high regard for the episcopate, Bishop Hobart had the highest regard for the Church, that is, the Church Catholic. Moreover, while Dator is absolutely accurate in his assessment of TEC having unitary authority in General Convention, there always has been and continues to be a spiritual authority of bishops and dioceses that sometimes contends with, or even over-rules, the temporal authority. A notable example was the irregular ordinations of eleven women to the priesthood by Bishops Daniel Corrigan, Robert DeWitt, and Edward Welles, in July 1974, without the permission of General Convention. More extraordinary than these irregular and uncanonical ordinations was their ratification by General Convention 1977.

Like the Anglican Communion at large, TEC has never definitely answered the question of authority. But note that, even at the beginning, it had not taken long for William White’s idea of a general vestries and unicameral legislature to become a bicameral General Convention with unitary authority.

Noted Episcopal Church New Testament scholar William Countryman comments that TEC, since its inception, has had “a polity that maintained the office of bishops, while balancing their authority with that of other clergy and of lay people, acting in local parishes and in diocesan and national conventions...[i.e. Dator’s “diocese, with its bishop, clergy and laity]...The idea of a bishop who can dictate to the diocese is not absolutely unknown in [The Episcopal Church], but it exists, where it does, by local custom, not by canonical right.”79

Countryman further argues:

78 Ibid.
The American church [TEC] is thus markedly different from some of the Anglican provinces that might be called ‘Commonwealth churches’ by virtue of their devolution from the British Empire [c.1607-1940]. We did not originate in a top-down fashion. Nor are we presently organized in such a fashion. Such an arrangement is at home neither in our history, nor in our culture. [Any] effort to turn the American church into a top-down, episcopally controlled structure is not only unlikely to succeed, but it would violate the fundamental Chicago-Lambeth criterion of an episcopate adapted to local needs.\(^{80}\)

While Dr. Countryman may be accurate in his assessment of the attitudes of modern Episcopalians, he is less accurate in his reading of church history. Although TEC was never a “Commonwealth church” because it predates the Commonwealth, TEC did in fact “originate in a top-down fashion” dating to colonial times. TEC’s post-Revolutionary identity may be democratic, thanks to William White, but its roots are deeply hierarchical and the office of bishop is respected. Top-down, Bishop of London-directed, church of England-established ecclesiology existed in the Americas for nearly two hundred years prior to the Revolution. Moreover Samuel Seabury, a high churchman, styled himself “Bishop of All America,” imitating the Archbishop of Canterbury’s “Primate of All England.” Therefore it could be argued, counter to Countryman, that some sense of episcopal authority, apart from conventions, has been a part of the fabric of TEC since the beginning; or, more to the point, that there persists a tension between the authority of Bishops and that of the General Convention.

Further it could be argued that the sovereignty of General Convention poses certain problems in the Anglican Communion; for in recent years this unitary government has gotten TEC in no little hot water. For example, there was serious discussion about voting on whether or not Jesus Christ is Lord, in a resolution proposed by the Baltimore Declaration Group at General Convention 1991. Or, again resolutions have passed essentially outlawing any clergy members

\(^{80}\) Ibid., 5.
who believe women should not be admitted to Holy Orders – as if an all-male clergy is not a legitimately Christian point of view.

Of course this sovereignty of General Convention dates back to TEC’s beginnings. However, as Dator and Nunley point out:

...there appears to be no limit to the power of General Convention but its own self-limitations. Specifically, there is no evidence in the Constitution that the power of the General Convention was to be in any way limited in favor of diocesan conventions, nor that the two were to have mutually exclusive powers in any particular case...More importantly, the governing powers of General Convention are not fundamentally limited by the Constitution. Especially is there no expression of a division of powers or of a limitation to the powers of General Convention in favor of the dioceses. In consequence, General Convention does not exhibit essentially federal or confederal structure, but rather a unitary one. Its powers are virtually unlimited.\(^{81}\)

Be that as it may, now the “sovereignty of General Convention” may be added to the “first Anglican Church outside of Great Britain” and a “bicameral legislature” as distinctive features of the new denomination called The Episcopal Church. How has this uniquely Episcopalian polity affected the Communion? The answers to this question will take up the remaining two sections of this chapter.

**The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion Today**

Today’s Anglican Communion is comprised of thirty-eight autonomous provinces, representing nearly eighty-million Anglicans. Its growth and spread of the Christian gospel are admirable. However the Anglican Communion never created a super-structure or central governing body to keep pace with its phenomenal growth and hold it all together. Rather it has held together extraordinarily by good will. Writing at the close of the twentieth century (1998), Perry Butler opines,

the last forty years have...seen efforts to strengthen communion and consultation within the Communion...the appointment of the American Bishop Stephen Bayne (1908-74) as

\(^{81}\) Dator and Nunley, *Many Parts, One Body*, 73-74.
first executive Officer of the Anglican Communion in 1960 following a recommendation from the 1958 Lambeth Conference was the first significant step in this direction. [More will be said of Bishop Bayne’s ministry shortly.] Pan-Anglican congresses were held in Minneapolis in 1954 and Toronto in 1963. An Anglican Centre was established in Rome in 1966. . . The Anglican Consultative Council [the latest Instrument of Unity] was created after the 1968 Lambeth Conference and the Executive Officer replaced by a Secretary-General appointed by and responsible to the Council. The ACC is unique in that it is the only international Anglican body with a legal and constitutional position, since it was set up by a series of decisions taken by the synodical bodies of the various provinces. It provides a continuity of consultation and guidance on policy which the Anglican Communion has hitherto lacked.\(^\text{82}\)

However, it must be stressed that the ACC, like the other three Anglican Instruments of Unity, lacks any mechanism to enforce its decisions.

The Primates’ Meeting, the newest Instrument of Unity, was formed “to further advance cohesion,” writes Butler.\(^\text{83}\) But some Anglican theologians, such as Philip Turner, would argue that the creation of each successive Instrument of Unity, rather than creating clearer lines of authority, has further muddied the waters of communication and undermined authority.

Undoubtedly, the Primates started these more frequent meetings in direct response to the growing power and influence of the ACC. Nevertheless, Butler argues, “the Primates’ Meeting has been held since November 1979, though this is in no sense a ‘higher Synod’. Such developments have nonetheless affected the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury. He has become a more significant focus of unity within the Communion and is expected to travel extensively within it. This international role first uneasily with his position as Primate of a national and established church.”\(^\text{84}\)

TEC’s place in the Anglican Communion reached its zenith in the halcyon years following the second World War. Post-WWII America could be described as a third Great

\(^{82}\) Butler, “From the Early Eighteenth Century to the Present Day,” 49.

\(^{83}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{84}\) *Ibid.*
Awakening: everybody “liked Ike,” church attendance boomed and there was great prosperity and optimism. As a result TEC’s membership soared, and Presiding Bishop Arthur Lichtenburger built an enduring symbol of this period: the Episcopal Church Headquarters building at 815 Second Avenue in the cultural capital of the world, New York City. “815,” as it is affectionately known, represented not only a prosperous and optimistic denomination, but a “national church” as well. A national church (not to be confused with Huntington’s National Church Idea) is like a successful American corporation, has a sky-scaper headquarters, a large staff, a Chief Executive Officer – which is what the Office of Presiding Bishop had become – and of course a business plan – which in the case of the church was captured in its corporate name, “the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States.” Any missionary regularly receiving cheques from the “national church” would be familiar with this moniker. Additionally, and not coincidentally, “815” was located barely one block south of the United Nations headquarters building, another enduring symbol of post-war optimism as well as a long-held dream of President Woodrow Wilson (who is buried in the National Cathedral) and President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (a “cradle Episcopalian,” who was Senior Churchwarden of his parish church in Hyde Park, New York and President of the United States simultaneously).

If “815” represented TEC’s new place as a world leader, then Stephen Fielding Bayne (1908-1974) personified TEC’s leadership in the Anglican Communion. Bishop Bayne was the first appointed Executive Officer of the Anglican Communion (1960-1964), under Archbishop of Canterbury Geoffrey Fisher. He was also founder of the Anglican Consultative Council – another Instrument of Unity. According to church historian John Booty, “from the outset, Bishop Bayne’s understanding of the Anglican Communion was grounded in the definition provided by
Resolution 49 of the Lambeth Conference in 1930: ‘The Anglican Communion is a fellowship, within the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted dioceses, Provinces or regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, which have the following characteristics in common:

(a) they uphold and propagate the Catholic and Apostolic faith and order as they are general set forth in the Book of Common Prayer as authorized in their several Churches
(b) they are particular or national churches, and, as such, promote within each of their territories a national expression of Christian faith, life and worship; and
(c) they are bound together not by a central legislative and executive authority, but by natural loyalty sustained through the common counsel of the Bishops in conference.\(^{85}\)

There is no better summary definition of the Anglican Communion than Bishop Bayne’s.

But how telling that this Lambeth Resolution did not mention the laity, when, at least in the Church of England and TEC, it is the counsel of bishops, clergy and laity together that takes decisions. It should come as no surprise that Bishop Bayne thought this way. He wrote,

I am a child of the Catholic [high church] side of the house, I suppose, nourished in the great tradition of Bishop Hobart, taught from youth a vigorous sense of the sacramental and institutional, historic life of the church. I did not know it then, but I know it now, that such a ‘Catholic’ sense was the result of a virile and often pugnacious witness of a minority school of thought – that had it not been for me [sic.] willing to be different and often divisive, few of the treasures of a steady, healthy sacramental life which are now so freely found in all our churches would have been even suspected...Quite equally, I know that the kind of healthy sacramental life which was taught me would be impossible to maintain were it not for the persistent reminders of the supremacy of Holy Scripture and the primary necessity of personal devotion and faith, which came from the other side of the house [low church evangelicals]...\(^{86}\)

The Anglican branch of the Church Catholic – “that wonderful and sacred mystery” – is comprised of thirty-eight autonomous provinces, often called, “member churches.” Of the thirty-eight TEC holds a special place, both historically and politically, as discussed in Chapter One.


However, TEC’s place in the Communion today is a bit tenuous, due in part to controversial actions of the all-powerful General Convention. As indicated earlier, it was The General Convention of the Episcopal Church that underwrote Bayne’s ministry as Executive Officer of the Communion and head of the Anglican Consultative Council in the 1960s. And it is General Convention that to this day remains the prime supporter of international, inter-Anglican meetings. Yet this same General Convention has tackled highly controversial social issues, making it sometimes unpopular in the rest of the Communion. David Holmes writes that for TEC, “The three issues that caused the most controversy during the 1970s and 1980s [and continue to the present] were the ordination of women, the rights of homosexuals, and the revision of the Book of Common Prayer.” For reasons to be explained in the next chapter, this paper deals mostly with General Convention’s resolutions with respect to homosexuality; but before doing so, since this chapter deals with ecclesiology, it is worth looking at how General Convention sees itself in relation to the Anglican Communion.

A Survey of General Convention Resolutions Regarding the Anglican Communion (2000-2012)

We now turn to General Convention’s recent actions regarding its relationship with the Anglican Communion. From the Seventy-third General Convention (2000), Resolution C009, explaining TEC’s understanding of authority in the Anglican Communion:

Resolved, That the 73rd General Convention of the Episcopal Church celebrate the diversity of the cultures and races of the member churches of the Anglican Communion; and be it further
Resolved, That the Convention note that the breadth of cultural differences in the Communion today is both a gift and a challenge to understanding of authority in our communion; and be it further
Resolved, That Convention affirm the Anglican experience of shared provincial authority as an authority shared among lay, clerical, and episcopal orders as well as among the many diverse churches of the Anglican Communion; and be it further

87 Holmes, A Brief History of the Episcopal Church, 167.
Resolved, That the convention commend the Episcopal Church’s ongoing participation in the variety of ways Anglicans come together as the Body of Christ including, but not limited to, diocesan and national conventions, the Anglican Consultative Council, Lambeth Conferences, the Primates Meeting, Anglican Congresses, and official and unofficial networks; and be it further

Resolved, That the convention encourage the continuing evolution of conciliar modes of discernment in the practice of an authority that relies upon scripture, tradition, and reason as the basis for our discernment of God’s will in our lives. Motion carried.\textsuperscript{88}

Essentially this resolution affirms TEC’s commitment to the status quo. But in no way seeks to locate or clarify what the authority of “conciliar modes of discernment, using scripture, tradition and reason” should mean today. In other words General Convention sees it in TEC’s best interest not to seek a more definitive Anglican ecclesiology.

Similarly, in a rejection of TVR recommendations for clearer authority, the “73\textsuperscript{rd} General Convention of the Episcopal Church express[ed] concern about the acceptance by the Bishops assembled at Lambeth (1998) of the Virginia Report, especially its call to study ‘whether effective communion, at all levels, does not require appropriate instruments, with due safeguards, no only for legislation, but also for oversight’ (Resolution III.e, citing the Virginia Report, para. 5:20) and whether the Primates Meetings should be given ‘enhanced responsibility in offering guidance on doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters.’ (Resolution II.6); and be it further

Resolved, That the 73\textsuperscript{rd} General Convention affirm the traditional Anglican view of authority as an authority dispersed among the many autonomous provinces of this communion and that this authority is shared among lay, clerical, and episcopal orders of this communion; and be it further

Resolved, That the 73\textsuperscript{rd} General Convention affirm the traditional understanding of the Anglican Communion that scripture, tradition, and reason together provide the basis for our discernment of God’s will in our lives.\textsuperscript{89}


\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 514-515.
Perhaps because it was preoccupied with the momentous ratification of the election of the Revd V. Gene Robinson, a partnered, openly gay man, as Bishop of New Hampshire, the seventy-fourth General Convention, 2003, in Minneapolis passed no resolutions with respect to its relationship to the wider Anglican Communion.90

Then, in 2006, partly resulting from Gene Robinson’s election, the seventy-fifth General Convention was compelled to respond to the Windsor Report. Briefly, both Lambeth 1998 and TVR had called on the Archbishop of Canterbury to appoint a Commission to consider what his role should be in resolving intra-Anglican disputes. Although this never happened, it could be argued that the Lambeth Commission on Communion, better known by the name of its chair, the Most Revd Robin Eames, was created in the spirit of the Lambeth 1998 request. The Eames Commission wrote The Windsor Report, 16 October 2004. The Windsor Report tried unsuccessfully to clarify the nature of communion and authority in the Communion. Instead it succeeded in calling for a Communion-wide theological discourse; and it succeeded at infuriating some of the provinces who prefer the nebulous status quo.

Resolution A 165 reads thus:

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church commend the Windsor Report “as offering a way forward for the mutual life of our Communion,” (Primates’ Communiqué), and as an essential and substantive contribution to the process of living into deeper levels of communion and interdependence across the Anglican Communion; and be it further

Resolved, That the 75th General Convention commit The Episcopal Church to the ongoing ‘Windsor Process,’ a process of discernment as to the nature and unity of the Church, as we pursue a common life of dialogue, listening, and growth, formed and informed by the bonds of communion we share; and urge all members of this Church to commit themselves to the call of greater communion and interdependent life; and be it further

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Resolved, That the 75th General Convention commend the ‘listening process’ as recommended in the Windsor Report, ‘so that greater common understanding might be obtained to the underlying issue of same gender relationships’ (Windsor Report, para 135); and be it further
Resolved, That the 75th General Convention gratefully acknowledge the practical steps taken by the Anglican Communion Office to begin a formal ‘listening process’ across the Communion; and be it further
Resolved, That the 75th General Convention commit this Church to participating fully and openly in this ‘listening process,’ both at the local level and with the rest of the Communion (ACC 13, Resolution 12); and be it further
Resolved, That a staff person at the Episcopal Church Center be identified to forward this ‘listening process’ in coordination with the cognate person for the Communion and with our Communion partners.91

The seventy-fifth General Convention also attempted to clarify its place in the Anglican Communion in a response to the Windsor Report with Resolution A159:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church reaffirm the abiding commitment of The Episcopal Church to the fellowship of churches that constitute the Anglican Communion, and seek to live into the highest degree of communion possible; and be it further
Resolved, That the 75th General Convention reaffirm the descriptive Preamble of our church’s Constitution that states that The Episcopal Church is in ‘communion with the See of Canterbury, upholding and propagating the historic Faith and Order as set forth in the Book of Common Prayer,’ with the understanding that decisions by other Provinces and primates of the Anglican Communion do not affect the legal identity of The Episcopal Church; and be it further
Resolved, that the 75th General Convention join with the Archbishop of Canterbury, the primates, and the Anglican Consultative Council in making a commitment to the vision of interdependent life in Christ, and commends Section A and B of the Windsor Report as a means of deepening our understanding of that commitment; and be it further
Resolved, That as an expression of interdependence, the Presiding Officers of both Houses work in partnership with the churches of the Anglican Communion to explore ways by which there might be inter-Anglican consultation and participation on Standing Commissions of the General Convention of The Episcopal Church.92

The seventy-sixth General Convention, 2009, as has been predicted, spent most of its time with world mission, and interfaith and international concerns because it followed Lambeth

91 Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America otherwise known as The Episcopal Church, 13-21 June 2006 (New York, NY: The General Convention of the Episcopal Church, Episcopal Church Center, 2006), Columbus OH – “Come and Grow, 427”.
92 Ibid.
2008. Unlike the previous three General Conventions, almost no time was spent on human sexuality or the Anglican Communion, with the exception of Resolution D027 concerning the “Anglican Communion Five Marks of Mission,” which will be discussed below.

Interestingly, the effort to create a “Task Force on Anglican Communion Relations (Resolution A125) to consider and make recommendation to the 77th General Convention on requests from any of the Instruments of Communion which require a response from The Episcopal Church,” was soundly defeated. This resolution would have mirrored A124, “A Task Force on Congregations in Foreign Lands,” which proposed TEC’s increased financial support of former churches/provinces in this hemisphere. Both were defeated primarily due to the proposed $100,000 funding from the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance. But with respect to A125, “the baby was thrown out with the bath water:” although it was understandably defeated at a time of national crisis (“the Great Recession”), at the same time, in light of yet another unprecedented election, that of the Rt Revd Katherine Jefferts-Schori as Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church, it sent an unfortunate signal to the rest of the Communion. It unintentionally implied that TEC was willing to disregard the expressed wishes of the rest of the Communion and “go it alone,” to paraphrase of the words of former President (and cradle Episcopalian) George Walker Bush. To be fair, it needs to be asked if a convention of hundreds of individual Christians can always be said to be of one mind about anything, especially since resolutions are deliberated upon almost in isolation, not in a wider context or world-view. In other words, it is worth asking if, when deputies vote, are they thinking primarily of the specific issue at hand or are they thinking more generally of how their vote might affect the Anglican Communion? Most likely, the former is all too often the case.
Happily, the seventy-sixth General Convention did strongly endorse the Anglican Communion’s newly articulated formulary, called “The Five Marks of Mission.” D027 reads thus:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the 76th General Convention adopt the following “Five Marks of Mission” as articulated by the Anglican Communion:
- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise [sic.] and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth
And be it further
Resolved, That the 76th General Convention recommend the “Five Marks of Mission” as the five top strategic priorities for The Episcopal Church, and request Program, Budget and Finance and the Executive Council to center the budget for the 2013-15 triennium around these strategic priorities; and be it further
Resolved, That convention recommit The Episcopal Church to mutual responsibility and interdependence in the Body of Christ with the provinces and churches of the Anglican Communion in keeping with “A Covenant for a Communion in Mission” commended by the 13th Meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council (Nottingham, 2005); and be it further
Resolved, That The Secretary of the General Convention communicate the substance of this resolution to: The Archbishop of Canterbury, the General Secretary of the Anglican Communion, the Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council and Primates, and the leadership of the churches and provinces of the Anglican Communion.93

Once again the sovereign General Convention seemed to send mixed signals to the rest of the Anglican Communion. On the one hand it heartily endorsed the “Five Marks of Mission,” thereby indicating a willingness to continue to be identified as Anglican; on the other hand it elected the first woman Primate in the Communion, fully aware that this action would further antagonize a Communion already divided over the election of a gay bishop in 2003. A recognizable pattern that has emerged, particularly from these two actions, is one of unilateral

decision making and an over-emphasis on the autonomy of individual Anglican provinces, as if we were not interdependent “churches” or in communion at all.

Although the main theme of the seventy-seventh General Convention, 2012, could be said to be the restructuring of TEC (most of which was tabled till the seventy-eighth convention in 2015); it did turn its attention to Anglican Communion matters more forcefully than it had since 2000. The number of resolutions nearly doubled due mostly to the proposed Anglican Communion Covenant, itself a result of the Windsor process. The Anglican Communion Covenant is seen by many as a call for a type of global canon law. Because of this, its fourth section is consistently vetoed by the more liberal provinces of the Communion.

The array of relevant resolutions included: B006 affirming the Anglican Covenant; C115 recommending further study of the Anglican Covenant; D006 recommending consideration of the Anglican Covenant for “Communion in Mission;” D007, a proposed “Response to the Anglican Covenant;” and D046 recommending the Anglican Covenant be labeled moot; all of which failed. However, B005 regarding the ongoing commitment to the Anglican Covenant Process and D008 affirming TEC’s membership in the Anglican Communion passed. Here they are quoted in their entirety.

Resolution B005:

Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, That the General Convention express its gratitude to those who so faithfully worked at producing and responding to the proposed Anglican Covenant, and be it further

Resolved, That the 77th General Convention acknowledge that following extensive study and prayerful consideration of the Anglican Covenant there remain a wide variety of opinions and ecclesiological positions in The Episcopal Church, and be it further

Resolved, That as a pastoral response to the Episcopal Church, the General Convention decline to take a position on the Anglican Covenant at this convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention ask the Presiding Officers to appoint a task force of Executive Council (Blue Book 637) to continue to monitor the ongoing developments with respect to the Anglican Covenant and how this church might continue its participation; and be it further

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Resolved, That the Executive Council task force on the Anglican Covenant report its findings and recommendations to the 78th General Convention.  

Note that the B005's second and third Resolve make it clear that General Convention believes a so-called pastoral response, intended to placate its diverse internal opinions, trumps any clear statement of doctrine or unity within the Communion.

Resolution D008:
Resolved, the House of Bishops concurring, that the 77th General Convention express its profound gratitude to those who so faithfully work at encouraging dialogue within the diversity of the Anglican Communion, and be it further
Resolved, That we celebrate the great blessing of the Anglican Communion in its diversity within community as autonomous church in relationship bound together in our differences in service to God's mission, and be it further
Resolved, That we hold fast and reaffirm our historic commitment to and constituent membership in the Anglican Communion as expressed in the Preamble of the Constitution of The Episcopal Church, and be it further
Resolved, That The Episcopal church maintain and reinforce strong links across the world-wide Anglican Communion committing itself to continued participation in the wider councils of the Anglican Communion, and be it further
Resolved, That The Episcopal Church deepen its involvement with Communion ministries and networks using where applicable the Indaba process: conversations across differences to strengthen relationships in God’s mission; and be it further
Resolved, That the 77th General Convention encourage dioceses, congregations and individual members of The Episcopal Church to educate themselves about the Communion as well as promote and support the Anglican Communion and its work.  

The Journal will note, “This resolution is closely modeled upon a resolution adopted in a number of dioceses in the Church of England following their vote against a motion to adopt the Anglican Covenant.” Also the stated goal of the Indaba process, first introduced at Lambeth 2008, is “conversation across difference to empower mission.” In other words Indaba presumes (or, hopes) that if people of vastly differing opinions are nevertheless united in a common goal - for example, the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the advancement of the Kingdom of God -

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96 Ibid.
then somehow by remaining in conversation and truly listening to one another, they will
eventually arrive at the goal. This idea is noble, but problematic in that General Convention is
designed to be political and legislative, where *Indaba* is designed to be relational and spiritual.
Moreover, in light of General Convention’s political personality, ResolutionD008 reads almost
platitudinous. Its last three Resolves encouraging greater participation in and knowledge of the
Anglican Communion are belied by General Convention’s unilateral actions and lack of
cooperation with the Communion’s (or, at least the Instruments’) expressed wishes.

The words of these two resolutions, and most of those dealing with TEC’s place in the
Anglican Communion, ring a bit hollow. General Convention seems to be biding time. Rather
than respecting the theological opinions of fellow Anglican provinces, General Convention
seems to insist on its own way. These resolutions reveal a “church” that sees itself as completely
independent of the Anglican Communion. Meanwhile, the dreams of Episcopalians who want a
clearer and stronger relationship with the Anglican Communion are deferred. If the General
Convention can be said to be of a mind, it is to preserve the nebulous *status quo*, as if to say, in
time all will come around to our point-of-view. But the times are clearly calling for something
more than preserving the *status quo*. Chapter Four will ask what is needed for the Communion to
survive into the twenty-first century. But, first Chapter Three will deal with Anglicanism’s key
stumbling block.
Chapter Three: The Threat to Communion: How homosexuality is both the focus of conflict and the key to the survival of the Anglican Communion (Moral Theology)

Introduction

If Chapter One’s description of The Episcopal Church as both catholic and reformed is to be believed, then TEC’s relationship to the wider Anglican Communion is equally confusing: sometimes reflecting a catholic view of the Church, oftentimes reflecting a congregational view. Historically, the relationship has proved to be uneasy and uneasily defined. But happily a social issues has come along that could clarify the relationship one and for all. In fact this issue, homosexuality, may be the defining issue of our time. The Anglican Communion finds itself in the middle of the gay rights controversy, but this is not a bad place to be. Rather it is providential that we are here. With the issue of homosexuality, God is presenting the Anglicans with an opportunity once again to lead the way in social change, as they did in the beginning of the twentieth century.

This chapter will argue that while homosexuality is the source of deep division in the Anglican Communion, at the same time, it can, if handled carefully, be the key to the Communion’s future viability. Unlike Chapter Two which was highly critical of the sovereignty of General Convention and General Convention actions that disregard Anglican Communion requests, this Chapter supports the idea that it is God’s will that the “Church” promote healthy homosexual practice. The chapter begins with a brief history of TEC’s theological journey with homosexuality. It will next review recent General Convention decisions regarding homosexuality (2000-2012) to show a pattern of increased acceptance of gays and alienation from the Communion. It will then attempt to interpret what has happened during these forty-some years.
Episcopali ans and Homosexuality

The “800-pound gorilla” in the Anglican living room is the moral issue of homosexuality. The “love that dare not speak its name,” as Lord Alfred Douglas, the infamous young lover of Oscar Wilde called it, is as much the threatening and defining issue of the twenty-first century as was slavery in the nineteenth. To use Canon Paul Avis’s categories of Anglicans, which were Evangelicals, Broad Churchmen and Anglo-Catholics: Evangelicals (who are now called Traditionalists) consider homosexuality a tragic moral choice and the greatest sin on the calendar. They would rather it disappeared; and clinging to a handful of biblical texts, denounce it as an abomination. Meanwhile, broad churchmen (now called Progressives) see homosexuality as merely an accident of birth and an important and timely political issue. Progressives prefer to elevate homosexuality to a larger discussion of human sexuality in a so-far unsuccessful attempt to encourage dialogue. And, Anglo-Catholics (whom Evelyn Waugh, in Brideshead Revisited referred to as sodomites) barely acknowledge homosexuality exists, although many gays are drawn to their ranks. Anglo-Catholics would prefer not to discuss the matter at all. For the most part, true Anglo-Catholics have abandoned TEC completely and either aligned themselves with other provinces or converted to Rome.

The church party rivalry that dominated TEC’s life in the two previous centuries no longer exists. In the twenty-first century TEC, churchmanship has been replaced by partisan politics, as is the case in the American culture at large. Theology is almost completely relegated to seminaries and scholarly journals, and has been replaced in the wider TEC life by the Social Gospel. But, regardless of this TEC culture change, homosexuality, at least in America, is an

issue whose time has come and therefore must be dealt with. The fate of the Communion may depend upon how this debate is resolved.

Rightly or wrongly, TEC has emerged as a leader in bringing homosexuality to the theological discussion table. In “To Set Our Hope on Christ,” TEC’s response to the Windsor accusations, which will be discussed later in this chapter, Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold made a revealing statement: “We have been wrestling with this issue for more than forty years,” he said.98 This and other statements in the document rather suggested that TEC opinions on homosexuality had somehow evolved, and implied that perhaps those of other provinces of the Communion had not. Also, Bishop Griswold implies that somehow TEC’s forty-year experience itself should validate the conclusions TEC reached.

TEC’s redefining the place of gays in the “church” dates at least to the 1960s, a decade often referred to as a time of sexual revolution in America. The birth of the gay rights’ movement in American is considered to be the 1969 “Stonewall” incident in which gays finally and publicly resisted New York City police harassment. This watershed moment empowered many American gays, including those in the church, to “come out of the closet.” By this time TEC had acquired an enviable reputation for championing social issues and defending the oppressed. Thus, in many ways, gay rights became the latest in a series of human rights’ causes: for example, women’s suffrage, worker’s rights, and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s.

Where precisely did public discussion on homosexuality in TEC begin? In a section of his History of the Episcopal Church called “The General Convention Compromise on

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Homosexuality,” the Revd Dr. Robert Prichard summarizes the beginning of TEC’s theological journey with gay rights.

In 1973, the General Convention had rewritten the church’s 1946 canon on remarriage. The earlier canon allowed remarriage in the church only when one of nine impediments (consanguinity, insanity, bigamy, fraud, etc.) existed in the first marriage. The new canon, which [importantly] focused on the health of the relationship that a person intended to enter rather than upon previous marriage gave the parish priest greater pastoral freedom in dealing with divorced people. Some within the church perceived this decision as a first step in a broader revision of traditional standards for personal morality.99

In other words, the bishops’ shift, in the 1970s, from a legalistic to a holistic point of view regarding human relationships unwittingly (and unintentionally, since Presiding Bishop John Allin was vocally opposed to the then new idea of gay rights) opened the door for gays to be acknowledged openly in the church, although it was not until 1994 that “Integrity,” a support group for openly gay and lesbian Episcopalians, founded by Dr. Louie Crew, was officially recognized by General Convention. While this was a monumental advancement in the Church’s life, it was merely the first step on the road to true acceptance. General agreement was relatively easy, first because the holistic view of all human relationships was generally accepted by the 1970s, and second because traditionalists could maintain a “love the sinner; hate the sin” approach to the issue. Prichard supports this assertion when he writes, “By the 1970s many Episcopalians made a distinction between homosexual orientation and homosexual activity, [which quite naturally led to General Convention combining] a restatement of the inappropriateness of sexual relations outside of heterosexual marriage with the affirmation that ‘there should be no barrier to ordination of qualified persons of...homosexual orientation whose behavior the Church [that is, TEC] considers wholesome.”100 This compromise statement – not

99 Prichard, A History of the Episcopal Church, 268.
100 Ibid., 269.
uncommon for General Convention pronouncements – was a significant shift in TEC moral teaching, undoubtedly influenced by a shift in American social mores of the time.

However it could also be argued that General Convention 1979 lit the candle of sexual revolution in TEC, although it may not have been generally understood at the time. Such is one of the hazards of TEC’s democratic – as opposed to autocratic, conciliar, or synodical – polity. It was a revolution because it is one thing to restate the Christian Church’s traditional teaching that sexual relations are appropriate only within the sacred bond of Holy Matrimony; it is quite another to suggest that homosexual identity should not be a barrier to ordination. It seems that nobody noticed. Things continued pretty much as they had been before: conservative bishops declined to bless or ordain homosexual person and liberal bishops willingly did so. While there is no record of the rest of the Anglican Communion commenting on these 1970s TEC decisions, they are nonetheless revolutionary; and they set the stage for the present debate. This was only the beginning.

The Gene Robinson Affair

It could be further argued that the forty years of discussion Bishop Griswold referred to (reminiscent of the metaphorical forty years the freed Jewish slaves spent wandering in the wilderness, seeking God’s will), culminated in the 2003 ordination of an openly gay and partnered Episcopal priest, the Revd Canon V. Gene Robinson, as Bishop of New Hampshire. While TEC could maintain that Bishop Robinson was validly elected according to the TEC Constitution and Canons, and that his election was validly confirmed by General Convention 2003; nevertheless a hailstorm of dissent throughout the Anglican Communion ensued. For example, Archbishop Peter Akinola, spiritual leader of the largest Anglican province, Nigeria, wrote,
With this tragic topic on the agenda of the Anglican Church [sic.] worldwide, the Church has regrettably come to a crossroads...[but, communion with one another cannot be] at the expense to vital communion with God, and certainly not at the cost of shepherding more than 17 million Nigerian Anglicans into harm’s way by leading them into the wilderness of morally empty theologizing. Homosexuality or lesbianism or bestiality is to us a form of slavery, and redemption from it is readily available through repentance and faith in the saving grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{101}

The Archbishop’s harsh words signaled the beginning of an unfortunate rupture among the 38 provinces – mostly “First world” provinces, like TEC versus “Global South provinces,” like Nigeria – that continues to this day. It must be noted also that Akinola’s reference to “17 million Nigerian Anglicans” is a not so thinly veiled flexing of his political muscles in the Communion. Similarly, it could argued the same forty year journey (the 1960s – 2000s) American Episcopalians used for social advancements roughly paralleled the forty years that “Global South” provinces, like Nigeria, spent learning how to be the church newly freed from colonial rule. It could be argued that Akinola’s motivation in making so strong an objection to American innovation was strategic in that it marks the first time “Global South” provinces refused to give their “rubber stamp” approval to anything the “First World” provinces did. It could also be argued that ironically the province with the most people (Nigeria), for the first time, placed itself in opposition to the province with the most money (TEC), the primary funder of the Anglican Communion. All these things could be true. Put together, they graphically demonstrate colossal social change in a Communion that was once quite monolithic. They are signs that the Gene Robinson affair and its subsequent responses were a wake-up call to the Anglican Communion that the status quo had ended.

Sadly, Akinola’s words also reveal the depth of the present theological divide and the height of the emotion of those opposed to homosexuality. This point of view should not be

\textsuperscript{101} Archbishop Peter Akinola, Primate of Nigeria, “Why I Object to Homosexuality,” in Church Times, 4 August, 2005.
ignored or dismissed as primitive or unenlightened. While the Archbishop’s words here quoted are venomous, he does have 1,000 years of Church teaching on his side. TEC could have taken much more care with its place in the Anglican Communion before allowing Bishop Robinson’s election to come before General Convention. Or again, the Diocese of New Hampshire could have given more thought to the possible implications of such a move, in spite of their high regard for (then) Canon Robinson.

Archbishop Akinola was by no means alone in his public opposition to Gene Robinson’s election. His words were simply chosen for this paper because they were among the most virulent and represent a point of view shared by many faithful Anglicans, including some Episcopalians.

In addition to the “Global South” opposition, the Archbishop of Canterbury, spiritual head of the Anglican Communion expressed reservations as well. Hein and Shattuck wrote, “the response of the archbishop of Canterbury, the Anglo-Catholic theologian Rowan Williams, reflected his anxiety for the future of the Anglican Communion. A liberal who personally supported the ordination and appointment of homosexual clergy, Williams nonetheless expressed his concern that the decision of the Episcopal Church in the United States would ‘inevitably have a significant impact on the Anglican Communion throughout the world.’”

As a reminder of Chapter One’s discussion, it is ironic that the Episcopal Church without whose vision and work the Anglican Communion would not have come into being is now the same Episcopal Church that is at odds with half of its fellow provinces and, some would argue, could cause the dissolution of the Communion.

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102 Hein Shattuck, Jr., *The Episcopalians*, 145.
The Windsor Report

After the ordination of Bishop Gene Robinson, something had to be done. Thus, in classic Anglican fashion, Archbishop Williams established a commission to assess TEC’s decisions to permit the ordination. The commission issued its “Windsor Report” in 2004 rounding condemning TEC’s unilateral actions.103 The Windsor Report is too exhaustive for this paper to summarize, but there are three important aspects that are particularly relevant to the gay rights debate.

First, in the foreword, Archbishop Robin Eames (who had previously chaired the commission that produced TVR) describes the seriousness of the gay rights debate. “The depth of conviction and felling on all sides,” Eames asserted, “has on occasions introduced a degree of harshness and a lack of charity which is new to Anglicanism...the ‘bonds of affection’ so often quoted as a precious attribute of Anglican Communion life, as well as the instruments of communion and unity, have been threatened by the current divisions. While attention turns to the developments in the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Anglican Church of Canada it is clear that this threat [hence, the title of this chapter] has been increased by reactions to them.”104

Second, it was noticeable that the composition of the Windsor Commission’s membership was skewed in the traditionalist direction, inadvertently chosen to get results the traditionalists desired. While it cannot be doubted that Archbishop of Canterbury Williams attempted to achieve a balanced representation, this is not in fact what happened. Of the seventeen members, ten (i.e. more than half) were bishops or archbishops in a Communion that places weight on the theological opinions of clergy in this particular order. Similarly, three of the

104 Ibid., 1.
four primates on the commission are well known conservatives. The commission’s chair was Archbishop Drexel Gomez, Primate of the West Indies, who is known to be a gay rights opponent.

Third, there were Windsor Report recommendations that proved to be problematic to the progressives. For example, in Section C, called “Instruments of Unity,” (namely, the See of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conferences, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Primates’ Meetings), recommendations 105 and 106 pose a threat to the status quo. 105 reads, in part:

We have concluded that there needs to be a clearer understanding of the expectations placed on provinces in responding to the decisions of [the Instruments of Unity]. We do not favour the accumulation of formal power by the Instruments of Unity, or the establishment of any kind of central ‘curia,’ [as in the Roman Catholic Church] for the communion. 105

Just as strongly, 106 argues for clearer authority in the Communion, and because it supports one of the main contentions of this paper will be quoted in its entirety:

Further work is necessary on the relationship between [the] Instruments of Unity. At the moment there is no clear demarcation indicating which responsibilities fall to which Instrument; this is particularly true of the relationship between the Lambeth Conference and the Anglican Consultative Council. Which speaks with the more authoritative voice for worldwide Anglicanism? Should the Lambeth Conference, as the gathering of the chief pastors and teachers of the churches have a ‘magisterium’ [again, like the Roman Catholic Church], a teaching authority of special status? Is the Anglican Consultative Council, as the sole instrument which has lay participation alongside ordained membership other than the episcopal order, and thus most closely resembles the synods and conventions of the provinces, more appropriately the body which can take something approaching binding decisions for the Communion? What is the relationship between the Lambeth Conference and the Primates’ Meeting? When the Primate’s Meeting began, it was envisaged as taking on certain responsibilities akin to a Standing Committee of the Lambeth Conference, providing the sort of frequent meeting which would allow it to address emerging crises...Has it, in fact, developed such an ‘enhanced responsibility’ as the Lambeth Conference and the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission have strongly recommended? It may be clearer if the ‘Primates Meeting’ became known as the ‘Primates’ Conference’ – the Lambeth Standing Committee. 106

105 Ibid., Paragraph 105.
106 Ibid., Paragraph 106.
These two Windsor recommendations should remind us of Chapter Two’s description of an ecclesiology that has not kept pace with the growth of the Communion. The recommendations also portend Chapter Four’s discussion of the need for greater authority in the Communion. They are cited here because they demonstrate the seriousness with which some parts of the Communion responded to TEC’s unilateral gay rights decisions and because they demonstrate that Anglicanism has no legal mechanism for arbitrating disputes. Although the above recommendations are perfectly reasonable, it is important to point out that they overlook the fact that the Communion is not a legal entity, and therefore cannot enact or enforce legislation. The thirty-eight provinces are each sovereign and autonomous.

It should also be noted that the Windsor Report makes frequent references to Roman Catholic polity, such as “curia” and “magisterium,” without explicitly mentioning the Roman Catholic Church. However, this paper wants to say Windsor recommendations could have been made even stronger if contrasts between Anglican and Roman polity had been explicitly stated. For, it cannot be denied that a Communion that began as a small, loose and friendly association bound together by allegiance to Canterbury and respect for the English crown has evolved into one of the largest Christian bodies in the world, and therefore in need of some way of “policing itself” – if that term is appropriate. Moreover, Church History teaches us that ever since the ancient Jewish culture grew to the point of demanding a king in lieu of the judges, time and time again Christian bodies (especially American Protestant dominations) who in their early days resisted organization and regulation finally gave in to them. In light of these realities it is possible the Windsor recommendations did not go far enough in revealing our need for more recognizable authority in the Communion.
The most helpful Windsor recommendation is 135, which reads in part: “We recommend that the Instruments of Unity, through the Joint Standing Committee, find practical ways in which the ‘listening’ process commended by the Lambeth Conference in 1998 may be taken forward, so that greater common understanding might be obtained on the underlying issue of same gender relationship.” This led to an impassioned TEC response.

“To Set Our Hope on Christ”

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, TEC’s response to the Windsor Report came in the form of “To Set Our Hope on Christ,” an unapologetic explanation of its actions. (Hereinafter it will be referred to as the Response.) The response answers Windsor question 135 – regarding the worthiness of a gay and partnered person to be in a leadership position in the Christian community – using “scripture, tradition, and reason” – but not in the ways traditionalist Christians would expect or accept. Its bottom-line arguments in favor of ordaining practicing homosexual Christians and blessing their relationships is actually an appeal to, what some Anglicans refer to as a fourth leg of the three-legged stools: experience (in this case, the forty years of discussion). The Response is replete with references to TEC’s forty-year journey exploring human sexuality, culminating in the ordination of Gene Robinson.

Some of its more salient points follow:

First, in Part II, the Scripture section, called “Holiness, God’s Blessing and Same Sex Affection” the Response states, “There was never a time when all members of Israel or of the Christian Church agreed on all major matters.” While this is mostly rue, the traditionalist Anglicans might counter-argue that, while there was a long and difficult debate in the Early

107 Ibid., Paragraph 135.
109 Ibid., 17.
Church regarding the inclusion of non-Jews (c.f. Acts 10 – 15), as the Response discussed, still there was unity in expectation regarding Christian moral behavior. Or, again, as was stated in the Windsor section above, we may assert that it was easier to achieve unity in the Early Church which was much smaller numerically than it is today. Further, it was important to the earliest Christians that they adhere to strict moral standards that separated them from the standards of the more sophisticated Roman (Pagan) culture in which they lived. Still, these possible counter-arguments do not remove the fact that there always has been great diversity in the Christianity, and rarely uniformity.

Second, in the Scripture section, the Response also deals well with the biblical texts that are usually trotted out to condemn homosexual behavior (e.g. Leviticus 18, Leviticus 25, Romans 1:18, et.al.). However its appeal is mostly to what could be called the contextual argument and an interpretation of scripture based on higher biblical criticism. There is much talk of TEC’s journey in listening to the experiences of faithful Christians who are homosexual. It argues, for example, that, “Beyond the primary purpose of blessings same-sex unions to celebrate a new household of faith, the public blessing of those unions is an evangelical message to persons of same-sex orientation and to the culture-at-large.”\textsuperscript{110} For the progressives, the “evangelical message” is that homosexuality is not sinful, but natural and God-given. One could only wish “To Set Our Hope on Christ” had made this claim explicit.

\textbf{Scripture and Homosexuality}

While on the subject of scriptural interpretation of homosexuality, we will momentarily deviate from “To Set Our Hope on Christ,” to introduce some comments of a liturgical scholar, the Rt. Revd J. Neill Alexander. Bishop Alexander’s book, \textit{This Far by Grace: A Bishop’s

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 29, para 2.30.
Journey Through Questions about Homosexuality is an excellent representation of mainstream TEC interpretation of the biblical texts traditionally interpreted as dealing with homosexuality.  

Alexander writes,

Two stories in the Old Testament are generally understood to be relevant to the matter before us: Genesis 19: 1-14 (the destruction of Sodom) and Judges 19: 1-13 (the concubine at Gibeah). Most biblical scholars believe that these two stories are essentially the same, having emerged from common sources within the ancient tradition. They appear in the biblical text as two versions of the same story. The details have changed over time, as always happens in stories that circulate for a long time in oral tradition. The stories have, as it were, been locally adapted.

For Alexander, “the sin of Sodom,” in Genesis 19, is actually the sin of inhospitality, something almost incomprehensible to us today, because we post-moderns do not live in a desert culture, and we tend to think of hospitality as merely a courtesy. Thus he writes, “...it is entirely plausible that the anger and offense of the men of Sodom was that their cultural conventions had been violated by Lot – a visitor usurping the privilege of hospitality that rightly belongs only to the local folks.” Or, again, “Many scholars who have studied Genesis, chapter 19 believe that what cause the ruckus in Sodom was the violation of the mandatory social conventions of hospitality.”

This is a widely accepted interpretation of this passage. But, as Alexander admits, although it is likely that later generations of Christians have interpreted this story with their own cultural biases against homosexuality, it is equally possible that this story means exactly what the Christian churches have traditionally taught; after all, rape, even homosexual rape, has

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112 Ibid., 31.
113 Ibid., 32.
114 Ibid., 33.
historically been an egregious sign of disrespect for human life and sometimes grounds for capital punishment.

Similarly, Alexander’s assessment of the parallel story in Judges 19: 1-30 appeals to the cultural context. “The host had a social and cultural obligation to protect his guest even if it means that the concubine had to the humiliation of being raped again and again by a gang of wicked men. In the next chapter (Judges 20:6) the people of Israel rise up and make war against the citizens of Gibeah...not because of some same-sex incident that never actually took place, but because of the violent rape of an innocent woman by angry, wicked, out-of-control men. To conclude that anything from this passage is relevant to our present conversation in the church concerning homosexuality seems to be to be a significant stretch.”\(^{115}\)

Alexander then moves to the oft-quoted portion of the “holiness code” Leviticus 18:1 and 20:13. He opines that these two texts, both declaring that “a man shall not lie with another man as with a woman” have a deeper meaning. He argues that for something to be an *abomination* in Hebrew, it is “not because it is inherently immoral but because it is offensive with respect to the cultic requirements of Israel’s faith. Of course traditionalists could easily retort that these both could be true: there is the deeper cultic meaning, but also the literal meaning; which is why the statements are explicit and repeated for emphasis.

As for Romans 1:26-27, Alexander again cites context: Paul’s “larger argument,” in Romans, is about God’s grace. For Paul, as interpreted by Alexander, “The people are separated from God *not* because of their improper conduct but because *they have chosen* to separate themselves from God. The proof of that separation is found in their improper conduct...[and] it is possible that “Paul is referring, in verse 27, not to same-sex behavior in general, but to a

\(^{115}\) *Ibid.*, 36.
specific form of it, well known among the Romans, that Paul found detestable. Alexander claims, "It was common in those days, and generally accepted, for men (who understood themselves to be heterosexual) to have a boy for their sexual pleasure." For the Romans passage, Alexander concludes with a very subtle point: "I think the apostle is quite right to suggest that a person should not have sex in an unnatural way, which means that heterosexual persons should not have homosexual sex...In the same way, homosexual persons should not have unnatural sex either. They should act sexually as though they are heterosexuals. The perversion that Paul rightly finds disgusting is simply doing that which is unnatural."\textsuperscript{117}

Alexander gives equally progressive interpretations of 1 Corinthians 6:9-20, against the malakoi, or sexual perverts; and finally of 1 Timothy 1:8-10, which he construes as:

\ldots a long list of vices that are not dissimilar to those we have observed elsewhere [in scripture]. \textsuperscript{118}[Yet] It is interesting to observe the shift in interpretation that has taken place. What in Romans, chapter 1 was considered contrary to \textit{nature} [classic Paul], in 1 Timothy chapter 1 is [now] considered contrary to \textit{sound doctrine}...

In other words, even before Christendom was unified we see changes or progress in Christian moral teaching.

Again, these interpretations of Paul to the Romans and Corinthians, and the First Letter to Timothy are perfectly reasonable, but definitely difficult for traditionalist Christians to understand or accept; for we have experienced at least 400 years of literal interpretation of passages like these and Leviticus 18, Leviticus 20 and Romans 1:26. And Americans are of course heirs to Puritan theology as much as we are children of the Enlightenment. In fact, our Puritan heritage for too long has dominated our interpretation and construal of scripture. Of

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 45.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 48.
course, the Episcopalians abandoned Puritan theology in the 19th century, if not earlier; but much of the Anglican Communion did not.

Bishop Alexander’s interpretations represent mainstream Episcopalian thought. They are more in-depth and convincing than those in “To Set Our Hope on Christ;” but they are complementary to it in that they can help the layman and the traditionalist Anglicans to understand, if not to agree with, the mind of TEC as it is today. Alexander concludes that all same-sex behavior is not immoral or indecent in all circumstances, and ends his book hopefully:

I believe that the Episcopal Church is broad enough, deep enough, and strong enough for us to live together in commitment to the Lord of the church, in spite of being in quite different places on these matters. Our unity need not be imperiled because of a lack of uniformity in these matters. We have been to just such places before, and because of our willingness to hold on to one other, we emerged a stronger, healthier, more faithful church.119

This comment is an example of Anglican pragmatism. It is an argument for what has come to be called the strategy of time. While the strategy of time may not be ideal to those of strongly held convictions, it is a very helpful tool to resolve what sometimes seem to be irreconcilable differences, such as those currently held by the progressive and traditionalist Anglicans.

“To Set Our Hope on Christ (continued)”

Returning to “To Set Our Hope on Christ, “ in Part III, “Contested Tradition, Common Life: The Episcopal Church’s Historical Witness to Unit in Difference,” the Response rehearses TEC’s history of culpability in past social injustices, such as racism and sexism. Further it describes TEC’s repentance for these sins. Therefore admission of gays to full inclusion seems to be a type of atonement for past sins and a fervent desire not to repeat them.

119 Ibid., 69.
Also in a section of Part III that re-tells TEC's journey with women's ordination, church historian Mary Donovan is quoted with reference to the Anglican Instruments of Unity (i.e. the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Primates' Meeting). She says, in part, "The Instruments of Unity in general came to the table after the arguments [for women's ordination] had been presented and, particularly in the case of the Lambeth Conference, after the decision had been made. The unity that was achieved regarding the ordination of women was a unity based on the general agreement that member church [provinces] could live in harmony with other member churches that reached different conclusions even about an issue as fundamental as whether half of the world's population should be declared ineligible to exercise the ministry of priest or bishop."120 Her sarcasm at the end of the previous statement notwithstanding, Donovan is right in pointing out that the thirty-eight member "churches" (provinces) never have had identical theologies, anymore than "there was [ever] a time when all members of Israel or of the Christian Church agreed on all major matter," to quote again "To Set Our Hope on Christ." Anglican provinces tend to reflect their cultural settings, as H. Richard Niebuhr argued. Donovan may not have intended her words to be read this way, but it is equally obvious, in the case of women's ordinations, that the Anglican provinces were consistently reactive to cultural issues, not proactive with them. That is to say, General Convention, for example, approved women's ordinations (1977) only after the irregular ordination of the "{Philadelphia 11" in 1974. Similarly, TEC's full inclusion of African Americans followed a dramatic high-jacking of General Convention's agenda in 1969 by the Black Panthers and other "militant" groups. The point is there is little evidence of the Instruments of Unit "leading from the front" in church teaching, but abundant evidence of their

120 "To Set Our Hope on Christ," 38, paragraph 3.13.
reacting to changes in cultural mores, of behaving like Niebuhr’s “synthesists.” This was true for women’s issues as well as for gay rights. The focus has been on the American culture almost to the exclusion of the rest of the Communion.

Part IV of “To Set Our Hope on Christ,” called “Eligibility for Ordination,” expressed TEC’s teaching that forty years of human sexuality discussion (or, more precisely homosexuality discussion) is sufficient for full inclusion for gays into the life of the Communion. The Response gives and excellent defense of the ordination of Gene Robinson in this way: “Bishops are consecrated into an order of ministry in the worldwide Church of God, and they do represent the universal to the local and the local to the universal (Windsor Report 124), but this has never meant that a bishop duly elected in one locale must be acceptable everywhere or that his or her election is properly subject to confirmation by the whole Church.”\(^{121}\) A good example of this important point is that for years indigenous clergy in the Communion have often been ordained prior to or without receiving a formal theological education; but out of charity the provinces of the Communion raised no objections to this practice. Not only does “To Set Our Hope on Christ” make this claim that Anglican Orders are local yet recognized, but it gives scriptural precedent for it as well (i.e. Titus 1:5, Acts 6:5, and Acts 13). This is the Response’s most defensible claim. It is true, but it ignores the extraordinary (and unprecedented) nature of ordaining a gay bishop. It does not take into account the fact that homosexuality, as Archbishop Eames suggests, is an emotional as well as a theological issue.

The bottom-line for TEC’s response to the Windsor Report is that each constituent province of the Communion should be allowed to do virtually anything it believes is right, after internal consultation and scriptural reflection. This is traditionally and canonically accurate, but

it is an unconvincing argument that does damage to the catholicity of Anglicanism. It makes it appear that each of the provinces is a congregational church unto itself, or that their interdependence does not matter. Alas, “To Set Our Hope on Christ” makes it seem that, for TEC, ultimate authority is not in episcopal synods, or in bishops individually, or even in the General Convention, but in the experience of Christians. This type of theological argumentation is ultimately unsupportable.

Part IV argues for “unity in difference,” which it rightly points out, has been an Anglican virtue all along. We can only pray that the present differences are not irreconcilable, that our “bonds of affection” are not stretched beyond our endurance. Ironically, “To Set Our Hope on Christ,” a defense of unilateral actions, ends with an Ephesians appeal for collaboration amongst followers of Christ: “May we as Christians outdo all in love, that we may the more effectively bear witness to the God of love...And may God the Holy Spirit teach us to walk together by God’s grace,’ to set our hope on Christ,’ to live with you ‘for the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:12).  

More Windsor Responses

Many prominent Anglican theologians have lent their voices to the type of criticism of the Windsor Report found in “To Set Our Hope on Christ.” Some may be found in a collection of essays titled, Gays and the Future of Anglicanism. (Countryman’s essay in this book was cited in Chapter Two; as was Archbishop Akinola’s denunciation of homosexuality in this chapter.) In his introductory essay, “Mistakes of the Creator,” Professor Andrew Linzey of Oxford writes dismissively,

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122 Ibid., para 5.3.
The Windsor Report says the usual things: any demonising of homosexual persons, or their ill-treatment, is totally against Christian charity and basic principles of pastoral care. We urge provinces to be pro-active in support of the call of Lambeth Resolution 64 (1988) for them to ‘reassess, in the light of … study and because of our concern human rights, its care for and attitude towards homosexual orientation’ (57, para 146). ‘But Archbishop Rowan Williams, in his speech to General Synod in 2005, offered us a rare acknowledgement that all might not be well: ‘If the acceptance of the Windsor Report or something similar to them were to be simply a mask, a stalking horse, for prejudice or bigotry; for collusion in violence, then I think the report would have failed, and worse than failed it would have made us less than the body of Christ…’’

Linzey believes the “Windsor recommendations are [indeed] influenced by homophobic sentiments,” a notion that is supported by the composition of the membership of the Commission. Linzey here affirms one of the main points of this paper: the issue of homosexuality is not mere political or theological disagreement in the Communion; it is far deeper and more threatening than that. Like race or gender, it goes to the core of our human identity. Therefore, for TEC, or anyone to suggest that homosexual identity needs to be reassessed in light of new revelation (both scientific and theological) obviously will be threatening to many.

Authority in the Church

Although most of the scholars in Gays and the Future of Anglicanism do not specifically address the Windsor Report, the heart of the objections to it centers in an issue Anglicans historically have avoided: authority. Keith Ward, in his article, “Ecclesial Authority and Morality” explains:

My concern is with the exercise of church authority in matters of morality. I have appealed to the Sabbath regulations as an example of how complex and difficult appeal to the Bible is on this issue. I have emphasized the Church of England’s position that any church meeting or council is liable to error, even in matters concerning God [c.f. Article XXI of the Thirty-Nine Articles, ‘general councils may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God.’] And I have shown how a main precedent for Christian decision-making (the Council of Jerusalem) is, not an appeal to a literal and

124 Ibid., xxvi.
direct application of written words, even from scripture or from Jesus, but an appeal to what the Holy Spirit is believed to suggest in changing situations.\textsuperscript{125}

So, like the ecclesiastical discussion of Anglican formularies and ancient creeds in Chapter Two, this chapter reinforces the claim that, even when Anglicanism appeals to these authoritative precedents it is not identifying where authority ultimately lies in the Communion anymore than it is identifying an ecclesiology. It is the nature of Anglicanism to be fluid and ill-defined.

It would seem, at least to the traditionalists, that the final authority in Anglicanism is sacred scripture. But, as we have seen in Alexander’s writing and now see with Ward’s essay, conflicting uses and construal make even scripture an unreliable authority. Ward continues:

The inescapable conclusion is that the interpretation of the Bible is difficult and always liable to dispute by the most competent and pious of scholars...No specific interpretation of the Bible, and no adherence to the teaching of...committees and bishops, has been demanded...[Anglicanism] is a church in which the Bible is treasured as a source of inspiration, and prayerful scholarship offering guidance in moral issues if taken seriously. But it is not a church in which definitive and binding answers are given to perplexing moral questions.\textsuperscript{126}

Ward’s comment that Anglicanism is “not a church in which definitive and binding answers are given to perplexing moral questions” certainly would be objected to by traditionalists, especially African Anglicans in Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda, who were formed by the evangelical Church Missionary Society (CMS) of the nineteenth century. They would argue in favor of a tightly defined Christian morality and a fundamentalist interpretation of scripture. These observations notwithstanding, Ward rightly concludes, “the acceptability of homosexual practice cannot be decided by appeal to the [Old Testament] law, which is superseded, or to the

\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Ibid.}, 24.
explicit teaching Jesus, which is unspecific. It is to be decided by the New Testament criterion of whether homosexual practice shows true love of neighbor, whether it respects human personhood, and whether it expresses the compassionate and self-giving love that was seen in Jesus." Many Anglicans, even conservative ones, are beginning to see that homosexual practice, when covenantal and mutually respectful, can in fact express “the compassionate and self-giving love that was seen in Jesus.

There is yet another essay, in *Gays and the Future of Anglicanism*, which responds directly to and vehemently against the Windsor Report: “Faithfulness in Crisis,” by Marilyn McCord Adams. Adams writes:

> [T]he effect of Windsor is to define the Anglican Communion in such a way as to make it a bulwark against cultural change. In particular, it allows church members in societies where institutions are in flux, where taboos are unraveling, to appeal to member churches in more conservative societies where the taboos are still in place, to keep the changes from affecting the church...Windsor does not concern itself with comparable provision for searching out and uprooting systemic evils entrenched within and across many societies.

Like Linzey, Adams gets to the nettle of the controversy. The Windsor Report admittedly makes recommendations for preserving the Communion, rather than improving it. Further, the reason the Windsor Report wants the progressive provinces to appeal to the traditionalist provinces to arbitrate disputes is Windsor’s ultimate aim is the preservation of the *status quo*; which, as we have argued in Chapter Two, is no longer tenable. The reader could hope that Adams had elaborated on her biting criticism that Windsor “does not concern itself with...uprooting systemic evils” that may be present in the traditionalist provinces; although we

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127 Ibid.
129 Ibid., 78-79.
can imagine what some of them might be; such as unbridled violence, large-scale poverty, government corruption, and religious wars.

In her essay’s final section, “the costs of discipleship,” a title intentionally patterned after Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s famous confession, Adams offers a helpful homily with a re-echoing refrain: “So far from repenting of consecrating Gene Robinson or approving rites for the blessing of same-gendered unions, we [Anglicans] should...

...repent of not contradicting the Levitical language of abomination, for – by turns – sponsoring and acquiescing in the judgment that who gay and lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons are, and what they do is an abomination to the Lord...[and] to own up to the spiritual violence we have done to gay and lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons...[and] call upon the Church of England to apologize for the clumsiness of its so-called “pastoral” accommodation, which allows stable same-sex couplings for laity who can’t control themselves, but enjoins celibacy as a counsel of perfection to which homosexual clergy must conform...[and] repent of its rude reception of gay and lesbian clergy...[and] apologize for the harm cause by the passage of 1998 Lambeth Resolution 1.10, and to express regret by repealing it at the earliest available opportunity.\textsuperscript{130}

Adams insists that homosexual Christians are “treasures of the church” who can no longer afford to deny who they are. Her sentiment reinforces this paper’s claim that the Anglican Communion has reached a point-of-no-return in the homosexual debate. Further, Adams dares to imply that the ultimate goal should not be preservation of the Communion, but faithfulness to one’s beliefs. Rowan Q. Smith, Dean Emeritus of Saint George’s Cathedral, Cape Town, South Africa, supports this view when he writes:

In recent years in our Anglican Communion we have become more aware both of our rich diversity and that for some this diversity is not seen either as a blessing or as a particular gift we bring to the wider church. It would appear, therefore, that for some Anglicans, communion equals conformity and covenant means coercion. The basis of our Communion is our common baptism in Christ and the declaration that there is ‘one Lord,
one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all’ (Ephesians 4:5-6). That baptismal affirmation is part of our heritage.¹³¹

Again, while these could be dismissed as extreme liberal arguments defending sinful practice, they are valid claims about the Windsor Report’s intentions and valid observations about the progress of human history. Moreover, history teaches: no church can stop an idea whose time has come.

A Survey of General Convention Resolutions Regarding Homosexuality (2000-2012)

While “To Set Our Hope on Christ” and Gays and the Future of Anglicanism are admirable efforts at continuing theological conversation with fellow Anglicans, it remains that, for TEC, General Convention is sovereign. Its decisions are binding. Recent resolutions, rather than listening to or cooperating with the rest of the Communion, show evidence of moving forward in the way a majority of deputies thinks best. These resolutions may or may not represent the views of mostEpiscopalians.

The seventy-third General Convention, in Denver, 2000, passed Resolutions C043, concurring with the so-called Church of England “Cambridge Accord.” C043 reads, in part:

Resolved, That the 73rd General Convention of the Episcopal Church affirm and endorse the Cambridge Accord of October 1, 1999 and urge all members of the House of Bishops to affix their names to the Cambridge Accord which affirms that...every human being is created equal in the eyes of God and that homosexual persons should be treated no differently.¹³²

Perhaps because of the preoccupation with the consent to the ordination of Gene Robinson, the only relevant resolution from the seventy-fourth General Convention, in Minneapolis, was A029, which reads, in part:

Resolved, the House of Deputies concurring, That the 74th General Convention of The Episcopal Church commit itself to foster moral deliberation on social questions, seeking to be a community where open, passionate, and respectful deliberation of challenging, contemporary issues is expected and encouraged; engage those of diverse classes, genders, ages, races, disabilities, sexual orientation, and perspectives to participate so that our limited horizons might be expanded and our witness in the world enhanced; address the issues faced by the people of God, in order to equip them for their discipleship and citizenship in the world... 133

The preceding carried: resolution and amendment. A029 and A009 before it epitomizes TEC’s commitment decision-making that derives from a consensus of varying and differing opinions. Further, coming to a consensus or decision does not seem to be as important as the conversations themselves.

The seventy-fifth General Convention, in Columbus, Ohio, seems from its journal to have devoted itself to identity issues and Anglican Communion affairs. For example, this Convention passed Resolution B032, which “affirmed that no resolution of the General Convention is intended to affect either the historic separate and independent status of the churches [sic.] of the Anglican Communion or the legal identity of The Episcopal Church. Shortly thereafter, a voice-vote also passed a motion that the “The” in “The Episcopal Church” be capitalized; which has the obvious effect of changing the denomination’s official name hereinafter to “The Episcopal Church,” notwithstanding the fact that there are other national Episcopal Churches throughout the Communion.

The only resolution bearing on homosexuality is A165, which was quoted in its entirety in Chapter Two. While not enthusiastically affirming the Windsor Report, A165 commends it and affirms the need for more listening. The Resolve that is relevant to the homosexuality debate reads thus:

*Resolved*, That the 75th General Convention of The Episcopal Church commend the listening process as recommended in the Windsor Report, “so that greater common understanding might be obtained of the underlying issue of same gender relationships” (Windsor Report, para 135).134

Also, as noted in Chapter Two, the seventy-sixth General Convention followed Lambeth 2008. Thus, Resolution D025 reaffirms TEC’s commitment to the Anglican Communion on the one hand, and its commitment to gay rights on the other. D025 reads in part:

*Resolved*, That the 76th General Convention reaffirm the continued participation of The Episcopal Church as a constituent member of the Anglican Communion; give thanks for the work of the bishops at the Lambeth Conference of 2008; reaffirm the abiding commitment of The Episcochal Church to the fellowship of churches that constitute the Anglican Communion and seek to live into the highest degree of communion possible; and be it further...

*Resolved*, That the 76th General Convention affirm the value of “listening to the experience of homosexual persons,” as called for by the Lambeth Conferences of 1978, 1988, and 1998, and acknowledge that through our own listening the General Convention has come to recognize that the baptized membership of The Episcopal Church includes same-sex couples living in lifelong committed relationships “characterized by fidelity, monogamy, mutual affection and respect, careful, honest communication and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God.” (2000-D039); and be it further...135

D025 covers a lot of territory; but of particular significance are the fourth, fifth and sixth Resolves. New ground was broken by General Convention publicly confessing “the baptized

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135 *Journal of the General Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America otherwise known as The Episcopal Church, 8-17 July 2009*, (New York, NY: The General Convention of the Episcopal Church, Episcopal Church Center, 2009), 627-628.
membership of The Episcopal Church includes same-sex couples,” that “gay and lesbian persons who are part of such relationships have responded to God’s call and have exercised various ministries,” and that “members of The Episcopal Church, as of the Anglican Communion...are not of one mind, and Christians of good conscience disagree about some of these matters.” TEC has taken seriously the calls for listening processes and has learned much about the experiences of homosexual Christians. There is no evidence however that the more conservative provinces have engaged in such conversations. Instead there is overwhelming evidence that some provinces believe such an exercise would be futile.

Then, almost as a logical conclusion to Bishop Griswold’s forty years of wandering in the homosexual wilderness, the seventy-seventh General Convention, in Indianapolis, 2012, passed a resolution to permit the blessing of same-sex unions. In an article titled, “Episcopal Church becomes biggest US Church [sic.] to Bless Gay Unions,” dated July 19, 2012, Becky Bratua of MSNBC, reported:

The U.S. Episcopal Church became the biggest church in the United States to approve a provisional rite for blessing gay unions after its House of Deputies gave its final approval Tuesday...The proposed blessing liturgy was initially approved by the Church’s House of Bishops Monday during the 77th General Convention in Indianapolis, with 111 votes in favor to 41 opposed and three abstentions...Deputies of opposite views spoke in alternate succession Tuesday afternoon, with those against the proposal urging more time to consider a decision of such magnitude...The Rev. Sharon Lewis, alternate deputy of the Diocese of Southwest Florida, said the liturgy is more than a ‘pastoral provision. Let us move together in the heart of Christ, not turn this great big old church that I love so much on a dime,’ Lewis said. Speaking in favor of the blessings, deputy Jenna Guy from Iowa said the resolution is important to the younger generation of Episcopalians, adding that passing the resolution would bring more people into the Church.136

Granted these are personal and anecdotal opinions, but they do give provide a window into the mind of General Convention. Both appeals, pro and con, are to experience, not to

136 “Episcopal Church becomes biggest US church to bless gay unions,” by Becky Bratua, MSNBC.com, July 19, 2012, 8:47 AM.
scripture or tradition. It is almost as if the blessing of same-sex unions passed because it is considered a “right,” or because it seems like a nice thing to do. There is no evidence whatsoever that General Convention considered this resolution in the context of the Anglican Communion. Before 2012, both the Primates’ Meeting (an Instrument of Communion) and the Windsor process had requested The Episcopal Church refrain from this action; but evidently these requests were not considered.”\textsuperscript{137}

Bratua also interviewed the Rt Revd Mark Joseph Lawrence, the traditionalist Episcopal Bishop of South Carolina, who, in opposition to the resolution asked, “Do I think that these...decisions will cause further decline? I believe they will, he said, “I think we’ve entered into a time of sexual and gender anarchy.” Bishop Lawrence also said, “It’s not merely a matter of adapting the church’s teachings about Jesus Christ, and about right and wrong to the culture,” he said. “The culture is adrift in sexual confusion and obsession.”\textsuperscript{138}

The history of TEC debates about homosexuality and the survey of General Convention decisions reveal how TEC has arrived at the place of ordaining a gay bishop and blessing same-sex unions. But they do not demonstrate why TEC has chosen to ignore many of its Communion partners and Instruments of Unity and go its own way. Perhaps the answer lies in the notion that TEC has struck upon a moral issue that it is convinced cannot be ignored. Perhaps it is the case that, as Episcopalian (and African American) scholar W.E.B. Dubois famously predicted the defining issue for twentieth century America would be race, the defining issue for the twenty-first century America would be homosexuality. Perhaps the Episcopal Church (along with other denominations, such as the United Methodist Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Presbyterian Church USA) is courageously leading the way to full inclusion for

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
one of the least visible but most denigrated groups in society. Although its traditionalist detractors have defensible arguments, such as literal interpretations of scripture and two-thousand years of church history; it is still quite possible that TEC is right on this issue.

In a heart-rending article, “Time to tell the truth about gays,” Jeffrey John, himself a distinguished cleric in a longstanding gay relationship referred to earlier, argues that the time is fulfilled for the Christian Church to recognize gays and gay marriage.\(^{139}\) He makes the following points. “My early wrestling with the ‘gay issue’ brought me to a conclusion that has never wavered. Unless you are genuinely called to celibacy, the God-given framework for being homosexual is the same as for being heterosexual: monogamy.”\(^{140}\) Next he argues, “…Christian theology has a deeper reason for saying that monogamy is good. When we love one another in a fully committed way, so that the love does not depend on *eros*, but on faithful self-giving to the other, then marriage reflects Christ’s union with the Church, God’s with his people. Our covenant with each other reflects God’s own kind of covenanting love…This covenant theology of marriage does not depend on gender or childbirth. Even in Genesis, the reason why God makes Eve is because ‘God saw that it is not good for man to be alone.’”\(^ {141}\)

Then John drops a bombshell:

Ironically, the Church knows more about homosexuality than most institutions. Most of the lifelong gay relationships I know are between Christians – many of them clerics. My partner and I met at theological college, where about three-quarters of the students and staff were gay (and the college was not unique in that respect)…This is the real problem. For decades – perhaps centuries – the Church’s leadership has had a public attitude to gayness, and a private one.\(^ {142}\)

\(^{139}\) Very Revd Dr. Jeffrey John, Commentary: “Time to tell the truth about gays,” in *Church Times*, (London: Hymns Ancient and Modern, Limited, 31 August 2012), No 7798, 9.

\(^{140}\) *Ibid.*


\(^{142}\) *Ibid.*, 12.
John is referring of course to his own Church of England. But the Episcopal Church, through more than forty-years of painstaking discussion has courageously chosen to tell the truth, come what may, cost what it will. The challenge remains to find a way to get the conservative Anglicans to the conversation table. The goal of such conversation need not be to change the conservative’s mind about interpretation of scripture, but at least to acknowledge that homosexuality is a legitimate part of God’s creation.

To return briefly to a compelling comment from “To set Our Hope on Christ,” namely, “There was never a time when all members of Israel or of the Christian Church agreed on all major matters;” why should homosexuality in the Church be a considered a major matter? 143 Why does it, of all other major matters, threaten to rend the Anglican Communion asunder? A good answer is contained in Linzey’s “Mistakes of the Creator.” Linzey observes:

Note that the underlying argument [of Archbishop Akinola and many traditionalist Anglicans]: homosexuality isn’t just wrong, it ‘is at the expense of vital communion with God’; it leads to ‘the wilderness of morally empty theologizing’; homosexuality and lesbianism is placed in the same category as ‘bestiality’, and is depicted as ‘a form of slaver’. In the same article, it is made clear that there can be no tolerance of what is called ‘the permissive and satanic spirit’ that leads to ‘an acquitted aberration’. Note especially the emphasis upon the ‘satanic’ in both statements. I do not believe that I have selectively quoted, and the words are actually those written (rather than reported) in a newspaper article penned by its author. Remember, these words are from an Anglican Primate, a member of the 38-member body that constitutes one of the supposed ‘Instruments of Communion’. Whatever is at work here, it is more than simple disagreement about the rightness or wrongness of certain behaviors.144

As indicated previously, what is at work here is nothing less than monumental social change. The Anglican Communion, therefore has the opportunity to be on the right side of history, not to mention the right side of God.

143 To Set Our Hope on Christ, 17.
Chapter Four: The Hope of Communion: How TEC can play a helpful role in shaping the future of the Anglican Communion

A Collect for the Unity of the Church

O God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Savior, the Prince of Peace: Give us grace to lay seriously to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions; take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatever else may hinder us from godly union and concord; that, as there is but one Body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may be all of one heart and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify thee, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(originally from the Accession Service of William and Mary, 1689; then from the Accession Service of George I, 1714; then from a prayer book for the Armed Forces during the American Civil War, 1861; now in the BCP, 1892 and 1979)

“We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection.”

(from President-elect Abraham Lincoln’s First Inaugural Address, 4 March 1861)

Chapter One outlined the history of The Episcopal Church (TEC) and its relationship to the worldwide Anglican Communion. It made three claims that have shaped this relationship since 1840. For instance, Anglican Calvinism was an important ingredient in the evolution from the colonial Church of England to The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. It was also a theological seed, along with philosophical seeds, such as the Enlightenment and Lockian principles (John Locke 1632-1704), that would grow into an American belief in democracy in religion. Second, there were two TEC wilderness periods: 1776-1789, when TEC had no organization or identity, and 1789-1811 when TEC languished. Third, Chapter One identified three unique characteristics of TEC – the first Anglican “church” outside of Great Britain; its unique polity including a bicameral legislature; and the sovereignty
of its General Convention – that have had profound effects on its relationship to the rest of the Communion.

Chapter Two described both the exponential growth of the Anglican Communion and the lack of a definitive ecclesiology to accompany that growth. Anglican ecclesiology is variously defined as "bridge church;" the quintessential ecumenical Christian body (Kärkkäinen) and the national/ecumenical church idea (Huntington); The Church of the Triune God (The Virginia Report); a synthesist (i.e. tradition and reason) church (H.R. Niebuhr); a continuation of the Church Catholic; and so on. Thus, there is no single Anglican or TEC ecclesiology. There is no Aquinas, or Calvin, or Barth in Anglicanism. However, this may not be a fault; for there is a distinguished history of balancing loyalty to the historic Creeds and Councils, common worship - lex orandi, lex credendi, and pragmatism and flexibility when dealing with newly revealed truths. Chapter Two also claims that TEC ecclesiology is deeply rooted in the sovereignty of its General Convention. Thus, a review of General Convention actions reveals TEC’s true values. The review of General Convention resolutions (2000-2012) regarding TEC’s relationship to the Anglican Communion demonstrated TEC’s commitment to safeguarding its autonomy and resistance to the demands placed on it by the Instruments of Unity (the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference of Bishops, The Anglican Consultative Council, and the Primates’ Meeting).

While in Chapter Two this paper was highly critical of General Convention actions, especially with respect to their disregard of Anglican Communion and Archbishop of Canterbury requests, Chapter Three strongly supports the idea that it is God’s Will that healthy homosexual practice be blessed. This chapter mentioned the Windsor Report’s requests that TEC give an account for its extraordinary ordination of the Revd V. Eugene Robinson. Two recommendations
in particular [Windsor Report paragraph 105 and paragraph 135] reveal an Anglican ecclesiology that has not kept pace with the growth and diversity of the Communion. Thus, the chapter gave a attention to TEC’s response to Windsor demands, “To Set Our Hope on Christ.” Former Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold’s simple statement gave important clues to TEC ecclesiology and values: “We have been wrestling with this issue for more than forty years.” For instance, it demonstrated that TEC highly values *human experience* in addition to scripture, tradition and reason. Another survey of General Convention resolutions, this time regarding its stands on the issue of homosexuality, demonstrated how the “mind” of General Convention evolved in favor of gay rights. Both the forty-year history of TEC debates about homosexuality and the survey of recent General Convention decisions show how TEC has arrived at the place of ordaining openly gay bishops and blessing same-sex unions, almost completely at the expense of its relationship with the rest of the Communion. Finally, this chapter suggested that most likely reason that a deliberative body as large as a General Convention of more than five-hundred voting members, could come to a consensus regarding such an emotionally charged issue as homosexuality is that it is the right thing to do.

Now, the conclusion aims to suggest a way forward that would protect the autonomy and integrity of the Anglican provinces while, at the same time, preserve the Anglican Communion.

**Anglican Pragmatism**

It could be argued that, ever since it was established by Constantine (324 CE) as the religion of his empire, Catholicism has been shaped more by its internal beliefs (e.g. dogma, doctrine, Papal decrees, et.al.) and its insistence on being seen as the one, true church, the most authentic Christian expression in the world. By contrast, Anglicanism, since its establishment by Henry VIII (1491-1547; Act of Supremacy, 1534), consistently has been shaped by forces
external to itself (e.g. the Crown, Parliament, the English Civil War, Puritanism, the American Revolution, the Great Awakenings, secular events, etc.). This dynamic has made Anglicanism vulnerable to prevailing cultural winds and subject to political agents more temporally powerful than itself. Some, like Orthodox Father Alexander Schmeman, would argue that this is an obvious weakness, and a sign that Anglicanism is not built on a sure theological foundation. However, this historic flexibility has proven itself to be a key strength of Anglicanism, a sign of its dynamism, a hallmark of its graciousness, a mechanism for its growth and expansion, a foundation for its leadership social change, and a vehicle for God’s continuing revelation. Perhaps this is why the Anglicans and Episcopalians, in spite of their relatively small numbers, have exercised a disproportionately greater influence in world affairs, as is evinced in the international role of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Helpfully, Paul Avis writes,

The claims that Anglicans over the centuries have made for their church have not been articulated, needless to say, in a timeless realm of abstract truths but in response to the challenge or threat of the moment - over against Rome, or the Puritans, or modern science, or ecumenism, or the feminist movement, or the chronic pluralism of the modern world. In responding to these challenges or threats, Anglicans have singled out various aspects of the Anglican synthesis that have seemed to be relevant...Anglicans [such as Hooker and Whitgift, who] defended their continuity with the pre-Reformation Church, rebutted charges of schism, and refuted the claims of the papacy [in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries]; then Anglicans [such as Henry Newman and Charles Gore] who dealt competently and convincingly with modernity in the nineteenth century; and the many Anglican leaders who responded heartily to the Ecumenical Movement and social concerns of the twentieth century...145

Avis would argue that internal division within Anglicanism, especially among the Catholic, Evangelical and Liberal parties who “seem to have largely gone their own way, taking care to reinforce their prejudices all along the line through party patronage of livings, partisan

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theological colleges and tame newspapers and journals,” has been largely detrimental.\footnote{Ibid., 463.} However, Anglicanism has tolerated internal division throughout its history. In fact, some would call Avis’s description \textit{diversity} rather than internal division. Moreover, there is no reason why this should be a threat to the Anglican mission in the twenty-first century. In fact, there are many reasons, as described above, why the Communion in general and TEC in particular are uniquely positioned to do so.

Dr. John S. Pobee, an Anglican on the staff of the World Council of Churches, in his essay, “Non-Anglo Saxon Anglicanism,” has a section titled, “The Search Together for a New Model of Communion,” and argues, “We define ourselves as a communion. But the demographic spread of the Communion means that the old model of being a communion minted when there was an Anglo-Saxon predominance is no longer adequate.”\footnote{Pobee, “Non-Anglo Saxon Anglicanism,” in \textit{The Study of Anglicanism}, 456.} He therefore gives two suggestions, first, “a community must have a focus of identification who represents the unity, solidarity, permanence, continuity and perfection of the community...[i.e. ‘The See of Augustine can...become the symbol of unity, solidarity, continuity, and our striving for perfection.’]...and secondly, “mutuality [amongst its diverse members] as a mark of the Communion.” Pobee then gives two biblical/familial images for what the Anglican Communion can be: body and family. He concludes, “I am African, a people who define themselves by an extended family and not so much the nuclear family. Elsewhere I describe this epistemology as \textit{cognatus sum, ergo sum}, i.e. I am related to others, therefore, I am.”\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 457} \textit{Cognatus sum, ergo sum} is in obvious contradistinction to René Descartes’s \textit{I think therefore I am}. Anglicanism is historically relational, not juridical.

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\textbf{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{146}} & \textsuperscript{Ibid.}, 463. \\
\textbf{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{147}} & Pobee, “Non-Anglo Saxon Anglicanism,” in \textit{The Study of Anglicanism}, 456. \\
\textbf{\footnotesize\textsuperscript{148}} & \textit{Ibid.}, 457
\end{tabular}
The thoughts of Avis and Pobee are examples of Anglican pragmatism that have stood it in good stead. Still, while Anglicanism demonstrates these admirable qualities, there is unfinished business. As Avis suggests, Anglicanism cannot continue as it has in the past.

**Authority in the “Church”**

A sharp and detailed critic of Anglicanism’s present dilemma is Philip Turner who conveniently returns our attention to the issue of authority. In his excellent book, *The Fate of Communion: The Agony of Anglicanism and the Future of a Global Church*, Turner’s and co-author Ephraim Radner’s bottom-line argument is that authority in Anglicanism ought to be in scared scripture because the Anglican Communion is a “scriptural community.”

While the Anglican Communion undoubtedly values scripture, as can be seen in its Prayer Books, it should not be labeled a “scriptural community” in that it did not begin as *sola scriptura* (like the Lutheran Reformation), but as “scripture, tradition and reason.” That Turner should call it so is an historically protestant notion that can be traced to Anglicanism’s Puritan heritage. It is also a typically traditionalist Anglican point-of-view; which is not to say it does not have merit or should be dismissed as partisan.

Radner writes cynically, “Despite, or because of, the purported ‘vagueness’ of an Anglican framework of authority, the experienced and increasing reality of diversity on both teaching and practice within and among Anglican churches has both seized upon and suffered from this longstanding inexactitude, giving rise to a host of competing arguments for ‘particular standards of authority.’ These arguments have boiled down to several main commitments. All

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maintain a reference to Scripture...”150 This is true. However, as suggested above, scripture is only normative in the Anglican Communion, not necessarily paramount, as it would be in most American Protestant churches. Therefore, Turner turns to “Episcopal Authority.”151 He writes, “We cannot possibly address the challenges of our church’s communion life without also focusing special attention on Episcopal ministry within it.”152 In this chapter Turner makes a distinction between classical authority and new authority in the church. The former could be described as scriptural and conciliar, and the latter as post-modern and pluralistic. (Or, the former would be Evangelical and the latter, Liberal, in Paul Avis’s terms.) For Turner, a conspicuous example of the new authority is the Church of Canada [Anglican] bishops’ commissioning a study on the nature of episcopacy prior to authorizing same sex blessings, which they intended to do all along. Tuner asks, “Might it be that the general perceived crisis in Episcopal authority signals an even more profound [crisis], namely, a loss of ecclesial identity so severe that it is increasingly difficult for the churches of the Anglican Communion to say with any degree of confidence that they are members of a communion of churches that are jointly members of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church?"153 Posing it as a question makes the bitter medicine go down more smoothly; but Turner is undoubtedly suggesting that this is actually the case: that the role (or, decreasing authority) of bishops is at the heart of the Anglican Communion’s present trouble. Not only is this likely, but it is possible that, as argued in Chapter One, the 1789 TEC constitution’s way of selecting bishops may be the precursor to the present challenges; or at least it may have set the precedent for TEC’s inability to arbitrate disputes.

150 Ibid.
151 Ibid., 135.
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid., 139.
Turner’s is a timely and important question. A more succinct way of asking the same thing would be to ask what should episcopacy look like in the post-modern world.

Turner makes more claims about authority in the church. Legitimate authority exists to “procure wholeness” or the “common good”; whereas individualism is a threat to both of these notions, he says. Or, again, he says, “Authority exists...to insure that social transitions do not divide people in an irretrievable sense or alienate them from the beliefs and ways of life that have provided identity through the ages.”\(^{154}\) Or, again, authority is “maintaining and augmenting the common traditions of the church in the midst of a struggle over their meaning and implications.”\(^{155}\) For Turner, the “new authority is justified not by what is common but by irreconcilable differences in what people believe and the way in which they choose to live their lives...inclusivity becomes not only the method but also the end of the exercise of authority...”\(^{156}\)

While these words of Turner are strong, and perhaps traditionalist, reactions to post-modern values; nevertheless, they have great merit. Philip Turner, and Max Weber, whom Turner cites, both claim that history teaches that true authority tends to come from “a charismatic individual who, by the force of his personality and vision, can impose his will on theirs,” hopefully for the good.\(^{157}\) (Arthur Michael Ramsey and William Temple come to mind as Archbishops of Canterbury who exercised great authority in the Communion.) Further, Turner believes emphatically that true authority comes from “a common way of life and a common set of beliefs.” Here, we must allow that he may be confusing leadership and authority. But another historical example supports Turner’s (and Weber’s) claim. Bishop Samuel Seabury was a faithful

\(^{154}\) Ibid., 143.
\(^{155}\) Ibid.
\(^{156}\) Ibid., 144.
\(^{157}\) Ibid.
and duly elected leader in Connecticut; but William White (of Philadelphia) could unite the whole denomination by force of his personality and vision. It is not that one was right and the other wrong, but that one had a better sense of what the church needed and was a leader all people could rally round. White was the authoritative leader of the colonial church because of his understanding of what was needed, his sense of timing, his political acumen, and his popularity with the people.

It is important for this paper that Turner’s views on authority in the church be considered and taken seriously. They may seem heavy-handed, but they give hope and provide a way forward. With his understanding of ecclesiastical authority, we turn to some of Turner’s more specific comments on The Virginia Report (TVR). In general, Turner says, “TVR is foundational to recent attempts by Anglicans to understand themselves as a church [sic.] that transcends national boundaries. It is consequently a document of fundamental importance…”158 The current expression for this description is “global church.” Like the Roman Catholic Church or the United Methodist Church, the Anglican Communion is seen as a “global church.” However, Anglicanism heretofore has not seen itself as a “church,” let alone a global church. Instead it was considered a goodly fellowship of like-minded provinces with a common English heritage. Yet, in terms of its perceived organizational structure, the global role of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the number of its adherents the Communion definitely qualifies as a global church. Unfortunately, a global church requires, among other things, a central leader (or, leadership committee), a recognizable structure, a constitution of some sort, a way of governing itself, a means for arbitrating disputes, etc., none of which the Communion at large now contains. These characteristics can be summed-up in one word, “authority.” Turner argues that, due

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158 Ibid., 166.
primarily to its unprecedented growth (especially in the African provinces) the time has come for Anglicanism to consider enacting and strengthening some of these necessary structural characteristics of a global organization. It is time to locate authority in the Anglican Communion. It is time for the Anglican Communion to become a church.

In addition to understanding the Anglican Communion as a church, Turner argues that TVR’s attempts to describe communion, while noble, are not pragmatic. He writes, “The question of communion is at the center of TVR’s concern. We can see it implicated in all matters we [Turner and Radner] have been addressing thus far: the church’s catholic character, the apprehension of God’s truth, scriptural formation, authority, and the ordering of our common life. Yet, as a particular concern, the specific nature of ecclesial communion itself is a relatively recent topic of discussion for Anglicans, and has only rarely been the subject of careful examination.”\textsuperscript{159} Undoubtedly this is because, until this present post-modern era, communion could have been assumed due to the Englishness of it. (Recall W.M. Jacob’s description of the homogeneousness of the first Lambeth Conference 1867.) Whereas, now diversity is stretching the Anglican Communion to its limits.

Turner goes on to give four convictions that provide context and a basis for his TVR critique. First is that the Anglican Communion has a “particular gift” to offer the divided Christian Church and the world. This “unique gift...has to do with the way in which the church [the Anglican Communion] maintains both the apostolic faith and unity in the midst of historical change,” the way in which Anglicans handle paradosis... [that is] “The handing-on of the faith and life of the church.”\textsuperscript{160} Turner also champions Anglicanism’s unique place in the Church Catholic. While the Anglicans do not have the legalism of Rome, the static Tradition of the

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., 165.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., 168.
Orthodox Churches, the confessional statements of the Reformation churches, or the agreed-upon scripture construal of the neo-evangelical churches; they do have "an agreement that in the midst of the conflicted process of passing on the faith (paradosis), it is necessary for the church to use Holy Scripture and the Apostles and Nicene Creeds to prove doctrine and practice, that the process of proving takes place in the midst of the baptized members of the church as they are engaged in a regular round of Bible reading, Eucharistic worship, prayer, and that the unity of the church as it struggles to pass on the faith and practice of the apostles is expressed and maintained through the collegiality of its bishops."\textsuperscript{161} We would be hard put to find an Anglican thinker who would disagree with this conviction of Turner. However, it does beg the question, does this implicit agreement still hold, or is this conviction, this unique Anglican unraveling?

Turner's second conviction says that because the Christian Church is an important part of God's "narrative of redemption," Christian "unity is in no way an incidental consideration. It is God's chief business, and it is the chief business of the church."\textsuperscript{162} This is reminiscent of Karkkaenien's definition of Anglican ecclesiology based on Christian unity.

Turner's third conviction has to do with the "stance from which Christians should view their divisions and conflicts."\textsuperscript{163} This stance is eschatological because the Church is both temporal and eternal. As Turner says, "that Christ was not only raised but also ascended means that, in respect to his body the church, he is both present and absent. This paradox raises the possibility of infidelity which sets the stage for [this] third conviction, namely, that when divisions within the church become intractable, as they seem now to be, it is mandatory that we think of the presence of the Spirit first of all as a call for the recognition of infidelity, for

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 169.
repentance, and for amendment of life." In other words, when the church is at its best it reflects God’s love for the world and the world is drawn to its eternal character; but when the church is in error, it is much like any other human institution, in need of forgiveness and renewal. So, although Turner is theologically correct in this conviction, it remains that progressives would say that in supporting homosexuality we are now following the Spirit’s direction and seeing new revelation; whereas the traditionalists would say the insistence on legitimizing homosexuality is infidelity for which the Communion needs to repent.

Probably the most valuable contribution Turner makes to the TVR debate (and to this paper) is his recommendation for a “strategy of time,” as he calls it. Thus, he describes his fourth (and final) conviction this way:

...the intractable divisions that are beginning to appear within the Anglican Communion are best understood as continuing manifestations of the divisions within the [entire] Western Church... The fourth conviction is then that we do need to find a better way and, as the first conviction suggests, that way is the way of penitence and suffering rather than the way of feud.165

Here Turner echoes the Apostle Paul’s description/appeal to a “love that does not insist on its own way, is not arrogant or boastful, etc. (I Cor 13).” How different our Communion would be if all the warring parties replaced their attitude of justice and political self-righteousness with an attitude of humility and repentance. That would be a type of Christianity based, not on hubris and the need to be right, but on radical obedience to the Gospel.

In sum, Philip Turner’s is a conservative but convincing analysis of and remedy for TVR and other Anglican ailments. Using Ephesians (as did “To set Our Hope on Christ), Turner suggests “to make clear the problem with TVR and how it might be strengthened...the Great purpose of God in history is to unite the peoples of the earth through the reconciling sacrifice of

164 Ibid., 170.
165 Ibid., 173.
Christ..." The Ephesian letter, Turner says, is Paul dealing with conflicts, not between the church and the world, but within the church itself; which is why Paul suggests that the solution is to “live a life worthy of the ‘unity’ to which we have been called (Eph 4:11-16).” In other words, our goal should be unity in Christ rather than insisting on our need to be right. Again, Turner’s is a reasoned, helpful, and hopeful critique of TVR and the present threat to Anglicanism.

The Hope of Communion

Interestingly, the catalyst for the Eames Commission Report (1993) was the ordination of the Rt Revd Barbara Harris. The Virginia Report (TVR, 1997) was responding to Eames Commission concerns. The Hurd Report (2001), though commissioned by the Archbishop of Canterbury, was responding, in many ways, to The Virginia Report. Then, The Windsor Report (2004) was responding not only to the ordination of the Rt Revd Gene Robinson and the rites for Blessing Same-Sex unions in Canada but also to some of the concerns of TVR and the Hurd Report. It seems that the Anglican Communion is fond of using commissions and reports to arbitrate disputes. But, rather than clear problem solving, these commissions and reports tend merely to react to perceived threats with calm and reassuring alacrity. Or, to make the same point theologically, the Anglican Communion believes in conciliari and relational decision-making. However, an important question is, where has all this fine work gotten us? Evidently, not where we need to be in the absence of a final authority who arbitrates deep disputes.

Is there hope for the Anglican Communion? Yes. Are our differences intractable? No. As Bishop Neil Alexander said about TEC, the Communion is “broad enough, deep enough, and strong enough for us to live together in commitment to the Lord of the church, in spite of being

\[166\textit{Ibid.}, 175.\]

\[167\textit{Ibid.}\]
in quite different places on these matters. Our unity need not be imperiled because of a lack of uniformity..."\textsuperscript{168} While it is true that only God knows the way forward and that God almost certainly wills that this unique gift of Anglicanism indeed goes forward, it is equally true that the constituent members must have the will to be in communion (\textit{koinonia}) with one another. To echo Turner’s recommendation, we must develop a better “strategy of time” in which we can engage not only in the compassionate conversation favored by TEC, but also the hopeful waiting demonstrated by oppressed Christians throughout the ages. Not all change is good; neither is it always prophetic. Rather than imitating the culture with precipitous actions, perhaps the Anglican Communion needs to lead the culture in waiting on the Lord (Psalm 27:14). Perhaps an intermediary step in remedying the gay rights debate would consist in both warring parties (Progressives and Traditionalists) determining that Anglican unity and witness are worth re-evaluating preconceived notions and cultural biases without compromising fundamental principles.

However, tracing Anglican history and reviewing recent actions have shown both the strategy of time and the redefining of Anglican authority are indicated. “May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 15:13).”

\textsuperscript{168} J. Neil Alexander, \textit{This Far By Grace: A Bishop’s Journey Through Questions about Homosexuality}, 69.
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