

REWRITING HISTORY: SCAPEGOATING THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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Savitri Hensman and her family are no Anglican newcomers – in the run-up to the Anglican Congress held in 1963, when she was a baby, her father travelled from their home in Sri Lanka to several countries in Africa as an envoy of the bishop organising the international gathering. It was a time of hopefulness. Now, however, relationships in the Anglican Communion are under strain.

In this essay, she laments recent developments in Anglicanism, where she says: ‘Genuine interdependence, respect and a common understanding across theological and cultural divides are under attack not from “liberal” America but from a new “tidy minded ferocity” within the “conservative” and puritan wing of this family of churches.’ She urges that ‘what is of value to the church and world in the Anglican heritage should not be lightly discarded.’

Summary

- The Episcopal Church (TEC) has been singled out from other Anglican provinces and subjected to harsh criticism and threats of expulsion.
- Because TEC is more accepting than most provinces of lesbians and gays, including those in loving partnerships, it has been accused of failing to act in accord with the clear teaching of the Bible and the agreed position of the Communion, being too heavily influenced by the dominant culture and acting in an imperialist manner. Resolution 1.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference is often mentioned: though its position on homosexuality was not binding, TEC has been condemned for breaching 'bonds of affection' by not conforming.
- However it is unjust to punish TEC when senior clergy in certain other provinces have to a far greater extent failed to act in line with Scripture and Anglican consensus, to examine their own cultures critically and to oppose imperialism. These include the primate and bishops of the Church of Nigeria, who have acted in ways contrary to key Biblical teachings, the 1998 Lambeth Resolution on homosexuality and over thirty resolutions agreed by Lambeth or the Anglican Consultative Council, as well as several recommendations of the Windsor Report.
- Yet they have not been treated nearly as severely as TEC. Indeed, internationally agreed Anglican positions on a range of matters are frequently disregarded by bishops and archbishops.
- What is more, TEC was placed in a difficult position because of apparently contradictory principles widely held in international Anglican circles, and the persistent refusal of leaders of several other provinces to promote serious study of human sexuality and listen attentively to lesbians and gays, despite repeated conference resolutions.
- Traditionally Anglicanism's broad nature, and careful attention to Scripture, tradition and reason in responding to complex issues, had enabled the church to revise its position radically on various matters over the past couple of centuries, including ethnicity, gender and sexuality, while staying true to its heritage. Recently, however, some senior clergy have demanded that their own opinions on specific matters be treated worldwide as core truths, like those in the Creeds, and refused to consider any evidence to the contrary.
- With the hope of adequate international dialogue fading, members of TEC were faced with the pastoral realities of a diverse society and the strength of the theological case for full inclusion of lesbians and gays. It seemed to many that, by postponing justice decade after decade, they were failing to seek and serve Christ in all persons and love their neighbour as themselves, and this was damaging ministry and mission. In becoming less discriminatory, TEC was acting in a reasonable manner.
- For associating too closely with those often facing rejection and contempt, TEC has been targeted, and has become a scapegoat for wider divisions, based partly on different responses to social issues and the determination of some bishops elsewhere to transform the nature of the Communion.
- Respect for the dignity of all people, encouragement of thoughtful study of the Bible, appreciation of advances in science, participation of the laity at all levels of decision-making and catholicity based on acceptance of provincial autonomy and diversity have long been valued by Anglicans, but are now under threat. What is of value to the church and world in the Anglican heritage should not be lightly discarded.

1 Introduction

In recent debates about homosexuality and Anglicanism, the Episcopal Church (TEC) of the USA and several other countries has been strongly criticised. The recent primates' meeting in Tanzania singled this province out, warning that its full participation in the Anglican Communion may be affected unless its bishops give way to certain demands. This represents an abandonment of long-held principles of provincial autonomy.

It has been suggested that TEC has brought this upon itself by consecrating a partnered gay man as a bishop, causing divisions in its own ranks and beyond. TEC has been accused of failing to comply with Scripture and the agreed position of the Communion, in contrast to other provinces, imposing its own Western liberal cultural stance on other parts of the world in an imperialist manner.

Is this true? Or has TEC been unjustly targeted? Have its actions been reasonable, given the circumstances in which it found itself? Might its difficulties even have arisen because it has tried to be faithful to the Trinity to whom the Bible testifies, in line with developments in international Anglicanism? And what are the implications of the targeting of TEC for the Anglican Communion in the context of the church's mission and ministry?

2 Acting in accord with Scripture

The importance of the Bible

Scripture is of great importance to Anglicans, who without it would not have words to tell of God's creative, redemptive and enlivening love. The living God meets people through the Bible, among other means. Word and sacrament are both prominent in worship. In church art and music, liturgy and prayer, believers may find themselves surrounded by and indeed inhabiting Scripture. Indeed, Anglicans (not only those who are evangelical but also liberals and Anglo-catholics, inasmuch as such labels are meaningful) will often be exposed to far more of the Bible in the course of a year than members of fundamentalist denominations, who may focus on a narrow range of passages.

The Bible is richly complex, and taking it seriously is not the same as taking it all literally. Indeed some of the most powerful passages are poems or stories: the fictional good Samaritan, for instance, has perhaps had more influence than any of the kings or queens of England. Reports of historical events need not be correct in every detail for their significance to be grasped. Different books reflect a developing understanding, as finite humans struggle to make sense of their encounter with an infinite God. And translators, commentators and readers are influenced by what they expect and want to see.

The difficulty which can be encountered in interpreting the Bible has been known from ancient times. According to North African church father Augustine of Hippo, **'Whoever thinks he understands divine scripture or any part of it, but whose interpretation does not build up the twofold love of God and neighbour, has not really understood it.'**¹

Augustine also warned of the risks of disregarding science and reason and thus putting off people who might otherwise be drawn to Christianity: 'Usually, even a non-Christian knows something about the earth, the heavens, and the other elements of this world, about the motion and orbit of the stars and even their size and relative positions, about the predictable eclipses of the sun and moon, the cycles of the years and seasons, about the kinds of animals, shrubs, stones, and so forth, and this knowledge he holds to as being certain from reason and experience. Now, it is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics... to defend their utterly foolish and obviously untrue statements, they will try to call upon Holy Scripture for proof and even recite from memory many passages which they think support their position, although they understand neither what they say nor the things about which they make assertion... Let no one think that, because the Psalmist says, *He established the earth above the water*, we must use this testimony of Holy Scripture against these people who engage in learned discussions about the weight of the elements. They are not bound by the authority of our Bible; and, ignorant of the sense of these words, they will more readily scorn our sacred books than disavow the knowledge they have acquired by unassailable arguments or proved by the evidence of experience.'²

Read with humility and openness, the Bible is an ongoing source of inspiration, speaking to people in many different personal and social contexts. But taking passages out of context and insisting on one's own interpretation while failing to consider alternatives is risky; Paul warns that 'the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life'³, and in Gospel accounts of the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, Satan quotes Scripture for his own purposes. Indeed, Jesus finds himself targeted by pious people who are convinced that his acts of mercy are contrary to God's explicit commands.

Anglicans tend to emphasise the interplay of Scripture, tradition and reason (to which experience is sometimes added). According to influential sixteenth-century theologian Richard Hooker, where there was uncertainty, the course where 'greatest probability

leadeth' should be taken. No human could be relied on never to get things wrong: 'such is the untoward constitution of our nature that we neither do so perfectly understand the way and knowledge of the Lord, nor so steadfastly embrace it when it is understood, nor so graciously utter it when it is embraced, nor so peaceably maintain it when it is uttered, but that the best of us are overtaken sometimes'.

When the Anglican church was created during the Reformation, while it kept some of the features of its Catholic heritage and rejected the option of a detailed confession of belief which some Protestants adopted, it introduced a liturgy in the language of the people in place of the Latin mass. No longer was religious understanding restricted to a few learned people (mainly men). This was a dramatic development for worshippers. In the beautiful English of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, worshippers were immersed in Scripture and tradition and sent out into the world to live out their baptismal and eucharistic faith. He also insisted that English translations of the Bible, which had previously been the subject of persecution, should be placed in each church, allowing visitors to read it for themselves or, if illiterate or blind, have it read to them.

Since then, Anglican liturgies have been produced in, and the Bible translated into, many languages. However narrow the interpretations sometimes offered from the pulpit, it has been impossible to prevent people from reflecting on what they have read or heard and experienced, and interpreting it in the context of their own situations. Parish clergy and the laity have grappled with, and sought to put into practice, the Trinitarian faith in numerous rural and urban settings across the world.

Sometimes, in responding to new possibilities for good and ill, and seeking to love God and neighbour amidst poverty, other forms of suffering and the shadow of death, understanding has developed and new insights have arisen.

How readers understand passages of Scripture tends to be influenced by past readings and present circumstances, though this may not be recognised. While it is indeed important to search for the truth and challenge what is erroneous, it has often taken time for consensus to be achieved. Moreover new translations and interpretations, and new questions arising from developments in technology, culture and the physical, biological and social sciences, continue to pose challenges. Yet in the process of prayer, attentive listening and reflection and the attempt to live faithfully, drawn together in the Word made flesh despite individual and collective imperfection, through God's grace insight may deepen. For leaders, however eminent, to assert forcefully that a particular interpretation of the Bible is the only one permissible has not traditionally been the Anglican way in which controversial matters have been resolved. The process of discernment may be slow, but there are no short cuts.

Differences over sexuality and gender

On some matters there has long been wide agreement within the church, for instance that Jesus is both fully human and fully divine. On others consensus has shifted: for example the Bible has long been quoted to justify slavery and anti-Semitism but these are now widely regarded as wrong. The Anglican church is especially marked by diversity: from the sixteenth century, it has united in worship, and service to God and neighbour, people with a wide range of theological positions. Though sometimes relationships have been stormy or cold, many would say that this has enriched the Communion.

Sexuality and gender have long been contentious issues for Christians. On contraception, remarriage, priestly celibacy and ordination of women, leaders of different major denominations continue to read the Bible in different ways. Indeed significant differences remain among Anglicans, for instance on the nature and purpose of relationships between men and women.⁴

Over the past half-century or so, there has been extensive debate among scholars about what the Bible teaches on homosexuality. These have not been resolved, and sometimes people with similar theological positions may take different views on whether same-sex partnerships are acceptable.⁵ Some in TEC such as William Countryman (author of *Dirt, greed and sex*) have made a significant contribution to this debate. Other Anglicans such as British evangelical Michael Vasey, and theologians from other denominations, have also contributed.⁶ Recent works such as *Gays and the future of Anglicanism*⁷ give just a glimpse of the huge volume of work which has been undertaken, and why many Anglicans believe that a careful reading of the Bible leads to different conclusions from those of the nineteenth-century teachers and missionaries who, despite their merits, often reflected the prejudices of their culture, and whose influence is still widely felt.⁸

As on a range of issues such as war, opinions now vary widely among Anglicans. The situation in many provinces is reflected in a pastoral letter by Church of Ireland bishops in 2003:

In general, four main viewpoints may be identified within the Church of Ireland with regard to same-sex relationships. They are not so much clear-cut, isolated points of view as relative positions on a spectrum, and the views of the members of the present House of Bishops are to be found across this spectrum.

- The witness of the Scriptures is consonant with a view that rejects homosexual practice of any kind, and that marriage between a man and a woman in life-long union remains the only appropriate place for sexual relations. This must remain the standard for Christian behaviour.
- The witness of the Scriptures is consonant with a more sympathetic attitude to homosexuality than has been traditional, but this would not at present permit any radical change in the Church's existing stance on the question.
- The witness of the Scriptures is consonant with the view that a permanent and committed same-gender relationship which, through its internal mutuality and support brings generosity, creativity and love into the lives of those around, cannot be dismissed by the Church as intrinsically disordered.
- The witness of the Scriptures is consonant with the proposition that, in the light of a developing understanding of the nature of humanity and sexuality, the time has arrived for a change in the Church's traditional position on affirming same-gender relationships.

There is general agreement among the bishops that the mind of the Church must be discerned in relation to sexuality in general. The same requirement also applies to any form of new definition or new pastoral practice in relation to the question of ordination, appointments to positions of leadership, or to the blessing of same-sex unions.

The quest for a common mind is not simply an academic exercise. It has long been tacitly if not formally recognised, that homosexual people have held positions of leadership, ordained and lay, within the Church. Their ministry has frequently been highly imaginative and characterised by great pastoral sensitivity that has deeply enriched the lives of those who have experienced it.⁹

However some leaders are adamant that their own understanding should be enforced throughout the world. Archbishop Peter Akinola, Primate of Nigeria and president of the Global South Anglican grouping, has been among the most vocal in denouncing TEC for failing to enforce Scriptural standards of morality. He expressed astonishment that, by electing a partnered gay bishop, TEC 'should conspire to turn their back on the clear teaching of the Bible on the matter of human sexuality' and has sought to take over parts of the province, though under certain circumstances he might withdraw.

'We in Nigeria believe very strongly in the priority of the Scripture,' he claims. 'We want to see ourselves as a church that seeks to live in obedience to the dictates of the Scripture, regardless of whether that is convenient or inconvenient.'¹⁰ But does this fit the facts?

Disregarding Scripture – love, mercy and justice

Those allied with Archbishop Akinola sometimes claim to ‘hate the sin but love the sinner’. Their actions contradict this. On the significance and meaning of neighbourly love and justice, there is far wider agreement among Christians than on sexuality, and Scripture is clearer. In the Gospels, Jesus urges ‘In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets’¹¹, ‘Do not judge, so that you may not be judged’¹², ‘If you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council’¹³, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’¹⁴ and even ‘Love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.’¹⁵ Feeding the hungry, offering hospitality to the stranger and visiting the sick and imprisoned is vital, for ‘just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’¹⁶

The epistles elaborate on these themes. ‘Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law,’ Paul urges.¹⁷ ‘Judgment will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead,’ warns James.¹⁸ ‘We know that we have passed from death to life because we love one another. Whoever does not love abides in death. All who hate a brother or sister are murderers, and you know that murderers do not have eternal life abiding in them. We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us – and we ought to lay down our lives for one another. How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?’ writes John.¹⁹

Hence it might seem that church leaders seeking to live in obedience to Scripture should study the issue of homosexuality as seriously as if they themselves, or someone close to them, were attracted primarily to the same sex; avoid contemptuous language; even if they came to the conclusion that gay sex is wrong, treat any who acted on their feelings no more harshly than heterosexuals in a similar position; and seek to ensure that the basic needs of lesbian and gay people such as food, shelter, safety and care when sick were met.

The actions of Nigerian bishops have been quite the opposite. In Nigeria, gay sex is already an imprisonable offence. In general, detainees are often tortured and then denied medical treatment despite life-threatening injuries.²⁰ The conditions of prisoners, many of them still awaiting trial, are appalling, with meagre rations and lack of healthcare, while illnesses such as tuberculosis are rife; amidst conditions of squalor the sick may be left to die.²¹ Some states where sharia law is in place impose the death penalty. Prejudice too is rife, and many gays and lesbians dare not reveal their identity, especially since loss of livelihood may leave them unable to buy necessities like food and medicine for themselves and their families. Yet to Archbishop Akinola and other church leaders (apart from sharia, which is associated with Muslims) this is not severe enough.

A Bill has been going through Nigeria’s parliament which would mean that lesbians and gays who did not hide their feelings successfully, and anyone encouraging open discussion and authentic listening, could face five years’ imprisonment. It covers anyone who ‘goes through the ceremony of marriage with a person of the same sex’, who ‘performs, witnesses, aids or abets the ceremony of same sex marriage’ or who is ‘involved in the registration of gay clubs, societies and organizations, sustenance, procession or meetings, publicity and public show of same sex amorous relationship directly or indirectly in public and in private.’²² This legislation, though supported by many religious leaders, has been opposed by moderates (including Muslims) in Nigeria²³, and condemned by UN officials as ‘an absolutely unjustified intrusion of individuals’ right to privacy’ which goes against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.²⁴

A collection of testimonies by Nigerian lesbians and gays give some indication of the suffering they already undergo and the fear that the Bill has evoked.²⁵ One described how, after being arrested, 'They kept us locked up in a cell.... We were never tried. We were just held in detention indefinitely. My friend decided that he would help us. He bribed a policeman so that we could escape. The policeman "forgot" to put shackles on us one morning so when we went to empty the toilet bucket we were able to escape.' 'I have seen a lot of prejudice towards gays in Nigeria,' another reported. 'I have also seen the effect this prejudice has on gays in Nigeria in the form of social isolation, poverty and unemployment. Violence against gays is popular in Lagos... I am concerned that the same sex bill proposed by the Nigerian government will further force gays underground. Hate campaigns against GLBT people will increase and fundamental freedoms will be challenged. The laws will also affect Nigerians more broadly. HIV/AIDS will increase because visible support for GLBT organizations will vanish.'

This Bill has the enthusiastic backing of Archbishop Akinola, along with other church leaders. To quote his message to the nation in February 2006, 'The Church commends the law-makers for their prompt reaction to outlaw same-sex relationships in Nigeria and calls for the bill to be passed since the idea expressed in the bill is the moral position of Nigerians regarding human sexuality'; and in September he publicly declared, 'The Church affirms our commitment to the total rejection of the evil of homosexuality which is a perversion of human dignity and encourages the National Assembly to ratify the Bill prohibiting the legality of homosexuality since it is incongruent with the teachings of the Bible, Quran and the basic African traditional values.'²⁶ The vigorous support of those claiming that they speak for God has been significant in providing apparent moral justification for blatant violation of human rights. It appeared possible however that, as a result of political changes in Nigeria, the bill would not become law.

Language which dehumanises fellow-humans made in God's image, fosters fear and blames victims of prejudice for their plight makes it easier to maltreat others. Archbishop Akinola promotes the view that 'if homosexuals see themselves as deviants who have gone astray, the Christian spirit would plead for patience and prayers to make room for their repentance... We argue that it is a blatant lie against Almighty God that homosexuality is their God-given urge and inclination. For us, it is better seen as an acquired aberration... The practice of homosexuality, in our understanding of scripture, is the enthronement of self-will and human weakness... As we are rightly concerned by the depletion of the ozone layer, so should we be concerned by the practice of homosexuality... God created two persons — male and female. Now the world of homosexuals has created a third — a homosexual, neither male nor female, or both male and female — a strange two-in-one human... 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 the Christ.'²⁷

It might also be expected that pastoral care might involve some attempt to listen to and understand those to whom one is supposed to be ministering, even if one disagrees with them on certain matters. Indeed it is helpful to be able to engage with others' feelings and experiences, if only to persuade them to reconsider their position. But Peter Akinola has reportedly had little contact with those whom he so confidently denounces. When he found that a man he had shaken hands with was a partnered gay, 'I said, "Oh!" I jumped back.'²⁸ Nor does he appear to have done much serious study of the issues; for instance he has said that 'I cannot think of how a man in his senses would be having a sexual relationship with another man. Even in the world of animals, dogs, cows, lions, we don't hear of such things,'²⁹ whereas homosexual sex occurs in many species.³⁰

The animal theme was reportedly also taken up by the bishop of Calabar, Tunde Adeleye, who said that homosexuals were 'worse than animals in the forest', and that homosexual behaviour was 'devilish and satanic.... It comes directly from the pit of hell. It is an idea sponsored by

Satan himself and being executed by his followers and adherents who have infiltrated the church.³¹

Gay and lesbian Nigerian Anglicans calling for greater understanding and acceptance have faced rejection and indeed persecution.³² Tolerance of theological diversity is limited: indeed the front page of the Church of Nigeria website contains links to Canons which state that 'The Church of Nigeria has power so to order its discipline as to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines', that clergy may be suspended or removed for 'heresy or false doctrine' if 'the accused has taught, published or otherwise publicly promulgated, some doctrine or opinion repugnant to or at variance with the Faith and Doctrine of the Church', while laypeople may be excommunicated.³³ Hence insights from dialogue and study cannot always easily be shared, and openness to the guidance of the Spirit is blocked where this might call into question the power of bishops.

This is not to say that Nigerian church leaders are insincere when they claim to 'hate the sin but love the sinner', rather that **their behaviour does not conform to the Christian concept of love**. Some may be deluding themselves as well as others.

It would be unfair to single out the Church of Nigeria bishops when leaders in many other provinces have been indifferent to abuses of the human rights of lesbian and gay people, or have actively sought to inflict further hardship on them. For instance in March 2007 the National Council of Churches of Singapore responded to a review of the law by urging that gay sex remain an imprisonable offence and that lesbian sex be criminalised.³⁴ One of the Vice Presidents of this organisation was Dr John Chew³⁵, Bishop of Singapore and Archbishop of South East Asia. **Anglican leaders have thus sought to outdo even repressive governments in treating others in ways in which they would not themselves wish to be treated and failing to love their neighbour as themselves.**

3 The worldwide Anglican Communion

Ethical issues and change

The Nigerian bishops flout not only Biblical teaching but also numerous resolutions agreed by international Anglican bodies. While these have no binding authority over national churches, it is ironic that TEC has been so severely penalised for not conforming to these, while far greater breaches by others in the Communion have been overlooked. Indeed, it could be argued that TEC's problems arise in part because its members have taken Anglican ideals too seriously.

Prevailing views on **specific ethical issues** such as **sexuality and gender** have changed radically in the course of many Anglicans' lifetimes, as has the practice of national churches, for instance that of the Church of England on remarriage of divorcees.³⁶

When the Lambeth conference of bishops (which first met in 1867 and is convened every decade or so by the Archbishop of Canterbury) changed its position on contraception in 1930, this represented a break with its past and put it out of step with most other major denominations.³⁷ The previous conference had issued 'an emphatic warning against the use of unnatural means for the avoidance of conception, together with the grave dangers - physical, moral and religious - thereby incurred',³⁸ and the Bishop of Southwark had argued in 1913 that it was better for a marriage to break up under the strain of abstinence than for a couple to use contraceptives.³⁹ But the once radical stance of accepting contraception now has wide support, even among laypeople in the Roman Catholic church, though senior clergy of that denomination are still opposed. Recognition that sexual intimacy without the intention to conceive was not always mere self-indulgence was a major advance in the understanding of sexuality.

Among Anglicans, the ordination of women has also been a turbulent issue involving major change, and people with strongly opposed views have managed to co-exist. Also, those who at first were doubtful about women clergy were able to observe what happened elsewhere, listen to alternative perspectives and in some cases reconsider their views.

If appropriate roles and restrictions for men and women in intimate relationships, church and society, or other important ethical issues such as the circumstances in which violence might be permissible, had been elevated to being first-order issues like the divinity of Christ, the Anglican church would probably not have survived into the twenty-first century in any recognisable form.

Mainstream Anglican thought

But from the late nineteenth century, at least until the late twentieth century, there appeared to be wide agreement on certain matters, reflected in resolutions of the Lambeth Conference (LC) and, from 1971, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), which also involves representatives of the laity. Respect for the dignity of all humans, including the disadvantaged; encouragement of thoughtful study of the Bible; appreciation of advances in science and catholicity based on acceptance of provincial autonomy and diversity are among the interconnected themes. This is not to say that there were not other more narrow or authoritarian strands within Anglican thinking and practice; but they were not dominant.

During this historical period, rapid urbanisation, changes in work and family patterns, expansion of education and research and mass communications led to much greater awareness of diversity, visibility of people attracted to the same sex and study of human relationships, including those involving sexual intimacy.

Provincial autonomy has long been a key feature of Anglicanism, in contrast, say, to Roman Catholicism, with its sometimes authoritarian centralism. For example:

There are certain principles of church order which, your Committee consider, ought to be distinctly recognised and set forth, as of great importance for the maintenance of union among the Churches of our Communion.

1. First, that the duly certified action of every national or particular Church, and of each ecclesiastical province (or diocese not included in a province), in the exercise of its own discipline, should be respected by all the other Churches, and by their individual members.
2. Secondly, that when a diocese, or territorial sphere of administration, has been constituted by the authority of any Church or province of this Communion within its own limits, no bishop or other clergyman of any other Church should exercise his functions within that diocese without the consent of the bishop thereof.
3. Thirdly, that no bishop should authorise to officiate in his diocese a clergyman coming from another Church or province, unless such clergyman present letters testimonial, countersigned by the bishop of the diocese from which he comes; such letters to be, as nearly as possible, in the form adopted by such Church or province in the case of the transfer of a clergyman from one diocese to another. (LC 1878)⁴⁰

...any bishop-elect... should, before his consecration, make a solemn declaration that he will pay all due honour and deference to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and will respect and maintain the spiritual rights and privileges of the Church of England, and of all Churches in communion with her. In this manner the interests of unity would be maintained without any infringement of the local liberties or jurisdiction. (LC 1897)⁴¹

The Conference affirms that the true constitution of the Catholic Church involves the principle of the autonomy of particular Churches based upon a common faith and order (LC 1930)⁴²

This Conference:

1. reaffirms its unity in the historical position of respect for diocesan boundaries and the authority of bishops within these boundaries; and in light of the above
2. affirms that it is deemed inappropriate behaviour for any bishop or priest of this Communion to exercise episcopal or pastoral ministry within another diocese without first obtaining the permission and invitation of the ecclesial authority thereof. (LC 1988)⁴³

Not only bishops but also other clergy and **the laity** had a crucial part to play in taking the initiative in their immediate situations and in decision-making at all levels:

The ministry of the laity requires to be more widely recognised, side by side with the ministry of the clergy, in the work, the administration, and the discipline of the Church (LC 1908)

...every member of the Church, both clerical and lay, is called to be a channel through which the divine life flows for the quickening of all mankind (LC 1930)⁴⁴

The Conference, believing that the laity, as baptized members of the Body of Christ, share in the priestly ministry of the Church and in responsibility for its work, calls upon Anglican men and women throughout the world to realise their Christian vocation both by taking their full part in the Church's life and by Christian witness and dedication in seeking to serve God's purpose in the world (LC 1958)⁴⁵

The Conference recommends that no major issue in the life of the Church should be decided without the full participation of the laity in discussion and in decision (LC 1968)⁴⁶

The Conference recommends that each province or regional Church be asked to explore the theology of baptism and confirmation in relation to the need to commission the laity for their task in the world (LC 1968)⁴⁷

The Conference, thankful for the intensified interest of young people in human welfare, conscious of the value of their informed insights, and recognising the need to involve them more directly in decision-making, in both secular and ecclesiastical society, requests provinces, dioceses, and parishes to promote this involvement in every way possible (LC 1968)⁴⁸

This Conference:

1. acknowledging that God through the Holy Spirit is bringing about a revolution in terms of the total ministry of all the baptized, thus enriching the Church and making Christ known to men and women as the hope of the world;
2. urges each bishop with his diocese to take the necessary steps to provide opportunities, training and support to ensure that this shared style of ministry becomes a reality (LC 1988)⁴⁹

Careful theological **study**, the **link between worship and knowledge**, **intellectual freedom** and **avoidance of misusing the Bible** were emphasised. Passages were to be read **in context and in the light of Christ**:

...there is need for the Church to renew and redirect its teaching office... by a fresh insistence upon the duty of thinking and learning as essential elements in the Christian life (LC 1930)⁵⁰

It is no part of the purpose of the Scriptures to give information on those themes which are the proper subject matter of scientific enquiry, nor is the Bible a collection of separate oracles, each containing a final declaration of truth. The doctrine of God is the centre of its teaching, set forth in its books 'by divers portions and in divers manners.' As Jesus Christ is the crown, so also is he the criterion of all revelation. We would impress upon Christian people the necessity of banishing from their minds the ideas concerning the character of God which are inconsistent with the character of Jesus Christ. We believe that the work of our Lord Jesus Christ is continued by the Holy Spirit, who not only interpreted him to the Apostles, but has in every generation inspired and guided those who seek truth (LC 1930)⁵¹

Believing as we do that men should offer their worship to God because of his great glory, and because of his supreme revelation of love in Jesus Christ, apart from any thought of benefits that may accrue to them, we urge upon the Church the absolute obligation of corporate worship... Moreover we believe that it is through the development of their capacity for worship that men advance in their knowledge of God's nature, and may hope to penetrate further into his mysteries (LC 1930)⁵²

The Conference affirms that our Lord Jesus Christ is God's final Word to man, and that in his light all Holy Scripture must be seen and interpreted, the Old Testament in terms of promise and the New Testament in terms of fulfilment (LC 1958)⁵³

The Conference gratefully acknowledges our debt to the host of devoted scholars who, worshipping the God of Truth, have enriched and deepened our understanding of the Bible, not least by facing with intellectual integrity the questions raised by modern knowledge and modern criticism (LC 1958)⁵⁴

The Conference, having considered and welcomed

- (a) the increasing extent of human knowledge,
- (b) the prospect of human control of the natural environment,
- (c) the searching enquiries of the theologians,

calls the Church to a faith in the living God which is adventurous, expectant, calm, and confident, and to faith in the standards of Christ, who was, and is, and is to come, as the criterion of what is to be welcomed and what is to be resisted in contemporary society (LC 1968)⁵⁵

The Conference recommends that theologians be encouraged to continue to explore fresh ways of understanding God's revelation of himself in Christ, expressed in language that makes sense in our time. It believes that this requires of the theologian respect for tradition and, of the Church, respect for freedom of inquiry (LC 1968)⁵⁶

The Conference rejoices at the abundant evidence from many parts of the world that there is renewed awareness of the power and gifts of God's Holy Spirit... We all should ensure that reading and meditation of the Bible be part of the normal life of the parish and be accompanied by appropriate study of scholarly background material so that the Scripture is understood in its proper context... We all should search out ways to identify with those who suffer and are poor, and be involved personally in efforts to bring them justice, liberation, healing, and new life in Christ...

The road from Palm Sunday to Pentecost must pass through Good Friday and Easter. It is at the cross that new life through the Holy Spirit is found, and in the shadow of the cross that Christians must pray 'Come, Holy Spirit.' (LC 1978)⁵⁷

Advances in **science** were to be taken seriously, learnt from and made use of in the alleviation of suffering:

We recognize in the modern discoveries of science - whereby the boundaries of knowledge are extended, the needs of men are satisfied and their sufferings alleviated - veritable gifts of God, to be used with thankfulness to him, and with that sense of responsibility which such thankfulness must create (LC 1930)⁵⁸

The Conference acknowledges gratefully the work of scientists in increasing man's knowledge of the universe, wherein is seen the majesty of God in his creative activity. It therefore calls upon Christian people both to learn reverently from every new disclosure of truth, and at the same time to bear witness to the biblical message of a God and Saviour apart from whom no gift can be rightly used (LC 1958)⁵⁹

While Anglicanism was originally often associated with political conservatism, there has been a growing recognition of the need not only to care for the needy but also to **work for justice, democracy and human rights**, and seek to **identify and resist the misuse of power**:

The Conference recognises the ideals of brotherhood which underlie the democratic movement of this century; and, remembering our Master's example in proclaiming the inestimable value of every human being in the sight of God, calls upon the Church to show sympathy with the movement, in so far as it strives to procure just treatment for all and a real opportunity of living a true human life (LC 1908)⁶⁰

The Conference believes that both the recognition of the responsibility of the individual to God and the development of his personality are gravely imperilled by any claim made either by the state or by any group within the state to control the whole of human life (LC 1948)⁶¹

The Conference endorses the proposed Covenant on Human Rights, now before the United Nations (LC 1948)⁶²

The Conference, profoundly aware of the effect on human life of the responsible and irresponsible use of power at all levels of human society, considers that the Church should address itself energetically to the range of problems arising in this area (LC 1968)

The Council calls upon its member Churches:

- a. to be sensitive to the violent dehumanization of minority peoples in their midst;
- b. to acknowledge the Church's vocation to side with the oppressed in empowering them to live their own lives in freedom, even at some sacrifice to itself, while at the same time seeking in the power of Christian love to bring about the true liberation of the oppressor;
- c. to seek for the education of the majority in these needs by confrontation with and participation in the suffering of the oppressed.
- d. that where solutions to such violence seem possible (as, for example, in the pollution of our environment by industry or testing of nuclear devices), to join with those pressing for such resolution;
- e. where apparent resolutions are not available, to serve as an agency for demanding that attention is not averted, through either fear or fatigue, from the persistent and hopeful quest of a just settlement (ACC 1973)⁶³

The Conference regards the matter of human rights and dignity as of capital and universal importance...

we call on governments to uphold human dignity; to defend human rights, including the exercise of freedom of speech, movement, and worship in accordance with the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights...

we appeal to all Christians to lend their support to those who struggle for human freedom and who press forward in some places at great personal and corporate risk (LC 1978)⁶⁴

We recognise that violence has many faces. There are some countries where the prevailing social order is so brutal, exploiting the poor for the sake of the privileged and trampling on people's human rights, that it must be termed 'violent.' There are others where a social order that appears relatively benevolent nevertheless exacts a high price in human misery from some sections of the population ... we condemn the subjection, intimidation, and manipulation of people by the use of violence and the threat of violence and call Christian people everywhere... to re-examine as a matter of urgency their own attitude towards, and the complicity with, violence in its many forms (LC 1978)⁶⁵

...a bishop... will have a concern for the wellbeing of the whole community (especially those at a disadvantage) not primarily for the advantage or protection of the Church community. The bishop should be ready to be present in secular situations, to give time to the necessary study, to find skilled advisers and to take sides publicly if necessary (in ecumenical partnership if at all possible) about issues which concern justice, mercy, and truth. Members of the Church should be prepared to see that the bishop is supported in such a ministry (LC 1978)⁶⁶

This Conference...

Endorses the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and asks the provinces of the Anglican Communion to support all who are working for its implementation...

Commends the work of various international human rights organisations campaigning to support the freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and their work on behalf of human rights activists throughout the world who are persecuted for their defence of those fundamental freedoms (LC 1988)⁶⁷

On the fiftieth anniversary of its proclamation in December of 1948, this Conference... resolves that its members urge compliance with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the nations in which our various member Churches are located, and all others over whom we may exercise any influence (LC 1998)⁶⁸

Five Marks of Mission identified by the ACC in the 1980s and 1990s included commitment to love and justice.⁶⁹

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise 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

Concern for the underprivileged and commitment to more just and compassionate relationships were to be manifested within the church, as well as outside, and **self-examination** was important:

The Council calls upon its member churches and individuals to concern themselves with human rights and responsibilities, reflecting upon them in the light of the Gospel, so that Christians may be as well informed about them as possible; and asks, more specifically, that the churches...

1. study in particular the attitudes of the several societies in which they are themselves situated, developing a Christian approach to actions appropriate to their situations;
2. rigorously assess their own structures, attitudes and modes of working to ensure the promotion of human rights within them, and to seek to make the church truly an image of God's just Kingdom and witness in today's world;
3. themselves take actions consistent with Christian principles and support such actions by others, and to involve themselves in all possible ways with the struggles of people who are denied human rights (ACC 1979)⁷⁰

This Council urges every Diocese in our Communion to consider how through its structures it may encourage its members to see that a true Christian spirituality involves a concern for God's justice in the world, particularly in its own community (ACC 1990)⁷¹

The implications of diversity of thought and the quest for truth and justice

For some Anglicans, at least, these principles were not adopted lightly, and they realised the controversial nature of what was being asserted.

The 1878 Lambeth conference, where provincial autonomy was strongly affirmed, took place just eight years after the First Vatican Council, which sought to maintain unity and protect against error through a high level of centralisation of power⁷². The Anglican commitment to a different kind of approach persisted. As the Church of England House of Bishops put it in 1997 in a response to a Roman Catholic call for Christian unity under papal authority, while desiring unity Anglicans tended to take the view that authority 'belongs to the body of the church as a whole, and that the discernment of the faith once delivered to the saints is a function of the whole body in which all the faithful in each particular church have a part to play at every level.' What is more, **'Anglicans have reservations if and when high authority'** such as the pope **declares that 'truths, beliefs or devotional practices that many believers do not see to be demanded by Holy Scripture or required by the biblically rooted tradition inherited from the ancient church' are among the church's 'most essential elements.'**⁷³

Such an approach brought the possibility that there might be profoundly different understandings of what God was calling the church to do. In such circumstances, some measure of mutual tolerance might be needed, and trust in divine faithfulness, until it became apparent which avenues were futile and which fruitful. It was possible for congregations, dioceses and provinces to observe and examine what their fellow-Anglicans and other Christians were doing elsewhere, and the results, and seek to discern the value of such developments.

The Anglican approach to the Bible, with its emphasis on the doctrine of God, rejection of crude literalism and commitment to deep study and intellectual integrity, differed from both the extremes of modernism and the development of fundamentalism by conservative Protestant theologians in the early twentieth century. 'It must be evident to all who pay close attention to the spiritual conditions of our day that there is being made at this time a very determined and widespread effort to set aside entirely the authority of the Bible. Let us note that one of the unique characteristics of that Book is that it claims the right to control the actions of men. It speaks "as one having authority." It assumes, and in the most peremptory and uncompromising way, to rebuke men for misconduct, and to tell them what they shall do and what they shall not do,' wrote one of the contributors to *The Fundamentals*, unaware of the subjectivity even of those claiming to uphold the Bible in its entirety. 'In such a state of things it is manifestly of the very highest importance to insist unceasingly upon the sufficiency, finality and completeness of the Revelation given by God in His Word.'⁷⁴ But **Anglicans tended to follow a different way, based on the unflinching trustworthiness of the living Word, in whose light written words should be read, and reluctance to insist on submission to one point of view on matters where understanding differed.**

To some, the refusal to re-create, and submit to, the usual earthly patterns of authority and privilege within the church was an important aspect of its witness to the kingdom of God, so different from the kingdoms of this world.⁷⁵ According to a report prepared under the chairmanship of Archbishop Philip Carrington of Quebec, presented to and adopted by the Lambeth Conference 1948, authority within the Anglican Communion 'is a dispersed rather than a centralized authority having many elements which combine, interact with and check each other; these elements together contributing by a process of mutual support, mutual checking, and redressing of errors or exaggerations to the many-sided fullness of the authority which Christ has committed to His Church. Where this authority of Christ is to be found mediated not in one mode but in several we recognize in this multiplicity of God's loving provisions against the temptations to tyranny and the dangers of unchecked power.' The 1963 Anglican Congress in Toronto was of great importance for many Anglicans in deepening their awareness of a wider

world where so many were marginalised and subjected to injustice, not only in Asia, Africa and Latin America but also in the West, where segregation and other forms of discrimination and subjugation affected many people's chances of freedom and fullness of life. The church was no longer to be marked by paternalism but was rather a family of equals. **Mutual responsibility and interdependence in the Body of Christ required openness to listening to the unheard and siding with the underprivileged.**⁷⁶

Commitment to justice of course involves **challenging those attitudes and structures which are oppressive**, and may upset those keen not to offend the powerful or act outside social or institutional norms even when these are unjust. At times racial justice, for instance, involved major struggle and conflict, and even now many who regard themselves as fair-minded are reluctant to embrace the full implications of equality and respect for ethnic diversity.

This commitment may be expressed in, and deepened through, liturgy. For example, Church of England churchgoers sometimes confess, 'We have seen the ill-treatment of others and have not gone to their aid'⁷⁷, and pledge, with the help of God, to 'seek and serve Christ in all people, loving your neighbour as yourself' and 'acknowledge Christ's authority over human society, by prayer for the world and its leaders, by defending the weak, and by seeking peace and justice'.⁷⁸ Church of South India worshippers may proclaim their belief that 'God has called us to a partnership for the continuance of his mission in this time and place, and that, though we live in the midst of confusion, turmoil, exploitation, oppression and in the grip of the forces of death, we are called to be instruments of peace and justice.' In praying for the poor, dispossessed, exploited and unheard, 'the victims of discrimination because of colour, race, class, caste, nationality, religion and traditions', and that 'Where the mind is without fear, where the head is held high... Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls, into that haven of freedom, O Lord let our world awake',⁷⁹ Christians align themselves with a God whose love is disruptive as well as healing. To say such words truthfully involves being willing to question one's own complicity in injustice, disturb superficial harmony and risk the anger of the powerful, in time helping to create the conditions for a deeper unity and peace based on responding to Christ in one's neighbour.

Virginia Report

As late as 1998, though senior clergy had begun considering mechanisms for greater centralisation of power, the Lambeth Conference largely endorsed the Report of the Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, published in 1997 by the Anglican Consultative Council and known as the **Virginia Report**:

This Conference...

welcomes the 1997 Report of the Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (The Virginia Report) as a helpful statement of the characteristics of our Communion...

commends its discussion of our Trinitarian faith as the basis of our koinonia and interdependence...

affirms that the Churches of our Anglican Communion are joined in the communion of God through Our Lord Jesus Christ by the gracious power of the Holy Spirit, celebrating the fact that our communion together is maintained in the life and truth of Christ by the gift to us of the Holy Scriptures, the Apostles and Nicene Creeds, the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, and the historic episcopate, and commending the fundamental importance of these to the consideration of our partners in ecumenical dialogue...

values the instruments of Anglican unity as they are described in the Virginia Report, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the meeting of Primates;

values and discerns the Church to be held in koinonia by our liturgical tradition and common patterns of worship, by prayer and the communion of the saints, the witness of the heroes and heroines of our history, the sharing of the stories of our faith, and by our interdependence through exchanges of friendship between our dioceses and by service to others in the name of Christ...

requests the Primates to initiate and monitor a decade of study in each province on the report, and in particular on "whether effective communion, at all levels, does not require appropriate instruments,

with due safeguards, not only for legislation, but also for oversight" (para. 5.20) as well as on the issue of a universal ministry in the service of Christian unity (cf. Agros Report, para. 162, and the Encyclical Letter of Pope John Paul II, *Ut unum sint* 96 (LC 1998))⁸⁰

In 1999 the ACC requested primates to 'ensure that opportunity is given at provincial and diocesan level for careful and critical study of the report'.⁸¹

According to the Virginia Report,⁸² a **Trinitarian** faith, reflected and deepened through **liturgy**, had major implications for the life of the church:

A living faith in the God of Jesus Christ draws us into the life of the Holy Trinity. This means living as Jesus lived his life, empowered by God's Spirit:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (Luke 4:18-19)...

The same Spirit of the Lord rests upon the Church and dwells in the hearts of the believers, empowering the community to go forth as Christ did to proclaim the reign of God. The mission of the Church is to be the icon of God's life. By prayer and praise, mercy and peace, justice and love, constantly welcoming the sinner, the outcast, the marginalised into her sanctuary, the Church is revealed as communion and is faithful to its mission...

As the sacrament of initiation into the life of the Church, baptism is related not only to a single experience, but to lifelong growth in Christ and participation in his ministry. Those who are baptized... have a common responsibility to bear witness in the Church and the world to the Gospel of Christ, 'the Liberator of all human beings'... (BEM, Baptism 9, 10).

The eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among those who are brothers and sisters in the one family of God, and constantly challenges those who participate to search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life (Matt 5:23f. I Cor 10:16f; 11:20-22. Gal 3:28). All injustice, racism, separation and denial of freedom are radically challenged when Christians share in the body and blood of Christ.

A church which rejected and victimised those marginalised by society, scorning love and justice and instead encouraging human rights abuses, would thus be **unfaithful to its mission**. Likewise the **meaning of the sacraments** would be terribly distorted if used to further exclusion and oppression or callous indifference to others' suffering.

This understanding was repeatedly reinforced during worship in certain provinces, including TEC. Ironically, though Americans are often thought of (and think of themselves) as modern and not bound by ancient texts and traditions, the approach of progressive Episcopalians has often resembled that common in much of the early church.

'Do you think that kindness toward your neighbour is not something necessary, but voluntary; not law but exhortation? I would wish and think that it were so, were I not frightened by the possibility of being numbered among the goats on the left hand of the Sovereign Judge who will hurl his condemnations; and this not because they have robbed or committed sacrileges or adulteries, nor because they have done something forbidden; nothing of the sort attracts condemnation on them, but their having failed to care for Christ himself in the person of the poor,' warned St Gregory Nazianzen in the fourth century. Likewise St. John Chrysostom taught that 'This is the rule of the most perfect Christianity, its most exact definition, its highest point, namely, the seeking of the common good... for nothing can so make a person an imitator of Christ as caring for his neighbours.'⁸³ In TEC's baptismal liturgy, worshippers promise that they will, with God's help, 'seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself', 'strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.'

With regard to the **instruments of communion** within the broader context of the mission and ministry of the church, and the role of the **laity**, according to the Virginia Report:

The calling of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and according to the gifts given to them, to carry out Christ's work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship and governance of the Church...

In the development of the Anglican Communion there is no legislative authority above the Provincial level... However, while autonomy entails the legal and juridical right of each Province to govern its way of life, in practice autonomy has never been the sole criterion for understanding the relation of Provinces to one another. There has generally been an implicit understanding of belonging together and interdependence... Each Province has something distinctive to offer the others, and needs them in turn to be able to witness to Christ effectively in its own context...

The Archbishop of Canterbury's task has been described as involving "in a particular way, that care of all the churches which is shared by all the bishops", and also as a task "not to command but to gather" the Communion. Clearly, the emphasis is upon service and caring and not upon coercive power...

What was said about the identity and role of the first Lambeth Conference in 1867 was cautious:
It has never been contemplated that we should assume the functions of a general synod of all the Churches in full communion with the Church of England, and take upon ourselves to enact canons that should be binding upon those represented...

The consultative rather than legislative role of the Conference was reiterated clearly in 1920:
The Lambeth Conference does not claim to exercise any powers of control. It stands for the far more spiritual and more Christian principle of loyalty to the fellowship. The Churches represented in it are indeed independent, but independent with the Christian freedom which recognizes the restraints of truth and love....

A balance is held between denying any power of compliance or control while upholding the need for loyalty to the fellowship expressed in restraint imposed by virtue of belonging to the Communion. No one part should act without regard for the others...

The Anglican Consultative Council meets every three years and its Standing Committee annually... Its most vital purpose...like the Lambeth Conference, is to establish a communion of mutual attentiveness, interdependence and accountability to serve the unity and interdependence in mission of the Anglican Communion. The mutual attentiveness required when members from various parts of the Communion share the richness of their experiences also helps to form the mind of the Communion and is a reminder of the rich diversity of gifts which God has given us...

The minutes of the 1979 Meeting of the Primates comment that:
The role of a Primates' meeting could not be, and was not desired as a higher synod... Rather it was a clearing house for ideas and experience through free expression, the fruits of which the Primates might convey to their Churches...

What has yet to be given serious consideration is Resolution 18 Section 2(a) of Lambeth 1988:
This conference urges that encouragement be given to a developing collegial role for the Primates' Meeting under the Presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, so that the Primates' meeting is able to exercise an enhanced responsibility in offering guidance on doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters...

Care needs to be taken to prevent a Province from becoming bound by its culture. The corrosive effects of particular environments are often not perceptible to those who are immersed in them...

In much the same way as a juridical decision made at Provincial level has to be received, so the expressed 'mind of the Communion' given in resolutions of Lambeth Conferences, still has to undergo a process of 'open reception', in the life of the Anglican Communion and the whole Church.

This indicated that, while stronger international connections should be considered, provinces were still autonomous – and that any developments had to be based on mutual attentiveness, not the imposition of conformity without regard for the reality of mission and ministry in particular provinces.

The Report emphasised the importance of being **open** to dialogue and **attentive** to the Holy Spirit, to one another and to the particularity of people, times and places, and of **not abandoning the vulnerable and marginalised**.

The Church needs to be tolerant and open enough to conduct its arguments with charity and attentiveness to the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Care needs to be taken to ensure that complex matters are fairly and appropriately considered...

The Church is effective when it is embedded a local place, challenging wrongs, healing relationships, standing with the vulnerable and marginalized, and opening up new possibilities for mutual service, respect and love...

At all times the theological reflection and praxis of the local church must be consistent with the truth of the gospel which belongs to the universal Church. The universal doctrine of the Church is important especially when particular practices or theories are locally developed which lead to disputes. In some cases it may be possible and necessary for the universal Church to say with firmness that a particular local practice or theory is incompatible with Christian faith. This was said, for example, to those churches in South Africa which practiced and justified racial discrimination at the eucharist...

Bishops have a special responsibility for maintaining and focusing the internal unity and communion of the local Church... episcopal ministry is no authoritarian ministry above and separate from the community, but is a ministry, based in the grace of God, always exercised in relation to the community and always subject to the word of God... As representative persons, bishops have a moral duty to reflect the concerns of the whole community, especially those whom society pushes to the margins...

The various levels of the Church are accountable to each other. This will be expressed by openness to dialogue, by attentiveness to the particularity of people, times and places, by acceptance of interdependence on both the personal and corporate levels and by honouring plurality and diversity as gifts of God...

Attentiveness, in the Christian community, is a specific quality of interacting among members of Christ's body. Christian attentiveness means deciding to place the understanding of others ahead of being understood. It means listening and responding to the needs and the hopes of others, especially when these differ from one's own needs, agendas and hopes. Further, Christian attentiveness means keeping these needs and agendas in mind, when making one's own decisions and developing one's own practices. Such attentiveness is consonant, we said, with the quality of God's love known in Christ and shared in the Holy Spirit. This divine love is imaged beautifully in John's Gospel, where the Father and Son glorify and affirm the identity of one another. It is mirrored further in our Lord's acute awareness of and compassionate responsiveness to the needs of others...

Anglicans agree that the Great Ecumenical Councils of the fourth and fifth centuries were the highest conciliar authority. However, no ecumenical council possesses final authority simply as an institution. Even with these early councils there was no guarantee that the guidance of a council was free from error of judgement or distortion of the truth. Its words were accepted as true and binding, not because a particular council spoke, nor because it had been convened by a particular authority, but because its decisions came to be received and recognised by the faithful in the local churches as expressing the truth of the gospel...

Within the Anglican Communion matters which touch the communion of all the churches need to be discerned and tested within the life of the interdependence of the Provinces, through the meeting of bishops in the Lambeth Conference and through the consultative process of the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meeting. Beyond that lies the process of open reception

within the life of the local churches... Though some of the means by which communion is expressed may be strained, the need for courtesy, tolerance, mutual respect, prayer for one another and a continuing desire to know and be with one another, remain binding upon us as Christians...

The mission of the Church is to embody and proclaim Christ's gospel of love and reconciliation, healing and freedom. This must be transparent not only in the words it speaks and in its advocacy of justice and peace, but also in its visible structures and processes. The theology implicit in the Church's structures and processes must be one with the explicit theology of its words...

In the context of the Lambeth Conference, Christian attentiveness entails, in the first place, that individual bishops and groups of bishops will heed the voice of other bishops when these express the needs and hopes of the Church in their place... Attentiveness becomes distinctively Christian when the bishops assembled give ear to, and make space for, the voices of those Christians who are seldom, if ever, heard... One example of such Christian attentiveness in the past is western bishops' heeding of, and being responsive to, the deep concern of African bishops regarding polygamy...

The bishops at Lambeth are to represent those who have no voice: those who can rely on no one else to tell their story and plead their case; those whose concerns society and/or the Church have chosen, sometimes deliberately, sometimes forgetfully, to address. It is when the bishops consider themselves to be accountable to those who have the least that they discover the way of God's Kingdom.

The Virginia Report, while recognising that opinions might be influenced by cultural context, did not fully address the problems which could arise because of the human tendency to fail to see God's image in those of low social status or differing from the norm, and indeed to victimise others. For instance, though racial discrimination at the eucharist was given as an example of what was unacceptable, for many years it was the mainstream view that racism (indeed slavery) was divinely sanctioned; if those expressing what were then widely regarded as ungodly views had been silenced in the interests of unity, it would have been a setback for moves towards greater equality. Nor did the Report examine how laypeople, clergy and bishops should respond if leaders in other provinces not only failed to abide by Biblical teaching on love and justice and Anglican understandings of the church but also insisted that others do the same, threatening schism if their will was not done worldwide.

4 Homosexuality, justice and power in church and society

'The need for deep and dispassionate study'

It has often been suggested that greater acceptance of gays and lesbians in much of TEC than in most other provinces reflects the fact that the West is either more enlightened or more decadent than the rest of the world, and that the church has tended to go along with society. In fact, blatant prejudice and discrimination against gays and lesbians were very common in the UK and North America just half a century ago and are still far from unknown; in Texas, indeed, gay sex was only decriminalised in 2003. And, while churches worldwide – including North America – are influenced by secular trends, TEC is in many ways profoundly counter-cultural. Indeed, in many other former colonies, laws introduced in the days of the British empire had played a key part in creating an institutional framework for such discrimination, though these were not always put into force.

By the late 1950s and early 1960s, considerable research had been carried out on human sexuality, though hampered by a negative climate which often distorted the perception of same-sex relationships and indeed the conduct of lesbians and gays who had internalised this negativity or who were desperate to avoid discovery. The USA was in the grip of hysteria about supposed threats to national security from communists and homosexuals. For instance thousands of civil servants suspected of being gay or lesbian were sacked⁸⁴. Life in much of Europe too was grim; German gays and lesbians who had survived Nazi concentration camps still had to lead clandestine lives, and in Britain even national heroes were not spared: the brilliant mathematician, wartime code-breaker and pioneer computer scientist Alan Turing had been arrested for gay sex, lost his security clearance and committed suicide.⁸⁵

In the UK and elsewhere, extreme methods were sometimes used to try to change people's sexuality, including electric shock treatment. Others followed the then-fashionable advice to get married, in the hope that their sexuality would go away. But attraction to the same sex usually persisted. And, while some gays and lesbians were able to 'act straight' much of the time, the damage to them and their families was often high.⁸⁶

Nevertheless, in countries with widespread literacy and reasonably good access to scientific books and journals, **many of those who were open to learning reverently from every new disclosure of truth were becoming aware of human diversity, and the fact that a minority of men and women were attracted mainly to the same sex and were unlikely to be able to change their orientation.** There was **greater awareness of the value of sexual love in the context of committed relationships**, not simply for the purpose of having children. And **theologians responding with intellectual integrity to the challenges of their time and worshipping the God of truth had begun questioning entrenched views on homosexuality.**

By the late 1960s, campaigners seeking to reform destructive and unjust laws and challenge extreme bigotry had achieved some success, though prejudice and inequality were still widespread. In the USA, the upsurge of black militancy and the civil rights movement, which used non-violent direct action among other means, was jolting Christians in various denominations, including Episcopalians, out of their complacency about injustice.

Baptist minister Martin Luther King Jr, a leading campaigner against economic injustice and war as well as racism, had written in 1963 while in jail to several white clergymen – including Episcopalian bishops – who had criticised him for extremism, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere... You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations... Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging dark of segregation to say, "Wait"... More and more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much

more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people... I see the church as the body of Christ. But, oh! How we have blemished and scarred that body through social neglect and through fear of being nonconformists.⁸⁷

He proclaimed that 'we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream',⁸⁸ and **for a generation of Americans the words of prophets such as Amos became a challenge to transform their own society, wracked with injustice and division.**

Though some Episcopalians had been active in the anti-racist movement from its early stages, such as the priests Malcolm Boyd (who was to come out as gay in the 1970s)⁸⁹ and Denzil Carty, and martyred seminarian Jonathan Daniels, they had not represented the mainstream position.⁹⁰ But change was taking place, painful as it was to some, and more members of TEC were learning not to take it for granted that the economic and social inequalities in their nation and the world were ordained by God, or need not be resisted on the basis that sooner or later they would disappear.

The lesbian and gay rights movement also became more militant in challenging social injustice, including police brutality and misuse of psychiatry. In some parts of the USA, attitudes became more accepting, though elsewhere there was fierce prejudice. Moreover almost everyone old enough to be in a clerical or lay leadership position in TEC had grown up in a profoundly homophobic setting, where feeling attracted to the same sex, let alone acting on this, was regarded as unnatural, immoral and not in accord with the American way of life. They would take a great deal of convincing to accept committed same-sex partnerships. However, as more lesbian, gay and bisexual people in and outside the churches 'came out of the closet' and stopped pretending they were heterosexual, it became harder to sidestep the issue. And, rather as the second world war had brought black and white US servicemen into contact, prompting Christians to rethink racist misreadings of the Bible,⁹¹ the visibility of gays and lesbians called into questions some of the assumptions in religious as well as secular circles.

Some Christians persisted in the belief that it was reasonably easy to 'cure' people of their homosexuality, despite all the evidence to the contrary. In 1977 a high-profile ex-gay ministry run by Truro Episcopal Church in Virginia closed its doors abruptly, and it turned out that even its founder had stayed gay.⁹² However, much damage continued to be inflicted on people who were taught to believe that their identity was unacceptable to God and struggled unsuccessfully to change.⁹³ Jesuit theologian John McNeill was silenced by the Vatican after writing *The Church and the Homosexual*, which re-examined Scripture and tradition and argued for acceptance of faithful same-sex partnerships. And in Miami in 1977, where a Baptist ex-beauty queen was crusading against local anti-discrimination legislation, her pastor declared that he would burn down his parochial school 'rather than permit a homosexual to teach here', and some cars sported bumper stickers 'Kill a queer for Christ'.⁹⁴

Though complete objectivity is hard to achieve for anyone on a subject such as human sexuality, there were clear merits in trying to consider the issue in a calm and careful manner. **The first Lambeth Conference resolution explicitly mentioning the issue of homosexuality was in 1978:**

While we reaffirm heterosexuality as the scriptural norm, we recognise the need for deep and dispassionate study of the question of homosexuality, which would take seriously both the teaching of Scripture and the results of scientific and medical research. The Church, recognising the need for pastoral concern for those who are homosexual, encourages dialogue with them. (We note with satisfaction that such studies are now proceeding in some member Churches of the Anglican Communion.) (LC 1978)⁹⁵

One member church studying the issue was the Church of England, where a working party chaired by the Bishop of Gloucester that year produced a report which considered the social setting, insights from biology and psychology, Biblical evidence, theological and ethical considerations. While endorsing marriage as the norm for sexual relationships, it suggested that 'there are circumstances in which individuals may justifiably choose to enter into a homosexual relationship'. Clearly, **by the late 1970s there was enough evidence to lead a church working party to conclude that gay and lesbian partnerships were not necessarily wrong.** And, though many disagreed with the findings of the report, and in the end the conclusions were too radical to be officially endorsed, it did not result in threats to expel the C of E from the Anglican Communion. Sexuality was commonly regarded as important but not a first-order issue similar to or more important than, say, the nature of the Trinity.

Canada was another province where study had begun, as was the USA, where the General Convention (synod) had agreed in 1976 that 'homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the Church.'⁹⁶ However there, too, the official line was that those gay and lesbian in orientation should not be victimised but same-sex partnerships should not be encouraged.

Research, care and human rights

In the late 1970s and 1980s, **theological work on sexuality continued, as did research in the humanities and sciences.** Historians and social scientists, in particular, threw light on the existence of same-sex attraction in different cultures and eras, and the different ways it has been understood and expressed. John Boswell's findings suggested that same-sex unions involving blessings were not uncommon in the early church (those these were probably not all sexually expressed), until persecution became widespread in the middle ages.⁹⁷ Urbanisation was by now widespread internationally, and Latin American, Asian and African lesbians and gays were becoming more visible and organised.

Negative attitudes in many denominations continued to take a heavy toll, including in the USA. The experience of young Bobby Griffith growing up in a town in California was by no means unusual⁹⁸ except for the detailed diary he kept. The ministers of the church which his family attended confidently proclaimed that homosexuals were sick, perverted and condemned to eternal damnation and, to his mother Mary's later regret, she took this as true. When she discovered that her teenage son was attracted to the same sex, he was sent to a Christian counsellor and urged to read the Bible and pray. But his feelings did not go away. 'Why did you do this to me, God?' he wrote. His mother repeatedly told him that he could change. He sank into depression, convinced that 'I am evil and wicked. I am dirt'. He killed himself in 1983.⁹⁹

A new and urgent pastoral need emerged in the 1980s with the spread of AIDS. Difficult issues of sexuality and mortality, family and friendship were raised. And those clergy and laypersons willing to reach out compassionately to gays (who in the USA and Europe made up a large proportion of those affected, and many of whom had deep spiritual yearning but felt alienated from the church) learnt about the reality beyond the stereotypes. In 1988 TEC's General Convention commended 'those homosexual persons and others who have witnessed to us all in their caring for AIDS victims' and called for educational programmes on HIV and further studies of human sexuality by all congregations.¹⁰⁰

The **second Lambeth Conference resolution mentioning homosexuality**, in 1988, underlined the **need for study, recognition that socio-cultural factors could influence attitudes and concern for human rights and pastoral care:**

This Conference:

1. Reaffirms the statement of the Lambeth Conference of 1978 on homosexuality, recognising the continuing need in the next decade for 'deep and dispassionate study of the question of homosexuality, which would take seriously both the teaching of Scripture and the results of scientific and medical research.'
2. Urges such study and reflection to take account of biological, genetic and psychological research being undertaken by other agencies, and the socio-cultural factors that lead to the different attitudes in the provinces of our Communion.
3. Calls each province to reassess, in the light of such study and because of our concern for human rights, its care for and attitude towards persons of homosexual orientation (LC 1988)¹⁰¹

In provinces acting on this and the previous resolution, many who previously assumed that gay and lesbian relationships were necessarily sinful were rethinking their positions, though there was stiff resistance to change. For example the Church of England had convened another working party, this time led by Rev (later Canon) June Osborne. When in 1988 it too came up with findings suggesting that the C of E reconsider its position, the report was suppressed, though it soon leaked. It pointed out that 'We need to keep clearly in mind that if what we stand for makes no connection with the real dilemmas and questions experienced by homosexual people we are in danger of failing in the basic pastoral task', and warned that 'No serious work on moral growth can be achieved in an atmosphere marked by a judgemental and fearful spirit... Those who wish to stress the inclusive character of the Gospel and therefore of the Church can appear to be suggesting that anything goes in the Church... On the other hand there are those who seem to be saying in effect we would rather not have fellowship in Christ with homosexual people. Life in the Church would be more comfortable without them. That is how homosexual people hear much of what the Church appears to say to them.'

Even in circles where being gay was tacitly accepted, lack of openness was pastorally damaging. Outstanding theologian Rowan Williams, a Professor of Theology at Oxford University, wrote in 1988 that, while sympathising with those who are bewildered or even hurt by changes in sexual mores, it was important not to 'compromise on what liberty in Christ means'. The Church of England had given an uncertain moral lead over 'the moral and spiritual importance of truthfulness, truth to one's own nature, truth in relations with other believers. The more we make such truthfulness impossible, the more we quench the spirit... It is hopelessly inadequate now to think that we can go back to the comfortably discreet situation in which sexual orientation was known and tacitly accepted, but never discussed, let alone affirmed. Such a situation too helps to nourish just that coyness, adolescent naughtiness and irresponsibility which many, gay and straight, have found so tiresome a feature of the ecclesiastical gay scene: no-one holds you responsible for an adult sexuality, or suggests that you might need to share and reflect as much as anyone else, and there is little help in working out a tough and consistent morality. To argue for the need for gay liberation in the Church is not to commend a policy of letting everyone go their way in a bland situationist paradise, but to ask that this issue become part of the collective and public reflection of the Church.'¹⁰²

The following year he pointed out the importance of sexuality for heterosexual and homosexual people, not just for the purposes of reproduction: 'Same-sex love annoyingly poses the question of what the meaning of desire is in itself, not considered as instrumental to some other process (the peopling of the world); and this immediately brings us up against the possibility not only of pain and humiliation without any clear payoff, but - just as worryingly - of non-functional joy: or, to put it less starkly, joy whose material "production" is an embodied person aware of grace... Hosea's projection of the husband-and-wife story on to the history of Israel deliberately subverts the God-and-the-land clichés of Near Eastern cults: God is not the potent male sower of seed but the tormented lover, and the gift of the land's fertility is conditional upon the hurts of unfaithfulness and rejection being healed... In other words, if we are looking for a sexual ethic that can be seriously informed by our Bible, there is a good deal to steer us away from assuming that reproductive sex is a norm, however important and theologically significant it may be... A theology of the body's grace... depends heavily on believing in a certain sort of God - the

trinitarian creator and saviour of the world - and it draws in a great many themes in the Christian understanding of humanity.'¹⁰³

His views did not prevent the Church in Wales from appointing him three years later as Bishop of Monmouth, then as Archbishop of Wales. While many conservatives continued to believe that gay and lesbian relationships were always wrong, it was becoming apparent that their theological stance was at least open to question, and indeed that many Anglicans valued a thoughtful approach in which Scripture, tradition, reason and experience were brought to bear on the questions facing individuals and communities in today's world.

In 1991 the House of Bishops of the Church of England came up with a booklet, *Issues in Human Sexuality*, which took the position that – though heterosexual marriage was the norm for sexual relationships – some laypeople might conscientiously form same-sex partnerships, though priests who were homosexual in orientation should practice self-denial, and discussion should continue. In practice, however, many deacons, priests and bishops as well as laypeople did not follow this advice; and a few years later the ex-chair of the working party publicly changed his theological stance, arguing for acceptance of permanent and faithful partnerships.

However strong the theological arguments that same-sex relationships could sometimes be a positive choice for gays and lesbians not called to celibacy, Anglican churches worldwide tended to be cautious about change, and were also influenced by social attitudes, still largely hostile. In the early 1990s, stigma, discrimination and violence against lesbians and gays in the USA were common, and many internalised the hostility they experienced, with harmful results.¹⁰⁴ Though many church leaders tried to encourage dialogue, there was reluctance in many dioceses to address the issue; and, where there was engagement no consensus emerged. A study document was produced in 1995, *Continuing the Dialogue*, in which Scriptural and other issues were addressed. As well as being distributed in TEC, it was shared with every other province.

Following the Jesus of faith

In the **global South**, meanwhile, a more radical approach was being adopted by some theologians, setting the issue within the context of a wider **commitment to struggle against the life-threatening forces of repression and injustice**. According to a Statement of the 1992 Assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians, held in Nairobi, Kenya, **'Cry for life'**:

The Third World cry for life is one multi-tonal cry. It reflects the various ways oppression assaults Third World life. It carries the cries of countries protesting economic indenture to IMF and the World Bank... It carries the cries of refugees, children, displaced people and those afflicted with AIDS, the cries against the discrimination of homosexuals, of those who suffer from economic oppression, women forced into prostitution, victims of drug abuse and the unjust politics of health care. It carries the cries of Blacks against apartheid. It carries the cries of the Dalits against the apartheid of caste oppression. It carries the cries of women against patriarchal dominance and sexual violence...

Structures of oppression are global and local, external and internal... Our elites perpetuate their dominance over the majority, increasing the misery of the poor. Among our religious institutions there are churches in most places which tend to be elitist, racist and sexist. By and large these churches have lost the moral credibility to respond to the cry of the world for life...

Our spirituality is our experience of the Holy Spirit moving us and our communities to be life-giving and life-affirming... In all communities of women and men reaching out to life and resisting death, prayer becomes a threat to those who violate life...

To follow the Jesus of faith, first, is to follow one who is unrelentingly critical of the power relations in the structures of society that engender injustice and oppression.

Second, it is to follow someone who believes that it is necessary to embody in community our vision of the new, more just, society, as well as the discipline to work to realize our vision in this world. Third, following the Jesus of faith means following one who was dedicated to feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and fighting for the liberation of oppressed people... God is present to us in him...

For many centuries the Bible has been interpreted from the point of view of a Western patriarchal and dominant culture. The Bible was used as an instrument for the spiritual conquest of America, Africa and Asia. It continues to be a tool of class, race and gender oppression of the large majorities of Third World peoples.

The people are now freeing the Bible from these wrong interpretations...

To be committed means standing fast until anything which threatens the full humanity of any person is destroyed... Commitment might lead to harassment, marginalization, ecclesiastical sanctions, arrest, torture or even death. To be committed means there is no cost too great when one joins God's mission to make the world a place where life is valued for all of God's creation.¹⁰⁵

Not surprisingly, this did not reflect the position of all churchpeople, especially many in senior positions who were aligned with local elites. Questioning the misuse of the Bible to bolster patriarchal, class and other forms of oppression could be uncomfortable. And fundamentalism of various kinds was gaining ground, often tapping into the human tendency to victimise minorities. Also, in localities and countries undergoing rapid change often based on developments over which even local business and political leaders had limited control, critics focused on visible targets such as skimpily-dressed women and 'out' lesbians and gays, and a new puritanism gained ground. Some Anglicans were directly influenced, others had to compete with Christian and other fundamentalists and feared losing their 'market share' if they too strongly opposed a strident, dogmatic approach and identified with the targets of hostility.

In South Africa, where Anglican leaders had played an active part in the people's struggle against the US government-backed apartheid regime, they were not easily intimidated. To Archbishop Desmond Tutu, members of the church were called to be **'God's partners, God's agents of transfiguration, to change the ugliness of the world, its hatred, its hostilities, its jealousies, its hunger, its poverty, its injustice, its oppression, its alienation, its loneliness, its rivalry, its competitiveness, its grasping, its sickness, into their glorious counterparts; so that there will be laughter and joy, sharing and caring, justice, reconciliation and peace, and compassion'**.¹⁰⁶

In 1995, he warned about **hunger for certainty**: 'Periods of transition...heighten uncertainty and anxiety, which means that there is a nostalgia for certainty, for dogmatic, unambiguous answers to what turn out to be quite complex issues. People become impatient of diversity and differences... Hence the growth and attraction of all kinds of fundamentalisms, especially religious fundamentalisms which invoke what appear to be infallible, all-knowing authorities...There are those Christians who claim that there are unambiguous and categorical directives regarding what the Christian position ought to be on issues such as abortion, homosexuality, divorce, euthanasia, etc. Such people are able to claim that "the Bible says" and then believe that they have dealt once and for all with a complex issue and anyone who disagrees with them is really not Christian. You point out to them that they are actually misusing the Bible because they treat it as a compendium containing clear and unambiguous decrees on all kinds of ethical and moral issues. You try to point out that they are misleadingly selective in the biblical texts that they appeal to. You say the Bible categorically forbids certain food to believers, e.g. pork or rabbit, and yet our friends will almost certainly not have forgone their bacon and eggs at breakfast... We contend that the Bible should be seen as seeking to reveal the mind of God and we who are Christians must then say over things like Aids, human sexuality, etc. "What would Jesus Christ have said or done in these circumstances? What do we believe to be the mind of Christ?"'¹⁰⁷

The following year he went further than any other Anglican primate in **affirming lesbian and gay Christians**, who were:

baptized fellow Christians, members together with us all in the body of this Jesus Christ, wherein as a result of that baptism there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, free nor slave - there is a radical equality.

And then we spurn them, we shun them, because we are all caught up in an acknowledged or a tacit homophobia and heterosexism. We reject them, treat them as pariahs, and push them outside the confines of our church communities, and thereby we negate the consequences of their baptism and ours.

We make them doubt that they are the children of God, and this must be nearly the ultimate blasphemy. We blame them for something that it is becoming increasingly clear they can do little about...

It is only of homosexual persons that we require universal celibacy, whereas for others we teach that celibacy is a special vocation. We say that sexual orientation is morally a matter of indifference, but what is culpable are homosexual acts. But then we claim that sexuality is a divine gift, which used properly, helps us to become more fully human and akin really to God, as it is this part of our humanity that makes us more gentle and caring, more self-giving and concerned for others than we would be without that gift. Why should we want all homosexual persons not to give expression to their sexuality in loving acts? Why don't we use the same criteria to judge same-sex relationships that we use to judge whether heterosexual relationships are wholesome or not?

I was left deeply disturbed by these inconsistencies and knew that the Lord of the Church would not be where his church is in this matter.¹⁰⁸

In many countries, divisions were deepening, including between moderate conservatives and others willing to split the church rather than tolerate greater inclusion. After TEC consecrated its first woman bishop in 1989, the Episcopal Synod of America was created, which later became Forward in Faith-North America. 'We must remain within the church to transform it,' said one of the leaders, but if separation was forced on the flock 'we will take the path when it comes.'¹⁰⁹ In 1996, several hardliners failed in their bid to have a retired bishop declared guilty of teaching false doctrine and violating his ordination vows for ordaining a non-celibate gay man. A church court decided that, **whether same-sex partnerships were unacceptable or not, this was not a core Christian doctrine** like belief in the Holy Trinity.¹¹⁰

TEC's growing opposition to social injustice, including challenging the US government's domestic and foreign policy where these harmed the poor, also gained it wealthy enemies, who were ready to fund opponents who might damage its credibility. An American Anglican Council was founded, with generous assistance from the far-right millionaire Howard Ahmanson Jr, who had earlier campaigned for Old Testament laws to be applied in the USA, though later modified this: 'It would still be a little hard to say that if one stumbled on a country that was doing that, that it is inherently immoral, to stone people for these things. But I don't think it's at all a necessity.'¹¹¹

The American Anglican Council was closely linked to the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD)¹¹², 'an ecumenical alliance of U.S. Christians working to reform their churches' social witness',¹¹³ funded partly by billionaire Richard Scaife. Claiming that Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian leaders had 'largely turned toward political agendas mandated neither by Scripture nor by Christian tradition' and 'thrown themselves into multiple, often leftist crusades--radical forms of feminism, environmentalism, pacifism, multi-culturalism, revolutionary socialism, sexual liberation and so forth'¹¹⁴, this helps church members to 'battle for renewal within their denominations, arming them with facts, and helping them to reach other concerned churchgoers across the nation'. The IRD was a strong supporter of US military, economic and political

dominance, enforced by extreme violence if necessary. In the 1980s the IRD had worked closely with the US State department to campaign in support of government policies on El Salvador (where death squads murdered the Roman Catholic archbishop, several leading theologians and numerous others) and Nicaragua (where contra guerrillas were funded to carry out terrorist attacks, in an operation which ended up subverting democracy in the USA as well). Opponents of these policies within the churches were attacked for supposedly being soft on communism, which was anti-Christian.¹¹⁵

In 1996, a legal row blew up when hardliners including bishops set up structures to take over some of TEC's assets if they set up a rival church, registering a non-profit organisation which would engage in 'the executive, administrative and financial administration of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, otherwise known as the Episcopal Church...'¹¹⁶ Though this particular initiative failed, in the longer term they were determined to have their way.

Through an **alliance with conservatives in the global South** – some of whom, ironically, resented Western dominance – extremists within TEC gained greater credibility. Many European and North American liberals with understandable feelings of guilt about racism (which indeed remained a powerful damaging force in their countries and the wider world) would be reluctant to challenge anti-gay sentiment too strongly if it was disguised as opposition to Western decadence and cultural influence. Others too sometimes fell into the trap, assuming that there was a conflict between the advanced West and unenlightened South, whereas in fact some of the worst abuses of gays and lesbians in living memory had been organised by Western states.

Some church leaders in the West were also willing to listen to claims that if they were too accepting of gay and lesbian relationships this would undermine evangelism in the South and put Christians at risk from militant Islamists¹¹⁷ – though why some of the people supposedly afraid of a negative reaction should be so keen for publicity was not easily explained. It was understandable that some people in precarious situations might be nervous about anything which drew attention to them, but there were other developments on the world which did far more to highlight strife among people of different religions. Later, when Archbishop Akinola went out of his way to inflame antagonism between Muslims and Christians not only at home but internationally,¹¹⁸ it became apparent that though the rationale had been flawed. Moreover, while it was indeed a challenge in many societies to be even vaguely associated with opposition to oppressive views of women and gays, if the church failed to uphold justice for all it left moderate Muslims (some of whom showed great courage in resisting bigotry and extremism) even more isolated.

No doubt some of those willing to use extreme measures to block greater acceptance of partnered lesbians and gays were motivated less by bigotry or ambition than a desire to get rid of ideological impurity. To them, the influence of Anglo-Catholicism, liberalism and progressive evangelicalism could cause confusion: their own theological stance alone was acceptable. Some pushed a form of Calvinism. In the Reformation the Anglican church had taken the path of becoming broad enough to embrace a range of perspectives while witnessing to the core beliefs of a Trinitarian faith. To them, it seemed that the time was right to correct this error.

The term sometimes used, 'traditionalist', is highly misleading. Though hardliners upheld beliefs about homosexuality which have been common in many churches in recent centuries (as was the ban on contraception), their reasoning and methods were usually not those of mainstream Anglicanism. Some, as in Singapore, were liturgically far from traditional; and in parts of Australia laypeople rather than priests were celebrating the eucharist, which was a major break with the practice of Anglican churches over the centuries. It was however recognised that seeking formal recognition of this development would have to be postponed to

avoid dividing those seeking to take control of the church (some of whom were more conservative).

The Kuala Lumpur statement

What became known as the **Kuala Lumpur Statement**, passed at a gathering which brought together a number of Anglicans mainly from the global South in 1997, was distinctly un-Anglican in tone, avoiding any recognition of the complexity of Scripture, its interplay with tradition and reason and the possibility that Christians carefully considering the issues might reach different conclusions:

While acknowledging the complexities of our sexual nature and the strong drives it places within us, we are quite clear about God's will in this area which is expressed in the Bible...

The Scripture bears witness to God's will regarding human sexuality which is to be expressed only within the life long union of a man and a woman in (holy) matrimony...

The Holy Scriptures are clear in teaching that all sexual promiscuity is sin. We are convinced that this includes homosexual practices between men or women, as well as heterosexual relationships outside marriage...

We find no conflict between clear biblical teaching and sensitive pastoral care. Repentance precedes forgiveness and is part of the healing process. To heal spiritual wounds in God's name we need his wisdom and truth. We see this in the ministry of Jesus, for example his response to the adulterous woman, '...neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more' (John 8:11)...

We are deeply concerned that the setting aside of biblical teaching in such actions as the ordination of practicing homosexuals and the blessing of same-sex unions calls into question the authority of the Holy Scriptures. This is totally unacceptable to us...

This leads us to express concern about mutual accountability and interdependence within our Anglican Communion. As provinces and dioceses we need to learn how to seek each other's counsel and wisdom in a spirit of true unity, and to reach a common mind before embarking on radical changes to Church discipline and moral teaching.¹¹⁹

Curiously, for an approach supposedly based on a literal reading of the Bible, there was an obvious breach of the commandment against false witness (Exodus 20.16), at least if the usual definition of promiscuity is used. A monogamous same-sex couple can hardly be promiscuous, whatever else they might be. It might seem that the Statement was trying to tap into common prejudices against gays and lesbians. Also, this reading of Scripture would appear to rule out remarriage, but the implications were not pursued, presumably because it would have alienated large numbers of heterosexual people who were family members or friends of divorcees or whose own marriages had broken down.

While denouncing those who supposedly set human reason above the Bible, the creators of the Kuala Lumpur Statement ignored the fact that all people – themselves included – bring their own understandings to bear; and attempts to silence or expel other wings of the church would in fact reduce the chance that flaws in certain humans' reasoning would be brought to light through open discussion. While conservatives might concede that those taking a different position on sexual ethics had a point, though they themselves were currently not convinced, some hardliners refused to take seriously, or even acknowledge, any reading of Scripture different from their own. This was a sharp break with Anglican tradition.

While leaders who adopted this course might have thought they were protecting the faithful from confusion, it in fact signalled a lack of openness to what the Holy Spirit might be conveying to the church today through the Bible, read in the light of the attempts of Christians in the past and present to be faithful to the living God. Some signatories of the Kuala Lumpur Statement may have interpreted it as supporting one side in a debate, but it read as if no real debate existed.

The demand that others avoid doing what 'is totally unacceptable to us', in the interests of 'mutual accountability and interdependence', without any signal of willingness to make any change oneself, was also a break with a spiritual tradition based on humility, where self-

examination was placed above attempts to condemn and control others. The claim that 'we need to learn how to seek each other's counsel and wisdom', given that many signatories had not taken forward in their own dioceses the process of study and listening set out in successive Lambeth Conference resolutions, rang hollow.

Moreover, mere denunciation of sexual immorality, however this was defined, was clearly not stopping the rapid spread of HIV in much of Africa and Asia, despite the apparent deference to religious leaders. In the spirit of bearing one another's burdens (Matthew 23.4, Galatians 6.2), could leaders do more to address the conditions which might make it harder for others to stay faithful, for instance the poverty and abuse which drove some women into prostitution, looking at the possibility that sins of omission on their own part might be relevant? And did not pressuring lesbians and gays into heterosexual marriages rather than supporting stable same-sex partnerships sometimes lead to promiscuity? While the Statement recognised 'awareness of our own vulnerability to sexual sin', it seemed detached not only from the theological debates of the past two thousand years but also the context in which moral choices were made in today's world. Though poverty was one of the topics discussed at the conference in Kuala Lumpur,¹²⁰ it was the Statement on sexuality which got most publicity, and ended up being treated by some people as if it reflected a consensus which only a few 'liberals' were questioning.

It was interesting that, if trying to establish the authority of the Bible, the hardliners did not focus on issues mentioned in the Gospels and far more clearly and extensively covered in the Old and New Testaments than homosexuality, such as excessive wealth and economic justice within as well as among nations. Though some joined in campaigns for international debt relief, the divisions in countries in the South and West were also stark; scenes of beggars hoping for scraps from the tables of the rich¹²¹ still took place across the world. Tradition, too, had much to say on these matters.¹²² But demanding, say, that all provinces recognise that 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God'¹²³ and 'Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him?'¹²⁴ would have alienated wealthy and powerful backers: it was much easier to pick on a vulnerable minority.

The underlying message appeared to be that Scripture could be narrowly interpreted or ignored for political reasons. The notion of 'mutual accountability' in this context, while sounding attractive, meant in fact 'accountability to us' – hardliners showed little willingness to be accountable to anyone else.

Indeed to some of those seeking dominance, diligent study and careful listening seemed not just pointless but positively evil. Archbishop Moses Tay of Southeast Asia, who had hosted the gathering which gave rise to the Kuala Lumpur Statement, wrote in 1997, 'Sometimes we feel like Elijah battling alone on Mount Carmel in the days of national apostasy, but God revealed that there were 7000 who had not bowed their knees to Baal. It looks like the same situation is repeated in our day, but as the faithful remnant of God, we join hearts, heads and hands in the battle for biblical truth... Refusal to accept homosexuality as sinful is a diabolical contradiction of the Word of God, and is a blatant attempt to destroy the Gospel of Salvation through Jesus Christ. This is an issue of eternal life and eternal death. It is not a matter of opinion or a subject for study by an appointed commission. It is my conviction that faithful people of God must unite and stand against current proposals to appoint commissions to study the issue or the Kuala Lumpur Statement. Such a wily approach must be resisted at all cost if we are to remain faithful to Scripture and resist the temptation of the devil who tempted Eve to use her intellect against the Word of God in the same way.'¹²⁵ If this way of working were to be adopted, it would involve a radical break with mainstream Anglicanism.

So would the structural changes being sought by the gathering which adopted the Kuala Lumpur Statement: 'We question the wisdom of retaining the compete autonomy of our many provinces and believe we should look for ways of strengthening mutual accountability and interdependence. It is vital for our mission that we have effective ways of seeking God's will together, of reaching a common mind, and of encouraging and admonishing one another... we call for a careful review of our instruments of unity and ask the Lambeth Conference to consider organisational and governmental changes in the Communion.'¹²⁶

A conference in **Dallas** in 2007 bringing together hardline church leaders from TEC and other parts of the world endorsed the Kuala Lumpur Statement, and **underlined the role of the Primates in bringing about a new orthodoxy**: 'We are convinced that God has called us to effective mutual accountability... we are glad to note that our Primates want to exercise enhanced responsibility... We call upon the Lambeth Conference to empower the Primates' Meeting to become a place of appeal for those Anglican bodies who are oppressed, marginalized, or denied faithful episcopal oversight by their own bishops. In such situations, a way must be found to provide pastoral support, oversight and formal ecclesiastical relationships for faithful people.'¹²⁷

Months before the Lambeth conference, **in 1998, a Rwandan bishop working with TEC rebels declared that a parish in Arkansas was part of his diocese.**¹²⁸ **This was a radical break with the episcopal system long established across the Anglican Communion.** The bishop, John Rucyahana, already had ties in the USA: he was a graduate of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry in Pennsylvania,¹²⁹ where TEC rebels were in powerful positions (John Rodgers was Dean, followed by Colorado bishop William Frey¹³⁰). In years to come, another Southern leader with US connections was to become prominent, Peter Akinola, who had attended Virginia Theological Seminary.¹³¹

'I believe we're seeing the first wave of a coming reformation,' the priest in charge declared. The Bishop of Arkansas pointed out that such a takeover was in violation of what had been agreed in Lambeth, but **the manager of the Lambeth Conference pointed out that Lambeth did not pass legislation for the Anglican Communion**: 'The Lambeth Conference passes the resolutions. Those resolutions only have moral authority.'

Many people however supported the conclusions of the Kuala Lumpur Statement and did not think too deeply about the implications for Anglicanism if, say, different factions started to demand that their interpretation of Biblical teaching on a particular ethical question was the only one acceptable, or if certain leaders came to assume that their opinions would be treated as divine pronouncements.

Lambeth 1998: accepted as God's children?

A 1997 report of the International Anglican Youth Network prepared for the 1998 Lambeth Conference stated:

Homosexuals should not be hated or persecuted but accepted as God's children. Our over-riding concern should be to speak openly even if it makes us feel uncomfortable. The glory of God is realised in human life, fully realised. Dialogue should continue on this subject...

Diversity is something to love, not fear. The rainbow represents our diversity, various colours, cultures, gifts. The sun represents Christ whose light shines to give the colours of the rainbow their brilliance...

We are different from each other in many ways - every way - but we are all one in Christ¹³²

However it was **Resolution 1.10 in 1998 on human sexuality** which got most attention. It was perhaps most remarkable for the reference to the Kuala Lumpur statement, the circumstances in which it was passed and the subsequent use to which it was put. It stated:

This Conference:

- a. commends to the Church the subsection report on human sexuality;
- b. in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage;
- c. recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ;
- d. while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex;
- e. cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions;
- f. requests the Primates and the ACC to establish a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality in the Communion and to share statements and resources among us;
- g. notes the significance of the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality and the concerns expressed in resolutions IV.26, V.1, V.10, V.23 and V.35 on the authority of Scripture in matters of marriage and sexuality and asks the Primates and the ACC to include them in their monitoring process (LC 1998)¹³³

The subsection report commended in (a), based on thoughtful consideration by a working party, acknowledged the difficulty of coming to firm conclusions on homosexuality, stating that:

Human sexuality is the gift of a loving God. It is a gift to be honoured and cherished by all people. As a means for the expression of the deepest human love and intimacy, sexuality has great power...

Some are homosexual by orientation

We also recognise that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships.

All loved by God

We wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons; regardless of sexual orientation; are full members of the Body of Christ. We call upon the Church and all its members to work to end any discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and to oppose homophobia...

Differing views on homosexuality

We must confess that we are not of one mind about homosexuality. Our variety of understanding encompasses:

- i. those who believe that homosexual orientation is a disorder, but that through the grace of Christ people can be changed, although not without pain and struggle.
- ii. those who believe that relationships between people of the same gender should not include genital expression, that this is the clear teaching of the Bible and of the Church universal, and that such activity (if unrepented of) is a barrier to the Kingdom of God.
- iii. those who believe that committed homosexual relationships fall short of the biblical norm, but are to be preferred to relationships that are anonymous and transient.
- iv. those who believe that the Church should accept and support or bless monogamous covenant relationships between homosexual people and that they may be ordained.

It appears that a majority of bishops is not prepared to bless same sex unions or to ordain active homosexuals. Furthermore many believe there should be a moratorium on such practices.

Request for Primates and ACC to ensure ongoing discussion

We have prayed, studied and discussed these issues, and we are unable to reach a common mind on the scriptural, theological, historical, and scientific questions that are raised. There is much that we do not yet understand. We request the Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council to establish a means of monitoring work done in the Communion on these issues and to share statements and resources among us.

Call to maintain unity of Church even in times of disagreement

The challenge to our Church is to maintain its unity while we seek, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to discern the way of Christ for the world today with respect to human sexuality. To do so will require sacrifice, trust, and charity towards one another, remembering that ultimately the identity of each person is defined in Christ.

'There can be no description of human reality, in general or in particular, outside the reality of Christ. We must be on guard, therefore, against constructing any other ground for our identities than the redeemed humanity given us in him. Those who understand themselves as homosexuals, no more and no less than those who do not, are liable to false understandings based on personal or family histories, emotional dispositions, social settings and solidarities formed by common experiences or ambitions. Our sexual affections can no more define who we are than can our class, race or nationality. At the deepest ontological level, therefore, there is no such thing as "a" homosexual or "a" heterosexual; there are human beings, male and female, called to redeemed humanity in Christ, endowed with a complex variety of emotional potentialities and threatened by a complex variety of forms of alienation.'¹³⁴

At the 1998 Lambeth Conference, however, it became disturbingly clear that such a moderate and reasoned approach was being sidelined.¹³⁵ TEC rebels and their allies elsewhere in the world had been organising. While they were able to tap into some resentment among bishops in the global South who felt patronised or marginalised, it emerged that a view of the church had been gaining ground worldwide which was strongly at odds with traditional Anglicanism. The language used by several bishops revealed their hostility and contempt not only for lesbians and gays but also for the call in 1978 and 1988 for deep and dispassionate study, and in general the belief expressed at previous international conferences in learning from science, seriously considering the work of theologians and upholding universal human rights. Attentiveness to the experience of the lesbians, gays and their families who were supposedly in their pastoral care (other than to lecture them from above) and to churches in other provinces seeking to live and proclaim God's love in their own local context, was out of the question for these bishops.

Outside the plenary hall on the day sexuality was to be discussed, Emmanuel Chukwuma, the Bishop of Enugu, Nigeria, tried to exorcise the general secretary of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM), bellowing 'Repent of your sin. You have no inheritance in the Kingdom of God. You are going to hell. You have made yourself homosexual because of your carnality.' He underlined his non-acceptance even of those with homosexual orientation: 'You make yourself homosexual. God did not create you as a homosexual. That is our stand.' He also claimed to speak for God: 'You are killing the Church. This is the voice of God talking. Yes, I am violent against sin. Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed.'

Inside the session, too, emotive language was used, passing beyond vigorous debate into something far uglier. The term 'bonds of affection' is sometimes used to describe the relationship among Anglicans across the world, but there was little evidence of affection on the part of certain bishops for the lesbians and gays in their own dioceses let alone elsewhere. Indeed it would have seemed obvious, in a sizeable gathering, that some of the bishops present would have been gay or lesbian themselves, or had children or grandchildren who were, and so

the subject would have been personal to them. But this did not deter certain other bishops from making their contempt and hostility clear.

One amendment (in the end not adopted) stated that 'some African Christians in Uganda were martyred in the 19th century for refusing to have homosexual relations with the king because of their faith in the Lord Jesus and their commitment to stand by the Word of God as expressed in the Bible on the subject', and that 'homosexuality is a sin which could only be adopted by the church if it wanted to commit evangelical suicide.' 'Homosexuals and deviants teach what is opposite Scripture,' the Bishop of Mityana in Uganda reportedly claimed.

Deep and dispassionate study and dialogue were also ruled out by the Bishop of Lahore in Pakistan, who asked if they would also have to discuss people wanting to bless their relationship with their pets, implying that homosexuality was similar to bestiality. 'What is so new about this issue that put it on the agenda? We have known about this since Sodom and Gomorrah.'

To the Bishop of Rejaf in the Sudan, 'If founders of the Church rose from their graves, they would laugh at us.' Though in his country gays risked crucifixion at the hands of the brutally repressive government, he stated, 'We know nothing of homosexuality in the Sudan. We only know the Gospel.' He made clear his unwillingness to listen to lesbians and gays, urging that instead of coming out they should go and confess their sins to God.

The Suffragan Bishop of New York was one of those opposing the gradual amending of a balanced motion to something harsher. 'We will have a divided church if this amendment passes,' she said. 'If affirming homosexuality is evangelical suicide in [Africa], to condemn it is evangelical suicide in my region. If you win it will be a Pyrrhic victory.' She was not heeded.

However, when the Bishop of Armidale, Australia, moved to make paragraph (e) on blessings and ordinations stronger by replacing 'advise' with 'approve', the Archbishop of British Columbia pointed out, 'The Lambeth Conference can't approve or disapprove. What does disapprove mean? It's only advisory.' The motion was defeated. **Resolution 1.10, though disappointing to many, was not binding.**

Afterwards Primus Richard Holloway of Scotland commented that he had 'never felt this depressed and so close to tears in my life.' A heterosexual man himself, he had been aware of the homophobia experienced by gay and lesbian members of his church, 'but sitting in there this afternoon I felt it.'

In a sermon near the end of the conference, Khotso Makhulu, Archbishop of Central Africa for eighteen years and Bishop of Botswana (also a former president of the World Council of Churches), said:

The tenor of some of our discussions can only be described as "frenzied". The tone in which they were expressed was devoid of the love of God. We have had tyrants using the Bible as armour, and words spoken from this very spot that were aimed to wound and to win score debating points.

I do not believe that this is the economy of the community of the Trinity. I do not believe that this is the basis of our Lord Jesus Christ. In our confusion He comes in order that He may shed light upon us. In our perplexity He comes that we may have comfort. In our bewilderment He sheds a light, a comforting light, so that we may truly be representatives of His.

There were those in this conference who have power, those who want it and want it badly, those who want to use it - whether by being utterly articulate or experts at procedural devices - those who have the 'lollie' [money] and know exactly how to use it to best advantage.

Sadly, we have equally had those who have been marginalised in our midst - some are confused and others remain wounded. From my background, I want to say here and now, I have resisted tyranny all my life and nor will I ever tolerate it from those who claim the love of the Bible over everyone else. Let not the intolerance of a variety of contexts inexorably lead us to intolerance, which, if unchecked, will find us with a band of vigilantes and fundamentalists.

I pray to God that the spirit of Anglicanism will survive, that we shall come to engage each other and find the best way forward. May God forgive us our wrong doings and our failure to strengthen His fellowship. I heard the Cross mentioned, and at times one got the impression that that Cross was not the life-giving Cross but was almost some kind of whip to whip those who were sinners...

As we leave this place we still remember whence we came, we came from God, we have engaged in the presence of God and now we must go back whence we came. It is there that we should render service.¹³⁶

Njongonkulu Ndungane, Desmond Tutu's successor as Archbishop of Cape Town, recently reflected on the damage to the spirit of Anglicanism:

During the first two weeks of our three weeks together, Bishops spent considerable time working on particular questions. I chaired Section 1, which had the overarching theme of 'Called to Full Humanity'. Some 200 bishops opted for this Section, of whom 60 signed up to consider human sexuality. Let me tell you, these 60 spanned the broadest spectrum imaginable, from the hardest line conservatives to the most radical liberals!

Someone calculated that we devoted 800 bishop hours to this thorny subject. It was the most difficult group of the whole conference – there was huge pain and division as discussions began. But 800 bishop hours later, we had thrashed out a common position.

The result was the 11 carefully crafted paragraphs of Theme 3 of the Section 1 Report... We recommended that the Conference Resolution should not go into details, but merely accept and affirm our report, and refer it to the Provinces for discussion. The rest of the 200 Bishops of the Section agreed with this approach, recognising that it resulted from refining in a real crucible of fire.

Now this is where clumsiness prevailed. The Archbishop of Canterbury found himself under considerable pressure for there to be a fuller resolution on homosexuality. Contrary to all the usual normal procedures for handling resolutions, a draft was presented, and then debated and substantially amended in an hour-and-a-half plenary meeting, of over 600 bishops, spouses, observers, guests, and all in the full glare of the cameras.

The result was Resolution 1:10. Though it does commend the report of the subsection, the points that follow did not arise out of the long hard wrestling that we had done, and did not reflect the way that, despite such differences, we had managed to enunciate our differences in ways that allowed us to keep working together. It was as if our 800 bishop hours had never happened!

For all that resolutions are advisory and not binding, some of its clauses, those which 'reject homosexuality as incompatibly with Scripture' have taken on a life of their own. Other clauses, including those advocating continuing listening and also monitoring work in the area of human sexuality – alongside all the rest of the resolutions of the Conference – are given nothing like the same prominence!

What grieves me most, is that through not holding to the internal processes of this Instrument of Unity, we have undermined, and so lost our grip, on the assumptions of unity in communion that underlie our common life.¹³⁷

One hundred and eighty-five bishops from six continents later issued a pastoral statement apologising to lesbian and gay Anglicans 'for any sense of rejection that has occurred... It is our deep concern that you not feel abandoned by your Church and that you know of our continued respect and support... We call on the entire Communion to continue (and in many places,

begin) prayerful, respectful conversation on the issue of homosexuality. We must not stop where this Conference has left off. You, our sisters and brothers in Christ, deserve a more thorough hearing than you received over the past three weeks. We will work to make that so.¹³⁸

5 Deadly silence and faithfulness to Christ

An end to silence

Those dioceses which had taken seriously earlier Lambeth resolutions on human sexuality, and the overall Anglican ethos expressed in numerous resolutions of Lambeth and the Anglican Consultative Council, were faced with a **dilemma**. How could they faithfully render service to God and neighbour in the places where they had been called to mission and ministry, especially in communities where through prayerful and respectful conversation many had come to believe that loving and committed same-sex partnerships were compatible with Christianity? On what basis should they act if they were gay or lesbian themselves, or bear one another's burdens even if they were not? If sexuality was indeed a gift from God not only to heterosexual but also homosexual people, how could people be encouraged to use it responsibly? What should congregations and dioceses do if they believed that the Holy Spirit had called a non-celibate gay or lesbian to a particular vocation?

This was not a matter of imposing their own views and practices on other Anglicans. As the Virginia Report had mentioned, the baptism of polygamists because of the pastoral realities in some African countries had been widely accepted without Anglicans elsewhere having to change their own views and practices to embrace polygamy. Across the worldwide Anglican Communion there were dioceses where ordination of women as priests was not yet accepted, others where there were already women bishops. International fellowship, dialogue and cooperation in service to a needy world might in time prompt Anglicans to rethink what they might otherwise take for granted and advance in understanding and holiness of life. But this was very different from demanding that others conform to norms which were contrary to their current understanding.

The Theological Education working group of the Anglican Peace and Justice Network of the Anglican Consultative Council later:

discussed the vexed question of Anglican teaching on human sexuality and in particular the Churches commitment to continue with the 'theological study of sexuality in such a way as to relate sexual relationships to that wholeness of human life which itself derives from God...' (Lambeth 1978 Resolution 10). We further discussed the 1988 Lambeth Resolution 64 which called all provinces to undertake, 'deep and dispassionate study of the question of homosexuality, which would take seriously both the teaching of scripture and the results of scientific and medical research.' We do not believe the Church universal honoured its commitment to undertake such intentional and necessary studies. We further believe that the resolutions passed in 1998 at Lambeth simply obfuscated the Churches existing albeit unfulfilled commitment to the theological study of human sexuality. This action has resulted in further entrenching injustice against those who 'experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation.'¹³⁹

Not only had leaders in many provinces failed for two decades to honour the commitment to promote study and listening: they had made it clear that they had no intention of doing so. Yet in TEC and elsewhere, laypeople and parish clergy as well as bishops could not indefinitely postpone their responsibility to be the church, as best they could, in the setting where God had placed them.

An Amnesty International report in October 1998 on **discrimination** pointed out:

Discrimination is an attack on the very notion of human rights. It systematically denies certain people or groups their civil, political, social, economic or cultural rights for no other reason than who they are or what they believe. It is therefore an attack on the fundamental principle underlying the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...

When governments and political leaders promote discrimination against sections of their population to further their own aims, they are giving the green light not just to state agents but to ordinary citizens to inflict suffering on others...

In countries all over the world, men and women are harassed, abducted, imprisoned, tortured, even murdered for their sexual identity or orientation. Gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people - anyone who does not adhere to the dictates of what is portrayed as 'normal' sexuality - may be subject to persecution by officials of the state or by private individuals whose actions go totally unpunished. To a greater extent than sexism and racism, homophobia is legitimized almost everywhere in the world by laws which criminalize homosexuality or otherwise discriminate against sexual minorities and deny them equal protection... In the USA several states have discriminatory sodomy laws, which provide penalties of imprisonment for consensual sexual acts between people of the same sex. In Jamaica too, consensual sexual acts between adult men in private is a criminal offence under Sections 76-82 of the Offences against the Person Act, and can be punished by up to 10 years' imprisonment with hard labour...

Such laws reinforce popular prejudices and increase the dangers faced by homosexuals. In Jamaica, for example, 16 prisoners were killed and 40 injured in disturbances at St Catherine's District Prison and Kingston's General Penitentiary in August 1997. The disturbances started after guards walked out in protest at the Commissioner of Correction's announcement of his intention to distribute condoms to guards and prisoners in an effort to control the spread of HIV/AIDS. Among those killed were prisoners targeted because they were homosexuals...

Discrimination of the kind illustrated above is of course compounded by other factors, in particular socio-economic status. The majority of women most at risk of human rights violations are those from the poorest and most vulnerable or marginalized groups in society...

Governments have a responsibility to ensure that law and practice conforms to international standards, however ultimately discrimination will only end when all individuals make a personal commitment to make the rights enshrined in the UDHR a reality in the world - for everyone.¹⁴⁰

The challenge to make a commitment was brought home forcefully to Americans that month by the death of young Matthew Shepard in Wyoming. While murders of gays and lesbians were not uncommon there as elsewhere, the especially brutal nature of the crime captured media attention. The priest who anointed him, Bill Bacon, later wrote:

The phone rang on a Saturday afternoon as I was finishing the Sunday sermon. Would I come to the hospital and meet with the family of Matthew Shepard and would I come prepared to administer Last Rites? Matthew is the 21 years old man beaten, robbed and left for dead, hanging like a scarecrow on a fence outside Laramie, WY.

As we were gathered in a side room, waiting for nurses to complete some medical procedures, Judy, Matthew's mother, told me how her son loved the Episcopal Church. He chose to be confirmed at age 15, served as an acolyte in his parish in Casper, WY. Attended Canterbury Club while at the University of Wy. He had recently attended a service at an Episcopal Church in Denver and had felt rejected for being gay. Yet he had expressed determination to remain in the Church he loved. Matthew was known as a kind, gentle person, who took everybody at face value, and did not see the bad side to anyone.

Gathered around his bandaged body, we began the Litany at the Time of Death. As lights blinked and the respirator purred, I thought of the obscenity of the Lambeth Resolution on Sexuality.

Especially the bit included as an afterthought, and not unanimously:

'We wish to assure them (homosexuals) that they are loved by God and that all baptized, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ.'

Matthew, a child of God by Baptism...a Son of the Episcopal Church. The obscenity of even thinking that a vote had to be taken to ensure that he was a full member of the Church...

Gay and Lesbian men and women serve at God's altars, celebrate Eucharist for us, serve on our vestries and sit in our pews. We don't have to vote on their membership; they are full members and the time has come to work together for the things that need to be done for God's Kingdom.

Matthew entered into Paradise on October 12. God did not ask him his sexual orientation. God asked him if he loved his Lord and did he love his fellow humans and seek to serve them and did he try to find a bit of Christ in those he met. Let us pray that we can answer as well as Matthew when our time comes.¹⁴¹

The murder prompted much soul-searching. Bishop Steve Charleston, at that time chaplain of Trinity College, said:

The burning of Black churches, the bombing of innocent people, the death of a shy young man from Wyoming: these events suddenly shake us out of complacency and remind us that fear, prejudice and rage are always the shadows just beyond the light of our reason.

And so people suddenly start to speak out. There are voices of outrage and grief. Voices of sorrow and demands to know why such a thing could happen. And predictably, there are also defensive voices...

As the chaplain for our own community, I would like to invite us all to consider Matthew's death in another way. Not through the clamor or denials, not through the shouts or cries of anger: but rather, through the silence of his death, the silence of that young man hanging on his cross of pain alone in the emptiness of a Wyoming night, the silence that ultimately killed him as surely as the beatings he endured.

Silence killed Matthew Shepard. The silence of Christians who know that our scriptures on homosexuality are few and murky in interpretation and far outweighed by the words of a savior whose only comment on human relationships was to call us to never judge but only to love. The silence of well meaning educated people who pretend to have an enlightened view of homosexuality while quietly tolerating the abuse of gays and lesbians in their own communities. The silence of our elected officials who have the authority to make changes but prefer to count votes. The silence of the majority of 'straight' Americans who shift uncomfortably when confronted by the thought that gays and lesbians may be no different from themselves, save for the fact that they are walking targets for bigotry, disrespect, cheap humor, and apparently, of murder.

A young man's heart has ceased to beat. Hear the silence of that awful truth. It is the silence of death. It is the silence that descends on us like a shroud... With silence, we condemn scores of our neighbors to live in the shadows of hate. In silence, we observe the suffering of any group of people who have been declared expendable by our society...

I will renew my resolve never to allow this silence to have the last word. Not for Matthew. Not for gay men or lesbian women. Not for any person in our society of any color or condition who has been singled out for persecution. Not in my church.¹⁴²

Credibility and witness

The fact that many lesbians and gays had established loving long-term partnerships also had an effect. In areas where many were 'out of the closet', numerous people were able to observe uncles and aunts, neighbours and workmates, in same-sex partnerships, and draw their own conclusions about whether the stereotypes were true.

For instance, in a landmark case in 1999, the Law Lords (Britain's most senior judges) ruled that long-term same-sex partnerships could sometimes be regarded as family relationships with regard to tenancy rights. Martin Fitzpatrick and his partner John Thompson had lived together for many years in 'a longstanding, close, loving and faithful, monogamous, homosexual relationship' and after Thompson had a serious accident, Fitzpatrick 'took Mr. Thompson home in April 1986 to care for him full time himself. The applicant took over the total care 24 hours a

day for Mr. Thompson, feeding him and nursing him until his death in 1994. The applicant gave up his job and received benefit because he was unable to work, due to his full time care of Mr. Thompson. Despite the loving and dedicated care of the applicant, Mr. Thompson died in November 1994.' Fitzpatrick, who faced eviction because Thompson had been the legal tenant, was allowed to stay in the home they had shared.¹⁴³

Some countries were by now looking at legal recognition for such partnerships, as well as protection against discrimination on grounds of sexuality as well as for other reasons. These discussions may have affected churchgoers in a different way from some of their less religiously-inclined neighbours: some Christians believed that same-sex partnerships could be experienced as sacramental, regardless of society's approval or disapproval, while others believed they could never be sanctioned by God. However, **to be effective in ministry and mission, it was difficult to ignore the presence of loving couples who had openly affirmed their commitment to each other.** This offered rich opportunities for pastoral care, especially when couples were open to the possibility of having their relationship blessed. In celebrating human love, it was possible to deepen people's understanding of the love of God. In addition, intimate relationships (same-sex as well as heterosexual) could involve pain, vulnerability and loss as well as joy, generosity and mutual support in doing good, the temptation to selfishness as well as potential for growth. The church had much to offer, but only if it could recognise people's complex reality. And when many churches gave the impression that, to become or remain a Christian, it was essential to believe that such faithful and self-sacrificing love was self-indulgent and indeed satanic, the credibility of its whole message was damaged.

Yet to some, it appeared that negativity about homosexuality was so important that basic concern for love and justice was abandoned, whatever the Bible and Lambeth and ACC resolutions might say. In September 1999, the Ugandan President ordered the police to arrest all homosexuals for engaging in what he termed 'abominable acts'; at least five people were arrested and tortured, one of whom was also raped, and others were terrified.¹⁴⁴ Archbishop Livingstone Mpalanyi-Nkoyoyo declared his support for this repression, claiming 'We cherish the biblical teaching of marriage between man and woman. We condemn this inhuman sex between man and man'.¹⁴⁵

Quest for control

Meanwhile those seeking control of the Anglican communion were becoming bolder. **The consecration by primates of 'missionary' bishops to work in other provinces without the consent of the churches there was a radical break with the past, and started years before the selection of Gene Robinson.** In 1999 Archbishops Maurice Sinclair of the Southern Cone, Emmanuel Kolini of Rwanda, Moses Tay of South East Asia, Harry Goodhew of Sydney, and representatives of the primates of Nigeria and Uganda met Dr John Rodgers, Chuck Murphy and other TEC rebels.¹⁴⁶ In Singapore in **January 2000**, despite pleas from the then Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, and concern by others (even Archbishop Goodhew distanced himself),¹⁴⁷ Archbishops Kolini and Tay consecrated these two priests as bishops for the USA,¹⁴⁸ creating an Anglican Mission in America (AMiA). Nor were such takeover bids confined to countries with 'out' gay bishops or indeed the West: the Archbishop of the Southern Cone later tried to take control of a diocese in Brazil.¹⁴⁹

In 2001 the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, persuaded his fellow-primates to adopt a more reflective and pastoral approach than that proposed by the Archbishops of the West Indies and Southern Cone, who aimed to discipline more inclusive churches. In *To mend the net*, they called for limits to be set of diversity of thought and action and greater power given to the primates.¹⁵⁰ Primates would take on enhanced responsibility in a more centralised, indeed authoritarian, Anglican Communion.

'The steps in the proposal... are designed to cherish unity and to deal pastorally with divisive issues. The appeal is to collegial loyalty, and mutual responsibility. The proposal does, however, squarely face what needs to be done in the event of this appeal being refused. Again a series of measures aimed to preserve unity are recommended, and suspension of communion is reserved only in the case of dioceses or provinces finally rejecting these overtures. The Primates' Meeting will thus fulfill its role as an instrument of unity alongside the other instruments of unity in the Communion... while positively affirming the comprehensive nature of Anglicanism, the Primates should exercise a responsibility to specify the limits of diversity and the frame of reference of provincial autonomy... When in the judgment of at least a significant minority of the Primates these contemplated changes exceed the limits of Anglican diversity, then the Meeting should ask the Province(s) to refrain from implementing them. Conversation concerning such changes can continue but should not be pre-empted by unauthorized innovation.'¹⁵¹ However, some of the elements were to reappear later, and this time gain backing from leading moderate primates.

Tensions continued to run high in parts of TEC. In 2001 there was a dramatic stand-off after Samuel Edwards, former executive director of Forward in Faith North America, sought to take up an appointment as rector without his bishop's permission, and indeed to ban her from church gatherings. He had previously expressed the position that TEC was an 'Unchurch' and that its 'machinery' was 'hell-bound', and advocated 'gumming up the works.' In the end he resigned.¹⁵² While conservatives might grumble about, and campaign to reverse, TEC's supposed liberalism, there were a few clergy and laypersons who were prepared to wreck the church if they would not control it, and who now had influential allies in other provinces.

An end to the wait

After half a century of debate within the church around homosexuality, and a quarter of a century after the first Lambeth Conference resolution calling for in-depth study of the issues, in some provinces attentive listening and serious discussion had not begun, nor was there any immediate prospect of this. Indeed, certain leaders seemed increasingly entrenched in their opposition to deep study and meaningful dialogue. Elsewhere, a great deal of ground had been covered. While indeed there were some extreme liberals who believed that the church should mirror secular trends, for numerous people the case for change was grounded in their faith in a loving and just God.

By the early twenty-first century, extensive work on the theology of sexuality had been undertaken, to which many eminent Biblical scholars and other theologians from various denominations had contributed. To name just a few from the USA alone, in addition to Episcopal priest and Professor of New Testament at Church Divinity School L William Countryman,¹⁵³ they included Walter Wink, Professor of Biblical Interpretation at Auburn Theological Seminary, New York City;¹⁵⁴ Walter Brueggemann, Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary;¹⁵⁵ Rosemary Radford Ruether, Professor of Applied Theology at Garrett Evangelical Theological School, Illinois;¹⁵⁶ Peter M Gomes, Professor of Christian Morals at Harvard University;¹⁵⁷ Eugene F. Rogers, Associate Professor of Philosophical Theology at the University of Virginia;¹⁵⁸ Carter Heyward, Professor of Theology at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Massachusetts;¹⁵⁹ Choon-Leong Seow, Professor of Old Testament Language and Literature at Princeton Theological Seminary; and Dwight N Hopkins, associate professor of theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School.¹⁶⁰ (Theological thinking on sexuality was of course continuing elsewhere: for instance the late Oxford lecturer Gareth Moore's book *A Question of Truth* was published in 2002, and the Congress of Asian Theologians was studying the issue in the context of the encounter with the 'other' through which God's grace could be manifest.¹⁶¹)

The issue was not purely academic. **Many Episcopalians felt that they were compromising their mission and ministry, negating their baptismal promises and the meaning of the**

eucharist. In other countries too, faced with pastoral realities which contradicted commonly-held assumptions, many came to revise their opinions. By the new millennium in Britain, less than half of regular churchgoers believed that same-sex relationships were always wrong; though older Christians tended to be less accepting than others of their age, Anglicans under 25 were more likely to approve of such relationships than their non-religious peers.¹⁶² In 2001 UK-based evangelical 'ex-gay' ministry Courage changed its position.

As the founder Jeremy Marks explained, 'Our non-negotiable view regarding homosexuality... promoted the belief that "the answer" was either to be found through the possibility of change, "... to become heterosexual as God intended", if this was the heart's desire of the person seeking help, or at the very least to live a celibate life... After ten years, however, six spent running residential discipleship courses, followed by years of weekly group meetings, it was increasingly clear that however repentant people were, and however much dedicated effort they put into seeking change, none were really "successful" in the long term... the kind of change everyone really hoped for—which was to "re-orientate" and reach a point where their struggle against homosexuality was well and truly over, remained at best elusive... many so-called "bible-believing Christians" still go on demanding celibacy for all people outside heterosexual marriage. Under this pressure, I've seen many folk become very seriously disillusioned over the years. Some became deeply depressed and hopeless, even suicidal. Others have embraced a more "liberal" theology and sought gay relationships. Most tragically, some have lost their faith altogether—a conclusion that I found heart-breaking, as a pastor committed to helping people find their hope in Christ... I do not see what scriptural basis we have for doggedly insisting that any and every form of erotic expression outside monogamous heterosexual marriage is sinful... It is my hope that, as Christians, we will be willing to see what God is doing (John 5:19-21) amongst us. This means recognising the need and the heart-desire that sincere lesbian and gay Christians have for intimate relationship. If we neglect to do so, I believe we fail to recognise what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Churches in these days (Revelation 3:13).'¹⁶³

The claim of some 'ex-gay' ministries to be able to 'cure' gays and lesbians if their faith was deep enough not only left many people psychologically and spiritually devastated¹⁶⁴ but could also provide an alibi for homophobia. If persisting in being deeply attracted to the same sex was mere wilfulness, anyone who suffered as a result could be blamed for their own plight.

To avoid exacerbating divisions in the worldwide Anglican Communion as well as TEC, in 2000 General Convention had decided not to move forward on authorising liturgies for same-sex blessings.¹⁶⁵ But hardliners had demonstrated that to them 'bonds of affection' meant at best paternalism (since they were convinced they knew what was best for everyone), at worst as an excuse for ruthless power-seeking. This is not to deny the sincere belief of some that they were doing God's will. However their unwillingness to re-examine the views they had grown up with around homosexuality, to give any sign of hope to those seeking greater acceptance that patience might be rewarded, left many in TEC frustrated. They felt they had waited too long, and it was time to move forward.

While many Anglicans worldwide were deeply unhappy about the violation of church order by reactionary bishops and archbishops making forays into other provinces, as if they had papal authority over the whole Anglican Communion, there were no sanctions. But when provinces where issues of human sexuality had been studied in depth took action on their findings, the penalties were harsh.

When Jeffrey John, a leading light in the Affirming Catholicism movement, was chosen as suffragan Bishop of Reading in the Church of England, there was a storm of protest because he was known to be gay and (like many other Anglo-Catholic theologians) in favour of greater acceptance in the church. While he was a Biblical enthusiast and outstanding communicator whose book and talks on finding meaning in the miracles had helped many to recognise that

Christ's grace could transform lives today, his way of reading Scripture was obviously different from that of conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists. Though it was revealed that for years he and his life-partner had abstained from sex, to comply with the official church position, this sacrifice was not enough: he had not repented, since he did not accept that physical intimacy in the context of a committed relationship was necessarily wrong.

Peter Akinola threatened to split the Anglican Communion if this celibate gay man was appointed.¹⁶⁶ **In addition to the homophobia revealed in the vehement opposition to Dr John's consecration even after his sexual abstinence became public knowledge, opposition to the theological diversity which had long been a feature of Anglicanism had become apparent.** Certain narrow evangelicals in other provinces now felt they were entitled to demand that an Anglo-Catholic not be appointed by the Diocese of Oxford in part because his reading of the Bible was different from theirs.

The new Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, not only had argued for greater acceptance himself but also was a friend of Dr John. Nevertheless Archbishop Williams was persuaded to block the consecration in the interests of unity. Reluctant as he was to sacrifice lesbians and gays, he had come to believe that giving way to the demands of hardliners, while trying to persuade them to take a more moderate approach, was the only way to hold the Anglican Communion together. Unfortunately this tended to reinforce their sense that they spoke for God and were entitled to obedience.

In TEC, one of the more decentralised and democratic provinces, the story was different. By 2003, many members believed that justice for gays and lesbians and openness to the Holy Spirit's prompting had been too long delayed. It seemed to them contrary to the heart of the Gospel to continue, decade after decade, to treat others as lesser beings in the vain hope of appeasing others who were unwilling even to enter into genuine dialogue. While there were conservatives in TEC who would not themselves make such a choice, they were generally willing to accommodate difference, as were those liberals and Anglo-Catholics who had accepted the ministry of conservative evangelicals with whom they profoundly disagreed on many matters.

When the people of New Hampshire were looking for a bishop, the outstanding candidate was Canon Gene Robinson, coordinator of various local programmes for spiritual development and an advocate for international debt relief and socially responsible investment. **He happened to be gay and in a partnership.** The majority of other TEC bishops consented – it was rare to overrule a local choice – and he was consecrated in 2003, despite the urging of the Archbishop of Canterbury. New Westminster diocese in the Anglican Church of Canada (ACC) had also approved a rite for same-sex blessings.

There had of course been numerous actively gay clergy consecrated as bishops elsewhere in the Anglican Communion, but they tended either to be closeted or their sexuality was an open secret, widely known but not acknowledged by the church hierarchy. Again, in some provinces such as England, blessings by priests of same-sex partnerships were quite common, but no rite was authorised.

While some might debate the correctness of the decision to ratify the consecration of an openly partnered gay, or whether this should have been done earlier or delayed longer, it is hard to deny that it was at least reasonable in the circumstances.

Nevertheless **the North American churches came under fierce attack.** A statement by Archbishop Peter Akinola of Nigeria 'for and behalf of the working committee for the Primates of the Global South' claimed that they were 'appalled' and that 'A state of impaired communion now exists' between TEC and most other provinces and urged the Archbishop of Canterbury to

'bring forward urgently a mechanism to guarantee adequate provision of episcopal oversight' for parishes and clergy unwilling to work within TEC. In fact it turned out to be far fewer than expected,¹⁶⁷ but many other leaders were prepared to condemn the US and Canadian churches supposedly for risking unity by failing to obey the hardliners. The American Anglican Council moved forward with its plans for schism,¹⁶⁸ with the assistance of overseas allies who cared little for Anglican traditions of provincial autonomy and theological diversity.

Allegations of imperialism

TEC has sometimes been accused of **imperialism** for moving forward on lesbian and gay equality within the church,¹⁶⁹ yet this is to trivialise the concept, as if the US government's bombing of Vietnam were no worse than permitting instant marriages in Nevada. Whether or not TEC was insular, it was not forcing its own norms on Anglicans in other provinces. It was not TEC which was sending out missionary 'bishops' to other provinces without the consent of local churches; it was not even threatening to withdraw from the Anglican Communion if other churches persisted in ignoring Lambeth resolutions and Biblical teachings on love of neighbour.

Those elsewhere in the world who were embarrassed by the choice of Bishop Robinson could have played down its significance, just as Anglican women trying to witness to their friends in the USA or Britain were unlikely to emphasise the welcoming of polygamists in parts of Africa. And, while US culture may evoke disproportionate interest in other countries, Americans can hardly stop making music, writing or getting on with their lives in order to avoid the risk of influencing anyone else.

Perhaps some of the anger against TEC was because the US state was at that time embarking on a genuinely imperialist venture in Iraq, along with the UK and Australia. But the very concern for justice and compassion which had led TEC leaders to challenge discrimination against gays and lesbians had led them also to question their own government's decision to go to war,¹⁷⁰ unlike most of their fellow-Americans.¹⁷¹ And the US state's commitment to big business, which had led it to oppose wide availability of cheap anti-HIV medication in case it reduced profits,¹⁷² also came under fire. When in early 2003 Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold warned that the notion of an 'axis of evil' was 'bellicose', that an attack of Iraq would not be a just war and that US policy toward AIDS in Africa was a 'form of sin from which we as a nation are called to repent', and that 'I am not surprised we are hated and loathed wherever I go', he was criticised by the president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy.¹⁷³ In contrast, even after the deception by US leaders which led to war was uncovered, and the horrific abuse of detainees at Abu Ghraib, Peter Akinola was full of praise for President Bush and his 'admirable courage in upholding firmly the timeless values of the historic faith of the Church'.¹⁷⁴

As for stark suffering of so many in a world where a handful of multinationals and governments controlled so many resources and so much power, in Archbishop Akinola's view this was not a major concern for Anglicans: 'This church didn't create poverty. Poverty is not an issue, human suffering is not an issue at all, they were there before the creation of mankind.'¹⁷⁵ It was clear who actually supported imperialism.

Responding to the New Hampshire consecration

While there was fierce hostility among some in the USA to Gene Robinson's consecration – indeed for a while he had round-the-clock protection because of death threats¹⁷⁶ – it also attracted many to the Anglican church who had been put off by the harshness of certain other Christian denominations.¹⁷⁷ In a USA parts of which were still deeply homophobic, and where a virulently anti-gay 'Christian right' had considerable media coverage and political power,¹⁷⁸ TEC could seem a refuge for those yearning for a safe space to worship, grow in faith and join with others in pursuit of God's kingdom.

Internationally, too, while some Christians objected, others rejoiced, believing that it strengthened Christian witness to a God of love and justice who cared for those oppressed and excluded by society.

Meanwhile some of those misleadingly known as 'traditionalists' or 'orthodox' pursued their own innovations with far less international publicity. Archbishop Peter Jensen of Sydney continued to pursue his commitment to promoting lay celebration of the eucharist: 'Lay administration is an evangelical way of meeting one of the problems of mission as we experience them in our largely (though not exclusively) urban setting. The Anglo-Catholic way is not open to us. We are aiming to develop a theologically shaped, pastorally responsible method of achieving a sacramental life for our people... Our understanding is that there exists at the moment no legal barrier to lay people administering Holy Communion, except on church trust property. If we delay too long, it may be very difficult to license and order this practice. The unsatisfactory result will be that a priest will be required for the Lord's Supper simply because of the nature of the building in which the service is being held.'¹⁷⁹

Phillip Jensen, his brother, Dean of Sydney's St Andrew's Cathedral, continued to follow an even more extreme agenda, including trying to undermine the traditional parish system. As he had said in 2001, 'Dividing the world into parishes and dioceses is a useful strategy for reaching the world with the gospel... However the Bible does not mandate that the world must be divided into parishes and dioceses or that there can be only one church in each city or suburb... Evangelicals are committed to making the gospel known to every one. Whenever people have taken this evangelistic commitment seriously, it has meant preaching in and out of season - where people want us and where they do not want us... If people do not want us planting churches in their patch then invite us into their pulpits and let us minister in the parishes or in their dioceses.'¹⁸⁰ Church-planting backed by Sydney leaders led to worldwide controversy, and provoked strong opposition from more moderate evangelicals among others,¹⁸¹ but Archbishop Williams was more accommodating, even if this meant undermining the authority of bishops in his own province.¹⁸²

In contrast, keen to placate the hardliners seeking the punishment of TEC, he set up a commission chaired by the Archbishop of Armagh. Despite his good intentions and those of several other members, its attempts to broker a compromise when some hardliners were reluctant to make any concession would cause further problems.

6 Anglicanism under threat

The Windsor Report

The commission produced the 2004 Windsor Report¹⁸³, received by primates at Dromantine in Ireland in 2005. This did not probe why, after centuries of (sometimes grudging) coexistence by different wings and factions of the Anglican church despite profound theological, liturgical and ethical differences, some leaders should suddenly decide that such diversity was no longer acceptable.

TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada were criticised for not ‘attaching sufficient importance to the interests of the wider Communion’ and invited to express regret for breaching the ‘bonds of affection’, explain their actions, not conduct further such consecrations and blessings and withdraw from some committees of the Anglican Consultative Council. It was proposed that the Archbishop of Canterbury and a small group of primates be given greater power over Anglicans worldwide. But the Report also called on ‘those bishops who believe it is their conscientious duty to intervene in provinces, dioceses and parishes other than their own’ to ‘express regret for the consequences of their actions’, ‘effect a moratorium on any further interventions’ and ‘seek an accommodation with the bishops of the dioceses whose parishes they have taken into their own care.’ Also the listening process should continue, with the support of a member of the Anglican Communion Office staff, and ‘any demonising of homosexual persons, or their ill treatment, is totally against Christian charity and basic principles of pastoral care’.

The decision of one ‘instrument of unity’ to interfere in the workings of another – the only one with a lay majority or indeed any lay participation – and to make demands of particular provinces revealed a dangerous undermining of Anglican principles of lay involvement, provincial autonomy and synodical government. However TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada dutifully stepped aside, while turning up to provide detailed explanations of their actions.¹⁸⁴

A booklet which explained TEC’s journey on issues of human sexuality¹⁸⁵ made clear its desire for unity and respect for fellow-Anglicans: ‘Dear brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the Anglican Communion, we can scarcely begin to express our gratitude to God for permitting us to share fellowship with you over the many years of our life together, and we earnestly desire to walk in communion with you into God’s future. We would never willingly grieve or hurt you in any way. We wish only to describe something of what—through much perplexity and faithful struggle to serve the Good News of God in Christ— we have come to believe that God has been doing among us... The world, beset by terrible anger, division, and famine, is in great need of our Savior’s healing and reconciling power. Many of you know this in far more costly and personal ways than do we—and indeed suffer through it in a powerful witness to the Gospel. We pray that whatever differences there are in our Anglican Communion may never be overtaken by the anger and divisiveness of this world. We are not a Communion in agreement on all matters, yet may God grant us to be a Communion that bears the wounds of Christ, a Communion of differences yet reconciled in the Cross, a Communion broken yet united in love for the crucified and risen Savior. Let the same mind be in us all “that was in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). May the Lord make even of our differences a sign to the world of the reconciling power of God. We set our hope on Christ, that we may, together with you, live for the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:12).’

Many in TEC had themselves been surprised to find God at work in unexpected places: ‘For almost forty years, members of the Episcopal Church have discerned holiness in same-sex relationships and, have come to support the blessing of such unions and the ordination or consecration of persons in those unions... These unions have evidenced the fruit of the Holy Spirit: “joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). More specifically, members of our congregations have seen the fruit of

such unions as sanctifying human lives by deepening mutual love and by drawing persons together in fidelity and in service to the world... Their holiness stands in stark contrast with many sinful patterns of sexuality in the world... In this, we find ourselves in the same position as Peter and his companions in Acts 10, who, initially hesitant to welcome righteous Gentiles like Cornelius into their church, discovered that God had already welcomed them (Romans 14:3) and poured out the gifts of the Holy Spirit upon them. So we have been holding our circumstances, especially these signs of holiness where we had not known to seek holiness, before the Lord. We have been asking God to help us find our way.'

After considering in detail Scriptural and other theological issues, and humble admission of TEC's own chequered past, the struggles to come to terms with national divisions and complicity with injustice, there was a plea for the Anglican way: 'Anglicanism at its best has been attentive to human fallibility, and has therefore especially prized humility and mutual forbearance as primary Christian virtues. The need for correction by others in a diverse Body of Christ and the need for openness to others in love, even and especially a respectful attentiveness to those with whom one most fervently disagrees, have always had a basis in this characteristically Anglican realism about the likelihood of moral and intellectual failure among the people of God. It is only in and through a diverse Communion that allegiance to any one particular viewpoint is prevented from *replacing* the allegiance that all of us owe to Christ, the one Head who alone can hold all of us, its diverse members, together in love.' But to those convinced that their own understanding was infallible, and that the Holy Spirit could not act in ways which might be a surprise even to them, these were mere excuses.

'A body which exists by means of a constitution agreed to by all the member churches of the Anglican Communion, and that is required by that constitution to be "consultative" cannot consult fully or properly if all of its members are not sitting at the same table. It is surely not for one Instrument of Unity to disempower another?' the ACC chairman later said. 'The ACC gives voice and hope and strength and dignity to those 80 million or more Anglicans who say they belong to us, and look to us to represent them, but who are not themselves primates, archbishops, bishops, priests, deacons or ACC members.'¹⁸⁶

The 2005 ACC gathering would also give into the primates' insistence on being appointed – something which the ACC had previously resisted – so that laypeople would become a minority of just a third in the ACC provided certain conditions were met. Irish lay delegate Kate Turner argued against this: 'Less than one-half of the laity here speak,' she said, and "if their primates were here, they'd be even less inclined.' But Archbishop Akinola argued that the set-up would improve relations and cooperation among the instruments of unity: there was 'an amount of suspicion and mistrust' and 'we believe with this arrangement, all that will be removed.' Others perhaps hoped that the ACC's position might be strengthened, though this proved problematic.

The Windsor Report also argued that provincial freedom should be strictly limited:

Communion is, in fact, the fundamental limit to autonomy. In essential matters of common concern to the worldwide fellowship of churches (affairs, that is, which touch both the particular church and the wider community of which it forms part), we believe that each church in the exercise of its autonomy should:

- consider, promote and respect the common good of the Anglican Communion and its constituent churches (as discerned in communion through the Instruments of Unity)
- maintain its communion with fellow churches, and avoid jeopardising it, by bringing potentially contentious initiatives, prior to implementation, to the rest of the communion in dialogue, consultation, discernment and agreement in communion with the fellowship of churches (through the Instruments of Unity), and
- be able to depart, where appropriate and acceptable, on the basis of its own corporate conscience and with the blessing of the communion, from the standards of the community of which is an autonomous part, provided such departure is neither critical to the maintenance of

communion nor likely to harm the common good of the Anglican Communion and of the Church universal (again, as determined by the Instruments of Unity)...

Autonomy gives full scope for the development of authentic local living out of the Christian faith and mission, in what has come to be known as *inculturation*. This is an essential part of the Christian mission: each church must find fresh ways to proclaim the Gospel of Christ into the context of the world in which it is living. The eternal truth of the gospel relates in different ways to the particulars of any one society, as we see already within the life of the earliest church as described in Acts. This combination of faithfulness to the gospel and inculturation into different societies will inevitably produce a proper and welcome diversity within the life of the Church...

As the Church has explored the question of limits to diversity, it has frequently made use of the notion of *adiaphora*: things which do not make a difference, matters regarded as non-essential, issues about which one can disagree without dividing the Church. This notion lies at the heart of many current disputes... Whenever, therefore, a claim is made that a particular theological or ethical stance is something “indifferent”, and that people should be free to follow it without the Church being thereby split, there are two questions to be asked. First, is this in fact the kind of matter which can count as “inessential”, or does it touch on something vital? Second, if it is indeed “adiaphora”, is it something that, nevertheless, a sufficient number of other Christians will find scandalous and offensive, either in the sense that they will be led into acting against their own consciences or that they will be forced, for conscience's sake, to break fellowship with those who go ahead? If the answer to the latter question is “yes”, the biblical guidelines insist that those who have no scruples about the proposed action should nevertheless refrain from going ahead.

How could some Anglicans be ‘forced’ to break fellowship with others? The Archbishops of Nigeria and South East Asia had not been required to enter into same-sex partnerships themselves, or conduct blessings of same-sex unions. If those at the extremes of Anglo-Catholicism and Protestantism could have co-existed, pacifists managed for so long to be part of the Communion alongside militarists they regarded as advocates of murder, feminists alongside male supremacists they regarded as advocates of idolatry, and human rights activists alongside these archbishops who condoned human rights violations, why could they not swallow their distaste, and indeed use the opportunities offered by fellowship in the church to try to change others’ views? Indeed, while it might at first be distasteful for someone brought up to avoid ‘inferior’ ethnic or social groups to have to gather at the altar with those ‘types’ of people, is this not an important part of spiritual growth. Seeking to infringe others’ freedom without accepting any significant restraint on one’s own, and breaking fellowship with those who will not submit, is a choice not a necessity.

What is more, if two Anglicans had differing views on a matter, should the more courteous and humble one always give way to the one more insistent on having his own way, and if so how could the Holy Spirit lead the church into all truth? And was the door not being opened to possible splits on all kinds of matters if issues not previously regarded as central could be elevated to being treated as if they were as important as, say, the divinity of Christ?

The Windsor Report’s discussion of the Bible referred to the traditional Anglican approach, far removed from fundamentalism. However the Report also appeared to put an uncharacteristic emphasis on bishops’ teaching authority which appeared contrary to Reformation principles:

When Jesus speaks of “all authority in heaven and earth” (Matthew 28.18), he declares that this authority is given, not to the books that his followers will write, but to himself. Jesus, the living Word, is the one to whom the written Word bears witness as God’s ultimate and personal self-expression. The New Testament is full of similar ascriptions of authority to the Father, to Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit...

If the notion of scriptural authority is itself to be rooted in scripture, and to be consonant with the central truths confessed by Christians from the earliest days, it must be seen that the purpose of scripture is not simply to supply true information, nor just to prescribe in matters of belief and

conduct, nor merely to act as a court of appeal, but to be part of the dynamic life of the Spirit through which God the Father is making the victory which was won by Jesus' death and resurrection operative within the world and in and through human beings. Scripture is thus part of the means by which God directs the Church in its mission, energises it for that task, and shapes and unites it so that it may be both equipped for this work and itself part of the message...

for scripture to "work" as the vehicle of God's authority it is vital that it be read at the heart of worship in a way which (through appropriate lectionaries, and the use of scripture in canticles etc.) allows it to be heard, understood and reflected upon, not as a pleasing and religious background noise, but as God's living and active word. The message of scripture, as a whole and in its several parts, must be preached and taught in all possible and appropriate ways. It is the responsibility of the whole Church to engage with the Bible together; within that, each individual Christian, to the fullest extent of which they are capable, must study it and learn from it, thoughtfully and prayerfully. Within this context, the Church's accredited leaders have a responsibility, through constant teaching and preaching, to enable the Church to grow to maturity, so that when difficult judgements are required they may be made in full knowledge of the texts...

The place of Christian leaders - chiefly within the Anglican tradition, of bishops - as *teachers of scripture* can hardly be overemphasised. The "authority" of bishops cannot reside solely or primarily in legal structures, but, as in Acts 6.4, in their ministry of "prayer and the word of God". If this is ignored, the model of 'the authority of scripture' which scripture itself offers is failing to function as it should. The authoritative teaching of scripture cannot be left to academic researchers, vital though they are. The accredited leaders of the Church - within the diocese, the bishop(s); within the Communion, the primates - must be people through whose prayerful teaching ministry the authority of God vested in scripture is brought to bear - in mission within the world and in wise teaching to build up the Church...

Where a fresh wave of scholarship generates ideas which are perceived as a threat to something the Church has always held dear, it is up to the scholars concerned, on the one hand, to explain how what is now proposed not only accords with but actually enhances the central core of the Church's faith. And it is up to the Church, on the other hand, not to reject new proposals out of hand, but to listen carefully, to test everything, and to be prepared to change its mind if and when a convincing case is made.

...to link once more with scripture as the central fact of unity within the Communion, it is the bishop's role as teacher of scripture that is meant, above all, to be not merely a symbolic but a very practical means of giving the Church the energy and direction it needs for its mission and therefore the motivation and the groundwork for its unity.

But what if bishops misinterpreted the Bible and refused to consider the possibility that their interpretation might not be right? For instance, a couple of centuries ago, was it wrong for laypersons to try to undermine the slave trade when senior clergy believed that it was ordained by God? If leaders in some provinces resolved to reject certain proposals out of hand, should others give way, even if this appeared to them to undermine the church's mission and ministry? In a world of mass literacy, how likely are scholars and local Christian communities who have spent years grappling with complex issues to submit to the teaching authority of senior clergy who know far less than they do, especially if this involves violating the law of love?

Controversy over the relationship between bishops on the one hand and other clergy and laypeople on the other hand was particularly intense in the province of Central Africa. In Lake Malawi the elected bishop had formerly been a leader in the liberal Modern Churchpeople's Union and was rejected by the hardline Archbishop, Bernard Malango, sparking off revolt by grassroots Anglicans.¹⁸⁷ Archbishop Malango also blocked church court proceedings against Bishop Nolbert Kunonga of Zimbabwe, an active participant in human rights abuses, for charges which included incitement to murder.¹⁸⁸ In an imperfect world where such problems could and did arise, for the Anglican Communion to strengthen the power of bishops over the laity could undermine the credibility of the church.

The flaws in the Windsor Report's approach (examined in depth in *Gays and the future of Anglicanism*) meant that, for all the good intentions of many involved, it was unlikely to succeed in resolving the problems which had arisen. There were also serious concerns that the Primates' meeting was overstepping its brief, arrogating authority to itself

A working party was set up to draft a **covenant**, to which those who wished to remain Anglican should conform, under conservative Archbishop Drexel Gomez of the West Indies. Some hardliners were impatient to finalise their takeover of the Anglican Communion, even if this meant expelling some provinces and splitting others.

Urging 'appropriate discipline' and choosing the 'next generation of leaders'
Archbishop Akinola is President and Archbishop Chew General Secretary of the Global South grouping (though this by no means represents all Southern bishops). A 2005 communique¹⁸⁹ declared:

Apart from the world condition, our own Anglican Communion sadly continues to be weakened by unchecked revisionist teaching and practices which undermine the divine authority of the Holy Scripture...

The Church of Jesus Christ is called to be holy. All Christians are to participate in the sanctification of their lives through submission, obedience and cooperation with the Holy Spirit...

Scripture demands, and Christian history has traditionally held, that the standard of life, belief, doctrine, and conduct is the Holy Scripture. To depart from apostolic teaching is to tamper with the foundation and to undermine the basis of our unity in Christ. We express full confidence in the supremacy and clarity of Scripture, and pledge full obedience to the whole counsel of God's Word...

It is envisaged that once the Covenant is approved by the Communion, provinces that enter into the Covenant shall be mutually accountable, thereby providing an authentic fellowship within the Communion...

We will also support those orthodox dioceses and congregations which are under difficult circumstances because of their faithfulness to the Word. We appreciate the recent action of the Primate of the Southern Cone, who acted to stabilize the volatile situation in Recife, Brazil...

The unscriptural innovations of North American and some Western provinces on issues of human sexuality undermine the basic message of redemption and the power of the Cross to transform lives. These departures are a symptom of a deeper problem, which is the diminution of the authority of Holy Scripture. The leaders of these provinces disregard the plain teaching of Scripture and reject the traditional interpretation of tenets in the historical Creeds...

We recognize with regret the growing evidence that the Provinces which have taken action creating the current crisis in the Communion continue moving in a direction that will result in their "walking apart." We call for urgent and serious implementation of the recommendations of the Windsor Report. Unscriptural and unilateral decisions, especially on moral issues, tear the fabric of our Communion and require appropriate discipline at every level to maintain our unity. While the Global South calls for the errant provinces to be disciplined, we will continue to pray for all who embrace these erroneous teachings that they will be led to repentance and restoration...

We commit ourselves to identify the next generation of leaders and will seek to equip and deploy them wherever they are needed...

We see ourselves as a unifying body, moving forward collectively as servants of Christ to do what He is calling us to do both locally in our provinces and globally as the "scattered people of God throughout the world" (1 Peter 1:1).

Thus the hardliners both urged that the Windsor Report be enforced and flaunted their unwillingness to abide by its call to end border-crossing (which, it highlighted, could take place

not only in the West but also in the South). They also showed their unwillingness to accept the points made in the Windsor Report about the complexity of the Bible, the need for openness to new insights, the importance of an ongoing process of listening and discernment and the unacceptability of demonising or ill-treating homosexuals. Indeed serious dialogue and dispassionate study appeared to be ruled out, since anyone taking a different stance on the acceptability of same-sex relationships was accused of undermining the basic message of redemption. Though Anglicans had long debated particular aspects of sexual ethics, for instance in what circumstances if any it was permissible for divorcees to remarry and whether a betrothed couple could legitimately sleep together, disagreement on this matter was supposedly now not permissible.

While even popes seldom invoke infallibility, these primates were clearly confident of their own inerrancy as well as righteousness as they sent out missionaries to convert the world. The Covenant was viewed as a means to allow them to purge the church of those who would not surrender the capacity to think and act independently.

However in 2005 a letter from primates in Global South attacking the Archbishop of Canterbury for failing to expel TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada, and questioning his own orthodoxy, led even some of the hardliners to distance themselves from such extreme tactics.¹⁹⁰ Divisions surfaced between those who wished to change the nature of Anglicanism using the correct procedures and those in such a rush to seize power that they were liable to alienate the undecided and wavering. While the leaders of some provinces, including the Church of England, might be willing reluctantly to sacrifice the spiritual and physical welfare of lesbians and gays for the sake of church unity, attempts to unseat the Archbishop of Canterbury from chairing Primates' gatherings and general refusal to play by the rules were a different matter.

Nevertheless, Anglican theologians were now on notice: however thoughtful and scholarly their writings, and even if they were at the heart of the establishment, they might come under fire if they did not agree with the stance of Archbishop Akinola and his allies. It could also seem prudent to moderates and liberals to modify their own public stance to accommodate a supposedly Southern perspective.

In November 2005, Archbishop Akinola also proudly proclaimed, 'Earlier this year we announced CANA - a mission of the Church of Nigeria, a Convocation for Anglicans in North America. We see this as a creative way to provide pastoral and episcopal care for those alienated by the actions of ECUSA... We are beginning a process of formally incorporating clergy and congregations into CANA and we will shortly be selecting and consecrating episcopal leadership to oversee further growth and development and enable us to more effectively respond to the pressing needs within the USA.'¹⁹¹

Defending the Anglican way for God's pilgrim people

Meanwhile, in 2005, the ACC had endorsed a very different **Covenant**, for **Communion in Mission**:

This Anglican Consultative Council:

- a. commends the *Covenant for Communion in Mission* to the churches of the Anglican Communion for study and application as a vision for Anglican faithfulness to the mission of God
- b. forwards the *Covenant for Communion in Mission* to those bodies of the Anglican Communion tasked to consider an Anglican Covenant as commended by the Windsor Report and the Statement of the February 2005 Primates' Meeting
- c. requests the next Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism to monitor responses to the *Covenant for Communion in Mission* and evaluate its effectiveness across the Communion.¹⁹²

This offered a way forward based on mutuality, including **recognising Jesus in the contexts and lives of others**:

This Covenant signifies our common call to share in God's healing and reconciling mission for our blessed but broken and hurting world.

In our relationships as Anglican sisters and brothers in Christ, we live in the hope of the unity that God has brought about through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit...

Nourished by Scripture and Sacrament, we pledge ourselves to:

1. Recognise Jesus in each other's contexts and lives...
2. Support one another in our participation in God's mission...
3. Encourage expressions of our new life in Christ...
4. Meet to share common purpose and explore differences and disagreements...
5. Be willing to change in response to critique and challenge from others...
6. Celebrate our strengths and mourn over our failures...
7. Share equitably our God-given resources...
8. Work together for the sustainability of God's creation...
9. Live into the promise of God's reconciliation for ourselves and for the world.¹⁹³

It was pointed out that '**Covenants are free-will voluntary offerings from one to another while contracts are binding entities whose locus of authority is external to oneself... We believe the Covenant for Communion in Mission can provide a focus for binding the Communion together in a way rather different from that envisaged by the Windsor Report.**'

Leaders in some provinces failed to respond to the ACC's call, while others took it on board. The Executive Council of TEC even drew up a litany based on this covenant.¹⁹⁴

ACC also welcomed a connected **report on mission**¹⁹⁵:

The Anglican Consultative Council:

- a. receives the report from the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism (IASCOME) entitled "Communion in Mission"
- b. expresses its appreciation to IASCOME and thanks its members for their work and dedication
- c. adopts as the mandate for the next IASCOME the text set out in their Report
- d. encourages IASCOME in its work over its next term.¹⁹⁶

This report examined the experience of **God's pilgrim people**:

A communion in mission is characterised at one and the same time by a celebration of commonality and difference. As Anglicans we believe that both commonality and difference are sustained by apostolic truth and the hope of the final unity of all things as expressed in our worship.

As an Anglican *communion in mission*, led forward by the Holy Spirit, we acknowledge (as sister churches) that we are God's pilgrim people. Therefore, whilst affirming the patterns and traditions of our past, we realise that such providential arrangements are provisional, and that our Communion is developing as it is being transformed in Christ.

Love in concrete situations is of crucial importance:

Jesus made friends of his disciples by loving them. Christian mission is the call to love others the way Jesus did, so that we, and they, can discover the loving friendship of Jesus...

The heart of the witness of the Church is the day-to-day presence, life and witness of lay Christians in their places of residence, work and the neighbourhoods where they live, or the networks with which they are associated. The Christian faith is a way of life rather than an organisation and Christians live out that way in the wider society. The resources of the organised Church, its worship and teaching, need to focus on strengthening and enabling Christians to witness in their daily lives...

The God we proclaim is a God of love and justice. The world in which we live, however, is characterised by injustice, greed, poverty, terrorism, abuse of power and exclusion. It is in this broken world that we are called to joyful participation in God's mission of love and justice for all...

Peoples' experiences need to be witnessed, recorded and honoured. Then, those who have borne witness need to name the injustices and speak the truth to those in power. Often this means speaking to international bodies, national bodies, and even to the powers in our own churches. Those who take up this mission often put their own jobs, and sometimes their lives, at risk.

Crushing opposition in Nigeria

Nigeria was one country where it could be risky to witness to good news for the poor and oppressed, even outside the parts of the country subjected to sharia law's distortion of Islam. Far from even pretending to engage in a listening process, the bishops set out to silence lesbians and gays, and any heterosexual people who might assist the process of deep study. As mentioned in Section B, Archbishop Akinola backed legislation to outlaw a wide range of activities which could conceivably lead to greater acceptance or even understanding of same-sex relationships. Lay Anglican Davis Macllyalla, who founded Changing Attitude Nigeria, was among those targeted, though it proved impossible for church leaders to prevent lesbian and gay Christians from courageously organising to provide mutual support and challenge myths and misconceptions.¹⁹⁷

Senior Anglican clerics helped to create a climate in which homophobia and ruthless repression might seem justified, along with other Christian leaders, such as Apostle Hayford Alile of the Saint Joseph's Chosen Church of God, to whom gay sex was reportedly 'the most despicable practice on earth' and the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Lagos, Cardinal Olubunmi Okogie, who accused gays and lesbians of wanting to 'destroy the human race'. According to the Anglican Bishop of Lagos, Dr. Ephraim Adebola Ademowo, same-sex partnership was 'crazy, abnormal and is not promoted by any religion known to man', and stated that 'we commend the Federal Government for the bold step it has taken thus far on the issue and we hope it will go the whole hog to make the National Assembly complete the process by enacting it into law which will be completed to the letter'.¹⁹⁸

'Human right ensures that man lives as he **ought** to and not as he **likes** to,' stated an article by David Onuoha, Bishop of Okigwe, on *The absurdity of same sex union*, published on the Church of Nigeria website in early 2006¹⁹⁹ (emphasis in original). 'It is very clear that if everyone is allowed to live as one likes to live, there will be chaos and anarchy. This is why the law is there to guide ones life as one ought to... To choose the wrong only to turn round and coerce others to see and accept it as right and a universal truth negates all the canons of human reasoning. Since man is created in the image and likeness of God and is also dependent on Him, his laws must be derived from those of God. When therefore there is a conflict between "human right" and "God right", the former must judge and redefine itself by and from the latter in order to live in true freedom.'

As was all too common in pronouncements from senior clergy in the province, he failed even to acknowledge properly the arguments in favour of what he was disagreeing with, in this case universal human rights. Quite apart from the fact that basic freedoms (for which so many ordinary Nigerians had courageously struggled) did not in practice inevitably lead to chaos and anarchy, he failed to explain just why he regarded the mainstream Anglican view on human rights repeatedly endorsed by Lambeth and the ACC as flawed. And surely it was the use of force to stop people expressing their views and feelings which was coercive: mutual tolerance

did not mean that people were coerced to accept their neighbour's opinions or behaviour as right or a universal truth (a Christian and spiritualist could live next door to each other for instance, and heartily disagree, without one seeking to fling the other in jail).

In trying to justify the mistreatment of Nigerian lesbians and gays, the Bishop sought to make out that such loving relationships were not in accord with national tradition: 'Recently a group of social deviants claiming to be gays in Nigeria came together in order to attract recognition. There is no doubt that they were misguided and influenced into taking the action they took because asking for recognition to same sex relationships is clearly alien to our culture.' Quite apart from the inaccuracy, there was an obvious contradiction in condemning some lesbians and gays for supposedly going against their culture, others for conforming to their culture (one of the accusations frequently levelled at TEC). A more careful and self-critical look might have acknowledged the historical and cultural diversity in the norms of the people of this large and varied country, and the weaknesses as well as strengths in some frequently-held beliefs about how men and women should relate to one another.

Likewise, after half a century of scholarship in which it was repeatedly pointed out that a mob attack on strangers is not the same as a committed loving relationship and that the sin of Sodom in the view of Biblical authors was inhospitality and injustice, it was odd to read that 'Homosexuality is not a new issue in the Bible. The earlier reference to this is Gen. 19 where men of Sodom wanted to have sex with Lot's male visitors who incidentally were angels... Rather than dissipate energy and resources trying to hoodwink, cajole or subtly mislead the Church of God into accepting this satanic doctrine, champions of gay movement should first of all tell the world when homosexuality stopped being a wicked act.'

Setting aside the debate about how exactly the men of Sodom wanted to 'know' the foreigners, if this story is about homosexuality in general, does the treatment of the Levite's concubine in Judges²⁰⁰ and Amon's rape of Tamar²⁰¹ reflect negatively on heterosexuality in general? Why do they so pointedly refer to Lot's own foreignness? Does the Bishop really think that a mob attack is the moral equivalent of a tender consensual partnership, and if so what does this say about his knowledge of those he condemns? Why does he choose to ignore passages in the Bible commenting on the sin of Sodom, such as the Gospel account of Jesus linking Sodom to the rejection of outsiders and the unfamiliar,²⁰² and Ezekiel's warning to the complacent that 'This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy'?²⁰³

In the Bible, the account of the inhospitality of the men of Sodom immediately follows that of the hospitality of Abraham, who through his welcome of strangers is privileged to entertain God. Despite aspects of this part of Genesis which may put off readers today, including the treatment of gender, there is much of relevance to today's world, where mistreatment of migrants, scapegoating and failure in general to respond with love and respect to the 'other' are still serious problems. It is ironic that this passage should be used to justify the exclusion or even imprisonment of the 'other' – not just those whose sexuality fails to conform to society's norms but anyone who dares to put forward a different reading and live out the consequences of welcoming those despised and rejected.

If Bishop Onuoha had made any serious attempt to engage in deep and dispassionate study and the listening process, he might not have been so adamant that 'homosexuality is a design of the reprobate mind', and that 'both the apostles and disciples of this movement of those who have passion and lust for same sex union are perverts. Perversion is a psychological disorder that can be corrected.' He might then have been more open to questioning whether he might be reading his own prejudices into the Bible.

This is connected with a disturbing attitude to God as a cosmic enforcer of what humans who regard themselves as holy feel and believe, incapable of acting in ways of which they might disapprove, as if any person or system of thought could embrace the whole of reality. This is reflected in the rationale for believing that ‘homosexuality is a design of the reprobate mind. This is because the God who made man from the beginning made them male and female thereby making conjugal relations heterosexual. Nothing therefore can be more irrational and unreasonable than man to suddenly wake up and to tell God that “You made a mistake by creating male and female. It is now time to correct you!”’ Firstly, if the creation story is read not as using poetic language to indicate something of the awesome creativity of God’s love, diversity and fruitfulness of creation, the importance of interaction within and between species and the unique privileges and pitfalls of being human, but rather as a technical description setting limits to diversity, it is liable to be disproved. Every person who is born with both female and male characteristics²⁰⁴ would then call into question the basis of faith. St Augustine’s warning about the Bible and science was indeed wise. Secondly, why does making humans male and female mean that conjugal relations should be heterosexual for everyone? What about celibacy? In fact, when people find themselves attracted to the same sex, far from thinking God mistaken, they may feel deeply appreciative, and they may also delight in the joy of heterosexual friends and family members. Perhaps, in God’s place, the Bishop would have done things differently, making sure that nobody felt anything other than what he regarded as normal: but it is risky to talk of God as if God was subordinate to anyone, even a bishop. Though many of the theologians associated with the Global South or other supposedly ‘Bible-believing’ groupings are far more sophisticated than David Onuoha, there is a shared tendency to be closed to new discoveries – including some of the fruits of Biblical scholarship – about what God can and does bring to pass.

The Bishop certainly did not appear to be following the advice in the Epistles to ‘in humility regard others as better than yourselves’²⁰⁵, or to believe that one should behave ‘with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love’,²⁰⁶ let alone the call to love one’s neighbour as oneself, without explaining why he regarded these as invalid. Those hardliners who claim to be follow the Bible literally may be sincere in this belief, but in practice this is not the case: they themselves do what they accuse others of doing. This is a failing common to most humans, but the version of Christianity being promoted so vigorously tends to make it harder to correct errors.

Harsh and unyielding rhetoric of this kind, backed by absolute conviction in one’s own intellectual infallibility, and the willingness of bishops in Nigeria and certain other countries to ally with the state to punish those who did not submit to their will, might appear to some people to show moral and religious fervour and a praiseworthy desire for purity. However, to others it was deeply unattractive, deeply different from the life and teaching of Jesus and his embodiment of God’s redeeming love, and a demonstration of the dangers of giving too much power to senior clergy. And the **ongoing refusal to engage in reasoned discussion within and across provinces made it harder to persuade others not to move forward but instead wait** for dialogue to take its course.

TEC’s compliance and the nature of Anglicanism

It had **become clear both that hardline archbishops had no intention themselves of being constrained by 1.10 or other Lambeth resolutions or the Windsor report, and that most other primates were reluctant to hold them to account.**

Nevertheless the North American provinces continued to give ground.

TEC general convention in 2006 came under heavy pressure from the Church of England in particular to backtrack on accepting lesbians and gays on equal terms to heterosexuals.²⁰⁷ After much debate, TEC offered ‘its sincerest apology to those within Anglican Communion who are

offended by our failure to accord sufficient importance to the impact of our actions on our church and other parts of the Communion', urged standing committees and bishops not to consent in future to the consecration of anyone as a bishop 'whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion' and committed itself to the Windsor process.²⁰⁸ It was a painful decision with which a sizeable minority did not agree. Many delegates were deeply dismayed, and afraid that they were betraying not only their brothers and sisters but Christ himself.

The concept of a way of life posing a challenge to the wider church was an interesting one. TEC for instance had a suffragan bishop for the chaplaincies including military, a decorated ex-soldier, but his consecration had attracted little attention.²⁰⁹ The ethics of the circumstances in which killing was permissible had long been debated by Anglicans and other Christians, but in the early twenty-first century it appeared that committed partnerships were far more problematic.

But these moves, despite the sacrifices involved, were rejected as inadequate by those seeking to purge the Communion of those they considered unsound. Some primates declared themselves out of communion with TEC, others strongly disagreed.

Rowan Williams' 2006 paper *The Challenge and Hope of Being an Anglican Today* appeared to give guarded support to the hardliners, while claiming to oppose discrimination:

It is possible – indeed, it is imperative – to give the strongest support to the defence of homosexual people against violence, bigotry and legal disadvantage, to appreciate the role played in the life of the church by people of homosexual orientation, and still to believe that this doesn't settle the question of whether the Christian Church has the freedom, on the basis of the Bible, and its historic teachings, to bless homosexual partnerships as a clear expression of God's will. That is disputed among Christians, and, as a bare matter of fact, only a small minority would answer yes to the question.

... it is not unreasonable to seek for a very much wider and deeper consensus before any change is in view, let alone foreclosing the debate by ordaining someone, whatever his personal merits, who was in a practising gay partnership. The recent resolutions of the General Convention have not produced a complete response to the challenges of the Windsor Report, but on this specific question there is at the very least an acknowledgement of the gravity of the situation in the extremely hard work that went into shaping the wording of the final formula....

Very many in the Anglican Communion would want the debate on the substantive ethical question to go on as part of a general process of theological discernment; but they believe that the pre-emptive action taken in 2003 in the US has made such a debate harder not easier, that it has reinforced the lines of division and led to enormous amounts of energy going into "political" struggle with and between churches in different parts of the world.

...if other churches have said, in the wake of the events of 2003 that they cannot remain fully in communion with the American Church, this should not be automatically seen as some kind of blind bigotry against gay people. Where such bigotry does show itself it needs to be made clear that it is unacceptable; and if this is not clear, it is not at all surprising if the whole question is reduced in the eyes of many to a struggle between justice and violent prejudice. It is saying that, whatever the presenting issue, no member Church can make significant decisions unilaterally and still expect this to make no difference to how it is regarded in the fellowship.

It might have seemed that church leaders who, decade after decade, tried to block serious study of issues of human sexuality in their dioceses and provinces, had at least some responsibility for the problems which had arisen, as well as those who had been carefully planning to take greater power and who, if this issue had not emerged, might have found another rationale for threatening schism. Indeed, key reasons given for opposing TEC included the failure of leaders to insist that damnation of all non-Christians²¹⁰ and penal substitutionary atonement²¹¹ were essential to faith.

And, while it was indeed possible to defend lesbians and gays against discrimination and appreciate their role in the church without agreeing with blessing same-sex partnerships, this was not the position of all too many of the senior clergy who so passionately opposed greater acceptance of their brothers and sisters in Christ. Whatever their words, in their deeds they had shown callous indifference or active malice towards gays and lesbians; but this had gone unchallenged, even by many supposedly or liberal leaders. Clearly certain minorities were spiritually and physically expendable, if this was what was needed to keep those provinces threatening schism within the fold.

In addition, **those who took part in or condoned human rights abuses or who vilified gays and lesbians, helping to foster self-hatred and violence by others, had acted unilaterally:** they had not sought consent or even advice when they set aside Scripture and Anglican consensus. Yet it was only those provinces which sought to act inclusively which were accused.

Moreover, whatever the rights or wrongs of TEC's decisions on this issue, the door had been opened: **if a large enough group of primates claimed that they were unquestionably right on any matter, and that they could not bear to be in communion with anyone who did not submit to their will, there was a strong possibility that they would get the Archbishop of Canterbury's backing.** Unless the most power-hungry or politically skilful were necessarily possessed of the mind of Christ on every question where they insisted that they knew best, **it would be harder than in the past for the Spirit of truth to guide the church into all truth.**²¹²

Though the Archbishop of Canterbury might have decided it was unhelpful to defend traditional Anglicanism too strongly (while from time to time making a theological case for a more traditionally Anglican approach), certain other primates stood firm. **In July 2006 the Archbishop of Cape Town called on the primates to uphold the ' broad rich heartlands of our Anglican heritage':**

Anglicanism is not a tradition that has operated through binary polarities and sharp distinctions - this versus that, in versus out, us versus them. Rather, Scriptures, creeds and historic formularies, together with the ordered sacramental life of worship, and with careful, prayerful reflection, provide the magnet that continually draws us toward the centre – one baptism, one church, one faith, and most of all one Lord “in whom all things hold together” (Cor 1:17).

It is because Jesus Christ, second person of the Trinity made flesh, is our goal, our end, our telos, the central focus and direction of our lives, that Anglicanism has found through the ages that we can afford to live with messiness, ambiguity and anomaly at the edges. Through that permeability many have found a warm invitation to come closer, and so to recognise and accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

Let no-one imagine that to speak of this Anglican middle ground implies a bland and mediocre faith. By no means! This is no shallow, casual approach.

The greatest Anglicans of past and present are characterised by radical holiness of life, an uncompromising dedication to prayer and Bible study, and tenacious pursuit of the truth as they wrestled with the issues of their day...

It is not easy to live with a spectrum of perspectives – it is challenging even when we are fully confident we are all firmly within the Anglican heartlands. But this wrestling together offers us the possibility of treasures that cannot be found in more monochrome approaches to faith.

...the degree of autonomy we enjoy in our Provinces has allowed hugely productive expressions of mature Christian faith appropriate to our regions of the world, and from which others have then learnt. As we are a church that is both episcopally led and synodically governed, they also provide effectively for full participation of clergy and laity alongside the episcopacy in deliberating and decision-making.

Thus it is the Provinces that have the final say – through their constitutional processes and the deliberations of their synods. This is ultimately where the future of Anglicanism lies...

God's gifts of tolerance, trust and charity have provided grace for that other aspect of Anglican style – the diversity found not least within our church walls on Sunday mornings.

Our liturgical wealth, historically rooted yet finding contemporary, contextual, expression, provides scope for the full celebration of word and sacrament in our worshipping life. High church, evangelical, charismatic, and more – each bring their own particular riches, while all resonate with something undeniably Anglican. Whether it is awe and adoration, gospel proclamation, faith re-energised, encultured expression – there is room for all and there is need for all.²¹³

The new puritans

In the September 2006 **Kigali Communique** the Global South grouping however was adamant that there was not room for all:

We believe that an Anglican Covenant will demonstrate to the world that it is possible to be a truly global communion where differences are not affirmed at the expense of faith and truth but within the framework of a common confession of faith and mutual accountability...

At the next meeting of the Primates in February 2007 some of us will not be able to recognize Katharine Jefferts Schori as a Primate at the table with us. Others will be in impaired communion with her as a representative of The Episcopal Church...

We are convinced that the time has now come to take initial steps towards the formation of what will be recognized as a separate ecclesiastical structure of the Anglican Communion in the USA...

We received 'The Road to Lambeth', a draft report commissioned by the Primates of the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA) which they have commended to their churches for study and response. It highlights the crisis that now confronts us as we consider the future of the Lambeth Conference. We commend this report for wider reflection.

The Road to Lambeth (which spuriously claimed to speak for African Anglicans as a whole) was **even more extreme in its rejection of the advice in the Gospels 'Do not judge, so that you may not be judged'**.²¹⁴

The Anglican Communion is at a crossroads. The idea of a crossroads – a meeting and parting of two ways – is woven into the fabric of Scripture. The people of Israel is confronted with the choice of ways – the way of the Covenant or the way of idolatry – and more often than not choose the latter (Jeremiah 6:16). So too Jesus describes a narrow road that leads to life and a broad avenue to perdition (Matthew 7:13). Hence the church must choose to walk in the light and turn from the darkness of sin and error (1 John 1:6-7)...

The African attitude toward the actions of the North American churches has been consistent throughout this crisis. It is based on several assumptions:

- the supreme authority of Scripture as the ultimate standard of faith and life (C-LQ 1);
- the clarity of the Church's teaching on 'the unchangeable Christian standard' of marriage between one man and one woman (Lambeth Resolution 66 [1920]);
- the practice of homosexuality as a sign of fallenness and a sin separating one from salvation (Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 5:3-5);
- the need for repentance by individuals who sin, even more so for those who teach sin as blessing (Matthew 5:19; 18:6); and
- the requirement that believers not associate with openly immoral church members (1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:14)...

We in CAPA want to say clearly and unequivocally to the rest of the Communion: the time has come for the North American churches to repent or depart. We in the Global South have always made

repentance the starting point for any reconciliation and resumption of fellowship in the Communion. We shall not accept cleverly worded excuses but rather a clear acknowledgement by these churches that they have erred and 'intend to lead a new life' in the Communion (2 Corinthians 4:2). Along with this open statement of repentance must come 'fruits befitting repentance' (Luke 3:8). They must reverse their policies and prune their personnel...

It grieves us to mention that the crisis is not limited to North America. The passage of the Civil Partnerships Act in England and the uncertain trumpet sounded by the English House of Bishops have made it unclear whether the mother Church of the Communion is fully committed to upholding the historic Christian norm... So far as we can see, the Archbishop of Canterbury as Primate of All England has failed to oppose this compromising position and hence cannot speak clearly to and for the whole Communion...

We Anglicans stand at a crossroads. One road, the road of compromise of biblical truth, leads to destruction and disunity. The other road has its own obstacles because it requires changes in the way the Communion has been governed and it challenges our churches to live up to and into their full maturity in Christ.²¹⁵

Centuries before, Anglican theologian Richard Hooker had criticised the Puritans, at that time highly influential, for their approach to theological difference. They appeared to be shocked by whatever fell short of their standards, giving others the impression that they themselves were extremely holy; they claimed that their own way of running the church would be the answer to current problems; they asserted Scriptural authority for their own opinions; they acted as if their faction only was illuminated by the Holy Spirit; and they set themselves apart from others, supposedly inferior to them.²¹⁶ Others' faults are 'ripped up with marvellous exceeding severity and sharpness of reproof', persuading their audience that they 'would never be so much offended at that which is evil, unless themselves were singularly good.' They 'propose their own form of church-government, as the only sovereign remedy of all evils', and read their own assumptions into the Bible: 'how plainly do they imagine that the Scripture every where speaketh in favour of that sect'? Their earnest belief that they are 'God's own' leads to 'high terms of separation between such and the rest of the world; whereby the one sort are named The brethren, The godly, and so forth; the other, worldlings, time-servers, pleasers of men not of God.'²¹⁷ **So-called traditionalists in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries often appeared to be promoting a form of puritanism rather than defending mainstream Anglican tradition.**

One of those who most forcefully rejected TEC's attempts at reconciliation was Archbishop Mpalanyi-Nkoyooyo of Uganda's successor, Henry Orombi²¹⁸, who in 2004 had claimed control of three Episcopal churches in Los Angeles where clergy were TEC rebels²¹⁹, then staked a claim to part of Virginia²²⁰ and sparked off further controversy in early 2006 by sending a bishop to carry out confirmations in Kentucky.²²¹ In December 2006 the House of Bishops of the Church of Uganda unanimously resolved to support *The Road to Lambeth*.²²² Archbishop Orombi had made it clear that he had no intention of listening to homosexuals or alternative views on the theology of sexuality, to the extent that he arraigned a retired bishop in Uganda who ministered to gays and lesbians and who suggested that the church should engage in listening.²²³ In 2006 he was stripped of his license,²²⁴ and he was reportedly warned that he would be denied a Christian burial.²²⁵

The church persisted in supporting society's homophobia towards, and state repression of, gays and lesbians.²²⁶ After same-sex marriage was made a criminal offence (gay sex was already punishable by imprisonment) and persecution of gays and lesbians intensified,²²⁷ the prime minister was invited to speak at the Provincial Assembly of the Church of the Province of Uganda, where he expressed appreciation for the churches' stance.²²⁸

'Love is an incredible feeling. It is not just the sex, though that is part of it. It is also the feeling of trust in another human being,' wrote a gay Ugandan. 'I cannot tell my parents. I cannot tell my

family. I cannot tell the rest of the village, my community. The Cardinal speaks out against my love, the Archbishop is ready to break with others of his church who affirm that I can love, Parliament has written into the constitution a prohibition to our companionship. It is possible for our community to lynch us for what we are, if they discover it... I see it, in part, like we are affirming our human-ness. In spite of those who would say we are less than human. We love, and loving each other, we face the world.²²⁹

Attempting a 'coup'?

A primates' meeting was held in Tanzania in February 2007, aimed at trying to resolve the tensions in the Anglican Communion. It was a province where, as in many others, opinion was divided. While the majority of bishops were strongly opposed to the actions of TEC, Bishop Mdimi Mhogolo of the Diocese of Central Tanganyika took a different approach, combining a traditional Anglican emphasis on God's graciousness and the importance of worship and loving service with the experience of a particular time and place:

Our salvation comes from God through Jesus Christ, the only one "full of grace and truth." It is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that draws us to God - the grace we receive unconditionally. As we received grace, we too try to live according to His grace and become gracious in holding the truth, in how we treat other people and as we relate with one another.

The grace of Jesus Christ has called us not only to renounce evil [the expression of the Mosaic Law] but more so to bear the fruit of the Spirit of God which is 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control.' Our new life is characterized not so much by avoiding or renouncing evil and sin, but by actively doing what is good - a reflection of our new life in Jesus Christ. As notorious sinners used to run to Jesus for help, the Church too should become a safe place of refuge, a gracious space where sinners come...

God receives our worship and renews us, comforts us and sends us into the world to live and worship God through lives of service and mission. Our lives become our daily offerings to God.

We are here not for ourselves, but for others. Our mission is to make God known in people's lives and to show them how God creates, upholds and nourishes each person. We try to express Jesus Christ in the sufferings and challenges of our communities. We cry with those who cry and bring hope for a better future to those who suffer. We share the sufferings and hurts with the people we serve and become a prayerful sign before God on behalf of them all. We also work for the hope of glory in trying to transform the lives of our people regardless of their colour, gender, religion, sexual orientation and social status...

We are an African Church that has come from Western Christian exploitation through slavery, colonialism and paternalism. We know how the Bible has been used in the past to terrorize our people, our cultures and the values we hold dear; questioning the dignity of our being and our faith in God, as though we were made a little less than in the image and likeness of God. We still know how the Bible is used selectively to affirm people's intrinsic understanding on the place of women in the society, the Church and Christian families; and Women's ministries and ordination, in the Church.

We value our freedom in Jesus Christ and protect it with all the power of the Holy Spirit. We will not relapse into being held captive again by anybody, even by a brother or sister in Christ...

We live in our cultural context where gay and lesbians are regarded as criminals punishable by long term imprisonments. We also live in a country where gay and lesbians are violently persecuted, mistreated, hated and ostracised. We as Black Africans know the hurts and permanent damage caused by our past experiences which still linger on to the present. We have gone through all that and we know how it hurts. Once we were regarded like animals to be shot at, less than humans, to be turned into slaves and without God, to be taught the Western Christian gods. We have gone through that and we don't want to go that way again.

We hold the Gospel of grace and love where all people are welcomed, loved, cared for and treated with dignity. We preach a Gospel of restoration, reconciliation, love, peace, grace and healing. Many

people are already feeling bad, hurt, disoriented, frustrated and bitter. We do not want to make life worse for them; instead we provide spaces for grace, love, and care to grow, and healing to take place for all...

The issue of homosexuality is not fundamental to the Christian faith, although many try to make it that way!²³⁰

Conflict over human sexuality reflected wider differences over the nature and purpose of the church which could not be resolved simply by the exercise of authority. Crushing dissent, scapegoating and humiliating or even expelling one or more provinces, might give a temporary sense of relief but would not make the underlying issues go away.

The first communion service at the primates' meeting was boycotted by several primates, though fewer than a previous gathering. Those who refused to share the eucharist, who included Archbishops Akinola, Chew and Orombi, claimed that:

Scripture teaches that before coming to sit with one another at the Lord's Table we must be reconciled. (Matthew 5:23-26 and 1 Corinthians 11:27-29) We have made repeated calls for repentance by The Episcopal Church and its leadership with no success. We continue to pray for a change of heart.

We are unable to come to the Holy Table with the Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church because to do so would be a violation of Scriptural teaching and the traditional Anglican understanding, "Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways; Draw near with faith" (Book of Common Prayer).

Once again, a radical interpretation of the usual Anglican practice and misreading of the Bible were being presented as if these were orthodox and a defence of Scripture and tradition. In much of the Communion at least, worshippers had approached the Lord's table humbly searching their own consciences, not reflecting on the real or perceived wrong beliefs and practices of their neighbours, and whether they themselves were too holy to associate with such sinners.

Matthew 5:21-26 actually read, 'You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, "You shall not murder"; and "whoever murders shall be liable to judgment." But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.'²³¹ Perhaps it was more appropriate than the boycotters realised.

For a while it seemed that a spirit of moderation might prevail. A sub-group reported that 'It is clear to this group that in the period following the Dromantine meeting, the Episcopal Church took the Windsor Report and the recommendations adopted by the Primates extremely seriously', and 'The response of the 75th General Convention to the Windsor Report as a whole in its resolutions was positive', though it remained to be seen how this would be put into practice. In contrast, 'We have to express our concern that other recommendations of the Windsor Report, addressed to other parts of the Communion, appear to have been ignored so far.'²³² Almost all primates attended a communion service on Sunday, where Archbishop Williams pleaded for humility: 'There is one thing that a bishop should say to another bishop, That I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great saviour.'²³³ It seemed as if TEC's humiliating

and morally questionable compromises might have secured unity of sorts while ongoing discussion might continue on sexuality issues.

But the refusal of some hardliners to moderate their stance won out, though they did not succeed on getting TEC immediately expelled. Their power was based on the grudging support of more moderate archbishops who were willing to go along with their demands, in the hope of maintaining surface unity in a church preserving some of the trappings of Anglicanism, whatever principles and values had to be abandoned.

The final Communiqué was an exercise in rewriting history to make TEC out to be the villain of the piece (while conveying a threat to any other provinces which did not submit to the will of the hardliners). Supposedly:

The Windsor Report identified two threats to our common life: first, certain developments in the life and ministry of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada which challenged the standard of teaching on human sexuality articulated in the 1998 Lambeth Resolution 1.10; and second, interventions in the life of those Provinces which arose as reactions to the urgent pastoral needs that certain primates perceived. The Windsor Report did not see a “moral equivalence” between these events, since the cross-boundary interventions arose from a deep concern for the welfare of Anglicans in the face of innovation. Nevertheless both innovation and intervention are central factors placing strains on our common life...

What has been quite clear throughout this period is that the 1998 Lambeth Resolution 1.10 is the standard of teaching which is presupposed in the Windsor Report and from which the primates have worked... The Primates have reaffirmed this teaching in all their recent meetings, and indicated how a change in the formal teaching of any one Province would indicate a departure from the standard upheld by the Communion as a whole...

The response of The Episcopal Church to the requests made at Dromantine has not persuaded this meeting that we are yet in a position to recognise that The Episcopal Church has mended its broken relationships.

...a significant number of bishops, clergy and lay people in The Episcopal Church are committed to the proposals of the Windsor Report and the standard of teaching presupposed in it... We are deeply concerned that so great has been the estrangement between some of the faithful and The Episcopal Church that this has led to recrimination, hostility and even to disputes in the civil courts...

We believe that the establishment of a Covenant for the Churches of the Anglican Communion in the longer term may lead to the trust required to re-establish our interdependent life. By making explicit what Anglicans mean by the “bonds of affection” and securing the commitment of each Province to those bonds, the structures of our common life can be articulated and enhanced... However, an interim response is required in the period until the Covenant is secured.²³⁴

The Communiqué made it clear that TEC alone – if it wished to be sure of not being suspended or expelled – would be subjected to strict conditions unlike those ever imposed on a province, and which were practically certain to drive a wedge between senior clergy and those they supposedly served. TEC bishops were asked to agree by the end of September not to authorise same-sex union liturgies, or consecrate as a bishop anyone in such a union, until these measures gain approval across the Communion. Another demand was that an international committee appoint a primatial vicar for bishops not wanting to be accountable to TEC’s elected leadership, in such a hurry that even TEC bishops would barely have time to discuss it among themselves, let alone with other clergy and laypeople.

A draft Covenant was also unveiled²³⁵ which, while not mentioning sexuality explicitly, took forward some of what was urged in the 1997 Dallas Statement as well as the 2001 proposals in *To mend the net*, giving much greater power to the primates; provincial autonomy would be much reduced. Francis H Wade has used the phrase *coup d’eglise* –

similar to a *coup d'état* in the church – to describe ‘the lightning ascendancy of the primates of the Anglican Communion. From their first meeting in 1979 to their asserted role in the proposed Anglican Covenant, the group has moved from non-existence to centrality. This may or may not be what the Anglican Communion needs; it may or may not be what every devoted Anglican wants; it may or may not be the leading of the Holy Spirit; but we should all know that it is happening.’²³⁶

Much has been written about the risks of abandoning traditional Anglicanism. For instance, Professor Carolyn J Sharp suggested that ‘The Baptismal Covenant, the Creeds, and the Eucharistic liturgies we use have all been developed with extraordinary care over the centuries and are sufficient as the “fundamentals” that bind us together officially. To suggest that we need another covenantal authority beyond those is not only to innovate in an undesirable way regarding the central characteristic of Anglicanism. It is also to dishonour, however unwittingly, those ancient and great instruments of unity.’²³⁷ TW Bartel of Inclusive Church pointed out that ‘One of the chief responsibilities of Christian communion is intellectual humility. That virtue is not just a means to fulfilling the Church’s mission in the world: it is an essential constituent of the ideal of human character displayed to perfection in Jesus Christ, an ideal that the Church herself must embody if she is to convince the world to imitate Christ’s example. This means that the traditional Anglican respect for diversity in doctrines, interpretations and ways of life, far from being an obstacle to the mission of the Anglican Communion, is absolutely central to it.’²³⁸

While Archbishop Akinola and his closest associates may have been disappointed not to get quite as much as they wanted, Archbishop Orombi was openly triumphant: ‘It was the most intense meeting I have ever attended. Even until the last night of our meeting, we were in a deadlock. But, the Lord has prevailed. Biblical authority is being restored, and from that, we are hopeful that Biblical mission will be the result.’²³⁹

Not all primates were so happy. In a sermon at the beginning of Lent, focusing on the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-collector (Luke 18.9-14), Archbishop Carlos Touche-Porter of Mexico said:

It is difficult for us to imagine Jesus as being abusive towards anyone, but even so, some of the language he uses on the Pharisees is anything but gentle.

I believe that the reason for this is what today's Gospel calls being ‘self-righteous, self justified’. It refers to those who presume to define their own worth - those who believe that they can make themselves valuable and good, literally, those who try to save themselves by what they accomplish. In Holy Scripture, the ‘self-righteous’ is the person who really has no need for the help of others, and, ultimately, not even of God...

It is very easy for religious people to fall into kind of self-righteousness. Our very enthusiasm and practice can plant the seeds of religious arrogance. We discover what commitment demands of us, we experience relative success in our endeavours to be faithful, we distance ourselves from what we think might threaten our resolve, and then we pass judgement on those who do not share our values or experience life as we do...

It is so easy for a tax collector to become one of the Pharisees, and to forget that, one day, we claimed and received God's mercy. That same mercy we now deny others.

I believe that this is what's behind our current problems in the Anglican Communion: many of the tax collectors of yesterday have become the Pharisees of today. They want today's tax collectors excluded from the family of God and from the Lord's table. They now deny others the same mercy and grace that was so freely given to them yesterday.

The faithful are being required not to associate with openly immoral church members (whatever that means), and I am afraid that the same is being required of Jesus; who, according to the Gospels, did exactly that; not one or seven times but seventy times seven. And recently, one province of our

Communion has been brought to trial for trying to practice justice and inclusion for all; with actions, not words.²⁴⁰

Archbishop Ndungane later commented:

One touchstone of Anglicanism has been the involvement of laity in the governing of the Church. We are not ruled from above by a Pope and a Curia of Bishops. Rather, we believe that God's Spirit is at work in all God's people to build up the whole Body of Christ. Paul tells the Corinthian church 'to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good' (1 Cor12:7), For this reason, we describe ourselves as 'both episcopally led and synodically governed'. In our synods, all God's people are represented – Bishops, clergy and laity...

Yet it seems that centre stage is increasingly being given to the Primates – and I very much regret this...

At the Archbishop of Canterbury's behest, the Joint Standing Commission of the Primates and the ACC set up a sub-group, which reflected the full span of perspectives, to report to the Primates in Dar es-Salaam on the American response to Windsor. They judged that the report had been taken very seriously, and that overall the response was positive. They noted that in some areas the General Convention had gone beyond what had been asked by Windsor. They also acknowledged that in other areas the General Convention had not followed the exact letter of Windsor where that did not reflect the internal structures and legal framework, but had instead operated within its own polity to reflect the spirit of Windsor.

Well, as you know, that was not the position that was reflected in the final communique. Nor were the internal structures and workings of the Episcopal Church taken into consideration in the new set of demands being made of the Americans (and let us be clear here – though the Primates' meeting legally remains only advisory, these effectively are demands).

Whatever the merits of the various positions on human sexuality, my greatest sadness is that we have allowed ourselves, within the Primates' meeting in particular, to lose sight of what it means to live in Communion...

I will be honest and say that beyond my continuing question of whether a Covenant is really the best way ahead, my serious concern with the current draft is that the ACC is being sidelined, and far too much power is being given to the Primates' Meeting.

I fear we are in danger of setting up something akin to the Roman Curia...

God's eternal Word did not come as a philosophical concept, nor as a political programme. Nor was the Word made text. But the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth.

It is not where we stand on this or that particular issue which is definitive for our salvation – nor even our understanding of this or that passage of Scripture. What matters is our relationship with Jesus Christ, who gave his life for us on the cross, and who was raised to new life, so that we too might find new life in him.²⁴¹

Upholding the Reformation heritage and proclaiming the Gospel

In response to the request of hardliners such as the Bishop of San Joaquin for alternative primatial oversight, TEC's Presiding Bishop had proposed in November 2006 that, in consultation with the Archbishop of Canterbury, a primatial vicar could be appointed who would stand in for her, so that in effect large parts of TEC could operate outside the usual leadership structures.²⁴² This was an extraordinary move, since in other provinces dissidents just had to put up with whoever was in charge at the time. However the proposal had been turned down by the Primates' meeting, in favour of a system that would profoundly violate not only TEC's own structures but also the Anglican tradition of provincial autonomy.

It was not as if hardliners were not already permitted the freedom to engage in practices about which more conventional members of TEC might be profoundly uncomfortable. For example, the Dean of San Joaquin Cathedral reported on the diocesan weblog on the visit to the Cathedral in February 2007 by 'Prophet' Dennis Cramer:

Dennis began to minister as he called upon various people and gave them a 'word from the Lord.' Each person I talked to was astounded by the presence of the Lord and the amazing accuracy of these words, at least as they described people's hearts, current ministries, or circumstances. Most of these prophecies also had a future or directional content as to how the Lord was going to use that person or couple in the future...

Dennis even prophesied over several unbelievers whose experience was like that described by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 14 'they will declare that God is certainly in your midst!' True prophecy is an expression of God's Evangelical love...

Dennis, in an indirect way, has birthed in my congregation a healthy ministry of prophecy. During a recent parish gathering at 6:00 AM on a Thursday morning, it was remarked, 'When Dennis comes back this time after two years, his ministry is not going to seem strange to us at all! We are experiencing something like what he does on a weekly basis!' This is because our faith has been raised to believe God wants to speak to His people as described in the New Testament and witnessed in the Early Church of the first several centuries.

In short, I do believe this is one of the components of the catholic church of the apostolic age that the Holy Spirit is restoring to the Church of Christ.²⁴³

This was indeed unusual for an Anglican cathedral, though perhaps less extraordinary than the theology of the 'Endtimes' sermons delivered in Singapore's St Andrew's Cathedral the previous year.²⁴⁴ Worldwide (ironically in the guise of preserving 'tradition' and 'orthodoxy'), Anglicanism was being transformed into something far removed from its recent as well as more distant past, with less debate than might have been expected.

When the TEC bishops met in March 2007, Archbishop Orombi was in Los Angeles conducting confirmations without the consent of the diocesan bishop, as of he and his associates already possessed papal authority over the whole Anglican communion. This strengthened their resolve to take a stance against the abandonment of long-held Anglican principles.

Though the TEC bishops affirmed 'the deep longing of our hearts for The Episcopal Church to continue as a part of the Anglican Communion', they refused to recommend a scheme to the Executive Council which would in effect break up TEC. They had gone to great lengths to try to reach agreement, but the lack of reasonableness in the behaviour of the Primates made this near-impossible:

Since our General Convention of 2003, we have responded in good faith to the requests we have received from our Anglican partners... Our Executive Council voluntarily acceded to the request of the Primates for our delegates not to attend the 2005 meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in Nottingham...

At the meeting of our House of Bishops at Camp Allen, Texas in March, 2004 we adopted a proposal called Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight as a means for meeting the pastoral needs of those within our Church who disagreed with actions of the General Convention. Our plan received a favorable response in the Windsor Report. It was not accepted by the Primates. At our meeting in March 2005, we adopted a Covenant Statement as an interim response to the Windsor Report in an attempt to assure the rest of the Communion that we were taking them seriously and, at some significant cost, refused to consecrate any additional bishops whatsoever as a way that we could be true to our own convictions without running the risk of consecrating some that would offend our brothers and sisters. Our response was not accepted by the Primates. Our General Convention in 2006 struggled mightily and at great cost to many, not the least of whom are our gay and lesbian

members, to respond favorably to the requests made of us in the Windsor Report and the Primates' Dromantine Communiqué of 2005. We received a favorable response from the Joint Standing Committee of the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates, which found that our effort had substantially met the concerns of the Windsor Report with the need to clarify our position on the blessing of same sex relationships. Still, our efforts were not accepted by the Primates in the Dar es Salaam Communiqué.

Other Anglican bishops, indeed including some Primates, have violated our provincial boundaries and caused great suffering and contributed immeasurably to our difficulties in solving our problems and in attempting to communicate for ourselves with our Anglican brothers and sisters. We have been repeatedly assured that boundary violations are inappropriate under the most ancient authorities and should cease. The Lambeth Conferences of 1988 and 1998 did so. The Windsor Report did so. The Dromantine Communiqué did so. None of these assurances has been heeded. The Dar es Salaam Communiqué affirms the principle that boundary violations are impermissible, but then sets conditions for ending those violations, conditions that are simply impossible for us to meet without calling a special meeting of our General Convention.

It is incumbent upon us as disciples to do our best to follow Jesus in the increasing experience of the leading of the Holy Spirit. We fully understand that others in the Communion believe the same, but we do not believe that Jesus leads us to break our relationships. We proclaim the Gospel of what God has done and is doing in Christ, of the dignity of every human being, and of justice, compassion, and peace. We proclaim the Gospel that in Christ there is no Jew or Greek, no male or female, no slave or free. We proclaim the Gospel that in Christ all God's children, including women, are full and equal participants in the life of Christ's Church. We proclaim the Gospel that in Christ all God's children, including gay and lesbian persons, are full and equal participants in the life of Christ's Church. We proclaim the Gospel that stands against any violence, including violence done to women and children as well as those who are persecuted because of their differences, often in the name of God. The Dar es Salaam Communiqué is distressingly silent on this subject. And, contrary to the way the Anglican Communion Network and the American Anglican Council have represented us, we proclaim a Gospel that welcomes diversity of thought and encourages free and open theological debate as a way of seeking God's truth. If that means that others reject us and communion with us, as some have already done, we must with great regret and sorrow accept their decision.

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

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

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

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

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

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

At the same time, we understand that the present situation requires intentional care for those within our Church who find themselves in conscientious disagreement with the actions of our General Convention. We pledge ourselves to continue to work with them toward a workable arrangement.²⁴⁵

But **the hardliners had no interest in a workable solution. They were out to win.** As a memo to the primates and bishops of the US-based Ekklesia Society (no connection with the UK-based website) on Alternative Episcopal Oversight (AEO) had put it in March 2004, 'There have been occasional incidences where a priest and a congregation have been "picked up" by an "offshore" bishop and diocese... After several conversations with Bill Atwood of Ekklesia, John Guernsey, Martyn Minns, and some clergy seeking "offshore" AEO, this proposal is being submitted as a draft for consideration of a process and protocol for establishing Overseas AEO as an interim stage on the way towards the realignment of Anglicanism in North America and the re-establishment of biblically orthodox faith as normative in North American Anglicanism'. By the middle of the year, Archbishop Akinola of Nigeria had visited Virginia to install Martyn Minns as a 'missionary bishop',²⁴⁶ Archbishop Orombi of Uganda had announced that he would consecrate John Guernsey to serve as a bishop in the USA²⁴⁷ and Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi, Primate of Kenya, has declared that Bill Atwood would be consecrated as a suffragan bishop also to oversee congregations in the USA.²⁴⁸

Willingness to listen

In March 2007, when the Archbishop of Uganda was making his mark in the USA, a young Ugandan lesbian was also making the headlines there, as she desperately sought asylum. The persecution she had experienced included a mob attack, after which she was hospitalised, and a rape arranged by two of her own relatives.²⁴⁹ There was also much negative publicity internationally about the proposed change in Nigerian law which could victimise not only lesbians and gays but also anyone presenting same-sex relationships in a positive light.²⁵⁰ Archbishop Akinola's promotion of harsh repression came into the limelight.²⁵¹

That month, too, the **results of the listening process to date** were published.²⁵² The Anglican Communion Office had put considerable work into finding out what work each province had done on human sexuality and agreeing a summary of this to appear on the ACO website. Given that listening to the experience of homosexual persons had been part of Lambeth 1.10, the resolution which TEC had been so widely denounced for failing to comply with, and that two previous resolutions had addressed the issue, it might have been expected that there would be much to report.

As might be expected from other accounts such as *Other Voices, Other Worlds*, **in many provinces there had been at least some serious attempt to listen and to act on what had been heard. Elsewhere, however, leaders appeared to have gone to considerable lengths to demonstrate their refusal to abide by Lambeth 1.10 or any other resolution, and their general rejection of the Anglican heritage of study and reflection.** They seemed convinced that, possessing all truth, their role was only to teach, and they had nothing to learn by listening to lesbians and gays, their parents and godparents, natural and social scientists, Old and New Testament scholars and other theologians whose perspective was different from their own.

The Primate of Nigeria affirmed his view that homosexuals are 'deviants', that 'it is a blatant lie against Almighty God that homosexuality is their God-given urge and inclination. For us, it is better seen as an acquired aberration' and acknowledged church support for the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act.²⁵³ The Primate of South East Asia gave no response, maintaining the provincial boycott of a process of study earlier denounced as satanic.²⁵⁴ The declaration from the Southern Cone was richly ironic, given that its leaders had spent so much time and energy interfering in other provinces largely around this issue: apparently 'The Province is small with few resources and does not have the time to do all things and has needed to set its own priorities and agendas rather than ones that seem to have been manufactured for them' and it

had 'heard the cries of members of the Communion who have been pastorally abused by those who foist a sexual political agenda upon them.'²⁵⁵

In late March 2007, the Archbishop of Canterbury stated that:

The commitments of the Communion are not only to certain theological positions on the question of sexual ethics but also to a manifest and credible respect for the proper liberties of homosexual people, a commitment again set out in successive Lambeth Conference Resolutions over many decades. I share the concerns expressed about situations where the Church is seen to be underwriting social or legal attitudes which threaten these proper liberties. It is impossible to read this report without being aware that in many places – including Western countries with supposedly "liberal" attitudes – hate crimes against homosexual people have increased in recent years and have taken horrifying and disturbing forms.

No-one reading this report can be complacent about such a situation, and the Church is challenged to show that it is truly a safe place for people to be honest and where they may be confident that they will have their human dignity respected, whatever serious disagreements about ethics may remain.²⁵⁶

It was widely thought that he was referring to Nigeria, but he was careful to avoid any mention of provinces by name. Evidently, **in international Anglican circles, attempting to treat all people as equal was a far worse offence than promoting persecution of a minority.** And shortly afterwards, in a trip to Singapore, where church leaders were keen to make sure that gay relationships remained a criminal offence and that lesbians too could be locked up, Archbishop Williams reportedly told an interviewer that 'I think that the church's willingness to hold together an evangelistic and social ministry here is very important. The church is showing that it is an agent for social healing, not just for individual conversion.'²⁵⁷

However it was a welcome development for him to acknowledge that provinces other than TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada had not acted in line with Lambeth resolutions. The rewriting of history had been so thorough that many in and outside the church had come to believe the claim by hardliners that they were seeking to make sure that no province acted unilaterally.

The draft Covenant included a pledge by member churches 'to spend time with openness and patience in matters of theological debate and discernment to listen and to study with one another in order to comprehend the will of God'. But the persistent refusal of many leaders to engage in serious study and listening on this matter, and of supposed moderates to hold them to account, suggested that double standards would be applied if the Covenant was in force.

Many human relationships include an element of give and take, where humility and willingness to compromise on the part of a person or community is matched by the other. However, to the hardliners, whatever was offered to them seemed to be regarded as no more than their due as God's representatives on earth, while any challenge to their authority was met with indignation. While they did not claim to be incapable of sin, it seemed impossible to them that they might be mistaken, and 'mutual accountability' was about obedience to the standards they set.

In May 2007 **a gathering of the Global Centre, bringing together a number of bishops and archbishops from Latin America and the Caribbean, issued a declaration calling on the Anglican Communion 'to preserve its participative nature, diverse, ample and inclusive, characteristics which we consider essential to Anglicanism and at the same time our contribution to the Christian tradition.'** They pointed out that they themselves held different positions on the matters being debated in the Communion but that **'the plurality and diversity we represent has become a rich source for growth, rather than a cause for controversy and division,'** and quoted John 13.35, **'By this all men would now that you are my disciples, if you love one another.'**²⁵⁸

Business as usual?

Also in May 2007, the Archbishop of Canterbury **issued invitations to Lambeth 2008**. A handful of bishops were left off the list, most prominently the irregularly consecrated Martyn Minns, Chuck Murphy and John Rodgers and the properly appointed but controversial Gene Robinson. It was perhaps unfortunate, in view of the listening process, that the only openly partnered gay bishop – indeed one of a tiny minority of ‘out’ gay bishops – was excluded, though it was hinted that he might be invited as a guest.²⁵⁹ The majority of TEC bishops were permitted to attend, provided they were willing to do so in the absence of Bishop Robinson (and that their invitations were not later withdrawn, though this seemed unlikely). The notorious Bishop of Zimbabwe, whose trial in a church court for misdeeds including incitement to murder had been blocked, was also not invited.

Archbishop Williams’ strategy appeared to be to exclude those perceived as extreme or a focus for controversy, introduce a covenant which would extend the authority of senior clergy beyond their own dioceses and provinces and work for a gradual broadening of minds. This could also make unity with more authoritarian churches easier: while it might be desirable to communicate on important matters with laypersons and parish clergy scattered in congregations across the world, ultimately decisions could be made by a small central group. If Anglicans in the USA and Canada could be more patient and discreet, their bishops rein in any tendency to act openly in ways that might upset hardliners, a kind of peace and outward unity could perhaps be achieved.

Quite apart from the impact on gays and lesbians and their families, and the loss of credibility for the church and its teaching among those put off by injustice, this strategy perhaps underestimated the determination of hardliners, and the effects of rewarding this as long as ecclesiastical protocol was not too blatantly breached. For example, some believe that penal substitutionary atonement and the damnation of all non-Christians are fundamental Christian doctrines,²⁶⁰ though these are hotly disputed by many others, not least on Biblical grounds. What would happen if certain primates insisted that these were essential to the ‘faith which is uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures’ and failure to agree threatened ‘the unity of the Communion’, to use the language of the Covenant?

The Global South is preparing a theological framework of an Anglican Catechism for the worldwide Communion, to be ready by June 2008.²⁶¹ There is a strong possibility that, if the Covenant is in place, the new Catechism will be used to define ‘the catholic and apostolic faith, order and tradition, biblically derived moral values and the vision of humanity received by and developed in the communion of member Churches’, deviating from which will result in ‘mutual admonition and counsel’ and, if this fails, ‘guidance and direction’ by the Primates? What will happen if any diocese or province disagrees with any aspect?

Meanwhile, **the pastoral issues and implications for mission throughout the world had not gone away.** In mid-2007, a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered pride rally in Moscow, Russia, was attacked by far-right thugs allied with hardline Christians; the police did not protect the victims, and indeed arrested some of them.²⁶² Sao Paolo Pride was a more joyful occasion, bringing an estimated three million people on to the streets to celebrate human diversity and love.²⁶³ In Britain, a survey showed that more than four-fifths of all people (and of people of faith) believed that it was right to give gays and lesbians legal protection against discrimination as service users and customers, while believing that more needed to be done to counter homophobia; most people thought that religious attitudes were a cause of prejudice, but 64% of people of faith said they would be comfortable if their religious representative was gay.²⁶⁴ A study of British secondary school students revealed that 65% of lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils had experienced homophobic bullying (75% in faith schools).²⁶⁵

Hundreds of people attended the funeral of gay twenty-year old Sean Kennedy, who had been attacked and killed in May 2007 in South Carolina, USA. His grieving mother described him as

'just a giver. No matter what you needed, you didn't even have to ask', and quoted from a poem he had written before his death: 'I stand tall with all of my pride. You hate. You discriminate all who are not like you. Yes, your words do hurt. But I stand in the end.'²⁶⁶

7 Conclusion

It is **possible to exaggerate the hardships experienced by TEC. This would be unhelpful.** A sense of victimhood is seldom healthy, and any suffering undergone by Anglicans in that province should be seen in context. Lesbians and gays in vulnerable situations, especially those facing harsh repression or violent assault as well as the hostility of religious leaders, are generally far worse off than worshippers in supportive parishes, where God's generous love could be celebrated in the context of a caring and welcoming Christian community. It can also be argued that those in TEC are fortunate compared to those Anglicans who have been taught that it is acceptable to despise and seek to harm their fellow-humans, with no warning of the spiritual consequences. And, like all institutions and communities, TEC has shortcomings, which have played a part in the problems it faces. What is more, there are many kinds of injustice in the world which need to be challenged.

Nevertheless it should be acknowledged that **TEC has been treated unjustly**, and that this has affected the life and witness of the Anglican Communion as a whole. The harshness of its treatment has been out of proportion to any mistakes it may have committed.

TEC has been accused of acting in ways contrary to the clear teaching of the Bible by being more accepting than most provinces of lesbians and gays, including those in loving partnerships. However, many eminent theologians – Anglican and from other denominations, and including Old Testament and New Testament scholars – now believe that lesbian and gay relationships are not always wrong, and many of those Anglicans who have been able to hear arguments for and against this position have come to share this view.

Yet many who criticise TEC have failed to challenge those in other provinces who have behaved in ways which are more obviously contrary to Scripture. Nigerian bishops, for instance, have failed to act in line with Biblical teaching on neighbourly love and justice, including 'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you', 'Do not judge, so that you may not be judged', 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' and 'Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.' Instead, they have used language which has promoted hostility and contempt – for example claims that 'As we are rightly concerned by the depletion of the ozone layer, so should we be concerned by the practice of homosexuality' and that 'both the apostles and disciples of this movement of those who have passion and lust for same sex union are perverts' – and have sought the imprisonment of gays and lesbians, along with those working for greater understanding and acceptance.

Again, **TEC has been condemned for failing to comply with the Windsor Report, and Resolution 1.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference (LC) dealing with human sexuality. Yet neither of these is authoritative.** What is more, with regard to the Windsor Report, a sub-group reported in 2007 that 'The response of the 75th General Convention to the Windsor Report as a whole in its resolutions was positive'. In contrast, Nigerian and other bishops have failed to 'express regret for the consequences' of intervening in other provinces, to 'effect a moratorium on any further interventions' and to 'seek an accommodation with the bishops of the dioceses whose parishes they have taken into their own care'; to participate in the listening process; to avoid 'any demonising of homosexual persons, or their ill treatment', as 'totally against Christian charity and basic principles of pastoral care'; to acknowledge that Jesus' 'authority is given, not to the books that his followers will write, but to himself'; and to uphold the responsibility of the Church 'not to reject new proposals out of hand, but to listen carefully, to test everything, and to be prepared to change its mind if and when a convincing case is made'. **Whatever the weaknesses of the Windsor Report, TEC has been far more Windsor-compliant than the Anglican Church of Nigeria and many others.**

With regard to Resolution 1.10, TEC's actions have indeed not been in accord with 'rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture' and being unable to 'advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions'. But it is not the only province to fail to abide by this resolution. **Nigerian bishops, for example, have failed to take account of 'the subsection report on human sexuality', which recognised the variety of views on the issue; 'to listen to the experience of homosexual persons'; and 'to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals'. Yet they, and leaders in other provinces who have done the same, have not been penalised or threatened for not complying with Resolution 1.10.**

What is more, **TEC had long delayed fully addressing the pastoral needs of its own members, and the requirements for effective local mission and ministry, while international study and dialogue was supposedly going on; but many provinces were unwilling to engage. It had become increasingly difficult to persuade members to carry on waiting indefinitely, especially since many felt that they were failing to act on their baptismal promise to seek and serve Christ in all people, love their neighbour as themselves, strive for justice and respect the dignity of every human being, and were resisting the prompting of the Holy Spirit.** In the circumstances, its actions were reasonable.

The Theological Education working group of the Anglican Peace and Justice Network of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) later highlighted 'the Churches commitment to continue with the "theological study of sexuality in such a way as to relate sexual relationships to that wholeness of human life which itself derives from God..." (Lambeth 1978 Resolution 10)' and 'the 1988 Lambeth Resolution 64 which called all provinces to undertake, "deep and dispassionate study of the question of homosexuality, which would take seriously both the teaching of scripture and the results of scientific and medical research"', declaring that 'We do not believe the Church universal honoured its commitment to undertake such intentional and necessary studies.' **If TEC acted unilaterally, this was the result of a repeated failure by leaders of other provinces to act on LC resolutions on human sexuality, and in some cases their contemptuous or hostile dismissal of any notion that they should do so.**

Moreover, on issues of human sexuality, the official Anglican position has changed dramatically within living memory, and it was a reasonable expectation that there would be ongoing change in this area, taking into account the weight of scholarship over the past half-century. However there were several themes on which international consensus had appeared to arise, reflected in a number of LC and ACC resolutions. TEC acted in accord with these, striving to promote respect for the dignity of all people, including the disadvantaged; to undertake and encourage thoughtful study of the Bible; to appreciate advances in science and make use of these to increase knowledge and reduce suffering; and to uphold catholicity based on acceptance of provincial autonomy and diversity.

In contrast, **Nigerian leaders:**

- 1) by undertaking the crossing of diocesan and provincial boundaries, failed to respect 'the duly certified action of every national or particular Church, and of each ecclesiastical province (or diocese not included in a province), in the exercise of its own discipline', and to recognise 'that when a diocese, or territorial sphere of administration, has been constituted by the authority of any Church or province of this Communion within its own limits, no bishop or other clergyman of any other Church should exercise his functions within that diocese without the consent of the bishop thereof' (LC 1878);**
- 2) failed to 'respect and maintain the spiritual rights and privileges of the Church of England, and of all Churches in communion with her' (LC 1897);**

- 3) failed to abide by 'the principle of the autonomy of particular Churches based upon a common faith and order' (LC 1930); and
- 4) undermined 'the historical position of respect for diocesan boundaries and the authority of bishops within these boundaries' (LC 1988);
- 5) by treating laypersons in their own province in an authoritarian manner, especially those seeking a more just and informed response to issues of human sexuality, and by undermining decision-making processes in other provinces in which laypersons were meaningfully involved, did not adequately respect the involvement of the laity 'side by side with the ministry of the clergy, in the work, the administration, and the discipline of the Church' (LC 1908);
- 6) failed to enable every member of the church to 'be a channel through which the divine life flows for the quickening of all mankind' (LC 1930);
- 7) made it more difficult for 'the laity, as baptized members of the Body of Christ,' to 'share in the priestly ministry of the Church and in responsibility for its work' (LC 1958);
- 8) sought to ensure that major issues were 'decided without the full participation of the laity in discussion and in decision' (LC 1968);
- 9) did not adequately 'explore the theology of baptism and confirmation in relation to the need to commission the laity for their task in the world' (LC 1968, interpreted especially in the light of the Virginia Report);
- 10) did not adequately promote the involvement of young people in decision-making, drawing on 'the intensified interest of young people in human welfare' and 'the value of their informed insights' (LC 1968, especially in the light of the 1997 report of the International Anglican Youth Network);
- 11) adopted a shared style of ministry based on recognition 'that God through the Holy Spirit is bringing about a revolution in terms of the total ministry of all the baptized' (LC 1988);
- 12) in their approach to theological study and use of the Bible, failed adequately to fulfil 'the duty of thinking and learning' (LC 1930);
- 13) failed adequately to recognise that it 'is no part of the purpose of the Scriptures to give information on those themes which are the proper subject matter of scientific enquiry, nor is the Bible a collection of separate oracles, each containing a final declaration of truth', that Christ is 'the criterion of all revelation', and that 'ideas concerning the character of God which are inconsistent with the character of Jesus Christ' should be banished, nor been fully open to the work of the Holy Spirit, who 'has in every generation inspired and guided those who seek truth' (LC 1930);
- 14) obstructed corporate worship among Anglicans with different views, through which they might deepen their understanding and love of God and thus be drawn closer together (LC 1930);
- 15) failed fully to recognise that 'our Lord Jesus Christ is God's final Word to man, and that in his light all Holy Scripture must be seen and interpreted' (LC 1958);
- 16) refused to acknowledge the Church's 'debt to the host of devoted scholars who, worshipping the God of Truth, have enriched and deepened our understanding of the Bible, not least by facing with intellectual integrity the questions raised by modern knowledge and modern criticism' (LC 1958);

- 17) failed to welcome 'the increasing extent of human knowledge' and 'the searching enquiries of the theologians' and encourage 'faith in the living God which is adventurous, expectant, calm, and confident' (LC 1968);
- 18) undermined 'respect for freedom of inquiry' (LC 1968);
- 19) did not ensure that Bible reading is 'accompanied by appropriate study of scholarly background material so that the Scripture is understood in its proper context', nor sought 'ways to identify with those who suffer' and get 'involved personally in efforts to bring them justice' (LC 1978);
- 20) with regard to the natural and social sciences, failed to 'recognize in the modern discoveries of science - whereby the boundaries of knowledge are extended, the needs of men are satisfied and their sufferings alleviated - veritable gifts of God (LC 1930); and
- 21) discouraged Christians from learning 'reverently from every new disclosure of truth' (LC 1958);
- 22) in promoting hostility to and persecution of lesbians, gays and those seeking greater understanding and acceptance of them, failed to remember 'our Master's example in proclaiming the inestimable value of every human being in the sight of God' and strive 'to procure just treatment for all' (LC 1908);
- 23) failed to take into account that 'both the recognition of the responsibility of the individual to God and the development of his personality are gravely imperilled by any claim made either by the state or by any group within the state to control the whole of human life' (LC 1948);
- 24) did not uphold the UN 'Covenant on Human Rights' (LC 1948);
- 25) inadequately addressed 'the effect on human life of the responsible and irresponsible use of power at all levels of human society' (LC 1968);
- 26) were unwilling 'to be sensitive to the violent dehumanization of minority peoples' and 'acknowledge the Church's vocation to side with the oppressed in empowering them to live their own lives in freedom, even at some sacrifice to itself, while at the same time seeking in the power of Christian love to bring about the true liberation of the oppressor' (ACC 1973);
- 27) failed to encourage governments consistently 'to uphold human dignity; to defend human rights, including the exercise of freedom of speech, movement, and worship in accordance with the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights', or 'to lend their support to those who struggle for human freedom and who press forward in some places at great personal and corporate risk' (LC 1978);
- 28) failed to 'condemn the subjection, intimidation, and manipulation of people by the use of violence and the threat of violence' and to encourage Christians 'to re-examine as a matter of urgency their own attitude towards, and the complicity with, violence in its many forms' (LC 1978);
- 29) failed to show 'concern for the wellbeing of the whole community (especially those at a disadvantage)', to 'give time to the necessary study' and act properly on 'issues which concern justice, mercy, and truth' (LC 1978);
- 30) refused to 'support the freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' and 'human rights activists throughout the world who are persecuted for their defence of those fundamental freedoms' (LC 1988);
- 31) promoted non-compliance 'with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights' (LC 1998); and

- 32) did not 'seek to transform unjust structures of society' in accord with the ACC's Five Marks of Mission;
- 33) did not 'rigorously assess' diocesan and provincial 'structures, attitudes and modes of working to ensure the promotion of human rights', 'seek to make the church truly an image of God's just Kingdom and witness in today's world' or 'involve themselves in all possible ways with the struggles of people who are denied human rights' (ACC 1979);
- 34) failed to encourage church members 'to see that a true Christian spirituality involves a concern for God's justice in the world', particularly in their own community (ACC 1990);
- 35) failed to act on key features of the ACC's Virginia Report despite its being 'a helpful statement of the characteristics of our Communion' (LC 1998), including recognition
 - a. that 'By prayer and praise, mercy and peace, justice and love, constantly welcoming the sinner, the outcast, the marginalised into her sanctuary, the Church is revealed as communion and is faithful to its mission';
 - b. that those who have been baptised 'have a common responsibility to bear witness in the Church and the world to the Gospel of Christ, "the Liberator of all human beings"', and that 'the eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among those who are brothers and sisters in the one family of God, and constantly challenges those who participate to search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life';
 - c. that 'The mutual attentiveness required when members from various parts of the Communion share the richness of their experiences also helps to form the mind of the Communion and is a reminder of the rich diversity of gifts which God has given us';
 - d. that 'Care needs to be taken to ensure that complex matters are fairly and appropriately considered';
 - e. that 'The Church is effective when it is embedded a local place, challenging wrongs, healing relationships, standing with the vulnerable and marginalized';
 - f. that 'bishops have a moral duty to reflect the concerns of the whole community, especially those whom society pushes to the margins';
 - g. that accountability 'will be expressed by openness to dialogue, by attentiveness to the particularity of people, times and places, by acceptance of interdependence on both the personal and corporate levels and by honouring plurality and diversity as gifts of God'; and
 - h. that 'the need for courtesy, tolerance, mutual respect, prayer for one another and a continuing desire to know and be with one another, remain binding upon us as Christians'.

Whereas TEC has been vilified and threatened with suspension or expulsion for supposedly not abiding by a single LC resolution, the Church of Nigeria has not even been formally invited by any international Anglican body to explain why it has failed to observe over thirty LC and ACC resolutions.

Though TEC has been accused of imperialism, it has not sought to interfere in other provinces; and it has been critical of the overseas policies of its own government and corporations, in contrast to Archbishop Akinola's uncritical endorsement of a US president widely regarded as imperialist, and his practice of boundary violation, which fosters a climate of acceptance for the overruling of the local by those wielding global

authority. This is generally unhelpful to the people of the South. It should be noted that **boundary-crossing started half a decade before the consecration of Gene Robinson, and has not been confined to the West.**

While TEC's actions have been influenced by local realities, and like other provinces it may at times be swayed too much by cultural trends, its championing of justice has sometimes been **counter-cultural**. Prejudice and discrimination are by no means confined to the South; and the tendency to victimise minorities is a feature of most societies. Leaders of provinces where homophobia is most extreme, however, often seem to have done little work on examining their own, and society's, prejudices.

In some ways, the treatment of TEC has come to resemble a sports match where the referee threatens to send off players from one side for a disputed technical infringement while their opponents are allowed to punch, bite and do what they wish, despite the occasional plea to play by the rules. **An atmosphere has also been created in which numerous Anglicans in other provinces are aware that, if hardliners take a dislike to any aspect of the way they themselves seek to be faithful to Christ in their own context, they too will feel the wrath of those seeking control over the whole Communion, and few will come to their aid. Proposed changes to the way the Anglican Communion functions – including the introduction of a Covenant giving greater power to bishops, particularly primates – are likely to reinforce this problem.**

The priority given by some Christians to opposing acceptance of consenting same-sex relationships, in the light of pressing issues such as extreme poverty and powerlessness, environmental destruction and the risk of world war, also raises questions.

For associating too closely with those often facing rejection and contempt, TEC has been targeted, and has become a **scapegoat for wider divisions**, based partly on different responses to social issues and the determination of some bishops to transform the nature of the Communion. **Attempts have been made, with some success, to rewrite history** to make out that TEC's approach has involved a sharp break with the past, while its fiercest opponents are 'orthodox' or 'traditionalists'.

Genuine interdependence, respect and a common understanding across theological and cultural divides are under attack not from 'liberal' America but from a new 'tidy minded ferocity'²⁶⁷ within the 'conservative' and puritan wing of this family of churches.

Respect for the dignity of all people, encouragement of thoughtful study of the Bible, appreciation of advances in science, participation of the laity at all levels of decision-making and catholicity based on acceptance of provincial autonomy and diversity have long been valued by Anglicans, and have created space for those in the South as well as the West to engage constructively with present-day issues while drawing on a rich heritage. **This is now under threat.** While nothing mortal is permanent, what is of value to the church and world in the Anglican heritage should not be lightly discarded.

Heated disputes over human sexuality in the Anglican Communion have revealed deeper underlying questions for the church as a whole, and thrown light on its workings as a flawed and fallible human institution as well as a vehicle of and witness to God's love and manifestation of the body of Christ. Uncomfortable as this may sometimes be, challenging the tendency to scapegoat may help Christians to experience more deeply and reflect more fully God's love, be open to the workings of the Holy Spirit and encounter Christ in familiar and unexpected places.

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