

THAW!

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A letter from Bangkok where Lance Woodruff's New Year's Eve was interrupted by bombs; a letter and hymn by dog team from Archdemon Weir Shivering at Chesterfield Bay and a review of The Windsor Report by Harold.

A NEW YEAR'S LETTER FROM LANCE WOODRUFF IN BANGKOK

Dear Franciscan and Canadian Anglican friends,

Happy New Year from Bangkok. We were just about to leave for services at Christ Church--I looked forward to being a chalice assistant -- when my office beeped me for urgent stories. The bombs had started I really don't know what to say. We didn't go to church. There were two bombs in our immediate neighborhood, with

one man killed and five others (including a 10-year-old girl) wounded at a flower market where my wife, a florist, shops quite a bit. The second bomb was defused by a bomb squad, and it was in a popular night bazaar which we visit frequently. We customarily have our cell phones off at church so I could not inform others we were not coming, though I received a call from another cup bearer, who was also unable to be at service because of security duties at the Australian embassy.

In a lighter vein our four year-old-daughter Hannah, who had extinguished the Advent candles after church Christmas morning, watched the news footage on the bombings as part of her panorama of events. Before going to sleep she asked, why can't I be 10 years old? And then she asked why she didn't have 'real' breasts if she's a girl... Actually it might be easier to explain than bombs...

A few small bombs...technically...can alter both public spirit and the fabric of society... I've had very little sleep, but started the year with a reading from 'New Daylight' on Philippians, after getting wife and daughter up at 3:30am to bus to the beach at Hua Hin with 50 Kachin young adults from Burma...

Blessings from Bangkok,
Lance

NEWS FROM THE NORTH

Fr. Weir Shivering has sent news of his large floating ice berg in the Arctic ocean, just off Ellesmere Island. He has been rescued and is home in Chesterfield Bay. The supply ship has made it annual visit. For the first time, it brought a carton of mosquito repellent. The Hudson's Bay Store in Chesterfield is selling bikinis, for two beaver pelts each something unheard of. Another marvel – the sale of air conditioners is brisk, in anticipation of a hot summer. Some pampered people are leery of 24 hours of hot sun every day in July.

Archdemon Shivering has sent this new hymn, which I print below.
(To the tune: Jesus loves me)

Do not live on an iceflow,
Weather warm and melting snow
Icebergs are no quid pro quo
Turn to water, down you go.

Yes, things are melting
Yes, things are melting
Yes, things are melting
The climate tells me so.

See the bear, the white polar,
Getting too much heat solar
Too much sleeping in, by far
Definitely under par

Yes, ...

See the robin turn his ear
List'ning for what he can hear
Ice worms edible, no fear
Soon the dry land will appear.

Yes...

God has turned it upside down
Cold is hot and square is round
Daisies grow in Arctic found
Tundra turns to solid ground.

Yes...

THE WINDSOR REPORT – A lack of ambiguity

Harold Macdonald TSSF

Church documents produced for important occasions and intended to have significant consequences are often written in high prose and supported by eloquent doctrinal statements which, the authors deem, suit the moment. In the case of The Windsor Report, requested by the Archbishop of Canterbury and produced by the Lambeth Commission chaired by the Most Rev. Robin Eames, archbishop of Armagh it certainly had the occasion and assuredly lives up the standard of notable Anglican essays. The Church, or more specifically, the episcopacy of the Anglican Communion, had just returned from a bruising Lambeth Conference, where many dioceses and some provinces, mainly in Africa and the global south, had roundly condemned the Episcopal Church of the U.S.A., and the Anglican Church of Canada for their 'inclusiveness' towards persons in committed same sex relationships. Such was the rampant hostility of many, that some bishops and archbishops had subsequently entered these two North American Churches to console offended parishes and dioceses and to include them in new orders of North American Anglicanism, the best known being The Anglican Mission in America, (AMiA)

The rhetoric of the Windsor Report, the high doctrinal context which it supplies to a Communion in conflict, its appeal to indisputable and eloquent language – is both the strength, the allure of the document and its flaw. It exalts the Church but ignores the ambiguity of its nature; Catholic and Protestant, Episcopal and synodical

The Godly Communion

The Anglican Communion, including many different peoples and cultures throughout the world is a reflection, says the Report, of the very nature of God, Who is a “communion” of three Persons in perfect unity. At the outset, the mission of the Church is described in these memorable terms:

“God has unveiled, in Jesus Christ, his glorious plan for the rescue of the whole created order from all that defaces, corrupts and destroys it. The excitement and drama of that initial achievement and that final purpose pervade the whole New Testament, and set the context for understanding why God has called out a people by the gospel, and how that people is to understand its identity and order its life”.

It then goes on to describe how the Church should be seen in this plan of cosmic “rescue”.

“... God’s people are to be, through the work of the Spirit, an /anticipatory /sign of God’s healing and restorative future for the world”.

And this sign resides in the unity and “communion” of the whole church to which all of Christ’s people are called and thus rooted in the trinitarian life and purposes of the one God.”

But the Commission warns that life in communion cannot continue without their being some practical form of headship and authority to govern and guide. “In acknowledging Jesus Christ as our one and only Head, we are aware that at no point have we found the need to clarify the ways in which through particular ministries, that Headship is brought to expression within the local and international leadership of the Communion” (para 11).

And on this point the Commission turns to a perception of a former Archbishop of Canterbury, the late Robert Runcie. (para 66)

“...are we being called through events and their theological interpretation to move from independence to interdependence? If we answer yes, then we cannot dodge the

question of how this is to be given "flesh"; how is our interdependence articulated and made effective; how is it to be structured? ... But we have reached the stage in the growth of the Communion when we must begin to make radical choices, or growth will imperceptibly turn to decay... the choice is quite simply the choice between unity and gradual fragmentation". (Lambeth 1988),

Though uplifting the theology, and inspiring the rhetoric, these descriptions of the Anglican Communion (as an expression of the community of the one holy God) reach the sublime through a sacrifice of inconvenient truth, central to the nature of Anglicanism. The Anglican Communion, by choice, is a fragment of the whole and divided Church. Its universality is shared and one might say, dwarfed, by that of others; from whom it has broken away; the Roman Catholics and also the various Patriarchates of Orthodoxy, not to mention the Protestant Churches which spread themselves more vigorously around the globe not by dint of a history of conquest but by an enthusiasm for souls. The document makes no mention of the fact that the Church of England is the result of dissent and rebellion, and sought to become a deliberately national entity in its break with Rome. One notices throughout the document a reluctance to tell of the ambiguity which goes with legitimate dissent or to confess the untidiness of our so-called unity; a strong desire to clean up the story of Anglicanism and to present it as a nascent form, a growing embryo, of the very structured episcopal unity which the Commission would bring to pass.

Nor does the Report heed the history of lay government of the Church, albeit the supreme Governor of the Church of England is a lay person. In North America this distortion could not happen. In the Episcopal Church, (despite the name) laity has important powers at all levels of Church life. In Canada, likewise, it is the General Synod of laity, clergy and bishops which determines vital doctrinal affairs. The bishop, while a symbol of the church's unity, is so in the midst of the community, not over and above it. One remembers that the first General Synod in Canada occurred in Winnipeg in 1893 at the urging of Archbishop Robert Machray, the first Primate of the Canadian Church. Lay government has no place in Church polity described or recommended by the Report. Rather, the document gives all significant power to the sons (and daughters) of Lambeth, that is to the bishops of the Church. In Canadian perspectives, Lambeth is simply a consultative and occasional fellowship; but in North American Anglicanism, genuine decisions may not be made by bishops alone but by the whole community of bishops, other clergy and laity.

Consultation or Permission?

The Report wishes to show that the Episcopal Church and the Canadian diocese of New Westminster were negligent in consulting with the rest of the Church about

emerging theology of same sex unions and about proposed actions based on the legitimacy of same sex unions. Its argument rests on two foundations.

The first is the claim that the Episcopal Church and the diocese of New Westminster, failed to act in a consultative manner on a matter which would effect the affairs of other dioceses and provinces.

About the diocese of New Westminster, the Episcopal Church and, indeed, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada, in a tone aggrieved and injured, the Report writes as follows;

"... the primates singled out synodical actions that have been taken in one diocese and one province which have gone against both the letter and the spirit of the resolution of the Lambeth Conference... The synod of the diocese of New Westminster has requested the Bishop to provide and authorize a public Rite of Blessing for same sex unions; the Bishop has complied. The Episcopal Church (USA) has given its consent to, and proceeded with the consecration of, the person elected as Bishop of New Hampshire, a divorced man openly acknowledged to be living in a sexually active and committed same sex relationship, despite the primates describing that forthcoming consecration as one which might 'tear the fabric of our Communion at its deepest level'. (Oct. 16, 2003),

"We should also note", the report adds gratuitously, "after this Commission had already been set up, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada passed a resolution affirming 'the integrity and sanctity of committed adult same-sex relationships'.

Was the Commission miffed?

Then, in a consideration of "Theological Development", in the Churches of the Communion (para 32) the report condemns both the Episcopal Church and the diocese of New Westminster on the two grounds referred to above; both of which have an important bearing on the quality and directions of the Report.

The first foundation for reprimand is the slippery argument from appearances; the appearance of misdemeanor rather than the fact of it by the Churches involved. The Report accuses both of the above entities in these words:

"The first reason therefore why the present problems have reached the pitch they have is that it appears to the wider Communion that neither the Diocese of New Westminster nor the Episcopal church (USA) has made a serious attempt to offer an

explanation to, or consult meaningfully with, the Communion as a whole about the significant development of theology which alone could justify the recent moves...." (para 33)

Procedures and Protocol

The second foundation of criticism goes to the heart of the strategy of the Report. The Report erects a framework of procedures for consultation which did not, and still does not, exist. Yet the Report finds them in embryonic form at the time of the ordination of women, when the national churches consulted extensively and elevates them to the level of required procedures and then blames New Westminster and the Episcopal Church for not adhering to them. In the ordination of women consultation with the Consultative Council is praised because it was met with agreement, to a degree. (In the first case by a vote of 24 to 22). In the issue of same sex unions the consultations were met with significant (but not a majority of) dissent. The Report thus blurs the difference between consultation and permission, suggesting that if an "Instrument of Unity" agrees with or can live with, an action then one may proceed, but if not then one cannot proceed without rebuke and retaliation of some sort.

The sudden appearance of procedures of consultation reminds me of a witticism of Reginald Seeley, once Provost of Trinity College, Toronto. "When you do something for the first time, it's a revolution" he said. "And when you do it a second time, it's a tradition". In the Report, methods of consultation have gone with similar speed from courtesy to procedures and permissions.

Were there procedures which brought everyone in the Communion on board, when women were first ordained? Not according to the late Muriel Adey, a professed member of the Franciscan Third Order and the first woman to be ordained priest in the diocese of Columbia, (Vancouver Island). Her one regret was that women had been priested (in the USA) without the prayerful and peaceful compliance of the whole Church! Whatever the Episcopal Church did in consulting with others, for the sake of courtesy and respect, was not enough to bridge the gap. It is still not enough, there is, in the Anglican Community, still a lack of unity which Muriel regretted.

Of the ordination of women, the Report speaks in support:

" In 1978 Lambeth Conference addressed a situation where Hong Kong, Canada, the United States and New Zealand had all ordained women to the priesthood....in response the 'Conference stated; 'The Conference also recognizes ...the autonomy of each of its member Churches, acknowledging the legal right of each Church to make its own decision about the appropriateness of admitting women to holy orders".

No mention of the pain, the disagreement, the conflict over the decision to ordain. Yet between Churches and within our own Church in Canada, the pain and division was intense. In most cases, about one third of synod delegates were opposed to the ordination of women, and special provision had to be made to keep many of them within the Church. Some split away into fragmentary forms of Anglicanism. On the ordination of women, the Anglican Communion is divided, still.

The Commission then goes on to elaborate the rules of procedure which emerge from our common experience in the Communion or which they consider were actually present and in force. ("traditions"). I will hurry through them. They are important, interesting proposals. But they belong to a structure which does not exist.

- Recommended procedures for doing theology; which would have the effect not only of guiding but limiting, theological discussions. "Christians are not at liberty to simplify these matters, (theological explorations) either by claiming the Spirit's justification for every proposed innovation or by claiming long-standing tradition as the reason for rejecting all such proposals". (para 32).

- There are procedures for consultation, discussed above;

- there are distinctions between matters of faith and salvation and lesser matters of disagreement (adiaphora).

- there is a new doctrine of "subsidiarity" which assigns theological questions to levels of church structure, including a structure for the whole of the Communion, to which matters such as same sex unions would be assigned.

- There is the issue of "trust";

- there is the existence of The Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (1998), the recommended location of Communion-wide dimensions of theological discourse.

- And finally authority, achieved by a covenant between member churches under an empowered Archbishop of Canterbury. Read it for yourself.

- And then there is the Covenant, itself. (To be discussed in THAW! next month)

There is no doubt in my mind that the Windsor Report means to remove powers from the autonomous member churches and place them in the pan-Anglican super-

structure being proposed. The report is strong on Communion but weak on autonomy. It is strong on agreement but weak on dissent. It does not attempt a balance between independence and interdependence with respect to our national Churches. Those of us in North America, many of whose forbearers came here to escape from the authority of the English Church and government, may have special difficulties with the thought of a new layer of Episcopal decision-making which diminishes that of the national North American Churches. We may feel that the Windsor Report is a call back to both colonialism and clericalism. Having come to The New World (so-called) such attitudes die hard. And we remember that the decisive act of the Church of England was to break with Rome in order to become a national Church.

Yet the insight of Robert Runcie cannot be denied. It is time for a change. We must find a path to interdependence, without losing our independence, to Communion without losing autonomy, to unity without losing dissent. The tradition of Anglican ambiguity will make it possible. But not yet; not while the episcopal "Instruments of Unity" are anxiously writing simple solutions to complex problems. The Windsor Report should be seen as the first attempt; the first of many. I don't think we should approve of the Report in our General Synod in 2007, but I don't think we should agree, ever again, to absent ourselves from further discussion, study, dialogue and prayer.- our privilege and responsibility in the Anglican Community.