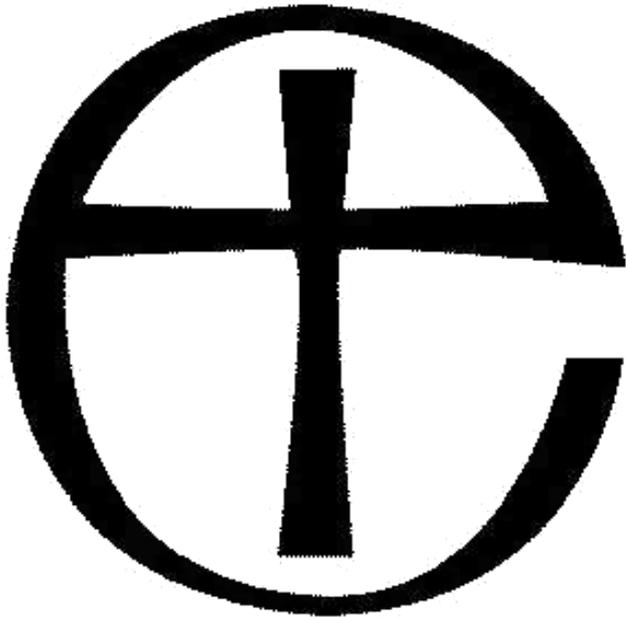


Our Anglican Futures



Real Issues

7 September 2008

A prayer of Thomas Cranmer



- “ALMIGHTY and everliving God ... we humbly beseech thee ... to inspire continually the universal Church with the spirit of truth, unity, and concord: And grant, that all they that do confess thy holy Name may agree in the truth of thy holy Word, and live in unity, and godly love. ... Grant this, O Father, for Jesus Christ’s sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.”

A word from Christ's servant



- “Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a licence for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.” (Jude 3-4)

A Communion in Crisis



ANGLICAN WARNING

BBC NEWS

23:31

RS IN MORPETH AND HAD TO BE ASSISTED BY SEAR





Our Anglican Futures

- **The Church of God**
 - What does God's word say about God's church?
- **The Church of England**
 - The Anglican past:
 - solid foundations, but no golden age
 - The Anglican present:
 - huge growth, but unparalleled heresy
 - Our Anglican future? Or futures?
 - empire or commonwealth?



The Church of God

- There **is** a perfect church ...
 - ... with no division or sin
 - ... perfect in love and truth
 - It is not the Church of England!
- We must belong to this church to be saved!
 - “the mystical body of Christ, which is the blessed company of all faithful people” (BCP)
 - This is the “church triumphant” or the “invisible church”.

The Church of God



- John describes it:
 - “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’”
(Revelation 7.9-10)

The Church of God

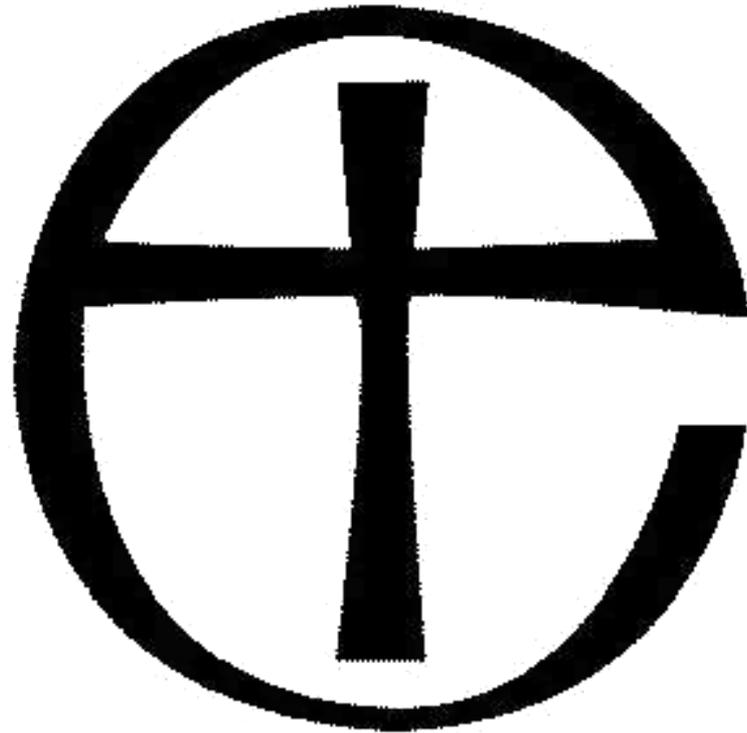


- When we gather in Christ's name ...
 - "... you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel." (Hebrews 12.22-24)



The Church of God

- But how do the Church of God and the Church of England relate?
 - “our citizenship is in heaven” (Phil 3.20) but it is also in England!



The Church of God *in England*



- “To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ – their Lord and ours” (1 Cor 1.2)
 - We are the church of God *in England* (or Chester, or Hartford and Greenbank ...)
 - We are “sanctified in Christ Jesus” – already holy in the Lord’s sight because of Jesus’ death.
 - We are “called to be holy” – to live out what we are.
 - We are just one of many: “together with all those everywhere ...”

The Church of God *in England*



- “Called to be holy”
 - “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”
(1 Corinthians 6.9-11)

The Church of God *in England*



- How do we know the Lord's will?
 - “that Will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the Word of God.” (Article XVII)
 - “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3.15-16)

The Church of God *in England*



- We find our unity in our common submission to God's word.
 - “Make every effort to keep **the unity of the Spirit** through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit ...”
 - “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up **until we all reach unity** in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God ...”

The Church of God *in England*



- This is the unity for which Jesus prays:
 - “My prayer is not for them [the apostles] alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (John 17.20-21)

The Church of God *in England*



- The Church of God is eternal:
 - “I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” (Jesus, Matthew 16.18)
- The Church of England may not be:
 - “Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.” (Jesus, to the Church of Ephesus, Revelation 2.5)

The Church of England: The Anglican Past



- Solid foundations
 - Supremely, the 39 Articles
 - NB Series from April/May
 - An enduring foundation
 - ‘The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal.’ (Canon A5)

The Church of England: The Anglican Past



- The Articles are designed to promote unity:
 - ‘... for the avoiding of diversities of opinions, and for the establishing of consent touching true religion.’ (Preamble)
- The Articles teach the supremacy of the Scriptures
 - “... it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another.” (XX)

The Church of England: The Anglican Past



- A church is only a church if Scripture rules:
 - ‘The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance.’ (XIX)

The Church of England: The Anglican Past



- Solid foundations, but no golden age
 - It didn't bode well when the principal author of the Articles (and the Prayer Book) was martyred!
 - In every century since the Reformation, Bible-believing (and Article-believing) Anglicans have faced at best toleration, at worst persecution
 - 16th century Puritans suffered under Elizabeth I
 - 17th century Puritans were ejected in 1662
 - 18th century Evangelicals were hunted out of the CofE
 - But 19th century Anglicans faced a new assault ...

The Church of England: The Anglican Past



- John Henry Newman
 - Founder of Anglo-Catholicism
 - Tract 90, 1841:
 - ‘It is a duty which we owe both to the Catholic Church and to our own, to take our reformed confessions in the most Catholic sense they will admit: We have no duties towards their framers.’
 - ‘whether he intended to or not, he taught us to lie’.
- Where Newman led, the liberals followed
 - “Essays and Reviews” (1860), “Lux Mundi” (1889)

The Church of England: The Anglican Past

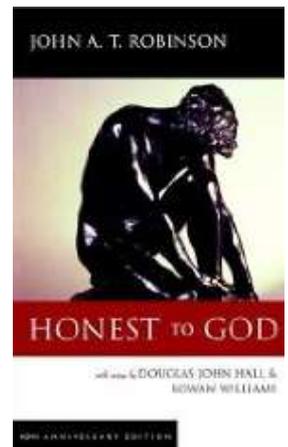


- So began the Anglican practice of seeking unity in ambiguity, rather than unity in truth
 - The Articles sought to express Biblical Christianity in clear doctrinal language; almost all official Anglican documents since the mid 19th century have sought to express inclusive Christianity in ambiguous doctrinal language.
 - As a sign of this, clergy subscription to the Articles was weakened in the 1860s and 1970s.
 - Ironically, the Lambeth Conference began in 1888 at the request of Canadian bishops concerned with increasing Anglican liberalism!

The Church of England: The Anglican Present



- Huge growth
 - Perhaps 70+ million Anglicans – the largest grouping apart from Roman Catholicism
 - The fastest growing churches are in the developing world; the vast majority are orthodox.
- Unparalleled heresy:
 - By the 1960s, a bishop could be an atheist without facing censure (Bishop Robinson of Woolwich, followed by Bishop Spong of Newark and others)



The Church of England: The Anglican Present



- If an *extreme* bishop can be an atheist, it's not surprising if bishops in general are not known for their submission to Scripture ...
- Consider the following quote:
 - “Some things in the Bible are no longer scripture for us, whereas the letters of Bonhoeffer and the sermons of Martin Luther King are ... the Gospel of Thomas is closer to the Jesus we understand and appreciate than Revelation [which is] contrary to the mind of Jesus”
 - Rev John Henson, “Good as New”

The Church of England: The Anglican Present



- And from the forward:
 - “John’s presentation of the Christian gospel is of extraordinary power ... I hope that this book will ... spread in epidemic profusion through religious and irreligious alike.”
 - The endorsement is written by Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury.

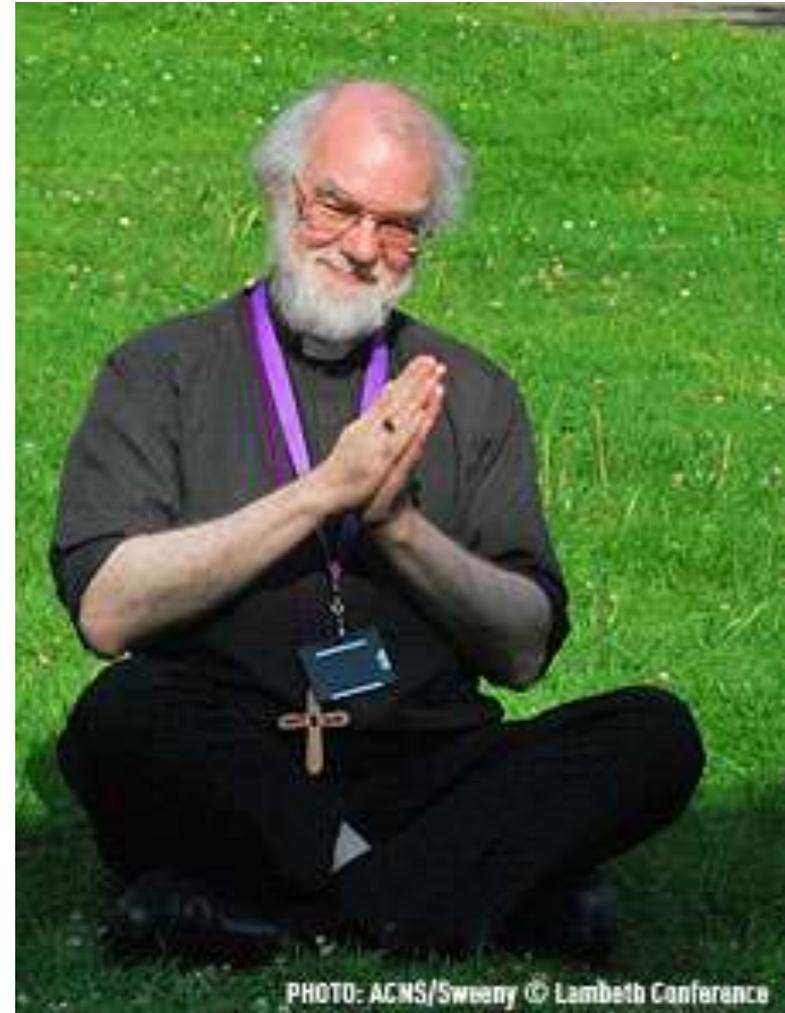


PHOTO: ACMS/Sweeny © Lambeth Conference

The Church of England: The Anglican Present



- An earlier archbishop warns us:
 - “If there were any word of God beside the Scripture, we could never be certain of God's Word; and if we be uncertain of God's Word, the devil might bring in among us a new word, a new doctrine, a new faith, a new Church, a new god, yea himself to be a god. If the Church and the Christian faith did not stay itself upon the Word of God certain, as upon a sure and strong foundation, no man could know whether he had a right faith, and whether he were in the true Church of Christ, or in the synagogue of Satan.”
(Thomas Cranmer)

The Church of England: The Anglican Present



- If Scripture is not supreme, something else is!
 - It is not surprising that doctrines and practices always understood as Scriptural but now at odds with the spirit of the age are under assault in the Anglican Church.
 - Currently, the focus is on gender and sexuality questions.
 - The signs are that the next assault will be on Christ's unique person and work.
- Our two current crises both began in the rejection of biblical authority in the church.



At the central moment of the ordination of presbyters the bishop places a bible into the hand of the ordinand and says, “Take thou authority to preach the Word of God ...”. In that Bible, Christ’s apostle says, “I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man ...”. (1 Timothy 2.12).



Christ's apostle says, "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders ... will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6.9-10) How can a man who celebrates sin and refuses to repent be a bishop in the church?

The Church of England: The Anglican Present



- These developments share common roots, but is one more serious than the other?
 - Yes! One is an issue of salvation, and the other a matter of church order.
 - Many evangelicals would argue that the ordination of women as bishops or presbyters is consistent with Scripture – though they must defy both the obvious meaning and historic understanding of the Bible to do so.
 - BUT the political drive for women’s ordination has not come from evangelicals, but liberals.
 - Maybe ... if the motive for either begins with the question, “did God really say?”, who is behind it?

The Church of England: The Anglican Present



- The status of both crises has changed in recent months.
- GAFCON and homosexuality
 - 1000 Anglicans, including 290 bishops, met in July in Jerusalem and declared their unity in the biblical Christian faith as Anglicans have received it.
 - The Jerusalem Declaration was the result.
 - Our PCC (unanimously) and the DEF have recently endorsed it.

The Church of England: The Anglican Present



- GAFCON included those on both sides of the women's ministry question.
- GAFCON is not a single issue movement: it seeks the wholesale reform and renewal of the Anglican Church.
- **Our future at St John's and Christ Church is likely to be among GAFCON-minded Anglicans.**

The Church of England: The Anglican Present



- General Synod and women bishops
 - When Synod decided that women could be ordained as presbyters in 1992, explicit provision was made in the law for those ministers and parishes who dissented.
 - Hartford PCC (by overwhelmingly majority) makes use of these provisions.
 - In moving ahead to women bishops, Synod has provisionally voted to remove them.

The Church of England: The Anglican Present



- This is contrary to the resolution of the Lambeth Conference 1998, which urged provinces ‘to affirm that those who dissent from as well as those who assent to, the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate are both loyal Anglicans.’
- **If General Synod continues on its current course, this has the potential to drive out conservative evangelical clergy from the Church of England.**

The Church of England: Our Anglican Future(s)



- The choice for Anglicanism:
 - We loosen the denominational ties that bind
 - In reality, being ‘Anglican’ means increasingly little. We need to make new, creative partnership between like minded parishes and dioceses.
 - ‘Why not accept that we are a federation (or “commonwealth”) of largely autonomous Churches?’ (Archbishop of Sydney, Peter Jensen)
 - A move from ‘Empire’ to ‘Commonwealth’
 - the historical precedents of South Africa and Europe: parallel jurisdictions.

The Church of England: Our Anglican Future(s)



- Positively, GAFCON enables the realignment of the Anglican world for the benefit of Bible-believers everywhere.
- Or we strangle ourselves
 - In the west, the liberal agenda gradually prevails and orthodox congregations, ministers and bishops are eventually persecuted out of existence.

You can't split a marshmallow. You can melt it. You can even cut it. But, marshmallows are too malleable to be split. Something has to be brittle to split. So there will be no split in Anglicanism. It is just not the kind of thing that is open to splitting. ... The marshmallow of Anglicanism is melting a little further into the surrounding culture. But remember the words of the Apostle: God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." (2 Timothy 2:19).

Phillip Jensen, Dean of Sydney