

## **LAMBETH COMMISSION**

**(15 June 2004)**

### ***Testimony by the Rt. Rev. Robert Duncan***

Thank you for allowing me and the Network team to join you this morning. It is good to see so many friends and acquaintances; and it is always good to be among brothers and sisters in Christ. I am pleased to have the opportunity to address you and the matters of theology and ecclesiology, of faith and order, that are before you in this Commission, before us in the Episcopal Church (USA), and that are before our entire Anglican Communion.

Allow me also to begin by saying how sad I am to be here. I want you to know how grieved I am to be testifying against my own Presiding Bishop, and against other leaders of my Church. I want you to know how heartbroken I am that the Church which formed me from the cradle, within which I gave my life to Christ as a teenager, and to which I vowed service in Holy Orders more than 30 years ago has arrived at its breaking point and my own.

#### **Introduction**

Bishop Ben Kwashi of Jos, Nigeria, has recently written about what he has called “the doctrinal and structural collapse of the Episcopal Church.” This is a very helpful phrase: the doctrinal and structural collapse of the Episcopal Church. Like Manhattan’s twin towers in the first hour after the unthinkable had happened, the appearance was that of steel and glass mostly intact. Yet unseen, under the façade, the inner core was inexorably melting away. That is what we who address you this morning believe is the current state of our beloved Church in this Province. Moreover, it is our contention that, as the inner skeleton of the Episcopal Church weakens and fails under the immense stress put upon it by the fatal (twin, I might add) synodical decisions of last summer, damage is threatened to all the structures around it – to the other provinces of the Anglican Communion – and to the infra-structure of the whole Communion, and of the nation, within which it has so proudly (dare I say, dominantly?) stood.

I am here to argue that an irreparable fracture has occurred in the Episcopal Church. The presentations that follow mine will provide ample evidence of the fracture, of *our* “tearing” apart “at [our] deepest level.” There is still the appearance of unity, but the chaos of separation -- of schism enacted by conciliar majority and then blamed on a remnant minority – is manifest in many places.

Let me be clear: This ECUSA schism is not about blessing of same-sex marriages nor is it about a same-sex partnered bishop, at least not fundamentally so. This schism is about scriptural authority. It is about evangelical truth. It is about whether the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments can be trusted as the ultimate rule and standard of the Christian Faith (to use the phraseology of Lambeth 1888). This schism is also about

catholic order, and about whether the consistent voice of the universal church must be heeded by Anglicans everywhere, or no.

Evangelical truth and catholic order are not options for the team that addresses you this morning, nor are they options for the Network that is gathering, gathering despite formidable opposition and commonplace inertia. Whatever our numbers, it seems to us that we speak to you as did the three young men to the king and his officials at Babylon so long ago: “It may be that our God [and this Commission] will deliver us, but if not be it known to you...that we will not bow down.” (Dan.3:18)

### Schism and Chaos

An irreparable split has occurred. What happened last August at the General Convention of the Episcopal Church cannot be repaired. Within the Episcopal Church, there are two different worldviews, two different gospels, two different faiths.

Let us be clear: The reality of the schism the Network team is here to describe is being denied by the majority in the Episcopal Church. You will hear from the Presiding Bishop’s team this afternoon a denial that the towers are on fire. You will hear from a team that is convinced that the towers will not fall. ECUSA’s leadership and ECUSA’s majority says to you and to us that what we are in is but a short-term crisis, a passing storm.

We, however, testify to you that the towers have been struck, that they are on fire, that thousands of souls are trapped within, and that chunks of rubble are already beginning to fall.

I will offer here some personal illustrations of the profound and even visceral nature of this irreparable split. I have personally transferred three of my clergy to overseas jurisdictions (Kenya, Uganda, Zambia) in recent months. By thus transferring these clergy, observing the letter of the law, they are free to serve orthodox congregations in revisionist dioceses here in the United States without fear of presentment, essentially as missionaries of foreign jurisdictions. Moreover, two of this year’s seventeen ordinands in the Diocese of Pittsburgh (the largest ordination class in the U.S. so far as I can determine) have asked for similar transfers for similar reasons. I have taken no joy in these actions. They speak to the breakdown of bishop-parish relationships in call processes and of theological disputes in bishop-clergy relationships. I am not proud of these things, but my work as a shepherd is ultimately to protect sheep. I could add that clergy and laypeople from all across the States contact the Moderator’s office day in and day out – some even travel all the way to Pittsburgh just for an hour or two (from places like Oklahoma and Connecticut and Florida) – to know how they can be “protected.” There is little I can do for them except listen, but that protection is, I believe, in your hands.

Mutual recognition of one another’s ministries is breaking down. At the April meeting of the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, the President of the Standing

Committee, Rev. Doug McGlynn, informed us that he had been denied a license to function in the Diocese of Milwaukee, specifically on the ground that he was the President of the Standing Committee of Pittsburgh. To be fair, back in December Pittsburgh's Standing Committee had done its own de-recognition. The policy then adopted for the Pittsburgh Diocese was that any bishop who participated in the consecration of Gene Robinson in New Hampshire would not be allowed to function episcopally in Pittsburgh. The schism and chaos multiply: Milwaukee does not recognize Pittsburgh and Pittsburgh does not recognize 39 ECUSA bishops directly complicit in New Hampshire.

In January Bp. Neal Alexander forbid my presence at a speaking engagement at an Atlanta hotel. In May the Bishop of Pennsylvania told me I could not perform an ordination in any of the diocesan churches, or in a farm under a tent for that matter. (I have accepted that decision.) At the same time Bp. Bennison told me I did not have his permission to baptize my own grandson in that grandson's parish church. (As this report is given that refusal is being reevaluated.)

There are two ministries here; there are two episcopates here; there are two churches here.

Or consider this last bit of personal testimony to the schism and the chaos: At the March 2004 meeting of our House of Bishops the break was clear. Six diocesans either refused to participate or left in distress within hours of arrival. Others of us could not make our communions or, in some cases, even bring ourselves to be present at worship or at meals or to stay under the same roof. The Presiding Bishop described us just last week in this way: "there were several members who were very much on the edge of the meeting, but..." Those of us "on the edge" were there to discuss the crisis. For us, that discussion was the "highest degree of communion possible." At the end, those of us on the orthodox side, those of us "on the edge," experienced ourselves as "listened to" in precisely the way the Primates of our Communion were "listened to" by this same Presiding Bishop, by this same American Church, in August and November of 2003.

The great question before this Commission is whether the schism and the chaos will spread to the whole Communion. Questions of human sexuality in general – and questions relating to homosexuality in particular – are matters which affect the wider Anglican Communion. And as I stated earlier, we believe these are just the presenting issues of a far more destructive rejection of the authority of both Scripture and Tradition. The very existence of this Commission makes this clear. Yet the Episcopal Church chose not to submit to communion-wide discernment on the specific issue of common concern. The Episcopal Church chose not to listen to the voices of the Anglican Communion, as mediated and manifested in the Anglican instruments of unity. Rather, in its arrogance, the Episcopal Church proceeded unilaterally. As a result, General Convention represents not merely an innovation in the area of moral theology. General Convention represents the repudiation of the norms for communion-wide discernment articulated in the Virginia Report. It is up to this Commission to find a way to re-establish the norms which shape

our common life as a world-wide Communion. It is up to this Commission to find a way forward.

### The Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes

We are a biblically-based, missionally-driven, remnant-gathering association of dioceses and parishes stretching from coast to coast (South Carolina to San Joaquin) and border to border (Albany to Rio Grande). We came into being at the suggestion of Archbishop Rowan Williams, whose suggestion for a “network of confessing dioceses,” able to stand in North America as once another confessing church had stood in Europe, was first imparted to several of our leaders in September 2003.

Thirteen diocesans, given impetus by four other Communion primates, agreed to create the Network in November. Representatives of twelve dioceses and six convocations (groups of parishes in non-Network dioceses) chartered the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes in January 2004. To date nine of those dioceses have ratified the charter, Albany becoming the most recent just this past Saturday. Within the six convocations, 43 congregations (within 22 non-network dioceses) have thus far taken vestry action to associate. Many times this number have such action under consideration, and this frequently in the face of direct opposition from the local bishop. 14 Provinces (all among the 21 Provinces who have announced some form of broken communion with ECUSA) have to date recognized the Network.

From our opponents you will hear how small, how insignificant, we are. The majority in the Episcopal Church rehearses this mantra over and over. “They are 12% of the domestic dioceses at best, and not 100% of those, with just two-score parishes signed on elsewhere,” they say. We say, “Look at which 12% we are. Or look at the record of the Episcopal Church in the last 40 years: declined from 3% to less than 1% of the US population, from a denomination to a sect, among whose sadder works are the spawning of 38 separate continuing churches as but one small aspect of that extraordinary decline.

We have a letter here signed by 700 Episcopal clergy, protesting what the Episcopal Church has done. 700 is only 10% of active Episcopal clergy. But look at who the 10% are. Among the signatories (or would-have-signeds) are the rectors of many of ECUSA’s largest and most successful congregations, churches like Christ Church (Plano). Among the signatories (or would-have-signeds) are the vast majority of ECUSA’s church-planters. Among the signatories (or would-have-signeds) are also the ordained leaders of most of ECUSA’s missionary societies. As with all of Christian history, the 10% (or the 12%) who have nailed our colors to the door are where the whole future lies, if there is to be a future for Anglicanism in the United States.

Two developments in recent weeks support this conviction further. First is the decision of the leaders of expatriate Nigerian Anglicans, who gathered at the end of May in Atlanta. Nigerian expatriates are to be called out of ECUSA to form distinctly African congregations across the United States, congregations to be allied with the Network, an alliance which can be guaranteed as Biblical, traditional and unreservedly missionary.

Second is a Statement of Common Cause, delivered earlier today to Lambeth Palace, signed by the President of the American Anglican Council, the Bishop Chairman of the Anglican Mission in America, the President of Forward in Faith North America, the Presiding Bishops of the Reformed Episcopal Church and of the Anglican Province of America, as well as by myself for the Network – all agreeing to move forward under the chairmanship of the Moderator of the Network. Could it be that three decades of disintegration (or in the case of the RE Church, thirteen decades) is about to be reversed as ECUSA's hold on the US Anglican franchise is re-evaluated?

### A Way Forward

Here is what we are suggesting to this Commission as a possible path forward:

- (1) acknowledge that the schism we describe has occurred;
- (2) observe that the minority here is at one with the majority of our Communion and with the undivided voice of evangelical and catholic Christianity;
- (3) implore that the minority not be forced to submit to the aggressive and uncompromising innovators who insist, under plans like delegated episcopal pastoral oversight, that the endpoint is “reconciliation” [i.e., “submission”];
- (4) ask the Archbishop of Canterbury to give immediate protection and recognition to the Network through significant structural relief;
- (5) recommend some form of discipline of ECUSA sufficient to return her to us and to recognizable Anglicanism; and
- (6) propose some core covenant, some inter-Anglican code of canon law, establishing broad limits to innovations against received Faith and Order, for consideration and adoption by any province desiring full membership in the Communion.

### Conclusion.

We stand at a moment of decision. The unthinkable has happened. The towers are burning. The questions are these: will you protect – by recognition – the Network dioceses and parishes? Will you put limits on the chaos? Can we then together rise to the challenge of shaping and building a deeper and more profound Communion, one whose hallmarks for the future are just as they have been in the past, evangelical truth and catholic order. We of the Network stand ready to do our part in the difficult road of Reformation (rebuilding, if you will) that lies ahead of us all.