

newdirections

September 2008
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serving Evangelicals and Catholics seeking to renew the Church in the historic faith

A future

Reasons for being cheerful
after the axe has fallen

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'Beware your victories.' This ancient advice has a certain resonance for the Church of England in the crisis created by the July Synod vote.

A code of practice may have seemed like a clever idea to the more strident proponents of women bishops, but the realization is now dawning that it poses a real threat to the Church of England.

A code will not affect the integrity of our own constituency. It has been absolutely clear from the very beginning that a code of practice, by answering none of our needs or concerns, will always be completely irrelevant. A code will affect us not at all.

A code of practice, however, seriously challenges the integrity of the Church of England majority who (apparently) are seeking to make use of one, in order to effect the introduction of women to the episcopate. It gives a formal, legally recognized place to misogyny within the structures of the church. It is important that both sides understand just how and why it does so.

A proper structural solution, of the form suggested by Forward in Faith, expounded in NEW DIRECTIONS and outlined in the Manchester Report, would be neither sexist nor discriminatory. It would make a distinction between those who continue to believe what-the-Church-has-always-believed and the entire college of bishops which included women. Opponents of the innovation would make no distinction between the men and the women of this new college. There would be no discrimination if the women were treated exactly the same as the men.

By contrast, a code of practice would formally enshrine misogyny within the structures of the Church of England. Liberals might suggest that they do so only in order to condemn it, but this is disingenuous. The fact remains that a code of practice allows a parish to discriminate against a woman bishop on the grounds that she is a woman.

Imagine, if you will, two parishes. The first has passed all three resolutions, is under the care of a provincial episcopal visitor, and is affiliated with Forward in Faith. At present it has a woman deacon, but for years it has had women Readers within its team, women eucharistic ministers, and so on.

It is what you would call Modern Catholic, and no one has ever accused it of being anti-women. A code of practice will do nothing whatever for this parish, and its congregation will be forced out of the Church of England.

And then a second parish, an ancient priory church, magnificent male-voice choir, wealthy parishioners, traditional Prayer Book worship of the highest standard and best possible taste.

It has never taken any resolutions, confident that bishop, patron and its large quota will always provide (as indeed they have) a male incumbent. They have never even had a girl server nor a woman chalice assistant, let alone a woman Reader. For such a parish, a code of practice is a godsend; it offers everything they could ever wish for, without demanding anything in return.

A code of practice will reward misogynists and discriminate against traditional Catholic Anglicans (women included). It is a vile and poisonous prospect.



As the dust settles on Lambeth 2008 there are serious grounds for concern. The stratagem – to seek to resolve nothing and to rely on bonhomie (the so-called 'bonds of affection') – has clearly not worked. Michael Scott-Joynt is not alone in having seen through the ploy. The African bishops who did not attend the Canterbury gathering, but went to Jerusalem instead, are no more positive than he. And in addition they are angry at the bare-faced effrontery of devising a mechanism for not discussing their grievances – the so-called 'indaba' process – and then calling it by an African name.

For Lambeth 2008 to issue in any positive outcome at all, to justify the £5 + million expenditure and £1.2 million loss, there will need to be an extended period of restraint on the part of the North Americans. Katharine Jefferts-Schori has spoken of 'gracious restraint'; but even if her intentions are more serious than those of her predecessor before the consecration of Gene Robinson, it remains the case that TEC cannot and will not deliver on them. The next meeting of the Primates threatens to be stormy indeed.

Anglicans need to take seriously their need for some sort of magisterium which can rule definitively and be respected in its rulings. Only by such a mechanism can a world-wide Communion be regulated and moderated. But the sad fact is that a magisterium cannot simply be called into existence. As history shows, it takes more than a millennium to evolve. And there is currently only one Magisterium up for grabs. Rumour has it that the Diocese of Fort Worth is already looking to that Magisterium for its future life and salvation. It would not be surprising, as events unfold, were other dioceses of the Communion to look in the same direction.

It is shocking enough that the 2008 Conference made a loss. Answers need to be forthcoming or heads should roll. It remains to be seen, however, if it was a dead loss. **ND**



How to be cheerful

Anthony Saville finds that time and reflection show the Synod vote not to be quite so irredeemably awful as it first seemed, that there may still be generosity in the Church of England and the basis for a structural solution

Let us not fool ourselves, nor go into denial. On Monday, 7 July the General Synod, meeting in York, engaged in an ill-prepared, badly-organized, over-complicated, poorly-chaired debate on how to make good on its earlier promises to make provision for those members of the Church of England who cannot in conscience receive the innovation of women bishops.

Against the clear advice of its two Archbishops, against the judgement of the Manchester Group it had set up to advise it, against the pleas of many of its most senior bishops, against its own earlier resolutions, the Synod finally voted to make no proper provision for traditionalists at all.

It could hardly have been worse, either for Anglo-Catholics in particular nor the Church of England in general. There is every reason for traditional and faithful Anglicans to feel saddened, hurt, depressed and anxious. Nevertheless...

Is it possible, without being delusional, that the blackness of that day was not quite as black as we originally supposed? Since you ask, yes. There are a number of reasons to be (moderately) cheerful.

1. We have stayed firm. Despite much mischief-making from the press, there has not been a rush to Rome, nor serious calls to abandon ship. Clergy and laity are continuing as before to worship and pray as members of the Church of England. We are not 'threatening to leave' as opponents suggested, but promising to stay. There has been no panic, nor histrionics. The public responses have been calm and measured, and certainly not rushed.

What happens in the future is still in the future, but for the moment traditionalists in general and Forward in Faith in particular are staying, are united and will continue to fight for proper provision. The second sentence of the short FiF resolution in July is worth repeating, 'The Council remains determined to respond to the needs of its members by securing a structural solution comprising discrete dioceses for those in conscience opposed to the ordination of women as bishops.'

It is worth giving thanks to God for his blessings over the past fifteen years. We have learned to work together, to share a common purpose, and to maintain a unity of action, which we might have hoped for, but could not reasonably have predicted in the aftermath of the 1992 Synod vote. We may be a smaller group within the CofE, but we are a stronger and more united group. God has indeed blessed us.

2. Lay opposition is growing. The figures are so small as to be almost insignificant; nevertheless it is a worrying and unexpected trend for those hoping for total victory. The Synod figures we hear cited are 32% against in 2005, 36% in 2006 and 38% in 2008. They make no difference at this stage, where only simple majorities are required in the initial votes.

If repeated, however, at the final and decisive stage in 2014 (according to the current predictions), it suggests the real possibility that the necessary two-thirds majority might *not* be achieved among the laity, in which case the entire edifice collapses and a decade's work in Synod is for ever wasted.

As we know, there will be an election for a new General Synod in 2010. It is possible that the hard-line liberal agenda will persuade, steamroll or otherwise weaken this opposition among the laity. Nothing is certain, except that this existing percentage is no certain ground for hope for traditionalists. But it is grounds for real worry for liberals.

Could ten years' work towards women bishops really be lost on the vote of a few lay members of Synod? The answer is yes, and many bishops are well aware of this. Of course they would like to see traditionalists disappear, but is it really worth sacrificing the great prize just for the sake of being ungenerous to opponents?

The Church in Wales, you will remember, only this year, failed to win the same prize, all because the House of Bishops was too mean in its provision (or rather lack of it) for those with whom they disagreed.

3. The laity are generous. More than a third voted against the final motion for a single clause measure; but of the nearly two-thirds who voted in favour, a large majority did so in the belief that a code of practice would be enough to provide what traditionalists need.

Bishops and priests, with a direct professional interest in these things, may well have been aware that any code, statutory or otherwise, was an irrelevance and an illusion; but this was not true of the lay members. The House of Laity voted in favour of the Bishop of Ripon's last minute compromise: this was a deliberate attempt to make provision, when the initial suggestions from the Manchester Report had been rejected.

In the confusion and complexity, they found themselves late at night with only the final motion before them, accompanied with the spurious promise that statutory provision would be so much stronger and more helpful than a voluntary code. Many of those who voted for this code did so – we cannot see into people's hearts but the figures confirm this – out of a genuine and generous hope that it would satisfy the needs of opponents of women bishops.

Watch members may have been voting for a single clause measure, but many ordinary members were voting, albeit mistakenly, for a statutory code. This vague generosity may be somewhat formless, but it is strong enough to make the House of Bishops take notice.

4. They lack courage. The move to women bishops relies almost entirely upon the justice argument, as all reports of the Synod debate in the media have made clear. Proper provision cannot, it is suggested, be made

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for those who cannot accept this innovation because it would be a form of discrimination. A code of practice is by no means free of the same accusation – a statutory instrument that provides for a man to masquerade as a woman, for those cannot accept her ministry, is not the most obvious expression of justice.

In fact, it is worse than this. It is not simply the substance of a code which is highly questionable, it is the very existence of a code. If the women bishops issue is a matter of justice, then it is reasonable to have a single clause measure: there is no room for equivocation in matters of human rights. But if there is no room for equivocation over human rights, where on earth is the justification for a code of practice to deal with those who object to the implementation of these human rights?

Now, it may be that some of the more wily church politicians are using the pretence of a code to bamboozle the opposition. In which case, you would expect the more straightforward campaigners to call for a single clause measure with no code whatsoever. For a moment, it looked as though there was an amendment in the Synod debate calling for exactly that. Not so. It only suggested there could be alternative, local arrangements, without the need for a *legislated* code.

It is extraordinary – though surely most encouraging – that no one has publicly called for simple, unequivocal legislation for women bishops. Not one person has dared to proclaim the clear logic of the justice argument.

5. What did they vote for? It is important to leave this as a question, because it is one which has not yet been properly answered. General Synod, within its own labyrinthine rules and procedures, can change its mind as often as it likes. Yet, for all that, it does not quite see itself like the little Church in Wales Governing Body. It claims, not unreasonably, a certain gravitas. Modelled as it is upon the Mother of All Parliaments, it seeks to live up to a higher calling and a greater consistency than its baby sister.

How then will it cope with the fact that it has voted against a single clause measure three times before? How can it explain, to itself, that it voted in 2005, in this same process, to accept that we the minority have a full and honoured place as Anglicans, and then vote against these same words when proposed by a senior bishop in 2008?

Obviously, if you are wanting to overturn the practice of the universal Church for the past two millennia, you will not be that worried about decisions made in the past. Nevertheless, the justifications for the big change – the trajectory of Scripture, a new understanding of gender and justice – are precisely what make the little changes of mind look like uncertainty, waywardness, or perhaps even incompetence.

If the General Synod does not know its own mind, it becomes rather more difficult for it to justify imposing its own mind (whatever it happens to be) on the wider Church of England. What exactly did they vote for? The question still remains somewhat open, for all the apparent finality of the vote. Contradictory voting is perfectly legal, procedurally acceptable, and quite capable of altering the church for ever, but it is still unfortunate and embarrassing.

Its most important implication is the uncertainty it imposes upon the bureaucrats. Synodical civil serv-

ants are supposed to be servants of the Synod, but it is not easy to serve a master that is in two minds.

6. The crisis is not about us. As a principled but tiny minority, we are a problem that the Church of England has to deal with. But the far greater problem is what the introduction of the new measure/measures will do to the Church of England as a whole.

If you add up all the parishes who have passed all the resolutions, and add in all those parishes you think would do so if only circumstances were right, you will still not reach 5% of the parishes in this country. We may be a principled minority, but we are a small one. Provision for our future cannot, therefore, be a major problem in itself.

It is not what happens to us that matters most, either to us or to the majority. It is what happens to the Church of England, and to the proclamation of the Gospel in this country. If the Church of England does not matter, there is little to worry about; but if it does, then we must be very careful not to destroy it, and its history and witness of tolerance and comprehensiveness, its reasonableness and generosity.

A code of practice sounded helpful and reasonable to many – which is why it commanded the necessary majority – but more sober reflection will reveal it to be a dangerous option for the church. Something that appeases misogynists while rejecting faithful Anglicans has a nasty smell to it.

Worse still is the prospect that a first Great Ejection, of those who cannot accept this particular change, would be followed by another. Witch hunts encourage witch hunts. Would it be Evangelicals next on the list, on another issue? And who would follow them?

7. Promises are not easily broken. The whole basis for the experiment in women's ordination has been based upon an open reception. The Church of England seeks neither to deny its past nor what it sees as the imperative of the present. Both the Catholic tradition, if you like, and the liberal enlightenment are to be given their due place. Hence the fundamental promise that undergirded the introduction of women priests, that both sides of the issue would have a full and honoured place within the church.

It was this that was so brutally torn apart and thrown out in the July debate. It is understandable if those who have been so shabbily treated, who heard or read about the animosity of the victors, who sensed, in the horrible phrase which has become common currency in descriptions of that Monday evening, that 'the Synod smelled blood and went for the kill', should now be feeling angry and bitter.

One cannot deny nor undo a vote, but is it not true that the Bishop of Dover's intervention at the end was closer to the truth about the Church of England than the final motion? Promises are not easily broken. How the House of Bishops are going to square the circle and undo the mess they initiated by their failure to give leadership back in May is a mystery.

They will certainly try. We pray they will succeed. Until they fail, we have a responsibility to support them. Do we have reasons to be optimistic? Probably not. But a single (albeit monumental) synodical accident is not excuse enough to take our bat home. Our commitment to the Church of England is not so easily set aside. **ND**

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Brighton Rock

Martin Lewes considers the nature of Anglican loyalty and tries to express why so many feel hurt at this time

Along with its Blackpool counterpart, Brighton Rock has the name written all the way through, and I suspect that this is true of many people at this time of crisis in the Church of England.

However much we see the consequences of being divided from the universal church as we take an inevitably Protestant lurch in 'doing what is right under our own fig tree', there will be many people who, for different reasons, do not want to leave the church where they were baptized, confirmed and ordained. They are through and through Church of England.

Quite apart from the clergy whose family commitments make it hard for them to think in terms of relocating, there are many godly laity who literally grew up in the shadow of a church, were baptised, confirmed, married, had their children baptised, buried their parents,

and so on.

Many have borne office in that church and, like their ancestors at the Reformation, seen it change round their feet during their lifetimes. This can lead to the caricature where one argues 'I will go to St Agatha-by-the-Gasworks when rape and pillage is what is meant by a family service.'

There is more to our Anglican loyalty than this. Unlike other denominations, the Church of England has always seen itself as the church of the nation, not in the way one MP put it the other week, that the established church has at long last come into line with the mind of the English people, but that we are there to serve all the English people. We are not chaplains to nor members of our own particular sect alone.

True, the diversity of the Church of England makes us such a broad church that it is sometimes difficult to define

what we really do stand for, so that people cry to us 'Let us stand for something, lest we fall for everything.'

But it begins to look as though we are, in fact, going to see the end of this concept. In the name of becoming servants of the English nation, we will adopt the nation's attitude and mores.

Our pastoral targets will be set by the latest whim of the bishop and his/her staff. Simply getting on with the job, being involved with the community around, will be despised, for this must follow if the current political correctness is to be taken to its logical conclusion.

It is for this reason that so many of us feel hurt at this time. The idea that years of faithful service can be just dismissed as irrelevant has shocked many loyal Anglicans to the core.

It is hoped a realization of what they propose doing will gradually dawn on the members of the Synod for, in this earnest striving after political correctness, the pastoral care, the dignity and beauty of worship, which the current Pope so wishes to see restored to the universal church, will be marginalized and driven out 'in the name of the Creator, the Redeemer and the Sustainer'. **ND**

Recreational activities are exactly that: they re-create. They are physical or mental activities, often using all the senses and sometimes involving memory and imagination. Recreational activities are one way in which the image of God is restored in us. The miraculous thing about recreation is that there are countless ways in which it can happen. From the usual pursuits of gardening, cooking, reading or walking to the 'fine art' of making or listening to music or painting, sculpting or visiting a gallery; all these activities are a renewing engagement with both the glory of creation and the mystery of being alive.

Many of these activities are used in occupational therapy – there is healing to be found in creativity. For these reasons (and many others), it is important that as part of a review of life we should include recreation among the other areas for prayerful review – Bible reading and study, prayer and quiet, giving and service, confession, retreats and worship.

One reason for such a 'review' is to ensure that the gifts that God has given us are put to the best use. For example, a reader may have a fine singing voice and may have sung in choirs at one time. Perhaps personal circumstances changed

Ghostly Counsel Playing & Praying

Andy Hawes is Warden of
Edenham Regional Retreat House

and that became impossible, but in the present it is not any circumstance but a dull apathy that prevents the use of the gift and the enjoyment and interaction that would surely bring. So many people say to me, 'I used to do this and I used to so enjoy that...' It is these 'used to' activities that need putting in front of the mind from time to time.

All of us are ridiculously gifted and most of us are distressingly lazy at using and enjoying these gifts. For instance, think of something as essential as preparing a meal as a recreational activity. A meal freshly prepared brings the cook into physical contact with creation in all its rich variety; it involves many of the skills of the artist in taking and rearranging creation to make

something new by combination and physical skill; and in addition it can be an expression of love and care for others. There is a spirituality of cooking. There is little spirituality in the microwave or take-away.

One of our contemporary challenges is so to engage with others in the use of our gifts that we experience recreation, when all the pressures of our society are geared towards making us consumers of entertainment. I played rugby for many seasons and now I am appalled at the huge number of young men who pay to watch others play instead of playing themselves. I cannot play any more, but I can help put the flags out and shout from the touchline! It is the Christian way to be actively engaged with creation and community. It is not the Christian way to be a passive consumer.

A person who plays at something with others (even bingo) stands a better chance of praying in God's presence. Remember the Lord's promise that 'I come that you may have life in all its abundance.' Part of that abundance is surely found in having fun, in making and doing, in sharing with others and engaging with creation as a workshop and a playground.

A mutual challenge

We are grateful to **Christina Rees** for sharing with us a very different perspective on the Synod vote in July and the hopes of Women and the Church for the CofE

The result of the debate in General Synod on 7 July should have come as no surprise. The outcome was consistent with how General Synod has repeatedly voted on the subject of opening the episcopate to women. And yet for some, there was surprise, and more than that, a sense of shock, even disbelief.

First of all, to state the obvious, *Watch* did not bring the motion to General Synod in July, anymore than *Forward in Faith* or *Reform* did. The House of Bishops did, based on its response to the Report of the Women Bishops Legislative Drafting Group.

No broken promises

There were cries of broken promises, but a vote taken in one Synod cannot 'promise' something in perpetuity, because synodical government is part of a dynamic 'due process'. We have all heard that succinct description that the Church of England is episcopally led and synodically governed. The bishops provide a lead and the General Synod responds with reports, debates and votes.

There was talk as if *Watch* 'won'. Certainly, the vote reaffirmed the Synod's expressed wish for women to be allowed to be bishops, and because of this *Watch* was delighted, but it was not a *Watch* victory. The result was actually a compromise for those of us who believe that the better way forward would have been simply to draft legislation permitting women to be bishops, and to make mutually acceptable arrangements as needed for those who remain opposed to women's ordination, on an informal basis, with the priest and the female bishop concerned.

However, we continue to be committed to the ongoing process in which we are all involved. That process has been at times immensely frustrating and discouraging for *Watch*, feelings which I expect *Forward in Faith* and *Reform* can share from their own perspectives.

At times I feel that some in the church are operating with a theology of paucity, instead of with an understanding of a God of infinite abundance. Allowing those called to be bishops to respond to that call does not prevent other people from responding to God's call in their lives. Your responding to God's unique call in your life does not prevent my responding

to God's unique call in my life. Making it possible for women to be appointed as bishops does not take anything away from anyone else, yet I have heard the cry 'we want to stay', as if somehow having women as bishops will drive people out of the church.

No one driven out

No one is being driven out, and, what is more, no one *wants* anyone to leave the church. A Code of Practice can work, if we allow it to. A Code can be created that will 'allow' someone to stay if they want to stay.

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How can we speak peace, love and unity, when we do not 'give peace a chance'? How can we discern the most loving and just way ahead when some have already declared what will and will not be part of the journey, and when threats have been made to withhold and withdraw from full participation in the life of our Church?

We do not agree about women's ordination as priests and consecration as bishops, but soon our church will have women as bishops. So what do we do now? I recently heard of Archbishop Desmond Tutu's two-word definition of Anglicanism: 'We meet.' Yes, it's simple, but it holds a truth.

Anglicans are those whose natural stance is openness and spiritual humility, being willing to listen, to talk and to permit the greatest degree of freedom possible within the bonds of our precious unity in Christ. This is why those bishops who stayed away from the Lambeth Conference were being, among other things, profoundly un-Anglican.

I cannot see how those who genuinely care about strengthening our expression and experience of communion can promote going down the path of separate

structural
arrange-
ments.



One of the reasons that some of the most senior ordained women in the Church of England opposed options that would enshrine in legislation any compromise to the authority of a bishop who is a woman is because such a compromise would also change and irreparably damage the role of all bishops. Any separate structures or categories that are made for some bishops affect the authority and standing of all bishops.

This is God's initiative

I remember comments made by Roman Catholics when the Act of Synod was passed, that although they did not accept the validity of ordained women, they were even less impressed with an arrangement which destroyed the catholicity of the episcopacy. Part of the problem with the Act of Synod was its fracturing of the episcopate, as it allowed people to cease to recognise their own diocesan bishops as acceptable – it allowed people effectively to choose their own bishops according to a bishop's views on one subject, a subject which is not even part of the credal basis of our faith.

In all these discussions, debates and deliberations, I keep coming back to God: what is God saying to our church at this time about opening all orders to women? This isn't our initiative – any of ours. This is God's initiative! Do any of us honestly think that we would be seeing the growth, spread and good fruit of women's ordained ministries if it were not of God? Didn't Gamaliel once have some wise advice about not opposing things that may possibly be of God?

The Anglican Communion has had 20 years of the experience of women serving as bishops. In none of the 15 Provinces that have voted to have women as bishops have separate structural arrangements been made for those who remain opposed. Do we really want to be the type of church that shows by our laws that we believe baptised women are in a different position to baptised men, that we are prepared to have two kinds of bishops with different degrees of validity? My sense is that the Spirit is calling us to catch up with where God already is. **ND**

Keep calmly faithful

The letter from the 14 bishops to the 1400 clergy contains wise advice lay people may wish to hear, of which this is the central extract:

It is now clear that the majority in this General Synod, and probably in the Church of England at large, believes it is right to admit women to the episcopate. If that is so, it is vital for the most catholic of reasons that there must be no qualifications or restrictions to their ministry. That means however that proper ecclesial provision must be made for those who cannot accept this innovation.

A code of practice in any form cannot deliver such ecclesial provision, and we want the Manchester Group and the House of Bishops to be in no doubt about the seriousness of the situation. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that the General Synod vote was merely an instruction to the Legislative Drafting Group, and it is by no means clear that the House of Laity would support legislation whose inevitable consequence would be the exclusion of substantial numbers of faithful Anglicans from the Church of England.

The patterns of voting in the General Synod, not least on the amendment proposed by the Bishop of Ripon and Leeds (seeking to keep open the option of 'statutory transfer of specified responsibilities'), may also give the House of Bishops pause for thought, and everyone should remember that the House of Bishops has determined that it wishes to remain 'in the driving seat' in this process.

We shall be encouraging the House of Bishops to recognise that proper ecclesial provision would enable the Church of England both to honour the wish of the majority for women to be admitted to the episcopate and also create a space in which the theological convictions of others are respected in fact as well as in words. In this way both groups would have the opportunity to flourish in as high a degree of fellowship as possible while the 'open process of reception' continues.

This is a complex situation and we acknowledge that people and groups will react differently. Different decisions should be respected and supported, including that of those who have come to believe that fidelity to the faith we have received means that they can no longer remain within the communion of the Church of England. As bishops, however, we want to say that this is not a necessary conclusion. We are being encouraged by friends in the other historic churches to continue to struggle for the catholic identity of the Church of England. The legislative and synodical process will be long and we have time to reflect and pray before any final decisions are taken.

Many matters will become clearer during the next few months – critical moments will be the House of Bishops meetings in October and December and

the General Synod in February 2009. We are not saying, 'We are bishops, trust us', but we are assuring you that we are doing what we can to ensure that the Church of England at the very least honours the solemn assurances of an honoured and permanent place given by undertakings it made in the early 1990s. We are also determined to remain faithful to the ARCIC vision of full visible unity which has been an Anglican commitment for forty years and is the context in which we have consistently understood our Anglican ecclesiology.

At the same time as we are feeling bewilderment and disappointment, others in the Church of England are rejoicing. However hard it is, it is essential that we behave with grace and charity towards everyone. We are faced with apparently irreconcilable differences in matters of faith and order, and it is important to try to conduct all conversations and debates in a spirit of generosity even when church-dividing issues are at stake.

*The signatories were the Bishops of
Chichester, Blackburn, Gibraltar,
Fulham, Ebbsfleet, Plymouth, Burnley,
Beverley, Whitby, Richborough,
Pontefract, Horsham, Edmonton, and
the Assistant Bishop of Newcastle.*

The full text can be found at www.forwardinfaith.com/artman/publish/article_460.shtml > 

The true heart

Paul Griffin

Iam not a scientist, but I do try to listen to scientists. When they make Genesis seem a sober account of how the universe began, I lose the Victorian idea of science as certainty, religion as speculation.

Take this paper as a start. It is fairly insubstantial, and can be scrunched up and made into a small lump – but wait till you have finished this article to do so. Paper consists of atoms and molecules which contain tiny electric charges, plus an awful lot of nothing at all. All matter is like this, so that if you now throw in the chair you are sitting in, plus yourself, the scrunched result would be invisible to the naked eye.

Now comes a more difficult bit. Throw

in the furnishings of your house, the house itself, the road outside, the whole town, the county, the country, the world itself, and your lump will still not be big enough to see. Have courage, because if you then proceed to throw in the planets, the stars, and the galaxies you will find the task becoming easier: so much stuff exerts a colossal force of gravity and pulls things together. In the end you will just about begin to see it all as the size of a pinhead. That, at least, is what I understand scientists to be saying.

Apparently, in what we may like Genesis call the beginning, a tiny lump like this exploded outwards, driving everything at an immense speed.

Everything is still galloping outwards accordingly, as can be seen through a telescope.

Now I am going to quote words written by the Lady Julian of Norwich five hundred years ago, and spotted by Alec Guinness who quotes them in his book *Blessings in Disguise*: 'Our Lord... showed me a little thing, the quantity of a hazelnut, in the palm of my hand, and it was as round as a ball. I thought there upon with the eye of my understanding, and thought, what may this be? And it was generally answered thus: It is all that is made.'

Never tell me science and religion are far apart.

Comfort one another

A Sister from Rempstone reflects on the spirituality of our present crisis and on how we can keep praying, stay joyful and always continue to give thanks

Whenver there is division and disunity in the Church, there is pain, confusion and hurt on both sides. But there are times when there is no escape from the suffering except by remaining in it. Seeking to be elsewhere, or to make things other than they are, serves only to increase pain. The seemingly inevitable remains and the deadlock mysteriously deepens in the face of stubborn resistance.

Jesus at Calvary can alone make it possible for us to continue to be, in such a situation. For the joy that lay ahead of him, he endured everything, and there are times when he calls us to join him in this. In his strength we are to remain with him in his trials and make up what is still lacking in his sufferings for the sake of his body, the Church.

Lord of his Church

However gravely we might seem to err, in our own eyes, corporately or individually, Jesus remains Lord of his Church, for it is his; the gates of the underworld will not prevail. There may be casualties and bitter anguish on the way for us all, but there will be no final defeat, for victory is already achieved. The Church, in fact, has no meaning or purpose outside the pre-determined purposes of God, and if we remain faithful, while human things are shaken, then so much the sooner will the unshakeable Kingdom come.

St Paul would probably tell us to comfort one another with these things. It won't be a cold or sentimental comfort either, that pretends things are not as they are. The comfort we are to minister to one another, even across our conflicting understanding of things, is the strengthening grace of the Holy Spirit, who sustained Jesus through Calvary and the underworld into the resurrection. Such comfort enables us to remain *in* the suffering, while God works his redemptive purposes, and so brings a whole universe, in the End, back to himself.

At times, we may feel utterly alone in all this. Companions, if there are any, or well-meant clichés, even from the words of Scripture or pious exhortation, are meaningless, or indeed an insult. We are like Job in the face of his comforters. Again, there is no escape, except that of acceptance. This is the rock bottom of faith, the faith that can understand and see nothing, but which persists. And it is there that we find our companions again. We know of a surety that the Church is the company of all the redeemed, and that nothing can come between us and one another in the love, which is God himself.

In the love of God

It is there, too, that we can know that others are at prayer with and for us, and we are upheld. However, there is always the immediate, practical moment. What is to be done? At times of pain and bewilderment, after the initial, paralysing inertia, there comes the need to be doing something, the sheerly ordinary, so that we can regain our sanity and equilibrium. What might our Lord require of us?

St Paul, once again, suggests an answer, 'This is what God, in Christ, wills for you,' he says [1 Thess. 5.18]. The suggestions made might well grate at first, but let's look at them: 'Be always

joyful; pray continually; give thanks whatever happens.'

Joy may well seem furthest of all things from heart and feeling. Yes indeed, if we mean a facile, hand-clapping, 'all's well with God's world' sort. Rather, let us return to an earlier thought – Jesus at Calvary, making it possible for us to endure, because he endured the full cost of the Cross and Passion for the joy that lay ahead of him. The rock-bottom faith we have spoken of, which God graciously bestows on us at our point of near despair, is the birthplace of a renewal of hope. By this same grace of the Spirit, it becomes gradually possible to find a quiet joy at all times and even in the bitterest circumstances, since God is in control and all is in his hands.

Praying continually

Sensing the presence of the Spirit *is* to be praying continually. There will indeed be moments when prayer, on the individual level, will seem impossible. It is then that we should perhaps recall that there are those in the Church given wholly to a life of prayer. In them, we are upheld. But for all of us this is God's will – pray continually.

Just as soon as it is possible, we must return, after moments of crisis, to the regular pattern and framework of daily prayer to which we are accustomed, in liturgy and private devotion. Feelings are immaterial. The framework is vital as our strong support, and we shall be enabled to regain meaning, pattern and purpose there, in the familiar.

Ultimately, of course, we shall need our Eucharist, where we can, day by day, week by week, participate in the full mystery of our dying and rising with Christ. This brings us to St Paul's third point: 'Give thanks whatever happens.'

On the surface, this might seem to imply a false, external show of being glad about awful things as much as the ones we feel to be just right. But not so. Ultimately, our faith tells us that everything is well; in Christ, all things genuinely work together for good, since God is the Lord of his own creation, and God is love. For the Christian, then, it is possible, by his grace, to thank God at all times for everything. When it is well-nigh impossible to *feel* grateful, it is all the more important to offer Eucharist.

At times of crisis in the Church, we may perhaps feel tempted to opt out, and do our own private thing. Isolation is not often the best course. Maybe our Lord, in the words of St Paul, is giving a timely piece of advice: whatever you do, do not stop making Eucharist. This is your lifeblood and your contribution to the renewal and up-building of the Church.

There you will find comfort, and the gift of mutual support:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the father of mercies and God of all comfort,
who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able
to comfort those who are in any affliction,
with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.
For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings,
so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too [2 Cor. 1.3–5].

Thanks be to God. **ND**

Those reflections

John Richardson takes a less than sanguine approach to the final Reflections that emerged from the Lambeth Conference

Is there somewhere on earth where the Sunday afternoons are so interminably long that one's life would be more enhanced by reading in detail the *Reflections on the Lambeth Conference 2008* than by, say, watching another re-run of *The Great Escape* or re-attempting a Sudoku puzzle? Perhaps there is, but for most of us life is too short for me to recommend the exercise.

What was the Lambeth Conference convened to achieve? The answer is: nothing. Remember, with the exception of the very first (and with interruptions for world wars), Lambeth Conferences have occurred decennially. They are held because it is time to hold one, not (essentially) because there is something that needs to be done which only a gathering of Anglican bishops from all the corners of the globe can achieve.

Avoiding confrontation

Thus, despite the acknowledgement within the *Reflections* document itself that the Anglican Communion is in 'crisis', it was possible to organize this conference with the express intention of avoiding confronting the issue. Behind the scenes, of course, the intention was that by avoiding confrontation, a resolution of sorts could be approached, since keeping everyone together would further establish the *status quo* as *de facto* policy.

Publicly, the means to this end was a bastardized African import, the so-called *indaba* groups. These, one suspects, as much resembled the real thing as village-hall *yoga* does the Indian mystic tradition. Historically, an *indaba* is a meeting of Africans, not Anglican bishops, and brings with it the assumptions of African, not western liberal, culture, one of which is not 'constantly avoiding confronting the issue' (thus, from an old ANC Daily Briefing on the internet: 'Sport and Recreation Minister Ngconde Balfour has called a one-day *indaba* to thrash out the problems plaguing professional boxing in South Africa'). The organizers of the Lambeth Conference adopted the term *indaba* because it sounded good, but used it for their own ends.

And now a Conference called for no particular reason, holding meetings designed to reach no particular conclusions, has produced not a report but a series of reflections.

Having decided to decide nothing, it appears that the Conference felt it must comment on everything. Thus the reader who is willing may wade through pages of good intentions about good causes ranging from disaster relief to carbon footprints. Yet, of course, nothing is (nor could be) specific; not even the Gospel which, it is claimed, lies at the heart of the Communion's concept of mission. In reality, as we know, there is no shared concept of 'Gospel' across the Anglican Communion, and so in matters of religion specifically there can be no shared concept of ministry. (Indeed, I amused myself with the thought that the Bishop of Durham, Dr Tom Wright, who addressed the Conference on the authority of Scripture, would have held that almost none of the delegates were 'gospel preachers' in his own terms – certainly not Dr Rowan Williams, who has his own peculiar take on the topic.)

The elephant in the room

Moving beyond matters of doctrine, however, the *Reflections* unabashedly define the social mission of the Anglican Communion in terms of fulfilling the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. (Quite what would happen to the mission of the Church were these goals to be achieved does not seem to have crossed anyone's mind.)

But what about the elephant in the living room – the crisis in the Communion which prompted so many bishops not even to attend? Thanks to the process set up by the Conference organizers, the elephant is, of course, admired from every angle, but remember, there is no intention to remove it from the room. The last Lambeth Conference spoke clearly and concisely on the subject; yet we have been reminded by both words and deeds that such pronouncements have no binding force (despite the Conference being acknowledged as one of the instruments of the Communion, para. 136).

So no matter what the *indaba* groups may have shared or the *Reflections* may reflect, only the pathologically optimistic will suppose anything is going to deter the western churches from promoting and supporting the revisionist agenda. As many have noted, the dominant voice on campus, other than the bishops themselves, was that of the many pro-LGBT


groups, not only in the market-place but via a daily 'newspaper'.

What fewer seem yet to have noticed is that, as defined in the *Reflections*, one of the three 'moratoria' on actions currently 'dividing' the Communion would require sanctions against the Church of England itself, namely 'Episcopal ordinations of partnered homosexual people' [para. 131]. These are, of course, entirely permissible within the law of the land and the guidelines set out in the 2005 statement by the House of Bishops on Civil Partnerships: 'The House of Bishops does not regard entering into a civil partnership [with someone of the same sex] as intrinsically incompatible with holy orders' [para. 19]. True, the statement goes on to say that this is 'provided the person concerned is willing to give assurances to his or her bishop that the relationship is consistent with the standards for the clergy set out in *Issues in Human Sexuality* (i.e. is sexually celibate).'

However, the *Reflections* clearly need to be more careful on this issue at least. And in any case, the latitude exercised by some English bishops in refusing, as the Bishop of Chelmsford puts it, 'to engage in intrusive behaviour into the private lives of their clergy' means that the conditions of the moratoria are almost certainly being breached in the English Provinces.

Nothing to say

In any case, we keep returning to the question of whether anything coming out of this Lambeth Conference can add to what has gone before or to what is currently in process. Remarks contained in the *Reflections* suggest anxieties about the Instruments of Communion, a lack of confidence in the Windsor Process, suspicion about the Covenant (specifically when it comes to any disciplinary process) and a determination that the proposed Pastoral Forum should be toothless – a 'pastoral' body without legal powers acting solely at the discretion of the Primate of the Province concerned.

One is reminded finally (and ironically) of Oscar Wilde's dictum: 'The Lords Temporal say nothing, the Lords Spiritual have nothing to say.' Sadly, we may modify his final comment about the House of Commons to read: 'the Lambeth *Reflections* has nothing to say and says it.' 

devotional

Prayer in spite of discouragement

Br Steven Haws CR

Let us pray in spite of all discouragement, even when the future seems to be unfolding to us a life different from all we had hoped. Prophetic words taken from unpublished retreat addresses by Fr R.M. Benson, founder of the Society of St John the Evangelist; prophetic words written during those early years of the Society, but relevant to the current situation we find ourselves in the life of the Church.

Watching in prayer

Pray in spite of all discouragement. The events of the past two months have not been forgotten. The General Synod vote on the legislation for women bishops still faces another hurdle next year. There is the unfinished business of the Lambeth Conference. Mixed reactions to the Synod vote are still very much with us: sadness, anger, betrayal, numbness, bewilderment. Many are asking if there is still a place for us to flourish within the Church of England.

Pray even when the future seems to be unfolding to us a life different from all we had hoped. The future for us is unfolding differently, that is for certain. It is early days, so all the more reason to remain steadfast in the faith and pray without ceasing. It is only through grace that God will see us through the present crisis.

Fr Benson tells us that if we are watch-

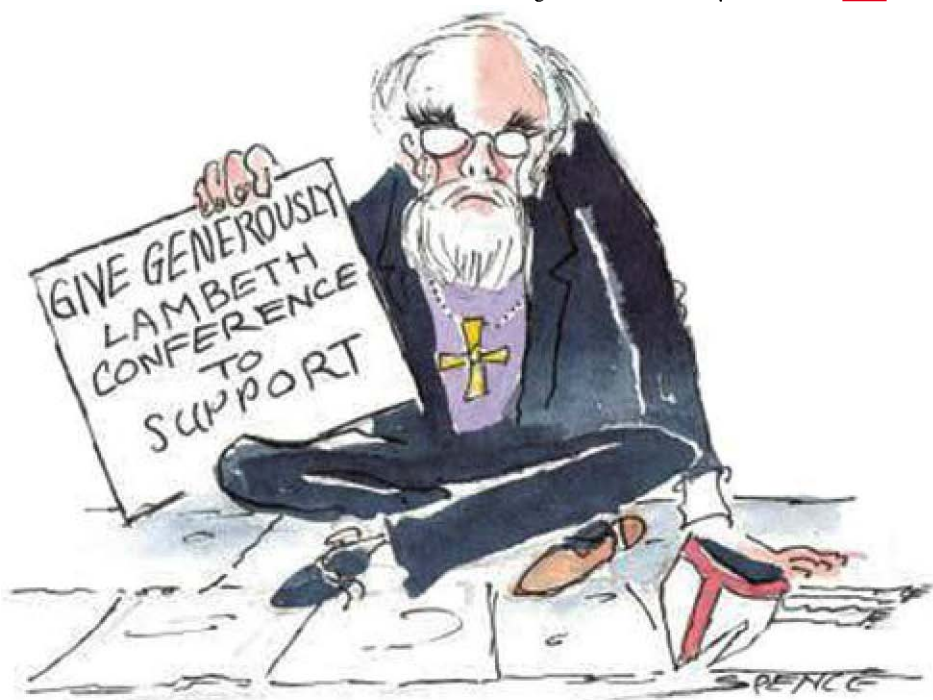
ing in prayer for the truth of God, we may be often weary. We may often begin to despair. But we watch and at last God makes the light of his truth to shine out with the glory of the fire of heaven. It speaks to him now with all the power of the world to come. For we are no longer disappointed who wait upon God. We may be kept waiting for a long time, but if we endure to the end we shall see light.

Suffering for Christ's sake

As we contemplate the feast of the Exultation of the Holy Cross, perhaps our vocation during this time of uncertainty is to suffer alongside the Crucified and Risen Christ. The Cross goes before us, and it is not a cross of flowers, nor a cross of precious stones. It is a cross all bloody with the blood that is ever fresh. It is the blood of Jesus that is perpetually fresh upon it. The challenge before us is to suffer for the sake of Christ. St Peter reminds us that we may have to suffer various trials [1 Peter 1.6–7].

The glory that shall be will strengthen us for whatever trial and suffering may be in store for us. Think of the love where our Lord has loved us. Think of the glory which is in store for us; think of the joy that is set before us [Heb. 12.2]. Let us follow Christ in simple hope and trust through spiritual trial and sorrow, through the deep temptations by which loving souls are tried and proved.

When Dr Pusey died on 16 September 1882, Fr Benson SSJE reminded his listeners that we cannot live the life of Jesus without showing the wounds of Jesus. No sufferings can compare with the sufferings of the soul, which the faithful have to pass through, if they are to be tried in their allegiance to the Body of Christ. **ND**



Price of meanness

Britain has a poor record in regard to its overseas territories. Compared with France or the Netherlands, it is mean and penny-pinching. St Helena, Pitcairn, Bermuda and Tristan da Cunha may be too far away from anywhere to consider other options. But what about the two territories with a single direct connection to a much larger Spanish-speaking nation: Gibraltar attached to Spain and the Falklands off the coast (at some distance it is true) of Argentina?

Why is Gibraltar still British? And the Falklands? We presume that the overseas British will always be more patriotic than those in the mother country, but this is an arrogant presumption. The fact is both these tiny communities could so easily have been incorporated into their much larger neighbours.

What did they ever get from Britain back in the Fifties, Sixties or Seventies? Not much. All was closure, withdrawal and managed decline. Why are they still British? Because of the foolish, short-sighted and arrogant opposition of their larger neighbour.

Had Franco not closed the border, and had the Spanish government not continued its low-level harassment ever since, things would have been different. Had Argentina held out an olive branch instead of invasion, those islands might now be full of Argentinians.

One cannot write too much what-if history, but it is worth noting that the foolish failure to work for any kind of proper provision or structural accommodation for the tiny minority has fuelled anti-Spanish and anti-Argentinian feeling more effectively than anything else.

Spain and Argentina are still paying for their folly and meanness – an analogy worth remembering when a Code of Practice is being considered.

Forget for a moment the serious theological arguments and consider the social context of what is being debated and discussed. Meanness will drive the opposition underground, harden the resolve of the faithful remnant, and ensure a bitter fight for decades to come.

David Noble

Unanswered question

The Book of Jonah and the prodigal son both pose the same question to the reader
Patrick Henry Reardon is a Senior Editor of *Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity*

There are two stories in holy Scripture that end with an unanswered proposition: the Book of Jonah and the Parable of the Prodigal Son. The drama in both these stories builds to the propositions with which they end; that is to say, it is the point of the stories themselves. Moreover, this proposition, which is directly put to a character in the story, is implicitly addressed to the reader as well.

First, they have the same theme: both are stories of the divine mercy bestowed on the unworthy – the Ninevites and the younger son, both of whom are described as sinners. Of the younger son we are told that he ‘wasted his possessions with prodigal living’ [Luke 15.13]. As for Nineveh, the book begins by mentioning the wickedness of the place [Jonah 1.2].

In both accounts, nonetheless, the sinners are brought to repentance. Thus, the king in Nineveh decreed, ‘Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell whether God will turn and relent, and turn away from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish?’ [Jonah 3.8–9]. We learn also of the resolve of the parable’s younger son: ‘I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son’ [Luke 15.18–19].

These humble expressions of repentance are immediately answered by the outpouring of the divine mercy. Thus, when the younger son ‘was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him’ [15.20]. As for the Ninevites, ‘God relented from the disaster that he had said he would bring upon them, and he did not do it’ [Jonah 3.10].

Second, each of these accounts involves an antagonist – Jonah and the older brother, both of them resentful that God’s mercy is available to the repentant sinners. Since the final proposition in

both stories – their intended point and purpose – is addressed to this angry resentment, a proper understanding of the two narratives requires that we examine these antagonists in detail.

First, the Book of Jonah is not really about Nineveh, but about Jonah. Nineveh, we are told, repented and was forgiven, but we are not so sure about Jonah. From the beginning, after all, Jonah resisted the divine intent to forgive Nineveh – even to the point of running away from the face of the Lord [1.3, 10]. Only when absolutely forced to do so did Jonah give even a brief warning to the Ninevites.

Jonah did not want the Ninevites to repent. After all, the city was well known to be vile [Nahum 1.14]. Accordingly, self-righteous Jonah wanted its citizens to get what they deserved, and what made him uncomfortable was the fact that the Lord was ‘a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness’ [Jonah 4.2]. Unable to appreciate the irony that he himself had been given a second chance when released from the belly of the whale, Jonah wanted no mercy shown to the Ninevites.

Second, the story of the prodigal son is not really about the younger son but his older brother, who resents the mercy shown to the repentant sinner. Like Jonah arguing with the Lord, this self-righteous son finds fault with his father for showing such mercy.

The closing proposition in each case – ‘Should I not pity Nineveh?’ and ‘It was right that we should make merry and be glad’ – forces the reader himself into the place of the antagonist. Like Jonah and the older son, he is obliged to choose between a natural sense of retributive righteousness and the mercy manifest in God’s acceptance of the sinner. That is to say, the reader himself must repent. Each story ends with this decision still open. **ND**

Sacred vision

Artists are able to offer ambiguous and discomfiting images, that writers are then left to explain. Of all the legendary virgin martyrs, none is stranger than the supposed daughter of a supposed king of Portugal.

St Wilgefortis (from the Latin *virgo fortis*, strong virgin?) was promised to a neighbouring king. Unwilling to be yoked to a pagan, she prayed for a miracle. The Lord obliged, and gave her a full beard; and the wedding was called off. Her father, ‘enraged by this unfeminine miracle’, had her crucified.

We have here then a picture of a female crucifix from the early sixteenth century. A statue of her in Westminster Abbey has her (more conservatively) merely holding a cross. She was invoked by women who wished to be free of abusive husbands.

One suggestion is that she was somehow a misunderstanding of



St Wilgefortis

the famous *Volto Santo* of Lucca, a bearded figure of Christ on the cross, clad in a full-length robe. Certainly she typifies a late medieval degeneracy in the cult of the saints, but this still does not properly explain the diffusion of this unsettling image.

To suggest, as one recent feminist ‘scholar’ does [Ilse Friesen, *The Female Crucifix*], that ‘the popular cult of this mysterious saint at one point nearly rivalled that of the Virgin Mary’ is surely nonsense, but she is right that ‘these sometimes disturbingly androgynous crucifixes resulted from a much more complex and diverse set of reasons than a mere

misunderstanding of a particular image of the crucified Christ’

She is classed among the transvestite saints in the ‘Calendar of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Saints’.

Nigel Anthony

Gay and not-so-gay

George Austin considers Dr Williams' understanding of gay relationships and the trouble this causes him as Archbishop of Canterbury trying to reconcile the starkly opposing views within the Communion

Before the Lambeth Conference, there were dire predictions that the gay issue would bring down the fragile unity of the Anglican Communion. Even at the best of times any Archbishop of Canterbury is in a no-win situation, never able to please all the factional groups baying for his attention and support. For the 2008 Conference it was worse, given the refusal of many of the overseas bishops to attend, and with the deliberations of GAFCON seemingly as an alternative to Lambeth itself.

But this year for the Archbishop his impossible job was as bad as it has been for many a year, particularly with Lambeth coming after the bitterness of the York General Synod only days before, which itself probably heralded the end for the orthodox Catholics in the Church of England, after the rejection of Rowan Williams's lead by a large majority of the bishops, clergy and laity.

The earlier letters

The determination of the Lambeth organizers to avoid damaging conflict, conducting such discussion as there was in so-called *indaba* groups, which would consider issues but come to no conclusions, meant that some bishops returned home wondering if it had been worth the £5m+ cost. After all, conflict is never resolved if it is simply brushed under the carpet as at Lambeth or if it is replaced by the vicious take-it-or-leave-it rejection of York.

Sadly for Rowan Williams there was even worse to come. On August 7 *The Times* published a report about letters dealing with his changing attitude to the issue of homosexuality, written by Williams in 2000 and 2001 when he was Archbishop of Wales.

In them he explained how he had after 1980 gradually come to the conclusion that 'an active sexual relationship between two people of the same sex might therefore reflect the love of God in a way comparable to marriage.' He did make the important proviso however that this was 'only if it had the same character of absolute covenanted faithfulness.' And he added that he was 'not convinced by the argument that the ethics for homosexual relationships should be different from those for heterosexuals (i.e. that they should not be exclusively faithful or lifelong).'

These restrictions on the unbridled liberal position go to the heart of today's divisions and should be welcomed by those who are concerned to hold to biblical principles. The impression given by those, particularly of The Episcopal Church in the USA, who seek to advance the Church's attitude in their direction, is too often that homosexuals should not in any way be restricted by the ethical standards that apply to heterosexuals.

At the same time, it is not surprising if the gay lobby came to believe that they would have the wholehearted support of Williams when he was translated to Can-

the only solution lies between those two extremes

terbury, and that they are somewhat disappointed in his reticence. He does make clear that there has to be some conflict between his views as a theologian on the one hand and as a leader of the church on the other. This was emphasised in the letter to *The Times* of August 9 signed by the Bishop of Durham and seventeen other bishops, though the letter also made the point that 'many among them did not agree that Dr Williams's contention that a same-sex relationship "might reflect the love of God in a way comparable to marriage"'. In fact this does show clearly if inadvertently that the divisions within the Church are profound.

Deeply thoughtful scholar

Liberal hopes for Dr Williams's support on the gay issue go back well before the hopes for his appointment to Canterbury. When the see of Southwark was vacant in 1998, Jeffrey John, then a residentiary canon at the cathedral, lobbied hard for Williams, at that time Bishop of Monmouth, to be appointed. A reliable source who was then a member of the Vacancy-in-see Committee claims that as a result Williams's name was presented to the Appointments Committee as the diocesan choice, with Tom Butler – then much more conservative in his views – not even mentioned; but that Archbishop Carey would have none of it.

But Rowan Williams is a spiritual man as well as a deeply thoughtful scholar, one who will come to his conclusions and give his support not because it follows a current trend but because it seems right as he judges the evidence – and thus probably just the right man to deal with the current controversies in the Church as Archbishop of Canterbury.

This is reflected in the correspondence of 2000. When he speaks of a same-sex relationship and comments that it 'might reflect the love of God', he goes on to say that he is 'not convinced by the argument that the ethics for homosexual relations should be different from those for heterosexuals (i.e. that they should not be exclusively faithful or lifelong).'

This view, held by the more extreme liberals, effectively rules out any understanding of sinfulness, and is one of the major problems in coming to a satisfactory conclusion in the present arguments dividing the Church. The condemnation in Leviticus 20.13 is against sodomy – rather than a condemnation of a man for being a homosexual.

What remains as sin

It would be false argument to reject this on the grounds that the writer then goes on to demand the death penalty for this, since only a few verses earlier he has demanded the same punishment for adultery – which Jesus himself clearly rejected when he forgave the woman taken in adultery. But adultery remains a sin as does sodomy, and for the same reason that adultery, theft, deception and the rest are still sins – that they deliberately damage.

But the loving acceptance by Jesus of the adulterous woman is also a curb on those at the other extreme who seem to consider the homosexual condition itself as a sin. The only solution in the present crisis in the Anglican Communion lies between those two extremes.

It will not be solved if The Episcopal Church in the United States continues to make and break agreements, nor if the conservative African and South American branches of the Communion refuse even to talk. Rowan Williams has the combination of theology, spirituality and common sense which could provide the leadership so desperately needed. **ND**

Georgia on her mind

'Episcopal Church head to visit Georgia next month' screamed the headline which we spotted online whilst surfing the internet during our 30DAYS holiday last month. Visions of Russian troops fleeing in terror from the litigious one quickly came to mind, along with a reluctant admiration for the lady: one might even go so far as to admit that she perhaps has more balls than most bishops.

Thankfully, though, our admiration was short-lived, as we read the pedestrian story which followed. Apparently, she's off no further afield than Augusta, Savannah and Statesboro – all, of course, in the Diocese of Georgia. (Just north of Florida, for those who weren't paying attention in Geography all those years ago!)



TECNews I

Talking of The very wonderful Episcopal Church, we were much diverted recently by one of its websites - <www.collegeforbishops.org> – where there are details of all the hard work done there in the formation and support of bishops. For example, each January, a 'New Bishops' and Spouses' Conference' takes place – designed for 'new bishops and bishops-elect within 6-9 months of election and their spouses'.

The five day conference provides 'an opportunity for reflection and support during this important time of transition for the bishop and the spouse'. Well! What sort of church has The very wonderful Episcopal Church turned into? Spouses? They don't seriously expect these new bishops to be *married*, do they? Whatever next!



TECNews II

The very wonderful Episcopal Church may indeed expect its baby bishops to be married, but it seems not to have the same expectations of its older models. The College for Bishops also offers a regular 3-5 day course for bishops 'within 2-3 years of planned retirement and their spouse/partner'.

That's better! Much more like the very wonderful church we all know and love!

After all, what possible reason can there be for a bishop to indulge himself (or, we suppose, herself!) in monogamy?



Small earthquake

Extraordinarily, this news item in the Liverpool Daily Post failed, as far as we know, to make the front page of any of the national dailies, still less the six o'clock news. Under the headline Bishop overwhelmed on his first flower show visit, readers learned that the Bishop of Liverpool, James Jones, had visited the Southport Flower Show, where he commented: 'I'm so impressed with the creativity and talent I've seen here.' Apparently, he also pointed to Thorn Cross Young Offenders Institution's entry to the bedding plant competition as 'an example of the importance the show had for Merseyside'.

30DAYS is delighted, not to say overwhelmed, that Bishop Jones was overwhelmed by the horticultural excesses of Southport and counsels him to develop his interest further – it's so much safer than Mariology! (See *New Directions*, *passim*.)



Who's in, who's out?

It's good to see that, post-Lambeth, some of our old friends are getting back into the swing of organising the purge. The Feminist Theology Group at Southwark Cathedral is hosting an evening entitled WOMEN INCLUDED? An introduction to Inclusive Church in the Garry Weston Library at Southwark Cathedral on Wednesday, 24th September, at 6.30pm.

'All are welcome, men and women!' trumpets the poster, and those lucky enough to be there will get the chance to sit at the feet of Giles Goddard and Clare Herbert of Inclusive Church, Rosemary Lain-Priestley, the Dean of Women's Ministry across the river in London, and (naturally!) Christina Rees, the Chairman of WATCH. All are



welcome – the poster says so – so why not go along and hear just how inclusive their church is going to be ?

Further and better particulars needed . . .

Meanwhile, 30DAYS dropped in on the website of *Affirming Catholicism* (*sic*) to see if the page headed 'What we think' was still 'under construction'. Needless to say, it is. So then we went to the website's News pages, to check out their take on all the latest goings-on – only to find that silence has reigned since before the July sessions of General Synod. And then we noticed that the full-time Director, Richard Jenkins, who was appointed in 2005, seems no longer to be thus employed. And then we noticed that the website proclaims that 'Affirming Catholicism is registered as a Charity. The organisation is governed by a board of Trustees, chaired by the Revd Nerissa Jones, MBE.' And then we noticed, as we passed by the website of the Charity Commission, that there seem to be only two trustees, neither of which is called Jones. Rather, there is a Mr Peter Beesley and a Mr Howard Dellar – both of whom would seem to be partners at Lee Bolton Monier-Williams, the well known legal practice situated just next to Westminster Abbey, and around the corner from the national headquarters of *Affirming Catholicism* (*sic*) at St Matthew's House, in Great Peter Street.

And then we noticed on the Charity Commission website that *Affirming Catholicism* (*sic*) was only registered as a charity on 21st February this year. And then we noticed that it has a subsidiary charity, bearing the same name, which was registered only on 29th July this year and which is governed by a 'Trust Deed dated 18 December 1991 as amended by Supplemental Deed dated 30 June 2008 as affected by a Uniting Direction letter dated 29 July 2008'. And then we wondered what on earth has been going on

*Copy for 30 DAYS should reach FiF office by the 10th day of the month:
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Natural chastity

Simon Heans examines the useful contribution made by Elizabeth Anscombe to the debate on contraception and the interpretation of *Humanae Vitae*

The *Church Times* commemorated the fortieth anniversary of the publication of *Humanae Vitae* in predictable fashion by engaging a dissenting Catholic journalist to rubbish it. The premise of his argument in that article will be familiar to readers of *NEW DIRECTIONS* for it is the source of the legitimacy claimed for the decisions of General Synod. The majority of Roman Catholics, he said, don't accept the teaching of *Humanae Vitae*: therefore it should be changed. Deciding doctrine by show of hands is of course the Church of England way. Quentin de la Bedoyere is obviously a very Anglican Catholic.

But what do Catholic Anglicans think about *Humanae Vitae*? Are we also liberals on this issue? In a recent sermon, Bishop Andrew Burnham challenged his clerical congregation to reflect on paras. 2368–2370 of the Catholic Catechism concerning 'the regulation of births'. This little article is intended to aid that reflection, and not just among the clergy.

Modified outcomes

Discussing the work of the papal commission called by John XXIII to examine the whole question of birth control, de la Bedoyere claimed that it reached the conclusion that there was no difference between use of the condom or pill and intercourse during the infertile period. All are 'simply different ways of modifying natural outcomes.' In a letter to the *Church Times* (which I'm glad to say was published), I expressed scepticism about his account of the commission's thinking and made the point that there is a world of difference between an act of intercourse deliberately rendered infertile by mechanical or chemical intervention and one which is infertile because it takes place during the infertile period of the woman's reproductive cycle. The first two are indeed ways of modifying natural outcomes. However, the last is an unmodified outcome – which is surely what is meant by a *natural* outcome!

But what if we put the stress in that sentence on *outcome* rather than on *natural*? Is there then such a difference between the artificially sterile act of intercourse and the one which is infertile by nature? After all, the outcome is the same, viz. conception does not take place. And in the latter case might it not also be said

that the outcome is needlessly rendered uncertain?

In my letter I recommended the CTS pamphlet, *Contraception and Chastity*, by the late Cambridge philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe, where this line of reasoning is refuted. She points out that Paul VI readily acknowledged that in both contraceptive intercourse and intercourse using infertile times 'the married couple... are perfectly clear in their intention to avoid children and mean to secure that none will be born.' However, 'contraceptive intercourse is faulted' by Pope Paul 'because of the kind of intentional action you are doing. The action is not left by

G.K. Chesterton put it even more succinctly: 'Birth control means no birth and no control'

you as the kind of action by which life is transmitted, but is purposely rendered infertile, and so changed to another sort of act altogether.'

Prophetic words

So what sort of act is the contracepted sexual act? In answering, Anscombe reminds us that Christianity was at odds with the ancient pagan world in its moral teaching on sexual matters, above all in prohibiting fornication and adultery. She then makes the connection between the early Christian objection to these activities and the modern Catholic opposition to contraception: 'the ground of objection to fornication and adultery was that sexual intercourse is only right in the *sort* of set-up that typically provides children with a father and mother to care for them. If you can turn intercourse into something other than the reproductive type of act... then why, if you can change it, should it be restricted to the married?' If sexual intercourse is not to be so restricted, then 'there is no reason why for example "marriage" should have to be between people of the opposite sex.' She was writing in 1975.

There are some prophetic words too about the effect of 'the new heathen, contraceptive morality' on heterosexual

behaviour: 'more and more people will have intercourse with little feeling of responsibility, little restraint, and yet they just won't be careful about always using contraceptives. And so the widespread use of contraceptives naturally leads to more and more not less and less abortion.' G.K. Chesterton put it even more succinctly: 'Birth control means no birth and no control.'

Natural law

Not the least of Elizabeth Anscombe's achievements in this pamphlet is in bringing clarity to a particularly confused area of the debate over contraception. She notes that 'in popular discussion there's usually more mention of "natural law" in connexion with the Catholic prohibition on contraception than in connexion with any other matters.' But this is a mistake. Contraception is not wrong because it is artificial: the contraceptive act does not have to involve chemical or mechanical devices.

As Onan's behaviour after deciding against providing heirs for his deceased brother proves [Gen. 38.9], it is perfectly possible to have one without the other. Thus 'it is not because there is a *natural* law that something *artificial* is condemned.' She helpfully explains that the language of natural law is 'simply a way of speaking about the whole of morality, used by Catholic thinkers because they believe the general precepts of morality are laws promulgated by God our Creator in the enlightened human understanding when it is thinking in general terms about what are good and what are bad actions.'

Anscombe is in no doubt that contraceptive intercourse falls under the latter heading. It is a sin against chastity 'in which chastity is simply the virtue whose topic is sex just as courage is the virtue whose topic is danger.' And chastity, like charity, begins at home. Anscombe writes: 'contraceptive intercourse within marriage is a graver offence against chastity than is straightforward fornication or adultery. For it is not even a proper act of intercourse, and therefore not a true marriage act.' Mr de la Bedoyere would doubtless disagree, but I think that is a major reason why these days so many Christian marriages, both Catholic and Anglican, clerical and lay, end in divorce. **ND**