

One New Province

Contributed by Bp. Paul Hewett
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A manifesto for orthodox Anglicans and traditional Episcopalians in the United States.

"We have a grand opportunity in this Philadelphia metropolis to witness to our unity. In our Anglican Fellowship of the Delaware Valley we have a serious commitment to one another as parishes in a coordinated mission of growing together in Christ and proclaiming the Gospel in our region. This paradigm can work in many of our cities and states...fellowships that can become deaneries, or go right on to become geographic dioceses in the emerging one province, in communion with orthodox Anglicans around the world. We will open up the possibilities for one province as we begin, right now, wherever we are, to think, speak and act, in terms of it, as though it were already in place."

- Bishop Paul C. Hewett

In the early days of WWII George C. Marshall was the architect of a unified allied command to fight the axis powers. He built up the American armed forces and coordinated our efforts with those of our allies in a most remarkable way, to forge the largest military alliance in history. It was not easy keeping the United States, Great Britain, Canada, the Soviet Union, the Free French and the other allies on track with each other. In fact what Marshall did, or what God did through Marshall, was miraculous.

After the War he was largely responsible for the plan to rehabilitate Europe that bears his name. What Marshall did to help achieve victory in the darkest days of the American century can be a metaphor for what needs to be done with the jurisdictions of faithful, orthodox Anglicans and traditional Episcopalians in the United States. We need today what we set out to build in 1977: a single, unified province for us all, committed to the Affirmation of St. Louis.

Another metaphor for what God wants us to do is provided by Thomas Watson, the son of the founder of IBM. There came a time when an entirely new computer was needed, to integrate the functions of nine older models. What he proposed was exceedingly bold, and no one knew exactly how to build it. But he staked the entire company on finding a way. He turned IBM inside out to come up with the answers. So important was the new prototype that he ran IBM right to the edge of meltdown. The successful product dominated the world market for years and was the basis for a new era of technological breakthroughs.

There are eight jurisdictions and groups which can become one province: the Anglican Catholic Church (ACC), the Anglican Church in America (ACA), the Anglican Mission in America (AMiA), the Anglican Province in America (APA, which is working toward full unity with the Reformed Episcopal Church [REC]), the Diocese of the Holy Cross (DHC), Forward in Faith/North America (FiF/NA), and the Province of Christ the King (PCK). What new paradigm might there be for the bishops, clergy and people of these jurisdictions to become one province?

Here are nine steps toward a single new province.

1. We soak everything we are and do in prayer and thanksgiving for one another. Cathedrals and parishes can include in their cycles of intercession all of the orthodox Anglican parishes in their region, irrespective of jurisdiction. Daily prayer and thanksgiving for one another leads to all kinds of new communication, cooperation, pulpit exchanges and clergy covering for one another. Our prayers and thanksgivings open us to the kinds of miracles God wants to work in our midst...the kinds of miracles he has been working since we left Egypt for the wilderness.

2. As Forward in Faith/United Kingdom moves towards the new free province in England, we can all continue to build bridges with them. We will all want to be related to the new province there, and so we will have

London as a point of common convergence. Since the new free province in England will be part of the Church of England, and since our one new province in the United States will be in communion with it, our new province will be part of the Anglican Communion, or the part of it which is re-aligned and orthodox. Meanwhile other links are being forged with orthodox Anglicans in other parts of the world, especially in Africa, with the remnants in Scandinavia, and with the Polish National Catholic Church. These links have a unifying effect on us.

3. There are national jurisdictions which are committed to organic unity with each other, namely, the APA and the REC. All of us will get important clues for our own situation by paying attention to theirs. There are other national jurisdictions which are opening up new channels of communication with each other, and cooperating more at the local level. There are more instances of people from one jurisdiction attending the synods of others. We recall the example of the Antiochian Orthodox Church, which at one time had two separate jurisdictions in the United States. They became a single jurisdiction when one of the bishops said to Metropolitan Philip, "You are a better man than I. So you look after the whole thing." That kind of courage and humility is a miracle of God's grace.

4. A vital key to our unity is geographic planning. The Anglican Fellowship of the Delaware Valley was formed in the Philadelphia metropolis two years ago, with a potential of over 20 orthodox parishes. As we slowly erase the existing jurisdictional lines, this Fellowship can someday become a diocese, a building block in the emerging one province...perhaps the first such building block. A number of metropolitan areas and other regional groupings and states are ready to become fellowships. A state with a large number of parishes can become a diocese in the emerging one province. The bishops and their clergy and parishes call a synod and elect one of their number as a diocesan. Even now, before this happens, bishops of a region can occasionally meet, across jurisdictional

lines, to pray and break bread and engage in kingdom thinking.

5. Clergy, laity and young people can attend the youth camps of other jurisdictions. Our camps are opportunities to get to know each other well, and form lasting friendships. One way to build a geographic diocese is to let it grow out of the camp experience, where bishops, clergy, laity and young people are together in a eucharistic community with daily teaching and witnessing. Last month's Camp in W. Jefferson, NC, the "Anglican Life Adventure Camp" included the APA, the REC and the DHC. Last week's camp in Dewitt, MI, "St. Michael's West" included FiF/NA and DHC. We can make a long list now of Anglicans sharing each others' camps.

6. Para-church organizations foster cooperation and common understandings. We can cite the good work of the Prayer Book Society. Clergy in the Society of the Holy Cross come from various jurisdictions. In the Society they are all in communion with one another, and have many opportunities for collaboration. The Fellowship of Concerned Churchmen continues its mission for unity. Last September's rally in Wilmington shed light upon our path. Festivals of Faith are dotting the landscape. The shared Pilgrimage in Fond du Lac opens doors, not least to Bishop Grafton's intercession.

7. It has long been Archbishop Robert Morse's conviction that an effective headquarters of a single province would be in Washington, D.C., close to the embassies, think tanks, colleges, military bases and places of civic pilgrimage. The Archbishop or Presiding Bishop of a new province would reside there and have his own diocese, comprised of the counties around the Capital.

8. For the proper revision of the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, a Standing Liturgical Commission of scholars from the various jurisdictions can draft a new Prayer Book for the new province.

9. Think, speak and act as though the new province is already in existence. This tends to bring it about in a powerful way. Refuse ingrown, narrow jurisdictional or denominational thinking, speaking or acting that limits God and grieves the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not very interested in our territorial squabbles. He wants us to learn "Kingdom Thinking," which is to see geographic regions as the places where we work together to present the claims of Christ to every person living in them, people who are starving for the Gospel.

All nine of these steps are being taken simultaneously: (1) Prayer, (2) the new province in England, (3) mergers of existing jurisdictions, (4) regional fellowships and emerging new geographic dioceses, (5) youth camps, (6) membership in para-church organizations (7) a headquarters in Washington, D.C. (8) revision of the Prayer Book and (9) Kingdom thinking.

It is all too human to say that a single province is humanly impossible to achieve. In fact, it is true that a single new province is humanly impossible. Many of the things God does in our midst are humanly impossible. It is humanly impossible that we have come this far. It was humanly impossible for the Israelites to get out of Egypt, go through the wilderness, and enter the Promised Land. Jesus' Resurrection is the impossible possibility. It was humanly impossible for 13 colonies that were virtually separate and sovereign nations to form these United States of America. St. John of the Cross said, "to get to a place where you do not want to go, you have to go by a path that does not exist." Not everyone wants to leave his comfort zone and strike out into uncharted territory, willing to let God help us with the amazing miracles and breakthroughs he has in store for us. But as we move out, as the militia Christi, the Lord shows us how to "make our luck" as we go along, and to trust that He has a vocation for us as Anglicans.

We can open ourselves to the possibilities of "break-through thinking." The Lord has his ways of showing us

what this is, not least from Holy Scripture. Break-through thinking is moving toward seemingly impossible goals through new and creative approaches, and letting go of entrenched patterns of thought, behaviour and organizational structure that bind us to the mundane and keep us from reaching our goals. That is what Jesus did on the Cross. The Holy Spirit is always releasing apostles and prophets into the Church, who are listening deeply to what He is saying to them, to break out of old ruts and be broken in repentance and humble service.

We can do no less than Thomas Watson, who was willing to turn IBM inside out, and stake its entire future on a bold plan to build a new computer that integrated the functions of nine older models, even though no one at the time knew quite how to do this. It is important for us to press on, because the Holy Spirit has opened up a window of opportunity for us. This is the kairotic moment for us to relinquish the existing pattern of guerilla units and become one army of the Lord, in the terrible battle which is upon us, the battle for Truth. We are to present the claims of Christ to everyone within sound of our voice.

The Church is the Sacrament of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of unity. The Church's unity is the sign to shattered, splintered humanity of wholeness and new life in Christ. Our unity is a given. We cannot make the Church one. It already is one. What we do is reveal this unity, or obscure it. In the Holy Spirit, in lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, we reveal the essential unity of the Body. In our own pride, prejudice, ignorance and unwillingness to submit to the mind of Christ, we obscure the unity of the Body. Where we have erred, (and all of our jurisdictions have made mistakes) we can come together in mutual repentance, and ask forgiveness of one another. Nothing reveals the unity of the Body like mutual repentance. We can agree to go forward with greater discipline in critical areas such as marriage standards for our bishops, clergy and people, by grandfathering, without

prejudice, the situations we find ourselves in, resolved to do better after a certain date.

In 1974 in Philadelphia, the father of lies made a ferocious attack on the Church we love, and our unity was grievously obscured. The great wounding began then, and there. But our heavenly Father has an amazing way of dealing with wounds. We see in nature how a bone is strongest where it was once broken, and now knit together. A weld in two pieces of steel is stronger than the original piece. Most sublimely, the wounds of Jesus' broken Body on the Cross are the very places where the new creation is intimated. Water and Blood and the Spirit bearing witness constitute the New Eve, taken from the wounded side of the Second Adam. Would it not be just like God to reveal healing and renewal in the very place where our community first fell apart?

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Then we can go on to let God use as He will, to fulfill our vocation as Anglicans: to help the two great lungs of the Church, Rome and Constantinople, breathe together again. In all this work we will have the priceless intercession of our Lady. The purpose is not to build institutional infrastructure but to proclaim the Gospel and reveal the Kingdom. To this end, the Father is forming in us one heart, and pouring out the Holy Spirit upon us, to reveal His Son Jesus as Saviour and Lord of all. With one mind and one mouth we glorify thee, Christ our God. Amen.

