

A REPORT ON THE 10th FORWARD IN FAITH/UK ASSEMBLY
17-18 OCTOBER 2003
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One of the great shock waves to hit the Anglican Communion was the recent election in New Hampshire of a practicing homosexual to the Episcopate. Concerned and alarmed Episcopalians rallied in a huge meeting in Dallas, and the new Archbishop of Canterbury called for an unprecedented meeting of all the primates of the Communion in Lambeth...

Introduction

One of the great shock waves to hit the Anglican Communion was the recent election in New Hampshire of a practicing homosexual to the Episcopate. Concerned and alarmed Episcopalians rallied in a huge meeting in Dallas, and the new Archbishop of Canterbury called for an unprecedented meeting of all the primates of the Communion in Lambeth. There the archbishops stated the obvious and stalled for time. In Dallas the focus was on the issue of homosexuality and the authority of Holy Scripture. In both places the bulk of the leadership is not yet up to speed on "the package deal" -- the interrelationship between homosexuality, ordination of women, use of inclusive or gender neutral language, the divorce culture, abortion and euthanasia.

These issues are all part of one larger issue, the gnostic attempt to re-define human nature apart from Christ. To accept any one of these issues is to accept them all. The Mind of Christ is clear on them all. To err in one is to err in all, wittingly or unwittingly. Error in any one of these issues ends inevitably in a denial of both Jesus' humanity and divinity. The great cataclysm that separated the Episcopal Church from the

Catholic Faith and turned it into a gnostic sect was the ordination of women in 1976. Many conservative Episcopalians have not even started to play catch-up with this catastrophe in apostolic order. To move towards and embrace orthodoxy, all of us must go into deeper repentance.

On the heels of the Dallas and Lambeth meetings, we gathered in London for the Forward in Faith - UK Assembly. FiF/UK is a ten year old energetic, unified and well-led movement that has identified the root problem and is working steadily toward a new free province in the Church of England...a province that will include Wales and Scotland, and be networked closely with the orthodox remnants in the rest of the Anglican Communion, in Scandinavia, and with the Continuum in the United States. The ultimate convergence point is Rome and Orthodoxy, in the consensus of the undivided Church of the first millennium. We are the bearers of a precious heritage, a gift for the Body, which need not be lost by absorption, with provision for self-governance such as the Orthodox will require.

A new province in the British Isles, to be enacted in law, must pass the hurdles of both the General Synod and Parliament. Failing this there are many bishops, clergy and laity who will do what we did in the United States after 1976. The legislation for the province will be presented in tandem with the legislation for the consecration of women bishops, not that far down the road, and the prospect for passage for the new province is good. In the meantime the committees on theological, legal and financial issues are busily at work. FiF/UK has built up an impressive head of steam and is gaining both speed and momentum.

The International Meeting

Every year the delegates from the United States, Australia, Norway and Sweden report on their progress. For years we had hoped that the delegation from the United States, once a thin thread, could be turned into a rope, a cable and then a bridge. This was the year that 19 delegates came from the United States, 17 of

them from the Diocese of the Holy Cross, whose Bishop, Robert Waggener, reported that we seek to be a catalyst for the formation of one province in the United States for orthodox Episcopalians who share FiF/UK's convergence point: the consensus of the undivided Church of the first millennium. All the traditionalist jurisdictions in the United States have slipped in one critical area: the standard of marriage for bishops. Might bishops have annulments? It is essential that we stand for catholic order in every one of the issues before us in today's culture of divorce and death.

Bishop Waggener was able to spend a week in England both before and after the Assembly, to meet with much of the leadership of FiF/UK, to get a feel for the Mother Church, understand the workings of FiF/UK, share our own experiences, intensify our networking and advance our unity in the United States. A special thanks goes to Canon David Wastie, who, together with Canon Geoffrey Neal, organized much of the Bishop's itinerary.

Fr. Roald Flemestad from the Nordic Catholic Church in Norway, under the oversight of Bishop Thaddeus Peplowski of the Polish National Catholic Church, reported on their growth, and recent purchase of a new church building. Fr. Göran Beijer from Sweden gave an update on this year's proclamation of the Missionary Province, an outgrowth of the Free Synod, to set up more koinonias, advance the cause of orthodox theological training and ensure orthodox episcopal oversight for the future.

The Assembly

We worked our way through the housekeeping and resolutions and then heard Fr. David Moyer's report on Forward in Faith/North America and the situation at Good Shepherd, Rosemont, and St. James the Less, Philadelphia. He and Archbishop John Hepworth of the Traditional Anglican Communion (TAC) had just been in Rome, and would be returning to Rome after the Assembly, to lay some more groundwork for the days

ahead. Fr. Moyer attended the Institution of the new cardinals in Rome, which included Philadelphia's new cardinal.

It was good to see religious from at least four orders: the Franciscans, Sisters of St. Margaret, Society of St. John the Evangelist and Sister Gerd from Sweden. Their experience of the life of prayer is essential to our stability.

Bp. John Broadhurst, the Chairman of FiF/UK and Bishop of Fulham, gave his address, and was warmly thanked for his, and the FiF/UK Council's, superb leadership. Bp. Broadhurst works with five flying bishops who look after what could be called "proto-dioceses," that are further subdivided into regional deaneries. Sitting here in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, one has to really appreciate the truly imaginative and thorough work of the FiF Council and priests like Fr. Geoffrey Kirk, traveling tirelessly throughout the UK to explain how necessary this new province is.

Bp Robert Ladds, SSC, of Whitby, finished up with a moving devotional address on the theme of sacrifice, from Cain and Abel to Jesus' Perfect Sacrifice, and His Resurrection. The great Pontifical Eucharist on Saturday, the Feast of St. Luke, was celebrated at Christ the King, Gordon Square with perhaps nine bishops and twenty priests concelebrating, and many hundreds of clergy and laity in the Congregation. Three regional deans were installed.

Further Networking

That evening the Waggeners and Canon Geoffrey Neal and I went to the home of Tony and Sheila Kilmister for dinner, where we were joined by Bryan and Beryl Parkin. Tony is a past president of the Prayer Book Society, and Bryan is a churchwarden at nearby St. Peter's, Bushey Heath. On Sunday morning we went to the 8 and 9:30 am Masses at St. Peter's, about 25 miles northwest of central London. Bp. Waggener gave an address and afterwards it was good to see how grateful the people are to meet Anglicans from overseas

who want to link up. Our Sunday dinner was at Bryan and Beryl's home, and that evening we visited St. Alban's Cathedral, to venerate England's proto-martyr at his Shrine.

By Monday some of our American delegates were spreading out on various sightseeing jaunts, and I accompanied the Waggeners' on a tour of Canterbury Cathedral and the Shrine of St. Thomas a Becket. On Tuesday I celebrated the Eucharist for a contingent of the Church Army, and was treated afterwards, with Fr. Geoffrey, to an extraordinary dinner, prepared by Sisters Ruth and Iris. Fr. Geoffrey is filling in at St. Peter's. One of the early founders of FiF/UK, he is now the Regional Dean of the Ouse Deanery and the priest who in 1998, while working with us in Virginia, gave the needed encouragement to build a bridge with FiF/UK. On Wednesday, very early, Deacon John Richards and I made our way to Heathrow, courtesy of John and Lynda Lang of St. Peter's.

Conclusions

1. The Prayer Book Societies, in the UK and the US, might consider not only preserving our liturgical tradition, but proposing the groundwork for principles of revision. For example, rather than re-working existing revisions like the American Book of '79 (a rather mechanical approach to a deeply flawed book) we should use the organic approach of seeing our Liturgy as a snowball rolling down a hill, accumulating snow from every elevation on the hill. We want to incorporate elements from every period of our history.
2. We must recognize the importance of the Religious Life in any new province in the US.
3. Just as FiF/UK has brought a Roman Catholic and an Orthodox theologian onto the committee to draft theological position papers, so we ought in the US to do the same, as we build the new province.
4. In the US, the Diocese of the Holy Cross will offer itself as a catalyst in the formation of this new

province, and broker to other jurisdictions its contacts and gains. We can encourage other jurisdictions to send delegates to the Assembly in London, and propose to them that London is our paradigm and convergence point.

5. We can reply to Pope John Paul II's invitation in his Encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint*, "to reflect with him in light of Scripture and the earliest practices of the Church on ways to reshape the exercise of the Petrine Office." (Robert P. George, "The Divisions We Must Sustain," *Touchstone*, Vol. 16, No. 6, p. 51) Our Orthodox and Scandinavian brethren can join in this, and our reply can be hand delivered to Rome, after which we spend some time in Athens.

6. We need to be even more involved with the Orthodox, and to open more communication with them at every level. As Rome seeks to do the same (no earthly agenda being closer to the Pope's heart) we can be useful to Rome, as a shoe-horn, to help her fit herself into the Orthodox mold.

7. The basis of all closer fellowship in the Holy Spirit is mutual repentance and humility. At every Mass we pray that "we and all thy whole Church may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of his passion." We can picture the Pope at the recent cardinals' institution and ring ceremony, bent over his prayer desk...a soul dragging a body, it has been said. His witness is increasingly a magnificent silence, an icon of Philippians 3, especially verses 10 and 14, "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that if possible I may attain the resurrection of the dead...I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."