

Ecclesial Existence Today

Douglas Farrow

“For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things come and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. But not everyone knows this.”¹

What is the Church?

The crisis in the Anglican Church of Canada does not concern the word Anglican – at least not in the first instance – much less the word Canada. It concerns the word Church.

What is the church? Whatever else may be said in answer to that question, and whatever may be disputed between the churches, we must surely say at least this: The church is the community of the new covenant between God and humanity that is grounded in the self-offering of Jesus Christ and confesses him as Lord. What is happening in the Anglican Church of Canada today, as epitomized by resolution A-134, is a crisis for the faithful precisely because it reveals a different and contrary premise.

I want to reiterate here the key point in my response to General Synod in the article “Different Gods,”² which leaned especially on a statement found in the Barmen Declaration: “We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords – areas in which we would not need justification and sanctification through him.” This statement of denial,

of repudiation of other would-be lords, is founded on an evangelical affirmation,³ as all good confessional theology should be: “As Jesus Christ is God's assurance of the forgiveness of all our sins, so, in the same way and with the same seriousness, he is also God's mighty claim upon our whole life. Through him befalls us a joyful deliverance from the godless fetters of this world for a free, grateful service to his creatures.”

Here is the gospel with which the church has been entrusted, the gospel by which the Holy Spirit enables it to *be* the church, and to serve the world as only the church can. It is a gospel of deliverance and of allegiance – of total deliverance, hence of unqualified allegiance. It is the same gospel preached by Moses to Israel: “Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, ‘This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: “You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”’” (Exo. 19:4ff., NIV) It is this same gospel, only the deliverance is not merely deliverance from the lords of Egypt but from the lordship of sin and death; and the divine deliverer’s accomplice is none other than his own Son, who in his incarnate person and priestly work has brought us even unto God.

The church is the community of the new or renewed covenant between God and humanity that is grounded in the self-offering of Jesus Christ, the one offering that is truly acceptable to God. It is a community that owes to him its unqualified allegiance. There is no sphere of life or of death in or from which it has not been delivered by him, or in which it may own some other lord in preference to him. It is also a community that participates in his priestly mission to bring the world to God (to bring “many sons to glory,” as Hebrews puts it) just because it has been liberated from the godless fetters of this world for a free and grateful service to God’s creatures.⁴ There is not now, nor ever shall be – for his kingdom shall have no end – any ecclesial existence that is not existence on these terms.

The Loss of Evangelical Insight

Let me say at once that it is incidental that the creatures immediately at issue in our church crisis happen to be homosexuals. It is incidental, that is, to the gospel; for God loves all his creatures, including those of homosexual inclination, with perfect consistency and the mission of Jesus Christ is a mission to homosexuals and heterosexuals alike. It is not incidental, however, to our culture or to our society's indifference to the love of God. For it is in rejection of the glory and love of God that human beings and whole societies are cast back, not upon a covenant of divine grace, but upon their own resources for salvation. The celebration of homosexuality is one tell-tale consequence of this rejection, as St Paul reminded the Romans. So, we may add, is the shift in the church from the language of grace and of covenant obligations to the language of rights (neither discourse being well-understood even in the church).

Now it disturbs me greatly that love for our neighbours, which to be authentic must flow from love for God, has fallen so low that we have become almost incapable even of that rational concern that still marks thoughtful non-Christians. One often looks in vain, in our internal debates about homosexuality, for patient and careful questioning of popular assumptions about human psychology and biology, equality rights, the rights and welfare and education of children, the contraceptive mentality, etc., or for serious analysis of public policy questions related to the enormous cultural disaster that is same-sex marriage.⁵ No, in the Anglican Church we are all "heart" and "compassion" - treacherous ideals when detached from reason, never mind from the gospel - hence all disjointed anecdotes and non sequiturs.⁶ But much more disturbing still is the fact that we seem to have become incapable of genuinely evangelical thought, of thought liberated through obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our lack of due diligence on the homosexual question is merely a symptom of the fact that our culture's indifference to God's love has infected the Anglican Church of Canada, calling into question its right to call itself "church."

That, no doubt, is why we foolishly attribute the present crisis to all the wrong causes: Liberals, so-called, to the intolerance of social conservatives, especially those of a supposedly fundamentalist bent; or to a conflict of interest between the church in enlightened democratic societies and the church in non-western cultures marked by patriarchy and homophobia; or even to a conflict of love, love for homosexual friends near to hand and for our many brethren out there in the “developing” world. The first of these charges is no more than the pot calling the kettle black; the second, its moment of truth notwithstanding, comes from a culture blinded by the beam in its own eye; the third, if not darkest cynicism, is dereliction of duty, for it begs the obvious question. What *is* love, Christianly speaking, and what should love do?

Conservatives – even the very label betrays them. What has conservatism to do with the gospel? Conservatism, as Oliver O’Donovan remarks, is an attempt “to tame the apocalyptic strength of novelty to the point where it can be managed by a comfortable process of adaptation.”⁷ That may describe well enough the labours of Lambeth Palace, or even of Church House in Toronto, but it can hardly describe those who take their cue from the good news of the resurrection of the Crucified. “Conservative evangelical” is an oxymoron. Unfortunately such conflicted creatures do exist, and, like their traditionalist comrades, they often attribute the crisis in the church to its failure to be properly Anglican (by which they mean properly biblical, though on their side it is not always made clear whether and how scripture, tradition and reason cohere).⁸ They thus invite, and may even deserve, the taunt from the synodic majority – and from its lawyers – “Who owns the church?”⁹

This very question, however, may serve to call us back to evangelical thinking. The church is the community of the covenant that is grounded in Jesus Christ. As such, it is the church of God and of this Man – not your church or my church or even our church. If it is in crisis, its crisis can only be a crisis of the gospel. If the issue of homosexuality will not submit to analysis in gospel terms, then leave it to the real conservatives; that is, to those responsible for a comfortable process of adaptation.¹⁰

And yet it does submit. “We affirm the integrity and sanctity of committed adult

same-sex relationships”: when this resolution is measured against the gospel we discover that it amounts to an anti-gospel; when we think about it ecclesologically we discover that it rests on a premise hostile to the very being of the church.

Building the Golden Bull

I said in “Different Gods” that resolution A-134, amendment six, exemplifies the principle that what we are in ourselves is already pleasing to God, requiring no redemption in Christ. That is, it does something more than change Christian moral teaching by asserting, in contradiction of Holy Scripture, that homosexual relations fall within the divine plan and purpose for human sexuality. It does something more than assert that “committed” sexual relationships – though lying outside the marriage covenant that sacramentally participates in the bond between Christ and the church – are nonetheless sanctified. In doing that, it concedes what cannot be conceded without denying the gospel itself and the church with it; namely, that the persons involved in such relationships carry within them, in their very capacity for such relationships, their *own* holiness and their *own* sanctification. It speaks, in other words, as if there are areas of our life in which we do not belong to Jesus Christ, but to ourselves or to other lords, “areas in which we do not need justification and sanctification through him.”

We ought to consider carefully what this means. To the advocates of gay liberation it means quite simply the removal of another roadblock to the full acceptance of homosexual lifestyles by society at large; not merely of permanent and exclusive homosexual bonding, at which few aim or even wish to aim, but of homosexual lifestyles generally (a point that has been clear for more than thirty years now).¹¹ But that is not our concern here. Our concern here is with the gospel as the *conditio sine qua non* of the church, and as the chief treasure of our love for our neighbours. What does it mean for the gospel? What it means for the gospel is that the gospel has nothing essential to say, and nothing essential to offer, where human sexuality is concerned. Where human sexuality is concerned, there is need only of an amorphous and strictly

subjective component called “commitment.” Which is tantamount to saying that Jesus is neither saviour nor Lord of human sexuality – indeed, if he is not the one he cannot be the other. And if not of human sexuality, then of what exactly?

A-134 represents a curious but recognizable mixture of Pelagian and gnostic heresies. It is Pelagian because it pushes us back on our own resources for salvation; it is gnostic in so far as it attempts to locate salvation in the spirit alone, rendering what is done in the body an arbitrary matter; it is both, in that it renders inconsequential the offering up of the incarnate One. Not to put too fine a point on it, A-134 invites and demands, of those who would be consistent, worship and obedience not to “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” but to “the God that is in you.”¹² Behind the Pelagian and gnostic tendencies we discover that fundamentally un-Christian premise about what the church is. The church is no longer understood to be grounded in the self-offering of Jesus Christ alone; nor is it a community that confesses his sole lordship. It is grounded in *our* offering as well as his, and our offering, like Cain’s, is whatever we choose to make of it.¹³

Heresies, of course, like the poor, we have always with us; nor can any of us claim to be entirely free of heretical tendencies. Is it not, then, the charitable thing, in pointing out the heresy, to suggest that perhaps it is all a mistake, requiring for its correction only a little more effort at catechesis? There are, after all, three years until General Synod meets again. Why should anyone feel a need to speak, as I did in “Different Gods,” of being utterly divided from the Anglican Church of Canada in its present form? Is that not a form of intemperance, a vice listed by the scriptures alongside that of deviant sexual behaviour? Should we not simply make our complaint, or rather make our point, and then go home to our own churches to build up the saints?

Would that it were all a mistake, a misunderstanding and nothing more! No doubt with many individuals that is the case, and individuals must be treated with pastoral discretion. But things are different with authoritative bodies. General Synod has spoken. It has declared its mind, and its mind is not that of the church of Jesus

Christ. By passing A-134, as amended, it has turned a second-order issue – Christian moral teaching on sexuality – into a first-order issue, a community-defining issue. Like Israel at Sinai, it has cast into the fire such gold as it has to hand. It has begun building its virility god, albeit one that is quite sterile, to go before it.

I do not make this charge lightly. I believe that what the Episcopalians and the Anglican Church of Canada have done, in their different ways – one by deed, the other by word affirming the deed – fits the archetypal unfaithfulness of those who at Sinai refused the situation that God has determined for his people. In the absence of their Master, who is alone with God in the secret times and places of the holy mountain, they have become impatient and gone a-whoring after the old deities. They have broken not only the tablets of the law, but denied the gospel that underwrites those tablets.¹⁴

Unity is Impossible

To the extent that this is true, unity in the Anglican Church of Canada has become impossible. The only possible response to this sort of heresy, and to the program of moral corruption that must necessarily follow from it, is rejection root and branch. For the church that follows this path is no longer the church.

We need not marvel at those plaintive voices that profess their inability to understand why unity is impossible. “We see no reason why Anglicanism should not remain united while disagreeing about the ethics of homosexuality,” they say.¹⁵ And indeed they do not see, for their understanding of church unity, like their understanding of the church itself, is not rooted in the gospel. Unity for them is not a function of the common life in Christ, but of a conservative decision-making process – a comfortable process of adaptation – which they more or less equate with the common life in Christ. Unity does not require standing with Moses or even with Jesus; it requires only a standing together. Unity, like sex, has no given content; it is strictly consensual.¹⁶

Against this notion of unity the ad hoc commission that was struck by the

Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Kasper has rightly warned us, in the wake of the suspension of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission. Against it Canon J. A. Douglas warned us many years ago in his report on the Orthodox Delegation to the Lambeth Conference of 1930: "God prepares miracles. But until the antinomy is resolved between those who among us believe that an incontrovertible Revelation has been given to the Church and those who believe all Revelation to be relative and would cheerfully accept for themselves the Russian Khomiakov's ironic designation of the Lutheran Churches as a body of good men eagerly seeking after Truth, but certain that they cannot attain to it, our Union or Intercommunion with the Orthodox will be difficult, humanly speaking, of achievement."¹⁷

It now appears, as it had to, that even our own internal union cannot hold. For this much may be granted to those who hold this defective notion of the church and its unity - a body of good men! - namely, that they have managed enough of a grip on Anglicanism in the twentieth century to see mockery made of the Solemn Declaration of 1893, wherein the first Canadian General Synod bound itself to a very different view: "We declare this Church to be, and desire that it shall continue, in full communion with the Church of England throughout the world, as an integral portion of the One Body of Christ composed of Churches which, united under the One Divine Head and in the fellowship of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, hold the One Faith revealed in Holy Writ, and defined in the Creeds as maintained by the undivided primitive Church..."

It is not by accident that the move to overturn Christian teaching on homosexuality has been made, in our circles, by those who have rebelled against the Solemn Declaration both in principle and in particulars, who indeed scoff at the very notion of credal orthodoxy.¹⁸ Nor is it an accident that they must now attack especially its notion of Christian unity. But we have every reason to insist that one cannot sanely acknowledge one and the same church, as represented by General Synod 1893 and General Synod 2004 respectively. We have therefore to choose, and the choice is clear: We will choose - if we are not conservative but evangelical - 1893. We will therefore

stand in our time and yet out of it, in our place and yet out of it, looking upwards to the holy mountain and forwards to the promised city of God, not downwards and backwards to that city of man from which, by the blood of Jesus Christ, we were redeemed.

Unity has now become impossible: let our “Broad Church” friends hear this clearly and let them understand that we hold them partly responsible. Was it not the Broad Church movement that taught us to find the truth about God within ourselves, to transform the analogy of faith into an ever-more-slippery analogy of experience, to be inspired by the Bible but to be governed in our reading of it by the culture rather than by the creeds? Its remaining representatives may think that they are well positioned to broker a deal, if a deal can be brokered. But the Broad Church coalition is itself broken and will not be remade. Advocates of what today is called the Inclusive Church, running on ahead, have exposed its weakness. Broad Church leaders lead as Aaron led when Moses was away on the mountain. They may be more or less well-meaning, but they cannot prevent the people (even those with collars) from doing what comes naturally, from following their own gods, from constructing their golden bull.¹⁹ At the end of the day, all they can do is build an altar in front of it, and declare that “tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord.”²⁰ But that is a festival to which the faithful will not come.

What is to be Done?

When Moses returned from the mountain he was instructed by the Lord to put swords in the hands of the faithful and to set them against their brothers. Woe to those who think that this is what must be done today, however figuratively – whether externally through courts of law or internally through parish putsches. When Jesus came to fulfill the law of Moses, and to make effective the gospel of Moses, he established a new economic and strategic order. What Moses did first, he would do second, and what Moses did second, he would do first. That is to say, he would stand first before God

with Moses' words on his lips: "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold. But now, please forgive their sin – but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written." He who has borne our sins in his own body on the tree has put but one sword in our hands, the sword of the gospel. What we do now must be a gospel deed.

Our task is to discern together what the gospel requires of us in order to affirm ecclesial existence today, for ourselves and for the sake of our neighbours, in the face of the growing apostasy of the Anglican Church of Canada, an apostasy formalized at General Synod 2004. Let the prophets among us give their counsel – I would rather hear it than my own – but I will not shy altogether from my part in the task, or from warning that the deed to be done is one of suffering as well as of rejoicing. What I have to say follows, I believe, from the perspective I have tried to offer here. It will bring us round to some peculiarly Anglican considerations, for the crisis, which is not confined to the Anglican Church, does have Anglican dimensions that we can hardly overlook.

I venture three suggestions. First, it is right that we should offer repentance on behalf of ourselves and our churches. We are all complicit, we are all responsible for the present church crisis, in so far as we have failed fully to proclaim and to live the gospel.²¹ And we have failed. Only very rarely does our preaching accept as its main burden the task of setting forth Christ. Low church, high church, middle church, any church – all seem to have more important things to talk about. Only very rarely are our liturgies transparent to him. Only very rarely do our neighbours have occasion to marvel at the vitality that can only come from him. Few of us are accused of being full of the Holy Spirit and of power.

Among other things, this repentance will mean fasting, and in many places our fasting may also have to be a eucharistic fast. Certainly we cannot offer together the Great Thanksgiving when our disagreement is so fundamental. If resolution A-134 does indeed represent, as I have charged, a theology of offering incompatible with the gospel, and as such the setting up of false gods, then we cannot make offering together with those who affirm that resolution (just as we cannot make offering together with

those who attempt to do so in some other name than that of Jesus Christ, or to some other "God" than the Father). Nor, as members of a church episcopal in structure and theology, can we retreat into private or purely congregational eucharists – there is no such thing – as if isolating ourselves in some vain attempt at purity. What we can do is perform an act of corporate repentance by committing ourselves to morning and evening prayer until the situation is resolved, and unity in the truth is restored under the oversight of catholic bishops.

Exceptions should be made for the sick and the dying, of course, and this fast need not be observed in the same way in dioceses whose bishops publicly repudiate A-134 and discipline those clergy who draw their flock away into disobedience and apostasy.²² Yet if undertaken it will bring trouble to many, without a doubt. Repentance comes at a cost and for this we must prepare ourselves. (On the whole question of eucharistic fellowship and discipline, I have offered here an appendix that may serve to inform our discussions, though it does not address many of the practical questions sure to arise.)²³

Second, it is right that we should be prepared to give up property and security in pursuit of "free and grateful" service to the Lord of the church. When leaders of the synagogue in Ephesus became obstinate and refused the gospel, Paul and the other believers went out to the lecture hall of Tyrannus. They resumed the mission in rented quarters, and in the space of two years "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord," attending which there were a great many conversions and public acts of repentance, and also, when the economic core of the city was itself touched by the results, persecution and a riot! As long as it is our intention chiefly to protect what is ours – buildings, livings, pension funds, social standing, individual financial "freedom," etc. – we cannot pretend to be undertaking a gospel act like that of Moses or of Jesus.

Third, it is right that we should renew our own devotion to Christian unity. Ecclesial existence today, in the face of local and even national apostasy, may indeed mean to become more authentically Anglican than we have been hitherto, through

greater faithfulness both to the scriptures and to the Book of Common Prayer. It may mean binding ourselves together in renewed commitment to the same, even to the breaking of fellowship with those who have set aside the divine authority of the one and the rightful governance of the other. But if the unity we seek is a unity of the gospel, if it is a unity authentically Christian – a unity in Christ and in the Holy Spirit – then it cannot be a merely Anglican unity. This is a time of reckoning for us all. How far does our devotion to Christian unity go, and how consistent is it? If we find warrant in the gospel for a realignment (to use the popular euphemism) *within* Anglicanism, may we not also find warrant for a realignment *of* Anglicanism?

Of course, if Anglicanism is mere protestantism such questions need not be asked. Fragmentation is our doom. But insofar as Anglicanism aspires, as in the Solemn Declaration, to being catholic and apostolic – a portion of the one church dedicated to the recovery of ecclesial unity – they are crucial. The ecumenical implications of decisions about reconfiguration will have to be considered very carefully, together with the whole business of Anglicanism's *raison d'être*. Anglicanism, at its best, was the best reform movement the sixteenth century could muster. At its worst it *was* mere protestantism, not to say a detour into rank Erastianism. Humbled by the fact that it now finds itself a fractured communion, riddled – and not only in the west – with forms of cultural syncretism and political servitude as egregious as any Rome and Orthodoxy have seen, perhaps it is time for Anglicanism to pursue, not its own unity, so much as that of the church.

This will necessarily involve rethinking both the clerical and administrative structures of our Anglican churches, and the relation between the servant priesthood and the royal priesthood – which in any case is desperately needed if our churches are to recover their missionary function. There is much here to be debated, in the right forum, including the vexatious question of the ordination of women and the old but still pressing question of our relation to Rome. May we not hope to cast new light on all of this? But a word of caution on a closely related and more immediately pressing matter: No service is done internally or externally, from the standpoint of Christian unity, by

abandoning the notion of territorial episcopal responsibility, however tortured and tortuous it has become through conflicting claims. That notion requires careful qualification, to be sure, by means of an eschatological analysis that cannot be offered here, but it also calls for a spirit of repentance, not only with respect to the present but with respect to the past. For this too is a question of our collective witness to the lordship of Christ and to the appearing of his kingdom.²⁴

Well, you must judge for yourselves the rightness of my three suggestions – or how they might be made right, for they are but broadly sketched in no very satisfactory manner, though the appendix may help a little. I fear I will be misunderstood at the last, however, if I fail to add these final remarks.

Ad Rem

Karl Barth wrote his famous *Theological Existence Today!* (which the German government quickly banned) on the occasion of the imposition by the Nazis, in June 1933, of a new set of authority structures and authority figures in the German protestant church. But he did not write it simply to protest that imposition or to support the New Reformation movement that had arisen in defence of the church's formal independence from the state. Indeed, he reserved his harshest criticism for the New Reformation men, because (as he saw it) they held out to the church a subtle but deadly temptation: the temptation to respond to the crisis by seeking salvation through church politics rather than by seeking it where alone it can be found. Formal independence was of no value – indeed, it was of negative value – apart from material independence. What had to be recognized was that the church had its own leader, hence its own *Führer-Prinzip*, and that leader was and is the Lord, Jesus Christ.

What is at stake in our own church crisis is not mere formal independence from a body we regard as having lost the authority of the gospel, or from bishops who no longer proclaim the gospel. What is at stake is material dependence on “the one Word of God whom we have to hear, and whom we have to trust and obey, in life and in

death" (Barmen). It is quite possible to establish, as we must, some measure of formal independence from, or even to sever all ties with, General Synod; to set up a network of confessing churches and to hope that the wider Anglican communion will recognize this network as its true partner in Canada. But we could do all of that without taking a single step nearer to what we are called to be, namely, the church of Jesus Christ. In fact, we could expend so much energy doing it that we actually lose track of our ecclesial vocation to share in the mission and ministry of Christ. And we could end up – let us heed the warning voices! – no more than a self-appointed chaplain to socially conservative culture, in much the same way that the Anglican Church of Canada is today no more than an aspiring chaplain to so-called progressive or “liberal” culture.

As Barth put it, “even a reform of the church chiefly affecting its external aspect ought to spring from the internal requirement of the church’s life itself: it ought to issue from obedience to the Word of God, or else it is no reform of the *church*.”²⁵ This is what we must aim at – this and nothing else. To hear, in this moment of crisis, “the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword,” to hear “what the Spirit says to the churches” about their witness to him, is our first task.

APPENDIX

1. On eucharistic fellowship

- a. the sacrament of the eucharist is the enabling means and the fullest expression (martyrdom excepted) of the church's *koinonia en christo*; in it the body of Christ, both in the literal and in the extended or ecclesial sense, is presented to us and to the Father, albeit in an eschatological mystery
- b. eucharistic fellowship is a *koinonia with Christ*, and so with the Father, and *in Christ*, and so with one another, both these dimensions being epicletic functions of the Holy Spirit's eschatological ministry
- c. eucharistic fellowship both grounds ordered ministry and is itself ordered by it, through the apostolic ministry of word and sacrament; the bishop functions as an effective sign of that order and ministry, and so also of Christian unity

2. On the threat to eucharistic fellowship

- a. eucharistic integrity is threatened where Christ is not preached in accordance with apostolic faith, or where lack of charity or obedience disrupts unity in Christ
- b. a bishop who refuses to preach Christ in the apostolic way, or to practice and encourage charity and obedience, is a special threat to the integrity of eucharistic fellowship: such a bishop requires correction by his fellow presbyters and the college of bishops; if he refuses that correction it is necessary for the sake of the church, and for his own sake, that he be disciplined or even deposed
- c. in part because the ACC only rarely, if ever, exercises such discipline, the situation has arisen in which a significant number of bishops now fall into that category – enough that canonical discipline is no longer even an available option, and that the church has in many places become ignorant of or rebellious against Christian truth and the Christian way of life

3. On the response of the faithful

- a. response should begin with the bishops, who, by virtue of their special vocation, authority, and obligation to the wider church, should break eucharistic fellowship with fellow bishops who openly deny the ecumenically agreed substance of the faith, including the basics of Christian moral teaching
- b. faithful clergy and laity should likewise be encouraged to refuse communion with their bishop if he is placed under this de facto discipline; under such circumstances clergy should be offered a letter from the orthodox bishops recognizing their authority for ministry, on condition that they submit to the pastoral guidance and oversight of the same, as exercised by the nearest such bishop on behalf of the rest; and the laity should be encouraged to receive communion only with and from priests so recognized
- c. those clergy and parishes deprived of their livings and places of worship by a bishop with whom they have broken communion should be supported as far as possible by a fund set up for that purpose; if the orthodox bishops, though acting and authorizing as one body, are individually or collectively threatened with canonical discipline by the ACC, they should stand together and make a common defence, appealing to the wider Anglican communion for support

4. On warrant

- a. such actions have been undertaken many times in the history of the church, for good reasons (defence of the creed, for example) and bad (conformity to the will of Henry VIII, say); that they should be undertaken now is evident in so far as the gospel and authority of Jesus Christ are challenged by fellow bishops
- b. that is most obviously the case where bishops have abandoned the Nicene faith, and acts of discipline should begin there; but it is also the case where bishops undertake to alter the sacrament of marriage or to change church teaching on sexuality (for example, blessing sexual intimacy outside of marriage), since they have no authority to do so and, in doing so, do grave injury to church unity

- c. no disciplinary action or inaction is warranted that in itself does further injury to the unity of the universal church; whatever course is taken must be a course that leads the faithful deeper into unity with all who hold to the Nicene faith and to the Christian way of life, and who respect episcopal order as far as possible under the conditions of a church seeking to overcome its historic divisions

Douglas Farrow

¹ 1 Cor 8:5ff. (NIV) This address was prepared for “The Way Forward” conference in Ottawa, 30 August 2004. Responsibility for the views expressed here is the author’s alone. Douglas Farrow is associate professor of Christian Thought at McGill University.

² 6 June 2004 (www.anglicancommunioninstitute.org/articles/farrowgods.htm)

³ I use the word “evangelical” etymologically.

⁴ In Luther’s programmatic expression: “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”

⁵ On which see especially *Divorcing Marriage: Unveiling the Dangers in Canada’s New Social Experiment*, ed. D. Cere and D. Farrow (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004).

⁶ If you seek an illustration, I point you to an embarrassingly inadequate analysis in the *National Post*, written by one who should have known better: see Ted Scott, “Why I cannot accept the Pope’s Invitation” (5 January 2004).

⁷ *Resurrection and Moral Order* (Eerdmans 1986), 185.

⁸ Or whether we should follow St Paul in fingering the collapse of reason as the final failure of same-sex proponents; cf. Rom. 1:22.

⁹ See e.g., David Cook, “Whose is the Episcopal Church?” (www.rci.rutgers.edu/~lcrew/dojustice/j201.html)

¹⁰ In a penetrating critique of an earlier Oxford moralist, Bishop Kenneth Kirk, O’Donovan observes that the genius of institutional conservatism “is its admiration for the adaptability of tradition, its delight in social institutions which can float gloriously down the stream of time, negotiating all its bends without accident” (op cit. 167). Seen in this light, what is happening to the good ship Anglican is not a result of the triumph of the liberals, as many suppose, but of the *conservatives*. In North America the ship’s senior

officers, such as Captain Griswold and First Mate Michael Ingham, are simply trying to steer it free of a local peril posed by social change. On their view, the homosexual bend in the river of western culture might have been negotiated without so much as scraping the Anglican's hull, were it not for unruly evangelicals making the ship difficult to manoeuvre. That problem can doubtless be solved, however, by disembarking the ring-leaders and lightening the ship, which can then be floated back into the main current.

¹¹ Jonathan Rauch's recent book, *Gay Marriage: Why It Is Good for Gays, Good for Straights, and Good for America* (Times Books, 2004), represents an exception, but in effect Rauch is asking us to reassert the marriage ideal by fundamentally altering our very concept of marriage. One cannot do both these things at once.

¹² The latter phrase is Schleiermacher's, from the final line of the Fifth Speech, and I do not think that I twist his meaning. The "time of caution and timidity" is past! It is time to reassert the ancient wisdom of the divinity of the human spirit and to enter "into the one indivisible fellowship of the saints, which embraces all religions." (This is the path Ingham followed in *Mansions of the Spirit: The Gospel in a Multi-faith World*, Anglican Book Centre, 1997.)

¹³ The BAS is ambiguous here, as so often; its revised eucharistic prayers are right to present our self-offering as something that takes place in, with, and through Christ's redemptive offering, but wrong to imply (as some of the prefaces and peripheral prayers do) that they somehow comprise that offering.

¹⁴ See further my *Ascension and Ecclesia* (T. & T. Clark, 1999), chap. 6, though no mention is made there of the present crisis.

¹⁵ From a submission of the Modern Churchpeople's Union to the Eames Commission.

¹⁶ "We believe that this granting of time and freedom, within which a consensus can slowly arise or change, is justified by the Anglican understanding of authority. Central to the traditional balance of Scripture, reason and tradition is the recognition that no single authority is infallible and we therefore need them all to balance each other. This makes Anglican theology open, in the sense that every age has the potential to discover new insights. The methodology is inductive rather than deductive; absolute certainty is not given to us, so theological reflection should be done with humility and creativity. Within the church divergent voices need to be heard, or our ears will be blocked; churches at their best are inclusive." (ibid.)

¹⁷ *The Christian East* (Summer 1930) 11:2, pp. 49-64 (source: Project Canterbury).

¹⁸ They are joined, to be sure, by some (in England Jeffrey John comes to mind, in America Eugene Rogers) who think that same-sex blessings are compatible with church dogma, but the best attempts to demonstrate that only lead further into a hopeless quagmire of theological confusion and heretical notions, as I have tried to show elsewhere. See “Beyond Nature, Shy of Grace” in the *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 5.3 (2003) 261-86; cf. Rowan Williams’ remarkably uncritical review of the same book in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 56 (2003) 82ff.

¹⁹ On 1 Nov. 2003, looking ahead to the morrow’s consecration of Canon Robinson, *The Guardian* (online) reported that “worshippers in the state have donated gold wedding rings and family heirlooms to be melted down into the new bishop’s ceremonial pectoral cross, which he will wear over his heart on official occasions.”

²⁰ Exodus 32:3. Immediately after the Robinson consecration Bishop Howe wrote as follows to Bishop Griswold: “You have helped us learn to be civil with each other, and for that I am grateful, but you have led us deeply into a world of ‘pluriformity’ in which there is, ultimately, no truth on which we can rely. And hence many are hailing yesterday’s consecration as a “new thing God is doing” in spite of its contradiction of what God has actually said!”

²¹ When I say “live” I do not mean as regards sex only, of course, though I do mean as regards sex *also*. If we say to our fellow Anglicans that the gospel requires sexual relations between Christians to witness to the higher truth of the bridegroom (Christ) and the bride (the church), and if we insist that same-sex relations cannot do this, what of our own sexual relations? Do *they* do this?

²² See Rev. 2:12ff.; cf. 2 Tim. 4:1ff.

²³ This discussion paper on eucharistic fellowship was drafted before General Synod 2004.

²⁴ “Jesus is Lord” – this has implications for the world as well as for the church, hence for the way in which the church construes its relation to the world, even administratively.

²⁵ *Theological Existence Today!* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1933), 19.