

REPORT OF THE HISTORIOGRAPHER OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

In the summer of 2000, I was nominated by the Presiding Bishop and elected by General Convention to the honorary office of Historiographer of the Episcopal Church under Canon I.1.5(d), and this is my second triennial report as the tenth holder of that office. My responsibility as Historiographer is to “promote throughout the Episcopal Church the serious study and intelligent use of the history of the church in every place and from every century of its existence.”

During this triennium, as Historiographer in service to the Office of the Presiding Bishop, I have:

- Prepared a memorandum on the history of the Episcopal Church’s hymnal and metrical psalter in the various sizes and editions that have been published with the Book Of Common Prayer from 1789 to 1918;
- Prepared a survey of the history and theology of the Armenian Church and a list of basic Armenian conversational and ecclesiastical terms for the Presiding Bishop’s nine-day visit to Armenia in 2005;
- Worked, with the Presiding Bishop’s Chancellor, on legal and historical affidavits for the Episcopal Church’s property rights in the case of certain would-be breakaway congregations;
- For the New York Public Library, wrote an analysis of a recently discovered seventeenth-century Russian Orthodox manuscript (penned in Latin) against the insertion of the *filioque* clause into the Nicene Creed by the Roman Church, for publication in an Eastern European festschrift; and facilitated the transfer of a source collection of Byzantine Church historical documents, and gave an historical presentation at a symposium, “Russia Engages the West;”
- Keynoted the annual conference on women’s history in Chicago with a plea for recognition of Saint Blandina among the Martyrs of Lyons in the calendar, and chaired a panel of younger historians and theologians on Lutheran-Episcopal relations;
- Convenor for the Conference of Anglican Church Historians;
- Delivered four public lectures on the ecumenical councils of the early church;
- Wrote an introductory commentary on the Venerable Bede’s “Ecclesiastical History of the Early English Church and People.”

In my own research, my 464-page volume of translations from Greek and Latin patristic source materials in the “Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture” series, dealing with the history of biblical exegesis in the early church was published in April, 2005. Consisting of key readings translated from early church writers with a related historical introduction illustrating how the bible was interpreted over the first eight centuries of the church’s history, the volume covers an area often overlooked by modern “critical” commentaries on scripture as well as by theologians. This 28-volume series published by InterVarsity—to which I prepared the volume on Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon—marks a breakthrough in scholarship and ecumenism, a catholic and evangelical collaboration endorsed by many.

My shorter publications in the past triennium have included:

- Essay (drawn from Latin manuscript sources) on Walter Reynolds, an early fourteenth-century archbishop of Canterbury, for the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography;
- Essay on “Early Prayer Book Translations in Foreign Languages” for the Oxford Companion to the Book of Common Prayer;
- Essay in the Anglican Theological Review on the failure of the Windsor Report to take cognizance of the history of international Anglican ecumenical relations.

In the past triennium I have presented on Anglican and Episcopal heraldry, Celtic spirituality, the history and meaning of icons, Anglican ecclesiology, and Anglican/Episcopal Marian devotion. In Spring 2004, I supervised the doctoral dissertation of the Rev. George Klee on the history of Celtic Christology from the fifth to the ninth centuries, as well as presenting papers on “Papal Authority as Ecumenical Problem” at Notre Dame University and on “Theosis in the History of Eastern Iconography” at Drew University. That summer I lectured for Episcopal clergy of Europe on the principles of priesthood and pastoral care in the writings of Saint Gregory the Great

(590-604). And for the Church Club of New York, I served as historical consultant for their summertime study-pilgrimages to Canterbury Cathedral, York Minster, and the city of Rome.

The Historiographer serves as a voting member of the Board of Directors of the Historical Society of the Episcopal Church, and I have participated in many of their activities in service to the church over the past three years. Of particular importance has been the successful establishment by the Society, in co-sponsorship with Virginia Theological Seminary, of the African American Episcopal Historical Collection, which will preserve and make available for researchers many records that relate to the role of African Americans in the life and history of the Episcopal Church. A formal dedication was held on February 24, 2005, which opened with a keynote address by the Rt. Rev. Herbert Thompson, Jr., Bishop of Southern Ohio. I presented one of the addresses in response to Bishop Thompson's remarks, all of which have been published in the Virginia Seminary Journal. The homily for this event was delivered by the Rev. Canon Angela Ifill, Missioner of the Office of Black Ministries. This Collection has already acquired by gift or purchase a number of valuable papers and manuscripts, including the non-diocesan papers of the late Bishop Walter Dennis.

The Historiographer serves as advisor to the Historical Society for a number of its programs, including its joint sponsorship of a triennial conference with the National Episcopal Historians and Archivists and the Episcopal Women's History Project. In June 2004, the theme was "Anglicans and Lutherans: The New World Experience of Two Old World Traditions." The next joint conference will be held at Williamsburg, VA, June 24-27, 2007, in observance of the 400th anniversary of the founding of Jamestown Colony and the establishment of a permanent Anglican presence in North America. The Society continues its quarterly journal, Anglican and Episcopal History, edited by John Woolverton and now in the 74th year of publication, and I serve on its Board. Two recent issues included papers from the Anglican-Lutheran Conference.

The Historical Society awards annually small research grants to assist scholars engaged in new studies of the history of the church, and I have participated in their selection. The Society sponsors a dinner during General Convention that includes a speech by a prominent church historian. In 2003, Dr. Bruce B. Lawrence, the Marcus Professor of Religion at Duke University, spoke on "Muslims, Christians, and Terrorists: The Crescent and the Cross at Home and Abroad, after 9/11." Beginning at the next General Convention, the Society will designate this dinner event as "The William W. Manross Lecture," honoring the memory of the distinguished church historian who is its principal benefactor. Professor Thaddeus W. Tate is the outgoing President of the Historical Society, and the incoming President is Professor Fredrica Thompsett of the Episcopal Divinity School.

Respectfully submitted,
J. Robert Wright