THE BLUE BOOK

2000

ANNO JUBILEE

73RD

GENERAL CONVENTION

OF THE

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

JULY 2000

COLORADO

Reports of the Committees, Commissions, Boards and Agencies of
The General Convention of the Episcopal Church
Seventy-Third General Convention, Denver, Colorado, July 2000

CHURCH

Church Publishing Incorporated, New York

Theological Aspects of Committed Relationships of Same-Sex Couples

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMISSION ON LITURGY AND MUSIC PREPARED IN RESPONSE TO RESOLUTION C003S OF THE 72ND GENERAL CONVENTION MEETING IN PHILADELPHIA IN 1997 FOR DISCUSSION AT THE 73RD GENERAL CONVENTION MEETING IN DENVER IN 2000

Resolved, That the 72nd General Convention affirms the sacredness of Christian marriage between one man and one woman with intent of life-long relationship; and be it further

Resolved, That the Convention directs the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to continue its study of theological aspects of committed relationships of same-sex couples, and to issue a full report including recommendations of future steps for the resolution of issues related to such committed relationships no later than November 1999 for consideration at the 73rd General Convention.

MEMBERS OF THE STANDING COMMISSION ON LITURGY AND MUSIC

Dr. Mary Abrams, Diocese of Kentucky
Mrs. Jill Bigwood, Diocese of Connecticut
Dr. Owen Burdick, Diocese of New York
The Reverend Jean Campbell, Diocese of New York
Dr. Carl Haywood, Diocese of Southern Virginia
The Reverend Dr. John Hooker, Diocese of Arizona
The Reverend Bruce Jenneker, Diocese of Massachusetts
The Right Reverend Mark MacDonald, Diocese of Alaska
Mrs. Paula MacLean, Diocese of Southern Florida
The Right Reverend Paul Marshall, Diocese of Bethlehem
Mr. Monte Mason, Diocese of Minnesota
The Reverend Dr. Leonel Mitchell, Diocese of Northern Indiana
Mrs. Phoebe Pettingell, Diocese of Fond du Lac
The Right Reverend Catherine Roskam, Diocese of New York
Mr. Milner Seifert, Diocese of Chicago
The Right Reverend Geralyn Wolf, Diocese of Rhode Island

Introduction

For nearly twenty-five years now, The Episcopal Church has chosen to keep before its General Conventions the issue of the homosexuality of some its members, and the extent to which those homosexual members are fully a part of this Church. For some this has represented the threat of a compromised Christianity conformed to the prevailing culture and for others it has signaled, even if not yet offering, the hope of an authentic Christian life without the denial of what they experience as a fundamental fact of their lives. There has been passion on both sides of the issue, as well as pain. There have been studies that

have been read one way by one group and interpreted differently by the other. There has been prejudice, misinformation and a lack of Christian charity.

Many studies were called for, numerous educational programs were urged upon the Church. In some communities heroic attempts were made to engage the issue, in many others very little was done, if anything at all. And at each succeeding General Convention the issue was once more brought before the Church, as it was again in Philadelphia in 1997 when it was

"*Resolved*, That the 72nd General Convention affirms the sacredness of Christian marriage between one man and one woman with intent of life-long relationship; and be it further

***Resolved*, That the Convention directs the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music to continue its study of theological aspects of committed relationships of same-sex couples, and to issue a full report including recommendations of future steps for the resolution of issues related to such committed relationships no later than November 1999 for consideration at the 73rd General Convention."**

For us in The Episcopal Church the last twenty-five years have also been shaped by three other very significant experiences. The first must be the impact of The Book of Common Prayer 1979 with its rediscovery of Baptism as the heart of the life of the Christian community and the Holy Eucharist as the central act of worship for a community gathered in Christ's name to share Christ's life and bear witness to Christ's love. The second is the experience of AIDS. It was a telling moment in the life of our Church when the National Episcopal AIDS Coalition distributed buttons declaring that "The Episcopal Church has AIDS." It was telling because it was true. Soon there was not one of us who did not know someone living with AIDS, or who had died from complications associated with it. In the first 15 years of the disease that someone we knew was almost always a gay man. AIDS brought the homosexuality of our children and our siblings, of our friends and our colleagues, of our fellow parishioners and our neighbors into our conversations, our newspapers and onto our television screens. Questions of homosexuality and the will of God, AIDS as punishment, Christian compassion in the context of moral ambiguity, were the topics of our Sunday forums. In every place we learned that love is the gravity that holds the world together, and that it is by our love for one another that both we and the world know that we follow Jesus Christ.

The third experience that has radically affected the life of the Episcopal Church in the last twenty- five years is the ordination of women. Born of the same baptismal impulse and undertaken as a movement to achieve in our church life that "new creation" which St. Paul defines as its vocation: "as many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave nor free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:26–29) The Episcopal Church struggled (and in some communities struggles still) with the conflict inherent in this call for the full recognition, integration and celebration of women in the ordained ministry of this Church. For most the call was obvious, urgent and inevitable; and for others it represented a painful break with a cherished past. In the process our Church

has learned—sometimes successfully, and sometimes less so—to live with a majority decision and to make attempts at reconciliation which affirm the choice the church has made while accommodating those who struggle with it still. The lessons we learned—and continue to learn—about living into a new definition of ourselves, living with ambiguity, and living with the tension of radical disagreement stand us in good stead for the challenges that lie before us.

Our liturgy was calling us into a new life of community, one that has always been the vocation and blessing of the Christian way, but which we were discovering anew. At the same time an epidemic of monstrous proportions was making us talk about sex and sexuality, pain and compassion, death and how short life could be. We discovered that on both sides of this issue, heterosexual people and homosexual people were indeed living out what we had affirmed at the 65th General Convention in Minneapolis in 1976: "that homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance and pastoral concern and care of the Church."

In our continuing debates over this issue—which continue to be experienced as difficult and painful on both sides—we in the Episcopal Church soon discovered what the 1998 Lambeth Conference Report on Human Sexuality describes so aptly:

> "We must confess that we are not of one mind about homosexuality. Our variety of understanding encompasses:
>
> - Those who believe that homosexual orientation is a disorder, but that through the grace of Christ people can be changed, although not without pain and struggle;
> - Those who believe that relationships between people of the same gender should not include genital expression, that this is the clear teaching of the Bible and of the Church universal, and that such activity (if unrepented of) is a barrier to the Kingdom of God;
> - Those who believe that committed homosexual relationships fall short of the biblical norm, but are to be preferred to relationships that are anonymous and transient;
> - Those who believe that the Church should accept and support or bless monogamous covenant relationships between homosexual people and that they may be ordained."
>
> (from *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998*, p. 94)

In its preparation of this report the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music was informed by two specific theological insights. The first concerns the Gospel of grace proclaimed by Paul in the letter to the Galatians:

> For freedom Christ has set us free. Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of

righteousness. (Gal. 5:1, 2–6)

The "hope of righteousness" comes to us as the gift of the Spirit through the practice of our faith. The ritual acts by which we claim and express our faith derive from the promise of the hope of righteousness, and as such are essential to every Christian in his or her faith development. The Commission understood that access to all of the ritual acts of faith—baptism, eucharist, ordination, blessing of life-long unions—is of crucial importance to all of the members of the Body of Christ, for we all fall short of the glory of God and we all need the "hope of righteousness." Redemption is achieved by God's grace and our submission to its power in our lives.

The second is an ecclesiological affirmation: that we are the Church we are talking about. The homosexuals whose life of faith we are defining are Christians with us, sharing the life of the Risen Christ with us as members of our parishes, serving on our vestries, parish and diocesan committees, and participating in the national life of our Church. Their pain at being excluded from the "hope of righteousness" weighs heavily, as does the fear of compromise that is the concern of those who oppose their inclusion. They too worship alongside us, sit with us as we meet in the councils of the Church, and share with us the bread of heaven and the cup of salvation.

Another important insight informing the Commission's reflection and deliberation was the Principle of Subsidiarity formulated in the "Virginia Report" of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission:

> The character of the Christian faith from its early days has given it a profound investment in the quality of personal, face-to-face relationships. Christians are called to embody in daily life God's reconciliation of all things in Christ, living newly in the light of God's justice and forgiveness. It is through the personal witness of Christians to the reality of that new life that the attractiveness of the gospel becomes apparent.... The principle of "subsidiarity" has been formulated to express this investment in the local and face-to-face. Properly used, subsidiarity means that "a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level". (*Oxford English Dictionary*)

Subsidiarity may properly be applied to the life of the Church in order to resist the temptation to centralism. But in the life of the Church the local level was never seen as simply autonomous. Because the work of Christ was itself a reconciliation of humanity, there is evidence from the first days of the churches of concern for the unity of the communities, both in their internal relationships and in their interrelationships. St. Paul, for example, writes of his anxiety for the continuity of preaching and teaching the authentic apostolic gospel, and for the effectiveness of the united witness of the Church to the gospel of reconciliation. Care was taken, as the Church grew, to preserve the continuity of its witness across time and its coherence and effectiveness in different places. (From *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998*, pp. 44–45)

The Commission reflected on the 1998 Lambeth Conference and its discussion of Human Sexuality, listening carefully to the bishops serving on the Commission as they recounted and interpreted their experiences of the Conference, its *Reports and its Resolutions*. The Commission finds in the Report on Human Sexuality an agreement with the positions taken by the Episcopal Church:

> We also recognize that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of this Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of their relationships. We wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptized, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation are full members of the Body of Christ. We call upon the Church and all its members to work to end any discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and to oppose homophobia. (From *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998,* p. 93)

The several essays comprising this report, brief critical reviews intended to initiate conversation and direct those engaged in them to earlier studies and other resources, are offered in the hope that our whole Church will in every place and at every level commit itself to encounters between Christians on opposing sides of this issue. In the context of those conversations characterized by loving attentiveness and respectful listening, the Commission hopes that these materials will enable dialog which is informed, open, honest, comprehensive and transforming.

SCRIPTURE

The Reverend Dr. L. William Countryman
Professor of the New Testament
Church Divinity School of the Pacific

Current conflict among Anglicans about issues of sexual orientation arises from a variety of causes, cultural and political as well as theological, but the theological aspect of the conflict often centers on the authority and interpretation of scripture. Here, there are two principal questions to be asked. One is the question of what the Bible in fact says about sexually-based relationships between people of the same sex. The other question is how we, as Anglicans, go about understanding and determining the authority of the passages, aspects, or themes of scripture we deem relevant. This essay will begin with the latter question.

How do Anglicans understand the authority of scripture? The Articles of Religion speak of the "sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for salvation" and list the books to be considered canonical, allotting secondary status to the Old Testament apocrypha (Art. VI). They assert the unity of Old Testament and New, but also limit the applicability of the Torah (Art. VII). They describe the Bible's authority as a matter of setting limits to what anyone can be required to believe rather than as constituting a complete outline of belief

(Art. VI). This reflects the persistent refusal of Anglicanism, unlike most other churches in the sixteenth century, to define itself narrowly in theological terms.

This is not to say that Reformation Anglicans had no principles. Quite the contrary, they had beliefs they were willing to die for. They were, however, less optimistic than most of their Protestant co-religionists that one could find in the Bible a detailed system of Christian faith. The English Puritans, like the Reformed churches of the continent, wanted to strip away everything that they did not find specifically commanded in the Bible. Anglicans like George Herbert criticized the results as naked ("The British Church," ll. 19–24). The mainstream Anglican response was to take the Bible not as a blueprint but as a factor limiting church claims.

This minimalist understanding of scriptural authority left room in Anglicanism for tradition to play a role in determining our common life. The Bible sets limits on what is required, but does not give a complete account of the life or worship of the church. Much has to be filled in, and for that purpose godly tradition continues to be important.

Anglicanism has also had a role for reason, but it functions somewhat differently from tradition. As Richard Hooker pointed out, we have no access to the Bible at all without the use of reason (Laws ii, c.7, s. 3). Every Biblical text becomes useful to us only insofar as someone uses reason to read, translate, and interpret it. All these processes introduce elements from outside the text itself—elements that relate the passage to knowledge of ancient languages, to history, culture, and systems of Christian theology, and to the larger world in which we are endeavoring to live as faithful people.

Scripture cannot settle questions for Anglicans in isolation from reason; rather, it comes to life for us in an ongoing dialogue with reason and faith. This reality has to be borne in mind when we turn to the texts often proposed as pertinent to the present conflicts. Older writers on the subject tended to appeal to the story of Sodom and Gomorra (Gen. 19) as evidence that the Bible condemns same-sex sexual activity. Over the last few decades, however, this argument has generally been discarded, since other Biblical references to the story never make such a connection.

There are also two verses in Leviticus (18:22; 20:13) that forbid some type of sexual activity between men (possibly anal intercourse). A question arises here as to the basis for the prohibition. Some hold it was to prevent cruel abuse of prisoners of war, others to prevent non-procreative use of semen, others to exclude non-Israelite religious rites. The text itself, insofar as it specifies a reason, treats the matter as a violation of ancient Israel's purity code—a code that New Testament writers treat as no longer binding on gentile (and perhaps even Jewish) Christians (cf. Acts 15; Rom. 14–15).

Some have argued that the second creation narrative contains a positive command (Gen. 2:24) that all human beings are to marry heterosexually. The passage, however, can equally well be read simply as an etiological story, telling how the institution of marriage came into being.

There are three passages in the New Testament that are sometimes considered relevant. Two are occurrences, in what are technically called "vice lists," of the Greek term *arsenokoites*, sometimes loosely translated "homosexual" (1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10). Some connect this term with the verses from Leviticus mentioned above and see it as reconfirming their validity for later Christians. The term is rare, however, and there is no evidence to show what it actually meant to speakers of Greek in the first century.

Finally, Paul, in Rom. 1:18–32, describes same-sex sexual intercourse between men (and possibly between women) as unclean and disgraceful. According to the most careful reading of the Greek text, Paul does not specifically identify it as sinful; and nowhere is there evidence to show what it actually meant to speakers of Greek in the first century.

Do these biblical passages help us in evaluating the claim, made by modern Christians of same-gender sexual orientation, that God can and does bless their lives in and through their life partnerships? Do the biblical passages in question even speak to such a claim? It is not clear that they do; at best, they are open to varying interpretations. In any case, how do we as Anglicans, with our relatively minimalist tradition about biblical authority, deal with them? Our tradition reminds us that "whatsoever is not read (in scripture) nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of Faith, or to be thought requisite or necessary to salvation" (Art. VI). It would seem that the Bible, taken as a whole, is not definitive enough to demand a negative judgment on the present subject.

Scripture: Bibliography

Bicknell, E. J. *A Theological Introduction to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England.* 3rd ed. Revised by H. J. Carpenter. London: Longmans, 1955.

This work's discussion of scripture is significant both for its clarity and moderation and also because it antedates the current conflicts over gender and sexuality.

Borsch, Frederick Houk, editor. *Anglicanism and the Bible.* Wilton, CT: Morehouse Barlow, 1984.

This collection of essays traces some of the historical breadth of our tradition in dealing with the scriptures.

_____, editor. *The Bible's Authority in Today's Church.* Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993.

This collection comes out of the House of Bishops; the new (1999) printing includes a foreword by Presiding Bishop Griswold.

Countryman, L. Wm. *Biblical Authority or Biblical Tyranny? Scripture and the Christian Pilgrimage.* 2nd ed. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994.

The present author's effort to set forth the Anglican tradition in ecumenical language for today.

_____. *Dirt, Greed, and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and Their Implications for Today.* Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988.

This is detailed examination of biblical passages dealing with sexual ethics generally. In the matter of same-sex life partnerships, it finds no prohibition in the Christian scriptures, read as a whole.

Ferlo, Roger. *Opening the Bible.* The New Church's Teaching Series. Boston: Cowley Publications, 1997.

An introduction to the Bible's role for faith for general parish audiences.

Johnston, Michael. *Engaging the Word.* The New Church's Teaching Series. Boston: Cowley Publications, 1998.

A kind of "second course" after the book by Ferlo on interpretation and use of the Bible.

Muddiman, John. *The Bible, Fountain and Well of Truth.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983.
A clear and concise treatment of biblical issues, written from an Anglo-Catholic perspective.
Stott, John, and others. *The Anglican Communion and Scripture: Papers from the First International Consultation of the Evangelical Fellowship in Anglican Communion, Canterbury, UK, June 1993.* Carlisle, Cumbria: Regnum, 1996.
The papers in this collection are written from Anglican Evangelical perspectives. A few refer specifically to the issue of sexuality.

TRADITION[1]

The Reverend Dr. Richard A. Norris
Professor of Church History
Union Theological Seminary

To understand the workings of tradition, it is important to note some of the different senses of the word "tradition" itself.

In popular usage, "tradition" means, roughly, "what people back there in the past used to say." The word is mostly employed in a deprecatory Manner, on the ground that what people used to say is invariably wrong by comparison with what "we" say. This usage is a fruit of the age of Enlightenment, which employed "tradition" as a label for the sub-rational, particularistic heteronomous obscurantism of the priest-infested Dark—or Middle—ages. Over against tradition it set the emancipatory light of "reason," which was taken to be an endowment that is (α) identical in each human individual (and therefore universal), and (β) autonomous, i.e., setting its own "law" for itself (and therefore not subject to any external authority, least of all that of tradition).

In fact the English word "tradition" (Latin *traditio*) connotes by its derivation an action of handing on or giving over. The Greek noun it renders is παραδοσζ, which, like the verb from which it derives, denotes precisely a process of transmission.[2] Thus Paul asserts that he has "handed over" (παρεδωκα), and his Corinthian converts "have received," the gospel by which they are saved (1 Cor. 15:1–3); and the Letter of Jude speaks of "the belief once for all handed over (παραδοθειση) to the saints" (Jude 3). In its most basic sense, therefore, the word "tradition" refers not to a thing that is there to be examined, but to a process or activity of some sort.

"Tradition" fairly early required a second derivative sense. Taken in this way it referred to that which is handed over or handed down, i.e., the content of what is delivered.[3] This content was variously called "the belief" (πιστιζ) or "the Gospel" (ευαγγελιον), or "the proclamation" (κηρυγμα), and even "the deposit" (παραθηκη); and 2 Thessalonians—which belongs to the "school" of Paul if not to the Apostle himself—seems to use the word παραδοσιζ in this way, exhorting its readers to "hold to the traditions which you were taught by us" (2 Thess. 2:15). There was a "thing," then, an inheritance of some sort from the first age of the church, that Christians have understood themselves to receive and transmit[4] in their turn, both in preaching and, above all, in baptismal catechesis. The content of this inheritance was gradually defined through the emergence of a NT canon and summaries of baptismal catechesis (which later took the form of creeds), and by the end of the 2nd century it was regularly spoken of as "tradition."[5] I seem to have included, then,

the essential or central elements both of Christian belief and of Christian praxis ("faith and morals").

As such, tradition—or better, "traditioning"—necessarily has its vehicles. By this is meant things (buildings, e.g., or books), or reiterated patterns of action, that carry and convey its content or some aspect of it. The use and interpretation of these vehicles of tradition constitute the act of "traditioning." The primary vehicle of Christian tradition is the Scriptures (the "norm" of tradition), together with the classic baptismal creeds, which were understood to summarize and pass on, in the condensed form of a catechetical syllabus, the message that was the essential burden of the Scriptures. Other central vehicles are the liturgies—of baptism, eucharist, and office with their several offspring (Wednesday-night prayer meetings, recitation of the Angelus, e.g.)—in which the scriptural and credal message is illustrated, read, expounded or enacted, whether in word or in action (prayer, sacrament). In Anglican circles, the Book of Common Prayer (itself an excellent example of a central vehicle of tradition) governs the public use of the Scriptures and creeds and sets them in a context of prayer and praise that relates worshippers to God in ways that reflect Christian life and calling in Christ as those have been experienced, entered into and understood over the centuries.

Further vehicles of tradition are the art-forms that clothe us—architecture, posture and gesture, music, rhetoric, the furnishing and decoration of liturgical spaces, icons, statues of saints, rosaries, and the like. As public vehicles of traditioning, all of these are aspects of what we call "tradition;" and this is not less the case because there are different liturgical, rhetorical, musical and architectural traditions within the Christian movement, just as there are differing theological "schools" and emphases that articulate, develop and embroider the focal message of Scriptures and creeds and thus "tradition" it.

Thus in Christian usage "tradition" refers at once to an action of handing on, to the content of what is handed on, and to the more or less institutionalized vehicles (masses and Sunday-school classes) by whose means this handing-on is (presumably) effected. The word "tradition," then, denotes the church as a living system of communication in and through which people are brought into and live out a certain relationship to God in Christ through the Spirit. (cf. Gal 4:6). In the last resort it is that relationship itself which is "traditioned," and not merely the beliefs or ideals or precepts that are proper to it.

Further it is important to see that traditioning is at work in the ordinary, daily business of teaching, attesting, and interpreting the Gospel, by action as well as word. Tradition is not merely a body of teaching or practice that people appeal to in moments of controversy, even though it is mostly in moments of controversy that people objectify it and begin to talk about it. In the church—and indeed in almost any community of which one can think—traditioning is like breathing: boringly normal and scarcely ever noticed.

It is therefore a necessary part of wisdom to recall that tradition never stands still. The reason for this is that all traditioning takes the form of a continuing process of interpretation through which the "meaning" of sacred texts, icons, institutions, and ritual actions is intimated or explicated. Hence in conveying the truth of the Gospel, tradition has, in different times, places and circumstances, different—and sometimes conflicting—incarnations. It clothes itself, in short, in varying patterns of thought, belief and behavior. These varying patterns themselves, through their interaction, generate critical reflection and reappropria-

tion.[6] "Tradition" thus refers to a broad, diversified and, above all, moving stream of human communicative activity which, like the Mississippi River, encompasses a variety of currents, vortices, shallows, and fecund backwaters—all of which, however, derive from the interactions of the river's central drift and flow with the varying shape of its immediate environment.

It is a mistake to suppose that only the church has (or is) a παραδοσιζ that defines and sustains an identity in the sense of an individual and communal way of being and acting. It makes perfect sense to speak, in exactly the same complex sense of the term, of the "tradition" of Marxist thought, or of Confucian cultures, or of American legal theory, or of the academic "world." Indeed it now seems plain, if ironic, that what the Enlightenment called "reason" was and is, from the point of view of its content, a "traditioned" way of seeing and understanding things. Similarly, what is called "experience," considered as an answer to the question what "I" see in, and make of, something, is also a social and historical product of traditioning: people learn how to identify and understand things, and they "experience" in accord with what they learn. Tradition is the mode in which any way of life or of thought or both—as embodied in the beliefs and practices of human groups of some sort—is continued through time; and one belongs to a group insofar as one is significantly formed by its tradition and participates in its "traditioning."

It may be wrong, therefore, to think, as Anglicans have been taught, that, in the church, Scripture, Reason, and Tradition are three independent "sources" or "authorities," with regard to which the church attempts to achieve a nice balance—not too much of any one of the three but a generous pinch of each of them.[7]

Scripture is indeed a "source," a set of books that can be consulted and interpreted.

Reason, however, does not lie about in the manner of a "source." It acts rather in the capacity of a lens through which Scripture is understood—the lens of what counts as "common sense," of "what everyone knows," of "what 'makes sense'" (which of course differs, to varying extents, from one society or culture to another).

In somewhat the same way, tradition is not a "thing" alongside and independent of Scripture (a good Protestant point). Tradition is the cumulative "common sense" of the community whose life and common mind represent an interpretation as well as a vehicle of the scriptural message.[8] To consult tradition is to render this "common sense," in its varying forms, a conscious object of inquiry: (a) to review, for one purpose of another, regarding one issue or another, the ways in which the meaning and implications of the new life in Christ have been understood, explained, and transmitted in previous generations; (b) to see how these fit with the Scriptures and above all with the Gospel that is the Scripture's central message; and thus (c) to elicit the "sense" of this tradition in the light of the circumstances or events or conditions that have made people wonder whether the church's common sense makes as much sense as it ought to.

The distinction, then, between tradition and reason—a distinction that not surprisingly grew up in the 17th century—is a distinction between the common sense of the Christian movement and the common sense of a (modern) Western tradition that, in principle if not invariably in practice, stands aloof from any religious faith or commitment. These two "common senses" sometimes conflict—just as Islamic and Confucian tradition sometimes conflict with both of them and with each other. At the same time they influence each other,

as one might expect, since large numbers of people belong both to the stream of Christian tradition and to the stream of tradition called "reason."

The process of traditioning is therefore always a continuing process of interpretation: that is, Christian tradition is never a dead thing, but a living process of the appropriation of human life and calling in Christ, and therefore a process of faithful learning, to which relative novelty is no more alien than is rifling the past for its insights. There is always much more in the river of tradition than the perceived need of any single generation, with its peculiar obsessions, its designer blinkers, and its glowing buzzwords, can utilize; and its manifold currents, eddies and backwaters show how it questions itself over and again—and also how what looks irrelevant today may be of the liveliest importance tomorrow. (Most radical movements in the church are spawned by "recoveries" of elements in the tradition that had been obscured or deliberately forgotten as a result of its last, or next-to-last, updating.)

EXPERIENCE

The Rt. Reverend Charles E. Bennison, Jr.
Bishop of Pennsylvania

Historically, in the effort to order in ways pleasing to God human sexual behavior, including sexual relations between persons, experience has taken precedence over the first of the three legs of the classical Anglican epistemological tripod—Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. Today most Anglicans would still agree with the Bible in rejecting incest, rape, adultery, or intercourse with animals. But most would not agree with the Bible in its view that semen or menstrual blood are ritually unclean. Nor would most concur with the Bible's condemnation of or opposition to intercourse during menstruation, celibacy, marriage with non-Israelites, naming sexual organs, nudity, masturbation, or birth control. At the same time, most would oppose practices the Bible permits, including prostitution, polygamy, levirate marriage, sex with slaves, concubinage, treatment of women as property, and the marriage of girls at 11–13 years of age. Furthermore, most would go along with the Hebrew Scriptures in permitting divorce, and thereby would disagree with Jesus in his prohibition of it. Thus, following what we would contend to be Christian sexual morality, most would agree with only four of the sexual mores mentioned in the Bible, and we would disagree with sixteen of them (Wink, 1999). That is because Anglican sexual morality has been shaped and reshaped above all by people's experience of what in practice works to make them fully alive and the supposition that, as Irenaeus wrote, Gloria Dei vivens homo—"The Glory of God is a human being fully alive."

Experience has also taken precedence historically over the second of the three legs of the classical Anglican epistemological tripod—Tradition. Because all traditions pursue internal "goods" whose richness and depth forever prevent their full and final definition, those who bear the traditions are always engaged in a pursuit of rather than in a final attainment of those goods, and if in a pursuit, then in an argument as well. Thus, the church's Tradition is "partially constituted by an argument" to be rehashed, and the Tradition to be revised, again and again (MacIntyre). Tradition is not just a stone tablet to be admired, but a "a not-yet-completed narrative" shaped and reshaped by experience of the ambiguity and

complexity of daily life as people seek to determine what will work practically (Lindbeck, 1984).

Traditions are of two kinds. Tradita, the content of a tradition which is conserved, can be distinguished from traditio, the time-honored way in which the community goes about adapting or adjusting its tradita when experiential data from the surrounding world so outstrip the ability of the tradita to absorb it that the tradita loses credibility and people suffer cognitive dissonance between it and a proposed, differing, compelling tradita. (Schreiter, 1985; Lindbeck, 1984; Bass, 1994). Experience, rationally reflected upon, teaches us that "the Church never apprehends the truth.... The more the church learns of God, the more it is aware of the incomprehensible mystery of God's being.... The more the church knows, the more it is aware that a great unknown lies ahead" (Ramsey, 1956).

Throughout its tradition the church has never embraced a single, developed, monolithic view of marriage or its practices. Reflecting different understandings of the sexual relations experienced in them, marriage liturgies have varied widely. They have varied geographically: of marriage Martin Luther quoted the proverb, "Many lands, many customs." And they have varied historically: whereas Augustine called marriage not a mere "joining," but a sacramentum (a mystery, a solemn obligation), Cranmer later saw it, not as a sacrament, but as "a holy estate, instituted of God himself"(Stevenson, 1987).

Because liturgical rites are "the primal means for Christians to cope with reality ... any theology of marriage must arise from reflected experience, mediated through liturgy" (Stevenson, 1983:213). Historically, the marriage rites "were not the work of theologians or canonists, but of anonymous and long-dead pastors whose apt invocations in the context of marriage survived to accompany and interpret and partially transform the old, inherited ways of doing things.... Liturgy is always a moment of decision, when the theorizing has to end and the ideal has to yield to the practical: something has to be said and something has to be done. These documents witness to what nameless believers have found to say about marriage in the concrete, about the life and relationship that is opening up before this couple, and about the sacramentum ... not an ideal, but a given reality" (Stevenson, 1992: 261). The priority of experience is evidenced by the fact that in all marriage rites the prayers pass directly from anamnesis to intercession without any epiclesis invoking the Holy Spirit on the grounds that the nuptial blessing is a blessing on a marriage in which the Spirit is already present through the consent offered each other by the partners (Stevenson, 1987: 232).

Differing understandings of the experience of marriage existed even at the beginning of our history. In 950 bce, the author of Genesis 2 defined the purpose of the relationship between Adam and Eve as the alleviation of loneliness, not procreation of children. The Ancient Near Eastern understandings of fertility, marriage, and passion, depicted in the Bible, were re-framed by Israel in terms of a relationship between God and Israel. Hosea more than any other worked out the imagery of the marriage of God and Israel, and with him we see the focus of marriage shift from fertility to fidelity (Hos. 4:2; 6:6). Later the use of the term covenant, which was perhaps only implicit in Hosea, was made explicit in Malachi (2:14). Then in the second century bce the Book of Tobit (7:12ff.) introduces the idea that God actually joins the couple through a divine blessing on them.

In 30 ce, Jesus spoke of marriage in terms, not of procreation or child-rearing, but of permanence and fidelity. What Israel understood about its relationship with God was reinterpreted by the church in terms of its relationship between Jesus, referred to as a bridegroom, and Christian believers, or between Christ and the church (Mt. 9:15/Mk. 2:19/Lk. 5:34; Rev. 19:6ff). The New Testament reflects a conventional Jewish liturgical practice of which, interestingly, our own seems to be the reverse—that of women accompanying the groom in procession to the home of the bride (Mt. 25:1–13). At a wedding in Cana of Galilee, before the groom pronounced the Seven Blessings traditional in Judaism (for creation, the creation of humankind, Zion, the barren one, the couple, with reference to the Garden of Eden, the joy of the couple, and the qualities of married life, with reference to the marriage feast), Jesus blessed the new wine, a sign of the eschatological and ecclesiological importance of marriage as one of the founding relationships of the new covenant (John 2:1–11).

Paul, too, understood marriage eschatologically and ecclesiologically, contending that in anticipation of a wedding yet to come Christians now are betrothed to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). In 56 ce, the Apostle, condemned, not homosexual persons, but homosexual acts by heterosexual, not homosexual, persons, as being contrary to what they are "by nature" (Rom. 1:26–27). Actually, because empirically in many dimensions of our own experience, he does "not understand (his) own actions," he is reluctant to presume to know or judge the experiences of others (Romans 7:15ff.). He is content to leave judgment to God (Rom. 12:19).

Further twists and turns mark the patristic and medieval periods. It was Basilius Binder who pointed out the great variety of local marriage rites in the Middle Ages, and Korbinian Ritzer who, in his study of the marriage rite in the first millennium, showed that the Gregorian Sacramentary only barely concealed differences from one region to the next (Stevenson, 1987: 27). Over sixty manuscripts exist which indicate that the ancient and medieval church celebrated the same-sex equivalent of its heterosexual marriage ceremony—at least if read by homosexual individuals for whom "it is relatively easy to recognize and absorb ideas about a ceremony of same-sex union, because they have a place to locate the information." (Boswell).

The Reformation occasioned yet more re-thinking. Thomas Cranmer (who nearly lost his job for being married before the break with Rome in 1534) held to a completely reformed marriage rite in pre-medieval guise. He spoke of the "solemnization of matrimony," not a sacrament. His Prayer Book rite was to take place in two parts, the first in the nave, for the contract, and the second in the sanctuary, leading into the Eucharist. In his rite the ring was to be placed on the book, but it was not to be blessed until it was placed on the left hand of the bride: the priest was no longer to have a sacramental role, but instead was to witness the exchange of vows and give the blessing, in no sense "joining" the couple. The centrality of consent—both as an answer to a question asked by a priest and as a vow made by both partners—was kept, but the blessing was downgraded to the form of an intercession.

Re-thinking and change have continued into our own period. While in the medieval and Reformation rites women had to promise to obey their husbands, in the 1928 American prayer book that requirement disappeared and the woman was asked if she wanted to marry the man before that same question is asked of the man—a way of introducing the equality

of the sexes. In the 1960s, Vatican II upheld the Tridentine principle of permitting local variation in the marriage liturgy and ended the practice of prohibiting marriages in Lent and "mixed marriages." In 1969, French Roman Catholics published a rite in which the woman and man recited parts of their vows together and, in the nuptial blessing, prayers were offered for both partners without differentiating their gender roles in a way which would be in keeping with modern French society (Stevenson, 1987: 152). Throughout the tradition there has been no concurrence whether to call the service a "veiling" or a "solemnizing" or a "blessing" or a "celebration." We are similarly confused today.

The same kind of ongoing shaping and reshaping of our tradition is reflected in our Anglican liturgical tradition. In 1571, Article XXV of the Thirty-Nine Articles holds that matrimony—like confirmation, penance, orders, and extreme unction—is not a sacrament like baptism and the Supper of the Lord, but is only one of the "commonly called sacraments" which "are not to be counted for Sacraments of the gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the apostles, partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures; but yet have not like nature of Sacraments of baptism, and the Lord's Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God." In the opening address to the rite in the Book of Common Prayer of 1549, marriage is said to have three purposes: 1) procreation of children; 2) prevention of fornication; and 3) provision for mutual society, help, and comfort. In addition, in the Prayer Book of 1662, marriage is defined as "an honorable estate instituted by God ... signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and his Church." But the American Prayer Book of 1789 is adopted without mention of the three purposes of marriage.

Finally, experience has also taken precedence historically over the third of the three legs of the classical Anglican epistemological tripod—Reason. It is from experience that Reason learns what works in praxis. In the face of the postmodern quandary over the unworkability of theoria (theoretical or speculative knowledge), poeisis (the knowing involved in the mastery of a craft), and techne (applied theoretical knowledge), or blind custom and tradition to effect change, reasoned rational reflection on the experience of life itself is valued as workable because it is consistent with the very nature of human thinking processes in which "we never really move from theory to practice even when it seems we do. Theory is always embedded in practice" (Browning, 1991).

The term "experience," like "experiment," derives from a Latin root, peri, meaning "to try" or "to test." "Praxis" derives from a Greek root connoting the kind of knowledge of human experience good politicians and effective leaders need as they "try" or "test" what will work in order to make possible "shared and workable decisions." Decisions, of course, effect change and transformation, and in the end the purpose of "praxis" born of "experience" is to create constructive changes which arise from and in turn advance the experience of a community with its traditions. In the words of the 1968 Lambeth Conference, to maintain its unity the church must "refuse to insulate itself against the testing of history and the free action of reason."

The debate in which the Episcopal Church finds itself is over the epistemological question, Can we ever know the truth or is agnosticism our fate? Everywhere the old epistemological categories of the Enlightenment Rationalism have given way, and the search for a new postmodern order has been undertaken, but in no area more than in our understanding

of sexual relations. In his Sexual Behavior in the Human Male (1948) and Sexual Behavior in the Human Female (1953), Kinsey conflated the local with the universal, and the particular with the general, on the assumption that, when it comes to a species, even our human one, "one size fits all." But in The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962), Kuhn argued just the opposite in contending that even the most persuasively verified claims in the most mathematically developed and technical of the sciences were dependent upon the historically specific practice of particular people in distinctive human communities. If the Episcopal Church has been divided over lesbian and gay Episcopalians, the split is fundamentally over epistemological differences between so-called "Kinseyites" and "Kuhnians."

Increasing numbers in the Episcopal Church—informed by Reason which tells them that some, as they experience their own embodied lives, are heterosexual, and others homosexual, "according to nature"—see that ours is an institutionally heterocentrist church supporting a systematically heterosexist society in which those deemed to be heterosexual are benefited in terms of economic and social capital at the expense of those regarded as homosexual. The extreme to which a gay man or lesbian woman can be disadvantaged is epitomized by highly-publicized case of Matthew Shepherd, the young Episcopalian who was murdered in Wyoming in 1998 simply because he was gay. The most important moral action which the church can take in order to liberate itself and its society from its institutional prejudice is to extend to homosexual couples the same sacrament of marriage it profers heterosexual couples and to ordain persons in such marriages and who are otherwise qualified to be ordained. (Jung and Smith).

Based on their experience, more and more Episcopalians are thus coming to join in argument with the tradition about the practices of marriage even while concretely practicing the tradition in divergent ways. Many gay men and lesbian women have endeavored to practice heterosexual marriage, found it practically unworkable, rejected it as hypocritical in their cases in favor of a homosexual variation of it which does work for them, and have thereby begun to reshape the tradition. Thereby more and more homosexual couples are experiencing, if not fully and finally, at least partially and proleptically, the goods pursued in marriage—mutual joy, help and comfort given one another in prosperity or adversity, the procreation of children. Based on the rubric (BCP 13) providing that on occasions "for which no service or prayer has been provided in this Book, the bishop may set forth such forms as are fitting to the occasion," increasing numbers of bishops are permitting clergy and congregations to use rites for the marriages of homosexual couples and, in some cases, are themselves providing a rite which can or must be used.

Experience: Bibliography

Bass, Dorothy. "Congregations and the Bearing of Traditions." In *American Congregations: New Perspectives in the Study of Congregations*, edited by James P. Wind and James W. Lewis. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Boswell, John. *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

_____. *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe.* New York: Villard Books, 1994.

Browning, Don S. *A Fundamental Practical Theology.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction.* New York: Pantheon, 1978.
Jung, Patricia Beattie, and Ralph F. Smith. *Heterosexism: An Ethical Challenge.* Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993.
Kinsey, Alfred. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male,* 1948.
_____. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female,* 1953.
Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* 1962.
Lindbeck, George A. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age.* Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984.
Ramsey, Arthur Michael. *The Gospel and the Catholic Church.* London: Longman, Green, and Co., 1956.
Schreiter, Robert J. *Constructing Local Theologies.* Maryknoll, NY: Fortress Press, 1991.
Stevenson, Kenneth. *Nuptial Blessing: A Study of the Christian Marriage Rites.* Alcuin Club Collections, London: SPCK, 1983.
_____. *To Join Together: The Rite of Marriage.* New York: Pueblo, 1987.
Stevenson, Kenneth, and Mark Searle. *Documents of the Marriage Liturgy.* New York: Pueblo, 1992.
Wink, Walter. "Homosexuality and the Bible." In *Homosexuality and Christian Faith,* edited by Walter Wink. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999.

UNDERSTANDINGS OF HOMOSEXUALITY: A REVIEW

Timothy F. Sedgwick
Professor of Christian Ethics
Virginia Theological Seminary

As with most human behavior, sexual orientation and response is in humans more complex than in other animals. Male and female sexual response in animals can, for example, be switched off and on by the injection of hormones (Money, 1988). In humans, however, biological, psycho-social, and historical-cultural factors appear to mutually inform sexual orientation and identity. This would be expected given the evolutionary development of the human brain from that of reptiles and other animals.

The human brain may be conceived as triune (MacLean, 1970, 1978; Ashbrook, 1988). At the core of the brain, reaching just above the brain stem, is the oldest region of the brain. This level of the brain is the source of instinctual behavior and hence has been called the reptilian brain. Surrounding the reptilian brain is the midregion of the brain, what may be called the paleomammalian brain or simply the old mammalian brain. This region of the brain is most closely associated with what is called the limbic system. Developed further in the forehead, the mammalian brain includes the cortex. Together this region of the brain is the source of human emotions and memory. Finally, surrounding the mammalian brain is the neocortex, what may be called the neomammalian brain or simply the new brain. Consisting of two hemispheres, in this region of the brain is found activities most distinctively associated with humans, namely the development of ideas. As these three regions of the brain interact and mutually condition human response, human sexual response and orientation may be most adequately understood to be both involuntary (as

apart from the will and human choice) and voluntary (as a matter of will and human choice).

In the last ten years biological research on homosexuality has correlated homosexual orientation with genetic differences and differences in brain structure (Baily and Pillard, 1991; Hamer, et al., 1993; LeVay, 1991). Other studies have focused on the psycho-social factors that correlate with homosexuality (Green, 1987) and on the historical-cultural factors that shape homosexual identification (Greenberg, 1998).

The multi-dimensional factors that correlate with homosexuality have not prevented some theorists from offering single-cause explanations. Classical psychoanalytical theories have understood homosexuality as a matter of arrested or inverted development resulting from an intra-psychic, childhood trauma in relationship to parents (Socarides, 1988). Learning and behavior theories have argued that homosexuality is more broadly a maladaptive response to the social environment (Green, 1987). The recent biological studies have likewise been extrapolated into causal theories (Isay, 1989).

In identifying correlations, biological studies have not provided an account of the developmental processes or causal links between genetics, brain structure, and homosexuality. While psychoanalytical theories and learning theories offer accounts of the process of the development of homosexuality, these processes have not been verified in the study of the actual development of homosexual orientation in the general population (Bell, et al., 1981). Altogether, contemporary studies of homosexuality reflect John Money's conclusion that sexual orientation may be helpfully thought of as analogous to left-handedness. There is a genetic-biological basis for sexual orientation, which is shaped and formed in interaction with psycho-social and historical-cultural factors (Money, 1987, 1988; Coleman, 1995).

While the origin and process of development of homosexual orientation and identity are not clear, studies have documented that homosexual orientation is relatively fixed or given. While sexual behavior may be changed, sexual orientation does not (Coleman, 1978). Recent studies further refuted the understanding of homosexuality as a mental illness (Gonsiorek, 1991). The beginning of this change from a pathological understanding of homosexuality is reflected in the decision in 1973 of the American Psychiatric Association to declassify homosexuality in their diagnostic manual as intrinsically a mental disorder. Given classical psychoanalytic theory, psychoanalysts have more uniformly viewed homosexuality as pathological. Some psychoanalysts continue to do so (Society of Medical Psychoanalysts, 1988; Socarides, 1988); other psychoanalysts, however, now understand homosexuality as non-pathological (Friedman, 1988; Isay, 1989).

Understandings of Homosexuality: Bibliography

Ashbrook, James B. *Brain and Belief.* Bristol, IN: Wyndham Hall Press, pp. 102–117.

Bailey, J. Michael, and Richard C. Pillard. "A Genetic Study of Male Sexual Orientation." *Archives of General Psychiatry* 48 (1991), 12:1089–1096.

Bell, Alan P., Martin S. Weinberg, and Sue K. Hammersmith. *Sexual Preference: Its Development in Men and Women.* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1981.

Coleman, Eli. "Homosexuality: Clinical and Behavioral Aspects." In *Encyclopedia of Bioethics,* Warren T. Reich, editor-in-chief, 2:1143–1147. New York: Macmillan, 1995.

_____. "Toward a New Model of Treatment of Homosexuality: A Review." *Journal of*

Homosexuality 3 (1978), 4:345–359.

Friedman, Richard C. *Male Homosexuality: A Contemporary Psychoanalytic Perspective.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988.

Gonsiorek, John C. "The Empirical Basis for the Demise of the Illness Model of Homosexuality." In *Homosexuality: Research and Implications for Public Policy*, edited by John C. Gonsiorek and James D. Weinrich , pp. 115–136. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991.

Green, Richard. *The "Sissy Boy" Syndrome and the Development of Homosexuality.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987.

Greenberg, David F. *The Construction of Homosexuality.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.

Hamer, Dean H., Stella Hu, Victoria L. Magnuson, Nan Hu, and Angela M. L. Pattatucci. "A Linkage Between DNA Markers on the X Chromosome and Male Sexual Orientation." *Science* 261, 1993, 5519:321–327.

Isay, Richard A. *Being Homosexual: Gay Men and Their Development.* New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989.

LeVay, Simon. "A Difference in Hypothalamic Structure Between Heterosexual and Homosexual Men." *Science* 253 (1991), 5023:1034–1037.

MacLean, Paul D. "A Mind of Three Minds: Educating the Triune Brain." *Education of the Brain: The 77th Yearbook of the National Science for the Study of Education*, Part II, edited by Jeanne S. Ohall and Allan F. Mirsky, pp. 308–342. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

_____. "The Triune Brain, Emotion, and Scientific Bias." *The Neurosciences: Second Study Program*, edited by F. O. Schmitt, pp. 336–349. New York: The Rockefeller University Press, 1970.

Money, John. *Gay, Straight, and In-Between: The Sexology of Erotic Orientation.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

_____. "Sin, Sickness, or Status? Homosexual Gender Identity and Psychoeuroendocrinology." *American Psychologist* 42 (1987), 384–399.

Socarides, Charles W. *The Overt Homosexual.* New York: Grune and Stratton, 1988. Society of Medical Psychoanalysts. *Homosexuality: A Psychoanalytic Study.* Northvale, NJ: Aronson, 1988.

ECCLESIOLOGY—THE NATURE OF ANGLICAN DECISION-MAKING

The Reverend Dr. Daniel B. Stevick
Professor Emeritus of Liturgics and Homiletics
Episcopal Divinity School

Where, the midst of all this change and division, is the church? The ecclesia? Where can we discern the Body of Christ? It is hard to answer. The church—though it may be wedded to persisting, essential forms, traditions and actions—is always, to some extent, a divine mystery. Augustine warned that it often is where we do not think it is, and it often is not where we are quite sure it is.

Our question may be particularly hard to answer now. Our culture is pluriform. Our churches are divided—between denominations and within denominations. And people seem to inhabit separate realms of discourse.

It is important to remember that the presence of Christ pervades all, and the Creator-Spirit touches everyone. Yet Christians see this universal presence made tangible, accessible in the history of Israel and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. The gospel of Christ forms the church; the church lives under and by the gospel.

The gospel—centering in the cross and resurrection—is a freeing, dignifying, unifying act of God. It declares that God loves and judges all, and that all live under the sign of forgiveness—although not all know it. The church, serving the gospel, witnesses to God's gracious affirmation of humanity. Its life is to exhibit an "alternative reality." It is a community in which the divisions of human life are transcended ("In Christ there is neither....") and which demonstrates the intention of the Creator—an intention flawed by sin. A British theologian once said, "The church recognizes no boundaries except those it exists to overcome" (John Oman).

Yet the actual, historical church is part of the fragmented, tormented 21st century human scene. It provides no point of escape—it cannot if it represents the Crucified. But where and how does it exhibit its unique identity? An answer should not limit. Christ is present wherever a cup of cold water is given in his name. But the church comes into visibility as it gathers for Word and Sacraments ("the epiphany of the church"). Here, by a few modest words and actions, it renews itself in its own life in Christ, and it stands, in the midst of the trauma of our time, as a sign of the Age to Come.

The Anglican way of identifying the ecclesia is not to develop an authoritative confession of doctrine, nor a detailed form of polity, but to point to some basic elements of the common life—F. D. Maurice call them "signs"—classically identified as scriptures, creeds, sacraments and order. These "signs" form and sustain the church as they are used in a fabric of liturgy, the Book of Common Prayer.

But scriptures, creeds, sacraments and orders must be interpreted, and the church is a community of interpreters. We cannot see the elemental signs except through the spectacles of our interpretations. The interpretations are many, and some of them are in conflict with one another—though they claim loyalty to the Christian message as it is received in the Anglican tradition. Persons of faith tend to locate their interpretations in a scheme of reality that is bound into divine truth itself, and hence difficult to bring under question. Instead of using the gospel to revitalize our interpretations, our doctrines and ideologies, we too often let our intellectual and cultural constructions capture the gospel.

Without choosing it, we live in a time of particularly sharp division and non-stop change. Division and change are a challenge to the individual's interior life, but also to the collective life. When the foundations are shaken, values, habits of conduct and ways of thought that had long been taken for granted must be reconsidered.

Some of the challenges before society and the churches today fall in areas of sexual identity and gender roles. These matters are deeply bound into our perception of ourselves, our confidence in dependable social order, and into our fundamental sense of reality. They lie so close to our understanding of who we are that proposals for change or for the recogni-

tion of alternative ways of conduct can seem threatening. It may be hard to credit the good faith of those who differ from us.

The new is not always right against the old, nor the old against the new. But when the new arises in the midst of the old, the church must look freshly at its ultimate sanctions, and it must discriminate. Its task is not to adjust its message and conduct to new claims—to trim its sails to the winds of change. Rather, new situations ask (they require) the church to repossess, indeed, at times to reconceive its own gospel. Can the church, in creative fidelity, change while remaining itself? It is not that suddenly we are put out ahead of gospel and required in the light of new insight to revise it. Rather, it is always ahead of us, and we are—in the light of unprecedented circumstances—slowly catching up with it.

When history generates newness and the church must respond, not all Christians will respond the same way, and not all who take the same direction will move at the same pace.

Modern day interpreters, when they look at their sources for guidance in faith and life, must take into account a great deal that is not part of the worlds of the Bible or the creed-making church. Anglican discourse is active and wide-ranging. But the appeal of Anglicans in matters of thought and conduct is quite focused. No interpretation of the basic ecclesial "signs" is accorded the finality that belongs to the "signs" themselves. It may be important to determine that with respect to many urgent issues of today, the basic Anglican sources (which are at the same time the basic Christian sources) say nothing whatever. If we think they have clear implications for today, such conclusions derive from our interpretations, and not from the "signs" themselves. As loyal Anglicans, we may cherish our interpretations and represent them strongly, while at the same time we must remain open to new truth and coexist in charity with those who, consulting the same sources in the same spirit of honest inquiry, have come to different conclusions.

ECCLESIOLOGY—THE NATURE OF ANGLICAN DECISION-MAKING: BIBLIOGRAPHY

Avis, Paul. *Authority, Leadership and Conflict in the Church.* London: Mowbray, 1992.
An original work that combines theological with practical wisdom.

_____. *Christians in Communion.* Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1990.
Contemporary, ecumenical insights on ecclesiology.

Griffis, James E. *The Anglican Vision.* Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1997.
Notable for its brevity, clarity, attractive manner, and responsible viewpoint.

Herbert, A. G. The Form of the Church. London: Faber, 1944.
An old but influential brief study of the Church as identified in the Lambeth Quadrilateral.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Scripture and Discernment: Decisionmaking in the Church.* Nashville: Abingdon, 1966.
Finding guidance from the Bible without being simplistic.

Maurice, Frederick Denison. *The Kingdom of Christ*, 2 vols. 4th ed. London: Macmillan, 1892.
The basic work of Maurice's thought. Maurice is quite wordy; there have been abridged versions of this work. The heart of his thought is well presented in Alec

R. Vidler, F. D. Maurice and Company, SCM Press, London: 1996.

Mudge, Lewis S. *The Sense of a People: Toward a Church for the Human Future*. Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992.

An informed contemporary statement on the Church in God's purpose.

Outler, Albert. The Christian Tradition and the Unity We Seek. New York: OUP, 1957.

An attempt to point to the future by way of the formative years of the past.

Scroggs, Robin. The New Testament and Homosexuality. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1984.

A discriminating look at the biblical evidence.

Sykes, Stephen, John Booty, and Jonathan Knight. *The Study of Anglicanism*, Revised Edition. London/Minneapolis: SPCK/Fortress Press, 1998.

Part IV, ch. 8, "Canon Law," by Daniel Stevick, has a passage, pp. 234–236, on the challenge that issues of marriage and divorce, sexuality and the place of women in the church pose for the institution and its leadership.

BARUK ATTAH, ADONAI BLESSING

The Reverend Canon Dr. Leonel L. Mitchell
Professor Emeritus of Liturgics
Seabury-Western Theological Seminary

"Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel," the opening words of the Song of Zechariah, is typical of the blessings found in both the Old Testament and in Jewish practice. It is in the form called berakah in which God is blessed, usually for some particular gift. In the Benedictus it is because, "he has come to his people and set them free." We find this same usage in The Book of Common Prayer, for example, in the General Thanksgiving:

> We bless thee for our creation, preservation,
> and all the blessings of this life;
> but above all for thine inestimable love
> in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ,
> for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. (BCP 58)

In the familiar Jewish blessings of bread and wine, it is concrete material objects for which God is blessed:

> Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, who bring forth bread from the earth.
>
> and
>
> Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, who created the fruit of the vine.

God is blessed for the gifts, and the gifts are then said to be "blessed." An equivalent alternative formula thanks God for the gift. The second paragraph of the Jewish Table blessing (birkat-ha-mazon) begins, "We thank you, Lord our God, who has given us this good land," and concludes, "Blessed are you, Lord our God, for the land and for the food." The New Testament accounts of the institution narrative at the Last Supper seem to use "bless" and "give thanks" interchangeably, Mark and Matthew saying that Jesus blessed the bread, and Luke and Paul (1 Cor. 11) saying he gave thanks.

Sometimes the blessing is directed toward a person, as in Numbers 6:24, "The Lord bless you and keep you," or less often toward an object to be used by people, as in Exodus 23:25, "I (the Lord) will bless your bread and water."

Blessing, then is first of all to give praise and thanks to God for someone or something. Secondarily it is thereby to invoke God's favor upon those for whom the thanks are offered, either in general or in some particular enterprise, such as getting married, going on a journey, or exercising a ministry. The Western liturgical tradition has tended to use bless as a transitive verb with a person or thing as its object, rather than to bless God for it.

The blessing of things is rooted in the doctrine of creation, specifically that, "God saw everything that he had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1:31), and that, "Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected provided it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by God's word and by prayer" (1 Tim. 4:4–5). To bless an object is to recognize it as part of God's creation and to affirm its use to the glory of God. It does not imply that the creation is profane and needs to be somehow altered or purified in order to be fit for sacred use. Although the consecration of the eucharist is a complex special case, the blessing of things is usually directed toward the people who use the things, not toward the things themselves.

In liturgical use we bless both people and things. We bless the congregation at the end of services, sick people, penitents, those entering ministries, newborn babies, the eucharistic elements, baptismal water, chrism, oil for the sick, wedding rings, palms, ashes, organs, churches, books, houses, bells, crosses. . .the list could go on. In each case we ask God to pour grace and favor upon the person, either in general, or in some particular circumstance, for example, "The Lord be in your heart and upon your lips that you may truly and humbly confess your sins..." (BCP 447) or "Bless the ministry of these persons and give them grace..." (BOS 135) or "Bless all who live here with the gift of your love... " (BOS 155) Liturgical blessings are reserved to priests or (in some cases) bishops, but apart from the liturgy, others give blessings: parents bless their children, and those who eat bless their food.

Liturgically we distinguish between "pronouncing blessings," which is limited to priests and bishops and praying for them, which anyone may do, e.g., "The almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us," (BCP 135) which is said by the officiant at the end of Compline. The difference, presumably, has to do with the official authorization of the priest to pronounce blessings in the name of God and the Church, although it would be difficult to argue that there is a difference in effect, for it is hard to see how it is not the "prayer of the Church" which God has promised to answer which is invoked in both cases.

Historically the nuptial blessing in the Roman Rite was a blessing of the bride as she entered her new status, but in Northern European use it came to be a blessing of both parties. (See Kenneth Stevenson, Nuptial Blessing) The blessing is not the same thing as the covenant of marriage, which the couple themselves enter. It is the blessing of the Church on those entering in, and is therefore comparable to other blessings of people entering a new state.

Almost any person or thing, or any human activity can be and has been the subject of blessing. Solemn prayers are offered for armies setting off to war, and baseball players coming up to bat sign themselves with the cross. The Church formally blesses fishing fleets and fox hunts (even though many Christians consider fox hunting immoral). The blessing does not always mean that the Church favors the activity (such as fighting a war), but that it asks God's care and protection for those engaging in it, and assures them of God's love and the Church's continuing prayers.

Blessing, then, is about God's loving relationship with human beings, the goodness of creation, especially of the gifts which God has given us to use and enjoy, and the offering of "ourselves, our souls and bodies" back to God in thanksgiving, remembering that all we are and have comes from God, and dedicating it to God's honor and glory, so that its use becomes a means of communion with God.

CATECHESIS AND SAME-SEX BLESSINGS—A REVIEW

The Reverend Dr. Sheryl A. Kujawa
Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology, Episcopal Divinity School

Catechesis is the process by which people are instructed in the Christian faith and are assisted in reflecting on their life in light of their faith in order to mature as Christians, become authentic disciples of Jesus Christ, and live the Gospel. It is an intentional life-long process of formation, education, and instruction within the context of a community of faith. As Christians within the Anglican/Episcopal tradition, our catechetical ethos is necessarily based on three interrelated sources of authority: scripture, reason, and tradition, as well as our common worship according to The Book of Common Prayer.

The task of adult catechesis is to create environments and processes that invite Christian people to journey together—exploring, studying, reflecting, and acting in and toward faith. Catechesis is about hearing and telling our stories; articulating fundamental questions about what it means to be human and in relationship with God and with each other; listening deeply to each other and making connections; and discerning our mission in the world. Catechesis is essentially dialogical and centered within a community of faith. It is about sharing human hopes and fears within the context of care and compassion. It is a journey toward faith and wholeness.

For many people, speaking about human sexuality from a religious perspective brings with it feelings of guilt and sinfulness. Although it is possible to discover in history the reasons why these negative and erroneous impressions about sexuality were taught, it is more important within the context of Christian catechesis to facilitate the development of a Christian spirituality of human sexuality based on the assumptions of health and wholeness. Our sexuality is sacred because it finds its source in God's love. Its power provides the possibility of the most profound relationship between people. Through the Incarnation

all human beings share in the capacity to live within the communion of God's love. One of the goals of genuine catechesis—throughout the human lifecycle—is to assist people to integrate their sexuality into their personal life, and to give a Christian meaning to this integration.

If our Christian catechesis is aimed at the support of whole persons, we will need to encourage people to become aware of their sexuality as a gift from God, and uphold the spiritual, psychological, and physical intimacy between couples, whether those involved are of the same sex or different sexes. In so doing, we will have to face personal wounds due to misunderstandings of sexuality, as well as prejudices against people within our faith communities. We will need to encourage all couples in covenanted relationships to live their commitment faithfully and form a family responsibly.

Most adults living in our society today, from many different social contexts, struggle with issues relating to family life, work, school, or church. They experience anxiety over their own future, their children's future, and the future of the world. They are challenged through health crises, employment issues, and housing costs. If we as a church are not compelled to listen to each other, to support healthy relationships, to build community, to clarify problems, and to work toward a just world, then where in our society will this vision be sustained? If we are not committed to assisting others in making connections between their experiences and hopes, and the stories, traditions, values, and rituals of our faith community, then where will people find meaning and spiritual refreshment?

The Gospel empowers us to reflect, and to discern, and to act. Catechesis involves human beings in communities of faith engaged in the process of interpreting our most profound concerns, continuously reframing difficult questions, and risking to see the meaning of the Christian life in new ways. It is an invitation to live a more fully Christian life.

Catechesis and Same-Sex Blessings: Bibliography

Ammerman, Nancy Tatom, et al. "Adaptation: Integrating Gay and Straight," in *Congregation and Community*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997.

Profiles of three congregations that engaged in a deliberate process to become "open and affirming."

Called to Teach and Learn: a Catechetical Guide for the Episcopal Church. New York: Episcopal Church Center, 1994.

General catechetical guide; study guide.

Glaser, Chris. *Come Home! Reclaiming Spirituality and Community as Gay Men and Lesbians*, 2nd ed. Gaitherberg, MD: Chi Rho Press, 1998.

This classic is available in a new edition which includes five new chapters. Invites gay men and lesbians to come home to their spirituality through community.

Graede, Betha Ann, editor. *Congregations Talking About Homosexuality: Dialogue on a Difficult Issue*. Silver Spring, MD: Alban Institute, 1998, reprinted 1999.

Stories of congregations and how they engaged in dialogue about homosexuality.

Graff, E. J. *What is Marriage For? The Strange Social History of Our Most Intimate Institution*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1999.

Places same-sex relationships in the context of the history of marriage from the ancient Hebrews to the nineteenth-century Utopians.

Horowitz, Paul, and Scott Klein, "A Ceremony of Commitment." In *Twice Blessed: On*

Being Lesbian or Gay and Jewish, edited by Christie Balka and Andy Rose. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.

Same-sex blessing ceremony for use in a Jewish context.

Kittredge, Cherry, and Zalmon Sherwood, editors. *Equal Rites: Lesbian and Gay Worship, Ceremonies, and Celebrations*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1995.

Worship resource with a section on same-sex blessings.

Marshall, Joretta. "Counseling Lesbian Partners." Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997.

Handbook of support for lesbian couples; including covenanted partnerships and challenges of those partnerships.

Rowell, J. Cy. "Toward Understanding Homosexuality: An Agenda for Adult Christian Education's Contribution to Human Wholeness." *Religious Education* 91, I:122–134.

Proposes a framework for religious educators concerned with becoming more articulate allies of homosexual persons.

Switzer, David K. *Pastoral Care of Gays, Lesbians, and Their Families*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999.

Pastoral care of lesbian and gay couples and families.

Vogel, Linda J. *Teaching and Learning in Communities of Faith: Empowering Adults Through Religious Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991.

Basic text on Christian education for adults on an empowerment model.

Waum, Maurine C. More Than Welcome: Learning to Embrace Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Persons in the Church. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999.

A heterosexual pastor writes of her journey to share the struggles of sexually marginalized people. Articulates the opportunity for the church to fill the spiritual needs of the lesbian and gay community; study guide.

A REFLECTION ON THE FOREGOING ARTICLES: THE VIRTUES OF IGNORANCE, HUMILITY, AND REVERENCE FOR MYSTERY

The Rt. Reverend Dr. Paul V. Marshall
Bishop of Bethlehem

The reader of these articles and the literature that they cite will have noted that the authors, Episcopalians, all of whom are devoted disciples of Jesus Christ, think very differently. For the most part, they have studied the scriptures in their context and grappled with the tradition of the Church, yet they have arrived at very different points of view on homosexuality and the blessing of same-sex unions. This state of things is not surprising, however. It is certainly not established that all homosexual acts and desires have a single cause. To further complicate the matter, there is no unanimously held view of same-sex unions in the gay community, and the same variety exists in the opinions of those opposed to or hesitant about blessing such unions. In addition, evidence can be brought forward from the social and biological sciences in support of several positions on these subjects. Finally, people holding various points of view not unnaturally organize politically around their positions, and the amassing and solidifying of political power tends to frustrate the search for truth.

Among the choices facing the Church is the possibility of allowing the political process to dominate, ending the issue without settling it, by taking an up-or-down vote. Far from establishing truth, such an attempt at closure would deny that which most characterizes the state of theological knowledge at this point: ignorance.

It might be more comfortable to describe this state as partial knowledge, but it is healthier to call it ignorance. The fact that there is no single way to assemble the theological evidence, and that there is considerable disagreement about what the sciences have to tell us, argues for an acknowledgment yet again that "our knowledge is imperfect." Rather than choosing between competing truth-claims, we seem better poised to say that while numbers of us may perhaps believe ourselves to observe from a distance several aspects of the truth, the best description of our overall state is ignorance.

To admit that we are not ready, theologically or scientifically, to say a defining word about the life of homosexuals in the church betokens the much broader disagreement, in practice, among very faithful people regarding sexual mores in general. It appears that, in practice, many otherwise committed Christians believe that engaging in sex outside of marriage is not wrong for them, but the existence of this majority practice, mistaken or not, has not been thoroughly acknowledged and addressed by the Church. This fact reminds us that there has not been a serious and thorough-going attempt among us at a theological anthropology—a Christian definition of the human person—for far too long. Given the state of our knowledge, such an enterprise would be itself tentative and unsatisfying, but it is an essential undertaking nonetheless.

The easy path in the face of ignorance is to deny it, and aggressively to assert certainty where there may be at best one way of assembling the evidence that seems most compelling to us. It is easy to deny that those who threaten or seem to oppress us have any evidence on their side or that they operate from a position of personal and intellectual integrity. It is necessary for our spiritual health that we refrain from such denial.

The more difficult path is to admit that among issues that some see as justice and fulfillment, and that others see as sin and distortion of humanity, we do not know everything. The questions about human sexuality (biologically or theologically) extend far beyond the question of the activities of a relatively small percentage of the human population, and it is important that all the questions be addressed in an integrated way.

Can the Church take the corporate stand of admitting its ignorance and respecting at the same time those among Christ's followers who hold disparate points of view? After all, no one is suggesting that those holding the other opinion cannot be baptized or receive Holy Communion. Can we allow our ignorance and disagreement to be transcended by our undenied unity in Jesus Christ?

Humility has been defined as the ability to be taught by each person one encounters. This definition may not say all there is to say about humility, but it is certainly an important part of any explanation of what it means to be humble. When people disagree with us, we tend to see them as opponents or dismiss them as ideologues. Humble people with active awareness of their ignorance are free to learn from those who are different or who think differently, and humbly to relate to them on a new level, that of mystery.

We are fearfully and wonderfully made as a species. In addition, each human being is an immensely complex product of many influences, from the biological to the spiritual.

Proceeding from this truth, we encounter each human being with the reverence due mystery, and encounter each practicing Christian as God's work in progress. Even when we reprove what we believe to be error on the part of a brother or sister, this reverence for mystery mandates a gentleness with each other that is probably the best testimony we can give to the Truth who took our flesh. Perhaps we do well to understand the command to "speak the truth in love" by addressing and hearing each person we engage with the reverence appropriate to the complexity of creation and the unique path of personal formation incarnate in that individual.

In this context of reverence—and humility—it seems best not to take absolutist positions on a national level about what cannot be known with great certainty. Whatever are the historical facts about a Council of Jerusalem, we see in Acts 15 some in the early Church being asked to accept those with whom they could not agree about holiness of life, while those for whom the way was being paved were charged not to outrage the sensibilities of other communities in the Church. Local fellowships worked out their ways of life accordingly. This approach could have been belittled as "compromise" only by those who could see no ambiguity in the situation. This is a fact often hidden from us because the view of St. Paul, that Gentile converts need not be circumcised or keep most of the rest of code of purity, triumphed completely and is now what we think is normal and normative. It is hard to remember that for Jewish Christians, like other Jews of their time, the concept of a law being "merely" one of ritual behavior was offensive and absurd. We seldom appreciate the extent to which St. James was taking a great risk in reconciling the Jewish and Gentile factions in the nascent Church.

The point here is not the content of James' injunction, which concerned things no longer even discussed for the most part, although it did touch on sexual matters at one point. Rather, it is that although each side worried about whether the other's stand on the issue of purity would weaken the Christian message, their fears were not realized. Points of view that really did threaten the Christian faith, what we now call "ancient heresies," were ultimately rejected, and the Gospel continued to spread.

When we simply cannot agree that one view compels the allegiance all faithful people, as is the case today, the reverently ignorant thing to do is either to abstain altogether from making a decision, or else to allow dioceses to find their own way in the matter, and only much later, if ever, come to some general agreement. The fact that people's lives, not merely their ideas, are to some extent at issue here suggests providing for local resolution rather than doing nothing. In the diocese, it is the task of the bishop, as chief teacher and pastor, to know the state of understanding of matters of sexuality among local clergy and people, and to teach and to foster discussion accordingly. Such an approach also allows broader participation in discussion by those whom any decision would affect. All of this is a primary instance of the Anglican principle of "subsidiarity," our preference for doing on the provincial or international level only what cannot be done at the fundamental level of the diocese. On this basis the charitable recommendation of the Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music commends itself to the Church. The principal alternative seems to

be schism, which many an ancient Christian believed to be a state far worse than heresy or ignorance.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RESOLUTION OF ISSUES

Resolution A065 Resolution on Issues Related to Committed Same-Sex Relationships

Resolved, the House of ____ concurring, That the 73rd General Convention urge congregations, dioceses and every other church group and organization to facilitate genuine and respectful encounter between heterosexual and homosexual parishioners, recognizing that they live different life-styles, hold different opinions but share one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and using the materials in the Response to C003s Report to enable a dialog that is comprehensive and transforming; and be it further

Resolved, That each Diocese, under the spiritual and pastoral direction of its bishop, shall determine the resolution of issues related to same-sex relationships, including the blessing of such relationships, and the ordination of homosexual Christians.

Explanation

The 65th General Convention of this church, meeting in 1976 in Minneapolis affirmed "that homosexual persons are children of God who have a full and equal claim with all other persons upon the love, acceptance, and pastoral concern and care of the church." The Baptismal Covenant establishes us all as members of Christ and of one another, incorporating and transcending our differences, calling us to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as we love ourselves, respecting the dignity of every human being. Because the continuing debate within the church on questions of human sexuality has led to a variety of responses on the part of dioceses and congregations, dialog and pastoral action in dioceses leading toward the resolution of these differences is essential.

THE REVISION, RENEWAL, AND ENRICHMENT OF THE COMMON WORSHIP OF THE CHURCH

Prepared in response to Resolution C021s of the 72nd General Convention meeting in Philadelphia in 1997 for discussion at the 73rd General Convention meeting in Denver in 2000

Resolution C021s of the 72nd General Convention Of the Renewal and Enrichment of the Common Worship of this Church

Resolved, That the 72nd General Convention direct the Standing Liturgical Commission and the Standing Commission on Constitution and Canons to submit to the 73rd General Convention for first reading an amendment to the Constitution of this church to add to Article X an authorization for preparation and use of additional liturgical materials, and be it further

Resolved, That the Standing Liturgical Commission be directed to prepare a plan for liturgical Revision and Enrichment of the common worship of this church to be presented to the 73rd General Convention, and be it further