"Ties That Bind"

Being in Communion in the Anglican Church of the 21st Century

Address #1 – Trinity College, Toronto June 27, 2005

by

The Most Reverend Andrew S. Hutchison, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada

(Due to illness the Primate was unable to deliver this address.
It was spoken by his principal secretary Archdeacon Paul Feheley)

It is nearly 40 years since I registered in the Faculty of Divinity at Trinity College – biblical shorthand for a very long time. Certainly at that time neither I nor my classmates could have imagined that I would one day be invited to do these lectures as a successor to the then Primate, Archbishop Howard Clark. Nor, I suspect could we have imagined the current challenges facing the Anglican Church of Canada or the Anglican Communion.

I have been invited to do three addresses. The first, under the title "In the Beginning" will look to our roots in England and the early development of what we have come to know and love as classical Anglicanism in the Anglican Communion. In the second address we will move on to reflect on the issues challenging that happy fellowship. Then in the third we will attempt to look ahead to what God may be calling us to in the 21st Century.

There is a well-known story about Jesus showing compassion for St. Peter who had tended the gates of the kingdom for so long without a break. He decided to relieve Peter for an interval. The next arrival at the gates was a rather startled Baptist. Jesus said to him, "There has been a procedural change. Before you go any further, you must answer a skill testing question; 'who do you say I am?" The Baptist immediately replied, "The Holy Bible says….." But Jesus interrupted him, "No, no, I know what the Bible says, but what do you say?" The Baptist looked perplexed, and said, "Well I can't presume to say on my own account, it's what the Bible says that matters". "I am sorry, says Jesus, you will have to go elsewhere". Then came a Roman Catholic, who was presented with the same question. He began, "Holy Mother Church teaches.." But he too was interrupted. "I know what Holy Mother Church teaches, but what do you say"? The Roman Catholic stuttered, "But surely only Mother Church can answer that with any accuracy". At last came an Anglican, to whom Jesus put the same question. "That's easy", said the Anglican, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God". "Quite right", said Jesus, "Please proceed". Then just as the Anglican was about to step through the gates, he turned and said, "On the other hand……" Somewhere in there is the seed of an issue underlying the present challenges, which our discussions may bring to light.

Our earliest origins in England are somewhat obscure. There is evidence of a delegation from Britain at the Council of Arles in 314, and again at Nicea in 325. When Augustine arrived on his mission to Britain in 597, he reported back to Pope Gregory that he had discovered there were already Christians there, and that even the Queen of Kent was a Christian. The Pope wisely advised him to bless everything he found, and made him the first Archbishop of Canterbury. What Augustine had found was the remnant of the Celtic Church, whose influence on Anglican spirituality continues into our own time.

The relationship between British Christianity and Rome waxed and waned though the centuries, depending on the monarch of the day, right through to the time of Henry VIII. It was ultimately

the Pope's refusal to grant the King an annulment that provided the catalyst for the full and formal severance. "The Bishop of Rome has no authority in this land", declared Henry. He then procured from the Archbishop of Canterbury his writ of divorce. Since Anglicans never developed the machinery for divorce, or for that matter annulment, it was possibly the only marriage after divorce granted in the Anglican Church until well into the 20h century. In any case, so began an independent state Church, with the Monarch at its head. It is perhaps ironic that the Monarch still carries the title "Defender of the Faith", a title first granted to Henry by the Pope for Henry's brilliant defense of the Catholic faith.

On a recent visit to China, I had the opportunity to meet with the Director General of Religious Affairs for the People's Republic, and explored with him the question of normalizing relations with the Vatican. One of the non-negotiable conditions for that, he said, is that bishops would have to be elected and appointed in China, with no interference from the Vatican. I indicated that as an Anglican, I could have some sympathy with that view.

Our separation from Rome was both political and theological. To put it simply, there were those whose attitude seemed to be that nothing had changed but the management. Others saw it as an opportunity for bold participation in the continental Reformation. It was a chaotic period of history, in both State and Church. To make a long and convoluted story short, the turmoil continued despite a series of Acts of Uniformity from 1549 onward. It was not until the fourth Act, of 1662 that a settlement was realized. As part of the Restoration Settlement, the Book of Common Prayer was annexed to the Act. With a few significant amendments (1872) the Act remains in effect to this day. King James I convened the Hampton Court Conference in 1604 to bring together Puritan leaders and the bishops of England to consider Puritan demands for reform. The King sided with the bishops, so while the Puritans gained some revisions to the BCP, the great achievement of the conference was setting in motion the process for an Authorized version of the Scriptures. There were six companies of translators. Adam Nicolson's book, God's Secretaries, provides a record of their work, and a delightful insight into Jacobean England. To quote from it,

> *The period was held in the grip of an immense struggle between the demands for freedom of the individual conscience, and the need for order and an imposed inheritance; between monarchy and democracy; between extremism and toleration. (xiii)*

It may be important to remind ourselves that we are talking about the 17th Century here, not the 21st.... or are we?

> *The book they created was consciously poised in its rhetoric between vigor and elegance, plainness and power. (ibid)*

This may suggest something to us about how Anglicans have approached and received the Scriptures through the centuries since then.

The evolution of the Book of Common Prayer provides us with another insight into the struggles of the times. The first book (1549) continued many of the uses of the Catholic Church, but with a larger portion of Scripture, the use of the vernacular instead of Latin, and some simplification of rubrics. For example, the Athanasian Creed had to be said only six times a year, instead of every Sunday! A second book under Edward VI (1552) prohibited the use of the alb, chasuble, tunicle and cope, and ordered the priest to preside from the north end of the altar. The epiclesis in the prayer of consecration was forbidden, and the words of administration were changed.

The book, however, did not gain much support beyond Edward's life, and the 1549 version remained in favour .

To say that toleration was not established as an Anglican virtue in the 16th century is an understatement. When the Puritans came to power, Parliament passed an ordinance forbidding the use of the BCP anywhere in England or Wales (1645). Severe fines were imposed for infractions; a third offense resulting in a year's imprisonment without bail! With the Restoration came the Savoy Conference, which set about the work of yet another BCP revision to address the concerns of both the Puritans and the bishops. The result is the remarkable 1662 Book of Common Prayer, which was to become normative throughout the Communion for the next four centuries.

All of the preceding is by way of a reminder that Anglicanism has had a less than serene past in the land of its origins.

One is reminded of a synagogue in which a dispute arose over whether the congregation should be sitting or standing during certain prayers. The aged founding rabbi was still alive, so a delegation was sent to visit him to resolve the issue. "Rabbi", asked one of them, "is it not the tradition that we sit for these prayers?" "No", said the Rabbi, "that is not the tradition". "You see", said another member of the delegation, I told you it is the tradition that we stand for those prayers". "No", said the Rabbi, "that is not the tradition". "But Rabbi", said another, "if there is no clear understanding that we sit or that we stand, there will be nothing but chaos!". "Yes", said the Rabbi, "that is the tradition". Some would say there is an echo in that for Anglicans.

The 39 Articles of Religion have been regarded by some as a complete and sufficient statement of Anglican belief and doctrine. For almost four centuries clergy throughout the Communion were required to assent to them as a condition of ordination. (When I was required to do so I noted that there were a number of entries in the book in the Synod Office of the Diocese of Toronto where the words "under protest" had been added.) In fact, however, the Articles originally had a more specific intent. They are an evolution over the years of the 16th century through to the mid 17th century – at times they varied from 6 to 10, to 13, to 11, to 42, to 38, and finally the 39 which still appear in the BCP. Evan Daniel says of them

> *Their contents are best understood by bearing in mind the objects the Anglican reformers had in view, viz. to demonstrate the organic identity of the Post-Reformation Church of England with the Primitive Church, and to point out wherein its teaching differs from that of the Church of Rome on one side, and that of Protestant bodies on the other.*

Article 6 will be of particular interest in our present circumstances. The Council of Trent had formally established Scripture and Tradition as <u>coordinate</u> sources of truth. To quote from the Council, the Church "receives and venerates both with equal affection of piety and reverence". Article 6, on the other hand affirms the sufficiency of Scripture:

> *Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation.*

It does not, however, go on to insist that nothing but the clear and simple word of Scripture is to be commended; only that nothing that is not read or can be proven from Scripture is to be regarded as <u>essential to salvation.</u> B.J. Kidd, sometime Vicar of St. Paul's, Oxford, says "when Article 6 was accepted, the Convocation evinced the high value put upon Tradition by the Church of England as a <u>subordinate</u> guide to truth.

Much is made also in current discussion of Article 20.

> *"The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: And yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written."*

Some, however, neglect what follows in the same article:

> *"neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another."*

But let us move beyond the 17th century and its controversies towards what we now experience as Anglicans in the 21st century. What is established early on is that Scripture is the source of all truth, and tradition the guide to its meaning.

> *"All Scripture is written for our learning." We read in Romans 15.*

The Anglican Communion as we know it today is a product of the British Empire, and of the 19th century. As the Empire expanded, Church of England chaplains went with the troops to "foreign lands afar," ministering first to the troops, and then to tiny colonial congregations, and finally to the people they encountered and assumed to be pagans and savages living in deep darkness. In time bishops were appointed by the Crown and dispatched to the colonies – including the first four bishops in Canada Gradually, however, colonial churches took on a life of their own, raising up their own bishops and clergy, and gaining independence province by province, while still maintaining a close relationship with the Church of England, and the See of Canterbury. Originally, for example, we took the name of the Church of England in Canada. When in 1955 we became the Anglican Church of Canada, we were the first national church to use the word Anglican in its title. We were, earlier, the first church of the era to introduce synodical government including bishops, clergy and laity.

Whereas we have long cherished a tradition of independence, it is interesting that Canada was largely responsible for the first Lambeth Conference. In 1865, the Provincial Synod of Canada, on motion of the Bishop of Ontario, petitioned the Archbishop of Canterbury "for a General Council of her members from every land." At issue was a scandal around Bishop Colenso of Natal, who had come to the conclusion that not all of the Old Testament could be relied upon as true. He was deposed by the Archbishop of Capetown, and appealed to the Privy Council. What resulted from Canada's petition was not at all what it had asked for, but has become what we now cherish – the Lambeth Conference of Bishops, which met first in 1867. Of it Archbishop Longley said,

> *"It should be distinctly understood that at this meeting no declaration of faith shall be made, and no decision come to which shall effect generally the interests of the Church, but that we shall meet together for brotherly counsel and encouragement. I should refuse to convene any assembly which pretended to enact any Canons or affected to make any decisions binding on the Church."*

So was established a strong tradition of respect for the integrity of the churches of the Anglican Communion, a tradition upheld by subsequent Lambeth Conferences, including that of 1998. Over time other bodies have come into existence and have come to be known as "instruments of unity" within the worldwide family of Anglican Churches known as the Anglican Communion. They are, in order of their creation: the Archbishop of Canterbury, Senior Primate of the

Communion and "Primus inter pares"; the Lambeth Conference of Bishops; the Anglican Consultative Council and the Primates' Meetings (a periodic meeting of the Primates of the Communion).
Had the original Canadian petition prevailed, we might well have had a General Synod of the Anglican Communion with juridical authority, at least in some things. Instead we have a much more informal relationship among the churches of the Communion, bound by bonds of affection, a common tradition, and what we call the four instruments of unity. The diversity of cultures represented in 164 countries that share in this Anglican family poses a challenge to full communion. So contemporary proposals are among us to address these challenges, usually triggered by a particular challenge to tradition.

Resolution 18 from Lambeth 1988 called for "further exploration of the meaning and nature of communion". The Eames Commission on *Communion and Women in the Episcopate* was established and Resolution 1 (The Ordination or Consecration of Women to the Episcopate) of the 1988 Lambeth Conference set out its mandate:

a) *to provide for an examination of the relationships between provinces of the Anglican Communion and ensure that the process of reception includes continuing consultation with other Churches as well.*

and

b) *to monitor and encourage the process of consultation within the Communion, and to offer further pastoral guidelines.*

The Commission was asked to report to the Anglican Consultative Council. It is perhaps important to note here that the ACC is substantially a Canadian invention, something, about which more will be said in the second address.

In its report to the Anglican Consultative Council in Panama City in 1994, the Commission, in words that are echoed almost precisely in the mandate of the Windsor report,

> *"offered guidelines on how Anglicans might live together in the highest degree of communion possible, while different views and practices concerning the ordination of women continued to be held within the Communion." (Being Anglican in the Third Millennium, p. 229)*

The Virginia Report presented for study at Lambeth 1998 addressed concerns about how to balance respect for the independence of provinces and the interdependence of member churches in communion with one another. While the report has not received general acceptance, it affirms some important principles:

1) Subsidiarity – "a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed at a more immediate or local level" (Resolution III.3 "Subsidiariy" from the 1998 Lambeth Conference

2) The Lambeth Quadrilateral – Scripture, creeds, the two dominical sacraments, and the historic episcopate. Resolution 11 of the 1888 Lambeth Conference affirmed the four elements of the Lambeth Quadrilateral as follows:

1. *The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as 'containing all things necessary to salvation' and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.*

2. *The Apostles Creed, as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.*

3. *The two Sacraments ordained by Christ himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution, and of the Elements ordained by Him.*

4. *The historic episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his Church.*

Both the principle of subsidiarity and the Lambeth Quadrilateral are in fact well established in the life of our church in Canada. The report goes on to say,

> *"Some matters are properly determined at a local or regional level, others which touch the unity in faith need to be determined in the Communion of all the churches."*

The issue is one that has been with us since the beginnings of the Church of England, and of the Anglican Communion in 1867. I suspect it will be with us yet for some time. It is complicated in the 21st century by at least two important developments:

1. The Communion has grown by leaps and bounds in the global south, and challenges both colonial attitudes to mission, and the once dominant Anglo-Saxon culture.

In 1963 the Anglican Congress, held here in Toronto, brought together bishops, clergy and laity from every part of the Communion. Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence in the Body of Christ (MRI) became the principle on which new partnerships and new relationships were to be built.

2. Information technology. In 1963 and before, what happened in the Church in Madagascar might not have been known in our part of the world for months, or even years, if at all. Today everything said in a Canadian General Synod is heard in Khartoum in a matter of minutes.

From the time of Richard Hooker, the Anglican ethos has rested on Scripture, reason and church tradition. As the Rev. Ross Thompson, Vicar of St. Barnabas & Holy Cross in Bristol has said,

> *"It is precisely the art of using the three together that matters, and that as a Communion we have yet fully to learn."*

Perhaps Aidan Nichols is right in his "The Panther and the Hind" when he argues that Anglicanism has often represented a "trialogue of the deaf." His solution, however, is the proposal of a "recognized majesterium" with authority to adjudicate among the three voices and decide on a solution. – hardly a view that would find favour with traditional Anglican thinkers.

The difficulty, of course, is that there are those who claim absolute authority for each voice. Kant, for example, argues that "reason and conscience need to set even the claims of Christ to their tribunal."

For Anglicans, however, there is a powerful resistance to absolutism that allows all three to interact, without any one being the supreme arbiter.

We live in an eschatological reality, in which absolute assurance is what we will achieve only at the end of time. [Paul please check to see if I have made this clearer.] Infallibility belongs only to God. Ours is a journey of faith, hope and love in the meantime towards our unity in Christ.

Perhaps a good note on which to end this talk is offered by Archbishop Michael Ramsey in "The Gospel and the Christian Church."

> *"Unity, therefore, exists already, not in what the Christians say or think, but what God is doing in the one race, day by day. And the outward recovery of unity comes not from improvised policies, but from faith in the treasure which is in the Church already."*