

MANIFESTO FOR A NEW ANGLICAN REFORMATION

TO ALL CHRISTIAN PEOPLE:

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS COME, GREETINGS IN THE NAME OF GOD, OUR FATHER, OF HIS CRUCIFIED AND RISEN SON, AND OF THE HOLY AND LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT. AMEN.

We the undersigned scholars who are members and friends of the Parish Church of the Good Shepherd in Rosemont, PA, find ourselves at the epicenter of a crisis that is spreading to the worldwide Anglican Communion. Heresy, narrow, sinuous, and toxic, is gaining at the expense of the rich, deep, salvific stream of Christian orthodoxy. There is no basis in reason or experience to support this process of displacement; it is occurring under the influence of nothing more than fashions within Western culture. Some of our leaders, although accredited as God's Shepherds and successors to the Apostles, are willfully leading this progression. In an age in which heresy is popularly seen as fresh and exciting and orthodoxy regarded as dull and worn-out, we believe with the Church Universal that "heresy is largely a matter of the will and orthodoxy is not correct logic but a mending of the heart".¹

Although Good Shepherd's Rector and parish church are under attack by a Bishop who espouses a vicious revisionism, we do not view the present crisis, however it affects our lives, as a disaster. Forcing deep issues to the surface and into the light, the crisis will be, we pray, the first step towards a revitalizing victory for Christian orthodoxy. It may provide the incentive for genuine reform, enabling the Anglican Communion for the first time in its history fully to realize the aspirations of its sixteenth- and seventeenth-century leaders. Such a victory for orthodox Truth would render Anglicanism's gifts available to a divided, suffering, and persecuted Christendom. Accordingly, we

pray and call for a "mending of the heart" among those in our midst who are proceeding against us, that Grace abounding may settle upon them and upon all.

What is unfolding in Rosemont is far-reaching, with consequences for the whole Christian world. The heresy among us not only threatens the integrity of Anglicanism but has undermined the Anglican contribution to worldwide ecumenical dialog. Apart from universal repentance, there is no way to deal effectively with heresy in the life of the Church or to accomplish reunion of her sundered fragments. This Manifesto is a call to repentance², and to reform and renewal within Anglicanism with increased accountability on the part of Anglicans to the rest of the Christian world.

To Bishop Charles Bennison of Pennsylvania, his Standing Committee, and all revisionists in the worldwide Anglican Communion:

Bishop Bennison, you have inhibited and attempted to depose the Rector of the Church of the Good Shepherd, David Moyer, from the exercise of his priestly ministry. You thus continue to act in response to events initiated by your public denial and failure to affirm on request the authority of Scripture and the uniqueness, Lordship and bodily Resurrection of Christ. It is required of you as a successor to the Apostles and by your own consecration vows to uphold these doctrines. Your actions reflect what is now often known as revisionism. They place you under anathema: St. Paul's anathema esto (Gal. 1:8). (Anathema is not a curse uttered in hatred, or vengefully, but the toughest form of "tough love" with the intent of turning false teachers towards salvation and of protecting the faithful.) Attempting to revise tradition, you have also pressed upon us the issues of ordaining active homosexuals and blessing same-sex marriages.

In rejecting your authority because of your heterodox doctrines, David Moyer appeals to the eternal faith of the Church as expressed in the formularies of Anglicanism. In contrast, your injustice toward David Moyer has neither a legal nor a theological foundation. That which in large part undergirds contemporary revisionism, the movement for

demythologization of Scripture, has provided scholars with some useful tools; but it has run its course and failed. Logically it is a circular argument, for it assumes that a scientific world-view precludes a belief in miracles, to establish the incredibility of Scripture's testimony to their occurrence. Contrary to the claims of those who attempt demythologization, science cannot legitimately be used to demonstrate the impossibility of miracles. By their nature,

miracles are outside the scope of science, which confines itself to repeatable or repeatedly observable events within the material world. Therefore, Bishop Bennison, your demythologist denial of the bodily Resurrection and the Lordship of Christ is fundamentally flawed and will pass away, as other fashions in the intellectual world have passed away.

You, a false teacher, urge us to accept your authority on the basis of Unity over Truth. But we cannot accept the pastoral care of a Bishop who will not affirm Christ's unique Lordship and bodily Resurrection. Our acceptance would be contrary to Scripture and would violate Patristic precedent and canon law as expressed by the first four General Councils, to which we Anglicans are unambiguously bound. Accordingly, we now call on you, Charles Bennison, on your Standing Committee, and on any Bishops in the Anglican Communion who are fostering innovations in faith and practice, to desist immediately. Cease your persecution of priests, people, and parishes who, intending to remain faithful to what the Church has always taught, resist such innovations. Your persecution is theologically ungrounded and profoundly unjust.

To all Anglican Bishops, Clergy, and People:

Among the complex causes of the crisis presently unfolding at the Church of the Good Shepherd and elsewhere is the historic Anglican insistence on placing Unity above Truth. To value Unity over Truth, within recognized but wide boundaries, was the policy of Queen Elizabeth I. This policy doubtless saved the English Church and nation from disintegration, thus influencing decisively the course of world

history. But the Elizabethan Settlement is now dead. Anglicanism is a global Communion, in a very different position from that of the Ecclesia Anglicana in the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries.

The earlier Anglican appeal to the Fathers now compels us to a shift toward fundamentals. As with the Undivided Church, the Fathers and Gospel alike require that we value Truth over Unity. Unity is important, indeed blessed (cf. Ps. 133). But St. Paul gives Truth much higher priority as when he says, "But even if we ourselves or an angel from heaven preaches to you a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let God's curse be on him (anathema esto)" (Gal. 1:8, NJB). That Gospel is the kerygma of the bodily Resurrection of Jesus the Lord, with all that it implies for salvation of the human race and the transfiguration of the cosmos.

We therefore call for a New Anglican Reformation. Let us return the Anglican Communion to its foundation on Scripture, interpreted by Tradition and Reason. Leaving behind us the moribund controversies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and doctrinal innovations that have been urged upon us in recent times, let us establish the Anglican Communion, for the first time, in full fidelity to the Gospel which values Him Who is the Truth (John 14:6) even more highly than it does Unity.³

However, there is before us a difficult issue, that of the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate. We recognize that according to current Anglican polity, the practice of ordaining women to priesthood and episcopate is in an unfinished process of reception, the outcome of which is uncertain. We call upon all provinces of the Anglican Communion to recognize that status and to consider theologically whether such ordination is or is not meant by the Holy Spirit as a gift for the whole church. In an unfolding process, the consciences of those presently opposing the practice of women's ordination to these orders must be protected with the deepest and most charitable respect.

To All Christian People:

Events beginning in 1976 with the said ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate have troubled many Anglicans. They have also removed the Anglican Communion from its earlier status as a serious partner in ecumenical exchange, especially with the Churches of Rome and the East. We Anglicans have increasingly been perceived, often with reason, as partners in dialog who do not say what we mean and mean what we say. Instead, Anglicans have undertaken unilateral actions such as advocating or preparing to authorize rites for the blessing of same-sex unions, and have denied fundamentals of Christian faith including the uniqueness and Lordship of Christ, His bodily Resurrection, and the divine inspiration of Scripture. Small wonder that Christians are confused and misled when prominent Anglicans openly state that the Resurrection is only the disciples' subjective or interior religious experience and the Bible merely a human product. Those who make such statements have disturbed Christians and have jeopardized, if not de facto terminated, formerly fruitful ecumenical conversations. Yet a far larger number of Anglicans, including ourselves, have passively failed or been slow to identify, expose and oppose these attacks on Christianity. Accordingly, we now call for a Church-wide act of repentance, beginning with our own:

For taking or failing to oppose irresponsible and ecumenically unilateral actions and positions: we the undersigned do hereby humbly acknowledge our active or passive share of corporate responsibility, and do, before God, publicly repent, asking for ourselves and all Anglicans the prayers and forgiveness of the Christian world.

For the grievous part the Anglican Church has played in causing and strengthening divisions in the Christian world since their beginnings: we the undersigned do hereby humbly acknowledge our share of corporate responsibility, and do, before God, publicly repent, asking for us and all Anglicans the prayers and forgiveness of the Christian world.

We call on all Christians, of all faith traditions, to join us in this act of repentance for everything in our past histories that has contributed to disunity.

In the present parlous state of the world and the Church, let Christian faith communities cease their claims of exclusivity. Instead may we

concentrate our efforts towards listening, in dialog, to each other, and to supporting prayerfully those who are involved in defense of orthodox Faith. Let us bring a spirit of renewal to serious ecumenical exchange with the stated objective of restoring full Christian unity. In the unfolding restoration of that unity, we Anglicans have much that is unique to present as gifts to all Christians. We are in an especially privileged position to recognize, call forth, and welcome the gifts of all other Christian faith communities because we hold that the bounds of orthodoxy are sufficiently wide to allow a considerable range of beliefs on non-essential issues. This presupposition may be our principal contribution to ecumenism. At the same time, the Church as bearer of a sacred and saving Revelation must insist upon fidelity "in the Lord" (Phil. 4:2) to that Revelation.

Finally, let questions concerning human sexuality be considered with due regard to Christian Tradition and Scripture. Let the vexed question of ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate be regarded by all as a legitimate *quaestio disputata*. Theologians of all traditions may then address such issues with a view to an ecumenical settlement or at least the attainment of a *modus vivendi* within which, for whatever time shall be necessary before full settlement, all Christians may live together in mutual respect and ultimately in communion.

"In essentials Unity, in non-essentials Liberty, and in all things Charity."⁴

FOOTNOTES

1. C. FitzSimons Allison, *The Cruelty of Heresy: An Affirmation of Christian Orthodoxy*, Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg, PA, 1994; p. 34. Quotes in the original have been deleted.

2. Cf. N. Zernov, *The Reintegration of the Church*, SCM Press, 1952; p. 44: "The healing of schisms must begin with severe self-examination; only when the members of each confession accept their guilt in the disruption of Christian fellowship will the reintegration of the Church become a practical task instead of remaining an unattainable ideal."

Since this was written, fifty years of the so-called Ecumenical Movement have only served to vindicate Zernov's prophetic insistence on the need for repentance.

3. Perhaps what we are calling for should be termed a "New Counter-Reformation"; see Philip Jenkins, "The Next Christianity," *The Atlantic Monthly*, October 2002; pp. 53 - 68.

4. Source disputed.

Stevens Heckscher, Obl. OSB, Ph.D.

*Vincent O. Eareckson, Ph.D.

William J. Gatens, D.Phil. (Oxon.)

*Nancy Bancroft, Ph.D.

Nasser Lajevardi, C.P.C., Ph.D.

Fr. Allen Guelzo, Ph.D.

*Indicates a drafter of the Manifesto

Correspondence concerning the Manifesto may be sent via e-mail to:

manifesto@goodshepherdrosemont.org

or via postal mail to:

Stevens Heckscher

Church of the Good Shepherd

1116 East Lancaster Avenue

Rosemont, PA 19010

USA