

THE COVENANT JOURNAL

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Draft Covenant Creates Instruments of Exclusion

by Marilyn McCord Adams

Actions speak louder than words!

The new draft covenant speaks softly. Its text has mostly lost the strident tone of The Windsor Report and successive pro-Windsor polemical documents. It has mostly dropped the fiction that pan-Anglicanism has 'always been synodal' and the urgent recommendation that pan-Anglican 'instruments of union' be given legal teeth—at least for the reason that kept the first Lambeth Conference from being a synod, that it would be illegal for the Church of England (St. Andrew's Draft 3.1.2)!

If The Windsor Report expresses the righteous indignation of its authors in the face of a perceived emergency and represents the purpose of the 'instruments of union' primarily in terms of preventing change, the new draft at least nods approval of the notion that Gospel proclamation has a social justice dimension—that 'hungering and thirsting for righteousness' involves not only striving for individual holiness but carries a mandate to work for social transformation and institutional reform (SAD 1.2.5, 2.2.2.a, 3.2.3).

The new draft covenant repeatedly acknowledges the legal autonomy of the provinces and accepts that deliverances of the instruments of union will have no legal—legislative or judicial—force (SAD 3.1.2, 3.2.2).

The archbishops' rewrite, and the new draft covenant speak softly. But let the covenanter beware! The big stick has not been thrown away but rather closeted in the appendix, where the machinery and timetables for 'relinquishment' are laid out. True, the language is of 'request' rather than 'judicial injunction' or 'ultimatum.' Yet, it is enough for one 'church' to accuse another to set the ball rolling towards a request for compliance that would have the same effect as a demand to cease and desist on pain of excommunication!

Actions speak louder than words! Recent experience should make us wary. Just how much difference will the lack of legal authority make to the behavior of the 'instruments of union' in handling intra-Anglican disputes?

Look at how—without any legal basis whatever—Lambeth 1.10 (on Human Sexuality) has been elevated to almost credal status, canonized as the teaching of the Anglican communion on sexuality. Consider how study documents such as *Issues in Human Sexuality* and *Some Issues in Human Sexuality* have been elevated to rub shoulders with patristic authors.

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A Funny Kind of Christian

by Giles Fraser

In this essay on the actions of President George W Bush, English author Giles Fraser discusses powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God. He finds it difficult to see how torture of any kind and waterboarding specifically reflect love for neighbor or respect for the dignity of every human being. —Ed.

Somewhere in the Middle East, Jesus Christ is strapped to a bench, his head wrapped in clingfilm. He furiously sucks against the plastic. A hole is pierced, but only so that a filthy rag can be stuffed back into his mouth. He is turned upside down and water slowly poured into the rag. The torturer whispers religious abuse. If you are God, save yourself you... idiot. Fighting to pull in oxygen through the increasingly saturated rag, his lungs start to fill up with water. Someone punches him in the stomach.

Perhaps this is how we ought to be re-telling the story of Christ's passion. For ever since the cross became a piece of jewellery, it has been drained of its power to sicken. Even before this the Romans had taken their hated instrument of torture and turned it into the logo of a new religion. Few makeovers can have been so historically significant. The very secular cross was transformed into a sort of club badge for Christians, something to be proud of.

Two weeks ago, the most powerful Christian in the world vetoed a bill that would have made it illegal for the CIA to use waterboarding on detainees. "We need to ensure our intelligence officials have all the tools they need to stop the terrorists," said George Bush... "This is no time for Congress to abandon practices that have a proven track record of keeping America safe."

Throughout his time in office, the president has frequently been photographed in front of the cross. Yet as his support for torture demonstrates, he has understood little of its meaning. For the story of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is supremely a moral story about God's identification with victims.

The French anthropologist René Girard is the modern voice that has done most to explain the nature of this moral change. Human societies, he argues, are often held together by scapegoating. From the playground to the boardroom, we pick on the weak, the weird, or the different as a way of securing communal solidarity. At times of tension or division, there is nothing quite as uniting as the "discovery" of someone to blame - often

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THE COVENANT JOURNAL is an alternative and independent journal of opinion unofficially published within the Episcopal Church and grounded editorially in the Baptismal Covenant (BCP pp 304f).

It is an occasional paper written primarily to encourage leadership and collegiality among all four orders of ministry — lay persons, deacons, presbyters, and bishops — by promoting charitable, yet timely and vigorous discourse through articles and letters about church agenda and life, about church councils and moral choice, and about the way the church makes and implements decisions.

May it provide a safe place, a place where truth can be told, a place where we can trust one another.

This non-profit enterprise is sustained entirely by the gifts of those who want to promote an alternative church press. We invite your contributions of thoughtful articles, letters, and money to —

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A covenant is a relationship initiated by God, to which a body of people responds in faith. (BCP p 846)

Two Kinds of Faith

A covenant is a relationship initiated by God, to which a body of people responds in faith (BCP Catechism p 846).

The Holy Scriptures of both Old and New Covenants tell the story of how a Judaeo-Christian body of people responded in faith to the relationship God initiated with them. We, who may be said to be an Anglican body of people, adopt our response in faith and call it our normative tradition, meanwhile building our own tradition by responding in faith to the relationship God initiates with us. We affirm that their response contains all things necessary to salvation. We are not always so sure whether our response does or not, though we often feel it has promise.

Urban T Holmes in his singular monograph, "What is Anglicanism?" writes about this Anglican consciousness that it "is a mode of making sense of the experience of God... a particular approach to the construction of reality, or to the building of a world." The Baptismal Covenant according to the use of the Episcopal Church (BCP pp 304f) is one very important way that we respond in faith and inform (ie give shape to) our understanding of our relation to God's initiative—and continuing to make all things new.

It's the faith with which we respond -- there are at least two kinds—that often creates the problem, a problem sweeping the Communion even now. There's the credal or doctrinal faith "we believe" and the covenantal faith "we will." There's the doing here and now, with little direction as to how we go about it. And there's the willing here and now, but with both present and future intention and commitment and clear instructions as to how we go about it. It is the difference between faith as passive acceptance of some, albeit essential content, and faith as active participation in a relationship. The Anglican consciousness seems more a covenantal than a credal way of responding to our experience of God. It's rather like parting the Red Sea.

Samuel Butler is credited with saying "people in general are as equally horrified at hearing the Christian religion doubted as they are at seeing it practiced." The two kinds of faith, credal and covenantal, seem somehow caught up in that statement. It may be safe to presume that some might say the creeds with fingers crossed behind their back. It is not altogether safe whatever to will the Baptismal Covenant without both hands on the wheel.

This ambiguity is revealed by the Baptismal Covenant and its two sets of questions. The Apostles' Creed (the Baptismal Formula) asks for our belief, for passive faith, the part of the Covenant to which we assent. The questions that make up the balance of the Covenant ask for our will, for active faith, and begin with "Will you..." to which we respond, "I will, with God's help." Strangely, we do not ask for God's help for what we believe, but only for what we will, perhaps because a covenant fulfilled is a process, a practice, a life, a relationship in which we choose to engage.

Ironically, the Catechism, itself a form and outline of the faith as belief, is also the source of the definition of a covenant. Faith as assent to doctrine, faith as response to God's initiative all bound in one. The creeds do not spell out beyond implication at best how one must act in response to the affirmations one makes. On the other hand, the covenants are very specific about what one wills to be and to do in the relationship being embraced.

The questions in the Baptismal Covenant embrace the full expanse of the Christian life and way. Nothing and no other is excluded. It is this as editorial premise on which The Covenant Journal was founded and, with God's help, we will to keep it that way.

—JLD

The Mail

The Revd Raymond Lawrence Niskayuna, NY Your January (TCJ27) issue was the best ever. Katie Sherrod was wonderfully bracing. Let's hear more from her. Louis Crew was at his best, revealing his big heart. And Jack Gessell's history was a treasure to be preserved. Keep it coming.

Elaine Smyth Nashville, TN Thanks so much for all the good work you do. (Check enclosed.)

Karen Kral Hendersonville, TN Please remove my name from your mailing list. I left the Episcopal Church eight years ago and have found God's love, community, and PEACE in the Lutheran Church. My prayers go with all those caught up in the conflict within the Episcopal Church. There is PEACE available to you also. In God's love.

Lee Thompson Decatur, GA I am so proud of CET (aka Continuing Episcopalians of Tennessee) and the Diocese of Tennessee. (Check enclosed.)

W Brown Paterson Sewanee, TN The Covenant Journal is a voice that deserves to be heard! (Check enclosed.)

Lucy Morgan College Grove, TN Thanks for all the good thinking! (Check enclosed.)

The Revd Jack Gessell Sewanee, TN Homage to Katie Sherrod. Her piece in the current issue (TCJ27) is brilliant. I have made a contribution to TCJ, and I think it is worth every penny. (Check enclosed.)

Diane Duntley Pittsburgh, PA When one lives in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Covenant is a breath of hope and fresh air. Keep it up. (Check enclosed.)

The Revd Ramona Rose-Crossley Sewanee, TN Thank you for a fine issue of Covenant. Incidentally, I loved the poetry on the Baptismal Covenant (TCJ26), and see no reason why you should not continue to be sometimes seriously theological and at other times playfully creative. After all, YHWH made Leviathan "for the sport of it." And besides, it was good poetry. (I am enclosing a check toward costs and adding names and addresses for three new subscribers.)

Carroll Young Nashville, TN Keep up the good work and good writing! (check enclosed)

Ann Oliver Sewanee, TN The Covenant Journal gets better and better. Thanks so much.

The Revd Donna Scott Nashville, TN Many thanks for your willingness to "speak" for so many of us in the voice of Covenant. Blessings.

Cleo Cowan Nashville, TN My time is well spent when reading this paper... It is such a worthwhile publication. I appreciate all the writers, especially the editor.

The Revd William Dalglish Lebanon, TN Thanks very much for Covenant over the past decade. It helps me always get a better perspective on issues—whether I agree or not. A check is enclosed.

The Revd Rod Murray Nashville, TN A very late note to say how exceedingly grateful I am that The Covenant Journal came into my theological radar. I have been a "subscriber" since the second issue. The superb insights and glimpses the Journal gives all of us who are often confused by episcopal power abusers discover that we aren't really going insane. Keep up the good words because I know you are making a difference in the lives of many of us "churchers." Pax et agapé.

Jeanne Bodfish Nashville, TN Please add the following name to your address list. Enclosed is a little stamp money. Your friend.

Peripatetikos

An 1865 synod of the Anglican Church in Canada, concerned over a troublesome issue which they believed affected the entire Communion, asked for a worldwide Council to define doctrine. That possibility drew such strenuous opposition among Anglicans that it never materialized, but issued, instead, in the so-called Lambeth Conferences which, not having the authority to prescribe, tend rather to suggest.

Exhibiting, then, the inevitable docility of consensus, "Lambeth" has met under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury (aka ABC) every ten years or so since 1867. It often attracts most of the bishops in the Anglican Communion, an association of provincial churches, each autocephalous in its polity. Only a few of these use the word "Anglican" in their official names.

The Conferences frequently talk about achieving unity with other Christians. They have also been concerned over the years with the marriage discipline, rules of churchmanship, peace, family planning (approving, with reservations), faith, the Bible, and, of course, God.

ABC Rowan Williams has said, "The main focus I long to see at this 2008 Conference is the better equipping of bishops to fulfill their task as agents and enablers of mission, as coworkers with God's mission in Jesus Christ."

Lambeth meets at Kent College, Canterbury, England, 16 July – 3 August, 2008.

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*So keep fightin' for freedom and justice, beloveds,
but don't you forget to have fun doin' it. Lord, let
your laughter ring forth. Be outrageous, ridicule the
fraidy-cats, rejoice in all the oddities that freedom can
produce. And when you get through kickin' ass and
celebratin' the sheer joy of a good fight, be sure to tell
those who come after how much fun it was.*

— Molly Ivins (1944-2007)

Peripatetikos, contd.

Crude Awakening is a documentary about how fast we are guzzling the diminishing supply of fossil fuel. Some say the planet has only twenty years of supply left; others say it's only ten, as more and more are demanding a share. Almost every Chinese person expects to own a car within ten years.

The few remaining big sources of fossil fuel are in some of the most unstable places in the world. The average annual income in Saudi Arabia twenty years ago was about \$20,000, but now it is closer to \$800 -- except for the oil billionaires, whom the US military protects to assure our access to oil. Saudi Arabia's most ominous export has become Islamic fundamentalism, fueling conflict throughout all oil rich countries. The genocide in the Sudan is a deliberate attempt to lay claim to the oil. Chinese soldiers guard the pipelines, much as the US guards the Saudi billionaires.

Most people are in denial about the risk of society's collapse as the oil runs out. What public voice does the Episcopal Church have in these regards? Or do we risk terminal earwax?

The earth sustained human life for thousands of years with no trouble. Oil was unimportant to our way of life until less than 200 years ago. The oil glut of the last 100 years has completely changed the way we live. Will we be able to live more simply again, or will we destroy the planet in competing for the last barrels of crude? Almost all of our other ethical concerns pale if we cannot find a way to live within the means of the good earth that God has provided us.

Please watch this documentary. It's available through Netflix. Other films recommended by Episcopalians can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/oac8d>.

(Ed note: Louie Crew, TEC pooh-bah, got our attention with this.)

The Truly Orthodox

by Sergio Carranza

Here we are, just a few months away from the Lambeth Conference and we find ourselves in an impasse: the Bishop of New Hampshire without an invitation to attend the meeting, the poachers from the Global South hunting in the USA and Canada, the schismatics trying to steal TEC's property, the Nigerian postcolonial neo-crusaders-in-reverse uttering threats, and the Archbishop of Canterbury giving the impression that he is willing to sacrifice the Episcopal Church in order to appease the radical conservatives and thus maintain the unity of an already fractured Anglican Communion.

These are perturbing, bewildering and irritating times for the truly orthodox Anglicans who want to preserve not only the identity, but the essence of Anglicanism, and who refuse to accept the new religion crafted by some of the power-greedy Third World hierarchs and the lunatic fringe of American conservatism.

The truly orthodox Anglicans reject the selective literalism of the biblical exegesis propounded by the new religion, as well as the hypocritical morality based on that kind of hermeneutics.

They reject the notion that lay people and priests do not have an equal share with the bishops in the governance of the Church.

The truly orthodox Anglicans reject the allegation that gay and lesbian people are not beloved children of God and cannot be fully included in the ordained ministry of the Church.

They reject the Primates Meeting pretension to define doctrine, to enact legislation and to impose discipline on the autonomous Provinces of the Anglican Communion, as the new religion would have it.

And the reason why the truly orthodox Anglicans reject all these enormities is because they disfigure Anglicanism and destroy its very being.

I do not believe for a moment that the Archbishop of Canterbury would be so naïve as to think that, by ceding to the demands of the Global South radical Primates, he will keep them in the flock and remain himself as the titular head of the Communion. This notion is wishful thinking, at best, since the new religion advocates have been increasingly disrespecting him and his office and are already making plans to set up their own international ecclesial body. As we know, last December 26 the Primate of Nigeria and a coalition of his minions announced a conference in the Holy Land to chart the Church's future course, that will take place next June, just before the Lambeth Conference which some of them have said they plan to boycott.

The truly orthodox Anglicans, while respecting each other's autonomy, want to preserve the bonds of affection which have kept us together across the world, as well as to maintain the centuries-old concept of unity in diversity.

The truly orthodox Anglicans uphold justice, because justice is God's passion and an inherent characteristic of God's Kingdom.

And before I am accused of being just an irate fellow, let me quote what St. Thomas Aquinas has to say about it: "He who is not angry when there is just cause for anger is immoral. Why? Because anger looks to the good of justice. And if you can live amid injustice without anger, you are immoral as well as unjust."

The Rt Revd Sergio Carranza is Bishop Assistant, Diocese of Los Angeles

There Are No Blue Cows

by *Walter Righter*

On a typical cold winter day in Vermont, in the midst of a snowstorm with both ice and snow making the going difficult, Mary Adelia McLeod was consecrated the Bishop of Vermont. She is the first woman in the Anglican Communion to be a diocesan Bishop. The preacher was Barbara Harris, since 1989, the Suffragan Bishop of Massachusetts. She is the first woman in the Anglican Communion to be consecrated Bishop. Bishop Harris's words were prophetic to most of us in attendance. Her words at that point were addressed to the new Bishop. One sentence still stands out. It was something like this – No matter what your experience has been in the past what is coming to you in the future is like nothing you have experienced before. Bishop Harris undoubtedly had experienced a certain uniqueness in the office of Bishop. What struck me however was this. Everyone elected and consecrated Bishop is unaware of what is ahead. There is no preordination training that equips one for the episcopate.

My first weeks in office I was startled by the number of times I had to refer to the constitution and canons in dealing with issues that clergy and lay persons brought to me. The book containing them lay on my desk with Prayer Book and Bible. In talking with other new bishops I found this was true for lots of us. I consulted my chancellor about how unusual I found some of the questions to be and asked if he had any advice for me. He said something like – “Remember you will not ever get a ‘blue Cow’ case.” I took that to mean that in the history of jurisprudence, especially in the church, nothing would be so original as to be the one and only situation ever.

I still believe that to be true. But in recent years we have come pretty close to something like it.

We have seen two bishops renounce their orders and start the process for becoming Roman Catholic. We have seen the House of Bishops depose two bishops for abandoning this communion. And there are two more Bishops that are in the process of being dealt with in the same way. One of the latter is a seminary mate of mine with whom I served in the parish ministry in the same diocese for seventeen years. If anyone had told me, on the day of my ordination in 1951, that this was going to happen I would have suggested they talk with a psychiatrist. Statistically that is a mere two per cent of the House of Bishops, but the rumbles clustering around it make it more significant than a statistic.

The rumbles can be grouped in two groups. The first group questions the canonical validity of what was done in deposing those who abandoned the communion. No matter that the canons the Presiding Bishop followed she followed meticulously. No matter that her chancellor gave her and the House of Bishops, in its meeting recently, his pertinent advice. No matter that the House of Bishops voted to do what the canons require. No matter that had they not done this we would have looked like fools in the Anglican World. Canons seem optional in the eyes of those who object. And at times they seem to want to make resolutions mandatory. The same people seem to reverse things and ask us to take scripture literally and make scholarship optional.

The mildest of the assertions being made questions the competence of the Bishops in applying the canons to the situations in which the Bishops involved were clearly seen as abandoning the communion. The words used about the House of Bishops are these: “the canonical violation appears to be something that slipped under everyone’s radar.” Meaning the bishops violated the canons in their action of deposing Cox and Schofield. There are other sterner expressions used. It has been suggested that perhaps the griping about this action is part of an effort to keep the House of Bishops from deposing Robert Duncan, the present Bishop of Pittsburgh. He has been, in the last five years of my presence in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, moving toward abandonment, and urging his diocesan convention to do so as well. Beside moving in that direction he has inspired fear among many of his clergy. They hesitate to act in opposition. Many of them were heard to say at the recent diocesan convention that they did not want to vote for leaving the Episcopal Church and joining the Southern Cone, but were afraid of hurting the Bishop if they did not. Fear being the key word. The Bishop also seems to like being a victim. In many of his speeches that have been published that is a key concept.

The second set of rumbles is somewhat different. They involve concepts instead of canons. Inclusion is a concept that people find objectionable. Allied to it are suggestions that the ordination of women may turn out to be wrong, even though some of the dioceses do have women priests in them. In spite of that, there is real resistance to having a Presiding Bishop who is a woman. It is my understanding that the Presiding Bishop wanted to visit Pittsburgh, and Bishop Duncan would not allow it. Allied also are all the ideas about gays and lesbians being included. One priest in the Diocese of Pittsburgh actually told one of his parishioners he would not baptize a gay person. Another key word is revelation. The fact that God revealed a great truth to us in the person of His Son Jesus Christ is accepted. But the idea that God may continue to reveal fresh truths to us even today does not have much credence. There are of course other concepts such as the value of biblical scholarship, the necessity for expository work on Biblical texts and stories, and the direction users of those particular skills take with them.

For me, this adds up to one basic idea we need to grasp.

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*There's probably not any point
in being a Christian if you don't
know that the world is going to
break your heart eventually.*

— *Senator Pat Moynihan*

Blue Cows, contd.

Here it is. We need to claim as clearly and as thoroughly as we can that God is working through us in the Episcopal Church. As difficult as that may be we need to claim that we are leaders in the Anglican Communion. We need to put an end to apologizing for ourselves because the majority of Bishops in the 1998 Lambeth Conference disagreed with us. I honestly believe that God has revealed to us the path we are taking. That path is not in conflict with our creedal beliefs or our ways of reading and interpreting scripture. We need to claim that we are the pacesetters in the Anglican Communion not the disobedient minority. We need to believe that we have done something unusual in the deposition of some bishops. We need to believe that not to depose those who are in process would be tragic and confuse the worldwide communion that looks to us for leadership as well as money.

In the first years of my ministry I learned a truth from Bishop Austin Pardue then Bishop of Pittsburgh. He was making his annual visitation to the parish church I served and he was having a grand time. He drew me aside towards the end of the visit and said "Walter you are doing a fine job here. But don't start believing it until twenty years have gone by." It is that long sweep of history we are involved in here. Let's claim it and move on with mission – and Love, believing God is revealing himself/herself to us as we live our lives in faith, not apologizing, but rejoicing.

The Rt Revd Walter Righter, VII Iowa, ret'd.

Myth and Gilligan's Island

by Robin Courtney, Jr.

In the movie, *Coming to America*, Eddie Murphy and Arsenio Hall play two lead roles and several supporting characters residing in the Queens borough of New York City.

Mr Hall, acting as the local parson, Reverend Brown, attends a social event where a marriage is announced. He says to the future bride, "Now I want you to know I am going to be praying for you. And God is going to be faithful to you, just as he helped Joshua fight the battle of Jericho... he helped Daniel get out of the lion's den... and just like he helped Gilligan get off the island!"

Even though it has been over ten years since I first viewed that scene, I remain overwhelmed with laughter whenever I recall it.

I have often wondered if the disciples' seminary training occurred during the years of Jesus' ministry, and if so, would they claim to be Masters of Divinity like we clergy folk call ourselves... or as our seminaries deem us to be?

In the first years of a seminary education, the idealistic, well-meaning student learns that the gospels do not portray a consistent account of Jesus's life from the moment he is born to the time when some of the writers (not all) say he ascended to heaven. Professors also reveal that ancient cultures embraced certain motifs and cultural legends (eg great leaders were born of virgin mothers and were said to have been resurrected from the dead), so some of our cherished biblical events can be labeled as "myth."

The student learns that "myth" does not necessarily mean that biblical events are fairy tales, but it is a genre of literature attempting to explain why and how certain phenomena came to be. So if Samson did not kill 1000 Philistines with the jawbone of an ass, then one wonders if the Resurrection also occurred. Reverend Brown's backing for God's faithfulness becomes tolerable, since Daniel serving time in the Lions' Den may be

just as historically accurate as Gilligan being marooned on that tropical island.

Episcopalians are very comfortable with such academic-based spirituality, as we enjoy musing upon our faith and thus being empowered to "pick and choose" aspects of Scripture as truly relevant or bogus. After all, if the church gave the Bible its authority in the first place, it can also devalue that authority. History reveals we have done just that, so we now find ourselves in an ecclesiastical quandary: "If we toss out the baby with the bath water, then we may not have a legacy to follow us." I suspect that is how we lost approximately 50,000 members last year who feel we have gone over the edge in being too inclusive in matters of human sexuality.

So what does a moderate, who wants to balance the picking and choosing of his/her theology do? Do we stay or do we go?

My justification for my Episcopal priesthood these days is that it is like being married to an alcoholic spouse. Do I know it is self destructive? You bet. Do I apologize to others for its behavior? Indeed. Do I feel that it has lost its mind? Daily. Do I recognize the chaos of our household and how it affects other members of the family? Only if I really have to do so. Do I hope it will get better? Yes. And thus, I stay.

So history will reveal how Masters of Divinity either make or break an institution deemed to be the household of God and whether we are on the cutting edge of divine revelation OR self deception. I can only do like Reverend Brown and pray for this fragile church, our island home; and that God will remain faithful to it, just like with Joshua, Daniel, and possibly Gilligan. Who knows? Just as the jawbone of an ass is alleged to have changed the course of human history, the Episcopal Church may, too.

The Revd Robin Courtney, Jr, is priest-in-charge, St James-the-Less, Madison, TN, and Spiritual Care & Bereavement Coordinator, Asera-care Hospice, Nashville, TN.

Draft Covenant, contd.

Remember how—without any legal basis whatever—the primates behaved in Tanzania: ‘requesting’ moratoria, creating ‘instruments’ to interfere in the internal affairs of TEC. The ABC said they weren’t ‘ultima’, but they sure fooled the American House of Bishops!

Consider how the ‘instruments of union’ continue to give aid and comfort to North American secessionists, with the Archbishop of Canterbury’s comments that they might be recognized as pan-Anglican Communion members and archepiscopal speculations about whether it is dioceses or provinces that are the intended covenanters.

How, we may ask, have the primates demonstrated their hungering and thirsting for justice, when Archbishop Akinola’s promotion in Nigeria of severe criminal penalties for homosexuality has gone without Communion investigation or sanction?

Actions speak louder than words! Recent past performance by the ‘instruments of union’ raise serious questions about whether they should be trusted with so much gate-keeping power.

Here in the Church of England, this recent track record will be welcomed with rejoicing in some quarters and greeted with indifference in others. Isn’t the Episcopal Church guilty by association with the rebellious colony whose present international arrogance deserves to be cut down?

Let the covenanter beware! Strong gatekeeping institutions can be turned in more than one direction. We may be happy when they move to enforce our viewpoint on others. But what about when our turn comes?

What if an English diocese should wish to secede? What if English dioceses demanded local option on signing the covenant?

What if African provinces started planting parishes and ordaining bishops on English soil? What if Anglican churches in England sought alternative primatial oversight? What if parishes and dioceses started exploiting legal loopholes to take the property with them?

What international machinery would be set in motion then?

What if another province complained that our permission of civil partnerships was contrary to biblical morality?

What if the international community insisted on a moratorium and reversal of the ordination of women?

What if persecuted churches maintained that our participation in Interfaith Councils and insistence on civil rights for non-Christian religious groups, undermined martyrs’ morale and jeopardized their mission?

What if other provinces accused us of betraying tradition by allowing anything but services from the 1662 Book of Common Prayer? What if we were ‘requested’ to ban free church-style fresh expressions or missal-based “smells and bells” worship and to discipline participating clergy?

What if other provinces declared certain forms of biblical scholarship unfaithful and ‘requested’ that we forbid ordinands to study them?

What if our faithfulness to the Gospel leads us in directions that provinces in the pan-Anglican Communion can’t countenance? Are we assuming that we are different, because we are the organizers of the club?

Covenant ‘relinquishment’ clauses and machinery still contradict the Reformation insight that Adam’s fall means that groups of sinners are just as fallible as individual sinners. Covenant clericalism still fails to reckon with the priesthood of all believers. Just as it would be unfaithful for individual lower house members to delegate discernment to the House of Bishops or the archbishops, so it is unfaithful for the Church of England to delegate its discernment about Christian mission and social justice in England to international bodies that are not accountable to General Synod, much less to Parliament or the Queen.

Let the covenanter beware! These documents, like their enactments, remain deeply flawed.

The Revd Canon Marilyn McCord Adams is Regius Professor of Divinity, Christ Church, Oxford. This article appeared in Episcopal Café from which we coopted it without even asking permission.
<episcopalcafe.com/daily/anglican_communion/draft_covenantant_>

Funny Kind, contd.

someone perfectly innocent. For generations of Europeans, the Jews were cast in that role in the same way women have been accused of being witches, homosexuals derided as unnatural, and Muslims dismissed as terrorists.

The crucifixion turns this world on its head. For it is the story of a God who deliberately takes the place of the despised and rejected so as to expose the moral degeneracy of a society that purchases its own togetherness at the cost of innocent suffering. The new society he called forth—something he dubbed the kingdom of God—was to be a society without scapegoating, without the blood of the victim. The task of all Christians is to further this kingdom “on earth as it is in heaven.”

Yet, for all his years in office, it is hard to think that President Bush has done anything much to make this kingdom more of a reality. Instead he has given us rendition, so-called specialised interrogation procedures, and the blood of many thousand innocent Iraqis. Bush asserts his Christianity while ignoring the life and teachings of Jesus.

Easter is not all about going to heaven. Still less some nasty evangelical death cult where a blood sacrifice must be paid to appease an angry God. The crucifixion reveals human death-dealing at its worst. In contrast, the resurrection offers a new start, the foundation of a very different sort of community that refuses the logic of scapegoating. The kingdom is a place of shocking, almost amoral, inclusion. All are welcome, especially the rejected. At least, that’s the theory. Unfortunately, very few of us Christians are any good at it.

The Revd Giles Fraser is the vicar of Putney, a columnist for the Church Times, and a regular contributor to the Guardian and Radio 4’s Thought for the Day.

Raymond L. Lawrence, Jr., *Sexual (The Scandal of Christendom) Liberation*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, CT, 2007, Hardback, 196 pp, \$49.75

A Review by G. Richard Wheatcroft

When you have this book you will see on the front cover, above the title, two photographs. One is the bright picture of a woman who looks as if she might have been cast in plastic. She is wearing a white gown, trimmed in gold. She holds her hands together as if in prayer. And wrapped around her hands is a necklace of white stones, with a cross in the center. The other picture is of a man and a woman, discreetly nude, embracing.

The photographs picture the title of the book which the author tells us is "an account of the strange ways sexual pleasure has been profoundly devalued and even perversely demonized in the so-called western world, meaning Europe and its sphere of influence. It is also an exploration of the likely motivations driving this proves of demonization."

Raymond J. Lawrence, Jr. is Director of Pastoral Care at New York Presbyterian Hospital, Columbia Medical Center, General Secretary of the College of Pastoral Supervision and Psychotherapy, and Director of Pastoral Care at the New York Council of Churches.

The book offers, in chronological order, the story of the individuals who made significant contributions to "public process of sexual value-making" in the history of the western world from Jewish tradition to the present. The author maintains that the attitude toward sex found in the Palestinian Jewish tradition, in the law, the prophets, the wisdom literature, and the Talmud, was "exuberantly positive about sexual pleasure which it considers to be a divine gift and even mitzvah -- a meritorious act -- in certain circumstances." He believes that the historical evidence reveals a Jesus "who affirmed the joy of sexual pleasure as a gift from God while at the same time being critical of the institutional forms -- marriage, for example -- by which culture seeks to control sexual behavior." Then he offers the startling conjecture that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, "As an observant Jew, Jesus was likely married as a young man and fathered children." Paul, the Apostle, did not have a clear sexual ethic because the subject was not on his agenda. He was married, and it is

reasonable to assume that, as a Jew, he had a positive attitude toward sexuality. To highlight sexual liberation in the Bible are two fascinating chapters. One, titled *Sexual Pleasure in Judaism*, focuses on the nature and expression of sexuality. The other, titled *Sexual Conduct in the Early Christian Church*, focuses on the moral dimensions of sexual conduct.

The author then turns to the historical forces which radically changed the Biblical meaning and expression of sexuality, beginning with the Roman Emperor Constantine and continuing to the present day. When the Emperor Constantine adopted Christianity in the early fourth century, the biblical theology and values underlying sexual liberation were eclipsed by Stoic and Neoplatonic philosophy and values which promoted virginity and abstinence from sexual pleasure.

Thus began the *Scandal of Christendom*. Three prominent leaders of the Church, Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine reinforced the change. The monastic movement, which began in the late third century, with Anthony of Egypt as its leader, promoted clerical celibacy. The author states that this movement is the basis of "the rejection of sexual gratification" as the "central ethical principle of Christianity in the West."

There are eight chapters, each focused on individuals who, by their relationships, made significant contributions to the meaning and expression of sexuality. They include individuals from the twelfth century to the twentieth century, from Bernard, Abelard and Heloise to Martin Luther, Karl Barth and Paul Tillich.

The conflict between sexual liberation of the 1960's and the counter anti-sexual forces which followed, continued during the latter days of the twentieth century and is not over. The author describes the many differences and ramifications of the war over sexual values. He writes, "The search for sexual pleasure is basic to our experience of being human. We reject it at our peril. It is tragic that Christianity has most recently been on the side of those who hold sexual pleasure in disdain to their great loss." He devotes a chapter

to describing the sexual disarray in the churches today.

In a postscript he provides a summary of the conflict between the first century Jewish sexual liberation values and the "sex-phobic ethic of Stoicism and Neoplatonism, the central philosophy and quasi-religion of imperial Rome." He emphasizes that "Subsequent generations of Church leaders gradually turned away from Jewish sexual values and looked increasingly to the Stoic and Neoplatonism of the empire for their sexual teachings." Concluding his study, he writes, "Christianity in all of its manifestations -- Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox -- has only one good option, to return to its Jewish origins, and to the Pharisaic-Talmudic rabbi (Jesus) who started it all, and away from whomever seems to have drifted." He qualifies that statement by writing, "No final or absolute answers to specific and concrete human behavioral dilemmas are envisioned.

The basic biblical teaching, especially represented by Jesus is that all behavior --including sexual--is judged by the demands of love and justice, a teaching that is both rigorous and liberating." Anyone with an open and inquiring mind will find this scholarly but easy to read book fascinating and liberating.

The Revd G Richard Wheatcroft is rector emeritus of St Francis Church, Houston, TX. He is a board member of TJC and lives and writes in Irving, TX.

All the world's a stage, and most of us are desperately unrehearsed.

—Sean O'Casey

Episcopal Church Named "Official Denomination" of Major League Baseball

from Episcopal Cafe

Here's some exciting news that's breaking this first day in April:

As a part of opening week festivities, Commissioner of Baseball Bud Selig and Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori announced today that the Episcopal Church has been designated the Official Denomination of Major League Baseball. The move was announced today in a teleconference with reporters.

"Faith oriented promotions have increasingly become a part of many minor league team," Selig said. "We felt that it was time to tap into this important demographic."

"We also want to reinforce our family friendly image while at the same time reaching out to a wide cross section of life-styles, incomes and tastes," Selig said. "We are pleased that the Episcopal Church will join us in this first partnership between a major sport and a church."

Many denominations were considered for the endorsement. Some traditions did not make bids for theological reasons, but unnamed sources described the behind the scenes competition as intense. "The Baptists and Catholics both made strong bids," said a baseball official familiar with the negotiations. "And it is true that both traditions brought strong numbers to the table." Few commentators expected the Episcopal Church's bid to be as strong as it was.

Selig said that Episcopalians bring the right mix of arcane tradition, an appreciation of minutiae and a tolerance for long stretches of relative inaction that make them "a good fit for us."

"We believe that Episcopalians understand the nuances of the game and won't meddle with our traditions too much."

As part of the agreement, Presiding Bishop Jefferts Schori said that a Suffragan Bishop for Baseball will be appointed. A name will be presented at a special House of Bishops meeting called for the purpose in May. The ministry of the Suffragan Bishop for Baseball will be to coordinate the ministries of the church in the baseball environment.

"The designation of Official Denomination will be a boon to our evangelism," said the Rev. Jan Nunley. "Reflective MLB logos will soon appear as a part of the well known Episcopal Church Welcomes You signs in front of every Episcopal Church and along many streets in towns and cities across the US."

Observers also noted that the designation will also help the public differentiate Episcopal Churches from other churches that have recently appropriated the Anglican "brand" for their own use.

"The Episcopal Church encompasses many nations that differ along language and cultural lines—from the Dominican Republic to Taiwan—but we all share a love for Baseball," Nunley said.

"Theologians and poets have long described how the rhythms and traditions of baseball speak to us on many levels," Jefferts Schori told reporters. "Baseball shows us the presence of God in everyday things, that sublime combination of individual and team effort which reminds us of the Body of Christ and in the end God wants us all to come home."

Saying only that the marketing possibilities have "yet to be worked out" neither Selig nor Jefferts Schori would comment on rumors that pre-packaged Holy Communion and box-score editions of the Book of Common Prayer would be offered at kiosks at major league parks.

While some religious and sports commentators expressed skepticism at the move, and some wondered if the Presiding Bishop had the canonical authority to establish such a relationship, others were more forgiving.

"Baseball and Jesus." Nunley said. "They go together like peanuts and Cracker Jack."

Great news for a great day.

Posted by Nicholas Knisely on April 1, 2008 2:59 AM | [Permalink](#) / [Digg this](#)

COMMENTS

The Chicago Tribune is reporting that the agreement calls for the Prayer Book intercessions to be amended as follows:

"For the absolution and remission of our sins and offenses, and for the lifting of your ancient curse upon the Chicago Cubs, let us pray to the Lord. Lord, have mercy." This will clear the way for the Rev. Ernie Banks to become Suffragan Bishop for Baseball.

Posted by Josh Thomas | April 1, 2008 6:30 AM

I had to keep pinching myself to stay in reality. This article reads exactly like a spoof from the Onion.

Posted by David Hoster | April 1, 2008 9:04 AM

Wow, another coup for our PB! As my dad used to say, no flies on that gal. Speaking of flies, I guess the Suffragan Bishop for Baseball will have to be a 'flying' bishop. I hope that won't lead to any, um, difficulties.

Posted by Jean Lall | April 1, 2008 9:26 AM

Being in politics is like being a football coach. You have to be smart enough to understand the game and dumb enough to think it's important. — Senator Eugene McCarthy

A Reflection

by Elizabeth Kaeton

Ah, Spring. It is nothing if not unpredictable.

Yesterday, the morning was cold but by 3 PM it was 71 degrees and I was driving around with the top down on my VW Bug singing from the top of my lungs to Aretha " . . .put your top down in your car and take a ride, and rock . . .steady. Let's call this song exactly what it is (What it is. What it is. What it is.)"

At 10 PM I was sitting out on the deck, sipping wine and text messaging on my iPhone. It was perfectly lovely.

This morning was cold again and it has stayed that way. It has never quite gotten above 55 degrees today, being overcast with occasional rain.

The ocean was gray and raw, but that didn't stop the kids from playing in the sand. People were still taking off their shoes and walking along the water's edge, while the sea gulls laughed at them overhead.

I did run into a couple who wanted Thrasher's Fries for breakfast. "Sorry," said a delivery man who was walking by. "They don't open until 11:30." The couple looked at each other, smiled and, undaunted, said together, "Lunch!"

Tomorrow, I will raise the house for the Purple Martins to begin to nest. It's a bit early, but I've seen other houses up, so I'm following their lead.

Spring.

It may be hard to explain, but its promise will not be denied.

You know.

Just like the resurrection.

The Revd Dr Elizabeth Kaeton is rector of St Paul Church, Chatham, NJ, president of the Episcopal Women's Caucus, and a Board member of TCJ.

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