

APPROACHING LAMBETH

An address by the Rt Rev Brian Smith, Bishop of Edinburgh

This address was given to members of the Diocese of Edinburgh on 17 June 2008. Drawing upon earlier addresses and Bible studies given in the diocese, it argues that the church should allow the category of 'the tragic' to shape its perspective on the world, and should place more emphasis on what is highlighted as 'ethical transcendence' in its understanding of God. Doing this creates the possibility of articulating a circumscribed and limited pluralism, totally different from simple relativism. The paper concludes by suggesting that much in current approaches to Anglican difficulties rests upon a too limited approach to the doctrine of the Trinity. The heart of the paper is a plea that Anglicanism recaptures elements in the traditions which lie at the heart of its life, brings them to the fore and addresses our current disputes in their light.

Introduction – why this talk now?

This talk arose because of our recent series of diocesan conferences. At those I made remarks outlining some of my views on the Lambeth Conference. People asked if I could repeat them. Most were off-the-cuff, but others related to matters about which I had given addresses before in one context or another.

There is much that I *could* be saying about Lambeth, which shall not appear anywhere in this address. At Lambeth we shall be looking at matters such as climate change, the Millennium goals, and international work on AIDS etc. These are part of our church's proper agenda, but I believe that many would rather I concentrated tonight on our current divisions.

The first part of this paper will be fairly descriptive and unsurprising. The second half may be seen as possibly a little more innovative.

The forthcoming Lambeth Conference in the Anglican Communion

The Anglican Communion appears to be in crisis. The Lambeth Conference meets next month. This month an alternative Conference, GAFCON, is taking place in Jordan to be attended by Bishops who wish to assert a more conservative position in current debates. There is widespread talk of schism. There is widespread talk of non-schism.

There is certainly a strong *centrifugal* tendency operating within Anglicanism – we *seem* to be flying apart - hence current discussion of something to act as a countering *centripetal force*, drawing us together – the proposed Anglican Covenant.

At Lambeth I shall wish to engage thoroughly with this process, but my own view is basically that **the issues that are around here are deeper than the covenant process itself at present seems to recognise, and that a more fundamental analysis of our predicament may be required.**

Our first fundamental question

Our initial question must be, ‘*How do we view our current divisions and the passions arising within them?*’

- We can view them as symptomatic of a sudden obsession with matters of *sex*.
- We can view them as a result of insufficient attention to the *bible*.
- We can view them as a result of the *global information explosion* as we now can see into what is going on in the life of other Provinces. (E.g. A service on Saturday in a London church is instantly commented on by the Archbishop of Uganda.)
- We can view them as arising from a simple *power struggle*. Real power in Anglicanism is moving from London to Africa or (more plausibly) to the US.
- We can view them as the effects in the church of the outworking of a *post-colonial* reordering of international relationships.
- The Windsor Report spoke of the Communion being ‘*sick*’.

All these descriptions have some truth in them, but we need to be clear as to which one we are going to work with if we are to find a way through our present difficulties. We need to ask whether we can find a description which contains within it ***both a fair analysis of the issues which we face, together with the seeds of a way ahead.*** Getting the right question is an essential preliminary to getting the right answer. Correct diagnosis must precede prescribed remedy.

My belief is that we need to ask ourselves whether or not there is something askew in our understanding of *God and the world* (not just the governance of the Anglican Communion) that is currently fuelling our discussion.

The issues before us

- A. Many say that our present divisions concern different attitudes to sexuality in the Anglican Communion. There is certainly a truth here. Different voices on this subject make themselves heard across the globe. We must listen to all these voices as we engage in the Anglican Communion Listening Process.

And as we attend to Anglican discussion on sexuality we encounter *at least* three separate *clusters of values* in terms of which the debate is conducted.

- Some see it as part of the debate for the extension of the claims of natural *justice* and human rights. (This characterised the approach of many liberals in the west.)
- Others see it as concerned with the development of *holiness*, in relation to which the adoption of a *biblically grounded* sexual ethic is of vital importance. (This characterised the approach of many evangelicals in the west.)
- Others see it as a debate concerned with, and deeply affecting *interfaith relations and interfaith understanding*, particularly as these discussions are conducted in countries where there is a strong Islamic influence in the countries legislation. (This characterised the approach of several in Africa and the Middle East.)

This is an important issue, but we need to recognise that in this area the church is participating in a debate that is already going on in the world quite *independently of the church*. Differing and rapidly changing attitudes to sexuality are part of the global culture in which our church is currently embedded.

We naturally face the question as to whether in our own life we are strong enough to be incarnated in that context of global debate. I certainly hope we are.

Different clusters of values, each with their own strong coherence and plausibility, are engaging with each other.

- B. Others will say that our concern with sexuality, barely scratches the surface of our problem. The deeper reason for our divisions lies in our attitude to scripture and its authority in the life of Anglicans. Again there is truth there. A variety of approaches to scripture exists within our communion. These are, and have been, subject to significant debate over a number of years. I don't need to spell this out here. ***Such debates have constantly informed our life, and will continue to do so into the future.***
- C. However my belief is that if we are really to get to grips with our current crisis it must be understood with reference to our theological understanding *of both God, and of the world*. I believe that we have in recent years allowed this understanding to become distorted and narrowed, and ***there are elements from our tradition that we need to recapture if we are to move ahead satisfactorily.***

Two facets of Anglicanism

Before we move to do this, there are two facets of Anglicanism that we must note briefly in passing, both of which have bearing on its international character. These concern its *history* and its *theological method*.

A cursory glance at Anglican history

- A. Within the UK, after the English reformation, a settlement was reached by which Catholic and Protestant elements in the religion of England were to be held together in a settlement with the crown. Anglicanism with such a view in its history has often sought to describe itself as piloting a middle way between Catholic and Protestant tendencies. However, to talk Anglicanism thereby plotting a single *middle way* is misleading. Rather it was a structure which held together a *spectrum of ways* within one organisation!

Following the Scottish reformation, and the subsequent religious wars, the Scottish Episcopal Church currently occupies a social setting which sees itself as operating between, the major Scottish denominations of Presbyterianism and Roman Catholicism.

The Anglican Communion, emanating as it does from these islands, is rooted in structures that were shaped by having contrasting components in their make up from the very start. From the start it has seen both virtue and error in both sides of the Protestant-Catholic debate, and has a developed tradition of containing variety.

- B. Move to look at the world-wide scene (again with criminal brevity). It is sometimes said that the missionary activity of Anglicans, particularly in Africa, was also affected by this “dual” or “polyvalent” character of Anglicanism, but *in a very different way*. Two principal Anglican missionary societies went out from these islands. One (CMS) went with a largely ‘Protestant or evangelical’ flavour, and the other (USPG) went with a largely ‘Catholic’ flavour. Thus we have seen develop a situation where the Anglican church life in places like Sudan and Nigeria, whose missionaries were largely sponsored from CMS, has a different ‘feel’ as far as church life goes from places such as Ghana, Zimbabwe or South Africa, whose missionaries were coloured by the ethos of USPG. For example the evangelistic and organisational zeal of Bishop Crowther of Nigeria has given to that Province a greater uniformity and unity of approach amongst its dioceses than could be found, or even imagined in any of the UK provinces.

However whether the missionaries were from CMS or USPG or elsewhere, the expectation generated by them could be that of a church with a significant uniformity colouring its life. Internal tension, with a pragmatic working compromise could be a less dominant theme.

We cannot but notice that there will be a significant difference between a Province whose long history has imbued it with a recognition by all parties of the need to hold real diversity together, and a Province where very significant growth has taken place as a result of a united and *single-minded purpose*.

Thus there are some provinces where pluralism is felt as a normal and indeed defining part of its life, and others where it is not. Anglicanism is currently coming to terms with this dual facet of its international life. Some may say that because of this difference we have been for many years living with two quite different types of Anglican Communion.

The cursory glance at Anglican ‘foundations’

Now let us glance not at our history, but look at what we might call our ‘theological method’ - the distinctive theological approach within Anglicanism. Again we do this with criminal brevity. Anglicanism generally speaks of its theology as being based upon the three pillars of *Scripture, Tradition, and Reason*.

What do we mean by these? Scripture seems straightforward. Attending to the tradition, especially that of the doctrinal discussions of the early church again seems straightforward. But what do we mean by ‘reason’?

Some see the trio as saying that our Communion grounds its theology on the *Bible*, the *Fathers* of the early Church, and to contemporary *experience*.

Paul Avis has written of it as expressing Anglicanism’s indebtedness to the *Reformation* (where the importance of the Bible was recaptured), the *early history* of the church, and the influence that the *universities* have had in shaping the Anglican tradition.

Philosophy

I do not want to be too precise here, but I do wish to make two points in broad brush terms. One other possible way of characterising this trio is to say that it has been shaped by, the *Bible*, by the *history of theological debate* in the (particularly early) church, and also by debates in *philosophy, and in law*. Take philosophy first.

The text of the most recent draft of a covenant for Anglicans places great weight on scripture and tradition, and very little on ‘reason’. It is certainly a weakness in the drafting.

Clearly some will see the lack of emphasis here as something to be expected. At times these three pillars of Anglicanism (Scripture, Tradition, and Reason) have been spoken of as the three primary *sources* of our theology.

Our theology has its *roots* in scripture. This has been *interpreted over the years* in our tradition. And for many people, reason or *philosophy as a discipline* has been seen as a contemporary critic and *opponent* of theology rather than a *source* of anything theological.

However it can be argued that a neglect of issues of a more philosophical nature may lie at some of the roots of our present discontents, particularly if philosophy might be able to say something fundamental about *the extent and nature of any agreement for which we might hope*.

We might quote Aristotle here who reminded us, in the *Nichomachean Ethics*, that in any subject we must not expect a precision greater than the subject matter allows.

[Nich Eth 1.iii] “Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject-matter admits of, for precision is not to be sought for alike in all discussions, any more than in all the products of the crafts. It is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits; it is evidently equally foolish to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician and to demand from a rhetorician scientific proofs.”

If we strive for a greater agreement than the subject matter admits, we shall be in danger of letting an ‘impatience’ that has its true roots in a just perception of the reality we are dealing with, be transmuted into an anger at the intransigence of colleagues.

Failure to agree totally with those with whom we discuss may not always result from a moral or intellectual fault in either them or ourselves, but be inherent in the subject matter.

I shall amplify this presently.

Law

Another possible candidate for the label REASON, in our trio of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason, could be *law*.

It is a commonplace to assert, for example, that currently the Episcopal Church in the USA and the Anglican Church in Nigeria are *different* in their approach to sexual ethics. Others will talk differently. They will say that they are very *similar* indeed. Each is developing, in their church, ministerial policies that reflect the law and current opinion of their respective societies. Neither is taking a strong counter-cultural stance. Each is allowing the norms for a good society, *as these are understood, have developed and are expressed in the laws of their country* to inform ministerial practice and strategy. I am well aware that neither would seek to defend their position using this argument, but we can note it in passing.

Anglican theology and practice concerning human relationships (as we also see in such matters as divorce and contraception) has generally tended to follow the norms of the society in which it is set (albeit often with a time-lag). We can ask ourselves whether this is what is happening concerning homosexuality?

The global debate on homosexuality is *not a specifically church-led debate*. It is a debate in which the church is caught up, and in which it shares. In the UK anti-discrimination legislation has been passed. Civil Partnerships are allowed. Adoption of children by gay and lesbian couples is a possibility. The church is currently seeking to be the church of a nation *that thinks and legislates like this*.

And we can describe the issue being faced in the UK. The issue is to what extent it should adopt a clear *counter-cultural stance to such tendencies* or whether it should be guiding a process of *reception and refining* of these social attitudes into the wider life of the church itself. This is an issue, and one that must be settled within our provinces.

Before we became more globally conscious, a church could operate in relation to the given norms embedded in its legal system. It would engage in debate with those responsible for legislation. The resultant value system provided a background of good ethical sense against which theological reflection also took place. When Anglicanism ‘went global’ this did not pose a significant problem for it. The countries into which Anglicanism initially spread were churches with were originally part of the British Empire, and so came to share the broad legal framework, and cluster of values handled by that administration. Theological method almost assumed that a foundational agreement in law and the values it embodied lay behind life across the world of global Anglicanism. It was a foundation that could be criticised and developed, by churchmen and others, but different places might be expected to move and change together or at least in a way that did not give rise to large-scale inconsistencies.

But now since independence of many nations, many countries including the UK have been modifying their law in particular areas. ***Churches are now very much embedded in societies with differing clusters of values embodied in their legal systems.***

This fuels conflict in our communion, which also relates to matters of biblical interpretation, and at present it seems intractable. To address it we need a wider approach.

A world-view

If we are to introduce a wider approach, let me say that a wider approach will only work if it offers us a world-view

- a) which has a certain neutrality with reference to specific ethical divisions
- b) with which we can identify as a reality of our experience and
- c) which allows a deeper and more profound approach to our tradition
- d) which offers a better way of understanding conflict.
- e) which in general moves the discussion to another level, with different counters in the argument.

The tragic vision

I believe that we do need to capture and embrace such a world view, and to my mind we have such in what much literature refers to as the worldview, known as the ‘tragic vision’. I believe that such a view is implicit in mainstream Anglicanism needs to be rendered more explicit, and it offers a different way into and through current conflicts.

By talking of the world view of the “tragic vision” I do not mean that all is sad and miserable – though at times this does seem to be so, but it is to assert a world view, that makes sense of our religious claims in a profound and significant way.

What I am talking of here is the perspective that *human beings approach the world with a demand that the world cannot satisfy.*

In terms of the story of the Fall, we have been cast out of Eden, and the place we now inhabit does not allow us to live in the manner to which we would like to be accustomed!

It lies behind Augustine’s prayer “Thou hast made us for thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in *thee*.” We find this developed in such ‘fringe’ theologians as Blaise Pascal. We see it explicitly worked out in writers such as the French Marxist critic Lucien Goldmann. We see it in the Scottish Episcopal theologian Donald MacKinnon.

At its heart humanity expects something of the world, and hopes for something from the world, that it cannot be given.

Goldmann says: “*What,, is this demand that tragic man can never satisfy in the world and which causes him to place himself entirely in God’s hand? this demand is for unity and for the synthesis of opposites. It is a demand for totality.*” [the Hidden God p.83]

Humanity longs for the world to be more coherent than it in fact is, and coming to terms with the reality of its profound incoherence makes us confront deep religious issues.

Berlin

We can make this a little more precise, by considering some other writing. As you know from other addresses you have had from me, I generally favour approaching such issues through the writing of Isaiah Berlin.

Consider his comments on Machiavelli:

Machiavelli in his writing and thought distinguishes *two incompatible ideals of life*, and therefore two separate moralities.

- One is the morality of the pagan world: its values are courage, vigour, fortitude in

adversity, public achievement, order, discipline, happiness, strength, justice, above all assertion of one's proper claims and the knowledge and power needed to secure their satisfaction. Here are values and virtues needed in a successful Prince.

- Against this moral universe stands in the first and foremost place Christian morality. The ideals of Christianity are charity, mercy, sacrifice, love of God, forgiveness of enemies, contempt for the goods of this world, faith in the life hereafter..... This is another valid moral universe.

The values implicit in one, clash with the values implicit in the other, yet we can be drawn to both. Each has its own coherent validity. Yet we cannot follow both. They clash.

And we know such tensions in our own personal life. Obligations to parents can clash with obligations to children. The demands of justice clash with the demands of mercy. Life is forever presenting us with choices, not between good and bad [that would be easy], but *between good and good – we face choices between values that clash.*

Berlin comments that:

*if we are told that such contradictions will be solved and all good things can in the end be harmonised in principle, then we must answer, to those who say this, that the meanings they attach to the names which for us denote the conflicting values are not ours. Some among the Great Goods cannot live together. That is a conceptual truth. **We are doomed to choose, and every choice may entail an irreparable loss.** [The Pursuit of the Ideal]*

In fulfilling one duty, we have had to ignore another equally real one.

He adds:

Happy are those who live under a discipline which they accept without question, who freely obey the orders of leaders, spiritual or temporal, whose word is fully accepted as unbreakable law; or those who have, by their own methods, arrived at clear and unshakeable convictions about what to do and what to be that brook no possible doubt. I can only say that those on such comfortable beds of dogma are victims of forms of self inflicted myopia, blinkers that may make for contentment, but not for understanding of what it is to be human. [The Pursuit of the Ideal.]

Most fundamentally it is saying that in this world some of the most fundamental clashes are between one good and another good. Policies can clash, but each be seeking to do justice to a different good.

Divine Transcendence

Once we begin to see the world in this way, then new questions begin to arise about the God who is worshipped and served within such a world. If this is what the world is like how does this relate to our understanding of God? I believe that what we find is that certain aspects of belief in God, which are there in the Bible, jump vividly to the foreground, aspects that are not so noticed if we are operating within the normal expectations given by the enlightenment view of the world.

I can only be brief: We can make a distinction between talk of the *ontological transcendence* of God, and the *epistemological transcendence* of God. The former seeks to describe how God's *being* is greater, and of a different order from anything else that exists in the material world. The latter talks of how *knowledge* of God is beyond our immediate *capacity to know* and to understand. However this does not exhaust issues raised by divine transcendence.

We shall also need to do justice to what I shall move to call the *ethical transcendence* of God. By this we mean that what he *demands* of us is beyond our *capacity to fulfil* it, a full life under God only being made possible by the infinite capacity of what we may call divine grace and forgiveness.

In life we may have to choose between the path of justice and the path of mercy, but once we have chosen, we have to remember that we have not chosen the other path which also had virtue embodied within it.

This is not a philosophy of 'anything goes'. But it is to recognise that the cluster of positive value with reference to which we live will give rise to a number of options between which there will be real clashes. These clashes are *not* the same as clashes that arise when we confront the *evils* of the world.

What it means is that *the good person will be involved in two types of clash*. He/she will clash with the advocates of the bad, but he/she will also inevitably clash with the advocates of another different good.

Someone may say, Yes there may be different possible clusters of values by reference to which people may live, but surely our task is to choose the Christian ones? Within the *world* there may be clashes of value, but surely within the Christian faith, there must be a unity. When tempted in that way (and it a temptation affecting many in our current debate), we need to recall Berlin's words I quoted earlier.

'I can only say that those on such comfortable beds of dogma are victims of forms of self inflicted myopia, blinkers that may make for contentment, but not for understanding of what it is to be human.' [The Pursuit of the Ideal.]

It is my belief that the God who relates to this situation is the God we are called upon to proclaim. People struggle in this world because this world has this tragic dimension to it. People know insoluble dilemmas in their life, and are not looking for quick fix solutions.

People are increasingly conscious of new diversities among cultures across the world. The church very often finds itself giving a glib answer *on either the liberal or conservative side*. The God of our tradition can speak more deeply here.

A church that seeks to offer quick fix solutions will not address the deep pluralist contradictions that make the *unknown and deep* void in many people lives. This void is awaiting a meeting with the *unknown God* whom we are charged to bring to the world.

Jesus

I have commented before that even the picture of Jesus that we find in the gospels is interpreted by many people in many different ways. He is variously a critical revolutionary - one who articulates demands for justice; a compassionate, caring person looking after the poor and the needy in the midst of great turbulence; a defender of the Jewish religion.

Jesus himself embodied a number of values that did not sit easily together.

The prophet and the priest, the traditionalist and the innovator can all look back to Jesus. The values they embody are all ones we are all called to live, but the aspiration for each of us to do everything goes far beyond our capacity to fulfil it as individuals. We seek to live the totality of these values as part of the body of Christ.

Those who want a united uniform church all believing the same thing simply fail to realise the richness and variety with which we are dealing when we meet the man Jesus.

We do not have diversity because we have not been able to agree. We have diversity because we have been entrusted with a richness which no one of us as an individual can contain, but can find a place in the Body of Christ.

Christians know themselves to be under obligations that they cannot fulfil. They are obligated by both justice and mercy, but can only fulfil one obligation, and so know the pain of failure in respect of the other.

The implications for us all

Without the 'tragic vision' suggesting to us a particular perspective on the universe, we might believe that conflict could be resolved by articulating our shared beliefs and values in an agreed *covenant*, and then slowly from that working towards a *shared strategy* for the church, and solving issues of disagreement within it. We seek the *one true path* we must walk together – a path that has coherence to it.

But if our global life is now such that the conflict we face has its origin in an *inevitable conflict at the level of values*, this needs to be rendered explicit and understood before

conflicts *at the level of strategy* can begin to be addressed. Within our global tradition values may (indeed do) cluster themselves in different ways. We need a framework that makes us not afraid of this. ***A different path, leading to the desire not to walk apart, needs to be mapped out.***

Let us try to indicate what such a path would look like.

The Way ahead

The question we must ever face is not “What errors do we see in our opponents position?”, but “What values do we discern in our opponents position, values that our own position may not be stressing as fully?” And we need to see these questions not as ones simply to be asked in a formal way, but as expressing an *attitude of a path of shared discovery on which we are willing to embark*, within the debate in which we are participating.

And so concerning the current ‘troubles’ in our communion:

- We might ask that the debate be shaped in terms of *values rather than policies or strategies*
- We thus ask each Province to express the values it sees being expressed in its present position, relating these to values within our scriptural and traditional inheritance
- We note that as a metaphysical ‘fact’ values clash and that this creates a significant space within which a variety of good options can be considered .
- We seek to articulate this ‘space’ as an area within which diversity can be accepted, as being paths that seek to live in the light of Christian values, noting that this *limited variety* is not ‘anything goes relativism’.
- ***We do not expect total agreement, but we seek to circumscribe an acceptable pluralism.*** In doing so we reflect the recommendation of Aristotle, only to expect that degree of precision (*akribeia*) of which the subject admits.
- Each Province admits that no one will in their life have achieved a total and full expression of the Divine demand, but each with due humility and repentance offers its life to God and to the other Provinces.

To approach in this way is to accept, in Kuhn’s terms that we may need a paradigm shift in perspective, or in Goldmann’s terms “a conversion”, for *a world in which values clash, is a very different world from one in which these values are potentially in harmony.*

It is my belief that we need to make this shift on the widest possible front, and seek a way forward for our life together in its light. Such an approach does greater justice to the traditional doctrine of God and our understanding of the world, as we have inherited it from our tradition. Such is a programme far wider than that of our current Windsor issues, but *unless we address things at this level, we might solve one small aspect of the issues we face, and that solution keep us quiet for a few years, but shall lay ourselves open to further schism when the next disagreement arises.*

Incarnation and Trinity

The proposed Anglican Covenant begins by referring to the Trinity. Citing the Trinity is almost the standard preamble to any suggestion of solutions to our difficulties. I quote:

God has called us into communion in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:9). This communion has been “revealed to us” by the Son as being the very divine life of God the Trinity. What is the life revealed to us? St John makes it clear that the communion of life in the Church reflects the communion which is the divine life itself, the life of the Trinity. This life is not a reality remote from us, but one that has been “seen” and “testified to” by the Apostles and their followers: “for in the communion of the Church we share in the divine life” (The Church and the Triune God^[1], par. 1-2). This life of the One God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, shapes and displays itself through the very existence and ordering of the Church.

It says that the unity and coherence that is asserted to obtain within the Trinity holds out to the church a model in terms of which it is being invited to conceive a coherent interrelatedness of its various parts. The church is called to be a united community of different parts, existing in a harmony of love.

I do not find this appeal convincing. It evinces a romantic optimism about human relatedness. It offers a weak view of the Trinity. One asks where does the whole sense of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ fit in. There is more to this core of a Trinitarian faith than this.

We need a model of Trinity as an icon of mutual loving, yes, but also the Trinity as an icon of *real and painful difference* within the Godhead. It must be both. The heart of the Christian life, and the Christian spiritual path, is to live the life of *reconciliation across a painful value laden divide.*

Books on the Trinity often refer to Rublev’s Icon of the Trinity. His depiction of the event of Abraham at Mamre. We might have begun with that familiar Old Testament image - Jacob wrestling with the angel. Central to the Christian notion of the Trinity is not just the binding together of the three persons in love. There is also what has been described as the eternal intercession of the Son to the Father - an active wrestling in *intercession* within the Godhead in which it is our privilege to share.

P. T. Forsythe talks of the church being '*conduits of the eternal intercession*'. Here there is *difference*. There is difference that may find its own special icon in the pain of the prayers of Gethsemane. Here is a difference within which one *will* wrestles with another *will*. Here is difference, but one where each is prepared to bless the other in the encounter.

Is there not wrestling within the Trinity? The pain of Gethsemane is pain within God. Within the Trinity we find more than just three persons in a relation of love. There are three persons engaged in conflict, the pain of which expressed itself at Gethsemane. This is **all** within the life of God. Such life can only be the life of the church.

I referred earlier to Donald Mackinnon. I can recall his commending to our mediations that haunting final line of Sophocles' "*Women of Trachis*"

"Maidens come ye also, nor linger at the house; ye who have lately seen a dread death, with sorrows manifold and strange; and in all this there is nought but God."

Our belief is that in that life of ***combined love and pain*** we are sharing in the life of God – it is on earth the highest life we can aspire to. ***In this life we cannot hope for the life of love alone, unless we walk the way of denial, or walk apart from our fellows.***

What the church has is a *hope* that '***at the end of time***' a harmony will be *possible* between those irreconcilables which we find in our current life. This is something that the church can neither see nor grasp. In the meantime it seeks to do justice to both 'sides', while it lives on earth. It recalls Paul in Romans 8 "*Hope that is seen is not hope.*"

Concluding

There are contradictions and irresolvable issues within the life of the church. *But these mirror tensions in the life of the world*, and are to be expected in a world created by the God in whom we believe.

We have been entrusted with a *pain* concerning which we cannot say '*let it pass from us*'. We have been entrusted with it '*for the healing of the nations*'. The supreme virtues of Anglican ecclesiology and its *fellowship* are **trust and hope, as it seeks to offer a ministry of reconciliation.**

And a ministry of reconciliation is NOT a ministry seeking agreement. It is a ministry that takes conflict, and seeks to let love flourish ***alongside the pain*** of deep difference. Our gospel is that this is possible. The power of conflict to let soul-destroying bitterness arise in our souls, can be destroyed.

But also I believe we have by this, in our tradition, been given a profound theological method.

We must always engage in dialogue with *scripture and tradition*. We must also engage with the *embedded voice* of the moral cluster of values embedded in our own society. And within our communion we have an obligation to listen to the often *differing moral voices* from neighbouring provinces. Anglicanism does not want a uniformity of provinces. It wants provinces which are in prayerful dialogue with scripture and tradition, with the voices of the society in which they are embedded, and in dialogue with each other.

Naturally, any province *could* become corrupted by a corrupt society. If this is ever felt to be so, that is precisely *not* the time for expulsion or walking apart. ***On the contrary***, here is a time for *increasing* challenging dialogue within our *global fellowship* between provinces. Sustained moral challenges made in *love* are more powerful than the *ruling* of an outside body.

The Anglican Communion is at present sharing in the life of a wrestling God. ***It cannot opt out of that wrestling without walking away from God himself.***

If it can do its task well the world itself may come to know a blessing.

If it refuses, or seeks to buy peace in the shallows, the church and the world will be impoverished.

If it can grasp these issues which have been put firmly into its court, it will be able to speak most profoundly to the world out of that pain with which it has at present been entrusted.

My belief is that much that I have said lies at the implicit heart of our distinctive Anglican tradition, and needs now to come more to the fore.

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