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The Feast of James DeKoven at Racine College, Racine, Wisconsin, March 22, 2006. See the Reverend Charles Henery's sermon on the occasion beginning on page five of this issue. For more information on the life and work of the DeKoven Center today, please visit dekovencenter.pair.com.

From the President New Contours for American Anglican Ecclesiology by J. Robert Wright, 2

Anglican Preaching A Sermon for the Feast of James DeKoven by Charles R. Henery, 5

Anglican Reading "God Is No Contender:"

The Christian Poetry of Vassar Miller by Nicholas Birns, 8

Reflections on Benjamin Britten's War Requiem by Eugene K. Garber, 13

Apostolic Episcopal Succession by Mark E. Chapman, 18

FROM THE PRESIDENT

New Contours for North American Anglican Ecclesiology

by *J. Robert Wright*



ONE BAPTISM, ONE HOPE IN GOD'S CALL, the report of the Special Commission on the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion, released in April 2006, has set forth a helpful consideration of the issues that were precipitated by those who voted in the affirmative at the last General Convention in support of the confirmation of Bishop Gene Robinson. Co-chaired by Bishop Mark Sisk and Dr. Ian Douglas and consisting of fourteen members, of whom eleven are clergy and of whom only one hails from the West, this Special Commission has proposed, for possible action at the General Convention in June, some eleven resolutions which, in my view, should go a long way towards preserving the unity of the Anglican Communion and the place of the Episcopal Church within it. From the advance perspective of the month in which the report was issued, the same month in which this column is being written, I see them as being very hopeful and I salute the members of the Commission for their efforts and their invitation to dialogue. The

document can be found on the Episcopal Church's website and is well worth reading.

Yet at the same time, as is often the case, when one thinks that a solution has been reached, still other issues are raised in the process. Without knowing how the Convention will vote on these resolutions in June, I think it is worth noting that this report, and especially its attendant resolutions, presents new contours for American Anglican ecclesiology—our doctrine of the church—that deserve our attention. My present essay is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of the report, but merely to pursue the discussion and to point out some difficulties, of which I here name four.

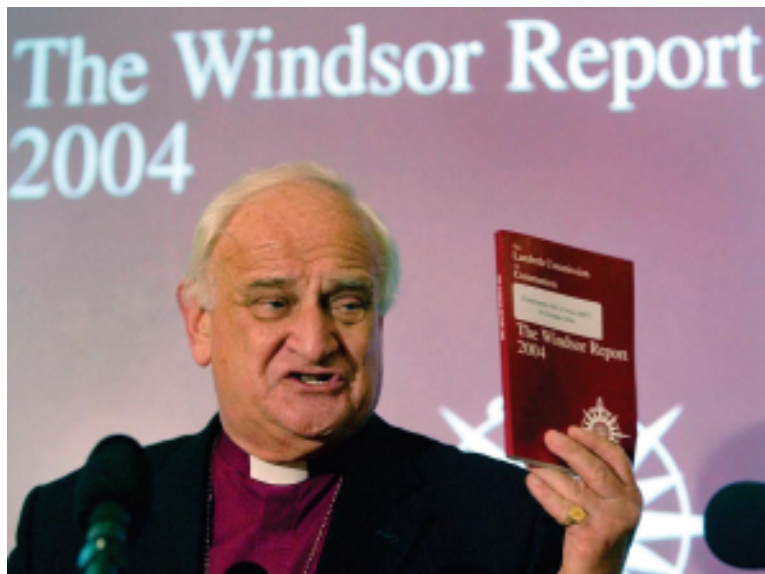
FIRST, Resolution A159, "Commitment to Interdependence," proposes that our Standing Commission on Constitution and Canons "make provision for persons from other Provinces of the Anglican Communion to serve with voice but not vote on each of the Standing Commissions of the Episcopal Church." The only reason given in the accompanying explanation is the intention of "mutual responsibility and interdependence," which seems very generous but doesn't really explain how this arrangement can be "mutual" if our church is the only Anglican province that does it. It is said that we already benefit by having observers from the Anglican Church of Canada and the ELCA, so this new ecclesiological arrangement could also be beneficial although it does raise questions. Do we envision that other Anglican provinces will extend the same invitation to us and to all other provinces? In the interest of mutual responsibility, do we also hope that the Church of England and the Anglican Church in Nigeria,

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The Most Reverend Robin Eames, Chair of the Lambeth Commission on Communion at the Windsor Report. Reproduced from the website of the Episcopal Church ecusa.anglican.org.

for example, will follow our lead and do the same for us? And just as our own national church officers work very hard to make appropriate appointments to every standing commission, so do we think that our same presiding officers will have the time and the savvy to do this for each of our twelve standing commissions and from each of the nearly forty Anglican provinces? And if this proposal is really something more than just window-dressing, then we must ask, realistically, who is going to pay for all this, for transportation, housing, meals? Is this resolution intended to establish a new ecclesiological norm of total reciprocity in consultation, or only for ourselves and any other Anglican province that can afford to pay for it?

RESOLUTION A160, the “Expression of Regret,” whatever it may mean by its use of such terms as pain, repentance, and apology, also borrows from the Windsor Report and elsewhere and endorses in this resolution as well as at other places in the report, certain phraseology about “breaching the proper constraints of the bonds of affection,” as though with foresight any intelligent bishop could have known precisely what those bonds were and what would have constituted adequate consultation. To me, this vague terminology underscores the difficulty of thinking that we now must imply that we may have failed to consult adequately, when there was no advance agreement about the need or procedure for such consultation but only subsequent emotions of anguish expressed in some parts of the Anglican world by afterthought. Anglicans have often boasted that they have very little need for canon law or specific rules of procedure in order to maintain their

credibility, but I think we are now seeing that the Windsor Covenant, or something like it, may well be necessary for the future if, say, some other Anglican province happens to breach the proper constraints of some other bond of affection that it did not even realize were in existence.

Resolution A160 in my view is one of the weakest of the proposals of the Special Commission because it too easily concedes that there may have been a failure to consult adequately about bonds and constraints that were not clearly stated and because it makes no corresponding demand for a clearer statement of them in the future. As the Virginia Report and the 1998 Lambeth Conference queried, can Anglicans continue to go on pretending there is no need for such things, pretending that everyone knows what the constraints and the bonds are? Will other churches respect us if this is what our ecclesiology amounts to?

THIRD, Resolution A161, on the Election of Bishops, urges “very considerable caution in the nomination, election, consent to, and consecration of bishops whose manner of life presents a challenge to the wider church and will lead to further strains on communion.” The Special Commission acknowledges a wide range of meaning to the phrase “manner of life,” and admits that it was “not of one mind” about its recommendation to “exercise caution” rather than to “refrain from,” as was stipulated in the complete moratorium on such episcopal elections demanded by the Windsor Report and as seems implied in the ruling of Archbishop Williams that resolution 1.10 of Lambeth 1998 will not be re-opened at the next Lambeth Conference in 2008.

For the purpose of these present remarks on emerging American Anglican ecclesiology, however, I find it interesting that Resolution A161 of the Special Commission seems to establish a “higher” standard of qualifications for episcopacy than for the other ordained ministries in the church. Is it really fair for those bishops of the Episcopal Church who already do ordain persons living openly in same-sex unions to say to such persons that they may be ordained to the diaconate and priesthood but that now, because of Resolution A161, of course they may never be ordained to the episcopate? Is this an inconsistency that we really want to allow by act of General Convention, even if the Windsor Report did not ask for such moratoria in the case of ordinations to diaconate and priesthood? The closest rationale offered by the Special Commission (para. 49), which is quoted from Windsor 124, is that “a bishop is more than simply the chief pastor to a local church,” and that bishops “are consecrated into an order of ministry in the worldwide Church of God.” Both these assertions are true, of course, but they did not stop many of our bishops and others from voting affirmatively in support of the New Hampshire decision, regardless of what the wider Anglican world might think.

I suggest that we should not freeze such duplicity in our answer to this question, and I fear that Resolution A161, if passed, will legislate a double standard for episcopacy, not on the desirable bases of doctrinal orthodoxy or knowledge of Scripture and tradition, but on the basis of personal morality, forged not on the basis of reason but in the fear of ostracism from the rest of the Anglican world. Faced with such an alternative, there is little comfort in going underground “until a broader consensus in the Anglican Communion emerges,” or in “urging the Episcopal Church to consult with our communion partners,” as was already voted unanimously at the General Convention of 1991 but never happened. See *THE ANGLICAN* 33:2 (April, 2004), 3-4. The meaning of “consensus,” the Commission notes (in 51-52), is not defined.

FINALLY, Resolution A169 purports to “encourage and recognize a diversity of theological opinions” within the discernment processes that can lead to ordination or to other goals, subject only to “the broad boundaries defined” by the four points of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral and thus extending as much latitude to those within our own Anglican tradition as we have traditionally allowed “toward those of other traditions.” Well and good, we might reason at first, but without establishing any mechanism for identifying those “broad boundaries” this resolution may well be pointing us to troubles ahead. Most thoughtful Anglicans who have read the Quadrilateral think they know what it says, but under this proposed resolution it will rapidly be tested when ordinands, especially trained in some other parts of the Anglican world, for example, present themselves for ordination holding a literalistic and fundamentalistic interpretation of Scripture, as has been claimed under point one, for example that a bishop must be the husband of one wife [I Timothy 3:2]; or those who deny the Virgin Birth as implied in the creeds or, conversely, would insist upon forcing their congregations to use some inclusive-language version rather than what we have agreed in the Book of Common Prayer; or who plan to baptize only in the name of the creator, redeemer, and sanctifier, or who refuse to use any of our officially authorized eucharistic prayers but instead assert (as some do) that only an institution narrative of the words of Jesus is necessary but then realize that the Scriptural accounts differ and that none of the prayers we authorize in the prayerbook are literal quotations from the Bible; or who insist that the episcopate, to be both “historic” as well as “locally adapted,” must allow for oversight and governance by a committee of elders, on the one hand, or by the papacy, on the other. All these are interpretations of the Quadrilateral that I have encountered at one time and place or another, and all would seemingly be protected under this proposal from our Special Commission. Our ecclesiology would certainly be stretched by such boundless latitudes, whether conservative or liberal, that could now be linked to any of the Quadrilateral’s four points.

A Sermon for the Feast of James DeKoven

by Charles R. Henery

A Sermon Preached at Racine College, Racine Wisconsin, on March 22, 2006

THE STORY OF JAMES DEKOVEN and Racine is known to many. Less familiar is the story of James DeKoven's early days in Wisconsin. A native of Connecticut and graduate of Columbia College and the General Seminary in New York City, DeKoven came West in 1854, drawn by the heroic tale of the beginnings of Nashotah House Theological Seminary.

He arrived at the Mission as a newly ordained deacon, just shy of his twenty-fourth birthday, and there assumed the duties as tutor of church history. In addition, he accepted the rectorship of the Church of St. John Chrysostom in Delafield, two miles away.

Delafield was "a tumble-down village," in DeKoven's description, nothing "picturesque about it." But if one crossed the Bark River and mounted a little hill, he observed, the village ceased to be forlorn. There stood the church, a handsome board-and-batten structure in a style dubbed "Carpenter Gothic;" to the east was a view of Lake Nagawicka; to the northwest was a road stretching through the woods to Nashotah.

Over the next five years this road, from the church to the Mission, was to be the axis of James DeKoven's world and ministry.

From the start he entirely consecrated himself to his work. Two months after his arrival in Wisconsin, he recorded in his diary: "My parish school opened today. Thank God. May He bless it and make it succeed."

The parish school did prosper. It was not long before it counted 43 students (1856) under daily instruction.

One of those early students was Nelson Hawks, the son of the local innkeeper. At the age of fourteen he enrolled in the parish school along with his ten-year-old sister. Years later he wrote to his sister of the event: "No more bare feet nor short pants. A velvet jacket with brass buttons, white shirt and collar and silver watch—not a boy any more." "It was there I got the best of my schooling."

Hawks kindly recalled DeKoven loaning him his old Latin Lexicon and inviting him to be the school's first librarian, sending him to fetch books from the Mission in his wagon.

And then there were the memories of May Day picnics in the woods north of the school. Ice cream was the treat and a novelty to some, prompting one boy to call out once: "Mr. DeKoven, your pudding's frozen." A May Day queen and maidens on the occasion chose their knights who were to accompany them with upheld parasols.

Young Hawks once failed in this duty and was reprimanded by DeKoven for his lack of chivalry. "DeKoven was rigid in enforcing his idea of cancelling the wrong," it was noted, demanding public apologies

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James DeKoven (1831-1879). Reproduced with permission from *anglicanhistory.org/dekoven*.

for the mere trifles generally. In spiritual matters, another reflected, he dealt very tenderly with students such that a summons to the vestry was greeted with more pleasure than dread.

He was likewise active in the parish school, with a later elementary level. Sunday schools were also nurtured—one in Delafield and the other at Pine Lake (Nashotah), boasting some 100 attendees and 10 teachers. During all this time, DeKoven was not only teaching at the Mission, but he was also developing its preparatory department. He lived with the students at Nashotah and walked down with them every day to the parish church to Morning Prayer and recitations in the parish school house, and back again to dinner. He used his own means to purchase thirty acres adjacent to the church to lay a more permanent foundation for the preparatory school, as St. John's Hall. In 1858 the new school was chartered, and soon after DeKoven visited England to acquaint himself more fully with the church's educational system, especially as in practice at Saint Peter's College, Radley. His trip was also a time for recuperation.

Besides all his educational labors at home, DeKoven was the quintessential parish priest—

conducting morning and evening services each Sunday and on Prayer Book Feast Days, celebrating the Holy Communion, preaching and teaching special classes, and conducting regular parish visits.

“All his parishioners and pupils were in his heart,” a seminary classmate who accompanied him to England recalled.

“He poured out upon each the wealth of his spiritual interest and love. He prayed for each, and on his journey, he mentioned them by name, boys and girls, and simple folk. He wrote many and many a letter to those to whom he thought that his remembrance would bring pleasure, and so his life went out to his work. Though absent from Delafield and Nashotah in person, he was not separated in spirit. He was with them, loving them, caring for them, anxious for them, praying for them.”

In 1859 DeKoven received the invitation to become the warden of Racine College. His parting from the parish church of Delafield was not easy.

“The great difficulty for me,” he wrote a student, “is that it will compel me to leave St. John Chrysostom’s and my parish. There are so many tender ties which bind me to it and to the people, that it will be a very great trial and a very great sorrow.”

IN THE END, as we know, he turned his faced to Racine and to God’s service, fully consecrated as ever. His early years in Wisconsin at the Nashotah Mission—and especially in his only parochial charge in Delafield—trained his talents as a Christian educator and pastor and sent him forth in zeal for the good of the Church at large. In these early years he left behind a legacy of love to all who knew him.

One dear to him as both a student in Delafield and Racine, and who entered Holy Orders under DeKoven’s inspiration, offered this tribute years later:

“O excellent master, honored father, thou incarnation of wit and eloquence; clothed with

elegance and dignity; prince of story-tellers; so true, so pure, so brave; rich and yet ascetic, using thy abundance for the glory of God and mankind’s good; with heart devoted to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and receiving from the Eucharistic Presence, in which thou delightest, a spiritual glory, like that of Moses descended from the mount; thee whom in the days of thy flesh, I obeyed, now in paradise, I revere; to have been loved by thee is a joy of my inmost soul, and I praise God, for the legacy of love, [which in thy last will and testament thou hast left us: ‘To my old boys and students, and to all my beloved professors and teachers, I leave the assurance of my love and prayers, and ask of them the same.’]”

So many, so many could voice the words: “...to have been loved by thee is a joy of my inmost soul, and I praise God, for the legacy of love....”



Racine College today. Photograph by Miriam K. Stauff, reproduced with permission.

“God Is No Contender:” The Christian Poetry of Vassar Miller

by *Nicholas Birns*

ALL HER LIFE, Vassar Miller experienced profound suffering. She was born with cerebral palsy and lived with severe physical limitations. Yet her poetry, though not denying this suffering, indeed deriving much of its adamant strength from it, is unconstrained by it. An intensely religious poet, Miller did not write often specifically about her personal religious experience. There are few dark nights of the soul or personal pilgrimages in her work. Rather, Miller’s poems are about religious experience itself. Specifically, they concern the human experience of Jesus Christ and of the Christian Church. Unlike so many poets who use Christianity as a motif in their work, she is not trying to “sell” her own religious experience to the reader. She does not attempt to impress us with her zeal or piety, or to entice us with the charming eccentricity of being religious under modern or postmodern conditions.

Vassar Miller was born in 1924 in Texas. She lived all her life in the Lone Star State, and is considered one of the leading writers in Texas’s history. Despite the physical challenges which marked her childhood, Miller early on showed writing talent and was encouraged to be a writer. Because of her disability, she never wrote by hand, but composed on a typewriter. This arguably helped her achieve early on a confidence, a distance from the mundane, a sense of authority, and, ultimately, the impersonality that even profoundly emotional poetry requires. Again because of her disability, Miller stayed near home for her undergraduate and graduate degrees, receiving both B.A. and M.A. from the University of Houston. Miller thus avoided the *cursus honorum* for many poets of the period: the inevitable ascent to

the Ivy League, followed by fellowships, “prestige” friendships, and academic positions. This is another aspect that makes her an exception to the typical model of what an American poet of her era was like.

Miller, though, wrote in the formal style of the 1950s, where witty, learned, tightly knit poems acknowledging the influence of T. S. Eliot and the metaphysical Poets were in vogue. Because of this, Miller received some acclaim at the beginning of her career, including being nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in 1961. This acclaim quickly faded, though. Taste in poetry went the other way, toward the confessional, uninhibited, and “authentic.” Miller, who kept on writing the way she always wrote, was no longer *au courant*. Nevertheless, she continued to produce regularly. *If I Had Wheels of Love*, the omnibus volume of her selected poems published in 1991 by the Southern Methodist University Press, contains excerpts from nine volumes. The omnibus covers a period from the mid-1950s to the late 1980s. Toward the end of her life, she began to receive more recognition. She was twice Poet Laureate of Texas. A year before her death, she was inducted into the Texas Women’s Hall of Fame—the ceremony presided over by then-Governor George

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W. Bush. Even so, though, Miller remains virtually unknown to most aficionados of poetry today, and even more to the general public.

Miller was, in the words of her friend Shaun Griffin, a “self-taught theologian.” Griffin goes on to say that “few things made Vassar Miller happier than Sundays. She cherished the morning rituals and repetition of the Episcopal Church.” Miller, though, was not a ritualistic fetishist. According to Griffin’s article in *Sojourners* (May/June 2000) she would go to a liberal Baptist congregation in the afternoon after a ritualistic morning at Saint Stephen’s Church, a High Church Episcopal parish in Houston’s quasi-Bohemian Montrose neighborhood. Miller’s poetry is the poetry of a regular churchgoer, not someone who occasionally dips into Christianity as part of a consumer menu of spiritual choices. It is a poetry of someone for whom going to church was part of life’s essential rhythm.

People of any stripe can enjoy Miller’s poetry. But she is especially “the churchgoer’s poet,” a poet particularly appreciable by those who experience Christianity as a rite of “ordinary time” as much as a flash of epiphanic revelation.

In his introduction to *If I Had Wheels of Love*, the novelist and poet George Garrett, another Southern Episcopal writer who could well be himself a subject in this series in the future, comments that the “core and center” of Miller’s poetry was “religious—Christian, as knotty and complex in thought as any of the seventeenth-century metaphysicals ...yet at the same time as humorous and playfully profound as the finest moments of George Herbert.”

Garrett’s comparison to Herbert speaks of an essential humility in Miller’s poetry, a willingness, notwithstanding the enormous poetic craft she put into each poem, to let the message speak for itself.

There is an incalculable joy, an exuberance in Miller’s poetry. “In Faith” expresses this vividly:

Where love sits still let roses fling
Aside the prim and proper rules
Where none dare breathe let roses sing
Defiance of all the sober schools.
Where angels hang back, shivering,
Let roses rush, God’s scarlet fools.
(*If I Had Wheels of Love*, page 170)

The rogue courage of roses displays as much of the Holy Spirit as do the hierarchies of angels. In their vividness and bright colors, they defy any artificial

decorum to show the full palette of the glory of God’s creation. Roses have been an oft-sued, even clichéd poetic symbol. But Miller uses roses in a very individual way, as an instance of all that is doughty and foolhardy in their naive but admirable willfulness to affirm beauty against all the earthly odds.

And yet—there is always a “yet” even in Miller’s most celebratory poems—the color of the roses also reminds us of the color of blood, and the blood of Christ on the Cross which we commemorate every year in March and April, just when, in the Northern Hemisphere at least, we begin to think of spring and the arrival of roses. So the faith here is double-sided—faith in the infinite beauty of God’s glory, but also faith to stand by Him in His suffering.

Many of Miller’s most explicitly religious poems are concentrated in her 1968 volume *Onions and Roses*. The book’s unusual title comes from “De Profundis,” which begins, “O Lord, defend me when I go/through the dark in daylight” and ends with this plea:

Accept me, though I give myself
like a cast-off garment
to a tramp, or like an idiot’s
Bouquet of onions and roses

The associative clash of “onions and roses” is like “garlic and sapphire” in T. S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets* in its juxtaposition of the beautiful and the pungent. But, unlike Eliot’s pair, both onions and roses are organic. They both are the fruit of plants that blossom “after their kind,” as Genesis would put it. Miller’s point is that although onions and roses do not go pleasingly together in a conventional bouquet of flowers, they are both part of the wrecked and sin-marred “bouquet” of life that everyone brings to God.

Miller is at once pointing to the radical imperfection of the individual believer and demonstrating that the range of beauty and ugliness that everyone offers to God is part of the necessary way we come to terms with ourselves within God’s creation. “Onions and roses” stands as an image of both the beauty and what Gerard Manley Hopkins would call the “sheer plod” of a human existence aspiring towards communion with God.

Miller’s signature poem is “Thus Saith the Lord to the New Theologians,” which runs as follows:

Whatever happens, God is no contender
Whatever happens. God is on the spot
In all the murkiness, In all the splendor
God is involved, and, so says God, “So what?”
(*Wheels*, page 152)

The whimsy and humor here make mock of human positions about God that take themselves too seriously. The immediate target here is the “Death of God” theology of the 1960s. “God is no contender” rebuts the rhetoric of secularization, of bringing God up to date, making Him relevant to the public sphere: a God for our time. “Thus Saith the New Theologians” ultimately addresses a wider range of concerns, though, than just this one movement. In general, it looks askance at attempts to encase God’s relationship to man in a merely social manifestation. In immediate reverberation it is an anti-liberal point. But, more generally, it can be seen as an anti-reactionary one as well. The poem tacitly chides ideas of revived belief with a social matrix, of “the return of religion” as a sociopolitical phenomenon. That God cannot, in Christian terms, be merely a contender, cannot be put into a box or adduced as the foundation for a party platform, is why books like C. E. M. Joad’s *The Recovery of Belief* (1952) are ultimately not inspirational. It is as fallacious to make God a figure in the arena, a kind of candidate for a position of centrality in the society, as it is to try to “smarten God up,” to make Him more trendy and with-it. Either strategy is laden with the fallacy of making God into a contender. Miller also is interested in the unobviousness of God.

He who bears witness of my might speaks truly,
He who denies me, lying, does not lie.
I count no one obedient, none unruly.
I do not have to. I am God Most Sly.
Bicker your brains out, I am none the poorer.
Defied, defy, call me true, untrue.
Hold dialogue, be sure that you’re no surer.
Whether you win or lose, I always do.

This is one of the few poems about God from the perspective of a religious believer to say God has less power than we suppose. But, in discerning that God is not a contender, does not exert literal power in the cockpit of social debate, Miller is meticulously, and piously, reserving God’s power for the ultimate, abstract, and more-than-human levels. It would be tawdry, and not in the nature of divinity, for God to intervene in merely human debates. All the contending positions in these debates are a result of sin and man’s distance

from God’s perfection. The poem, interestingly, is quite daring in having God speak in the first person—it is as if the poet is speaking in the “persona” of God!

Miller often devises ingenious, complex relationships between the speaker of a poem and its implied meaning. She pulls this off without being overly coy. This is because, despite the often complex logic of her poems, there is a simplicity about Miller’s poetry. Her simplicity comes from the sense that the poet is giving full emotional backing to what she is saying. This simplicity, all the more, enables her to devise complex rhetorical and dramatic situations. “An Athenian Reminiscences” shows a cosmopolitan, adiphoric Athenian of Paul’s time. The Athenian is someone who had heard Paul preach and recognizes, perhaps, the intellectual importance of his argument but is utterly unmoved by their spiritual force and truth:

Yes, I remember Paul, his ugly face
Alive with joy, his stooping shoulders seeming
Straighter somehow as if his words had driven
A rod of iron down his spine. “My friends,
the Unknown God to whom you rear an altar,
I now declare! He’s dead
You say, beheaded by that madman Nero.”
(*Wheels*, page 221)

It would be easy for a Christian poet to blow this speaker out of the water for his theological unperceptiveness. But Miller does not editorialize. She maintains a crisp, critical distance from the speaker’s own mentality. This enables the reader to deduce her actual Christian convictions.

“Pontius Pilate Discusses the Proceedings of the Last Judgment,” in its dry irony and fastidious reserve, gives us a sense of how Constantine Cavafy might have written had the great modern Greek poet been a Christian. Pontius Pilate is an urban man of affairs who simply, in a fashion far beyond the calculations of the sort of person he was, ended up on the wrong side of things:

Unfortunate. Yet how was I to know
appointed to preserve the Pax Romana,
that he was not another of those fools
Whose crosses bristled on the hills like toothpicks.
And how were you to guess that the young girl
You burned in France for hearing Voices,
was destined to be hailed as saint and genius,
not merely silly in the head from sex?
(*Wheels*, page 151)



Vassar Miller (1924-1998) with her friend George Garrett, 1962. Photo courtesy of George Garrett.

Miller is chortling a bit at Pilate’s situation. But she is also tacitly conceding (as he mentions Joan of Arc, executed by Christians) indicates that most people responsible for practical administration within “Christendom” comport themselves in much the same way, that Pilate was simply a functionary caught out by events that pass the vast majority of his equivalents by without a cosmic scratch.

That Miller is willing to look again at characters in biblical narrative to whom straightforward reading might assign a certain moral response is shown in “Mrs. Lot:”

There has to be something said for Lot’s wife, for not moving on, for, in other words, nostalgia (*Wheels*, page 247)

The poet is more sympathetic to Lot’s wife than to the Athenian or Pilate, but achieves a dramatic vividness by withholding judgment and letting the character think out her dilemma in her own mind:

she has long gazed back on her past which she couldn’t put back any more than a pulled tooth, for which crime she stands changed to a briny pillar, still turned towards her yesterdays and her God who surrounds her on all sides—right, left, front, and back—her sad but salty stare.

THOUGH MILLER IS SKILLED at depicting religious personae, from Pilate to Lot’s wife to God himself, she does sometimes write in what seems to be her own voice:

My bones
being boughs aflame
with Thy Glory,
Lord, suffices (*Wheels*, page 147)

It is extremely dicey—possibly reductive, possibly patronizing—to read everything by disabled writers in light of their disability. Yet most of us cannot help but bring what we know of Miller’s lifelong battle with cerebral palsy to our reading of it. It is almost as if she

is declaring her body, even in the persistent pain of its severely limited state, as much of a temple of God's glory as any other human body. Appreciating her own body as a vehicle for the kinetic glory of the Holy Spirit becomes a moving act of affirmation, dignity, and radiant joy. Parallels can be found in the work of the poet Samuel Menashe, whose religious poem "The Shrine Whose Shape I Am" ends:

Thus in my bones I am the King's son
And through death's domain I go
Making my own procession

Both poets have a sense of the human body as the medium of God's creation, and of bodily experience as the ultimate human offering to God.

Immediately preceding "Oblation" in the omnibus volume is "Cologne Cathedral." This, in concept, is a less characteristically Millerian poem than most. It addresses the more conventional religious subject of a great medieval cathedral. But Miller makes the cathedral into something as dynamic and unpredictable as the human body:

I came across it stretched against the starlight,
a black lace
of stone. What need to enter and kneel down?
It said my prayers for me,
lifted in a sculpted moment of imploring
God in granite... (*Wheels*, page 146)

Prayer need not be active in the literal sense; a cathedral can, though a totally static object in reality, still say a prayer, still seem to imply the lifting toward God a prayer generates. Undoing the traditional antithesis between spatial and temporal art, Miller makes the poem itself seem more a part of the *vita activa* than its more conventional pigeonhole, the *vita contemplativa*.

The heaviness of the cathedral becomes a soaring shaft of light in the mind of the individual. This exemplifies a constant preoccupation with the idea of burdens, of religious meaning as something to be carried and borne. A friend recently mentioned to me that friends of his had recently named their newborn son "Christopher" without any sense of the name's meaning. Miller's poem "Christopher" can serve as an antidote to this:

You bear a good name
Given in no baptism

But that of your mother's waters,
named for the brawny saint
who bore Christ over a surly river,
child grown heavier than a coffin
(*Wheels*, page 274)

The pun on "bearing" a name and Christopher as, etymologically, "Christ-bearer" is shadowed by the Millerian leitmotif of seeing Christ's death as implied even in the most innocent days of His infancy. This is confirmed by the poem immediately after "Christopher" in the omnibus volume, "Christmas in Dark Times," which concludes:

No blithe vacationer, God comes anew
Seeing that death is what we have to do.

There is no morbidity here. Miller does not delight in the proximity of God and death, but underscores how Passion and Resurrection pervade all of Jesus' earthly experience, and all our earthly experience of Jesus. Churchgoers forget all consciousness of Good Friday when celebrating Christmas, but in "Lullaby after Christmas" Miller soothingly warns:

Little Child, sleep softly
Blood of babies slain
near your crib foreshadows
Yours in its deep stain
Even God has the right to
peace before his pain. (*Wheels*, page 150)

Yet Miller's work is not just a poetry of Good Friday, but also a poetry of Easter:

Yet I can trust you. You resembling me—
two eyes, two hands, two feet—
five senses and no more—will cup my being,
spilling towards nothingness, within your palm.
And when the last bridge breaks,
I will walk on the bright span of your breath
(“To Jesus on Easter,” *Wheels*, page 148)

THROUGH ALL HER physical privation (she was never able to live fully on her own, and spent most of her life in a nursing home, somewhat neglected until her final period of recognition) Christian hope was always an ontologically "felt" dimension of Miller's life. She trusted in the largeness and mercy of the God of Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter, a God far too great to be merely "a contender."

Reflections on Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*

by Eugene K. Garber

FROM THE FIRST performance of Britten's *War Requiem* at Coventry Cathedral on May 30, 1962 to this day, popular and critical reception have placed it in the first rank of choral works of the twentieth century. The question proposed here is not one of musical assessment, but one of meaning. What does the *War Requiem* say? It says that war is evil. But is it so evil that it vitiates the long tradition of western humanism? So evil that it casts humanity into a darkness inaccessible to the consolations of religion?

In October of 1958, a representative of the Coventry Cathedral Festival approached Britten about the composition of a large choral work that might use sacred or secular texts. No one could have predicted that Britten would use both, and that the juxtaposition of the two kinds of texts would hold the forthcoming work in a profoundly provocative tension that has haunted listeners for half a century.

Texts and Music

OF PRIMARY INTEREST in the search for meaning are the texts themselves, their inter-relationships and the ways in which the music illuminates them.¹ The texts of Britten's *Requiem* consist of the words of the traditional Latin requiem mass and nine poems by Wilfred Owen—six complete, three excerpted. The full text of the work can be accessed readily by readers online.²

I will describe several sets of textual juxtapositions and the music that accompanies them. A full examination of the *Requiem* text by text, accompanied by musical analysis, would be very rewarding, but it

would constitute a sizeable monograph. Here I can only point to a handful of text/music cruxes.

Every Owen poem lies between two sections of Latin, and therefore looks both backward and forward. Take, for instance, the first of the Owen poems, a sonnet called "Anthem for Doomed Youth." It begins: "What passing bells for those who die as cattle?" It comes immediately after the *Requiem Aeternam* and the hymn to God in Zion and before the *Kyrie*. The poem's bitter indictment of war's slaughter of youth and of those who would offer consolation in the form of traditional religious ceremony is in keeping tonally with the *Requiem Aeternam*; its dark musical colorations seem to offer little hope for rest, much less for *lux perpetua*. The hymn sung by the Boys' Choir sounds a fragile note of sweet piety, and the tenor, whose voice has been full of a stentorian anger, also shows some sweetness when he sings: "not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes/ shall shine the holy glimmer of good-byes." It is moist eyes and not the candles of the mass that truly express proper grief for war's ravages. The *Kyrie* that follows is preceded by and punctuated with bells—the very bells of the poem, one could say, that sound for those who die like cattle. The Chorus's singing of the

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Kyrie is unanimated, monotonous—a plea for mercy without salience.

THIS IS DARK INDEED. War is monstrous. Traditional religion and its trappings are ineffectual if not downright hypocritical in the face of war. Rest and mercy are at best distant possibilities. According to Britten, only children in their innocence, boys in particular, may make some true expression of piety and grief. Most ironic of all, this very liturgical form we are listening to—with its expression of grief, piety, terror, consolation and hope—is deliberately being undermined by invasions of alien texts and musical structures that it cannot reconcile. Will the rest of the work simply hammer home these bleak themes, or will there be some change?

The long *Dies Irae* encloses four Owen poems. The first is the opening three stanzas of the fragmentary “Bugles Sang,” gentle and elegiac in tone if also somewhat ominous. The second is the sonnet “The Next War,” which begins as a jaunty challenge to the power of Death and ends with the hope that in the future men will war against Death for life rather than against each other for national aims. The third is six lines from “Sonnet: On Seeing a Piece of Our Artillery Brought into Action,” a complex poem the basic point of which is that the huge artillery piece is an instrument of necessary chastisement of those executing war but one to be purged in the future: “May God curse thee, and cut thee from our soul!” The last of the four poems, “Futility,” begins tenderly but ends wondering why sun and earth awakened humanity out of the elements.

Britten’s *Dies Irae* is suitably dark and fearful, but this is no thunderous operatic Verdi, whatever debt Britten may have owed his predecessor. There is a memorable fanfare and drums, the Women’s Choir unsettled by the all-encompassing book of deeds, a touching *Recordare Jesu Pie* again by the Women’s Choir, and a *Lacrimosa* of extraordinary poignancy. In the poems we have the same undercutting irony that we saw in the *Requiem Aeternam*. Sad bugles diminish the *tuba mirum* that calls the dead from their tombs. Death is a noxious nuisance, not a terror. The thunder of man-made guns assaults the heavens in a judgment that rivals God’s. A dead soldier was better never born. But the irony, in both words and music, has given up some of its edge. A more hopeful future for mankind is at least conceivable. The agency of God is called upon.

Britten’s treatment of the *Offertorium* warrants special attention. The Boys’ Choir sings with urgency

its plea for the delivery of the souls of the faithful. Then baritone and tenor sing Owen’s “The Parable of the Old Man and the Young,” a retelling of the biblical story of Abraham and Isaac. In Owen’s version Abraham refuses to follow the injunction of the angel of God and sacrifices Isaac anyway: “But the old man would not so, but slew his son/ and half the seed of Europe one by one.” The musical setting of the poem borrows from Britten’s own “Canticle II, Abraham and Isaac” (1952) which, using text from the *Chester Miracle Play*, tells the story straight and ends with praise of obedience.

When the poem is ended the Boys’ Choir returns to finish the *Offertorium* with “sacrifices and prayers” and with a reminder of God’s promise to Abraham that his seed will “pass from death to life.” Here ensues perhaps the sharpest irony of text and music. As the boys continue to sing of the promise, their song is invaded by repetitions, sung by baritone and tenor, of the last line of the Owen poem—the slaughter of the seed of Europe.

What exactly is the point here? God requires obedience. He does not require human sacrifice. If the biblical story is to be seen anagogically as a precursor to the sacrifice of Christ, Owen’s version erases any connection between Isaac and Christ. For in the poem Abraham is no longer the biblical father. He is European nationalism hell bent on the destruction of his progeny. Isaac is no longer first son of the chosen people but European youth sacrificed to nationalistic war. The irony here turns not on God’s agency or on the agency of the Church but on human perversion of sacred promise.

The *Sanctus* contains the most glorious and triumphant music of the *Requiem*. The counterpoint here between the hosannas of the liturgical text and the gloomy denial of immortality in Owen’s poem “The End” is this time uncomplicated. The liturgy proclaims the glory of God. The poem declares that death is final. Though the doleful poem has the last word, the music of the *Sanctus* has the greater power.

The *Agnus Dei* interlaces the liturgical text and Owen’s poem “At a Calvary Near Ancre.” The liturgical text petitions what it always petitions: peace from the lamb who takes away the sins of the world. The poem says that the gentle Christ is true to his sacrificial calling. It does not say he is a savior. The poem also says that Christ’s disciples have deserted him, that his priests are prideful, and that the scribes are busy whipping up nationalism. Only the soldiers bear with Christ. There is absolutely no bitterness in the tenor’s singing of the



Edward Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) in a photograph by Lotte Meitner-Graf. Photograph reproduced from the Britten-Pears Library, available online at www.britten-pears.org.

poem, which ends thus: “But they who love the greater love/ Lay down their life; they do not hate.”

Up to this point the *Requiem* has been moving definitely if not uniformly from expressions of bitter irony and anger toward resignation and even hints of reconciliation. Where does the *Libera Me* take us?

If the *Sanctus* has the most glorious music of the *Requiem*, the *Libera Me* has the most terrifying. Beginning with an almost inaudible drumbeat and deep strings, the chorus and the soprano slowly rise to a horrifying crescendo of desperate pleading punctuated by lash-like sounds from the percussion section. Mounting brass marks the reappearance of the *Dies Irae*, which plunges the singers into a panic of muddled voicings. Out of this comes the compulsive repetition of *ignem*, fire of war, fire of damnation, followed by the soprano’s equally compulsive repetition of *tremens factus sum ego*. So distraught finally are the singers that they have forgotten, we might say, to sing the last plea of this section of the liturgy: *Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine; et lux perpetua luceat eis*. Instead, they are reduced to a constantly diminishing and ineffectual repetition of *Domine*.

The power of this section can scarcely be suggested. It has to be heard. It is preeminently the place in the *Requiem* where musical effect seizes text and wrings from it the last degree of terror.

The long poem that concludes the *Libera Me*, “Strange Meeting,” is sparsely set; the words speak for themselves. Two speakers—tenor and baritone—once enemies in war, meet now in the underworld. They reject enmity and mourn their loss. The second speaker wishes he could have lived to cleanse the blood-clogged chariot-wheels of war: “I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,/ Even from wells we sunk too deep for war./ Even the sweetest wells that ever were.” But this is not to be. They are dead: “Let us sleep now.” Now comes the *Paradisum*. The tenor and the baritone continue to sing “Let us sleep now,” while the Boys’ Choir sings of entry into Paradise, joined at the end by the Chorus, foregrounding the voices of women. The *Requiem* ends softly.

So, if the work has been a sort of contest between the liturgical text, which reposes its final hope in God, and the Owen poems, which condemn war and its perpetrators without offering much hope of human

betterment or of religious consolation, where do we stand at the end? Every commentator, virtually without exception, speaks of the enormous power of the work. Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, the baritone for the first performance at Coventry, was completely undone and could hardly be persuaded to leave the choir stall. There are many such testimonies. Some listeners identify religious consolation as the source of power. Others do not. Mervyn Cooke finds the ending of the *Requiem* “profoundly unsettling.”³ I take up these different responses further in the Conclusion below.

Context

OBVIOUSLY *War Requiem* did not spring from Britten’s imagination as a self-contained piece of musical art unconnected to history, culture, and his own life and thought. It is richly contextualized, and the contexts are embedded in the work, often very subtly. Here is a question that takes us to several important areas of interest. Why did Britten deploy the poems of a dead poet written about a war that did not destroy Coventry Cathedral? This will no doubt sound curious: I believe that there is a strong element here of nostalgia.⁴ For Britten, a pacifist, the First World War is a much clearer case than World War Two. Britten’s pacifism, something of a work in progress in the thirties, grew ever more steadfast, so that when in 1945 he visited Belsen he was horrified but unshaken in his faith in non-violence. The visit would have confirmed knowledge which he already had, if fractionally, when he wrote the satirical *Our Hunting Fathers* (Opus 8, 1936), in which he ominously couples the words *German* and *Jew*.⁵ But the fact remains that the First World War with its useless carnage and its hideous jingoism is a better pacifist target than the Second World War, fought against imperialism and Nazism. If, however, we stop here we may be inclined to charge Britten with mere opportunistic anachronism. Let us look further.

We might ascribe the choice of Owen to the simple fact that World War Two did not produce poetic indictments of war with anything like the directness and power of Owen’s. If Britten had turned to American poets (unlikely given the occasion for the *Requiem*) like Randall Jarrell or Henry Reed, he would have found images of war sufficiently grotesque, but he would not have found, as in Owen, the defeat of idealism, the loss of innocence, the sense of betrayal. And there was no British poet to turn to. Philip Larkin, perhaps the best alternative, himself saw the uniqueness of loss of

innocence in the Great War and reflected it in his poetry.⁶ So Britten chose to overlay at Coventry the devastation of World War Two with the ravages of the earlier Great War. The Great War was more cruelly definitive of the destruction of any sense of historical purposefulness. Old Europe died in the trenches in Belgium and France. The effect in the *Requiem* of this layered double image of the two wars is striking, like watching a horrific action through a scrim of bloody memory.

But there is more to the choice of Owen, whose poetry and life Britten was studying. Owen’s struggle with traditional religion was far more dramatic than Britten’s. Young Owen began to prepare himself for the priesthood, but he could not go on with it. He found life at the parsonage where he served dull and mindless, and more important he felt hypocritical teaching boys Church dogma. Thus we see in his poems (and certainly the ones chosen by Britten for the *Requiem*) many ambivalent references to Christianity—the benightedness of the priesthood, the ineffectualness of religious ceremony, the presumptive power of God to strike down injustice, the futile drama of humankind with its disobedience to God and blindness to its own good, the fondness of the hope for immortality, the gentleness and trueness of Christ—a conflicted set that cannot be amalgamated.

This all comes close to what we know about Britten’s own religious condition. He wrote much church music, and it cannot be said that he did so only because of tradition or convenience of venue and audience. His music on religious subjects is too passionate. One thinks especially of the dark Donne holy sonnets, set shortly after Britten’s visit to Belsen, and of shorter works like the unforgettable setting of the old ballad “A Lyke Wake Dirge” with its impassioned refrain: “And Christe receive thy saule.” Thus we see in the *Requiem* Britten expressing both his and Owen’s unresolved ambivalence toward religion.

And finally Britten’s choice of the Owen poems helps him focus sharply on war’s destruction of innocence and youth, a horror heightened by a highly subtilized element of homoeroticism. Fussell, treating the role of homoeroticism in the poetry of the Great War, says: “It is most conspicuously in the poetry of Wilfred Owen that these impulses of Victorian and early-twentieth-century homoeroticism converge, and it is there that they are transfigured and sublimated with little diminution of their emotional warmth.”⁷ I will show how, musically, a transfigured and sublimated homoeroticism adds a special element of poignancy to

the *Requiem*.

First let us remember that for three decades, from the writing of *Peter Grimes* (1945) through *Death in Venice* (1973), Britten works and reworks the theme of the love of boys and the destruction of innocence. Carpenter in his analyses of Britten's operas is quite perceptive about the ways in which operatic characters play the roles of innocence and corruptor of innocence: Grimes's apprentices/Grimes (*Peter Grimes*); Billy Budd/Claggart (*Billy Budd*); Miles/Peter Quince (*The Turn of the Screw*); Tadzio/Aschenbach (*Death in Venice*). Each opera comes at the theme from a different angle, but common to all is a transaction, always fatal, between the older man and the youth, a transaction tintured—sometimes subtly, sometimes overtly—with homoerotic elements. Throughout his adult life Britten was powerfully attracted to the innocence of boys and struggled to find a way to express warm affection free of erotic interest. The operas are a dramatic, musical record of the dilemma, perhaps one not psychologically resolvable.

How is this theme manifest in the *Requiem*? Consider Britten's careful spatial arrangements for his sizeable musical forces. Peter Evans describes them in this way: "the three spatially distinct ensembles move most often on quite separate planes, presenting the impassioned calm of a liturgy that points beyond death (boys and organ), the mingled mourning, supplication and guilty apprehension of humanity in the mass (choir and main orchestra, sometimes sublimated, rather than personalized, by the soprano soloist) and the passionate outcry of the doomed victims of war (male soloists and chamber orchestra)."⁸ Evans is accurate, but this arrangement does not mean that Britten has at last found a way to protect the innocence of boys (as he did not in the operas). Remember that in the *Offertorium* the boys' prayers of sacrifice and praise are invaded by the male soloists repeatedly singing the last line of Owen's "The Parable of the Old Man and the Young": . . . "and half the seed of Europe one by one." And later when the boys sing the *Paradisum*, the male voices again interrupt, though less ominously, with "let us sleep now," the last line of Owen's "Strange Meeting." And so again, as in the operas, the purity of the boys is assailed by older men.

Owen and Britten understand, then, that in any circumstance perpetual purity and innocence is not

possible. But the destruction of the young male body in war is the final evidence of a nation gone mad, become the anti-Abraham who kills his sons despite the injunctions of the angel of God.

IN PREPARING TO WRITE this essay I have listened to the *Requiem* many times.⁹ I cannot listen as others, but here is my feeling. Darkness and light are here too finely balanced on the fulcrum of irony to allow for a simple either/or. Too much is held in suspension: blessings and curses, salvation and damnation, immortality and dust, belief and doubt, hope for the future and the nightmare of history. We Christians may wish that Britten had come to believe firmly in God's infinite grace, but he remained true to the terrible equipoise between yea and nay that haunted him all his life. Yet I believe that the *Requiem* does provide, if not a declaration of faith, still a powerful emotional expressiveness that brings the gift of all great tragic art, catharsis. By capturing for us musically a huge mass of yearnings, fears, and hopes, the work allows each of us to gather into the experience of the work the emotional roots of our own history, our own losses, our own faith, and to achieve a degree of release and even purification.

NOTES

¹ I am deeply indebted to the musical insights provided by Mervyn Cooke, *Britten: War Requiem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) and by Peter Evans, *The Music of Benjamin Britten* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979).

² See, for example, <http://www.its.caltech.edu/~tan/Britten/reqtext.html>.

³ Cooke, *War Requiem*, 77.

⁴ I am indebted in what follows to Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

⁵ For biographical information I have referred always to Humphrey Carpenter's *Benjamin Britten: a Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993).

⁶ For an extended discussion of the loss of innocence in the Great War, see Fussell, 18-28

⁷ Fussell, 286

⁸ Evans, 451

⁹ The recording I have is by Robert Shaw and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra & Chorus (1988).

Apostolic Episcopal Succession

by *Mark E. Chapman*

THE HISTORIC APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION of bishops as the normal and normative form of governance in the Church is so profoundly implicit in the whole history of the Church that the seeking after and achieving of its restoration is a non-negotiable element of the faith for anyone who confesses the Nicene Creed and calls the Church “catholic” and “apostolic.” The order and office of bishops in apostolic succession certainly has sufficient Biblical warrant. Whatever historical-critical judgment one makes about the Pastoral Epistles, the fact remains that they are canonical Scripture; they are as much a piece of the Word of God in Holy Scripture as any other book of the Bible. And there is no getting around the fact that the Pastoral Epistles establish as rule and norm for the governance of the post-apostolic Church not only the authoritative oversight of bishops in apostolic succession, but the whole threefold order of ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon. One has to parse the New Testament into a thoroughly subjective “canon within the canon” in order to avoid this fundamental fact of New Testament ecclesiology.

The apostolic succession of bishops through history is necessary for the Church to remain in immediate union with the apostles and their witness in the Holy Spirit to the Gospel of the incarnation, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world. The ultimate promise of Jesus in the Great Commission of Matthew is: “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (28:20). The Great Commission is addressed only to the

eleven remaining disciples (28:16), who are thereby in Matthew’s theology commissioned as Jesus’ apostles and missionaries. The link from this Jesus to the Church is through this mediation of the chosen disciples/apostles. The mission of the Church—evangelization, Baptism, catechesis—is entrusted to these eleven as the beginning, as the first-hand connection to the risen Jesus himself. The mission of the Church is Jesus’ commission entrusted to those to whom he entrusted himself in his earthly life.

The mission of the Church must always be this first-hand commission from Jesus; if not, the Church becomes a philosophical school for the preservation of the ideas and ideals of an ancient rabbi named Jesus. The first apostles must have Spirit-filled (consecrated) successors in every generation and in every place where the Church extends its life, for the mission that Jesus commissions is always to be contemporary, always Jesus’ mission at first hand, keeping every Christian in every generation “to the end of the age” in contemporary, first-hand connection to Jesus, precisely through the unity in the Church of Word and Eucharist.

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This immediate and contemporary union with Christ is not a matter of passing on ideas or ideals. It is done by apostolic acts done by the apostles and, through the gift of the Spirit, by their consecrated successors—evangelization, conversion, initiation, catechesis, maintaining the unity of the Church community. The apostolic succession cannot be fulfilled by an abstract notion of the continuation of the Word alone. There must be living people who are the apostolic successors, those gifted by the Spirit with the commission and mission of the apostles, who in and as their very ministry maintain the immediacy and contemporaneousness of Christ to the Church.

These ministers are the bishops, the “overseers” or “foremen” who direct the “big picture” of the planting, growing, and harvesting of the mission of the Church, or the building up of the Body of Christ. *Episkopos* is really quite an earthy term. The *episkopos* is the boss of the farm hands who makes sure the best crop is achieved; the *episkopos* is the one at the construction site with the blueprints who makes sure the builders put up the house as designed by the architect. The *episkopos* has the calloused hands of the workers, and knows how to do each aspect of the work; which is why the *episkopos* is the boss and manager of the whole project “on the ground” and “on site.” It is not a calling for the elite, or for anyone who doesn’t like to work up a sweat.

This may not be the description of many bishops in North American and European denominations today, especially white, affluent, mainstream ones. But it definitely characterizes the bishops of the Global South and the “Two-Thirds World” where Christianity is

expanding exponentially. One need only point to these *episkopoi* of the Global South to find the “signs of the times” validating the divine institution and Spirit-called leadership of the hierarchical order of bishops in apostolic succession.

Today the debate over the necessity and desirability of bishops in apostolic succession ought to be a moot point. The watershed Faith and Order document, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982) crowned decades of careful movement toward a recognition of episcopacy as the biblical and traditional ordering of the Church. Lutheran bilateral dialogues with Roman Catholics and Anglicans closed the gap further by seeing a desirable point of consensus in reestablishing the tradition of apostolic succession of bishops.

The breakthrough with the Anglican Communion, whose view of apostolic succession is determinedly ecumenical and insistent that it is in unbroken continuity with the ancient Church through the Church of Rome together with the Orthodox Church, opens the door for Lutherans to receive and restore a rightly ordered and ordained episcopate. Nor should the current divisions afflicting the Anglican communion, particularly the Episcopal Church here in the United States, be used as a smokescreen to dismiss Lutheran-Anglican full communion and apostolic episcopal succession. Indeed, the Anglican communion, in sifting out its wheat from its chaff, may well ultimately give us a much stronger and coherent communion with which to enter and from which to reenter the historic succession of apostolic *episkopoi*.

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