

"SHAKING THE FOUNDATIONS: LGBT BISHOPS AND BLESSINGS IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME"

a paper delivered by the Rev. Canon Marilyn McCord Adams

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I. Two-Faced Church!

The Church is a school for Kingdom-heralds. The Church is charged with responsibility for Christian education that grows us up in the knowledge and love of God and sends us out for word-and-deed proclamation of God's love for a broken and divided world.

The Church is human as well as Divine. At the deepest level, God organizes church and cosmos into Christ's organic body-politic, whose members are interdependent and united under the direction of Christ their head. The real unity and eventual functional harmony of the Church are not in jeopardy, because they are guaranteed by God. By contrast, visible church institutions--the ways we organize ourselves--are human constructions that have no intrinsic authority. They gain credibility and earn our allegiance only insofar as they prove to be skillful means to Kingdom-ends.

The stark truth is that humans are socially 'challenged'. That is, we are not very skilled in social organization. Generally speaking, we have a poor understanding of how what we do as a group of individuals gives rise to group propensities and dynamics that we neither aim for nor anticipate. Good intentions regularly spawn systemic evils that are deeply rooted and take on a life of their own.

The human side of the Church--like the text of the bible--cannot escape human fallibility. Her calling--like that of individual members'--is not to boast of being 'holier than thou', all the while claiming Divine sanction for her institutional policies. The human side of the Church is no more 99 and 44/100 percent pure than her individual members are. Rather the Church is summoned to *vigilance*, to institutional circumspection which is ever on the lookout to identify the systemic evils to which it gives rise; to *repentance* and works meet for repentance that seek to uproot them. Nor is this a temporary and passing assignment. When it comes to social and political arrangements, our institutions will always be riddled with systemic evils. Because it proves so difficult to uproot any one of them, because we can't dig out all of them at once, we are everywhere-and-always tempted to *status-quo* acquiescence. Our calling is to the exact opposite: to discern which ones are ripe for uprooting and to take the lead eradicating them, beginning in the garden behind our own house!

II. Homophobia, Individual and Institutional

Homophobia is a sin, whose end-time is now! The trouble is, not everybody thinks so. Many deny that it exists. Others stand prepared to defend it. Conflict presses us to be precise about what we mean.

Psychological Pathology, or Social Formation? On its psycho-spiritual interpretation, 'homophobia' refers to a psychological pathology, to an irrational fear of same-gendered relationships, a fear that is itself traceable to an unstable or fluid sense of gender identity. Jung's doctrine--that sexual orientation does not come in polar opposites but arranges itself along a spectrum between them--stirs the fear that while I have built my life around one understanding of my sexuality, it may well be false to my truest self. Other people's claiming homosexual identities on the outside disturbs my peace on the inside. Because 'acting out' inchoate urges could easily prove ruinous, the stronger my impulses are the more strident my need to shove them (both my feelings and LGBT people) back into the closet--out of sight, out of mind. The suggestion is that fear of public homosexual coupling signals inner terror that I, too, am LGBT.

When 'homophobia' is taken this way, the charge of homophobia has become a politically incorrect pejorative to which sex-and-gender conservatives protest: their convictions are not pathological, but conscientious and theological!

This reaction should not be enough to put the word out of circulation, however. For one thing, 'pathological versus conscientious' is not an exclusive dichotomy. We do not have to go all the way with Freud to recognize that our fallen conscience is shaped by pathologies. How often do conservatives warn

liberals: just because something (e.g., the genocides in Judges) offends your moral sensibilities doesn't mean it isn't normative. 'Who are we,' they ask, 'to say what God will command or do?' By their own admission, conservatives also participate in 'fallen' human fallibility. They cannot consistently claim certainty for their own conscientious promptings instead.

In any event, 'homophobia' is no mere expletive, as if a loaded emotive term with no cognitive content. I use it advisedly, with a rather precise meaning: homophobia is the fear that I cannot exist and flourish as who I really am if others come out of the closet about being LGBT. So understood, homophobia is an instance of the false conviction that I cannot be as big as I really am (cannot stand up to full stature) unless others pretend to be smaller than they really are--a thesis that is ancient, dishonorable, and directly counter to the Gospel!

What I mainly want to urge at the moment is that *homophobia is a socially constructed sin, one that is built into us as part of our socialization*. Part of what makes human beings socially 'challenged' is our limited imagination. We feel that we can mount and manage only a limited number of social roles. We are schooled to fill a selection of these from earliest childhood. In how many ways did the powers that be, the adults in charge of us send the message: we will be allowed a share of the common good, if and only if we are perceived to pull our oar. Societies reasonably feel that they have a desperate interest in institutionalizing 'the means of reproduction'. In Jewish law, commandments orbit around the desideratum of maximizing reproductive potential to secure the perpetuation of Jewish tribes. Bestiality and male homosexual intercourse waste valuable seed. Rape and adultery undermine the common good by stealing fields in which other tribal males are entitled to sow.

Two forms of social implementation may be distinguished. Institutions define and publicize socially useful patterns of relationship, and provide social support for entering into them--both in the form of education and in the form of sanctions and honors. Thus, during the twentieth century, marriage and the 'religious' life were 'institutionalized'--recognized and reinforced by secular and canon law as well as by public opinion and reactions. Children were encouraged imaginatively to 'try on' the roles of husband or wife, priest or nun. Their real and story-book worlds were populated by many and various 'role models'. Social structures were at work to rear them up into these roles. By contrast, homosexual partnerships have only begun to be institutionalized, recognized in civil law and supported by the public. Before that, LGBTs were 'on their own', left to invent directions or find guidance in subcultures whose existence and mores remained hidden from public view. Prostitution was different from either and even more ambiguous. In a way, prostitution is and always was entrenched and institutionalized to supply male demand for extra-marital sexual activity (for sexual activity that floats free of more complicated relationship commitments). Because such sexual activity transgresses received social norms, society compensates by denying prostitution and prostitutes the usual social benefits. In many places, prostitution is still illegal, so that prostitutes *de facto* face dangers without any protection under the law. Whether or not prostitution is legalized, prostitutes cannot expect public honors for contributing to the common good through excellent and heroic job performance. On the contrary, society scapegoats them for its own lack of imagination in providing sexual outlets, and with consummate hypocrisy demands that some enter roles for which they 'don't get no respect'!

Taboos are social structures erected to wall out behaviors and conditions that attack the social foundations. Because they aim to make the excluded behaviors or lifestyles *unthinkable*, they tend not to be rationalized or explained. To ask why, is already to reach the brink of violation. Threats to society may be *concrete*: e.g., refusal to respect private property or physical safety. But they may also be *symbolic*. Insofar as the sexual purity of women is a metaphor for social integrity, failure to wear the veil may be seen as a serious violation of the sacred even though it may pose little concrete threat. Conditions that are not seriously disruptive, whether concretely or symbolically, may be set right through fines and rituals. But *there is no remedy for taboo violations*: such behaviors and conditions make one unfit for polite society. *Taboos are readily translated into Divine sanctions*. What most societies covertly regard as sacred is their own survival. The job-description for a deity is one who secures the survival and well-being of the group that worships him/her.

For how many centuries has homosexual activity been consigned to the outer darkness of taboo? Not only has it not been institutionalized by the dominant society. It has usually been criminalized. The evolution of mores, the initiation into recognized lifestyle patterns, has had to go subcultural. *Homophobia is thus not in the first instance a private neurosis signalling defective sexual integration. Rather homophobia is a psycho-spiritual instrument of taboo-enforcement.* It has been schooled into us from earliest childhood as part of our social formation, so that all of us over twenty--LGBT included--are willy nilly homophobic. We have all been taught and--at deep levels--we have learned that homosexual activity is socially traitorous. It *symbolizes* the shaking of social foundations. Hence the rhetorical effectiveness of the concretely ridiculous accusation: that homosexual activity (by the 10%) is responsible for rising divorce rates (as much as 50% in California) and the instability of heterosexual marriage!

The Church as Homophobic: God alone is able to organize people and cosmos in ways that do not spawn systemic evils. The Spirit of God has enough imagination to be all-inclusive, to ‘organize in’ all of the sorts and conditions of things that God has made. The Spirit of God also has the power and resourcefulness to make good on the worst that we can suffer be or do. Known even as it knows, the Spirit of God casts out fear and so does not guarantee the functional unity and harmony of the Body of Christ with taboos.

By contrast, the human side of the Church, the institutions that we socially construct bear the marks of our fallibility. Willy nilly, her members have been schooled into the systemic evils of the wider society. Entering Church doors, they bring these unconscious habits with them. *The result is that--everywhere and always--humanly constructed Church institutions also spawn systemic evils.* Willy nilly, the Church always participates in the “spirit of this present age.” What’s worse, because religion is inherently conservative, it participates in the “spirits of past ages” also. Holy scriptures are human as well as Divine. The human authors of the bible bring to their task a variety of cultural presuppositions spanning 1700 years. The sins of the fathers descend to the children beyond the third and fourth generations and get perpetuated by borrowing the authority of Scripture. Like slavery, homophobia and misogyny number among the systemic evils handed down. Current crises in the Anglican communion are exacerbated by this bad use of the bible to appeal to the sins of the fathers to justify repeating them.

These observations bring me to the heart of my diagnosis. *In the current controversies over sex and gender, the Church is not primarily called to bring individuals to repentance--whether to convert the homophobic into LGBT-friendly or to subject LGBT Christians to orientation-changing schemes.* The Church is always called to the *pastoral* care and spiritual formation of her individual members. But most parties to the conflict agree, the pastoral care of individual Christians is not what the current crisis is primarily about. At the moment, *the Church is called as an institution to recognize and repent of the sin of institutional homophobia, and to do works meet for repentance by overturning her taboos and instigating institutional reforms.*

III. ‘The Liberal Agenda’: Paradox and Confusion

I might as well own up to it. My diagnosis overlaps the Gospel agenda with the so-called *liberal agenda*. The cliché contrast is that liberals focus on what the bible has to say about systemic evils and social injustice, while conservatives focus on individual piety and morality. Liberals point to how Jesus preached the Kingdom of God, a new world order. Jesus was not merely trying to inspire individual devotion. He was trying to ‘change the system’ and to call disciples to such a rooting and grounding in God as would allow us to weather the upheavals of institutional change and work towards the radical reconfiguration of the social frame. Current events prove the cliché misleading, insofar as--*inter alia*--the Windsor Report, the Windsor Process, and the Gomez draft covenant expose conservatives also as having a political agenda.

Toleration and Inclusion: Ecclesiologically, the ‘L’ label has been a source of confusion for liberals and a manipulative opportunity for conservatives. Politically, so far as institutional structures are concerned, liberals prize tolerance and freedom of conscience. Doubtless, for some liberals, these values are underwritten by an optimistic view of human nature and an exalted view of human capacities. Historically and theologically, however, tolerance and freedom of conscience have been commended by a

low estimate of human agency. Thus, pessimistic liberals oppose authoritarian governments because they believe that humans are neither smart enough nor good enough to organize utopia. From this negative estimate, pessimistic liberals conclude that there are limits on the amount of control government should try to exercise and on the kinds of sanctions they should impose on the conscientious beliefs of citizens.

Such reasoning is taken to support toleration for *individual* conscientious beliefs and an agreement to differ, *not simply about matters of indifference, but about issues of deep importance*. So far as the state is concerned, people's conscientious beliefs qua beliefs should not be a bar to individual inclusion in the body politic or to participation in its decision-making procedures. What the state appropriately limits is scope for 'acting out' conscientious beliefs when they affect the life or liberty or property of others. Thus, the Ku Klux Klan is allowed to exist, to organize and to foster racist beliefs in its members. But they will be legally prevented from the lynchings, cross-burnings, and fire-bombings that the early and mid-twentieth century saw. Within the Church, liberal estimates of the human condition sponsor loose institutional definition, minimalist membership requirements, and lenient enforcement policies. *Liberal polity in state and Church de-emphasizes gate-keeping and fosters inclusiveness where individual members are concerned*.

Individual versus Institutional Toleration: Liberal emphasis on tolerance and inclusion sets liberals up for paradox, however, a paradox which pits the liberal's conscientious *procedural* beliefs against the liberal's conscientious *content* beliefs about the nature of Kingdom-coming. To dissolve it, liberals will have to make and observe an important distinction between toleration that makes conscientious disagreement about important matters no bar to *individual participation*, and toleration that allows the opponents' conscientious beliefs to *set institutional policy*.

Within TEC and the Church of England, liberals and conservatives hold contrasting and incompatible conscientious beliefs about sex and gender issues. Until the mid-twentieth century, sex-and-gender conservatives held a firm majority which allowed their conscientious beliefs to set institutional policies about sex and gender within the Church. They were mostly prepared to tolerate individual difference of opinion, because liberal viewpoints were not able--by the agreed decision-making procedures of TEC/CoE polity--to set institutional policies. (To be sure, some sex-and-gender conservatives would have been happier with stricter membership criteria and tighter enforcement policies. But most conservatives felt no urgent need to do anything about it.)

In the mid-twentieth century, sex-and-gender conservatives in TEC/CoE began to lose their majority, and sex-and-gender liberals were increasingly in a position to give their conscientious beliefs institutional expression instead. This forced conservatives to 'come out of the closet' to themselves and others about their commitment to (what I shall call) the 'Institutional Purity Principle' [IPP]:

It is contrary to our conscientious beliefs to live within an institution whose institutional policies are incompatible with our conscientious beliefs.

It did not take them very long to turn this exposure into a challenge to liberals with the following arguments:

Arg. 1: Given [IPP], tolerance for our conscientious beliefs requires you to let us set institutional policy whether or not we hold a majority; and/or requires you to complicate the polity of the institution in such a way as to insulate us from close encounters with parts of the institution in which your conscientious beliefs prevail.

Arg. 2: Given [IPP], your commitment to being inclusive requires you to allow our conscientious beliefs to set institutional polity and/or to complicate it whether or not we hold a majority.

In other words, the conservatives have played on liberal propensities for tolerance and inclusiveness to insist that liberals tolerate not only *individual beliefs* but *institutional policies* contrary to liberal conscientious beliefs, and to do so *no matter who holds the majority*.

Instruments of Mischief: Over the last decade and a half, sex-and-gender liberals in TEC/CoE have shown themselves vulnerable to this sort of reasoning. They have conceded sex-and-gender conservatives' construals of what liberal tolerance and inclusiveness entails, and they have responded by handing sex-and-gender conservatives two (what I shall call) instruments of mischief. The CoE led the

way with the Act of Synod which complicated the polity of the CoE to allow for flying bishops: a plan which allowed sex-and-gender conservative parishes to refuse to welcome geographical diocesans who had ordained women, and to request the episcopal offices of another bishop with clean hands. Candidates for ordination are also allowed to request a 'clean hands' flying bishop to ordain them. This model has been twice adapted and applied in TEC, with the institution of Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight (DEPO) and now the presiding bishop's scheme for Episcopal Visitors. Once the concept of individual congregations or dioceses not being bound to their duly elected geographical diocesan or PB is introduced and legitimized, it is an easy leap to appealing to bishops and primates of other Anglican provinces as well. The trajectory of +Duncan shows how slippery the slide from parallel ecclesial units within TEC (his diagnosis at the end of General Convention 2006) to schism (the move to form a separate North American Anglican church entirely, and/or to affiliate with some other 'orthodox' Anglican province).

The second instrument of mischief is the The Windsor Report-proposed and Archbishop Drexel Gomez-interpreted Anglican covenant, which constructs a wider Anglican body politic in which a conservative majority would be guaranteed for the foreseeable future. Like the PB-sponsored House of Bishops' 'pause' (its resolve to withhold consents to non-celibate LGBT candidates for the episcopacy, and to refrain from authorising rites for the blessing of homosexual partnerships), consent to a Gomez-style Anglican covenant would represent a liberal concession not to implement their conscientious sex-and-gender beliefs at an institutional level. Talk about pastoral care defines the maximum scope within which conscientious liberal sex-and-gender convictions would be allowed to hold sway: to the private sphere, to what goes on individual to individuals, perhaps counter-culturally and covertly. And some Anglican communion primates are insisting on their right to invade privacy and put an end to the blessing of same-sex couples under the rubric of pastoral care.

Liberal concessions and sponsorship of these instruments of mischief represent not only a major political victory, but also a rhetorical triumph for conservatives. If tolerance and inclusiveness always trump, then liberals will never be in a position to press their conscientious content-beliefs about Kingdom-coming in the face of clever ([IPP]-invoking) conservative opposition. No wonder liberals are regularly caricatured as making idols of tolerance and inclusiveness, while betraying the Gospel!

The Limits of Tolerance: Contradiction forces rational choice: one or the other, not both; or some qualification of one or both. So far, liberal Anglicans have acted as if their commitments to tolerance and inclusiveness were unqualified, and have back-pedalled on their conscientious content-commitments (most recently, the PB's and the New Orleans' Bishops' meeting 'pause' in consents to LGBT episcopal candidates and rites for blessing LGBT couples). Contradiction is a teeter-totter. What goes up can come down! My argument is that liberals need to reverse their choice, to 'teeter' conscientious content-commitments back up and to recognize limits to liberal tolerance thereby 'tottering' it back down.

Put otherwise, confusion about tolerance and inclusiveness has driven us liberals to make fools of ourselves and brought us to the brink of betraying the Gospel. To see what liberal limits to tolerance might look like, let us review the fundamentals once again. Pessimistic liberals have a low estimate of human social competence. Both experience and traditional theology combine to show [IPP] the conservative demand for institutional purity to be irrational and contrary to sound theology. Pessimistic liberals are willing to live within institutions that embody policies to which they do and/or should conscientiously object, because pessimistic liberals don't believe humans are capable of constructing institutions of any other kind. All humanly constructed institutions spawn systemic evils. Pessimistic liberals see themselves obliged--not to the creation of pure institutions--but to a continuing process of identifying and uprooting systemic evils. In this sense, pessimistic liberals can enthusiastically endorse the evangelical slogan: *ecclesia est reformata et semper reformanda!*

Liberals do have a disposition to tolerance. Like Locke, liberals are and should be unwilling to coerce individual conservatives into giving up their conscientious beliefs. Liberals have a penchant for inclusiveness. They do not and should not have an interest in gate-keeping that excludes individuals from membership merely on the basis of their controversial conscientious beliefs. Liberals set a high value on democratic procedure. For liberals the end does not justify the means to let content goals overturn democratic process.

Yet, none of this implies that liberals should not take their turn in the majority to let their own conscientious content beliefs set institutional policy. Liberals think conservative embrace of [IPP] is false and irrational. Liberals find the content of many world views false and irrational, if not also immoral. Tolerance of individual beliefs qua beliefs and refusal to excommunicate individuals because of their beliefs does not by itself entail toleration that lets conservative conscientious beliefs set institutional policy, no matter who holds the majority. Liberals are willing to include individuals whose conscientious beliefs liberals find false, irrational, immoral and untheological--include in the sense of not wishing to cancel their memberships or rule them out of the participation accorded to members generally. But this is different from liberal willingness to do whatever it takes to keep conservatives from leaving voluntarily: e.g., in the present crisis, to accede to [IPP] and agree to let conservative content beliefs establish institutional policy, no matter what.

Concrete analogies may help to persuade us. In the United States today, we tolerate people who believe that the earth is flat. The constitution allows them freedom of assembly. Being a member of the Flat Earth Society does not jeopardize a citizen's voting or property-holding rights. But most Americans find the flat-earthers' views false and irrational. We would not think of tolerating them to the extent of cancelling the space program. Likewise, individuals are free to hold racist beliefs. The Ku Klux Klan is free to hold meetings to inculcate them. But post-'60's we would not dream of supposing that tolerance required us to re-segregate schools and public institutions. Thus, liberal tolerance for flat-earth-ers and the Ku Klux Klan is and ought to be limited.

Likewise, sex-and-gender liberals have no interest in excommunicating sex-and-gender conservatives or in denying them the institutional access that all members of TEC/CoE enjoy. But in the name of faithfulness to the Gospel, sex-and-gender liberals cannot extend toleration to allowing sex-and-gender conservatives to set institutional policy no matter what. Liberals should not be so desperately committed to inclusiveness as to let themselves be held hostage by conservative threats to leave unless they get their way. Nor should liberals barter conscientious content-commitments away in a panic to be included in the pan-Anglican polity that conservatives are constructing. Time to teeter-totter! Sex-and-gender liberals should repent of the 'flying bishops' scheme, of DEPO and EV. Liberals should also refuse to sign a Gomez-style (as opposed to a Lambeth-Quadrilateral-style) covenant. Liberals should work within the established polity of TEC/CoE and use their majority to uproot homophobia. The reason is straight-forward: homophobia is a sin, and its end-time is now!

IV. Institutional Policy: Change and Implementation

When I was first invited to this conference, the topic proposed was summarized in the question, why gay bishops? We might expand to ask, why LGBT bishops and blessings? My answer is that *LGBT bishops and blessed couples are participating symbols--in the Tillichian sense, sacraments--of Kingdom-coming*. They herald the Gospel in at least three important ways.

First, they are part and parcel of the uprooting process. Systemic evils are by nature deeply rooted. They send out runners that branch out and infiltrate every level of institutional practice. By the same token, they form and shape the individual personalities of members, consciously but--far more effectively and dangerously--unconsciously, in thousands of ways that escape recognition and elude self-control. Systemic evils cannot be eradicated by one swift tug any more than dandelions can be eliminated by surface plucking of leaves and flowers. Clearing our institutions of racism, sexism, and homophobia is a process in which their contradictory opposites have to be 'acted out' again and again.

Twentieth-century American bouts with racism furnish us an instructive example, which illustrates the *persistent long-term efforts required*. Up against the demon racism, Supreme Court rulings and Congressional civil rights legislation were small steps--for mid-twentieth century White America, giant steps--in the right direction. But they were first steps. Rulings and laws had to be implemented. African Americans had to become pupils in formerly white schools. They had to be protected from harassment enough to be able to study and graduate. Voter registration campaigns had to be mounted and voters accompanied to the polls. Affirmative action had to widen access to colleges and government jobs. Fifty years later, we expect to have an African American postmaster, we are only a little startled to

have an African American doctor, we can accept African American secretaries of state if they have privileged pedigrees, but are we ready for an African American president? Up against the demon racism, we are still mini-stepping. But it has taken thousands of African Americans 'transgressing', daring to enter previously forbidden roles, not to mention persistent government enforcement, to get this far.

Few would now dare to deny that racism was 'ripe for uprooting' in mid-twentieth century White America. African Americans weren't prepared to put up with it any longer. Enough white Americans were 'cut to the heart' when the case was put to them, so that even a not reliably high-minded President from Texas was prepared to spend considerable political capital to push civil rights legislation through. But it is helpful now to notice what 'ripe for uprooting' did not mean. It did not mean that southern states were reliably ready for it (remember the showdown between George Wallace and the National Guard on the steps of the University of Alabama). It did not mean that all of the many truly devout Christians who took segregation for granted, suddenly repented of it. Violent resistance met many steps, and many American segregationists were terrified and/or bewildered as enforced desegregation rearranged when it didn't shatter their lived worlds.

'Ripe for uprooting' doesn't and couldn't mean--what the CoE would like it to mean--'it won't upset anyone very much' or 'we are now able to get everyone on board in advance'. Uprooting systemic evils tears up the ground and shakes the foundations. Human societies and psyches are inertial. They exert considerable resistance to fundamental restructuring. This means that for many, conversion cannot come in advance, but only after the fact. What brings most of people around eventually is the *lived experience* that having previously ostracized people in the contested roles doesn't call down fire from heaven and isn't medium-run disruptive, that *mirabile dictu* it sometimes has unmistakably good effects. Like adolescence, the transition is a storm that is costly but can be weathered, and new faces around the table are enriching as well as challenging. The weeded garden grows more beautiful than before.

So also with sex and gender controversies within our Church. Passing the non-discrimination clause in Title III, Canon 1, Sec.2, was a significant step. But people are prepared to go along with paper changes, so long as they have no impact on what happens day to day. Implementing the canon, not only with diocesan ordinations of 'out' LGBT deacons and priests, but with General Convention 2003's consent to the election of +Gene Robinson was a further significant step. The furor of resistance to it shows just how entrenched systemic homophobia is within the Anglican Communion generally and TEC in particular. For its part, TEC has been intimidated from getting on with the weeding. Despite TEC's non-discrimination canon, TEC's PB-elect urged the passage of resolution B033, which seems *prima facie* incompatible with it. The Diocese of CT has argued that B033 is therefore null and void, while the Executive Committee at least wonders whether B033 doesn't add to the qualifications for ordination. The PB's talk of a 'pause' in paying our institutional respects to LGBT and the HoB's seeming acquiescence in it at New Orleans, shows TEC to be inconstant of purpose and lacking in nerve to persevere to the end.

What the Gospel mandate to uproot systemic evils calls for is not a moratorium on consents to the episcopal election of non-celibate LGBT's and a promise not to authorise rites for blessing LGBT unions, but just the opposite. Eradicating institutional homophobia requires the consecration of more non-celibate LGBT bishops. It demands not only the authorisation of rites but widespread public blessing of LGBT partnerships. Each ordination and each blessing asserts and insists upon the legitimacy of the new policy, and thereby brings to judgment our residual institutional and individual resistance to reform. 'Repetition teaches donkeys'--in any event, alters our social expectations and gradually converts our sensibilities about the way things should be. *Ordaining and blessing LGBT persons and partnerships until it seems obviously normal and normative is the way we uproot institutional homophobia within our Church.*

Second, not only are LGBT bishops and blessed couples key to the institutional weeding process, they are essential to outward mission and institutional reconstruction. Every LGBT bishop and blessed partnership is a living, breathing advertisement of what should always have been obvious: that God our Creator loves LGBT's. Up to now, we have had to plead with LGBTs not to make God guilty by association with the Church. (Yes, I'm afraid to many LGBTs New Orleans continued to 'speak with forked tongue'.) Every LGBT bishop and blessed partnership at least tentatively suggests what is not at all obvious: that the Church loves LGBTs, too.

Moreover, bringing LGBT partnerships out of the closet, blessing until the publicly exemplified variety of LGBT relationships approaches that of heterosexual marriages, will put us all in a better place theologically to rethink what is essential and wholesome in sexual unions. The Church has inherited an institution of marriage that involved buying and selling women--like reproductive livestock--from domination by one male into subservience to another (remember, 'love, honor, and *obey*'?). Despite a couple of decades of dialoguing, the Church still joins society in treating marriage as a 'sacred cow' that cannot be touched (witness the dogmatic insistence that homosexual *marriage* is a category mistake), when the whole idea of godly partnership needs radical revision. Modern heterosexual couples involving 'liberated' women are left to their own devices to transmogrify the institution from the inside. My suspicion is that uncloseting same-sex partnerships will help us to distinguish dimensions of intimacy--for example, to explore the relationship between friendship and sexual activity. They might also furnish models of equality and illustrate different divisions of labor. Honest reflection on varieties of 'transgression'--heterosexual and homosexual--would not only move us towards marriage reform but also lead us to fresh conceptions of godly unions that might help the wider society as it evolves new norms.

Third, institutionalizing LGBT bishops and LGBT partnerships will free up our theological thinking about who God is and how God loves. The bible shows, the history of theology proves, liturgical texts testify, human beings conceive of God by mapping social models onto the heavens. The Hebrew bible sometimes imagines God as the bedouin-style abusive husband of an unfaithful wife; other times as a severe but faithful and resourceful patron-king. Some epistles forward God as the *pater-familias* of a Roman household. John 15, patristic and medieval trinitarian theology conceive of the Trinity using ancient ideals of male friendship. Non-celibate LGBT bishops and partnerships are sacraments that bring out of the closet what is old and what is new. The more we unlearn our homophobia, the more they will remind us of subtle and startling things about God.

V. Concluding Pragmatic Reflections

Some will doubtless think that my reactions to the PB's pause and HoB's acquiescence in it are too harsh. Sex-and-gender conservatives have manuevred TEC into a difficult position. These responses were political moves that were meant to signal that we do not wish to break fellowship with the Anglican communion or withdraw our commitments to (what are now labelled) Millenium Development Goals. Our leaders were merely practicing the 'art of the possible'. Our willingness to compromise was offered as a measure of our commitment to pan-Anglican well-being.

Less involved observers might imagine that they are witnessing an institutional game of 'chicken': TWR and primatial pronouncements challenge, 'whether or not you walk apart is your decision!'; to which TEC responds, 'we won't pull out; you'll have to throw us out!' Each side wants to shift blame for any potential break-up to the other side.

My response is simple and predictable. TEC is a humanly constructed institution whose only reason for being is word-and-deed Gospel proclamation. The *message*--that American Anglicans desire to maintain connection with Anglicans world-wide--is good. But the *medium*--the demanded moratoria, however hedged and qualified--is inappropriate because it accedes to a Gospel-falsehood: that non-celibate LGBT persons are not first class citizens, that *ipso facto* their manners of life cannot holy before God, that homophobia is not all that bad, that its end-time is later. I've said it before and I'll say it again: it is not right to sacrifice the spiritual dignity and well-being of real and present human beings on the altar of institutional expediency. And it is not right for privileged insiders to pit the interests of one oppressed group (LGBTs) against those of others (the suffering millions around the world), especially when we are not in a position to pay like costs.

Perhaps the Principle of Double Effect will help here. Breaking with our global Anglican partners has not been and should not be TEC's end or chosen means. Whether or not others make it an unintended side-effect of TEC's faithfulness to its Gospel mandate is not something for which TEC is primarily responsible and not anything that TEC can control.

I will close with one further observation. Not theologically, but socio-politically, TEC and the CoE are in very different positions. The CoE is an established church, which may still hold itself responsible for the survival of Christianity in England. The CoE is also the colonial mother of most other Anglican churches. The ABC is *ex officio* colonial god-father, who feels the burden of keeping the Anglican communion together. In the USA, however, TEC should not have such delusions of grandeur. TEC is only a small protestant denomination, whose only reason for being is to proclaim the Gospel. If TEC were not here, the Roman Catholics and the Baptists would keep Christianity going in America for some time to come. To me, this suggests that TEC has a distinctive niche in Kingdom-economy: to be a crucible of Gospel ferment and experimentation, to be a Church that takes risks to celebrate God's new-fangled sacraments, to hold them up and present them as Kingdom-heralds to our broken and divided world.