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Anglicans in the Postcolony: On Sex and the Limits of Communion

Mary-Jane Rubenstein

At this point, it would be a considerable accomplishment *not* to be aware that there is something very strange going on in the Anglican Communion. Nearly every day brings fresh stories of increasingly complicated ecclesiastical warfare: Nigerian bishops in Virginia, Ugandan churches in California, same-sex blessings in Canada, threats of schism, charges of heresy—and perhaps you’ve heard about the gay bishop in New Hampshire?¹

The current difficulties in the American Episcopal Church and the wider Anglican Communion can be traced back to a number of different events in the life of the church, depending on how deep the storyteller would like to go. The flashiest and most recent of these is the consecration of the Right Reverend Gene V. Robinson, a partnered gay man, as Bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire in 2003. But the tension within the world’s third-largest Christian family had already grown unbearable by its 1998 meeting at Lambeth Palace, when questions about gay clergy and same-sex blessings polarized the Communion to such an extent that none of the other matters (war, debt, poverty, HIV/AIDS, water) received

1. See Michelle Boorstein, “Conservative N. Va. Priest Installed as Anglican Bishop: Head of Episcopal Split to Lead Nigerian Offshoot,” *Washington Post*, May 6, 2007; Jan Nunley, “Two California Parishes Vote Alignment with Uganda Diocese,” *Episcopal News Service*, August 17, 2004; Diocese of New Westminster, “Information on Same-Sex Blessings,” available at the diocesan website, <http://www.samesexblessing.info>; Peter Akinola, “A Most Agonizing Journey,” available at the Church of Nigeria website, http://www.anglican-nig.org/main.php?k_j=12&d=88&p_t=index.php; and James Solheim, “Amid Cheers and Protests, Robinson Consecrated in Diocese of New Hampshire,” *Episcopal News Service*, November 2, 2003.

nearly the attention it deserved.² This millennial conflict at Lambeth had been brewing at least since the Episcopal Church's "irregular" ordination of women to the priesthood in 1974, which threatened to split the Communion between proponents and opponents of women in Holy Orders.³ There have been few decades, in fact, in which some faction of this global church has not accused another of an unacceptable departure from tradition. Such a dispute can even be said to have formed the Anglican Communion itself: the first Lambeth Conference was called in 1867 in response to the excommunication of J. W. Colenso, Bishop of Natal, South Africa, whose biblical scholarship the Bishop of Cape Town found to be heretical.⁴ And, of course, the efficient cause of the English Reformation in the first place was Henry VIII's refusal of papal authority on matters of sexual conduct. The contemporary crisis among Anglicans worldwide is therefore not qualitatively different from skirmishes they have encountered before. That having been said, the current *quantity* of internecine rancor might ultimately prove too much for the Communion to bear.

The vast media coverage of recent events tends to explain the conflict as an ideological battle between "liberal" and "conservative" members of the Communion, who simply cannot agree on the status of homosexual people within the church. Most Anglican leaders believe, at least in principle, that lesbian and gay people should not be the objects of ridicule or abuse.⁵

2. The Lambeth Conference convenes roughly every 10 years at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury; see the official website, <http://www.lambethconference.org>, for the history of the Conference as well as archives of its resolutions. In relation to Lambeth 1998, see Stephen Bates, *A Church at War: Anglicans and Homosexuality* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004), pp. 125–41; and Mary-Jane Rubenstein, "An Anglican Crisis of Comparison: Race, Gender, and Religious Authority, with Particular Reference to the Church of Nigeria," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 72:2 (2004): 341–65.

3. The first woman to be ordained in Anglican Communion was actually Florence Li Tim-Oi, ordained in 1944 in occupied Hong Kong. The controversy that ensued prevented her serving as a priest until she emigrated to Canada. On the history of women's ordination within the Communion, see Norene Carter, "The Episcopalian [*sic*] Story," in *Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998), pp. 356–72; and Henry R. McAdoo, *Anglicans and Tradition and the Ordination of Women* (Norwich: Canterbury Press, 1997).

4. See Peter Hinchliff, "Colonial Church Establishment in the Aftermath of the Colenso Affair," in *Religious Change in Europe 1650–1914: Essays for John McManners*, ed. Nigel Aston (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 345–63.

5. Lambeth Resolution 1.10 declares that while homosexuality is "incompatible with scripture," the members of the conference commend gay and lesbian people to the pastoral

But does the principle of Christian love demand that they be healed, or celebrated? Should same-sex partnerships be blessed, or condemned? And can a gay man be a model of Christian living to a parish? To a diocese? The yea-sayers seem to include the majority of the American Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada, who see the “full inclusion” of lesbian and gay people as an urgent matter of justice.⁶ The nay-sayers are said to include the disaffected members of the Episcopal Church, along with the churches of the “Global South.” The self-appointed spokesperson of this body is the Most Reverend Peter J. Akinola, Archbishop, Metropolitan and Primate of All Nigeria, who believes the rise of gay advocacy amounts to a “satanic attack” on the church.⁷ As for the Church of England and the Archbishop of Canterbury, they have done their best to remain on the theological fence, allowing clergy (but not bishops) to live in same-sex relationships so long as both partners remain celibate.⁸ While this global schematic can perhaps be helpful for the purposes of a news brief, the problem is that it ultimately fails to account for the vast range of opinions within specific Anglican provinces, dioceses, parishes, and even families—not to mention entire continents and hemispheres. This is particularly true of “the Global South,” and of “Africa” in particular, which is almost always represented as univocally ultra-conservative. It should be said from the outset that this is hardly the case.

In a recent speech to the Ecclesiastical Law Society in Liverpool, England, Bishop Musonda Trevor Selwyn Mwamba of Botswana ventured that there were at least three major strands within Africa; “conservative,” “liberal,” and “moderate.” Mwamba explained that the conservative voice is represented by Archbishop Akinola of Nigeria, who views homosexuality

care of their priests and bishops and “condemn irrational fear of homosexuals” (Lambeth Conference website, <http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1998/1998-1-10.cfm>).

6. On the position of the Episcopal Church, see *The Episcopal Church (USA), To Set Our Hope on Christ: A Response to the Invitation of Windsor Report* (New York: The Episcopal Church Center, 2005), par. 135. On the position of the Anglican Church of Canada, see “Same-Sex Blessings not in Conflict with Core Doctrine,” available at the Anglican Church of Canada website, http://www.anglican.ca/news/news.php?newsItem=2007-06-24_m.news.

7. See Jane Little, “Schism Looming for Anglican Communion,” *BBC News*, December 18, 2006.

8. Celibacy was officially recommended to gay clergy in *Some Issues in Human Sexuality* (London: Church House Publishing, 1991). The 2003 controversy over Jeffrey John’s candidacy for the episcopate in Reading demonstrated that this leniency does not, however, extend to bishops: see Bates, *A Church at War*, pp. 155–79.

as “a cancerous growth which needs to be removed in order to save the Communion from collapsing.”⁹ To that end, the Primates of Nigeria and Rwanda have each established missionary groups that consecrate American priests as bishops in Africa and then send them back to re-convert the New World.¹⁰ This faction emphasizes a “plain” reading of Scripture over all other sources of authority and includes the leaders of the churches in Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. While there are certainly clergy and laity within these provinces who think otherwise, their bishops and archbishops usually claim to speak for the entirety of the continent when they call homosexuality “un-African, inhuman, unscriptural.”¹¹

The “liberal voice” to which Mwamba refers issues primarily from the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, its Primate the Most Reverend Njongonkulu Winston Ndungane of Cape Town. Much like his predecessor Desmond Tutu, Archbishop Ndungane approaches the issue of homosexuality from the perspective of South Africa’s struggle against apartheid. As Tutu has recently said of the status of gay and lesbian people in the Communion: “It is a matter of ordinary justice. We struggled against apartheid in South Africa because we were blamed and made to suffer for something we could do nothing about. It is the same with homosexuality. The orientation is a given, not a matter of choice.”¹² In addition to affirming Tutu’s assertion of sexual equality as a human right, Archbishop Ndungane has challenged the hermeneutic inclinations of his more conservative brothers.

9. Musonda Trevor Selwyn Mwamba, “The Anglican Communion: Crisis and Opportunity,” March 26, 2007, available at the Anglican Church of Canada website, http://www.anglican.ca/news/news.php?newsItem=2007-03-26_africa.news.

10. Rwanda, along with South East Asia, works through the Anglican Mission in America (AMiA), and Nigeria’s group is called the Convocation of Anglicans in North America (CANa).

11. Dickinson Adeyanju, “Homosexual Priests: Nigerian Anglicans Will Not Succumb to Pressure From the West, Says Akinola,” *The Guardian* (Nigeria), July 30, 2007.

12. Desmond Tutu in Bates, *A Church at War*, pp. 129–30. The idea that homosexuality is inborn is a common position among liberals in the church, who are usually caught in the position of countering claims that God “did not make people gay.” The most obvious retort to such an accusation seems to be, “yes, he did!”; but this leaves defendants vulnerable to the doctrine of original sin. (See Paul Zahl, “Last Signal to the *Carpathia*,” *Anglican Theological Review* 86 (Fall 2004): 647–52.) This essentialist stalemate has been partially circumvented by *To Set Our Hope on Christ*, which reports that “contemporary studies indicate that same-sex affection has a genetic-biological basis which is shaped in interaction with psycho-social and cultural-historical factors” (*To Set Our Hope on Christ*, 2.22). Granted, this falls short of Judith Butler, but it manages to avoid collapsing same-sex behavior into either a biological defect or a whimsical “lifestyle choice.”

Scripture, Ndungane argues, can only be approached in conversation with “reason, faith, culture, experience, and tradition.”¹³ Inasmuch as the Communion has experienced the dedication of its lesbian and gay members, Ndungane considers them to be gifts rather than cancers and has called upon the churches in Africa to recognize the episcopacy of Gene Robinson.¹⁴ Other representatives of this “liberal” voice include members of African Anglican gay rights organizations, including Integrity Uganda and Changing Attitudes Nigeria.¹⁵

Finally, there is the “moderate” voice, which is embodied for Mwamba in the Anglican Church in Burundi. While Burundi’s official position is critical of the consecration of Gene Robinson in New Hampshire and the development of a rite for same-sex blessings in New Westminster, Canada, it does not seek to expel the participants of either from the Communion. Rather, Burundi, along with other “moderate” Anglican churches, is calling both poles to reconciliation. The missiologist Titus Presler has suggested that this position comes out of Burundi’s own context of genocide, which he distinguishes from the Rwandan context. In Rwanda, Presler explains, the recent genocide taught the church that the nation needs a strong, unified Christianity, which the “disease” of homosexuality can only destroy: “[W]e cannot afford,” Presler paraphrases, “for our church to be contaminated in this crucial time of national reconstruction.” In Burundi, by contrast, genocide taught the church to be suspicious of rigid theo-political positions: “What we have learned is that we must keep talking. Breaking relations is not a solution.”¹⁶

Other parties within this “moderate” group include the churches in Latin America and the Caribbean who have declared themselves “The Global Center,”¹⁷ and perhaps most significantly, the entirety of the Anglican

13. Njongonkulu Ndungane, “Scripture: What Is at Stake in Anglicanism Today?” in *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism: The Anglican Communion in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Ian T. Douglas and Kwok Pui-Lan (New York: Church Publishing Inc., 2001), p. 253.

14. See Mwamba, “Anglican Communion,” and Stephen Bates, “African Cleric Breaks Ranks on Gay Issue,” *The Guardian*, September 8, 2003.

15. These groups are chapters of groups based in the Episcopal Church and Church of England, respectively, but their leaders maintain that, despite these affiliations, they remain locally organized.

16. Titus Presler, “Listening toward Reconciliation: A Conversation Initiative in Today’s Anglican Alienations,” *Anglican Theological Review* 89 (Spring 2007): 262–63.

17. These include the churches of Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Venezuela, and the Virgin Islands. See “Declaration of the Anglican Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean (Global Center),”

Women's Network, which comprises two delegates from every province in the Communion—including Nigeria. The Network meets every two years at the meeting of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, and each time has unanimously affirmed its desire to remain in communion, regardless of who holds the crosier in New Hampshire. The statement from their 2007 meeting reads in part, "Given the global tensions so evident in our Church today, we do not accept that there is any one issue of difference or contention which can, or indeed would ever cause us to break our unity as represented by our common baptism. Neither would we ever consider severing the deep abiding bonds of affection which characterize our relationships as Anglican women."¹⁸

And so the notion that the Global South holds a unanimous opinion on human (that is, homo-) sexuality is simply false. This misconception is partly the work of a group of Primates who have appointed themselves the spokesmen for the whole of the southern hemisphere, partly the work of their North American allies, and partly the work of scholars and journalists who love a good postcolonial culture-clash. Indeed, among all parties concerned, the thesis Philip Jenkins sets forth in *The Next Christendom* has become common parlance: while church membership in the European and American mainline churches has been steadily declining for half a century, Christians have multiplied exponentially in Africa, South and East Asia, and Central and South America.¹⁹ This means, Jenkins concludes, that the agenda of the global churches will now be determined by the people to whom Europe brought the gospel in the first place: as Archbishop Henry Orombi of Uganda has recently written, "the younger churches of Anglican Christianity will shape what it means to be Anglican. The long season of British hegemony is over."²⁰ This is undoubtedly the case. But what neither Jenkins nor Orombi nor the often sensationalist news analysts makes clear

available at the Anglican Communion website, <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/articles/40/50/acns4054.cfm>. Vocal opponents of this centrism include the archbishops of the Central Cone and West Indies.

18. Anglican Women's Network, "Statement From the Anglican Women gathered at the 51st of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women," March 3, 2007, available at the International Anglican Women's Network website, http://www.iawn.org/2007From_the_Anglican_Women_gathered_at_the_51st_UNCSW.htm.

19. See Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002).

20. Archbishop Henry Luke Orombi, "What Is Anglicanism," *First Things* 175 (2007): 23–28.

is that the “younger churches” do not all speak with one voice. The problem, Bishop Mwamba explains, is that progressive Anglican voices from the southern hemisphere are usually ignored and often silenced, so that the Global South can be presented as univocal and uncompromising.²¹

And when “the Global South” is so presented—whether by journalists, American Episcopalians, or African bishops—the choice for Europeans and North Americans seems to be to side or not to side with the postcolonial monolith. This means that the great divide within the northern churches seems to fall between those who care about their sisters and brothers in the developing world and those who do not; between Americans who take global relationships seriously and American cowboys who do whatever they please; in short, between proponents of relation within the Communion and proponents of autonomy. If the Global South speaks with one voice and that voice condemns homosexuality, then northern supporters of gay lives, rights, and practices are “choosing to walk apart”²²—in other words, abandoning their African, South American, and Asian siblings.

I would like to suggest, however, that a more useful picture—both analytically and ecclesiastically—emerges when one considers the full range of commitment and opinion within the Communion. In conversation with the work of French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, I will propose that the Anglican Communion’s crucial distinction falls, not between proponents of ecclesiastical relation and proponents of ecclesiastical autonomy, but rather between proponents of two different *kinds* of relation: one that aims to bring all difference into identity, and another that seeks its identity in and through difference. Both of these models can arguably find scriptural and traditional justification, and yet they are proving to be fundamentally incompatible as they vie for the souls—and the soul—of the Anglican Communion.

Unworking Communion

In an essay titled “La communauté désœuvrée,” Jean-Luc Nancy reflects on the nature of living in relation to others. He comes to distinguish what he calls “communion,” which replicates the logic of identity, from

21. See Mwamba, “Anglican Communion,” and Pat Ashworth, “Listen to the Majority African Voice of Grace,” *Church Times*, February 2, 2007.

22. See Akinola’s accusation in Jordan Hylden, “The Episcopal Declaration of Independence,” March 26, 2007, *On the Square* blog at the *First Things* website, <http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/?p=676>.

“community,” which names the interrelation of differences.²³ Like the roundly critiqued figure of the (Cartesian) individual, Nancy’s “communion” understands itself to be self-identical and a soundly unified work, or *oeuvre*. A group of people “in communion” work at making themselves a work by retelling their communal myth, which assures them they all come from a common origin—that they are *essentially* all the same. Nancy calls this mode of relation “immanentism”: once each existent is reduced to one common substance, or one “common-being,” each of them is totally present to each of the others. It is perhaps obvious that “communion” thus understood becomes the focus of incisive criticism in Nancy’s work, but the motivation behind this critique is no ordinary poststructuralist allergy to the “metaphysics of presence.” Rather, Nancy’s exposure of the immanentist logic of communion functions as a political critique of the kinds of violence that “communions” exercise in trying to assert their identity, reappropriate some mythic past of perfect unity, and purify their single essence.²⁴

In distinction to communion’s “common-being,” which gathers all difference into identity, Nancy offers the “being-in-common” of community. Whereas a communion asserts itself as one massive individual, a community is composed of singularities that are only themselves in relation to *other*—essentially different—singularities. Refusing the self-identical appearance of communion, singularities can only “com-pear.” “One cannot make a world with simple atoms,” Nancy explains, “There has to be a *clinamen*. There has to be an inclination or an inclining from one to the other.”²⁵ When being is understood not as common but as in-common, nothing properly *is* at all, except insofar as it is with others, toward others, touching others, and seeping into others. Far from being shared in common, a community’s essence is shared out—communicated, fragmented, shattered—to such an extent that all community “is” is this inclining, this communication, this “with-ness” itself. “It is a groundless ‘ground,’” Nancy writes, “made up only of the network, the interweaving, and the sharing of singularities.”²⁶ Community’s work, then, is to un-work

23. See Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Inoperative Community,” in *The Inoperative Community*, trans. Peter Connor (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2001), pp. 1–42.

24. See Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Nazi Myth,” trans. Brian Holmes, *Critical Inquiry* 16:2 (Winter 1990): 291–312.

25. Nancy, “The Inoperative Community,” p. 3.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

itself; to become *dés-œuvrée*; that is, to interrupt the formation of any single essence into which all its different singularities might be forcibly gathered. In other words, while “communion” must assimilate or destroy everything in its path, community’s persistent interruption resists “the delirium of an incarnated communion. . . . Community is, in a sense, resistance itself: namely, resistance to immanence. Consequently, community is transcendence.”²⁷

After naming community “transcendence,” however, Nancy goes on to note that such transcendence “no longer has any ‘sacred’ meaning.” This is perhaps no surprise; one of the primary targets of Nancy’s critique seems quite clearly to be ecclesiastical organizational structures. Christian communities can be said to function as Nancean “communions” *par excellence* insofar as they claim a common foundational myth (the life and death of one man in Judea), a common function (to “make disciples of all nations”²⁸), and most importantly, a common essence: every Christian on earth is said to be a “living member” of the one body of Christ, himself “of one substance” with God the Father.²⁹ This substantial unity seems to be affirmed nowhere more clearly than in the words of St. Paul, often echoed in the Eucharistic liturgy: “We who are many are one body, for we all share in the one bread.”³⁰ Along one reading, then, the Eucharist is the paradigmatic source of common being: it begins each time with a re-telling of the foundational myth (“on the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Savior Jesus Christ took bread. . . .”³¹); distributes the one body for internalization by the many; and proceeds to knit the multitudes into one, holy *communion*.

It would therefore seem that the churches are simply doomed to the “fascist” annihilation of difference that Nancy ascribes to communion,³² and that historical and contemporary assertions of Anglicanism only confirm as much. When powerful men travel and replicate themselves overseas in order to purify their ranks and enforce sexual “order and

27. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

28. This injunction is known as “the Great Commission.” See Matt. 28:6–20.

29. This phrase can be found in the traditional English version of the Nicene Creed. Both this and the contemporary version can be found at <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/word/creeds.html>.

30. 1 Cor. 10:17.

31. *The Book of Common Prayer* (Episcopal Church) (New York: Church Hymnal Corporation, 1979), p. 362. Cf. p. 334.

32. Nancy, “The Inoperative Community,” p. 35.

discipline”—whether in nineteenth-century Nigeria or twenty-first-century New Hampshire³³—it stands to reason that they re-confirm the irreducibly totalizing nature of Christian “relation” itself. The question I would like to explore is whether there is there a way of configuring Anglicanism as a “community” in the Nancean sense, that is, as a network of interrelated, mutually constitutive, mutually *contaminating* singularities that resist the violence of enforced identity. In a more concrete idiom, the question is whether a church built on a colonial infrastructure can resist its own impulse toward colonialism. Rather than imposing order and discipline upon its recalcitrant subjects, can this—or any—Christian fellowship understand its identity as both constituted *and unworked* by difference?

Relation and the Windsor Report

After Gene Robinson’s consecration in November 2003, the much-besieged office of the Archbishop of Canterbury appointed a group of bishops, clergy, and laypeople to a body called the Lambeth Commission. This group was charged with the task of writing a document that would examine the sources of and remedies for the church’s seemingly irreconcilable differences concerning same-sex relationships and openly gay clergy and bishops.³⁴ The resulting Windsor Report, released in 2004, begins by addressing the unique structure of authority in the Anglican Communion. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, it explains, the Anglican Communion has no curia—no centralized structure of control.³⁵ Rather, the Communion has been defined since its official formation in the 1860s as a set of autonomous churches, held in relation to one another through reciprocal “bonds of affection.”³⁶ While Windsor affirms this “autonomy of individual provinces,” it warns that “‘autonomy’ is a much-misunderstood concept.”³⁷

33. On the imposition of sexual order and discipline in early colonial Nigeria, see Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London: Zed Books, 1987); Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, “The Translation of Cultures: Engendering Yorùbá Language, Orature, and World-Sense,” in *Women, Gender, Religion: A Reader*, ed. Elizabeth A. Castelli (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 76–97; and Rubenstein, “An Anglican Crisis of Comparison.”

34. The Lambeth Commission on Communion, *The Windsor Report* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2004), par. 23.

35. *Ibid.*, par. 42.

36. Robin Eames, foreword to *The Windsor Report*, p. 5.

37. *Windsor Report*, par. 72.

The Report explains that within Anglicanism at least, the concept of autonomy grew out of a colonial context, initially signifying “independence from the control of the British crown.”³⁸ Gradually, such independence gave way to liturgical and ecclesiastical expressions that varied from continent to continent, nation to nation, and town to town, so that with respect to strictly “local issues,” provinces and dioceses were understood to be free from any sort of centralized control.³⁹ This freedom notwithstanding, autonomy in local affairs did not and does not extend to autonomy in *all* affairs; after all, the churches within the Anglican Communion can only be said to be autonomous insofar as they have been granted autonomy by those to whom they are responsible:

A body is thus, in this sense, “autonomous” *only in relation to others*; autonomy exists in a relation with a wider community or system of which the autonomous entity forms part. The word “autonomous” in this sense actually implies not an isolated individualism, but the idea of being free to determine one’s own life within a wider obligation to others. The key idea is autonomy-in-communion, that is, freedom held within interdependence.⁴⁰

So far, this sounds strikingly like Nancy’s account of singularities in relation: no body within in the Communion exists, except insofar as it relates to the other bodies composing the Communion. What, then, was the error of the Episcopal Church when it consecrated Gene Robinson, or of the Diocese of New Westminster when it developed a rite for same-sex blessings? Their fault lay in exercising autonomy as though autonomous decisions did not affect and rely upon others—or, to put it more simply, in doing what the rest of the Communion believed to be wrong. This is not the way that churches in communion are meant to behave: “[I]n communion,” the Report explains, “each church acknowledges and respects the interdependence and autonomy of the other, putting the needs of the global fellowship before its own.”⁴¹ In short, the Episcopal Church and Diocese of New Westminster ought to have waited for—and obeyed—a communion-wide consensus on matters that their sisters and brothers tend to find “scandalous and offensive”: “The relational nature of communion

38. *Ibid.*, par. 3.

39. *Ibid.*, par. 74.

40. *Ibid.*, pars. 75–76.

41. *Ibid.*, par. 49.

requires each church to learn more fully what it means to be part of that communion... seeking a *common mind* in essential matters of common concern: in short, to act interdependently, not independently.”⁴² As Windsor understands it, then, the crisis in the Communion comes down to a refusal of relation itself on the part of the offending dioceses.

What is troubling about this account is that it ends up equating relation with being of a “common mind,” that is, with unanimity, or at least the opinion of the majority. If autonomy, like Nancean singularity, is only ever exercised in relation to others, then one would presume that autonomy and relation depend on *otherness* itself. Yet, such otherness is swiftly eclipsed as Windsor’s analysis of interdependence reaches its practical, frankly utilitarian conclusion: “if a sufficient number of other Christians” oppose a particular practice, Windsor admonishes, then it ought not to be done.⁴³ For example, any “acceptable” candidate for the episcopate must be viewed as acceptable across national and hemispheric lines: “The question of acceptability could be posed in a number of ways. Is there any reason to expect that the appointment or election of a particular candidate might prejudice our relations with other provinces? Would the ministry of the individual be recognized and received if he or she were to visit another province? Would the individual be ‘translatable?’”⁴⁴ The Report does note briefly that, since the Right Reverend Barbara Harris’s consecration as Bishop of Massachusetts in 1989, many provinces have refused to recognize the episcopacy of any person who happens to be a woman. Women, in other words, are not quite “translatable” across the Anglican globe. Gender, however, is a degree of disagreement the Communion can bear.⁴⁵ Sexual expression, by comparison, is not.

“Not all ‘differences’ can be tolerated,” Windsor explains. “(We know this well enough in the cases of, say, racism or child abuse; we would not say, ‘some of us are racists, some of us are not, so let’s celebrate our diversity.’)”⁴⁶ These parenthetical parallels to the “difference” of homosexuality are hardly coincidental. They reflect, first, a persistent equation of (especially male) homosexuality with violence against children and, second, a simplistic and dangerous conviction that those who offend the

42. *Ibid.*, pars. 93, 51 (emphasis added).

43. *Ibid.*, par. 93.

44. *Ibid.*, par. 131.

45. *Ibid.*, pars. 12–21, 126.

46. *Ibid.*, par. 89.

sexual sensibilities of “the Global South” are effectively racists. This highly complicated bind was summarized by the Reverend Martin Smith of Massachusetts, who explained to local Episcopalians that at Lambeth ’98, “the few bishops who spoke up for gay and lesbian reality were literally hissed, and denounced in angry whispers as racists and imperialists, for if you supported gays you were opposing the witness of the third world bishops defending purity and scriptural authority.”⁴⁷ As Bishop Barbara Harris told this same diocese, however, the bishops’ “belief in the inerrancy and primacy of Scripture” mirrors the very colonial hermeneutic “that not only had been handed to their forebears, but had been used to suppress them.”⁴⁸ So it is hard to determine who is colonizing whom.

To recapitulate before moving on, the Communion’s official explanation of its own difficulty is that some of the “autonomous” churches have taken autonomy too far and ought to be mindful of their constitutive relation to others. But Windsor’s account of “relation,” far from designating identity in and through difference, eventually comes down to like-mindedness. Insofar as a province takes interdependence seriously, it will put others ahead of itself, which effectively amounts to submitting to the dominant—or loudest—position on any given matter. Relation thus construed is ultimately a matter of unifying different people by enforcing unanimity. In other words, the Windsor Report considers the Communion to be a “communion” in the Nancean sense: a unified body that, while speaking of autonomy in relation, seeks in the end to assert itself as one, whole, individual. Furthermore, because the most vocal critics of the American and Canadian churches’ sexual politics are bishops in Africa, understanding the Communion as “communion” solidifies “the Global South” and its allies, on the one hand, against their alleged opponents, on the other. Given the number of Christians in the southern hemisphere, the former is taken to be the majority. If relation simply means submitting to the majority’s opinion, then, heeding it means submitting to this ostensibly singular voice of the southern hemisphere. Resisting such submission is seen not only as a denial of responsibility to others, but also, and more gravely, as a refusal to take the “younger churches” seriously. In short, the northern churches’ unwillingness to alter their stance on homosexuality amounts to a “refusal

47. James Solheim, “Sexuality Issues Test Bonds of Affection among Bishops at Lambeth Conference,” *Episcopal News Service*, September 3, 1998.

48. James Solheim, “Bishops Interpret Meaning of Lambeth Conference for their Dioceses,” *Episcopal News Service*, September 28, 1998.

of relation,” which in this global context constitutes an act of neo-colonialism. And yet, again, the gospel defended by the developing Anglican world was a colonial imposition in the first place. Considering the history of the Anglican Church, it is hard not to think it may have brought this crisis on itself.

Axes of Colonialism

In his address to the third International Conference on Afro-Anglicanism in 2005, the Rev. Dr. Michael A. Clarke of Virgin Gorda reminded his sisters and brothers that “the Afro-Anglican Church had its origins, for the most part, either in the cauldron of colonialism or the branding-iron of slavery.”⁴⁹ Whatever their political and theological inclinations, leaders of all the African churches find themselves in the difficult position of defending and spreading the tradition that helped to enslave and subject them in the first place. In the case of nations colonized by Great Britain, people who choose to remain Anglican do so because they see a crucial distinction between the church and the “cultural vessels” that brought it to Africa.⁵⁰ Contemporary Afro-Anglican thought and practice is therefore a matter of teasing out the Book of Common Prayer’s distinction between “doctrine” and “discipline”; that is, of distilling the core teachings of the church from the socio-political tincture in which they were administered during the colonial period. As South Africa’s Archbishop Ndungane has explained it, “Colonialism brought both pains and joys. It brought the gospel, and for that we shall be eternally grateful. . . . Yet we have even had to work at understanding what the gospel message was and is for us. It came clad in the culture of those who brought it to our continent.”⁵¹ Since independence, it has been the task of African Christians to throw off this culture.

Different Afro-Anglican theologians and bishops tend to disagree about the extent to which the churches have overcome this cultural legacy. For example, Archbishop Ndungane believes the scriptural literalism of

49. Michael A. Clarke, “Claiming Elijah’s Mantle: Young Adults and the Life of the Church,” *Anglican Theological Review* 89:1 (Winter 2007): 64.

50. Conference on Afro-Anglicanism, “The Codrington Consensus: Agreed Statement from the Conference on Afro-Anglicanism,” June 17–22, 1985, available at <http://www.afroanglican.com/CodringtonConsensus/The%20Codrington%20Consensus.pdf>.

51. Njongonkulu Ndungane, “Sermon: Grasping the Past, Taking Hold of the Future: The Challenge of Afro-Anglicanism,” *Anglican Theological Review* 89:1 (Winter 2007): 22.

his ultra-conservative colleagues to be a western imposition.⁵² Moreover, he argues alongside many of his northern colleagues that as distinct from Calvinists, Anglicans have never understood the Bible to be self-evident. Rather, they have appealed to the “three-legged stool” upon which Richard Hooker said the sixteenth-century Church of England rested: scripture, tradition, and reason. Ndungane therefore maintains that a more authentically African *and* more authentically Anglican theology would be one in which “African culture and tradition were treated as the primary source alongside the Bible.”⁵³ As a place to start, he often suggests the South African teaching of *ubuntu*: “I am because we are.”⁵⁴

By contrast, the African bishops who uphold Scripture as “the central authority in our communion”⁵⁵ consider the three-legged stool itself to be an Enlightenment accretion to the core message of the gospel. The key to Anglican liberation from British culture, they argue, is the Bible, whose simplicity and trans-culturalism transcend social particularities. As Archbishop Henry Orombi of Uganda has recently written, it is scripture alone that has “ended the assumption that Anglican belief and practice must be clothed in historic British culture.”⁵⁶ Because of their adherence to “biblical” standards, especially concerning sexuality, both Orombi and his colleague Archbishop Akinola understand their churches literally to be more Anglican than the Church of England itself. For while the Church of England has not committed the egregious offenses of its North American counterparts, it has also not condemned them nearly so roundly as either Orombi or Akinola would like. In fact, it seems to be hovering somewhere between these two poles. And so, upon hearing the news that Rowan Williams had authorized Church of England clergy to live in celibate, same-sex partnerships,⁵⁷ Akinola changed the name of his church from “The Anglican Church of Nigeria” to “The Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion).” The church’s constitution now claims to be in communion not “with the Archbishop of Canterbury,” as the classic formulation would have it, but rather “with all Anglican Churches, Dioceses, and Provinces

52. Ndungane, “Scripture,” p. 240.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 241. Cf. L. William Countryman, “Reading Scripture—and Rereading It,” *Anglican Theological Review* 86:4 (Fall 2004): 573–83.

54. Ndungane, “Sermon,” p. 22.

55. Orombi, “What Is Anglicanism?”

56. *Ibid.*

57. Church of England, “House of Bishops Issues Pastoral Statement on Civil Partnerships,” July 25, 2005, available at <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/news/pr5605.html>.

that hold and maintain the ‘Historic Faith, Doctrine, Sacrament and Discipline of the one holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church.’”⁵⁸ In the light of this redefinition, Canterbury’s half-acceptance of same-sex partnerships, along with its inability to call the renegade churches to repentance, has led Akinola publicly to inquire, “Is the Church of England an Anglican Church?”⁵⁹

Since the North American churches have failed to adhere to scriptural discipline and Canterbury has failed to make them do so, “Africa” is taking matters into its own hands. “God has always looked to Africa to save his church,” Akinola said in a recent interview. “When Christ sought safety from Herod, he found it in Egypt, in Africa, and when he was completely worn out, an African carried his cross.”⁶⁰ Now as then, God is “[us]ing] Africa to build his church, to save his church from error.” The visible sign of this is the network Akinola has established overseas: the Conference of Anglicans in North America (CANA). American parishes that reject the authority of their own bishops and affiliate with CANA come under the diocesan oversight of the Church of Nigeria, which ultimately hopes to declare the Episcopal Church a schism and realign its faithful former members with the majority of the Anglican Communion. To this end, Akinola consecrated a disaffected Episcopal priest in 2006 as a bishop in the Church of Nigeria, and then a year later, traveled to Virginia to install him as chief pastor to Americans who have broken with the Episcopal Church. The Windsor Report, along with Primates’ Communiqués, numerous resolutions of the Communion’s consultative bodies, and the Archbishop of Canterbury himself, has urged Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, and now Kenya to stop interfering with provincial and diocesan structures of authority. But as Akinola understands it, he is “simply doing what Western churches have done for centuries, sending a bishop to serve Anglicans where there is no church to provide one.”⁶¹ When faced with charges of reverse colonialism, Akinola tends to lose his patience: “For God’s sake let us be. When America invades Afghanistan it is in the name of world peace.

58. Constitution of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), available at the Church of Nigeria website, http://www.anglican-nig.org/main.php?k_j=1, 3.1. See also Mwamba, “The Anglican Communion.”

59. Stephen Bates, “The Real Mr. Big?” *The Guardian*, February 14, 2007.

60. Sarah Simpson, “An African Archbishop Finds Common Ground in Virginia,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 8, 2007.

61. Lydia Polgreen and Laurie Goodstein, “At Axis of Episcopal Split, an Anti-Gay Nigerian,” *New York Times*, December 25, 2006.

When Nigeria moves to Biafra it is an invasion. When England takes the Gospel to another country, it is mission. When Nigeria takes it to America, it is an intrusion. All this imperialistic mentality, it is not fair."⁶² Of course, Akinola is not criticizing imperialism so much as he is defending his own right to exercise it alongside everyone else. Which, all things considered, is understandable.

For as he sees it, planting Nigerian churches in North America is merely an act of self-defense. The true colonialists are those members of the northern churches who have imposed their schismatic beliefs, their gay bishop, and homosexuality itself upon the inhabitants of the southern hemisphere. As one Nigerian Anglican put it, "homosexuality is a western thing. In Nigeria we don't condone it, we don't tolerate it."⁶³ This perception is hardly limited to Anglicans; President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe has repeatedly called homosexuality a "'Western' phenomenon imported to Africa by the European colonists," and this view is shared by many in sub-Saharan Africa, including, most dangerously, health workers.⁶⁴ For the sake of their political as well as their physical well-being, African gay-rights groups have sought to offer evidence to the contrary. Nigerian activist Dorothy Aken'Ova has published a "Preliminary Survey of Homosexuality in Nigeria," which argues that "the fact that there is a name for [homosexuality] in various languages in Nigeria indicates that the practice existed well before colonialism."⁶⁵ Davis MacIyalla, a Nigerian Anglican and founder of the lesbian and gay-rights group Changing Attitudes Nigeria, argues that far from bringing homosexuality to Nigeria, the West brought sodomy laws and the British penal code. Not only does MacIyalla note that each of the local languages have terms for same-sex practices ("we call it *supe* in the south, *gwobo* in Yoruba, and *dandaudu* in the North"), but, as he explained to a group of New York Episcopalians in the spring of 2007, the priestesses of pre-colonial goddess traditions were

62. Ruth Gledhill, "For God's Sake," *The Times* (London), July 5, 2007.

63. Lydia Polgreen, "Nigerian Anglicans Seeing Gay Challenge to Orthodoxy," *New York Times*, December 18, 2005.

64. Kendall, "'When a Woman Loves a Woman' in Lesotho: Love, Sex, and the (Western) Construction of Homophobia," in *Boy Wives, Female Husbands*, ed. Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe (New York: Palgrave, 1998), pp. 223, 250.

65. Cesnabmihilo Dorothy Aken'Ova, "Preliminary Survey of Homosexuality in Nigeria," presented to the Commission of Status of Women, March 7, 2000, available at the International Women's Health Coalition website, <http://www.iwhc.org/resources/homosexualitysurvey.cfm>.

renowned for sleeping with women.⁶⁶ In other words, “the West didn’t bring us homosexuality; it brought us homophobia.”⁶⁷

The most likely answer to this disagreement between opponents and proponents of gay rights in Africa is that they are both right. As Foucault demonstrates, the category of “homosexuality” was produced through the modern psychiatric cataloguing of sexual practices. While Foucault knows full well that there were men who slept with men and women who slept with women before the nineteenth century, he argues that it was only with the intensification of the *scientia sexualis* that homosexual practice was forged into an identity.⁶⁸ In this light, Ugandan priest and theologian Kevin Ward argues that the West brought homosexuality *and* homophobia to Africa: “same-sex relations have always been present and, to a limited extent, acknowledged in African societies. . . . but without the essentializing of sexuality which has been characteristic of western constructions of homosexuality in the last hundred years.”⁶⁹ Either way, to return to Archbishop Akinola’s perspective, condoning homosexuality in the church would amount to a betrayal of Scripture and Africa all at once. The continent was converted one time, he seems to say, and will not simply accept theological revisions that the northern churches decide to hand down a hundred years later: “The missionaries brought the word of God here and showed us the way of life,” he said in an interview with the London *Times*, “We have seen the way of life, and we rejoice in it. Now you are telling me this way of life is not right. I have to do something else. Keep it for yourself. I do not want it.”⁷⁰

Of course, from the perspective of the North American Anglicans who support the “full inclusion” of lesbian and gay people in the church, Nigeria is not being forced to revise its own position at all. It is being asked to live with difference, rather than uniformity, within the communion. As

66. Davis MacIyalla, address delivered at the Church of the Holy Apostles, New York, NY, July 19, 2007. Amadiume argues that relationships between women priestesses and their wives were strictly non-sexual; see Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands*, p. 7. For a critique of Amadiume’s disavowal of lesbianism, see Kendall, “When a Woman Loves a Woman,” pp. 238–39.

67. Davis, address to the Church of the Holy Apostles.

68. “The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume I*, trans. Robert Hurley [New York: Vintage Books, 1990], p. 43).

69. Kevin Ward, “Same-Sex Relations in Africa and the Debate on Homosexuality in East African Anglicanism,” *Anglican Theological Review* 84:1 (Winter 2002): 87.

70. Gledhill, “For God’s Sake.”

Bishop Robinson has explained, “The Episcopal Church is not looking for agreement, only for permission to live out its life and ministry in the context in which we live. It is not asking the Church in Nigeria to raise up gay and lesbian priests and bishops. We are only asking to be allowed to do so because it seems to be where God is leading us in our context.”⁷¹ As is hopefully becoming clear, then, Akinola and Robinson are operating with two different notions of the nature of community. As far as Akinola is concerned, being in communion means being in agreement, while Robinson understands it to mean interdependency in and through dissonance. What Robinson does not quite acknowledge, however, is that community thus configured does not permit the easy separation of one “context” from another. As Nancy argues, being-in-common necessarily entails a mutual contamination between and among parties, and it is precisely this contamination that Robinson’s opponents are most resolved to stave off.

The fear among conservative African leaders, sacred and secular alike, seems indeed to be a fear of contamination, as though laxity toward same-sex behavior will cause it to spread everywhere. Robert Mugabe has in this vein called homosexuality a “sickness” threatening to consume his nation.⁷² Similarly, Akinola typically characterizes homosexuality either as a “cancerous lump” on the body of Christ,⁷³ or as an infection threatening to spread anarchy throughout Nigeria: “[I]f care is not taken, our country will be one where you can do whatever you want to do.”⁷⁴ There is, of course, a scriptural remedy for infection, which is to cut ties to the infected. In a recent communiqué entitled “The Road to Lambeth,” the primates of the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa (CAPA) therefore remind the Communion of Paul’s “requirement that believers not associate with openly immoral church members (1 Corinthians 5:9–13, 2 Thessalonians 3–14).”⁷⁵ In this Pauline spirit, they insist that, in order to remain in

71. Andrew Collier and Ruth Gledhill, “Church of England ‘Would Shut Down’ without Its Gay Clergy,” *The Times* (London), July 27, 2007.

72. Andrew Meldrum, *Where We Have Hope: A Memoir of Zimbabwe* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2004), p. 103.

73. “Nigeria Bishops Scorn US ‘Cancer,’” *BBC News*, July 4, 2006.

74. Gledhill, “For God’s Sake.”

75. Primates of the Council of Anglican Provinces in Africa (CAPA), “The Road to Lambeth,” September 19, 2006, available at the Global South Anglican website, http://www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/comments/the_road_to_lambeth_presented_at_capa. Days after the communiqué was issued, Archbishop Ndungane of the Province of Southern Africa announced that not all the members of CAPA had been consulted before the communiqué had been released, and that a significant number of them disagreed with

the Communion, the North American churches must “reverse their policies and prune their personnel.”⁷⁶ And while they are waiting for the bad leaves to be cut off the Anglican family tree, the leaders within CAPA will continue to plant bishops and churches in North America to minister to dissenting parishes. CAPA thus sees its missions to North America as a way of saving souls and stopping the spread of sinfulness at the same time. Archbishop Bernard Malango of Central Africa illustrates this dual-function with a parable about a neighbor’s house that catches on fire: “[A]nd if [my neighbor] says to me ‘I like my house to be on fire,’ what do I do? Well, I go and rescue the children first of all, and then I put out the fire before it spreads to my house as well.”⁷⁷

The bishops of CAPA therefore understand what Robinson does not want to admit: that when bodies exist in community with one another, the integrity of each is constantly undermined and contaminated by otherness. It is for this reason that they are insisting upon the uniformity that characterizes a communion, rather than the mutual interruption of community. To be sure, the leaders of the Global South across the board have good reason to be suspicious of foreign interruptions. As Akinola knows all too well, African modernity has more or less consisted of a string of them:

In our human existence in this world, there was a time Africans were slaves, but we came out of it. But what again followed? Political slavery, under colonial administration. Somehow, we came out of it. Then economic slavery: World Bank, IMF would tell you what to do with your money and your own resources. Now it is spiritual slavery, and we have to resist this. They had us as human slaves, political slaves, and economic slaves. They want to come for spiritual slaves. Now we won’t accept it.⁷⁸

And so the Communion’s original sin refuses to leave it alone: founded upon a strategy of socio-political imposition, every move it makes seems to one party or another a colonizing gesture. This being the case, the only available strategy seems to be reciprocation: England colonized Nigeria,

many of its arguments. See “Ndungane Disavows Global South Communique,” *Episcopal News Service*, September 25, 2006, available at the Episcopal Church website, http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3577_78023_ENG_HTM.htm.

76. CAPA, “The Road to Lambeth.”

77. Bates, *A Church at War*, p. 29.

78. Adeyanju, “Homosexual Priests.”

which is looking to counter-colonize the very communities now threatening to re-colonize *it*.

The story grows even more complicated when one considers that the African resistance to North American sexual imperialism has been partially orchestrated by North Americans themselves. During the year leading up to the Lambeth Conference of 1998, members of the conservative American Anglican Council (AAC) organized preparatory meetings with potential allies from Africa, Asia, and South America. Such meetings took place in Dallas and the Great Lakes, and were intended as a means of solidifying a global majority opinion against the ordination of gay clergy and the authorization of blessings for same-sex couples.⁷⁹ At the Lambeth Conference itself, the AAC set up headquarters in a Franciscan center on campus. There, volunteers stood ready to provide the bishops of the southern hemisphere with food, tea, coffee, mobile phones to communicate quickly with their American colleagues, and “crib sheets” that reiterated the collective consensus against homosexuality. All told, this operation cost over £40,000 (\$66,484 at the July 1998 rate of conversion) and was all financed by the AAC.⁸⁰

Sources of funding for the AAC itself have become increasingly obscured over the last ten years, as public financial documents have become less and less detailed. What *have* been demonstrated are the organization’s close financial and geographical ties (the two offices are next door to one another in Washington, DC) to the Institute for Religion and Democracy (IRD).⁸¹ Founded by Michael Novak and Richard Neuhouse in 1981, the IRD works to inhibit the growth of “liberalism” within the mainline American churches. According to Jim Naughton’s “Following the Money Trail,” the IRD helped the AAC to target Howard F. Ahmanson, who has shouldered a rising percentage of the AAC’s annual budget since he financed the Dallas meeting in 1997.⁸² Most recently, the IRD has launched a “Reforming America’s Churches Project,” which seeks

79. See Christopher T. Cantrell, “The Dallas Statement: from the Anglican Life and Witness Conference,” September 24, 1997, available at the Road to Emmaus website, <http://theroadtoemmaus.org/RdLb/32Ang/Epis/DallasStmt.htm>.

80. Bates, *A Church at War*, p. 131.

81. See Jim Naughton, “Following the Money,” *The Washington Window* of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, April 2006, <http://www.edow.org/follow>; Alan Cooperman, “Gay Bishop-Elect: Foes Have Agenda,” *Washington Post*, October 24, 2003; and Bates, *A Church at War*, p. 186.

82. Naughton, “Following the Money,” p. 3.

to “restructure the permanent governing structure” of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Episcopal churches in order to “discredit and diminish the Religious Left’s influence.”⁸³ The “Episcopal Action” wing of this initiative looks to replace “theologically flawed” bishops, however duly elected, with men whose agenda matches their own. Therefore, whenever the AAC supports the consecration of a North American as bishop in the Church of Rwanda, Uganda, Nigeria, or Kenya, it is safe to assume IRD money is behind it.

As for Archbishop Akinola, when confronted with the suggestion that his crusade against homosexuality might be the product of vast financial and spiritual blackmail (or “whitemale,” as one African Primate suggested to me), he charges that this is yet another instance of the West’s unmitigated narcissism. “Like a joke,” Akinola told a Nigerian reporter in response to accusations of having accepted American bribes, “they thought that as Africans, we don’t know what we are doing; particularly the Americans and you know they always have their ways politically and economically.”⁸⁴ In the same interview, however, Akinola proudly tells his interlocutor that his Conference of Anglicans in North America is growing by leaps and bounds, and that these defectors from the Episcopal Church “are not just ordinary Americans; they are leaders and well-recognized people—who is who in Washington, DC.”⁸⁵ Clearly, then, Akinola is aware of these ties to powerful right-wing lobbyists, and yet he insists that the commitment to stamping out homosexuality above all else is his own: “[T]here is no price tag on Akinola’s forehead.”⁸⁶

Accusations to the contrary are common, however—not only among liberal North Americans, but also among moderate African Anglicans themselves. In an address to the most recent Afro-Anglican conference, the former Provincial Secretary and Personal Assistant to the Archbishop of Central Africa asked his audience to consider “in reality who or what is driving the current debate: is it events in the West, politics in the West,

83. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 1. Naughton’s footnote references a document entitled, “Reforming America’s Churches Project 2001–2004,” by the Institute on Religion and Democracy, 200, Washington, DC, which I have been unable to find. Calls to the IRD have been met with an acknowledgment that they “worked on” such a document, but they do not know where it might be. The IRD directs all inquiries regarding the project to the Institute on Religion and Democracy website, <http://www.ird-renew.org>.

84. Adeyanju, “Homosexual Priests.”

85. *Ibid.*

86. *Ibid.*

or money from the West? I only ask the question.”⁸⁷ Similarly, the *New York Times* cites Archbishop Ndungane as asking, “‘Whose agenda is this? Definitely in my view, this is not God’s agenda.’ Nor is it the average Anglican’s agenda, he said. ‘I interact with people on the ground. They don’t care about the lifestyles of people in America.’”⁸⁸ More importantly, these “people on the ground” are being neglected by their leaders, who cannot seem to get their minds out of Gene Robinson’s bedroom long enough to ensure that their people are fed and their schools and hospitals funded. Esther Mombo, Kenyan delegate to the Anglican Women’s Network, has noted the irony of certain bishops’ calling homosexuality un-African when “they seem to spend most of their time on it. Who is paying for these voices to be heard? . . . Who is using whom in this debate? For whose benefit is it taking place? . . . These and many more questions are being asked by those in the pews. Who will give them answers?”⁸⁹

Of the many questions from the pews that call for answers, Mombo notes in particular her constituents’ disbelief that their own bishops are dedicating themselves to what they see as a western debate, “at the expense of the far more pressing and urgent issues of mission and ministry . . . [such as] poverty, feeding the hungry, and dealing with the sick, especially those infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS.”⁹⁰ The same point has been raised in public addresses by Archbishop Tutu⁹¹ and by Archbishop Ndungane,⁹² who adds to this list of errors Akinola’s silence on the matter of stoning a woman to death in Nigeria.⁹³ British and American columnists have listed even more of the Archbishop’s alleged failures, including his refusal to condemn either the rigged elections in Nigeria, or Robert Mugabe in Tanzania, or genocide in Sudan.⁹⁴ To all of this, Akinola responds, quite

87. George W. Brandt, Jr., “Celebrating the Gifts of Afro-Anglicanism,” *Anglican Theological Review* 89:1 (Winter 2007): 33.

88. Sharon LaFraniere, “Inviting Africa’s Anglicans to Gather under a Bigger Tent,” *New York Times*, February 10, 2007.

89. Esther Mombo, “The Windsor Report: A Paradigm Shift,” *Anglican Theological Review* 89:1 (Winter 2007): 77.

90. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

91. See Derrick Z. Jackson, “The Antigay Obsession,” *Boston Globe*, November 18, 2006.

92. See Njongonkulu Ndungane, “Sermon,” and LaFraniere, “Inviting Africa’s Anglicans.”

93. Bates, *A Church at War*, p. 191.

94. See Bates, “The Real Mr. Big?” and Wayne Besen, “Anything But Straight: Nigeria’s Frequent Flyer,” *Falls Church News-Press*, May 3, 2007.

simply, that homosexuality is more important. “They are urging us to think more of our poverty, HIV/AIDS and other problems and forget this matter [of homosexuality],” Akinola told a Nigerian reporter. “But Jesus told his disciples that ‘you will always have the poor with you.’ We are talking souls, eternity and kingdom of God, and you cannot equate it with anything. HIV/AIDS will come and go; poverty will come and go. But the matter of faith is eternity. They are not the same level.”⁹⁵ So that is that: homosexuality is worth more time and energy than poverty and disease, because the former kills the soul, while the latter simply kill the body. It is at this point that dialogue begins to look genuinely impossible.

Communication and Communicability

Since the Most Reverend Katharine Jefferts Schori was elected Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the spring of 2006, she has been asked how she plans to build bridges across the profound rifts in the Communion. After all, very few Anglican provinces consecrate women to the episcopate, and some dioceses as close as Fort Worth and San Joaquin still refuse to ordain women to the priesthood. Bishop Jefferts Schori’s consistent response has been that she intends to go forward with the work of the church: to feed the hungry, heal the sick, and make peace in a world ravaged by war.⁹⁶ To focus this work, Jefferts Schori has appealed to the Millennium Development Goals⁹⁷ as a site of mutual concern across political and hemispheric lines. Two days before her installation in November, the Presiding Bishop-elect tried to initiate reconciliation in a letter addressed to four primates of the Global South, who intended to fly to Falls Church, Virginia, later that month to meet with Episcopal Church leaders who opposed Jefferts Schori’s consecration. “In the spirit of Lambeth 1998,” she wrote,

the Episcopal Church has identified the Millennium Development Goals as the framework for our missional work in the coming years. I would hope we might see the common interest we all have for seeing these

95. Adeyanju, “Homosexual Priests.”

96. Katharine Jefferts Schori, “Investiture Sermon,” November 4, 2006, available at the Episcopal Church website, http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3577_79214_ENG_HTML.htm, and Schori, “Sermon for Seating Ceremony,” November 5, 2006, http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3577_79270_ENG_HTML.htm.

97. See the UN Millennium Development Goals website, <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals>.

Goals met, as they provide a concrete image of the Reign of God in our own day, where the hungry are fed, the thirsty watered, and the prisoners of disease and oppression set free. . . . I hope that during your visit you might be willing to pay a call on me, so that we might begin to build toward such a missional relationship. If that is a possibility, I hope you will contact this office as soon as possible. I would be more than happy to alter my schedule to accommodate you.⁹⁸

Archbishops Akinola (Nigeria), Gomez (West Indies), Nzimbi (Kenya), and Akrofi (West Africa) not only declined this invitation, but they also refused to sit or share the Eucharist with the Presiding Bishop at the 2007 Primates' Meeting in Dar es Salaam.⁹⁹ In "The Road to Lambeth," these and three other primates explained their refusal thus: "We recognize the strategy employed by Episcopal Church and certain Communion bodies to substitute talk of Millennium Development Goals for the truth of Scripture. These choices are false alternatives: it is Christ of Scripture who compels us to care for the poor and afflicted."¹⁰⁰ In other words, questions of poverty, hunger, and disease cannot even be addressed until all parties submit to the authority of Scripture;¹⁰¹ and Jefferts Schori, who as Bishop of Nevada approved Gene Robinson's episcopacy, has not submitted.

The central message of "The Road to Lambeth" is that "the time has come for the North American churches to repent or depart." The bishops of the Global South Steering Committee have had enough of conversation with their recalcitrant siblings: "Due to this breakdown of discipline, we are not sure that we can in good conscience continue to spend our money and our prayers on behalf of a body that proclaims two Gospels,

98. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Letter to The Most Reverends Peter Akinola, Drexel Gomez, Benjamin Nzimbi, and Justice Akrofi, November 2, 2006, available at the Episcopal Church website, http://www.episcopalchurch.org/78703_79163_ENG_HTML.htm.

99. See Rachel Harden, "Primates Head into a Storm in Dar es Salaam," *Church Times*, February 9, 2007.

100. CAPA, "The Road to Lambeth."

101. This argument is strikingly similar to that which Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger made to Latin American bishops and scholars in 1984, chastising liberation theology for privileging politics and things earthly over true doctrine and things eternal: "[L]iberation is first and foremost liberation from the radical slavery of sin" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation,'" August 6, 1984). The parallel may or may not have something to do with Ratzinger's public support for the conservative Anglican alliance, which he voiced in a letter to a 2003 meeting in Dallas, Texas (see Bates, *A Church at War*, p. 198).

the Gospel of Christ and the Gospel of Sexuality.”¹⁰² The primates add that they will not attend the Lambeth Conference of 2008 unless the North American churches are either absent or penitent. Either way, submission is the prerequisite of conversation: “Let the Western churches first affirm God’s plan for the sexes, then let us dialogue.”¹⁰³

By imposing such a condition upon dialogue, however, “The Road to Lambeth” forecloses dialogue itself; for what kind of conversation could possibly take place only after all parties agree to say the same thing? What seems clear is that the “Road to Lambeth” signatories are seeking not conversation, but rather unanimity. Just as Christ is of one substance with the Father, so must his body on earth be perfectly, essentially *one*. Anyone who vitiates this unity is free to leave the Communion. We will recall that this is more or less the position of the Windsor Report, which gradually equates communion with “common-mindedness.” “The Road to Lambeth” primates simply take this equation to its logical conclusion: since relation means respecting the majority opinion, the minority must either give way or forfeit relation itself. The question, then, is whether or not this is the only theologically justifiable way to construe Christian life together. I would submit that it is not.

In fact, a different understanding of the nature of communion can be found in the Episcopal Church’s response to the Windsor Report, *To Set Our Hope on Christ*. Far from demanding uniformity, the “communion” sketched in this document names a nexus of differences akin to Nancy’s concept of community:

The unity maintained by Anglicanism, in contrast to other churches, has always been a unity in difference (*Windsor Report* 66), a rich and diverse unity (*Windsor Report* 62). A unity with this degree of internal diversity requires a communion that is exhibited and maintained, not by simple agreement among all parties, but by respectful listening to those with whom one disagrees (*Windsor Report* 65), by a willingness to render account to one another in love, and a readiness to learn from one another (*Windsor Report* 67).¹⁰⁴

Despite the frequent indications of consonance with the Windsor Report, *To Set Our Hope on Christ* is actually offering a profoundly different vision of life in communion. First, rather than subsuming all difference

102. CAPA, “The Road to Lambeth.”

103. *Ibid.*

104. ECUSA, *To Set Our Hope on Christ*, 4.17.

à la Windsor, this understanding of unity depends structurally upon the persistence of differences. Second, these differences are not papered over but rather drawn into relation, by means of constant communication. As we have seen, communication—or communicability—is precisely what Akinola and his colleagues are resisting, looking to remove cancers and cut out infections, lest their people fall prey to the same diseases of scriptural laxity that plague their sisters and brothers overseas. What *To Set Our Hope on Christ* suggests, however, is that there is no community without such a risk of contamination. Community’s communicability means that it will never be at one with itself; nevertheless, this fragmentation constitutes the inessential essence of unity: “We are not a Communion in agreement on all matters, yet may God grant us to be a Communion that bears the wounds of Christ, a communion of differences yet reconciled in the Cross, a Communion broken yet united in love for the crucified and risen Savior.”¹⁰⁵ The body of Christ, one might say, becomes itself precisely inasmuch as it unworks itself.

Contrary to the Windsor Report’s assessment, then, finding a way forward for the Anglican Communion will not be a matter of waking parts of the church to relation, but rather of determining what sort of relation it ought to pursue. There are those for whom communion requires unanimity and those for whom unity only genuinely takes place across disagreement.¹⁰⁶ There are those who seek to impose “order and discipline” upon difference, and there are those, like the members of the Anglican Women’s Network, who humbly propose that “perhaps church order and ecclesiastical discipline may not be the ultimate need for the Anglican Communion.”¹⁰⁷ There are those who separate out “acceptable and unacceptable forms of diversity,”¹⁰⁸ and those who ask, *not that all difference be uncritically accepted*, but that all differences speak, communicate, and share themselves.¹⁰⁹

Instances of the “communal” model of relation are in no short supply: nations, race, genders, and socio-economic classes all operate on the principle of subsuming distinctions under one essence. Instances of

105. *Ibid.*, 1.6.

106. See *ibid.*, 1.5.

107. Mary Sudman Donovan, “Anglican Women: Empowering Each Other to Further God’s Kingdom,” *Journal of Anglican Studies* 5:1 (2007): 67.

108. The Lambeth Commission on Communion, *Windsor Report*, par. 71.

109. The Episcopal Church draws a parallel between its current position and that of Peter, called to account for his irregular baptism of Gentiles (ECUSA, *To Set Our Hope*, 2.10).

community are harder to find, but an appeal to Archbishop Ndungane's theological apparatus of "scripture, reason, faith, culture, experience, and tradition" produces at least three. There is, first of all, the Eucharist. To be sure, one interpretation of this rite construes it as instituting and confirming perfect unity among its members. This is the reason some Primates have declared themselves "unable" to commune with the Primate of the Episcopal Church. Whether because of her gender or her stance on human sexuality, she is *essentially* different and therefore can only vitiate Eucharistic purity. Consequently, a different interpretation must animate those members who communicate despite profound differences and a very painful history. Along this interpretation, the Eucharistic rite creates communion not by enforcing uniformity, but by being *broken*, shared out, and taken up into different bodies *that remain different*. Even "essential" disagreements, then, are not inimical to the Eucharist; to the contrary, they allow it to take place in the first place. A second model for Christian being-in-common is the Trinity itself—the "'difference-in-relation' of the divine persons"¹¹⁰—whose essence is nothing but the loving movement between and among them. And finally, in searching for a way to open the communal monolith out to conversation, "interweaving, and the sharing of singularities,"¹¹¹ one could call with Archbishop Ndungane upon the South African concept of *ubuntu*. As Ndungane reminds his Anglican brothers and sisters, *ubuntu* "can only be experienced in rich, varied community" and names the relationship between vastly different people who nonetheless are committed "to live and care for others; to act kindly to one another."¹¹² Those bound and held apart by *ubuntu*, rather than separating themselves from potential contamination, affirm the admittedly frightening truth that, when being is in-common, this contamination is all there is; that "I am because we are."¹¹³ In spite of all that "we" have failed to be.

110. ECUSA, *To Set Our Hope*, 4.19.

111. Nancy, "The Inoperative Community," p. 27.

112. Ndungane, "Sermon," p. 24.

113. *Ibid.*, p. 22.