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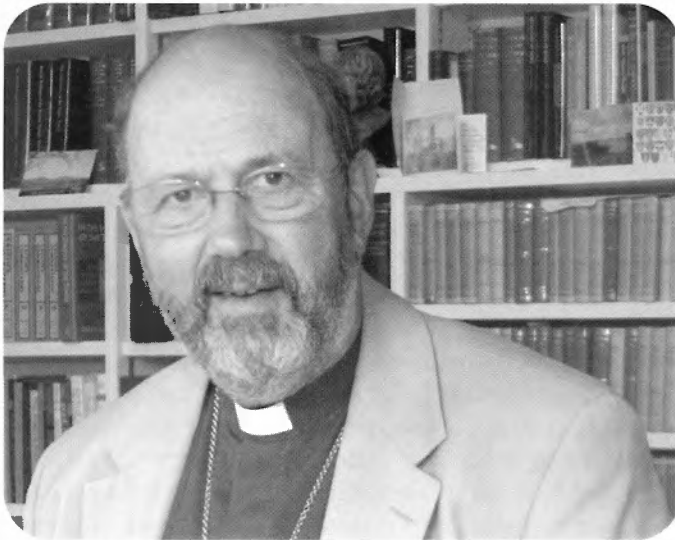
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The Living Church is published by the Living Church Foundation. Our historic mission in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion is to support and promote the Catholic and evangelical faith of the one Church, to the end of visible Christian unity throughout the world.

General Synod Sends Covenant to Dioceses

In 1867 the Archbishop of York turned down the invitation to the first Lambeth Conference because it was not a manifestation of Anglicanism that he recognized. On Nov. 24 in London the General Synod of the Church of England debated whether the proposed Anglican Covenant is recognizably Anglican and an appropriate development for our times.

At the end of a three-hour debate it voted overwhelmingly by a majority greater than two thirds in all three houses (bishops, clergy and laity), to move to the next stage in adopting the Covenant.

Even if the vote was decisive, questions remain regarding the degree of consensus that the Covenant will sit comfortably within the Church of England. In the weeks leading up to this synod the blogosphere has been the scene of a massive debate.

It began with two influential liberal networks, Inclusive Church and Modern Church (formerly the Modern Churchpeople's Union), buying advertising space in the *Church Times* to warn that the Covenant is punitive, against the spirit of Anglicanism and a threat to the autonomy of the Church of England. Later came a declaration from the Anglican Mainstream network that the Covenant was not strong enough to provide the assurances needed by conservative evangelicals. Neither prevailed.

A day ahead of the debate the Archbishop of Canterbury used his presidential address to make what was undoubtedly the decisive intervention in the Covenant debate. He cited a famous sermon by John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, on "The Catholic Spirit," which "is neither a climate of imposed universal agreement nor a free for all."

He continued: "Wesley wants us to be settled in the basics of the faith, 'fixed as the sun' in our allegiance to

the creed and the doctrine of a free and God-given atonement for sin." This, however, is "consistent with readiness to hear arguments against what we believe without panic ...



Williams

[and] consistent with the knowledge that opinions vary even when doctrines are shared."

Coming directly to the proposed Covenant, Archbishop Rowan Williams said: "It is an illusion to think that without some changes the Communion can carry on as usual, and a great illusion to think that the Church of England can somehow derail the entire process. The uncomfortable fact is that certain decisions in any province affect all."

The Covenant, he said, "offers us the possibility of a voluntary promise to consult. And it also recognizes that even after consultation there may still be disagreement. ... To say yes to the Covenant is not to tie our hands. But it is to recognize that we have the option of tying our hands if we judge, after consultation, that the divisive effects of some step are too costly."

In opening the Covenant debate, the Rt. Rev. Michael A. Hill, Bishop of Bristol, said it was an invitation for "member churches to commit themselves to greater mutual accountability, consultation and the pursuit of consensus on issues which are new or controversial and may have serious relational consequences for the Communion."

Speaking in support, the Rev. Simon Cawdell of Hereford said the Covenant offers "the best definition of Anglicanism that there is."

Dr. Paul Fiddes, a Baptist observer, said the Independent tradition in the British Isles had lots of experience with covenant-making but as yet has not sought to apply this in the international sphere. "I would like to

thank the Anglican Communion for taking the Covenant further than we have done."

The Bishop of Bath and Wells, the Rt. Rev. Peter Price, insisted that the Covenant process was underway well before the election of Gene Robinson in New Hampshire. He referred to an Anglican Consultative Council document, *Belonging Together* (1992), which had a direct influence on *The Virginia Report*, much of which formed the basis of Covenant drafts.

Traditional Catholics, in the persons of the Bishop of Blackburn and the Rev. Simon Killwick (leader of the Catholic Group), signaled support for the Covenant as a means to provide greater coherence and integrity in Anglicanism.

A succession of speakers aired doubts. Would the Covenant undermine the autonomy of the Church of England or its prophetic spirit? Some thought that Covenant language like "relational consequences" spelled a legalistic threat. Foremost among the doubters was the soon-to-retire Bishop of Lincoln, the Rt. Rev. John Saxbee, who thought a Covenant unnecessary since "Anglicanism is a covenant."

Canon Elizabeth Paver, a member of the Anglican Communion's Standing Committee, introduced a note of realism: in practice the Covenant will advise, never dictate; and it is vital that the Church of England "give some leadership" on the matter.

Now the Covenant will be considered by diocesan synods. Under the Constitution of the Church of England they cannot amend it, but only attach following motions. The last word on the subject has therefore not been said. The position of the Church of England should be clear by the time the Anglican Consultative Council meets in 2012.

John Martin, in London

Diocese of Cuba Welcomes Bishop

The Rt. Rev. Griselda Delgado del Carpio, 55, is the new bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Cuba. Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and Archbishop Frederick J. Hiltz of the Anglican Church of Canada participated in an institution service Nov. 28 at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Havana.

The *Miami Herald* reported that Caridad Diego Bello, chief of religious affairs of the Communist Party's Central Committee, and officials of Cuba's Ministry of Justice also attended the ceremony.

The diocese relied on an interim bishop, the Rt. Rev. Miguel Tamayo of the Anglican Church of Uruguay, for the past six years. Two bishops suffragan, Nerva Cot Aguilera and Ulises Agüero Prendes, have assisted Bishop Tamayo since June 2007.

Delgado, who was born in Bolivia, was consecrated as bishop coadjutor in February. She was appointed by the Metropolitan Council of Cuba, consisting of Bishops Jefferts Schori and Hiltz, and the Most Rev. John W. Holder, Archbishop of the West Indies. The council interviewed seven potential bishops.

The council has overseen the church in Cuba since it separated from the Episcopal Church in 1967. The diocese tried unsuccessfully in June and September to elect a new bishop. Internal divisions have prevented the diocese from electing its own bishop for 20 years.

Hiltz said in a sermon at Bishop Delgado's consecration in February: "She speaks of the rebuilding of temples throughout Cuba — the restoration of churches and the growing of congregations through worship and service, through reading biblical texts, celebrating the Eucharist, sharing in prayer for the community and for the world, and then sharing food, providing clothing and distributing medicines as any and all have need. Here, dear friends, is an expression

of the gospel in all its fullness."

The Rt. Rev. Brian Prior, Bishop of Minnesota, was part of a 17-member Minnesota delegation that attended the installation service.

After arriving, "I was quickly whisked away by our Presiding Bishop," Bishop Prior wrote on his weblog. "With significant enthusiasm in her voice she said, 'Brian, there is something I want to show you!' And thus began a tour through the bishop's office, home, sacristy and cathedral. All places I had been before, yet the purpose of this tour and [the Presiding Bishop's] enthusiasm was to show me the numerous pictures and plaques of Minnesota's first bishop, Henry Benjamin Whipple," who "is held in great reverence in Cuba as the instigator of the Episcopal Church in Cuba."

Seminary, Brodsky Reach Agreement

The General Theological Seminary has reached a preliminary agreement with the Brodsky Organization, a Manhattan real-estate developer, to sell several residential and mixed-use properties owned by the seminary.

The seminary intends to sell the building known as Chelsea 2,3,4, a residential structure on West 20th Street near the corner of Ninth Avenue; the West Building, also on 20th Street near the center of the block, currently being used for seminary offices; and an apartment building at 422 W. 20th St.

In October GTS trustees unanimously approved a comprehensive financial initiative aimed at eliminating the seminary's \$41 million of debt, restoring the school's endowment, and allowing the seminary to continue its mission with a balanced budget within 18 to 24 months. Phase 1 involves selling property to eliminate debt. The second phase is leveraging the seminary's \$30 million investment in the Desmond Tutu Center by bringing in partners and increasing the seminary's endowment.

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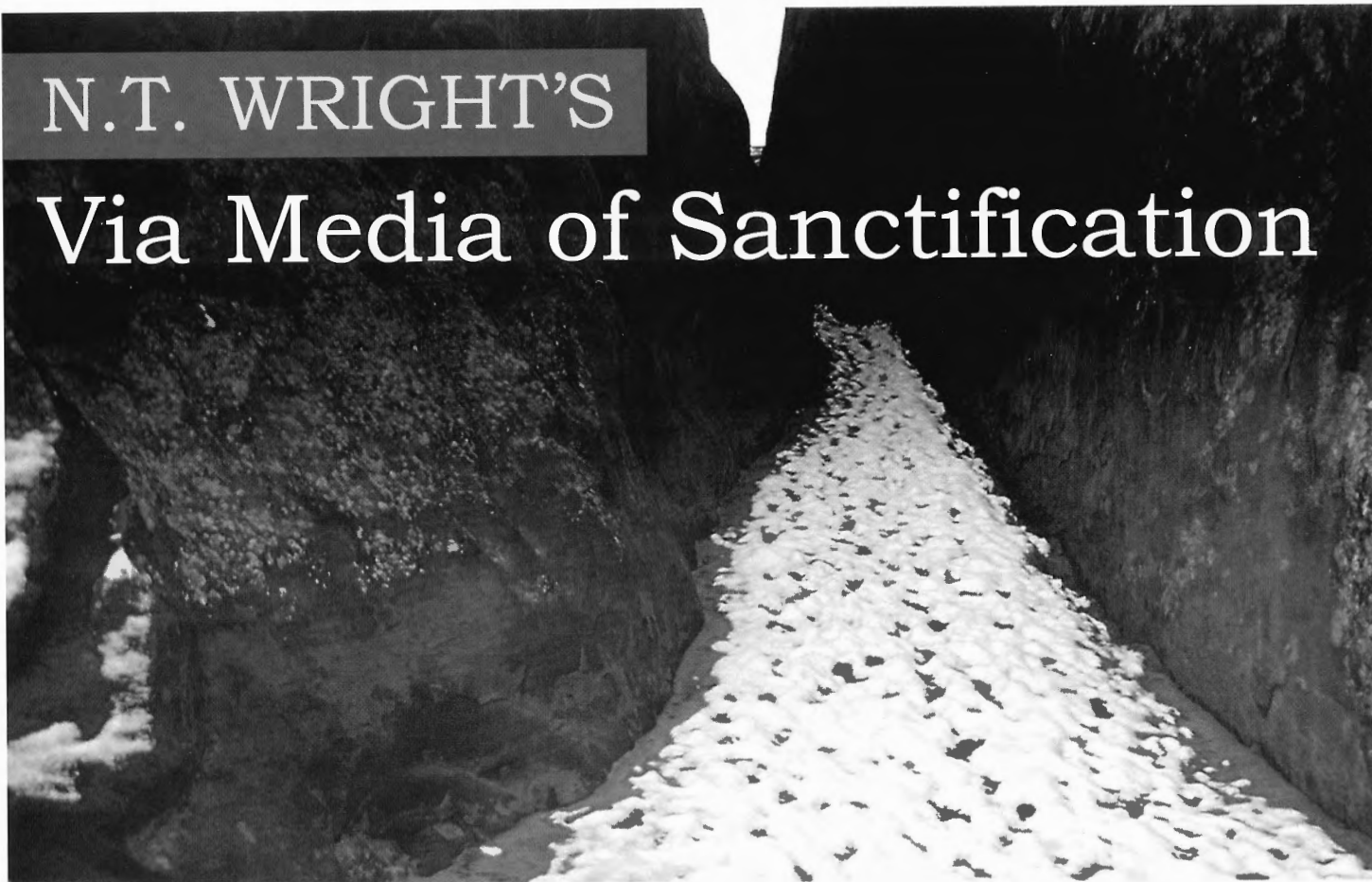
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N.T. WRIGHT'S

Via Media of Sanctification



By Elisabeth Rain

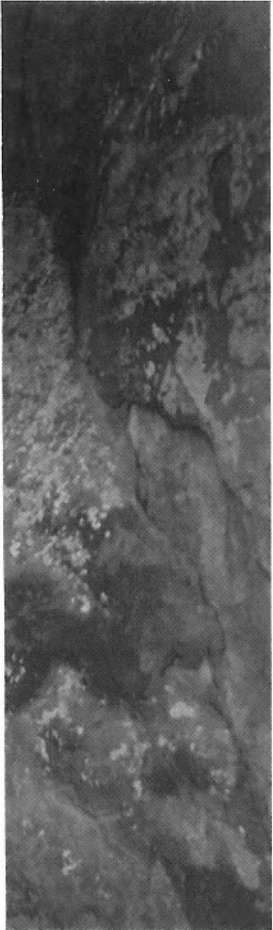
What happens in the time between your baptism and your funeral? We know we die, eventually, but what about the rest of life? What does the New Testament teach about the change that happens to Christians over the course of our lives? Bishop N.T. Wright addresses these questions in his book *After You Believe* (HarperOne, 2010), and he discussed them recently as a speaker in the James M. Stanton Lecture Series in Dallas. Bishop Wright's answer repeats the challenge he has laid down in much of his work. As Christians, we are not called merely to accept God's grace and then consider our lives a stopgap until heaven. God calls us to become, through his grace, fully human people who, by reflecting his image in the world, proclaim and participate in the coming kingdom.

Christians can be misled by two different assumptions, Wright said: that rules of morality no longer apply in today's culture, or that Christian discipleship consists primarily of obeying moral rules. In my ministry among graduate students, I have seen the damage these false assumptions can

do to young Christians. Some parents have "followed their hearts" straight out of marriage. Some students bought the lie, when they were younger, that all of their desires were justified and right. Many are just now starting to see the wounds caused by those choices. Just as many students have been damaged by rule-based rigidity. Some have simply given up because they believe their failures disqualify them as Christians.

Christians become fully human the way they have from the beginning, said Bishop Wright: through the way of sacrifice and the cross. Developing the habits of virtue, like learning to play an instrument or to speak a language, requires study and practice. God's work is not limited to miraculous, lightning-bolt interventions. Scripture tells the story of a God whose "normal method of working ... is to work *through* human beings who are fully alive." Instead of simply zapping us, God works with us to "enable us to grow into the fully human beings we were supposed to be."

Living as Christians requires us to "recognize and reject the ways in which you are being nudged by the world to go down one path, and recognize and



Paul is not advocating cheap grace
but a costly forgiveness which reaches
the sins hidden deep within
our souls and begins to transform
us from the inside out.

embrace the ways in which God the Creator, in Jesus Christ, is calling you to go up the other one,” Wright said. “We all know it’s tough. But the one thing we can be sure of is that a pathway which has written over it the words ‘This is what everybody these days thinks,’ or ‘This will enable you to be more authentic, to live more spon-

taneously in accordance with your inner self,’ is self-condemned as being conformed to the world.”

God calls us to be priests and kings: “an angled mirror” which reflects God out into the world (as kings) and the world back to God (as priests) in the “ceaseless rhythm” of worship and witness which make up the Christian life. In order to do this, we are called to be people of both holiness and prayer (Rom. 8). Holiness is not “a matter of gritted-teeth obedience to arbitrary commands, but a matter of *being in control* of a part of God’s creation, namely one’s own body, one’s own person and personality,” Wright argued. It is only through this holiness that we are able to do the work God has called us to in the world. In prayer and worship, we reflect the brokenness and beauty of the world back to God, “summing up the praises and the laments of creation before the Creator.” In this way we gain the strength for holiness, for “bringing God’s wise and healing order to the world.”

For this ministry in particular, Bishop Wright said, we need prophecy, the virtue that stands “between priesthood and royalty with its arms around their shoulders.” Biblical prophecy is not a

“vaguely religious version of what this or that newspaper or TV station says, but a word which comes genuinely from somewhere else, a word of a kingdom which is not *from* this world but is certainly *for* this world.” This stands in contrast to any teaching “which supposes itself to be prophetic because it is daring or provocative in terms of traditional Church teaching while being comfortably in line with the spirit of the age.”

What does it mean, day to day, to live as royal priests of God’s kingdom? Wright examined the contrast Paul developed in Galatians 5 between being people who are characterized by the works of the flesh and people who manifest the fruits of the Spirit. Paul’s teaching emphasizes that we are called to live radically as citizens who owe allegiance to God alone, not as people who are ruled by the patterns of the world or even our own desires. Paul is not advocating “an easygoing neomoralism in which all that matters is being true to yourself,” Wright said. Paul is advising Christians on how to avoid patterns that keep us from being fully human and fully functioning citizens of the kingdom of God.

In the same way that bad posture can keep somebody from playing a Mozart sonata to its fullest, or bad pronunciation can keep one from being understood when speaking a foreign language, bad choices (including those outlined in Gal. 15:21) keep us from functioning fully as citizens of the kingdom. “That [list] isn’t arbitrary,” Wright said. “That isn’t a cruel, exclusionary legalism. It’s simply a fact of life. In the same way, if you want to be part of God’s kingdom, of the new heavens and new earth in which true humanness will flourish and

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Wright challenged those who, even in our hearts, “object to the Church’s moral teaching because it makes difficult or seemingly impossible demands, demands which feel as though they are tearing you apart and forcing you to deny something which seems very deep within.”

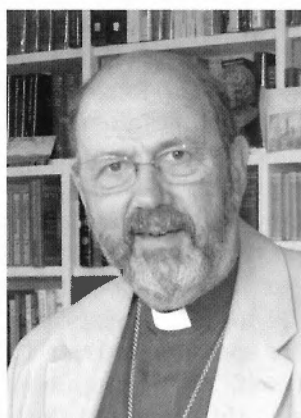
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reflect God fully into the world, these styles of behavior will disqualify you. If God is establishing his rule of justice and wisdom, how can there be room for folly and party spirit? If God is establishing his rule of peace, what place can there be for enmity and quarrelling? Christian ethics is about new creation in advance.”

Paul is not advocating cheap grace but a costly forgiveness which reaches the sins hidden deep within our souls and begins to transform us from the inside out. Baptism is not a sign that God accepts us just as we are, but that we have died and begun a new life. In verse 24, Paul reminds us that by sharing in the death of Christ through baptism, “those who belong to the Messiah, Jesus, have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires,” Wright explained. “The only way you get the fruit of the Spirit is through the crucifixion of the flesh.”

Wright challenged those who, even in our hearts, “object to the Church’s moral teaching because it makes difficult or seemingly impossible demands, demands which feel as though they are tearing you apart and forcing you to deny something which seems very deep within.” We feel this way, in fact, because we truly are being changed. It is only through this crucifixion of the flesh that the fruits of the Spirit begin to appear in us.

We experience joy, “the settled, deep-rooted celebration of the fact that something new has happened as a result of which the world is a different and better place,” by remembering that the world



Wright

is being transformed because Jesus Christ has risen from the dead and is Lord of all. To be peaceful, particularly in the West, we need to let go of “the pride that we Westerners have in that odd combination of post-Enlightenment industrial capacity and pre-Enlightenment desire to kill people to prove that our cause is right.”

If we are to become patient people, we must put to death the anxiety and fears that keep us from living like people who truly believe God is

ultimately sovereign. If we are kind people, we must let go of the fear of being seen as wimps and become people who see past our own selfishness. If we are “good” people, we are not just people living by a rigid code, but people through whom the generosity of God overflows into the world. We need to begin “to reflect carefully and prayerfully on what gifts God wants to give to the world through us.”

As faithful people — faithful in marriage specifically, but in all relationships and promises in general — we must put to death the lie that “a new factor in the situation trumps all previous ones,” Wright said. It is the quality of faithfulness, of being true to our word and being the type of people God calls us to be, which lets the other virtues work straight through us. To be gentle people, we must put to death that pride that sees our own needs and desires as most important.

And we must practice self-control. “One of the great lies of our time ... is that self-control is bad

for you, that it cramps your style, that it stops you being fully yourself," Wright said. "We have so emphasized, not least in the Church, that God loves you as you are, and God wants you to be a flourishing human being, enjoying life in all its fullness, that we fail to remind ourselves that that promise about fullness of life comes in the context of the Good Shepherd giving his life for the sheep (John 10:10). Jesus said that anyone who wanted to follow him must deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow him."

Pursuing virtue requires the guidance and direction of the Spirit, Wright said. We need to practice both the "daily and hourly practice of praise" and the "daily and hourly practice of lament." From this twofold habit of praise and lament, we can begin the new work of the Kingdom to which we are called "as it began in Scripture, with one or two here and five or six there determining that, come what may, they will be people of Scripture and silence, of prayer and worship, of sacrament and service; they will be people of praise and lament, of patience, humility, chastity and charity." This is the only way in which we can become truly free of both the tyranny of the rulebook and our own corrupt and decaying flesh. We are free to be truly human because "God's new creation has begun in Jesus Christ. We, by his Spirit, are called to learn the habits of the heart which will make that new creation a reality in tomorrow's Church and world."

Elisabeth Rain is a staff member of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship Graduate Ministries at Southern Methodist University, Dallas.

Reshaping Ecumenical Theology

The Church Made Whole?

By **Paul Avis**. T&T Clark. Pp. 205, paperback. \$34.95. ISBN 978-0-5671-9443-5.

One of the Church of England's leading ecumenists, Dr. Paul Avis, general secretary of the Council for Christian Unity and Canon Theologian of Exeter, has give us another fine book on today's ecumenical movement. He is absolutely frank about the enormous problems we face in the search for Christian unity today, but passionate about pursuing the "full, visible unity" of the Church for the sake of its mission.

Avis begins by acknowledging and even celebrating the diversity of Christianity which has been present since its inception, but asks an important question: "When does multiplicity become fragmentation?" (p. vii). As the chapters unfold he introduces the

centrality of mission into the discussion, making it clear that he does not see unity and mission as separate, or even complementary, activities but as two sides of the same coin.

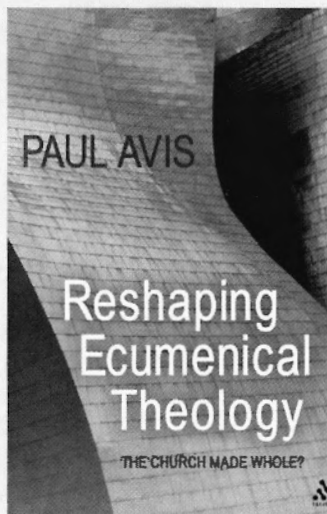
One of the refreshing things about this book is its realism as to what unity means and how we can reach it, for "the days of ecumenical pipedreams are now over" (p. ix). Avis has written extensively over the years on achieving unity "by stages," moving from an initial process of interaction which produces greater mutual understanding, through formal theological

dialogues, to the mutual acknowledgement of one another as "churches," to searching for concrete forms of cooperation, even finally the possibility of collaborative *episcopate* (pastoral oversight), perhaps the final stage before full, visible unity.

While Anglicans have traditionally seen the historic episcopate as serving to enhance the unity of the Church, the question is sometimes asked in ecumenical circles (and Avis asks it in his Chapter 7) whether episcopacy really is a focus of unity or a cause of division. Setting the episcopal office firmly in the context of mission, the author argues convincingly that episcopacy has an important role in the very nature of the Church and in each of its four "notes" — unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity.

Approximately halfway through the book there is a very helpful chapter on "reception," that relatively "new" concept (which

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is actually not new at all), but which is often bandied about without a full appreciation of its history or development over the years. Although we sometimes use the term “reception” to refer to a process of churches assimilating new or recently articulated developments, the concept actually is “endemic to the living, moving story of Church history and applies to the whole scope of the unceasing development that characterizes the theology, worship and mission of the Christian Church” (p. 81).

While serving as ecumenical officer for the Episcopal Church, I was often asked: “Have we not learned anything in the ecumenical movement which could assist us in our ongoing struggles to find a renewed unity in the Anglican Communion today?” In his chapters on “Building and Breaking Communion,” “Ethics and Communion: The New Frontier in Ecumenism,” and “Forging Communion in the Face of Difference,” Avis has some wise things to say about this very question and uses issues in the Anglican Communion as lenses through which to view these broader ecumenical challenges.

Never retreating from his clear-eyed realism about the plight of the ecumenical task today, Avis concludes his book nonetheless with a challenge to continue the journey strengthened by a series of insights stretching from the 1920 Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops through the 1961 Assembly of the World Council of Churches in New Delhi, to the Canberra Assembly of that same WCC in 1991.

While occasionally repetitive, as might be expected in a volume created from material reworked, expanded and corrected from previous lectures and articles (e.g., similar treatments of “diachronic” and “synchronic” difference in Chapters 1 and 2), this is a very wise and timely book. After all, there is nothing wrong with repeating important insights such as these in somewhat different contexts.

What I believe readers will find most helpful in *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology* is the rich interplay between the search for unity among the churches and the similar quest in our own fractious and troubled Communion in these days. Ecumenists like Avis have much to teach all of us about the need for respectful dialogue and communication.

“Where churches in communion consult with one another, seeking common discernment of the truth, but find it difficult to reach a common mind, the Christian virtues of patience and forbearance, about which the New Testament has much to say, are called for,” he writes (p. 153). “There can be robust — though always courteous — disagreement, but mutual condemnation or passing judgment on others, as though we were God, are out of place. I don’t believe that God has given anyone the right to do that (short of a General Council of the Church). To our own Master we all stand or fall.”

(The Rt. Rev.) C. Christopher Epting
Interim Dean
Trinity Episcopal Cathedral
Davenport, Iowa

Staying on Mission and in Communion

As theological conservatives emerge from the storm's aftermath, just what sense are they making of the new landscape?

By Gavin Dunbar

After a big storm there is usually a mess, and some reconfiguration of the landscape, as old landmarks are destroyed and new ones appear. Finding a path through the mess, and rebuilding connections with the wider world, is the first step in recovery. The storm of the last several years has indeed reconfigured the Anglican world. Realignment of a kind has come, along with a big mess. Significant numbers of conservatives have decamped to the Anglican Church in North America, Anglican Mission in the Americas, and other churches. Globally, the Communion has become a patchwork of churches in varying degrees of division or fellowship with each other. It is a bit of a mess, really.

The majority of theological conservatives remain in the Episcopal Church, and often in its larger and more evangelistically vigorous parishes and dioceses. As they emerge from the storm's aftermath, just what sense are they making of the new landscape? And what pathways are they clearing to rebuild connections to the wider Church?

To hear what some of these conservatives were saying, I attended the recent Communion Partners conference in Orlando, Florida. Communion Partners began in 2008 as a fellowship of bishops, and quickly become a fellowship of rectors as well. Conservative in theology, committed to the Windsor Process, supportive of the Anglican Covenant, determined to maintain ties with the Anglican Communion, critical at times of the Episcopal Church's leadership and policies, these leaders accept that they will need to take the long view and work for the renewal of the Episcopal Church. It is a new group with a low profile. But to judge from the enthusiasm of the Orlando meeting, we shall be hearing a lot more from it.

One might have expected despair, bitter recrimination, mourning. There was nothing of the sort. The mood was surprisingly hopeful, and even irenic. As one speaker pointed out, Communion Partners is the only North American body in communion with all Anglican provinces.

Members of Communion Partners build relation-

ships not only among themselves but also with partner churches in the Anglican Communion, through shared mission and support for ministry. They do not engage in destructive battles with the Episcopal Church Center. Conservative Anglicans will find ways of working together regardless of national bureaucracies.

The Rt. Rev. Josiah Idowu-Fearon — the second most influential bishop in the Church of Nigeria, after its primate — spoke about opportunities for mutual ministry in northern Nigeria. The Very Rev. Kuan Kim Seng, dean of St. Andrew's Cathedral in the Diocese of Singapore and diocesan director of missions, spoke about mission opportunities in southeast Asia, while the Very Rev. Yee Ching Wah, dean of the missionary deanery of Thailand, invited Episcopalians to use the teaching of English as a vehicle for evangelism in southeast Asia. Significant parts of the Global South with no love for theological liberalism are willing to engage fully with theological conservatives inside the Episcopal Church; ACNA, AMiA and the other separated churches are not the only gathering point for Communion-minded Anglicans.

Communion Partners undoubtedly faces some significant questions. The first of these is practical. Having reasserted their control of the institution, the theological liberals of the Episcopal Church can afford to extend to non-political conservatives a measure of toleration: what exactly are the limits of this toleration? Conservatives who stay at the table often end up as dinner.

The other questions are theological. For some voices in the ACNA and the AMiA, conservative clergy in the Episcopal Church are simply those who lacked the courage to leave behind their pension fund. Articulating a theological defense of staying rather than leaving remains a necessary task. Thinking through these questions cannot be postponed indefinitely because a gospel without the Church is a contradiction in terms. The challenge of rebuilding will require careful thought. For now, however, it is good to have survived the storm, and to reconnect with other survivors.

The Rev. Gavin Dunbar is rector of St. John's Church, Savannah, Georgia.

God with Us

RCL: Isa. 7:10-17; Psalm 24 or 24:1-7; Rom. 1:1-7; Matt. 1:18-25

The final days of Advent tilt our attention toward the young woman who is with child and who shall bear a son. They shall name him Emmanuel, which means "God with us." St. John's prologue states, "The word became flesh and dwelt among us." How are we to contemplate this image? Generally, we think of infancy as a state of innocence and promise, a sign of what is coming. But it is also a condition of grave vulnerability.

Having spent many hours and days in a pediatric intensive care unit, I was forced to witness infants struggling for survival, the mere beginning of troubles to endure for a lifetime. Infancy is astoundingly beautiful, a theme exploited in a great deal of art showing Mary with the baby Jesus on her knee or at her breast. A loving God enters the world. Still, we cannot forget that a loving God has entered a hurting and broken world, where disease, disability, mental impairment,

and anguishing distress may harm the least of these our brother and sisters.

With typical depth of thought and beauty of expression, John Donne writes, "He found a Golgotha, where he was crucified, even in Bethlehem, where he was born, for to his tenderness then the straws were almost as sharp as thorns after, and the manger as uneasy at first as his cross at last. His birth and death were but one continual act, and his Christmas day and his Good Friday are but the evening and the morning of one and the same day ("A Christmas Sermon" in *The Showing Forth of Christ*).

The inner truth of the incarnation is Christ's continual presence in every moment of human existence and every trial of human history. It is not that Christ comes with a flaccid approval, deifying a contorted humanity. Nonetheless, he is either with us in our brokenness or he is not with us at all. Or, stated in classical theological

language: "If he did not assume it, he did not save it." The infant Jesus then is God in our midst, God loving and touching everyone: the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the wise and the simple, the able and disabled, in the flower of youth, in the hour of death.

Because mother and child are the central image on Advent 4, and because we are all Christ-bearers, perhaps it would help to meditate upon Christ at the center of our being, rejoicing with us as we rejoice, and assisting us in sorrow or loss. Try this: "Enter into the room of your mind. Shut out everything except God and whatever may help you to seek God. After closing the door, seek him. Say, 'my whole heart, my whole heart I give to God. I seek your face, I seek your face, oh God'" (*Ex libro Prologion Sancti Amselmi*, cap. 1). In this way we open ourselves to a deeper transformation in Christ.

Look It Up

Read Psalm 80:4. Applying imperatives, we demand that God turn to us and illumine his own face. In this presence we are safe.

Think About It

Christ in you: "The word of God cannot simply be recited, but requires the testimony of a living Christian, because the Word has become flesh; and hence one has to demonstrate with one's flesh what the word is" (*Test Everything*, Hans Urs von Balthasar, p. 56).

Next Sunday **The First Sunday After Christmas (Year A), Dec. 26, 2010**

RCL: Isa. 61:10-62:3; Psalm 147 or 147:13-21; Gal. 3:23-25; 4:4-7; John 1:1-18

THE LIVING CHURCH

Volume 241 Number 25

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Floored

I can cope with biweekly editions and many other things, but when “a rabbi lays prostrate” [TLC, Dec. 5], I am prostrated. “A rabbi lays eggs” would be grammatical but unlikely; “a rabbi lays prostrate” speaks to me of a magazine that has lost its moorings. Being a good Episcopalian, I can cope with theological errata, but not grammatical!

*(The Rev.) Chris Webber
Sharon, Connecticut*

A Welcome Tribute

Kudos to Faith J.H. McDonnell for the tribute to the late Manute Bol, basketball star, person of faith, and humanitarian [TLC, Dec. 5]. What impressed me especially was the lack of compulsion to pinpoint this Sudanese native’s identity within the Christian family: e.g., as Anglican, Roman Catholic, or otherwise.

The article focused simply upon his sharing of himself and resources among fellow Sudanese and Darfurians, as well as building interfaith bridges in that devastated country. In describing this gentle giant’s life, TLC embodied its pillars of Catholic, Evangelical, and Ecumenical.

*(The Rev.) Hugh Dickinson
Grand Rapids, Michigan*

Hope in Schenectady

Thank you for publishing the story about the prayer table ministry at Christ Church, Schenectady [TLC, Sept. 12]. After I heard a recent episode of *This American Life*, which recounted the story of corruption and abuse in the Schenectady public school system, your article provided a bright counterpoint.

It is wonderful to show examples of how real Christians can provide simple ministries which impact people’s lives, are Christ-centered and are unlikely to be duplicated by any secular social service organizations.

*(The Rev.) Robert P. Travis
Knoxville, Tennessee*



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The Rev. **Marie Gray** is priest-in-charge of St. Paul's, 312 E Main St., Plymouth, WI 53073-1817.

The Rev. **Richard Kunz** is rector of Grace Church, 33 Church St., White Plains, NY 10606.

The Rev. **Lindsay Lunnum** is assistant at St. Barnabas', 15 N Broadway, Irvington-on-Hudson, NY 10533.

The Rev. **Beth McNamara** is associate at Incarnation Cathedral, 4 University Pkwy., Baltimore, MD 21218.

The Rev. **John Merz** is missionary at Ascension, 127 Kent St., Brooklyn, NY 11222.

The Rev. **Cristina Paglinauan** is assistant at Redeemer, 5603 N Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21210.

The Ven. **William C. Parnell** is archdeacon for mission in the Diocese of New York, 1047 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10025.

The Rev. **Yejide Peters** is rector of All Saints', 201 Scarborough Rd., Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510-2043.

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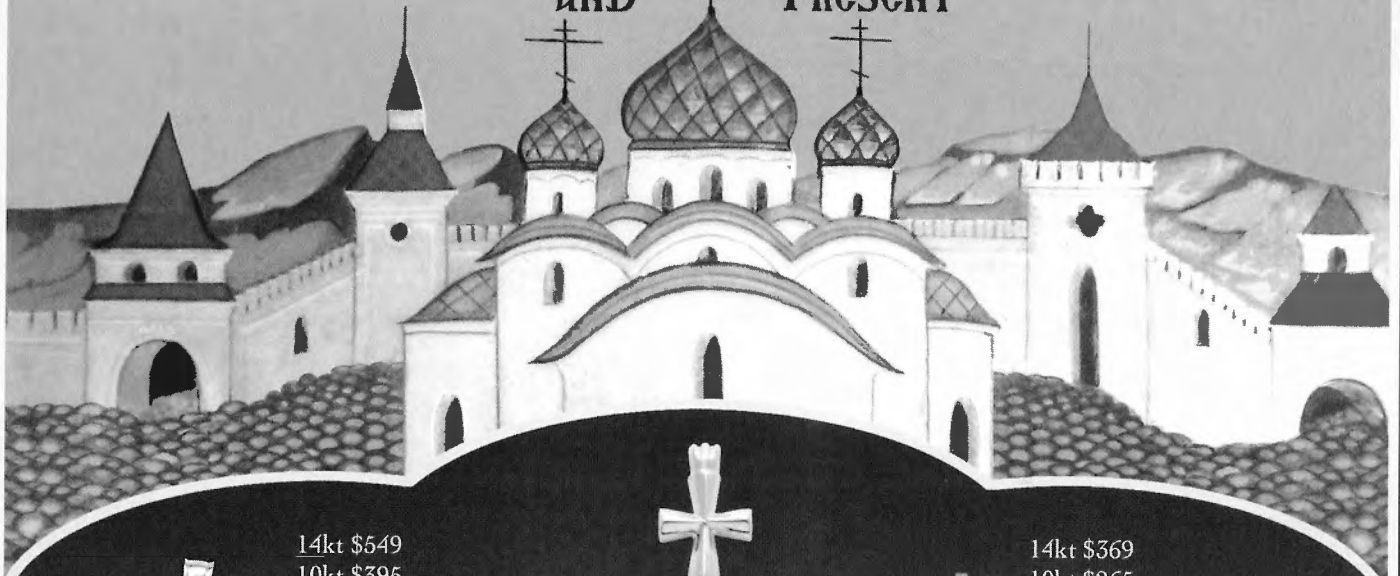
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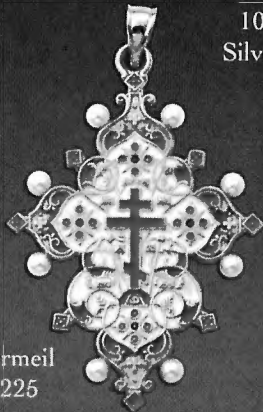
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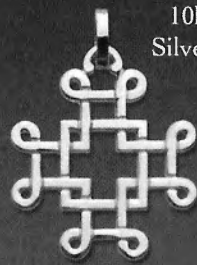
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