

# DOING THE LAMBETH WALK

## The request

We, the Bishops, Clergy and Laity of the Province of Canada, in Triennial Synod assembled, desire to represent to your Grace, that in consequence of the recent decisions of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the well-known case respecting the *Essays and Reviews*, and also in the case of the Bishop of Natal and the Bishop of Cape Town, the minds of many members of the church have been unsettled or painfully alarmed; and that doctrines hitherto believed to be scriptural, undoubtedly held by the members of the Church of England and Ireland, have been adjudicated upon by the Privy Council in such a way as to lead thousands of our brethren to conclude that, according to this decision, it is quite compatible with membership in the Church of England to discredit the historical facts of Holy Scripture, and to disbelieve the eternity of future punishment<sup>1</sup>

So began the 1865 letter from the Canadians to Charles Thomas Longley, Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of All England. The letter concluded

In order, therefore, to comfort the souls of the faithful, and reassure the minds of wavering members of the church, ... we humbly entreat your Grace, ...to convene a national synod of the bishops of the Anglican Church at home and abroad, who, attended by one or more of their presbyters or laymen, learned in ecclesiastical law, as their advisers, may meet together, and, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, take such counsel and adopt such measures as may be best fitted to provide for the present distress in such synod, presided over by your Grace.

Even without any knowledge of the background or context, a reader would have noted that the events referred to have *unsettled or painfully alarmed* the minds of many members of the church hence a call for action *to comfort the souls of the faithful, and reassure the minds of wavering members of the church*

## Some background<sup>2</sup>

### *Essays & Reviews*

The *Essays and Reviews* controversy involved seven prominent churchmen including a future Archbishop of Canterbury who published articles challenging Christianity in its orthodox form. Legal proceedings were instituted against two of the authors. Church courts found against the authors but on appeal the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council found in favour of the authors<sup>3</sup>.

### *The Bishop of Natal*

Bishop Colenso of Natal was a missionary bishop with a great heart for evangelism but was a modernist in theology. His publications got him into trouble and Bishop Gray sacked him. After various appeals, the Privy Council reinstated Colenso as Gray had no authority to constitute a tribunal. Colenso was also successful in forcing the Colonial Bishops Fund to continue paying his stipend. The Anglican bishops were outraged, Colenso was not invited to Lambeth, another bishop of Natal was elected and for some years until Colenso's death, there were two bishops in Natal.<sup>4</sup>

## **The Bishop of Cape Town**

Mr Long was an Evangelical clergyman who refused to attend a Synod convened by Bishop Gray. After several court actions the Privy Council held that where the church overseas was located in a colony with its own legislature, and where the church was not established by law, the members were in a voluntary association only. The Letters Patent creating the overseas diocese did not give the bishop coercive power to call tribunals, compel attendance and enforce judgments.<sup>5</sup>

## **Other events**

By 1865 there was significant growth of synodical government in the churches in the Colonies.

The third Jubilee of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) was celebrated from the middle of 1851 to the middle of 1852 and was an important event in the development of Anglican self consciousness. The Church in America had been a significant focus of the work of SPG. Many American bishops visited England, meetings were held, festivals conducted and great services held in Westminster. This celebration provided chances for conversations about a Pan Anglican Congress.

The end of the American Civil War (1865), John Henry Newman going to Rome (1845) and the Gorham Judgment on baptismal regeneration (1852)<sup>6</sup> were other background factors.

## **The response**

Archbishop Longley responded to the Canadians

I propose that in our assembling...we may consider many practical questions, the settlement of which would tend to the advancement of the kingdom of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and to the maintenance of greater union in our missionary work and to increased intercommunion among ourselves Such a meeting would not be competent to make declarations or lay down definitions on points of doctrine<sup>7</sup>

## **the nature and character of Lambeth**

The correspondence and discussions before the first Lambeth essayed the possibility of an International Synod. Objections to this possibility came from Evangelicals in the York Province, some broad churchmen such as the Dean of Westminster, and legal structural issues such as the independence of the Church in America and whether the Church of England could be part of an International Synod.<sup>8</sup>

Archbishop Longley was at pains to say that he would not '*convene any assembly which pretended to enact any canons or affected to make any decision binding on the church*'. The gathering was not a Synod but a Conference.

In preparation for the second Lambeth (1878) Archbishop Tait stated '*while a friendly counsel and gathering of all the Bishops of the Anglican Communion may be productive for the greatest good, they must be very careful not to claim any power or authority beyond that which is willingly conceded to them by the several voluntary bodies whom they may represent.*'

Benson opened the third 1888 Conference by pointing out that Lambeth was '*in no sense a Synod and not adapted or competent or within its powers if it should attempt to make binding decisions on doctrines or discipline.*'<sup>9</sup>

The fellowship character of the Anglican Communion (including Lambeth) was articulated by the 1930 conference

The... nature and status of the Anglican Communion ... is a fellowship, within the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted dioceses, provinces or regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury...they are bound together not by a central legislative and executive authority, but by mutual loyalty sustained through the common counsel of the bishops in conference.<sup>10</sup>

Our own Archbishop Loane, in speaking of the 1968 Conference said,

The Lambeth Conference has always been a semi private and unofficial gathering convened on the initiative of the Archbishop of Canterbury without any constitutional basis or legislative authority. Bishops have only been present at the invitation of the Archbishop and not as a matter of right, in the eyes of the law.<sup>11</sup>

## **resolutions**

Since 1867 there have been 12 subsequent conferences at roughly ten year intervals. The thirteen conferences passed 822 resolutions most of which have now passed into oblivion!

Until resolution 1.10 of Lambeth 1998, the resolution which had the most currency outside the meeting which spawned it, was the resolution known as *The Lambeth Quadrilateral*. This 1888 resolution gave a core shape to Anglicanism and arose out of a discussion of the basis on which the English churches could unite<sup>12</sup>. The Scriptures, the Creeds, the two dominical sacraments and the historic episcopate formed the central elements.

Just over a century later, 1998, it is the resolution known as *Lambeth 1.10* concerning human sexuality<sup>13</sup> which has been the flash point for endless debate, countless meetings, division between bishops and congregations,

Primates and the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the rock which threatens to sink the good ship *Anglicana Ecclesia*<sup>14</sup>.

But what is the authority of conference resolutions? Certainly there is no legislative fiat. And as Archbishop Robinson told the Sydney Synod

My point here is simply that neither the pastoral letters nor the resolutions of the Conference should be taken necessarily to represent the deliberate collective wisdom of the Anglican bishops at Lambeth. In my case, of course, they have no legislative or binding effect on the Churches, the Anglican Communion, or on the Bishops themselves.<sup>15</sup>

It is my view that the status and weight of *Lambeth 1.10* is due to the resolution being a true reflection of the teaching of scripture. That an overwhelming majority of bishops supported the resolution adds gravitas to the statement but it is not this element that gives the text its imperative, it is because scripture speaks from the resolution.

### **Who Goes?**

151 bishops including retired bishops were invited to the first Lambeth, 76 came. The Archbishop of York and most of his province refused to come. Evangelicals were suspicious of such a meeting and some doubted its legal basis.<sup>16</sup> In 1878, 173 were invited and 100 came. The numbers were 240 invitees and 194 acceptances to the fourth conference in 1897<sup>17</sup>.

By 1978 the numbers had grown so that it was no longer possible to hold the Conference in the Library at Lambeth Palace (or Church House at Westminster, as in 1968). The Conference became residential and was moved to the University of Kent, near Canterbury. Over 500 bishops were present in 1988 together with the Anglican Consultative Council (34) and others making up a total of 1,200.<sup>18</sup> In 1998, there were more than 850 Anglican bishops, bishops from churches in communion, the Consultative Council and ecumenical participants.

As to Lambeth 2008, not all bishops have been invited. The invitation list is a mystery. We all know that Gene Robinson has not been invited but the other focus of the *Windsor Report*,<sup>19</sup> Bishop Michael Ingham ( Diocese of New Westminster Canada), has been invited, despite the fact that Ingham and Robinson are joined together in the *Windsor Report* as causes of the present crisis.<sup>20</sup>

The consent by the Episcopal Church of America to the election and consecration of Gene Robinson to the Diocese of New Hampshire and the decision by the Canadian Diocese of New Westminster to authorise a Rite for the blessing of same sex unions were both actions contrary to the 1998 *Lambeth Resolution 1.10*.

The *Windsor Report* does not distinguish between the American or Canadian actions.<sup>21</sup> Given this joint condemnation of the American and Canadian

initiatives it is hard to see why Bishop Ingham has been invited when Gene Robinson has not been.

There are strong suggestions that Robinson may yet be invited as an observer. The distinction between 'observer' and 'full participant' is meaningless in practice, certainly based on my own experience at Lambeth 1998 when I was invited as the Australian lay representative on the Anglican Consultative Council. ACC members were full participants in all activities as were all observers, except that only Diocesan and assistant bishops could take part in and vote in the plenary sessions held on the last few days.

In my view it is entirely consistent with the *Windsor Report* for Robinson not to be invited. And it would be also consistent for invitations now to be withdrawn from Bishop Ingham and all American Bishops who consented to the election of Robinson as neither the Episcopal Church of America, or the Canadians have complied with the recommendations of *Windsor*.<sup>22</sup>

## Programme

I believe that when the Conference met in the Library at Lambeth, there was opportunity for proper debate and consideration of issues raised in position papers.<sup>23</sup> Conferences run for some three weeks.

Certainly from the 1978 Conference onwards, members self selected themselves into topic sections to discuss papers distributed before the Conference. Resolutions arose from the sections which were then supposed to be debated in plenary session, when the entire conference assembled. Archbishop Loane observed *debate in depth on these matters were scarcely possible since speeches in plenary sessions were strictly curtailed in length*.<sup>24</sup>

Ten years (1988) on there was no real change, as Archbishop Robinson reported to the synod,

The Section reports were not debated by the Conference as a whole. In fact they have yet to appear in their final form, having been committed to editors or consultants to be polished up. But about 70 motions were put to plenary sessions of the Conference in the last few days.

This to me seems a doubtful method of producing reports (despite a good deal of preliminary work having been done on the agenda before the Conference), nor do I think much weight can be attached to resolutions adopted at the conclusion of this process. Often there was no debate whatever in plenary sessions. The final plenary sessions, in which the motions were considered were, in my opinion, the least satisfactory part of the Conference. (They were also the least well attended.) Of course, some good things are said in these resolutions, as also in the pastoral letters which were also produced within (but not by) the Conference as a whole. These pastoral letters have now been issued and I hope will be widely read. My point here is simply that neither the pastoral letters nor the resolutions of the Conference should be taken necessarily to represent the deliberate collective wisdom of the Anglican bishops at Lambeth. In my case, of course, they have no legislative or binding

effect on the Churches, the Anglican Communion, or on the Bishops themselves.

The experience of Marcus Loane and Don Robinson was exactly my experience in 1998 concerning section reports and resolutions. I handed in 30 amendments to the draft section report in week one and was assured that the drafting committee would get back to me. I heard nothing!

The one resolution which did receive considerable debate and amendment on the floor was *Lambeth 1.10*. It had been the subject of intense preparation.<sup>25</sup> That resolution was considered with Robin Eames in the Chair which allowed George Carey to make a major speech in favour of the resolution.<sup>26</sup> Enormous press coverage was given to this resolution and Carey was condemned by a vocal minority.

According to what has been published, the programme pattern of previous conferences will not be followed in 2008. Retreats in small groups, no position papers and no provision for plenary sessions to consider resolutions seem to be the order of the day<sup>27</sup>.

The traditional London Day has been retained with lunch at Lambeth Palace followed by a garden party at Buckingham Palace by gracious invitation of the Sovereign.

## **costs**

As the conference was confined to diocesans in the first place and, only more recently, assistant bishops, it was customary for the diocese to pay for its own representatives. In 1998 and 1988 the members of the Anglican Consultative Council were also invited to Lambeth as full participants. On both occasions, the ACC office paid for the costs of the conference including travel. Before 1968 bishops made their own accommodation arrangements. Once the conference became residential the costs became immense. American generosity has underwritten much of these and therein lays a problem.

## **Conclusion**

As Archbishop Peter Jensen stated *the Anglican Communion has been irreversibly changed by these developments and this Lambeth Conference is not able to turn the clock back.*

It is ironic that the call for the first Lambeth came from Canada, supported by America, as located in these provinces today are the causes of the present disharmony. Just as issues of belief shaped the calling of the first Lambeth, issues of belief have affected the shape and acceptance list for Lambeth 2008.

Many conservative Anglicans will now gather at the Global Anglican future Conference (GAFCON) which is an opportunity to look to the future and obey

the great commission of *making disciples of all nations*. The Canadian request of 1865 asked that the bishops *be attended by one or more of their presbyters or laymen learned in ecclesiastical law*. That never happened with Lambeth but will happen at GAFCON.

The winds of change have blown through the Anglican Communion and the epicentre has shifted and we wait in expectation for the day of the Lord.

**Robert Tong**  
**Sydney**  
**14 March 2008**

---

<sup>1</sup> Curtis WR *The Lambeth Conferences. The solution for Pan-Anglican Organisation* AMS Press New York 1968 (reprint of 1942 1<sup>st</sup> ed Columbia University Press) p126. The text of the whole letter is:

May it please your Grace:

We, the Bishops, Clergy and Laity of the Province of Canada, in Triennial Synod assembled, desire to represent to your Grace, that in consequence of the recent decisions of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the well-known case respecting the Essays and Reviews, and also in the case of the Bishop of Natal and the Bishop of Cape Town, the minds of many members of the church have been unsettled or painfully alarmed; and that doctrines hitherto believed to be scriptural, undoubtedly held by the members of the Church of England and Ireland, have been adjudicated upon by the Privy Council in such a way as to lead thousands of our brethren to conclude that, according to this decision, it is quite compatible with membership in the Church of England to discredit the historical facts of Holy Scripture, and to disbelieve the eternity of future punishment; moreover, we would express to your Grace the intense alarm felt by many in Canada lest the tendency of the revival of the active powers of Convocation should leave us governed by canons different from those in force in England and Ireland and thus cause us to drift into the status of an independent branch of the catholic Church - a result which we would at this time most solemnly deplore.

In order, therefore, to comfort the souls of the faithful, and reassure the minds of wavering members of the church, and to obviate, so far as may be, the suspicion whereby so many are scandalized, that the church is a creation of Parliament, we humbly entreat your Grace, since the assembling of a general council of the whole Catholic Church is at present impracticable, to convene a national synod of the bishops of the Anglican Church at home and abroad, who, attended by one or more of their presbyters or laymen, learned in ecclesiastical law, as their advisers, may meet together, and, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, take such counsel and adopt such measures as may be best fitted to provide for the present distress in such synod, presided over by your Grace.

F. Montreal (Metropolitan, President), Jas. Beaven, D.D. (Prolocutor)

<sup>2</sup> Curtis chaps 1 & 2; also Stephenson ANG, *Anglicanism and The Lambeth Conferences* SPCK London 1978; the American connection is traced in Herklots HGG, *The Church of England and The American Episcopal Church. A Study in Relationships* Mowbray & Co, London 1966; Chadwick O, *The Victorian Church* SCM Press Ltd London 1972 Part 2; Cockshut AOJ, *Anglican Attitudes. A Study of Victorian Religious Controversies*, Collins London 1959; Marsh PT, *The Victorian Church in Decline. Archbishop Tait and The Church of England 1868-1882* University of Pittsburgh Press 1969.

<sup>3</sup> *Williams v The Bishop of Salisbury* 2 Moore PCNS 375; 9 LT Reports NS 786

<sup>4</sup> *Re Natal, Lord Bishop of (1865)* 111 Moore NS 115; 16 ER 43 and *Natal (Bishop) v Gladstone* (1866), LR 3 Eq 1; 15 LT 456; sub nom. *Colenso v Gladstone*, 36 LJ Ch 2; 12 Jur NS 971

---

<sup>5</sup> *Long v Bishop of Cape Town* (1863) 1 Moore ENS 411: 15 ER 756.

<sup>6</sup> *Gorham v The Bishop of Exeter* Moore's Special Reports 1852

<sup>7</sup> Curtis p133

<sup>8</sup> See for example Herklots HGG, *The Church of England and The American Episcopal Church. A Study in Relationships* Mowbray & Co, London 1966 as well as Curtis and Stephenson.

<sup>9</sup> Stephenson ANG, *Anglicanism and The Lambeth Conferences* SPCK London 1978.p31,36,53,79

<sup>10</sup> Resolution 49/1930 The Conference approves the following statement of the nature and status of the Anglican Communion, as that term is used in its Resolutions:

The Anglican Communion is a fellowship, within the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted dioceses, provinces or regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, which have the following characteristics in common:

- a. they uphold and propagate the Catholic and Apostolic faith and order as they are generally set forth in the Book of Common Prayer as authorised in their several Churches;
- b. they are particular or national Churches, and, as such, promote within each of their territories a national expression of Christian faith, life and worship; and
- c. they are bound together not by a central legislative and executive authority, but by mutual loyalty sustained through the common counsel of the bishops in conference.

The Conference makes this statement praying for and eagerly awaiting the time when the Churches of the present Anglican Communion will enter into communion with other parts of the Catholic Church not definable as Anglican in the above sense, as a step towards the ultimate reunion of all Christendom in one visibly united fellowship. From Lambeth Conference Resolutions Archive - [www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/](http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/)

<sup>11</sup> 1969 Year Book of the Diocese of Sydney, Presidential Address to annual synod p 204.

Loane attended Lambeth 1958, 1968 & 1978.

<sup>12</sup> Resolution II of the conference of 1888: That in the opinion of this conference, the following articles supply a basis on which approach may be by God's blessing made towards home reunion:

- (a)The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation" and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
- (b)The Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
- (c)The two sacraments ordained by Christ Himself - Baptism and the Supper of the Lord - ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by him.
- (d)The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

This declaration of faith had been drawn up by the clergy of the churches in the United States at the General Convention which had been held in Chicago in 1886. From resolutions archive.

<sup>13</sup> Resolution I.10 Human Sexuality This Conference:

- a. commends to the Church the subsection report on human sexuality;
- b. in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage;
- c. recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives and the ordering of relationships. We commit ourselves to listen to the experience of homosexual persons and we wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ;
- d. while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation and commercialisation of sex;
- e. cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions;
- f. requests the Primates and the ACC to establish a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality in the Communion and to share statements and resources among us;



- 
- g. notes the significance of the Kuala Lumpur Statement on Human Sexuality and the concerns expressed in resolutions IV.26, V.1, V.10, V.23 and V.35 on the authority of Scripture in matters of marriage and sexuality and asks the Primates and the ACC to include them in their monitoring process.

<sup>14</sup> Phrase borrowed from the *Act of Supremacy (26 Henry VIII, c 1)* 1534

<sup>15</sup> 1989 Year Book of the Diocese of Sydney, Presidential Address to annual synod p 231 DWB Robinson attended Lambeth 1978 & 1988 and was Archbishop of Sydney 1982-1993

<sup>16</sup> Stephenson 23,34, 63

<sup>17</sup> Stephenson iv

<sup>18</sup> 1989 Year Book p 230

<sup>19</sup> *The Windsor Report* Anglican Communion Office 2004

<sup>20</sup> See Windsor paragraph 27 which describes the events in Canada and America and paragraph 28 ‘the overwhelming response from other Christians both inside and outside the Anglican family has been to regard these developments as departures from genuine apostolic Christian faith.’

<sup>21</sup> See paragraph 4 of Eames’s Forward and paragraphs 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 33, 35, 37, 39, 122, 123,156.Paragraphs 124-135 deal solely with America and paragraphs 136-146 deal with Canada.

<sup>22</sup> See para 134 USA, and para 143 Canada

<sup>23</sup> Conversations over many years with Archbishop Sir Marcus Loane KBE, Archbishop of Sydney 1966-1982 and Primate of Australia from 1978.

<sup>24</sup> 1978 Year Book p215

<sup>25</sup> For the inside story from an Australian evangelical perspective speak to Bishops Goodhew, Barnett, Chiswell or Nicholls.

<sup>26</sup> Carey G *Know the Truth* HarperCollins London 2004 p328

<sup>27</sup> Circular to bishops. See Curtis or Stephenson for details of programmes at earlier conferences.