

## "Anglican Communion: Past Blessings, Present Challenges and Future Hopes"

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Speaks at Duke Divinity School

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<http://www.divinity.duke.edu/news/noteworthy/070207lordcareyspeech>

February 7, 2007

By Lord Carey

I must begin this address by thanking Jo Wells for her welcome and all those who have made it possible for Eileen and myself to make this trip to North Carolina. We are especially delighted to be here at Duke University and gain a flavour of the life and vitality of this place.

View video of Lord Carey's address

Duke's Methodist roots are well known, of course, and remind us of the debt that both Anglicanism and Methodism owe to each other. I served my Title as Curate at St. Mary's Islington in London and recall noting with delight on my first day there, that the great Charles Wesley had been a curate at the same church in the 18th century. Episcopalians are indebted to our young sister's commitment to evangelism and social action.

However, the 18th century Church of England did not take too kindly to Methodism's enthusiasm and direct spirituality. An ironic and somewhat bizarre witness to this is found in a church near Cambridge where a memorial plaque records the ministry of the Rector, of whom the plaque states 'served for 38 years in this parish without the slightest trace of enthusiasm.'

That astonishing memorial was not erected by disgruntled parishioners but actually delighted ones who were clearly pleased that, during their Rector's time the 'enthusiasts,' that is the Methodists, were kept at bay. Sadly, the division between our two churches today is due to that kind of attitude which prevailed all too often at that period.

Both John and Charles Wesley were disappointed by the reception given by the Established Church to the fledgling 'methodistical' preachers of their day. They died priests in the Church of England, even though both knew with reluctance that it would be only a matter of few years before the inevitable split between mother and daughter came about.

Dr. Wells invited me to speak about the Anglican Communion today, and I offered the title of: "The Anglican Communion; Past Blessings, present Challenges, future Hope." I do so with some hesitancy because I run the risk of some telling me, yet again, that I am interfering and that I am undermining the work of Archbishop Rowan Williams.

My response is twofold; it is difficult to accept the accusation of interfering when I am speaking of my own Communion, to which I gave so much in eleven exhausting and fulfilling years. I love this Communion and I love the Episcopal Church of the United States. One only 'interferes' if the matter has nothing to do with one. This is scarcely the case.

Secondly, I fully support the present Archbishop of Canterbury in his desire to hold the Communion together and to find a way out of the present serious situation we are in. The Windsor Report, if accepted by all, would strengthen the Communion and heal our brokenness. Alas, it has already become clear that its strong medicine does not please parts of our body and has been rejected by some. The coming Primates Meeting in Tanzania should be in all our prayers as the leaders of the Communion seek a way forward to hold the family together.

So, let me reflect with you from this place, Duke University, a former bastion of Methodist life. What would the Wesley brothers have made of the Anglican Communion; indeed, would it have been a reality in their day?

It is difficult to answer that question exactly. As serving missionaries at one point in Georgia before the Revolution, they would have been aware that the English church was firmly established in Canada, North America, India, and other places too but none was independent of the Church of England.

It is in the events leading up to the first Lambeth Conference that met in 1867, a mere 140 years ago, that we may perceive a body emerging, an ersatz embryonic communion of national episcopal churches with the See of Canterbury at its heart. However, the Lambeth Conference of 1867 was far from being a routine meeting of bishops called together to order the life of an emerging international church polity. The conference was called to deal with a crisis in the family; a crisis of such nature that some felt that, unless resolved, would have dire consequences for its unity and mission.

Of course, discerning observers at the time might have noted that there was nothing new in that. Crisis and conflict were central to the Church of England's separation from the Roman Church some three hundred years earlier. Cranmer's hesitant behaviour with respect to that split had less to do, in my opinion, with his cautious, mild and sensitive nature than his mature understanding that the break was serious, momentous and with devastating consequences for the unity of the Church.

The Reformers knew that it is in only exceptional circumstances that Christians should part from their mother Church. But it was their understanding that their mother had erred from the truth of God's word that led them to reform it from without. For the next 100 years the theology and practice of this new English Church was forged in the chaotic religious scene that dominated European history of the period.

While wars of religion were waged on the continent, the development of Anglicanism in this period was no easy progress (as some historians have made the mistake of thinking).

Firstly, Roman Catholics and Protestants both had numerous martyrs; secondly the changes to the Acts of Uniformity were enforced at times by savage policing of the English reformation as historians like G.R Elton have ably shown. (Policy and Police).

The idea of Anglicanism as a 'bridge church' incorporating Catholic and Protestant traditions and avoiding the extremes of both, has been an easy, tempting and schematic way of portraying the Anglican spirit. In actual fact there was nothing easy or clear cut about the development, or eventual conclusion.

The 16th century English Church was profoundly shaken by the break with Rome, the martyrdom of scores of Protestants and Catholics, the dissolution of the monasteries, the rapid acceleration of the reformation under Edward and a bloody counter-reformation under Mary, before the throne turned to Elizabeth who restored an equilibrium.

Yet even then the Reformation wasn't complete and in the following century the country was consumed by civil war, and a continual tug-of-war between protestant or puritan and catholic elements for power and control. Let us not forget that the mediaeval Becket was not the only Archbishop of Canterbury to die violently - Laud, whose devotion to the King and to what now might be called Anglo-Catholic piety and devotion, not only expedited hundreds of protestants to seek freedom in the colony known as America, but also suffered the same fate. Thankfully, the fate of modern-day successors to that ancient office has been more figurative than actual, martyrdom is usually at the hands of the British media - which, however savage, at least allows you to keep your head after ascending the gallows!

The theme of 'conflict' which has brought about the emergence of an Anglican settlement in England, continued throughout the spread of the Church of England as a result of Imperial and missionary expansionism to the New World and British dominions in Asia and Africa. At the beginning of the last century the shape of an 'Anglican Communion' was beginning to emerge as it spread outwards to the United States, to Canada, to India, to China, to Africa, to South America and many other places beside. It would have been this kind of development that the Wesley brothers would have noticed. Or course, it was recognisably British to begin with, with English hymns and the Book of Common Prayer as the universal language of prayer.

But by the middle of the 19th century things were changing. It is very significant that the cry to hold the First Lambeth Conference did not arise from within England but from the colonies. The impetus for it came from a dispute in South Africa where Bishop Colenso had fallen out with Archbishop Frank Gray for promoting advanced ideas about the Old Testament. The Canadian Bishops wrote to Archbishop Longley asking him to convene a meeting of all Bishops to respond to this and other matters of common concern. The Archbishop sought the advice of his English colleagues. Some were firmly against the idea and when that first Lambeth Conference met in 1867 the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of London absented themselves.

That first Conference met at Lambeth Palace and there were just 76 bishops present with

only one black bishop, the famous Samuel Crowther of West Africa. All men, all but one white - what a far cry from today. It is worth recording that fifty years later, at the end of the 1920 Lambeth Conference, the assembled bishops gathered to express their thanks to the Archbishop of Canterbury and to his wife, Mrs Davidson, for their hospitality. For the first time ever a woman stepped onto the platform and the Bishop of Pennsylvania in presenting her with a gift said: 'We don't want this to be taken as a sign that women will be admitted in the episcopate!' Little did they know that 78 years later that would be a reality.

Turning to the situation today, Bishops representing Churches in the West are now vastly outnumbered by Bishops from rapidly-growing churches in Africa. The Nigerian Church alone has grown from about a million members in the 1960s to something in the region of 17 million today. I often comment that there are now more Anglicans worshipping on a Sunday in the Province of Nigeria than all Episcopalians in the UK, America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand put together. It would be a foolish Communion indeed that ignored such strength.

For a good part of the 20th century those meetings of Bishops at Lambeth for consultation and mutual support were the only Anglican gatherings which took place at all. At the first Lambeth Conference and all subsequent ones, a more juridical structure was resisted. It was felt to be enough that the increasingly independent provinces of the Anglican Communion - a process begun by the American Civil War hundreds of years earlier - shared a common prayer book and common roots. But in the post-war period when international institutions were developing precisely to avoid conflict in the future, the Anglican Communion followed suit. In the 1960s the Anglican Consultative Council came into being, and as the ecumenical movement developed, particularly the promising opening of talks between Rome and Canterbury, it was felt necessary to have more representative instruments of communion. As a result Anglicans, began to meet more regularly in the ACC, the Primates Meetings and the Lambeth Conferences, overseeing interfaith work, ecumenical dialogue, evangelism and mission, and liturgical development.

New liturgical adventures were also to take place for the Anglican Communion in the 20th century as the diverse Churches began to develop common prayer in their own languages. The leadership of the Communion was no longer solely in the hands of Lambeth Palace and 815 Second Avenue but now shared with strong and capable leaders in Africa, Singapore and elsewhere. Missionaries gave way to indigenous clergy; the Book of Common Prayer was translated into the vernacular. But further liturgical changes followed to the point that it is problematic to point to a common prayer book as a shared Anglican phenomenon.

And just as the Anglican Communion abandoned Common Prayer so it also lost a common ministry. The interchangeable ministry of Bishops, priests and deacons was lost to the Anglican family of churches as women were ordained priests and bishops. In 1944 the first woman was ordained in Hong Kong. But it was 30 years later before 'illegal' ordinations were held in Philadelphia, followed by confirmation of that action by the

General Convention of the Episcopal Church two years later.

Nevertheless, the move to ordain women was so gradual and so well-discussed by all instruments of the Communion that a decisive schism was avoided. This was helped by a general recognition in the Communion that the scriptural and theological basis for the inclusion of women in the Ministry of the Church was so strong that it would be only a matter of time before they took that momentous step. Fortunately, proper consultation then took place in the Communion between the first ordinations of women as priests and the consecration of women as bishops- a more radical ecclesiological development because of the apostolic, and ordaining function of bishops. It is worth recalling that a state of impaired communion exists throughout the Anglican Communion to this day.

The Church of England, at the official level, still does not recognize the Episcopal ministry of women bishops from the US, although it welcomes their priestly ministry. When as Archbishop of Canterbury I was preparing for the Lambeth Conference of 1998 I was urged by some to resist inviting women bishops to that Episcopal Conference. I ignored that advice because the Conference was not under the auspices of the Church of England but that of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Every invitation was personal and private. Women bishops there played valued roles. It is surely odd, and decidedly embarrassing for the Church of England, that the present Presiding Bishop of the United States, bishop Katherine Jefferts Schori, though most welcome in her role as Presiding Bishop, is not allowed under our present rules to exercise an Episcopal ministry in England.

To continue this story of impaired communion, priests ordained by women bishops are acceptable in some English provinces but not others. Many priests and laity left the Church of England when women were ordained. Here in the States, it is recognized with sadness that the Continuing Anglican Church movement in the US, with its plethora of small denominations, was largely created by the crisis and conflict in the US during the 70's and 80's.

Yet there were gains from the ordination of women. The Anglican Communion had developed a process of decision making through its gatherings of responding to the issue. The Eames Commission reported on the difficulties and recommended a closer relationship among the provinces despite the difficulties over impaired communion. For two decades Anglican leaders gave much consideration to the question of how Anglicans could develop closer links and consider controversial questions together rather than separately. Anglicans decisively turned their back on acting independently and autonomously and began to stress the interdependence of the Communion. The 1988 Lambeth Conference gave this renewed desire to be united in working together great impetus through the leadership of Robert Runcie.

The need for Anglicanism to have greater coherence came about as a result therefore of both conflict/crisis and ecumenical developments. But the theme of conflict and crisis had another layer to it. Individual provinces of the Anglican Communion were in a state of emergency and crisis during this period as well. The significant leadership of the

Anglican Church in South Africa under Desmond Tutu, in the struggle against apartheid contributed to the development of Anglicanism. As a result of the support that Archbishop Tutu needed, the secretariat of the

Communion, its communications (especially electronic communications) and its leadership were bolstered and strengthened. And here I recognize the valuable ministry of Trinity Wall Street to supporting the Communion. The burgeoning African Church began to develop its own regional gatherings and its voice became much stronger in the counsels of the Communion.

In the mid 1990s the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury was confronted with an unparalleled crisis after the genocide in Rwanda. I was among the first western leaders on the scene after the conflict, which resulted in a conservative death toll of some 800,000 victims, with many more dying as a consequence of injuries and the rape of thousands of women, leaving them suffering from HIV/AIDS. Four Anglican bishops, including the Archbishop, were in exile after the conflict - alleged to be complicit in the genocide. The remaining Church leaders appealed to me to help them get the Church back on its feet.

I visited this demoralized and disgraced church - certainly not alone in its failure to lead, because all mainstream churches in Rwanda were involved in that shameful episode. I recall the difficult decisions I had to make, with the support of canon lawyers, in deciding what right I had to intervene in matters that concerned a separate Province. The crisis led to new developments in the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury which were set in law at a later Anglican Consultative Council at Panama. I recall a painful meeting with Archbishop Augustin, Archbishop of Rwanda in the VIP lounge at Nairobi airport where I had to plead with Augustin to surrender his office. He had fled the country immediately the rebel forces under Paul Kagame had entered Rwanda, and now the Anglican Province of Rwanda was leaderless. My advice to him was direct, yet I trust sympathetic. 'Augustin, you must return to your people and lead them'.

'But they will kill me' he said, with tears in his eyes. 'Augustin', I repeated, 'A shepherd is only defined by the office he has of leading the sheep. Your people need you and if you will not return they are without a focal point. Return if you are a true shepherd, surrender your office if you are afraid'. We talked for what seemed like hours. He clung to an office that he had let down by clinging too closely to political power. It took another six weeks of pleading and pressure by myself and others before the reluctant Archbishop surrendered his office, so allowing the healing to begin in a broken and penitent church. That the Rwandan church today is now stronger and growing is largely because of the faithful leadership of bishops, clergy and laypeople who kept the faith through that bitter and terrible episode.

In short, it became apparent that a role for the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council was being forged for states of emergency like these. The nature of our Communion, with its semi-autonomous structure of decision making, means that states of emergency in many countries ( and Zimbabwe, is a recent example) will require close consultation and personal ministry not always fully supported

by legal structures at the time. Fast footwork and close collaboration will always be needed.

The important thing to note is that Anglicanism has been forged out of conflict and crisis, however much we might like to pretend it's been an easy and straightforward progress. It is difficult to point to a decade within the history of the Anglican Church when there hasn't been some controversy or other. And while the Prayer Book offered a common pattern of bible reading, worship and doctrine, the abandonment of Common Prayer has left a vacuum in its wake. The vacuum has been one of authority. And while it's true that Anglicanism has not had the hallmarks of a confessional church, or a deeply authoritarian one - in its structures or its theology - yet it has subscribed to various confessional statements, including the Prayer Book, the 39 Articles and the Lambeth-Chicago Quadilateral. The abandonment of these norms, together with a serious weakening of the scriptures as our definitive and authoritative guide, has led conversely to the strengthening of structures, but these as we have seen, were not strong enough to deal with the current crisis which Anglicanism faces.

Before we turn to the present crisis let me say, as a former Archbishop, that the 20th century witnessed many blessings from the close relationships forged between the growing Provinces of the Communion. In many distinctive ways our Communion has been a blessing to the very poor of the world and our incarnational ministry in education, health and much else beside, noted and valued. In this regard the Episcopal Church of America has played an impressive and important part.

## THE PRESENT CRISIS

The latest emergency, and indeed long-term crisis, for Anglicanism is the debate over homosexuality. In terms of the time-line of the debate, the place of homosexual people in the Churches and their ordination and relationships has been seriously underway for two decades. When I came to office in 1991 one of the first House of Bishops' statements I had to sign was 'Issues in Human Sexuality', a pastoral document, which though it prohibited sexual relationships outside heterosexual marriage to the clergy, sought to lay guidelines for bishops as pastors and expected the document to open a debate on an issue that most people wished to sweep under the carpet.

However, in 1991 it was by no means obvious that the homosexual liberation movement would secure such support throughout the western world in such a short space of time. While there was some thirty years between the first ordained women and the official ordinations by the Episcopal Church, the gay debate, concerning the ordination of homosexual clergy in relations with other men, has been with us for a much shorter space of time. A major moment in that debate was the debate at the Lambeth Conference in 1998 where the contentious Resolution 1.10 was passed by a large majority of the assembled bishops.

Resolution 1.10 described practising homosexuality as 'incompatible with holy scripture' yet called on all bishops to enter into a deeper dialogue with homosexuals, seeking to

understand their situation in society and in the church. It should be understood that the Resolution was NOT a wholly new idea that now put the Communion in a different place from where it was before. It spelled out where the Communion had always stood but now, forced to define itself on this matter, had clarified its position once and for all. If there is any misunderstanding about this we should remind ourselves that Lambeth 98 also received the ARCIC document 'Life in Christ' in which the agreed position of Catholic and Anglican representatives declared their mind in similar terms on this issue.

Five years later to the very day the decision of General Convention 2003 to allow the consecration of a homosexual priest to the Episcopate was bound to create a major crisis. That decision was a watershed that took a national church from a permissive and casual practice of ordaining practicing homosexual and lesbian priests, to the endorsement of a new and now official policy. Therefore it should have surprised no one that the consecration of Gene Robinson to the episcopate would cause such consternation and dismay in the Anglican Communion.

In response, some leaders in ECUSA have argued that the Anglican Communion had not followed up its promises to listen to homosexual people and debate the issues and, from their point of view, the time for discussion has passed. It was time to act and, as an autonomous Province, ECUSA had the right to provide ministries for all laypeople and priests, whatever their sexual orientation. I have to say that from where I have stood this is not so. Very many meetings of the Anglican Communion have devoted time to this issue.

The point of Res 1.10, in spite of its firm stand on the issue of homosexuality, was that it committed the Communion to a sustained debate on the matter. Speaking personally, I had several important discussions and debates with homosexual groups and the House of Bishops of the Church of England set up a process of listening to those most deeply affected by the issue. We were all aware that we were talking not about 'homosexuals' but men and women, dearly loved by God and respected Christians, sharing the same faith as our own. It is important to note that the decision, made by General Convention five years after Res. 1.10, put an end to the debate; a decision had been made by one of the most senior of our Provinces and discussion was now 'dead in the water' because it had been pre-empted by General Convention's unilateral act.

As I have friends on both sides of this debate I recognize the bewilderment, hurt and resentment that the speed of the process has caused. For those who believe that the ordination of a homosexual Bishop in a 'married' relationship with another man is a holy, good and prophetic thing, the idea that this should be a matter causing division and conflict is staggering. Surely, they argue this is not a first order theological issue - it belongs to the realm of Church order, not salvation. I respect and understand that point of view. It is one sincerely held by many, not only in the United States.

It is of course, far more serious than that. In a lecture I gave at Virginia Theological Seminary last May at the request of the Dean I endeavoured to show why the majority in the Anglican Communion could not agree with the step taken by General Convention in

2003. There are five theological problems, I argued. General Convention's decision represented a fivefold departure:

1. A Departure from the Ordinal and theology of Ministry. The Anglican tradition has inherited from the undivided Church an understanding of ministry that those ordained must be either celibate or married. The fact that our Ordinals never mention the possibility of practising homosexuals being ordained is that such an option was inconceivable - indeed, reprehensible. That homosexuals should be ordained who are in a relationship that replaces marriage would have been seen as a serious and extraordinary departure from the Church's practice.

2. A departure from orthodox interpretation and the teaching of the Bible. The bible is univocal in its condemnation of practising homosexuality. It cannot be dismissed as having no consequence for us today. The matter is far more than the interpretation of a few Old Testament verses but includes significant Pauline texts that are central to the classical interpretation of sin and redemption. Many cannot see any justification for bypassing Paul's teaching in Romans I concerning homosexuality as irrelevant to our times, or as a cultural equivalent to women wearing hats in church. Surely, many will say it is a timeless commentary on the power of sin when people turn away from God.

3. It is a departure from our understanding of the sacramentality of marriage. We know how central to message of Jesus is his understanding of marriage. The way that apostolic writers build on this in 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, 1 Timothy and elsewhere show their continuity with our Lord's teaching concerning the creational significance of marriage between a man and woman that is lifelong, faithful and tender. The parallel of marriage to the union of Christ to his church in Ephesians V shows the error of identifying any other relationship as comparable with marriage. Paralleling any other relationship with marriage, however close the friendship, is seen as a dangerous error and it is difficult to see how alternative relationships may be blessed by the Church or considered 'holy'.

4. A departure from Anglican understanding of Unity. It is possibly the case that some delegates at the Gen Convention on August 5th 2005 may not have fully understood the significance of its decision or that all were aware that the vast majority of Anglican Provinces was against the consecration of Gene Robinson. However, it is difficult to excuse the Bishops who consented, because they of all people knew that it went against the mind of the Communion and could only be seen as a wilful arrogating of individual freedom. On that day ECUSA seemed to say to the Communion: 'We have no need of you... we are an independent church and will make our own laws and define our own theology'.

5. A departure from our understanding of Authority. When I was Archbishop I gave expression on a number of occasions to my worries about the fragility of our theology of authority. We are strong on synodical authority within our Provinces but very weak when it comes to exercising authority within the Communion. August 5th 2003 revealed the stark poverty at the heart of our tradition as the fundamental four Instruments of Unity; the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates, ACC and the Lambeth Conference were

ignored.

So where does that leave us today? The Windsor Report suggests another process which will lead to a strengthening of the Communion mainly in the form of a Covenant to which all Provinces of the Anglican Communion agree. By signing up to the Covenant, Provinces are effectively signing up to the rules of the Communion - presumably concerning decision-making and consultation. An overly-rigorous covenant is likely to be rejected by provinces in the West, but a bland and unchallenging one will leave the growing churches of the global south un-persuaded.

## FUTURE HOPE

As someone who is now no longer party to the decision making processes of the Communion I can only join with the vast majority in longing for some resolution that will allow us all to get on with the far more important tasks of healing a broken world with the claims of Christ our Lord. There are so many pressing needs that our Communion is especially well positioned to address. We are there in significant strength among the very poor in Africa and elsewhere; we are making an excellent contribution to the terrible scourge of HIV/AIDS; in areas of conflict, such as Sudan, we are a voice that is heeded and respected; in areas of health and education the Anglican Communion is a well known player; in matters of advocacy we have a distinguished record as the work of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, his successor Ngongonkulu Ndungane in South Africa, Bishop Dinis Sengulana of Mozambique and Archbishop Robin Eames of Ireland, Bishop Riah in Jerusalem, Bishop Mouneer Anis in Cairo, Archbishop Desmond Mtetamala in Tanzania show.

It is clear that our witness in such areas where our Communion is so strong will be greatly weakened if the current challenge in our body leads to the breakdown of communion.

Therefore what trajectories, or futures, are likely or possible?

One possible future for a minority will sadly be to leave the Communion altogether. In America some of the most faithful clergy and most able laypeople have already departed and more are likely to follow. They are leaving out of despair. They feel they are not heeded, valued or respected. Some of them are extraordinarily gifted theologians and teachers who feel they have no future in a body that was once their church. Some of them will leave for the Roman Catholic Church which has for many become an attractive alternative with strong leadership rooted in the faith and traditions of the Church. Others of course, will leave for alternative Anglican structures that will allow them the freedom to get on with the task of preaching the gospel without this debate occupying all their time and energy.

How does one respond to such a turbulent situation?

As someone who has invested a great deal of time in ecumenical debate I am very

conscious that once Christians separate the chances of reconciliation are daunting indeed. An illustration of this is the Church of England/Methodist talks in the UK. Although Methodism and Anglicanism in the UK have so much in common, organic unity still eludes us. The fact is that once groups divide, the journey back into full unity often never happens.

Perhaps, then, in the present tense situation I may plea for patience. The Primates who will gather shortly in Tanzania know how critical the times are and to them is entrusted the task of finding a solution to heal our sharp divisions. The establishment of an Anglican covenant is a task that may take years rather than days, weeks and months. It will require much hard and honest talking and no little patience and Christian love. The duty of leaders is to stay at the table, contributing to the debate as long as it takes. The imperative of unity in fact requires all Anglican leaders to desist from threats to withdraw, or refusing to talk to others. But allied to that must go a generous Christian spirit that is prepared to acknowledge mistakes made, hasty decisions concluded and lack of consultation. The generosity of which I am thinking will include American Church leaders recognizing that the conservative voice has not always been heeded, and that some fine conservative priests have been badly treated. It will, by the same token, require conservative leaders and clergy recognizing also that some behaviour towards their diocesans have fallen short of a spirit that is Christian. If we in this present challenge cannot give an example to the world around us of how Christians behave when we disagree violently, we disgrace our Lord who remains the reconciling God, in spite of what his Church gets up to.

I finish this address by reminding you again that John and Charles Wesley remained Anglicans to their dying day. Though often badly treated by their own church, their patience and love is an example to us all. Their overwhelming desire was to lead all to the Saviour who had changed their lives so powerfully years before.

John Wesley is not noted for his hymn writing but among the few he wrote there is a translation of Paul Gerhardt's version of Psalm 37. The last verse is an encouragement to trust in the providence and wisdom of Almighty God:

"Far, far above your thought, His counsel shall appear,

When fully he the work has wrought, that caused your needless fear.

Leave to his sovereign will to choose and to command,

With wonder filled, you then shall own how wise, how strong his hand."