



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Anglicanism tears itself apart but draws nearer to Rome



Leading Anglican
"dissident", David

The Vatican is publicly stressing its progress in forging closer ties with the Anglican Communion, despite the deepening divisions over homosexuality that clouded the recent visit by the archbishop of Canterbury to the pope.

A statement by the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity outlined what it said was continuous progress in bringing the two churches together, but made no mention of the explosive decision of the US Episcopal Church to elect its first openly sodomite bishop in August past.

The archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams' first official meeting with Pope John Paul II took place at the beginning of October, when he was given the Vatican's reaction to the US decision. An emergency meeting of the Anglican Communion's 38 church primates to discuss the matter has been arranged.

The Vatican statement said of the meeting in Rome:— "These exchanges of visits are a clear sign of the desire of the Anglican Communion and the Catholic Church to continue to operate together toward the goal of full communion." It added that both churches had also formed two joint commissions that have reached agreement on several theological issues over the years. Regardless of the apparent growing harmony between Rome and Canterbury, more than 2,000 Episcopalians are furious that their church has elected an openly gay bishop in New Hampshire, USA. In a clear sign of their alienation from the national church, the organizers of the Dallas conference refused to allow the denomination's presiding bishop, Frank T. Griswold, and the president of the denomination's House of Deputies, George Werner, to send a delegation of observers to their gathering in Texas. The delegation was to include two bishops, a seminary president, and a priest. Using words like "apostasy" and "heresy" and "immorality" to describe the actions of their denomination, leading conservative Episcopalians told a gathering of about 2,600 they should demand that the archbishop of Canterbury "rebuke, reject, or correct" the Episcopal Church in USA, for allowing an actively sodomite bishop to serve in New Hampshire and for failing to bar the blessing of same-sex unions. Gathered at a cavernous Texas hotel, the Episcopal dissidents — 45 bishops among them — describe themselves as "orthodox Anglicans." "We come from a deaf church . . . with lots of sorrow and heartbreak, with relationships that have been broken, but we come knowing that our church has embraced schism and heresy," said Bishop Robert W. Duncan of Pittsburgh.

Inside Trinity Conference Centre at Wyndham Anatole Hotel, the gathered Episcopalians cheered as their own denomination was blasted by theologians, bishops, and priests. "We are a church under judgment," said the Rev. Kendall S. Harmon, an Episcopal theologian from South Carolina. "The Episcopal Church is now a church where people are officially led away from Christ. This is why we need a realignment." Harmon said "a way of life which is in contradiction to holiness was celebrated and blessed" at the Episcopal Church's general convention in August. The conservative Episcopalians gathered in Dallas have a variety of viewpoints about what should happen now, but want Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, to find some way to declare that those parts of the Episcopal Church that support a



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

gay bishop have erred and that those who oppose a gay bishop are the true Anglicans in the United States. "The church convention has erred and must be rebuked, rejected, or corrected in some way," said the Rev. David H. Roseberry, rector of Christ Church in Plano, Texas. The American conservatives are clearly in the minority within the Episcopal Church in the USA, but they have aligned themselves with Anglican primates in the developing world who have said they oppose the increasing acceptance of homosexuality in Western culture and in Western churches, and have denounced the decision by the Episcopal Church, which is the American province of the Anglican Communion, to elect a gay bishop. A majority of Anglicans now live in the developing world; just 2 million of the estimated 70 to 80 million Anglicans in the world live in the United States.

It may help us to understand the true nature of the protest that is taking place within American Anglicanism when we take note of the fact that the pope sent a letter to the conference via Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. It was read aloud to the conference. Ratzinger wrote on behalf of the pope, "I hasten to assure you of my heartfelt prayers for all those taking part in this convocation." "I pray in particular that God's will may be done by all those who seek that unity in the truth, the gift of Christ himself."

A Nigerian bishop, who called the appointment of an openly gay bishop in the United States "a satanic attack on God's church", has been elected to lead the council of African Anglican bishops. Peter Akinola, primate for Nigeria, has taken over as head of the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa. It is a strong signal that Africa will maintain a hardline stance on the ordination of sodomites. "We as African Christians, we take the plain truth of the Bible, we don't distort it, it is good for us as it is," Bishop Akinola said.