

MARYLAND ADDRESS, 2010

The Rt. Rev. Tom Butler

Good afternoon. Giving an address at this time in the afternoon on a warm day has its problems. I recall a similar occasion when, in the middle of my address I observed that two of my audience were, let us say, meditating deeply with their eyes closed. I commented on this at the end of my address and then was perturbed when over half a dozen folk came up to me during the tea break and apologized for falling asleep. Let me say then, that in this address, you have permission to meditate deeply with your eyes closed, but don't tell me about it.

Now, first a word to Bishop John Rabb, I was rather startled to hear him say that he was retiring for "reasons of advanced age", for to me he is a mere youngster. But out of my month's experience let me tell him that there is life after retirement. Who knows, John, you also might be asked to address a diocesan convention and speaking for myself it's a great pleasure to be present at your diocesan convention and a privilege to be asked to give this address. Bishop Eugene was such a star at the Lambeth Conference two years ago that I invited him to come and speak to my diocesan clergy's residential conference last year and he made a great contribution. It was good to get to know him and Sonia and so my wife Barbara and I didn't hesitate in accepting his kind invitation to be with you here and we've been most impressed by what we've heard and seen this far.

I've been interested to read in your preparatory documents Bishop Eugene's emphasis on the imagery of rocks as the basis of building vision for the future. This reminded me of the words of the prophet Isaiah. "Listen to me, you who seek saving justice, you who seek the Lord. Consider the rock from which you were hewn, the quarry from which you were dug."

Anglicanism has been built and rebuilt over the years on a number of fundamental rocks, the Bible; the early Fathers; the Celtic Mission around the coasts of Britain; English Catholicism - particularly the Benedictine tradition; the Protestant Reformers - Wycliffe, Tyndale, Cranmer; the catholic puritan struggles around the English civil war with its consequences of church planting here in Maryland; the Evangelical renewal in the eighteenth century and the catholic Oxford movement of the nineteenth, the spread of the Anglican church around the globe on the back of the expanding British Empire, the disgrace of the sin of slavery tolerated and even blessed by the Church of England until William Wilberforce and the other members of the Clapham sect in my former diocese campaigned with others this side of the Atlantic to destroy the slave trade two hundred years ago.

And this demand for social justice has been a constant strand in Anglicanism, seen in Britain in campaigns for prison reform, schools for all children, universal health service, and such campaigning for social justice can be seen in virtually every country where Anglicanism has taken root, perhaps seen most dramatically in recent times in the civil rights struggles here in America and the success of Bishop Desmond Tutu and others in demolishing the apartheid system in South Africa. He

has claimed that it was the eucharist which broke apartheid, the eucharist where women and men of all types and ethnicities gather in fellowship around the same table to break holy bread together. There can be no division in that body.

The strands of Christian experience to be found in Anglicanism might be summed up like this - a Catholic focus upon holiness of worship; a Liberal passion for social justice; a Charismatic dynamic of the experience of God; a Evangelical commitment to listen to God through scripture and to witness to Jesus Christ in the world together with a respect for intellect and learning, and it's interesting to note that these strands are mostly represented in the five affirmations for Horizon 2015 but now I'd like to share a few images from our past which illustrate for me some of this Anglican heritage.

Christianity first came to Britain in the days of the Roman Empire, but as we know only too well empires come and go in history, and with the collapse of Rome and the withdrawal of the roman army, Christianity went through hard times in Britain being pushed to the Celtic fringes by the Anglo Saxon invaders. Then from Ireland the faith was replanted on the mainland, first in Scotland by Columba and then in North East Britain by Aidan and my first image is Aidan's monastery on Lindisfarne, Holy Island off the coast of North East England, a situation not unlike your own..

People today when they visit Holy Island can get mistaken ideas of what Aidan and those early Celtic missionaries were about because today everything seems so peaceful and other-worldly. Not in Aidan's time. In Aidan's day, with travel on land being so difficult and dangerous because of marsh and banditry, much travel took place around the coasts by boat, as of course it has done in Maryland. Aidan's island stood then in the heart of a major marine highway with travellers galore.

Also it was a stone's throw away from Bamburgh castle, the headquarters of the king, and Aidan and his successors were not slow in preaching to power and then with the goodwill of those in power taken the gospel and planting the church in every corner of the kingdom.

But there's one more feature of Lindisfarne, which has a message for us modern Anglicans. It was and is a holy island, but it is only an island twice a day because it's connected to the mainland by a causeway which floods with the incoming tide. So twice a day it was a peaceful abbey where God could be worshipped in holiness and truth and the gospels could be preached and reproduced. But then the tide went out and the holy island became very much a part of the mainland and the messy ambiguities of living out the gospel in a world of power and powerlessness had to be faced.

That I believe has been the Anglican tradition every since. Our churches are holy places, and you have plenty of beautiful examples, where, sitting beneath the authority of scripture, God is worshipped in holiness and truth. Thoughtful holiness is a rock upon which Anglicanism is built, not least in the Episcopal church here in America. But like holy island Anglican churches are no other worldly havens they are also very much part of the main and our calling is to engage with every aspect of daily living and all of the ethical issues of the day, to speak our truth to power and

powerlessness, to make our contribution to the common good in a world of many faiths and non. Since being with you I've seen and heard some good examples of that social engagement. I was particularly impressed with our visit yesterday to the Ark project near the harbour, seeing the pre-school care that the Episcopal church is giving to young children from the most hard pressed families.

A second image I'd like to share with you from our faith heritage comes from the other end of the British Isles at much the same time in history. Pope Gregory in Rome was determined to replant Christianity back in England and he commissioned Augustine to head up the mission. Augustine set out faithfully but when he reached the channel coast and heard rumours of the wild English he lost his nerve and fled back to Rome. Pope Gregory was not impressed. He ordered Augustine back to his mission, and he said, "As you walk your chaplain is to proceed you carrying the cross, but this time he is to turn the cross around so that the crucified Christ is facing you to remind you that Christ died for you, and now you must take the crucified Christ to Britain for the salvation of their souls also." And Augustine went and the mission prospered from the abbey and cathedral at Canterbury, where successive archbishops of Canterbury have ever since had their seat. And the message to us contemporary Anglicans? It's the message of that turned around cross reminding us that our church does not live for itself, it lives for others following the example of its crucified saviour.

My third image comes from Canterbury. I spent seven years of my ministry as University chaplain based at Canterbury cathedral. At demanding times I used to go and sit quietly in the crypt chapel in the Abbey built on that of Augustine's. St Augustine's used to be the missionary college of the Church of England, the place where many Victorian missionaries prepared for their ministry in Africa, India, the Far East, and the West Indies. The walls of the crypt chapel today are still covered in plaques commemorating those who had gone overseas. Each plaque bears a name and two dates - a date of departure and a date of death, and it's an unusual plaque for those two dates to be separated by more than five or six years.

It may be fashionable to criticise those Victorian missionaries with their cultural prejudices and dogmatic attitudes, but they were people of great faith and commitment. They prayed each morning during their time of preparation surrounded by many of those memorials. They knew that they were going to almost certain death and yet they went, confident in the love of God and the power of Christ's gospel. We are right to criticise their cultural imperialism, but there's no denying their courage and conviction.

For mixed motives then sometimes on the back of power, sometimes following commerce, sometimes with heroic motives, sometimes with ignoble motives the Anglican church was planted in innumerable countries around the globe through a massive missionary movement containing many different strands. Barbara and I were such missionaries in the seventies in the newly independent country of Zambia in Central Africa, just as that missionary movement had reached its zenith, for with the end of empire a transformation was beginning which quickly gathered pace.

The mission had been from the West to the East, from the North to the South, with incidentally a massive contribution in terms of money and personnel coming from the Episcopal church of America. Now as country after country became independent, the mission became indigenous with local leadership. The Anglican communion became a commonwealth of independent provinces.

The changes in the last forty years have been immense and we are still coming to terms with them throughout the communion. It's been the tradition for the Archbishop of Canterbury to invite all the bishops to a Lambeth conference in Canterbury every ten years. I've attended four, three as a bishop the first as a consultant. They've all been very different .

The biggest shift has been that of confidence in those attending from provinces in the global South and East. Of course there's always been plenty of confidence from Britain and America. The Episcopal church here has been independent since the War of Independence and has consecrated its own bishops since shortly afterwards, and with the American tradition of democracy, amply illustrated in your proceedings this morning, bishops from here have played an important and articulate part in successive Lambeth Conference.

But the churches of the South, of Africa, India, Asia have now come of age and have things to say to those of us in the West and North and it hasn't been very comfortable. Since 1978 we've had disputes concerning polygamy, women bishops, and sexuality. Issues which engage with culture at a deep level and coming from very different cultures, and coinciding with decades where bishops from Africa in particular have been finding their feet, their voice and their confidence the arguments have been fierce and sometimes inconclusive. Throw in the demise of one empire, the British Empire, and the growth of another through American power and commercial and cultural influence. Put into the mix resentments concerning Palestine Israel, and the Iraq and Afganistan wars and the Muslim world's reaction to what they see as cultural imperialism. Put all that together and it's not surprising if the more gentle atmosphere of reasoned Anglican debate and discussion has changed somewhat.

And of course some of our fellow Anglicans in Africa, India, the Middle East and the Far East are living in places where they are a small minority, very vulnerable to Islamic pressure and with twenty-four hour news and satellite communication everywhere we're all affected by one another's words and actions. In that context where cultural sexual mores are similar in traditional Christianity or Islam and are extremely hostile to same sex relationships it's not surprising that liberal sexual developments here in the States or indeed back home in South London are used by Islamic neighbours in other parts of the world to claim that Christianity is corrupt and is a foreign Western presence. Of course centuries ago here in this diocese after Independence your forebears had to combat the claim that the Episcopal church was the English church unpatriotic to American aspirations. So you've been there

and can have some understanding of how Anglicans in Nigeria or Egypt are responding to equivalent pressures at the present time.

And, of course English bishops like myself carry an additional cultural burden which you thankfully don't share – post colonial guilt. As I've said earlier, I'm an admirer of Victorian Christian missionaries, but it must be admitted that they had a patronising cultural superiority and a taken-for-granted assumption that Britain's calling was to civilize the world, a view I'm sure not shared here in the States where you rejected that claim centuries ago. But all of this has left a legacy in newly independent countries and provinces which means that English bishops and church leaders are almost the last people to have their advice heeded, and conversely such is the post colonial guilt of people like Archbishop Rowan that, it seems to me, he bears insults and anger from bishops and archbishops in Africa and Asia that he would never accept from those in Britain or America

And what's true in the Anglican Communion is true domestically back in the Church of England. My former diocese of Southwark is probably the most liberal in the Church of England. Consisting of half of London it has all the urban and suburban values and pressures that you know here. The same cultural and faith mix, similar divisions in church and community, similar challenges, similar opportunities for mission. I have no doubt that society in London has already made up its mind about sexual values and mores. Matters of divorce and same sex relationships are non issues, every household has family members which previous generations of Christians would have found problematic. And many in Britain still do. Although we in the diocese of Southwark mostly want to open our doors equally without discrimination to race, gender or sexuality and see this as a gospel justice matter, many in the Church of England do not.

Brothers and sister I have to tell you that a Diocese like Southwark in England is in a minority just as we and you in the American Episcopal Church are in a minority in the Anglican Communion. There are mega battles ahead and we'll lose some of them in the short term, and I stand here not to give you advice, English bishops are the last people to give advice to Americans, but to ask you to hang in there. The Anglican communion may not appreciate us overmuch at the present time, but whether it realises it or not, it needs the dedication, discipleship, and insights of the American Episcopal church, and I tell you dioceses like my former diocese need you to stand alongside them in a Church becoming, if anything, more conservative.

Archbishop Rowan believes that, in such times, an Anglican covenant is the only way of holding the Communion together, though there are fears that this would result in a two tier church. He also believes that as part of that covenant there should be several moratoria on such developments as the unwanted intrusion of some bishops into dioceses and provinces not their own. Another call, of course is a moratorium on the ordination of practising gay or lesbian bishops either here in America, or in the Church of England. Most of the bishops in the Church of England will go along with

that, but as one of the many gay priests in my former diocese said to me, “How many centuries is the moratorium to last bishop?”

Well, with such an able potential bishop as Mary Glasspool, it seems that you in Maryland and in the Episcopal Church have already mostly made up your minds that to delay further would be unjust whatever the other consequences even if some of these might well be further hostility to your bishops or indeed your presiding bishop. You must be prepared to see a strong global reaction to the forthcoming consecration of Canon Glasspool, but of course you are well aware of that.

In preparation to being with you I've been reading something of the rich history of your diocese and its episcopacy. I've been interested to see how many firsts you can chalk up. Maryland was one of the first Anglican dioceses in America; Thomas Claggett was the first Episcopal bishop after Independence to be consecrated in America; your diocesan bishop in 1925 John Murray was the first to be elected to the office of presiding bishop of the national church, and of course your present bishop, Bishop Eugene, was the first diocesan Bishop of Maryland since Thomas Claggett to be elected on the first ballot. With that mixture of rich history, tradition and democracy it seems to me that you need no advice from a bishop whose former diocese was only formed a little over a hundred years ago. We in Southwark are new kids on the Anglican block compared with you in Maryland.

Mind you, all has not always been plain sailing in the diocese of Maryland. Last month I spent a few hours in the British Library in London reading the charge the fourth bishop of Maryland, William Whittingham coming as bishop from being a young professor at the General Seminary in New York, gave to this diocesan convention in 1843. There had been a long vacancy before he was elected with very strong support as bishop. He was obviously a man of straight speaking and in his charge he was scathing in his description of the diocese of years past to quote him, “We have sometimes heard it called cold, dead orthodoxy but that is to speak with more bitterness than truth, for though it was cold and dead enough, it was very far from being orthodox.” He didn't pull his punches then, but he had more to say, to quote him, “From what I have heard and read, I am struck with wonder that God spared a church so universally corrupt. Surely the continuing existence of this diocese is a monument of mercy and a signal proof how, under that mercy, the fire of spiritual life may be kept smouldering even under the ashes of an almost extinct profession.”

With that kind of introduction to his new diocese he obviously wasn't out to win friends, but he wasn't looking for friends he was looking for comrades in arms to join him in the struggle for reform to which he felt called. And he looked to what he called again to quote “that strange unanimity with which your choice of bishop rested on one so little worthy of it, for support in strengthening my hands in carrying out the charge committed to me.” In other words, if they'd felt called to elect him with such strong support, they had a duty now to work with him with equal support. And, of

course, he turned out to be the bishop for the times, holding the diocese together through the trauma of the civil war even though Maryland was located on the fault lines of civic division.

The clue to how he did this lay in the title of his convention charge, the Body of Christ, and he had a high doctrine of individual Christians serving their Lord in the unity of that body. To quote him, "To make the individual everything is to preach another Gospel than the one we have received of Paul for individual responsibility separated from organised unity becomes a fearful source of danger and a snare of undoing." And so, Bishop Whittingham challenged the clergy and lay people of his new diocese to work together with him to build the future of the church and help to serve the common good of society.

Well Bishop Eugene, elected with unparalleled support found a diocese of Maryland in a very much better state than the one Bishop Whittingham found, but there is never room for complacency in the Body of Christ so you've been engaged in the process of horizons gathering to discern new vision and mission priorities for the diocese, and you are doing important work in this convention as you lay plans for the future.

I shared earlier three images from the past life of the church which I felt might help us in our present endeavours, Holy Island, S. Augustine's turned around cross, the crypt chapel of S. Augustine's missionary college. I have a fourth image which, in a diocese of battlefields like yours might be helpful. It comes from the diocese of Leicester in the English midlands where I also used to be bishop and it's the battlefield of Naseby. This was the battle during the English Civil War at the time when the Church first came to Maryland, where Oliver Cromwell the military leader of the Parliamentaries fighting the army of King Charles tried out his New Model Army for the first time with spectacular success

The battle started and the forces were deadlocked until the royalist general Prince Rupert led a glorious cavalry charge which cut through the Roundheads like a knife through butter. In triumph on they galloped until they came to the parliamentary army's baggage train at Naseby which they ransacked with great abandon.

But the battle wasn't in fact over. The Roundheads were fighting with disciplined tactics not seen before. Forming and reforming, striking and striking again like a hammer knocking a nail with one blow after another until the job was finally complete.

By the time Prince Rupert with his horsemen had returned to the battle-field, all was over, the king's army had been decimated, the king had fled and it was only a matter of time before he would be arrested and the civil War brought to an end.

It was the discipline of the Roundhead army which had been the key to the victory. But Cromwell hadn't only wanted men of discipline he'd wanted people of faith

"Give me people, who know what they fight for, and love what they know" he'd demanded.

And that, perhaps, is the challenge for us all as we seek to serve and witness to Jesus Christ in our own times. Most of us would probably be happier, like Prince Rupert, in making glorious individualistic charges. But that's not our calling. We are not called to make individualistic rabbit runs down blind alleys, we are called to focus the work of the Body of Christ and to make one small gain after another until the task is thoroughly completed. That it seems, is what you are planning in your Horizon 2015 enterprise and you've made an impressive start.

The Greek poet Nikos Kazantzakis developed the theme of disciplined discipleship in his essay "The Saviours of God".

He wrote "I, the cry, am the Lord your God. I am not an asylum. I am not a hope and a home. I am a call to arms. You are not my slave, nor a plaything in my hands. You are not my friend. You are not my child. You are my comrade in arms. Hold courageously the passes which I have entrusted to you & do not betray them.

Your prayer is not the whimpering of a beggar ...nor is it the trivial reckoning of a small tradesman, "give me & I will give you". Your prayer is the report of a soldier to his general. 'This is what I did today. This is how I fought to save the entire battle in my own sector. These are the obstacles I found. This is how I plan to proceed tomorrow"

And that seems to me to be the spirit of your Convention as you meet in council, prayer and companionship. You are a generous serious people engaged in a generous serious task "The Mission of God". In my former Diocese of Southwark when we tried our hands at producing a Mission Statement for the diocese we came up with this as our aim, "A confident prayerful church, with viable and effective structures, and a holy, educated and trained clergy and laity, equipped for worship and mission, serving and challenging the people of South London

When we were children and were going out to some special occasion my mother used to say, "Remember who you are and where you come from". In this address I've tried to remind us a little of where we as Anglicans have come from. And who we are, well I know precisely who you are because it's there on your web site. Let me remind you of what you say about yourself, "We are a community of congregations and individuals in covenant with God and one another. We commit ourselves to carry forward God's reconciling work through Jesus Christ as we build up the Body of Christ, strengthen one another in Christ's Mission, and strive for justice and peace within the church and the world.

I now wait with eagerness for the continued presentation of the new Vision and Mission priorities as you go forward into the future for God and with God.

A Royalist soldier who was on the losing side at Naseby has this as his epitaph, "He served his master with a constant and dangerous loyalty". May we give such service to Our heavenly master.