The Church-Idea for an Episcopal Moment

by

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Chapter One

Introduction

In 1870, The Rev. Dr. William Reed Huntington (1838-1909) published a series of essays entitled *The Church-Idea* that explicated his vision for the unity of the Church in America. That text began with the words, “Dissatisfaction is the one word that best expresses the state of mind in which Christendom finds itself to-day. There is a wide-spread misgiving that we are on the eve of a momentous change.”¹ It does not require a great deal of understanding about the state of the Church at the time of writing (2015) to realize that Huntington’s words continue to echo loudly through the empty buildings of American Christianity. Huntington saw the possibility of momentous change as an opportunity and spent his life and ministry attempting to change the future of Protestantism in America. Nearly 140 years later, in 2009, non-denominational pastor, leading voice of the Great Emergence, theologian, and author, Brian McLaren, stood before the 76th General Convention and declared the opening of an Episcopal Moment saying, “I believe this moment of Episcopal crisis is also a moment of Episcopal opportunity.”² The argument of this dissertation is that both William Reed Huntington and Brian McLaren are correct in their assertions that the Episcopal Church was and is uniquely poised to meet the religious and spiritual needs of a changing world. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century, it will be argued, that moment was missed. As we shall see, however, the actions of the Episcopal Church in the two General Conventions that followed Brian McLaren’s sermon are slowly moving the church toward realizing her moment of opportunity.


This dissertation will take considerable time to look at the specific moments in history in which McLaren and Huntington found themselves. While it may seem that Post-Civil War and post-modern America have very little in common, the late Phyllis Tickle suggested that perhaps they are merely bookends of a larger historical epoch. The words of hope for church unity from Huntington’s era have much in common with the words of hope for an Episcopal Moment in our own. Chapter one will lay out the historical setting of the church in America after the Civil War, followed by a chapter dealing with Huntington’s *Church-Idea* and his subsequent work to bring forth a pan-Protestant American Catholic Church under the umbrella of what would become the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, including a look at Huntington’s work to revise the Constitution of the Episcopal Church to achieve his goals. Chapter three will focus on McLaren’s speeches beginning with his presentation to the Lambeth Conference in 2008, through his General Convention sermon in 2009 and the subsequent tour of Diocesan Conventions as well as other presentations and addresses, culminating with his reflections in an interview with me on July 13, 2015. The final chapter looks at the response to each of these scholar-pastors in their era, as well as a proposal for a way forward, utilizing the work of both thinkers to suggest a way in which the Episcopal Church might seize this Episcopal Moment and become a church for the 21st century, ready to meet the needs of a changing America.

There are, of course, many assumptions within this dissertation, as there are within the theses of Huntington and McLaren. There will not be space in the essay to engage in a full sociological study of religion’s place within the larger cultural shifts of our time, although some review of the basics will certainly be in order. Additionally, the premise of this essay is that the church is willing to change, which I pray is not too large an assumption to make. Moreover, I firmly believe that the Spirit is at work in the Episcopal Church, calling us forward to preach the
Good News in the 21st century. A factor limiting my research was the availability of documents pertaining to McLaren’s Episcopal Moment idea. Specifically lacking is record of his presentation to the Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles. A promotional video of the presentation seems to show that it was his most in-depth dealing with the topic. It is unfortunate that it could not be recovered.

The primary areas of interest during my doctoral studies at The School of Theology have been Church History and Liturgics. I stumbled upon this topic of study during the summer of 2012 when The Rev. Dr. Mark Chapman gave two lectures entitled, “American Catholicity and the National Church.” As I listened to Dr. Chapman’s presentation of the passionate work of Huntington, I realized that I had heard similar ideas in a class, “The Church in Post-Modern Society” taught by Dr. Diana Butler Bass at Virginia Theological Seminary in 2008. As I have studied the past, it has become clear that it offers innumerable insights into the future. I hope to build on my understanding of the history and the subtle, but inherent, flexibility of the Episcopal Church to suggest that the future for the Episcopal Church is much less dire than some would suggest. It is my sincere belief that if the leadership of the Episcopal Church, most notably the General Convention, and specifically the House of Bishops, takes heed of the advice of Huntington and McLaren, we can capture the Episcopal Moment. I offer this paper to the wider church in the hopes of producing new wine to pour into the new wineskins of the 21st century.

3 https://youtu.be/qwxZMNQKkYe
Chapter Two

A 19th-Century Church Crisis

“Dissatisfaction is the one word that best expresses the state of mind in which Christendom finds itself to-day. There is a wide-spread misgiving that we are on the eve of momentous changes. Unrest is everywhere.” These words could have easily begun a text on the state of the church in America today (2015), but they do not. Instead, they make up the opening paragraph of The Church-Idea: essays toward unity, written by the Rev. Dr. William Reed Huntington and published in 1870. That the Episcopal Church was, in many ways, feeling what the nation at large was feeling after the tumultuous years of the American Civil War is not surprising, but that Huntington saw in this pervasive dissatisfaction the opportunity for the Church catholic generally, and the Episcopal Church specifically, to offer respite in the midst of the ongoing unrest is part of what earned him the honorary title of “First Presbyter” in the Episcopal Church.5

William Reed Huntington had a single focus for his life and ministry: church unity. As his biographer, John Suter, describes it, “He had dreamed a dream, and the dream was that the Christianity of America should one day present a united front to the forces of opposition, and claim his beloved land for Christ.”6 Before we spend significant time on Huntington’s Idea which became the foundation of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, we will first look at the larger climate of Christianity in America following the Civil War and up through the first decade of the twentieth century, paying particular attention to Huntington’s underlying motivations.

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The opening sentences of *The Church-Idea* go on to say, “The party of the Papacy and the party of the Reformation, the party of orthodoxy and the party of liberalism, are all alike agitated by the consciousness that a spirit of change is in the air.”7 Unlike the early American jeremiad, which “made anxiety its end as well as its means” and turned “crisis into the social norm,”8 the work of Huntington was aimed at a coming peace that was, at least in his mind, God’s will for a hurting nation, a theme which is evident only a few lines further into *The Church-Idea*:

A calmer and perhaps truer inference is that we are about entering upon a new reach of Church history, and that the dissatisfaction and perplexity are only transient. There is always a tumult of waves at the meeting of the waters; but when the streams have mingled, the flow is smooth and still again. The plash and gurgle that we hear may mean something like this.9

It is clear from Huntington’s early writings that the tragedy of the American Civil War and burgeoning Reconstruction weighed heavily on his heart. On May 16, 1865, Huntington introduced his hope for an “American Catholicity,” even as the nation was a full year away from President Andrew Johnson’s final declaration of peace.10 In his sermon to the Church Union of the Diocese of Massachusetts gathered at Boston’s historic Trinity Church, Huntington makes a clear connection between the need for unity in the nation and the need for unity in the church:

Real unity always seeks its expression in visible unity. The public events of the last four years, have been teaching us, with emphasis, how childish it is to scoff at visible unity as a thing of small importance. A million lives have not been given for a chimera. The

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visible is the symbol of the invisible, and symbolism we must have, wherever there is
government and law.\textsuperscript{11}

For Huntington, the connection between disunion in the Church and the sort of disunion in the
world that led to the Civil War was clear: “Doubtless in the triumvirate of evil, the world and the
flesh are the predominant partners as respects the number of souls enticed away from God; but,
in any fair reckoning, a third member of the group, the devil of division, should have its due.”\textsuperscript{12}
So it was that a National Church, or as Huntington called it in the early days, an “American
Catholicity,” was needed, and needed soon.

A true Catholicism, as distinguished from individualism on the one hand, and from
popery on the other, was never more imperatively needed than now and here. Never, it
may be added, was there a grander opportunity to profit by the errors of the past in
building for the future. We are entering upon a time of reconstruction in the State; God
grant that it may be also a period of reconstruction in the Church.\textsuperscript{13}

As the years went by, the immediate sting of the Civil War faded, but the call for unity
remained strong. Church Historian Robert Prichard notes that while America was working to
reinvent itself through Reconstruction and the Industrial Revolution, leaders in the Episcopal
Church like Huntington in the North and William Porcher DuBose in the South, were setting the
stage for a National Church based on three ideals: “that only a national church could cope with
the social and intellectual complexities of modern industrial America; that episcopacy was a
logical form of leadership for such a church; and that, while such a national church did not yet
exist, the Episcopal Church could play a leading role in its formation.”\textsuperscript{14} As we will see,

\begin{footnotes}
Transcribed by Wayne Kempton, Archivist and Historiographer of the Diocese of New York. Accessed August 15,
2013. \url{http://anglicanhistory.org/usa/wrh/american_catholicity1865.html}
\item[12] Huntington, William Reed. \textit{A National Church}. New York: Scribner’s, 1899, 47.
1999, 188.
\end{footnotes}
Huntington wrestled with the question of governance, but his conviction that the Episcopal Church would play a primary role in an American Catholic Church never wavered.

Nearly thirty years after *The Church-Idea* was published, Huntington completed his trilogy on church unity with a book of lectures given at Kenyon College entitled *A National Church*. In those lectures, Huntington argued (to Prichard’s point), “Surely the time has come for a turn of the tide. The *reductio ad absurdum* of sectarianism, as a philosophy of Christianity, is complete… As a people we have ceased to believe any longer in sectarianism; but the task of doing away with the thing, now that it has been saddled upon us, looms so large as almost to incapacitate us for effort.” Citing H.K. Carroll’s, *The Religious Forces of the United States*, Huntington argues that it was a sin for there to be 143 distinct religious denominations in the census of 1890. He went on to sort the 143 denominations into ten “affinity” groups that contained “nineteen-twentieths” or 95% of all communicants. This study of denominations and affinity raised a question that had already plagued him for 40 years:

So then, here lies the practical question with which we have to grapple: Is there discoverable any persuasive or conciliatory method of bringing these ten types of Christian life and thought, these ten tribes as we may call them, into such a relations with one another, that as Americans we may look forward not merely to a retention of our common Christianity, but to the gradual emergence of a national Church really worthy of the name?

Digging deeper into Carroll’s text from the perspective of 2015, where much has been made of the Pew Research Center finding that 22.8% of Americans are religiously...

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15 Suter, *Life and Letters*, 492. The trilogy’s middle book is entitled *The Peace of the Church*

16 Huntington, *A National Church*, 44.

17 Huntington, *A National Church*, 43.

“unaffiliated,” it is interesting to note that the 1890 statistics show that while estimates had the Christian population up near 57 million, or 91% of the 62,622,250 citizens, a much smaller number were actual communicants, those listed in official church records and including “all who have the privilege of partaking in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, and members in denominations like the Friends, Unitarians, etc.” Carroll states it this way, “There were in 1890 nearly twenty and a half millions of Christian believers, of all creeds and denominations… When it is remembered that several millions of our population are children too young to be communicants, the showing for the Churches cannot be regarded as unfavorable, by any means. Nearly one person in every three of all ages is a Christian communicant.”

The difference between the anxiety of 2015 and the “not unfavorable” tone of the turn of the twentieth century is that of growth. While in 2015 church attendance in America is trending downward, in 1912 “growth [was] the rule and decline the rare exception.” Despite the Church’s significant growth pattern at the turn of the 20th century, as the number of communicants grew 60% between 1890 and 1906, the reason for Huntington’s “dissatisfaction” shows up in Carroll’s analysis:

We have, of course, no warrant for believing that the majority of these 5,000,000 who are outside the religious population are atheists, or avowed unbelievers… But most of the 5,000,000 are probably opposed to the Churches for various reasons. And we must not forget that in the fifty-seven millions counted as the Christian population are many who are indifferent to the claims of religion, and seldom or never go to a house of worship. Adding these, and the large number of members on whose lives religion exercises practically no power, to the 5,000,000, we have a problem of sufficient magnitude to

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22 Carroll, The Religious Forces, xxxv-xxxvi.
23 Carroll, The Religious Forces, lxiv.
engage the mind, heart, and hand of the Church for a generation. One out of every twelve persons is either an active or passive opponent of religion; two out of every three are not members of any Church.\(^{24}\)

So it was that in the decades following the American Civil War, as the Church gained members and influence that William Reed Huntington refused to fall prey to the comfort of complacency. Instead, he continued to seek to give the Church her best chance possible to meet the needs of every American citizen through the ideal of a national “Church of the Reconciliation.”\(^{25}\) On Sunday, November 19, 1905, 42 years to the day after President Abraham Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address,” Huntington stepped into the pulpit at Grace Church, New York City, where he was rector, to offer a sermon on a day which had been set aside as “A National Observance of the Day in the Interest of Christian Unity.”\(^{26}\) In his sermon, which was focused on the need for real unity beyond federation he argues three motivations for unity: intellectual, moral, and economic.

From the intellectual perspective, Huntington argues that the source of much of the division in Christianity was the reopening of a deep theological question which had been at rest since the Reformation, “What is the true source of authority in religion?”\(^{27}\) Because of similarities to conversations today between the likes of Phyllis Tickle and Brian McLaren, it behooves us to read Huntington’s argument in its entirety:

At the close of the Reformation, the Roman Catholics had settled down upon the infallibility of the Church, though without determining to a nicety just where that infallibility resided; while at the same time the Protestants had settled down upon the infallibility of the Bible, though with only an untenable theory of verbal inspiration to

\(^{24}\) Carroll, The Religious Forces, xxxv, emphasis mine.

\(^{25}\) Huntington, The Church-Idea, 147.


\(^{27}\) Huntington, “Inter-Church or Intra-Church, Which?”, 274.
give as a reason for holding the Book to be infallible. But, by and by, there came discoveries in natural science, apparently subversive (some of them) of tenets which both Roman Catholics and Protestants had for generations held beyond question. Had God made the round world so sure that it could not be moved? Had He made it round like a sphere instead of round like a circle which it looked to be? Did He make it in six working-days, resting on the seventh? Did He put man upon it only about six thousand years ago? Was sin really in the world before death? A negative answer to these questions and others like them, did not, to be sure, involve the saving or the losing of the soul; but it did jar and very seriously jar men’s confidence in the authority upon which they had all along been accepting affirmative answers, whether such authority had been, in any given case, that of the infallible Church or that of the infallible Bible. 

Using Jesus’ prayer for his disciples in John 17 as his primary text, Huntington argues that, for Protestants, the question of authority should ultimately be answered not by “certain elaborate philosophies of religion, systems of theology, bodies of divinity,… or in the observance of complicated forms of worship, intricate liturgical arrangements, heavily brocaded rituals; but one through Him whom John the Baptist pointed as the Lamb of God, whom Simon Peter owned to be the Christ, whom fifty generations of believers have called Blessed.”

Turning his attention to the moral imperative for unity, Huntington argued that the Church owes it to society at large to live into Christ’s prayer for unity. “It is because sober-minded people here in America have become seriously alarmed at the rapid spread among us of [a] sort of indifference to moral values that they are casting about to see whether some way cannot be found to unify, and by unifying to intensify, the forces that make for righteousness.”

Finally, Huntington reluctantly turns his attention to the third argument for unity, the economic one. He is careful to note that giving for the Kingdom is not the issue: “If our Christianity cost us twenty times as much as it does, and it would do so were we in dead earnest, we should be

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28 Huntington, “Inter-Church or Intra-Church, Which?”, 274.
29 Huntington, “Inter-Church or Intra-Church, Which?”, 276.
30 Huntington, “Inter-Church or Intra-Church, Which?”, 278.
only the better men and women for the outlay”\textsuperscript{31}; but rather the money spent was not “in dead earnest.” “It is not the expenditure of money for religion’s sake, it is the waste of it that one deplores.”\textsuperscript{32} In the middle book of his trilogy on Church Union, \textit{The Peace of the Church}, Huntington had, again begrudgingly, dealt with this issue: “common-sense demands to be informed why it should be necessary to keep three or four sets of parochial functionaries in pay, merely to enable three or four groups of fellow-townsmen, who differ in opinion on three or four points of belief which nobody accounts essential, to enjoy the luxury of being walled off from one another while they say their prayers.”\textsuperscript{33} Here, in his sermon on unity, he returns, without hesitation to “The multiplication of half-filled meeting-houses and half-famished ministers in little country towns, is a sight to make the angels weep…”\textsuperscript{34} Whether one focuses on the intellectual, moral, or economic motivations, Huntington’s goal is as clear as it is grand: “Christ’s similitude of the one vine with the many branches, Paul’s parable of the one body with the many members, Peter’s figure of the one holy temple built up of the many stones – of such sort are the shadow-pictures that haunt our dreams; let us keep on believing in them, till these eyes behold the vine in blossom, the body all alive, the temple built.”\textsuperscript{35}

Huntington believed, and believed strongly, that the call to unity was more than merely a polite notion, but that it was a Gospel imperative. In a sermon preached in 1899 entitled “The Talisman of Unity,” Huntington called on the Church to heed the words of the prophet Jeremiah

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Huntington, “Inter-Church or Intra-Church, Which?”, 280.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Huntington, “Inter-Church or Intra-Church, Which?”, 280.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Huntington, William Reed. \textit{The Peace of the Church}. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1891, 22.
\item \textsuperscript{34} Huntington, “Inter-Church or Intra-Church, Which?”, 280.
\item \textsuperscript{35} Huntington, “Inter-Church or Intra-Church, Which?”, 282.
\end{itemize}
and listen for God’s call to return to Him as sheep return to their shepherd.\textsuperscript{36} Turning his attention again to the more than 50% of Americans that do not “acknowledge allegiance to any form of organized Christianity,”\textsuperscript{37} Huntington boldly proclaimed that the Church’s disunity was to blame:

But why is it that our young men and young women can afford to take up this attitude of indifference toward organized religion? How do they justify themselves to themselves? Largely in this way, I fancy: They look at the ‘religious world’ as they have heard the journalists call it; and they consider it, what it is. They see it made up of a number of groups or circles, ranging all the way from Roman Catholics at one end of the line to Christian Scientists at the other. ‘These are so many religious clubs,’ they say to themselves. ‘Each seems to have its own clubhouse and its own set of officers. Even were I disposed to join one of them, I should be puzzled to make a selection; and, perhaps, I could not afford the fees. On the whole, I think I will let my membership in my Trade-union, and my Order, and my Friendly Society suffice.’\textsuperscript{38}

Over the course of more than fifty years, William Reed Huntington fought for church unity. Huntington’s motivations evolved over the years, as did the living out of the Idea as it moved through General Convention actions and found its way to the meeting of all the bishops in the Anglican Communion at the Lambeth Conference of 1888. Whether it was the tragedy of the Civil War, the stresses of Reconstruction, the power of statistics, or his own theological understandings that motivated him, Huntington was compelled with singleness of mind to call the church toward unity, a subject, he once wrote, than which “no loftier object is it possible for prayer and effort to be devoted.”\textsuperscript{39} We now turn our attention from his motivations to the fruit of his labor; chapter 2 will examine the lasting unity he sought.

\textsuperscript{36} “He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock.” Jeremiah 31.10

\textsuperscript{37} Huntington, William Reed. \textit{The Talisman of Unity}. New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1899, 11

\textsuperscript{38} Huntington, \textit{The Talisman of Unity}, 11-12.

\textsuperscript{39} Suter, \textit{Life and Letters}, 437.
Chapter Three
The Church-Idea

In this chapter, we will take an in depth look at the development of Huntington’s ideal of church unity from three points in “American Catholicity” to a simple quadrilateral in The Church-Idea, and ultimately the versions which were approved by the House of Bishops at the 1886 General Convention and the Lambeth Conference of 1888. We will note how each version was expanded and how Huntington’s strong nationalism influenced his work, and why his love for the Episcopal Church may be the reason that his plan for church unity never caught on outside of the halls in which Anglican bishops live and move and have their being.

As the Civil War came to an end, a deeply wounded nation began to seek ways to restore the perceived unity of its past. For Huntington, the challenge was clear; the church must forge the path to unity on behalf of the nation. As the Body of Christ, the role of the church is to reflect the possibility for perfection that was made known in the life and ministry of Jesus. As he preached to the Church Union of the Diocese of Massachusetts in 1865, Huntington recognized the limits of that calling:

> We are estranged from one another, more or less, by differences of calling, differences of education, differences of climate, differences of temperament. This is because our little horizons are so narrow. But Christ, raised far above the petty inequalities that hide us from each other, sweeps with his glance the whole broad field of our humanity.\(^40\)

It was in that sermon, entitled “American Catholicity” that William Reed Huntington first spelled out publicly his image of a pan-Protestant Church, united under the banner of Jesus’ perfection. “It is conceivable,” Huntington claimed, “that out of the whole world, with all its tribes, and families, and kindreds, and peoples, there might be gathered and united a body of men capable of reflecting the fulness (sic) of the Lord, and worthy to be called his bride… we can imagine God

\(^{40}\) Huntington, “American Catholicity,” 4.
electing or selecting a company of men, a chosen people, to be indeed a Holy temple, a mystical body for his Spirit to inhabit.”  

In his first sermon on the subject, Huntington goes on to spell out three points that would, five years later, develop into his Quadrilateral. “Allow me to suggest the three prominent characteristics by which a truly National Church in this country would be known. Let us term them the conditions of American catholicity. They are three: a simple creed; a varied worship; a generous polity.” As the sermon winds to an end, he gives a nod to a fourth, vitally important point, while acknowledging that he is still struggling to wrap his mind around its implications: “Here lies the rock of our difficulty. What is that one common government, under which these various orders, with their several systems of operation, would be willing to range themselves? I cannot conceive of a visible unity apart from unity of government, and I ask myself again and again where such unity is to be sought…” Throughout the course of “American Catholicity,” we find the essence of themes that will develop over the course of Huntington’s life: a strong nationalism, the need for flexibility, the absolute of humility, the peskiness of the governance question, and always seeking God’s help. 

From the early stages of his thought on this issue, through to his third, and final, book on Church Unity, A National Church, published in 1897, Huntington sought to raise up the ideal of nationalism as it related to Church Unity. “The Church of America must be thoroughly American,” he said in 1865, “The idea of a National church is that it embodies the regenerate national life.” He goes on to posit that just as individuals retain characteristics of themselves

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41 Huntington, “American Catholicity,” 5.
43 Huntington, “American Catholicity,” 11-12.
upon conversion, so it is with a people. “British traits, as such, survive the conversion of the British people from Druidism to Christianity,” he argues, as did national traits in every other Church that came to be after the breakup of the Roman Empire: “A converted people is as sure to retain a fractional part of its inborn characteristic, its constitutional habit, as a converted person is.”

So, Huntington argues, “If we would build up a Church of America, it must be with an intelligent comprehension of American character, its capabilities and its deficiencies, its strong points and its weak.” He is quick to argue, however, for some moderation: “I do not of course mean that the American Church ought to reflect all American habits, be they good or bad, and that whereas we, as a people, are somewhat notorious abroad for a spirit of boastfulness and self-complacency, our National Church should be similarly distinguished from other parts of the catholic world.”

It is probably the case that Huntington was caught up in a tide of nationalism that swept across the northern States following the Civil War, but his point is well taken: in order for the Church in America to find unity, it must understand what it means to be American.

The tenuous balance between nationalism and churchmanship raises again questions of flexibility and humility which bring us back to Huntington’s three characteristics of American Catholicity. The first characteristic, a simple creed, would be obvious to every Christian, if it were not for that one important word, “simple.” “A Church without a creed is a palpable absurdity,” Huntington told the people gathered at Trinity Church: “On the other hand, it is an absurdity to suppose that our people, with all their variety of education and training, could ever be brought to agree upon any elaborate system of divinity, whether that system were allied to

46 Huntington, A National Church, 9.
Trent or to Geneva.” Here is where we get our first glimpse of what will be a recurring call for humility and flexibility. Huntington’s goal is to bring people together, and he realized very early on that what forces people apart more than anything else is the desire for strict statements of belief. In his 1870 book, The Church-Idea, this point is made crystal clear: “The Christian Church was meant to be an inclusive, comprehensive, catholic society, and not the opposite. Any system, therefore, that proposes to curtail, narrow, or diminish the largeness of the blessing thus bestowed upon the world does violence to the purpose of our Lord.”

His understanding of a simple creed would develop, but in this first attempt to define American Catholicity, Huntington makes a very simple claim indeed.

The Church of America must plant herself, without hesitancy or reserve, on the grand facts of the incarnation... She will accept the Bible as the spoken Word of a living God. She will make the primitive creeds, which are the condensation of that Word of God, her citadel. And on Peter’s rock, ‘Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God,’ she will set up her gates. Upon such a basis, unity of faith may be obtained.

The facts of the incarnation, the Bible as the Word of God, and the Messiahship of Jesus are, at least in 1865, the simple foundation of faith for Huntington. As any good leader of a renewal movement would do, he stakes his claim not on the issues of his day, but rather on the shoulders of the primitive past: “Do you complain that this is giving up too much? It is giving up no more than the Church was willing to give up during the first three centuries of her life, centuries certainly as honorable to her as any that have since elapsed... We can afford the little we surrender, in view of the immensity we gain.”

50 Huntington, The Church-Idea, 85.
Huntington’s second characteristic, a varied worship, is an odd one for an Anglican cleric, and as such, it is one that would slip to the background in his future writings on the subject. Even as he speaks it in 1865, one can tell he is struggling with what “a varied worship” might actually mean for a Church built on the foundation of common prayer. “I yield to no one in love and admiration of the Book of Common Prayer. It satisfies my mind, it warms my heart, it feeds my spirit,” he says, withholding the “but” for just a moment, “And yet I cannot help seeing the egregious fallacy of making liturgical worship a condition precedent of ecclesiastical unity. We cannot afford to keep men out of the fold of Christ on pathetic grounds; and the form of worship, where the creed is right, is purely an aesthetic question.”53 His goal in a varied worship is not to walk away from the Book of Common Prayer, for he thinks that one day the whole nation will gather around its splendor: “I have faith to believe that, in due time, the taste of the community will have been so far educated that nothing less than the liturgy which is the natural inheritance of the Anglo Saxon race will satisfy it.”54 Instead, his goal is that of flexibility, of openness, and most importantly, humility so that as many souls as possible can subscribe to the basics of the Christian faith:

Human nature, even when regenerate, is more easily led than driven, -- especially in things religious. The moment you give your neighbor to understand that you believe your worship to be more acceptable to God because it is in better taste, that moment you alienate and embitter him. He falls back, with justice, upon first principles, and makes the story of the Pharisee and the Publican his own.55

As time went on and his thoughts developed further, Huntington would leave room for a varied worship without such explicit references.

In his third characteristic of American Catholicity, a generous polity, we see the beginnings of what will be the ongoing point of contention between Huntington, his beloved Episcopal Church, and the other 140-plus Protestant denominations. At the turn of the 20th century, he will look back on the polity issue with a certain wistfulness and yet steadfast hope: “We are now discovering how many of our old alienations were founded upon strifes of words rather than stifes of fact. A little of the oil of gladness goes a long way as a lubricant. What we need now is to get near each other.”

Returning to 1865, we find Huntington offering three points concerning generous polity. First and foremost, he deals with the means of entrance into the National Church: “One feature of [a generous] polity would be the recognition, at the outset, of all the baptized as making up the body of the National Church. Let it be understood that baptism admits to the ecclesiastical privileges, just as naturalization admits to the civil privileges of the land.”

It would seem that this would be a broad enough definition, but realizing that humans are quick to exclude, he uses his second point to underscore the first: “Another mark of a generous polity would be a willingness to sanction a great variety of methods in doing our Lord’s work.”

If every baptized person were a member of the National Church, then it would naturally follow that this church would be full of great diversity. Great diversity requires flexibility and humility, which are not characteristics shared by many human beings: “Ye are apt to treat superciliously, or, at least, with a contemptuous toleration, such forms of Christian activity and

56 For more on the reaction to Huntington, see Chapter 5.

57 Huntington, A National Church, 69.

58 “American Catholicity,” 10.

devotion as are alien to our own tastes and habits.” 60 Huntington is very careful to show that in order for an American Catholicity to be possible, we must come to terms with great diversity. 61 He goes on to liken the diversity of sects within Protestantism to the various Orders found within Roman Catholicism and asks, with sincerity of spirit:

Why might not a generous polity secure the harmonious cooperation, in one National Church, of all the five great religious bodies among which the Protestant Christians of this country are distributed? This would be something analogous to the religious orders of the old Church; it would be fitted to conciliate prejudices, and would wonderfully diminish friction. Protestant sects have been often blamed for calling themselves after their founders’ names. But if men will only consent to keep the unity of faith, and to acknowledge one common government, we need not quarrel about names. Under such circumstances, it would be no more schismatical for a body of believers to call themselves Wesleyans or Calvinists, then it was for the old friars to call themselves Dominicans and Franciscans. 62

With that, we return to the question will be the source of much contention for Huntington and his goal of unity: one common government. His biographer, John Suter, called the governance question a natural “storm-center in much of the debate as to unity.” 63 Still, it is a matter that had to be dealt with for unity to be found between Congregationalist, Baptists, Presbyterians, and even among the Protestant churches which maintained the episcopate: Methodists, Lutheran, and Episcopalians. After much thought and prayer, he unsurprisingly settles on the form of government that he has come to know and love in his own Church: “I ask myself again and again where such unity is to be sought, unless we find under that system which is both old and new, conservative and progressive, catholic and reformed, the system of

60 Huntington, “American Catholicity,” 10.
63 Suter, Life and Letters, 401.
We might be suspicious of his choice of a republican episcopacy (he will later term this “primitive episcopacy”) as the foundation of governance upon which a National Church might be found, but we would do well to withhold our judgment and consider that this point was also a source of his conviction. As a member of the clergy in the Episcopal Church, Huntington felt a duty to work toward unity, not because it felt comfortable to him or would be the easiest course of action, but again because of the historic nature of the Episcopal Church:

It is idle to prate about the Church of the future, unless you can find for it some point of historical attachment to the Church of the past. Just this ‘missing link’ the Protestant Episcopal Church in these United States supplies, a Church that traces her lineage all the way back to the first century, while, at the same time, she is in her constitution, perfectly conformed to the structure of the civil government under which we live.  

It is in this struggle over a unified governance that we also find the place of Huntington’s deep faith. It is easy to lose sight of the Gospel in the quagmire of Church politics, but it is precisely there that Huntington is reminded that it is only through the power of God that any progress toward unity is possible: “I have said that a simple creed, a varied worship, a generous polity will distinguish our National Church when it is reared. Let me add now that faith and love alone can rear that Church. To draw unity out of discord is God’s work.” The sermon comes to a close with an image of what God could do, if only we were willing: “Remember it is peace we want. Only by speaking the truth in love, patiently and honestly weighing the arguments of those who differ with us, gently smoothing away prejudice, and gracefully conceding, where it is

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64 Huntington, “American Catholicity,” 11-12.
65 Huntington, “American Catholicity,” 12.
possible to concede, can we hope for a shadow of success. May the God of Peace send us a new Pentecost that these things may come to pass.”\footnote{Huntington, “American Catholicity,” 13.}

Five years after his “American Catholicity” sermon, Huntington preached a series of three sermons on the topic of church unity in his parish, All Saints’, Worcester, MA. In the final sermon, given on January 30, 1870, he used publicly for the first time the word with which he would forever be associated, Quadrilateral. Suter recounts that the sermon was based on 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, the varieties of gifts. Huntington reminded his audience, as he was wont to do, that the motivation for church unity came not from the desires of man, but from the heart of God.\footnote{Suter, \textit{Life and Letters}, 162.} He followed up with a call to repentance against the sin of denominationalism,\footnote{Chapman, Mark. “American Catholicity and the National Church.” \textit{Lectures to The School of Theology at The University of the South. Sewanee Theological Review Easter 2013 Volume 56:2}, 128.} inviting the congregation to ponder his themes of flexibility and humility.\footnote{Suter, \textit{Life and Letters}, 162-163.}

The sermon finds its climax in the presentation of Huntington’s soon-to-be famous Quadrilateral. In this section, we hear again his conviction that the Episcopal Church has a special role calling it “the only reasonable hope,”\footnote{Suter, \textit{Life and Letters}, 163.} in the pursuit of church unity:

Now the conditions of Church unity demanded by the Anglican principle, the points which that principle cannot possibly surrender without self-destruction are these four:  
1. The Holy Scriptures, as the Word of God.  
2. The Primitive Creeds as the Rule of Faith.  
3. The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself.  
4. The Episcopate as the center or keystone of governmental unity.  
These four points, like the four famous fortresses of Lombardy, make the Quadrilateral of Anglicanism. Within them the Church of the Reconciliation stands secure.\footnote{Suter, \textit{Life and Letters}, 163.}
The special place held by Anglicanism will show up again and again in Huntington’s work, including both times he lists the Quadrilateral in full. In *The Church-Idea*, a book which finds its genesis in the sermon of January 30, 1870, he prefaces the Quadrilateral with these words: “The true Anglican position, like the City of God in the Apocalypse, may be said to lie foursquare. Honestly to accept that position is to accept,” and he goes on to list his four points. More than twenty years later, in *The Peace of the Church*, the middle book of his trilogy on church unity, Huntington again points to the primacy of place held by the Episcopal Church and, by then, the wider Anglican Communion in what we will see is a much expanded Quadrilateral:

Let us hear from each denomination what, in its deliberate judgment, is the most generous platform of union it conscientiously offer to the rest. ... One of our denominations, as it happens, has done this very thing already, and is first in the field with its suggestion of the true basis of unity... The Chicago-Lambeth platform, as it may fairly enough be called, sets forth that the data essential to the establishment of a visible unity among Christians are as follows:

First. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as containing all things necessary to Salvation, and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith. Secondly. The Apostles’ Creed as the Baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.

Thirdly. The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself, – Baptism and the Supper of our Lord, – ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.

Fourthly, 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 the Church.

It was Huntington’s firm conviction up through his final days that the Episcopal Church was well suited, if not best suited, to meet the needs of a rapidly changing America because of the gift it could offer in the Quadrilateral. In a sermon preached on the 22nd of January, 1899, entitled “The Talisman of Unity,” Huntington made explicit this bold claim: “The American

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73 Huntington, *The Church-Idea*, 156.

74 Huntington, *The Peace of the Church*, 45-46. A more detailed examination of each point of the Quadrilateral follows
Episcopal Church stands, to-day, the most comprehensive Church in Christendom, loyal to the Scriptures of both Testaments, loyal to the early Creeds, loyal to the Sacraments of Christ, loyal to Holy Order – a spiritual house large enough for a nation.”

Before we turn our attention to the specifics of the Quadrilateral and their benefit to the Church at large, some time must be spent in understanding Huntington’s assertion of the pride of place of Anglicanism within this hoped for church unity. To audiences full of mostly Episcopalians, his argument would come a reassuring, however, some of his language comes across as stereotypical, at best, and downright racist, at worst. Nevertheless, his conviction about the primacy of the Anglican tradition was grounded in the difference, as he saw it, between the principles of Anglicanism and the Anglican system which he parses out, at some length, in *The Church-Idea*. He begins his argument for the primacy of Anglicanism in her history, arguing that the foundation of an American Catholic Church “must have an historical character; its roots must be driven deep down into the farthest past; it cannot be a creature of today.” He suggests that in America, only two Churches qualify on the basis of history: Anglicanism and Romanism, which “trace their lineage to Apostolic times [and] are especially solicitous to retain the grand old epithet of ‘Catholic.’” He then turns his attention to his beloved Anglican tradition, and tries to whittle down an answer to his central question, “What are the essential, the absolutely essential features of the Anglican position? When it is proposed to make Anglicanism

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75 Huntington, *The Talisman of Unity*, 18.

76 See, for example, Huntington, *The Church-Idea*, 139ff. “That a marvelous diversity of origin distinguishes our population cannot be denied, but there is a fact of equal significance to be set over it. Notwithstanding our strange mingling of bloods, there is one race that contrives to keep, and for obvious reasons always will keep the ascendancy – the Anglo-Saxon.”

77 Huntington, *The Church-Idea*, 152.

the basis of the Church of the Reconciliation, it is above all things necessary to determine what Anglicanism is.”

Huntington is aware of the tendency in Romanism to exaggerate what is central, such as the doctrines of papal supremacy and relating to Mary and the saints. He is equally aware of the same tendency in Anglicanism: “The word brings up before the eyes of some a flutter of surplices, a vision of village spires and cathedral towers, a somewhat stiff and stately company of deans, prebendaries, and choristers, and that is about all. But we greatly mistake if we imagine that the Anglican principle has no substantial existence apart from these accessories.” Here he makes clear the distinction between the Anglican principle and the Anglican system, noting “The writer does not favor attempting to foist the whole Anglican system upon America; while yet he believes that the Anglican principle is America’s best hope.” The Anglican principle is therefore to be distinguished from the system that complicates it: “Because the English State-Church has muffled these first principles in a cloud of non-essentials, and has said to the people of the land, ‘Take all this or nothing,’ she mourns to-day the loss of half her children. Only by avoiding the like fatal error can the American branch of the Anglican Church hope to save herself from becoming in effect whatever she may be in name, a sect.”

With a clear understanding of how the Quadrilateral attempts to maintain the Anglican principle while being “disentangled from all [that is] accidental and unessential” in the Anglican system, we can now turn our attention to the four points of Huntington’s Quadrilateral. We will

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82 Huntington, *The Church-Idea*, 156.
look at each point to determine what it offers the wider Church. We will pay particular attention
to the additions made between the Quadrilateral’s first incarnation in 1870 and the final version,
which was adopted by the Bishop’s at Lambeth in 1888, using Huntington’s own words as our
guide: “Any system that proposes to curtail, narrow, or diminish the largeness of the blessing
bestowed upon the world by the Christian Church does violence to the purpose of our Lord.” 84

Point One - The Holy Scriptures as the Word of God

Beginning with the ordination rite in the 1552 Book of Common Prayer 85 through Article
VI of the Thirty-Nine Articles 86 and up through every ordination service 87 performed in the
Episcopal Church to this day, one common theme has withstood the test of time: “Holy
Scriptures containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor
may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of
the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” 88 As Huntington first lays out his
understanding of what it means that Holy Scriptures are “the Word of God,” he points to these
words from Article VI as having real wisdom despite widely disparate understandings of what
they might mean. Quoting the Bishop of Ely’s essay entitled “Inspiration” published in Aids to
Faith in 1861, Huntington notes that one of the great gifts of Anglicanism is that it has “happily
pledged no special philosophy of inspiration.” 89 “It seems pretty generally agreed among
thoughtful men at present,’ says Bishop Harold Browne, ‘that definite theories of inspiration are

84 Huntington, The Church-Idea, 85.
85 1552 Book of Common Prayer, 232, Reprinted from a copy in the British Museum,
(https://archive.org/details/prayerbookkinged00churiala) [accessed December 8, 2015]
doubtful and dangerous.” 90 Huntington’s goal, early on in his explication of the Quadrilateral, is to remind his readers of the theme of flexibility and diversity in his hoped-for Church of the Reconciliation:

Holy Scripture, according to the Anglican view, is the treasure-trove of God’s revealed truth. How far and in what precise manner the divine and the human elements coexist there, it is idle to surmise, because manifestly impossible to determine. It is enough to know that in a sense peculiar and unique, differencing it from all other books, the Bible is God’s word or message to us. The embassage of the Son of God is evidently the subject of the Scriptures. When the fact of this embassage has been once acknowledged, all difficulties about inspiration fly to the winds. 91

Despite his willingness to allow for some variation in the interpretation of Scripture, Huntington’s desire to come to an agreement on the “First Principles” 92 leave him in a predicament for “the Church must have some guarantee from its members that the cardinal truths enshrined in Holy Scriptures are indeed received.” 93 In The Church-Idea, he sees this as a key reason for the need for a creed since “no man knows, or can know [the Scriptures] thoroughly.” 94 Years later, in The Peace of the Church, he is still dealing with the issue, asking this basic question in his chapter on the Scriptures, “How ought we of these times to think about the Bible? Or, to put it otherwise, Has anything occurred in this intellectual movement of our day to compel a change of attitude on the part of reasonable men towards the book, or books, heretofore dignified by the title Word of God?” 95

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90 Quoted in Huntington, The Church-Idea, 157-158.
91 Huntington, The Church-Idea, 158.
92 Huntington, The Church-Idea, 11.
93 Huntington, The Church-Idea, 159.
95 Huntington, The Peace of the Church, 52.
By the time of *The Peace of the Church*, the Quadrilateral has seen its once simple language expanded by time, discussion, and debate to include the instructive words of Article VI. Point 1, as approved by the Bishops at Lambeth now reads, “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.”⁹⁶ Commenting on its expanded form, Huntington is careful not to allow the first point to put too much weight on Scripture and instead chooses to define the task of “rule and ultimate standard of faith” in a very narrow way: “The Christian plea for the Scriptures is that they contain disclosures not elsewhere to be found with respect to the character and purposes of God, and the duty and destiny of man.”⁹⁷ They are, he later expounds, “intelligence received by message. God, they say, has declared his will, and given us his commandment; nay, more than this, has to a certain limited extent revealed his purpose.”⁹⁸

Ultimately, he raises a question that will continue to be a source of struggle for the rest of his life, and as we will see below continues to be an open question for the Church in 2015, the question of authority. “The whole question… revolves itself into one of credentials. Are these voices to which Christians have given assent trustworthy?”⁹⁹ To answer in the negative would leave Christianity sorely lacking, if it were able to survive at all: “The real downfall of the Bible would mean the break-up of Christendom,” Huntington writes. “It is of no avail to argue that because the Church was in existence before the manuscripts, so equally it might endure and flourish if bereft of them.” His concern was the picking away at the details of the story of God so that all that was left was some kernel of it:

“Equally futile is the assurance that no matter what may happen to the letter of the Bible, the spirit of it is certain to survive. Doubtless the spirit of ether survives the breaking of the bottle in which it has been kept; but survives where? A Christianity so thinly diffused as to be nowhere definitely discoverable will prove a sorry help in the work-a-day process of bettering mankind.”

For Huntington, ultimately, there is no real fear that the Bible would not survive scrutiny because in the Scriptures is our connection with the past, a characteristic which is of utmost importance to him:

A religion which has nothing to tell about the past; which can point to no evidence of the working of God in history; affects to be beyond the need of way-marks and footprints; acknowledges no epochs of unveiling, no seasons of special vision; cannot say, ‘There, there, and there He passed, and men felt the breath of his presence as He went by,’ – it begins to be made plain to us that a religion which can do none of these things, but instead, boasts of itself as being wholly without records and quite free from such troublesome impedimenta as sacred annals, is scarcely a religion we can afford implicitly to trust.

Instead of future death, Huntington finds in the Bible itself the promise of everlasting life, for it and for us. “Here is the secret of the book’s perpetuity; live it must, because of the good news in it.” For Huntington, the role of Scripture seems clear: it shares with us the promises of God. Yet only six years later in a series of lectures to Kenyon College published as *A National Church*, he prophesies a question that will continue to serve as a “storm-centre” in the church for generations to come, “We have fallen upon times when the well-worn formula, ‘The Bible, and the Bible only the Religion of Protestants,’ scarcely suffices for controversial needs. The issues of to-day lie back of the Bible, and it is no longer possible to silence the inquirer by throwing a

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100 Huntington, *The Peace of the Church*, 63.
We will see below that the role of the Bible remains an open one for the Anglican principle, even to today.

**Point Two – The Primitive Creeds as the Rule of Faith**

Not content to allow the debate over dogma to be purely a religious one, Huntington opens his argument for the value of the Primitive Creeds by pointing to the necessity of first principles in the world at large: “The principle of dogma is the cornerstone not only of Church life but of all social life whatever. Dogmas are simply first principles, and without some agreement upon first principles the very beginnings of society are impossible.”

Given his arguments for the necessity and primacy of Scripture, one might think that Huntington would be able to do away with creedal statements, but that is not the case. Instead, he finds in the cardinal truths of Holy Scripture the necessity of a creed: “It is simply trifiling (sic) with words to say that the Scriptures are in themselves an all-sufficient creed. They are too voluminous to be grasped entire by any single mind, and even if they could be so grasped, they would not be a creed, for a creed is a summary of truths thought to be essential…”

Assuming that he is correct in his assessment, then we must turn our focus toward what kind of creed should be central to the Church of the Reconciliation. For Huntington, there are three criteria, “Brevity, Definiteness, Antiquity.” The quest for brevity is in part a quest for understanding, but for Huntington what is more important about a short creed is its universality: “A creed that enters into a great number of minute particulars is a creed that invites opposition

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103 Huntington, *A National Church*, 16-17.
and makes conflict inevitable.” As he seeks to bring the various sects that make up the Church catholic back under one roof as a Church of the Reconciliation, Huntington is convinced that “very extended doctrinal earth-works” like the Decrees of the Council of Trent, the Augsburg Confession, and the 39 Articles serve only to exacerbate division and conflict, and instead “the time has come to exchange… long-drawn creeds for the briefer rule of faith” that satisfied the early Church.”

He is quick to caution that what he is positing is not a call to liberalism, but rather a call to clarity of position, for “Dogma, well-defined, sharply-cut dogma is… essential to the very existence of the Church, and just in proportion to the fewness of the required articles of faith ought to be their distinctiveness.” With that, he turns his focus to the second requirement of a creed, definiteness, or as he also calls it, “precision.” He argues that “the religious mind of today expects to be told, and is willing to be told, that there are few things it can know; but what saddens it and sickens it is to receive the message that there is nothing about God or heaven it can know for certain. By all means what we hold, let us hold fast.” The contemporary reader will hear in these words still more similarities to the questions of our current age

Finally, the third characteristic of a universal creed, according to Huntington, is “the venerableness that comes with age.” When he wrote this, in 1870, the memory was still fresh of

107 Huntington, The Church-Idea, 162.
108 Huntington, The Church-Idea, 163.
109 At the Lambeth Conference of 1888, the bishops had called Holy Scriptures “the rule and ultimate standard of faith.”
110 Huntington, The Church-Idea, 163.
111 Huntington, The Church-Idea, 164.
112 Huntington, The Church-Idea, 166.
113 Huntington, The Church-Idea, 165.
his 1861 pilgrimage to Hursley, where noted Oxford Movement leader John Keble had served as vicar since 1836. 114 Though he spent only “an hour or two”115 at the feet of Keble, Huntington was strongly impacted by their time together. In an Endnote to his 1865 sermon, “American Catholicity,” he uses Keble’s Hursley as a foil against the argument that he was calling for a wholesale enfolding of all the churches in America into the trappings of the English Establishment.116 What he did learn from Keble and the Oxford Movement, it seems, was a deep appreciation for the wisdom of the early Church Fathers, arguing in *The Church-Idea* that “A creed that is to commend itself to the confidence, and not merely to the admiration of Christendom, must come backed by the authority of the ages. The wisest theologian alive cannot make such a creed to order. No assembly of divines, however august, can compile it today. It must be found, if found at all, among the inherited treasures of the Church of God.”117

To Huntington’s mind, only two Creeds fulfill all three criteria: the Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed. This conviction is reflected in the expanded form of Point Two which holds “The Apostles’ creed, as the Baptismal Symbol, and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.”118 Already in 1870, Huntington argues for clarity between the two Primitive Creeds:

Some parts of the Nicene Creed are confessedly couched in language that is strictly theological, and by the unlearned hard to be understood. Need a formal assent to these propositions be demanded of all Christian people indiscriminately as a condition of communion? Anglicanism says, and always has said, No. If there be any doubt in particular instances as to whether the Apostles’ Creed is received in its true sense, then let

114 Chapman, “American Catholicity and the National Church,” 124.


inquiry be made and instruction given. But let not a humble-minded child of God be
turned away from the Holy Table because the philosophical and theological bearings of
the term ‘one substance’ are not clearly understood.\footnote{Huntington, \textit{The Church-Idea}, 170-171.}

In an effort to bring as many people under the umbrella of the Church of the Reconciliation, he
allows for the laity to subscribe fully to Point Two with “an affirmative answer to the question,
‘dost thou believe all the articles of the Christian Faith as contained in the Apostles’ Creed?’”\footnote{Huntington, \textit{The Church-Idea}, 171.}

For clergy, he holds as the minimum requirement the more “exactly stated and more fully
expanded”\footnote{Huntington, \textit{The Church-Idea}, 171.} Nicene Creed. This suggestion opens the way for what will prove to be a part of
the failure of Huntington’s legacy, an attempt to remove the 39 Articles from the pages of the
American Book of Common Prayer and instead place the central statement of our faith as a
Preamble to the Constitution. This plan probably originated with frustration at his being delayed
ordination by Bishop Eastburn of Massachusetts in 1861 over what Huntington saw as a small
point of disagreement over the 39 Articles.

Beginning with the General Convention of 1895, Huntington proposed a series of
amendments to the Constitution which failed to gain the necessary support. Despite strong
support for an amendment that “would allow a bishop to take under his oversight any
congregation of Christian people who accepted the Quadrilateral platform,”\footnote{Suter, \textit{Life and Letters}, 396.} it failed in the
House of Deputies thanks to a strong minority opinion lead by the Rev. John Faude of
Minnesota.\footnote{Hutchins, Charles L., Journal of the General Convention, 1895, 293} Huntington’s biographer describes the reaction this way: “In the press this
Convention was spoken of as ‘reactionary,’ and as marking ‘the collapse of the Quadrilateral,’ as

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\item[\footnote{119}]{Huntington, \textit{The Church-Idea}, 170-171.}
\item[\footnote{120}]{Huntington, \textit{The Church-Idea}, 171.}
\item[\footnote{121}]{Huntington, \textit{The Church-Idea}, 171.}
\item[\footnote{122}]{Suter, \textit{Life and Letters}, 396.}
\item[\footnote{123}]{Hutchins, Charles L., Journal of the General Convention, 1895, 293}
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in effect ‘repealing the Chicago-Lambeth platform.’”\(^{124}\) Though Huntington saw no reason to believe these claims, by the time of the first General Convention after his death, held in Cincinnati in 1910, his move to replace the 39 Articles in the Book of Common Prayer with the Quadrilateral as a Preamble to the Constitution, the latter of which had passed in 1907, failed to garner the necessary on-going support.\(^{125}\) Within his own House of Deputies of the General Convention, it was Point Two of the Quadrilateral that held back the Church of the Reconciliation, but as we will see, for many Christians outside the Episcopal fold, Point Four would serve as the point of contention.

By the time the bishops at Lambeth voted on the matter, Huntington had added a fourth criteria for a universal creed, “positiveness of form,”\(^{126}\) saying that the Apostles’ Creed has special value “because it is affirmative, it encourages hope.”\(^{127}\) Here he seems to have in mind the ongoing debates of his time in regards to orthodoxy:

> Modern creed-makers have condescended to argument; these ancient voices simply enunciate the facts. They set forth certain great objects of faith, and say to man. Look at them. They invite, not to the speculative discussion, but to the reverent contemplation of things that have been, are, and are yet for to come.\(^{128}\)

Meanwhile, the Nicene Creed, as it is an expanded version of the more ancient Apostles’ Creed is “sufficient” because “it so grandly sets forth what God has told us Himself, and leaving unsaid what we may safely be trusted to find out for ourselves, in our wretchedness and poverty,

\(^{124}\) Suter, *Life and Letters*, 396.


\(^{126}\) Huntington, *The Peace of the Church*, 131.

\(^{127}\) Huntington, *The Peace of the Church*, 131.

namely, our sore need of the One who can thus be described.”\textsuperscript{129} This call to creeds of affirmation is put more beautifully in a quote from “a profound religious thinker [who] not so many years ago remarked, ‘to base theology upon the dogma of sin, instead of on the dogma of God, is a mistake.’”\textsuperscript{130}

Finally, we see a growing realization that those who are raising objections to the Chicago-Lambeth platform, do so with real challenges to the scheme. In an attempt to fling the doors of the Church of the Reconciliation open as wide as possible, he answers his critics by attempting to name the crux of the issue: that one item that must be laid down on all sides in order for reunion to occur. “In the region of dogma, the crux is the sacramental theology. Unless the philosophy of grace can be declared neutral ground, and honestly dealt with as such, there is no hope for Christian unity, either in the near future or in the far.”\textsuperscript{131} As we will see, this question, like that of the authority of Scripture, remains open.

\textit{Point Three – The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself}

Huntington is careful to note that Christianity is not merely an occupation of the head and heart, but that discipleship calls for an engagement of the whole body. “A marked peculiarity of the Christian religion is the fact that while intensely spiritual in its motives and aims, it does not loose itself wholly from the material world… Christ gave His people a doctrine clothed. He linked the inner to the outer world, and asserted His kingship over both.”\textsuperscript{132} It was, therefore, important to include in his Quadrilateral some physical symbols of the faith around which every Christian could unite. For Huntington, these symbols were easily discerned, for the two

\textsuperscript{129} Huntington, \textit{The Peace of the Church}, 133.

\textsuperscript{130} Huntington, \textit{The Peace of the Church}, 133.

\textsuperscript{131} Huntington, \textit{A National Church}, 67.

\textsuperscript{132} Huntington, \textit{The Church-Idea}, 177.
Sacraments ordained by Christ “image forth to the eye His two all-comprehensive sayings, ‘Come unto Me,’ ‘Abide in Me.’ The one is the Sacrament of Approach, the other the Sacrament of Continuance.”

Moreover within Anglicanism they have been said to be “means of grace,” and are of utmost importance: “The sacramental element is an integral portion of the Church-Idea, and cannot be cut away with safety.”

Like each point of the Quadrilateral, at first blush Point Three seems to be one of easy agreement, and yet there are key doctrinal points that must be addressed. As he first lays out the argument for the Quadrilateral in *The Church-Idea*, Huntington is hopeful that this might be the means by which the door to unity could be opened.

The peculiar claim of the sacraments to rank as pledges of unity is this, that they are among the few undisputed legacies of the Apostolical age. Upon whatever points Christians may differ, they are agreed that these two simple rites, Baptism and the Supper of our Lord, have been in use in the Church since its beginning. Even those who, like the members of the Society of Friends, reject the sacraments altogether, do so upon the ground that Christians have no longer need of such external helps, not upon the ground that the rites themselves are of post-apostolic origin.

He sees this as a hopeful place where the Anglican principle, removed from the particularities of the Anglican system, might have something to offer the Church of the Reconciliation: “Anglicanism, while perfectly clear upon this point of the essential character of the sacraments, is not pledged to any particular theory of their operation… Grant first that the sacraments are of perpetual and binding obligation, and secondly that they are channels of

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133 Huntington, *The Church-Idea*, 177.
blessing to the Church, and the Anglican principle is satisfied.”137 It is in this return to his call for flexibility and diversity that Huntington bases his hope for a Church of the Reconciliation.138

The ability to gather around the two central acts of worship given to us by Christ became more difficult as the language of Point Three was expanded to include some very specific criteria, namely that they must be “ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.”139 The Peace of the Church, published in 1891 and focusing on the Lambeth version of the Quadrilateral, seems to backtrack on his earlier claims for diversity. In its first public form in 1870, Huntington argued strongly for liturgical diversity as a prerequisite for church unity:

Whatever may be our estimate of the importance of sacramental privileges, there can be no question that the validity of Baptism lodges in the act itself, not in the forms of words that may be employed before or after the act… the unreasonableness of exacting conformity to one particular devotional formulary of Baptism, as a condition precedent of Church unity, may be said to be parallel to the unreasonableness of demanding that any one mode of administering the sacrament, such as immersion, triune immersion, aspersion, or affusion, shall be held valid to the exclusion of all others.140

Still, Huntington tries to give the bishops gathered in Chicago and Lambeth141 the benefit of the doubt in his reflection on the updated language, attempting to allow for as wide a reading of the narrowing of Point Three as possible:

The Bishops have… done wisely in setting the boundary pillars of sacramental usage wide apart. On the one hand, they make Baptism and the Lord’s Supper an integral part of the Church’s life, guarding thus against the constant drift of theology towards a

137 Huntington, The Church-Idea, 179.

138 Huntington, The Peace of the Church, 168.

139 Huntington, The Peace of the Church, 46.


141 The Quadrilateral was affirmed by the Episcopal Church’s House of Bishops at the 1886 General Convention in Chicago and all the Bishops of the Anglican Communion at the 1888 Lambeth Conference in slightly different forms, except for Points 3 and 4, which were identical.
philosophical idealism; while, on the other hand, they insist that, provided the words and
elements by Christ ordained be strictly held to, we ought not to let ourselves be set
asunder either by differences of opinion as to the *modus operandi* of the sacraments, or
by differences of taste as to the ritual administration of them. Idolatrous misuse is by the
very word ‘sacrament’ ruled out on the right, a pseudo–spiritual disuse is ruled out on the
left, - another way of saying that we are to use without abuse these great institutes of
God, suspicious alike of the old alchemy by which the mediaeval theologians sought to
transmute the elements into something they were not, and of the new chemistry which by
a wholly different process would vaporize them into a metaphor.¹⁴²

Though it should be noted that even at the beginning, Huntington was keen to keep close to
Scripture in the celebration of the Eucharist, for “in defining the standard of fitness for the Holy
Communion, the Anglican principle demands a close adherence to the language of
Scripture…”¹⁴³ As he looked back on 18 years of conversation, development, and debate,
Huntington notes that the crux of the problem which threatens to hold back unity is not so much
word or action, but each Church’s sacramental theology. “Unless those who believe and those
who do not believe in such a mystical presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist as differences that
service intrinsically from all other exercises of worship, can be persuaded to bear with each
other’s ways in practice, there is no hope for Christian unity either in the near future or in the far,
and our vision of a national Church is but a will-o-the-wisp.”¹⁴⁴

*Point Four – The Episcopate as the key-stone of Governmental Unity*

At length, we reach the final corner of Huntington’s great Quadrilateral, the Episcopate.

It was, as we have seen, the last part to come to fullness of thought for him, having struggled
with the governance question in his “American Catholicity” sermon. Despite his assertion that
the Bible stood as the storm-centre of the question of unity, his biographer is clear that Point 4
was the deepest source of struggle. Looking back on it, Huntington himself admitted it as well:


¹⁴³ Huntington, *The Church-Idea*, 188.

“In a later address, he urges that the phrase ‘Historic Episcopate,’ which he had himself invented, ‘was intended to conciliate rather than to antagonize.’”\textsuperscript{145} Of course, he did little help to his theme of diversity and flexibility when he went on to say, “It presents the Episcopate as a fact rather than a theory. The cordial and sympathetic way of commending the Episcopate is to show that it helps to coordinate the two elements in the organic life of the Church, those of leadership and counsel. Where to the former everything is sacrificed there is tyranny, where to the latter, confusion and chaos.”\textsuperscript{146} Clearly, years of polemical debate on this issue had taken their toll on Huntington.

The struggle over the Episcopate started early in Huntington’s works. Though he was struggling with the government question in 1865, by 1870 he was already convinced that “The Anglican principle insists upon governmental unity as an essential condition of oneness in the Church.”\textsuperscript{147} He points to the Scriptures as his source, but not to the New Testament use of \textit{episkopoi}, as one might imagine, but instead to God’s law of Headship:

\begin{quote}
From its fountain in the bosom of the Holy Trinity, this principle of headship flows downward through all the ranges of created life. We find it in the constitution of the Family, recent social theories to the contrary notwithstanding. We find it in the constitution of the State, which, when it falls into anarchy, (or headlessness,) ceases to be. We find it in the constitution of the Church, of which God’s only Son our Lord is Head.\textsuperscript{148}
\end{quote}

Using military imagery, he argues: “True the Head of the Church is invisible, but the army of which He is Head is not, and if ever any army needed unity, this one does.”\textsuperscript{149} Continuing the

\textsuperscript{145} Suter, \textit{Life and Letters}, 401-402.

\textsuperscript{146} Suter, \textit{Life and Letters}, 402.

\textsuperscript{147} Huntington, \textit{The Church-Idea}, 190.

\textsuperscript{148} Huntington, \textit{The Church-Idea}, 190.

\textsuperscript{149} Huntington, \textit{The Church-Idea}, 191.
image, he goes on to raise his concerns about disunity: “What army ever won a battle when every
division and every regiment and every company carried on the fight according to its own
discretion?” According to Huntington, there is no hope for church unity aside from agreement
on governmental unity.

Returning to his affinity for the venerableness that comes with age, Huntington turns his
attention away from the need for unity and toward answering the question, “what type of
government will it be?” To answer this question, Huntington uses an unlikely source, Edward
Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*:

There exists a form of Church polity which can be traced back, century after century,
until we have come to the very confines of the Apostolical age. A characteristic feature
of this polity is headship. The name of it is the Episcopate. ‘After we have passed the
difficulties of the first century,’ says Gibbon, ‘we find the Episcopal government
universally established.’ … [Gibbon’s] testimony to the high antiquity of the Episcopate
is chiefly valuable, because he cannot possibly be suspected of a bias in favor of the
Church… Neither he nor any other historian has ever proved that the polity which was
universal in the year of grace 100 is another polity than that which was established on the
day when Jesus, going up into a mountain, called unto Him whom He would, and
‘ordained twelve.’

Part of the struggle to convince the wider Church of the value of the Episcopate seems to
have come from his choice to drop a word that was key to his argument in “American
Catholicity,” *republican*: “There is a latent suspicion among Americans that this form of
ecclesiastical polity is not in harmony with ‘the genius of republican institutions.’” But, he
argues, “the Episcopate, so far from being pledged to alliance with any civil polity, possesses a

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wonderful power of adaptation to all forms of social organization.”

Turning again to history he suggests that a republican Episcopate is, in fact, the way it was intended from the beginning:

It is generally agreed that in the first age of the Church, bishops were chosen by the suffrages of the faithful, and then consecrated to their office and given authority to execute its duties by other bishops who had in times past been similarly empowered. It is thus that the American Episcopate is perpetuated to-day. Our bishops trace their consecration to the Anglican Church, and through the Anglican Church to the Church of the Apostolical age; but they owe their election to the free voice of the people of their respective flocks, and exercise their authority in as strict conformity to constitutional law as a president or a governor.

Here we see the argument that will lead to the expanded form of Point Four, approved by the Bishops in Chicago and Lambeth: “The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his Church.”

It is the historical aspect of the Episcopate that matters, both as the fullness of headship and, as Huntington will later argue, the model by which Jesus set up his Kingdom: “Jesus Christ appears among men and announces Himself the founder of a new social order, which He names the Kingdom of Heaven; and one of his very first acts, as legislator, is to appoint a ‘ministry.’ He gathers about Himself a definite number of men, invests them with definite privileges, and charges them with definite duties.”

Huntington is particularly interested in clarifying the differences between the “Historic Episcopate” and later forms of hierarchical episcopal government as a means to reaching out to Presbyterians and Congregationalists. In *A National Church*, he looks again at the numbers

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laid out in Carroll’s *The Religious Forces of the United States* and happily finds that his ten affinity groups, at least on the matter of governance, can be narrowed down to three, “a far nearer approach to unanimity than one who had been contemplating exclusively their doctrinal divergences would have expected to find.”

Huntington defines them as Congregationalism, “emphasizing the principle of home-rule;” Presbyterianism, “emphasizing the principle of counsel and advice;” and Episcopacy, “emphasizing the principle of a strong executive.”

In each model, he acknowledges the number of adherents to each: “of the twenty millions of communicants… nearly six millions are for home-rule, something more than three millions are for recognition of a Church universal administered by the conciliar method, and almost twelve millions for the leadership principle.” Yet even those numbers are deceiving, as under the Episcopacy model falls “three such dissonant and apparently irreconcilable elements as the Roman Catholics, the Methodists, and the Anglicans.”

His goal in using these statistics, however, is not to assign a winner, but to “argue that since each one of the three methods has so many adherents, the probability is that there must be much good in each; and that better than the victory of any one would be the prevalence of some wise combination of them all.” He goes on to imagine what such a structure might look like:

Imagine a county Church. The centre of administration is the county-town. Here dwells the chief-pastor of the Christians of the county. His position, although one of dignity, is not one of splendor. His duties are far more urgent than his honors are conspicuous. He is simply the master-missionary of the region, which, although large enough to keep him busy, is not so large as to make the personal care of souls impossible.

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159 Huntington, *A National Church*, 57.


From time to time, at stated intervals, there gather about this leader his counsellors, clerical and lay. He and they consult together for the good of religion in the county, talk over the spiritual needs of the various towns and villages, plan anew the ever-shifting campaign, and make provision for the sinews of war…

Well, then, have we not a microcosm of the United Church? What is lacking? Anything? The home-rule principle has justice done to it; for the local Church of each town, each village, is, as respects the management of its affairs, the choice of its pastor, the handling of its revenues autonomous. The synodal and conciliar principle has justice done to it; for, instead of each little group of disciples living by itself and for itself, as if no other group existed, we see the representatives of the groups coming together once a year, or as much oftener as may be found desirable, to exchange ideas, and incite one another to better things. The principle of leadership has justice done to it; for, convinced that what is everybody’s business is nobody’s business, the Christian people of the County have seated at the heart of things one whom they hold in a special sense responsible for the efficient conduct of their affairs.\(^{163}\)

Huntington imagines how that structure might work at the state and national levels, including bicameral assemblies at both levels, in many ways mirroring the civil polity of the United States, and wondering, “What is there inherently absurd or chimerical in such a picture as this? The very same three principles work together happily enough in civil polity; what is to prevent their doing so in ecclesiastical polity?”\(^{164}\)

Despite his grand plan, as was the case with the question of Scripture, Doctrine, and Worship, there remained one open question which could never quite be settled enough for unity to be anything more than a thing hoped for, but not seen. In the final book of his trilogy, we hear of his deep concern over the question of historicity: “In the region of polity, the crux is the value of historicity in connection with Holy Orders. Unless those who care nothing for the continuity of the sacred ministry can persuade themselves that is worth while to conserve that continuity for


\(^{164}\) Huntington, *A National Church*, 60-61.
the sake of those who do care very much about it, there is no hope for Christian unity either in the near future or in the far.”

The Primacy of the Episcopal Church

Through it all, William Reed Huntington remained convinced that the ideal of church unity was possible, and that its best starting point was through the doorway of the Anglican principle, the bones upon which the Episcopal Church had been constructed. To Huntington’s mind, the Episcopal Church had a gift to offer, noting in 1899 that “The American Episcopal Church stands, to-day, the most comprehensive Church in Christendom, loyal to the Scriptures of both Testaments, loyal to the early Creeds, loyal to the Sacraments of Christ, loyal to Holy Order – a spiritual house large enough for a nation.” Her comprehensiveness was matched only by her willingness to remain flexible, open to other ways of thinking and being the Church, as “it has escaped the lust of delimitation.” His hope did not come without caution, however, as he was aware of the tendency of the Church to turn in upon itself on questions such as “the methods of the transmission of divine grace or as to the philosophy of Holy Orders.” In the end, as America continued to change rapidly following the Civil War, through Reconstruction, and into the Industrial Revolution, Huntington saw that the Church stood at a hope-filled turning point:

The Episcopal Church in this new world stands, at the present moment, at the parting of the way. After a century of infancy, a century of childhood, and a century of adolescence, she has come at last to her majority, and reports for duty. ‘For duty,’ and towards whom? Towards all, no doubt, whom her voice can reach or her hand help, but

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165 Huntington, A National Church, 67.

166 Huntington, The Talisman of Unity, 18.


in a special sense toward those twenty millions of believers who among our sixty or seventy millions of population have with their own mouth and consent openly acknowledged Christ. Her errand to these is the errand of the reconciler and the peacemaker.\textsuperscript{169}

More than 140 years after Huntington preached “American Catholicity” at Trinity Church, Boston, Brian McLaren, a non-denominational pastor, speaker, and writer stepped into the pulpit at the 76\textsuperscript{th} General Convention in Anaheim, California and attempted to help the Episcopal Church to see that in a rapidly changing world, she has something to offer, as a Church of the Reconciliation.\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{169} Huntington, \textit{A National Church}, 71.

\textsuperscript{170} McLaren, “We live in a strange time…”
Chapter Four
A 21st-Century Church Crisis

In 1870, William Reed Huntington summed up the state of American Christendom with a single word, “dissatisfaction.”171 Whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, liberal or conservative, the general state of Christianity after the American Civil War was ongoing unrest. One hundred forty-two years later, it took sociologist, historian, and author, Diana Butler Bass, four words, “discontent, doubt, disillusionment, and for some, despair are the themes of the day.”172 No matter what “D” word we might choose to describe the state of Christianity in America today, the reality is that the church in America in 2015 finds itself echoing Huntington’s sentiment. The culture in which American Christianity lives and moves and has its being is changing rapidly. Every denomination from Roman Catholicism to the Southern Baptist Convention, from the Episcopal Church to non-denominational mega-churches is feeling the pressure to meet the needs of a changing America. Huntington’s dream of a pan-Protestant catholic church in America did not bear the fruit for which he had worked so hard, but his realization that the Episcopal Church had something special to offer the wider church in her struggles would find new life in an unexpected voice, Brian McLaren, a non-denominational pastor, speaker, and writer. Before turning our attention in the next chapter to McLaren’s assertion to the 76th General Convention that “this moment of Episcopal crisis is also a moment of Episcopal opportunity”173 we will spend some time here looking at Christianity’s current crisis in America with particular attention paid to the state of the Episcopal Church from 2000 to 2015.

173 McLaren, “We live in a strange time…”
The year 2008 marked a watershed moment for the study of religion in America. With the publishing of the results of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life’s “U.S. Religious Landscape Survey,” for the first time in recent history there became available a resource akin to H.K. Carroll’s 1912 statistical study of religion based on the censuses of 1890 and 1906, although today there is stronger statistical science undergirding it. The Pew Forum proved scientifically what many had come to believe anecdotally “that religious affiliation in the U.S. is both very diverse and extremely fluid.”174 Of particular note to those who study such things was the realization that “among Americans ages 18-29, one-in-four say they are not currently affiliated with any particular religion.”175 The second report on the same survey data, published in June 2008, also noted that “most Americans have a non-dogmatic approach to faith.”176 Of particular note for the Episcopal Church, in a chart showing the breakdown by religious affiliation, 82% of Mainline Protestants believe that there is more than one true way to interpret the teachings of their own religion—well ahead of the 68% of all those who are religiously affiliated and 64% of all Protestants (evangelical, mainline, and historically black churches) who believe the same thing.177

Also published in 2008 was Phyllis Tickle’s first foray into Christian sociological study, *The Great Emergence*, in which she argues that this “Great Emergence” is a “monumental

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phenomenon in our world” that “affects every part of our lives… everything we do socially, culturally, intellectually, politically, [and] economically.” Tickle summarized her thesis using the metaphor of a rummage or yard sale that was first suggested by Mark Dyer while he was serving as the Episcopal Bishop of Bethlehem (PA) in the early 1990s:

Christianity has had five significant yard sales. Each one has had to do with the church’s struggle to resist the temptation to domesticate God’s vision, to settle for change when God seeks transformation. The sixth is now. It’s something that seems to happen every three or four hundred years. In Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, God empowers the church to discover its roots and its center, and transform itself in new, exciting and wonderful ways. Jesus announced the first yard sale. Then Benedict, in the sixth century. Then the Franciscan Spring in the thirteenth century. Then Martin Luther and the reformers in the sixteenth century, the only yard sale led by an ordained person. It’s time once again for a massive yard sale, a transformation led by lay people. Our 400 years are up.

Tickle suggests three results of these every three-to-five hundred year opportunities to refocus on the mission of God:

First, a new more vital form of Christianity does indeed emerge. Second, the organized expression of Christianity which up until then had been the dominant one is reconstructed into a more pure and less ossified expression of its former self… The third result is of equal, if not greater, significance, though. That is, every time the incrustations of an overly established Christianity have been broken open, the faith has spread – and been spread – dramatically into new geographic and demographic areas, thereby increasing exponentially the range and depth of Christianity’s reach as a result of its time of unease and distress.

As a result of these historical patterns, Tickle suggests that one possible future for Emergence Christianity is that of a “gathering center” in which “old natal divisions begin to melt

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179 Tickle, The Great Emergence, 14.
181 Tickle, The Great Emergence, 17.
182 Tickle, The Great Emergence, 123ff.
Her theory is based on the power of communication in 21st century. As stories get shared, initially around the watercooler in the 1980s, and increasingly through social media “people admire the ways of some other people whom they liked, people curious and able now to ask without offense. And more than anything else, it is people finding deep within themselves an empty spot… they had not experienced before, or at least had not been empowered to acknowledge before.” As more and more people experience this “watercooler theology,” Tickle suggests, a center has begun to form as a “mélange of ‘things’ cherry-picked from each [tradition] and put together… without any original intention and certainly no design beyond that of conversation.”

It is in and around that loosely organized center that Tickle places various currents of Emergence Christianity, which could reshape Protestantism in America, though probably not in the way for which Huntington had long hoped.

Later, Butler Bass would take issue with Tickle’s tacking a once-every-five-hundred-year timeline on to her argument, suggesting it “weighs like spiritual determinism, a kind of historical predestination,” but if we use Tickle’s metaphor, we find that perhaps Huntington was seeing the attic overflowing with boxes full of unnecessary baggage long before many others could.

Tickle suggests that somewhere between 100 and 150 years before the rummage sale itself, the Church begins to feel uncomfortable in its current surroundings; it begins to see unnecessary clutter where it once saw only beauty. Switching metaphors, she likens religion to the cable that tethers a boat to its dock. The cable is made up of five distinct parts: the waterproof covering

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183 Tickle, The Great Emergence, 133.
184 Tickle, The Great Emergence, 133.
185 Tickle, The Great Emergence, 134.
186 Tickle, The Great Emergence, 140.
which she calls our story, “the shared history – mythic, actual, and assumed;”

the mesh sleeve of our common imagination, “the general, operation opinion of how the world works;”

and a braided rope made up of three cords: spirituality, “experiences and values that are internal to the individuals who compose society;”
corporeality, “the overt evidences that a religion exists;”
and morality, “the external application of the values and experiences of the individuals who compose society.”

Tickle, like Huntington in his Good Shepherd sermon, suggests that the Reformation settlement was challenged by scientific discoveries from the likes of Faraday and Darwin in the mid-1800s, calling their combined work “the line of demarcation between post-Reformation and peri-Emergence ways of thinking, being, and believing.” From the mid-nineteenth century on, the central question of every rummage sale, every fraying of the cable, every time of reformation began to creep into the consciousness of politicians, scientists, theologians, and layperson alike, “Where, now, is the authority?”

Tickle points to Walter Rauschenbusch, declaring in 1907 that the West was “in the midst of a revolutionary epoch fully as thorough as that of the Renaissance and Reformation,” as the “first prominent American scholar to

188 Tickle, The Great Emergence, 34.
189 Tickle, The Great Emergence, 35.
190 Tickle, The Great Emergence, 36.
191 Tickle, The Great Emergence, 36.
192 Tickle, The Great Emergence, 36.
193 Tickle, The Great Emergence, 65.
194 Tickle, The Great Emergence, 72. See also, Huntington, “Inter-Church or Intra-Church, Which?”, 271.
195 Tickle, The Great Emergence, 125.
perceive what was happening,”¹⁹⁶ but in parallels already noted above, Huntington was already preaching about the unravelling of the authority of sola scriptura in 1905. Even earlier, in 1870, Huntington was willing to suggest that part of the gift of the Anglican tradition was the idea that “it has never been held that a knowledge of the minutest detail of Scripture is essential to the well-being of the soul.”¹⁹⁷ What Huntington saw in the late 19th century, Tickle sees as central to the state of unrest in American Christianity today.

Four years before American Christianity was gifted the Pew Forum study and The Great Emergence, the Church of England received its own wake-up call in the form of a report from a working group of the Mission and Public Affairs Council appointed by Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. Here again, the report found what many already knew: “Western society has undergone a massive transition in recent decades. We all live in a fast-changing world.”¹⁹⁸ However, what for a hundred years many had seen as an obstacle to the Gospel,¹⁹⁹ the Archbishop’s working group chose to see as “a significant moment of opportunity.”²⁰⁰ With what appears to be a nod to the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, the working group assumes in its suggested values for the Church of England in the 21st century that “to be missionary, a church has to proclaim afresh the faith of the Scriptures and the creeds. This is not a ‘value’ of the church, but the foundation upon which church is built.”²⁰¹ The fresh expression of the faith

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¹⁹⁶ Tickle, The Great Emergence, 124.
¹⁹⁷ Tickle, The Church-Idea, 159.
²⁰⁰ Mission-shaped Church, 1.
²⁰¹ Mission-shaped Church, 81, emphasis mine.
for which *Mission-shaped Church* argues, continues to assume the diversity suggested by Huntington:

As part of a worldwide Church, Anglicanism prefers to seek unity within tolerated diversity. The practice of the Anglican Communion is helpful and contextual cultural divergence in different provinces is welcome. Yet, at the same time, an instinct for loose common features, a common consultative council, all held not least by relational bonds between bishops, may be one that will need increased application within, not just beyond, the Church of England. The Chicago-Lambeth 1888 Quadrilateral of Scripture, the Creeds, the dominical sacraments and the Historic Episcopacy provide a similar yardstick for a common understanding of church. 202

In a 2006 follow-up text looking at the ramifications of the *Mission-shaped Church* study on parish life in the Church of England, Paul Bayes et al affirmed in England the realities that would be enumerated in America by the Pew Forum study of 2008: “Christendom is certainly passing away. For too long the Church… has ignored this truth, and has assumed that all is fundamentally well in the Church’s mission and that we are just having a bad run of things, a numerical blip… No. We are called to Christian hope, not facile optimism.” 203 Six years later, back in the United State, Diana Butler Bass made the same realization: “I became convinced that the numbers were not being manipulated this time. The survey data were too consistent and coming from too many different sources for too many years.” 204 In 2015, another Pew study would be released, offering a comparative look at the state of Christianity in America over the course of only seven years. What this new study found echoed the growing sense shared by Tickle, Butler Bass, and many others that “the Christian share of the U.S. population is declining,

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202 *Mission-shaped Church*, 100.


204 Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, 16.
while the number of U.S. adults who do not identify with any organized religion is growing…”

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According to the Pew study, the trend away from organized religion, and from Christianity in particular, will only increase as the Millennial generation (born 1981-1989) “displays much lower levels of religious affiliation, including less connection with Christian churches, than older generations” at an increasing rate, with “roughly one-third of older Millennials now say they have no religion, up nine percentage points among this cohort since the 2008 report.”

It is beyond the scope of the Pew studies to determine why people are moving away from organized Christianity, but Diana Butler Bass’ research shows several reasons. First, she points

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to a growing five-decades-long trend “away from externalized religion toward internalized spiritual experience.” In 1962, 22% of Americans could claim a “mystical experience of God”; by 1976, that number was 31%, and in 2009, 48% were able to share of a “mystical encounter with the divine.” She goes on to suggest, like Bishop Dyer and Phyllis Tickle, “that the United States is caught up in the throes of a spiritual awakening, a period of sustained religious and political transformation during which our ways of seeing the world, understanding ourselves, and expressing faith are being, to borrow a phrase, ‘born again.’” Second, and not unrelated, is the fact that “even mature, faithful Christians are finding conventional religion increasingly less satisfying, are attending church less regularly, and are longing for new expressions of spiritual community.” Put simply, the institutional church is no longer meeting the spiritual needs of the people in the pews. According to the 2015 Pew study, even those who have been there for decades are walking away. In 2008, 9% of the Silent Generation (born 1928-1945) reported their current religion as atheist, agnostic, or nothing in particular. By 2015, that number was 11%, and Baby Boomer (born 1946-1964) “nones” now stand at 17%, a three percentage point increase over 2008. Additionally, Butler Bass points to anecdotal evidence over twelve years of study that people are flat-out bored with “church-as-usual, church-as-club, church-as-club.”

213 Butler Bass, Christianity After Religion, 4.
214 Butler Bass, Christianity After Religion, 3.
215 Butler Bass, Christianity After Religion, 5.
216 Butler Bass, Christianity After Religion, 15.
217 The “Nones” are defined by Pew Research “includes self-identified atheists and agnostics as well as those who describe their religion as ‘nothing in particular.’” “American’s Changing Religious Landscape,” 10.
Finally, but not of least importance, is the reality that many former churchgoers, especially those born after 1980, have left the church angry, and are likely never going to return. For Butler Bass this anger is anecdotal, but one need not look very hard to find statistical evidence of it. In a 2007 report by the Barna Group, only “16% of non-Christians in their late teens and twenties said they have a ‘good impression’ of Christianity.” David Kinnaman, author of the book unChristian, which delved deep into the results of the Barna study, came up with the title after noticing “not only the severity of [young non-Christians’] frustration with Christians, but also how frequently young born again Christians expressed some of the very same comments as young non-Christians.” The words most often associated with Christianity were anti-homosexual (by 91% of non-Christians and 80% of young churchgoers), judgmental (by 87% of non-Christians), hypocritical (85%), old fashioned (78%), and too involved in politics (75%). In a similar 2014 study by Barna, almost half of the unchurched respondents could not name a single favorable impact of the Christian community. While the brunt of this frustration is aimed at evangelical churches, research done in-house shows that The Episcopal Church is not immune to the wider cultural change taking place.

219 Butler Bass, Christianity After Religion, 17.
220 Butler Bass, Christianity After Religion, 17.
222 Barna, “A New Generation…”
223 Barna, “A New Generation…”
Beginning with the triennium that followed the 74th General Convention, The Episcopal Church has been well served by the newly hired Program Officer for Congregational, Kirk Hadaway. Hadaway’s work has helped the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church better understand the wider significance of the numbers provided by congregations through their annual parochial reports. The 2006 Report on the State of the Church, the first fully to use the expertise of Hadaway, showed a 3.1% decline in active baptized members from 2,320,221 in 2002 to 2,247,819 in 2004, the latest year for which information was available.225 While many pointed to the controversial decision by General Convention to uphold the election of V. Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire, the first openly gay man to hold such an office, as the reason for decline, Hadaway, offering his support to the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church, was clear that there was more going on: “The explanation is complex and that the decline mirrors declines in all mainline churches over the last two years. At most, he said, a third could be attributed to the actions of General Convention. Perhaps the greater consequence is the fact that The Episcopal Church has the lowest birth rate and highest mean age of any mainline denomination.”226 Birthrate and age continue to play a part in the overall decline of the Episcopal Church, such that every Report on the State of the Church from 2009 through 2015 has only the slightest variation on this important sentence, “The advanced – and still advancing – age of the Church’s membership, combined with a low birth rate, means that the Church loses the equivalent of one diocese per year through deaths over births.”227


While birthrate and average age are important, these statistics cannot be read in isolation from the larger trends pointing to significantly lower religious engagement rates for Millennials than for Baby Boomers. As noted in the 2006 State of the Church Report, “few younger Americans (especially those in the GenX and Millennial generations) have the denomination of their forbearers.”

The questions of authority that arose with the ordination of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire suggest that as a whole, the Episcopal Church is struggling with many of the same questions raised by Tickle and Butler Bass. Hadaway recognized these larger issues very early in his work, noting in response to the low birthrate for Episcopalians that “church growth must come through evangelism to the unchurched.”

In response to that realization, the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church strongly suggested evangelism and Christian formation as the only means by which the Episcopal Church might grow: “We need to prepare congregations to receive people and know what it means to be a part of Christ’s body and a reconciling force in the world… churches and diocese must be prepared to welcome new members and help them become formed in the church’s theology, spirituality, and liturgical tradition.”

By 2009, after Hadaway’s more detailed 2008 Faith Communities Today Survey, the Church was coming to grips with its failure to engage the unchurched through evangelism, noting that “under 20% of [Episcopal] congregations report active evangelism programs and less than 5% report that evangelization is a congregational specialty.”

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As was the case during the rapid changes after the American Civil War, the changing culture invited questions of identity for the Episcopal Church. The House of Deputies Committee spent significant time dealing with those issues between 2006 and 2009 and, for their part, concluded that Episcopal identity is “grounded in the traditions embedded in our Book of Common Prayer; in our Baptismal Covenant and in our common sacramental life; in our Constitution and Canons, in our church’s polity and in how we operate as a church; and, finally, in the way we live our lives.”\(^{232}\) It may be a very different quadrilateral from that proposed by Huntington, but even by asking these questions, the leadership of the Episcopal Church was beginning to seek new ways to be the Church in the 21\(^{st}\) century in the hopes that “the Episcopal Church may prosper and grow and continue to be a transforming agent in our lives and the lives of those we touch.”\(^{233}\)

In the three years following Brian McLaren’s sermon to the 76\(^{th}\) General Convention, calling the Episcopal Church to embrace the idea that “E-piscopal and E-vangelistic might be joined together by God in a holy union,” the rhetoric around evangelism that was present in 2006 and 2009, had faded away by 2012.\(^{234}\) The narrative in the 2012 Report on the State of the Church was almost entirely that of anxiety around the squabbles within the Anglican Communion, natural disasters, and litigation surrounding the so-called continuing dioceses in San Joaquin, Fort Worth, Pittsburgh, and Quincy. Where suggestions are made, the tone is dire:


\(^{233}\) “Report on the State of the Church, 2009,” 70.

\(^{234}\) McLaren, “We live in a strange time…”
Unless there is some sort of intervention, such as a Churchwide church planting initiative, dramatic increase in the number of under-30 ordinands, along with intentional congregational development training and resourcing, current trends indicate The Episcopal Church will become more and more a denomination of predominately part-time clergy and single-cleric church, with the clergy becoming, in the words of Dr. Matthew Price, ‘chaplains to the retired.’235

Of course, this makes sense, given that the 2012 Report shows the rate of decline increasing to 5.1% from 2008 to 2010,236 and an active baptized membership of less than two million for the first time since the early 1930s.237

The signs improved as the 78th General Convention gathered in Salt Lake City, Utah. the House of Deputies Committee, with the able help of Kirk Hadaway, reported that decline had slowed to just under 3%,238 and the tone of the Report changed dramatically, opening with the words: “The Committee on the State of the Church observes that The Episcopal Church is already a new Church in many ways – some ways are challenging, and some bring joy. We are, above all, a Church that is filled with hope.”239 And closing in similar fashion, “Hope, collaboration, and joy are the images that will describe the State of the Church as we move into the new triennium.”240

A place of hope rather than a place of despair is where Brian McLaren was calling the Episcopal Church to be at the end of the first decade of Christianity’s third millennium. As we

turn our focus toward what he called “The Episcopal Moment,” we do so with words of Diana Butler Bass summing up her assessment of the current state of things: “People are fed up. They are unwilling to put up with religious business-as-usual. And, perhaps surprisingly, their unwillingness – the rejection of religion – is also hope for the future of faith communities.”

It is to that hopeful future that we now turn.

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Tumultuous might be the best word one could use to describe the state of affairs in the Anglican Communion as the bishops gathered for another Lambeth Conference in 2008. Not only were there deep divisions resulting from the ordination of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire in 2003, but there was the added anxiety that comes with steady and marked decline in membership for bishops of Anglican Provinces in the Global North. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, realizing the pressures facing many of the bishops in attendance, invited Brian McLaren to offer a plenary presentation on evangelism. Some might think it strange to invite someone from outside of the tradition to make a presentation to almost every bishop in the Anglican Communion, but as it turns out, McLaren is not at all unfamiliar with Anglicanism; as he told the graduates of Virginia Theological Seminary in 2010, Anglicanism, specifically The Episcopal Church, holds a special place in his heart. “The best pastor I ever had was an Episcopal priest…, and through his encouragement I prayerfully considered coming to this seminary about thirty years ago. Although I felt I was led into another path… I must admit I have an Anglican heart, shaped by the Prayer Book and deepened by the liturgy…”

In 2004, McLaren published *A Generous Orthodoxy*, in which he sought to build on the work of Hans Frei and Stanley Grenz to find a way that the Church, in all her various incarnations, might be able to meet the needs of the “postmodern transition” by moving beyond the traditional denominational labels, and more importantly, seeking to heal the rift that is growing between liberal and evangelical forms of Christianity. What Huntington saw as a

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tragedy, namely the growth of denominationalism, where “each is the representative of a certain portion of truth, torn out of its place in the perfect circle of Catholic doctrine, and mangled in the process,” McLaren saw as an opportunity to learn from the best that each articulation of the faith has to offer, attempting to “acknowledge that Christians of each tradition bring their distinctive and wonderful gifts to the table, so we can all enjoy the feast of generous orthodoxy – and spread that same feast for the whole world.”

Though the book looks to find the good in each tradition, for our purposes it is worth noting that McLaren includes in those gifts something special that Anglicanism has to offer in the rapidly changing context in which Christianity finds itself. Early in the text, McLaren writes of the seven Jesuses he has come to know in his faith journey. One of those seven Jesuses he called “The Liberal Protestant Jesus.” In his 20s and 30s, McLaren came to see that the Jesus that many Liberal Protestants, Episcopalians chief among them, sought to follow was the Jesus that took up most of the space in the four Gospels, whose “teachings and acts of love, healing, justice, and compassion offer a way of life that, if practiced, brings blessing to the whole world.” This Jesus calls disciples to a different way of living from the Jesus followed by the Orthodox, conservative Protestants, and even, in McLaren’s opinion, Roman Catholics. Instead of focusing on the various ways in which Jesus saves us from our sin, the Liberal Protestant Jesus calls us to “bring the teaching and example of Jesus to bear on our world – not only on our personal relationships, but also on the political structures and cultural systems of our world.”

244 Huntington, The Church-Idea, 93.
245 McLaren, A Generous Orthodoxy, 67.
246 McLaren, A Generous Orthodoxy, 59.
Later in the same text, McLaren takes a deeper look at the specifics of what the Anglican ethos has to offer this generous orthodoxy. In his early thinking on this subject, we begin to see the building blocks for what became in 2010 a series of three quadrilaterals for the Episcopal Moment. The key to the Anglican ethos and why McLaren is happy to count himself, among many other things, as an Anglican is the uniquely Anglican understanding of the *via media* which in the struggles of the sixteenth century was an attempt to “embrace what was of value from medieval Catholic Christianity and to embrace what was of value from the emerging Reformation movements.”

In fact, the *via media* mindset, that willingness to see the good rather than focusing on the bad in the other, seems to play a key role in the whole of *A Generous Orthodoxy*, but it is not without its difficulties. “The problem with being a bridge, one of my Anglican mentors once told me, is that you get walked on from both ends.”

More than 450 years of trying to figure out how to live the middle way has taught Anglicans three distinct practices that McLaren calls “the greatest gifts the Anglican community brings to the church at large.”

The first practice of the *via media* is the practice of dynamic tension. By choosing to be a church committed to “both/and” rather than “either/or,” Anglicanism has learned how to “resist the reductionist temptation to always choose only one thing over the other,” opting instead to “hold two or more things together when necessary.”

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dynamic tension allows Anglicans to move beyond what McLaren calls “distinctives,” those “secondary doctrines beyond the core beliefs contained in the ancient creeds” \(^{254}\) by seeking “to live with the tension and tolerance, believing that better outcomes will follow if they live in tension rather than by rejecting one of the four values” of Scripture, tradition, reason, and experience.\(^{255}\) The second practice of the \textit{via media} is the practice of compromise.\(^{256}\) This practice is related to the first, but rather than focusing on the “distinctives” themselves, it turns the focus on individuals. The practice of compromise seeks to keep everyone at the table through a “high (uncompromised!) standard of unity and a high level of respect for your brothers and sister who disagree with you.”\(^{257}\) This practice may not be lived out all the time, but at its best, McLaren argues, Anglicanism is better than most at “leaving room for one another when Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience don’t line up for everyone the same way.”\(^{258}\) Finally, the third practice of the \textit{via media} is the practice of beauty.\(^{259}\) McLaren supposes that it is “the deep beauty of liturgy” that binds Anglicans together even in their disagreement. It is the foundation of the Anglican ability to compromise: “the Anglican way (as I have observed it) has been to begin with beauty, to focus on beauty, and to stay with it, believing that where beauty is, God is.”\(^{260}\) Because of the proximity of the writing of \textit{A Generous Orthodoxy} to the Communion-wide rancor that followed the 74\(^{th}\) General Convention and the ordination of Gene

\(^{254}\) McLaren, \textit{A Generous Orthodoxy}, 32.


\(^{256}\) McLaren, \textit{A Generous Orthodoxy}, 211.

\(^{257}\) McLaren, \textit{A Generous Orthodoxy}, 211.

\(^{258}\) McLaren, \textit{A Generous Orthodoxy}, 211.

\(^{259}\) McLaren, \textit{A Generous Orthodoxy}, 211-212.

\(^{260}\) McLaren, \textit{A Generous Orthodoxy}, 211-212.
Robinson, McLaren was hesitant to offer the Episcopal structure as “one of the enduring values of Anglicanism.” Instead, he noted the disadvantages of Episcopal governance: that it is “more top-down than the structures preferred by most other Protestants” which means that “pastors and priests (including homosexual ones) can be imposed on a congregation against the will of its people, and churches in one missional setting have to abide by decisions suitable to other missional settings – but not to their own.” However, by the time he found himself standing before the bishops at Lambeth in 2008, his opinions on Episcopal leadership had softened with time.

When Brian McLaren took to the podium at the 2008 Lambeth Conference several bishops from the Global South were meeting elsewhere in protest over the actions of both The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada in regard to issues of human sexuality. Moreover, the central figure of the controversy, Gene Robinson, had not received an invitation to the gathering. As we saw in the previous chapter, Anglicanism, like almost every other denominations in the West, found itself near crisis. McLaren was not unaware of the crisis going on within, but his focus like that of Rowan Williams was on the outside world, noting “how grateful we all should be that at this moment, the leaders and design committee of this historic gathering have chosen to highlight the great priority – not of internal institutional maintenance, but rather of the church’s outward mission of evangelism, or as I would prefer to put it, disciple-formation.” For McLaren, this focus on the outward mission of evangelism must be embraced as it is “our best and only hope to save the world from its trajectory into violence, greed and

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261 McLaren, A Generous Orthodoxy, Note 106, 212.

262 McLaren, A Generous Orthodoxy, Note 106, 212.

McLaren invited the bishops on a journey, a world tour, in which they would see the various ways in which the world, not just the Western world, but the entire world, is changing. As he neared the end of his presentation, McLaren leaned into his audience and invited them to think differently about themselves. Rather than lamenting the current situation, McLaren invited them to think of five “great advantages” of Anglicanism. The first advantage is not unlike the Liberal Protestant Jesus that McLaren had come to know so many years ago. For Anglicans, the Good News they have to offer is the “Gospel of the kingdom of God.” The focus of the Gospel is not merely about the Incarnation or the Crucifixion or even the Resurrection, but the entirety of Jesus’ life and ministry, and that the suffering we find so often in this world is the result of our ignorance of the way of the kingdom. For Anglicans, the Good News is that the kingdom of God is already here, and that it is available to us all. His second advantage of Anglicanism is the “Fresh Expressions” movement. Fresh Expressions lays stress on the words of the Preface to the Declaration of Assent that “The Church of England… professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation.” The Fresh Expressions movement seeks to find new ways of proclaiming the historic gospel, and though perhaps a unique advantage to Anglicanism

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266 McLaren, A Generous Orthodox, 65.
267 McLaren, “Changing Contexts,” Slide 76. Note that not everyone sees Fresh Expressions as an advantage. See, for example, Milbank and Davison’s For the Parish.
268 Mission-shaped Church, 34, emphasis mine.
in 2008, in my 2015 interview with McLaren, he expressed dismay over how long it has taken the Episcopal Church to catch on.269 So long, in fact, that in 2015, Fresh Expressions has long since been embraced by Methodist Bishops in the US,270 and the term has been coopted by Evangelicals in the United States, such that the Episcopal Church is not listed as a partner on the website of Fresh Expressions US.271

The third advantage of Anglicanism, according to McLaren in 2008, is its multicultural and global flexibility.272 This flexibility, McLaren was quick to mention in our 2015 interview, brings with it a real advantage as well as significant baggage: “for better or for worse, because of the British Empire, no non-Roman Catholic denomination has the same breadth of constituency that the Church of England has.”273 He added that while the imperial nature of the Church of England is perhaps the source of the troubles of the last 15-20 years, nevertheless “because it was an imperial church it developed connections around the world, wherever the empire spread and upon which the sun never set, that is the advantage.”274 As in A Generous Orthodoxy, McLaren still sees governance as the nexus of the ongoing struggles of the Anglican Communion: “That the imperial era left a primary unity in governance rather that mission, vision, and so on, that has been the disadvantage.” Overall, however, this multicultural and

269 McLaren, WebEx Interview, July 13, 2015.

270 McLaren, WebEx Interview, July 13, 2015.

271 “Partners” http://freshexpressionsus.org/about/partners/ [accessed December 8, 2015]


274 McLaren, WebEx Interview, July 13, 2015.
global flexibility is an advantage, suggesting his “hope, and I think there is a good chance of this happening, that the Anglican Communion can morph into a true collegial partnership.”

The fourth advantage of Anglicanism continues to build upon the practices of the via media, liturgy which combines beauty, mystery, intelligence, and clarity. This, McLaren would later say, is Anglicanism’s unique quality: “I think [that] what comes naturally to Anglicans in the relationship between liturgy, beauty, mystery, intelligence, and clarity is much more normative for Anglicans than anyone else.” Finally, the fifth advantage of Anglicanism that McLaren offered to the bishops at Lambeth and which was discussed in the previous chapter is the real need for change and growth. When pressed on this issue in our interview, McLaren noted that “institutional ego, institutional apathy” is by far the greatest threat to realizing this need for change, adding, “because of your relative wealth, you can hold yourself off until it is too late, and I think that is a great danger… It isn’t just the excess of money, but it the sense of entitlement and the power structures that are legitimized by that money and the power struggles that exist because of that money. These things are deeply entrenched.”

The five advantages of “this moment” in 2008 were the foundation for his call in January 2009 for the Episcopal Church to embrace this Episcopal Moment. While we know that church unity was an issue near to the heart of William Reed Huntington prior to 1870, it was in that year, with the publication of the first iteration of the Quadrilateral, that the idea really

275 McLaren, WebEx Interview, July 13, 2015.
277 McLaren, WebEx Interview, July 13, 2015.
279 McLaren, WebEx Interview, July 13, 2015.
crystalized. Similarly, while we have seen that Brian McLaren had already given thought to the place the Episcopal Church might hold in the changing landscape of early 21st century America, it was not until 2009 that the notion of an “Episcopal Moment” began to bear real fruit. It began on Saturday, the 31st of January as McLaren gave a presentation to the 114th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington entitled, “The Episcopal Moment,” in which he sought to articulate “a moment of opportunity for the Episcopal Church in particular, this diocese specifically, but for the Anglican Communion in general... That out of whatever problems we have, something new can be born.”

The presentation characteristically began with a short overview of how things are changing in the world around us, suggesting that this is “a moment of great possibility because of the challenges.” He then shifted his focus to the ways in which the Episcopal Church is well-equipped to meet this moment of possibility in the midst of great challenges by way of three different quadrilaterals: four advantages, four disadvantages, and most-importantly, the four spirits that are needed for the Episcopal Church to seize its Episcopal Moment. He began with the advantages, which he called both “unique” and “profound,” inviting the audience gathered to “not underestimate these advantages at this moment.”

With the first advantage, McLaren hearkened once again to A Generous Orthodoxy, lifting up the church’s “Via Media Mindset.” McLaren argued that “many denominations have fully surrendered to modernity and to rationalism and to a way of doing business that has...

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282 McLaren, “The Episcopal Moment.”

283 McLaren, “The Episcopal Moment.”

284 McLaren, “The Episcopal Moment.”
worked in recent centuries and decades. Anglicans, like Roman Catholics, like the Eastern Orthodox, have preserved some pre-modern treasures that I think help you. That via media really puts you in a good position.”

He also noted that “the struggles between liberals and conservatives is really just two versions of modernity… I believe you have resources that come from before the modern era that can help you as you move beyond the modern era.”

The second advantage he called “A Celtic Mindset.” This advantage again has to do with the ancient nature of our tradition. Christianity may have arrived on the British Isles well before the religion of Jesus’ followers found favor with the authorities in Rome: “Among those who came from Rome… there may well have been some who had heard and accepted the message of the Christian Church and who secretly prayed to the Christian’s God while their fellows did homage to the old gods of the State…”

McLaren suggests that this early incursion of pre-state sponsored Roman Christianity has had a lasting impact on Anglicanism. “It was a form of Christianity that was out on the margins, that was extremely relevant to marginal people and it brought resources into the Anglican tradition that are desperately needed and profoundly valuable by (sic) people today.”

Third, McLaren suggested that the Episcopal Church held within it “A Diverse Mindset” and that “learning how to differ is incredibly important.”

Finally, McLaren pointed to “A Liturgical Mindset” as the fourth advantage of the Episcopal Church. Calling it a “great treasure,” McLaren once again pointed to the virtue of beauty as a place where Episcopalians can offer others a place to experience God.

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285 McLaren, “The Episcopal Moment.”

286 McLaren, “The Episcopal Moment.”


288 McLaren, “The Episcopal Moment.”
There are, of course, disadvantages alive and well in the Episcopal Church. Here McLaren did not hold back, but invited the audience to take these disadvantages very seriously. “If your advantages and disadvantage are equal,” McLaren argued, “then you are slowly losing ground as people die and go un-replaced.” The first disadvantage McLaren saw in the Episcopal Church is “An Upper-Class Mindset.” This is “the idea that we’re the church of the highly educated and above-average compensated.” McLaren suggested that on the surface “there is nothing wrong with that because there are an awful lot of churches that take pride in being something else, but part of that elitist mindset also biases white people… and biases older people, and we have to deal with those biases” especially when they show up in our one-size-fits-all liturgy that McLaren calls, echoing his speech to Lambeth, “inherently colonial.”

Second, McLaren highlighted the church’s “institutional mindset” as a disadvantage. Here he claims “institution isn’t a problem, institutionalism is” because it creates a church that is “change-resistant and risk averse.” The third disadvantage in the Episcopal Church is “A Christendom mindset.” McLaren notes that this is a “deep one” and “the downside of coming from the Anglican church which was a state church.” This foundation as a state religion has placed deep within the Episcopal Church a notion that “Christianity is normative, and that people ought to come to church: it’s their job.” In the post-Christendom world, McLaren argues, “Unless you give people a great reason to be a part of your community, it’s not going to happen.” Finally, McLaren points out the “cold war between liberals and conservatives” as the symptom of the fourth disadvantage, “a bi-polar mindset.” This mindset, he suggests, “is inherently exclusive, whichever way it resolves, and becomes a horrible distraction from our higher calling to mission.”

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289 McLaren, “The Episcopal Moment.”
The average leader in the average Episcopal congregation would probably not find any of McLaren’s suggested advantages and disadvantages surprising. As was said in his introduction at the St. Paul’s Cathedral in San Diego, what McLaren offers that is unique; the reason he made the tour from Lambeth to Diocesan Conventions to General Convention is his claim to see the way forward. Where the presentation excels is his proposition of the four spirits that will help the Episcopal Church capitalize on its advantages while downplaying and perhaps even moving beyond its disadvantages. The first spirit that is needed to seize this Episcopal Moment is a “bring them in spirit.” Here McLaren gets to the heart of the Episcopal problem, our aversion to evangelism. As he would later say in a sermon given at the 76th General Convention: “For many of us, the word evangelism evokes ugly and morally tainted associations with colonialism, religious supremacy, and shabby televangelism. As a result, many Episcopalians would say that evangelism may be Southern Baptist or Pentecostal, but it’s not Episcopalian.” Turning that anxiety on its head, McLaren calls the membership of the Episcopal Church to get excited about inviting friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors to church. With mainline churches aging faster than the general population, this moment invites us look closely at ourselves, at how truly welcoming we really are, and how we can change our attitude to say “we are having a wonderful family meal and we love to have company with us.” McLaren is clear that “This bring them in spirit, nothing is going to happen without it.”


291 McLaren, “The Episcopal Moment.”

292 McLaren, “We Live in a Strange Time…”

293 McLaren, “The Episcopal Moment.”
The second spirit of the Episcopal Moment is a “let’s experiment spirit.” Turning our focus away from emboldening the institution, this way of looking at the church invites us to be entrepreneurial and evolutionary. McLaren suggests that this word “experiment” is very important:

Never suggest a change because most people in churches have the idea that nothing should ever be tried for the first time. Instead suggest an experiment for 4-8 weeks, that way the 20% of people who oppose every new idea will say ‘Oh good, I only have to wait this out for eight weeks.’ That will give the experiment a chance to take life.

Here he points to the example of Fresh Expressions in the Church of England where the leadership said, “We are ready to declare an open season on exploring fresh expression of what the church can look like.” In a reversal of his footnote on episcopacy in *A Generous Orthodoxy*, here McLaren highlights the distinct advantage that Anglicans/Episcopalians have in their structure:

You know that old saying, ‘it is impossible to turn around a big ocean-liner fast’? The truth is, I think that’s wrong. It is only a big ocean liner that can turn around fast because there is somebody, one person, up in the control center who can say ‘all hands on deck, turn this thing around.’ Imagine turning around six thousand motor boats fast. That’s not a pretty picture. That’s what evangelicals have to do, but you can use the advantage. This is what they did the Fresh Expressions movement. They said, ‘If a bishop will enfranchise a season of experimentation. If a bishop will make room for things to for things to happen. They can happen.’ That’s using your structure as a great advantage.

The key to successfully engaging this “let’s experiment spirit” is to empower those who can say “yes” to new ideas by listening to them.

The third spirit needed in the Episcopal Moment is a “we’re beginning again spirit” that honestly engages the idea that “we are not preserving the church of the past, we’re giving birth to the church of the future.” Evoking Phyllis Tickle and Bishop Dyer, here McLaren updates the idea of the great rummage sale and instead invites the church to “call Craigslist or eBay and let some things be carted away.” “We’re cluttered,” McLaren says, “sometimes we’re cluttered
with bureaucracy, sometimes we’re cluttered with bad ideas, sometimes we’re clutter with
unfinished business and unresolved conflicts. What would it mean to have a clean house spirit?”
This invites us to turn the focus away from “What’s wrong with those people who aren’t coming
to church?” And instead we can honestly look at ourselves and say, “What about us needs to be
changed?”

Finally, and perhaps offering the biggest challenge, the fourth spirit needed to embrace
the Episcopal Moment is a “transcend and include spirit” which will deal with the very real
problem of bi-polarity. The *via media* tradition has enormous potential in this moment, but only
if we can move “above” liberal and conservative. Both liberals and conservatives have a
tendency to transcend and exclude because their worldview is based on the modernist idea that
we can fully know the world around us, and that there is one truth and all others are wrong.
Quoting Vincent Donovan, a Roman Catholic Priest, McLaren attempts to explain the nuance of
his argument: “Do not merely try to bring others where you are, as wonderful as that is. But do
not leave them where they are either. Instead, go with them to a place neither of you have ever
been.” Drawing strength from the providence of God, McLaren argues that the only way
forward from polarities of left and right is for everyone to follow the Holy Spirit to a new place
together.

At the heart of the four spirits are the Holy Spirit and a call to evangelism, offering
people something bigger than the life we see on a day to day basis. The harsh reality, McLaren
suggests is that

There aren’t millions of people sitting out there thinking, ‘Shoot, I wish I could be an
Episcopalian.’ But there are a lot people who are seeking meaning, direction, depth, and
relationship. Where are they going to get help? … There are people all around us who

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294 McLaren, “The Episcopal Moment.”
295 Quoted in McLaren, “The Episcopal Moment.”
are looking for people who love God and that love doesn’t make them hate other people…. There are people all around us who are seeking the peace that only God can offer… They need Episcopal Churches that will accept them as they are… and say ‘we are a community that’s not trying to turn you into one of us, but to help you turn to God and help you get connected with the living God.

Near the end of his presentation, McLaren looks back on his prior work to suggest that the gospel that the Episcopal Church embraces can offer the world something different, something better: “nobody has better news and nobody has more hope.”296 If the Episcopal Church can live into the four spirits, and with the power of the Holy Spirit reclaim evangelism, sharing the fullness of Jesus’ gospel of the kingdom of God in the hopes not of saving the institution, but with the goal of making disciples, we might just change the world.

Following McLaren’s presentation to the Diocese of Washington, his premise that the Episcopal Church might be poised for an Episcopal Moment gained steam. After a March 2009 presentation to the clergy of the Diocese of Massachusetts, in late April 2009 a group of small group of bishops joined with church-growth specialists, writers, and consultants to “explore paths for developing a revitalized church, one more attuned to post-modern sensibilities, and more nimble in developing new leaders and responding to evangelism opportunities.”297 Among those in attendance were Diana Butler Bass and Phyllis Tickle. Very little has been reported about that two-day gathering, but one white paper prepared by two mission-minded Episcopal priests has been published. In the Foreword to that paper, Brain McLaren reiterated for the bishops in attendance that The Episcopal Church, because of its episcopal polity, is uniquely suited to meet the needs of the post-modern transition: “I have proposed this kind of innovation

296 McLaren, “The Episcopal Moment.”

to a few other denominations, and although it is under consideration, these other denominations
don’t have the advantage of being able to use the Episcopal structure for the advantage of such a project.”

He was quick to offer warning, however, that the opportunity could dissolve rapidly, “the Episcopal Church in America could do for emerging leaders in the 21st Century what the Church of England failed to do for John Wesley… Or not: as the opportunity could easily be missed.” He called specifically on the bishops gathered to “seize the moment and… take bold and critical action.” “No group is better positioned to seize this moment, I believe, than the Episcopal Church.” The remainder of that text, authored by Donald Schell and Karen Ward, looks at how the church might raise up and ordain new leaders for new congregations, but it is the wide-eyed optimism of McLaren that would continue to garner interest in the possibilities of the Episcopal Moment.

Less than a month after the Chicago gathering, Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori announced the preaching line-up for the 76th General Convention in Anaheim, CA. As is the custom, each day has a theme and McLaren was invited to preach on the 16th of July on the theme of evangelism. With an echo of William Reed Huntington, McLaren asked the leaders gathered to follow St. Paul in II Corinthians 5 and think of the call to evangelism as a call toward reconciliation: “The E-word for Paul is the R-word, reconciliation. We are God’s reconciling co-workers; we are God’s reconciling co-conspirators; we seek to demonstrate what it looks like to be spiritually and socially reconciled individuals and communities in the Spirit of the risen


300 McLaren, “Foreword,” 1.

https://gc09diocge.wordpress.com/2009/05/21/gc09-preacherscelebrants-announced/.
Christ.” Again, McLaren, knowing his audience, pointed out the benefit of the episcopal structure for meeting the needs of a changing world, though he did so with cautious optimism, recalling the time in his 20s when he was discerning a call to ordination in the Episcopal Church:

As I approached my discernment retreat with the bishop, I increasingly felt that a call to Episcopal ministry was at odds with my primary calling to evangelism. I hope that you will make it possible for people like me not [to] have to choose one over the other in the future. May it be said to all people who are gifted and called in evangelism that the Episcopal Church welcomes you... The good news is that this would be a relatively simple thing to change... and the Episcopal structure itself, I believe, has remarkable inherent powers of self-renewal. And that’s why, I believe, this moment of Episcopal crisis is also a moment of Episcopal opportunity.  

Demand for McLaren stayed hot through the end of 2009 and the spring of 2010. He presented at least two key-note speeches on the Episcopal Moment to the Diocese of Los Angeles’ Annual Convention in December of 2009, however those presentations are no longer extant. In January of 2010, McLaren was once again on the West Coast, this time for the Annual Convention of the Diocese of San Diego. On the Sunday after the Convention, McLaren made a presentation to Saint Paul’s Cathedral in which he expanded upon the three quadrilaterals first presented in Washington DC, making his clearest and boldest claim about the opportunity of an Episcopal Moment, “I really do believe that the Episcopal Church is incredibly well placed to seize a very, very special moment in history.” While he gave a very similar presentation to the Cathedral in San Diego as he had in Washington DC, he had clearly spent the year expanding his thoughts on the matter.

The first advantage, a _via media_ mindset gives us the opportunity to learn from our founding in the Reformation, the last time the world underwent such a momentous change. As the battles raged between Roman Catholics and Protestants, the leaders of the Church in England had a choice to make: they could side with Rome or with Geneva; but they chose a third path,

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302 McLaren, “We Live in a Strange Time…”
“preserving everything that could be preserved from the Middle Ages and embracing and welcoming the kind of changes that were coming…” Here McLaren argues that as the world makes another great shift, Episcopalians have these lessons built in them, perhaps unconsciously, in order to be able to say “yes, we embrace change, but we can embrace change without becoming reactionary against our past.” As many Protestant churches realize that in the Reformation’s attempt to excise the excesses of Rome, the actions of the Reformers may have been too reactionary; some are seeking to relearn things like liturgy, art, and an appreciation for beauty, Episcopalians, as inheritors of the Anglican Tradition, already have a long history with these, and are very comfortable with them.

Second, the Celtic mindset is also present unconsciously within our tradition. Not only were we able to hold on to some of the best of Roman Catholicism during the Reformation, but a thousand years earlier, as Rome found its way to the British Isles, our ancestors were able to maintain the best of the Christianity that predated Constantinian Christianity which became increasingly influenced by Roman civilization and politics. Specifically, the way in which Christianity fused with the already existing culture taught the early church in England that the gospel could enter a culture “and not try to drive the culture from the people but to drive the sin from the culture.”

In a 2015 interview, McLaren noted that this advantage exists in the ideal, but because of the ways in which the Anglian Communion developed alongside the British Empire, the colonial influences often overwhelmed the Celtic mindset. However because this ideal exists within us, there is the opportunity to live into it: “I think Christianity is in the process

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303 McLaren, “The Importance of Being an Episcopalian.”
of extracting itself from being an imperial religion. I think that if it doesn’t extract itself from its legacy of empire… it should not continue.”

The diverse mindset is another outgrowth of Anglicanism’s tumultuous early years as the church “had to negotiate with the contentious polarities of Catholic and Protestant… and play the role of peacemaker to try to keep religious people from killing each other.” In order to create space for the many differences of opinion that existed within the Church of England, the choice was made to “base unity on practices [of worship] rather than opinions.” McLaren calls this “the genius of the Anglican tradition.” Finally, McLaren returns to the advantage of a liturgical mindset, defining liturgy as “organized mysticism.” Here he develops on his Washington DC presentation to suggest that the “real purpose of liturgy is… to create space for the human soul to experience contact with the living God.” As an example, McLaren points to the Confession as an opportunity to “slow down, and through well-chosen words we actually present ourselves as we are, as people with sins and failures and needs, to the presence of God, and we actually experience honesty before God about our failures… and receive the grace and forgiveness of God… in community with one another.”

Just as McLaren developed his thoughts on our advantages, so too did he add depth to our disadvantages. For example, the upper-class mindset does not just bring with it inherent biases, but it requires us to “overcome the most intractable division between human beings, deeper even than race and maybe even religion, social and economic class… If we really want to be faithful to Jesus Christ, we have to break the social class barrier.” Next McLaren argues that the institutional mindset is holding us back from engaging the possibility that exists in this moment, “Institutions preserve the gains made by past social movement and they always oppose the gains proposed by current social movements, but a movement cannot succeed unless they embed their

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304 McLaren, WebEx Interview, July 13, 2015.
values in an institution.” As long as the Episcopal Church sees itself primarily as an institution, it cannot hear the voice of change for which this moment is calling. Third, McLaren makes a much stronger statement about the disadvantage of the Christendom mindset: “When Christianity and a kingdom or political system combine and Christianity is the favored religion of a nation state, the Christian faith becomes lazy and allied with power.” After three disadvantages that seem to have grown stronger in the year since he first presented in Washington, McLaren offers some hope regarding our fourth disadvantage, the bi-polar mindset: “that mindset polarizes and then paralyzes, but what I’ve been so encouraged to see in the Episcopal Church in general just in the last couple years… is a moving beyond a period of polarization and paralysis and saying ‘OK, let’s get on with what we’re here for.’”

From there, McLaren once again turned his attention to the four spirits needed to embrace this Episcopal Moment. The “bring them in spirit”, he characterizes as being “so excited about life with God in the way of Jesus that you are eager to involve other people in that life.” Always an evangelist first, McLaren asks whether or not we “actually believe that people would be better off if they had a deep connection with God through Jesus Christ?” With an ominous tone he implores the audience gathered, “If people like you do not recruit people into a positive, open, and deep understanding of the Christian faith, other people will be trying to recruit them into a brittle and judgmental and angry and, in some cases, violent version of the Christian faith. If the only people speaking up for the Christian faith are of that latter sort and you have the name Christian applied to you, people will have no reason not to assume you are like the other folks.” As he said in Washington, there is no hope for our future without a move toward evangelism and a “bring them in” spirit.
Continuing his somewhat ominous tone, McLaren suggests that the next spirit, a “let’s experiment” spirit means accepting the reality that “our mission is not just to continue to consume religious goods and services according to our connoisseurial tastes, but we are here as part of a mission and that mission involves welcoming people into the way of Christ.” That welcome, he argues, will only become reality when we move beyond “fossilized” liturgy and into “living liturgy with room to grow.”

In our 2015 interview, McLaren, now a member of an Episcopal congregation echoed these words, adding:

I love the Episcopal Church. I love the liturgy, but if I’m honest, 50-70% of the liturgy does not touch what’s going on in my life. There are so many important things that the liturgy could touch in my life that it doesn’t ever touch. If we consider the liturgy as this requirement from the past that we have to hold on to no matter what, then we are stuck with that. If we say that, then people have to say, well that’s your problem, the liturgy… you have the wrong needs. The liturgy is meeting the right needs and you have the wrong needs. If we say that liturgy is a tool for spiritual formation, then the church is responsible to adapt that too for the needs of the moment, then we have significant work to do in that area. I say that, and I love the liturgy…

Third, with the “we’re beginning again” spirit, McLaren cites the disadvantage of holding too closely to the via media and Celtic mindsets: “It is not terribly exciting to say, ‘I’m carrying on the tradition of my ancestors, come hell or high water, and I’ll probably be the last one to turn out the light.’” Instead, he invites the church to take on the attitude that “we’re in an incredible place for a new beginning.” Finally, he clarifies the “transcend and include” spirit from its earlier version to mean, quite simply, “We are inviting liberals, conservatives, and moderates on a new quest of mission, adventure, and journey together,” adding, “There is a new future.” He concluded his remarks with a call to action, the means by which we can all work toward seizing the Episcopal Moment:

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305 McLaren, “The Importance of Being an Episcopalian.”

The way this is going to happen is for all of us to realize that to be a follower of Jesus Christ is an amazing gift. It isn’t just some tired old thing from the past, but it makes an incredible difference in our lives and in the world. For us, congregation by congregation, to have people who are seeking to live out that way of not just being believers of Christ but followers of Christ and agents of Christ… that is the exciting future.\textsuperscript{307}

Despite McLaren’s call to seize the moment before it is too late, despite the early work of some forward thinking bishops, despite the buzz and the hope surrounding his presentations at Lambeth, General Convention, and in major diocese like Washington and Los Angeles, the energy surrounding the possibility of an Episcopal Moment flamed out almost as quickly as it began. In the years since his presentation in the Diocese of San Diego, little, if any, activity can be found in regards to the Episcopal Moment. Instead the collective attention of the Episcopal Church turned to marriage equality and structural reform.\textsuperscript{308} In July 2015, Brian McLaren was gracious enough to spend an hour discussing those old presentations, and it is worth noting that even after half a decade of silence from the Church on this hope-filled possibility, McLaren is as hopeful as ever: “The things I talked about in those talks, I believe as much as ever. I still think they’re true.”\textsuperscript{309}

William Reed Huntington spent more than thirty years thinking, speaking, and writing about the Episcopal Church’s opportunity in the movement toward church unity, but within months of his death, his voice no longer serving to beat the constant drum, the General Convention are labeled as evangelism (with only one dealing with reaching all those who do not already know the love of God), while A050 (Create a Task Force on the Study of Marriage) and C095 (Structural Reform) served as omnibus resolutions to handle the dozens of pre-filed resolutions on these matters.

\textsuperscript{307} McLaren, “The Importance of Being an Episcopalian.”

\textsuperscript{308} See Straub, the Rev. Canon Doctor Gregory., “A Summary of the Actions of the 77th General Convention.” August 10, 2012. Accessed November 11, 2015. \url{https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/5901.pdf} in which only two resolutions acted on by Convention are labeled as evangelism (with only one dealing with reaching all those who do not already know the love of God), while A050 (Create a Task Force on the Study of Marriage) and C095 (Structural Reform) served as omnibus resolutions to handle the dozens of pre-filed resolutions on these matters.

\textsuperscript{309} McLaren, WebEx Interview, July 13, 2015.
Convention seemed ready to move on.\textsuperscript{310} McLaren’s work was much more condensed, spanning less than two years, but it too seems to have been usurped both other areas of interest. In the final chapter, we will look at the responses to Huntington and McLaren from both within and beyond the Episcopal Church and seek to find a way to take their ideas forward toward a hope-filled future for The Episcopal Church in the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century.

\textsuperscript{310} Suter, \textit{Life and Letters}, 409.
Chapter Six
Toward a Hope-Filled Future

While both William Reed Huntington and Brian McLaren saw considerable energy for their work in their day, neither can be said to have found much real and long-standing success in the Episcopal Church. Though Huntington’s Quadrilateral was adopted by the House of Bishops and later by all the Bishops of the Anglican Communion at Lambeth as the basis for reunion, it was never formally adopted by the General Convention. As noted above, his work to entrench the Quadrilateral in the Constitution of the Episcopal Church failed in its required second reading only a year following his death. Criticism of his plan for church unity came from within and beyond his beloved Episcopal Church. McLaren, on the other hand, seems to have succumbed to the three year revolving door of General Convention fads. He arrived on the scene at Lambeth in 2008, rose to stardom at the General Convention in 2009, but his vision was already forgotten by the time the Bishops and Deputies made their way to Indianapolis in 2012. Before turning our attention, finally, to what the Episcopal Church might still be able to learn from these two wise men, it behooves us to look closely at the sources of pushback to their attempts to suggest that the Episcopal Church, with a few small changes, could be well suited to meet the needs of a changing America.

Huntington chose to engage his work toward church unity by way of the General Convention, which is known to be rife with politics both personal and corporate. As such, he knew the challenges that beset church unity, writing near the end of his life, “The truth is… Church Unity is not coming about in a hurry… There is no such thing as ‘rushing’ the work.”

Though his goal was always the reunion of the many denominations into some sort of American

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311 Suter, Life and Letters, 399.
312 Suter, Life and Letters, 425.
Catholic Church, other work fell upon him, not least of which the 1892 Revision of the Book of Common Prayer. His biographer, John Suter, notes that 1892 was “perhaps the high-water mark of his power,” yet even then, he experienced criticism when “Mr. Biddle of Philadelphia had stigmatized the idea of church unity, using Senator Ingall’s phrase, as an ‘iridescent dream…’” Even as Huntington sought to bring all of American Christianity under the pall of Episcopal churchmanship, the politics of General Convention proved to be too difficult to navigate, and by 1895, the press was talking of “the collapse of the Quadrilateral.”

Outside of the Episcopal Church there were questions about Huntington’s plan for church unity as well. Suter shares a portion of a letter from a Congregationalist minister sent to Huntington in 1899: “Differentiation is the mark of progress. I am continually glad that I live in the time of its increase. I never deplore the divisions of Christendom but rejoice in them, - that so many souls can find close associations to suit them.” Even those who were advocates for church unity took issue with the means by which Huntington sought to accomplish it. In Charles Shields, a Professor at (the Presbyterian) Princeton University, Huntington found an unlikely ally for the Quadrilateral’s controversial fourth point, the historic episcopate: “The Historic Episcopate is everywhere adaptable to Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians of every type, as well as those without as to those within the pale of that Episcopate.” Shields goes on to argue six reasons why “it is only through the historic episcopate that the primitive

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313 Suter, Life and Letters, 395.
314 Suter, Life and Letters, 395.
315 Suter, Life and Letters, 396.
316 Suter, Life and Letters, 400.
church unity can be restored.”\textsuperscript{318} First, though probably of least importance is the fact that the historic episcopate is “the \textit{de facto} government of three-fourths, if not four-fifths of Christendom.”\textsuperscript{319} Shields recognized that the sheer number of Christians who subscribe to this form of governance means it must be dealt with honestly, “otherwise, everything like church unity is simply out of the question.”\textsuperscript{320} Second, the historic episcopate “bases church unity upon church polity, not upon systematic theology,” after all “exact theological agreement as a basis of church unity is already a failure.”\textsuperscript{321} Not unlike McLaren, Shields argues that it is only the episcopate that is “ample enough and elastic enough” to bring unity out of wide diversity.\textsuperscript{322} Third, in the historic episcopate Shields finds a comprehensive polity of congregational, presbyter, and episcopal governance.\textsuperscript{323} Fourth, Shields sees the historic episcopate as “tolerant of all types of churchmanship”; as it is “presented as a historic institution apart from any theory of its origin and claims, it allows all such theories without repressing any of them.”\textsuperscript{324} Fifth, and perhaps most surprising given his place on the faculty at Princeton, Shields argues that the historic episcopate’s exclusion of non-episcopal ministry would create unity by forcing formerly sectarian discord to live in unity of variety under one pall.\textsuperscript{325} Finally, again with echoes of McLaren more than 100 years later, Shields suggests the benefit of the historic episcopate for

\textsuperscript{318} Shields, \textit{The Historic Episcopate}, 40.
\textsuperscript{319} Shields, \textit{The Historic Episcopate}, 35.
\textsuperscript{320} Shields, \textit{The Historic Episcopate}, 35.
\textsuperscript{321} Shields, \textit{The Historic Episcopate}, 35.
\textsuperscript{322} Shields, \textit{The Historic Episcopate}, 36.
\textsuperscript{323} Shields, \textit{The Historic Episcopate}, 36-37.
\textsuperscript{324} Shields, \textit{The Historic Episcopate}, 37.
\textsuperscript{325} Shields, \textit{The Historic Episcopate}, 38-39.
“guaranteeing the other three terms of church unity.”

The Sacraments, Creeds, and Scriptures all “emanated from the primitive episcopacy,” Shields writes, “… To render them consistent and complete episcopacy is needed.”

Even as he argues for the benefit of bringing all ministries under the roof of the historic episcopate, from which the keystones of church unity came into being, Shields takes issue with Huntington’s attempt to claim the Episcopal Church’s pride-of-place in an American Catholic Church, arguing that though the Episcopal Church, somewhat naturally, possessed the four points of the Lambeth Quadrilateral, his fear is that the coming together would be less about finding the best in each tradition and more about creating Episcopal “churchmen by the sheer force of propagandism…” He is most fearful of Huntington’s attempts to change the Constitution of the Episcopal Church to allow a bishop to claim authority over any congregation, Episcopalian or otherwise, that affirms the Lambeth position even as they maintain something of their denominational identity. Shields sees this as an impossible scenario, fearing instead that it would seem to invite them thither only through the successive stages of concession, submission, absorption, extinction. In their view it would be somewhat like gaining the boon of immortality at the loss of personal identity… The Methodists would need to undo much of their history before they could return to the church whence they went out. The Lutheran and Reformed bodies, Dutch and German, never having gone out of the Anglican Church, could not very well be asked to return. The great Presbyterian communion, ever since it was driven out, has set up rival claims which it would not lower without at least a salute. And the greater Roman Catholic communion would simply reverse the invitation and bid us all come back to the mother church.

Ultimately, Shields sounds almost prophetic in his assessment of the way forward: “The approach to church unity must be slow, and the way may be long and difficult. Not in one
generation, perhaps not in several generations, can it be effected..." It would be several
generations later that, as an outsider, Brian McLaren would be bold enough to suggest a moment
of Episcopal opportunity. In his July 2015 interview, McLaren reflected on the two main forces
at work that have kept the Episcopal Church from seizing on the opportunity of the moment.
The first has already been mentioned above, “institutional ego” on the side of traditionalism:
“This idea that the tradition is all we have, the tradition is authoritative, and you do not tamper
with the tradition, it is the fortress into which you retreat.” This tendency can be seen in two
events that were highly celebrated by Episcopalians over the last few years: 1) the publishing of
a report by the Barna group looking at the worship preferences of members of the millennial
generation and 2) the “conversion” of evangelical celebrity, Rachel Held Evans. Barna was not
eager to make sweeping generalizations: “It’s tempting to oversimplify the relationship between
Millennials and sacred space… For instance, it might be easy to believe such a place needs to
look ultra modern or chic to appeal to teens and young adults. But the reality, like so much
about this generation, is more complicated – refreshingly so.” This nuance escaped many
Episcopalians, however. While the research suggests that many Millennials “aspire for a more
traditional church experience, in a beautiful building steeped in history and religious
symbolism,” it is just as true that 60% of respondents preferred the word “modern” over
“traditional.” McLaren was more pointed in my interview:

330 Shields, The Historic Episcopate, 57.
331 McLaren, WebEx Interview, July 13, 2015.
mind#.VdN2szZRFMu
333 Barna, “Designing Worship Spaces...”
If somebody wants to say that there is a trend in the direction of millennials coming back to traditional liturgical churches, that’s fine, there are trends in almost every direction.\footnote{See the oft shared “Why Millennials Long for Liturgy” \url{http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/why-millennials-long-for-liturgy/comment-page-1/}} I’m going to guess that whatever the trend tells us the numbers might mean… it’s like telling a cancer patient you have 36 months to live not 18 months… Our chemo is working better than we thought.\footnote{McLaren, WebEx Interview, July 13, 2015.}

The only thing more open to manipulation than statistics is the anecdotal evidence which can be shared on social media. In March of 2015, Rachel Held Evans published her memoir of conversion from Evangelicalism to the Episcopal Church, entitled \textit{Searching for Sunday}. In an interview with the Religious News Service that was shared 145,000 times on Facebook and more than 5,500 times on Twitter, Evans unwittingly became proof of McLaren’s warning about institutional apathy. In framing a question about her move to the Episcopal Church, Jonathan Merritt offers the Church the opportunity to sit back and wait for a lost generation to return: “Much of the Episcopal church has failed to embrace the cosmetic changes you critique and they practice things you say will draw millennials back.”\footnote{Merritt, Jonathan. “Rachel Held Evans defends exit from evangelicalism, calls Christians to celebrate sacraments.” Religious News Service Interview, March 9, 2015. Accessed August 18, 2015. \url{http://jonathanmerritt.religionnews.com/2015/03/09/rachel-held-evans-defends-exit-evangelicalism-calls-christians-celebrate-sacraments/}} Evans, like Barna, is hesitant to make universal statements: “I don’t want to project my experience onto all millennials.”\footnote{Merritt, “Rachel Held Evans defends…”}

Unfortunately, social media is not well equipped for nuance, and so the momentum toward the sort of changes that McLaren suggested in his presentations on the Episcopal Moment are easily forgotten amidst the “successes” of recent years.

More insidious, at least in McLaren’s opinion, is the rise of the theological project known as Radical Orthodoxy. On the surface, it may sound like it is advocating for the sort of things
McLaren has suggested, but in its American incarnation is seeking to reframe \textit{sola scriptura} (especially Augustine’s understandings of it) for another 500 year run. Radical Orthodoxy, to borrow a metaphor, is less interested in the Church holding a once-every-five-hundred-year rummage sale and more focused on finding a way for the Church to seek out the very best antiques, arguing that “the postmodern church could do nothing better than be ancient, that the most powerful way to reach a postmodern world is by recovering tradition, and that the most effective means of discipleship is found in liturgy.”\textsuperscript{338} One would be hard-pressed to find a leader in the Episcopal Church who disagreed with any of that, and yet McLaren worries that Radical Orthodoxy’s rise in popularity is a “counter offensive to the sort of change that I think needs to happen.”\textsuperscript{339}

One of the key leaders in the North American version of the Radical Orthodoxy movement is James K. A. Smith, whose 2006 book, \textit{Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism} was said to “dissect the popular teachings of postmodern writers like Brian McLaren…, Leonard Sweet, and Robert Webber” in a starred review from the former employer of Phyllis Tickle, Publishers Weekly.\textsuperscript{340} It is, in many respects, the sort of counter-emergence that should be expected in a time of transition such as we are living in now. Smith’s text engages deeply with an “unholy Trinity” of postmodern thinkers: Jacques Derrida, Jean-Francois Lyotard, and Michel Foucault.\textsuperscript{341} Specifically, it is his engagement with Derrida’s claim that there is “nothing but the text” as a “radical translation of the Reformation principle of \textit{sola scriptura}” that brings the likes


\textsuperscript{339} McLaren, WebEx Interview, July 13, 2015.


\textsuperscript{341} Smith, \textit{Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism}, 21.
of McLaren, Tickle, and Butler Bass pause. As we have seen, *sola scriptura* was already in its death throws by the time of William Reed Huntington, yet Smith argues that Derrida’s claim, rejected fearfully by many Christians, should be embraced in the recovery of “two key emphases… (a) the centrality of Scripture for mediating our understanding of the world as a whole and (b) the role of community in the interpretation of Scripture.”

Smith’s goal is to use postmodernism’s leading thinkers to return the Church to an “orthodox Christian faith” which he defines as “rooted in the Scriptures and attested in the historic creeds and confession, which I take to be amplified by later Reformed thought,” adding, “What is at stake here is an Augustinian Catholic theology.” It is this goal that McLaren sees as the most dangerous piece. In his July 2015 interview, looking again at the trend toward liturgically-minded Millennials, he notes “a significant number of evangelical babies would like to join one of the Anglican breakoff groups. They are drawn to tradition. What these folks are looking for is not necessarily the traditionally liberal mainline Episcopal Church, but a new liturgical expression for their foundational evangelical or, in some cases, fundamentalist theologies.”

It is probably clear by now that I tend to agree with both Huntington and McLaren in their assessments. While I find Tickle’s idea of a gathering center to be compelling, I do not hold out the hope that Huntington took to his grave that some sort of pan-Protestant denomination can come out of a move toward unity. Theologically, it seems that the various

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344 Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism*, Note 17, p. 27.
345 McLaren, WebEx Interview, July 13, 2015.
346 See note 182 above.
Protestant denominations are closer to unity than ever before, as long as worship style is matter of personal taste and as long as the money to train and hire clergy in various denominations can be found, the sort of unity hoped for by Huntington is nothing more than a dream. I do, however, find his attempt to seek the core of the Episcopal Church a noble one. Part of our ongoing decline, as I see it, is our inability to tell our own story, to offer a compelling reason to take part in our portion of the Body of Christ. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral seems as good a place as any to start, and while many in the Episcopal Church would seek to make Common Prayer a fifth point in the plan, I am happy to leave room for diversity in worship, even as I cling to my worn out copy of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer. In light of the statistics and commentary made by Kirk Hadaway and the House of Deputies Committee on the State of the Church over the last decade or so, I am also keenly aware that something has to change. The Episcopal Church cannot continue to follow the patterns of the last 60 years and expect people to join us. That is not to say we should throw out our tradition, but instead, we must find the best parts of our long heritage and do them to the best of our ability. It might look like the mysticism of Celtic Christianity, a return to the pattern of life defined by the Daily Office, or falling back in love with Scripture, but not in the way James Smith would have us read it. Rather, McLaren’s vision of the four spirits seem to me to be a starting place on the road to reclaiming our Episcopal identity for a world in need of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Still, there are improvements that could be made, especially in opposition to the counter-emergence of Radical Orthodoxy.

In light of that, alongside the good work of Huntington and McLaren, and with a firm belief that the world around is changing and changing rapidly, we are left with the question, “what now?” In response, I propose my own Quadrilateral that, if embraced by the Episcopal
Church, will place it perfectly to meet the needs of postmodern American religion. In the spirit of Huntington and McLaren, to meet the needs of a changing world the Episcopal Church must:

1. Come to know who we are and what we are about
2. Raise up disciples
3. Boldly go and tell our story
4. Not be afraid to fail

Before the 78th General Convention and the suggestions made in the Final Report of the Task Force for Re-Imagining the Episcopal Church\(^{347}\) began to take up more and more of the conversation, the President of the House of Deputies, Gay Jennings, took on a challenge from the Acts 8 Moment, and blogged her answer to the question, “What is the mission of the (Domestic and Foreign) Missionary Society (of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States)?”\(^{348}\) While the debate seemed to be all about structure, Jennings offered a helpful critique: “When we talk about structure as if it will save us, I think we’re not really talking about structure. We’re talking about our identity and our vision for the future.”\(^{349}\) As with most other institutions coming to grips with the culture changing around us, she wrote, the Episcopal Church is in the midst of an identity crisis:

As beloved children of God, we don’t need to rely on a makeover or a new vocabulary of jargon to bring us into new life. We’re not a corporation in need of a takeover; we are a people who need to rediscover who we are. Our governing documents – the Book of Common Prayer, the Constitution & Canons, rules of order and by-laws – provide the foundational principles for the ways in which we carry out God’s mission in the world. And within those documents, we have an enormous amount of room to stretch. Our job in the 21st century is not to remake ourselves in the image of the age. Our job is to change and grow and transform and adapt to be the Episcopal Church more and more authentically, more and more as God has called us to be.\(^{350}\)


To meet the needs of a changing world, the first thing the Episcopal Church must do is come to know who we are and what we are about. We need to find a clear identity. Since losing pride-of-place in America among the political elite with the rise of the Religious Right in the late 20th Century, the Episcopal Church has seemed content to define itself by what it is not. Around the same time as the rise of Evangelicalism, a print advertising campaign that started in Minneapolis gained in popularity. One of the most popular advertisements, one which still hung in the offices of Saint James’ Church in Potomac, Maryland during my seminary days, depicted a simple black and white image of Jesus under the words “He died to take away your sins. Not your mind.” The subtext of this ad campaign is clear, saying, if nothing else, “we are not like those other guys.”

Diana Butler Bass aptly suggests that this move to define ourselves differently has only exacerbated our problem:

In a very real way, mainline Protestants retained the ideal of comprehensiveness while jettisoning the idea that people are spiritually sick and need healing. Everyone was welcome – with no spiritual demands other than to conform to some sort of generalized Protestant morality. As a result many mainline congregations forgot the practices that originally formed their traditions, making participation in their churches optional at best and irrelevant at worst.

William Reed Huntington’s quest for church unity was also based on the need to have a clear understanding of identity. In order to meet the needs of 21st-century Americans looking for God,

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350 Jennings, “Structure, Identify, and Magical Thinking.”


353 Butler Bass, Christianity for the Rest of Us, 36.
the Episcopal Church needs a clear story of who we are and what we are about. Though the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral was never formally approved by the General Convention, it has made its way into the Historical Documents portion of the 1979 Book of Common Prayer and remains a suitable starting place for a discussion about identity. Since the American Revolution, the need to assent to the 39 Articles has gone away, yet every bishop, priest, and deacon ordained in the Episcopal Church has had to affirm before God, their bishop, and the congregation gathered, both verbally and in writing, that “I solemnly declare that I do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and do contain all things necessary to salvation; and I do solemnly engage to conform to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of The Episcopal Church.”

In such a declaration, the ordained leadership has affirmed that at its foundation, the Episcopal Church believes in the Scriptures, the historic Creeds, the dominical sacraments, and, given the context of standing before a bishop, the historic episcopate. Being a Church that allows for questions, doubt, and debate is an important facet of our common life; however we cannot be allow those questions to undercut our primary identity as disciples of Jesus committed to bringing the kingdom of God to earth as it is in heaven.

In its 2015 study on America’s religious habits, the Pew Research Center looked at what happens to childhood faith as we grow into adulthood. Episcopalians/Anglicans ranked ninth out of thirteen Protestant denominational families with 39% still identifying with their childhood denominational family, well below the net rate for all Protestant denominations (47%). More alarming is the fact that 27% of those who grew up as Episcopalians/Anglicans now identify as unaffiliated—only the Congregationalists have a worse attrition rate (28%).

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Church is failing at raising up disciples, and an aging, dying church is the result. In order to meet the needs of a changing world, the second thing the Episcopal Church must do is raise up disciples.

The need to raise up disciples can be looked at from two distinct angles. The first, to which I have already alluded, is the need to offer quality Christian education to our members of all ages. Our ability to teach with conviction is helped by a clear understanding of our identity, but it also requires a change of understanding of the role of Christian formation. Lyle Smith Graybeal, a board member of Forma, an association of Christian educators in the Episcopal Church, notes that the goal of Christian formation is not about self-actualization or creating polite members of society, but rather “becoming little icons of the God that we have come to know in the second person of the Trinity.”

Christian education is about disciple formation, and it is key to the renewal of the church. As one Lutheran pastor told Diana Butler Bass, “It isn’t rocket science. You preach the gospel, offer hospitality, and pay attention to worship and people’s spiritual lives. Frankly, you take Christianity seriously as a way of life.” Raising up disciples, whether they are 5, 50, or 105 will change the church, which will change the world. It is vitally important.

Of course, we cannot teach what we do not know, which leads us to the second understanding of what it means to raise up disciples: we need to identify and train gifted ordained leaders. Every Christian is called to work to “restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.” However, some are specially called to do that work on a fulltime basis.

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357 Quoted in Butler Bass, Christianity for the Rest of Us, 7.

and to help others find the specific ministry to which they are called. The power of the ordained to lead dioceses and congregations is too important not to take seriously, and as such, when Karen Ward set out to offer a word about seizing the Episcopal Moment to the bishops gathering in Chicago in April of 2010, she chose to focus her “preferential option for the future” on the subject of ordination.

Using the work of Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, Ward notes “When you cut the head off a spider, or too many of its legs, it dies, whereas a starfish has no ‘head’ (or centralized life support system)… giving the starfish the capacity to regenerate and carry on when distanced or cut off from other parts.” Currently, she suggests, the church looks at leadership development like a spider, “preparing leaders for ‘the whole church’ by moving everyone ‘to and through’ one of eleven Episcopal seminaries, and that without this the most cherished aspects of our church life and tradition will die.” If, instead, we look at leadership development like a starfish, “*wherever* there are faithful Episcopalians, faithful Episcopal leaders can be formed.”

I would stop short of suggesting we no longer seek to engage the majority of our ordained leaders in a three-year, residential seminary experience, but I do agree with Ward that no matter where our leaders are formed, we must take seriously the reality that “when the modern overlay is removed, the church has always been a starfish, a lively network and web of


peer relationships in the Spirit, which is the body of Christ… a body that is naturally regenerative, that can grow, prosper and raise up competent, faithful leaders.”

Brian McLaren, in his 2015 interview, reiterated this important claim, through the example of the Diocese of Edmonton in the Anglican Church of Canada where progressive evangelicals who had been ostracized for their changing position on issues of LGBT equality got wind of the fact that Bishop Jane Alexander was open to ordaining them. Bishop Alexander was able to fast track these entrepreneurial leaders with a strong understanding of the importance of outreach and welcome and a deep commitment to mission through the ordination process for the good of the wider church. “[Given] The kinds of dynamic people we need to attract, we need a very different understanding of [leadership.]”

Imaginative ways of raising up ordained leadership with a passion for the Gospel and a willingness to send lay leaders out into the world with mission and vision are greatly needed in this moment.

Once we know who we are and what we are about, and once we are equipped to faithfully live that identity, the third thing required for the Episcopal Church to meet the needs of a changing America is to boldly go and tell our story. It is on this third point that I am the most hopeful. On June 27, 2015, Michael Curry was elected on the first ballot as the 27th Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church by a more than two-thirds majority.

While the headlines focused on Curry as the first African-American to be elected as Presiding Bishop, what caught my eye was the final paragraph of his vision statement in the nominees’ booklet:

At a deep level I am suggesting a church-wide spiritual revival of the Christian faith in the Episcopal way of being disciples of Jesus. While not the only player in this, I believe

a significant role of the Presiding Bishop is to provide leadership, inspiration and encouragement for that revival. Obviously the Presiding Bishop has CEO (Chief Executive Officer) responsibilities that must be exercised clearly, collaboratively and effectively. But in this mission moment of the church’s life, the primary role of the Presiding Bishop must be CEO in another sense: Chief Evangelism Officer, to encourage, inspire and support us all to claim the calling of the Jesus movement.\footnote{Joint Nominating Committee for the Election of the Presiding Bishop. “The Nominees.” May 2015. Accessed August 18, 2015. \url{https://extranet.generalconvention.org/staff/files/download/13096.pdf}. np.}

The push for evangelism received an enormous bump with the overwhelming election of Michael Curry as Presiding Bishop, but the 78th General Convention also embraced evangelism programmatical and in the budget as deputies and bishops seemed to take heed of the “Memorial to the Church” published by a group of concerned deputies (of which I was one of the primary sponsors) under the title of Episcopal Resurrection.\footnote{Episcopal Resurrection, “A Memorial to the Church.” May 14, 2015. Accessed August 19, 2015. \url{http://www.episcopalresurrection.org/memorial/}} The Memorial called upon the gathered leaders of General Convention to, among other things, “fund evangelism initiatives extravagantly,”\footnote{Episcopal Resurrection, “A Memorial to the Church.”} which they did, amending the budget presented by the Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance to include an extra 0.5% draw on the endowment funds of the Episcopal Church to enable $2.6 million worth of church planting and evangelism initiatives. Despite these reasons for hopefulness, the three-year cycle of General Convention remains a threat to our ongoing pursuit of evangelism. We must remain vigilant, for, as Brian McLaren told the Diocese of Washington, “If we have people who are beating people over the head with the Bible and others who are so risk averse as to never talk about God we have a problem. Who will be the alternative voice?”\footnote{Schell & Ward, “The Episcopal Moment.”}
The fourth requirement for the Episcopal Church to meet the needs of a changing America is that must not be afraid to fail. The Episcopal Church has much to offer the world, not least of which is the Good News that Jesus Christ came to redeem the whole world. If we discern who we are and what we are about and if we form disciples from within our midst, then we will be equipped to go forth to proclaim our story, the story of Jesus, but we can only do so if we give up what McLaren calls our aversion to risk. To use a common sports reference, we have to stop playing not to lose, and instead choose to play to win. As Margie Warrell, best-selling author and leadership consultant recently noted, “When you are playing not to lose your focus isn’t on what you could gain but on protecting what you already have. Your energies are channeled into shoring up the status quo, and guarding against what you don’t what to happen.”

In order to play to win, the Episcopal Church must learn to embrace McLaren’s “let’s experiment spirit”. The church must be willing to try new things, not to stave off death, but to bring about new life. Here we would do well to channel the spirit of Huntington who devoted more than three decades of his life to church unity, a goal that he knew he would not see in his lifetime. Even in those moments of failure, when the media was casting doubt upon the entire enterprise, Huntington remained hopeful:

It is possible for us to fence ourselves off from this huge family of our fellow-believers as to secure for our lasting heritage only the cold privileges of a proud and selfish isolation. There could be no real catholicity in such a device as that. We have the opportunity of growing into a great and comprehensive Church. We have the opportunity of dwindling into a self-conscious, self-conceited and unsympathetic sect. Which shall it be?  

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A choice lies before us as well. Will we continue to seek to carve out a convenient and comfortable niche of the way things have always been even as the world changes right before us? Or, will we choose new life, life marked by a spirit of experimentation, seeking not to grow the Church, but to bring forth the kingdom of God through making disciples of all nations? As Moses told the wandering Hebrews\textsuperscript{372}, we have before us a choice between life and death. Which will we choose?

\textsuperscript{372} Deuteronomy 30:15ff.
Bibliography


