

Eames to the Primates

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Extracts from the letter, the full text of which can be found at the following address

"Following preparatory work and the first full meeting of the Commission in Windsor we are at present engaged in extensive study of certain key areas which we have identified and already agreed must be addressed in our Report. These issues concern such as the nature of autonomy, the practice of communion and relationships of interdependence as they have developed in the history of the Anglican Communion, the current status of the traditional Instruments of Unity and their relationship to each other and the interpretation of authority as we have witnessed it in the life of the Anglican Communion. The conclusions of these studies will be considered by the Commission when it meets at Kanuga, North Carolina, in June."

Comment : The Lambeth Commission was asked to look at structural issues, not the theological issue about sexual practice. People often forget this fact.

Eames makes three specific observations on the work the Commission is engaged with.

"However there are several aspects of the current situation which I feel I must emphasise. First, the Commission needs and I believe deserves space to do its work. Actions and statements however well intentioned which express definitive positions on relationships within the Anglican Communion run the danger of limiting the opportunities and options available to the Commission. I am grateful to my fellow Primates for remaining within the letter and the spirit of our Statement last October despite the obvious differences of opinion at present throughout Anglicanism. The recent assurance of support following the meeting of the CAPA Primates has been a great encouragement to the Commission."

Comment : They are trying to avoid people acting now before they have completed their work.

There have already been strong statements from orthodox provinces and bodies within the Communion but so too there has been provocative action which is destroying the credibility of the Communion such as the appointment of Jeffrey John.

"Second, I feel it is important that without prejudice to the Report of the Commission, we maintain the highest possible degrees of communion among those who adopt differing views at this time. In that regard those in North America who feel obliged to object to developments in the General Convention of the Episcopal Church or in the Diocese of New

Westminster are still to be regarded as faithful Anglicans or Episcopalians so long as these dissenting groups do not initiate schism in their own Churches. On my visit to the United States I was impressed by those who expressed a desire to remain within ECUSA despite the strength of their feelings.

Their initiatives to finding a way of maintaining communion within the Episcopal Church (USA) and the Diocese of New Westminster is further evidence of that desire but I feel such schemes will only be successful if dissenting groups are afforded sufficient support to feel their place within our Anglican family is secure. I would also hope that the wish of the Primates expressed last October that such schemes would be undertaken in consultation with the Archbishop of Canterbury will be observed."

Comment : Eames' language shows that he considers the orthodox to be schismatic, not the liberals. What he fails to address is how someone can remain faithful to Scripture and its clear call to separate from false teachers.

"Third, it is obvious to the Commission that if any groups, either dissenting from the decisions of General Convention in ECUSA, or from the forthcoming decisions of the General Synod in Canada, initiate definitive breaks from their parent church, then a different situation will arise for our deliberations. The Commission would have to regard such decisions as a serious development. But until the Commission has come up with proposals for the way in which we may handle such divisions together as a Communion, the support or encouragement of other provinces or dioceses would seem to be itself a further damaging of trust and mutual life and of the very clear guidelines concerning jurisdictional boundaries that we have agreed to adopt as a Communion at successive Lambeth Conferences."

Comment : The whole tone of this letter shows where the Commission is likely to come down. When Eames was appointed as the Chairman it was clear that the Commission would be concerned primarily with how to hold the Communion together and not how to respond to false teaching and schism caused by departure from Biblical truth.

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