***Will Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics Ever Get Along?***

It has been said that England and the United States are two nations divided by a common language. It is equally true that certain terms or categories mean different things in each nation. For example, the recently formed continuation of Anglican orthodoxy in North America consists of Evangelicals, Charismatics and Anglo-Catholics. In the United States these expressions have been less of a party than one would discover in the United Kingdom. That is, the General Convention was rarely a display, in recent decades, of one of these expressions vying for dominance or expressing itself in demonstrating that it had a voting block. In fact, the various attempts to express Biblical authority at General Convention had fallen upon an informal coalition of the three expressions. This past General Convention has made it clear that classical Anglo-Catholicism, classical Evangelicalism, and Charismatic expression are dead in the so-called councils of the Episcopal Church. Those who go to General Convention with some semblance of orthodoxy or minimal conservatism are quickly outvoted by a significant margin. Revisionism or as “they” like to say, “Progressivism” is the dominant force albeit that one may hear a few Renewal hymns, Eucharistic vestments, and enthusiasm.

In the UK it is a bit different. After thirty years of being marginalized, out of necessity in the United States, Evangelicals, Charismatics, and Anglo-Catholics have had to learn how to work together. This has not always been easy, and since some Evangelicals and some Charismatics approach ordination from a functional view instead of an ontological view, there have been, are, and will be some stumbling blocks. The reality is that in North America even if all the Continuum joined with Anglo-Catholics who have recently left the Episcopal Church, and those who have stayed in the Episcopal Church for property and/or investment issues, we have never had the critical mass nor the power to effect much change in the Episcopal Church. Even our famous ESA organizing event in 1989 which boasted a significant number was not enough to make a difference.

In the United Kingdom there has been a long-time tension between Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics. This has been expressed in theology, style, associations, societies, appointments, and preferment. Therefore, to assume that Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals can gather together to meet, let alone talk, requires creative imagination. This first major step may well have been accomplished in London in June as the inauguration of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans occurred. Skeptics and cynics exist in both parties, and black suits with black shirts are easily picked out from a collection of striped shirts and ties. Moreover, if one were to go to the average Anglo-Catholic parish and Evangelical parish on a Sunday one would wonder if they were even in the same Communion! The former typically uses the modern Roman Rite including praying for the Pope and the latter, if it uses a prayer book at all, will probably have the words projected onto a screen. One can go from singing the Angelus to listening to a praise band.

In the United States the extremes are not as great. Very few Anglo-Catholic parishes use the modern Roman Rite, and very few Evangelical parishes ignore some version of the Prayer Book. In addition, years of armed combat in the councils of the Episcopal Church have produced allies that have found creative ways to disagree, and yet work together.

It seems to me that the Church of England has learned from the Episcopal Church: heresy is worse than schism – a reverse of the mantra expressed by those who stay in the Episcopal Church as they witness the sinking of the ship. The Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans may very well be able to find creative ways to work together for the common good without compromising the essential truths. The speakers at this remarkable day ranged from myself, Bp. John Broadhurst (FiF – chairman) and Bp. John Hind of Chichester to Archbishop Peter Jensen of Sydney, Bp. Michael Nazir Ali and other remarkable Evangelical speakers. Abp. Jensen made the case for Anglo-Catholics as he said that we are only “guilty” of believing what Anglicanism has always believed.

Perhaps it is possible that the Anglican Church of North America will help set the stage for what is needed in the Church of England, namely a Third Province. Perhaps one of Forward in Faith’s predecessors, the Evangelical and Catholic Mission (ECM) is a symbol of hope for those who seek to work together albeit, coming from diverse perspectives.

I left the Conference in London with the hope that follow up gatherings will take place on a regional level throughout the UK. With the rapid growth in both the UK and North America of Islam, without conservative/orthodox Christians finding creative ways to cooperate we may well see a variety of “parties” maintaining party purity but as a minority religion. With a three per cent Christian population in Jerusalem divided between 11 Christian Communions and Denominations, perhaps both the United States and the United Kingdom can adopt an eastern facing glimpse of things to come.