

CHAPTER EIGHT

Let Us Depart in Peace

And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.

Matthew 16:18

Throughout this book I have been arguing that the Anglican Church of Canada is made up of two incompatible religions and this fact lies at the heart of our current crisis. While I really do believe that this is essentially true, I must admit that I have deliberately put this incompatibility in the starkest possible terms in order to make my point.

Many, no doubt, will be offended by my characterization of each side as a separate religion. While this is no doubt shocking to some, I believe there is no other adequate way of putting the enormous divide that has opened up in the Church. It saddens me to have to say it this way and I wish I could do otherwise.

Some will believe that I am being wildly extreme because they do not see the ACC the same way. Part of my goal is to challenge those who think like this to wrestle with what I have said. I believe that the evidence I have presented makes a compelling case that I am correct. If you are angry with what I have said, I think that will partly prove my point about how deep our division really is. And if you are angry, please channel that anger into a thoughtful counter-argument in order to convince me and others like me that we are wrong and that the Church is fundamentally unified and not in mortal danger. Nothing would please me more.

It is certainly true that at a casual glance the Church does not seem to be as divided as I make it out to be. That is partly because the conservative/liberal divide I have been labouring to describe is obscured by the very human truth that each one of us, myself included, fails to follow her or his convictions in a consistent manner. That is, there are few, if any, pure conservatives or pure liberals among us. Individual adherents of each side have been influenced by the other to a greater or lesser extent. I refer the reader to my earlier discussion on this point.¹

However, I hope I have said enough to warrant a serious consideration of my thesis that two religions divide the Anglican Church of Canada and that its present structure is incapable of keeping them (however we might prefer to characterize its divisions) happily together. If at all true, then surely we need to pay attention to any and all signs pointing in the right direction. Please God, this little book be one of them.

If the amendment to the Marriage Canon succeeds, the scenario in Section a) will unfold basically as described. Eventually this will result in a Church much diminished by the effective loss of its conservative wing. The victorious liberal establishment will simply continue to see things in its own way and naturally act in its own self-interest, rolling over any residual opposition to its agenda. It will have little motivation to accommodate other points of view, especially if it means making the necessary radical structural changes suggested above. It will simply not see the need.

If the amendment to the Marriage Canon fails, the scenario in section b) of the last chapter will unfold. Although this result will be much more traumatic in the short run, it bears the only realistic hope that I can see for the denomination to embrace both of its religions in a way that allows each to find a way to thrive and find ways to work effectively together. And even, perhaps, come better to understand one another and thus pave the way to fuller reconciliation. Who knows, it might even show the way forward through the same crisis which is afflicting other parts of the Anglican Communion.

¹ See above, p. 97f.

I ended the last chapter on a rather apocalyptic note. I do not apologize for this but rather hope that it might encourage us to remember, as all good apocalypticists do, that God is in control of history. Please pray for GS 2019 that his will might be done.

At this point it is important to remind ourselves that the ACC is only a small portion of the church universal and even if it should cease to exist in its current form, that is not the end of the church itself. In fact, it would not even be the end of the historic Anglican presence in the Canadian landscape. The authentic Anglican Way will still survive within the ACC², in ANiC, and in other continuing Anglican Churches. And in the worldwide Anglican Communion, which is thriving in many places. For those of us who consider this to be the best Way, “There is Hope”, as my old friend Stan Izon put it so long ago.

All of us go down to the dust;
Yet even at the grave we make our song:
Alleluiah! Alleluiah! Alleluiah!

Our God reigns!
In the name of the Lord, Amen.

² I strongly commend the good work to this end of the Anglican Communion Alliance. You can find them at the following address: <https://anglicancommunionalliance.ca>