

Newsletter

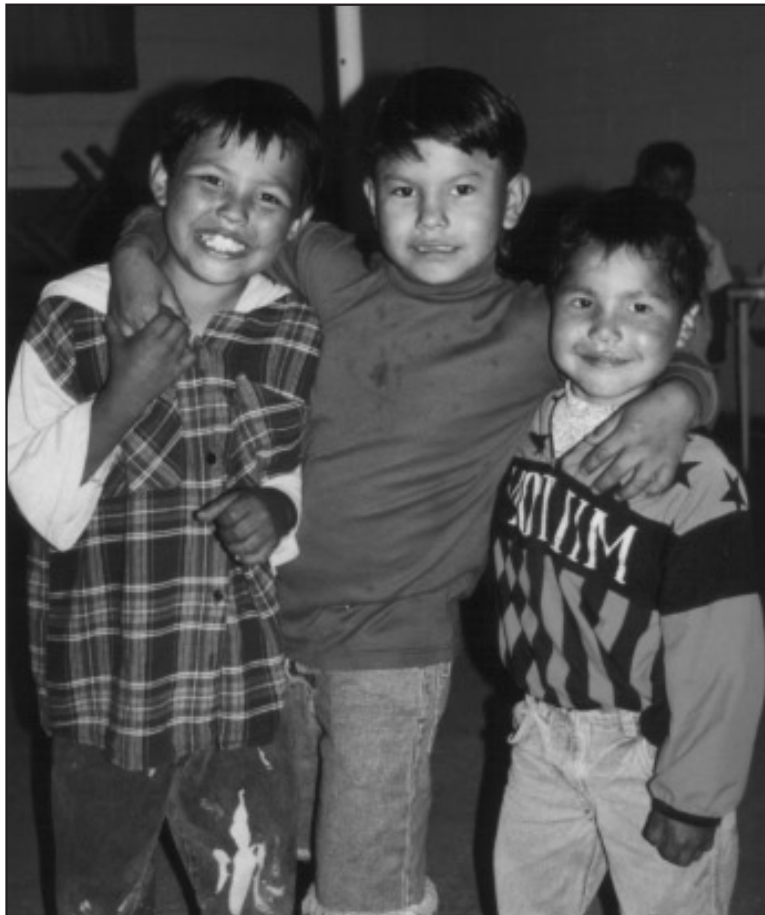
SPRING 2001

New PBSC Chairman Looks to the Future

Under the energetic leadership of its new Chairman, Michael Edward, the PBSC is actively planning for the future. Over the past year, the Chairman has visited Prayer Book Society groups in Nova Scotia (Halifax, Chester, Seaforth, and Windsor), Fredericton, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Brantford, and Regina. At the time of writing he is planning a trip to St. John's and Conception Bay, Newfoundland, after which he plans to attend General Synod in Waterloo, Ontario, and then visit Calgary, Edmonton, Victoria, and Vancouver.

Under his leadership also, the PBSC National Council is charting an ambitious course for the future. Plans include:

- A PBSC presence at the upcoming General Synod
- Planning and supporting a PBSC National Youth Leadership Conference
- Production of a video on Anglican Spirituality



- Ongoing support for theological students
- Ongoing support for existing branches, and fostering new branches
- Ongoing co-operation with other orthodox organizations within Anglicanism
- Ongoing support for the St. George's Sunday School curriculum
- Ongoing support for St. Michael's Youth Conferences

Some of these initiatives are described below.

INSIDE

2
Lift High the Cross

3
Why is Spong wrong? And why it matters.

4
Love by
George Herbert

6
Servants of the
Sacred Cross

7
St. Michael's Youth
Conferences

LEFT: The future of the Prayer Book lies partly with young aboriginal children like these enthusiastic churchgoers at Montreal Lake, Saskatchewan, a parish which uses the Book of Common Prayer (in Cree and English) exclusively.



Young People and the Prayer Book

A new generation of Anglicans is reaching adulthood, many of whom have little or no exposure to the Prayer Book. However, a number of young Anglicans are discovering and valuing the Book of Common Prayer, and they love it! They have a unique relationship with the Prayer Book: it is new to them, though old to the church. They approach the Book of Common Prayer from a variety of backgrounds, sometimes from other Christian denominations, sometimes, from a background that is thoroughly secular. They find in the Prayer Book something fresh, challenging, and entirely new.

Unfortunately, as far as the wider Anglican church is concerned, they are invisible. Prayer Book supporters are viewed largely as nostalgic, fussy traditionalists, unable to keep up with a fast-changing world. This stereotype is simply untrue: it is particularly untrue of those under

25 who are discovering, and valuing the Prayer Book.

The proposed PBSC National Youth Conference would profile young Prayer Book Anglicans, foster a sense of leadership among them, and encourage fellowship across the country. It would also attempt to deepen their awareness of the richness of the classic Anglican heritage, and further their Christian faith.

PBSC at General Synod

The PBSC plans to be present at this year's General Synod, to highlight our ongoing work, and to witness to the truths of classical Anglicanism.

Video Project

The PBSC is considering sponsoring a professionally-produced video devoted to what it means to be a believing, orthodox Anglican in the 21st century.

The proposed video would focus on Anglican teaching, and the richness of classic Anglican wor-

ship, hymnody, spiritual devotion and holiness. It would highlight the way in which the Anglican tradition—above all through the Book of Common Prayer, with its disciplined reading of the Scriptures throughout the Church year, and its emphasis on our dependence on the grace of God—nurtures Christian pilgrims as they learn to walk with God and understand His ways.

St. George's Curriculum

The PBSC endorses and encourages the use of this curriculum, developed at St. George's Church, Halifax, which presents a traditional, Scriptural teaching of the Christian faith at a level suitable for young people.

"We are completely dependant on the generosity of our members to fulfil this ambitious agenda," says Chairman Edward. "We're confident that, once they see our plans, they will enable us to do our part to preserve our Anglican heritage." ■

**"Lift High the Cross"****Global Anglicanism and the Anglican Church of Canada**

A conference to be held in Langley, British Columbia, June 14th to 19th, 2001.

World-wide, Anglicanism is in crisis. In the Western world, the older Anglican churches are divided and declining. In the third world, the new

Anglican churches are vibrant and growing. Our very identity as Anglicans seems at stake. One of the key issues that faces us, in North America particularly, is how traditional Christians should respond to calls from within the Church to conform to a secular world view. "Lift High the Cross" will address a number of these issues.

This conference is sponsored by Essentials, a coalition of three groups within the Anglican Church: the Prayer Book Society of Canada, Anglican Renewal Ministries, and Barnabas Anglican Ministries. The Essentials movement grew out of the highly successful Anglican Essentials Conference in Montreal in 1994, which brought together more than 800 laypeople and clergy concerned about the drift within the Anglican Church of Canada away from a Credal and Scriptural faith. Essentials is committed to fostering an orthodox understanding of Christian faith within our Church.

PBSC is participating in this conference, and many leading PBSC figures will be speaking there. This conference will play an important role in the ongoing witness of orthodox Anglicanism. Please read the enclosed flyer regarding the conference, and consider attending. Above all, please support the conference with your prayers, and in any other way you can.

Why is Spong wrong? And why it matters.

By Desmond Scotchmer



Previous PBSC Newsletters have covered Spong's Twelve Theses (which are printed in the appendix of his book *Here I Stand* and available on the website of the Diocese of Newark), and his enthusiastic welcome at a Theological Conference in Trinity College in Toronto, last summer. Some readers will doubtless say, "Oh, no! Not another article on Spong!" Many may think: Spong is passé, he's extreme, why waste time talking about him? I don't think Spong is passé. And his extremism lies only in the fact that he has taken ideas prevalent in many contemporary Anglican circles to their logical conclusion.

Underlying all of Spong's thought is a deep sense that contemporary culture determines what can be believed. This is the nub of the issue. This sense is shared by many within the so-called "Main-

line" churches, and is an idea endorsed by the modern liturgical movement (cf. p. 10 of the Introduction to the BAS). Many moderate Anglicans think that, because Spong's idea of what constitutes contemporary culture may be more "radical" than theirs, that the rest of his ideas can therefore safely be put aside. Yet the principle that contemporary culture determines what can be believed, if endorsed by any contemporary church, will lead it to a place similar to that where Spong finds himself.

By contemporary culture, Spong seems to be thinking of the mindset and prejudices of a certain segment of modern Western (particularly North American) society: white, affluent, culturally left-wing, politically-correct. To Spong's mind, modern, enlightened, educated people do not believe in miracles,

hence they cannot occur. Spong seems actually to believe that the discoveries of science have shown that the very idea of a transcendent deity who can intervene in this world is essentially implausible. Yet the Christian Gospel proclaims a God who works through historical events to disclose his purpose and plan.

Such a reliance on the inerrant nature of contemporary culture seems dubious at best. Spong would have the Word conformed to the world. Christians seek to conform the world to the Word.

For Spong, the Bible is patriarchal (a bad word for him), oppressive, exploitive, sexist, and racist, St. Paul is a self-loathing homosexual, the Gospel according to St. John is "anti-Semitic", and the Ten Commandments are "immoral". Spong believes the Bible to be unreliable and contradictory both at a literal level and at its deepest theological levels. Everything it has to say about God, about Christ, about the Resurrection is therefore unreliable. Paradoxically, he wants the authority of the Bible for his own teaching. (One wonders why. If the Bible is that bad, why not discard it?)

Spong relies on ideas from three separate strands of thinking: Gnosticism, Monism, and the contemporary belief in self affirmation. Enlightened people, Spong maintains, can learn to strip the Bible of its literal meaning, and discern beyond this a "truer" inner message. In the first two or three centuries A.D., the Gnostics claimed to decode the false literal meaning of Scripture by a process known only to the initiated few. This allowed

TOP: Bishop Spong

Annual General Meeting of the Prayer Book Society of Canada

Saturday, May 26th, 2001
Wycliffe College,
5 Hoskin Avenue, Toronto

Annual General Meeting 1:30 p.m.
followed by tea and coffee
Evensong 5:00 p.m.

Guest Speaker: TBA

All members are invited to attend.

Love

Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lacked anything.

“A guest,” I answered, “worthy to be here”;
Love said, “You shall be he.”
“I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
I cannot look on thee.”
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
“Who made the eyes but I?”

“Truth, Lord, but I have marred them; let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.”
“And know you not,” says Love, “who bore the blame?”
“My dear, then I will serve.”
“You must sit down,” says Love, and taste my meat.”
“So I did sit and eat.”

George Herbert (1593-1633)

them to penetrate to higher, hidden truth.

James Stanton, Bishop of Dallas, writing on Spong's Gnosticism, says this: “Orthodox Christians acknowledge the symbolic and inward dimension of a biblical event, but they do not throw out the literal event ... For the Gnostic, physical events are unworthy of God and pretty much unrelated to Him. It was easier to separate God from the physical world rather than to deal with the relationship of a Holy God to a world afflicted with death and sin. But for the orthodox, separating God from the world was not an option. God was the creator of heaven and the earth, of all things visible and invisible. Sin and death plainly were at work in the world, but that did not cancel the connection of all creatures with their Creator.”

“The difference between the Gnostic and the orthodox is that the orthodox reader assumes that the literal meaning is true as well... For the orthodox, the scriptural revelation is a truth that reveals truth. But for the Gnostic, the Scripture is a falsehood in which a truth is hidden, to be revealed only by applying his or her esoteric knowledge and methods.”

The second mode of thinking adopted by Spong is Monism. The Monistic view says that we are one with God and creation, and therefore the divine is in us. All that is, is one, God and the universe are synonymous, God is in effect the universe, and the universe is God. This is a view held by some Greek philosophers, also by modern philosophers such as Spinoza and Hegel. It is also the essence of religions such as Hinduism, and of all pantheistic belief.

It is in conflict with the Biblical witness: the Bible witnesses to a God who is personal, and who interacts personally with His people. Nor is He to be confused with creation. God acts of His own volition, and calls creation into being from the void. He exists outside and beyond creation, though he permeates it at every point. God would continue to be God, perfect, self-

sufficient if He had never created the universe.

Ultimately, Spong's Gnosticism and Monism make him deconstruct the plain meaning of Scripture, and reinterpret it to say little more than: "Life is good, affirm life, actualize life". "The Word of God in Jesus is a call to me to be myself, my whole self, without apologies, without boasting" the Bishop declares in *Living in Sin? A Bishop Rethinks Human Sexuality*, pp. 159 ff. "Be like Jesus, cast aside all that hinders, restricts, and discourages"—that is, all obligations, commitments, restrictions, duties. Trinitarian doctrine and traditional Christian dogma are oppressive because they put limits on how we are to affirm life. "To follow the call to be who one truly is" is the only true Good. For Spong, the self becomes the centre.

This type of thinking derives from such 19th century philosophies of life as are found in Bergson, Schopenhauer, or Bernard Shaw's "Life Force", or Nietzsche's "Will to Power". It is not a view which is compatible with Christianity, as it utterly overlooks any concept of the fallen nature of man or of the world. It is also diametrically opposed to what Jesus actually did: he became obedient to God's Law, even to the Law of death. Nothing could be further from the self-emptying love of

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, dying naked on the Tree.

Spong's view also raises an obvious problem: what happens when one person's self actualization impinges on another's? For the "me" to be truly "free", it must ultimately discard all claims on it, whether of love or duty, obligation, mutuality, or compassion. When two "me's" collide—which they must inevitably do—ultimately the strongest "me" will prevail. It is no coincidence that the Nietzschean "Will to Power" lies at the heart of most fascist thinking.

"Life" as a force is profoundly ambivalent. Nature is fallen, therefore amoral and predatory. Spong, having taken up his idea, ends up, as of course he must, by discarding Christian morality. So did Nietzsche. "In the end the Monist God becomes nothing but a means to reinforce the absolutization of self," says Stephen Smith, professor of theology and ethics at Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, speaking in connection with the influence of Monism on Spong's thought.

Curiously, Spong is deeply concerned for the survival of the Episcopal church. In fact, the survival of the Episcopal church becomes some sort of supreme good, to be sought at all costs. The Episcopal Church, therefore, must do whatever it takes in order to ensure its survival. Conformity to contemporary culture is what will do it, he thinks. A more desperate form of idolatry can hardly be imagined. A Church which prostitutes itself to the spirit of the age is simply the church no more. Membership in Spong's own Diocese of Newark declined markedly during the period he was Bishop. Surely the reason is that those who seek God are not looking

DOROTHY STUBBS

Long-time members of the Society will be saddened to hear of the death of Dorothy Stubbs on February 18, 2001.

Dorothy served as National Treasurer of the Prayer Book Society of Canada from 1989 to 1995, and as Treasurer of the Toronto Branch of the Prayer Book Society of Canada from 1996 to January, 2000.

A faithful Christian, devoted Anglican, and long-time supporter of the of the Prayer Book cause. Dorothy brought style, grace, enthusiasm, and a tremendous sense of fun to everything she did for the Society, whether it was manning the Society's table at Synod and at meetings, travelling to PBSC functions throughout Ontario, or keeping the books. She will be deeply missed.

I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord: even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours.

REVELATION 14.13

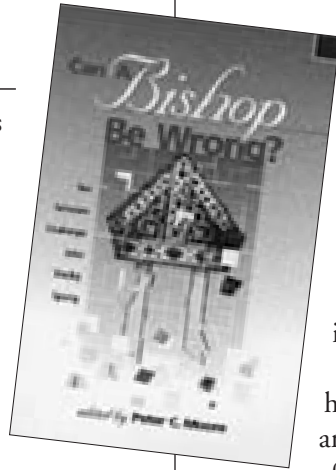


EDITOR'S NOTE

Dr. Packer's article on the role of Scripture within Anglicanism, promised for this edition, is not available. Dr. Packer has suffered a period of ill health, from which, thank God, he has now recovered.

for a reflection of the values of contemporary culture.

Spong's ideas are hardly shocking: we've been hearing them for more than forty years—even Pierre Berton was saying much the same sort of thing when I was a child. The thing that should concern all orthodox Anglicans is that he speaks as a bishop—even if a retired one, that is, a shepherd of the Christian flock, unchallenged by his peers, and that he is taken seriously by academic institutions and by educated clergy. Nor is this an issue of academic freedom: Spong was invited to speak at



a theological conference held at an Anglican seminary, the purpose of which is the formation and development of the minds, and hearts—and souls—of Anglican clergy, that is, the shepherds of the Anglican flock. Chaucer raised the question long ago: “If gold doth rust, what then shall iron do?”

Interestingly, Spong has lost some credibility among many middle-of-the-road Anglicans recently because he has been so outspoken. Many Anglicans—teachers, theologians, clergy—are eager to endorse these ideas in a milder, less extreme form.

This body of belief—“secular Christianity”, if you like, the idea that the Word should be conformed to the world, has become something of an alternative religion in the Anglican church in North America and the affluent West. While many people don't like it in the stark form presented by Spong, they are willing to embrace this “alternative religion” in its earlier stages. Hence the need for all believing Anglicans to understand this thinking and where it must inevitably lead.

The best orthodox critique on Spong that I have come across is *Can A Bishop be Wrong?* edited by Peter C. Moore, and published by Morehouse Publishing, (from which the content of this article is largely derived). I urge you to read it. ■

Servants of the Sacred Cross

A religious sisterhood of Anglican lay women, both married and single, not living in community, who dedicate their lives to taking up their cross and following Christ in service to God, His Church and people. Sisters do so as integral members of an orthodox, conservative, traditional Community committed to the historic Catholic Faith as the Anglican Church has received it and in adherence to the classic and historic Anglican formularies.

Sisters live out their vocation, in their own homes and communities, under vows of simplicity, purity and obedience. Some Sisters will work in a variety of active ministries in their parishes and local communities. However,

others will be called to a more contemplative expression of service in a life of prayer and intercession.

The Community is international in nature and open to women in any Church within the Anglican Communion.

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B0N 2T0

Phone: (902) 798-3782
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E-mail: wjames@ns.sympatico.ca

Nominations

are invited for the following positions:

Honorary President
and Members for
National Council
(up to 15 to be elected)

Please forward
nominations to:

The Rev'd Stephen Sharman
374 River Road,
St Andrew's, Manitoba
R1A 2Y1

Nominees must be
members of the
Prayer Book Society
of Canada,
and have
consented to
stand for election.

St Michael's Youth Conferences

Details for upcoming St Michael's Youth Conferences across Canada

Maritimes

Location: Camp Wildwood,
New Brunswick

Dates: August 27 to
September 1, 2001

Contacts:

The Rev'd Michael Hawkins,
St. Peter's Rectory,
West LaHave, RR#1,
Pleasantville, Nova Scotia
B0R 1G0

Telephone: (902) 688-2228

E-mail: hawkins@ns.sympatico.ca

or

The Rev'd Kevin Stockall
143 Main Street
Sackville, New Brunswick
E4L 4B3

Telephone: (506) 536-0872

E-mail: kstockal@nbnet.nc.ca

Newfoundland

Contact:

The Rev'd Chris Snow,
St. Michael and All Angels Church
150 Le Marchant Rd,
St. John's, Newfoundland
A1C 2H2

Telephone: (709) 579-0885

E-mail: stmichael@nf.aibn.com

Ontario

Location: Durham, Ontario

Dates: August 20 to 25th, 2001

Contact:

Mrs. Becky Creese
General Delivery,
Holstein, Ontario
N0G 2A0

Telephone: (519) 334-3602

E-mail: bcreese@greynet.net



Saskatchewan

Location: Camp Okema,
Saskatchewan

Dates: July 23 to 28, 2001

Contact:

The Rev'd George or Stacie Daley
804 Donald Street
Hudson Bay, Saskatchewan
S0E 0Y0

Telephone: (306) 865-3471

E-mail: gjsdaley@sk.sympatico.ca

The 2001 Atlantic Theological Conference

“The Journey Home”: Sin and Grace, June 25th - 28th, Charlottetown

From garish TV-talk shows, and the inner pilgrimage of each soul, to inter-church theological discussions, and the life of people and nations, the question of the nature and power of sin, and the grace of God in Christ which overcomes it, is a powerful and important topic, and central to our spiritual life.

Join us in beautiful Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island this June, to hear leading scholars and teachers of the faith teach us about how sin and grace are understood in the Bible that Jesus read, the Old Testament; how St. Paul the apostle to the Gentiles wrote and proclaimed the gift of God in Christ; what the Early Church and Medieval Fathers passed on to us; and how a clear teaching of sin and grace is found in the theological and liturgical Reformation as embodied in the Book of Common Prayer, Thomas Cranmer, Richard Hooker, and other Anglican and Reformed Divines.

CONFERENCE PAPERS AND PRESENTERS

“The Understanding of Sin and Grace in the Old Testament”

Dr Paul Epstein, Associate Professor of Classics, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma

Response: The Rev'd Tony Bassett, Rector of New Maryland, New Brunswick

“The Pauline Doctrine of Sin and Grace”

The Rt. Rev'd Fitzsimmons Allison, Bishop of South Carolina, (Retired)

Response: Rhea Bright

“The Development of the Doctrine of Sin and Grace from Augustine to Anselm”

The Rev'd Dr. Robert Crouse, Professor Emeritus of Classics, Dalhousie University and Canon Theologian of the Diocese of Saskatchewan

Response: The Rev'd John Paul Westin, Rector of St. Thomas' Church, St John's, Newfoundland

“The Reformed Doctrine of Sin and Grace”

The Rev'd Roger T. Beckwith, Warden of Latimer House (Retired), Oxford, England

Response: The Rev'd Gavin Dunbar, Vicar of St. John's Church, Savannah, Georgia

Conference Preacher

The Rt. Rev'd Donald Harvey, Bishop of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador will preach a series of sermons on the conference theme.

For More Information

2001 Atlantic Theological Conference,
P.O. Box 713,
Charlottetown, P.E.I.
C1A 7L3

Telephone/fax (902) 368-8442

E-mail: stptepub@isn.net

Conference web page at
<http://stpeter.org/conf.htm>

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ONLINE RESOURCES

PBSC Critique of
the new hymn book
[www.prayerbook.ca/
newhymn1.htm](http://www.prayerbook.ca/newhymn1.htm)

Critique of proposed
"composite"

Prayer Book
[www.prayerbook.ca/
crisis1.htm](http://www.prayerbook.ca/crisis1.htm)

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