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St. Bride of Kildare, Pitt Meadows

St. Columba of Iona, Halfmoon Bay

The Traditional Anglican Church of Canada



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In the Advent issue of the Emerald Echo, the first article reviewed who we are, and why, in an article from the Retro Church blog, and written by Archbishop Mark Haverland. For the Christmas & Epiphany edition, the theme is continued by Bishop Robinson, of the UECNA, which is, as you know, in full corporate communion with the ACC. Our thanks to Bishop Robinson for his clarity and pastoral sensitivity to the needs of all of us.

Posted on Saturday, November 17, 2012 at <http://www.theoldhighchurchman.blogspot.ca/>



[A Broad Orthodoxy](#)

**Bishop
Peter Robinson,
Presiding Bishop
UECNA**

One of the difficulties that the Continuum has faced over the five decades has been a tendency to want to *unnecessarily* narrow the boundaries of what constitutes Anglicanism. Our biggest difficulty is that we fail to distinguish the wood from the trees with liturgical orthodoxy being confused for doctrinal orthodoxy. Now I would concede that there is a link between orthodox-praxis and orthodoxy, I would also point out that two of the most theologically peculiar congregations I have worshipped in had very proper, correct, and I have to add quite "catholic" ceremonial. That would lead me to believe that the two - right practice and right belief - are not quite so tightly bound together as we all like to think. I also have to confess that I am a veteran of the Liturgy Wars, and have seen and heard

learned and experienced clergy derided because they did not hold their hands quite right at Mass, or have the correct red bound tome upon the altar. All of this seems to be a case of majoring on the minor stuff to the detriment of the Gospel of Christ.

If there is something that I would say characterizes the 'Old Anglicanism' it was the ability to tolerate differences of opinion without it spinning out of control into the modern cacophony of diversity for diversity's sake. The difference was that until the 1950s, the tolerance rested not upon an indifference to doctrine - as it tends to do today - but upon a broad consensus as to what constituted the essentials of the Christian Faith, and what was a matter of local custom. The success of the Old Episcopalianism in the USA was very largely due to this tolerant orthodoxy. One parish might be 'High and Crazy,' the next 'Low and Lazy' and the three after that 'Broad and hazy' but they accepted the same Scriptures, Creeds, Sacraments and Ministry, they used the same Book of Common Prayer whatever their variances of ceremonial, emphasis and outlook.

Although to a large extent the UECNA started out as 'a Low Church jurisdiction' it has mainly been peopled by orthodox Broad Churchmen. Today we have some Anglo-Catholic congregations among us, and I certainly do not hear any complaints about that development in our spiritual life together. Anglo-Catholics, Central Churchmen, and Low Churchmen are able to peacefully coexist within the UECNA, and it is a bit of a mystery to me why this principled tolerance is not more widely accepted in the Continuum. After all, provided the service is not sloppy or irreverent and the Book of Common Prayer

is used, then we have nothing to worry about so far as the efficiency and validity of what is being done is concerned as we share the same Scriptures, Creeds, Sacraments and Ministry.

Anglicans share with the Lutheran tradition - that other great 'Evangelical Catholic' tradition - the concept of adiaphora. External matters are indifferent, regulated to edify the faithful. However, back in the 16th and 17th centuries neither Lutherans nor Anglicans contemplated or foresaw the sort of erosion of traditional practice that took place between 1660 and 1810. The concept of 'adiaphora' was essentially a traditionalist one, allowing the customs and ceremonial of the Church, including its sacramental worship, to survive in the face of the attempts of the 'Hot Gospellers' to turn the Church into a lecture theatre. Familiar signs and symbols were used to enable the 'eye gate' as well as the 'ear gate' to be used in the service of orthodoxy. As was mentioned in a previous post (Northernness) the Old Lutheran service in Leipzig or Hamburg was quite Anglo-Catholic to our eyes, yet in a village church using the same Ordnung, the service would have been much simpler - adapted for local needs, but preserving the substance of the Faith entire.

This mention of 'local adaptations' serves to bring me to my next point which is that the frontline so far as Christian ministry is concerned is parish ministry. To use a vulgarism 'that is where it's at.' As we all know, every neighbourhood is not the same, and in the same way not every Anglican parish - never mind Christian congregation - is the same. Therefore there is a virtue in letting each parish develop along its own lines within the basic doctrinal and liturgical framework of the Church. One parish may choose to be Low - having Communion at the early service most weeks, and usually Morning Prayer as their main service. Another may have the staff and the tradition to have a High Mass. Still another will be content to hit the happy medium with a simple

Sung Eucharist on Sundays. Yet for all these differences it is still the same Church.

What we try and encourage congregations to do in the UECNA is to be the Anglican parish in their community. In some places this will mean one thing, and in others another. Yet, to return once again to the theme of this post, if we maintain the basic doctrines of the Church, and use her liturgy then we should welcome a diversity of ceremonial usage as the sign of an active, growing, and vibrant Church. To my mind, a tidy house is a house for show; whilst a messy house, with evidence of hobbies, books and so forth, is a house that is truly lived in. In the same way I believe the Church should be something that is a little bit messy with High, Low, and Broad Church parishes all working together to bring people to Christ and to be the Anglican Church in the Communities they serve. That sort of determination to witness brings a certain amount of mess and imperfection, but it is the sort of mess and imperfection that goes with life. In a sense, we have to be, as St Paul wrote 'all things to all men' so that men and women can make a connection with the Gospel and with Jesus Christ who alone saves us. On the other hand, an outwardly perfect Church is inevitably a dead or a dying Church because everyone is afraid that they might make a mess and as a result they have become self-obsessed. Our ceremonial should be an expression of our parish's life in Christ, something that lifts upwards towards the throne of grace and not an end in itself. We need to recover that Broad Orthodoxy where, whatever our ceremonial preferences, our primary work together is to proclaim the Catholic Faith revealed in the Scriptures, Creeds, Councils, and Father which leads us to Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life.



