The Reformed Episcopalians: Restoring some old Paths

ALLEN GUELZO

Introduction

When people discover that I am a Reformed Episcopalian, generally the next words out of their mouths are, 'What is a Reformed Episcopalian?' The question is asked so spontaneously and frequently that I have long ago resigned myself to its appearance. As an American, I have had to recognize that few of my fellow Americans are equipped to recognize anything but the most generic of Christian labels—Episcopal, Presbyterian, Catholic, Baptist. For me to describe myself as a specialty item (a 'Reformed Episcopalian') must unavoidably provoke that familiar puzzled inquiry.

But even among American Episcopalians, there are many whom I meet who have the same puzzlement, and one can almost hear them thinking, 'Reformed we know, and Episcopal we know, but who is this Reformed Episcopal?' I have noticed, however, that something in the way that Episcopalians ask that question has changed in the past ten years—no less puzzlement, perhaps, but certainly a new urgency, as the continuing controversies and disarray of the Episcopal Church in the United States have driven many Episcopalians to rummage through the Episcopal past to see if any alternatives have existed, or can exist, apart from the answers offered by the modern Episcopal hierarchy. And that rummaging has often brought them to the peculiar phenomenon of the Reformed Episcopalians.

What is, then, a Reformed Episcopalian? One quick way to answer that question is to say that we are simply Evangelical Anglicans, not terribly dissimilar in principles or practice from Evangelical Anglicans in almost every province of the Anglican Communion, from the Archdiocese of Sydney to Latimer House. And so, in keeping with that definition, we would say that we are a people who are deeply concerned to promote in our people a high view of the supremacy of the Scriptures, who have a powerful conviction about the need of every man for repentance and the new birth in Jesus Christ, and for the preaching of the Gospel as the principal (but by no means the only) means of grace. Of course, in some senses, this is what every Anglican at least professes to believe; what sets the Evangelical apart from the others is the prominence of place which he gives these things. And that makes us bold enough, not only to remind other

traditions within Anglicanism that they have no monopoly of the title *Anglican*, but to claim that as Evangelicals, we are loyal to Anglican Christianity in its best and purest forms.

But Evangelical as we may be, questions persist about whether the Reformed Episcopalians really can be called Anglicans. For the fact is that the Reformed Episcopalians represent a separation from the body of official Anglicanism, and we remain in the eyes of Canterbury, not to say 815 Second Avenue, New York, an invisible man. So, to answer fully the question, 'What is a Reformed Episcopalian?' I must turn to a history—not just because I am, by training, a historian, but because Reformed Episcopalians have always been acutely conscious of their history, and almost invariably explain themselves in historical terms. This is not to say that we have always interpreted that history correctly. But it is almost impossible to pick up any piece of Reformed Episcopal literature published in this century which does *not* begin, 'In 1873 . . .' Even the preface to the Reformed Episcopal revision of the *Book of Common Prayer* explains the Church and the prayerbook almost purely in historical terms.

We also turn to history as an explanation because our history, which is so critical to our own self-understanding, has been in large measure forgotten by American Episcopalians. In the United States, the Oxford Movement became not only *normative* (in the sense that Episcopal practice since 1873 has really consisted of variations on the Oxford Movement's themes, rather than conscious alternatives to it) but also virtually *exclusive* (in the sense that the history of the Episcopal Church in the nineteenth century eventually began to be written in the light of the Oxford Movement's triumphs in America).

American Episcopalianism 1845–1873

So we begin the history of American Episcopalianism as it was in the middle of the last century—let us say, at the year 1845.

Many of us, I expect, are more or less familiar with that peculiar hagiography which finds the origins of the Episcopal Church in the United States in the late eighteenth-century Connecticut episcopate of Samuel Seabury. Nothing, ironically, could have been further from the perceptions of the American Episcopalians of 1845, for whom Seabury was virtually unknown. Seabury was, after all, refused consecration by both archbishops when he approached them in 1784, and won his mitre only by striking a deal with the Scottish Non-Jurors which exchanged Non-Juror consecration for introduction of the Scottish eucharistic rite into Connecticut practice. If nineteenth-century Episcopalians were likely to regard anyone as the fountain of American Episcopacy, it would have been William White, the genial latitudinarian bishop of Pennsylvania, who *was* the first American bishop regularly consecrated through the Church of England. White's political and literary

influence (since his work on the Catechism and his *Charges* continued to be reprinted up through the 1800s in America) far outstripped the relatively brief and resultless episcopate of Seabury in Connecticut.

But even then few Episcopalians in 1845 would have been inclined to look on White as an effective model for their Church. The Church under White grew hardly at all for its first twenty years after White organized it as a separate entity in 1789. Instead, it threatened to petrify into a private chaplaincy for a handful of old Tory families. The real models of Episcopal leadership—the men who led the Episcopal Church into one of the most remarkable explosions of growth in Anglican history—were the High-Church bishop of New York, John Henry Hobart, and the Evangelical bishop of New England, Alexander Viets Griswold, both of whom were consecrated on the same day in 1811. It is from these two ferociously energetic churchmen that American Episcopalianism really springs, and different as they were in churchmanship and temperament, they gave the American Church the character it assumed in the nineteenth century.

Unquestionably, the stronger partner in this duet was Griswold. The founder of four dioceses, and the hidden hand behind two seminaries and a dozen Evangelical bishops, Griswold brought to the Episcopal Church the style and spirit of the great Evangelical Revival in the Church of England—of Wilberforce, of Simeon, of Newton. To step into the American Church of 1845, then, would land us in a very different Church from the one to which we are accustomed today. Under the influence of Griswold and his highly-talented co-adjutors, the Episcopal Church was almost one great big black-gown parish, staffed in large areas by self-consciously Protestant Evangelicals who celebrated at the north end of (as Bishop McIlvaine put it) 'an honest wooden table with four legs', and who practised ecumenical and eucharistic interchange with a broad spectrum of Protestant Evangelical churches.

By the General Convention of 1844, these Evangelicals accounted for almost two-thirds of the clergy of the Episcopal Church. And though Hobart and the High-Churchmen made up a stubborn and well-entrenched third, even Hobart performed confirmations in black gown and cassock, and spoke of the Eucharist in shockingly memorialistic terms. Taken as a whole, Evangelicals and High-Churchmen were separated not so much by theology as by style, and on those terms, there was no reason why accommodation, or at least toleration, could not have been the pattern of American churchmanship, and why the Episcopal Church could not have emerged as the dominant religious body in American life.

But the Oxford Movement and its American disciples changed all that, and in three basic ways.

1. **Ideologically.** The Oxford Movement, with its Romantic devotion to catholic order and submission to tradition, appealed deeply to a

strain of anti-democratic alienation in American life. Remember: the 1840s are the heyday of unshirted Jacksonian Democracy in the United States. The old Federalist elites, who looked back on Andrew Jackson and his unwashed hordes as the anti-Christ, found in Anglo-Catholicism, and especially the Ritualists, a way of giving visible form to their disenchantment with what the American Republic had become. Therefore, instead of Episcopalians emerging as the pre-eminent mainstream American Church, they veered off into becoming a sort of Victorian religious counter-culture, at odds with everything which American evangelicalism represented in American life.

2. **Tactically.** The Anglo-Catholics very quickly captured the most important of the three then-existing Episcopal seminaries, General Theological in New York City, and built another entirely on their own principles, Nashotah House in Wisconsin. This ensured that Anglo-Catholics would be represented by at least half the new ordinands in the Church at a time when, in numerical terms, Anglo-Catholicism was a relatively small party within the Church.

3. **Politically.** Anglo-Catholicism in America was not always, as it had been in England, a quiet donnish affair of worker-priests. At its best, Anglo-Catholicism produced some notable and saintly churchmen, whose dedication to apostolic truth and order offered an important restraint on the tendency of the Episcopal Evangelicals to fade into the background of all the other Evangelical sects in America, or to lapse into a minimalistic low-church/no-church brand of pietism. And whatever quarrels we may have with Anglo-Catholic sacramental theology, it certainly brought home to many laymen, who had only ever heard a historical Jesus discussed remotely in the pulpit, a terrifying and thrilling sense of the nearness and reality of our Lord's presence with his people.

But American Anglo-Catholicism also had its weaknesses, and at its worst it could, and did, degenerate into a party platform from which young ecclesiastical elitists could thumb their noses at their Evangelical counterparts, or spurn the base Congregational or Presbyterian rungs by which they themselves had ascended to the heights of *The Ritual Reason Why*. One finds in American Anglo-Catholicism an aggressiveness, almost more appropriate to the Kensitites, which manifested itself in a number of unpleasant ways— by producing students who were given to infiltrating Evangelical parishes as curates and diverting worship to higher, ritualistic ends, or by provoking Evangelical parsons with belligerently one-sided definitions of prayer-book terminology, or by promoting ecclesiastic trials of Evangelicals for canonical offences.

The most controversial of these trials was the notorious 1869 presentment of Stephen Tyng, Jr. of Holy Trinity Church, New York City, by Bishop Horatio Potter, for the unspeakable crime of preaching in a Methodist Church in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Such an offence as Tyng's would probably have passed unnoticed in most English dioceses then, and almost all of them now; and Tyng's subsequent trial and reprimand marked an unprecedented turn in the interpretation of the Church's exclusionary canon. But Americans have always had a nasty habit of exaggerating the ideas they import from abroad, and Anglo-Catholicism enjoyed no exemption from that. In England, Anglo-Catholicism was really a movement for martyrs, like Mackonochie. In America, martyrdom fell to the Evangelicals, like Tyng. And no wonder: Tyng was, after all, the grandson of Alexander Viets Griswold.

The Evangelicals recoiled from this, for they were by and large, men who had made their peace with the spirit of American democracy, and they frankly resented the Anglo-Catholics as cultural Tories. Especially, the Evangelicals criticized the ritualistic innovations of the Anglo-Catholics, their one-way anti-Protestant interpretation of the prayerbook, and their opposition (based on the notion of an exclusive apostolic succession in episcopal orders) to ecumenical bi-lateralism. At almost every General Convention from 1853 till 1871, they demanded a hearing for their grievances—in 1853, it took the form of the Muhlenberg Memorial on ecumenicity; in 1868, it was the proposals to allow liberty in the declaration of regeneration in baptism; in 1871, it was the ill-starred ritual uniformity canon. But the Evangelicals were plagued by dissension and poor leadership; and what was more, the House of Bishops remained the preserve of the old High-Churchmen, who looked with equal loathing on Anglo-Catholic innovation *and* Evangelical proposals to tamper with the prayerbook. So, the demands for redress went unheeded. And while all around them they saw what meant for them the perversion of everything they held dear, the Evangelicals were told by the House of Bishops that any steps they took for relief would be punished—as perversions.

And so they began to leave, singly and in pairs. No one has ever sat down to calculate how many Evangelicals deserted the Episcopal Church in the 1860s, but it is significant that four of the most important figures in the founding of the Reformed Episcopal Church had already left the Episcopal Church anywhere between two and four years before. Others, at the urging of the six major Evangelical bishops (Eastburn, McIlvaine, Johns, Stevens, and the two Lees) struggled to hang on, only to be deposed or retired, singly or in pairs.

Finally, at what was really the last gasp of the old Episcopal Evangelicalism, one bishop—George David Cummins of Kentucky—decided that the only alternative to the complete suffocation of Evan gelical Anglicanism in America was the organization of a new Episco pal Church. The occasion of his decision came in October 1873, when, as one of the participants in the worldwide convention of the Evangelical Alliance in New York City, he presided at an inter-church Communion at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. He awoke to find in the

New York papers attacks on his integrity and threats of trial and deposition for having violated the canons. This, for Cummins, was the straw laid on top of a great deal of grief that he had endured over ritualism in Kentucky, and on 10 November he resigned his bishopric with the announced intention of 'transferring' his episcopate to 'another sphere'. On 2 December, he presided at the organization of the Reformed Episcopal Church.[1] Twenty-eight years had passed since 1845, and Cummins had at his back only six clergymen and twenty laymen.

Reformed Episcopalianism

Cummins's action was, and still is, unparalleled in the Anglican episcopate, and for that reason he has been accused of not really being a genuine Anglican—which is true only if we happen to believe that Anglicanism is to be defined strictly in terms of the collegiality of bishops. If, however, we define Anglicanism in terms of doctrine, then the stigma of 'unAnglican' loses its force, since it would be hard to show where Cummins stood outside the Creeds, the Councils, or for that matter, the Anglican Evangelical Assembly. Even if we define Anglicanism in terms of that elusive quality known as 'comprehensiveness', it is still hard to indict Cummins, since it is significant that Cummins's break with the Anglo-Catholics occurred, not over questions of sacramental doctrine or ritual practice, but over what he considered to be the refusal of Anglo-Catholicism to allow any meaningful comprehensiveness with other Christians.

This question of ecumenical comprehensiveness has continued to be, along with our basic Evangelical identity, one of the central and permanent motifs of the Reformed Episcopal experience. Indeed, it has continued to be both our greatest strength and, at the same time, our greatest weakness.

1. In the first place, it has led us to define the episcopate, not in terms on an apostolic order which represents and embodies the *esse* of the Church, but in the functional terms reminiscent of William White's original 1782 call for the organization of the Episcopal Church, as a president chosen from among the presbyters of the Church who is to function as a symbol of unity for the *bene esse* of the Church. It may seem odd that the only modern Anglican separatist movement which has ever possessed an incontestably valid succession is also the only one which is maddeningly indifferent to it. But the indifference is deliberate, and underscores the Reformed Episcopal anxiety to affirm that church polity is a matter of historical development, not dominical ordinance; and, as such, to assure other polities, such as the Presbyterians or Lutherans, that we do not consider their ministries *ipso facto* invalid.

This anxiety to allay, or perhaps appease, the suspicions of other Evangelicals has sometimes threatened to turn into an obsession, and resulted in the abandonment of episcopal robes and even opposition to the term of address 'Right Reverend'. It has also led us to confine sharply the discretionary powers of our bishops in our canons. But on the other hand, we would hardly be the first or only Anglicans to look at the episcopate in this fashion; and in one of the more recent sessions of the General Synod, curious enquiries were made as to why a certain Evangelical Bishop never wears a purple shirt. Moreover, in whatever ways we have tried to minimize the episcopate, the Reformed Episcopal Ordinal still consecrates bishops almost word-for-word by the pattern of 1662, right down to the *Veni Creator Spiritus*; confirmation still remains an episcopal prerogative; and by what I can only regard as an inarticulate but altogether genuinely Anglican instinct, we have kept a painstakingly clear and careful consecration list from Cummins up till this day. Even with all the caveats and protestations firmly in place, there still remains a thoroughly recognizable notion of Anglican episcopacy in the Reformed Episcopal Church.

2. The urge toward Evangelical ecumenicity has also led us to take another step which, in the light of our conception of the episcopate, is really only logical, and that is to receive into our ministry clergy from other non-episcopal churches. Again, this was a gesture toward bilateralism, and though it has sometimes backfired on us, it would be a rash man indeed who would seize on this as something which has hopelessly compromised an Anglican identity. The researches of Dean Sykes made a very strong, if not unassailable, case for the recognition by the Church of England of the orders of the Continental Reformed churches prior to 1662; and in our own times, the gradual recognition of the peculiar structure of the Church of South India, and the new Church of England canons B43 and B44, have both brought mainstream Anglican opinion ironically close to the Reformed Episcopalians on this point. What Graham Leonard, Eric Mascall, Colin Buchanan, and J. I. Packer recommended in 1969 as the blueprint for the 'integration of ministries' into a new United Church of England (in *Growing Into Union*) has only been what the Reformed Episcopalians have been trying to do for over a century.

And yet, it also has to be said that while no actual re-ordinations take place in the Reformed Episcopal Church, nevertheless, none of these new-model clergy are canonically permitted to assume parish responsibilities without the licence of a bishop, and even then only after a special service which, all our explanations notwithstanding, does rather resemble a *sub-conditione* ordination.

3. It is unquestionably the urge to foster Evangelical ecumenicity which led us in 1874 to re-shape the Book of Common Prayer and expunge what were to our minds all its 'Romish germs'. Surprisingly,

these changes were relatively limited in number, and so it is possible for those used to the 1928 American prayerbook or to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer to go quite a way before noticing that something about the Reformed Episcopal prayerbook is different. However, those changes concerned issues dear to Evangelical consciences, both then and now. You can see the most critical of these changes in three places in the Reformed Episcopal prayerbook.

a. The word *regenerate* has been deleted from the baptismal office. This reflected our concern that the connotations of the word *regenerate* had narrowed since the sixteenth century to mean only the great moral change which the Scriptures describe as being 'born again', and that the continued use of *regenerate* in the baptismal order would give rise to a purely mechanistic notion of the efficacy of the sacrament. This by no means suggests that we believe that baptism contains no promise of grace at all; but it does mean that in our minds baptism cannot simply be turned into 'regeneration' in the absence of a genuine and lively faith. This also means that we anticipated more-or-less the direction of the Anglican Evangelicals at Keele in 1967, who called for the revision of the baptismal office on just this point, 'provided that the covenant basis which they express is not lost.'

b. The word *priest* has been replaced consistently in our prayerbook with *presbyter.* We all know Milton's line—'new presbyter is but old priest writ large'—and it is true that etymologically at least *priest* is merely an Anglicized contraction of the New Testament Greek term for elder, *presbyter.* But few of us are etymologists, and the associations of *priest* with *hiereus* and *sacerdos* rather than 'elder' are simply too commonplace to be ignored. And since it is our contention that the New Testament nowhere invites us to construe the ministry as sacrificial but rather as pastoral in nature, we have preferred the clearer if rather bulkier terminology of *presbyter.*

But again, in so doing, we have shown ourselves oddly ahead of the times rather than behind them, as is indicated not only by the usage of the Church of South India, but even the Lima document, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry,* and, once again, *Growing Into Union.*

c. Seabury's Scottish Invocation and Oblation has been eliminated from the Communion order, and the sequence of the prayers has reverted to something rather closer to 1662. This grows out of our basic concern that there be no confusion between Christ's sacifice and the Eucharist itself; hence we have jettisoned anything which we considered would imply any real substantial change in the elements, or suggest that we are uniting ourselves in Christ in the Eucharistic offering of praise and thanksgiving. We strongly affirm the real and objective presence of the person of Christ at every Eucharist (and the virtual presence of the body of Christ); our chief concern, however, is that the efficacy of the sacrament be not divorced from the worthy reception of it.

I should go on to say that there have been movements in the past for even more dramatic changes, as well as movements to fence in the changes which *were* made with ritual canons which proscribe even the use of cross and candlesticks on the Holy Table. Nothing, in fact, has been the source of greater contention—not even sacramental doctrine—in the Reformed Episcopal Church than our controversies over vestments. Today, in many places in the Reformed Episcopal Church, even the surplice is still anathema, which is perhaps understandable when we remember that, before 1873, the surplice actually was a pretty exotic article in American Episcopalianism. And in 1897, we came as close as we have ever come to ecclesiastical self-destruction by passing a uniformity resolution in favour of the old usage of gown and bands. But this strait-jacket uniformity only really prevailed in the eastern Reformed Episcopal parishes, and the 1897 resolution was allowed to lapse in 1981. Since then, not only have surplice and scarf made a gradual reappearance across the reformed Episcopal Church, but we have even seen the revival of rochet and chimere for the first time since 1916.

That development may not seem particularly advanced to those who have grown up accustomed to copes and mitres, but for the Reformed Episcopalians (and, I suspect, for many Evangelicals across the Anglican Communion) it symbolizes an important attempt to recapture an identity. It may not be the most profound way of going at the problem; but it is also true that, in our context, the people who wanted, in the nineteenth century, to minimize those origins struck first at the same items. After all, Evangelicalism in the Anglican world has always had some degree of difficulty making some aspects of Evangelicalism square with some aspects of Anglicanism. That the Reformed Episcopalians could come to blows with each other over this difficulty only demonstrates, in a back-handed sort of way, how routinely Anglican we really are. Granted that Reformed Episcopalians are Anglicans—are we Evangelical Anglicans (that is, are we basically Anglican in spirit, with 'Evangelical' as the means we use to realize that identity) or Anglican Evangelicals (that is, are we really merely generic Evangelicals for whom Anglicanism is simply an accident which can be set aside at any moment it might inhibit Evangelical ecumenicity)? There was no clear resolution of this at our founding, any more than there was at Keele and Nottingham, and the ambiguity which resulted in our experience is largely what allowed the various contentions about vestments and the like to come to front stage, and allowed the urge for Evangelical ecumenicity to swallow up Anglican identity.

Our quarrels over vestments in the 1890s are only one example of a number of blunders and sillinesses of which the Reformed Episcopalians have been guilty. But the purpose of admitting these mistakes is not merely to concede that we have made them, but to

underscore the fact that we made as few as we did. Remember that in 1873, we had nothing to guide us in rebuilding a Church; once loosed from the traditional inertia of canons and rubrics, we were perfectly free to make a monstrosity of ourselves, if we pleased. And how easy it is to create such monstrosities, Anglo-Catholic as well as Evangelical, as we may see in the unhappy examples of the Continuing Churches in the United States. The fact that we did not create a self-destroying Evangelical Frankenstein, but are in fact still here and prospering in 1990, suggests that some instinctive compass has guided us, and that we are indeed Anglicans at root, after all.

Moreover, if we have had to struggle with problems of identity, our struggle has not been a greater one than the struggle Anglican Catholics have had to adjust *their* principles to the inescapable fact of the Reformation, as well as the declining fortunes of Anglo-Catholicism since the great Congresses of the 1920s and '30s. American Anglo-Catholics in particular are in the myopic habit of assuming that their brand of churchmanship is not only right, but uniformly the Anglican norm. That forgets how very much a johnny-come-lately Anglo-Catholicism is to the American, not to say the Anglican, scene. And what a strange forgetfulness this is when Anglo-Catholics as well as Evangelicals use a liturgy composed by that most ambiguous Protestant of them all, Thomas Cranmer.

Such a forgetfulness is forgiveable only by understanding that in America, the loss of the Evangelicals was so complete and the victory of the Anglo-Catholics so overwhelming that the Episcopal Church developed into something very close to a monochrome province. Over the course of this century, triumphant Anglo-Catholicism gradually veered over into a notion that the Anglo-Catholic way was somehow exclusive; Evangelicals came to be regarded, not as fellow churchmen, but as a species of backwoods prophet.

This was, however, a dubious accomplishment. Anglo-Catholicism derived much of its popularity, not from catholic dogma, but from a Romantic aestheticism which relied on intuitions of Gothic beauty (one thinks here of Newman's 'illative sense') more than tough-minded Christian apologetics, and it was vulnerable from the very first to take-over by any number of modern currents of thought, provided that those currents dressed themselves in chasubles and lace. A case in point is the 'liberal Catholicism' of *Lux Mundi*, which needed only one generation after Newman and Pusey in order to become the predominant strain of Anglo-Catholic thought; a similar American case is that of Ferdinand Ewer, who frankly warned his readers that if they thought Anglo-Catholics had any problem with Darwin, they could not be more wrong. So much of the liberalism which today has corrupted the Anglican Communion has made its way into the system under the aegis of 'catholic' bishops and

'catholic' theologians that it is difficult for me not to hold my American Anglo-Catholic acquaintances somewhat guilty of the very developments they lament. So, if things the Reformed Episcopalians have done may seem, in Anglo-Catholic eyes, strange and perhaps even inexplicable, Anglican Catholics need to remember that many of the practices they have taken for granted, from counting candles on the high altar to pilgrimages to Walsingham, have seemed to Evangelical eyes no less strange, and perhaps even more accountable for our present trials.

Conclusion

I have been fulfilling the rôle of an apologist and interpreter thus far, but I do not mean that to sound defensive. The Reformed Episcopalians did not desire to revolutionize Anglicanism, but simply, as Cummins declared, to 'restore the old paths', and I believe that if we have not exactly 'restored' many old Anglican paths, we have certainly maintained the ones 'prepared for us to walk in.' By the same token, if I have spent an exorbitant amount of time in tendentious explanation, you should understand my feeling that such explanation needs to be given as my unspoken opinion of how far American Episcopalianism has drifted from those particular paths. For I have seen the Reformed Episcopal Church at work, and no matter what grade other churchmen may be inclined to give us on their churchmanship report card, the fact is that we have been vindicated by a century and more of continuous practice, by the consistently high levels of preaching and pastoral care which we find in the Reformed Episcopal Church, and by the institutional stability of our parishes and missions.

That, in turn, indicates something very important for every Anglican today, a point which Bishop Robert Mercer (a Mirfield monk and retired colonial bishop who is now the presiding bishop of the Anglican Catholic Church of Canada) made in 1987 in England when talking about the Reformed Episcopalians to the Northern Festival of the Anglican Society:

> What *is* an Anglican? Nobody quite knows. But it would seem that communion with Canterbury is not the deciding factor, and there is nothing new in this. . . . I have already told you there is a body in the U.S.A. called the Reformed Episcopal Church, four-square Protestants, who left the official church 130 years ago in protest against our Tractarian fathers. . . . They are not fundamentalists. They have a strong sense of church order, discipline and tradition. I estimate, that they may be a good deal more flexible than the Diocese of Sydney, with which we are in communion, and perhaps a good deal more flexible than some people in the Diocese of Bradford, with whom you do presumably dialogue? I suspect that if we go out and embrace them and talk with them we may find that small beginnings may have great

> conclusions. . . . It is true that they are not in communion with Canterbury, at least not now with the present Archbishop of Canterbury. But Archbishops come and go. And perhaps in the future they may be in communion with a future Archbishop of Canterbury.

Few things could surprise a Reformed Episcopalian more than being found in accord with a Mirfield bishop. But certainly in this case Mercer is right: the collegiality of bishops, or communion with Canterbury, or even 815 Second Avenue, is not the *sine qua non* of Anglicanism. If the Reformed Episcopalians ought to mean anything to other Anglicans, we should mean that Anglicanism is not merely a style, or something confined to the dictates of an ecclesiastical bureaucracy. It has a hard doctrinal core that is independent of what bishops and synods can do to it. It is formed around the Book of Common Prayer in its various local adaptations, on the Scriptures, in the testimony of the Creeds, through the three-fold ministry (in which the presbyterate and episcopate, certainly, and the diaconate probably, are to be understood by Scripture as delegated to males) and by the sacraments. Argue we will over how to interpret these things; but adhering to them, and not just the latest diocesan newsletter, is what makes us Anglican.[2]

ALLEN GUELZO is Academic Dean at the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Episcopal Church, Philadelphia.

NOTES

1 English readers may know that the Free Church of England is sometimes called the Reformed Episocopal Church. It likewise draws its episcopal orders from Bishop Cummins, but there is no formal connexion between the two groups.

2 A version of this paper has already appeared in *Christian Challenge*.