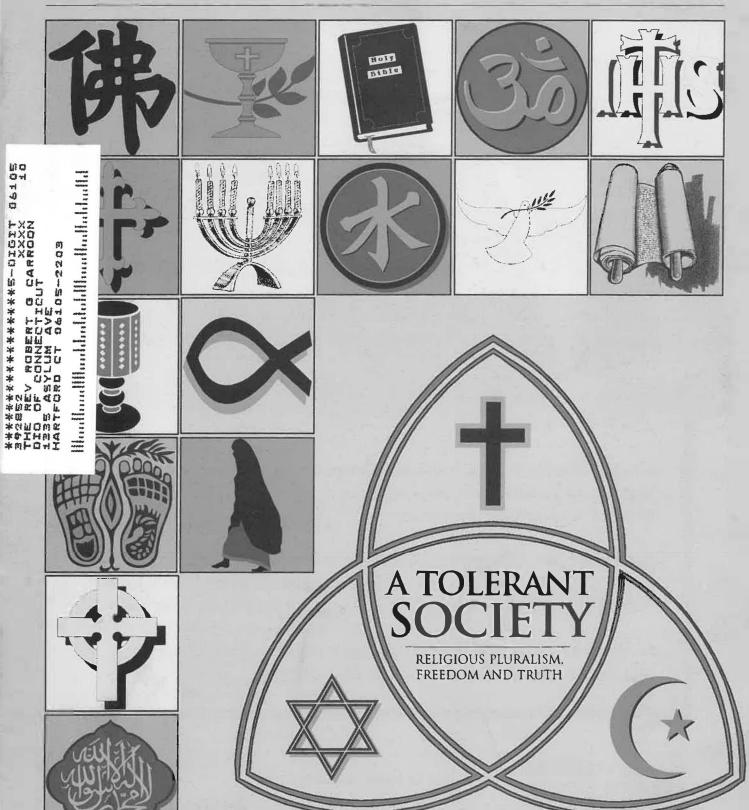
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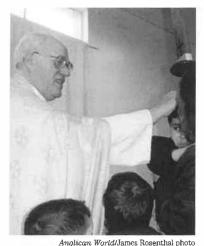
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SUNDAY'S **READINGS**

Preparation for the Kingdom

'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.'
(Matt. 4:17b)

The Third Sunday after Epiphany, Jan. 27, 2002

Amos 3:1-8; Psalm 139:1-17 (or 139:1-11); 1 Cor. 1:10-17; Matt. 4:12-23

Amos, a shepherd by trade, is the earliest of the Hebrew prophets to have his oracles preserved in the form of a book. Internal evidence suggests that he preached around 750 B.C.

In the chapters prior to today's reading. Amos condemns the practices of nations surrounding Israel and Judah and he foretells God's just punishment of them. Gaza has banished entire communities, so the Lord shall visit Gaza with a raging fire to destroy its strongholds (Amos 1:6b-7). The Amorites have engaged in sexual atrocities, so they too shall have their defenses destroyed and their leaders will be driven into exile (1:13b-15). The Moabites, engaging in political intrigue, have killed the king of Edom and the Lord will punish them through a fierce revolution (2:1-3).

The residents of Israel and Judah, however, apparently believe that their own transgressions are immune from divine retribution. "You only have I known," they vividly recall the Lord telling them, "of all the families of the earth" (3:2a). "Not so fast," warns the prophet. Since God's people have also sinned, "sell[ing] the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals," "father and son going into the same girl," and "reject[ing] the law of the Lord" (2:6a, 7b,4b). God's chosen people have sinned, and his retribu-

tion shall certainly come upon them. "The lion has roared; who will not fear? The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?" (3:8).

Luckily for us, after nearly three millennia, God chose to send a Redeemer to remit the sins of his people — not only Jews, but Gentiles who accept him as well. This Jesus, who preaches a message of repentance, freely forgives the sins of all who are contrite and follow him. His message is so powerful, in fact, that two brothers, Peter and Andrew, are immediately convinced by the Lord's sincerity. They immediately leave their fishing trade (and thereby their means of livelihood) to "fish for people" (Matt. 4:19). And their first act of evangelism is to enlist two other brother fishermen, James and John, to do the same (4:18-22).

It is precisely because Christ forgives the sins of all who truly repent and intend amendment of life that Paul urges unity among believers. His plea is "that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you." "For," he explains, "Christ [sent me] to proclaim the gospel ... so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power" (1 Cor. 1:10, 17). And it is through the cross of Christ that the sins of all people who truly repent are forgiven.

Look It Up

Without the redeeming self-sacrifice of Christ, what would be the fate of all sinners? (Read the Book of the Prophet Amos.)

Think About It

Although we are all selfish and therefore sinful by nature, will Jesus ever refuse to forgive anyone who has truly repented?

Next SundayThe Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 37:1-18 (or 37:1-6); 1 Cor. 1:(18-25) 26-31; Matt. 5:1-12

Celebrating the Saints

Devotional Readings for Saints' Days Compiled by Robert Atwell and Christopher L. Webber Morehouse. Pp. 514. \$34.95 ISBN 0-8192-1883-9

Celebrating the Seasons

Daily Spiritual Readings for the Christian Year Compiled by Robert Atwell. Morehouse. Pp. 578. Price not given. ISBN 0-8192-1847-2

These companion volumes offer, as their subtitles state, spiritual readings for those interested in following the church calendar.

Celebrating the Saints goes beyond the brief biographies of Lesser Feasts and Fasts. In his Introduction, compiler Robert Atwell, an Anglican vicar in the Diocese of London, offers why we should pay attention to the saints: "They constitute very individual stars in a wide galaxy, and their sheer variety and vitality affirms the worthwhileness of the Christian endeavor."

There are non-scriptural writings for a variety of saints' days from Peter and Paul to Mary Slessor, and for feasts of our Lord. The readings range from the famous (Julian of Norwich, Michael Ramsay) to the little known (Sulpicius Severus, Luis Froes).

As an example, on the date this review was written (the Feast of the Consecration of Samuel Seabury), the reading was from the Concordat established between the Scottish bishops and Seabury.

The presentations are short (mostly fewer than 500 words) and could be used as a reading at one of the Daily Offices in those places where both Morning and Evening Prayer are read.

Celebrating the Seasons goes a step further, offering a reading for each day of the year, whether it is a feast or not. While the aforementioned work is based on the calendar year, this one follows the liturgical year, beginning with Advent. Atwell calls it an "anthology of 'reputable and orthodox writers'." Particularly valuable, in addition to the readings, are notes on each season

son and the material which follows.

In some instances, alternate readings are provided. Occasionally poems and hymns are presented. An even wider range of authors is found in this book, from St. Augustine to Rowan Williams, from John Henry Newman to Guigo of Chartreuse.

This volume is based on the English calendar, with the primary differ-

ence being "Ordinary Time," the Sundays after Trinity Sunday, rather than the Sundays after Pentecost.

Both books have much to offer persons concerned with spirituality, especially those involved in a daily rhythm of prayer, or those who give more attention than a cursory glance to the church's liturgical year.

David Kalvelage

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It's Official: Archbishop Carey Announces His Retirement

The worst-kept secret in the Anglican Communion finally is out. The Most Rev. George Carey will retire later this year as Archbishop of Canterbury. The archbishop announced in a brief statement released Jan. 8 that he would retire effective Oct. 31.

"By the end of October I shall have served 11½ years in a demanding yet wonderfully absorbing and rewarding post," Archbishop Carey said. "I feel certain this will be the right and proper time to stand down. I look forward to exciting opportunities and challenges in the coming months and then to fresh ones in the years that follow."

The Archbishop of Canterbury functions as spiritual head of the worldwide Anglican Communion, primate of the Church of England, and bishop of the Diocese of Canterbury.

Archbishop Carey, 66, has been Archbishop of Canterbury since 1991. The former Bishop of Bath and Wells will continue to carry out his duties and responsibilities until his retirement date.

The Most Rev. Frank T. Griswold, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, spoke fondly of Archbishop Carey:

"His passion for the gospel and dedication to the faithfulness and unity of the church, together with his insistence that the suffering world is the proper sphere of our common engagement, have made George Carey an inestimable gift to the Anglican Communion and beyond. I am deeply grateful for his ministry, together with that of his wife, Eileen, as are countless Episcopalians who have come to know and love them through their frequent visits to our shores."

"The Archbishop of Canterbury has worked to encourage greater confidence in the Church of England," said the Rt. Rev. Michael Nazir-Ali, Bishop of Rochester and mentioned as a potential candidate to succeed Arch-

bishop Carey. "He has taken every opportunity to make it mission minded in its engagement with contemporary culture."

The Rt. Rev. Christopher Herbert, Bishop of St. Albans, also praised the archbishop's ministry. "Dr. George Carey has carried out his ministry as archbishop with steadfast and unflinching courage," Bishop Herbert said.

From Nigeria, the Most Rev. Peter Akinola, archbishop of that province, said, "Archbishop George has been a wonderful leader, having shown insight and sensitivity in his ministry. His concern for the unity and vibrant life of the Anglican Communion has been much appreciated."

Archbishop Peter Kwong of Hong Kong said, "I am sure he will go down in history as one of the greatest Archbishops of Canterbury."

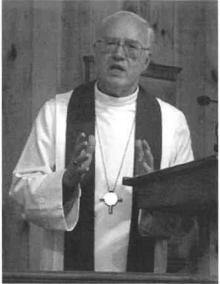
Archbishop Carey has had difficult issues with which to contend. In 1992 he presided over the legislation to ordain women as priests, and managed to hold the Church of England together amidst one of the most divisive controversies in its history.

Six years later, he was host to the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops during which controversial debate took place over the role of homosexual persons in the church.

During his entire ministry, statistics showed declining membership, and major financial concerns occupied much of his time, but attendance has increased recently, as well as giving. At the same time, the Anglican Communion showed rapid growth in some places, particularly in the churches of Africa and Asia.

The role of the Archbishop of Canterbury has been under study, and a review released last year called for the archbishop to be relieved of some of his duties in order to concentrate on his international role.

Archbishop Carey grew up in East



Anglican World/James Rosenthal photo Archbishop Carey preaches to Anglican primates, March 2001, at Kanuga Conference Center.

London, studied at Kings College, London, and served with the British armed forces in the 1950s. He developed a strong reputation as a parish priest during his time as vicar of St. Nicholas' Church in Durham, 1975-82. From there he became principal of Trinity College, Bristol, 1982-87, then served as Bishop of Bath and Wells from 1987 until 1991. He is the author of many books and articles.

Possible Successors

The archbishop's successor will be chosen by a process which begins with deliberation by the 12-member Crown Appointments Commission. The commission's work is done secretly as it seeks the views of individuals and groups within the church. The commission will pass two names to Prime Minister Tony Blair. Mr. Blair may choose one name, which he would submit to Queen Elizabeth II for formal approval, or he can send both names back to the commission.

Long before the archbishop's retirement announcement, several bishops were regarded as possible successors. They include Bishop Nazir-Ali; the Rt. Rev. Richard Chartres, Bishop of London; the Most Rev. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Wales; and the Rt. Rev. James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool.

AROUND THE

Role of Bishop

The **Diocese of lowa**, presently in the search process for its next bishop, heard at convention three bishops who presented their thoughts on the role of their office. The keynote speakers were the Rt. Rev. Mark MacDonald, Bishop of Alaska, and the Rt. Rev. Katherine Jefferts Schori, Bishop of Nevada. The Rt. Rev. Tom Ray, Iowa's assisting bishop, preached at the Sunday Eucharist. The ideas of ministering communities, shared ministry, and spiritual leadership were paramount.

Convention was called to order by the Rev. Canon Suzanne Watson Epting, canon to the ordinary, in her final duty as secretary to the convention. The Rev. Canon Glenn Rankin was elected to preside.

In an emotional farewell address, Deacon Watson stressed that even though several parishes, and the diocese itself, are in process of discernment, "Don't let anybody tell you that nobody's home."

The diocese hopes to elect its next bishop at its November convention, with consecration tentatively scheduled for March 2003.

Resolutions passed included giving seat and vote to any ELCA minister serving an Episcopal congregation in the diocese, and replacing the distinction between parish and mission with the term congregation. A resolution expressing concern over Lutheran modifications to Called to Common Mission was negated by the personal assurances of cooperation by the Lutheran bishops in Iowa.

The 2002 budget of \$1,173,910 was approved.

Mission Strengthened

At the 100th convention of the **Diocese of Western Massachusetts**, Nov. 2-3, its bishop, the Rt. Rev. Gordon Scruton, set forth his four initiatives for the next century.

Bishop Scruton challenged delegates to launch new outreach toward



those in need outside the church, to help congregations to expand their missions, to focus on

spiritual formation and leadership development, and to consider starting new congregations, especially Hispanic and Gen X churches. He lauded the 67 congregations for their support of Five Talents International, an Episcopal micro-credit agency which makes loans for small-business startups in other countries. During 2001, the diocese contributed \$46,000 to Five Talents.

Convention approved the 2002 Ministry Plan with the passage of a \$2.3 million budget, which includes a 9 percent increase to strengthen mission.

At small tables, delegates from dis-

tant churches told stories of their own parishes with photos, graphics and drawings. Twenty youth delegates participated in convention.

Economic Justice

The Rt. Rev. Thomas Ely, consecrated Bishop of **Vermont** last spring, delivered his first address to the diocese during convention Nov. 2 at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul in Burlington. He talked about the necessity of prayer, commitment, leadership and action in the context of the baptismal covenant. "Our future is about growth, not survival; about abundance, not scarcity," the bishop said.

Fourteen workshops were held on topics such as prison ministry, regional ministry, and an ecumenical approach to social justice efforts.

The diocese approved funding for a half-time canon for youth ministry. Among other resolutions was one calling for pastoral care and concrete steps to promote economic justice in response to the social and economic problems affecting the Vermont farming community.

Correction: Because of a reporting error, the action of the national Executive Council was not reported accurately in the Dec. 30 issue. The council approved the next step in the process to determine whether to move church headquarters to the General Theological Seminary. It did not approve the move as reported.

'Sustained Pastoral Care' on Agenda for Bishops

Sustained pastoral care in the Episcopal Church will be on the agenda when the House of Bishops meets March 7-12 at Camp Allen in the Diocese of Texas. The topic had been scheduled for discussion when the bishops gathered last September in Vermont, but it was left off the agenda because of the events of Sept. 11.

Bishops were informed of the agenda in a letter from Presiding Bishop Frank T. Griswold. In the correspondence dated Dec. 13, bishops were

told there would be time to discuss "what the primates in the pastoral letter in 2001 described as 'sustained pastoral care for all in our Communion' for congregations that feel removed from their bishop, what forms it might take, and our role as reconcilers."

The matter had been raised by primates of the Anglican Communion when they met at Kanuga in March 2001. That pastoral letter said the primates endorsed the concept by committing themselves to "seek for ways"

to secure sustained pastoral care" for those "estranged from others because of changes in theology and practice that they believe to be unfaithful to the gospel of Christ."

Among the aspects of pastoral care likely to be discussed is the concept of "flying" bishops who would provide episcopal ministry to congregations and individuals who have theological disagreements with their bishops. "Flying" bishops are in place in England and Wales.

One Lord

For more than 50 years, the **Church of South India** has blended two seemingly irreconcilable traditions of the church, the episcopal and the non-episcopal.

By Chris Theodore

India has made many significant contributions to the world of ideas and concepts, philosophy and religion, art and culture, which have benefited all humanity — the concept and shape of zero and also infinity, the Upanishads and the Vedic philosophy, the world-renowned temple architecture and sculpture, are some of the things that immediately come to mind.

The Church of South India (CSI) is another recent contribution India has made to the world,

for it is hailed as an ecumenical marvel of our times and an ecclesiastical miracle by

many. Church of South India is a unique gift of India to the world. It is typically and characteristically Indian. Few people there would look upon Christianity as a foreign religion, for after all Christianity also is of Asian origin and has been in India

longer than many other religions that originated or exist in India today.

CSI, which has existed for more than 50 years, is still part of the church universal, which came into existence nearly 2,000 years ago with the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon the disciples of Christ who were gathered in Jerusalem soon after the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This may appear to be an audacious claim and calls for an explanation.

The church was a monolithic structure for more than a millennium. The first great schism occurred in the 11th century when disagreement between the See of Rome and the Eastern bishops led to the separation of the Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. Then came the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, and this led to the fragmentation of the church in Western Christendom. As a result, the church was divided into various denominations, each claiming to be orthodox and faithful to the original tradition of the early church.

This situation continued for three or four centuries, until the great missionary era dawned in the 19th century and all these denominations launched missionary enterprises to various countries and regions. It was in the mission fields that they were challenged to examine the sinfulness of their division and the integrity of their mission in the light of

The Rev. Chris V. Theodore is formerly director of communication for the Synod of the Church of South India. He lives in Searcy, Ark.

the high priestly prayer of our Lord who prayed, "that they all may be one so that the world may believe" (John 17:21). As Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, former bishop of the Madras Diocese, says, "It was in the mission field that Christians realized that the division among them was not only sinful but was also intolerable."

This realization among them led to the first missionary conference in Edinburgh in 1910, where there was a call for unity among the various protestant churches. This was followed up at various levels. In 1919, there was a meeting in Tranquebar of like-minded Indian Christian leaders who issued a call for unity. In accepting this call, the Methodists, Anglicans and the Congregational-Presbyterian and Reformed traditions responded positively, and this led to the emergence of greater unity among the Reformed churches. Presbyterians and Congregationalists came together under the banner of the South India United Church (SIUC).

Very soon there was greater cooperation among SIUC and Anglicans and Methodists along with a desire for visible organic unity. Finally this resulted in the emergence of the CSI, which was inaugurated at St. George's Cathedral, Madras (Chennai), Sept. 27, 1947.

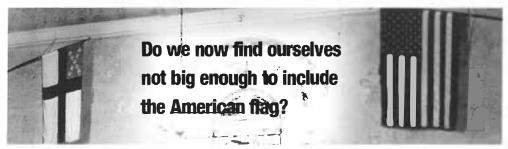
Which Lord?

On paper it might seem simple and smooth, but in reality there were tortuous negotiations, many of which tottered on the brink of breakdown. Anglicans were keen on preserving the historic episcopate and Congregationalists and Presbyterians were opposed to this scheme of church governance and polity. Both sides stuck to their stand adamantly, making it seem as though no headway was possible, but both were urged on by their overriding desire for visible unity and their conviction that division among Christians was not only theologically untenable, but also a tactical embarrassment. The question they had to face every day in the mission field was which Lord they would proclaim — an Anglican Lord or a Methodist Lord or a Congregational Christ or a Reformed Christ. How could they proclaim to their new converts the unity of the trinitarian Lord when they themselves were hopelessly divided?

It was therefore nothing short of a miracle when setting aside all the things that divided them, they focused on the unity they enjoyed in the one Lord and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit they

(Continued on page 18)

A Cherished Symbol



I was disturbed by the vacuous and misleading Viewpoint article titled: "Old Glory and the Cross" [TLC, Dec. 16]. The article called for the removal of the American flag from worship because by placing the cross and the flag together we are saying, "symbolically that the two are synonymous, maybe even interchangeable."

I am not saying that. I am, however, saying that to remove the flag at this time in our national life is not only pastorally insensitive, but terribly self-serving on the part of any rector who chooses this course of action.

Many people are still grieving and are experiencing great stress as a result of the terrorist attacks and the ensuing war in Afghanistan. Families have been torn apart by the death toll and economic impact from Sept. 11. More families now have husbands and wives, sons and daughters, actively involved in the war on terrorism. The Diocese of Kentucky, where I live, serves Fort Campbell and Fort Knox. Parishioners are grieving for our country. There is loss. Removing the flag ignores and insults the deep hurt and wound and can only misdirect our grief.

Liturgy literally means "the work of the people." People who come to Christian worship are incarnational. In the midst of their search, they look for God in other people and in a particular place and time. We are Americans. Why deny it and strip us of our identity by removing the flag? Part of my thanksgiving every Sunday is that I am free to worship. What reminds me of that constitutional principle is the flag.

If a rector decides to remove the American flag, he or she certainly has the authority to do so. Such a move, however, is a matter of discretion and not

church policy. Such discretion then can be interpreted as self-serving because it is a flagrant imposition of will. In fact, it is ironic to find such discussion in the Episcopal Church, where the current buzzword is "inclusivity." Do we now find ourselves not big enough to include the American flag?

The initial impulse to remove the American flag began as a reaction to Vietnam. In protest of that war, a liturgical theology emerged that called for a "political correctness" that separated national symbols from religious symbols. This knee-jerk reaction overlooked the fact that the flag symbolizes freedom of worship, freedom of speech, and the separation of church and state. Do we really want those principles and values removed?

Rather than perpetuating the divisions of Vietnam, it is apparent that we are today in a different war and certainly a different time. The Episcopal Church tries to be relevant but often is sorely lacking. Yet, since Sept. 11, we have noticed in our parish, not only an increase in attendance, but more young adults looking for meaning, purpose, and direction. They come with a love for their country. Is there a way to accept them where they are without denying access to a symbol that is now cherished by them?

The recent practice by some clergy of removing the American flag is a deep affront to many Episcopalians. Many will not leave the church they love, no matter what bishops and other clergy do. There are those, as well, who will exercise their freedom of choice and find another church that displays an American flag. Our guest columnist is the Rev. Robert T. Jennings, rector of St. Francis in the Fields Church. Harrods Creek. Ku.

Did You Know...

A Christmas pageant at Church of the Heavenly Rest, New York City, included a "camel" in procession that "spat" on members of the congregation with a hidden spray bottle.

Quote of the Week

Lobbyist Thomas H. Hart on activism by Episcopalians: "Episcopalians are much more interested in having cocktails than throwing them." A group in which members can ask questions and share experiences may prove far more helpful than for participants to listen to a lecture presented by a biblical expert.

Benefits of Bible Study

It is encouraging to note in many parish newsletters that Bible studies are a regular part of the life of many congregations. Some larger parishes have several Bible study groups on their calendars, meeting on different days of the week in different locations. Others may have only one group which gathers between services on Sundays, but whatever the arrangement, it is a practice which seems to be growing. As recently as 10 years ago there were many places where Bible study was not offered.

The authority and the role of scripture continue to be challenged in the Episcopal Church and elsewhere. Developing biblically literate church members is among the ways the church can address such challenges. A particularly effective method of studying the Bible is one which is participatory. A group in which members can ask questions and share experiences may prove far more helpful than for participants to listen to a lecture presented by a biblical expert.

Organizing a parish-based Bible study is not as difficult as it might seem. Clergy leadership is not required. It is likely that most congregations have lay persons who are either familiar enough with scripture from participation in other Bible studies or who know where to find resources to help such an activity get off the ground. Persons who participate in Bible study often find the Sunday lessons become not only familiar but easier to understand.

If your congregation has Bible study groups, we urge you to participate. If no study is taking place, talk to others about organizing one. Your participation is important to your church.

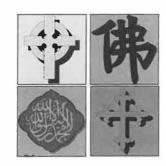
Expressing Divergence

In many issues of this publication, readers will find our news pages contain articles about groups and organizations whose positions may be different from those of the dominant leadership in our church. We are often criticized for presenting such news, but we believe it is especially important for an independent journal such as this to give exposure to convictions and outlooks which reflect the beliefs of substantial numbers of people within the church.

With a General Convention scheduled next year, it should be especially helpful to the church to have divergent views expressed. Convention deputies and bishops need to be aware of the variety of positions which exist, even if those convictions differ from their own. Minority views are not well represented in either of General Convention's two houses, and it is unusual for there to be time for a substantial debate to take place. We are pleased to be able to offer a place where differences of opinion may be expressed.









A TOLERANT SOCIETY

By John D. Alexander

The tragedy of Sept. 11 has unleashed a storm of attacks on traditional religion. Secularist critics are having a field day, pointing at the murderous fanaticism of the terrorists, and saying in so many words: "We told you so: Buy into religion and that's where you end up." In this hostile climate, a crucial challenge for people of faith is to demonstrate that traditional religious conviction is entirely compatible with, and indeed conducive to, the mutual tolerance and respect necessary for life together in a free, open and pluralistic society.

Even commentators sympathetic to religion are proposing that the very nature of our religious commitments must change. Columnist Thomas L. Friedman asserts that the current war is not against terrorism but against an ideology of "religious totalitarianism" (New York Times, Nov. 27, 2001). This ideology is not confined to Islamic extremism, but characterizes Jewish and Christian fundamentalisms as well. Such religious totalitarianism takes the position that "my faith must reign supreme and can be affirmed and held passionately only if all others are negated."

As the only alternative to such religious totalitarianism, Mr. Friedman proposes "an ideology of pluralism... that embraces religious diversity and the idea that my faith can be nurtured without claiming exclusive truth..." Without weakening religious passion, he continues, we must reinterpret our religious traditions to embrace modernity in

The Rev. John D. Alexander is rector of St. Stephen's Church, Providence, R.I.

a way that affirms "that God speaks multiple languages and is not exhausted by just one faith."

Mr. Friedman does not specify exactly how Jews, Christians, and Muslims are to maintain "religious passion" while giving up claims to "exclusive truth." What he seems to endorse, however, is a form of theological pluralism asserting that no one religion may claim to be any more true than any other. So, for example, Christianity is merely one way to God among many: the way that works best for those of us who are Christians, perhaps, but certainly not "the" way in any final or definitive sense.

But are the choices before us really so stark? Is the only alternative to the religious totalitarianism of the Taliban really such a watered-down and relativistic approach to theological truth? Mr. Friedman's mistake lies in assuming that exclusive truth claims in religion necessarily lead to intolerance, persecution, and violence against those whose beliefs differ from ours. But, in many cases, our religious traditions are able to embrace religious tolerance and freedom not in spite of but in consequence of the very truths they affirm.

Take our own Christian faith. Critics are fond of citing the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Wars of Religion, and the shameful history of European anti-Semitism as evidence of the violent intolerance that seems inherent in traditional Christianity. But Christian thinkers in the 20th century, including such reputedly conservative figures as Pope John Paul II, have shown that respect for the dignity and freedom of the human person is integral to the authentic Christian message.

In this reading of traditional Christianity, human beings are able to give meaningful

Where our respective religious traditions contradict each other, they can't both be right.









acceptance to the truth of the gospel only when they are genuinely free to reject it as well. For this reason, the church must repent of its past abuses of power and eschew all forms of religious coercion. The truth of Christianity is to be proposed but never imposed. And governments must foster open societies in which all people are free to seek the truth without restriction, and in which all religious groups are free to practice their faith and attract new adherents. Here, then, is an example of one Western religion, Christianity, drawing on rather than repudiating its traditional truth claims in order to affirm the necessity of a free, open, and tolerant society.

On the other hand, an "ideology of pluralism" that refuses to make exclusive truth claims on behalf of one's own faith simply won't work. The reason is that while Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share many common beliefs, they also contradict each other at key points. So, for example, a Jew who denies the "exclusive truth" of Judaism's rejection of the Christian claims about Jesus is betraying an essential tenet of traditional Jewish belief. Likewise, a Christian who denies the "exclusive truth" of the claim that Jesus is the Son of God is betraying an essential tenet of traditional Christian belief. Where our respective religious traditions contradict each other, they can't both be right. For committed adherents of each religion, the conclusion is inescapable that at these points of contradiction my faith is right and the others are wrong.

But this doesn't mean that we can't get along. Interfaith dialogue and understanding are crucial in today's world. Such dialogue often enriches our appreciation of the beauty and power of different religious traditions, including our own. But while such dialogue often reveals large areas of agreement among various religions, it can also highlight and clarify the points of difference. On the questions that divide us, I would rather learn to live in honest, friendly, and mutually respectful disagreement with my Jewish and Muslim neighbors than accede to a pluralist ideology that requires me to give up my belief in Jesus as God's final, complete, and definitive revelation of himself — even though the inescapable corollary of this belief is that non-Christian faiths are, at best, only partial and incomplete reflections of the fulness of the truth revealed in Christ.

Nor, for that matter, would I want my Jewish and Muslim friends ever to feel pressured by the demands of tolerance and pluralism to give up their denial of this belief, and certainly not in favor of some sophomoric nonsense about there being "many different equally valid paths to God." That would be to give up our respective birthrights for a mess of relativistic pottage. So long as our religious traditions make mutually contradictory truth claims, we must learn to live with our differences in all humility and charity, united in the shared conviction that the differences themselves are important and must be respected. For in the end, truth matters.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bad Strategy

As I read Becca Chapman's "Cultures in Conflict," [TLC, Nov. 25], all kinds of things came to mind, most of which spring from scripture. In the apparently schismatic culture in which the church now seems to exist, Ms. Chapman's arguments promoting, for lack of a better phrase, a kind of peaceful division, cannot be substantiated as a plausible option for anyone or any group trying to live into the Christian vision for the body of Christ.

She notes four major groups within the Episcopal Church. In sum, one could easily add about 100 to those four. The underlying suggestion seems to be that these varied "personalities" within the church should be a reason for schism. Fortunately, our Lord chose 12 very different kinds of personalities to carry the kingdom forward, and, of course, he expected them to learn to live together.

Schism? The evil one chuckles at all the energy being expended to break apart the body of Christ. And our dear Lord, surely, must weep.

(The Rev.) Russell Levenson, Jr. Church of the Ascension Lafayette, La.

A Natural Response

Ms. Campbell is right. We cannot earn salvation by works [TLC, Dec. 9]. Fr. Flowers is also right to say forgiveness "does not come cheaply" [TLC, Nov. 4]. Merely because something is free does not mean it has no price. Grace has its price: love, and love equates to actions.

The call of God's love evokes our response, our own imperfect love. Human love will attempt to manifest itself in actions, to please the beloved.

Talk of reconciliation without repentance is like talk of which came first, the chicken or the egg — interesting but hardly earth-shattering. The spiritual, emotional, psychological and even sacramental nature of reconciliation will call forth a response which we can identify as repentance. The love behind reconciliation will elicit our own imperfect act of love, repentance.

Even though salvation is by faith alone, faith draws forth works. Works are a wry human response to faith. As we are all sinners, and for many our time is short, the desire toward "works" may not be manifested.

The human desire to perform works, worship God, help our neighbors, forgive our enemies, is real and should be lived into, not as a "condition to salvation" but as a "reflection of salvation."

Beau Wagner New York, N.Y.

Offered and Received

From Fr. Flowers' letter [TLC, Jan. 6], it appears to me that he has missed the distinction between forgiveness offered and forgiveness received, or perhaps confused forgiveness with reconciliation.

Divine forgiveness is offered to all, through the atoning death of Jesus Christ. The prayer book quotes scripture to remind us, "If any man (anyone) sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the perfect offering for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1-2, BCP, p. 332). This understanding is reiterated in the Catechism's definition of grace: "Grace is God's favor towards us. unearned and undeserved; by grace God forgives our sins, enlightens our minds, stirs our hearts, and strengthens our wills" (BCP, p. 858).

The fact that forgiveness is offered to all does not imply that forgiveness is received by all. This, too, is indicated in scripture (John 3:14-18) and elaborated in the prayer book.

God has made my ongoing forgiveness received contingent on my forgiveness given, but does not make my forgiveness, either received or given, dependent on someone else's repentance: "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:12-15).

Jesus is teaching his disciples to offer forgiveness as freely as our heavenly Father offers it, rather than making it contingent upon the attitude of the person who has hurt us. Thus he teaches the truth that our failure to forgive is more damaging to us in the long run than anything another person can do to us.

(The Rev.) Judith Cowper Narvon, Pa.

Trust God

The Nov. 25 issue is one of those that irritates me by its depiction of an Episcopal Church different from the one I see around me. To say the church will "never be the same" is to forecast the future on the basis of the present. A lot of dotcom millionaires made the same mistake. "Traditional Anglo-Catholics do not have a bright future," David Kalvelage writes. Hey, we've always been a minority, but we've had an eno mous impact. The Eucharist is now officially called the "chief service" on the Lord's Day. Wouldn't Pusey and Keble be delighted! We have whatever future God will give us, and I'm not worried.

I do worry about people, like Viewpoint writer Becca Chapman, who want to divide the church into neat categories. I find myself defined as an "Anglo-Catholic Evangelical Broad Church" type with tendencies toward Liberalism. Do I have to choose one of these four slots? Can't I just be an Episcopalian? Can't we all practice up on our patience and tolerance, and trust God to guide the church in ways we may not all be comfortable with always - but which may nonetheless be in keeping with a plan none of us completely grasps?

The thought of hiving off into little church-lettes in which we all agree with each other in our own tiny neighborhood strikes me as protestantism gone wild. Catholicism is inclusive, not exclusive. It may not always be comfortable. but it sure isn't boring. Let's settle down and enjoy the ride.

> (The Rev.) Christopher L. Webber Sharon, Conn.

Lively Reading

I thoroughly enjoyed David Kalvelage's perceptive comments inspired by his current reading through the Book of Revelation [TLC, Dec. 9]. It is quite true that various apocalyptic and/or millenarian cults have relied heavily, if not exclusively, on citations from Revelation and, to a lesser degree, the prophet Daniel. Best known of these is that founded in the U.S. in 1872 by one Charles Russell, a Pittsburgh clothing merchant. My father used to refer to this sect as "The Final Fifty."

Well stated was Mr. Kalvelage's comment that one "doesn't have to be sacrilegious to wonder what John may have been smoking or how long he'd sat in the heat of Patmos to be able to describe the fantastic visions he saw."

I make no pretense to being an author-



defined as an "Anglo-Catholic Evangelical Broad Church" type with tendencies toward Liberalism. Do I have to choose one of these four slots?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ity on the ultimate formation of the canon of the New Testament. I do know that Revelation was much questioned or argued before being finally included both in the Western and Eastern churches. Most modern biblical scholars seem to agree that the book was written by a certain John (not the apostle) who was an otherwise unknown Christian of Jewish descent

living in Asia Minor whose mother tongue was not Greek. The writer's bitter hostility to Rome was evidently inspired by the persecution of Christians and Jews ordered near the end of his reign by the Roman Emperor Flavius Domitian (A.D. 81-96).

As Mr. Kalvelage points out, Revelation makes lively reading and has some powerful passages. I am not aware, however, that the book adds any real essentials to Christian doctrine as contained in the gospels and epistles.

Franklin M. Wright Memphis, Tenn.

A New Role

The article on "St. Paul's Chapel: Refuge Near Ground Zero" [TLC, Dec. 9] was a story that every Episcopalian should read, hear and tell for succeeding generations.

A few weeks after that fateful Sept. 11, my wife and I visited "Ground Zero." Concrete barriers and makeshift cyclone fencing were in place to prevent non-workers from interfering with the necessary effort. The crowd of people filling the sidewalks at the site was strangely quiet. People stared in disbelief of the horrors that television could never portray.

Many cried, some breaking the eerie silence with expressions of sadness for all who died. A deep love of America was echoed all through lower Manhattan in the face of adversity.

In the distance, St. Paul's Chapel could be seen with its doors open, offering nourishment, rest and prayer to all in need, the fire fighters, police, military personnel and various volunteers. A stranger standing next to me asked, "What church is that?" Without hesitation and filled with pride, I said, "That's St. Paul's Chapel — an Episcopal church."

Neither the founders of St. Paul's, nor any member since, ever envisioned that their church would one day fill a new role to serve God's people, and do it in such a meaningful way. Yet, here was St. Paul's, still standing among the ruin surrounding the edifice. I am certain that God was present that day to save St. Paul's so his people could be served in the time that followed. That day, I was proud to be an American, and especially proud to be an American Episcopalian.

George J. Marshall Albany, N.Y.

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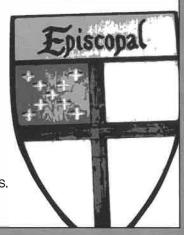
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The Rev. **John Kelly** is rector of St. John's, 146 First St., Troy, NY 12180-4431.

The Rev. **John J. Leahy** is rector of St. Paul's, 79 Cross St., Gardner, MA 01440.

The Rev. **Sandra Mayer** is vicar of Trinity, 203 S Carney St., Atmore, AL 36502-2404.

The Rev. **Linda Moore** is rector of Messiah, PO Box 67, Murphy, NC 28906.

The Rev. **Thomas Moore** is rector of Trinity, 15 Hemlock Ave., Spruce Pine, NC 28777.

The Rev. **Jerry Sneary** is rector of St. Francis' by-the-Lake, PO Box 2031, Canyon Lake, TX 78130.

The Rev. **Stockton Williams** is rector of St. Peter's 320 St. Peter St., Kerrville, TX 78028

Receptions

Colorado — **Todd Kissam**, as priest, from the Roman Catholic Church.

Religious Communities

Society of St. John the Evangelist — Geoffrey Tristam made profession of initial vows.

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Death notices may be sent to our office by mail, fax or e-mail, and should arrive no later than 60 days after the time of death. Obituaries should include the date of the death and place where it occurred along with biographical facts and names of survivors.

We urge persons who know of the deaths of clergy and prominent lay persons to let us know as soon as possible. They may be mailed to the following address: News Editor, The Living Church, PO Box 514036, Milwaukee, WI 53203-3436. Obituaries may be sent by fax to 414-276-7483 or by e-mail to TLC@livingchurch.org.

Next week...

A Wakeup Call

(South India - from page 8)

finally came together in one visible organically united church called the Church of South India.

The marvel of the CSI is that two great, seemingly irreconcilable traditions of the church, namely the episcopal and the non-episcopal, came together to form the CSI. Considering the tenacity with which each side was entrenched in its position, this is nothing short of a miracle

It was good for the CSI that it adopted episcopacy for its order. It gave the newly formed church a historic continuity of apostolic succession.

At present in the CSI, divisions and antagonism are a thing of the past. One can see erstwhile Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists and the Reformed worshiping together happily with Anglicans, guided and led by a bishop who himself might have come from a non-episcopal background.

There were some frictions in the beginning as when votaries of one tradition tried to have their own way in the order of worship they wanted to follow, ignoring the feelings of others, but they are all a thing of the past now. It is a visible, united church where the younger generation is blissfully oblivious to the divisions that were a reality to their previous generation.

The Church of South India is known as a pilgrim church, a church on the move. It is a united church but it is also a uniting church, for it does not see itself as yet another denomination but a movement of church unity, trying to bring together all other churches that are still outside its fold. To an observer in America, there may be cooperation among all these churches, but still they are visibly separated, lacking in organic unity which is the distinguishing mark of the CSI. This makes for a saddening and sobering reality which at the same time accentuates the wonder that is the CSI today. This unity is so thorough and consummate that the merging component churches no longer exist in South India.

This article was not intended to be a comprehensive treatise on the CSI covering all aspects of its faith and order, life and work, but was meant to be an introduction to the marvel that the CSI is.

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