

Augustana College  
Chapel of Reconciliation

**Us Versus Them**

Martin Brokenleg

3 November 2003

**Scripture: Acts 15: 1-6, 12-13, 19-21**

1. We are in conflict in the Episcopal Church and you would not know this only if you have lived under a rock in the past six months, or in an Augustana dorm. In the Anglican Communion, which consists of 38 provinces or national churches we are in disagreement on how much, or whether to include gay and lesbian people in the church. This is of interest to Lutherans since we have an agreement of full intercommunion, including an exchange of clergy.
2. Today's reading is about the Apostolic Council, which met and disagreed on how much Jewish custom was necessary for non-Jewish Christians to observe. It is an example of how the Church in the past has lived with profound differences of opinion.
3. The current controversy focused on whether or how much to include gay and lesbian persons in the life of our church. What does scripture tell us? This is not just about biblical literalism. How do we live with what *The Bible* says? How do we know what we know?
4. In the past Christians have supported a number of practices with the supposed-support of the Bible: divine right of kings, slavery, prohibition of making interest on money, rejecting people who married after a divorce, manifest destiny of Whites to dominate North America, rejection of leadership by women in the church. In most of these instances we have changed our understanding and our way of living as Christians.
5. Michael Ingham, the Anglican Archbishop of Canada says, "One of the tragic developments in the church today is the intellectual theft of the word 'orthodoxy' by conservative modernists. In fact historic Christian orthodoxy has accommodated a variety of spiritualities, theological schools, doctrinal convictions, and pastoral practices. Genuine orthodoxy includes people like St. Julian of Norwich, who Called God 'mother;' St. Francis of Assisi, who protested the Church's submission to money; and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who

- defied the ...system of apartheid [which was backed by biblical Fundamentalism]. Historically, orthodoxy has seen centuries when marriages were never performed in the church and, if John Boswell is right, periods when same-sex relationships were celebrated [and blessed] in the church.
6. Gregory Baum (*The Challenge of Tradition*), a Roman Catholic theologian draws a parallel between anti-homosexual prejudice and anti-Semitism and argues that both can be healed. He says that there are five steps the church takes when we see a discrepancy between doctrine and love.
    - A. A sense of contradiction arises in us when something in the tradition strikes us as incompatible with what we know of God's love and justice through Jesus Christ.
    - B. We search for the source of the contradiction in scripture.
    - C. We re-read the scripture and tradition to find hints for resolving the contradiction.
    - D. We turn to Christian experience as verification of the new experience – in this case to the experience of gay and lesbian Christians in their life in Christ.
    - E. We develop a systematic theology capable of overcoming the contradiction.
  7. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus asks, "Is there any one among you who, if your child asks for bread would give them a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish would give them a snake?"(Mt. 7: 9-10) Jesus was speaking of the love of God for each one in the human family. This is the reason we Anglicans have been rethinking our stance on homosexuality – any why, yesterday we elevated the first openly gay man to the office of bishop.
  8. We have become aware of how gay and lesbian Christians are starving for the spiritual food of love and acceptance... when many places in secular society are already welcoming. In some places, their communities reject gay and lesbian Christians. Some are labeled as "innately disordered" by ecclesiastical leaders. Some are denied participation in Holy Communion. Most are refused leadership positions in lay and ordained office. Many are persecuted through civil and ecclesiastical laws. Some are forced to become refugees. In places like Uganda, gays and lesbians are tortured and murdered.
  9. In some areas of the church, homophobia has replaced anti-Semitism as the last acceptable prejudice. Homophobia is so strong in some

communities that concerned Christians fear to be seen standing in support of gay and lesbian Christians.

10. Today, I raise three challenges: (1.) To gay and lesbian Christians, I say, “hold on and do not accept anything less than your full role as member of the Church;” (2.) To pastors and those in leadership positions, seeing the storm outside, I say, “step out and do not let justice pass you by- you are not alone. (3.) To each church member- You have been silent and watched your family members and loved ones turned away and are rejected. Tell us your experience, put away shame, and seek justice.
11. We are asking for bread, not a stone.

**MORNING WORSHIP**  
**Monday, November 3, 2003**

<b>Prelude</b>	“Prelude & Fugue in B= M” John Wilkening, organist
<b>Welcome/Announcements</b>	
<b>Invocation and Dialog</b>	WOV. p. 46
<b>HYMN</b>	“Gracious Spirit, Heed Our Pleading” WOV 687
<b>SCRIPTURE</b>	Acts 15: 1-6, 12-13, 19-21
<b>Sermon</b>	“Us Versus Them” Martin Brokenleg Native American Studies
<b>HYMN</b>	“Like the Murmur of the Dove’s Song” WOV 685
<b>Prayers and Blessing</b>	
<b>Postlude</b>	“Concerto in A Minor” Bach/Vivaldi

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**CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Into the Streets and the Augustana Coalition for Social Justice are sponsoring a Food Tax Forum on Monday, November 3rd, at 7:00 pm in the 3-in-1 room - commons.**

Augie and USF social work students, state legislators, penny pinching moms and others affected by the tax, will discuss whether this tax \* which opponents say currently robs lower-income families of up to three weeks' worth of grocery money \* is fair, and whether it can and should be repealed. Please plan to attend, with your questions.

**Seminary Day** - Wednesday, November 19. Anyone considering graduate study at Luther, Wartburg, Berkeley or Chicago Seminaries is invited to visit with admission representatives on campus. Please give Pr. Paul a note or e-mail with a time on Wed. you are available for an appointment.