

## Who are the Schismatics?

The Right Reverend Dr. Michael Ingham, Bishop of New Westminster, has warned that 'full-blown schism' has fallen upon the Anglican Church of Canada. Dr. Ingham has sent threatening letters to retired Bishop Donald Harvey to stay off his turf (not to ordain desperately-needed new priests for conservative parishes in New Westminster), to the potential ordinands (asserting that only his ordinations are recognized in the Anglican Church of Canada and the world-wide Anglican Communion), and to conservative priests in his Diocese (not to participate in any irregular ordinations).

In the various versions of the Bishop's warnings published by friendly media, little mention has been made that most of the global Anglican Communion considers Dr. Ingham a schismatic, and many of the large national churches of Anglicanism, especially in Africa, Asia and South America have severed or suspended their communion with the angry Bishop. In their opinion, Dr. Ingham is the one who has broken with the clear teaching of Anglicanism, as expressed in Lambeth conferences, and in the conciliar deliberations of the leaders of Anglican national churches, the Primates - most notably in the Windsor Report and its process of discernment and discipline, which Dr. Ingham and his Diocese have defied. Dr. Ingham has earned for himself a standing of revisionist leadership within the Anglican Communion, championing not only the gay rights agenda, attending supportively the consecration of the gay Bishop Gene Robinson of New Hampshire, but also a religious pluralism which sees salvation through Christ as but one of the ways to God, and a sexual morality which finds Eastern spirituality more promising for sexual expression than traditional Christian teaching on chastity and marriage.

Dr. Ingham also positions himself as the defender of catholicity against schismatics. He should look around, and look back to church history. Beyond his alignment with the American Episcopal Church, itself, like the Anglican Church of Canada, in radical free-fall, division and decline, the Bishop will find negligible support from Christian history, nor from world-wide Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, or the emergent forces of conservative Protestantism and Pentecostalism, especially in the two-thirds world, for his challenge to traditional and biblical teachings of Christianity. Only the dying establishments of first-world liberal Protestantism applaud his culturally accommodationist embrace of sexual permissiveness. Indeed, viewed in the larger context of church history and contemporary Christian demography, it is Dr. Ingham and his devotees in New Westminster who are not only schismatics, but sectarian as well -- as they make up a new faith while walking apart from historic Christianity. Do they recognize the irony, not to mention the hypocrisy, in their position?

Dr. Ingham once charged the former Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, with doing a 'great disservice to truth.' The Bishop of New Westminster's charges of schism themselves do 'a great disservice to truth' against those Canadian Anglicans who wish to remain faithful to historic Christianity and 'in full communion with the Church of England throughout the world' (as in the Solemn Declaration of 1893). In his preparations for legal harassment of his opponents, will the Bishop now become Anglicanism's leading Bailiff? Will the moribund Anglican Church of Canada now face dreaded realignment and competition, having rejected renewal from within, and admonition from without? Such are the questions posed by the looming schism and self-inflicted wounds following the defaults of Canadian Anglican synods and Bishops.

Bishop Donald Harvey is to be commended for his courageous Christian fidelity to historic Anglicanism in serving under the sanction of global Anglican Primates, protecting faithful Canadian Anglicans against the depredations of revisionist Bishops, and leading Anglicanism in Canada into a new realignment and reformation.

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