

## Marriage in the BCP and the shortcomings of Paul and Augustine

By Derek Olsen

I have four different documents on my hard drive where I take up the material posed by “Marriage in Creation and Covenant” (henceforth, MCC) and attending replies and responses — but none of them have been fully finished on the eve of General Convention. The problem is that there is so much there to work with that has not yet been adequately covered. I do feel that the MCC document deserves an additional response, albeit one without the full supporting evidence, citations, and clarifications that a proper response ought to contain.

So, without further dithering or further ado, here is my brief response to MCC and to the documents related to it. I will make a lot of assertions without demonstration or evidence and without the chains of logic that I believe the argument truly needs. This is not a full response. Rather, consider it a set of bullet points that could be greatly expanded.

### 1. I appreciate what MCC is trying to do.

I see MCC as a thoughtful response that attempts to address the question of same-sex blessings in the Episcopal Church. Thankfully, it begins with theology rather than lapsing into secular politics. As such, I appreciate a theological defense that does not simply fall into an *apologia* for the way things used to be. In particular, I appreciate an appeal to the Church Fathers as a grounded theological voice, a suitable starting place if not an ending point.

### 2. MCC lacks clarity, particularly around the use of Augustine.

All of the responses to MCC in the *Anglican Theological Review* take MCC to task for neither fully nor properly articulating Augustine’s theology of marriage. In an initial online reply, “Augustine, Scripture, and Eschatology” (henceforth ASE),<sup>1</sup> Zachary Guiliano’s rebuttal to the combined criticism of the ATR respondents was to be both heartened and amused:

[Their criticism] is heartening because, as we stated in our paper and as Joslyn-Siemiatkoski noted also, Augustine is the primary font of Western nuptial theology. But, for precisely the same reason, this move is amusing: we did not simply invoke Augustine as paradigmatic (as if we decided it was so while writing our essay), but we noted a whole Western tradition on marriage that takes Augustine as paradigmatic, pointing to a few key publications that offer further details. (ASE 1-2)

He returns to this point again in his conclusion:

In summary, it seems clear to me that all three [respondents] ought to note and reckon with the larger witness of Scripture and tradition, rather than trying to pin us down on a single biblical verse or Church Father. (ASE 10)

The fact that all three respondents — and my initial drafts on the subject — engaged Augustine and his theology of marriage should be no surprise; MCC was calling for a return to Augustinian roots. To express surprise that Augustine would be a primary focus is, therefore, a little disingenuous. Is Augustine paradigmatic or not? If he is, then closer attention to his theology is essential, as it

---

<sup>1</sup> In what follows I refer to his longer online discussion rather than the shorter reply that appears in the ATR. See <http://www.fullyaliveproject.com/marriage-in-creation-and-covenant>.

provides the wellspring from which the tradition flows. If Augustine is off-base at the start, then that matters for how we construe and use the tradition built upon him.

Having read Guiliano's remarks in ASE, it seems to me that MCC could have been clearer on this point. If MCC intends to invoke an Augustinian tradition, then it needs to provide a brief but clear sketch of what Augustine's theology was, followed by the key points where the tradition either modified or rejected aspects of Augustine's paradigm.

### **3. Both Augustine's thought and the Pauline witness need clarity.**

Neither the biblical witness nor Augustine are as tidy as MCC would lead one to believe. In order to engage both of them, we need to start with a basic reality check.

First, neither the Church Fathers nor the medieval theologians took the Scriptures to be the sole source of God's revelation to humanity. Rather, creation is an integral part of God's self-revelation to the entire cosmos. I think this is best summed up by Henri de Lubac:

The idea of two organically related revelations — by way of visible creation and by way of Scripture — an idea whose beginnings were to be found in a passage of the *De principiis* [Origen's seminal work on Scripture interpretation], was one that was often cultivated. Like the world, Scripture is "created" by God; conversely the world is "written" by him, as if it were a book. Scripture and the world alike are symbolized in the Book of Revelation by the book that has writing inside and outside and is sealed with seven seals. For "the whole of this sensible world," say Hugh and Richard of Saint Victor, "is like a book written by the finger of God." All the beings that it is comprised of "are like so many figures, not invented by human ingenuity, but established by the divine will, so as to manifest and signify in some way the hidden attributes of divinity." Creation was bequeathed to man "as a sort of incarnate and visible gospel," says Herbert of Bosham. Saint Gregory had spoken of "the well-considered likeness of creation, which is akin to something that the mind can read." (de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis*, I.78)

Because the natural world was itself a source of revelation and because Scripture itself referred frequently to the natural world, Origen, Augustine, and most other Church Fathers followed the principle they referred to as "plundering the Egyptians." In a nutshell, this principle states that the use of secular learning (which was not truly secular but actively pagan in their day) is permitted to help Christians see what God is up to and to read the Scriptures more intelligently. As such, Augustine and his comrades read in a way that was not only passively informed by their Greco-Roman context but in a way that was actively engaged with it.

#### *A. Ancient and late antique authors considered women to be inferior: socially, biologically, and ontologically.*

To really understand how the Pauline School was writing (I'll simply use this as shorthand for all the New Testament material attributed to Paul) and to understand how Augustine was reading and applying those writings, we have to have a sense of what they were absorbing from their culture. In their "plundering of the Egyptians," they were absorbing a milieu which saw women as inferior kinds of beings. In particular, the biological and medical texts of the day established this perspective. Aristotle understood women primarily as defective men. Hippocrates and Galen

believed women to be differently constructed and “more moist” than men. Interior genitals were inherently less noble than exterior ones. In fact, female flesh was understood to be categorically different from male flesh in that it was spongier and more able to soak up liquids; Hippocrates and Galen's discussions of procreation rely on this belief in various ways. The socially inferior and closeted status of women in Greco-Roman society was connected to and justified by appeals to their biological, mental, and ontological inferiority to men.<sup>2</sup>

*B. The main Pauline discussions of marriage relationships assume the cultural norms*

There are two major Pauline discussions of marriage. The first is fairly self-contained and appears in 1 Corinthians 7. Here, the Pauline position is that marriage is a concession to weakness; the preferred state for Christians is both single and celibate. This position is not unique in the New Testament. References to it appear in the teachings of Jesus (Matt. 22:30 Mark 12:25; Luke 20:35), in the literal text of Revelation (Rev. 14:4), as well as in myriad interpretations from the Early Church. Marriage is a poor second choice for the sake of those who are unable to control themselves.

The second discussion appears in Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Timothy and grounds its conclusions in Genesis 2-3. The analogy around which Ephesians 5 centers is not an equal one. Yes, the husband and the wife should both show care to the other, but Paul does not imagine a relationship of equals. The relationship between Christ and the Church is not one of equals; Christ is unquestionably the superior partner. When Paul constructs the relationship between husband and wife, the husband likewise receives the unquestionably superior position:

The husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. (Eph. 5:23-25)

The Ephesians passage is paralleled more succinctly in Colossians: “Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly” (Col. 3:18-19). It is entirely in line with the specious biology of the age to assert that the salvific potential of women is different to that of men:

I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty. (1 Tim. 2:12-15)

As the material from 1 Timothy alludes, this reading is not just a product of Late Antiquity but also arises from a plain-sense reading of Genesis 3:16: “your [a woman's] desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

MCC avoided getting into biblical texts, although it did place quite a bit of weight on certain aspects of Ephesians 5; the materials from the marriage taskforce seemed to dance around the difficulties in the Pauline texts. But here it is — the Pauline perspective on marriage as a social arrangement

---

<sup>2</sup> I'm grateful to Dr. Robert von Thaden for helpful conversations regarding views of women and sexuality in Late Antiquity here and in following points.

portrays a sacrament of unquestionable domination: the man, the husband, is the superior and is the head; the woman, his wife, is the inferior, the members ruled and directed by the head. The modern notion of complementarity as a means of acknowledging difference yet still positing an equality of ontology is a complete red herring here and does violence to the plain sense of the text. Marriage is not, according to the Pauline view, a relationship between equals.

Indeed, within the culture of Late Antiquity no sexual relationship was! There was always a superior partner and an inferior partner. Either it was a male superior and a female inferior, a superior master and an inferior slave, or an older male superior and a younger male inferior. In all cases the partner that penetrated the other was the superior.

*C. Augustine reads Paul at face value.*

It is no surprise that Augustine takes Paul at face value. That is, he sees celibacy as the preferred status of Christians, and understands marriage to be an unequal relationship. The production of children is the sole mitigating good that can come out of sex even within a marital relationship. Even that admission, though, is grudging. Children are less goods in and of themselves but are that product that salvages marital intercourse. In a perfect world, as far as Augustine is concerned, it ought to be easy to know how many times a proper Christian couple has had sex — all you have to do is count their children.

But what of the command to be fruitful and multiply? As far as Augustine was concerned, it was a commandment of the past that has no present force or necessity. Just as speaking in tongues had a purpose (to grow the Church) and then ceased, so in Augustine's theology the commandment to multiply has likewise lapsed. Augustine's eschatological commitments inform his position.

Several times Augustine talks about the ultimate purpose of humanity — we are needed to fill up the full number of heaven. That is, in his scheme, the tenth rank of angels fell alongside Lucifer and became the demonic order. Humans were created in order to complete the ranks of heaven, to match or exceed the number of angels who fell. But — we've already hit that number! For Augustine, the balance has been met, and no further children are necessary. The notion of the "propagation and continuation of the species" would not make sense to Augustine. Thus, there is no force at all — in his mind — behind the call of Genesis to "be fruitful and multiply" in a literal, material sense.

*D. For Paul and Augustine, Scripture, tradition, and reason speak uniformly.*

As far as Augustine, reading Paul, was concerned, celibacy was the proper state for Christians, the call to be fruitful no longer applied, and children were a mitigating good from the sin of acting sexually upon physical desire. His reading of Scripture, informed by his culture, and bolstered by the best science available to him spoke with a single voice: if they cannot control themselves, women must be married to a man to whom they can be subject and who will control them and their bodies. This was the logic inherited by the Western theological tradition.

**4. Modern science is at odds with antique science**

Augustine builds his theology of marriage on a theology of the body that draws on scriptural resources but is also informed by the best scientific thinking of his day. This confluence of science and theology, therefore, stands at the root of the Augustinian tradition of marriage no matter how much later thinkers have adjusted it. The central problem is that — given the vantage of sixteen

hundred years, the development of the scientific method, the establishment of the natural sciences as major fields of academic inquiry, and advances in our ability to observe, quantify, and engage the natural world on not just microscopic but sub-atomic levels — the science upon which Augustine relied has been utterly superseded. No credible thinker suggests that Aristotle's or Galen's description of biology coheres with reality as modern science is able to observe and quantify it. As Galen falls, so too does a theology informed by his premises.

Modern science does not deny that there are biological differences between men and women. Indeed, we are able to catalogue and quantify these difference far more precisely. What science has clarified, though, is that women are not defective or imperfect men. Furthermore, social assumptions about the place of women in relation to their husbands cannot be justified by appeals to biology. Our improved understanding of the natural world calls into question the ground of the revelation assumed by both the Pauline circle and Augustine.

The revelation of God in the natural world as we now understand it sees all humans as ontologically equal. Furthermore, the study of the natural world has expanded to include how groups of animals — both irrational and rational — form themselves. The social sciences have identified patriarchy and its attendant notions regarding the ontological superiority of men over women as a common but incorrect belief. They have rightly challenged us to embrace our full and equal humanity. Do we dare take this understanding back with us to our reading of the Scriptures?

If so, we are faced with a stark choice. On one hand, we could view male domination over women and the rest of the organisms on the planet as divinely ordained. On the other, we could recognize that the creation of the writings of the New Testament and their interpretation by members of the Early Church took place within a patriarchal society. They considered the shape and customs of their society to be coherent with the divine will, but we can see their patriarchal assumptions for what they are: cultural artifacts, separate from divine revelation.

As I see it, there is no way to read the Pauline position on marriage without recognizing upfront that it is sexist. It assumes and states male domination over the female. This is the clarity that both MCC and the original task force document avoided. And this is a position that we must first acknowledge and then reject. This domination is contrary to the will of God as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ and even contrary to the Pauline witness itself when it is functioning theologically rather than falling back on cultural habits (Gal. 3:27-8). A flat reading of the Pauline position is not tenable for the modern Church.

## **5. A reinterpretation of the Pauline perspective is possible with a sensible hermeneutic.**

What do we do now? If we choose to recognize what Paul is saying, but decide to go in a different direction, how do we do that responsibly?

The best strategy for rereading the Pauline texts on marriage, which both honors them and honors our understanding of divine revelation in the natural world, is to use a technique recommended by Augustine himself:

But since humanity is inclined to estimate sins, not on the basis of the importance of the passions involved in them, but rather on the basis of their own customs, so that they consider a man to be culpable in accordance with the way men are reprimanded and condemned ordinarily in their own place and time, and, at the

same time, consider them to be virtuous and praiseworthy in so far as the customs of those among whom they live would so incline them, it so happens that if Scripture commends something despised by the customs of the listeners, or condemns what those customs do not condemn, they take the Scriptural locution as figurative if they accept it as an authority. But Scripture teaches nothing but charity, nor condemns anything except cupidity, and in this way shapes the minds of men. (Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* 3.10.15)

Augustine lays down a general rule. The Scriptures do (broadly) two things: (1) they teach us what charity/love is and looks like; and (2) they condemn cupidity, which Augustine defines as the motion of the soul away from God and towards the enjoyment of one's self, neighbor, or anything else as an ultimate end. Armed with this knowledge, we can head back to Ephesians 5 and discover things about mutuality and about husbands and wives loving each other equally in ways that would make both Augustine and Paul squirm.

Furthermore, it reopens the first Pauline discussion of marriage. If all Christian marriage is permissible as a concession to non-celibate weakness, then there is no reason why the sexual orientation of the partners matters at all. If the two partners are engaged in a mutual, self-sacrificial relationship that cultivates love and virtue in one another and draws them closer to God as well as one another, the gender of the two partners is irrelevant.

**6. If a classical Augustinian theology of marriage is to be applied, it must be done equally.**

The biggest single problem that I have with the MCC text is the principle of unequal application. It attempts to place a theological burden on a small minority of the Episcopal Church that the larger majority is not willing to bear.

That is, if we expect same-sex couples within the Episcopal Church to live within the theology of marriage espoused by the Augustinian tradition, then different-sex couples must likewise be willing to live under the same theology and its standards. Otherwise, we commend hypocrisy.

If we follow Augustine's understanding of sex, then any form of contraception should be theologically illicit. Augustine does not use the language of the modern Roman Catholic Church. He does not say that any sexual act between married partners should be "open" to the possibility of producing children — no, he insists that the sole permissible reason for marital sex is children: there is no other acceptable excuse. Any other act of marital sex is at least a venial sin, if not, in fact, a mortal sin. Furthermore, he emphasizes the life-long character of marriage. Augustine's model has no theology of divorce. If the authors of MCC believe that same-sex couples should fall under the obligations of the Augustinian tradition of marriage, then so too must different-sex couples.

To impose an Augustinian framework is to impose a framework similar to, but more severe than, the moral teachings of the modern Roman Catholic Church regarding marriage, divorce, and marital sex upon all Episcopalians. If that is the goal of the authors of MCC, then they should simply say so up-front. If not, they need to explain why one subgroup within the church should follow Augustinian rules while the majority does not need to do so.

To put a finer point on it, if a bishop decides that, due to Augustinian principles, he will categorically reject all petitions for the unions of same-sex couples, then he would be acting hypocritically if he did not do the same thing categorically to all petitions for unions of divorced persons.

Is this where we want to go? And would most Episcopalians be willing to go there?

## 7. What does the Prayer Book say?

I appreciate that the authors of MCC are willing to forward a theological rationale for further work around marriage. The Episcopal Church must argue around theological positions rather than import secular culture wars. However, I do not feel that MCC fully addresses the problems at hand.

It is not sufficient to make sweeping generalizations about marriage in the Bible and speak vaguely about a “fitting construal of Scripture’s wholeness” (MCC 10) without getting in the dirt with some of the biblical passages. Do the MCC authors see male domination in marriage as divinely ordained or not? The shape of the resulting argument hinges upon how that question gets answered.

For my part, I would rather go back to what MCC said it was attempting to do: to preserve in the canons “the doctrine and discipline of marriage set forth in The Book of Common Prayer” (MCC 3). Very well — let’s see what the book says:

Dearly beloved: we have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony. The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life by his presence and first miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. It signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, and Holy Scripture commends it to be honored among all people.

The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God for their mutual joy; for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity; and, when it is God’s will, for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord. Therefore marriage is not to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly, but reverently, deliberately, and in accordance with the purposes for which it was instituted by God. (BCP 423)

The first paragraph here establishes an understanding of marriage connected to three biblical texts. Two of the references are clear enough: John 2:1-12 (the wedding at Cana) and Ephesians 5:21-33 (marriage as a *sacramentum*). The first is less so. How we identify this first piece of Scripture has implications for what we read next.

The two creation accounts at the beginning of Genesis make two different statements regarding the connection between men and women. The sixth day of creation (Gen 1:24-31) portrays God populating the dry land spaces. After calling forth “living creatures of every kind” and declaring them as good (Gen 1:24-25), God then creates humanity “in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27). God instructs humanity to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it” (Gen 1:28). This passage is fundamentally about reproduction within the context of the population and subjugation of created space. This is generative. We have the production of offspring. There is no description of the explicit “bond and covenant” that the Prayer Book mentions.

The second statement appears within the Garden of Eden narrative of Genesis 2:4b-3:24. Here, God seeks to create “a helper (*ʿezer*) as [Adam’s] partner (*neged*)” (Gen. 2:18). The creation of the animals in all of their kinds is an unsuccessful first attempt (Gen 2:19-20). Then God creates a woman — Eve — from Adam’s rib (Gen. 2:21-22). At this point, Adam pronounces success on God’s

latest production, and both Adam's poetic moment and an explanatory aside from the narrator make the same etiological point: as the starting materials for woman were originally taken from man, so in marriage, a man regains a state of original completeness when he is organically joined to a wife and when they return to the created state of being "one flesh" (Gen 2:24). Man's completion occurs when the woman is subsumed back under him; she is a missing lesser part, he is the completed whole.

When the Prayer Book states that "[t]he bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation" to which of these passages is it referring? The second actually describes a bond and implies a covenant; the first does not. To suggest that the prayer book authors did not have the Genesis 1 passage in mind would be naïve; I am not suggesting that. However, the emphasis seems to be upon the Genesis 2 text — which is the text to which Jesus referred in his disputes with the religious leaders.<sup>3</sup>

The second paragraph of the prayer book's introduction to marriage describes three "intentions" established by God for marriage. Thus, "The union of husband and wife in heart, body, and mind is intended by God":

- "for their mutual joy;" — this is the unitive aspect of marriage.
- "for the help and comfort given one another in prosperity and adversity;" — this is the assistive aspect of marriage.
- "for the procreation of children and their nurture in the knowledge and love of the Lord." — this is the generative aspect of marriage.

First, the order matters. The unitive aspect is first; the generative is last. Second, the generative aspect is the only aspect introduced with a conditional clause ("when it is God's will"). The implication, then, is that this aspect is a common part of marriage, but — given the conditional nature — not an essential one. A marriage that is both unitive and assistive would appear to contain the central aspects even if it is not biologically generative.

Reading this second paragraph through the biblical references of the first appears to reinforce this notion. The Genesis 2 narrative opens by introducing the assistive aspect (Gen. 2:18: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner") yet ends with the unitive (Gen. 2:24: "they become one flesh.") The Wedding at Cana displays no aspects of marriage (I suppose one could attempt a connection between the joy of the feast and the "joy" mentioned in the prayer book, but I think that's a stretch). The Ephesians text further underscores the unitive aspect with its direct reference to Genesis 2:24. And, while the words of Jesus are not referred to by the Prayer Book's introduction, his use of Genesis 2:24 only continues to emphasize the unitive character of Christian marriage.

Thus, the reference to "creation" in the Prayer Book's opening seems much more clearly and naturally to relate to the unitive and assistive aspects of marriage than the generative aspect.

---

<sup>3</sup> To suggest that the Genesis 2 text matters chiefly in relation to the fulfillment of the Genesis 1 directive — as argued by MCC following Robert Song (MCC 13) — is dismissive of Genesis 2; it attempts to trump the explicit theology of Genesis 2 with an implicit one assumed from Genesis 1.



Continuing through the prayers within the rite, the theme established in the introduction holds true throughout the service. It mentions “true fidelity and steadfast love” (BCP 425), and the couple who has “given themselves to each other by solemn vows” (BCP 428). The prayers begin by making reference to “one flesh,” continuing with four prayers that emphasize the bond and help that the partners should render to each other (BCP 429). Only at the fifth is the biologically generative aspect mentioned, including the conditional “if it is your will.” The line in the margin clarifies that this prayer is optional; none of the others are. Furthermore, the fourth and sixth prayers suggest to me a generative function of marriage not tied to biological production: the common life of the couple brings forth an effective “sign of Christ’s love to this sinful and broken world” and enables them to “reach out in love and concern for others” (*ibid.*). The Blessing of the Marriage near the conclusion of the service again emphasizes the unitive and assistive aspects and does not mention the biologically generative aspect (BCP 430-1).

Speaking broadly, MCC argues that a Christian marriage must have the potential to be biologically generative in order to fit the definition. This argument has certainly been made and continues to be made in the Christian tradition. To suggest that this is the Prayer Book’s definition of marriage, though, is incorrect. The Prayer Book’s rite foregrounds the unitive and assistive aspects of marriage; the generative aspect appears in last place, is conditional rather than essential, and the rite may suggest non-biological forms of generativity. In putting their position forward, the authors of the MCC are not presenting “the doctrine and discipline of marriage set forth in The Book of Common Prayer” (MCC 3) but an argument that is more specific and has different emphases than the rite of the Prayer Book.

## **8. Different directions**

I see two additional avenues that neither MCC nor the marriage task force addressed. The first involves leveraging the material in the Song of Songs. This book focuses on erotic desire — to ignore it in churchly discussions about marriage, love, and sex seems silly. Furthermore, it has been read throughout the centuries as speaking on multiple levels: about the relationship between men and women, between the soul and God, between Christ and the Church. As far as Bede and other interpreters were concerned, it put substance behind the hasty Pauline reference in Ephesians 5. As I read it, Song of Songs is fundamentally about the unitive aspect of marriage. There is no hint of the biologically generative; children as a product of the union between the lovers never comes up. We miss an important scriptural witness on marriage, love, and sexuality when we ignore this text.

Second, there’s a fascinating discussion of marriage in Augustine’s Book 3 of *On Christian Teaching*. From 12.18 to 22.32, he wrestles with how Christians ought to understand the polygamous marriages of the patriarchs. At the end of the day, he teaches that the patriarchs were not doing anything wrong even though polygamy should be strictly forbidden. The way that he argues this points to the virtues active within the relationships. The patriarchs, he assures us, were acting virtuously and with fully virtuous intent. In that case, they acted rightly even if the relationship was not one that would be condoned in Augustine’s own time. Can this same logic be applied in our circumstances today? In what ways does Augustine give us a strong language of virtue to talk about our relationships and what is proper among and between them? If same-sex unions display and inculcate the same virtues as different-sex unions, Augustine’s logic here appears to say that we should regard them equally.

While I respect what the MCC authors were trying to do, at the end of the day I am not convinced. They open several cans of worms without successfully resolving — or in some cases even addressing — the issues they have raised. I do think that Augustine and the other Church Fathers can and should be valued resources for our theological reflection — and yet context does matter. We cannot read them flatly. We cannot simply repeat their words divorced from their logic and context. On the contrary, we need to learn from their logic and be sensitive to ways in which their theology is hampered by their cultural limitations. No matter what General Convention chooses to do, this discussion is far from over. My hope is that it can continue in thoughtful ways that will help the whole Church live its common life more faithfully.