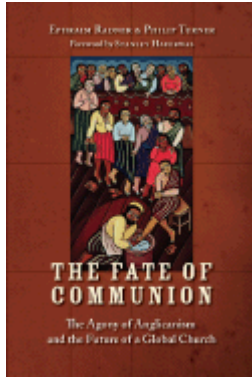


CIRCUITRIDER *Reviews*



The Fate of Communion: The Agony of Anglicanism and The Future of a Global Church

by Ephraim Radner and Philip Turner
(Eerdmans, 2006 ISBN 9780802863270)

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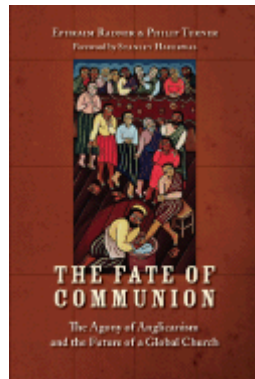
The Anglican Communion is beset by a struggle that threatens to divide it. Some argue that the division is over the question of human sexuality, others insist that the issue is one of biblical authority. If there are two parties, one is the majority of Episcopalians in the United States and Great Britain, while the other includes a minority of Episcopalians in the United States and Great Britain, and a majority of Anglicans in the global south, particularly in Nigeria and Uganda. This is a generalization, and yet it is true in broad measure. The ecclesial rift was exacerbated with the consecration of a divorced, non-celibate gay man as a Bishop by the Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. in 2003. Two other matters are worth mentioning: Anglicanism is growing most rapidly in the global south, where opposition to homosexual practice is strongest, and yet historically the mission to the global south has been funded, economically, by the church of the global north.

These facets of the Anglican crisis are worth naming because churches in other traditions live with similar divisions and have or will encounter many of the same struggles. Ephraim Radner and

Philip Turner are scholar/priests with a long history of involvement in these issues. While they represent a traditionalist perspective, they write with care about the communion, the tradition it maintains, and the people who compose it. *The Fate of Communion* is a collection of essays on a variety of subjects related to the present crisis: the meaning of denominationalism and individualism; questions of unity, truth and holiness; the history of colonialism; the church-state relationship; and the role of conscience in the development of doctrine. Throughout, the authors challenge us to see ourselves as participants in a living tradition, one that requires our patience, humility and mutual submission. The following insight, in reference to the Windsor Report (2004), is indicative of their call to the church:

"It has become painfully clear that those on both the left and the right have chosen to "walk apart". The prophets on the left claim the backing of divine providence that has placed them ahead of the pack. They are content to go it alone and simply wait for others to catch up. The prophets on the right claim to be the champions of orthodoxy--charged with maintaining a faithful church in the midst of "apostasy". They are content to go it alone and await the vindication of God....The burden...is the obedient way---one that serves as a caution to the prophets on both the left and the right and a beacon to those for whom maintenance of communion constitutes a fundamental obligation" (199-200).

As United Methodists approach the General Conference of 2008, the reflections of Radner and Turner are helpful precisely because they arise out of a distinct (while related) tradition. The authors offer no particular prescription to our own denomination, and yet their arguments are pastorally sensitive and theologically grounded. I hope participants in the conversation surrounding sexuality will venture beyond our denominational boundaries into these pages. Indeed, the fate of the (Anglican) communion may very well be the fate of our communion!



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