



Papers from the 2008 Modern Churchpeople's Conference

Saving the Soul of Anglicanism: the nature and future of the Anglican Communion

Unfit For Purpose or, Why a pan-Anglican Covenant at this time is a very bad idea!

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I. The SAD Situation

The St. Andrew's Draft Covenant (hereafter SAD) is a very sorry document, and it comes at a very sorry time.

SAD is the third in a series of official attempts to redefine the Anglican Communion in a way that would satisfy members scandalized by the events of Summer 2003. Recall (it seems ancient history now) how in July 2003, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church USA consented to the ordination of Gene Robinson, a coupled gay man, as bishop of New Hampshire. About the same time, the diocese of New Westminster in the Anglican Church of Canada authorized rites for blessing same-sex partnerships. These events stirred a furore among sex-and-gender conservatives in the Anglican Communion. The Archbishop of Canterbury (hereafter ABC) responded by appointing the Windsor Commission. The (by now infamous) Windsor Report (hereafter TWR) set down the *basic* polity frame.

Loose Federation.

Beginning with the first Lambeth Conference in 1867, the Anglican Communion had evolved as a loose association of legally autonomous national churches, who met together to compare notes, to share resources, and to foster cooperation.



Any sufficiently large group has to get organized if it wants to get anything done. So over the one hundred and forty years of its existence, the Anglican Communion has spawned 'instruments': besides the ABC whose office is of ancient and honourable origin, the Lambeth Conference (roughly once a decade meeting of Anglican Communion bishops), the Anglican Consultative Council (founded in 1968 to include lay and non-episcopal clergy representatives), and the Primates' Meeting (begun in 1978).

Since the first Lambeth (which disappointed the hopes of some participants for a pan-Anglican censure of Bishop Colenso), gate-keeping has not been a focus and has been largely left to the ABC: national churches counted as members if the ABC recognized them as such; episcopal attendance at Lambeth was conditional on the ABC's invitation.

None of these pan-Anglican instruments had or has any legal authority over national member churches. The ABC enjoyed a primacy of honor (*primus inter pares* among the primates) but his legal jurisdiction did not extend outside the province of Canterbury and other distinctive functions in the Church of England. Likewise, resolutions and sense of the meeting decisions were seen to have moral authority but were not legally binding on legally autonomous member churches.

Sex-and-Gender Crises.

These arrangements served the purposes of pan-Anglicanism well enough until second half of the twentieth century sex-and-gender controversies reached the Church.

When TEC was deciding (in 1975/77) to ordain women to the diaconate and priesthood, TEC notified the Communion of its intention. When it was about to take the further step of ordaining women to the episcopate (1987), it consulted once again. There was enough resistance to begin to raise the question, how much disagreement over significant issues of faith and practice the Communion could tolerate and still hold together.

The Virginia Report, commissioned by Lambeth, was mostly irenic in tone and recognized the link between vitality of ministry and subsidiarity (keeping decision making as local and as close to the ground as possible). Nevertheless, it forwarded the philosophy that the communion could not hold together and agree to differ over important issues such as faith, sacraments, the ordering of ministry, ecumenical relations, and ethics! By the time the Virginia Report appeared, several other provinces had ordained women bishops. TEC was not a lone maverick. Women's ordination was beginning to be 'received'. So the general sense of crisis abated.

By contrast, TWR is strident in tone and awash in righteous indignation. The events of summer 2003 had proved the Virginia Report's anxieties justified, and there was a felt urgency to create institutional machinery to prevent such changes from happening again.

TWR's solution was to give extant pan-Anglican instruments of union legislative and juridical authority. Member churches were to commit themselves to submit innovations in doctrine or practice (especially those concerning whom the Church is prepared to ordain and bless) to the instruments of union for approval, and to refrain from giving such changes institutional expression until such approval was secured. In other words, pan-Anglican instruments were to be given a veto power over any changes of 'essentials' by national churches. TWR suggested the mechanism of a pan-Anglican covenant, whose provisions would be given legal force through member churches changing their canons.

Rhetorically, TWR is remarkable for presuming its own legitimacy. It speaks throughout as if TWR polity were already in force and as if TEC and New Westminster had violated covenant commitments. Rhetorically, TWR encouraged the instruments of union to act on this presumption. Rhetorically, TWR was persuasive.

So when TWR went on to suggest ways of disciplining TEC and New Westminster (putting them on probation by asking them to withdraw from participation in pan-Anglican instruments until matters were settled, until TEC and New Westminster had repented and enforced moratoria on ordaining non-celibate homosexuals and blessing homosexual partnerships) and of protecting the faithful in (what came to be known as) non-Windsor-compliant dioceses or provinces, the ABC and the primates at Dromantine took authority and proceeded to do just that. Faced with

primate-sponsored TWR demands, TEC's House of Bishops pointed out that – according to TEC polity – the bishops cannot act alone but only in consort with the House of Deputies to set TEC policy. What the House of Bishops did do was to express regret that other Communion members were offended and to agree not to proceed with any episcopal elections until the 2006 General Convention.

When that body met, however, it did not repent but expressed regret; it did not institute a moratorium but urged restraint on consents to coupled homosexual bishops. TEC also elected its first woman presiding bishop Katherine Jefferts-Schori, who had authorized blessings of homosexual partnerships in her own diocese. Immediately, eight TEC dioceses appealed to the ABC for alternative primatial oversight.

Challenge and Hope?

It was in the midst of this situation that the ABC issued his manifesto 'Challenge and Hope' in which he sponsors TWR's idea of a pan-Anglican covenant as the way forward. To be a full constituent member of the Anglican Communion with rights to participate in its decision-making processes, a 'local' church would have to covenant Windsor-style to give pan-Anglican instruments the veto power over proposed innovations in doctrine or practice. Non-jurors might retain some associate status 'like the Methodists,' but would not be able to participate in pan-Anglican decision-making. Significantly, 'Challenge and Hope' left ambiguous whether 'local' referred to national churches only or whether individual dioceses or congregations might be eligible to covenant on their own.

The Nassau Draft Covenant.

Following through, the ABC appointed a covenant design group headed by a leading sex-and-gender conservative Archbishop Drexel Gomez of Global South. Early indications envisioned a

process, perhaps extending over eight to ten years with extensive participation by member churches in discerning what sort of covenant might be put in place and for what purpose.

In the event of the January 2007 Nassau meeting, however, ideological balance on the committee was forfeited by the absence of three of the more liberal members. Only one or two voices were present who thought a covenant might bind the Communion together with member churches disagreeing on issues that are not *adiaphora*. The majority of Nassau drafters felt that they already 'knew' the purpose of covenanting: to prevent change and to reverse or punish the 2003 North American innovations. They saw the covenant they drafted as a skilful means to that end.

Prepared in haste, the Nassau Draft Covenant (hereafter NDC) is mostly a cut-and-paste of the 1886 Lambeth Quadrilateral, the Lambeth 1888 Resolution 11, the 1662 BCP ordinal, and TWR-proposed polity. If we divide its provisions between Anglican-defining faith commitments and pan-Anglican polity, several points deserve notice.

(1) Where the 1886 Lambeth Quadrilateral contents itself with mentions of 'the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the revealed Word of God' and cites the Nicene Creed as '*the sufficient statement of Christian Faith*'; and Lambeth 1888 Resolution 11 speaks of the Bible as 'containing all things necessary to salvation' and as 'being the rule and ultimate standard of faith' and identifies 'the Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol, and the Nicene Creed, as *a sufficient statement of faith*' (italics mine); NDC does not so much as name the catholic creeds or allude to their sufficiency as doctrinal statements.

NDC shows more concern to make explicit that the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the 1662 BCP and its Ordinal

are to be numbered among 'the historic formularies that have born witness to Christian truth' (sec.2, (5)) – sources that cover topics such as the interpretation of Scripture that are not mentioned in the catholic creeds.

NDC reflects the desire of the majority of its drafters to reassert as normative the plain-sense biblical hermeneutics of the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation.

- (2) In elaborating what it would mean for these authorities to govern churches and lives, NDC explicitly requires covenanters to uphold 'biblically derived moral values and the vision of humanity received by and developed in the communion of member churches' (sec.3, (1)).

Current sex-and-gender controversies prove that there is no single vision of humanity within the communion as it stands. Likewise, there is no communion-wide consensus about what it would mean to use the bible as a guide to sexual mores.

NDC reflects the desire for a communion that is ideologically more homogeneous, which the majority of its drafters hope can be achieved once biblical authority and plain sense hermeneutics are restored to their proper place.

- (3) In comparison with TWR, NDC exalts the role of bishops within the communion twice-over.

To be sure, in the Lambeth Quadrilateral, Anglican Communion members have already affirmed 'the historic episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.' But NDC goes further to assign responsibility for faithful teaching and interpretation of Scripture to bishops and synods (sec.3, (3)).

Likewise, where serious disputes about doctrine and practice are concerned, the Primates Meeting becomes the first court of appeal. The Primates may consult with other instruments, but it belongs to the Primates to articulate 'the common mind' and to offer guidance and direction (sec.6, (5)). Thus, NDC seems to forsake the priesthood of all believers by side-lining the laity and non-episcopal clergy (among whom number many expert bible scholars).

- (4) By contrast with TWR which was focused on crisis management, NDC contains a section on mission, which recognizes that the Church has not only a conservative function with respect to tradition, but a prophetic office in relation to unjust structures of society, that the Church is called to serve the needy and promote responsible stewardship of the environment (sec.4).

- (5) Under the rubric of Unity of Communion, NDC would institutionalize the TWR-recommended crisis-solving process.

- (5a) First, member churches would agree to meet the **Dialogue/Listening Requirement** to 'spend time with openness and patience in matters of theological debate and discernment, to listen and to study with one another in order to comprehend the will of God' (sec.6, (2)).

- (5b) Following on the heels of this is the **Shared Discernment Requirement** that covenanters 'seek with other members, through the Communion's shared councils, a *common mind* about matters of essential concern, consistent with Scriptures, common standards of faith, and the canon law of our churches' (sec.6, (3)).

- (5c) Next comes the TWR-dictated **Mandatory Caution Requirement**

that in new and/or controversial situations covenanters engage in communion-wide consultation and accept the legitimacy of communion-wide evaluations (sec.6, (4)-(5)).

(5d) NDC concludes with a vague **Excommunication Clause**: those who fail to fulfil the substance of the covenant as construed by the instruments of union, shall be deemed to 'have relinquished for themselves the force and meaning of the covenant's purpose, and a process of restoration and renewal will be required to re-establish their covenant relationship with other member churches' (sec.6, (6)).

(6) If TWR's focus on enforcement made legal models seem attractive, NDC draws back from this interpretation. Tucked away in its description of this Windsor process is NDC's admission that the instruments of [comm]union 'have no juridical or executive authority in our Provinces' but rather 'a moral authority that commands our respect' (sec.6, (4)).

NDC realizes that the earlier and hotly debated question of whether Anglican Communion instruments do or should have legal teeth is a red herring. Even if the Anglican Communion is a voluntary organization, private clubs are allowed to set conditions for membership, to recognize and admit members in good standing, and to expel others who violate the rules. What is important is that NDC imposes stricter and more explicit membership conditions and devises procedures for their vigilant enforcement.

Rhetorically, NDC aimed for unassailability, insofar as it wove together provisions of documents already widely received within the Anglican Communion. It also sought to be fit for purpose. By requiring member churches to sign on to biblical authority and biblical morality as interpreted by the

pan-Anglican Primates meeting, and to govern their corporate lives by it, NDC would guarantee that member churches could not remain in good standing and repeat those North American mistakes. TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada would have either to 'knuckle under' (as one prominent evangelical put it to me) or 'walk apart' 'like the Methodists'.

Felt urgency drove the Nassau drafters to telescope the timetable. Provinces were to be asked to assent to 'the general substance of the preliminary draft' as 'a concise expression of what may be regarded as authentic Anglicanism'. Detailed responses to NDC were to be received in time to prepare a revised draft for Lambeth 2008. The ABC made clear in his invitations to Lambeth that acceptance presumed a willingness to engage in the covenant process.

Although NDC was circulated for comment among all of the provinces, only thirteen written responses were received. Frequently queried were the meaning and coherence of the reference to 'biblical morality', the emphasis on the Thirty-nine Articles and the 1662 BCP (the latter of which never had any standing in TEC), the side-lining of the laity and non-episcopal clergy, the coercive nature of the underdeveloped polity and its compromise of provincial autonomy, and the vagueness of the Excommunication Clause.

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York took advice to rediscover and underscore (what Archbishop Longley knew from the beginning) that it would be illegal for the established Church of England to bind itself legally to an international body not accountable to Parliament or the Queen! (Cf. the AB's Response to the NDC, sec.33.)

II SAD, the New Draft Covenant:

Published in February 2008 just in time for the winter meeting of General Synod, SAD is the second draft covenant. As

such, it is a direct descendant of TWR and NDC, but one that takes on board provincial, archiepiscopal, and other comments.

Nuanced Faith Commitments.

So far as faith commitments are concerned, SAD follows NDC in weaving together widely received documents (the Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886, the Lambeth 1888 Resolution 11, and the Preface to the Declaration of Assent, Canon 15).

SAD differs from NDC in consigning the list of 'historic formularies' of the English Church to its footnotes, while strengthening their authority: NDC follows the ordinal in claiming that they 'have borne witness', while SAD adds 'significant' witness (sec. 1.1.2).

SAD replaces NDC's talk of 'biblically derived moral values' with the methodologically vaguer reference to 'a pattern of Christian theological and moral reasoning and discipline that is rooted in and answerable to the teaching of Holy Scripture and the catholic tradition, and that reflects the renewal of humanity and the whole created order through the death and resurrection of Christ, and the holiness that in consequence God gives to, and requires from, his people' (sec. 1.2.2).

SAD leaves primary responsibility for faithful interpretation of the biblical texts in the hands of bishops and synods, but qualifies hierarchy with the stipulation that their teaching should build not only on rigorous scholarship but 'habits and disciplines of Bible study across the Church' (sec.1.2.4).

To NDC's clause regarding inter-communion among member churches, SAD adds an ecumenical commitment to 'strive under God for the fuller realisation of the Communion of all Christians' (sec. 1.2.3).

Polity Elaborations.

Like NDC, SAD would cement TWR-featured structures, the four instruments of (comm)union – the ABC, the Lambeth Conference, the Primates' Meeting, and the Anglican Consultative Council (hereafter ACC) (sec. 3.1.4).

On the one hand, SAD – like NDC – emphasizes 'the central role of bishops as guardians and teachers of the faith, leaders in mission, and as a visible sign of unity, representing the universal Church to the local, and the local to the universal' (sec. 3.1.3). But SAD's language also more than gestures towards the theology of episcopate elaborated in the Anglican-orthodox dialogue report *The Church of the Triune God* and in the Kuala Lumpur Report, as it speaks of the ministry of bishops as exercised 'personally, collegially, and within and for the eucharistic community' (3.1.3). On the other hand, SAD attempts to meet charges that NDC marginalized the laity and non-episcopal clergy by assigning the Anglican Consultative Council (hereafter the ACC) important gate-keeping roles (Appendix 1.4, 2.2, 4.5, 5.4, 6.5, 7.6).

Likewise, SAD takes over the outlines of NDC's crisis-solving process, with its Dialogue/Listening (sec.3.2.3), Shared Discernment (sec. 3.2.4), and Mandatory Caution Requirements (sec. 3.2.5abc).

Responding to the charge that NDC's Excommunication Clause was too vague, SAD's Appendix elaborates four alternative exclusionary procedures and runs to two-thirds of the length of the SAD covenant proper. Moreover, SAD-proposed exclusionary procedures make attempted purges all too easy: one province or covenanting 'local' church complaining against another is all that it would take to get the process rolling (Appendix, sec. 2.1).

The overall result is a lop-sided emphasis on gate-keeping.

III Reading in Context:

Diplomatic documents are an exercise in studied ambiguity. Negotiators seek forms of words to which warring parties can each and all agree by understanding them to mean different things. It follows that the real meaning of the covenant is a function of what major players take it to mean.

Archiepiscopal Ruminations.

TWR, NDC, and SAD all identify the ABC as titular head of the Anglican Communion, among bishops *primus inter pares*, the one with whom member churches are in communion, the one who decides to which bishops Lambeth Conference invitations will be sent. In his Advent 2007 Letter to the Primates, the ABC takes upon himself the role of speaking for the Communion in times of crisis. Clearly relevant, then, is what the ABC takes draft covenant clauses to mean.

Recognizable Family Resemblance

Having abandoned TWR's fiction that the Anglican Communion has always been synodal, the ABC now redescribes it as a fellowship of family members [a] who can recognize one another as family members; [b] who can speak for one another; and [c] who are open to being converted by one another. (One wonders which real, down-to-earth family he has in mind!)

Developing this image in relation to the authority of Scripture, the ABC declares that covenanters would not only have to sign on to the above-quoted generic subscription. They would have to share *a common hermeneutic*. The ABC warns that understanding the bible is not a private process to be taken in isolation by one part of the family. Radical change in the way 'we' read cannot be determined by one group of the tradition alone. Covenanting 'local' churches would not be free to give novel readings institutional expression (the way TEC and

New Westminster did) without first securing the consent of the rest of the family.

Second, recognizable pan-Anglican family members would have to share, *not only a common acknowledgement of an authentic ministry of Word and Sacrament but a ministry that can be recognized as performing the same tasks of teaching, pastoral care and admonition as they do*. Not only must all bishops teach, pastor, and admonish, these activities must have *recognizably the same content and ends*. What ministers in one local church say and do must not scandalise members of other provinces. The ABC warns, such scandal has been used to justify incursions by other provinces in North America! His expressed regret – that such interventions have been made without any 'clear and universal principle by which it may be decided that a local church's ministry is completely defective' – serves only to emphasise the harshness of the generalising judgment: the ministry of unrecognizable churches is not merely lacking, but null and void – completely defective!

For its part, TEC has complained that the instruments of [comm]union have repeatedly demanded that the Presiding Bishop and the House of Bishops act and acquiesce in foreign actions contrary to TEC's polity. Moreover, the instruments of [comm]union have done so without any legal authority whatever.

In his Advent Letter, the ABC counters with the insinuated query: if TEC's bishops and primate do not have the same powers and functions as those in other provinces, does TEC's ministry really bear the Anglican family resemblance? Despite the fact that these differences have been public and published for over two centuries, current crises now make the present ABC wonder whether TEC's constitutions and canons have exceeded the Lambeth

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Quadrilateral's permitted limits of 'local adaptation'.

Woolly Ecclesiology

Over the bumpy ride of the last five years, the ABC has tipped his ecclesiological hand in various documents.

In 'Challenge and Hope' 2006, he defends (what have become SAD's) Shared Discernment and Mandatory Caution Requirements with a picture of the whole Church as an organic body, whose parts have no existence or life when separated from the whole. 'Local' (provincial, diocesan, congregational) churches that fancy themselves prophetic can be wrong, but the whole Church in the end cannot. Yet, at other times, the ABC's affinity for things orthodox leads him to affirm that the bishop with his [*sic*] diocese is the basic unit of the Church, and therefore to question whether it is provinces or dioceses that should properly be parties to any pan-Anglican covenant (cf. the ABC's Advent 14/12/07 letter, and the AB's Response to NDC).

What has got washed out of ecclesiological consideration is the national or provincial level of organization, legal autonomy to the contrary notwithstanding. It is as if individual cells governed by their nuclei can be the Church, and the whole Body can be the Church, but circulatory and respiratory systems play no vital role.

This is a radical change from the *status quo ante*. From the beginning, it was not dioceses or congregations but national churches that counted as the constituent members of the Anglican Communion, not least that *prima intra pares*, the Church of England!

The ABC's remarks have already given 'aid and comfort' to dioceses in the process of trying to secede from TEC and organize an independent North American Anglican province.

More recently, in setting the agenda for Lambeth 2008, the ABC has evidenced wider worries that in the eyes of our ecumenical dialogue partners (the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox) the Anglican conception of episcopacy appears 'disordered' and in need of communion-wide redefinition. The Anglican-Orthodox dialogue and the Kuala Lumpur Report reflect an 'Orthodox' ecclesiology echoed by SAD language, according to which the bishop and his [*sic*] diocese are the basic unit but the bishop exercises his [*sic*] office collegially, so that the bishop becomes the connecting link between the diocese and other parts of the Church. Once again, this theory exalts the office of bishop and gives no theological significance to the national or provincial levels of church organization.

GAFCON'S Exposé

'Challenge and Hope' launched the covenant process as a way of appeasing scandalized sex-and-gender conservatives within the Anglican Communion. GAFCON brings out of the closet what it would take to satisfy them and 'keep peace' within the family.

Principled Faith Commitments:

Like SAD 2.1.1, which skips from the apostles and patristic period, to Celtic Christianity, to the Protestant Reformation, they reach back to the sixteenth century norms to endorse the **Plain Sense Infallibility Principle:** that Scripture is God's Word written, and therefore its statements on their plain-sense renderings are infallibly true.

They find their hermeneutic enshrined in the Thirty-nine Articles (especially, Articles VII and XX) which forbid the interpretation of one passage of Scripture in such a way as to contradict another. Scripture is self-interpreting, and plain-sense harmonization is the interpretive key. Any other way of reading Scripture for light on doctrine and practice will be regarded, not so

much as a *novelty* (after all, allegorical interpretation to avoid the scandalous plain sense of many Bible passages is part of an ancient and honourable tradition), but as an *anomaly* that must be submitted to international scrutiny.

Moreover, we can know in advance that contradictions of plain sense injunctions (e.g., of Leviticus 18:22 against male homosexual intercourse) will never be 'received' because Holy Scripture on its infallible plain sense reading is for them the 'rule and ultimate standard of faith'.ⁱ

By Article XX, 'it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything contrary to God's Word written' (the **Scriptural Submission Principle**). By Article VI, tradition has authority only if it can be proved from Scripture.ⁱⁱ Plain Sense Infallibility shows liberal readings to be wrong. Scriptural Submission would deny them institutional expression anywhere in the Anglican Communion.ⁱⁱⁱ

GAFCON makes clear that blessing and ordaining partnered homosexuals is only the presenting issue, the occasion that provokes them to bring their norms for doctrine and practice to the fore.

By their nature, the Plain Sense Infallibility and Scriptural Submission Principles will have many corollaries and concrete applications. Already, some GAFCON participants are making an issue of another, which we may call the **No Other Name Principle** (after Acts 4:12 and John 14:6 'no one comes to the Father but by me') that salvation comes exclusively through Jesus Christ. Unnuanced, the No Other Name Principle has proved a powerful motivator for missionary efforts to convert people away from other religions.

Some GAFCON members are already pointing the finger, accusing TEC's Presiding Bishop Jefferts-Schori of being a false teacher for allegedly rejecting it. Presumably, in the minds of many GAFCONers, Rahner's notion of anonymous Christians would represent a

different Gospel and not an admissible interpretation.^{iv}

Given these principles, GAFCONers will not be able to recognize liberal readings and readers as family members. Several African provinces have already excommunicated TEC and New Westminster. They are joined by Sydney and the Bishop of Rochester in boycotting Lambeth because they do not 'feel at home' with bishops who laid hands on +Gene Robinson. (Cf. GAFCON Statement on the Global Anglican Future, points (8) and (13).) How long will it be before this 'depart from me, I never knew you!' verdict gets applied to Scotland, Ireland, Wales, New Zealand, other parts of Australia, parts of the Church of England as well?

Polity Reservations. Strict Ideological Unity?

Although GAFCON gathered a spectrum of evangelical opinion that is not of one mind on every issue, some generalizations are possible.

Roughly speaking, if the ABC is enamoured of the organic-body-politics of the Church universal, GAFCON participants imagine themselves more as *the righteous remnant*. Many operate with a clear distinction between the invisible Church (chosen and organized by God) and visible human ecclesial institutions. Where the latter are concerned, their model is *federalist*: that is, individuals are Christians and congregations are the Church prior to and independently of regional, national, and/or international affiliations with others.

What makes individuals Christians and congregations Churches is their commitment to Jesus as Lord and to living under the reign of God as mediated by Holy Scriptures.

Their normative gathering principle is not *geographical* (the province of Canterbury or the diocese of Los Angeles) or *political* (the Church of England or the Church of

Sweden), but *ideological*: they think it would be wrong to maintain communion with individuals or groups of Christians with whom they disagree about essentials (I have labelled this the **Institutional Purity Principle**), where core commitments include the Plain Sense Infallibility and Scriptural Subsistence Principles and their evident corollaries. (GAFCON Statement on the Global Anglican Future (13))

NDC and SAD both reflect these ecclesial concerns in not allowing the Apostles' and Nicene creeds to stand as 'the sufficient statements' of faith, but emphasize the Thirty-nine Articles and the ultimate authority of the Bible.

Yet, any attempt at communion-wide enforcement of Plain Sense Infallibility and Scriptural Subsistence Principles would surely result – given SAD's easy-access exclusionary procedures – in the dis-fellowshipping by GAFCON of the liberal provinces (Scotland, Ireland, Wales, New Zealand, Australia apart from Sydney, not to mention the Anglican Church of Canada and TEC). This has already begun to happen.

However much TWR-, NDC-, and SAD-polity was designed with sex-and-gender conservatives in mind, many evangelicals would have principled objections to several of its features.

Faithless Dialogue?

Many GAFCON participants would find themselves unable to sign up to SAD polity because of its Dialogue/Listening Requirement (sec.3.2.3-3.2.4).

Official appeals for dialogue/listening were sounded by Lambeth 1.10 and TWR, and yet honoured more in the breach than in the observance. For strict evangelicals this was meet and right, because they adhere not only to the Plain Sense Infallibility and Scriptural Subsistence Principles, but also to the **Dialogical Doubt Principle**, which says that to engage in dialogue about something or to listen to people with

whom one disagrees involves opening oneself to the possibility that the opponents' position might be true.

Many GAFCONers conclude that to engage in a listening process with LGBT activists or liberals generally, would be unfaithful, because God's Word written declares homosexual activity to be an abomination (Lev 18:22), and Christians should not even entertain the possibility that God's Word written is false. Such GAFCONers regard liberal readiness to listen and dialogue as proof positive that liberals are incapable of conscientious commitments!

Covenanting with False Teachers?

For some of the most conservative evangelicals (e.g., those represented by SPREAD = the Society for the Propagation of Reformed Evangelical Anglican Doctrine), Plain Sense Infallibility and Scriptural Subsistence Principles should warn GAFCONers off covenanting in the present circumstances. For – like TWR and NDC before it – SAD's section on the instruments of (comm)union promote the ABC as chief pastor and teacher. Likewise, NDC and SAD emphasize the authority of bishops to decide on the interpretation of Scripture.

But SPREAD's article 'Counterfeit Communion and the Truth that Sets Free' cites 2 John 7-11 as warning Christians to dissociate themselves from false teachers. False teachers include those who (wittingly) contradict God's Word written. SPREAD details occasions on which ++Rowan Williams has taught that homosexual activity can be a form of holy living, and others on which ++Carey was guilty of pragmatic equivocation which restrains its zeal for truth (Carey himself believes that homosexual activity is a sin) in the interests of unity. In their minds, such evidence combines with the Plain Sense Infallibility and Scriptural Subsistence Principles to yield the conclusion that faithful Anglicans ought to separate themselves from the past and

present ABC and so from the Anglican Communion as presently constituted.^v

IV Actions Speak Louder than Words

Not only has TWR-polity been set down on paper three times. Thanks to TWR's tone of presumptive legitimacy, it has already had 'a trial run'!

The Windsor process against TEC and New Westminster gave TWR-polity a primate-dominant interpretation. If TWR spoke of submitting novelties to the instruments of (comm)union, it was the primates who acted at Dromantine to request that TEC and New Westminster explain themselves at Nottingham and to put TEC and New Westminster on probation.

It was the primates who acted at Tanzania to override the report of the Joint Standing Committee and to reject 2006 General Convention's responses to TWR. It was the primates who issued ultimata that TEC impose moratoria on ordinations and blessings of coupled homosexuals by 30 September 2007. It was the primates who declared foreign incursions (by one province into the turf of another) not to be on a moral par with North American breeches of faith. It was the primates who moved to set up a primatial council to handle appeals from TEC's conscientious objectors.

Even after the Joint Standing Committee had given TEC a passing grade for its New Orleans responses, it was the primates' estimates that the ABC still sought. Thus interpreted in the enacting, TWR-polity seemed to mean veto power for foreign primates in no way accountable to the province in question.

Even as a theoretical sketch, TWR-polity raised liberal eye-brows. Pessimistic liberals believe what experience teaches: that human beings are neither smart enough nor good enough to be entrusted with very much power. Actions speak louder than words.

For liberals, the ABC's and the Primates' behaviour towards TEC demonstrated that their fears were justified. Note once again: legal authority is a red herring. All of these actions have been taken, not only without legal authority, but independently of anyone covenanting to anything. To put it bluntly, the behaviour of the pan-Anglican instruments towards TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada has been abusive.

For liberals, recent past experience shows signing on to NDC or SAD to be a sure recipe for abuse of power!

For sex-and-gender conservatives, the North American saga shows the bankruptcy of TWR-polity for settling intra-union disagreements over essentials. From their point of view, the process did not deliver the desired result: the repentance or excommunication of TEC and New Westminster.

Sex-and-gender conservative primates number among the just under half who rejected TEC's New Orleans responses as unsatisfactory. From their point of view, the ABC fudged the process, just when it should have proceeded towards excommunication.

In the face of division among the primates, the ABC did not call a Primates Meeting. Neither did he proceed towards excommunication on his own authority. Instead, the ABC changed the format of Lambeth from that of a resolution-passing council into a retreat with small group Bible studies and discussions, and proceeded to invite all of the TEC bishops except for Gene Robinson himself.

Recent past experience proves to sex-and-gender conservatives that TWR-polity – which leaves with the ABC power to determine Anglican Communion membership, power to call Primates' meetings or not, and power to determine the composition of the Lambeth

Conference – is unfit for purpose. TWR-polity simply does not work!

V. Colonial Relics in a Post-Colonial World:

Pan-Anglican Colonialism, Alive and III!

Echoing Archbishop Akinola's 2006 remarks in *The Road to Lambeth*, several GAFCON speakers cut to the heart of the matter with their charge that the pan-Anglican polity featured in TWR and its Windsor-process successors NDC and SAD is a colonial relic.

It casts the ABC as 'the great white father' who decides which of his colonial offspring will be invited to the Lambeth garden party. Counting the ABC *primus inter pares* and *pater familias*, powerfully asserts that the Anglican Communion is still centred on England the way the British Empire was. But this vision is out of touch with current global realities, in which former colonies in Asia and Africa have become independent and their Anglican churches indigenous. Even if the figures are exaggerated, demographics suggest that Asia and Africa, not England, are where the action is. If the Anglican Communion is going to stay together, a much more radical remodel is needed than TWR-, NDC-, or SAD-polity provides.

The ineptness of the existing organization has played itself out in the current controversy in a soap opera of dysfunctional family dynamics and manipulative games. As the battles have dragged on, the ABC has proved ever more willing to step into TWR roles to speak on behalf of the communion and to lay down 'house rules' for family recognizability (cf. 2007 Advent Letter to the Primates).

Taking on the colonial responsibility for keeping the family together heightens desperation to keep Asian and African churches in. (British responsibility for those North American colonies ended some time ago!) CAPA and GAFCON both

equivocate between taking decisive action to organize something else where they can 'do their own thing' and pressuring Canterbury for more concessions by threatening to leave if they don't get their own way. Witness Archbishop Akinola's own statements at GAFCON: both that there is 'no longer any hope for a unified Anglican Communion' and that 'GAFCON won't break away!' There is no health in this!

Perhaps if the Anglican Communion de-centred off England and met as equal partners, all participants would find it easier to behave like adults!

GAFCON's 'Way Forward'?

GAFCON's concluding statement power-points its understanding of the 'essentials' of (what its literature calls) 'the Anglican faith', to which members of its society of 'confessing Anglicans' will have to subscribe.

Eschewing diplomatic ambiguity, GAFCON goes for the clear and explicit. As the ABC has noted,^{vi} many of its items are already mentioned in NDC and SAD, but with distinctive emphases: the authority of (2) the Bible as containing 'all things necessary for salvation' and as 'taught and obeyed in its plain and canonical sense'; (3) four ecumenical councils and three historic creeds; (4) the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion; (6) the 1662 BCP 'translated and locally adapted' as the standard of worship and prayer; and (7) three clerical orders (bishops, priests, and deacons); (9) the Church's mission to make disciples of all nations, (10) to be good stewards of creation, and to help the poor and needy.

The list goes beyond NDC and SAD, when it breaks out as separate points two corollary inferences from Plain Sense Infallibility and Scriptural Subsistence: it requires GAFCON members not only to sign on to the (5) No Other Name Principle, but also (8) to 'acknowledge' 'the *unchangeable* standard of Christian

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marriage between one man and one woman as the proper place for sexual intimacy and the basis of the family' and 'abstinence for those who are not married' (emphasis mine).

GAFCON's concluding statement calls upon its Council of Primates to expand the fellowship of confessing Anglicans and to 'put in place structures to lead and support the church'.

GAFCON acknowledges the *prima facie* 'desirability of territorial jurisdiction' 'except in those areas where churches and leaders are denying the orthodox faith or preventing its spread, and in a few areas for which overlapping jurisdictions are beneficial for historical or cultural reasons'. In particular, GAFCON concludes that 'the time is now ripe for the formation of a province in North America for the federation currently known as Common Cause Partnership'.

The ABC's response to GAFCON's concluding statement is fraught with ironies.^{vii} He refers to their 'Primates Council' as 'a self-selected group' and asks 'by what authority' Primates are deemed acceptable or unacceptable for membership? We could also echo the Gospels (Mk 11:28/Mt 21:23/Lk 20:2) and ask, by what authority did the ABC and the Primates intervene in North America?

In any event, GAFCON is clear that their criteria are *ideological*. They recognize as members of the fellowship of confessing Anglicans, only those who sign on to points (2)-(10) of their manifesto. Likewise, point (11) recognizes 'the orders and jurisdiction of those Anglicans who uphold orthodox faith and practice [as summarized in points (2)-(10)], while point (13) explicitly rejects 'the authority of those church leaders who have denied the orthodox faith in word or deed'.

When the ABC begs GAFCON to consider the unworkability of intercontinental

jurisdictions - he asks, 'how is a bishop or primate in another continent able to discriminate effectively between a genuine crisis of pastoral relationship and theological integrity, and a situation where there are underlying non-theological motivations at work?' - one wonders whether he has learned a lesson from international attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of TEC and the Anglican Church of Canada (e.g., with the ABC-appointed Panel of Reference to hear complaints from sex-and-gender conservative congregations).

Belatedly, the ABC warns that 'emerging from the legacy of colonialism must mean a new co-operation of equals, not a simple reversal of power' - I would add, such as was played out at the Tanzania Primates Meeting.

In any event, the ABC's plea for patience is not apt to be heeded.

GAFCON's manifesto, not only buries SAD. By 'upping the ante' for any covenant 'confessing Anglicans' would sign, GAFCON's concluding statement is a recipe for 'walking apart'. The reason is that GAFCON is insisting on conservative polity and conservative content.

Conservatives can live with liberal polity so long as they have the majorities needed to dictate institutional policy. The current crisis arose, because in TEC and New Westminster, sex-and-gender conservatives have lost such majorities.

Liberals can live with conservative content, if liberal polity holds out hope of working from within to change institutional policy. Liberals have lived with conservative sex-and-gender policies for centuries, but now - in TEC and New Westminster - their hour seems to have come.

The trouble is conservatives cannot live with liberal polity and liberal content. Neither can liberals live with conservative polity and conservative content.

GAFCON's clear lines in the sand already
count liberals out!

Notes

- i Bishop Robert Duncan, in 'Anglicanism Come of Age: A Post-Colonial and Global Communion for the Twenty-first Century', rejects the three-legged stool because it allows tradition and reason to share primacy with Scripture. Cf. GAFCON Statement on the Global Anglican Future, points (2) and (4).
- ii *The Way, the Truth, and the Life*, pp.23, 31-32, 62, 69-71.
- iii Cf. Stephen Noll, *The Global Anglican Communion and Anglican Orthodoxy*, on the GAFCON website, and 'Counterfeit Communion and the Truth that Sets Free' on the SPREAD website.
- iv WTL, pp.12, 53; cf. GAFCON Statement on the Global Anglican Future, point (5) & (13).
- v SPREAD, 'An Unsafe Place': How the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams Has Made the Anglican Communion Unsafe for the Anglican Faith'; Petition to the Third Global Anglican South to South Leadership Team and Primates Advisory Group; cf. GAFCON Statement on the Global Anglican Future, points (11) and (13).
- vi ACNS4417: Archbishop of Canterbury responds to GAFCON statement.
- vii ACNS4417 Archbishop of Canterbury responds to GAFCON statement.