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Anglicanism's Crisis and Its Joyous Counter-Rebellion

Many people are vaguely aware of a crisis within the Anglican Communion, the world's third-largest Christian denomination, with 85 million adherents. Within the Anglosphere, where Anglicanism is struggling to stem the loss of its traditional status, Anglicans are under immense pressure to syncretise two irreconcilable things: secular values and biblical faith. Beyond the Anglosphere, where Anglicanism is thriving, most Anglicans still measure their values against canonical scripture. While this crisis, about whether the Church follows society or the Lord, has existed throughout Christian history, it has entered a dangerous new phase. Anglicanism is under existential threat on two fronts, from the Church's enemies, and from within.

Anglicanism claims to embody the Reformation. It also claims to embody the four marks of the Church: One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic. To some it's Protestant. To others it's Reformed Catholic. Its claim to teaching authority exists somewhere between the Roman Catholic practice of magisterium, where authority is vested in the historical episcopate, and the Orthodox practice of conciliarism, where authority is vested in church councils.

Ultimately, however, all authority comes from Christ—who he is, what he does, what he asks—through the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. For this reason, every Christian needs a sense of how the Christ event became the Good News proclaimed by the Apostles (the Kerygma), how the Kerygma evolved into the New Testament, and how the New Testament evolved into the Creeds of the Church: Nicene, Apostles, Athanasian. This process, which is dialogical and self-interpreting, and is characterised by clarity and authority, defends orthodoxy (correct belief) against heterodoxy (what's contrary to the Creeds).

Progressive Anglicans no longer promote the evangelical counsels or defend the Creeds. Instead, they bear false witness against those who preach the Christian fundamentals: the infallibility of

Scripture, the truth of Christ's miracles, the Genesis accounts of creation, the virgin birth of Jesus, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, the bodily resurrection, and the physical return of Christ as judge. Anglicans who defend these fundamentals, who profess what Anglicanism has always professed, are now referred to as fundamentalists, a term which has become synonymous with stupidity and bigotry.

The crisis is being played out in a range of tensions between the Global North, once called the developed or First World, and the Global South, once called the developing or Third World. The Global North includes those nations currently experiencing the insidious culture wars waged by Cultural Marxists and the debilitating identity politics promoted by Third-Wave Feminists. The Global South includes those nations emerging from colonialism who still find themselves at the end of a paradox. Once they were the white man's colonial burden. Now they are the post-white person's post-colonial burden, especially when they claim an equal right to interpret the Gospel of Christ, defend the Church's creeds, and exercise apostolic authority.

The paradox is this. Imperialism is still imperialism, even when it comes in a post-colonial disguise. The tropes of enlightened Westerner and unenlightened "other" are still with us. The West's bias manifests itself in many ways, including the current diktats of multiculturalism, diversity and inclusion.

Conservative Anglicans tend to see themselves as made in God's image, and believe they should conform to his will, as presented in canonical scripture. Progressive Anglicans tend to get God's will mixed up with their will, which is as far from canonical scripture as one can get.

Homosexuality and same-sex marriage

Homosexuality, one of many issues distinguishing progressives from conservatives, has divided the Church. How much can the Church accommodate homosexuality while remaining faithful to the

Covenant of Sinai and the Gospel of Christ? How should the Church pastor to Tom, Dick and Harry?

Tom, a lifelong churchgoer, is a committed member of his local parish; an acolyte, sacristan, warden and nominator. His ideal religious observance is Anglo-Catholic liturgy, well ordered and deeply felt. For him, being gay is a don't-ask-don't-tell issue, but he loves to disclose half-truths about his gay life. His gin-and-lace experience of church tells him gay sex is a necessity, indeed a right. He's had lots of it over the years, so he depends on the medical profession to keep him alive.

Dick, now deceased, was a senior public servant. For many years, he and his partner Dorian were prominent members of their gay-friendly parish. While they marketed themselves as a "virtually normal" Christian couple the reality was quite different. Lionel, a parish acolyte, was once invited to their home for a "dinner party". When he arrived, they opened the door, naked and erect. I must have misunderstood, Lionel said, before excusing himself.

Harry, another gay public servant, asked if he could be baptised. I said we could certainly begin that process. I started giving him leaflets from *Anglican*, the sturdy catechetical resource by Graeme Brady. Each time I gave him a new leaflet, I asked whether he had any questions or comments. No, he said. After he had read the last leaflet I repeated the question a final time: "Do you have any questions or comments?" As he said no, I said the next step was going to a parish of his choice and worshipping there for a while. His reaction was hostile: "Where in the Bible does it say I must go to church?" I explained that baptism is a rite of initiation into a community, the Body of Christ, and participating in the community is part of the catechumenal process. As his hostility continued I dropped the subject and never mentioned it again.

The Church has never treated Tom, Dick or Harry badly or been pastorally insensitive towards them. Each is acting out his version of the sexual revolution, in ways hostile to the evangelical counsels. Having sniffed the winds of change, each is playing an opportunistic waiting game, of pitting progressive society against the Church, assuming their side will win eventually. This is dishonest, since they refuse to acknowledge their role in the culture wars, the game they are playing. "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow" (Galatians 6:7).

Brad and Mary are an ordained Anglican couple in the United Kingdom. Ted and Jean are secular health professionals in the United States. Both couples have told me they believe two men who love each other, who are in a committed relationship, should be allowed to marry. My reply to all virtue-

signalling straight couples is the same.

After asking whether they really believe there's no difference between their marriage and same-sex relationships, I question their knowledge of the gay lifestyle. I ask whether they would be happy for their marriage to become open and non-monomagamous. The concept of monogamy is difficult, for gay men particularly, I point out. Gay couples who say they are monogamous are usually lying, in my experience. For gay men, sex is a recreational sport, like a round of golf, with drinks at the nineteenth hole. How much of this is compatible with a Christian view of marriage?

Such couples always ignore my questions. They usually tell me their gay friends must be different from mine. So, the great deception, the idealisation of homosexuality and the disguising of homosexual reality, has been fully realised.

When did the fraud begin? While it's been building momentum for several decades, a turning point occurred on November 4, 2001, during Ellen DeGeneres's opening monologue at the Emmy Awards. "What would bug the Taliban more," she said to an enraptured audience, "than a gay woman wearing a suit surrounded by Jews?" With this clever one-liner, a comment on the recent 9/11 attack, Ellen was doing many things. She was elevating homosexuality to a public virtue. She made it seem heroic. She was reinforcing stereotypes about Jewish power and influence. The audience loved it. It was a perfect example of Hollywood packaging progressive ideology for global consumption.

Ellen was suggesting our enemies are heterosexual terrorists, and homosexuals aren't terrorists, so we're fighting a war on terror to protect homosexuals as symbols of what the West is (or should be). Ellen's carefully stage-managed way of prosecuting her worldview has been extraordinarily successful.

The Church is *semper reformanda*—always being reformed; always needing further reform—but constant reformation can only occur within an agreed framework of fundamentals. Bowing to the zeitgeist, when it compromises the faith and leads to grave error, is precisely what the Church can't and mustn't do. True, the Church is now morally compromised, sinful and hypocritical, but gay people are part of the problem. If they are to become part of the solution, certain prerequisites need to be completed.

Christians believe God's love is most fully represented in his Son, on the Cross, atoning for our sins and reconciling us with the Father. What is startling about this canonical truth is the way God's love, the outstretched arms of Jesus on the Cross embracing all creation, is now used to justify anything sinful

humanity wants to justify. But if God's love is all-embracing, it's also immensely difficult, and much more challenging than the vacuous mantra "Love is Love" chanted to such powerful effect during the same-sex-marriage survey.

Christians proclaim Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again. The invitation in *A Prayer Book for Australia* to confession for Pentecost puts it thus: "The Spirit of truth comes to convict of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." In the circles I move among, the benchmark of God's judgment is usually taken to be Christ's summary of the Torah in Matthew and Mark. In other words, when Jesus comes again in glory, he'll ask us whether we've loved God above all else and loved our neighbours as ourselves. At that time, each of us will be held to account. What does this look like, if God is not mocked?

In Tom's case, divine obedience and love of others seems to involve going to church regularly, reciting the creeds, showing pastoral concern, and not checking his dating apps during services. In Dick's case, it seemed to involve appearing virtuous in public and hoping his sexual predations would never be discovered. Harry's case is harder to judge, as he's an outsider, refusing to begin a journey unless it's on his terms. These men pretend God is either unaware of their personal behaviour or doesn't care about it.

The Church's message on human sexuality has become too compromised to offer Tom, Dick and Harry a way to grow in God's love. Instead of affirming biblical morality, or promoting positive views of chastity, progressive Anglicans bend over backwards to refashion the Church in the image and likeness of the society it's called to stand apart from. This is against Paul's warning: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).

Gender dysphoria

Progressive Anglicans no longer affirm what Paul means by "transformed". Instead, they affirm the politically correct and meaningless LGBTQ+ formula, and the politically expedient but fallacious idea of an LGBTQ+ "community", while playing the futile game of appeasing an increasingly secular society.

For example, in July 2017, the English General Synod passed a motion asking the bishops for a lit-

urgy to re-baptise transgender people in their new identities. In January 2018, the House of Bishops released the document "Welcoming Transgender People", which stopped short of authorising a liturgy of re-baptism but included the statement: "The House of Bishops welcomes and encourages the unconditional affirmation of trans people, equal with all people, within the Church, the body of Christ."

If this is an attempt at a pastoral response, it's neither kind nor truthful. In Christian anthropology, trans people cannot be "equal with all people" if that means the same as biological males and females. The real conundrum here, which is never discussed honestly or rationally, is why the Church is even entering this contested space. Gender dysphoria has its origin in questionable ideologically-driven science,

fraudulent and unethical medicine, mischievous leftist sociology, muddled psychology and identity politics. There's no integrated vision of the person here, no theology of the body, just Cultural Marxism and Third-Wave Feminism.

In affirming a sinister social trend, rather than defending biblical truth, the English House of Bishops leaves God out of its pronouncements. It forgets that baptism is indelible and once only.

Re-baptism, when moving between

denominations, or allaying the fears of Roman Catholic grandmothers of Protestant grandchildren, has never been necessary and is theologically incorrect. Re-baptism, for the sake of affirming a trans person's identity, denies the Holy Spirit acting in the original baptism, and indeed, in the creation of humans generally (Genesis 2:7). This is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:28–30).

The English House of Bishops is in grave error; indeed, a state of heresy. The Bible is clear. God created male and female, in his image, as part of his divine plan. Even in secular evolutionary terms, maleness and femaleness predate modern humans by millions of years. Maleness and femaleness aren't sociological constructs, deconstructable by progressive theorists. They are aspects of hard-wired dominance hierarchies older than society itself. Humans are born with a biological sex, not a socially-constructed gender.

Gender dysphoria is a recent phenomenon, invented by humans, not by God. It's an example of humanity's will, not God's will, and, as it's not driven by natural selection, it stands apart from evolutionary theory. It's a new form of Promethean hubris, Icarus flying too close to the sun, Frankenstein's monster. It's humanity attempting to remake itself

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in its image without God (and without Nature). England's House of Bishops should have tried to be more conciliar.

The failure of conciliarism

The practice of magisterium works for Roman Catholicism because it became the church of the Roman empire and its polity allowed it to maintain its magisterium status after the empire collapsed. Anglicanism lost its magisterium status during the Reformation when it ceased to be Roman Catholic and became a national church. Theoretically, Anglicanism could have regained its magisterium status during the British Empire period. Practically, it never developed the polity which allowed that to happen, because of inherent tensions within the imperial project.

The situation was different in the United States. One of the paradoxes of the US is how, under the banner of freedom, good and evil causes emerge simultaneously. In the current century, the US media creates the news rather than reports it, which is why everything about American life is presented to us as an apocalyptic battle, as the daily or hourly apocalypses make money for those trying to sell them.

The first bishop of The Episcopal Church (TEC), Samuel Seabury (who served from 1789 to 1792), realised the potential for Enlightenment philosophy to ultimately separate TEC from the larger body of Anglicanism, which is finally happening. As Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie described the problem in his September 1985 address at the opening service of TEC's triennial General Convention:

The Church is unavoidably conformed to the culture in which it is set and to which it must preach, and it is all too easy to identify the spirit of the age with the spirit of God ... the Christian Church exists in many different cultures, and the gospel is proclaimed with the aid of many different philosophies, but it is not to be identified with any of them ... History has set the see of Canterbury at the centre of our Anglican unity, but its role is to gather the family, not to rule it. The power to decide matters of faith, order and morals remains with the local church. This could so easily be a recipe for incoherence and for that ecclesiastical isolationism which pays scant regard to the convictions of others. Much therefore depends on what I can only describe as "a sense of Catholic solidarity" ... In the end, we belong to the whole Catholic Church of God which has a breadth and an enduring strength greater than that of any individual or particular

church. It is this "sense of solidarity" which has allowed the Church through the ages to deal with great questions in order to get on with its chief task of witness, mission and service.

TEC has lost its sense of "Catholic solidarity" and thrown its weight behind a culturally specific church, "limited in sympathy and partial in understanding", which identifies "the spirit of the age with the spirit of God". Having become theologically incoherent, to the point of heterodoxy, TEC disdains theological coherence. The English Church is also going down this path now, as is Anglicanism throughout the Global North more generally. Western progressivism, rather than biblical faith, has become the prism through which global Christianity is judged.

In the 1980s, when Anglicanism was processing the women's ordination issue, proceduralists were concerned about how the Communion's mind could be discerned, so consensus could be reached, and the Church could move forward in an authoritative way. In 1944, Rodney Hall, Bishop of Hong Kong and Macao, had ordained Florence Li Tim-Oi, on his own cognisance, to allow the sacraments to be administered under Japanese occupation. Since the 1970s, TEC had been ordaining women, on its own cognisance, never feeling the need to consult the wider Communion let alone wait for a consensus to emerge. In 1992, Peter Carnley, Archbishop of Perth, did the same thing, on his own cognisance, assuming his action was canonically correct and would be regularised eventually, as it was.

While this process, of acting first and regularising later, has worked in some cases, there's a limit to what the Church can regularise. To its credit, the Anglican Communion doesn't believe women's ordination is an existential threat; however, the issues of homosexual ordination, same-sex marriage, and now transgenderism, have become lines in the sand. To reinforce this, under pressure from the Global South, the 1998 Lambeth Conference passed Resolution I.10 on Human Sexuality by a huge majority:

This conference:

- ... in view of the teaching of Scripture, upholds faithfulness in marriage between a man and a woman in lifelong union, and believes that abstinence is right for those who are not called to marriage;
- recognises that there are among us persons who experience themselves as having a homosexual orientation. Many of these are members of the Church and are seeking the pastoral care, moral direction of the Church, and God's transforming power for the living of their lives

and the ordering of relationships. We ... wish to assure them that they are loved by God and that all baptised, believing and faithful persons, regardless of sexual orientation, are full members of the Body of Christ;

- while rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture, calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals, violence within marriage and any trivialisation or commercialisation of sex;
- cannot advise the legitimising or blessing of same-sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same-gender unions ...

Resolution I.10 should be binding, morally and spiritually if not legislatively, yet the Global North has done everything it can to ignore it. Holding its progressive views to be enlightened, and the views of the Global South to be unenlightened, the Global North is simply acting out a new form of cultural imperialism. It's not interested in consensus. It's only interested in its progressive ideology, which amounts to playing silly-buggers at the foot of the Cross.

Since Lambeth 1998, much has happened to fracture Anglican unity, although each action could have been avoided with a greater commitment to conciliarism. In 2003, TEC consecrated the first non-celibate gay priest as bishop, Gene Robinson, who married his "husband" in 2003 and, in a cynical display of cognitive dissonance, divorced him in 2014. In 2003, the Anglican Church of Canada's Diocese of New Westminster passed a canon allowing for the blessing of same-sex unions. Recently the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of New Zealand have followed.

At its 2015 General Convention, TEC voted to redefine its marriage canon to allow for same-sex marriage. As a result, in January 2016, the Archbishop of Canterbury convened a Primates Meeting, at which the Communion's primates overwhelmingly agreed that, as TEC disagreed with the Communion on a significant issue, it shouldn't represent the Communion ecumenically, or in its principal elected standing committees, nor should it vote on matters of doctrine or polity. The decision will be reviewed at the next Lambeth Conference in 2020.

TEC has done serious harm to global Anglican unity. It has been responsible for the deprivation of due process, and denial of natural justice, when inhibiting and deposing hundreds of bishops, priests and deacons for the crime of dissenting from its aggressive promotion of gender inclusiveness and LGBTQ+ rights.

Congregations and dioceses that have left TEC,

to form or join more conservative churches, have had their property confiscated; the fight over property has been scandalous. Under the leadership of Katharine Jefferts Schori (2006–2015), TEC undertook the largest exercise of penal discipline in the history of any Church in the Anglican Communion. Under Michael Curry (2015–present), who preached about love at the recent royal wedding, we have seen what happens when a progressive agenda becomes irreversible and does bad things to good people in the cause of political correctness and identity politics.

For years orthodox Anglicans called on the US and Canadian provinces to repent, to no avail. When bishops from these two provinces were invited to the Lambeth Conference in 2008, a group of 291 bishops and 1148 laity and clergy met in Jerusalem to consider how to take a stand against the false gospel being preached in parts of the Anglican Communion. At that moment the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) was born. The movement has grown steadily, as the Global North has continued to compromise the truth of the gospel. Today, GAFCON represents most Anglicans worldwide.

The 2018 conference

The first GAFCON, held in Jerusalem in June 2008, was intended to be an alternative to the 2008 Lambeth Conference. The second, held in Nairobi in October 2013, had over 1500 delegates. The third, held in Jerusalem in June 2018, brought together 1950 delegates from fifty countries including 316 bishops, 669 other clergy (including many women) and 965 laity. The more the Global North imposes its false gospel upon the world, the more GAFCON grows.

The 2018 conference theme was "Proclaiming Christ Faithfully to the Nations". Each day began with common prayer and excellent Bible expositions from Luke 22–24, followed by plenary sessions on God's Gospel, God's Church, God's World and God's Strategy. A draft Letter to the Churches was read out to the delegates, after which the draft was taken to regional groups for discussion and feedback. The final Letter to the Churches, improved and polished, reflected unanimity of spirit about GAFCON and where it needs to go. Under the banner of "Reforming God's Church", the Letter to the Churches highlighted the words of a conference speaker:

In the councils of the church, we should not mimic the ways of the world but gather to pray, to praise (that is, to be eucharistic), to consult,

to decide, and if necessary to discipline. These gatherings should be properly conciliar in nature, decisive in moving the church forward in its mission and common life. There should be the will to exercise loving but firm discipline to bring sinners to repentance and restoration.

The Letter also makes the following points:

- Our Communion has been under threat from leaders who deny the Lordship of Christ and the authority of Scripture.
- The resolution rightly called for pastoral care for same-sex-attracted persons. At the same time, it described homosexual practice as “incompatible with Scripture” and rejected both the authorisation of same-sex rites by the Church and the ordination of those in same-sex unions.
- The subsequent rejection of Lambeth I.10 in word and deed by TEC and later by some other Anglican provinces led to a “tear [in] the fabric of the Communion at its deepest level”.
- The 2008 GAFCON took up the challenge of restoring biblical authority (and the teaching on human sexuality in particular) by affirming the primacy of the Bible as God’s Word and going back to the other sources of Anglican identity—the Creeds and Councils of the ancient church, the Thirty-nine Articles, the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal.
- The Conference also constituted a Primates Council and authorised it to recognise Anglican churches in areas where orthodox Anglicans had been deprived of their church property and deposed from holy orders.
- Slogans such as “walking together” and “good disagreement” are dangerously deceptive in seeking to persuade people to accommodate false teaching in the Communion.
- Over the past twenty years, we have seen the hand of God leading us towards a reordering of the Anglican Communion. GAFCON has claimed from the beginning: “We are not leaving the Anglican Communion; we are the majority of the Anglican Communion seeking to remain faithful to our Anglican heritage.”
- We give thanks for the godly courage of our GAFCON Primates and applaud their decision to authenticate and recognise the provinces of the Anglican Church in North America and the Anglican Church in Brazil.
- At GAFCON 2018, we heard many testimonies of faithful Anglicans who have been persecuted by those holding office in their respective provinces, merely because they would not surrender to, nor be compromised by, the false

gospel that these leaders profess and promote.

- We respectfully urge the Archbishop of Canterbury: (a) to invite as full members to Lambeth 2020 bishops of the Province of the Anglican Church in North America and the Province of the Anglican Church in Brazil; and (b) not to invite bishops of those provinces which have endorsed by word or deed sexual practices which are in contradiction to the teaching of Scripture and Resolution I.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, unless they have repented of their actions and reversed their decisions.
- In the event that this does not occur, we urge GAFCON members to decline the invitation to attend Lambeth 2020 and all other meetings of the Instruments of Communion.
- To proclaim the gospel, we must first defend the gospel against threats from without and within. We testify to the extraordinary blessings on this Conference, which leads us to call upon God even more, that the Anglican Communion may become a mighty instrument in the hand of God for the salvation of the world. We invite all faithful Anglicans to join us in this great enterprise of proclaiming Christ faithfully to the nations.

Job said: “I know my Redeemer lives”, not “I did it my way”. The drama being acted out in and through GAFCON is the drama of how much the Church can identify with the cultures it exists within but must not be identified with. Anglicans can have an allegiance to Christ, or to progressive ideology, but not to both.

Tom, Dick and Harry are everywhere. Their equivalents and variants are in most parishes and of course in the ordained hierarchy. So, the Church must agree on an appropriate pastoral response towards them and every other would-be homosexual Christian. One response, the simplest yet the most difficult, is for each Anglican to behave as if we really believe in what we profess, and not assume our faith can be changed by public opinion or political pressure. We must stop pretending we can have private lives in which we can behave in incongruent or non-biblical ways. We must always behave as if we are being watched by the God who will ultimately judge us. We must be prepared to forgive, and love, while being mindful of what forgiveness and love really mean. We cannot change meaning to suit ourselves.

Dr Michael Giffin, a priest in the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, attended GAFCON 2018. The Letter to the Churches, and further information about GAFCON, can be found at www.gafcon.org.