

An Anglican Future without Canterbury and Lambeth?

~ David W. Virtue ~

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There is an old fable of the scorpion and the frog. The scorpion wanted to cross the river and asked the frog if he would carry him on his back to get across to the other side. The frog replied that if he tried to help him, the scorpion would surely try to kill him. The scorpion replied, "If I try to kill you, then I would die too, for you see I cannot swim!" The frog agreed to carry the scorpion. Half way across the river, the scorpion began to sting the frog. The frog protested, "You promised not to sting me. Now we shall both die. Why did you do it?" The scorpion shrugged, "I could not help myself. It is my nature."

This is precisely what is happening in The Episcopal Church. The scorpion of liberalism has been riding the frog of orthodoxy for more than 40 years. The frog has vainly been believing that its generosity in carrying the scorpion would lead him to the belief that he has been wrong on matters of faith and morals, and would reform, repent and return to the faith once delivered for all to the saints.

Alas, it is has not happened. As the journey of orthodoxy in The Episcopal Church nears its end, again and again the scorpion sting of revisionism has pierced the shell of orthodox Anglicanism, leaving the orthodox faith without hope of carrying the scorpion to any kind of repentance.

The analogy, of course, is not perfect. Orthodoxy never dies. Jesus said his Church would prevail against any evil that it might face including the revisionist theological sting of a scorpion. In the end only the scorpion dies. Theological and ecclesiastical

revisionism, like all the other isms of the last century: Socialism, Communism, Nazism, and the newer revised forms of revisionisms: materialism, Gnosticism, Arianism, Donatism, Pelagianism, and so forth, will die in due course. The Faith, though under serious attack, will remain.

What we see playing out now in the worldwide Anglican Communion, as the new century dawns, is the death of a post-colonial church caught in the vortex of postmodernism with its loss of absolutes, its acquiescence to moral relativism, its succumbing to political correctness and its overt acceptance of pansexual sin. This has led, in the case of the Episcopal Church and increasingly across the Anglican Communion, to ordaining non-celibate homosexual clergy, rites for same-sex "marriage" and the cultural and ecclesiastical acceptance of a deadly behavior.

This summer, the great divide in The Anglican Communion was highlighted by two important conferences: GAFCON and Lambeth.

The first conference was called The Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON). It was held in Jerusalem, and it was a model of clarity, civility and conviction. There was no argument or fudge about what the pilgrims, as they called themselves, believed. No one had to defend their "position" on what the Christian Faith taught about human sexuality. Nobody argued over how we define salvation, (is it by grace or MDGs) or even, for that matter, women's ordination.

GAFCON met to find a way forward, and they did. By contrast, when the 600 plus

bishops (the greatest single majority of them from The Episcopal Church [TEC]) met in Canterbury for the Lambeth Conference, it was anything but clear, lacked true conviction, and often displayed definite incivility.

Lambeth was structured to avoid any decision. The Indaba concept of listening and conversation produced nothing except the need for even more listening and more conversation. There was no resolution to anything of substance.

There was a palpable unity and joyfulness at GAFCON. Pilgrims came from multiple countries and different races, spoke numerous languages, yet had a definite fix on what the content of the gospel was. There was no black or white theology. There was only biblical theology and nobody wrestled with defining missions – The Great Commission – they all knew what it was. The only issues were on strategies on how to reach the whole world for Christ with the life-changing message of Good News.

By contrast, Lambeth's divisions were a sorrow for all to see and experience. Interfaith dialogue replaced gospel proclamation. Beneath the surface of pleasant Indaba conversation, there lurked a cauldron of anger and discontent. Pansexual Western bishops privately, and not so privately, belittled their fellow African bishops as uninclusive and lacking diversity.

The true nature of what was really going on erupted briefly when the Archbishop of the Sudan held an impromptu press conference calling on the homosexual Bishop of New Hampshire to resign, saying that homosexual behavior is unacceptable with Anglicans in general and Africans in particular, that it hampered Muslim evangelism, and much more. It was a major blow to the liberal spin doctors and official media types at Lambeth

who daily tried to put a good face and positive spin on what was going on behind closed doors.

At GAFCON there were no closed doors. Church leaders were empowered to lead the church. At Lambeth there was no such empowerment. It was go along to get along. It was find the lowest common denominator that everyone could agree upon and cross your fingers that no one will leave angry. Of course, that is precisely what happened.

Both sides went away angry. The Pansexualists, led by US Integrity leader Susan Russell said Rowan Williams had betrayed lesbitransgays. Richard Kirker, leader of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement in Britain said, "I wonder whether Rowan's desire to hold the communion together has been more important to him than making it clear where he stands. Leadership is about clarity of vision, not appeasing factions with irreconcilable differences." U.S. and Canadian liberal bishops returned to the U.S. saying there would be no change in the direction of their churches over sexuality issues, in effect blowing off calls for a "season of gracious restraint" by the ABC.

At Lambeth the doctrine was accepted that there are various ways to read the Bible. One of them, the common sense and traditional, says homosexual behavior is sinful, while another, favored by "the Gay Movement," does not. They actually celebrate covenanted same-sex partnerships as a means of displaying the Gospel of love and acceptance. Traditional views that sex must remain between a man and a woman in marriage or celibacy were not in the cards, even though Lambeth 1:10 (1998) still stands as the church's litmus test on sexual behavior.

Even a Moratorium not to ordain active homosexual bishops or perform official liturgies for same-sex blessings until the global or

western Church had matured in understanding, when their agenda could return, failed to ignite unity. At the same time, "moratorium" was being sold to everyone else as meaning "cessation" or "removal" for as far as we can see down the line. The Windsor Process and The Windsor Continuation Group refused to drop the word "moratorium." The Pansexual Movement in the West took it to mean "a delay in implementing the desired agenda" but not to cease such activity forever. That too fell on deaf ears.

The orthodox left Lambeth more or less convinced that it would be the last Lambeth Conference. They saw no future for themselves at any future pan-Anglican event that saw liberals unable to confirm the faith they swore to uphold. At the end, Lambeth proposed another committee. No Resolutions came out of Lambeth. The African-style discussion groups revealed a general readiness to hear and talk sympathetically about the homosexual lifestyle. North American bishops did much for the "Gay" cause, privately and publicly promoting Gene Robinson. In the end, it was clear to all observers of the North American scene that the blessing of same-sex couples, done with or without an official diocesan liturgy, will continue and that no one can do much to stop it. Furthermore, there will be no discipline (read interference) in a Province that does not implement the moratoria against sexual innovations or against those bishops and archbishops who perform border crossings. Any reprimand from Rowan Williams with an exhortation to behave will amount to a mere slap on the wrist. Everyone will remain the official Communion of Churches.

The real winners at Lambeth were the advocates of the "Gay Lifestyle" as a Christian Lifestyle and adaptable to the Anglican Way! The establishment of a Pastoral Forum to "engage theologically and practically with

situations of controversy as they arise or divisive actions that may be taken around the Communion" has, to date, proven to be a non starter. Pernicious litigation initiated by The Episcopal Church against fleeing dioceses and parishes is continuing.

TEC has a winner-take-all policy. There is no let-up here. Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori and her attorney David Booth Beers have given no indication that litigation will cease. Revisionism brooks no opposition.

At GAFCON a "Jerusalem Declaration" was made that established 14 mainstream Christian points. It called for the creation of a new council of primates overseeing a volunteer fellowship committed to mission and biblical Anglicanism as well as a new structure of accountability. It signaled the move of most of the world's practicing Anglicans into a post-colonial reality, where the Archbishop of Canterbury is recognized for his historic role, but not as the only arbiter of what it means to be Anglican.

The GAFCON Statement concluded:

The primary reason we have come to Jerusalem and issued this declaration is to free our churches to give clear and certain witness to Jesus Christ. It is our hope that this Statement on the Global Anglican Future will be received with comfort and joy by many Anglicans around the world who have been distressed about the direction of the Communion. We believe the Anglican Communion should and will be reformed around the biblical gospel and mandate to go into all the world and present Christ to the nations.

Interestingly enough, the Jerusalem Declaration represented more than 35 million practicing Anglicans worldwide constituting the vast majority of Anglicans. While it drew some 303 bishops, they represented more

than 75% of the Anglican Communion. By contrast, Lambeth had over 600 bishops speaking for less than 25% of the communion. At GAFCON those North American Anglicans who had felt confused and abandoned by their fellow Anglicans/Episcopalians found a home for themselves. Those US and Canadian orthodox in socially liberal provinces, who had set up their own networks, supervised by province-breaking African bishops like Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda and Nigeria, now believed they had a place to stand. And stand they did. Their reward will be the establishment of a new North American Anglican province.

GAFCON gave promise of a post-colonial Anglicanism. Lambeth merely substituted process for substance. The GAFCON bishops noted that the Communion actually fractured in 2003, when fellowship was "torn at its deepest level."

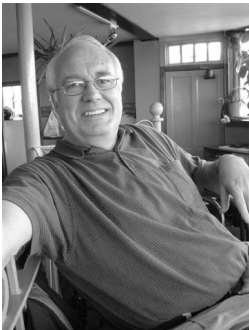
Now, after years of endless and fruitless Canterbury-centered statements, meetings, commissions, panels, reports, and crises, orthodox Anglicans are taking responsibility for their own future. The truly faithful are no longer the remnant; they are the show. They

will no longer be told what to do or believe by a Western white-male dominated church led by a bearded academic whose theological and moral fuzziness frustrates them. A new day has dawned.

The spiritual logjam in which orthodox Anglicans have been living since 2003 has broken. The Anglican flotilla will accelerate slowly and then carry forward in a rush. Over the next year more dioceses will leave The Episcopal Church. Common Cause Partnership will morph into a North American Anglican province replacing The Episcopal Church as the official voice of orthodox Anglicanism in the United States. It will be recognized by the Primates of the Global South.

Dr. Rowan Williams' passionate belief in unity as the glue to hold the Anglican Communion together belies the cost. The price of putting unity above truth can be summed up in the words of the Duke of Norfolk when he said to Sir Thomas More, "come with us for the sake of fellowship." More replied, "and if I do disregard my conscience, when I die and go to hell, will you go with me for the sake of fellowship?"

David W. Virtue is a theologically trained journalist and a pioneer in Internet journalism. He has been a newspaper reporter and editor in New Zealand, Canada and The United States for the Dominion newspaper, The Vancouver PROVINCE and the Virginia Churchman. He has also written for Christianity Today, Touchstone Magazine, The Christian Challenge, and others.



David studied theology in London, Chicago and Vancouver, and has worked for a number of large non-profit organizations including World Vision International, The American Bible Society and American Leprosy Missions. He has traveled extensively throughout the Two-Thirds World meeting leaders of the Global South and building relationships with bishops and leaders throughout the Anglican Church. David's expert reporting, orthodox theological education, and large network of contacts have made VirtueOnline the world leader in Anglican news.

He is the author of three books on social justice and evangelism: [A Flame for Justice](#), the Life of Caesar Molebatsi of Soweto, South Africa; [A Vision of Hope](#), the Life of Samuel Habib of Egypt; and [Good and Right in the Eyes of God](#). The truth about Homosexuality (co-authored with Dr. Earle Fox) and is presently completing a Memoir on the life of Malcolm Muggeridge.

David has been writing about Anglican issues for more than two decades and attended and reported on the 1998 and 2008 Lambeth conferences in Canterbury, England as well as the 2008 GAFCON conference. He has lectured on "Christianity and Culture" as well as journalism and has traveled extensively throughout the world, especially the Middle East, writing on matters of religious concern.