

**SURVIVAL AND TRANSFORMATION:
The Anglican Communion, What Future?
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I. Wholesome Distinction:

When discussing the Church, it's important to remember: *the Church is human as well as Divine!* By this I do not mean that we should divide up the things, the experiences, and the activities of the Church, so that affairs temporal--cooking and cleaning, building repairs and accounting--are entrusted to humans, while the spiritual--mystical encounters and conversions, transubstantiation and real presence--is the area where God is in charge.¹ Such a partition of our life together with God and one another would be heretical. Anglicans above all like to claim, we are an incarnational religion, where human devotees offer themselves, souls and bodies, where we--individually and collectively--entrust all of our life to God. Rather, I mean to distinguish human from Divine *ways of organizing* roughly the *same* things.

At the deepest level, God organizes church and cosmos into Christ's organic body-politic, whose members are interdependent and united under the direction of Christ their head. Who we are and what we mean at bottom, depends on what roles God assigns us and what God makes of us in God's Kingdom. It follows that the real unity of Church and cosmos is not in jeopardy. Because the Body of Christ is governed by the mind of Christ (human and divine), eventual functional harmony is guaranteed.

By contrast, visible church institutions--the way we organize ourselves--are human social constructions that have no intrinsic authority. They are at best *skillful means*, whose reason for being is training up Kingdom heralds to Gospel proclamation. Where institutions are concerned, form should follow function. What it takes to get the job done differs with place and time and cultural context. The result is variety in church polity. So far as we can tell, this has been true from the beginning: the New Testament itself suggests that the earliest churches *organized themselves in different ways* (some more charismatically, some more hierarchically). Whether or not human church institutions *should* survive depends on *whether or not they are still useful, and whether or not they are still judged compatible with Gospel fundamentals*. Thus, we shouldn't be surprised when humanly constructed institutions change, come or go. And we should take care that they *don't outlive their usefulness!*

It is really important to observe this distinction between Divine and human sides of the Church, because conflating the two levels misleads participants in ecclesial debates into serious mistakes. Every January, ecumenists begin with Christ's high priestly prayer--'that we may all be one, even as I and the Father are one' (the sameness of outlook and will, the one-soul-in-two-bodies model at which ancient friendship aimed)--and St. Paul's talk of the Body of Christ whose members are to put on the mind of Christ--to infer that we owe it to God to settle disagreements about doctrine and practice and to unite the human institutions of the Church. Nowadays, the same sort of reasoning is advanced to convince us how urgent it is to preserve the Anglican Communion.

Yet, the unity to which Paul's Body of Christ image refers, is the secure Divine-side unity, while the common mind for which Christ prays is not something to be nailed down by human institutional coercion, but is best seen as an eschatological goal. However much the Divine and human mind of Christ may be in accord, it is far from clear that forced agreements and merged human institutions would be the best way forward for us. God's ways are higher than our ways. We see through a glass darkly--we see something, but obscurely as in a mirror. Just as embryonic development begins with uniformity and then moves on to elaborate differentiation in service of higher types of functional harmony, so perhaps each Christian denomination has captured something distinctive. Developing each take on the Gospel in nuanced detail, among other things through questioning and disputing one another, may be--in the Church as in scholarship--the best approach to God's truth. Whether or not common human institutions would facilitate this effort is a practical question (to which I suspect a negative answer), not a Divine mandate revealed in Scripture. Besides, identifying God's way of organizing the Church with some merely human way (as a benedictine abbot did at a recent college dinner) is *idolatrous*, because it yields to the age old

temptation (witnessed in the Gospels) to attribute to human institutions authority (and in the case of Rome, the infallibility) that belongs only to God!

II. The Anglican Communion, a Skillful Means?

Colonial Artifact: Certainly, the Anglican Communion belongs to the human-side of the Church. It is a mid-19th century artifact of the British empire (which took the Church of England along to establish 'settler' churches) and foreign missions (which gave rise to indigenous churches). Like other human ecclesial institutions, its reason for being is discipleship-formation and Gospel proclamation. *Whether or not the Anglican Communion has a future should depend on whether it can continue to be useful.* And this immediately brings us to a further question: *useful for what?*

When mid-19th century Anglican bishops around the world appealed to Archbishop Longley to gather them together, they had several purposes in mind. Some hoped to form a pan-Anglican synod that could serve as the final arbiter on doctrine, discipline, and liturgy. Then-hot theological issues included biblical infallibility, baptismal regeneration, and eternal punishment. There was also the ritualism controversy. Many hoped a meeting could serve as a forum to clarify the standing of clergy from one Anglican province in another; the different relations of colonial churches to the Church of England and to the British crown. Some wanted to go further to create a canon law common to the whole communion. In addition, there was a need to coordinate missionary efforts and to share resources, and the bishops brought varying and conflicting ecumenical aspirations.

Although opposed by many English bishops who doubted the legality of such a gathering, ++Longley eventually did hold the first Lambeth Conference in 1867. It was recognized that there would be no legal way to unite established churches with the American and Scottish Episcopal Churches in a pan-Anglican synod. Any sense-of-the-meeting resolutions could have no legislative or juridical but at most moral authority. The 1867 Lambeth Conference *did* serve the other purposes of networking and consultation, of clarifying the inter-Anglican standing of clergy, and of mission coordination and resource-sharing. For that reason, Lambeth Conferences have continued until now to be held roughly once a decade. Over time, pan-Anglicanism evolved other institutions as seemed needed. In 1968, the Anglican Consultative Council was established and for the first time involved laity and non-episcopal clergy in international Anglican deliberations. In 1978, the Primates' Meeting began to meet regularly to serve yet another function of renegotiating relationships between the churches in the more recently independent former colonies and putting member provinces on a more equal footing.

Thus, if the four 'Instruments of [Comm]union' are honorable, only the archbishopric of Canterbury is ancient (567 CE). The other three are institutional johnny-come-lately's, illustrations of how human church institutions evolve, come and go as the context of evangelism and mission changes.

Pressures for Greater Pan-Anglican Institutional Coherence Over the last thirty years, however, various factors have converged to revive the idea that the Anglican Communion should function as a pan-Anglican synod to enforce doctrine and discipline. [1] First, North American conservatives are tired of putting up with liberal 'wishy-washy-ness'. They find the Episcopal Church's (=TEC's) institutional self-definition much too generic and loosely enforced. Roughly speaking, we in TEC sit on *the three-legged stool* of Scripture, tradition, and reason. We pledge our allegiance to *the Lambeth Quadrilateral*: to the bible but without requiring any one way of reading it; to the creeds but without taking trouble to find out whether and how clergy and laity understand them; to *the dominical sacraments* while--since Elizabeth I--deliberately allowing a wide range of theological interpretation. We commit ourselves to *holiness of living*, but don't officially go beyond the ten commandments, the first and second great commandments, and prophetic injunctions to bring good news to the poor and release to the captives, to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. We do not police one another with required sacramental confession before communion. It has been decades since clergy played the private eye to discover whether their congregation included 'evil livers'. It is secular society that has forced us to get serious about making the Church safe from sex offenders. By contrast, North American conservatives

dream of a 'pure' institution with effective gate-keeping procedures, with explicit and detailed membership requirements and strict enforcement policies.

[2] The second factor has been shifting cultural consensus around sex-and-gender in North American, European, and Australasian society generally. Conservatives within the church might have been more in a hurry to separate themselves from liberals, had it not been for the fact that--until the mid-twentieth century--conservatives enjoyed a majority sufficient to dictate institutional policy on the issues that mattered most to them. But now, where sex-and-gender issues (the ordination of women, the ordination and blessing of coupled homosexuals) are concerned, conservatives have lost that majority. Their sense of urgency is amplified because TEC's new sex and gender policies and practices violate evangelical convictions about how Scripture should be read and Anglo-Catholics' axioms about the locus and transmission of ecclesiastical authority.

Conservatives now declare that they cannot conscientiously remain part of an institution whose institutional policies contradict their conscientious beliefs and principles (call it, 'The Institutional Purity Principle'). From their point of view, one solution would be to give pan-Anglican institutions (where sex-and-gender conservative majorities can be expected to hold for the foreseeable future) enough teeth to prevent liberal sex-and-gender views from having institutional expression in member-provinces. Both the *Virginia Report* (commissioned in the wake of +Barbara Harris' election as suffragan bishop of Massachusetts) and *The Windsor Report (TWR)* (that reacted to the election of + Gene Robinson and New Westminster's authorisation and use of blessings for homosexual couples) responded to this felt need.

A third factor is that post-colonial churches are 'coming of age'. Among other things, they are becoming more assertive and insisting that Europeans and North Americans make good on the rhetoric of equality. African provinces have organized CAPA which mobilizes African churches to confront and resolve African problems. ++Akinola, the most vocal among their leaders, signals their equivocation in 'The Road to Lambeth' where he wonders, on the one hand, why the provinces that house 70% of Anglicans world-wide, do not control the existing institutional machinery of the Anglican communion? On the other, he questions whether these demographic-majority provinces really need an Anglican communion whose institutions are so weak and indecisive. Perhaps they would be better off taking matters into their own hands and organizing something more effective themselves!

Likewise, many but not all of the African churches² bring deeply entrenched conservative sex-and-gender views from the taboos of their own societies as well as from their CMS-originated views about the infallible authority of Scripture. Because these mission links remain alive and well, it was easy for North American conservatives to form an alliance at Lambeth '98 that resulted in the passage of the infamous Lambeth 1.10. More recently, ++Akinola is prepared to have North American conservatives whom he has ordained as missionary bishops for the US (Martyn Minns) ghost-write his speeches and use him to set their own agenda, which depend on stronger pan-Anglican institutions.

Meanwhile, back in the Mother Country, there is a matching approach-avoidance equivocation. On the one hand, post-colonial guilt reigns giving rise to the implicit conviction that repentance for complicity in colonial oppression requires England and North America to cooperate in a role reversal: to take their turn to 'wait upon' the African and Asian churches that used to wait upon them. This means, among other things, that if post-colonial provinces want strong pan-Anglican institutions in which they could play a prominent role, they should have them. On the other, Canterbury's reluctance to cut the ecclesial colonial apron strings, makes the Archbishop of Canterbury (= ABC) desperate to hold the Anglican communion together. Quite apart from the sex-and-gender issues that have occasioned the present difficulties, the ABC imagines that covenanted commitments to be networked by stronger pan-Anglican institutions would keep post-colonial provinces from leaving.

Overall, issues of church-political power (conservatives wishing to secure positions in Europe and North America; post-colonial provinces understandably wishing to function as first-class members if not lord it over their former oppressors) combine with deep convictions (about sex-and-gender issues, about the authority of Scriptures, and about institutional purity) to make many find it useful to remodel pan-Anglican institutions to give them more teeth.

III. The Windsor Report and Its Enactment:

The 10/2004 Windsor Report (TWR) leads with the legal. It makes synodality central to its conception of Anglicanism. (B66,B70) By ‘synod’, TWR understands, not just a meeting to share insights, to talk through and debate controversial issues and to brainstorm practical solutions to emergent problems, but a body with authority to make legislative and juridically binding decisions about the matters in its remit.

Windsor Provisions: TWR insists, the time has come for the Anglican communion to tighten up its various institutional structures and redefine them in the direction of international canon law (C.115). Formally, what was formerly a loose federation of legally independent churches would now be bound together by a covenant which would be given legal status by each of the member churches passing a canon to observe it. TWR goes so far as to say that each church has a corporate ecclesial personhood and *exists in and for its fellow churches!* [This would mean that legally, Anglican provinces would be creatures of the Anglican communion and not independent churches in their own right--a fascist political model!] (B.84) Just as the UN uses the doctrine of human rights to critique the legal practices of member states, so the covenant would hold member churches to “essentials” while allowing them autonomy over matters of indifference (such as the color of the altar flowers or the direction in which one crosses oneself). The covenant would oblige members to submit innovations in theology or ethics to the “instruments of union” (the ABC, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Primates’ Meeting). (B.78-79, C.119) TWR also implies that the selection of bishops (perhaps including that of the ABC) would be subject to the approval of these communion-wide authorities. (B.64; C.131) Compliance would be enforced on pain of excommunication.

Whose *Adiaphora*? TWR lodges authority to discriminate the essential from the indifferent with the instruments of union. The criteria for what violates essentials is what disrupts the union and/or compromises the common good of the Anglican communion. Thus, what counts as essential becomes a function of what international bodies can or cannot tolerate (whether or not a sufficient number of Christians find it scandalous, B.89-93). So far as the content is concerned, TWR repeats *The Virginia Report’s* (= VR) phrase: what touches all should be decided by all (TWR, B.51, 54); there must be an eventual *consensus fidelium* (B.68). Like VR, TWR widens the core beyond theological doctrines (such as are mentioned in the creeds), basic books (bible and BCP), liturgical practices, and episcopal form of government, to ethics and mores. Significantly, TWR also provides that parishes in dioceses or dioceses in provinces that are not Windsor-compliant, should be allowed to appeal to the ABC for the provision of alternative episcopal oversight, and the ABC’s investigation and provision in such cases should not be regarded as an inappropriate intrusion in member-church’s internal affairs. (C.109)

Presumptive Legitimacy: Overall, TWR was a speedy response to a perceived emergency. (The Windsor Commission under Archbishop Eames took one year to produce its report.) TWR’s focus is on preventing change in church and on purging the church of sex-and-gender scandal. Its redesign of pan-Anglican institutions was offered as a skillful means to that end.

Rhetorically, TWR was written in a tone of presumptive legitimacy, as if the proposed polity were already accepted and retroactively in force. It talks as if TEC and the Canadian diocese of New Westminster had failed to meet their obligations--which would exist if there were an Anglican covenant to abide by the instruments of union to which TEC and New Westminster had subscribed, sealing the deal with provisions from their own canon law. This rhetorical ruse proved very effective. TWR-polity had only to be sketched to launch an avalanche of enactments, which in fact had no legal authorisation whatsoever.

TWR itself proposed several actions the ‘instruments’ might take to deal with the sex-and-gender crisis: [i] to call upon TEC and New Westminster to repent in the form of expressed regrets and enforced moratoria on future episcopal consecrations and blessings of coupled homosexuals; [ii] to call on provinces that had sent bishops into TEC territory to express their regrets and to stop it; and [iii] to commend a ‘listening process’ among all parties.

The 2/05 Dromantine Primates' Meeting (the first to occur after TWR was issued) readily endorsed 'the Windsor Process' as 'a way forward'. (cf. 2/05 Dromantine Primates' Communique, B.66, 70) Dromantine and many subsequent documents speak of Lambeth 1.10 as if it had legislative force and normative status as *the* teaching of the Anglican communion, so that TEC and New Westminster had no right to violate it. (B.69) Accordingly, the Dromantine Primates acted to impose sanctions, to put TEC and New Westminster 'on probation': TEC and New Westminster were asked to withdraw voluntarily from participation in the ACC unless and until they repent by instituting moratoria on ordaining and blessing coupled homosexuals (cf. Communique #14, 18).

Not only did Dromantine Primates' behavior acquiesce in the presumptive legitimacy of TWR polity. Their actions gave it a distinctive interpretation. Whereas TWR spoke generically of submitting innovations in doctrine or discipline to the 'instruments of union' for *imprimatur* or veto, the Dromantine Primates took that authority to themselves, thereby signalling that the new polity would involve a kind of collegiate papacy.

The 2/07 Tanzania Primates' Meeting followed suit. Despite the fact that the Joint Standing Committee to the ABC under ++Aspinall judged TEC's 2006 General-Convention response to TWR demands adequate, given the constraints of TEC polity, the primates took authority to serve TEC with ultimata to be responded to by 30/9/07: that the House of Bishops give unequivocal assurances of enforced moratoria on [i] consents for non-celibate homosexual candidates for the episcopacy, and [ii] authorisation of public rites for the blessing of homosexual couples, and [iii] that TEC accept a foreign-dominated Pastoral Council and a primatial vicar for the pastoral care of 'Windsor compliant' dioceses and parishes. The primates also insisted on a 'moral distinction' between foreign incursions and same-sex ordinations and blessings, implying that the former would not stop until the latter did. The primates (ghosted by Martyn Minns) also called on TEC not to sue 'Windsor compliant' congregations and dioceses for church property.

Thus, the Tanzania Primates' performance showed how they interpreted TWR-polity as assigning them wide scope to interfere in the internal affairs of member provinces and to exercise gate-keeping functions. It was said at the time that if TEC did not comply, TEC would have chosen to 'walk apart'.

In 9/2007, TEC's House of Bishops met in New Orleans and made the following response to the primates' Tanzania ultimata (NOLA): [Ri] bishops reaffirmed B033 with its pledge to withhold consents to the episcopal election of individuals whose manner of life might prove a scandal to the common, and noted that non-celibate homosexual partnerships were of this sort; [Rii] bishops pledged not to authorise public rites for the blessing of same-sex unions unless the Anglican communion changes its mind and/or General Convention decides otherwise (the House of Bishops cannot act alone to bind future decisions of General Convention). [Riii] TEC's House of Bishops had already rejected Tanzania's foreign-dominated Pastoral Council and primatial vicar, on the ground that it was incompatible with TEC polity and that in any event DEPO (a flying bishops scheme) had been in place for some time. At New Orleans, the Presiding Bishop (= PB) also offered a scheme for alternative primatial visitors chosen from 'Windsor Compliant' bishops loyal to TEC.

Once again, the pan-Anglican Joint Consultative Committee (= JCC) under ++Aspinall judged TEC's responses adequate, and called on provinces consecrating bishops for North America to become 'Windsor compliant' themselves, by ceasing and desisting.

Significantly, *the ABC continued to operate on the 'clericalist' assumption that the primates were the ultimate pan-Anglican authority*, and circulated the NOLA statement and the JCC report to the primates. Predictably, the result was divided: a little over half thought TEC had complied, while the others rejected TEC's response as inadequate.

IV. New Covenants and Their Rationales:

Reportedly almost as an after-thought, 2004 TWR suggested a pan-Anglican covenant outlining Anglican essentials. By now, several working groups and documents have addressed themselves to this issue. What has come to prominence is the notion of a covenant that would give tighter institutional

definition by reformulating Anglican essentials in doctrine and morals, and would at the same time commit covenanters to a new Anglican polity with tougher enforcement procedures. The covenant would thereby exercise a gate-keeping function, twice-over. Non-jurors would count themselves out of full membership. Jurors could be counted out if they refused to submit to the ‘verdicts’ of pan-Anglican instruments regarding their doctrinal and disciplinary practices.

If 2004 TWR had dropped the hint, the ABC took up ‘covenanting’ as ‘a way forward’ in **Summer 2006 ‘Challenge and Hope’**. Conflating the Divine- with the human-side of the Church, the ABC defended TWR-style pan-Anglican polity. ‘Local’ churches may think they are being prophetic but they can be wrong. The whole church, however, cannot be finally wrong. Therefore, innovations (such as the ordination of women or coupled LGBT, or the blessing of homosexual partnerships) in doctrine and practice must be submitted to the whole and implementation must ‘wait upon’ reception by the whole church. Covenanting would be necessary for ‘constituent’ membership, which would allow full participation in pan-Anglican governance and decision-making. Non-juring churches would not qualify as constituent but might have some status as ‘associate’ members like the Methodists.

The ABC appointed a covenant-drafting committee with (sex-and-gender conservative) ++Drexel Gomez as chair. The first meeting agreed that covenanting might be a skillful means, but explored a range of purposes that it might serve with resultant variations in the style of covenant required. The first meeting also projected a lengthy communion-wide consultation that might stretch over a nine year period.

By the time the second drafting meeting occurred in January 2007, focus had narrowed to gate-keeping issues. Ideological balance on the committee was forfeited by three liberal members being unable to come. The resultant **Nassau Draft Covenant (NDC)**, hastily produced just before the Tanzania Primates’ Meeting, is a ‘cut and paste’ of the old English ordinal (with its subscription to the 1662 BCP and the 39 Articles), the Lambeth Quadrilateral (but with added emphasis on the primacy of Scripture and ‘biblical morality’ and bishops as its primary teachers and interpreters), and TWR polity. The draft is clumsy, because TEC among others has never subscribed to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer (with its repeated acknowledgements of the sovereignty of the English monarch). But it’s overall drive towards institutional tightening was clear. The (predominantly Calvinist) 39 Articles go beyond the Lambeth Quadrilateral in not only affirming the authority of Scripture but prescribing how it is to be interpreted (Article XX forbids the reading of one passage as contradicting another). NDC mentions the bible as the primary norm not only of doctrine but also of morality. Moreover, NDC continued to sound the theme of episcopal authority by assigning (not only primates but all) bishops the authoritative say on what Scripture means.

The NDC was circulated among the provinces for comment, but only thirteen provinces replied. Of these, New Zealand, Australia, Scotland, Wales, and TEC said ‘covenant, perhaps, but not that kind of covenant’.

Piling up towards Lambeth 2008, **a quartette of** recently released **documents**--the ABC’s Advent Letter to the Primates (14/12/07), the English AB’s response to and rewrite of the Nassau Draft Covenant, the new St. Andrew’s Draft Covenant (SAD), and ‘Communion, Conflict, and Hope’, The Kuala Lumpur Report of the third Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission--pursue the issue of how to remodel pan-Anglican institutions. There are significant changes, most notably, that all four step back from TWR’s legal language and conceptuality and from its historical fiction that pan-Anglicanism has always been synodal, because these documents now remember what Church House confirms: that it would be illegal for the established Church of England to bind itself legally to submit to the authority of the instruments of [comm]union. SAD and CCHKL repeatedly acknowledge the legal autonomy of the provinces. Likewise, the AB’s rewrite of NDC and SAD recognize what CCHKL emphasises: that the Church’s ministry is not merely conservative ‘of the faith once delivered to the saints’ but also has a social justice dimension that drives towards social transformation and institutional reform. CCHKL joins VR in celebrating inculturation and commending a healthy tension between subsidiarity and catholicity (between kneading the Gospel into the local context and being open and accountable to global reactions). SAD even back off from always giving primates and/or bishops generally the final say. Nevertheless, issues of tighter institutional

definition and gate-keeping are treated at length in SAD's appendix, front-and-centered in the ABC's Advent Letter, and muddled and muffled in CCHKL.

In his **Advent Letter**, the ABC replaces TWR's vision of a legally binding synod with the family model and frames the issue in terms of the conditions under which local churches can recognize one another as members of the same family. Evidently drawing on ancient ideals of friendship between individuals and insisting that what is in fact an eschatological goal be a present reality, the ABC assumes that family members would share a common mind on key issues; that family members would be in a position to speak for one another and could rightly be assumed to speak on behalf of one another; and that family members would share a willingness to be converted by one another. With a little reluctance, the ABC also assumes for himself the role of pater familias (or spiritual head of the household) to whom it belongs to articulate the mind of the Communion in moments of tension and controversy.

When the ABC turns to apply the image to elaborate the criteria for full communion among local churches, the demands for pan-Anglican uniformity are stronger than ever. First and foremost, recognisable pan-Anglican family members would agree about the place of Scripture. *Not only* would there have to be a common acknowledgement that we stand under *the authority of Scripture* as 'the rule and ultimate standard of faith', which the Holy Spirit interprets and to which we conform. There would also have to be *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.

Second, recognisable 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 recognised 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 *recognisably 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 unrecognisable 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 PB and the House of Bishops act and acquiesce in foreign actions contrary to TEC's polity. Moreover, they 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 Quadrilateral's permitted limits of 'local adaptation'.

This high demand for uniformity fits with the ABC's persistent conflation of the Divine-side with the human-side of the church and his evident desire to see the visible church as an organic body of interdependent members, whose identity as church cannot be separated from their identity as members of the body.

Like VR and TWR, **Kuala Lumpur**'s assignment was to address the question, whether and how the Anglican Communion can stay together in the midst of serious conflicts. Compared to other documents, its report forwards a more liberal theology of the church under the rubric of dynamic catholicity. The church is fundamentally *dynamic*, because God's future cannot be wholly predicted from the past. Constant change and renewal are not just a challenge to the church. They are a necessary condition for *being* the church. Individually and together, human church members are fallible and are called to live in the tension of a double bind. On the one hand, the Gospel calls any and every merely human way of looking at things into question. On the other, our incarnational task is inculturation, to knead the light of the Gospel into our local situations which bring out distinctive aspects of its message. The constant temptation is to err in the direction of uncritical syncretism. Here *catholicity* provides a

check, because feedback from churches in other places can help us recognise the need for midcourse corrections. Kuala Lumpur suggests that this need not involve centralized formal structures. Companionship links, partnerships in mission, inter-Anglican networks, missionary societies, and religious orders, can do a lot to maintain communication. Nevertheless, Kuala Lumpur does take it as an axiom that conflicts need, not only to be engaged, but resolved. Sometimes, it admits, discipline will be in order. Because it prefers face-to-face persuasion to bureaucratic coercion, Kuala Lumpur sees bishops as the fundamental links, representing their dioceses to the wider church and representing the wider church to the diocese. From a human point of view, much will depend on the collegiality of bishops. Laity and non-episcopal clergy do not figure in its scenario for how to hold the Anglican Communion together!

V. Concluding Reflections:

It is hard to hold relationships together when some parties are determined to break up and/or when differences come to seem irreconcilable. North American conservatives are determined to split with TEC if they cannot take over and replace TEC in the Anglican Communion. Nigeria, Kenya, and Uganda have already excommunicated TEC and are refusing to come to Lambeth 2008 because TEC bishops have been invited. Moreover, Nigeria has already removed references to Canterbury from its constitution and canons. As a co-sponsor of GAFCON (the pre-Lambeth alternative to Lambeth), Sydney is flirting with the idea of an alternative global communion of conservative evangelical Anglicans. By joining in GAFCON, North American conservatives are also toying with this option. Thus, not only are some determined to sever ties with TEC, they are exploring significant transformations in their relations with Canterbury.

Ideologically, the differences do seem irreconcilable. In a nutshell, liberals can't abide conservative *polity* (with its tighter institutional definition and focus on gate-keeping), and conservatives cannot abide liberal *content* (theologically, liberal hermeneutics and/or rejection of biblical infallibility; concretely, ordaining women, ordaining and blessing coupled homosexuals). Conservatives have proved willing to live with liberal polity, so long and only so long as conservatives retain the majority required to set institutional policy. But conservatives hold to the Institutional Purity Principle--that it is contrary to their conscientious beliefs to live within an institution whose institutional policy is contrary to their conscientious beliefs. So when they lose their majority, they insist on a polity change to make sure that conservative content sets institutional policy whether or not conservatives hold a majority in the national church. Liberals can go along with liberal polity and conservative content for a time and a season, because liberal polity gives liberals a chance to dictate institutional policy once they attain a majority in the decision-making bodies. But liberals cannot accept conservative polity that is designed to deny them that chance.

Thus, if the Anglican Communion covenants into a conservative polity such as NDC proposed, liberal national churches such as TEC, Canada, Scotland, New Zealand, and Australia (apart from Sydney) will not be able (consistent with their principles, their constitutions and canons) to sign on to it. If the Anglican Communion sticks with something like the old looser polity, that would strengthen conservative motivation to form a new global communion of conservatively like-minded national churches, diocese, and parishes. Neither way would the Anglican Communion return to the way things were before.

SAD hopes to resolve this dilemma by fogging and fudging. On the one hand, SAD asserts what Anglican liberals have insisted on: that national churches are legally autonomous, and that decisions by pan-Anglican Instruments of [Comm]Union could have no legal--legislative or juridical--force. On the other hand, its appendix gives the extended coverage (the most elaborate to date) to exclusionary procedures. Evidently, the hope is that the lack of Windsor-style *legal* coercion would satisfy liberals. But in fact SAD still forwards a fundamentally conservative polity. With or without legal teeth, the exclusionary procedures have the same effect of excommunicating non-compliant church bodies from what would then be the exclusive pan-Anglican club.

Likewise, the ABC's polity, which will doubtless frame Lambeth 2008 discussion, remains, works from a fundamentally conservative theology of Church as a family willing to disown black sheep. His uniformity demands are dangerously strong, not least because they could not hold the Church of England together! The last General Synod showed how, in the Mother Church, there is not enough ideological unity to speak with one voice in ecumenical dialogues. Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics definitely do not share a common mind regarding biblical warrants for Marian doctrine or the attractions of union with Rome. Diocesan ordinations (where some refuse stoles in favor of preaching scarves) bear witness to the fact that Anglicans and middle-of-the-roaders do not share a common understanding of ministry (are priests ordained primarily to preach or to say mass?). What keeps the Church of England together is not uniformity and tough gate-keeping, but establishment!

Overall and in conclusion, I would say first that the Anglican Communion will continue to exist, but it will not remain the same as before. If a conservative polity is adopted, it may continue to hold conservative churches (national, diocesan, or parish-level) together, but TEC would almost certainly be excommunicated and other liberal churches would very probably refuse to sign on. Moreover, SAD's gate-keeping machinery opens the door to further fissures, because it takes only one province complaining against another to set the ball rolling towards disciplinary measures. One wonders what would happen if post-colonial provinces used this to lodge complaints against the Church of England, or if pan-Anglican instruments tried to deal with the Church of England the way they have treated TEC!

Second, in my judgment, the break up of the Anglican Communion would be neither tragic nor a betrayal of the Gospel. Those who urge (as CCHKL most recently has) a Christian obligation to seek the maximum unity possible, slip into conflating the human with the Divine side of the Church. What would betray the Gospel is something different: member churches failing to live up to the light that is in them, compromising our conscientious commitments for the sake of institutional expediency. Once again, the Anglican Communion is a historical accident, a 19th century cultural artifact that has continued to exist because it has been found to be a skillful means. If the conscientious discernment of liberal and conservative churches set them at logger-heads, that may mean that we are in a season of ecclesial differentiation, when the Gospel will be better served by 'walking separately'.

Liberals have gone along with current developments to the extent that they have, TEC has put up with a considerable amount of abuse, because up to now pan-Anglican institutions have proved useful for networking and consultation, for coordinating mission and resource-sharing. If conservative members succeed in transforming pan-Anglican institutions so that they are no longer accessible to TEC and other liberal provinces, then liberals will have to raise new institutional umbrellas to house such activities, to nurture global connections and to coordinate the pursuit of Millenium Development goals. If conservatives can create new institutions (the Network, Common Cause, GAFCON), so can liberals. In any event, it is not our job to guarantee the future of the Anglican Communion, but to do our best to share the Good News and to give glory to God.

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¹ As Professors Millbank and Pattison imagined in their comments in the *Church Times*, Spring 2007.

² These include Nigeria, Uganda, and Kenya, but not South Africa where ++Tutu was responsible for writing homosexual rights into the new civil constitution.