

“Anglicanism Come of Age: A Post-Colonial and Global Communion for the 21st Century”

Opening Plenary Address in Jordan

The Global Anglican Future Conference

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TELLING THE OLD, OLD STORY

A dispute arose among them, which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And [Jesus] said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For which is greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves.” [Luke 22:24-27]

The leader who serves...The leader who empties himself for those he comes to...The leader who washes his disciples’ feet...The leader who gives his life for others.... This is the Jesus we follow, whose apostles and witnesses we are and want to be.

In a very profound way this is why we are here, here in Jordan and before many days in Jerusalem, here on pilgrimage in the Holy Land. We have come to re-claim our roots. Our roots as Christians, our roots as Anglicans, our roots as leaders: a pilgrimage back “to the old, old story” – the story of Jesus: His Incarnation, His Holy Nativity and Baptism, His teaching and His ministry, His Cross and Passion, His Death, His Resurrection, His Ascension, The Coming of His Holy Spirit, the original Apostolic Witness to Him. We want to tell this story clearly in our time, without loss or compromise in translation or transmission, and most certainly without individually or corporately getting in the way of the story.

In North America we have an expression: “Your actions speak so loudly I cannot hear what you are saying.” Often the Church is guilty of actions that make it very hard to take seriously – to “hear” – the words we speak. Bishops can be especially guilty of this, but so also can other Church leaders. Jesus, to our knowledge never dressed in purple, lived in a palace or stayed in a fine hotel. (These things are not in themselves destructive, but they can be dangerous!) In my part of the world, at least, we often live and act as Lords – we often live and act as if we were the ones who made the rules and set the agenda – yet we speak of one who entered in a manger, lived among the people, had no place to lay his

head, sought out the sick and troubled, died on a cross and borrowed a tomb. We are here on pilgrimage to remind ourselves of the kind of Lord we follow and the kind of leaders we want to be. We want our actions – our manner of life – to match the story, to serve the story – the old, old story. We who are gathered here do not want to be obstacles to the reception of the story. No, we are on pilgrimage to better be the vehicles – transparent vehicles – of the story.

We who are gathered here recognize that the Reformation (Elizabethan) Settlement of Anglicanism has disintegrated. We know that we are at a turning point in Anglican history, a place where two roads diverge. One road is faithful to Jesus' story. The other road is about some other story. We can take the road that is "strait and narrow," or the one that is "wide" (to use Jesus' own description of the choice.) The choice before us is a choice before all Anglicans. It is just as certainly a choice before the upcoming Lambeth Conference. Which road will the Anglican Communion take?

Personal Confession

Those of us here from North America come from two Provinces that have become masters of actions that are inconsistent – and more recently, incompatible – with the story. The wrong road has been willfully chosen. Few would dispute the observation that the present crisis in our beloved Anglican Communion is centrally the work of the progressive majority of the Episcopal Church in the United States and of the Anglican Church of Canada. Nevertheless, the orthodox are not without blame. Over the last five decades we have made more than our share of compromises when issues of Scriptural Truth were debated or challenged. There were also countless times that we kept silence when we should have spoken. Moreover, the witness of our personal lives has been scarcely better than the record of those whom we now forthrightly confront: divorce and remarriage, sexual sin, addiction, material possessions, careerism, children who wander far. Further to our shame, we have sometimes as orthodox battled one another – splintering into factions and sects, competing with one another for territory or adherents, even at times condemning one another – publicly proclaiming the Truth while privately operating for our own advantage. So it is not just the progressives who have allowed sin to masquerade as righteousness, but sometimes the orthodox as well that have disgraced, disrupted and divided the whole Anglican Communion. I begin on this platform – I begin as this pilgrimage begins – by saying that I am profoundly sorry and that I beg the forgiveness of our God and of all of you from other parts of world. We North Americans, all of us here, whether still in the wayward official Provinces or in the several splinters of the continuing churches or in the extra-territorial Provincial outreaches of recent formation, express to you our sorrow and beg from you forgiveness. We have been lords, not servants, and we have distracted you from, and embarrassed you in, the telling of the story in your contexts, and among the peoples to whom God has asked you to bear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ.

None without Sin

All of us as here are sinners, of course; all obstacles to the story, not just the North Americans. In the great tradition of the East African Revival of the 20th century, we would, in beginning, all admit to this sad truth of our fallen human nature. This is our base solidarity. Nevertheless, that God has had mercy on the likes of us, and called us to His ministry, despite our sinfulness, has been a testimony of God's Grace and God's Goodness for all to see. We are here to proclaim this transforming and joyful solidarity, too.

Corporate Obstacles to the Story

There is another category of obstacle to the telling of "the old, old story" beside the individual or the personal. Increasingly, we have become aware that our Church structures and Anglican Communion systems can also be obstacles to the story. A piece of what we are here together to do is to look at where our systems are failing us or are becoming obstacles to our central work together of telling the saving story.

The English Reformation positioned us so very solidly as:

grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal.¹

Nevertheless, the Reformation Settlement – represented in grounding under the Holy Scriptures, loyalty to the Articles [1571], the 1662 Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal, and dependence upon the polity of the Church of England – is a settlement that no longer holds across the global Anglican Communion. Our Communion is, in fact, challenged on all three of these historic bases: the biblical, the doctrinal-liturgical, and the ecclesiological. These developments among us as Anglicans have produced huge corporate obstacles to the telling of the story.

THE DIS-INTEGRATION OF THE REFORMATION SETTLEMENT OF ANGLICANISM

To our biblical grounding as Anglicans there is the presenting challenge that majorities in both the Episcopal Church [U.S.A.] and the Anglican Church of Canada no longer see themselves having to operate with "the Holy Scriptures as the ultimate rule and standard of Faith."² Thus far, Communion systems have failed in any containment, much less to mend the fabric's tear. Secondly, as regards our doctrinal-liturgical synthesis, there is the reality that the Articles are no longer widely subscribed and that the 1662 Prayer Book and its Ordinal are no longer common to worship across the Communion. Thirdly, as to the ecclesiological framework that once made such sense, there is the historical development of a global communion no longer centered in a secularized English Church and nation.

¹ Canon A5 of the Church of England

² Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888

Said succinctly, the Reformation Settlement of Anglicanism³, which held for some three centuries of unparalleled evangelization toward every corner of the globe, is disintegrating. The Anglican Way of the mid-seventeenth to mid-twentieth centuries is collapsing.⁴ The present crisis in the Anglican Communion, like the positive and hopeful purpose of this GAFCON pilgrimage, points to the need for some new “settlement” of Anglicanism. Coherence as part of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church will require some new “settlement.” The biblical, doctrinal-liturgical, and ecclesiological groundings of Anglicanism must all be reestablished or reengineered. This Global Anglican Future Conference is an opening chapter in this global (post-colonial) re-establishing and re-engineering. I am convinced that while the Reformation Settlement of Anglicanism has come apart, a Global (Post-Colonial) Settlement of Anglicanism is on the way.

Colonial Systems

We call ourselves Anglicans. We are the national churches that came out of *Anglia*, England. Canterbury (*Ecclesia Anglicana*) achieved dominance in the first millennium across the Christian fringe of Northumbria, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Then, in the second millennium, the British Church (and her colonies, in turn) took the Gospel across North America, Australia, Africa, South America, Asia and to the ends of the earth. What a remarkable feat is this worldwide missionary expansion from a remote corner of the ancient world! What is remarkable next, however, are the astoundingly British and overwhelmingly Western (Caucasian) systems that guide the thirty-eight Provinces of this worldwide Christian family as the third millennium begins. This ecclesiological framework has now become an obstacle to the story.

Questions that help us get at the reality of the colonial system in which we find ourselves might include the following:

- Of what nationality must the first among equals be?
- By what means is that global leader chosen?
- Who has the authority to call the Lambeth Conference together?
- Who defines what the Lambeth Conference does or does not do?
- Who alone calls the Primates Meeting together or decides it will not meet?
- Who presides in the Anglican Consultative Council?
- Who appoints the Secretary General and the Communion’s apparatus?
- Which Provinces fund the operations and set the practical agenda?
- Who carries forward conciliar decisions (Lambeth/Primates) once made?

As long as the systems were working – as long as the systems were not obstacles to the story – there was little reason to question them. It is amazing that the systems worked so

³ I prefer the concept “Reformation Settlement” to the more familiar “Elizabethan Settlement” because “settled” Anglicanism has its origins prior to Elizabeth and is not complete until the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

⁴ We are at a turning point of Church history, another Reformation time, and the author wishes to note that this is not just so for Anglicans, but for the whole Christian Church.

long. Nevertheless, events in the Communion since Lambeth 1998 and General Convention 2003⁵ result in the questions being asked and in the devastating conclusion that we are a global Communion with a colonial structure.

Instruments of Unity/ Instruments of Communion & An Anglican Covenant

Anglicanism's systems – all of them – emerged as Godly responses to historic needs. The office of the Archbishop of Canterbury came into being as Pope Gregory I (d.604) envisioned a means to end divisions between Latin and Celtic Churches. The Lambeth Conference (1867) came into being in response to a theological controversy over Biblical interpretation.⁶ The Anglican Consultative Council (1968) and the Primates Meeting (1978) both came into being as numerous British Colonies became independent nations, and as regional churches heretofore organically part of the Church of England suddenly found themselves independent national churches.

What “instrument” will now arise? Some answer, “a covenant.” Yes, of course, a covenant is required to re-establish the doctrinal-liturgical bedrock of the Communion that the “Thirty-nine Articles, the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal” long provided, provided as a part of Anglicanism's Reformation Settlement that has now disintegrated.⁷ We must – and we will – work on an acceptable form of such an Anglican Covenant here. But the ecclesiological piece of a Global (Post-Colonial) Settlement – the role heretofore played by the British (Western) Church systems (“instruments”) of our collapsed Reformation Settlement – must also emerge. Why? Because the Church is organic. Because councils are of the *esse* of the Church, and particularly so for Anglicanism. Because the role first played by the English Parliament, and successively by the Lambeth Conference and the Primates Meeting, cannot be dispensed with in any coherent future for Anglicanism.

The African Anglican Bishops Conference of October 2004, convened at Lagos, Nigeria, was gathered by the Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa, not by any of the present Instruments of Unity. An oft-repeated theme was “Africa comes of Age.” What happens as a global Anglican Communion comes of age? Is the result thirty-eight autonomous Provinces united only by their history? (The clear and unmodified use of the words “autonomous” and “autonomy” describing the Provinces in the St. Andrew's draft of the proposed Anglican Communion Covenant delivers such a future.⁸) Or is Anglicanism to renew itself as a globally coherent Christian Church? What new Instrument of Unity – what new Instrument of Communion – will emerge to meet the needs of an interdependent and coherent Christian Body, reliably evangelical, catholic and pentecostal across the globe? If the interdependent rather than autonomous road is chosen

⁵ The 74th General Convention of the Episcopal Church (USA), Minneapolis, Minnesota, August 2003

⁶ U.S. and Canadian bishops appealed to the Archbishop of Canterbury to call a conference to consider matters of Scriptural interpretation (and the limits of episcopal innovation) raised by a bishop's teaching in Natal, South Africa, the so-called “Colenzo Affair.”

⁷ See above, under “Structural Obstacles”

⁸ The word “autonomous” is used in sections 3.1.2, and “autonomy” in 3.2.1 and 3.2.2. See further the use of “request” and “not binding on a Church” in 3.2.5.e.

– dare we say the “strait and narrow” rather than the “wide” – what post-colonial mechanism (or mechanisms) will emerge, as emerge it (they) surely must?

It is in the shadow of these questions – What future will we Anglicans choose? What post-colonial settlement will or will not emerge? – that GAFCON meets. What kind of doctrinal-liturgical bedrock – what kind of Covenant – will there be? What will it take to restore the Holy Scripture as “ultimate rule and standard” among us? What kind of ecclesiological system – what new Instrument of Unity (Communion) – will emerge? The Global Anglican Future Conference has not been called to answer these questions, but to make a significant contribution.

We can, and will, have a great deal to say about the form of the Covenant, for we who meet here represent the majority, and ever growing mainstream, of the Global Communion. We can have a great deal to say because the doctrinal-liturgical ground of Church life (the role any Covenant would serve) is meant to be settled, at least relatively speaking. (As I have already pointed out, the last Settlement held for 300 years in this area as in each of the other two.)

The Scriptural ground is, of course, meant to be permanently fixed. There is no one here who does not agree in this, though Lambeth will include many from my part of the world who would, and will, argue the point.

The ecclesiological ground of a Global Settlement is the more elusive piece. But surely an answer will be begun here. That we are meeting together as pilgrims in this Global Anglican Future Conference – just as the African Anglican Bishops Conference four years ago gave similar witness – is a sign that some answer to the question of a globally appropriate Anglican ecclesiological future must already be in God’s mind. This is how our God has worked with us Anglicans since at least the end of the sixth century. That this Global Anglican Future Conference was called in the present Communion crisis – a systems crisis fully described in Archbishop Peter Akinola’s “A Most Agonizing Journey”⁹ – plants the inescapable question: “What Instrument of Unity will emerge to serve a Global Anglican Communion come of age?” Sometimes a question is enough.

A Conciliar Instrument

What emerges as an ecclesiological structure, we may be sure, will be neither British nor Western. What emerges, we may be just as sure, will represent the conciliarism that has characterized Anglicanism at its best. Ironically, the Lambeth Conferences from 1867 to 1998 represented that conciliar ecclesiology in significant measure. Similarly, the instinct that put the resolution of the North American crisis of 2002/2003 into the hands of the Primates Meeting was in the right direction, the direction of the global Anglican future. Just as at Lambeth 1998 where the reality of a global Communion was unmistakable – with its non-Western hegemony and its uncompromised biblical and

⁹ “A Most Agonizing Journey Toward Lambeth 2008,” in *The Way, The Truth, and The Life: Theological Resources for a Pilgrimage to a Global Anglican Future*, Latimer Trust (2008)

missionary commitments – the Primates Meeting actually represented where the Anglican Communion in its historic evolution necessarily had to move.

A huge part of what brings us here to GAFCON is that the process of resolution of the present crisis – a process begun at the Primates Meeting of 2003 (Lambeth) and continued through the Primates Meeting of 2007 (Dar es Salaam) – was suddenly aborted. The conciliar instinct that produced repeated global consensus about how the crisis was to be addressed, that expressed the *global* will of the Communion in dealing with the North American problem, was abruptly terminated. In this termination the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the role of the interests of the Western and progressive Provinces were central.

Archbishop Williams remarked at the beginning of the Dar es Salaam Primates Meeting: “It is all a question of who blinks first.”¹⁰ Neither the American orthodox, nor the Global South Primates, nor history would blink. Not then, not now. The so-called “blink” has taken place, but it has taken place in the re-definition of the Lambeth Conference as a place of managed conversation, not conciliar decision, and in the recognition that to call the Primates Meeting together ever again would be to confirm that the Communion’s engine has shifted to the South. Re-defining the Lambeth Conference and not calling the Primates Meeting are exercises of colonial control. But the inexorable shift of power from Britain and the West to the Global South cannot be stopped, and some conciliar instrument reflective of the shift is bound to emerge as the Reformation Settlement gives way to a Global (post-colonial) Settlement.

THE NORTH AMERICAN SCENE

The morning plenaries here in Jordan are designed to look at Anglican Identity and Witness, as well as Challenges to that Identity and that Witness. Each morning, after worship and Biblical exposition, presenters from different parts of our global Communion will focus these matters, both generally and with specific reference to the region from which they come. The present global crisis has its roots in North America, so it is I who have been asked by the Conference leadership to give this opening address.

Back in 1967, Dr. John Stott, defending his commitment to spend his ministry within the Church of England, spoke these words:

- In conclusion, can we envisage a situation in which orthodox believers feel absolutely obliged to leave? Such an extreme situation might be
- when an issue of first order is at stake, such as deserves the condemnation “antichrist” (1 John 2:22) or “anathema” (Galatians 1: 8-9)
 - when the offending issue is held not by an idiosyncratic minority of individuals but has become the official position of the majority
 - when the majority have silenced the faithful remnant, forbidding them to witness or protest any longer

¹⁰ Luncheon conversation preparing the four American bishops who had been requested to give testimony at the meeting

- when we have conscientiously explored every possible alternative
- when, after a painful period of prayer and discussion, our conscience can bear the weight no longer

Until that day comes, I for one intend to stay in and fight on.¹¹

In the United States and Canada every one of Dr. Stott's conditions has been met. There remains no way to go forward together. One diocese in the U.S. has already separated. Several more will make similar decisions this fall. Hundreds of parishes across the United States have separated from their dioceses, coalescing into sodalities like Rwanda's Anglican Mission in the Americas, Nigeria's Convocation of Anglicans in North America, and the Kenyan, Ugandan and Southern Cone rescue efforts affiliated with the Anglican Communion Network. It is the same story in Canada, on a smaller scale, with both the Network in Canada and the Anglican Coalition in Canada gathering the separating faithful. Priests are deposed for nothing more than being faithful to what the Church has always believed. In a few cases, a similar fate has befallen bishops who have acted to serve those who are bravely standing. In one case, my own, the Episcopal Church actually proposes to remove me for "abandonment of the Communion of the Church" just for speaking out and for drawing together the fragments while still a sitting diocesan bishop.

Contrast this with the "mainstream" of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada. Bishops and dioceses continue to authorize – or to look the other way – at the liturgical blessing of same sex partnerships. Bishops and priests continue to question the unique saving work of Jesus Christ. Human experience is exalted as superior to Scriptural authority. Religious syncretism abounds in supposedly Christian worship, not least at the consecration of bishops. Even occult practices go uncondemned when they surface within parish life.

Consider these offerings from the website of the Diocese of Northern Michigan, whose much-admired late bishop Jim Kelsey was praised by Katharine Jefferts Schori as one of the "bright stars" of the Episcopal Church:

- each and every one of us is an only begotten child of God
- everything, without exception, is the living presence, or incarnation of God
- we affirm the sacramental gift of all persons, their Christ-ness, especially those who are gay and lesbian, and reject any moratorium on the blessing of same-sex unions and consents of gay bishops
- we invite all to God's table
- everyone is the sacred word of God, in whom Christ lives

These statements were affirmed on 11 August 2007 by the Standing Committee (the present Ecclesiastical Authority of the diocese), the Core Team, the Diocesan Council and the General Convention Deputation. Heterodoxy abounds, goes officially unchallenged, while many, like myself, have been judged to have abandoned the Communion of such a Church, a Church invited to Lambeth. Remarkable times indeed!

¹¹ John Stott, *The Living Church* (2008), Historical Appendix, pp.164-165

In the fall of 2006, I was asked to address a convocation on the “Future of Anglicanism” at Nashotah House in Wisconsin (with Trinity School for Ministry in my own diocese, one of only two orthodox seminaries left to the Episcopal Church.) One expectation I shared at that time was my belief that some mediated settlement would emerge within a year, a settlement that would separate the two irreconcilable factions of the U.S. Church. I could not have been more mistaken. I did not believe that the litigiousness and mean-spiritedness of the progressives (the “winner-takes all” attitude and “give no quarter” battle tactics) could possibly be continued among Christians. I could foresee the call from the Dar es Salaam Primates Meeting to halt the lawsuits, for that is what one would expect Christians to do. But I could not foresee that the call would fall on deaf ears. The majority leadership of the Episcopal Church manifests an ever-hardening heart. Even lay vestry members are sued. It is ironic indeed that episcopal leaders who undertake or defend such actions will be welcomed at Lambeth, and that so many here, in conscience, have decided they cannot go. In the States, as in Canada, there is no prospect of an end to legal wrangling, to confiscation of what faithful congregations have long held, and to blatant dis-regard for what Scripture and the Communion have asked on this, as on so many other matters.

Good News from North America

The good news from North America has to do with ever-increasing cooperation among orthodox Anglicans. The “separate ecclesiastical structure in North America” called for at Kigali by the Global South Primates in November 2006 is not far off.

When founded in 2003, the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes (Anglican Communion Network, or just The Network) was given the vision of “a biblical, missionary and united Anglicanism in North America.” We were given clarity that our work was to connect all the orthodox together, whether still inside the Episcopal Church or, increasingly, outside in various fragments as rescue efforts were undertaken by various Anglican Provinces. Local circumstances and missionary relationships were producing Rwandan, Ugandan, Nigerian, Kenyan and Southern Cone enclaves all across the continent. It was also clear that several of the historically separated Anglican bodies – the “Continuing Churches” and Reformed Episcopal Church – shared the same Faith as all the rest of us.

In the spring of 2004 the lead bishops of six orthodox groupings – the Network, the Anglican Mission in America, the Reformed Episcopal Church, the American Anglican Council, Forward in Faith North America, and the Anglican Province in America – announced our intention “to make common cause for the gospel of Jesus Christ and for a biblical, missionary and united Anglicanism in North America.”¹² Others have since joined us, including the congregations of Kenya, Uganda and Southern Cone, the Anglican Network in Canada, the Anglican Coalition in Canada and the Federation of Anglican Churches in the Americas. All, excepting only the Anglican Province in America, have ratified a common charter and theological statement. In December 2007,

¹² Letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Trinity Sunday, 2004

we held our first Annual Council and elected a Moderator (me), General Secretary (a Canadian priest), and Treasurer (a Nigerian lay woman). These officers, together with the lead bishops, form the executive committee of the Common Cause Partnership, meeting regularly (by telephone and in person) to build for a common future, a federation of jurisdictions within a united and recognizable Anglican Province. The College of Bishops of this Partnership assembled for the first time at Pittsburgh in September 2007. The mood was electric. That College of Bishops assembles for the second time here at GAFCON.

Scores of new congregations have been planted, in addition to all the separating congregations mentioned above. Regional clusters of congregations for regional mission are coming together across the jurisdictional lines of the Common Cause fragments. Efforts in formation of children, youth and adults are already underway using the “Anglican Catechism in Outline.”. A common “Church Finder” and deployment system are under construction. A consultation on “Evangelization and Islam,” in cooperation with the Barnabas Fund, will gather key leaders from every Common Cause Partner this fall. A major relief and development agency – the Anglican Relief and Development Fund (ARDF) – is in place and doing millions of dollars of work in partnership with orthodox Anglicans around the globe. All the missionary organizations have been bound together in Anglican Global Mission Partners (AGMP). Anglican Awakenings – about which this conference will learn more – have already been held or planned in several cities (following on evangelistic training events sponsored all across the continent by the Network) and the Billy Graham Organization has partnered with the Awakening movement for what, by God’s grace, might prove to be significant revival. The Common Cause effort is already bearing significant fruit.

For those who say that we will never be able to come together – that our divisions and our frontier independence run too deep – we point to all that, with the Lord’s help and with repentance and humility, has been achieved to date. We are determined to become submitted Anglicans, taking our rightful place with each other and among our global partners for a biblical, missionary and united future. It is the TEC (The Episcopal Church) and the ACC (Anglican Church of Canada) lot who are embracing the role of “unsubmitted Anglicans” and that lot whose future is no future.

The Common Cause Partnership remains challenged by our divisions over the ordination of women. But we have become fully convinced that Lambeth 1988 gave us the way forward in describing “two integrities” within our Communion. We are determined to respect and honor one another and to work through the process of reception – be it “yea” or “nay” – in the wider fellowship represented here, where both integrities are very much in evidence. We are determined as North Americans to no longer do things independent of the wider fellowship which is our Global Anglican Future.

The news among the orthodox in North America is very good. The progressives may be battering us in every way conceivable, and we may be enduring much loss of material goods and standing, but the trajectory of the orthodox is moving together for the first time

since perhaps the American Revolution of the 18th century. May our Lord both protect and prosper us in the future He has for us.

ANGLICAN IDENTITY AND WITNESS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In the very difficult days of recent Church life in North America, I have grown fond of calling my priests and people to being themselves at their best. There is a wonderful tombstone epitaph from the period of the English Civil War:

Sir Richard Baxter
In the Worst of Times
He was the Best of Men

I pray that those who follow us will write something like that about us. To be the best of men and women in difficult days will require not only human resolve and tenacity, but the grace of the Holy Spirit as selfless servants of the Lord Jesus.

So what are our characteristics when we are at our best? What are the great hallmarks of our identity as orthodox Anglicans? I think the hallmarks are the same whether we find ourselves in North America or Australasia or Africa or South America or Europe. I want to turn now to a consideration of these hallmarks or characteristics. I want to comment on five aspects of what will mark us 21st century Global Anglicans at our best. This is where I will choose to end.

Biblical Christians

Anglicans are “under the Word.” That is the struggle that formed us in the Reformation of the 16th Century and this is the struggle that defines us in the Reformation of the 21st Century. It is because of the Word that we are gathering in this Global Anglican Future Conference. It is because of the Word that we are on pilgrimage here. The Articles call the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments “God’s Word written” and assert “sufficiency” assessing them as “contain[ing] all things necessary to salvation.”¹³ Our greatest theological thinker, Richard Hooker, gives Scripture the primacy, just as we do: there is no “three-legged stool” here, there never was. We interpret the Scriptures with reference to how Christians in the early centuries understood them (the Tradition) and we bring all the tools of scholarly understanding to bear on them (Reason), but finally Holy Scripture must have the last word, on its own terms. As was so ably pointed out in CAPA’s “Road to Lambeth,” the Anglican Communion is at a crossroads. One road leads to compromising Biblical truth, the road to disunity and destruction. This is the road that the Episcopal Church in the USA and the Anglican Church of Canada are now far advanced on. This is the road that Lambeth 2008 considers. The other road embraces

¹³ Article XX; Article VI

“the old, old story” and all its texts. The narrow road leads to God and to life. This is the road about which GAFCON is unequivocal. This is the road of resurgent Anglicanism in the 21st Century.

Mere Christians

The great 20th Century apologist and Anglican C.S. Lewis wrote about “Mere Christianity.” In the last several years, Fitz Alison, author, scholar, and sometime Bishop of South Carolina, has, with a group of colleagues, organized annual conferences on “Mere Anglicanism.” The idea being exalted here is that Anglicans at their best have no distinctives beyond what is representative of all Christians, merely Christian. We are evangelical in the way evangelicals are Christian. We are catholic in the way catholics are Christians. We are pentecostal (charismatic) in the way pentecostals are Christian. Anglicans are all three of these streams. Anglicanism in the 21st century will recover our place as a bridge between the Churches. The historic accidents that combined to place Anglicanism as a “middle way,” a *via media*, between Rome and Geneva, between Christian West and Christian East, and between the Holy Spirit outbreaks at Azusa Street and Duquesne University are a gift of God to us. The gift is re-embraced whenever we Anglicans humble ourselves in our vocation as “mere Christians,” simply evangelical and catholic and pentecostal claiming nothing peculiar of our own.

The distortion of Anglicanism in the West – the deceit the Enemy has sown – is that Anglicanism should be the bridge between the Church and the world. Anywhere on the old bridge – the bridge among Christians – one was always a Christian. Not very far over the new bridge Christianity is soon so badly distorted and quickly compromised that those who begin to cross are soon not recognizably Christian anymore. GAFCON knows on which bridge it is to travel. Lambeth 2008 flirts with the bridge to that new destination toward which U.S. and Canadian Anglicanism is well advanced. 21st century Global Anglicans will be “merely Christian” in the very fullest sense.

Missionary Christians

Reaching the “uttermost part of the earth,” as directed by our Lord in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, has always been a challenging undertaking. Whether an unreached people-group in some remote place, or the children of some urban garbage-dump, or the secularist, materialist unbeliever of the Old or New Worlds, Christian mission is not for the faint-hearted, weak-kneed, or uncommitted. Anglican missionaries and evangelists have been cultural transplants and martyrs of both the red and white varieties in every age since the third century. Sacrifices for Jesus Christ have cost those who have borne the gospel their homelands, their comforts, their health and, not infrequently, their lives. No less is being asked of us. We who will bear the gospel to the lost of the 21st century can expect no less. We Anglicans must again be what we have always been at our best before. Moreover, not only unavoidable confrontation with

Islamist militancy, but the presentation of Gospel claims to Muslims and those of every other Faith group, will be among the greatest challenges of the century ahead.

The universalist tendencies of the revisionist West, tendencies that accept “many ways” to God over and against the “one way” Jesus Christ, tendencies that reject the need to proclaim the gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:15), cannot and will not be accepted among us. 21st century Global Anglicans must be vigorous and indefatigable missionaries of the one and only Savior and Lord.

Prayerbook Christians

One of the great losses of Anglicanism in the 20th century was the Book of Common Prayer. We were what we prayed. *Lex orandi, lex credendi*. Until the 1960's everywhere in the world we prayed the same words, even if in translation. The theological and ascetical foundation of Anglicanism must be recovered in the 21st century. There can be no Global Settlement without it. How we can have widely varying liturgical texts across the Provinces of the Communion, and still have a common language for prayer and a consistent and reliable theology, is one of the greatest challenges before us.

Like the emergence of a new Instrument of Unity adequate to a Global Settlement of Anglicanism, some successor collection to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer must emerge, to guarantee Anglicanism's coherence and glorious (and reliable) life of worship. But how this shall come about is in God's gift alone, yet come about it must. This, too, is the future of 21st century Anglicans who are themselves at their best.

Apostolic Christians

The Christian Church is to be “one holy catholic and apostolic.” These are the “marks” of the Church as proclaimed in the Nicene Creed. Our Lutheran brothers and sisters would say that Christians are apostolic because we proclaim “the Faith once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3) The catholic traditions of both East and West would say that we are apostolic because we have apostles, bishops.

As Anglicans we can point to true apostles through the ages: Patrick and Cuthbert and Swithun and Wulfstan and Jackson Kemper and George Selwyn and Janini Luwum: each bore the story as a servant of their people and their Master.

These bishops were able to speak for their people and for their Lord. Servant bishops are those whose actions do not get in the way of the story.

The tradition that a bishop could speak for his diocese (his people and his clergy) and for the whole Church has to do with bishops who are servants rather than princes. This is the kind of episcopate where actions do not get in the way of the story, but rather confirm it. Jesus matched his words, and so must we.

Anglicanism depends on the quality of its bishops, because it is led by its bishops. Anglicanism is neither papal, nor confessional, it is rather apostolic and conciliar. And that is why we are gathered here in the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON). And that is why Lambeth has always gathered. And that is why various synods and councils of bishops have always been so important. It will be no less so for Anglicans of the 21st century.

HOPE AND A FUTURE

The whole world is watching. This gathering is about the future.

In my travels around North America this spring it has become increasingly clear just how much faithful Anglicans are looking to what we will do here. In contrast, there is almost no popular expectation surrounding Lambeth.

We are here on pilgrimage. With the author of the Letter to the Hebrews, we know ourselves to be strangers and exiles here. We are headed to a lasting city.

We know that everything we do has to do with the story: the old, old story. Finally, it is not about England, or Canterbury, though these relationships matter to us. Our life, our witness, our leadership, our pilgrimage here is all about Jesus.

What comes out of this gathering we cannot predict. But we are confident that God is not done with Anglicanism. We are confident that GAFCON is one piece of what God already has in mind as part of a Global Settlement of Anglicanism. This Global Settlement of Anglicanism we also understand to be but one aspect of a 21st century Reformation of the whole Christian Church.

It is tempting to be impatient. But impatience is just that, a temptation. Impatience does not become servants. We will do our part here. We will work hard here. We will build relationships here. We will focus on the story here. We will try to get out of God's way here. We will say our prayers here. We will dream here. But finally we will entrust everything to our Master here. Our God is sovereignly re-forming his Church, of that we may be sure, and of that this Global Anglican Future Conference is an unmistakable sign. The Prophet Jeremiah has a word for us: "I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." (Jer.29:11) We do well also to remember St. Paul's assurance at the end of I Thessalonians: "He who has called [us] is faithful, and He will do it." [5:24]

This promise is true, as are all the promises, not least for us Anglicans.