

GAFCON: Why and Whither

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Preacher: Canon Dr. J.I. Packer

- [0 : 00] Holy Father, we thank you for the ministry of your Holy Spirit. Grant us the blessing of a right judgment in all things through the illumination of the Spirit, we pray.
- And so, bring us together, keep us together, keep our vision and our purpose clear and strong. For the glory of our Savior and the honor of his name. Amen.
- Well, let me say at once that though I was not at Gafcon, as Bill has already observed, I have taken what I hope was an intelligent interest in Gafcon.
- I think that Gafcon may prove itself a very significant event, though only time will tell. Well, we have, of course, had reports here at St. John's from folk who did go to Gafcon.
- And it may be that the things that I say this morning will be things that you've already heard from them. Well, if so, I apologize prettily right at the outset.
- [1 : 28] I am going to give you the perspective that is mine, for better or for worse. And I hope that I may say something that will be of interest, even if a lot of it turns out to be repetition of things you've heard better expressed, perhaps, from other people.
- My notes are headed Gafcon, why and wither. And there you have the two questions which I seek to answer in this presentation.
- You have, I hope, all of you, got in front of you the two pages of two sides of, well, what is it in fact?
- It's a state, it's a state, it's a, sorry, it's a printing of the documents from Gafcon, done actually by the body that calls itself forward in faith, North America.
- No significance attaches to that fact. It's simply that their printing of the material was convenient for Xeroxing. So that's what you have in front of you.
- [2 : 48] There was, in the statement, preamble and conclusions, which you haven't got in front of you, but the heart of the matter is here, that you have.
- And if you read The Anglican Planet, which sometimes I'm inclined to think is the best thing that has come out of all the internal conflicts in the Church of Canada over this last seven years, again, a great deal of what I'm going to say will be familiar to you already.
- And if you don't read The Anglican Planet, well, let me simply tell you, it's time you did. It is a very good journal in its own right, and it keeps one posted on all the things that folk placed as we are placed in the conflict need to know.
- Now, I'm going to try to answer three questions. The first is a preliminary one, but it's fundamental. Why Anglican? Second question, why GAFCON?
- And third question, where now? But let me begin with the preliminary question, to which I've spoken before in this gathering, and so I expect that what I say now will sound familiar.
- [4 : 15] But I think it's very fundamental that if we are asked why, in light of all the conflict, are you staying with Anglicanism in any form at all?

Why not simply walk away from Anglicanism and be shot at the whole trouble? It's important that it's fundamental that we should have a good answer. So I'm going to remind you, that's all it is, because of what I've said to learners' exchange before, but I'm going to remind you what I say in answer to that question.

And if it resonates with you, well, I shall be happy. And if it doesn't resonate with you, well, honestly, I hope that on reflection you'll find that it's beginning to.

Anyway, here is my personal, principled answer to the question, Why Anglican? I come at it as what the world calls an evangelical.

That is, a person who seeks to be biblically controlled in all his thinking about God and godliness. And coming at the question this way, I answer thus.

[5 : 32] First, let's be clear that we know what Anglicanism is. It's a form of Christianity, which we may describe in family terms as an association of provinces within which are dioceses, within which are local congregations.

And it grew in its present form out of the missionary work done by the Church of England in the last century.

And it now is a fellowship which nominally has something like 80 million members worldwide. In fact, that number includes about 25 million in England who are sleeping Anglicans.

They get baptized and married and buried in the Anglican Church, and they put Anglican in the space where they're on forms, where they're to answer the question, What is your religion?

But their Anglicanism doesn't get any further than that. They are sleepers, and it makes for realistic sense to discount them.

[6 : 56] So, let me adjust my figure. There are something like 50 million live Anglicans, that is, practicing Anglicans, worshipping Anglicans, believing Anglicans, outreaching Anglicans in different parts of the world, the great majority of whom are in Africa.

And then next comes Asia, Southeast Asia in particular. And as for what I call the Old West, that's Britain and North America, both sides of the border, and Australasia, well, they tag along, or we tag along behind, with a maximum of 5 million worshippers of different stripes.

And we are by no means the majority, as you can see. And the question of whether we, as the Old West, have any right to think of ourselves as leaders of the Communion, that question is very much disputed these days.

But that's what Anglicanism is, and it's biblically shaped, with the 39 articles guarding that biblical commitment.

It is liturgically shaped, with the marvelous heritage of the Book of Common Prayer, English version 1662, as a resource.

[8 : 34] And it is episcopally overseen. Every diocese has a bishop, and every province has an archbishop. Yes, well, you say, I knew that that was what Anglicanism was like.

Get on with it, all right. Why be Anglican? That's the second half of the preliminary question. Why become an Anglican? If you came to Christ in another Christian community, why stay an Anglican, with all the present upheavals going on?

I give you a three-fold answer. Because, first of all, there's abundance of food here. Preaching, teaching the Bible, and using the liturgy for instruction in godliness.

This is the central Anglican way. And that means that we are ingesting good food from God all the time. So there's reason number one.

Abundance of food in Anglicanism. Second, there is a wealth of wisdom in Anglicanism. Right from the 16th century, the Reformation period in England, Anglicans have been, I think the word fits, thoughtful, as distinct from random, or, how shall I say it, impulsive in their way of understanding Christian discipleship.

[10 : 17] It is often said that Anglicanism is a rational form of Christianity. Well, it is. And I want to reclaim that word rational from the meaning that it's so often made to carry these days, that is the meaning of rationalistic.

using your reason to shrink the supernatural and diminish the glory of the Bible truths on which Anglican identity and life are based.

It isn't a criticism to say that Anglicanism is a sober form of Christianity. You know, in the confession at the beginning of morning and evening prayer, we pray that God will enable us henceforth to live a godly, righteous, and sober life.

I hope that word doesn't make you wince. Sobriety is a virtue. Sobriety is a matter of keeping your feet on the ground, being thoughtful, and so becoming insightful, and so discerning and holding on to wisdom.

Wisdom for your Christian living. Wisdom for your citizenship. Wisdom for your family. Wisdom for all the relationships in which life places us.

[11 : 40] Well, there's a wealth of wisdom in the Anglican heritage, and that's the second reason, it seems to me, for staying with it. And then, third reason, the Anglican vision of holiness, which runs all the way through the prayer book, seems to me to be wise, insightful, deep diving, and really, how can I say it, really incisive in pointing to the path of true Christ-likeness.

in the prayers, the collects in particular, it's constantly being emphasized that we pray for God to make us humble in his own presence and with each other, for God to make us helpful, abounding in good works for the benefit of others, and that God will make and keep us hopeful, living this life as the journey that it is, remembering that this isn't finally our home down here, we are traveling to heaven, and life on earth is seen in its true proportions only when you see it from the standpoint of, when you look at it from the standpoint of eternity.

Well, a prayer book will induce in us this frame of mind, humble, helpful, and hopeful, and here you have basic elements in the holiness or sanctification which the prayer book builds on the grace of justification, God forgiving and accepting sinners, adopting us into his family, and saying in effect, well, now that I've saved you, you're my children and I want you to exhibit the family likeness.

I want you to be like Jesus. So that's your task from now on. Well, the prayer book picks all that up, you see, and that vision of holiness is a third quality about the Anglican heritage that resolves me at any rate to stay with Anglicanism as a biblically rich, I think, biblically the richest heritage in Christendom for anybody.

And I hold to this despite the problems that arise from, how can I say it, the downside of two strengths, basically they are strengths which belong to the Anglican tradition.

[14 : 30] Most strengths have a downside in the form of corresponding weaknesses and I'm afraid that that's the story here. Strength one, Anglicanism as a form of Christianity is comprehensive.

Comprehensive, first of all, in the positive sense that it embraces all Christians who are agreed on the fundamentals and distinguishes carefully and conscientiously the things that are not fundamental and that ought not to divide believers.

In other Christian traditions, comprehensiveness is not thought out in that way and people are denied fellowship if they disagree with you on secondary matters and that's not good.

But in Anglicanism, very conscientiously, the question is always being asked when we run across disagreements, now is this a primary or a secondary matter?

If it's a secondary matter, we'll take it in stride. Only if it's a primary matter, as for instance in some of the disagreements between ourselves and the Roman Catholic communion, only when it's a primary matter must we walk apart.

[15 : 55] Of course, you, hearing me say that, you think immediately of the dispute in New Westminster Diocese as to whether sanctioning the gay way is, even for those who disagree with it, a primary or a secondary matter.

The diocesan line, as you know, has been, even if you do disagree with it, it's a secondary matter. And we, in conscience, have had to reply, no, with great respect, it isn't a secondary matter, it's a primary matter involving the doctrine of the gospel, quite specifically, the doctrine of repentance.

As you know, the gospel summons us to faith in Christ and repentance towards God. And repentance, according to the New Testament, means abstaining from homosexual behavior throughout your discipleship.

And, well, you know how the debate has gone on from there. So, that's the downside of Anglican comprehensiveness, the tendency there is on the part of some Anglicans, there are always Anglicans who are doing this, some Anglicans to treat primary matters as of secondary importance, and to tolerate the really intolerable, and to allow the gospel, the terms of the gospel, and thereby the authority of the Bible, which sets the gospel before us, to be compromised.

But, nonetheless, the idea of comprehensiveness, not, that is, excluding from fellowship any who hold the basics, that idea is a good and right idea in my judgment, and I affirm that it was an Anglican strength before it became an Anglican weakness.

[18 : 02] And then, the second strength, which has become, if not a weakness, at least, a very problematical reality, is the connectedness of the Anglican communion.

We call ourselves a communion, because we see ourselves as a single family, the family of God, in its Anglican expression here on earth, and all the 50 million of us are to think of ourselves as brothers and sisters, and the connectedness ought to be visible in the sense of every congregation welcoming Christians from every other congregation, every diocese welcoming ministers from every other diocese, and all the bishops being together as a consolidated fellowship of safeguarders of the doctrine, and disciplinary officers keeping the churches in shape.

And, well, you know, we are at sixes and sevens at the moment because of heretical bishops in the Old West.

The result of there being heretical bishops in the Old West is disorder in provinces, disorder in dioceses, and disorder passed on to parishes.

At every level, I use again the phrase that I used a moment ago, you have the problem of the intolerable being tolerated, and that makes for overall disorder and confusion.

[19 : 57] Well, I only mention these things in order now to repeat. I take the comprehensiveness of the Anglican ethos and the connectedness of the Anglican family as proper, as strengths, as virtues, and that is, I think, you see, that the connectedness which is ours in the body of Christ and belongs to every other Christian in the body of Christ also, that connectedness ought to be expressed in communion form in the churches around the world.

Well, I say I take comprehensiveness and connectedness to be virtues, but alas, at the present time they cause confusion, and I have to acknowledge the confusion as do you.

All right, that's the background now, and for me it's an Anglican commitment which is disfigured by the disorders that I've mentioned.

To my second question then, assuming a thorough going commitment to Anglicanism as the excellent thing that I've just argued that it is, why GAFCON?

Well, the statement from GAFCON did, in fact, set the summoning of GAFCON in a global Anglican context by pinpointing three facts, three unhappy facts, which, so it was claimed, have made GAFCON necessary.

[21 : 49] Let me read this from the GAFCON statement about the global Anglican context. The first fact is the acceptance and promotion within the provinces of the Anglican communion of a different gospel which is contrary to the apostolic gospel.

That puts it hard, but I think truly. This false gospel, the statement continues, undermines the authority of God's word written and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the author of salvation from sin, death, and judgment.

And so it goes on. In 2003, it finishes, and here we are at the top of the first page that I gave you.

Take that back. In 2003, this false gospel led to the consecration of a bishop living in a homosexual relationship. and you could add in the old west, it leads to the tolerating of the gay way and even the blessing of it as if it were a form of holiness.

The second fact, which may get necessary, is the declaration by provincial bodies in the global south that they are out of communion with bishops and churches that promote the false gospel.

[23 : 06] These declarations have resulted in a realignment whereby faithful Anglican Christians have left existing territorial parishes, dioceses, and provinces in certain western churches and become members of other dioceses and provinces all within the Anglican communion.

Well, we know that, of course, because we at St. John's under pressure have had to do it. And then the third fact, making Gafcon necessary, is the manifest failure of the communion instruments to exercise discipline in the face of overt heterodoxy.

The Episcopal Church USA and the Anglican Church of Canada, in proclaiming this false gospel, have consistently defied the 1998 Lambeth statement of biblical moral principles.

That's the statement that affirms the goodness of sex, the sanctity of marriage and the impropriety of homosexual behavior.

Goes on, to make matters worse, there has been a failure to honor promises of discipline, the authority of the primates meeting has been undermined and the Lambeth Conference, that's the Lambeth Conference 2008, has been structured so as to avoid any hard decisions.

[24 : 31] and of course we know that that is true, the Lambeth Conference of 2008, the conference just finished, was explicitly structured so that there would be no decisions and no guidelines coming out of it.

You might then ask, well, was it worth having it then? And the question hangs in the air. It certainly was a non-event as far as the future of the communion is concerned.

And the Gaffcon statement continues, having reviewed those three facts, you see. Sadly, this crisis has torn the fabric of the communion in such a way that it cannot simply be patched back together.

At the same time, it's brought together many Anglicans across the globe into personal and pastoral relationships and a fellowship which is faithful to biblical teaching, more representative of the demographic distribution of global Anglicanism today and stronger as an instrument of effective mission, ministry, and social involvement.

That is saying that the leadership claimed by the Old West has really forfeited its claim by not giving the leadership that it claims to give, while Anglicans from younger provinces are in fact giving leads, practicing effective mission and ministry, and changing the social involvement, perhaps I better not say changing, certainly exercising influence in the social situations of their countries as distinct from tamely following the social conventions nations of those countries in the way that the provinces of the Old West are.

[26 : 30] At least this is how I see it. I think the GAFCON preliminary statement is absolutely on target. Well, I hope you at least understand what I'm saying, whether you will agree, I don't know, we'll find out when the discussion time comes.

Just a couple of footnotes. Remember, as we discuss all this, that in Africa and Asia, Christianity remains a minority religion, up against Hinduism and Islam, Hinduism, primarily the force set against Christianity in Asia, Islam, the primary force set against Christianity in Africa.

I say minority religion, even though Christianity in these parts has a much larger, how shall I say, membership, affiliation of supporters, active supporters, than any part of the Old West has, and Christianity therefore is strong in these countries in a way that in the Old West it has ceased to be strong.

But nonetheless, Christian evangelism is up against Hinduism and Islam, and neither Hinduism nor Islam has any time for homosexual partnerships as if they were normal and natural to men and women and if the church, the church of England, well, we call it the Anglican church in that country, should do what here in North America has been done and profess itself to embrace homosexual patterns of behavior as a form of holiness, well, the Christian church would be mocked, the Christian church would be sneered at, and mission, world outreach, in these, Christian outreach with the gospel in these countries would be made far more difficult because Christianity would have forfeited cultural respect.

So, you must remember that this is a very existential matter for the primates and other leaders of churches in Africa and Asia in a way that it isn't for us in the Old West, where, as I said, the church is tamely following the culture in this particular matter.

[29 : 18] And then the second footnote has to do with the mysterious phrase instruments of unity. The GAFCON statement says that the instrument from well, no effective action has been taken by the instruments of unity to discipline those Anglican provinces that are out of line, like our own.

And that phrase, instruments of unity, it's a phrase that has only come to be current within the last few years. It was never used, I think, before the so-called Windsor report of whenever it was, 2003 or 2004.

The instruments of unity anyway, number four, let me list them, the Archbishop of Canterbury in his personal role, as the focus of Anglican fellowship historically, the Anglican Consultative Council, which meets periodically, represents the whole communion, the Lambeth Conference, in which all the bishops meet every ten years, and the Primates meeting, which is distinct from the Primates, of whom there are, what is it, 42, I think, something like that, in the Anglican communion.

These are the archbishops of the provinces. The Primates regularly meet, and the Primates meeting is distinct from the ACC and from Lambeth. Well, these four realities were labeled the instruments of unity in the Windsor Report, the thought being that through the consultations which are generated within these circles, a consensus on faith and morals in disputed matters will be achieved, and then that consensus will be taken back to the various provinces and passed down to the parishes, and so we shall be together in these matters of faith and morals, and unity will have been retained.

If anyone at this point pipes up and says, hey, but wait a minute, Anglican unity is administrative only, that is a matter of all of us staying together and sort of breathing together, Anglican unity, however, doesn't necessarily rest on agreement about matters of faith and morals, then the proper response is to say, well, then Anglican unity is a fraud.

[32 : 17] By biblical standards, that sort of togetherness is not unity. Unity in the Bible is first and foremost unity in the truth, truth that God has revealed and taught, truth that our Lord Jesus Christ revealed and taught, truth that is embodied in the Holy Scriptures, which in their totality are truth from God.

Anglican unity without agreement on matters of faith and morality is a fraud. Well, I say that to you, and again, I realize I am challenging you to ask yourselves whether you agree with me or not.

I'm deliberately talking in a provocative way in order to make sure that we're all of us thinking together, whatever the outcome of our thinking is. Well, now, Gafcon was called in order to deal with this situation, and the essence of what Gafcon achieved is all expressed in the Jerusalem Declaration and in the commitment based on it, which you've got on page two of what you've been handed at the bottom of the page where the heading is Primus Council.

See that? And at the very top of page one, the heading is A Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans. Well, you can see why that heading is appropriate.

The Gafcon constituency, over a thousand people together, with several hundred bishops, the Gafcon constituency identifies itself as a Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans.

[34 : 12] And that word confessing carries all the meaning that the word has carried in Christian circles ever since the 16th century Reformation. Confessing churches are churches which have a creed.

They not only acknowledge the historic creeds from the early centuries, they have a creed of their own, and their domestic creed, as it's called, expresses the truth which they embrace and seek to live by in as full and specific a way as the ordering of their common life requires.

Well, the Anglican document at this point is of course the 39 articles. This is not the moment for me to start celebrating the wisdom that went into the compilation of the articles which are strong, where the church needs to be strong, and which do leave gaps where secondary matters can be, well, they can become matters of differing opinion without Anglican unity being broken.

There's very, very good wise theological judgment, it seems to me, involved in what the articles go strong on and where they leave the gaps. Suffice it to say that with the 39 articles, the, well, the 16th century, of course, it was just the Church of England, the Anglican Church, qualified to be counted among the confessing churches of Christendom, churches of the Reformation, Lutheran and Reformed.

And in fact, in the 16th century, that's how it was. A book of the Reformed Confessions was published by a man named Rogers at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, and the 39 articles take their place along with the other Reformation confessions in that book.

[36 : 25] There's been drift since those days, well, we know that, but the heart of historic Anglicanism is, so I maintain, its confessional heart, that is, the truth which it learns from Scripture and on which explicitly it builds, and at times of crisis, well, the thing to do is to go back to first principles and foundations and it is very good that at this time in our Anglican history, when the church is split over matters of doctrine and morals, we should go back to the 39 articles and remind ourselves of the basic truths on which our historic Anglicanism is based.

Basic truths affirmed in the articles in echo of Holy Scripture and in application to the particular problems of the 16th century, that doesn't mean, however, that the articles have nothing to say to us.

Our task is to appreciate the truths that were being applied then and reapply them today. Not too difficult, is it, as a project?

Not unclear. So, there you have the Gafcon sense of identity, a fellowship of confessing Anglicans.

And they produced the Jerusalem Declaration, which I imagine that you will have seen in some shape or form. I imagine also that if you read it through, you will find that there's little, if anything, in it that is new to you, all the points, the 14 points being made in the Jerusalem Declaration, are points that have been taught and preached and discussed and, to my perception, made matters of agreement in this congregation for years and years.

[38 : 35] So, I'm not going to spend time going in detail through the Jerusalem Declaration. I am simply going to say it is there as a reminder of what confessional Anglicanism means today.

It is there as a standard to which biblical Anglicans, it seems to me, must commit themselves. It is there as a reference point for any discussions that take place involving Anglicans and dealing with matters of doctrine and morality.

So, Gafcon produced the Jerusalem Declaration and there it stands as a rallying point for the future. And this, it seems to me, is potentially a momentous thing to have happened.

So, we get to my question three. Where do we go now? Where does Gafcon or the Gafcon Fellowship go now?

If you look at the bottom half of the second sheet that you've been handed, you will see that the heading is, the first heading is The Road Ahead and the first sentence in the paragraph is, we believe the Holy Spirit has led us during this week in Jerusalem to begin a new work.

[40 : 11] And the first stage in actually performing the new work is specified in the bottom part, the bottom third of that page, where the heading is Primates Council and the first sentence of the first paragraph reads, we, the participants in the Global Anglican Future Conference, do hereby acknowledge the participating Primates of Gafcon who have called us together and encourage them to form the initial Council of the Gafcon Movement.

There is then going to be a movement and there will be a Council of Gafcon leaders with others to oversee and resource that movement.

We look forward to the enlargement of the Council, so it goes on, and we entreat the Primates to organize and expand the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans.

I believe that the Primates, of a dozen of them, who called Gafcon together, have arranged a meeting to take place about now, but I have no details.

I mention that simply to say that what I know encourages me to believe that these Primates are taking seriously the responsibility which the Gafcon statement lays upon them.

[41 : 53] And details are set out for you in the last three little paragraphs, which we don't need to go through because what is said there is simply corollary statements following from the basic fact that there's going to be a council of the Gafcon movement led by the Primates who called the movement together.

Okay, so this is where the Gafcon constituency hopes to go. What problems does it face?

Well, look, there are ongoing problems in the Anglican communion which will take more than the formation of a new executive body, executive right, a leadership body, the Gafcon council, to resolve.

Let me remind you there are three outstanding. the problem of theological standards in the Anglican communion extends to the seminaries and theological colleges of the Anglican provinces where what I call liberalism, I'll speak to that in a moment, but what I call liberalism is deeply entrenched.

Folk who study in theological colleges and seminaries inevitably are to some extent brainwashed. Now that, of course, is a prejudicial word.

[43 : 46] It's never used in talking about seminary education. The word that's used is formed. Formed is the verb and formation is the word, the name given to the process.

we talk gaily in these discussions about the formation of ordinands in seminaries, but you can see that when a person goes into seminary looking to be taught and conscious that he or she needs teaching, I mean teaching that will cover the resources that they need for half a century of ministry, or whatever it's going to be of ministry, well, they are open, very open to the ideas that their professors will share with them, and it would be a remarkable thing if the views, or shall I say prejudices, of the seminary itself and its teachers weren't imparted to them as part of the education they receive, part of their formation, in other words.

Well, things won't be doctrinally straight in the Anglican Communion until liberalism has been exorcised of authentic Gafcon-type Anglicanism.

Well, yes, so it is, but it's a standalone in Australia. No other seminaries are in the least like more. Same as no provinces are in the least like Sydney province, province New South Wales.

Well, this then is going to be an ongoing problem, and debates about doctrine will have to continue, and the process of trying to exorcise the particularly virulent form of liberalism that is found today in the Old West will have to go on for quite a long time, certainly until the present generation of theological teachers has worked its way out through retirement, and the boards which run the colleges have learned the wisdom that they need to learn to appoint henceforth Orthodox Anglican teachers as distinct from any other kind.

[46 : 21] But that's going to take time, and you can't legislate it. You simply have to persuade and persuade and persuade until through retirement, through a new generation of people arising, your point is taken, and so the seminaries and the doctrinal standards of those seminaries change.

Well, I want you to be aware of that fact, friends. It's my trade, seminary teaching, and I'm very conscious that this is a major problem.

I spoke of the particularly virulent form of liberalism that is taught in the seminaries. I can characterize it in a sentence or two like this.

It's a sort of liberalism that stems directly from the teaching of a German theologian named Paul Tillich, who was big potatoes in the States in the middle of the 20th century, and an English theologian, the late John Macquarie, died quite recently, who wrote a Tillich style textbook called Principles of Christian Theology, which established itself as the doctrine textbook in most Anglican seminaries in the Old West, and for all I know is still there.

And Principles of Christian Theology makes no appeal to scripture, following the Tillich trail, its line is rather this, human beings are religious, they can't help it, we're made that way, we're not always conscious of it, but it's a reality, human beings today face cultural problems, every generation faces cultural problems within the cultural state of affairs of which it's part.

[48 : 29] The business of theology is to come alongside people, make them aware that in fact, in their hearts, is religion, that is an awareness of the transcendent, and the recognition that the transcendent calls for reverence and worship, whatever precisely you take the transcendent to be, and then theology's business is to produce answers to the questions that are arising out of the culture.

well, that may sound very grand, but it takes you right away from the real business of theology, which is to listen to holy scripture as the word of God, and then relay what you found God teaching in holy scripture.

That's the historic Christian way, but Tillichian liberalism breaks with it completely. and in systematic theology classes, in seminars these days, in a more or less clear way, the Tillichian approach is being encouraged, and the authentic theological task is being neglected.

The result is clergy who are frightfully sensitive to the culture, and who can't preach because they have nothing to tell the world. Well, I'm sure that you are thinking quite specifically of the things that happen near home in this part of the world, but I don't want to dwell on that.

It would sound bitchy. But in fact, if you want a sort of laboratory example of what I'm talking about, you can find it without going outside the confines of Vancouver.

[50 : 35] Let me leave it at that. So, there's a major problem that will take years to be finally resolved regarding the orthodoxy and morality of the Anglican communion as a whole.

If, of course, you cut the knot by forming, as perhaps, well, as I think, Gafcon actually is looking to do, forming an inner circle of the Anglican communion in which orthodoxy of doctrine and right-mindedness of morality are maintained, and you relegate the Old West to the outer circle, it's been suggested, and as I said, the Gafcon statement is certainly compatible with that and I suspect is looking in that direction, well, that would cut the knot, that would resolve the problem quickly, but that would produce a structural, that is a communion problem for the future.

And it isn't a state of affairs, really, that one wants to see, is it? I don't. So, there's that whole area, which is an ongoing problem area, and then there's another problem area which has broken surface in discussion quite recently, and that is the position and significance of the Archbishop of Canterbury in the Anglican communion.

Well, here, I suppose I had better give my testimony and set the record straight. This summer, I was speaking in East Bourne, East Bourne, England, at a meeting, trying to put a congregation, some 200 people, put them in the picture regarding these conflicts which produced GAFCON, and in the question time, at the after my address, somebody piped up with the question, if you could have a one-on-one five-minute interview with the Archbishop of Canterbury, what would you say to him?

Well, I hadn't expected that question, but I wasn't unwilling to receive it and respond to it, and I said, well, as courteously as possible, I would try to say this, sir, the known fact that personally, you disagree with the Anglican standard on homosexuality, as expressed in the 1998 Lambeth decision, does mean that your leadership of the communion, the greater part of which regards this matter, has to regard this matter as one of major importance, both because it's involved in the gospel doctrine of repentance and because of the cultural implications in Africa and Asia of embracing the gay way as a form of holiness.

[53 : 56] In these present situations, your known views, sir, destroy any credibility that your leadership might have.

So, I would like to suggest with great respect that you consider resignation and a return to the world of academic theology.

Well, that was picked up and publicized by various people who like to pick up and publicize remarks of that kind. people who are going to do it in the world.

That was me on June 24th. On July 1st, a week after, I was part of a panel at a post-Gafcon briefing meeting in All Souls Church, London.

meeting, and this matter was raised again by the interlocutor who was asking me questions, and so I told that meeting, which I suppose was about 800 people strong, I told them what I had said.

[55 : 05] And this has been publicized by some as Packer calls on Archbishop of Canterbury to resign. Well, I tried carefully to put it in such a way that it wouldn't sound like that.

What I imagine myself saying to the Archbishop is just consider that your credibility as the leader of the Anglican Communion in this whole discussion is shot.

So that wisdom, the saving of all faiths, I didn't say this in my answer, but I can say it to you, the saving of all faces, first of all yours, because that was the thought, though as I said I didn't express it, would call for moving on from the position you now hold.

Well, that's the truth of the matter, whatever you may have read, in whatever it is that you have read, talking about the fact that Packer allegedly called on the Archbishop of Canterbury to resign.

Well, in formal terms I didn't. In personal conviction I believe that this would be a real step forward so that an uncompromised Archbishop of Canterbury could be appointed, and the deep disillusionment with leadership from Canterbury which I think disfigures the Gafcon movement.

[56 : 37] I mean, I think that it's simply a reaction to the fact that this particular Archbishop of Canterbury is in a particularly invidious situation. I don't think that it's a strategic point for the future at all to raise the question of whether the Archbishop of Canterbury should be the convening center of the Anglican communion.

What's needed is a different Archbishop of Canterbury, it seems to me. But, well, that's just Packer's view and you must decide whether you agree with it or not.

That's the true story of how I got involved in discussion of the position of the Archbishop of Canterbury. You will see, as a matter of fact, in the current Anglican planet, if you read it, as I said at the beginning, I hope you will, it was, you'll see there, Archbishop Arambe of Uganda, suggesting that the leadership of the Anglican communion, be detached from the Archbishop of Canterbury and be appointed by election.

Don't just take it for granted that the top bishop in Britain will be the stated leader of the Anglican Fellowship worldwide.

Well, the matter is under discussion. let everyone be persuaded in their own mind. The Gafcon solution, I think, for the future, I said this earlier, looks like a desire for a two-tier Anglican Fellowship.

[58 : 19] And the people in the inner circle or on the top tier will not be in full communion with the Anglicans in the lower tier or the outer circle. Well, that's one suggestion.

The official Lambeth suggestion for the future, of course, you will have spotted, is faith in the covenant process.

The idea, that is, that a covenant for the Anglican world can be produced, which will inevitably be the lowest common denominator for Anglican unity, and which will express the principles for mutual tolerance within the community.

And, well, the covenant process has got stuck, we know that, and the possibility of usefully producing a covenant which does these things and maintains doctrinal and moral unity by squaring the circle and somehow convincing and somehow convincing everybody that differences of opinion about whether the gay way is a way of holiness or not are secondary and not primary matters, that's a pipe dream, I think.

I say it's a squaring of the circle, and it's a process that is not likely ever, in my judgment, to be completed. when a covenant does come out, if a covenant does come out, it won't be satisfactory to Orthodox Anglicans of, shall I say, the St. John Shaughnessy type, and the Southern Cone type, and the Gathcon type.

[60 : 13] Well, where do we go now? The most that can be said then is that we want to see the, we look forward to seeing the primates, the primates council, the Gathcon primates council come into being, and we look forward to tighter bonds of fellowship between those who stand for Orthodoxy being sustained, and inevitably we prepare ourselves for being, well, sort of for an Anglicanism in which the Old West is not in the inner circle.

Do I like that? I wish we weren't in a situation where I have to think of it. No, I don't like it, but I don't like the situation in which in the providence of God we find ourselves.

And the most I can say is that the way of wisdom at each turn of the road will be for everybody to do the best they can. And on that very low note, I finish my presentation, I've overrun a little, sorry about that.

I wanted to leave time for discussion, and there is a bit of time for discussion, so please respond, react, say whatever it occurs to you to say. Yes, where do we start?

Right at the back actually was the first hand that went like, yes? Is there any call for the time that's moving at front of the state base in January? Will any ruling be able to come out of that?

[61 : 47] I don't see what the primates in January will be able to do except reaffirm what they will describe as the wisdom of Lambeth, that is to suspend any definitive establishing of principles, disciplinary action, patterns of disciplinary action or exclusions.

I think it's bound to be more of the same that Lambeth gave us. I don't see how it can be anything else. Yes, somebody right at the front, I think.

Yes. you mentioned that there's a cultural issue about churches in the global south adopting a stance for the gateway, but here it's exactly the opposite issue where the culture derives us.

Yes, for not doing so. For not doing so. So isn't it a little odd to be saying that we shouldn't be influenced by the culture? Because we shouldn't be. We shouldn't capitulate to the culture, but that that would be an influence in the global south, that they should be not, like, I'm not saying that they should be going to gateway, but why should that be an influence?

Why should that be a concern? If here we shouldn't be the same culture? Well, wherever we are, I mean, wherever we are as Christians, specifically as Anglican Christians, because that's who we are, wherever in the world we are, at whatever time of history, and whatever the cultural assumptions of society around us may be, there will be points, specific points, at which the Lord's people are called to be counter-cultural, that is, we are called as servants of Christ, all Christians are, everywhere, to critique the culture for which the Bible name is the world, and make sure that we don't become enslaved to the way of the world, the way of the culture.

[64 : 04] When the culture is on track by Christian standards, standards, it is for us to approve it and support it. Where it is off the track by Christian standards, it's for us to challenge it.

Here in the West, as I say, the culture goes for treating gay partnerships as humanly normal from every standpoint, Christian standards, and biblically, Christianly, the Orthodox have to challenge that.

There are a whole lot of other things in our modern post-Christian culture which we also have to challenge. Out in Asia and Africa, well, Islam and Hinduism have to be challenged.

challenged. If they were potent forces here in Canada or in the States, they would have to be challenged here as well. And, as I say, you take the culture as you find it.

You try to assess it all, and you become counter-cultural, where you need to do that in order to maintain Bible truth. Because, you see, we can't avoid outflanking maneuvers, relativizing maneuvers, one way or the other.

[65 : 30] If a position is wrong, and we don't relativize it to the gospel, well, that mistaken point of view will relativize the gospel to itself.

And, it's inescapable that one or other of those two processes will be going on all the time. So, it is important that Christians challenge the world, critique the world, and stand in an explicitly counter-cultural way, wherever the Bible shows that there's need to do that.

I think that's the real depth of the issue. And, one doesn't get to the real depth of it until one sees it in those terms. Well, think about it, anyway.

There was, yes, this side, yes, at the back there. The letter written by Bishop Harvey to the Archbishop this week has been made public. Can you imagine any kind of response that the Archbishop might give or could give that would calm the waters here in the back?

I haven't seen the letter, to be honest. But, I don't imagine that the waters can be calmed.

[66 : 46] No, I don't. I think that our Archbishop is, he is, of course, a standard issue post-Telichian liberal.

He is, how can I say, preoccupied, as liberal Archbishops are, by the problem of keeping all Anglicans together.

And, he knows that those who are going to absolutize doctrine, in this instance, it's the doctrine of the authority of scripture and the necessity of repentance, double-barreled doctrinal issue, those who are going to absolutize doctrine will not enter into pacific unity with folk who are resolved to do the opposite.

So, I imagine that our Archbishop will, Canada's Archbishop, will continue to take the line that Anglican unity calls for forbearance of each other, and those of you who won't forbear what others believe, what the majority of us seem to believe about homosexuality, you are showing a schismatic spirit.

your withdrawal from us cannot in any way be sympathized with, and if we can grab the property back from you, well, that's what we shall do.

[68 : 22] You have no moral claim to hold on to it. That's what a Tilekian liberal will say. Am I making sense?

It's sad sense, but that's how I expect any response will go. There was another hand over here.

No, yes, you I think. Do you have any insight about the Church of England and how, I'm reading an article by Tom Wright in which he was very concerned about, he was very critical of the Afton, and his concerns seem to be in part, he's afraid of bringing, in an inauthentic way, bringing the realignment to the Church of England.

My question is, do you have any sense about how the Church of England is going to relate to Gap Con, how this whole situation is going to impact the Church of England?

I do not have any any, what shall I call it, any inner circle insight or anything like it.

[69 : 42] I would say this, in the Church of England, nobody, no congregation, no clergyman, has been, yet as yet, been put under the pressure which was put on the clergy of the Diocese of New Westminster when in 2002 or whenever it was, the doctrinal character of the diocese was changed, that changed in the first instance by a synod vote, which the bishop confirmed as setting the standard for the future.

they didn't acknowledge that it was a doctrinal matter, but in fact, that's how evangelicals like myself saw it from the beginning, and the diocese corporately had shifted its stance doctrinally to say, well, the gay way is an acceptable form of holiness which the Church may properly bless, and if you don't agree with that, you belong to the awkward squad, that is, you're not representing the diocese, you are protesting against the diocesan standard.

Well, that's the pressure under which some of us were put, and for six years we bore it and tried to reopen the discussion, and as you know, we got nowhere, we have a bishop who is concerned at all points, whatever else he does, to show that he's boss, and he was committed, so there could be no movement there, and, well, nobody in the Church of England, as I say, has been put under that sort of pressure.

There have been some clergy in the Church of England who have been told by their church committees, what are called parochial church councils, to challenge their bishop on whether he personally accepts the gay way or not, and that has led to some tangles in the affairs of those, the church is concerned, but that's only about something like half a dozen churches where that has happened.

In England, nobody is under New Westminster type pressure. I want to say that loud and clear, because this isn't a situation in which now that we, here in the New West, with an equal number of folk from other churches that feel they've been put under pressure in other parts of Canada, now that we've gone to the southern cone, we should not be looking round for people to move in a similar way, as if that was the kind of support that we needed.

[72 : 40] You don't move until you are put under pressure that requires you either to accept false doctrine, accept it lying down, or to challenge it and so marginalize yourself in relation to your own diocese and your own bishop, which is an invidious thing and it isn't a stance that can be maintained indefinitely.

see, that's how it was for us here in the New West. In England, things change slowly anyway, you know that, and I don't want to see any recruiting, frankly, for withdrawal from the Church of England, and I'm right with Bishop Tom Wright for not wanting to see it either.

Bishop Tom is walking a tight rope, you probably realize that. He was the architect of a great deal of the thinking in the Windsor Report, and the Windsor Report, if you remember, called for a moratorium on same-sex blessings and a return to the principle of biblical authority.

it was called for clearly, and if Windsor was taken seriously, well, a lot of the heat would be off at the present time.

Tom, having achieved that, can't be expected to suddenly do a vault fast and come out as a champion of withdrawal, as if that was the way forward.

[74 : 24] you might argue that Tom says too much and would be wiser if he didn't say as much as he did.

He writes very easily, he thinks very fast, so I'm not sure that I should condemn him for wanting to make his views public, but certainly you should remember that when you reflect on what Tom Wright is doing.

He is trying to walk a tightrope, and he believes it necessary, I think he misjudges the situation, but he thinks it necessary to talk in very strong and emphatic terms about the impropriety of separation as if it was a threat in England.

I tell you, I don't think it is, actually, for the reasons stated. Last question, perhaps, Bill has stood up, and you know what that means, but you had your hand up quite soon.

Related to that, Dr. I understand that the, and I may say the name of the committee incorrectly, but the Windsor continues, but my understanding is they stated that they want this more important to be, I think they use the term retrospective, retroactive.

[75 : 36] Yes, they do. And that's created quite a response from Bishop, Lewis Bishop. Yeah, well, he won't do it. And so I guess my question is, do you, and then you know the answer, but do you think the House of Bishops in Canada as the battle to finally say something to Bishop England?

No. No, the Anglican Church of Canada is, in fact, deeply imbued with the kind, with the Tillichian liberalism that I described, which relativizes all absolutes of conviction, and simply seeks relevance.

Seeks, that is, to show Christian teachers and spokesmen how to say things that will be listened to by the world. And, puncturing the balloon here, I simply say, well, of course, if you want to be listened to by the world, what you do is chuck the world under the chin and say what the world is already saying, and then the world will be delighted to hear you because the world will have got you, and you will become a world follower.

No. In the Anglican Church of Canada, there is going to be, there is at the moment, and it's getting worse. But, no, the Bishop of New Westminster, he knows his legal position.

There's no pattern of discipline that can be used against him. There's no consensus on the part of the House of Bishops that they want to use a pattern of discipline against him.

[77 : 15] The House of Bishops is a cozy club, and the bishops hope to keep it that way. QED. Are there any more questions?

I was exposed to Paul Tillich in college. Were you? I realized he had to live well. Oh, yes. Yes, he was a magnetic talker.

You couldn't always see the thrust of what he was saying. Well, I know some other magnetic talkers of whom he said. But, you know, this is the thrust of his thinking.

And so he has been a very pernicious influence indeed. Well, now, I don't see anyone waving.

Oh, wait a minute. Yes, I did think you did have your hand up before. I was hoping you could speak a little bit about some of the rhetorical strategies that sort of facilitate the kind of false unity that the liberal churches of the US use.

[78 : 18] One of them seems to be a big definition of the via media. It's no longer a halfway point between Geneva and Rome, but rather between, say, Alexandria and Denver. And the second point is how they exploit Christian language and practice to achieve political limits.

Well, on the latter point, I will simply say one sentence. It has always been the practice of liberals to use the language of orthodoxy, because that's how they hope to persuade people that they are not, in fact, heretics, but leaders.

As for the via media conception, you've got to realize nobody ever talked about Anglicanism as a via media until John Henry Newman, distinguished Anglican who became a distinguished Roman Catholic, ended up as a cardinal in the last century.

He put forward the idea that Anglicanism was a halfway, a sort of middle route between Rome on the one hand and Geneva on the other.

Historically, he was quite wrong. In the 16th century, the position as discerned by Anglican leadership was that the Anglican church is following a path between Rome on the one hand, yes, and Anabaptists on the other.

[79 : 48] Anabaptists being folk who separated not only from the existing churches but from the body politic as well. We didn't have them in Britain, but there were quite a number of Anabaptist groups on the continent who did this, and we have their descendants in North America.

On the right wing, there are the Amish, and all through Canada, there are the Mennonites. These are descendants of the Anabaptists. well, that's all right.

I mean, they are the Mennonites anyway, some of the finest Christians I know in Canada. But that's the, I said they didn't use, the Anglicans of the 16th century didn't use the phrase via media, but that is the middle way that they saw themselves as first of all defining in the 39 articles and then following in the reorganizing of the Church of England.

So, well, we have to stop there. But those are the historical facts. Thank you. This talk will be on the gentleman's website.

Mark.