

**GLOBAL ANGLICAN FUTURE CONFERENCE  
METROPOLITAN'S MESSAGE  
ANGLICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**4 JULY 2008**

A number of self-described traditional Anglicans from around the globe, including many bishops and archbishops from the 'global South' bodies of the official Anglican Communion, recently met in Jerusalem at a meeting called GAFCON. This meeting was called largely in response to the refusal of the Episcopal Church in the U.S. and of the Anglican Church of Canada to heed earlier calls to rein in innovations concerning matters of sexual morality, including notably the ordination and consecration of self-proclaimed and practicing homosexuals and the blessing of 'same sex unions'.

GAFCON produced a now widely published statement which does not address the innovations that led to the formation of our own Continuing Church in 1976-8: namely the 'ordination of women', a new and radical Prayer Book, and a pro-abortion policy. Concerning GAFCON and its statement, I have several observations, which I believe are widely shared in the Anglican Catholic Church and, indeed, by most Continuing Churchmen. For that reason I make bold to write in the first person plural in what follows.

1. On the immediate issues that led to the GAFCON conference, we stand with GAFCON and its statement. That is, the ACC believes and teaches what Scripture and the universal Church have always taught everywhere concerning **human sexuality**. We would only note that GAFCON fails to address the problem of **divorce and remarriage**, which antedates the present crisis concerning homosexuality, and which in many ways prepared the ground for the more recent aberration.

2. The GAFCON statement, by its silence concerning **the ordination of women** to the diaconate, priesthood, and episcopate, implies that this earlier aberration is tolerable, if not desirable, and is at worst a much less serious departure from the universal practice of the orthodox and catholic Church than is homosexuality. This silence and its implications are profoundly mistaken. The ordination of women and homosexuality both flow from a confusion concerning both sexual roles and also the place of sexual identity in Church and Christian life. Furthermore, pretending to ordain women to Holy Orders requires a rejection of clear Biblical teaching and of the unbroken practice of the Catholic and Orthodox Church. The ordination of women is in effect a claim by official Anglican bodies to authority over the deposit of the Faith. The ordination of women assumes a falsehood: that Anglicans have authority to alter the doctrine and practice of the central Tradition of Christendom, which is represented by the consensus of the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and all older Anglican Churches. Such a claim, once made, can be pressed into service to justify any further innovation or aberration in doctrine or morals. No one should be surprised that Churches which began to ordain women in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, began to legitimize homosexual conduct in the 1990s and in the first decade of the 21st century.

3. GAFCON asserts and appeals for support to **formularies** which have a notable Anglican pedigree: namely the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer*, the *Thirty-nine Articles of Religion*, the three Creeds, and the first four Ecumenical Councils. No one can or should deny the authority of these formularies. However, these same formularies received formal assent from the same Anglican bodies that since the 1970s have abandoned orthodox and catholic doctrine as noted above. Many Anglican bodies traditionally cultivated a kind of studied doctrinal ambiguity which combined material toleration of grave theological errors with formal acceptance of traditional creeds and formulas. Therefore, the Continuing Churches wisely have fixed our doctrinal stance firmly in the *Affirmation of Saint Louis*. The *Affirmation*, confirmed by the Constitution and Canons of the Anglican Catholic Church, explicitly positions the ACC within the great central Tradition of

Christendom, represented by the consensus of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches and of the teaching of the Undivided Church of the first millennium. Since the studied ambiguities of some traditional Anglicans permitted the grave errors of recent years to arise, it is no longer enough to recapitulate compromise positions and formulas. A clearer, more explicitly catholic and orthodox stance is demanded by the times. GAFCON's statement, therefore, is far inferior to the *Affirmation* and in the long run will not stand up to the winds of error blowing in our world. I would note also that the *Affirmation* is not a confession or a new statement of belief, but rather affirms the authority of the great central Tradition of Christendom.

4. By way of fixing our own Church's teaching clearly, I note the following teachings of the *Affirmation of Saint Louis* and of the Anglican Catholic Church on matters about which GAFCON is silent:

– there are **Seven Ecumenical Councils**, not merely Four; – while the 1662 **Prayer Book** has many strengths, it also has some notable weaknesses, including a truncated Eucharistic Canon, which the 1928 American, 1954 South African, and other later Prayer Books have corrected. We by no means assert the invalidity of any form in the 1662 book, but neither can we accept that 1662 is the central or best model for Anglican liturgy; – the **1979 Episcopal Prayer Book**, and many other contemporary language books at use in the official Anglican Communion, are radically flawed and are often subject to grave theological objection; – **all three Holy Orders are male** in character; – the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist are **generally necessary for salvation** and as divine acts convey God's offer of grace objectively and unfailingly; – there are **seven sacraments** received by the central Tradition of the universal Church, namely Baptism; Confirmation or Chrismation, the Eucharist, Penance, Unction of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders. – **all Anglican formularies, practices, and beliefs properly are subject to** evaluation and interpretation in the light of **the central Tradition**. If both the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches reject something that some Anglicans believe, then that something probably is false, particularly if it concerns a matter of importance. Our security lies in the authority of Scripture as interpreted by the universal Tradition and by the living consensus of the great Churches, not in peculiarly Anglican notions; – human life is sacred from the moment of conception to natural death, and directly willed **abortion always is gravely sinful**. – valid **Christian marriage establishes an indissoluble sacramental bond** which cannot be broken save by death;

5. We call upon all self-described Anglicans to reject clearly and decisively all of the liturgical, moral, and theological errors of recent years, beginning with the ordination of women. We call upon all self-described Anglicans to return to the central Tradition of Christendom and to recognize that evangelical and neo-Pentecostalist Protestantism is no safe haven. We welcome GAFCON as a small step in the right direction. But we confidently predict that the ambiguities and silences that characterize its statement will lead rapidly to fragmentation and confusion without any countervailing theological achievement. The only issue addressed in a somewhat adequate fashion by GAFCON is homosexuality. Far more is at stake.

+MDH

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