

[Real Communion - Lost](#)

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An Attempt to Understand the Implications of Recent Decisions and Practices in the Anglican Church of Canada

There has been a great deal in Church news media lately about the crisis in the Anglican Communion. Questions have been raised about whether the Communion will remain unified or whether there will be a split, and about whether the Churches of the Anglican Communion in the United States and Canada will remain “in communion” with others in the Anglican Communion.

When we speak of being “in communion” what exactly do we mean? If being “in communion” simply means being on good terms with another Church then isn't it simply a case of learning to be tolerant, accepting, dare I say 'inclusive' of each other? However, what if being “in communion” actually means something much deeper?

If being “in communion” has a deeper meaning, then the crisis we now face is greater, with more serious implications, than most people know. Sadly, it has been the policy of some bishops to discourage - in a few cases to prevent - public discussion of the emerging crisis because (it is said) such discussion would be disturbing, even distressing to most Anglicans.

The desire not to distress people is understandable, even laudable in some circumstances, but I think that in this instance Canadian Anglicans have not been well served by these policies. If there were good indications from reliable earthquake detectors that a tidal wave was racing toward a major coastal city, but uncertain information about precisely how large and serious it would be, would it be more prudent to give warning and risk being accused later of overreaction or would it be better to say little or nothing and risk being guilty of all the resulting deaths? This is not too extreme a comparison. Check Ezekiel 33:1-9.

I believe that Anglicans across Canada need a better grasp of the issues and their implications, including a better understanding of what we may lose if the Anglican Church of Canada continues to pursue a policy of greater inclusivity in matters of sexual behaviour. It may be more than the invitation for our bishops to sit around a table with all the other Anglican bishops of the world.

I hope that concerned Anglicans will strive to gain a better understanding of the history and the content of the urgent discussions which have taken place within the Anglican Communion about this matter. In this article, however, I wish to address a few relevant questions which I think are central to understanding the importance of this crisis. It is more than merely a question of tolerance.

What does it mean to be “in communion”? What does it mean to be a Communion?

- **First of all, how did the word “Communion” come into our vocabulary?**

The Greek words below (spelled out in the western alphabet) are those used in the New Testament to talk about Communion. The Koinonia family of words are those most frequently used for speaking of Communion with God and with each other, and occasionally the slightly diminished synonym Metoche is used. What follows after the word is the sense or meaning of the word as found in English translations of the New Testament.

Koinonia = Communion / Fellowship (of an intimate nature) / partnership (deep commitment)

Koinoneo = come into communion / become a sharer / be made a partner / to share in

Koinonikos = ready to form and maintain communion / share possessions / give liberally (freely)

Koinonos = a partaker / one in communion / partner / companion / having joined oneself

Metochos = Partaker (...ing) / Partner (sharing) / Fellow

Metoche = fellowship / sharing / having in common / communion

- **A “Heads Up” about the use of the Word:**

We need to be aware that both consciously and unconsciously there is a confusion of meanings in the way the word “communion” is used even when we know that we are discussing the concept of the close fellowship of believers. It would be fair to say that broadly speaking there are two senses in which the word is used: Firstly the “theological” sense, and secondly the “institutional” sense.

The theological sense refers to what Scripture says about “communion” and the way Scripture is interpreted, while the institutional sense refers to how the structures and procedures of the Church strive to put the theology into practice. For some Anglicans the theology is the most important aspect of our shared Communion, but for others the structures and procedures are more important. It seems fair to say that the conservative members of our Communion believe that institutional communion can only flow from correct theological communion which is interpreted through a Scriptural lens, while the liberal members of the Anglican Communion believe that institutional communion is almost purely a matter of legal/diplomatic documents interpreted independently of theological communion which should, in turn, be interpreted through the lens of social experience. This difference, it appears, often causes the two sides to talk at cross-purposes as they try to understand each other and come to a resolution of the issues they face.

- **An Observation about History and Culture:**

The Anglican Communion developed and grew as an institution because of the growth of congregations, and then Dioceses of mostly expatriate Brits serving the Empire abroad. There were also great missionary efforts, but the initial pattern of these missionary churches was of congregations of indigenous people served by clergy sent from the British homeland. All these congregations initially shared liturgical traditions, but as change came, the precise wording of the liturgies were found to be not as important as maintaining the theological concepts and values conveyed by the liturgies.

They also shared ecclesiastical structures in which the smaller details of the structures, which changed in adaptation to local needs, were found to be not as important as the theological concepts behind the structures and the desire to embody those theological values and concepts in a close, broadly shared experience of Christian fellowship. Finally, while they shared a history in which the connection to the Church of England was initially crucial, that common background experience increasingly became less important as cultural diversity grew through the emergence of indigenous leadership and as culturally appropriate worship developed. Yet through all these changes and developments the Communion actually grew, because of shared theological perspectives and values.

It is clear, and I shall demonstrate it in greater detail later, that what holds the Communion together more than anything else has been a common theology which finds expression in markedly similar worship styles, liturgical expressions, ecclesiastical structures and Scriptural interpretation. While there was a historic link to the Church of England and an obvious colonial beginning, what was and remains of paramount importance is this shared theological perspective.

Lately, however, the western churches have “stretched the envelope” of their theological beliefs, and while they retain a marked similarity in liturgy and ecclesiology with the rest of the Communion it is clear that less and less do these elements contain common theological values and priorities. The western churches, (which share many elements of culture, especially those in Canada and the U.S.) have clung to their new and pragmatic interpretation of communion by emphasising their participation in shared institutional structures and the documents generated by those structures rather than shared theological values and perspectives.

In contrast, the non-Western majority of the Anglican Communion (which is very diverse culturally) continues to emphasise their common theological and ecclesiastical values without undue regard for the cultures around them. This growing difference between those who emphasise culture and institutional structures in contrast to those who emphasise theology in determining what it means to be in communion has reached a point of crisis.

All Anglicans know that the early Christians had to abandon much of their culture and local traditions when they converted from paganism to Christianity, and the vast majority of the Global South Anglicans themselves have had to abandon a great deal of their cultural views and traditions just as the early Christians did. They realise that their culturally shaped beliefs and views must be submitted to the Scriptures, and that those beliefs, traditions and views which are not compatible with Scripture must be abandoned as they grow and develop as committed Christians. Therefore, Global South Anglicans

find it very peculiar that western Anglicans seem unable to discern which aspects of western culture are incompatible with Scripture; for surely, if Scripture is the final authority in matters of belief and practice, then western Anglicans must undergo the same discipline of abandoning cultural views and beliefs which are unscriptural as Global South Anglicans do.

Of course, this begs the question of what is and what isn't Scriptural, and the accompanying question of who decides. This was, and remains, the critical question underlying everything else. As we shall see, the answer to the question of who decides is that the Communion decides together as the best qualified minds of the Church apply their academic skills and intellectual gifts to the questions the Church faces. The Communion seeks consensus and strives to retain its shared theological values and perspectives. The problems arise when consensus ceases to be possible.

• The Anglican Communion

The Anglican Church world-wide has historically referred to itself as a Communion, recognising that they share a common "bond of affection" with each other because of their shared historical ties and their bond with each other through Jesus Christ. I argued earlier that while certain Church structures have developed to maintain the practicality of the Anglican Communion, it is at heart a Communion which is based on a shared theology — a shared understanding of the Scriptures and the Faith. I trust this becomes clearer as the reader continues.

As a Communion, Anglicans acknowledge an interdependence and collectiveness which, in matters of theology, has always overshadowed the independence of the individual national Churches. It has been, until recently, more than a mutual support group, there was a genuine attempt to submit one to another out of reverence for Christ. It is an attempt to work out the ecclesiastical practicalities of the Scriptural teaching about the Body of Christ, the fellowship [communion] of believers. In other words, theology was at the heart of the effort to work out the nature of Communion relationships.

The Communion, at least in its ideals, is participation in a relationship which elevates and transcends the individual regional jurisdictions. However, this is a concept the practical details and limitations of which are still being developed. The present understanding of "communion" in Anglicanism (as articulated by the 1994 Eames Commission and the 1997 Virginia Report) is somewhat flawed, as several critics have pointed out (eg- Short, David: "Crisis in Koinonia: Biblical Perspectives..." (1). The Windsor Report of 2005 is a further attempt to work out (in the context of this crisis) what it means for us to be "in communion" with each other and what the limits are on the behaviour of individual national jurisdictions within the Communion. The Eames Commission and the Virginia Report emphasise the institutional structures of Communion without much reference to the Scriptural and theological foundations of the concept of communion, giving the impression that theological conformity is not at the heart of the Communion. The Windsor Report, which was necessitated by the deviation from shared theology by the American Churches, corrects this misconception and reasserts the central importance of a shared theology to the Communion's unity.

Consider the following:

Some Historical Background:

The first of the colonial churches to be “separate from” yet “connected to” the Church of England was the Episcopal (Anglican) Church in the United States. Needing independent leadership following their declaration of independence the Americans turned to the Episcopal (Anglican) Church of Scotland, and the Scottish bishops, on their own initiative, consecrated Samuel Seabury as the first American Bishop in 1784 (2) . Five years later the American Anglicans were indicating their continued connection with the Church of England and their desire to remain in communion with the see of Canterbury in the official Preface to their new (1789) Prayer Book. They declared that they desired to continue in the shared theology and fellowship of the Church of England while continuing to be independent in the governing of their Church. The Church in Canada was not too far behind the Americans, getting their first local bishop in 1787 (Charles Inglis), but arguably the Canadian Church kept closer and more dependent ties with the Church of England for some time.

As the colonial churches developed, the far east being the next region to need independent local leadership and ecclesiastical government, the body of Churches which owed their origin and claimed ties to the Church of England grew. It was in 1867 that a conference of bishops from all of the Church of England and its colonial derivatives was called to meet at Lambeth — the first Lambeth Conference.

As the Anglican Communion continued to develop the criteria of membership slowly emerged. There was, apparently, some concern about whether the Communion would, as a body, claim some authority over individual national Churches. This was particularly a concern of the Americans. It emerged, however, that the Communion was to be a mutually interdependent fellowship of those who shared certain theological beliefs and values.(3) Among these were to be recognition of the supreme authority of Scripture, adherence to the 39 Articles and the historic Creeds of early Christianity, a true “threefold” ministry (Bishops, Priests and Deacons) and a desire to be linked by “bonds of affection” to the see of Canterbury and the other members of the Communion (4).

The first Lambeth Conference of all the world’s Anglican bishops took place in 1867. There were issues to address arising from the need for local leadership in the growing colonial Churches and the need to work out the implications of independence for the Church in the United States while it maintained its interdependence with the Church of England. Also, the Church in the United States had discussed its hopes that Christians could be drawn together, and had debated a statement which outlined the conditions under which closer ties of mutual support and co-operation might develop.

This was the 1886 Chicago Declaration. (5) The statement was never adopted by the Church in the U.S., but it was brought to the third Lambeth Conference in 1888 where the bishops made minor alterations, mostly scaling it down, and adopted it as a framework within which closer ties with other denominations might develop. (6) The Chicago / Lambeth Quadrilateral (as it is called) had no direct bearing or impact on the development of the Anglican Communion, but it does demonstrate that, in thinking about relationships of close fellowship between Christians, the Communion thought in terms of required theological and ecclesiastical conformity.

The next major step in the development of Anglican identity and Communion relationships occurred in Canada in 1893 with the Solemn Declaration. (7) It can be said that this Canadian declaration formed a paradigm for the conditions under which other national Churches joined the growing and developing Communion. It is important to note, therefore, what values are set out in the Solemn Declaration, and again, I wish the reader to note that these values are theological — Communion with each other starts with Communion with Christ, the “One Divine Head” and is linked to others who hold the “One Faith revealed in Holy Writ” and “defined in the Creeds” of early Christianity. Note that the theology of the Book of Common Prayer and The Thirty-Nine Articles are specifically invoked and finally, note that there is a solemn pledge “to transmit the same (faith)unimpaired to our posterity”.

So, underlying all the structures which gradually developed to serve and to facilitate the life of the Communion there is an agreement to adhere to the shared theology of Anglicanism. It could be, and has been, argued that absent the shared theology there wouldn't be a Communion. (8)

In other words, the Anglican Communion was formed and has developed on the same basis as that communion evidenced in Scripture.

• **What is the Scripturally based, Theological Understanding of Communion?**

Traditionally, “Communion”, which comes from the Greek word “Koinonia”, is used to describe the intimate, committed fellowship between God and those who live in Christ. It also describes the committed partnership / fellowship between those believers engaged in the work of the Kingdom.

This is most succinctly supported by referring to 1John (quoted and highlighted below)

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched — this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.

This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth (9)9 . But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He

is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. (1Jn.1:1-2:6 NIV)

Communion With God:

Looking in more detail at our Communion with God, we see in Scripture that Jesus promises that if we obey Him then He will establish a new relationship with us through the Holy Spirit in which He and the Father will come and make their home in us. (John 14:15-26) This remarkable relationship parallels the very relationship Jesus had just claimed with the Father (John 14:10, 11). It is crucial to note that this relationship is based on obedience. This obedience has always been understood by the Church to be obedience to all the teachings of Scripture as viewed through the lens of the New Testament and interpreted by the Apostles (10), not just to a select few teachings with which we are currently comfortable or which we can interpret more flexibly to suit the prevailing culture.

This communion with God is spoken of by Paul in both letters to the Corinthians (eg 1Cor. 1:9 and 2Cor. 13:14) and in Romans (15:27) and is alluded to elsewhere like Hebrews (3:14) through the use of the synonym "metochos". In other places what is expressed is our "having" God, or "having" the Spirit by which is meant we participate in the full / real life of God through faith. In other words, 'communion'. (eg- see 1Jn.2:23, 1Jn.5:19, Jude 19, Rom.8:9) In some instances we are told that people who go beyond the limits of Christian doctrine do not have God. (see 2Jn.1:9) In other words, they are not in communion. In Jude 3 we read that the Faith we share (the "common faith"), by which is meant here the doctrinal content, is passed on to us (entrusted), and we are to fight ("contend") for this faith to defend and preserve the purity of it.

Communion With other Christians

Our "communion" with others is founded on our communion with God. We share in a faith held in common (eg- Titus 1:4 and Jude 3). The obvious implication, particularly in view of other passages touching on the subject, is that when we don't hold a common faith with an established doctrine handed down from the apostles then we don't have true communion.

In our communion with each other we not only participate together in the communion with God through the faith we hold in common, but we share in the activities of the Kingdom. Our communion is not a "private matter". (11) We are, by the nature of our common salvation and redemption, drawn into a pattern of shared worship, ministry, mission and witness.

In Philippians 1:5-7, for instance, we learn that our communion involves not just shared doctrine, but mutual care and ministry, sharing resources for the sake of the gospel and the communion. This is also conveyed by the account of the Christians in Acts 2:41-47.

The communion also transcends time (The Apostles' Creed says, "I believe ... in the communion of the saints..." without reference or limitation as to whether the saints are living or dead, for all are "in Christ" eternally) (12) transcends geography (St. Paul was hundreds of miles away in Rome yet the Philippians sent him gifts and financial support by Epaphroditus because they recognised their communion obligations), transcends race and social position (eg- Gal.3:26-28) but, as we shall see, there are real boundaries and limitations to being in communion.

Communion Boundaries

In 1 Corinthians 10:7-21 Paul clearly expresses that we cannot have communion with God and with anything not of God at the same time. Particularly in verse 21, the wording here states unequivocally that this is more than something which is merely undesirable, it is something which is not possible.

So, if we desire to maintain our communion with God we must make sure we are not claiming or behaving in such a manner as to participate with (be in communion with) anything that is not of God. If we are in communion with anything that is not of God, then automatically, because of the nature of communion, we are no longer in communion with God. As we shall see, the Apostles thought this was particularly critical.

We see, therefore, by the principle established in the above passage, that it is not possible to remain in communion with God while participating in any way with the "works of darkness".¹³ Those who were eating meat offered to idols were not themselves necessarily engaged directly in the idol worship from which the meat came, but they were considered to be participating in the works of darkness nonetheless for having eaten the meat that came from the sacrifice, and Paul said it was not possible to do that and remain in communion with God.

The implication for the present situation is that it is not possible to be linked to an ecclesiastical jurisdiction which is engaging in an unscriptural practice or upholding a policy contrary to Scripture and at the same time claim that one's communion with God is unaffected because one is not participating directly themselves in unscriptural activity. One cannot be in communion with God and something which is not in right standing with God (out of communion with God) at the same time.

In Ephesians 5:1-14, as Paul stresses that the new humanity in Christ is called to a high level of purity and a lifestyle of holiness, he reminds us that anybody participating in "works of darkness" has no inheritance in the Kingdom — no communion with God. (Eph.5:5-11) In fact, we are given a double imperative: to have nothing to do with these deeds of darkness ("take no part...") and to expose these deeds of darkness for what they are. (Eph.5:11)

Writing with advice for Timothy, Paul urges that he not lay hands on others hastily, and take no part in the sins of others, and keep himself pure. (1Tim.5:22) Given other passages (some of which we have already noted), one is led to conclude that the reason for this is that Timothy must not lose his communion with Christ which is the Source of his ministry. It would not be a valid ministry in the Name of Christ if he was not truly in communion with Christ himself. Participation in the sins of others would compromise that.

This compromise with sin, which negates our communion with God, is why John wrote that

“... if we say we have fellowship (communion) with him (God) while we walk in darkness [in any way not in full communion with Christ] we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship [communion] with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1Jn. 1:6,7 NIV [amplified for clarification])

Our communion with God shapes and determines our communion with each other. The communion we have with each other is valid and real only so long as our communion with God is valid and real. Participating, in any way, in the works of darkness negates this communion all round. So cherished, so vital is this communion with God and with each other that the apostle John urged that it be protected from all the works of darkness including false teaching.

“Everyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ, but goes beyond it, does not have God (is not in communion with God); whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. Do not receive into the house or welcome anyone who comes to you and does not bring this teaching; for to welcome is to participate in the evil deeds of such a person.” (2Jn.9-11 NRSV — emphasis added)

The apostle specifically instructs us not to have anything to do with those who teach falsely, not even to greet them, for to do so would be to participate in their darkness, even though they claim to represent Christ. The measure by which we evaluate them is the doctrine received from the apostles and entrusted to the saints. There can be no communion with false teachers and those participating in “works of darkness”.

• Rationalizations and Justifications

The Anglican Church of Canada claims that, notwithstanding the St. Michael’s Report¹⁴, which has an ambiguous status (15), the statements regarding the sanctity of same sex relationships and the blessing of same sex relationships (including civil unions) are to be interpreted pastorally and not theologically — according to the Anglican Church of Canada these are not supposed to be interpreted as indicating a departure from Communion teaching and policy (16) .

In responding to actions of disgruntled conservatives in the Church of England, bishop, historian and theologian Dr. N.T. Wright observes that the Anglican Communion has always suffered from rogue bishops who departed to various degrees from orthodoxy (17) . However, in the case of the Anglican Church of Canada and The Episcopal Church of the U.S.A., we are not talking of a few rogue bishops who are acting independently of their Church’s official teaching and policy. We are NOT talking of national Churches that are essentially orthodox with just a few rogue bishops. In one case we are speaking of a national Church that has already officially supported the actions of those “rogue” bishops and priests, and in the other case the national Church may soon choose to do the same.

In these instances we are not discussing a few rogues amidst an orthodox national ecclesiastical jurisdiction, we are talking of a national ecclesiastical jurisdiction which has chosen an interpretation of the faith which, on these matters of human sexuality, is entirely different from that of historic Christianity and the current global Anglican Communion.

All attempts to rationalise and justify this departure from the Anglican Communion's traditional, orthodox views on human sexuality require a significant departure from the historical pattern of the interpretation of Scriptures dealing with humanity and human sexuality. (18)

• A Cause for Division?

It is clear from all events that we are not dealing with a generally orthodox national Church faced with a few rogue bishops who have departed from the norms of the Anglican Communion. We are up against several rogue bishops who, from the point of view of some of their peers, are only guilty of having become impatient and "jumped the gun" in a move that is otherwise broadly supported: it is a major departure from the established, historic doctrine and practices of the Anglican Communion.

In other words, the National Church is increasingly willing to consider the blessing of same sex relationships as an acceptable practice, albeit that they recognize that some are more willing than others. Therefore it is viewed as desirable that, as a policy, individual diocesan jurisdictions should be allowed to move toward this at their own pace and in their own manner.(19) Some, in what may be an unconsciously twisted mockery of a once worthy phrase, have even referred to this as a "generous style of orthodoxy". (20)

The Windsor Report, which emerged from increasingly urgent efforts by the Communion to resolve this issue, affirms the authority of Scripture, confirms that the official Anglican teaching on human sexuality has been clearly articulated and was appropriately affirmed in Lambeth 1998, and states clearly that on this matter there is neither a case for *Adiaphora* (issues which do not impact the whole Communion's doctrine and on which there can be differences of interpretation without damaging the unity of the Communion) nor *Subsidiarity* (the principle that matters should be decided at the lowest level of jurisdiction consonant with the level of importance in which the issue is held, meaning that for an issue of such importance the decisions must be made at the Communion level). (21)

While it is true that the Anglican Communion has no authority to impose the findings of The Windsor Report on anybody, the report does present an accurate and broadly accepted articulation of the Communion's position. When the report states that the Communion sees no justification to view this issue as one in which either *adiaphora* or *subsidiarity* can be applied then the recent suggestion from CoGS and the National Office appears to be a clear rejection of the report and a clear statement of the intention to act independently of the Anglican Communion. (22)

Once the Anglican Church of Canada, through its National structures, has altered its practices, and thereby changed its doctrine so that it is no longer orthodox and in

agreement with the Scriptures as upheld by the Communion, the quality of the communion and the validity of the sacraments of everyone under the jurisdiction of that Church is suspect. (23)

If the matter over which the division is occurring was a trivial one (like the arguments in the late 18th early 19th century about candles and vestments) or one on which there is solid grounds for a position of adiaphora amongst the Communion or even within the national Church (like the age of baptism or the age and procedure for welcoming people to the sacrament of communion) or even one which, though causing angst, still has room for adiaphora like the ordination of women to the priesthood, then a major division would not only be unnecessary, it would be unloving and contrary to the highest ideals of communion fellowship. However, it is the consensus of the majority of the Anglican Communion as articulated in The Windsor Report that this is a larger, more critical issue than those.

If, over some issue, such as (for example) the prickly matter of women in the episcopate, in which it could be (and has been) argued that both sides are theologically justified but (for reasons of “hardness of heart” and an unwillingness to remain in close communion) the decision was taken to divide the Communion, then the ordinary priest and parishioner could be (should be) allowed to move from one Communion/jurisdiction to the other without any concern about the loss of spiritual communion with the One from Whom all true communion flows. That issue, or one like it, in which clear and undeniable ambiguity exists, would mean that no real communion is lost. That’s the essence of adiaphora. No harm is done by holding either view. However, again, I emphasize, it is the consensus of the Anglican Communion that this is not the situation in the matter of human sexuality.

The issue over which this division is occurring is one in which arguably the most diligent and rigorous minds in the whole Anglican Communion have concluded that there can be neither adiaphora nor subsidiarity and have concluded that Christian orthodoxy is breached by the views of those who uphold the position that same sex relationships can be blessed and are sanctified by God. Moreover, it is not the Anglican Communion only which has concluded this. The Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and several other smaller Communion within the Church Universal have all come to the same conclusion. What arrogance and hubris the Anglican Church of Canada exhibits to argue that it knows better, that this is not a communion breaking deviation from orthodox Christian theology.

Therefore, reluctantly, I must conclude that for a believing Christian to remain a member under the spiritual authority at any level of a Church jurisdiction that has accepted the position that same sex relationships can be blessed, whether it has accepted that position on the basis of “local option” (subsidiarity) or whether it has accepted that position on the basis that it is a “pastoral option” (rather than a doctrinal shift) has, either through passive acceptance or active participation, forfeited their spiritual communion with the One from Whom all other levels of communion derive their existence.

This is a momentous, and therefore terribly difficult conclusion to come to. This is the reason the Global South members of the Anglican Communion have pleaded with the North American Church about this issue for over seven years, and have made so many efforts to bring to the attention of Anglicans in North America the degree of their concern.

This is not merely a matter of different cultural views. This is not something about which we can easily agree to disagree. Those who support the blessing of same sex relationships necessarily must be supporting an entire line of theological reasoning which is a major departure from historic, Apostolic Christian orthodoxy, and consequently they have forfeited their communion with Christ and all those in Christ. It is a terribly painful conclusion to make, but after diligent study and prayer I can come to no other.

• The Case for Division

As I just said, the conclusion I find myself driven to is that one cannot be in communion with God through Christ Jesus and be in communion with a Church whose theology includes a major deviation from the Apostolic Faith.

Remember, we are not talking about a minor difference of views like when to baptise or whether to sprinkle or immerse. We are talking about a departure from orthodox theology that touches on more than just sexual practices and morality. To justify the reinterpretation of sexual morality and the blessing of same sex relationships the departure also inevitably impacts upon the theology of creation, the image of God in humanity, the nature of redemption and other critical aspects of the Christian Faith. In other words this is not a minor issue of an inconsequential technicality. This is a serious matter with widespread theological implications. That's why the Communion, through The Windsor Report and many other statements and communiqués going back some six or seven years, made every attempt to urge and encourage the Canadian and U.S. Churches not to take the steps they took, then to repent of having taken those steps. However, both the Anglican Church of Canada and The Episcopal Church in the U.S. have given every indication that they intend to persist in their departure from orthodox theology.

This persistent, significant departure from orthodox theology, after so many attempts to help the North American Church return to historic orthodoxy, with the continual rationalizations and justifications which reveal a preference for the authority of contemporary culture rather than the Word of God, indicates a horrible willingness to throw away our precious and costly communion through Christ and a callous disregard for communion with our Anglican brothers and sisters around the world.

A number of my clergy colleagues and many bishops have indicated that they feel bound by their vows to serve the Church faithfully by accepting and upholding whatever decision is legally arrived at by the synodical procedure. This attempt to hide behind ordination vows and synod procedures is totally misguided. We don't serve the Church if we don't serve Christ Jesus. The first vow in the life of all Christians is our baptismal vow in which we profess the Faith and promise to walk in obedience to the teachings of Christ, by which is clearly meant the Faith and teaching as we have received them from Apostolic times, not some novel, pragmatic and culturally determined reinterpretation of the Faith. That latter option is addressed by the baptismal vow to resist the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of the world, and the lusts of the flesh.

After declaring one's confidence in the Scriptures the first vows in the Ordination Service are to teach the Scriptures diligently and to minister the doctrine, sacraments and disciplines of Christ as the Anglican Church has received them. Moreover the next vow is to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word using both public and private admonitions. According to the Solemn Declaration, which defines and sets out the parameters of the Anglican Church of Canada, it is the Anglican Communion ("... the Church of England throughout the world...") that determines what is valid doctrine and what is "... erroneous and strange doctrine contrary to God's Word..." All ensuing ordination vows are taken subsequent to and in the context of these prior vows.

In light of all this, any attempt to justify going along with a synod decision which departs from Scripture because of a sense of obligation to ordination vows is totally specious. All Christians, not least the clergy, serve the risen Lord Jesus Christ. We do not serve the Church. The "Church" is the people, and the people, all of us, are servants of Christ Jesus. The Church, as an institution, exists as a vehicle for serving Christ. When the institution ceases to fulfill that purpose through a departure from orthodoxy all its demands for "loyalty" are abrogated. Faithful members of the Church, starting with the clergy, have a higher loyalty, first to Christ, and then to the Anglican Communion. We have an obligation to resist any departure from those higher loyalties. Failing that we have an obligation to dissociate from those departures in order to uphold those higher loyalties. Speaking personally, I chose membership in the Anglican Communion as a means of expressing and enacting my communion with God through Jesus Christ. My communion with God through Christ must come first, for without that any institutional "communion" I may have with others is rendered a merely human structure, empty and devoid of that which is my primary goal — communion with God and the Community of Faith He has created in and through Christ Jesus. In that case I may as well have joined the Rotarians.

Conclusion

Scripture teaches that by grace, through faith in Christ, we have Communion with God and therefore Communion with each other. Spiritual communion with each other cannot be separated from communion with God. Scripture teaches that if we don't have communion with others who are in communion with God then we are not truly in communion with God. Also, if we are not in true communion with God then we cannot be in true communion with those who are in communion with God. THEREFORE, IT FOLLOWS that those who are in communion with God cannot be in communion with those who are not in communion with God. These statements are clearly inferred from Scripture.

Communion with God is predicated on belief, faith and obedience to His teaching. Departure from these destroys communion with God. Communion can be restored through confession, repentance and forgiveness, otherwise, persistent unbelief and/or disobedience leads to broken communion. Communion with others is predicated on both parties being in communion with God. We cannot be in communion with God if we are in communion with those whose communion is broken through persistent unbelief and/or disobedience. Scripture is clear that in such cases we must separate ourselves from those who choose their own way over God's. (1Cor.5:9-11)

If we attempt to remain in communion with those who are not in communion with God we ourselves lose our communion with God, because one is dependent upon the other

With great pain and profound regret I find that I cannot come to any conclusion other than this: that if the Anglican Church of Canada, after all the deliberations, admonitions and the pleas of the Communion, does not turn away from its chosen path of heterodoxy then all Anglicans in Canada who desire to remain in Communion with God through Christ and with other orthodox Anglicans must leave the jurisdiction of the Anglican Church of Canada and come into the jurisdiction of an alternative ecclesial structure recognized by the faithful, orthodox Primates of the Anglican Communion who are seeking to uphold historic Anglicanism.

It would be my hope that, if this happens, the Anglican Church of Canada, which professes to be compassionate and understanding of all its members, would be as gracious and generous towards those who choose an alternative ecclesial jurisdiction as it has been toward those whom they seek to draw in through this departure from orthodoxy. The experience of orthodox Anglicans in the U.S. has not boded well, but as a nation Canada has always chosen gracious diplomacy and generous peace over acrimonious confrontation and control oriented litigation and conflict. It would be my hope that, if we find ourselves forced to walk apart, the Church would be at least as high-minded.

Appendix 1a The Chicago / Lambeth Quadrilateral

The proposal was a statement which had its origins in a document created originally in 1870 by Rev'd. Wm. Reed Huntington whose dream was the reunification of the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches (24) . The American Bishops were willing to expand that dream by setting criteria which, if met, it was hoped would provide a basis for the development of unity amongst believers in all major Christian denominations.

Adopted by the House of Bishops Chicago, 1886 (25)

We, Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America, in Council assembled as Bishops in the Church of God, do hereby solemnly declare to all whom it may concern, and especially to our fellow-Christians of the different Communion in this land, who, in their several spheres, have contended for the religion of Christ:

1. Our earnest desire that the Saviour's prayer, "That we all may be one," may, in its deepest and truest sense, be speedily fulfilled;
2. That we believe that all who have been duly baptized with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, are members of the Holy Catholic Church.
3. That in all things of human ordering or human choice, relating to modes of worship and discipline, or to traditional customs, this Church is ready in the spirit of love and

humility

to forego all preferences of her own;

4. That this Church does not seek to absorb other Communion, but rather, cooperating with them on the basis of a common Faith and Order, to discountenance schism, to heal the wounds of the Body of Christ, and to promote the charity which is the chief of Christian graces and the visible manifestation of Christ to the world.

But furthermore, we do hereby affirm that the Christian unity... can be restored only by the return of all Christian communions to the principles of unity exemplified by the undivided Catholic Church during the first ages of its existence; which principles we believe to be the substantial deposit of Christian Faith and Order committed by Christ and his Apostles to the Church unto the end of the world, and therefore incapable of compromise or surrender by those who have been ordained to be its stewards and trustees for the common and equal benefit of all men.

As inherent parts of this sacred deposit, and therefore as essential to the restoration of unity among the divided branches of Christendom, we account the following, to wit:

1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God.
2. The Nicene Creed as the sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.
3. The two Sacraments,—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord,—ministered with unfailling use of Christ's words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.
4. The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

Furthermore, Deeply grieved by the sad divisions which affect the Christian Church in our own land, we hereby declare our desire and readiness, so soon as there shall be any authorized response to this Declaration, to enter into brotherly conference with all or any Christian Bodies seeking the restoration of the organic unity of the Church, with a view to the earnest study of the conditions under which so priceless a blessing might happily be brought to pass.

The statement never got through the entire process of ratification in the American Episcopal Church, but it was brought up at the third Lambeth Conference in 1888, and emerged from there in a scaled back version which was intended to offer a basis for "Home Reunion" (by which was meant Anglican, Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches developing closer and deeper ties).

Appendix 1b Lambeth Conference of 1888, Resolution 1126

That, in the opinion of this Conference, the following Articles supply a basis on which approach may be, by God's blessing, made towards Home Reunion:

1. The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
2. The Apostles' Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
3. The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself — Baptism and the Supper of the Lord — ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.
4. The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church.

It is important to note that the Chicago/Lambeth Quadrilateral was only ever meant as a basis for uniting Canterbury, Rome and Constantinople. It was never intended as the basis for defining Anglicanism or Communion relationships within Anglicanism. Any attempt to argue from the Chicago/Lambeth Quadrilateral to a sufficient definition of membership in the Anglican Communion is totally wrong-footed.

However, it does give some indication of what the early Anglican Communion thought was of paramount importance in any close fellowship: The authority of Scripture, the theology contained in the two major creeds of the early and undivided Church, the presence and basic liturgical ingredients of the two Scripturally ordained sacraments, and the presence of some form of the historic episcopate.

The reasons behind these are theologically based at heart, not institutional or structural, notwithstanding that institutions and structures proceed from the application of the theology.

This is significant because it was an earlier document released into the Communion and arguably it likely did influence later thinking about Anglican identity and had some impact on what soon emerged— the 1893 Solemn Declaration of the Anglican Church of Canada.

In other words, from the start the thinking behind the formation of the Communion was in terms of theological conformity and participation in shared theology, not participation in shared institutions.

Appendix 2

The Solemn Declaration of the Anglican Church of Canada

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. (27)

WE, the Bishops, together with the Delegates from the Clergy and Laity of the Church of England in the Dominion of Canada, now assembled in the first General Synod, hereby make the following Solemn Declaration:

WE declare this Church to be, and desire that it shall continue, in full communion with the Church of England throughout the world, as an integral portion of the One Body of Christ composed of the Churches which, united under the One Divine Head and in fellowship of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, hold the One Faith revealed in Holy Writ, and defined in the Creeds as maintained by the undivided primitive Church in

the undisputed Ecumenical Councils; receive the same Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as containing all things necessary to salvation; teach the same Word of God; partake of the same Divinely ordained Sacraments, through the ministry of the same Apostolic Orders; and worship One God and Father through the same Lord Jesus Christ, by the same Holy and Divine Spirit who is given to them that believe to guide them into all truth.

And we are determined by the help of God to hold and maintain the Doctrine, Sacraments, and Discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded in his Holy Word, and as the Church of England hath received and set forth in The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church according to the use of the Church of England; together with the Psalter or Psalms of David, pointed as they are to be sung or said in Churches; and the Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests and Deacons and in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion; and to transmit the same unimpaired to our posterity.

This is the foundational document of the Anglican Church of Canada, and it is thoroughly theological in nature. It basically declares that the Anglican Church of Canada is determined to maintain, uphold and transmit the historic doctrine of the Church of England and its practices, and therefore desires to be a part of and to participate in the Anglican Communion world-wide.

References

- 1 To read Short see <http://www.anglican-mainstream.net/article20.asp>
- 2 cf- Bishop J.R.H. Moorman "A History of the Church of England" (A.C. Black, 1963/1976)
- 3 Moorman, Op.Cit.; Stephen Neil "Anglicanism" 1977
- 4 Stephen Neil Op.Cit. — note that these are theological values
- 5 see Appendix 1a
- 6 see Appendix 1b
- 7 see Appendix 2
- 8 Archbishop Gregory Venables in comments made at a meeting in Vancouver, Spring 2005. While my personal notes are insufficient to provide a perfect quote he said in effect that without the shared, historic, orthodox theology of the Communion there is no true communion, and that the Communion without communion was simply committee.
- 9 Truth, according to Scripture, is God's Word (John 17:17) by which is meant His teaching recorded in Scripture and His Teaching in and through the person of Jesus (eg- John 14:6). This is also implied in the passage quoted above.
- 10 see Matthew 28:18-20 and note the command to teach new disciples to obey everything Jesus had commanded the Apostles
- 11 It is significant that the early Christians could have saved themselves much grief and suffering if they had been willing to claim that their Faith and Religion were private matters, for the Romans respected and protected private belief systems. The very fact that the early Christians claimed that their Faith and Religion were public, for all to know, for all to see, and for all to come to believe, is what exposed them to persecution.
- 12 see also Jesus's view of God as "... the God of the living" (Mt.22:32; Mk.12:26;

Lk.20:37) and the fuller implications of Abraham rejoicing to see the day of Jesus (Jn.8:51-58) all of which suggest that true Koinonia with God transcends time.

13 The Bible uses the phrase “works of darkness” (eg- Rom.13:12f & Eph.5:11) metaphorically, to describe thoughts and acts contrary to God’s Word which, from the perspective of the writers of the Bible, were the result of the influence of Satan, the prince of darkness (cf — Gill, John, 1809; Barnes, Albert, 1832; Barrett, C.K., 1962; Cranfield, C.E.B., 19

14 The St. Michael’s Report found that since the ceremonies of blessing were analogous to marriage and since some of the people coming for blessing had previously been or would later be through a subsequent ceremony of civil union the whole question of blessing same sex relationships is a theological one and must be handled as such.

15 CoGS received the Report for presentation and voting at General Synod, but have effectively preempted the Report by also saying that a vote will also be taken on the question of blessing same sex relationships, blaming the Dar es Salaam communiqué and pressure from the Communion for clarity, suggesting that since “the damage will have been done” General Synod may as well put the question to the people.

16 This disingenuous statement is in direct contradiction of an oft repeated point by liberal theologian D.J. Hall of McGill University that “theology is as theology does”, meaning that our actions speak at least as loudly as our words, and that they must be seen as “theology in action”. In other words, a “pastoral response” must come from a prior theological view which defacto informs the “pastoral response”. Therefore, to claim that something is merely a pastoral response without being a departure from Communion standards of theology and policy is, at the very least, disingenuous.

17 I refer to Bishop N.T. Wright’s response to the “Covenant for the Church of England” see for example

<http://www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/news/2006/20061214wright.cfm?doc=171>

18 evidenced by Robert Gagnon “The Bible and Homosexual Practice: Texts and Hermeneutics”; and “Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views”

19 <http://www.anglican.ca/about/COGS/highlights/2007-03-11.htm> AND

<http://www.anglicanjournal.com/canada/cogs/002/article/blessings-vote-to-be-decided-by-resolution-1/>

ALSO <http://theagetocome.wordpress.com/2007/03/13/acc-cogs-march-meeting/> AND

<http://magicstatistics.com/2007/03/13/council-of-general-synod-tries-to-pull-a-fast-one/>

20 The phrase “generous orthodoxy” which was originally used by the Rev’d. F. Rutledge, was (for example) more recently subsumed by popular Christian writer Brian MacLaren, but was inappropriately purloined by Rev’d. K. Grieb in her defense of the policies of The Episcopal Church (see story at

http://www.episcopalchurch.org/3577_81748_ENG_HTML.htm) and was ably responded to by Rt. Rev’d. C. FitzSimons Allison. See <http://www.anglican-mainstream.net/?p=1487>

21 Refer to The Windsor Report, particularly paras. 42, 53-62 on authority of Scripture; paras. 22-33 on the Anglican teaching on human sexuality and paras. 36-39 & 87-96 on Adiaphora and Subsidiarity

22 See story <http://www.anglicanjournal.com/100/article/blessings-vote-to-be-decided-by-resolution/>

This is particularly so since the Dromantine Communiqué, the Nottingham Communiqué and the Dar es Salaam

Communiqué all make it clear that the Communion collectively upholds The Windsor Report and expects its membership to abide by the standards of The Windsor Report.

see also <http://www.anglicanplanet.net/TAPeDitor0704.html>

23 This is the clear implication of the earlier portion of this paper. There is no getting

around the unambiguous view of the Scriptures where the subject of communion with God and communion with fellow Christians is concerned.

24 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago-Lambeth_Quadrilateral

25 source for this document http://anglicansonline.org/basics/Chicago_Lambeth.html

2 6 source for this document <http://www.achome.org/tac/library/docs/quadrlat.htm>

2 7 Source: Anglican Church of Canada, The Book of Common Prayer, (1962 Edition) p. viii