

ANGLICANISM: THE SYSTEM IN CRISIS

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Anglicans along with those of other Christian denominations, other religions and secular society have kept tabs on the crisis which has hit Anglicanism, particularly over the last decade. Before we try to find those who are to blame or decide which faction is right, one must search out a more profound cause which is of a systemic nature. All human organizations organize themselves in a system, and when the moment comes in which the system no longer functions it is either superseded or else continues inadequate. The Anglican Communion will be dilacerated and denied hope of a solution if it fails to face up to the fact, with the analytical assistance of the Human Sciences, that its current organizational model has expired.

The first indication of inadequacy is the fact that the Anglican Communion is an international organism led by a national established church, which, through political mechanisms chooses its principal leader. 163 nations of the 164 which comprise the Communion, have no participation in this decision making process, and are compelled to wait passively the decree of the British government. It would be naïve to think that these 163 countries – some of which contain the majority of the Communion's membership – would accept indefinitely such an arrangement, the product of an imperial history, and choose not to pursue changes in this process, which, in one way or another includes everyone.

The function of a world leader chosen by the British government is not as formal, as symbolic as some might think, since this leader has the authority to call and preside the other so called "Instruments of the Communion" and to affix the seal of qualification with regard to who is and is not considered an Anglican.

The national leader of a national Church will always bring the possibility of visions and decisions marked by his or her culture, idiosyncrasies, ideologies, and by an inevitable ethnocentrism and parochialism. The symbolic centre is situated in Western Europe, developed, post-enlightenment and post-modern, and this affects the life of millions of powerless Anglicans. With the expansion of the Communion it's virtually impossible for the British leader to know what is really happening on the periphery, and official reports are liable to be coloured by opinions and decisions, which may not do justice to the facts on the ground.

The composition of the Anglican Communion is divided in three concentric circles. The first is formed by Anglo-Saxon nations; the second by countries which were a part of the British Empire, and which today are a part of the British Commonwealth or ex-Commonwealth having been exposed to a strong Anglo-Saxon influence; the third circle is made up of nations whose colonial roots are traced to the Southern, Latin Europe: France, Spain, and Portugal, with a language, culture and perspective very different from that found in the other two circles. The rule of the English language and the absorption of central aspects of Anglo-Saxon culture take on the form of impositions for the Anglican Communion as a whole, further isolating the clearly peripheral third circle.

An obvious dichotomy emerges between the “developed and modern”, that insists in maintaining its hegemony, even though constituting a minority today, and the “undeveloped and backward” that are the majority but seem powerless to seek a new hegemony that both History and Sociology consider natural and inevitable.

Another aspect worthy of consideration is the necessity to recognise the amplitude and depth of theological differences, doctrine and moral reasoning which refer not to secondary questions but to first order issues in terms of content and identity, not merely in terms of Anglicanism but Christianity itself. These are visions not merely divergent, but antithetical and mutually-exclusive.

The negation or mitigation of the importance of this fact, the endless dialogue or *listening process*, or the application of the Hegelian method of dialectic in the hope of a new “synthesis” is nothing more than an error with grave consequences, for it won’t solve the problem, but will only aggravate it to the point of no return and rupture.

What has become evident to the global media is the fact that the leadership of the Anglican Communion is unwilling to accept things as they really are, that the hegemonic Anglo-Saxon centre is unwilling to lose its hegemony, and that the only objective is the maintenance of the institution, whatever the cost, even if that means the loss of content and fragmentation behind the curtain of the formal edifice and rites.

The Lambeth Conference draws near, non-deliberative by design and mutilated by those excluded and the self-excluded, whose very absence diminishes its very legitimacy. Political deals or spiritualised mystic aspirations won’t resolve anything, unless of course the system adopts a realistic and a profoundly alternate approach, re-finding its functionality and relevance.

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