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# In Error and Apostate — The Anglican Division Looms

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The world-wide Anglican Communion has been skating on thin ice for decades now, skirting disaster only by an infinitely creative arrangement of compromises. Now, with the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops coming in just a few weeks, a group of 300 conservative Anglican bishops is meeting in Jerusalem. Their meeting will make history, and may well define the ultimate breakup of global Anglicanism.

The Global Anglican Future Conference [GAFCON] featured an address by Dr. Peter Akinola, Archbishop of Nigeria, on Sunday evening. Archbishop Akinola has emerged as one of the most courageous and theologically committed leaders of worldwide Anglicanism.

In his address, delivered as something of a keynote for the event, Archbishop Akinola declared that “a sizable part of the Communion is in error and not a few are apostate.” This gets to the heart of The Anglican dilemma. The issues now separating liberals and conservatives within the global Anglican Communion are no longer matters on which compromise can be reached. To the contrary, the doctrinal and theological explosions connected to the issues of human sexuality and biblical authority have distilled the fundamental issues down to what is considered non-negotiable by both sides. Conservatives are unwilling to surrender biblical authority and the liberals are unwilling to surrender their determination to normalize homosexuality and other liberal causes. In reality, the division has already happened — all that remains is the final form of the division.

As Archbishop Akinola lamented, doctrinal “revisionists” have attempted to create a new religion in the place of historic biblical Christianity. In his words: “Clearly the bedrock of the revisionist perspective is the humanist, rather than theological approach. This is the crux of the problem: they are going in the opposite direction from what Biblical orthodoxy demands, and with such a mindset, a meeting-point with those who are labeled conservatives – who have chosen to stand where the Bible stands, becomes a very remote possibility.”

As Ruth Gledhill of [The Times](#) [London] reported, Archbishop Akinola expressed frustration that Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams had arranged the upcoming Lambeth Conference in such a way that dealing with the fundamental issues would be virtually impossible. “Rejecting all entreaties, Lambeth Palace chose not to be bothered about that which troubles us; decided to stick to its own plans and to erect the walls of the 2008 Lambeth Conference on the shaky and unsafe foundations of our brokenness,” he said.

Meanwhile, Archbishop Peter Jensen of the Australian archdiocese of Sydney described the Anglican breakup as tragic. Nevertheless, Dr. Jensen insisted that the issue of truth was more important than the imperative of unity. “We’re not dealing with the secular world here, we are dealing with the Christian church, and the Christian church has a constitution which is the Bible,” he said [see coverage in [The Age](#) [Melbourne]].

In his address, Archbishop Akinola described how many Anglican believers around the world, especially in Africa, view the liberals in Western churches [see [The Times](#)]:

*“Having survived the inhuman physical slavery of the 19th century, the political slavery called colonialism of the 20th century, the developing world economic enslavement, we cannot, we dare not, allow ourselves and the millions we*

*represent to be kept in a religious and spiritual dungeon.”*

“We will not abdicate our God-given responsibility and simply acquiesce to destructive modern cultural and political dictates.”

Even as the meeting began in Jerusalem, observers were warning that the day of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s spiritual leadership over the Anglican Communion “is over.” The GAFCON meeting produced a plan for a new fellowship of more orthodox Anglican churches. As Ruth Gledhill explains:

*The new fellowship for orthodox Anglicans would have a leadership of six or seven senior conservative bishops and archbishops, such as the Bishop of Pittsburgh, the Right Rev Bob Duncan, who chairs the US Common Cause partnership that acts as an umbrella for American conservatives, Archbishop Henry Orombi, Primate of Uganda, and the Church of England’s Bishop of Rochester, Dr Michael Nazir-Ali.*

*The aim is not to split with the worldwide Anglican Communion, which counts 80 million members in 38 provinces, but to reform it from within.*

*Formal ties will be maintained with the Archbishop of Canterbury but fellowship members will consider themselves out of communion with provinces such as the US and Canada.*

There are orthodox and faithful Christians in the American and Canadian churches, but those in leadership in those churches have steadfastly refused to stop an onward march into theological and ecclesiastical disaster.

Jerusalem was a controversial location for the GAFCON meeting. But, after all, the famous “Jerusalem Council” of the early church was held there as recorded in Acts 15:6-21. In that council, the apostles and elders of the early church met and reached the consensus that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is for both Jews and Gentiles, and that Gentile converts to Christ were not required to first become, in effect, Jews.

Perhaps we are seeing before our eyes what we should have anticipated – that Jerusalem is a good place to remember what the Gospel is.

