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# Orthodoxy and the Politics of Christian Subjectivity: A Case Study of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON)<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Informed by theories of biopolitics and necropolitics, I argue that Christian orthodoxy is a colonial power formation that manufactures the subjectivities of those within the Church and those without. The operation of biopolitics and necropolitics coalesces around two Christian bodies – the local body and the corporate body catholic – and is thus explicable according to the synthetic framework of ‘body politics.’ Within the body-political calculus, orthodox Christians qualify as genuine lives and, consequently, benefit from biopolitical interventions to promote their flourishing; heretics, by contrast, represent (non-)subjects whose bodies orthodoxy/colonialism consigns to destruction. As a case study to illustrate the import of my theoretical analysis for ecclesiological reflection, I examine the rhetoric of the leaders of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON), who, despite presenting their movement as a decolonial project, espouse a body-political theology and, therefore, remain firmly within the matrix of Christian colonial orthodoxy.

**Keywords:** Anglican Communion, biopolitics, Christian subjectivity, colonialism, Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON), heresy, necropolitics, orthodoxy

## Introduction

Since the first meeting of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) in June 2008, the movement’s leadership has consistently portrayed GAFCON as a vector of decolonial, yet unwaveringly orthodox, theological thought within the global Anglican Communion. While those leaders’ claim to orthodoxy is undoubtedly correct, by virtue of that same commitment to orthodoxy GAFCON remains complicit in colonial formations and expressions of power, or so I shall contend in the present article.

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Although my analysis has specific import for the present dispute within the Anglican Communion over the place of LGBTQ persons within the Church, it speaks as well to broader questions of Christian ecclesiology and subjectivity. Proffering an account of the logic of orthodoxy and colonialism that foregrounds the common 'bio-' and 'necropolitical' dimensions of each (these terms being ones I define in detail below), I expose the limitations of those modalities of decolonial theology that remain invested – either tacitly or, as in the case of GAFCON, overtly – in the project of nurturing the lives of some subjects while simultaneously manufacturing other subjects for destruction. In so doing, I provide a theoretical foundation for future attempts to reimagine Christian community along decolonial lines.

This essay is divided into two principal sections. In the first, I explicate orthodoxy as a 'body-political' logic marked by the subject-forming operation of both bio- and necropower, concepts I elaborate upon in light of the theoretical insights of Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Achille Mbembe, and their intellectual heirs (Christian and otherwise). As I show here, insofar as it is body political in its structure and outworking, orthodoxy is but an extension of the logic of colonial modernity. In the second section, I turn to a focused treatment of the rhetoric that prevails within the GAFCON movement, devoting particular attention to three corpora: (1) the writings of GAFCON General Secretary Peter Jensen; (2) the official statements produced during the course of the 2008 conference in Jerusalem (the 'Jerusalem Statement') and the 2013 conference in Nairobi (the 'Nairobi Communiqué'); and (3) the materials released in advance of, and as a result of, the 2018 conference in Jerusalem. From this archive, I demonstrate that the same body-political commitments that animate Christian colonialism drive the theology of the GAFCON movement.

Before turning to these specific claims, however, it is necessary to preface my remarks with a brief word about my own subject position vis-à-vis the primary and secondary literature I engage herein. Both GAFCON and the movement's allies amongst the 'Global South Anglicans' deserve a more extensive (and sympathetic) historical and theological study than is within the ambit of the present article to offer; I myself make no pretensions either to exhaustiveness or to dispassionate objectivity in my analysis. Because Anglicanism is not unique amongst Christian churches in its colonial legacy, the efforts of GAFCON's leaders to separate themselves from that heritage index both the strategies by means of which other Christian groups have sought to redefine their relationship to Christian colonialism (both past and present) as well as the difficulties that attach to this project. While the views expressed by those leaders do not capture the full diversity of opinions that obtains amongst the wider membership of GAFCON, I operate from the assumption that they reflect the central theological commitments of the movement as a whole. Consequently, I have chosen to restrict myself to the official and semi-official publications in which said views find clearest articulation. Writing from an etic perspective, I propose to interrogate these materials as one who has benefited from the colonial logic they espouse and yet is a member of a church that, according to the rhetoric therein, will soon wither and die for having abandoned gospel truths.

In recognition of this double affiliation – and, hence, of my own limitations as an interpreter – I have fashioned this essay into a readers' text, that is, one that readers themselves are tasked with finishing (the participle form being significant in this

respect, for the task of finishing is never itself complete).<sup>3</sup> It is to be read and reread, not because its contents have any special claim to profundity, but, instead, because by dwelling on a particular decolonial challenge to Christian ecclesiology and subjectivity it points towards an as yet unobservable horizon of theological possibilities. That horizon is populated by the dead, whose voices, too often silenced by the cacophony that is Christian theological reflection, must needs be recovered and, *eo ipso*, recognized for what they are, namely, the conscience of the human experience.

## On the Formation of Populations of the Living and of the Dead

The logic of orthodoxy, like that of the modern-colonial matrix in which Christian theologies are presently articulated,<sup>4</sup> is the logic of the body. Both formed within and generative of networks of power, this logic marks select bodies as something other than bodies alone, namely, lives that must be nurtured and defended.<sup>5</sup> Thus interpellated, these lives together comprise the ‘body catholic’, an assemblage analogous to the Foucauldian ‘social body’ that circumscribes the domain of Christian intelligibility by defining the manner in which individual bodies become recognizable *qua* Christian.<sup>6</sup> As an assemblage, the body catholic is an unstable configuration irreducible not only to the geopolitical, national, and social formations in which its members participate but also to the identities of those members themselves, a configuration, note, that is always haunted by its potential to be other than that which it is in the process of becoming.<sup>7</sup> Orthodoxy, on this account, is thus less an index of the specific beliefs or doctrinal positions to which ‘proper’ Christian bodies-cum-lives subscribe (although it is certainly still that) than a set of regulative principles that orient vectors of belief and, in so doing, construct hegemonic (in pretense if not always in fact) regimes of Christian intelligibility.<sup>8</sup> Said principles govern ways of

<sup>3</sup>Robert Pogue Harrison, *The Dominion of the Dead* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. xii.

<sup>4</sup>On modernity/coloniality, see Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Latin America Otherwise; Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011). On the connection between orthodoxy and modernity, see, further, the analysis and critique of T-Theology in Marcella Althaus-Reid, *Indecent Theology: Theological Perversions in Sex, Gender and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000); Marcella Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God: Sexuality and Liberation Theology* (London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>5</sup>See, relatedly, Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (Radical Thinkers; London: Verso, 2009), pp. 18–21.

<sup>6</sup>On the social body, see Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977* (ed. Colin Gordon; trans. Colin Gordon et al.; New York: Vintage, 1980), p. 55.

<sup>7</sup>The ‘assemblage’ is described in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (trans. Brian Massumi; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987). My use of the term is informed by Kevin Grove and Jonathan Pugh, ‘Assemblage Thinking and Participatory Development: Potentiality, Ethics, Biopolitics’, *Geography Compass* 9.1 (2015), pp. 1–13 (esp. 2–4).

<sup>8</sup>On legibility/recognizability and intelligibility, terms I shall use throughout, see Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005); Butler, *Frames of War*, esp. ch. 1. Both Butler and I are, in turn, indebted to Foucault’s notion of ‘regimes of truth’, for which see Michel Foucault, ‘Truth and Power’, in *Power/Knowledge*, pp. 109–33; Michel Foucault, ‘What Is Critique?’, in Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth (eds.), *The Politics of Truth* (trans. Lysa Hochroth; New York: Semiotext(e), 1997), pp. 23–82; Michel Foucault, ‘Afterword: The Subject and Power’, in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (trans. Leslie Sawyer; New York: Taylor & Francis, 2014), pp. 208–26.

believing rather than beliefs per se, forcing the former into alignment so as to produce the illusion of a cohesive corporate body with a clearly delimited extension. 'Biopower' and 'necropower' represent distinguishable but inseparable sides of this 'body-political' logic,<sup>9</sup> the complementary operation of which generates both the subjectivities of individual Christians (by assigning those individuals subjectivities that are legible within the Christian imagination, of which the most salient are the orthodox believer and, paradoxically, the unorthodox heretic) as well as the bio-spiritual identity of the Church as the Body of Christ.

Since initially theorized by Michel Foucault to describe the shift, coincident with the advent of modernity, in which the administration of life superseded the dispensation of death as power's principal function and prerogative,<sup>10</sup> biopower – and, with it, biopolitics – has received significant, if critical, attention from scholars interested in advancing decolonial projects.<sup>11</sup> This engagement is perhaps unsurprising given the centrality of such concepts as 'recognition' within settler-colonial narratives (including, as we shall see below, the rhetoric of ecclesial entities such as GAFCON), wherein the legitimacy of the colonial state and its associated institutions is predicated on that state's authority to asymmetrically acknowledge the existence of dispossessed and colonized peoples according to the colonizers' own legal, philosophical, and theological frameworks.<sup>12</sup> By (re-)naming populations as such, the settler-colonial society arrogates to itself the right to assign those collective bodies positions within the settlers' own history. The result is the imposition of 'settler

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<sup>9</sup>Walter Mignolo coined the phrase 'body politics' in *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, p. xxii. As he put it there, body politics, together with what he calls 'geo-politics', challenges 'the imperial assumptions constructed around theo- and ego-politics of knowledge. . . . Thus it is crucial to distinguish bio-politics from bio-graphic or body-politics of knowledge. Bio-politics (or bio-power) is a concept that has served to analyze state-oriented strategies (and now used by the corporations) to manage and control the population. My use of bio-graphic or body-politics of knowledge describes instead the responses, thinking and action, of the population who do not want to be managed by the state and want to delink from the technologies of power to which they are being summated.' While I find Mignolo's phrase useful for capturing the manner in which biopower and necropower coalesce around both individual and social bodies, I am otherwise unsatisfied with the definition he provides. It remains unclear to me what he means when he characterizes biopower as 'state-oriented'. If he is intending to suggest that biopower and biopolitics are localized to states and corporations, that would be a rather unfortunate misreading of Foucault, for whom power generally, and biopower specifically, permeate the entire social body (see, e.g., Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, p. 114). Given the ambiguity of Mignolo's definition, I am therefore hesitant to adopt it for my own argument without significant qualification.

<sup>10</sup>See, especially, Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (trans. Robert Hurley; New York: Vintage, 1990), pp. 135-59; Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976* (trans. David Macey; New York: Picador, 1997), pp. 239-63.

<sup>11</sup>A critical appropriation of Foucault's writings on biopower is necessary in such discussions because, as Scott Morgensen observes, neither Foucault nor Giorgio Agamben (whose study of the figure of the *homo sacer* contributed significantly to the theorization of biopolitics vis-à-vis Western law; see Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* [trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen; Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998]) 'directly theorises colonialism as a context for biopower' ('The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism: Right Here, Right Now', *Settler Colonial Studies* 1.1 [2011], pp. 52-76 [55]).

<sup>12</sup>For a discussion of which, see Morgensen, 'Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism', pp. 62-64; Mark Rifkin, 'Making Peoples into Populations: The Racial Limits of Tribal Sovereignty', in Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith (eds.), *Theorizing Native Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 149-87; see, further, Achille Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15.1 (2003), pp. 11-40 (27).

time' onto colonized peoples, which transforms a people's past into a linear progression with two major segments, namely, the periods 'pre-contact' and 'post-contact'. With the delineation of this division there comes a further demand that colonized populations locate themselves within the latter to the exclusion of any continued connection with the contents of the former (for instance, through notions of ancestral inheritance). Far from signaling a benign acknowledgment of identities that exist independent of the settler (read: Christian<sup>13</sup>) gaze, then, recognition is instead a biopolitical intervention that brings populations into being in forms that, whatever their superficial similarities to entities within the imaginaries of colonized peoples themselves, are only legible because they represent elements within the settlers' vision of the cosmos.

Biopower thus produces subjects by investing bodies with histories that impose obligations on those bodies in the present.<sup>14</sup> Unlike what I term the 'bare past' (so called because it lacks the identity-forming influence of history proper), an archive of contingencies that attests the manifold ways in which the present could be otherwise, such histories are articulated within the body-political register as an inevitable progression that culminates, necessarily, in the modern-colonial, orthodox moment.<sup>15</sup> Since it is as an actor within the latter drama that the orthodox subject is recognizable as such, she is indebted for her own subjectivity to the body-political narrative itself. This debt, in turn, compels her to comport herself according to the standards of intelligibility that the script for said narrative dictates, chiefly by refusing to allow the contingent possibilities of the bare past to intrude upon, and thereby disrupt the necessity of, the body-political present. By conforming to these standards, the orthodox subject renders herself eligible for further biopolitical interventions designed to promote her flourishing, thereby tacitly communicating to the members of other populations that in order to benefit from the colonial moment they, too, must participate in the settlers' society on the colonists' own terms. In line with Foucault's insight that power is ubiquitous rather than localized to any single institutional apparatus or individual,<sup>16</sup> it is a straightforward exercise to identify further examples of such biopolitical interventions within Christian milieux. The most obvious is perhaps the publication of obituaries and, for a particularly exemplary few, hagiographies, which invites others to meditate on the contents of select lives and comport themselves accordingly.<sup>17</sup> Notable in this instance are those bodies the memories of which are not preserved in this fashion, prominent examples of which include the victims of lynching violence and those Native

<sup>13</sup>George E. Tinker, 'American Indians, Conquest, the Christian Story, and Invasive Nation-Building', in Harold Recinos (ed.), *Wading Through Many Voices: Toward a Theology of Public Conversation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), pp. 255-74.

<sup>14</sup>My reference to historical indebtedness is inspired by the discussion of the same (albeit on highly divergent lines) in Achille Mbembe, 'Borders in the Age of Networks: The Idea of a Borderless World', Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Yale University, March 28, 2018.

<sup>15</sup>See, similarly, Boaventura de Sousa Santos's reading of Walter Benjamin's parable of the *Angelus Novus* in *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 75. And, further, Orlando Patterson's discussion of the distinction between having a past and having a heritage as this distinction pertains to slavery in *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 5-6.

<sup>16</sup>Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, pp. 93-96.

<sup>17</sup>On the biopolitical significance of obituaries, see Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), pp. 34-38.

American children who suffered from the systemic abuses that obtained at Christian-run (including Anglican) residential schools.<sup>18</sup>

As this latter remark suggests, the obverse of biopower is necropower,<sup>19</sup> which identifies and expunges those elements that pose a real or perceived threat to the health of the body catholic (the distinction between real and perceived dangers being ultimately irrelevant for the operation of this power formation).<sup>20</sup> Unlike biopower, which produces living subjects, necropower aggregates bodies into populations of the 'living dead' by classifying the spaces occupied by those bodies as zones of death.<sup>21</sup> Demarcated by malleable and, in many instances, fuzzy borders from those spaces in which biopolitical interventions occur,<sup>22</sup> zones of death are spaces in which violence is the condition of existence. Because the conditions of biopolitical intelligibility do not hold in such spaces, bodies register within the necropolitical calculus as at once threatening and disposable by virtue of merely being located therein. Insofar as they figure ways of being that are inconsistent with the principles of orthodoxy, these bodies must be destroyed lest the exceptional subjective modalities they represent come to challenge the principles of orthodoxy for normative status. That same exceptionalism ensures, however, that whatever trappings of the flourishing life these entities might possess, they are marked by an ineradicable otherness vis-à-vis the living such that, although slaughtered en masse, these bodies can never be killed – being, in a sense, dead already, they can merely be disposed of in the same way that necrotic tissue is removed from an infirm patient.<sup>23</sup> Biopolitical dominion is predicated on the ability to define a space as one in which the operation of necropower prevails and, hence, in which bodies are formed as (non-)subjects that must needs be eliminated.<sup>24</sup>

In denominating zones of death, body power elides the differences between the individual bodies located therein, amalgamating the inhabitants of that space into a single class of entities in order to cement the partition between that grouping and the populations that benefit from biopolitical interventions. The organization of the

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<sup>18</sup>For a detailed account of the abuses committed at Canadian residential schools and the long-term impacts thereof, see the final reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, especially: *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1, Origins to 1939* (The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 1a; Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015); *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 2, 1939–2000* (The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 1b; Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), esp. ch. 41; *Canada's Residential Schools: The Legacy* (The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 5; Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015).

<sup>19</sup>'Necropolitics' and 'necropower' are coinages of Mbembe, 'Necropolitics'. While I find Mbembe's account useful as a point of departure for my own analysis, I make no attempt to slavishly adhere to his construal of either term.

<sup>20</sup>See, further, Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 12.

<sup>21</sup>Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', p. 40.

<sup>22</sup>It is this malleability that allows for the emergence of such phenomena as 'homonationalism' in the United States; see Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Next Wave; Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

<sup>23</sup>Judith Butler, 'Sexual Inversions', in John Caputo and Mark Yount (eds.), *Foucault and the Critique of Institutions* (Studies of the Greater Philadelphia Philosophy Consortium; University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), pp. 81–98 (97); Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 42.

<sup>24</sup>Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', pp. 26–27.



colony evidences this dynamic writ large, with this space constituting one in which, from the colonizer's perspective, there is no distinction between the enemy combatant and the native. To be the latter is to be the former, regardless of one's other affiliations or biological attributes (e.g., sex and age); hence, during colonial conflicts between European empires and Native American nations, not only Native warriors but also women and children were the frequent targets of indiscriminate, mass violence. This conflation reflects the settlers' own anthropological commitments, as Achille Mbembe explains: 'That colonies might be ruled over in absolute lawlessness stems from the racial denial of any common bond between the conqueror and the native. In the eyes of the conqueror, *savage life* is just another form of *animal life*, a horrifying experience, something alien beyond imagination or comprehension.'<sup>25</sup> The assimilation ('civilizing') of colonial subjects through the erasure of their Native identities (and, often, the imposition of Christian ones<sup>26</sup>) is thus a principal goal of the colonial enterprise, one that found tangible expression in American and Canadian residential school programs that sought to 'kill the Indian . . . and save the man'.<sup>27</sup> For there can be no rapprochement between a zone of death and the regime of body-political intelligibility unless the former is transformed, violently, into a space in which the only entities that remain are those properly disposed towards conformity with the principles of colonial orthodoxy.

Informed by the foregoing review of the bio- and necropolitical dimensions of body politics, it is possible to account for the internal logic of orthodox ecclesiologies such as the one proffered by GAFCON. Those formed within the body catholic as living subjects benefit from the operation of biopower, which, by investing their bodies with an apostolic history, interpellates these figures as members of a trans-temporal community of faithful believers whose theological views represent something other than the idiosyncratic convictions of a particular religious faction, namely, truths the acceptance of which is 'identical with fidelity to Christ himself'.<sup>28</sup> From an emic perspective, the modalities of theological reflection espoused by the members of this population constitute vectors of Christian thought the adoption of which brings subjects into communion not only with the Church, but also – and more significantly – with the 'God of the living' (Lk. 20.38) who authored that population's traditions. Hence, to depart from this community is to negate the possibility of not only flourishing but, insofar as one thereby abnegates access to the ultimate source of life, survival itself.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup>Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', p. 24.

<sup>26</sup>See, e.g., George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

<sup>27</sup>To reference the oft-cited remark by Richard H. Pratt, 'The Advantages of Mingling Indians with Whites', in Francis Paul Prucha (ed.), *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the 'Friends of the Indian' 1880–1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 260–71 (261).

<sup>28</sup>Wendy Farley, *Gathering those Driven Away: A Theology of Incarnation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011), p. 29.

<sup>29</sup>John Calvin's remarks are in this respect instructive. Characterizing the visible church as the 'mother of believers', Calvin argues in a body-political vein that 'there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother conceive [*sic*] us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like the angels . . . Furthermore, away from her bosom one cannot hope for any forgiveness of sins or any salvation, as Isaiah [Isa. 37.32] and Joel [Joel 2.32] testify . . . By [the words of Scripture] God's fatherly favor and the especial witness of

Necropower, on the other hand, forms that population's Others into heretical subjects who, lacking a pretension to apostolic history, are recognizable within the Christian imagination as entities that are Christian in appearance alone rather than in essence. Such figures might attend a church, recite creedal formulations, partake of the sacraments, and claim to have personally encountered divinity. Yet, lacking a genuine Christian heritage, these heretical subjects are little more than wraiths doomed to a final destruction that, on this view, will necessarily obtain at the eschaton when God sentences these bodies to an eternity of suffering in hell.<sup>30</sup> Since their demise is assured, heretics occupy a liminal space between life and death in their present existence, with this state leaving them vulnerable to acts of violence against their bodies by Christian believers who arrogate to themselves the right to act as agents of divine wrath.<sup>31</sup>

In short, Christian orthodoxy as such is body political and, which is the same, colonial. That Christianity (and, within that, Anglicanism) has, both historically and in the present, readily aligned itself with European and American imperial projects of conquest, assimilation, and violent occupation is for this reason unsurprising: the two share a common architecture. But this account of the body politics of orthodoxy remains abstract. It is to the task of rendering it more concrete that I now turn.

### The Body Catholic Must Be Defended

Following the vote at the June 2002 synod of the Diocese of New Westminster (Anglican Church of Canada [ACC]) to sanction the creation of a rite of blessing for homosexual unions, delegates from nine parishes staged a walkout to register their dissent.<sup>32</sup> Included among the protestors was theologian J.I. Packer, who justified his departure by characterizing the synod's decision as one that 'falsifies the gospel of Christ, abandons the authority of Scripture, jeopardizes the salvation of fellow human beings, and betrays the church in its God-appointed role as the bastion and bulwark of divine truth'.<sup>33</sup> Packer's church – St John's, Shaughnessy, then among the largest congregations in the ACC<sup>34</sup> – elected shortly after the conclusion of the synod to withhold its financial contributions to the diocese. On February 14, 2008, the congregation voted to disaffiliate with the ACC entirely and place itself, instead, under the ecclesial oversight of the Province of the Southern Cone, with church spokeswoman Lesley Bentley stating after that decision was reached that

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spiritual life are limited to his flock, so that it is always disastrous to leave the church' (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* [ed. John T. McNeill; trans. Ford Lewis Battles; LCC, 20–21; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1960], §IV.I.4 [p. 1016]).

<sup>30</sup>On the difference between having a heritage and having a past, see, again, Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, pp. 5–6.

<sup>31</sup>Farley, *Gathering those Driven Away*, ch. 1.

<sup>32</sup>Leanne Larmondin, 'New Westminster Synod and Bishop Approve Same-Sex Blessings', *Anglican Communion News Service* (June 18, 2002), <http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2002/06/new-westminster-synod-and-bishop-approve-same-sex-blessings.aspx>.

<sup>33</sup>J.I. Packer, 'Why I Walked: Sometimes Loving a Denomination Requires You to Fight', *Christianity Today* (January 1, 2003), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/january/6.46.html>.

<sup>34</sup>Justin Taylor, 'J. I. Packer to Be Suspended from the Anglican Church of Canada', *The Gospel Coalition* (March 11, 2008), <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/j-i-packer-to-be-suspended-from/>



the doctrinal disagreements between the congregation and diocesan bishop Michael Ingham were such that the two represented 'different religions'.<sup>35</sup> With these remarks, Packer and Bentley neatly captured the concern, prevalent amongst both the architects of GAFCON as well as many of those ecclesial leaders who identify as members of the so-called 'Global South', that in order to support the inclusion of LGBTQ persons within the Church one must adopt ways of imagining the Christian body catholic that so radically depart from historic and essential Christian teaching as to be unrecognizable as vectors of Christian thought at all.<sup>36</sup>

Of the numerous misunderstandings that haunt the arguments offered by participants in, and commentators on, the present controversy over human sexuality within the Anglican Communion, the one that is perhaps most likely to prevent rapprochement between the parties involved is the mistaken view that the dispute concerns sexuality as such. To be sure, the ubiquitous (even obsessive) attention that questions of sex and sexuality have received from both lay and ordained interlocutors within the Communion would appear to warrant those interpretations of ecclesial affairs that reduce the 'crisis' within world Anglicanism to a series of seemingly intractable disagreements over the place of LGBTQ persons within the Church.<sup>37</sup> Yet such an analysis, insofar as it treats questions of human sexuality in isolation from the larger questions of Christian subjectivity of which the former are merely a subset, overlooks the common cause that unites those in favour of accepting LGBTQ persons with those opposed thereto, namely, the body-political project of safeguarding the life of the Anglican body catholic. For however much they differ in how they denominate the category and assign entities to populate it, neither side wishes to admit heretics into the Church.<sup>38</sup>

In the geographic and theological realignments taking place within the Communion, we are thus witnessing the construction of histories and counter-

<sup>35</sup>Solange Desantis, 'Vancouver Church Votes to Leave Canadian Church', *Anglican Journal* (February 14, 2008), <https://www.anglicanjournal.com/articles/vancouver-church-votes-to-leave-canadian-church-7728/>.

<sup>36</sup>See, similarly, Ellen Davis's argument that those on either side of the present dispute within the Communion adhere to discrete ways of reading the Bible apropos of questions of human sexuality: 'Reasoning with Scripture', *AThR* 90.3 (2008), pp. 513-19.

<sup>37</sup>It would be tedious to cite more than a modest selection of texts to illustrate the degree to which questions of sexuality have captured the imaginations of both Anglicans themselves as well as external commentators on the Communion, for examples abound. Besides the literature discussed below, see, e.g., Stephen E. Fowl, *Engaging Scripture: A Model for Theological Interpretation* (Challenges in Contemporary Theology; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), ch. 4; Terry Brown (ed.), *Other Voices, Other Worlds: The Global Church Speaks Out on Homosexuality* (New York: Church Publishing, 2006); Kathryn Tanner, Richard W. Corney, and W. Mark Richardson (eds.), 'Homosexuality, Ethics and the Church: An Essay by Richard Norris with Responses', *Special Issue of AThR* 90.3 (2008); Jason Bruner, 'Divided We Stand: North American Evangelicals and the Crisis in the Anglican Communion', *Journal of Anglican Studies* 8.1 (2010), pp. 101-25; Godfrey Mdimi Mhogolo, 'Human Sexuality in the Anglican Communion', in Ian S. Markham et al. (eds.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to the Anglican Communion* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), pp. 627-42; 'Statement from the Global South Primates and GAFCON Primates Council Concerning Same-Sex Unions' (GAFCON, October 6, 2016), <https://www.gafcon.org/news/statement-from-the-global-south-primates-and-gafcon-primates-council-concerning-same-sex-unions>.

<sup>38</sup>This is so even if we allow for the substantial variation that obtains between the views of individual members of the Communion, which of course gives the lie to the reductionist view of the present dispute as merely having two sides.

histories rather than narratives of genuine difference. Histories bind a population to its ancestral past, one that, in the case of GAFCON, is not only Christian but also supposedly unmarred by colonialism. Counter-histories, by contrast, are those 'histories' claimed by a population's Others, which, on the emic view of that population's members, are little more than simulacra of tradition and, consequently, are incapable of imposing obligations on those bodies that live in the present. As such, the designation 'counter-history' is typically imposed (albeit often obliquely) by those advancing a claim to body-political dominion rather than asserted by a population of its own identity-forming narratives (and thus parallels the imposition of settler time).

Although it depicts the localized experience of an affluent parish in Vancouver, Canada, the vignette with which this section opened indexes the rhetorical strategies by means of which opponents of LGBTQ inclusion within the rest of the Anglican Communion produce and deploy histories and counter-histories to position themselves as stalwart defenders of the orthodox Church; the writings of Peter Jensen, GAFCON's former General Secretary and the retired Archbishop of Sydney (Australia), are similarly insightful. Acting as a spokesperson for the movement, Jensen published a series of articles in which he attempted to rebut the charge that GAFCON is a source of division within global Anglicanism. To the contrary, he argued, GAFCON is 'a great force for unity' that offers faithful Anglicans an ecclesial body with which to affiliate themselves when existing structures embrace 'teaching [that] endangers the gospel itself'.<sup>39</sup> Acceptance of same-sex partnerships, marital or otherwise, figured prominently in Jensen's delineation of such condemnable teachings. Insofar as both the biblical texts and 'the continuous interpretative tradition of the church catholic' proscribe homosexuality,<sup>40</sup> any effort to extend Christian approval thereto necessarily represents 'a choice to rewrite the Bible and so the Christian faith'.<sup>41</sup> By so turning away from strict observance of the 'biblical' sexual ethic to which Jensen subscribes, many contemporary Anglicans have yielded to the 'return to paganism' inaugurated during the 1960s with the advent of the sexual revolution.<sup>42</sup> This capitulation has deleterious implications for the spiritual health of individuals, to be sure, since it entails substituting a 'false Jesus' for the 'true Jesus' who alone is capable of liberating persons 'from bondage to immoral sex and greed'.<sup>43</sup> However, in a telling body-political move, it was a defined set of corporate populaces who Jensen predicted would suffer the most severe effect of

<sup>39</sup>Peter Jensen, 'Why GAFCON Truly Matters by Peter Jensen, General Secretary GAFCON', *GAFCON* (January 1, 2016), <https://www.gafcon.org/news/why-gafcon-truly-matters-by-peter-jensen-general-secretary-gafcon>; Peter Jensen, 'Is Gafcon Divisive?', *GAFCON* (September 19, 2017), <https://www.gafcon.org/blog/is-gafcon-divisive>; see, further, Peter Jensen, 'The Need for GAFCON', *GAFCON*, (December 22, 2015), <https://www.gafcon.org/blog/the-need-for-gafcon>. Jensen's construal of GAFCON as a force for unity echoes the language of 'GAFCON 2013: The Nairobi Communiqué' (*GAFCON*, October 26, 2013), p. 1, [https://www.gafcon.org/sites/gafcon.org/files/news/pdfs/Nairobi\\_Communique\\_Final.pdf](https://www.gafcon.org/sites/gafcon.org/files/news/pdfs/Nairobi_Communique_Final.pdf).

<sup>40</sup>Peter Jensen, 'The Mythical Middle', *GAFCON* (August 3, 2017), <https://www.gafcon.org/blog/the-mythical-middle>; see, further, Jensen, 'Why GAFCON Truly Matters'; Peter Jensen, 'Slipping into the Slumber of the Spirit', *GAFCON* (February 22, 2018), <https://www.gafcon.org/blog/slipping-into-the-slumber-of-the-spirit>.

<sup>41</sup>Jensen, 'Why GAFCON Truly Matters', under 'What GAFCON Means to You'.

<sup>42</sup>Jensen, 'Slipping into the Slumber of the Spirit'.

<sup>43</sup>Peter Jensen, 'How Important Is Sex?', *GAFCON* (January 10, 2018), <https://www.gafcon.org/blog/how-important-is-sex>.

'bow[ing] the knee to Baal', namely, death;<sup>44</sup> thus his assertion that '[a]lready the churches of the West have abandoned their first love . . . Here is the slumber of the spirit which leads to death.'<sup>45</sup>

Far from anomalous, Jensen's warnings about the rise of paganism and the prospect of impending ecclesial ruin gave voice to anxieties that were central to the critiques of the Anglican Communion expressed both in the official statements produced by delegates to the 2008 and 2013 GAFCON meetings as well as in the materials published in advance of, and as a result of, the 2018 GAFCON in Jerusalem.<sup>46</sup> Released on 29 June 2008, the 'Jerusalem Statement' proffered a 'framework for renewed Anglican orthodoxy' to which members of the GAFCON coalition (which comprised 'Evangelicals, Anglo-Catholics and Charismatics') committed themselves in an effort 'to counter a false gospel . . . spreading throughout the Communion'.<sup>47</sup> Despite being opposed to apostolic teaching, this false gospel (on their view an especially pernicious Anglican counter-history) was ascendant in those Western provinces that represented 'the most economically developed nations', chiefly The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada, neither of which had been subjected to effective discipline from the existing instruments of communion despite having embraced 'overt heterodoxy'.<sup>48</sup> That these churches could act with apparent impunity indicated, for the Statement's authors, that the Anglican Communion continued to have 'a colonial structure'.<sup>49</sup> A similar appraisal was offered in the Global South Primates' response to the 2008 Lambeth Conference, which objected to both the paucity of non-Western voices at the Conference's evening plenaries as well as 'the continuing patronising attitude of the West towards the rest of the churches worldwide'.<sup>50</sup>

By characterizing the Communion as a colonial apparatus, delegates to the 2008 GAFCON tacitly positioned their own push for ecclesial reform as a decolonizing project, a rhetorical gambit that produced a point of tension within the Jerusalem Statement between, on the one hand, the framers' disavowal of Anglicanism's colonial legacy and, on the other hand, their unwillingness to renounce *in toto* that legacy's purchase on contemporary Anglican theological reflection. This double movement is apparent in the prefatory remarks that framed the 'Jerusalem Declaration' (a 14-point enumeration of the 'tenets of orthodoxy' that together

<sup>44</sup>Quotation from Jensen, 'Why GAFCON Truly Matters', under 'What GAFCON Means to You'.

<sup>45</sup>Jensen, 'Slipping into the Slumber of the Spirit'.

<sup>46</sup>It is worth noting that attendance at these meetings was severely regulated by the conference's organizers. For a discussion and analysis of attendance patterns at the first GAFCON, see Joanna Sadgrove, Robert M. Vanderbeck, Kevin Ward, Jill Valentine and Johan Andersson, 'Constructing the Boundaries of Anglican Orthodoxy: An Analysis of the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON)', *Religion* 40.3 (2010), pp. 193-206 (196).

<sup>47</sup>GAFCON 2013: The Nairobi Communiqué', p. 1. On the coalitional politics of GAFCON, see Sadgrove *et al.*, 'Constructing the Boundaries of Anglican Orthodoxy'; Gill Valentine, Robert M. Vanderbeck, Joanna Sadgrove, Johan Andersson and Kevin Ward, 'Transnational Religious Networks: Sexuality and the Changing Power Geometries of the Anglican Communion', *Transactions* 38 (2013), pp. 50-64.

<sup>48</sup>GAFCON Final Statement: Statement on the Global Anglican Future' (GAFCON, June 29, 2008), under 'The Global Anglican Context', [http://www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/blog/printing/gafcon\\_final\\_statement](http://www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/blog/printing/gafcon_final_statement).

<sup>49</sup>GAFCON Final Statement', under 'The Global Anglican Context'.

<sup>50</sup>Statement at the Lambeth Conference 2008 – Global South Primates', *Global South Anglican Online* (August 3, 2008), [http://www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/blog/printing/statement\\_on\\_lambeth\\_conference\\_2008](http://www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/blog/printing/statement_on_lambeth_conference_2008).

served as the ‘basis of [GAFCON’s] fellowship’),<sup>51</sup> with the Statement’s authors therein insisting that, although recognition by the Archbishop of Canterbury could no longer be treated as determinative of one’s Anglican identity, the ‘doctrinal foundation of [said] identity’ remained the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion and the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* (BCP).<sup>52</sup> By construing their own actions as in continuity with the contents of the latter elements, the delegates implicitly disjoined the Articles of Religion and the BCP from the ‘colonial structure’ to which they objected, an untenable (and rather curious) move given the BCP’s historic deployment as a means of effecting a measure of both religious and social cohesion within the British Empire.<sup>53</sup>

The Jerusalem Declaration itself is notable less for the specific sins it proscribed (which, unsurprisingly, included non-heterosexual coital relations) than for the body-political commitments it inscribed into Anglican identity. Article 13 is in this respect germane, with the Declaration’s authors therein rejecting ‘the authority of those churches and leaders who have denied the orthodox faith in word and deed’ and, in so doing, articulating in summary form the drive to demarcate heretics from the body catholic that animates the GAFCON movement as a whole.<sup>54</sup> Indicative of its centrality for the authors’ self-understanding of GAFCON’s *raison d’être*, this rejection in turn provided the theological architecture for the ecclesiological proposals that followed in the subsequent two sections of the Jerusalem Statement. Thus, in calling for the creation of a Primates’ Council to provide leadership for the movement, the Statement’s authors ‘urge[d said] Primates’ Council to authenticate and recognise confessing Anglican jurisdictions, clergy and congregations and to encourage all Anglicans to promote the gospel and defend the faith’; justifying this injunction, the framers then acknowledged that they ‘recognise[d] the desirability of territorial jurisdiction for provinces and dioceses of the Anglican Communion, *except in those areas where churches and leaders are denying the orthodox faith or are preventing its spread*’.<sup>55</sup> With these remarks, the Statement’s authors threw the body-political logic of the GAFCON movement into sharp relief. Evidencing the biopolitical dimension of their project, they not only moved to affirm the legitimacy of those bodies (both corporate and individual) that figured

<sup>51</sup>GAFCON Final Statement’, under ‘A Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans’ and ‘The Jerusalem Declaration’.

<sup>52</sup>GAFCON Final Statement’, under ‘A Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans’.

<sup>53</sup>Not only did missionaries frequently translate the BCP into non-English languages during the course of their evangelistic efforts, but, as Eric Woods observes, the liturgical language of the text itself reflected imperial commitments to assimilation: ‘A key signaling event that Anglicans had begun to think more seriously about evangelism was the publication in 1662 of the revised *Book of Common Prayer*. Notably, the revisions included a baptism liturgy for adults – those of “riper years”. While this new liturgy was mainly aimed at providing a mechanism for admitting “lost” Anglicans back into the church in a time of the rapidly increasing visibility of Protestant dissenters, the book suggests that the service, “may be always useful for the baptizing of Natives in our Plantations, and others converted to the faith”. Thus, with the adoption of the new *Book of Common Prayer* any formal liturgical barrier to missionary work among the indigenous communities of North America was now cleared. The reference in the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* to “our plantations” hints at the impact that the American colonies were having on metropolitan Anglican perceptions about the mission’ (*A Cultural Sociology of Anglican Mission and the Indian Residential Schools in Canada: The Long Road to Apology* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016], p. 24).

<sup>54</sup>GAFCON Final Statement’, under ‘The Jerusalem Declaration’.

<sup>55</sup>GAFCON Final Statement’, under ‘Primates’ Council’ (emphasis mine).

subjectivities worth defending, but further assumed responsibility for the well-being of these subjects by supporting initiatives to provide 'orthodox oversight to churches under false leadership, especially in North and South America'.<sup>56</sup> Conversely, they disclosed their necropolitical commitments by simultaneously endeavoring to expunge from the Communion those malignant bodies that instead posed a threat to the welfare of the universal Church (in this case by divesting the institutions in which those bodies were members of ecclesial jurisdiction).

While the latter entailed defining both The Episcopal Church and the ACC as zones of death, the constituents of which were marred by their common adherence to a toxic 'false gospel' and, consequently, did not represent genuine Christian lives (a move that invested GAFCON with body-political dominion), this necropolitical maneuver remained largely tacit in the Jerusalem Statement itself. However, it would be given more direct articulation in the 2013 Nairobi Communiqué and again in the materials released before and as a result of the June 2018 GAFCON in Jerusalem. Since both sets of documents revisited many of the same points that were advanced in the Jerusalem Statement, they may be dealt with more briefly here.

With the publication of the Nairobi Communiqué, delegates to the second GAFCON laid out a body-political vision for the movement's future vis-à-vis the future of the global Anglican Communion. This vision was predicated on their 'willingness to submit to the written Word of God and . . . unwillingness to be in Christian fellowship with those who will not, . . . [a position] clearly expressed in The Jerusalem Statement and Declaration'.<sup>57</sup> On the delegates' view, the Church was qualitatively dissimilar from other forms of human community insofar as its members were in communion not only with each other but also with the Triune God. Consequently, it represented a space circumscribed by the contents of Scripture in which 'the truth matters, where it is guarded and where alternatives are exposed for what they are – an exchange of the truth of God for a lie'.<sup>58</sup> Arrogating to themselves the responsibility for launching a defense of the body catholic, the Communiqué's authors resolved to 'continue publicly to expose any false gospel that is not consistent with apostolic teaching and clearly to articulate the gospel in the church and in the world',<sup>59</sup> a course of action that was codified in the nine-part 'Nairobi Commitment' with which the Communiqué concluded. There, the delegates pledged to intervene in those dioceses wherein Anglicans were being marginalized for 'standing for apostolic truth', even when interposing themselves in this manner 'threatens existing structures of human authority'.<sup>60</sup> As an example of a successful intervention of this kind, the Communiqué's framers called attention (in an earlier

<sup>56</sup>GAFCON Final Statement', under 'Primates' Council'.

<sup>57</sup>GAFCON 2013: The Nairobi Communiqué', p. 2.

<sup>58</sup>GAFCON 2013: The Nairobi Communiqué', p. 2.

<sup>59</sup>GAFCON 2013: The Nairobi Communiqué', p. 3. Note, further, the following statement in the communiqué from the 2018 GAFCON in Jerusalem: 'To proclaim the gospel, we must first defend the gospel against threats from without and within' ('GAFCON Jerusalem 2018: Letter to the Churches, GAFCON Assembly 2018', *GAFCON* [June 22, 2018], p. 7, [https://www.gafcon.org/sites/gafcon.org/files/news/pdfs/gafcon\\_2018\\_letter\\_to\\_the\\_churches\\_-\\_final.pdf](https://www.gafcon.org/sites/gafcon.org/files/news/pdfs/gafcon_2018_letter_to_the_churches_-_final.pdf)).

<sup>60</sup>GAFCON 2013: The Nairobi Communiqué', p. 4.

location within the document) to GAFCON's 'instrumental' role in the formation of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), noting that the 'Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans' (GFCA) both extended recognition to this ecclesial body and granted its archbishop a position on GAFCON's Primates' Council.<sup>61</sup>

Whereas the membership of ACNA warranted biopolitical support insofar as it had remained faithful to the forms of theological reflection espoused by GAFCON, both The Episcopal Church and the ACC had been infected by a 'false gospel' and, *ipso facto*, faced the looming prospect of destruction.<sup>62</sup> The contrast between these two populations was articulated in stark terms in an article introducing the June 2018 GAFCON in Jerusalem, the authors of which, after registering their concerns about the ability of the existing instruments of communion to place a check on The Episcopal Church's continued participation in the Communion, averred that:

Right now, many of the leaders in the developed industrial Provinces in the Anglican Communion have abandoned Gospel ministry in favor of falling in step with the surrounding culture. That decision cannot bear fruit. In GAFCON, we have the Gospel, and the Gospel is life. . . . Those within the Anglican Communion who try to move forward without life-giving Biblical Gospel mission will wither. Before long, we will see them shrinking to nothing, while the Bible based Gospel ministry that GAFCON engages, will bear more and more fruit. Eventually, it will be obvious even to the casual observer which path is life-giving.<sup>63</sup>

True to the body-political logic of their project, the leadership of GAFCON herein delineated two competing modalities of theological reflection. Those who adhered to the first way, which included the members of GAFCON itself, would flourish because they had been assimilated into a population of the faithful that was governed by both the principles of the Bible and, ultimately, the living God. By contrast, the population that, by accepting a false gospel, instead observed the second way, of which the membership of The Episcopal Church was a prominent constituency, found itself on a path towards death because its identity was undergirded by a non-Christian past rather than the biblical history.

As the rhetoric of both the Jerusalem Statement and the Nairobi Communiqué attests, in calling attention to this latter population's vacuous counter-history, the leaders of GAFCON licensed themselves to act as a catalyst for this group's inevitable demise, specifically by destabilizing those institutional apparatuses that sustain this population's existence in the present. Or, as the language of the communiqué

<sup>61</sup>GAFCON 2013: 'The Nairobi Communiqué', p. 1. GAFCON is incorporated in the United Kingdom as the GFCA; see the notice at the bottom of the GAFCON website (<https://www.gafcon.org>).

<sup>62</sup>In the Nairobi Communiqué, the content of that false gospel was described thus: 'This false gospel questioned the uniqueness of Christ and his substitutionary death, despite the Bible's clear revelation that he is the only way to the Father (John 14:6). It undermined the authority of God's Word written. It sought to mask sinful behaviour with the language of human rights. It promoted homosexual practice as consistent with holiness, despite the fact that the Bible clearly identifies it as sinful' (see 'GAFCON 2013: The Nairobi Communiqué', p. 1).

<sup>63</sup>'Jerusalem 2018 – Introduction', GAFCON, under '2. Change the communion from within', GAFCON, <https://www.gafcon.org/jerusalem-2018/introduction> (accessed February 10, 2018).



from the 2018 Jerusalem Conference – entitled ‘Letter to the Churches’ – framed the matter: ‘Over the past twenty years, we have seen the hand of God leading us toward a reordering of the Anglican Communion.’<sup>64</sup> That reordering is one that the Archbishop of Canterbury ought to urge forward, or so the framers of the communiqué indicated when they issued that figure a double injunction to extend invitations to Lambeth 2020 to the bishops of ACNA and the Anglican Church in Brazil but to refuse to proffer such invitations to the bishops of those other Anglican provinces that ‘are in contradiction to the teaching of Scripture and Resolution I.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference’.<sup>65</sup> Calling not only for a strong separation of the insiders from the outsiders, the living from the dead,<sup>66</sup> but, moreover, for that separation to be effected and enforced through an imperial action by the Archbishop of Canterbury to recognize only some populations as legitimate Anglican bodies, this document fit squarely within GAFCON’s body-political project. If the Communion was indeed undergoing a divinely ordained “reordering,” it was along colonial lines.

### Conclusion: Whither the Church of the Dead?

The leaders of GAFCON portray their movement as a decolonial trajectory within global Anglicanism. In this article, I have called that portrayal into question.<sup>67</sup> Orthodoxy and colonialism share a common body-political logic, one in which bio-power and necropower manufacture subjects that are deserving of life and of death, respectively. That same logic permeates the theology of GAFCON, finding expression in both the writings of General Secretary Peter Jensen as well as in the official documents released after the movement’s 2008, 2013 and 2018 meetings.

Yet the GAFCON movement is by no means unique in that, despite its leaders’ express claims to the contrary, it has been unable to escape the long shadow of Christian colonialism. Christian history is littered with the corpses of those who encountered a putative gospel of life and found only death; it is upon their remains, rather than the faith of dogmaticians or ecclesial leaders, that the Church is founded. Resurrected to a spectral existence in the limen between the life they were denied and the abyss into which theo-colonialists past and present have consistently endeavored to cast their memory, these bodies continue, uncannily, to haunt adherents of Christians orthodoxy, making their presence known in the faces and voices of those populations that Christians continue to consign to oblivion. A viable decolonial theology is, consequently, first and foremost a macabre one, that is, a theology, not so much proclaimed as whispered in the dark, that is as much a

<sup>64</sup>‘Letter to the Churches’, 5.

<sup>65</sup>‘Letter to the Churches’, pp. 5-6.

<sup>66</sup>My thanks to this journal’s anonymous second reader for suggesting this turn of phrase.

<sup>67</sup>See, further, Miranda Hasset’s study of turn-of-the-twenty-first-century coalition building among conservative Anglicans, which, although predating the first GAFCON in 2008, helpfully details some additional ways in which the resultant alliances represent the continuation of colonial trajectories: *Anglican Communion in Crisis: How Episcopal Dissidents and their African Allies Are Reshaping Anglicanism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), e.g., p. 210.

cenotaph for the innumerable departed as it is a temple for the God of the Dead. Abandoning orthodoxy in an effort to reimagine the contours of catholicity, it is a heretical theology done by and for the fallen, yet one the articulation of which ought also to give hope to those who count themselves among the living. For, in the final analysis, orthodoxy makes corpses of us all.