

ARTICLE

The Challenge of Gafcon to the Unity of the Anglican Communion

Keith Joseph¹

Email: bishopnq@anglicannq.org

(Received 4 February 2022; accepted 10 February 2022; first published online 21 March 2022)

Abstract

Since 2008 the Global Anglican Futures Conference (Gafcon) has emerged as a powerful force within the Anglican Communion. It had the potential to reform some of the issues facing the Anglican Communion. However, its *Jerusalem Declaration* has become a standard of Anglican orthodoxy to the exclusion of many orthodox Anglicans who cannot assent to its extra-doctrinal material. This lends Gafcon to schismatic ends.

Keywords: Anglican, Australia, Gafcon, love, orthodoxy, schism

Introduction

The Global Anglican Futures Conference (Gafcon)² was formally inaugurated in 2008 following a conference in Jerusalem. Since then, Gafcon has held another two major conferences, in Nairobi in 2013 and again in Jerusalem in 2018.³ A number of other meetings have been held, such as an ancillary meeting in Dubai in 2019 for those who could not attend at Jerusalem due to visa issues; but it is the major conferences that appear to be authoritative. The 2008 and 2018 Conferences held in Jerusalem issued major documents. The first was *The Jerusalem Statement*,⁴ which gives the general story as to why and how Gafcon was set up. Within the *Statement* is to be found *The Jerusalem Declaration*,⁵ which largely consists of 14 sections to which people are invited to assent. In 2018 *The*

¹The Right Reverend Dr Keith Joseph is Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of North Queensland, Australia.

²Gafcon and GAFCON are both found in reference to the organization. On its website, Gafcon tends to use initial capitalization and then lower case, so this convention will be followed except where quoting, in which case the usage in the quoted text will be used.

³GAFCON: About GAFCON, <https://www.gafcon.org/about> (accessed 10 January 2022).

⁴GAFCON: The Complete Jerusalem Statement 2008, <https://www.gafcon.org/resources/the-complete-jerusalem-statement-2008> (accessed 10 January 2022).

⁵GAFCON: The Jerusalem Declaration – June 2008, <https://www.gafcon.org/about/jerusalem-declaration> (accessed 10 January 2022).

Letter to the Churches was issued.⁶ At the national level Gafcon has also been prominent in issuing documents and declarations designed to influence the wider church, such as *Commitment 2020* issued by Gafcon Australia.⁷

The structure of Gafcon was basically set up in 2008 with further refinements since then. It appears to follow the general conciliar structure familiar to Anglicans. There is a Primates Council chaired by Archbishop Foley Beach, and served by a Secretariat led by Archbishop Ben Kwashi as General Secretary. There is then a grouping of Gafcon affiliated provinces and a network of regional branches.⁸ There is a significant overlap with the Anglican Communion: while Archbishop Beach heads the Anglican Church in North America (which is not part of the formal Anglican Communion), the other members of the Primates Council are also primates within the Anglican Communion.

This appears to have established a pattern in which Gafcon both internationally and sometimes locally is not always coterminous with the official Anglican Communion or with local Anglican Churches. For example, the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA)⁹ and the Church of Confessing Anglicans Aotearoa New Zealand (CCAANZ)¹⁰ have no association with the larger local Anglican Churches which are part of the Anglican Communion (The Anglican Church of Canada, The Episcopal Church, and the Anglican Church of Aotearoa New Zealand) and their membership are largely those who have withdrawn from those churches. In contrast, for example, the Church of Uganda and the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) are both members of Gafcon and the Anglican Communion. In other parts of the Anglican Communion, such as the United Kingdom and Australia, Gafcon members are largely currently part of the official Anglican Church.

Why Gafcon?

The various parts of Gafcon have different histories and reasons for being part of Gafcon. ACNA is a combination of various denominations in North America which had formed in the twentieth century as traditionalists opposed to homosexuality or the ordination of women.¹¹ It was formed in December 2008 and acceded to the *Jerusalem Declaration*. The Anglican Diocese of Sydney is also renowned for its conservative evangelical theology, and its long-standing opposition to the ordination of women to positions of leadership, and conservatism on issues of gender and sexuality. ACNA has stated an understanding that homosexuality itself as a

⁶‘GAFCON: Letter to the Churches – Gafcon Assembly 2018’, <https://www.gafcon.org/news/letter-to-the-churches-gafcon-assembly-2018> (accessed 10 January 2022).

⁷Gafcon Australia, ‘Commitment 2020’, <http://www.gafconaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Commitment-2020.pdf> (accessed 10 January 2022).

⁸‘GAFCON: Structure’, <https://www.gafcon.org/about/structure> (accessed 10 January 2022).

⁹‘Anglican Church in North America’, <https://anglicanchurch.net/about/> (accessed 10 January 2022).

¹⁰Church of Confessing Anglicans Aotearoa NZ’, <https://confessinganglicans.nz/about/> (accessed 10 January 2022).

¹¹Encyclopedia Britannica, ‘Anglican Church in North America’, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Anglican-Church-in-North-America> (accessed 10 January 2022).

predisposition is not sinful, but rather that the sexual expression of homosexuality is sinful.¹² The Diocese of Sydney has a long history of opposition to homosexuality¹³ but currently holds to a similar view to that of ACNA which sees same-sex attraction (SSA) as not being sinful, but homosexual behaviour as being sinful.¹⁴ This also then leads on to opposition to same-sex marriage both as a civil rite and as a religious rite,¹⁵ but in a Western context appears to no longer involve calls for the criminalization of same-gender sexual behaviour. So there appears to be a general position in the Western membership of Gafcon that accepts that in a pluralistic society homosexual behaviour is not to be criminalized; and further accepts that some persons are same-sex attracted and that this is not sinful. Likewise, discrimination or vilification of same-sex attracted persons is condemned. However, same-gender sexual behaviour is rejected as being sinful and accordingly same-sex marriage both as a civil rite and a religious rite is also opposed. More recently, issues of gender have also become a matter of concern, with most of those concerned with Gafcon holding to a traditional view of gender as being essentially binary and God's design and prescription for humanity.¹⁶

But Gafcon is far more than a conservative Western movement. The international website for Gafcon lists twelve provinces and seven branches with another two being formed.¹⁷ The provinces listed include six African provinces (South Sudan, Nigeria, Uganda, Kenya, Congo, and Rwanda) and three other provinces (South America, Myanmar and Chile) which are aligned both with Gafcon and the Anglican Communion. Three of the provinces listed (Europe, North America and Brazil) are not part of the Anglican Communion. The branches listed include the UK, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa (which is REACH-SA,¹⁸ formerly the Church of England in South Africa, which is not part of the Anglican Communion), Tanzania, and the Diocese of Sunyani in Ghana.

It is claimed that Gafcon represents two-thirds of the Anglican Communion; for example, Gafcon Australia stated that the 'global movement now embraces over 70% of the world's worshipping Anglicans'.¹⁹ This figure seems to be largely based

¹²Anglican Church in North America, 'Sexuality and Identity: A Pastoral Statement from the College of Bishops'. <https://anglicanchurch.net/sexuality-and-identity-a-pastoral-statement-from-the-college-of-bishops/> (accessed 13 January 2022).

¹³D. Hilliard, 'Gender Roles, Anglicanism and the Anglican Church in Sydney', *Studies in Church History, Volume 34: Gender and Christian Religion* (1998), pp. 509-23.

¹⁴Standing Committee of the Diocese of Sydney, 'Human Sexuality Pastoral Guidelines: 34/15 Diocesan Doctrine Commission Report on Human Sexuality, 29 August 2019', <https://www.sds.asn.au/sites/default/files/HumanSexualityPastoralGuidelines.Report2019.pdf> (accessed 13 January 2022).

¹⁵Anglican Diocese of Sydney, 'The Same-Sex Marriage Debate: A Report from the Standing Committee', *Ordinary Session of Synod: Proceedings for 2017*. <https://www.sds.asn.au/sites/default/files/Same-Sex%20Marriage%20Debate.Report.2017.pdf> (accessed 13 January 2022).

¹⁶For example: Bishop Andy Lines, 'Statement from Bishop Andy Lines following the Church of England's guidance on liturgies to celebrate gender transition', <https://www.gafcon.org/news/statement-from-bishop-andy-lines-following-the-church-of-englands-guidance-on-liturgies-to> (accessed 13 January 2022).

¹⁷'GAFCON: Global Movement', <https://www.gafcon.org/about/global-movement> (accessed 10 January 2022).

¹⁸REACH-SA: Reformed Evangelical Anglican Church of Southern Africa. 'REACH-SA', <http://reachsa.org.za/> (accessed 12 January 2022).

¹⁹Gafcon Australia Media Statement 19 July 2021', https://acl.asn.au/pdf/GAFCON_Australia-Media-Statement-19-July-2021.pdf (accessed 10 January 2022).

on the membership of two of the largest Anglican churches in Africa, being that of Nigeria and Uganda. Now all statistics can be rubbery, including this one: one suspects that Gafcon or non-Gafcon Anglicanism as concepts mean even less to the average parishioner in Nigeria than they do to the average parishioner in Melbourne. But it does pick up an important point: that Gafcon is as much centred in the Global South as in the West. But again, there is a need for some caution here.

Gafcon overlaps significantly the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches (GFSA), with many of the provinces listed as belonging to GFSA also belonging to Gafcon.²⁰ However, many others of the provinces listed as belonging to GFSA are not aligned with Gafcon (mainly those in Oceania and Asia) and the list of those belonging to GFSA includes the Diocese of Sydney and ACNA but does not include the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. While the Anglican Church of Melanesia and the Anglican Church of Papua New Guinea are listed as members of the Global South, they are not listed as being affiliated with Gafcon,²¹ and most of the Anglican provinces in Asia are also not listed. So while there is overlap, it would not be fair to claim that Gafcon speaks for the Global South as if it were one entity united in support for Gafcon. However, very clearly the sub-Saharan African Churches apart from South Africa form the major portion of the supporters of Gafcon. Why do they adhere to Gafcon?

There is certainly much opposition to same-gender sexuality; while the Western churches would accept that same-sex attraction is not of itself sinful, and would allow for basic civil rights and non-vilification of homosexual persons, this is certainly not the case in Africa. There has been significant involvement by African churches in campaigns against homosexuality. For example, in Nigeria the view has been put by senior clergy that homosexuality is evil and celibacy is not ordained.²² In Uganda the view appears to be that the Church of England is in error even in the appointment of celibate homosexuals to ministry,²³ and more recently in Ghana the House of Bishops of the Anglican Church of Ghana has been reported as supporting legislation to increase penalties on homosexual behaviour and otherwise prohibit advocacy for LGBTI+ persons;²⁴ to the extent that the Archbishop of Canterbury felt it necessary to express his grave concerns to the House of

²⁰GFSA', <https://www.thegsfa.org/> (accessed 10 January 2022).

²¹The author of this article was ordained in the Anglican Church of Melanesia and has discussed Gafcon and related matters with the various Primates of Melanesia since 2008. There was also a long conversation in October 2019 with the late Archbishop Alan Migi, then Primate of Papua New Guinea. While Melanesian culture has strong cultural reservations about same-sex marriage – the idea is fairly incomprehensible – this has not translated into a desire to be involved with Gafcon.

²²Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), 'Celibacy not ordained – Most Rev. Lasebikan, October 25, 2016', <https://anglican-nig.org/celibacy-not-ordained-most-rev-lasebikan/> (accessed 13 January 2022).

²³Madelaine Davies, 'Welby too Supportive of Homosexuality, Says Church of Uganda', *Church Times*, 6 March 2020, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2020/6-march/news/world/welby-too-supportive-of-homosexuality-says-church-of-uganda> (accessed 13 January 2022).

²⁴Thinking Anglicans, 'Anglican Bishops in Ghana Support Anti-gay Legislation', 22 October 2021, <https://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk/anglican-bishops-in-ghana-support-anti-gay-legislation/> (accessed 13 January 2022).

Bishops of the Anglican Church of Ghana.²⁵ However, it has now been reported that the House of Bishops in Ghana has reservations about aspects of the proposed legislation, even though continuing to oppose same-gender sexual behaviour on both cultural and biblical grounds.²⁶ Both the Western members of Gafcon and the African members have a strong opposition to homosexual behaviour, but do appear to have differing views on the nature of homosexuality and its relationship to culture.

However, it is possible to make too much of this concern about homosexuality. As much as it is an issue in itself, it also reflects other concerns about errors perceived in the Anglican Communion.

For Western members of Gafcon, there is much material to be found making clear opposition to liberalism and progressive biblical understandings.²⁷ For example, in the brief history of Gafcon from its website it is made clear that Gafcon opposes liberalism and the collapse of biblical witness:²⁸

For years orthodox Anglicans called on TEC and ACoC to repent but to no avail. So in 2008, when bishops from these two anglican [*sic*] Provinces were invited to the next Lambeth Conference, a group of 291 bishops and 1,148 lay and clergy leaders met in Jerusalem to consider how to take a stand against the collapse of biblical witness in parts of the Anglican Communion. In that moment the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) was born and the Jerusalem Statement and Declaration was created. Since then, the movement has grown steadily as the Anglican Communion has continued to compromise the truth of the gospel. Today, GAFCON represents the majority of anglicans [*sic*] worldwide. But as liberalism continues to spread across the globe, beginning with TEC in 2015, the Anglican Church of Canada and then the Scottish Episcopal Church, three Provinces have now formally agreed to recognise and conduct same-sex marriage. TEC is also formally committed to spreading its false teaching in the Global South.

Likewise, the reasons for Africans being involved in Gafcon certainly go beyond homosexuality. Archbishop Ben Kwashi from Nigeria, who is now General Secretary of Gafcon, was asked in an interview in 2018 ‘What led to GAFCON?’ He responded in part that:

bishops in Australia, Africa, US and UK sat down together . . . and discovered that the issue was about the Bible, it had nothing to do with homosexuality,

²⁵Archbishop Justin Welby, ‘Archbishop of Canterbury’s Statement on Ghana’s Anti-LGBTIQ+ Bill, 26 October 2021, <https://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/news/news-and-statements/archbishop-canterburys-statement-ghanas-anti-lgbtq-bill> (accessed 13 January 2022).

²⁶Madeleine Davies, ‘Anti-LGBT Bill Is “Severe and Must Be Reviewed” Says Ghana’s Bishops, *Church Times*, 2 February 2022, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2022/4-february/news/world/anti-lgbt-bill-is-too-severe-say-ghana-s-bishops> (accessed 4 February 2022).

²⁷For example: David Virtue, ‘ACNA Archbishop Blasts Liberal Lutherans and Anglicans for Throwing Away Biblical Morality’, 13 August 2017, <https://virtueonline.org/acna-archbishop-blasts-liberal-lutherans-and-anglicans-throwing-away-biblical-morality> (accessed 13 January 2022).

²⁸Gafcon, ‘History’, <https://www.gafcon.org/about/history> (accessed 13 January 2022).

they wanted the Bible thrown out because one of them said men wrote the Bible and said they can rewrite it . . . So Lambert [*sic*] is not a place of sympathy, I suffered persecution in Nigeria and also in Lambert [*sic*] for being a black man, I don't think that is a place I want to be anymore . . . So this is what gave birth to GAFCON, it is moving and I hope it will continue moving.²⁹

Earlier comments by Archbishop Peter Akinola (one of the founders of Gafcon) bear this out. In a speech at the opening of the first Jerusalem Conference in June 2008,³⁰ Archbishop Akinola makes references to the 'revisionist agenda' and is strongly critical of those who would pursue humanist or revisionist thought which repudiate biblical authority. However, one of his constant themes was in defence of African Anglicanism against Western liberalism:

We are here because we know that in God's providence Gafcon will liberate and set participants (particularly Africans) free from spiritual bondage which TEC [The Episcopal Church, USA] and its Allies champion. 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 be kept in religious and spiritual dungeon . . . We know that the expert 'divide and rule' agents of TEC and Lambeth have been at work using money and other attractions to buy 'silence and compromise' from some gullible African and Global South Church leaders; hence we have begun to see signs of disunity in our ranks. How do we forestall this danger in Gafcon?

There does therefore seem to be some differences between the understanding of the aims and roles of Gafcon among conservative Western churches compared with that of their African colleagues. It is possible that the evils of colonialism and a possible rejection of control by wealthy Americans and other Western churches are far more important for the African churches and have little touched the consciousness of Western churches within Gafcon. This therefore should give cause for caution when trying to analyse the motivations of Gafcon. Just like the Anglican Communion as a whole, we should not think of it as being monolithic. Gafcon is a complex and varied creature.

But it is a movement that is having an impact on the Anglican Communion and the witness of Anglicanism in the world. In practical terms, what is Gafcon trying to achieve?

There is a need for some caution here. As for the Anglican Communion as a whole, motives and methods vary considerably. There is enough material to indicate that the African churches within Gafcon have a different agenda to the Western

²⁹Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), 'Exclusive with the Most Revd. Benjamin Kwashi, Bishop of Ios Anglican Diocese and the newly elected secretary of GAFCON, September 24 2018' <https://anglican-nig.org/exclusive-with-the-most-revd-benjamin-kwashi-bishop-of-jos-anglican-diocese-and-the-newly-elected-secretary-of-gafcon/> (accessed 13 January 2022). The reference to Lambert rather than Lambeth appears to be a transcription error.

³⁰A full transcript of the speech on 23 June 2008 is found at *The Guardian*, 'Archbishop Peter Akinola's Speech at Gafcon', <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jun/23/religion> (accessed 13 January 2022).

members. The African churches wish to be heard and to have a significant and autonomous influence in Anglicanism, and a desire to ensure that they are not subject to forms of neo-colonialism. There is much work to be done by theologians and missiologists in this area, as the Western church needs to learn and truly partner with the church in the majority world, in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania. However, one would suggest that the church in the majority world faces bigger challenges than same-sex attraction, and that true partnership remains difficult if epithets like 'liberal' and 'progressive' are simply used as pejoratives and thrown around with gay abandon. Partnership is not about takeovers in any direction; rather it requires respectful listening. The Western churches have been appalling in this regard in the past and still have a very long way to go, but the evils of the past do not justify evils in the present.

The Western members of Gafcon appear to have different challenges. Generally they are not in a majority position in their home churches, and therefore there has been a tendency to reject the mainline Anglican churches and strike out on their own. This is most obviously seen in North America, where The Episcopal Church in the United States (TEC) has long supported women's ordination and then the equality of same-sex couples, even to the extent of forcing out bishops who in good conscience cannot allow for the blessing of same-sex marriage.³¹ In the face of such illiberalism from a liberal church, a number of people have left TEC for ACNA.³² At present ACNA claims 972 congregations and about 127,000 active members across Canada and the USA in 2019–2020,³³ compared with TEC claiming 1.8 million members in 2019³⁴ and another 359,000 members (in 2206 congregations) in the Anglican Church of Canada in 2017.³⁵

However, in each Western jurisdiction local matters impact the progress of Gafcon considerably. While ACNA has enjoyed some success in the USA, Gafcon appears to have made less of an impact in Aotearoa New Zealand. The General Synod of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia (ACANZP) approved the blessing of same-sex marriages in May 2018.³⁶ In

³¹Egan Millard, 'Former Albany Bishop William Love Leaves The Episcopal Church to Join ACNA', <https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2021/03/30/former-albany-bishop-william-love-leaves-the-episcopal-church-to-join-acna/> (accessed 21 January 2022).

³²Jeremy Bonner, 'The United States of America', in David Goodhew (ed.), *Growth and Decline in the Anglican Communion, 1980 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 245.

³³Jeff Walton, 'Contra Expectations, Anglican Numbers Largely Hold Steady in 2020', <https://anglican.ink/2021/06/24/contra-expectations-anglican-numbers-largely-hold-steady-in-2020/> (accessed 21 January 2022).

³⁴Egan Millard, '2019 Parochial Reports Show Continued Decline and a "Dire" Future for the Episcopal Church', <https://www.episcopalnewsservice.org/2020/10/16/2019-parochial-reports-show-continued-decline-and-a-dire-future-for-the-episcopal-church/> (accessed 21 January 2022).

³⁵Anglican Church of Canada, '2017 Statistical Report', <https://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017-ACC-Stats.pdf> (accessed 21 January 2022).

³⁶Anglican Communion News Service, 'Anglican Church in New Zealand Opens the Door to Blessing of Same-sex Relationships', <https://www.anglicannews.org/news/2018/05/anglican-church-in-new-zealand-opens-the-door-to-blessing-same-sex-relationships.aspx> (accessed 21 January 2022).

response, a small number of parishes left ACANZP and formed the Church of Confessing Anglicans in Aotearoa New Zealand (CCAANZ)³⁷ under the auspices of the Primates Council of Gafcon, with Jay Behan being consecrated as bishop in October 2019³⁸ in a service led by Archbishop Foley Beach (Chair of Gafcon) and with the former General Secretary of Gafcon (and retired Archbishop of Sydney) Peter Jensen preaching and a number of other bishops from Australia and overseas participating. At present CCAANZ claims to have 17 parishes,³⁹ compared with 13 dioceses⁴⁰ in ACANZP, and approximately 500 parishes⁴¹ in ACANZP.

The situation in Aotearoa New Zealand is instructive. Possibly one of the reasons that CCAANZ is a relatively minor player is that ACANZP allows clergy to have freedom of conscience – there is no form of compulsion whereby clergy are required to take part in the blessing of same-sex relationships. Another important element is the way in which ACANZP is structured. With its three-*tikanga* system there are three equal partners in ACANZP – *Tikanga Māori* in New Zealand with five dioceses, the *Tikanga Pasefika* formed around the Diocese of Polynesia with its cathedral in Fiji, and *Tikanga Pakeha*. ‘Pakeha’ refers to the non-Māori who have settled in New Zealand, and there are seven *Pakeha* dioceses. Each *Tikanga* has an archbishop, forming a collective primacy. Prior to 2018 the *Tikanga Māori* and *Tikanga Pasefika* had blocked the blessing of same-sex marriage, but allowed it at the 2018 General Synod. In particular, *Tikanga Pasefika* strongly opposes the blessing of same-sex marriage,⁴² and abstained on this matter at the General Synod. The General Synod in 2018 therefore also set up the Anglican Community of St Mark as the vehicle for allowing parishes who did not agree with the blessing of same-sex relationships to remain within ACANZP, under the guidance of a bishop who agreed with their views. There are currently nine congregations affiliated with this community.⁴³ However, the grouping who now form CCAANZ declined to follow this avenue. Therefore, one of the criticisms of Gafcon was that it was acting in a colonialist way, overriding the voices and efforts of the indigenous people of Oceania who seek to maintain the unity of the church within the setting of over 200 years of shared history.⁴⁴ The particular history of ACANZP and the way in

³⁷Gafcon, ‘A New Diocese & Bishop for the Church of Confessing Anglicans in New Zealand’, <https://www.gafcon.org/news/a-new-diocese-bishop-for-the-church-of-confessing-anglicans-in-new-zealand> (accessed 21 January 2022).

³⁸Anglican Church League, ‘Jay Behan Consecrated in Christchurch’, <https://acl.asn.au/jay-behan-consecrated-in-christchurch/> (accessed 21 January 2022).

³⁹CCAANZ, ‘Find a Church’, <https://confessinganglicans.nz/find-a-church-2/> (accessed 21 January 2022). Seventeen churches are currently listed here.

⁴⁰ACANZ, ‘Directory’, <https://www.anglican.org.nz/Directory> (accessed 21 January 2022).

⁴¹The parish figures are rubbery. Wikipedia quoting the World Council of Churches in 2008 claims 552 parishes: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican_Church_in_Aotearoa,_New_Zealand_and_Polynesia (accessed 21 January 2022). More recent figures are not readily obtainable. Allowing for a decline of the numbers of Anglicans according to the census statistics, a total of 500 parishes seems a reasonable estimate.

⁴²Anglican *Taonga* [News Service of ACANZ], ‘Pasifika’s Perspective’, <https://www.anglicantaonga.org.nz/features/extra/perspective> (accessed 21 January 2022).

⁴³Anglican Community of St Mark, ‘Our Community’, <https://acm.net.nz/> (accessed 21 January 2022).

⁴⁴Anglican *Taonga*, ‘GSSC Responds to Sydney’, https://www.anglicantaonga.org.nz/news/common_life/sydney (accessed 21 January 2022).

which CCCANZ was formed have accordingly led to a somewhat different response to Gafcon in New Zealand compared to the United States.

England and Australia are again different. It the United Kingdom ‘Gafcon GB & Europe’ (Gafcon GBE) is the regional expression.⁴⁵ There is also an ‘Anglican Network in Europe’ (ANiE). Gafcon GBE remains inside the Church of England and the other Anglican Churches in the United Kingdom, while ANiE – which was launched in April 2021 – is not within the Anglican Communion. However, the two bodies have a close relationship; Bishop Andy Lines who heads ANiE (and therefore is outside the Church of England or the Anglican Communion) is also a member of the Gafcon GBE Council of Reference.⁴⁶

Australia again is quite different. This is possibly the Western Church where Gafcon is strongest within the councils of the church. The largest and wealthiest of the 23 dioceses in Australia is the Diocese of Sydney, which has had a leading role in Gafcon since its formation. The chair of Gafcon Australia, the Right Reverend Dr Richard Condie, is also Bishop of Tasmania. There is also support for Gafcon in most of the other Australian dioceses, with several regional dioceses being strong supporters.

In 2020 the Appellate Tribunal of the Anglican Church of Australia upheld a regulation of the Diocese of Wangaratta requiring a certain form of service to be used in the blessing of civil marriages (including same-gender marriages).⁴⁷ The Tribunal also considered legislation from the Diocese of Newcastle that was designed to protect clergy who either conducted a blessing of a same-sex marriage or refused to conduct such a blessing.⁴⁸ This decision was rather equivocal but it did allow that within the constraints of the national constitution the Diocese of Newcastle had authority to legislate on these issues in regards to its definition of offences under the Clergy Discipline Ordinance. As in New Zealand, the church legislation of Newcastle and Wangaratta had generous provisions respecting conscientious objection by those opposed to the blessing of same-sex relationships. However, in response, Gafcon Australia issued a document called *Commitment 2020* in December 2020.⁴⁹

Gafcon Australia and *Commitment 2020*

In *Commitment 2020* the Board of Gafcon Australia first stated ‘That our understanding of “orthodox Anglican faith” is expressed in the Jerusalem

⁴⁵Gafcon GB & Europe, <https://gafcongb.org/> (accessed 21 January 2022).

⁴⁶Gafcon GB & Europe, ‘About Gafcon GB & Europe’, <https://gafcongb.org/about> (accessed 21 January 2022).

⁴⁷Anglican Church of Australia Appellate Tribunal, ‘Primate’s References re Wangaratta Blessing Service, 11 November 2020’, <https://anglican.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/AT-Wangaratta-formatted-11112020FINAL.pdf> (accessed 21 January 2022).

⁴⁸Anglican Church of Australia Appellate Tribunal, ‘Primate’s References re Newcastle Discipline Ordinance, 11 November 2020’, <https://anglican.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/AT-Newcastle-formatted-11112020-FINAL.pdf> (accessed 21 January 2022).

⁴⁹Gafcon Australia, ‘Commitment 2020’, <http://www.gafconaustralia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Commitment-2020.pdf> (accessed 20 January 2022).

Declaration'.⁵⁰ Shortly after: 'We affirm the Jerusalem Declaration, which in section 13 says: "We reject the authority of those churches and leaders who have denied the orthodox faith in word or deed"'.⁵¹ Immediately follows 'five possible scenarios where faithful Anglicans will believe that they can no longer accept the ministry of their bishop', with these scenarios being listed as:⁵²

1. Where a Bishop no longer personally believes the doctrine of the Anglican Church of Australia (the doctrine is then explained in a footnote as that being the common understanding prior to the Appellate Tribunal decision),
2. Where a Bishop fails to act in restraining or disciplining a cleric from acting against this doctrine,
3. Where a Synod adopts a resolution contrary to this doctrine and a Bishop allows actions consistent with that resolution,
4. Where the Anglican Church of Australia changes its doctrine or discipline to a position that is not biblical (the decision of the Appellate Tribunal is given as an example of this), or
5. Where a Bishop disciplines a cleric for acting consistently with the doctrine of the ACA.

Gafcon Australia then propose to assist those who disaffiliate by setting up an extra-provincial diocese (EPD) under the auspices of the Gafcon Primates' Council. It is noted that: 'The Gafcon EPD will be a parallel jurisdiction with the existing Anglican Church of Australia and have a geographic spread across the whole country. It is not envisioned that this will include Anglicans from Dioceses where sound doctrine is upheld'.⁵³

Further details were added to *Commitment 2020* in a media release in July 2021,⁵⁴ which was mainly concerned with the administrative details of the proposed new Diocese. The chair of Gafcon Australia, Bishop Richard Condie, confirmed that Gafcon Australia upholds the *Jerusalem Declaration*, which is described as 'a statement of contemporary Anglican Orthodoxy that guides [Gafcon]'.⁵⁵

This then gives rise to an obvious question: is 'sound doctrine' or 'Anglican Orthodoxy' only to be found within Gafcon? Is the *Jerusalem Declaration* an accurate representation of orthodoxy, or is it possible to be an orthodox Anglican and not assent to the *Jerusalem Declaration*? These are important questions. If Gafcon is claiming that the *Declaration* is the standard of Anglican orthodoxy, then it is implicitly rejecting the rest of the Anglican Communion as being either heterodox or heretical. Alternatively, if there is orthodoxy outside of Gafcon, then arguably Gafcon is schismatic and possibly therefore heterodox. The claims made by Gafcon are significant and need to be made quite clear.

⁵⁰Gafcon Australia, 'Commitment 2020', p. 1.

⁵¹Gafcon Australia, 'Commitment 2020', p. 1.

⁵²Gafcon Australia, 'Commitment 2020', p. 2.

⁵³Gafcon Australia, 'Commitment 2020', p. 3.

⁵⁴Gafcon Australia, 'Media Statement, 19 July 2021', https://acl.asn.au/pdf/GAFCON_Australia-Media-Statement-19-July-2021.pdf (accessed 26 January 2022).

⁵⁵Gafcon Australia, 'Media Statement, 19 July 2021', p. 2.

Consequently the author of this paper exchanged open correspondence with the Chair of Gafcon Australia.⁵⁶ The correspondence consisted of a letter to Bishop Richard Condie on 5 March 2021,⁵⁷ a response from Bishop Richard on 11 April 2021,⁵⁸ and a final response from the author on 23 April 2021.⁵⁹ In the final letter, five points were put to the Chair of Gafcon Australia, mirroring the above discussion:

1. Does Gafcon Australia accept that orthodox Bishops and Dioceses exist in the Anglican Church of Australia outside of Gafcon?
2. Will Gafcon accept into the Extra-Provincial Diocese parishes that have left orthodox Bishops and Dioceses?
3. If Gafcon will accept parishes leaving orthodox Bishops and Dioceses, how is this not encouraging schism?
4. If Gafcon will not accept parishes leaving orthodox Bishops and Dioceses, how does Gafcon propose to determine the orthodoxy of those Bishops and Dioceses?
5. If Gafcon will accept parishes leaving Bishops or Dioceses who have departed orthodoxy, how does Gafcon propose to determine the orthodoxy of Bishops and Dioceses – and by which authority do they do so?

The author is grateful to Bishop Condie for his responses, but notes that to date no response has been received to these questions. Clearly these questions and any response to them revolve around the way in which Anglican orthodoxy is determined. The question as to what ‘orthodoxy’ means as a concept is vast, but in this context we come back to the *Jerusalem Declaration* and other declarative statements of Gafcon, especially *The Letter to the Churches 2018*. But what is about the *Jerusalem Declaration* that makes it possible for an orthodox Anglican to refuse to assent to it?

The Jerusalem Declaration

In the *Jerusalem Statement* Gafcon affirms the traditional bases of Anglicanism: Holy Scriptures, the Creeds,⁶⁰ the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal. The Ordinal encapsulates the three-fold order

⁵⁶This correspondence can be found on the website of the Anglican Diocese of North Queensland at <https://www.anglicannq.org/bishops/synod>

⁵⁷Keith Joseph, ‘Letter to Bishop Richard Condie, 5 March 2021’, https://www.anglicannq.org/images/documents/03_Bishops/02_Bishop_Bill_Bulletin/Gafcon/2_Letter_in_response_from_Bishop_Keith_Joseph_to_Bishop_Richard_Condie_dated_5th_March_21.pdf (accessed 26 January 2022).

⁵⁸Richard Condie, ‘Letter to Bishop Keith Joseph, 11 April 2021’, https://www.anglicannq.org/images/documents/03_Bishops/02_Bishop_Bill_Bulletin/Gafcon/3_Letter_from_Bishop_Richard_Condie_to_Bishop_Keith_Joseph_received_evening_11th_April_21.pdf (accessed 26 January 2022).

⁵⁹Keith Joseph, ‘Letter to Bishop Richard Condie, 23 April 2021’, https://www.anglicannq.org/images/documents/03_Bishops/02_Bishop_Bill_Bulletin/Gafcon/4_Letter_from_Bishop_Keith_Joseph_to_Bishop_Richard_Condie_dated_23rd_April_21.pdf (accessed 26 January 2022).

⁶⁰Although not explicitly stated here, the reference to the Book of Common Prayer seems to make it clear that the Creeds invoked are those to be found in the BCP; that is the Apostles Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Creed of St Athanasius.

of ministry. However, being in communion with the See of Canterbury is not seen as essential to Anglicanism. The *Statement* then goes on to state that the *Jerusalem Declaration* is the basis of fellowship. Anglicans are therefore invited to assent to the *Declaration* in order to align with Gafcon. In Australia, for example, ‘Our understanding of “orthodox Anglican faith” is expressed in the Jerusalem Declaration’.⁶¹

The *Declaration*⁶² starts by invoking the Holy Trinity, and then a preface which concludes ‘we agree to chart a way forward together that promotes and protects the biblical gospel and mission to the world, solemnly declaring the following tenets of orthodoxy which underpin our Anglican identity’. There then follows 14 sections. To what extent are they uncontroversial tenets of orthodoxy and to what extent is there material which might go beyond that which might be considered tenets of orthodoxy?

If we take Christian orthodoxy to refer to the doctrines accepted by the universal Christian Church since the Great Councils of the unified church up until the fifth century CE, then most of the *Declaration* restates orthodoxy. It expresses doctrine espoused by the catholic Church. However, there are some additions that have been introduced. For example:

In Section 2: ‘The Bible is to be translated, read, preached, taught and obeyed in its plain and canonical sense, respectful of the church’s historic and consensual reading.’ The idea of the Bible having a plain and canonical sense, respectful of the Church’s historic and consensual reading, is something that needs far greater explanation. A mantra such as ‘where the meaning of the Bible is clear, follow it’ is of little help. For example, it is quite clear in Lk. 6.35 that the taking of interest on money is against the teaching of Jesus – but little seems to be made of this by anyone in the modern Church. It could be argued that the ‘church’s historic and consensual reading’ has rendered another understanding of this passage – but in this case are we not reverting to the authority of reason and tradition? If so, why is one particular moral issue seen as clear and incontrovertible while others seem to be matters of acceptable controversy? What is the Church’s historic and consensual reading, for example, on military service or slavery? Does this add any clarity, or rather does it distract? It does appear that the authors of the *Declaration* were determined to go beyond the formula set out by the Reformers in Article VI of the Thirty-Nine Articles, and in doing so clarity does not seem to have been added. However, it does hint that it is perhaps issues of hermeneutics which are important in the motivators for Gafcon and which underlie its understanding of divisions in the Anglican Church. It might be helpful if these hermeneutical understandings were further elaborated by Gafcon.

The next issue is with Section 4, which states that the Thirty-Nine Articles are authoritative for Anglicans today. It claims an authority not to be found in the Articles themselves; and an authority that is not recognized by many orthodox Anglicans. Not every province of the Anglican Communion or of Gafcon accepts them as currently authoritative. For example, the Anglican Church of North America states in its constitution (Article 1(7)).⁶³

⁶¹Gafcon Australia, ‘Commitment 2020’.

⁶²The *Declaration* as extracted from the Gafcon website is found as an Appendix to this paper.

⁶³The Anglican Church in North America ‘Constitutions and Canons’, Article 1 (7) p. 3. <https://anglicanchurch.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/CURRENT-C-and-C-2019.pdf> (accessed 19 January 2022).

We receive the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion of 1571, taken in their literal and grammatical sense, as expressing the Anglican response to certain doctrinal issues controverted at that time, and as expressing fundamental principles of authentic Anglican belief.

Clearly ACNA locate the Thirty-Nine Articles in their historical context, and while expressing 'fundamental principles' this declaration falls short of declaring them to be normatively authoritative for Anglicans today. The fundamental principles expressed might be authoritative, but the actual text appears less so. Other provinces within the Anglican Communion go further; for example, the Constitution of the Anglican Church of Melanesia makes no mention of the Thirty-Nine Articles, but simply records as the basis of faith 'The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments [and] The Catholic Creeds.'⁶⁴

In Australia as clergy we are called to assent to the Articles, but (as implied by ACNA) parts of the Thirty-Nine Articles are clearly rooted in the controversies of sixteenth-century England. Take, for example, Article XXXVII. Those of us who are opposed to conscription or capital punishment might find that particular article less than authoritative today, even though we assent to it as the historical position of the Church of England. What of Article XXV? Some parts of the Anglican Communion interpret it to mean that there are only two sacraments, and others (such as predominantly Anglo-Catholic provinces within and without Gafcon) would interpret it to mean that there are seven sacraments, of which two were instituted by our Lord. For example, the Constitution of ACNA states that 'We confess Baptism and the Supper of the Lord to be Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself in the Gospel'⁶⁵ but later goes on to state that it 'affirms our Lord's teaching that Holy Matrimony, commonly called a Sacrament (Article 25 and ACNA Catechism 124-125), is a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman.'⁶⁶ The Anglican Church of Melanesia states 'The Church of this Province accepts and teaches that the following are Sacraments of the Church of God: - Baptism, Holy Communion, Confirmation, Holy Marriage, Holy Anointing, Penance and Holy Order [*sic*].'⁶⁷ So, two or seven sacraments, or both? In what sense then is Article XXV authoritative today?

The point of the above discussion on Section 4 is not to engage in detailed debate about the validity of the Thirty-Nine Articles. Rather it points out the variety of views on the Thirty-Nine Articles within the Anglican Communion and even within Gafcon, that are at odds with the position endorsed in the *Declaration*. I am not sure that either ACNA or the Anglican Church of Melanesia would be considered anything other than orthodox. Accordingly it is argued here that it is possible to hold to orthodox doctrine and yet not hold to the position that the Thirty-Nine Articles are authoritative today.

⁶⁴Anglican Church of Melanesia, *The Manual containing the Constitution, Canons & Standing Resolutions of the Anglican Church of Melanesia*, 2008, 'The Constitution of the Anglican Church of Melanesia', Article 1, p. 1.

⁶⁵ACNA 'Constitution and Canons', Article 1(2) p. 2.

⁶⁶ACNA 'Constitution and Canons', 'Canon 7: Of Christian Marriage', Section 1, p. 16.

⁶⁷Anglican Church of Melanesia, *Manual*, Canons, Title A, 'The Sacraments', p. 12.

In Section 8 we come to the issue of gender and sexuality. Now, this is a novelty in that it takes a subsidiary matter (gender and marriage) and makes it into a tenet of orthodoxy and therefore apparently it is a matter of doctrine. This is a somewhat novel approach to doctrine. The Creeds are instructive at this point. They do not discuss normative moral issues. At best they acknowledge sin – ‘We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins’. Yet nowhere in the Creeds as doctrinal statements is there any further development as to the nature of sin or normative lists of sinful behaviour. In short, the Creeds don’t do ethics. The absence of moral issues from traditional understanding of doctrine, and especially from credal statements is of great interest, but unfortunately the documents from Gafcon fail to develop this issue and state why moral issues are now to be considered doctrinal issues.

Section 10 has the same problem. No matter how praiseworthy it is, and noble an aspiration which hopefully all Christians would agree with – it is not a matter of orthodox doctrine. At best, as for Section 8, it is a subsidiary doctrinal matter. Now it could be argued here that moral issues should be part of doctrine, but this would itself be a novelty. Rather, Gafcon could have argued that some moral issues are so important that they are a first order issue on which there can be no disagreement, and that any Christian who falls on the wrong side of that issue can therefore not be considered to be orthodox. But the *Jerusalem Declaration* fails to do so and elucidate this in a clear way. It is not clear as to what is objectionable in same-sex relationships – is it physical expressions of love, or sexual expressions of love, or being in a relationship which might usually be considered sexual but may not be? If a line in the sand is going to be drawn, it needs to be quite clear.

The *Jerusalem Declaration* faced the general problem for all attempts to draw up something new. In attempting to restate traditional concepts, instead it introduces novel concepts. This invites further division between all those who claim to be orthodox. In attempting to add to the general deposit of faith accepted by all the faithful, they must fail to do so. Article XXI of the Thirty-Nine Articles attempts to deal with the Authority of General Councils, noting that they can only be gathered together with the commandment and will of Princes – and then notes that they can still err. So wherein is the authority of Gafcon to determine new elements of doctrine? Can they claim to act without error? Of course, Gafcon would argue that they are not attempting to introduce anything new, but simply restate the timeless truths of Christianity. However, that arguably is not the case. In the *Jerusalem Declaration* at least four novelties are introduced:

- Further elaboration of the nature of scripture and what it means
- Giving the Thirty-Nine Articles contemporary normative authority
- Introduction of gender and sexuality as doctrinal matters
- Introduction of care for the environment as a doctrinal matter.

So for all these reasons there is enough to indicate that an Anglican holding to orthodoxy might refuse to assent to the *Jerusalem Declaration*. But there is a more fundamental objection that an orthodox Anglican might have to the *Jerusalem*

Declaration. The *Declaration* discusses at some length moral issues. The *Letter to the Churches 2018*⁶⁸ follows up on the *Declaration* and expands the concerns on issues of gender, marriage and sexuality to cover approximately one-third of the *Letter*. Yet in all this discussion of important moral issues, not once are the Great Commandments (Mt. 22.34-40) mentioned or elaborated upon.

Now this does seem to be a notable omission. If moral issues are to be grounded in Scripture, then first and foremost the Great Commandments should be both invoked and used. The Great Commission (Mt. 28.16-20) which is invoked includes Jesus' words 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.' Clearly the Great Commandments, taught only six chapters before in the same Gospel, are central to the Great Commission and the moral teaching of the church. All the normative moral teachings of the church should start and finish with the Great Commandments.

But the Great Commandments are not mentioned once. In the *Declaration* 'love' or its cognates are only to be found in Section 1, in the context of our response to the love of God. The implications of that love are not worked through. Now, it can be reasonably responded that the *Declaration* is a summary, not a theological tract, and that therefore there was not room to talk about love of God and of neighbour. However, the *Letter* does set out to include theological reflection on issues of gender, marriage and sexuality at some length, and in that document love is only mentioned once, in the context of loving but firm discipline.

This seems to be a wholly unsatisfactory statement of orthodox moral beliefs. Now it could be responded that love is not to be found in the Creeds, and that is certainly true: but as stated previously, the Creeds don't do ethics. The *Declaration* and the *Letter* do ethics, and the failure to affirm love of God and of neighbour in that context does not reflect well. In both documents there is much talk of sin and repentance, but none of love. Consequently it is quite open for an orthodox Anglican to see the *Declaration* as being deficient in this regard, and therefore not a document that can be assented to as a statement of Anglican orthodoxy. Without a consideration of the love of neighbour, the *Declaration* is probably deficient, and the *Letter* is certainly deficient.

Now, none of the above is to cast doubt on the sincerity or integrity of those who adhere to the *Declaration* and the other documents produced by Gafcon. However, they do show that it is quite possible to be an orthodox Anglican and not accept the *Declaration* as an adequate or entirely reasonable or biblical statement of Anglican orthodoxy.

Issues of Schism

Accordingly, the questions can be legitimately raised as to whether the *Declaration* is the statement of Anglican orthodoxy (to which orthodox Anglicans must or should assent) or whether it is a statement of Anglican orthodoxy, which orthodox Anglicans may in good conscience not assent to. It is a real question: is orthodoxy only to be found in Gafcon, or is it to be found outside Gafcon as well?

⁶⁸GAFCON: 'Letter to the Churches – Gafcon Assembly 2018'.

Now, if Gafcon claims to be the only repository of orthodoxy within Anglicanism, then it is schismatic, as it seeks to exclude other Anglicans who are also orthodox. If Gafcon is not the only repository of orthodoxy within Anglicanism, then it needs to explain why it is taking action – in New Zealand, in Australia and arguably elsewhere – to set up parallel jurisdictions that have the effect of dividing the Body of Christ.

The matter of the division of the Body of Christ is quite serious. Jesus wills that we should all be one (Jn 17.20-21). We also know that in practice where there is division, there is usually then conflict or discord, and certainly a division of the witness to Christ. Those of us who have witnessed division in the Church understand it is relatively easy to divide, but considerably harder to put back together again. Therefore the onus is on those who would encompass division within the Body of Christ, to indicate why such division is necessary.

Clearly, such division has occurred in the past: the Anglican Church is a result of the fissures of the Reformation when an entire branch of the Catholic Church left the oversight of the Papacy. But the Anglican Church then attempted, with some success, to hold together as one: the Thirty-Nine Articles are part of that history. It is not simply enough to label one's opponents as being unorthodox, and therefore rejecting them: there is a need to explain in far greater detail what being orthodox entails. This is a challenge that Gafcon must apply themselves to if they intend to use definitions of 'sound doctrine' or 'orthodoxy' as the sword by which the godly and the ungodly will be separated. Alternatively, if Gafcon is defining a certain type of behaviour as the way in which those who are fit to remain in the church may remain, and those who are unfit are to be excluded, then that behaviour needs to be well defined and justified. After all, we should be extraordinarily cautious about attempts to judge those who are righteous and are allowed to be within the church, and those who are to be excluded: 'Judge not, lest ye be judged' (Mt. 7.1-3).

Indeed, the reformer John Calvin suggested that we should refrain from such matters. From Calvin's commentary of the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mt. 13.24-30):⁶⁹

In my opinion, the design of the parable is simply this: So long as the pilgrimage of the Church in this world continues, bad men and hypocrites will mingle in it with those who are good and upright, that the children of God may be armed with patience and, in the midst of offenses which are fitted to disturb them, may preserve unbroken steadfastness of faith. It is an appropriate comparison, when the Lord calls the Church his field, for believers are the seed of it; and though Christ afterwards adds that the field is the world, yet he undoubtedly intended to apply this designation, in a peculiar manner, to the Church, about which he had commenced the discourse.

As Calvin states, the children of God are to be armed with patience. Indeed, patience is part of what it is to be loving (1 Cor. 13.4). Even where fellow

⁶⁹Bible Hub, 'Calvin's Commentaries, Matthew 13', <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/calvin/matthew/13.htm> (accessed 31 January 2022).

Christians are judged to be especially sinful – ‘bad men and hypocrites’ – we are called to persevere as one. Following from Calvin’s interpretation, the onus again is on those who seek to remove the weeds or tares, to show why that is a better option than allowing the wheat and tares to grow together. I would suggest that the documents of Gafcon do not give a sufficient account of this need.

It can be argued that at times of great evil there is a time to make declarations with courage even if that means repudiating the official church. The best example of this in recent time is the *Barmen Declaration* of 1934.⁷⁰ It sets out to define a moral stance of resistance to the government of Adolf Hitler, as the Nazis attempted to suborn the German evangelical churches. It was a heroic call to spiritual arms against the powers of evil ranged against the Church of God. However, it was a statement of orthodoxy and Christian morality in the face of that which was clearly and palpably evil; I am not persuaded that the Anglican Communion is in such a position.

Conclusion

Gafcon are a powerful grouping within the Anglican Communion as a whole, and within national churches and provinces inside the Anglican Communion. There is much that is not happy within the Anglican Communion, and Gafcon is fully within its rights to form and challenge those things to which they are opposed.

However, when it starts to require assent to Declarations or other formulas as a mark of orthodoxy – and then uses that concept of orthodoxy to lend its weight to schism within the church – there are questions to be asked and responses that are needed.

Gafcon needs to make clear whether or not there is orthodoxy inside the Anglican Communion outside of Gafcon. In this paper there is an attempt made to show that is entirely possible and reasonable to be orthodox and Anglican without assenting to the *Jerusalem Declaration*. Gafcon does not have a monopoly on orthodoxy. Consequently, Gafcon should not hasten to schismatic action by supporting those who have chosen to leave Anglican churches which are orthodox. To simply accept and provide haven for people leaving orthodox churches and dioceses is to act schismatically.

Following that, if Gafcon is attempting to judge who is orthodox and who is not, there is a need to clearly indicate the grounds on which this is done. Further, there is a need to justify why the extremely serious step of division is required where unorthodox behaviour is detected. To go against the expressed desire of Jesus (and the advice of Calvin) on this matter, requires the most serious and extreme of justifications. The *Jerusalem Declaration* is not the *Barmen Declaration*; issues of gender and sexuality do not fall into the same category as fascist apostasy which did require the setting up of a separate structure. These are the challenges to which Gafcon, as part of the Anglican Church, should respond.

⁷⁰Presbyterian Church of the United States, ‘Barmen Confession’, in *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Part I, Book of Confessions*, pp. 279–284, https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/boc2016.pdf (accessed 20 January 2022).

Appendix: The Jerusalem Declaration⁷¹

In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit:

We, the participants in the Global Anglican Future Conference, have met in the land of Jesus' birth. We express our loyalty as disciples to the King of kings, the Lord Jesus. We joyfully embrace his command to proclaim the reality of his kingdom which he first announced in this land. The gospel of the kingdom is the good news of salvation, liberation and transformation for all. In light of the above, we agree to chart a way forward together that promotes and protects the biblical gospel and mission to the world, solemnly declaring the following tenets of orthodoxy which underpin our Anglican identity.

1. We rejoice in the gospel of God through which we have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. Because God first loved us, we love him and as believers bring forth fruits of love, ongoing repentance, lively hope and thanksgiving to God in all things.
2. We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God written and to contain all things necessary for salvation. The Bible is to be translated, read, preached, taught and obeyed in its plain and canonical sense, respectful of the church's historic and consensual reading.
3. We uphold the four Ecumenical Councils and the three historic Creeds as expressing the rule of faith of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
4. We uphold the Thirty-Nine Articles as containing the true doctrine of the Church agreeing with God's Word and as authoritative for Anglicans today.
5. We gladly proclaim and submit to the unique and universal Lordship of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, humanity's only Saviour from sin, judgement and hell, who lived the life we could not live and died the death that we deserve. By his atoning death and glorious resurrection, he secured the redemption of all who come to him in repentance and faith.
6. We rejoice in our Anglican sacramental and liturgical heritage as an expression of the gospel, and we uphold the 1662 Book of Common Prayer as a true and authoritative standard of worship and prayer, to be translated and locally adapted for each culture.
7. We recognise that God has called and gifted bishops, priests and deacons in historic succession to equip all the people of God for their ministry in the world. We uphold the classic Anglican Ordinal as an authoritative standard of clerical orders.
8. We acknowledge God's creation of humankind as male and female and the unchangeable standard of Christian marriage between one man and one woman as the proper place for sexual intimacy and the basis of the family. We repent of our failures to maintain this standard and call for a renewed commitment to lifelong fidelity in marriage and abstinence for those who are not married.
9. We gladly accept the Great Commission of the risen Lord to make disciples of all nations, to seek those who do not know Christ and to baptise, teach and bring new believers to maturity.
10. We are mindful of our responsibility to be good stewards of God's creation, to uphold and advocate justice in society, and to seek relief and empowerment of the poor and needy.
11. We are committed to the unity of all those who know and love Christ and to building authentic ecumenical relationships. We recognise the orders and jurisdiction of those Anglicans who uphold orthodox faith and practice, and we encourage them to join us in this declaration.
12. We celebrate the God-given diversity among us which enriches our global fellowship, and we acknowledge freedom in secondary matters. We pledge to work together to seek the mind of Christ on issues that divide us.

⁷¹Source: Gafcon, 'The Complete Jerusalem Statement 2008, 22nd June 2008', <https://www.gafcon.org/resources/the-complete-jerusalem-statement-2008> (accessed 10 January 2022).

13. We reject the authority of those churches and leaders who have denied the orthodox faith in word or deed. We pray for them and call on them to repent and return to the Lord.
14. We rejoice at the prospect of Jesus' coming again in glory, and while we await this final event of history, we praise him for the way he builds up his church through his Spirit by miraculously changing lives.