
WHY I AM STANDING APART

A PERSONAL STATEMENT AS TO WHY I HAVE WITHDRAWN FROM THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN
AOTEAROA, NEW ZEALAND AND POLYNESIA

It is with deep sadness that I find I can no longer continue in licenced ministry within the Anglican church as it is currently structured. I firmly believe that by passing Motion 7 (2018) authorising same-sex blessings, the General Synod has compromised its understanding of Christian marriage and is tolerating within the church a teaching that is contrary to Scripture. By doing so, the synod has blessed as holy that which God has not so blessed but explicitly warned God's people against.¹ Consequently, I cannot in good conscience sign the declaration of adherence and submission to the authority of General Synod as required of me under the church's constitution. It is a sad irony that the very declarations designed to protect the integrity of the church, have now become the means of compelling me and other faithful Anglicans to withdraw from leadership and to stand apart. However, not being able to sign is more than a mere technicality or personal scruple; it is the consequence of a church that has compromised the faith "once for all entrusted to the saints".² Even were it the case that I was not required to sign anything, I still believe that as a matter of integrity I would be compelled to separate myself from the current structures in order to be in accordance with God's word.³ For by authorising same-sex blessings, the General Synod has compromised the church, compromised the gospel, and has compromised the future mission and well-being of God's people.⁴

A COMPROMISED CHURCH: A QUESTION OF AUTHORITY

The church has been compromised in two ways. Firstly, by changing the church's doctrine of marriage and chastity in a manner that is contrary to Scripture. The General Synod has authorised the blessing of a sexual relationship outside the marriage bond, namely same-sex unions which are prohibited in Scripture. This is a serious abuse of the authority vested in the General Synod by the constitution of our church: it is a theological impossibility for the Church to bless as holy that which God has declared through Scripture to be unholy. The claim is made, however, that the General Synod has not in fact made any change in doctrine, and that marriage remains the union of one man and one woman. But

¹ 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Jude 4; Revelation 2:14-16, 20.

² Jude 3

³ 2 John 10-11.

⁴ 2 Corinthians 11:1-6; 12:19-21.

this turns on a distinction without a difference: by declaring same-sex blessings to be "non-formulary", the Synod has convinced itself that no formal change in doctrine has occurred. I consider this to be a legal manoeuvre motivated by political expediency. Yet, it is of little concern to me under which section of the constitution the resulting canon has been filed; for all practical purposes, a change has clearly been made.

A second, equally serious abuse of authority has been the granting of immunity from discipline for those conducting same-sex blessings. The granting of immunity, as well as being a tacit admission that a major revision as indeed occurred, also has the effect of creating a constitutional-free zone within the life of the church. The General Synod does not have the authority to make such a provision. The constitution, in speaking of its Fundamental Provisions enshrining the Church's doctrine, states:

The above Provisions shall be deemed **FUNDAMENTAL**, and it shall not be within the power of the General Synod, or of any Diocesan Synod, to alter, revoke, add to, or diminish any of the same.⁵

The changes made by General Synod, and the granting of immunity from discipline, have done the very thing that the constitution disallows. By exceeding its authority in this way, the General Synod has prevented a vital function of the constitution—to hold the church true to the teaching of Scripture. The Anglican church of this province is now ruled, in effect, by two constitutions: one expressed in the existing formularies, and another, parallel, "non-formulary", constitution under the direct protection of the General Synod. The implications of this are far reaching. The General Synod, having made itself the final authority in the church, is now free to apply (or not apply) the rules of the church as seems convenient to the majority of the day. Consequently, there is little to prevent further innovations from occurring, namely the recognition of marriage equality (so-called) and the ordination of candidates in same-sex unions. It is a compromised Church without authority.⁶

A COMPROMISED GOSPEL: A QUESTION OF INTEGRITY

Unfortunately, these decisions of General Synod have been but the fruit of a deeper, more serious malaise in the church—a compromised Gospel. It has long become apparent that the debate over human sexuality goes right to the heart of the Gospel message and what it means for God to call people to repentance and forgiveness of sins in Christ's name. Throughout the debate, those

⁵ Part A, Fundamental Provisions, Clause 6.

⁶ The Windsor Report (2004), paragraph 24, also identified the question of "authority" as the underlying problem in the wider Anglican Communion.
<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/68225/windsor2004full.pdf>.

promoting same-sex unions have wanted to radically reinterpret the church's teaching on marriage and chastity in order for the church's faith to align with what they term the "inclusive gospel". In doing so, they accuse conservatives of perpetuating outmoded doctrines that exclude and marginalise people in ways that are unloving, unjust, and a real cause of pastoral harm. It is also unfortunate that in advancing their cause, the advocates of an inclusive gospel have often reflected much of the anti-Christian rhetoric directed against the church by political activists in wider society.

This contest over the integrity of the Gospel was recognised by the GAFCON movement at its first conference in 2008. They named it as one of three "undeniable facts" that had "torn the fabric of the Communion".⁷

The first fact is the acceptance and promotion within the provinces of the Anglican Communion of a different 'gospel' (cf. Galatians 1:6-8) which is contrary to the apostolic gospel. This false gospel undermines the authority of God's Word written and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the author of salvation from sin, death and judgement. Many of its proponents claim that all religions offer equal access to God and that Jesus is only a way, not the way, the truth and the life. It promotes a variety of sexual preferences and immoral behaviour as a universal human right. It claims God's blessing for same-sex unions over against the biblical teaching on holy matrimony. In 2003 this false gospel led to the consecration of a bishop living in a homosexual relationship.⁸

This same Gospel crisis has been paralleled within the New Zealand church. Some have argued that this situation is no different to other controversies faced by the church in the past, where previous generations were still able to hold together. There is, of course, some truth in this, yet there is also a serious flaw: given that the Gospel is the only true basis for Christian unity, how can the Anglican Church hold together when there is such strident disagreement over that very same Gospel—how can a house divided against itself possibly stand?⁹

The solution offered by General Synod in 2014 was the adoption of a "two integrities" model for the church. General Synod's intention was not to replace the traditional understanding of the Gospel, so much as to allow an alternative understanding to co-exist alongside, each having its own "integrity". As the Synod acknowledged in passing Motion 30 (2014): "Although we are far from unanimous in seeing the way forward, there is a broad recognition of the dynamic nature of doctrine, and the call of the prophetic word to be attentive to the movement of the Spirit."¹⁰ It was on this basis that the Way

⁷ GAFCON (Global Anglican Future Conference) represents approximating 70% of Anglicans worldwide, drawn mainly from what is termed the Global South: Africa, Asia and South America.

⁸ <https://www.gafcon.org/resources/the-complete-jerusalem-statement>

⁹ Ephesians 4:4-5; Mark 3:25.

¹⁰ Motion 30 (2014). <http://www.anglican.org.nz/content/download/38945/196736/file/Motion%2030.docx>

Forward Working Group was established and asked to report back in 2016.¹¹ When the Way Forward Working Group report was released, the Archbishop's covering letter again highlighted the "two integrities" model:

The Way Forward Working Group has assumed that these two integrities cannot be reconciled. The Working Group has then asked whether these two integrities can be held together in the same Church. Can we acknowledge that those who have strongly-held views which are different to our own are also seeking to be obedient to the one Gospel of Jesus Christ? Can we honour the integrity of a position we cannot in conscience agree with?¹²

Consequently, Motion 7 (2018) simply puts in place the structures and arrangements based on principles already agreed upon in Motion 30 (2014). The result being that the Anglican Church now recognises within its life two mutually-incompatible and irreconcilable convictions with regard to how the Gospel message is to be understood and proclaimed. My conclusion is that the Anglican Church in New Zealand now holds to a compromised Gospel that lacks integrity.

A COMPROMISED MISSION: A QUESTION OF UNITY

A church that proclaims a compromised Gospel must inevitably pursue a divided mission. That indeed is the case with the provisions made by General Synod for the formation of "Christian communities". Presumably the reasoning behind such provisions is to allow conservative clergy and congregations to maintain a sufficient degree of separation from the rest of the church in order to pursue their own distinctive life and mission instead of leaving the church altogether.¹³ While this appears to be an attractive option to consider, I do not believe it presents a viable option for Gospel mission, for three reasons.

Firstly, it provides a pragmatic solution to what is a theological problem. The result being that the Gospel is turned from a unifying principle into a sectarian preference. In order to defend and promote one's particular Christian community, members must unavoidably engage in overt political action. In

¹¹ However, the debate over the Motion 30 report in 2016 led to the passing of another motion (Motion 29), calling for a second working group to meet and produce a further report for 2018. It was the presentation of the Motion 29 report in 2018 that resulted in the passing of Motion 7 that has caused such consternation among many faithful Anglicans.

¹² Archbishop's covering letter, 22 February 2016, <http://www.anglican.org.nz/content/download/41331/208882/file/Archbishops%20Cover%20Letter%20WFWG%20RELEASE.pdf>

¹³ The official rationale given by the Motion 29 Working Group is as follows: "The formal recognition of Christian Communities would allow individuals, families and other groupings the option of coalescing into communities bound by common bonds of affection and theological conviction; being able to remain involved in the life of a parish, the diocese and this Church."

<http://www.anglican.org.nz/content/download/46886/237010/file/Final%20Report%20of%20the%20Motion%2029%20Working%20Group%2022%20January%202018.pdf>.

the past, evangelical Anglicans have often been accused (largely unfairly, in my view) of being party-spirited, but now it becomes a necessity for the sake of the Gospel. Every parish meeting, every ministry appointment, every episcopal election—are all now politicised in a way that will sap the life of the community concerned.

Secondly, it normalises false-teaching within the life of the church. Whereas before, teaching that contradicted the Scriptures was resisted as not reflecting the apostolic faith as this church has received it, now, a certain degree of tolerance must be accepted. After all, it is now only a matter of divergent opinion, the limits of which are determined more by the House of Bishops (or, more likely, individual diocesan bishops) than by the Fundamental Provisions of the church's constitution.

Thirdly, it creates a church-within-a-church. In order to provide the necessary degree of separation, the formation of these communities will lead to the ghettoizing of conservatives Anglicans with all the attendant turf wars and demarcation disputes that entails. It is also not clear from Motion 7 (2018) how such future conflicts can be avoided, as much depends on the good-will of diocesan bishops, who have not had a good track-record in this regard.¹⁴ The formation of Christian communities, as a pragmatic solution to what is in essence a theological crisis, will effectively partition the church along theological lines. Consequently, although the church may have an outward appearance of unity, when it comes to mission, it will be hopelessly divided.

A NECESSARY CALL TO HOLINESS

If the mission of the church is compromised, then the church's response to God's call to holiness must be seriously questioned.¹⁵ For holiness brings to completion God's mission of sending his Son into the world: that through the proclamation of the Gospel, the Church might be gathered and presented to Christ as a pure and spotless bride—holy and blameless and irreproachable before him.¹⁶ That is why the Apostle Peter exhorts the church: "As he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy.""¹⁷ In the end, it is the call to holiness that sets the present controversy apart from others in the past, such as those concerning the remarriage

¹⁴ A case in point was the forced withdrawal of the West Hamilton parish in 2014 after protesting the decisions of the General Synod. <http://whcc.org.nz/our-story/>

¹⁵ 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

¹⁶ Ephesians 5:25-27; Colossians 1:21-23, 28; Revelation 19:6-8. See also the Windsor Report (2004), paragraph 3 & 4: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/68225/windsor2004full.pdf>.

¹⁷ 1 Peter 1:15-16

of divorcees, or the ordination of women.¹⁸ For this reason, opposition to same-sex blessings cannot simply be written off as unacknowledged homophobia or bigotry.

In responding to God's radical call to holiness, the church must separate from the world and be devoted to the Lord Jesus as the bride of Christ. The church must also be consecrated by the Holy Spirit to be the agent of God's mission in the world. All three aspects are needed: separation, devotion, and consecration. To be separated from the world means for us not to be conformed to the standards of this world but to be transformed.¹⁹ Devotion requires us to live lives worthy of the Gospel of Christ and for Christ to be exalted in all we do.²⁰ And it is the Holy Spirit who consecrates us and sets us apart for God's work of mission: to be a holy nation proclaiming the mighty acts of him who called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.²¹

In an age that prizes tolerance above all else, the idea of separation—as standing apart from the world—is counter-cultural to say the least, and yet it is a vital aspect of a holy church. At times we are even called to be separate and to stand apart from fellow believers for the sake of the Gospel.²² Though to separate in this way must be distinguished from the divisions, for example, that afflicted the Corinthian church over leadership.²³ While we must never confuse party-spirit or schism with a necessary call to holiness, to rule out such a step in principle, exposes the church to the danger of tolerating those things of which the Risen Lord has called us to repent.²⁴ As the Windsor Report (2004) acknowledges: "unity and communion are meaningless unless they issue in...holiness of life... In other words, unity, communion and holiness all belong together. Ultimately, questions about one are questions about all."²⁵ Tolerance for the sake of the Gospel is commendable, but tolerance for its own sake is in the end a refusal to heed what the Spirit is saying to the churches.²⁶

¹⁸ For an outline of how the Anglican Communion handled the issue of women's ordination see the Windsor Report (2004), paragraphs 12-21: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/68225/windsor2004full.pdf>. For a discussion of the remarriage of divorcees within the New Zealand Anglican Church, see Chris Spark's essay, "Double Standards? Divorce and Remarriage in light of discussion on same sex relationships in the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia." <http://www.latimer.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/Chris-Spark-Double-Standards.pdf>.

¹⁹ Romans 12:1-2

²⁰ Galatians 2:19-20; Philippians 1:20-21, 27-28; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

²¹ Acts 13:2-3; 1 Peter 2:9.

²² 2 John 10-11

²³ 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 3:16, 21-23. For an example of false teaching causing divisions, see Jude 19.

²⁴ Revelation 2:15-17, 22-23.

²⁵ Windsor Report (2004), paragraph 3:

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/68225/windsor2004full.pdf>.

²⁶ Revelation 2 & 3.

A NEW WAY FORWARD

Anglicans in New Zealand are not the first to face these issues and decide that they must take a stand for the sake of the Gospel.²⁷ But does this mean we must walk away from the Anglican church entirely? No, not entirely. But it does require that we separate ourselves from the current structures and take our stand alongside other faithful Anglicans world-wide. As the GAFCON assembly recently affirmed "We are not leaving the Anglican Communion; we are the majority of the Anglican Communion seeking to remain faithful to our Anglican heritage."²⁸ In order to stand apart, a realignment needs to take place through the formation of new Anglican structures.

In its 2016 submission to the Motion 29 Working Group, the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (FCANZ) advocated for the creation of an extra-provincial diocese as the best way forward.²⁹ An extra-provincial diocese would not be under the jurisdiction of the General Synod, yet would be authentically Anglican and preserve as much formal unity among New Zealand Anglicans as possible. While the Working Group in their final report gave some consideration to "Other Ecclesial Arrangements", in the end they decided against recommending an extra-provincial diocese. They argued that it was beyond their remit from General Synod to do so, though they did make this concession:

We note however, that should faithful Anglicans in this Church wish to consider other ecclesial arrangements, it would be appropriate for this Church to consider how best to embrace this challenge with the same grace and spirit as is reflected in Motion 29; seeking to find 'breathing room' for one another; to live out our commitment to each other in the light and life of the gospel.³⁰

This was a recognition by the Working Group that no consensus was going to be possible and that a number of Anglicans, such as myself, would be forced to withdraw should their recommendations be adopted. As a consequence, the Working Group urged "respectful conversations with any clergy

²⁷ One of the first instances occurred in June 2002 in the Diocese of New Westminster, Canada. Anglican theologian J. I. Packer gives an account of his decision to leave: <https://www.gafcon.org/resources/why-i-walked-sometimes-loving-a-denomination-requires-you-to-fight>.

²⁸ <https://www.gafcon.org/news/letter-to-the-churches-gafcon-assembly-2018>.

²⁹ FCANZ submission to Working Group, media release, 4 October 2016, <http://www.fcanz.org/media-messaging>. FCANZ is a part of the GAFCON network.

³⁰ Motion 29 Working Group Report, Section H, Other Ecclesial Arrangements, p 14: <http://www.anglican.org.nz/content/download/46886/237010/file/Final%20Report%20of%20the%20Motion%2029%20Working%20Group%2022%20January%202018.pdf>

person or Ministry Unit that wishes to leave this Church as a result of the recommendations made in this report."³¹

Despite the reluctance of the Working Group to endorse the FCANZ proposal, I remain convinced that the creation of an extra-provincial diocese is still the best way forward—with or without the co-operation of the General Synod. It is likely—as indicated by the on-going revisions being proposed within the North American churches—that conflict and controversy will continue to be a feature of the New Zealand Anglican church unless a new Anglican expression is formed. The General Synod, in a sense, has attempted to resolve the impasse by devolving responsibility back onto diocesan bishops and their synods. But, given the communion-wide controversy generated by same-sex blessings, I do not believe it is feasible to resolve these issues without reference to the wider Anglican Communion.³² This is something the General Synod has not been prepared to countenance on the grounds that it would infringe their right of autonomy.³³

By passing Motion 7 (2018), the General Synod has effectively aligned themselves with those who have torn our global fellowship apart: it is the General Synod who have divided this church not those of us who refuse to condone such schismatic actions. For this reason, the formation of an extra-province diocese within New Zealand is a necessary step in order to preserve fellowship with faithful Anglican partners around the world. I believe it is also the best way to ensure that New Zealand will continue to have a vibrant and authentically Anglican witness to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ for generations to come.

Malcolm Falloon

24 July 2018

³¹ Motion 29 Working Group Report, Section H, Other Ecclesial Arrangements, p 15:

<http://www.anglican.org.nz/content/download/46886/237010/file/Final%20Report%20of%20the%20Motion%2029%20Working%20Group%2022%20January%202018.pdf>

³² This is the principle of subsidiarity as outlined by the Windsor Report (2004), paragraphs 38-39, 83, 93-95,

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/68225/windsor2004full.pdf>.

³³ The Windsor Report (2004), paragraphs 72-86, rightly criticises such views of autonomy that places a province's right to independence over-and-against the obligations of "autonomy-in-communion" (paragraph 76): <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/68225/windsor2004full.pdf>.