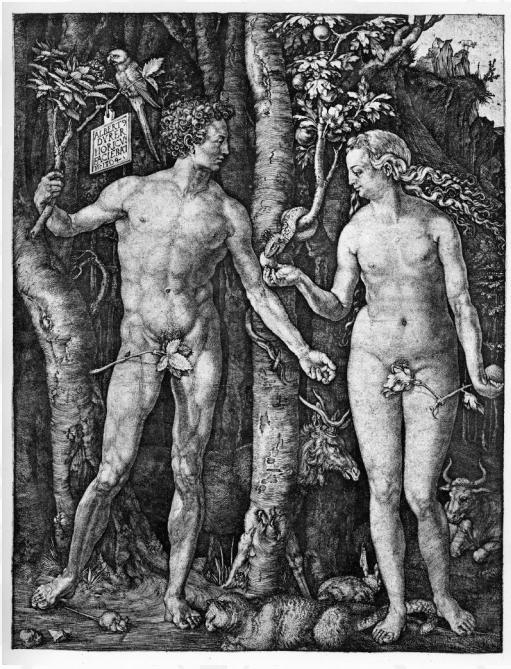


Evaluating ‘This Holy Estate’

A series from covenant.livingchurch.org

Introduction

In 2013, the General Synod of the Anglican Church of Canada passed Resolution C003, which directed the Council of General Synod to draft a motion "to change Canon XXI on marriage to allow the marriage of same-sex couples in the same way as opposite-sex couples."

This motion had to include "supporting documentation" that demonstrated, among other things, "broad consultation" on the issue. It also had to provide "a biblical and theological rationale for this change in teaching on the nature of Christian marriage," while showing that such a change would not "contravene" the church's Solemn Declaration of 1893.

In response to the General Synod's motion, the Council resolved to establish a "Commission on the Marriage Canon of the Anglican Church of Canada," with members appointed by the Primate and Officers of General Synod. This commission presented its findings to the Council on September 22, 2015, in *'This Holy Estate'* (henceforth, *THE*). The report was released to the public in October 2015.

Some advocates of canon change have claimed that the Holy Spirit has directed them to support same-sex marriage, but the report does not generally take this approach. It is not hard to see why. From the Montanists to Joachim of Fiore to Benny Hinn, Christians have appealed to the Spirit to justify any number of peculiar or divisive theological positions. But the claim that the Holy Spirit has spoken does not stand on its own. If we all enter the discussion with competing claims, asserting that the Spirit has spoken to us, we must find some way to navigate our disagreements. Thus, if I say that the Holy Spirit has spoken to me, you are right to ask me to justify my claim.

From a Christian standpoint, such justification must come from Scripture and tradition, and the commission rightly saw that it must offer just such a rationale. The report endeavors to demonstrate how "such a change in the church's traditional teaching on Christian marriage could be understood to be scripturally and theologically coherent" (*THE* 1).

We must understand how important this objective is. Its successful accomplishment would be more than a laudable intellectual exercise. A clear statement demonstrating that canon change is scripturally and theologically coherent would offer Canadian Anglicans of all stripes what they have been longing for: something that could draw them together on an issue about which there is no consensus (as *THE* 3.3 acknowledges).

We might ask: *What would a coherent scriptural framework look like?*

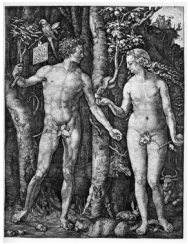
The report claims that such a framework would not be a matter of cherry-picking favorite proof texts (*THE* 5.1.1), a point that is surely true. However, in its actual engagement with Scripture, the report falls back into this precise approach. It proceeds by looking at a handful of individual texts before offering a rationale for why they do not justify a traditional understanding of marriage. Even if it is successful in its treatment of Scripture, therefore, the *most* it can have accomplished is to demonstrate why a few texts do not definitely "prove" that traditional understandings of marriage are normative. But it falls short of positively showing how all of Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, could be drawn together to offer a theologically coherent understanding of same-sex marriage.

Within this series "Evaluating *'This Holy Estate'*," we examine the report closely from a variety of perspectives. The essays are:

As the Anglican primates stated at their last meeting, canon change *is* doctrinal change. And, as doctrinal change, it requires a coherent scriptural narrative to undergird it. The failure of the report to offer such a narrative persists despite its allusion to Gentile inclusion. In the absence of a scriptural mandate justifying canon change, its proponents are left with little more than their own convictions that they have, in fact, gained unique access to the leading of the Spirit. They have fallen into the trap they sought to avoid.

In such a state of affairs, rhetoric invariably gives way to party politics. The Anglican Church of Canada thus finds itself in a truly troubling situation. It has been pushed to change the definition of marriage by those who know full well that such a change has been condemned by the Anglican Instruments of Communion and that it would severely strain interracial relations and ecumenical partnerships.

What is more, because the church is being asked to do so without a persuasive scriptural framework, it turns out that canon change is a far larger issue than some would suppose. Canadian Anglicans are not being asked about their opinions about marriage. They are being asked whether they will choose to depart from their traditional scriptural moorings and venture out alone, as their own guides, into the vast unknown.



Its Invitation to read Scripture

By Dane Neufeld

The members of the commission that wrote *'This Holy Estate'* (henceforth, *THE*) were given a nearly impossible task, and for this reason I am almost reluctant to criticize it. Their commission was to consult around the question of changing the marriage canon and to provide a scriptural and theological rationale for changing the canon to include same-sex relationships (*THE* 1). The document now stands before the Anglican Church of Canada as the most visible and official guide by which Anglican Christians can understand the vexed question of same-sex marriage. The document has come to hold center stage in the marriage debate; we have little choice but to engage it.

Given the nature of the commission, we should not expect to find a detailed consideration of arguments that oppose changing the canon, and of course the report contains very little in this regard. However, as the church approaches one the most critical moments in its history, and given the immense stakes in the outcome of this General Synod, it is unfortunate that the other side of the discussion has been largely relegated to the *ad hoc* initiatives of individual commentators. The incredible risk here is that ordinary Anglicans will read *'This Holy Estate'* and come to the conclusion that it represents, as it claims, a normative, quintessentially Anglican, "middle of the road" approach to reading Scripture.

It is a time-honored rhetorical device to position ourselves in the middle, vis-à-vis "extreme" opponents on either side. In political contexts such a move often requires caricaturing opponents so that they fit conveniently into their assigned roles on the margin. We can see how this happens within the report.

On one side are some for whom "it is obvious that the Bible condemns all [same-sex] relationships, committed and covenanted or not. Citing the six texts condemning same-sex activity is held to be sufficient to make this argument" (*THE* 5.1.1). On the other side are those who see the Bible as a "heritage" document for a church that struggles to hold together "secular ideas of justice and equality" and "outdated and oppressive ideas of the past." The authors then claim to have discovered a "true *via media"* between these troublesome extremes.

What is this middle way? It is a "Spirit-led engagement rather than a simple repetition of words"; it "is the practice of locating ourselves in the biblical narrative of God's unfolding purpose to redeem the good creation" (5.1.1). In other words, the authors rightly argue that any theology of marriage has to make sense of the whole sweep of Scripture; to make theological sense of same-sex marriage, we would have to locate ourselves coherently within the biblical narrative.

At this point, a problem arises. What if some Anglicans who argue against same-sex marriage do not fit into this simplified schematic? What if they have explicitly sought the goal of "locating ourselves in the Biblical narrative"? The document does not indicate that such people exist; the average reader is led to conclude that what ensues is a highly balanced, generous approach to Scripture, eschewing extremes, potentially the only kind available on the topic, taking the high road. But the opposite is true: the report leads us down a very particular and narrow road, not only in scholarly terms, but in scriptural terms as well.

For example, the "six bullet texts" that speak directly about same-sex activity are brushed aside because in the past they have "generated more heat than light." Apparently, hot contestation of their meaning means we need not deal with them at all. But removing these texts from consideration will do very little to dampen the flames of the current controversy.

Another curiosity: A large portion of the report's argument hangs on Acts 15 and the analogy of Gentile inclusion, a commonplace for revisionist arguments. Yet for that reason Acts 15 has also become a controversial passage; its significance in current debates is open to dispute. So the authors have transitioned us from six controversial "bullet" texts to one only. But simply shifting the debate from one scriptural focus to another accomplishes little, especially because the Scriptures are to be read as a unified, harmonious whole.

As Article XX ("Of the Authority of the Church") states: "It is not lawful for the Church to … so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another." It doesn't get more Anglican than this, and whatever it is that Acts 15 and the six bullets

texts each mean in their own right, a fruitful interpretation of Scripture should strive to establish unity among the manifold texts of Scripture. This is not an easy task, but we should be wary of interpretations that do not even make the effort. It is certainly not a "middle of the road" approach.

The authors recognize the potential danger of the course they are charting. To this effect they quote *The Windsor Report*, which states that the Church's exercise of interpretation should not function "as an attempt to avoid or relativize Scripture and its authority, but as a way of ensuring that it really is scripture that is being heard, not simply the echo of our own voices" (5.1.1).

But *The Windsor Report* places a certain burden on those who are advocating for radical changes: "to explain how what is now proposed not only accords with but actually enhances the central core of the Church's faith" (§ 60). The Church's task is "to listen carefully, to test everything, and to be prepared to change its mind if and when a convincing case has been made" (ibid.).

To this end, I believe the Anglican Church of Canada is still awaiting a convincing case for same sex-marriage that builds up and enhances the unity of Scripture. *'This Holy Estate'* avoids relevant portions of Scripture, and it engages others such as Romans 1 and Mark 10 with tendentious, one-sided scholarly argument. After the plain meaning of Romans 1 is speedily dismissed, the reader hoping for a fuller discussion of the passage is simply referred to J. Brownson's *Bible, Gender, Sexuality*, from which the report has adopted its argument wholesale (*THE* 5.2.3.3).

In the case of Mark 10, the authors penetrate the mind of Jesus to discover that he was not stating a timeless doctrine of marriage but rather responding pastorally to "a particular set of practices" (5.2.3.2). How do they know this is true? It appears they read a commentary by Pheme Perkins on the Gospel of Mark.

I do not intend any offence to Brownson and Perkins, but how can the Anglican Church of Canada "listen carefully" if it is only presented with these highly selective interpretations? There is little discussion of the early Church Fathers and the theological tradition of the broader Church. The Anglican theological tradition is almost omitted entirely: from Hooker to *Lux Mundi* and beyond, the document makes little effort to situate this new argument within our theological tradition. The *via media* is prescribed as a catch-all concept for Anglican theology, as if it has never been contested within Anglicanism, a concept that has only ever meant one thing and can now be employed to mollify views that dissent from the document's thesis.

The report concludes on an appropriately modest, albeit confusing note: changing the marriage canon is "theologically possible" though it may not be "theologically desirable" (5.4).

The report thus states that there is other evidence to consider, such as "[t]he growth in our understanding of human sexuality … [t]he pastoral need of those rejected by society and church … [and] the experience of same-sex committed partnerships in our midst" (ibid.).
These are indeed powerful realities in our current world, but it seems the authors are saying that the scriptural and theological case for changing the marriage canon is just about *good enough*, albeit not wholly "desirable," in light of these other reasons. We can see then that *'This Holy Estate'* represents an exercise in removing scriptural barriers, rather than allowing Scripture to lead. It is a document that does not grapple openly with arguments that oppose its conclusions. It does not wrestle with Scripture where it makes its greatest challenge to its proposals. It is possible, we are told, to read the Bible in this way, and in light of other evidence it is recommended that we do.

This is no *via media*.

If this document represents a future model for our Church and its engagement with the Scriptures and with truth of God's life among us, then liberals and conservatives alike have deep reasons to be concerned. But the responsibility of how to deal with this report hardly falls upon the authors: they received their commission, after all, from the Anglican Church of Canada. *We* bear the responsibility, and now more than ever we must find ways to search the Scriptures together and to humbly listen to what the Spirit is saying, through the Scriptures, to the Church.

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Locating ourselves in the biblical narrative

By Catherine Sider-Hamilton

Why does marriage matter? What is at stake in changing the marriage canon? In the reflection that follows I will address these fundamental questions by reading Scripture as *'This Holy Estate'* (henceforth, *THE*) invites us to read it. The biblical narrative, I will argue, locates marriage at the centre of the history of a good creation, a creation gone awry, and God's redeeming action; to this narrative, further, sexual difference is essential.

"Interpretation is the practice of locating ourselves in the biblical narrative of God's unfolding purpose to redeem the good creation that has fallen through sin" (*THE* 5.1.1). Marriage, as it is treated in the biblical narrative, invites us to do just this: to locate ourselves in the biblical narrative in and through marriage, and so to locate ourselves in God's redeeming purpose.

Marriage runs deep in the Christian narrative. God gives it to the man and the woman in creation: "This is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh"; "Therefore, a man leaves his father mother and clings to his wife and they become one flesh" (Gen. 2:23-24; cf. 1:27-28). Sin distorts marriage in particular: "in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you" (Gen. 3:16). The wedding feast is the place where redemption begins to break forth upon the world, in the water made wine at Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-12). Indeed, the wedding feast serves as harbinger and pledge of the peace at the end of all things: the final harmony of a redeemed creation with its redeeming God in the marriage feast of the lamb (Rev. 19:9, 21:1-4, 21:9). The biblical witness places the marriage of man and woman at the center of God's purpose in creation and in redemption.

The marriage liturgy in the Book of Alternative Services (as in the Book of Common Prayer) recognizes the centrality of marriage. Marriage, the rite begins in the BAS, "is a gift of God and a means of his grace, in which man and woman become one flesh" (p. 528). Their union ("one flesh") stands now as a sign of redemption — because the union of man and woman, given in creation and distorted in their turning away from God, is in Christ restored. In Christ, they may again "know each other with delight and tenderness in acts of love" (ibid.). The distortion of relationship that follows from the act of the man and the woman in Genesis 3 may in marriage be redeemed. In their redeemed union the man and the woman stand as sign and beginning of a larger redemption, the world's return to communion with its God. It is a return to communion known in the union of Christ with his Church, a union that (the biblical witness declares) marriage signifies (Eph. 5:25-31).

The whole sweep of the Christian narrative is thus encompassed in marriage.

What we say about marriage, then, matters. Marriage cannot be separated from the Christian narrative of salvation, the narrative that moves from God's work in creation through the brokenness of sin to the dawn of redemption: creation restored, communion given again.

This is the first and central point. Marriage is given by God as a lived sign and enactment of Christian hope. It is a central expression of our faith; it is a witness to God's redeeming action in the world. What we say about marriage, what we do about marriage, must be faithful to this hope.

The second point is this: sexual difference is fundamental to this sign. Woman and man we are made, and this bodily difference constitutes marriage in particular: "'This one shall be called Woman, for out of Man this one was taken.' *Therefore*, a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen. 2:23b-24, emphasis added). To become one flesh in the physical union of marriage belongs to the nature of man and woman; the marriage union follows from and is a fulfilment of their natures.

Genesis 1 implies the same thing. "So God created humankind in his image … male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them: 'Be fruitful and multiply'" (Gen. 1:27a, 28a). The sexual union that, in law, is necessary to the existence of a marriage follows from the male-female distinction. Further, it is in this male-female complementarity that we enact (in part) our nature as people made in God's image: as man and woman united in marriage, we are able to bring forth children. "Be fruitful and

multiply": in procreation man and woman in marriage share in God's creative work. In the biblical narrative, then, the male-female distinction belongs to the nature and purpose of marriage.

There are many other purposes for our lives: prophet, priest, teacher, friend, even celibate; in the New Testament, celibacy's witness to the absolute priority of the kingdom of God is at least as important as marriage, if not, as Paul suggests, more so (see 1 Cor. 7:25-40). But insofar as marriage is given to us in creation as the purpose of maleness and femaleness and the sacrament of God's image in us, and insofar as marriage is given to us in redemption as sign and beginning of creation restored, it is given to us in this particular way: as male and female, in this difference of body as well as of mind and soul. Preserving the distinction of the sexes in marriage is not discriminatory, in the negative sense. It defines marriage.

Creation and Christ alike thus tell a mystery: that the body matters. And this is the final point. That God loves us body and soul, that Jesus gives himself for us body and soul, that we, who are thus loved, are called to live for him with our body as well as with our soul: this is the Christian faith's constant song. We "locate" ourselves in the biblical narrative only by attending to this point.

To take the body out of marriage — to say that sexual difference does not matter — is to take the heart out of our faith. It is this world that God made and loves, flesh and bone, tree and rock and river, bodies beautiful and broken, groaning for redemption. It is this world, flesh and bone, that God saves: on the wood of the Cross, in the pierced hands of Jesus the Christ. The Cross is real. It has the hard edges, the inescapable particularity, of sin and pain and death and life. So, too, with marriage.

Why does sexual difference in marriage matter? Because it speaks to the fullness of God's purpose, the great hope that is ours: that God in Jesus the Christ loves this world body and soul, that God in the Word made flesh is redeeming this world body and soul. All flesh shall see the salvation of our God, and the world one day — this beautiful creation, every rock and tree and suffering body — will be made whole.

To walk through the biblical narrative as *This Holy Estate* asks us to do is to discover that marriage in God's purpose has a particular shape: a shape that speaks to Cross and to redemption; a shape to which sexual difference is necessary. As the union of one man and one woman in body, mind, and spirit, marriage recalls God's work in creation and the human tendency to turn away from God — a tendency known first precisely in the man and the woman; as the union of one man and one woman in body, mind, and spirit, marriage announces to the world in Christ its redemption.

To change the marriage canon so as to ignore sexual difference is to tell a different story — no longer God's story, the narrative of creation and sin and salvation given in the biblical witness and reflected in the church's canon and marriage liturgy, but a story we spin for ourselves: marriage that can lead us only back upon ourselves, marriage divorced from the narrative of sin and the concrete saving purpose of God.

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Ignoring the Old Testament

By David Ney

The Anglican Church of Canada's Commission on the Marriage Canon careated *'This Holy Estate'* to do two things. First, the document was to suggest wording for the proposed resolution to alter the marriage canon at the General Synod in 2016. Second, the document was to demonstrate how such a change to the church's traditional teaching on Christian marriage might be "scripturally and theologically coherent." Like the other in this series, my piece considers whether the report has fulfilled this second objective. I focus simply on section 5.2.3.1, which deals with the Old Testament.

As Dane Neufeld notes in his essay, *THE* 5.1.1 claims to offer a rationale for changing the marriage canon by pursuing a moderate approach, which uses Scripture neither as some fundamentalists do (by treating it as an assortment of proof texts), nor as some liberals do (by disregarding the authoritative voice of the text). Instead, the report endorses the more sensible practice of "locating ourselves in the biblical narrative of God's unfolding purpose to redeem the good creation that has fallen through sin."

I commend the report's attempted method, but I will show that the report's engagement with the Old Testament (like the report as a whole) fails to follow through on its plans. It falls back upon both the fundamentalist and liberal approaches it claims to disavow. I will then argue that the report is unable to present a reading of the Old Testament that includes contemporary Christians in the narrative because it fails to appreciate what it means to say that heterosexual marriage is *sacramental*.

The report's dismissal of Genesis 1 and 2

The report, surprisingly, engages only two Old Testament texts: Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. (Catherine Sider-Hamilton offers some comments on these texts in her essay.)

The report hastily concludes that Genesis 1 is not relevant to the current discussion concerning the definition of marriage, for two reasons. First, Genesis 1 must be located, as historical critics tell us, in its original context. And within this context, the report claims that its purpose was not to define marriage but to criticize "ancient near eastern royal ideologies that understood the king as image or representative of the divine" (5.2.3.1).

Second, Genesis 1 is deemed irrelevant because of the report's interpretation of the *imago dei* (the idea that humans are created in the image of God). According to the report, to say that humans have been created in God's image is to say that they have been commissioned as God's representatives in creation. While fulfilling this role implies procreation, the report says that God does not explicitly designate marriage as a "necessary agent of procreation." The meaning of the *imago dei*, the report concludes, is therefore irrelevant.

The report's discussion of Genesis 2 comprises two similar arguments. It initially states that the text is "more relevant" than Genesis 1 but seems to go back on this claim; it ultimately concludes that Genesis 2's declarations on marriage are not prescriptive, but descriptive. This conclusion is justified on two accounts. Again the report argues that the historicity of the text makes it irrelevant: the marriage between Adam and Eve is found to be dissimilar from ancient Israelite marriage practices, and therefore does not bear on our understanding of the Israelite institution of marriage (nor presumably on contemporary marriage). The second reason for the text's irrelevance is that, like God's creation of humans in his image, God's act of giving Eve and Adam to each other in marriage apparently makes no "*explicit* reference to procreation as part of the intent for marriage" (ibid., emphasis added).

In sum, the report calls into question the applicability of Genesis 1 to the current debate by means of two claims, and then largely repeats these claims with respect to Genesis 2.

The report's first argument

The first argument, the appeal to historical criticism in order to dismiss the Genesis narratives, betrays the assumption that texts, as reflections of specific historical contexts, cannot speak to all times.

In another essay, Cole Hartin will look at this assumption in greater detail. For now, let me say that using historical criticism in this

manner has become a favorite, albeit blunt, tool for disregarding the authoritative voice of Scripture. I note, for instance, its repeated use in the proposals concerning same-sex marriage that came before the Scottish Episcopal Church's General Synod, as Oliver O'Donovan highlighted at *Fulcrum* in "The Wreck of Catholic Identity."

The nature of a particular text seems not to matter, so long as some background particularity may allow its dismissal. *Jesus, after all, was speaking to first-century Jews*. Or: *We know that Paul had a primitive cosmology*. Or, as *'This Holy Estate'* would have it: the purpose of Genesis is to subvert "ancient near eastern royal ideologies that understood the king as image or representative of the divine" (*THE* 5.2.3.1).

Along these lines, interpreters who hope to salvage anything from the Bible must ultimately treat some biblical texts as if they are historically embedded and others as if they are not. This approach conveniently allows them to hold on to their favorite parts. However, to use a phrase from Bonhoeffer, if we are going to swallow this earthly cup, we must do so "to its very dregs." Every single word of Scripture is a product of history. Pointing this out is not the same as interpreting a text. And when a text's historicity calls into question its relevance, one thing is clear. The text no longer speaks authoritatively, and the opinions of the interpreter are given free reign.

The report's second argument

The report argues that procreation is not *explicitly* declared to be fundamental to marriage in Genesis 1 or 2. This amounts to saying that a person who speaks about feathers and wings and robins and eagles is not talking about birds because the word *birds* has not been used.[1] It is true that the words *procreative marriage* are found in neither Genesis 1 nor Genesis 2, but procreative marriage is clearly central to both.

The authors of Genesis 1 and Genesis 2 speak of sexual difference and a one-flesh union rather than procreative marriage because they take for granted that marriage is laden with generative potential. In Genesis 1 the first thing God does when he creates male and female in his image is to bless them and say to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number" (Gen. 1:28). This blessing is the basis of the man and the woman's commission to "fill the earth and subdue it." It is, therefore, far more closely tied to the *imago dei* than the report claims.

To make a connection between procreative marriage and the divine mandate of humanity is not to treat Genesis 1 as a proof text. Indeed, the importance of procreation in Genesis 1 is only filled out when it is interpreted within a larger narrative of Scripture. Thus, Genesis 2 beautifully describes the first marriage: God's giving of Adam and Eve to one another. To claim that the words of this text, and the particular sexed bodies they refer to, are important is not to succumb to fundamentalism. Rather, it is to take the words of Scripture seriously, as the building blocks of a larger story (again, see Catherine Sider-Hamilton's essay).

In the same way that Genesis 2 builds upon Genesis 1, the remainder of Genesis, the rest of the Old Testament, and Scripture as a whole add historical and theological definition to this story. We learn early on that the story of men and women being "fruitful and increasing in number" is a story often dominated by their sin. It is a story that pits brother against brother, and father against mother. It is a story of controversy, animosity, and murder.

But it isn't merely a human story. Already in Genesis 1, human fruitfulness and increase is, at the same time, God's story — the story of his relationship with his creatures. And from Genesis 3 onwards, procreative marriage is central to God's work of redemption. For there we encounter the *protoevangelion* (Gen. 3:15), declaring that Eve's offspring is God's appointed means of crushing the serpent's head. Since the dawn of Christianity, we have recognized this appointed offspring to be none other than Jesus Christ.

"When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law" (Gal. 4:4). Paul, and the early Church with him, believed that it was crucial that Jesus was "born of woman" and not merely to establish the doctrine of his humanity. The manner of Jesus' birth established his relationship with the larger narrative of God's redemption of his people through Eve's offspring.

By being "born of woman" Jesus confirms what we see throughout the scriptural narrative: the story of marital strife, female bar-

renness, sibling rivalry, family discord, and national crisis is never simply the story of fathers and mothers and their offspring. It is always, at the same time, the story of God working through and within fallen procreative history to accomplish the purification and salvation of his people through his Son. Human history is divine history because it is the story of the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. Here, we see why we must attend to the whole of the Old Testament, not least for how the Word speaks in and through it. When Jesus, quoting Psalm 22:1, cries out from the Cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?," we see that he has entered into and taken upon himself all that the psalmist suffered. The experience of being brought "out of the womb" and of being "cast" on God from birth, of being surrounded by "strong bulls of Bashan," of being "poured out like water" and having all his bones "out of joint," of having a heart "turned to wax," of having his mouth "dried up like a potsherd" and his tongue stuck "to the roof of [his] mouth," of having his hands and feet pierced, of having all his bones on display and having people "stare and gloat" over him, and of watching them "divide [his] clothes among them and cast lots for [his] garments" — these are all *his* experiences (Ps. 22:9-18).

What is more, like the psalmist, Jesus undergoes all these experiences with a specific purpose in mind: so that "Posterity will serve [God]" and so that "future generations will be told about the Lord" (Ps. 22:30). Thus, the psalm that began with a cry of dereliction ends with the confident assertion that future generations will "proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn" (Ps. 22:31).

We have here a tableau on the way the divine Word speaks in and through the whole of the Old Testament; he has taken up this whole history in all its particularity. We see how marriage, generation, and childrearing is integral to God's redemptive purposes. And so we can come to appreciate what the Church has traditionally taught: that heterosexual marriage is sacramental.
Most of our language for describing marriage in this manner stems originally from Ephesians 5, which refers back to Genesis 2:24: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." "This is great mystery," for it speaks not only of the particular unions of men and women but also of the particular union of Christ and his Church.

Therefore, the way husbands love their wives is not only similar to how Christ loves his Church. The association runs deeper still. God's own story, the story of the Son giving himself over to death for the sake of the Church's life, is irrevocably tied to the story of a man leaving his father and mother and being united with his wife. Human life and death, down the ages, is the story of God's enduring promise, his Word to his people. In other words, underlying Paul's claim is an understanding about the co-inherence of divine and human history in the institution of marriage.

Thus, a church affirming the traditional understanding of marriage holds up not merely a cultural ideal, nor does it make simple claims about birth and the raising of children. Such a church bears witness to Christ, insisting that procreative marriage is not just something that interested parties agree to, or even something that ensures the survival of the species. Such a church affirms that children are important because the gospel is important. For it is the children of the Church who, by following the path that Jesus walked, ensure future generations will "proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn" (Ps. 22:31).

Conclusion

'This Holy Estate' promises to avoid the extremes of fundamentalism and liberalism in its engagement with Scripture; it hoped to avoid proof texting and the dismissal of troublesome texts. In its actual engagement with the Old Testament, however, I have shown that the report falls back on both extremes. It fails to deliver on its promise to interpret the Old Testament narrative in a way that includes us in the story. The report addresses only the first two chapters of this narrative, and it does so only in order to dismiss them. It is thus unable to reckon with the central place of marriage in salvation history, and therefore fails to understand how marriage is sacramental.

The Old Testament shows people of all times, not least the Church of today, that God's plan has always been to work in and through procreative marriage, and therefore in and through history. Human beings, the fruit of procreative marriage, have hope for the future because the Church endures. And the Church has a future because God has appointed that human life will endure through procreative marriage. Because of this I worry that the church that fails to protect the unique sacramentality of procreative marriage may just find that it has cut its own umbilical chord.

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Dismissing our Lord and his Gospels

By Cole Hartin

'This Holy Estate' is a document written by a group of folks commissioned by the Anglican Church of Canada's Council of General Synod, "to change Canon XXI on marriage to allow the marriage of same-sex couples in the same way as opposite-sex couples."

The report is said to include "broad consultation" within and outside the Anglican Church of Canada, scriptural and theological rationales for blessing same-sex marriage, and the practical implications of changing the current marriage canon, among other items. The report is brimming with problems, but the most striking issue is a general disregard for Scripture: its engagement is shallow, as other essays in this series have already shown.

The authors of the report worked toward discerning what the Spirit is saying to the Anglican Church of Canada. But however much the report claims to engage (and intended to engage) relevant scriptural passages, it actually mutes the voice of Scripture. For this reason, it cannot serve as our guide as we seek to collectively discern the voice of the Spirit for our Church.

The most disheartening section of the report comes in its treatment of the words of our Lord in Mark 10:1-10 and Matthew 19:1-9. Whatever the motivation may have been, the report circumvents a straightforward reading of Scripture. In his disputes with the Pharisees regarding divorce, Jesus invokes the original purpose of God in establishing marriage: namely, to create an indissoluble bond between man and woman. The report comments on these passages (5.2.3.2):

> Jesus refuses to be entrapped, and yet also refuses to make a new law; rather, he challenges the "hardness of heart" reflected in both casual and utilitarian practices of divorce and remarriage in the Hellenistic world. Jesus is therefore not stating a timeless doctrine of marriage, but rather giving a pastoral (and political) response to a particular set of practices.

The first sentence in this paragraph is on the right track. Jesus *doesn't* fit into the casts forced upon him by some contemporary rabbinic positions regarding divorce. He does not make a "new law" either; in fact he simply reiterates a very old "law," one going all the way back to creation in Genesis 1 and 2. Further, the report is correct in noting that Jesus probably *was* concerned about "a particular set of practices," not least the permissive attitude toward divorce that was common at the time.

It does not follow, however, that Jesus is "not stating a timeless doctrine of marriage."

The logical error here is a classic *non sequitur*, an example of affirming a disjunct. The construction is set up like this: "Either Jesus is saying something that has enduring doctrinal weight, or he is saying something pastoral, addressed to a particular situation. He is clearly doing the latter, and so it follows that he cannot be doing the former."

The reality is, however, that Jesus was deeply pastoral *and* made doctrinally binding claims. He led a particular life and answered particular questions in a way that remains enduringly significant. In a first-century Jewish culture plagued by flippant divorce, Jesus responded pastorally by recalling marriage's original purpose; that is, by upholding doctrine. He referred back to the Creation, and stated that *because of this binding doctrine* the permissive divorce practices of his time went against the grain of marriage as God intended it.

Tempting as it might be to divide Jesus' sayings into two categories — particular responses and "timeless" doctrines — this approach is overly simplistic, and takes little account of the significance of the Incarnation, when dealing with the words of Jesus Christ. When God incarnate is speaking, we cannot simply say *this statement on marriage is irrelevant to our time*.

Furthermore, this temptation to divide the Scriptures into two piles — "relevant" and "irrelevant" — may prove to be an attempt to impose our will on the Word of God, contorting it rather than letting it speak. In such a case, we are no longer listening for how God speaks through his Word; we are instead using Scripture as a proxy, a puppet mouthing our own inventions.

This point is borne out if we consider other examples in the Gospels. In John 8, Jesus encounters a woman caught in adultery, with a crowd surrounding her, ready to throw stones. He protects her, reminding those present that only those without sin can cast the first stone. Having been left alone with her, Jesus tells the woman, "Go on your way, and from now on do not sin again."

Now this advice certainly arises out of her particular story, and Jesus is responding to her personally: doubtless, we might say something about how he surely means that the sin of adultery might expose her particularly to further violence. However, here again, it is senseless to assert that Jesus' words are simply "particular." The command "do not sin again" applies equally to us as well, whenever we are caught in a destructive pattern of transgression. And who would deny the other principle against condemnation, not least in our own age? *Let he who is without sin cast the first stone*.

The notion that something can be both pastorally sensitive and generally true is fleshed out in our congregations, too. Recently, I have been meeting with a young man who is returning to the faith after years of doubt while away at college. I challenged him to read the Bible and participate in the life of the Church while he is figuring things out. My particular pastoral advice was addressed to his specific situation. However, this does not mean that the advice to read the Bible and to participate in the life of the Church is somehow irrelevant in any other situation.

It should be clear that in this case the report does not treat the words of Jesus with the care they deserve. Moreover, the report does not bother to ask whether the Christian tradition has generally received these words on divorce as articulating a universal message regarding the nature of marriage. (Hint: it has.)

If the report wants to argue that these words were preserved in the Gospels simply to apply only to a few Pharisees, then the report should provide some serious argument, engaging with both Scripture and tradition, to show that this novel interpretation of Jesus' words is indeed true. As it stands, our Lord's citation of God's original purpose in establishing marriage ("male and female" becoming "one flesh") needs to be taken at face value. These words have enduring weight, whether or not they once had political or specific, pastoral overtones.

I want to address another assumption of the report. It suggested that Jesus was only offering a pastoral, political response rather than a "timeless" doctrine of marriage. I have shown that it is possible for Jesus' words to be large enough to encompass both a local meaning and an enduring weight. But I think the word *timeless* here assumes too much. What Jesus says about marriage, what is given in Genesis, is anything but "timeless."

As Catherine Sider-Hamilton showed in this series, marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman, within time, limited by their creatureliness, their numbered days, and their bodies. And as David Ney demonstrated in his essay, these marriages are part of a history and move both human history and salvation history forward. They are narrated in the genealogies in Genesis and Matthew, each a link in a very long chain, each with its own story.

Marriage, as Jesus expresses it, is not a "timeless doctrine," some vague idea that can be manipulated, changed, and amended in whichever cultural context one finds oneself. Rather, marriage is something concrete, as the other sacraments are concrete. Christians in particular cultural milieus may take them up, but they each have an essence that remains constant and enduring.

Marriage necessarily involves a man and a woman, created in God's image, becoming one flesh. And this oneness is abundantly fruitful: the human potential for procreation is nurtured in this time-bound, embodied married life.

To strip away the essential elements of marriage, to purge it of the human difference that it requires, *is an attempt* to fashion a "timeless doctrine of marriage," one that takes no account of our historical character as human beings. Whatever shreds remain after such a sanitization might be labelled "marriage" by its adherents, but that word will have become so detached from all of its rich texture that nothing much will be left.

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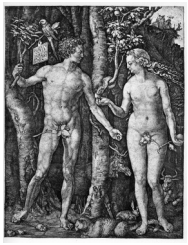

Misreading Romans 1 and Richard Hays

By Murray Henderson

'This Holy Estate' is the recent report of the Commission on the Marriage Canon of the Anglican Church of Canada. The commission was established by the Council of General Synod as it sought to prepare a motion to be presented at the General Synod of 2016, which would change the Marriage Canon of the Anglican Church of Canada to allow the marriage of same-sex couples (*THE*, 1). In addition to other tasks, the commission was mandated "to prepare documentation demonstrating how such a change in the church's traditional teaching on Christian marriage could be understood to be scripturally and theologically coherent."

The primate and the "officers of the General Synod" selected the commission's members for their demonstrated "capacity to hear and understand the theological diversity represented in the Anglican Church of Canada." Sadly, the document offers a consistent "revisionist" view, especially in its attempted scriptural and theological rationale. The document appeals to the authority of Scripture (see 5.1) and the need for the community to "digest" its message (in line with the BCP collect for the Second Sunday of Advent), but the report's engagement with relevant Scripture passages is one-sided, superficial, and often misleading.

Nowhere is the failure to provide an adequate biblical rationale more glaring than in the report's brief section dealing with the teaching of the Apostle Paul in Romans 1 as to whether homosexual relations are "a perversion of natural law or creation order" (5.2.3.3). In particular, the section dismisses any objection to same-sex marriage based on this passage. It purports to offer insights from Richard B. Hays's book *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (Harper Collins, 1996), especially regarding the overall rhetorical aim of the passage. Hays, however, cannot be claimed to support the revisionist view of Romans 1. Contrary to the report's attempt to insinuate that Paul does not regard same-sex relations as sinful and contrary to nature, Hays argues that this is precisely what Paul asserts.

The report's treatment here is emblematic of its superficial engagement with Scripture, as well as the relevant scholarly literature. I offer this piece not to belabor this point, but to provide a detailed picture of how the report's attempts to draft support for its dubious proposition miss the mark.

The key text here is Romans 1:24-27:

> Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading for their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.

The report alludes to the well-known fact that the Greek word *para* with the accusative usually means not "against" but "in excess of." The revisionist scholar John Boswell was one of the first to draw significant attention to this fact in *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (University of Chicago Press, 1980). He argued that Paul was not claiming that homosexual acts are "against nature" but rather merely "beyond nature." This served as a key part of Boswell's argument that homosexual relations are not morally wrong or sinful (and has been used in such a way in various revisionist publications since the 1980s). However, even Boswell admitted in a footnote that *para physin* is precisely the kind of stock phrase in which *para* does mean "against" (see *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, p. 111).

In *The Moral Vision of the New Testament,* Richard Hays noted that an opposite phrase, *kata physin* ("natural"), was commonly used in Stoic texts to describe right moral action (p. 387). Moreover, Hays pointed out that Hellenistic Jews commonly used *para physin* (that is *para* with the accusative) in polemic against homosexual behavior. The context of Romans 1 thus strongly suggests that Paul is taking over terminology from both Greek philosophical and Hellenistic Jewish contexts in his reference to same-sex sexual behavior: it is "contrary to nature" in Romans 1. Hays concluded that Paul identified "nature" with the "created order."

Paul is speaking of homosexual behavior not merely as "beyond" general norms, but as an example of the rebellion of the Gentiles against God the Creator. The creation account of Genesis 1 and 2 is clearly in view.

> Ever since the creation of the world God's eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So they [the Gentiles] are without excuse. (Rom. 1:20)

In the passage before us in 1:24-27, homosexual behavior (among other vices) flows from idolatry, as the true worship of the Creator is exchanged for a lie: the worship of the creature.

It is worth noting that same-sex relations between women are included as part of this rebellion against the Creator: "Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural" (1:26b). Revisionists often make the claim that it is not homosexual relations per se that are the object of Paul's judgment, but rather degraded forms of that behavior, such as Greek male pederasty. But anything comparable to male pederasty among lesbians is rarely cited in ancient Greek literature. The mention of lesbianism demonstrates that Paul judges homosexual relations in themselves to be sinful and against nature, and not a supposed debased form of them.

Despite Paul's strong words, I want to emphasize that the apostle is not singling out homosexual relations as though they were particularly heinous sins. As a parish priest of the Anglican Church of Canada I am committed to love those members of my parish family with homosexual feelings, recognizing my own sexual brokenness as a heterosexual person.

In what follows in 1:28-32, a list of vices is given that are not sexual sins, such as greed and hatred of parents. Paul's point is that rebellion against the Creator takes many forms, all of which favor practices that are both the sign and consequence of the "exchange" by which human fallenness distorts God's created order (1:25).

'This Holy Estate' is especially misleading in its attempt to show that Paul's "concern" in the passage is "not sexuality, but self-righteousness." The document attributes this view to Richard Hays, in his reference to "a homiletical sting operation" (Hays, *Moral Vision*, p. 389).

For Hays, the sting operation is based on the sins of the Gentiles described in Romans 1, and occurs in Romans 2:1. Hays builds up to "the sting" by demonstrating the immorality of all of the sins of the Gentiles listed in Romans 1. But it is just as his Jewish and Christian readers are full of self-righteous indignation that "the sting strikes." In passing judgment on the vices of the Gentiles, Jews and others are condemning themselves. Hays points out: "The radical move that Paul makes is to proclaim that all people, Jews and Gentiles alike, stand equally condemned under the just judgment of a righteous God" (ibid.).

The report is right in stating that sexuality is not Paul's main concern in Romans 1. However, Paul's condemnation of self-righteousness in no way negates his condemnation of other vices. Rather, self-righteousness and homosexuality (and greed and hatred, etc.) are sinful.

What then, is Paul's main concern in Romans 1? Paul's concern is to reveal the truth of the human condition. Whether a person is beset by covetousness, gossip, or sexual sins, Paul shows a fallen and confused humanity tragically caught up in rebellion against God and his created order. The self-righteousness of Romans 2 is equally dangerous. For Gentiles lost in their vices and for the Jews who condemn them, there is the good news of God's salvation in Christ.

The report's misreading of Romans 1 and its spurious attempt to enlist Richard Hays as support for that misreading reflects the revisionist bias of its misuse of Scripture. We should expect more, when the Anglican Church of Canada is considering such a serious issue. The report fails dramatically in its attempt to provide a biblical and theological rationale for this departure from the Church's teaching.

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Same-sex marriage, and a failed argument from analogy

By Jeff Boldt

Last September, a special commission of the Anglican Church of Canada's Council of General Synod issued a report: *'This Holy Estate'* was meant to prepare the church for its 2016 General Synod, at which it will consider a change to the marriage canon. The commission's mandate was to craft a theological "rationale" for a Christian doctrine of same-sex marriage and to provide a conscience clause for dioceses and clergy that could not support this innovation.

I appreciate the document's thoughtful tone; its contents deserve careful consideration. Not least, we ought to consider how a canon change might affect our relationship with the Anglican Communion, given the recent decisions of the Primates' Meeting and the Anglican Consultative Council regarding "consequences" for the Episcopal Church's recent canon change. However, I focus here on the report's theological argument for the sacramental character of same-sex marriage as an analogue for the Christ-Church mystery displayed in heterosexual marriage. The authors set out to show that opposite-sex and same-sex marriage are neither entirely the same nor absolutely different.

I will show that there is a fatal flaw in this theological proposal: the analogy is in fact never fully argued, and the report obscures this fact by an irrelevant sub-argument regarding Gentile-inclusion in the early church.

In accordance with the tradition, *'This Holy Estate'* defines marriage as a sacramental reflection of the Christ-Church mystery in Ephesians 5:32: "When we speak of marriage as a mystery, a kind of sacrament, it is because marriage is capable of reflecting the loving union of Christ and the church" (*THE* 5.2.8). The question the authors rightly articulate becomes

> Do we recognize within same-sex covenants the same "great mystery" [as in opposite sex marriage]? Or are there grounds to argue that same-sex unions cannot reflect the love of Christ for the church in the same way, and therefore their inclusion in Christian marriage would somehow modify the analogy? (ibid.).

Put differently, the authors ask whether same-sex marriage is analogous to the figure of Christ and the Church in the way that heterosexual marriage is:

> Is same-sex marriage essentially the *same* as heterosexual marriage? Is same-sex marriage completely *different* from heterosexual marriage? Or in what other way is same-sex marriage *related* to heterosexual marriage? (ibid., emphasis original).

The authors' answer is that the two are not "univocally" the same, nor "equivocally" different, but "analogous," which is to say similar but different.

Herein lies the problem. The issue is not whether heterosexual marriage provides an image of Christ and the Church; the authors can take that for granted. The issue is whether both forms of marriage are diversely related to the one image of Christ and the Church.

This issue seems like a central question for the report's proposal. Yet the conclusion that same-sex marriage is an analogue for the Christ-Church relation is only set forth in a footnote; it is not argued in the body of the text.

One might ask whether the relation is implicit in the writers' definition in section 5.2.5 of the marriage covenant as lifelong, committed relationships of self-sacrificial giving. Both heterosexual and homosexual relationships could presumably "reflect" Christ's self-sacrificial love for the Church, perhaps to the degree that they are indeed self-sacrificial in character. Therefore, both might qualify as sacramental on such a basis. The report however, *refutes this possibility* because it only leads to a "univocal" and undifferentiated definition of marriage. It seeks a unique definition of marriage for same-sex partners.

The report states the univocal position it disagrees with in this way:

> [I]f marriage is a form of Christian community — a particular subset of the church, a school of love, where partners are

> called to be as Christ to one another; to practice self-sacrificial love in the context of a committed, lifelong, and erotic relationship — then one could argue that this happens regardless of gender or orientation, and is thus exemplified in same-sex couples as well as opposite-sex couples. (*THE* 5.3.1)

But the report argues that such a definition is too reductive.

> [I]n reducing all marriages to a common denominator, [this definition] is unable to articulate the specific gifts of heterosexual love, as celebrated in the tradition. Likewise it risks excluding Christian homosexuals who understand same-sex unions to be theologically and experientially distinct. (ibid.)

This is a very helpful articulation of what the report views as its proper theological task. Something about same-sex unions must be "distinct."

Nonetheless, the fatal problem for the report's analogical proposal is that, when it takes up "Same-Sex Covenants as a Differentiated form of Christian Marriage," *the thread of the previous argument wholly disappears*.

Analogy implies both similarity and difference, as the report notes. One proposed similarity is that both forms of marriage are capable of self-sacrificial love. So what is the precise *difference*, indeed the distinct character of same-sex unions? The report does not tell us. It engages in a brief *discursus* on "analogical" or "typological" relationships in Scripture, such as the crossing of the Red Sea and baptism, in which each retains its unique character. It then suggests again that same-sex unions have a unique and perhaps more expansive meaning than marriage usually has, but it does not name the distinction. And in not engaging this question the report fails to show how same-sex marriage is differently related to the "the great mystery" of Christ and the Church. This point has simply disappeared.

The report then inexplicably changes course to argue same-sex marriage is analogous, not to heterosexual marriage, but to Gentile-inclusion in the Covenant of Israel. *It is impossible to overstate the gap in this argument.* Even without engaging the argument from Gentile-inclusion, which in any case is problematic for reasons the writers do not engage,[1] we must conclude that the theological argument that same-sex marriage is a differentiated form of Christian marriage becomes hopelessly muddled with the introduction of yet another analogy.

But, bracketing this irrelevant supporting argument, can we use the report to construct a consistent analogical argument with some force? I do not see an easy way forward here, because it is difficult, if not impossible, to detect the report's argument.

'This Holy Estate' downplayed the obvious, namely, that heterosexual and same-sex relations differ with respect to procreative potential.[2] If it had not done so, the report might have delivered on its promise of an analogy: the similarity between the two forms would be self-sacrificial love. The difference would be that one is procreative and one is not.

For an analogical justification for same-sex marriage to be successful *it loses nothing* by honestly admitting the procreative difference; however, it must demonstrate that same-sex marriage nevertheless reflects the figure of Christ and the Church in a way that is distinct from heterosexual marriage but that does not fall back on the self-sacrificial similarity — perhaps by bringing forth an aspect of the figure that was latent until the advent of same-sex marriage. The report is silent on what this additional, biblically relevant difference might be. Rather, by continuing to downplay the procreative, *'This Holy Estate'* commits itself to the reductive, "univocal," view of marriage it already condemned.

Allow me a brief example from the figure of the celibate. The celibate life has traditionally been seen as a suitable mirror for Christ's nuptial love as well. We could say that the pattern of celibacy is latent within the figure of Christ and the Church because Jesus died barren, in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy: "And who can speak of his descendents?" (53:8, NIV 1983) Still, Jesus was raised to "see his offspring" (53:10) and proclaim "Here am I, and the children God has given me" (Heb. 2:13, quoting Isa. 8:18). The life of "waiting" (Matt. 25) is intelligible for the Christian celibate, for on the other side of death a marriage does occur, which transfigures one's current barrenness into fecundity.

In this way (and others), heterosexual marriage and celibacy are different forms of life that nevertheless analogically reflect the one "great mystery." But to return to the previous paragraph's point, a case for same-sex marriage must, like the figure of the celibate, demonstrate that it is a form of life latent in the figure of Christ and the Church. To date this has not been done.

Therefore, although *'This Holy Estate'* is to be commended for identifying *analogy* as the central theological issue in justifying same-sex marriage, the report fails to follow through with an articulation of just what the analogy consists in. It articulated the self-sacrificial similarity between the two forms of marriage, which merely renders them "univocal." But the authors failed to identify the respective distinctives of each relationship, ultimately fulfilled in "the great mystery," therefore rendering them analogical.

The lurching insertion of Gentile-inclusion argument simply diverts attention from this fact. For an analogy for same-sex marriage from Gentile-inclusion has nothing to do with establishing whether same-sex marriage is analogous to the Christ-Church mystery.

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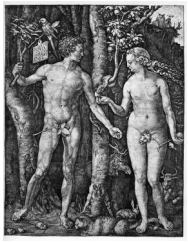
[1] For example, see the chapter "Dispirited: Scripture as Rule of Faith and Recent Misuse of the Council of Jerusalem: Text, Spirit, and Word to Culture," in Christopher R. Seitz, *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2001). For a briefer argument, see the next essay by Seitz.

[2] It is not enough to argue that because not all heterosexual couples are capable of children, procreation is not central to "the great mystery." Traditionalists argue not that participation in the mystery depends on procreative *actuality* (actually having kids) but procreative *potentiality*. Procreative potential can be frustrated by old age, infertility, miscarriage — all of which can be the occasion for a participation in Christ's own agony in the face of death. This potentiality does not exist in same-sex marriage. Thus easy arguments against procreation's centrality to the sacrament of marriage are unpersuasive to traditionalists, and they have the effect of undermining any attempt to justify a non-reductive, differentiated form of same-sex marriage.



Misunderstanding Acts 15

By Christopher Seitz

"The Old Testament is not contrary to the New: for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to Mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and Man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises" (Article VIII).

When Christians read the Old Testament it is very easy to adopt a perspective in which the covenant people are placed on par with ourselves, *en route*, however, to something they do not enjoy fully in their time as narrated. We relate to them, and identify with them as the main actors in a story, but see them as "behind us" in time and, as such, not yet where we are. This model assumes a developmental grid of improving evolution.

Worse is the instinct to conflate the people of Israel with those Jesus upbraided among his own people, given that the Scriptures are the corrective agent he appealed to: "You leave the commandment of God and hold fast the tradition of men" (Mark 7:8). "You search the Scriptures … it is they that bear witness to me" (John 5:39). "They drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4).

Israel enjoyed Christ under signs and figures, just as the Christian church today enjoys Christ through Word and Sacrament. For different dispensations, different modes of manifestation. "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58).

It has become popular to replace this conceptuality — everywhere present in the history of interpretation — with a one-dimensional developmental model. So when it comes to the "Council of Jerusalem" in Acts 15 — now popular in discussions about same-sexuality — we end up with a strange historicist interpretation: God gave the Law. Jewish Christians in Acts then set it aside, because they were prompted by the Holy Spirit. And by analogy, so too we now set aside whatever scriptural injunction — in Old Testament or in New — previously held by the Church because the Spirit is leading us into 21st-century "New Truth."

The narrative structure of Acts and the actual ruling of Acts 15 shows this evolutionary conception (almost reflexive with the rise of natural sciences) to be void of theological sense: this is one reason why texts like John 14:17 and 14:25 or Acts 15 *were through the entirety of the history of interpretation* never read through an evolutionary lens.

Acts is about the manifestation of the Holy Spirit: first to Jews at Pentecost then to prominent Jewish proselytes like the Ethiopian eunuch who worship in Jerusalem and study Holy Scripture; then to devout God-fearers like Cornelius renowned for alms-giving and prayer; and at last to Gentiles who are among the circumcised and hear the word proclaimed. The ministry of Paul, "apostle to the Gentiles," is almost exclusively conducted from the synagogue, even when Paul is constrained to do otherwise. The decision to proclaim Christ only to Gentiles —without the Scriptures of the covenant people — is nowhere on the horizon of Acts, even as the final chapter shows Paul struggling "to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the prophets" (28:23).

When we look closely at Acts 15 we see an unusual ruling, at least superficially. Some of the circumcised want Gentile believers — whose Christian convictions were never in doubt, given the manifestation of the Holy Spirit — to be circumcised and "to keep the Law of Moses" (15:5). Peter makes the case for the work of the Holy Spirit among them as adequate and not requiring circumcision in addition (15:7-11). Wider consensus is forthcoming as Paul and Barnabas and then James speak up. The Old Covenant prophets (Amos, Jeremiah, Isaiah) are called upon to testify that this Gentile embrace of Christ is what God from of old proclaimed (the "plan of God" or "mystery" referred to in Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians). Texts are cited formally: "it is written" (15:16-18). A first iteration of proper conduct for Gentile believers is then set forth.

Before turning to the admonition proper, note the explanatory gloss at verse 21. "For from early generations Moses has had in every city those who preach him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues." This is hardly a good example of what setting Moses aside might look like. Rather, the implication is that Moses is adequate to address the situation and indeed has done from "early generations" and "in every city" where he has been, is now, and will continue to be preached (so also Acts 28:23 cited above).

The four prohibitions (pollutions of idols; *porneai*; meat killed without letting out the blood; and blood itself), as has been noted by others, do not obviously refer to "Noahic" injunctions, though a history-of-religion explanation can be summoned at various points. Rather, the context for this particular foursome is better sought from the Law itself, strictly speaking, as this is also the context of the discussion.

A close reading of Leviticus 17-18 gives the answer, and precisely those sections that would be relevant in the context of a discussion of conduct for Gentile believers, whom the prophets Amos, Jeremiah, and Isaiah foresaw, as was declared at 15:15. The slaughtering of animals in Leviticus 17 deals not only with proper conduct for the covenant people but also those "strangers that sojourn among them" (17:8,10,15). "If any man of the house of Israel or of the strangers that sojourn among them eats any blood, I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off" (17:10). Blood must be properly drained (17:13) by both Israelite and sojourner in the midst. Israel and sojourner are not to eat what dies of itself or is torn by beasts (17:15). The sexual conduct expected of the sojourner and the Israelite is set forth in Levicitus 18.

For these reasons, to call the decision of the gathered a "fresh formal ruling" might give the wrong impression, even as it is in this general ambit. It is rather a penetration into the Law of God as this now takes form in the context of Gentile conversion. Gentile Christians are to avoid specific contact with blood, pollutions of idols, and *porneai* because long ago the Law of Moses saw fit to describe Israel's life in such a way that it anticipated Gentile association. The synagogue is one such prominent context in the period in question, once the diaspora has become a general reality. So those gathered in Jerusalem dispatch men to work with Paul and Barnabas and send them out with a letter that summarizes their admonitions for Gentile Christians (15:28). The Holy Spirit gave a goodly insight into how Scripture, and the Law of Moses as such, was to function in a context the prophets long ago anticipated. Far from setting Scripture aside, the logic of Scripture's word is sought for a context of Gentile association occasioned by the work of the one Cross of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

To turn the discussion and decisions of Acts 15 into an analogy for modern "spirit discernment into New Truth" is not just exegetically faulty, but runs almost exactly against the grain of how the Scriptures, the Law, and the Holy Spirit are effectively at work in Acts 15 and in Acts as such.

The problem is not just that a non-biblical account of evolutionary development runs interference, preventing many from hearing Acts 15 in its proper register. A related issue is that we fail to understand the character of covenant life on the terms of election and adoption. Gentiles are not an "advanced" species in relationship to God in Christ, and so able to look on the Scriptures of Israel, and the life of God with a people, as though they are superior observers and know which parts they might use to affirm New Truth, and which to let go. Once this reflex comes into play, it is hardly surprising that the entirety of Scripture — Old Testament and New — will become an arena for simply picking out what helpfully lines up with the "New Truth" being claimed.

Paul is correct to remind Gentiles that they were once strangers to the covenant life altogether, and as he economically puts it "without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). Those brought near by Christ are "sojourners in the midst of Israel," worshipers of Israel's King and God's only begotten Son.

Therefore, in Israel's record of that life, we are privileged to see the intimacy of a relationship that in time became ours to share in him as well. We are privileged to be brought near. And we learn as a bonus that the Old Covenant record had our names in it as well, on terms God had prepared from before the foundation of the world.

To flatten the distinction between (a) elected and covenanted people and (b) adopted sons and daughters and then to read the Old Testament as though we are the former instead of the latter is to mistake the work of God in Christ and to misunderstand what Romans, Ephesians, and Colossians — among other New Testament witnesses — are in fact saying conceptually and really about the divine mystery at work in sacred Scripture. That includes the Law of Moses as it reveals its purpose in the context of Acts 15.

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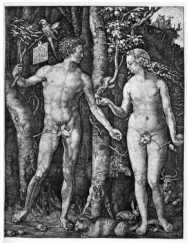


Sidelining Indigenous voices

By Joey Royal

I am a priest in the Diocese of the Arctic, a predominantly Indigenous diocese. Most of our people are Inuit, with some Dene people in the Western Arctic. There are non-Indigenous folks too, but they are the minority. We are a strong diocese, with a long history of faithfulness to Christ and resilience in the midst of many challenges.

In what follows I want to offer some reflections on *'This Holy Estate'*, and in particular, the way the report fails to engage Indigenous perspectives in any serious way. I speak as a person of Métis descent who has lived in northern Canada for the better part of a decade. Although I have learned much from living and working alongside Dene and Inuit people, I am still an outsider to those cultures. Nevertheless, I feel a kinship with all my Indigenous brothers and sisters in Christ who strive to be faithful to God amid the confusions and contradictions of this present age.

My critiques of the report are directed solely at what is written; I am not judging the hearts of the people who wrote it. I recognize that the commission had a difficult task, with all sorts of limits imposed on it. I hope that nothing I say will be interpreted as hostile to anyone. If we belong to Christ, then we are all part of God's family. We must never forget that, particularly in times of conflict and controversy. Nevertheless, our Lord tells us he is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6), and we must always be faithful to him above any earthly authority.

The first task given to the marriage commission was to demonstrate "broad consultation" from across the church. It invited individuals and groups to send written submissions during a five-month period in 2014. There were many intelligent and thoughtful submissions representing a spectrum of opinion. Unfortunately, the commission failed to consult the elders of First Nations and Inuit communities. Instead of simply *inviting* submissions, the commission should have actively *sought* them. What a gift it would have been if First Nations and Inuit elders were directly consulted and their words transcribed (and translated, if need be) for all to read. Such a process would have taken more time and more resources, to be sure, but the end result would have been instructive and enriched the whole church.

As it stands, the only reference to Indigenous perspectives in the report is a summary of a statement written by Bishop Mark MacDonald, Bishop Lydia Mamakwa, and Bishop Adam Halkett (*THE* 2.4). The summary is of limited value; it is extremely selective in what it highlights, and can be easily misunderstood. It is better to read the bishops' statement directly.

In what follows I will draw attention to a few points the bishops make in their statement.
In several places the bishops draw attention to the troubled recent history of Indigenous peoples in Canada. A dark legacy of cultural assimilation and marginalization lurks in the background of our current discussions. Indigenous Canadians are still trying to come to terms with what happened to them. Led by the government and the church, many Inuit and First Nations people were forced to abandon their language, their culture, and their land — key elements of their identity — and replace them with an alien language, an alien culture, and an alien land. These and other ills were brought to light, repudiated, and repented of during the Anglican Church of Canada's listening process, the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, which concluded in 2015. But recent events suggest that no lasting change has come. The Indigenous bishops have strong words about this troubling state of affairs:

> It is no longer acceptable to impose Western cultural questions and approaches on our societies, as if they were another segment or faction of a Euro-North American whole, either needing to be updated, tolerated, or assimilated in to the larger body. We absolutely reserve the right to make these choices and decisions, now and forever, on our own terms and in our own way. ("Statement of the Anglican Indigenous Bishops," p. 1)

As the Anglican Church of Canada deliberates about whether to change the marriage canon, we would do well to remember these words. Same-sex marriage is an idea forged by people of European descent, and it has been received as such by the Indigenous Anglicans of Canada. Although its proponents claim to celebrate diversity, it threatens to isolate them from the peoples of the world. It is a particular and idiosyncratic response to a particular set of cultural circumstances. And even within Europe and North America, it continues to be a controversial idea. If the redefinition of marriage is legislated "from the top down," as *'This Holy Es-*

tate' proposes, Indigenous Anglicans of Canada will no doubt receive the ruling as yet another episode in the long history of Western cultural imperialism, an imposition on a people who neither asked for it nor were asked about it. The Anglican Church of Canada must proceed with great caution and humility here.

The Indigenous bishops make a distinction between the view of marriage that is embraced by the dominant Canadian culture and the traditional view held by Indigenous elders. They describe the former in this way:

> For the rest of Canadian society, marriage appears to be a contract between two people, who have the right, under law and as a human right, to form their family life in any way they see fit. … In the understanding of the larger society, the focus of marriage is the individual choice, well-being, and happiness of the couple. (Ibid., pp. 1-2)

In much of Canadian society, marriage is understood as a contract centered on the mutual fulfillment of consenting adults (with comparatively little attention paid to either elders or to children). People understand themselves as autonomous agents possessing rights, who are free to do as they please so long as they do not purposely hurt others. This vision of marriage and sexuality fits comfortably into a culture of self-fulfillment and personal autonomy, but it is at odds with biblical, traditional Christian, and traditional Indigenous teaching.

The traditional understanding of marriage as taught by the elders sees people as embodied beings placed into an ordered world by the Creator; as created beings, people are only free insofar as they align their lives with the will of the Creator. The elders describe a traditional marriage ceremony as a communal event whereby "we enact our understanding of Creation and the relationship of God to the universe." Far from being a mere contract, marriage is, in this understanding, "an act in the spiritual realm, activated by ceremony and the commitment of love of the couples and their families" (ibid., p. 2).

Central to this vision is the created difference of male and female, who in marriage are joined together in unity. The union of male and female at once teaches spiritual truth, acts as a bridge across families and clans, and provides a foundation for future generations. In other words, marriage is not about only two people, but about a community that spans generations, and ultimately about the entire created order. This traditional teaching is in harmony with biblical teaching and Christian tradition, and is a corrective to the revisionism of the report. We desperately need the deeply rooted wisdom of the elders, particularly in our forgetful culture that hates all constraints and chases impatiently after novelty.

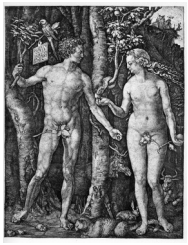
Our diocesan synod was held last month in Iqaluit, on Baffin Island, in Nunavut. During our gathering one of the main points of discussion was the vote on changing the marriage canon. Again and again people expressed frustration that neither they nor their elders were consulted in this process, and expressed concern that a change of this magnitude would irreparably damage the fragile unity of the church. The vast majority were opposed to the proposed change; and their opposition arose not from animosity but from their desire to respect their elders and be faithful to God. Many of those present felt shut out of a process that was happening in the south, and knew that the effects of decisions made elsewhere would be felt in their families, in their churches, and in their communities.

The weather on the horizon looks grim. Yet I hold onto my hope for the future of the Church in Canada. I have heard, on several occasions, a prophecy concerning God's purposes for Indigenous peoples. This prophecy has been spoken all across the north, from Alaska to Baffin Island. It has been repeated for generations, in different languages and in different circumstances.

The prophecy is this: that someday the people of the land (that is, Inuit and First Nations people) will be called upon by God to evangelize the people of the south (non-Indigenous people). Sometimes the image given is one of fire, burning across the Indigenous lands and gradually moving to the cities of southern Canada. That fire is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love and truth, which our Lord left us when he returned to the Father. I believe this prophecy will come to pass, and I hope to live to see it.

God's Spirit is at work among the people of the land. He has planted his Word in their hearts. Because he has planted his Word in their hearts they have something to say. What remains to be seen is whether the people of the south will be willing to listen and so to begin the long journey of walking together in Christ.

The Rev. Joey Royal is the director of the Arthur Turner Training School, set to reopen at St. Jude's Cathedral in Iqaluit, Nunavut.



Disrupting ecumenical and Anglican harmony

By Zachary Guiliano

Most of the essays in this series have addressed the role of Scripture in *'This Holy Estate'*, while Joey Royal's piece addressed the report's selective attention to the concerns of indigenous members of the Anglican Church of Canada.

I will address two further issues: what important ecumenical consequences will follow, should the church change its canon to approve same-sex marriage? And how will it affect the church's place within the Anglican Communion, and its relation to the church's "Solemn Declaration"?

Consultation with ecumenical partners, and consequences

More than any other recent report on same-sex marriage in the Anglican Communion, *'This Holy Estate'* engaged in fairly broad consultation before its authors began writing, with responses from "dioceses, theological colleges and seminaries, specialized experts, and full communion and ecumenical partners" (*THE* 1). These responses were posted on a dedicated website, for the sake of transparency.

With regard to ecumenical and inter-Anglican affairs, the report is honest: canon change would "impair our ecclesial relationships" (*THE* 3.4).

Moves towards same-sex marriage have already damaged the Anglican Church of Canada's relationship with Orthodox churches and the Roman Catholic Church. The official Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue affirmed its commitment to future meetings, but added that

> any divergence on the doctrine of Christian marriage, *which our dialogue has until now presented as a matter of fundamental convergence*, would weaken the very basis of our existing communion, and weaken the foundations upon which we have sought to build towards fuller ecclesial communion. (*THE* 2.2, emphasis added).

Other responses indicate that a revised canon would not damage relationships with two local Protestant churches: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, with which the Anglican Church of Canada is already in full communion, and the United Church of Canada. Both of these ecclesial bodies already permit same-sex marriage (*THE* 2.2, 3.4).

In other words, as in other provinces, a move to enshrine same-sex marriage in the church's canons will in no way hinder unity or dialogue with some local Protestant churches, while movements towards same-sex marriage have damaged and would continue to damage relationships with Roman Catholics and the Orthodox.

But what about Anglicans?

> The members of IASCUFO, while representing a variety of contexts and positions on the issue, cautioned that such a change by one member church "would cause great distress for the Communion as a whole, and for its ecumenical relationships. Members of the Commission are unanimous in urging you not to move beyond your present policy of 'local option.'" (*THE* 2.3)

This, at least, was the state of play back in September-October 2015, when the report was made public.

The Primates' Meeting last January has since made things clearer. It responded to similar changes in the Episcopal Church, asking that it not represent the Communion on official commissions or dialogues, nor take part in internal Communion governance. Various reports have suggested the Archbishop of Canterbury affirmed that the Scottish Episcopal Church would face similar consequences, should its canon change pass a second reading in 2017. There is no reason to think Canadians would escape a similar fate.

But might the consequences go further? I think they would, unraveling the church's very identity.

The Solemn Declaration of 1893 and "dissonance"

Like many other provinces of the Anglican Communion, the Anglican Church of Canada began its life as a colonial and missionary outpost of the Church of England. At the time of its first General Synod, it adopted a statement that reaffirmed its coherence and conformity to the Church of England's doctrine, much as the Episcopal Church had at its first General Convention in 1789. This statement remains at the beginning of the church's constitution and canons.

> In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen.
>
> We, the Bishops, together with the Delegates from the Clergy and Laity of the Church of England in the Dominion of Canada, now assembled in the first General Synod, hereby make the following Solemn Declaration:
>
> We *declare this Church to be, and desire that it shall continue, in full communion with the Church of England throughout the world*, as an integral portion of the one Body of Christ composed of Churches which, united under the One Divine Head and in the fellowship of the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, *hold the one Faith revealed in Holy Writ*, and defined in the Creeds as maintained by the undivided primitive Church in the undisputed Ecumenical Councils; receive the same Canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as containing all things necessary to salvation; teach the same Word of God; partake of the same Divinely ordained Sacraments, through the ministry of the same Apostolic Orders, and worship one God and Father through the same Lord Jesus Christ by the same Holy and Divine Spirit Who is given to them that believe to guide them into all truth.
>
> And *we are determined by the help of God to hold and maintain the Doctrine, Sacraments and Discipline of Christ as the Lord hath commanded in His Holy Word, and as the Church of England hath received and set forth the same* in "The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church, according to the Use of the Church of England; together with the Psalter or Psalms of David pointed as they are to be sung or said in churches; and the Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining, and Consecrating of Bishops, Priests and Deacons;" and in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion; and to transmit the same unimpaired to our posterity. (emphasis added)

The commission that produced 'This Holy Estate' was asked to determine whether a change to the church's marriage canon would "contravene" this Solemn Declaration. I think an unbiased reader would conclude that such a change would indeed do so.

It contradicts the Book of Common Prayer, and other essays in this series have argued that it contradicts Scripture. It contradicts the united witness to marriage of the Catholic tradition down the ages.

Furthermore, canon change clearly contradicts the doctrine of the Church of England and the Anglican Communion, which have been stated clearly on this matter in recent times. The document of the English House of Bishops, *Issues in Human Sexuality*, rules out same-sex marriage, and the C of E has gone on record on this matter again and again, even in secular courts, which have recognized its stance as being clearly articulated. (I mention the courts since they are the sort of authority invoked in *THE*.)

Finally, Resolution 1.10 of the 1998 Lambeth Conference defined this issue clearly in the context of global Anglicanism. Regardless of protests to the contrary, it has remained the touchstone for Anglican conversations and rulings since that time.

In other words, canon change would not simply damage ecumenical and inter-Anglican relationships. It would undermine the foundations and primary relationships that make the church the *Anglican* Church of Canada: namely, its relationship to Scripture, to the "Discipline of Christ," and to the liturgical and doctrinal inheritance of Anglicanism and the broader Christian tradition, as well as its unity with the Church of England and with the Anglican Communion, as an "integral portion" of Christ's one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.

The report attempts to avoid this issue in two ways: (1) by relegating the meaning and intent of the Solemn Declaration to a past era, making General Synod the only interpreter of the declaration, and (2) by stating that canon change may be "dissonant" with the declaration, but perhaps still harmonious, in a different sense.

First, the "historical" and "supreme authority" approach reflects the influence of Alan Perry, and his solicited response to the commission's work, founded on the interpretation of secular judges as they have struggled to respond to legal disputes around church property and other matters in Canada.[1] Inasmuch as this reasoning reflects a legal interpretation that has gained credence in litiga-

tion, one may grant its efficacy, but not its truth. The interpretation and settlement of this matter cannot rely on courts that have no competence to make doctrinal decisions, nor can we set aside broader canonical contexts, nor larger theological concerns.

The Rt. Rev. Stephen Andrews, while Bishop of Algoma, noted in his response to the commission's work that Perry's characterization was too simplistic. The Solemn Declaration stands at the front of the church's Constitution and Canons and provides the context and basis for the rest of its discipline as an organized body. The General Synod may not interpret the Solemn Declaration however it wills. Rather, the Declaration defines the very arena within which the Synod works; it constitutes the church's identity as an Anglican and aspiring Catholic body, making it subject to Scripture, tradition, and broader patterns of discipline.

Second, the idea that the church's General Synod may make a ruling fundamentally at odds with its identity — and yet remain "harmonious" with it — is intriguing, though it leaves unstated a number of fundamental assumptions. As I noted two weeks ago, 'This Holy Estate' grounds such an idea in a vague evocation of music theory: dissonant doctrine as "harmonic progression." Yet the report's proposals of dissonance as progress cannot easily be linked to the way chord progression or harmonic development appears in most tonal music. Only occasionally does dissonance persist in a song, often to elicit a mood of lasting despair or madness, or to "describe" extreme violence. Otherwise, tension passes away in resolution.

If we were to follow the metaphor through, as the report suggests, there might be a few different possibilities. First, Canadian dissonance will disappear, either through some greater resolution or progression (i.e., the whole Communion or global Church shifting in its direction) or by the Anglican Church of Canada departing from its dissonant position. To me, one of these suggestions seems like the report's most likely meaning, and would reflect the way most musical styles deal with dissonance. I cannot say that either development seems likely anytime soon.

Then again, the report may be evoking something entirely different, and has simply mixed up its musical terms. By harmonious dissonance, maybe it really refers to complex harmonic structures that are found most often in music developed in or since the 20th century, such as jazz. In this case, they are saying that Canadian departures from tradition serve some greater whole, one part in a larger orchestra or big band. Canada may contravene the Solemn Declaration at will, adding light and color to our mutual music.

The metaphor might work if we were all on board. It presupposes a fundamental commitment to communion, to playing the same piece, in which Canadians (and others) play the seventh of the chord, so to speak.

If the past 13 years of discord have taught us anything, though, it's that this sort of agreement does not exist. Rather, the Anglican Communion in its "Symphony of Instruments" is trying to perform something rich and deeply euphonious, obviously beautiful to the ear, like Vaughan Williams's "A Lark Ascending" or Gershwin's "Rhapsody in Blue." And its musical quality is intriguing to other ensembles; yes, it has some issues, it's still building up its chops, working out some intonation problems, strengthening the quality of its song. But the music is happening, and has a quality that others dig.

Yet individual players in the sections of the Anglican company have now decided, mid-performance, that they want to play something new, maybe something a little more "dissonant" or indeterminate (John Cage, anyone?). They don't even have all the members of their sections on their side, but they'd like to change the direction of the whole group.

Any musician could tell you what happens when a band member or section goes rogue, soloing a little too long, or proposing music no one else wants (or is able) to play: coherence is broken, trust is lost, harmony fades.

I am not making light of our common agony over these issues by playing out this metaphor. But I am trying to illustrate the fundamental differences that are at stake, which cannot be ameliorated by citing "harmonic progression." Anglicans have to decide whether we will walk together, and be realistic about what it will take to do so. I worry that 'This Holy Estate' brushes aside such serious ecumenical and inter-Anglican concerns, out of a desire to explore the possibilities of a parochial "dissonance," rather than a Catholic harmony.

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[1] E.g. Justice Kelleher in the British Columbia Supreme Court in *Bentley v. Anglican Synod of New Westminster*, cited in *THE* 3.5.