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EDITORIAL

Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark?

Martyn Percy[1,2,3]

[1]University of Saint Joseph Macao, Macao, China, [2]HKSKH Ming Hua Theological College, Hong Kong and [3]Canon Theologian, Convocation of Episcopal Churches, Paris, France
Email: martynwpercy@gmail.com

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> '. . . .*there is no central authority in the Anglican Communion. All of the provinces are autonomous and free to make their own decisions in their own ways – guided by recommendations from the four Instruments: the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Primates' Meeting and the Anglican Consultative Council . . .*' (https://www.anglicancommunion.org/structures/what-is-the-anglican-communion.aspx; Anglican Communion website)

Since the latter third of the 19th century, Anglicans worldwide have spoken of the framework for their unity, and across an expanding global compass, in terms of a quadrilateral. First proposed by the American Episcopalian William Reed Huntington in 1870, the Lambeth Conference of 1888 formally adopted the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, comprising the scriptures, historic creeds, the two dominical sacraments (i.e., Baptism and Eucharist), and the historic episcopate (locally adapted). Huntington proposed the quadrilateral as a means and basis for God's blessing, whereby an eventual 'home reunion' with the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches might become possible.

In the mindset of many Anglican thinkers, the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral has been conflated with, or superseded by, the later Wesleyan Quadrilateral, a theological framework devised by Alfred Cook Outler for Methodists in order to guide their understanding of faith. Formally adopted by the American United Methodist Church in 1968, the Wesleyan Quadrilateral consists of four key elements: scripture, tradition, reason and experience. These elements were not necessarily seen as equal sources of authority, but rather as interconnected components that informed and shaped theological reflection. The Methodist Quadrilateral emphasizes that the four elements are not mutually exclusive but rather work together to provide a holistic understanding of Christian faith. While scripture is the foundation, tradition, reason and experience may all play a pivotal role in shaping and interpreting religious truth.

Over the course of the 20th century, mindful of the tensions that the Anglican Quadrilateral framework was being made to endure – liturgical reform (e.g., the 1928 *Prayer Book*), gender, sexuality and subsidiarity (e.g., local or indigenous self-governing, etc) – the framework was augmented by four 'Instruments of Unity'.

Two had existed since the latter third of the 19th century, namely the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lambeth Conferences (though we note that even the first Lambeth Conference only managed to attract two-thirds of the bishops eligible to attend). To these, two instruments were added: the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC, added in 1968) and the Primate's Meeting in the final third of the 20th century (added in 1978).

At the dawn of the 21st century, these four 'Instruments of Communion' were commonly held to be able to frame, implement and express the unity of Anglicans worldwide. Naturally, the instruments do not have executive or legislative authority over the churches of the Communion, but function as tools of communication and cooperation. Anglicanism has no *magisterium*, common liturgy, global *Catechism* or agreed theological syllabus for training its clergy. Anglicanism is not a dogmatic faith. The instruments of unity are, therefore, means for framing and containing diversity and maintaining unity. The four instruments are:

1. The Archbishop of Canterbury: spiritual leader of the Anglican Communion.
2. The Lambeth Conference: a once-per-decade meeting of bishops from around the world to discuss local and global issues and responses.
3. The ACC: a body composed of representatives from clergy and laity from member churches who develop policy and advise on the communion's global mission.
4. The Primate's Meeting: a convention of leaders from national churches convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury for consultation and prayer on ministry and global and local issues.

The recent *Nairobi-Cairo Proposals* (Advent 2024) published by the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order (IASCUFO; and see the text at https://www.anglicancommunion.org/ecumenism/iascufo/the-nairobi-cairo-proposals.aspx), attempted to address the Anglican Communion's structure and leadership, particularly the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury, in response to ongoing disagreements and divisions. The proposals sought to help redefine, or perhaps just clarify, what the 1930 Lambeth Conference described the Anglican Communion as being, namely a fellowship, within one holy catholic and apostolic church, of those duly constituted dioceses, provinces or regional churches in communion with the See of Canterbury.

There can be no doubt that such an intervention is necessary and timely. But are the proposals workable? The IASCUFO proposals suggested broadening leadership responsibilities within the Communion's instruments, aiming for a more collaborative and equitable model. Specifically, the proposals recommended:

- *Revised Description of the Communion:*

A new way of describing the Anglican Communion, recognizing its global nature and the shared heritage that binds its member churches.

- *Broadened Leadership of Instruments:*

Shifting from a primarily Canterbury-led structure to a more diverse and shared leadership model.

- *Rotating Presidency of the ACC*:

Proposing that the ACC presidency be rotated among the five regions of the Communion, elected from among the primates by the Primates' Meeting.

- *Sharing Leadership in Meetings:*

The Primates' Standing Committee should play a role in calling and convening both the Primates' Meeting and the Lambeth Conference, alongside the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The proposals sought to address the current challenges and divisions within the Anglican Communion by fostering greater collaboration among the member churches. The proposals acknowledge the Archbishop of Canterbury's continuing pastoral and personal role, but suggest a wider sharing of responsibilities in leading the Communion, and propose amending resolution 49 from the 1930 Lambeth Conference (c.f. Appendix of the IASCUFO *Nairobi-Cairo Report*, p. 42 – additions and modifications for the 2024 version are indicated in bold italics):

Resolution 49, 1930	**IASCUFO Wording Proposed, 2024**
The Anglican Communion is a fellowship, within the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted dioceses, provinces or regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, which have the following characteristics in common: a. They uphold and propagate the Catholic and Apostolic faith and order as they are generally set forth in the Book of Common Prayer as authorized in their several Churches; b. They are particular or national Churches, and, as such, promote within each of their territories a national expression of Christian faith, life and worship; and c. They are bound together not by a central legislative and executive authority, but by mutual loyalty sustained through the common counsel of the bishops in conference.	The Anglican Communion is a fellowship, within the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted dioceses, provinces or regional Churches, which have the following characteristics in common: a. They ***seek to*** uphold and propagate the Catholic and Apostolic faith and order as they are generally set forth in the Book of Common Prayer as authorized in their ***distinct*** Churches; b. They are ***autonomous*** Churches, and, as such, promote within each of their territories a ***local*** expression of Christian faith, life and worship; and c. They are bound together ***through their shared inheritance, mutual service, common counsel of bishops and others*** in conference, ***and historic connection to the See of Canterbury, by which they seek interdependently to foster the highest degree of communion possible with one another.***
The Conference makes this statement praying for and eagerly awaiting the time when the Churches of the present Anglican Communion will enter into communion with other parts of the Catholic Church not definable as Anglican in the above sense, as a step towards the ultimate reunion of all Christendom in one visibly united fellowship.	***We make this*** statement praying for and eagerly awaiting the time when the Churches of the present Anglican Communion will enter into ***full*** communion with other parts of the Catholic Church not definable as Anglican in the above sense, as a step towards the ultimate reunion of all Christendom in one visibly united fellowship.

These mooted amendments to the 1930 Lambeth Conference resolution 49 are striking. Can Anglicanism merely be defined by 'shared inheritance', 'mutual service' and '[a] historic connection to the See of Canterbury'? This could well

amount to a miraculous draught of fish also needing a net of some considerable proportions (c.f., *John 21* and the 153 varieties of fish caught). The proposed revisions open the door for the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) to claim full membership of the Communion. Some 'Continuing Anglican Churches' that have left the Communion over the course of the last two centuries could justifiably claim their affiliation has been magically rekindled. The Free Church of England, Methodists, Presbyterians from the Church of Scotland, some Quaker and other stand-alone denominations qualify as valid members under the amended definition proposed by IASCUFO.

Furthermore, 'interdependently [fostering] the highest degree of communion possible' reads more like an ecumenical aspiration than some boundary-defining phrase setting out the ground for the ecclesial identity and unity of any denomination. That said, I should make it clear that I don't necessarily dissent from the proposed revisions mooted by the *Nairobi-Cairo Proposals*. They are broad, generous, pliable and open in texture. But they are also more likely to hasten the very ends and the processes of fragmentation that I suspect they sought to avert. The Appendix is worth reading again – slowly and carefully – and the question asked, 'whom or what would this amended document *exclude*?'. Some further questions would necessarily follow. But before articulating those questions and reservations arising from the IASCUFO Report, it is important to note the context from which it emerged in its current form.

The *Nairobi-Cairo Proposals* clearly understand that Anglican polity has now passed the point whereby, as the journalist and broadcaster Jeremy Paxman once quipped, the Church of England believes that 'there was no issue that could not eventually be resolved over a cup of tea in the Vicar's study'. Anglicanism might well have been a polity that was once-upon-a-time quintessentially peaceable and polite, in which arguments seldom got out of hand. But global Anglicanism no longer inhabits such a space. Wars on gender and sexuality suggest that theological disputes are likely to remain divisive and polarizing, with the elusive gel of unity unable to set, and the balm of Gilead unable to provide healing calm.

The *Nairobi-Cairo Proposals* are the result of a long-term piece of work, commissioned at the ACC in 2023. A sub-group was set with a brief to embark upon some renewed exploration of '*structure and decision-making to help address our differences in the Anglican Communion'* (emphasis mine). The ACC resolution underlined '*the importance of seeking to walk together to the highest degree possible and learning from our ecumenical conversations how to accommodate differentiation patiently and respectfully'*. The work was also honouring the call of the 2022 Lambeth Conference to seek an answer to two questions:

1. *To what extent are the Instruments fit for purpose?*
2. *To what extent might some (or all) of the Instruments be reconfigured to serve the Communion of today and the future?*"

Thus, we can discern an inner pulse in the *Nairobi-Cairo Proposals*. It is *straining* for unity, and the choice of language in the text – phrases and words – is *stretching* towards the most optimistic poles of interpretation. For example, the very use of the term 'instruments' in the IASCUFO document occurs more than sixty times. In

turn, this is supported by the use of the word 'symphony' on a dozen occasions – drawing on the earlier *Towards a Symphony of Instruments: A Historical and Theological Consideration of the Instruments of Communion of the Anglican Communion* (London: ACC, 2015). However, I contend the authors have confused harmony with unity.

The shortcomings of the musicological analogy should not surprise us, and astute readers of the *Nairobi-Cairo Proposals* document will quickly note that the word 'orchestra' does not appear in the text at all. Neither does the word 'conductor' nor 'performance'. It is a peculiar lacuna that speaks of a 'symphony of instruments', yet gives us no clue as to what this medley of instruments might sound like, nor how the music is to be arranged, conducted and performed. The unity of which the IASCUFO 2024 Report speaks is, in other words, one that is *remotely* notated and textual. This is a musical score – a light and simple piece of composition – showing how the parts for different instruments or voices *might* fit together.

The IASCUFO 2024 Report offers a musical-analogical blueprint for devolved ecclesial performance, indicating not just the notes but also rhythm, tempo, rubrics and other instructions. Analogically, the Report is a short piece of sheet music that any purchaser may take home and decide how to play and perform. The text and notation, including implied cadence and timbre, are matters that have been devolved for local interpretation and performance. That is ***not*** a 'symphony of instruments'.

I am also concerned by the problems encountered in the somewhat limited peripheral ecclesial vision implied by the word 'instrument'. In modern usage, instruments cover medicine, justice, torture, punishment, tools of coercion, measurement and weight. For sure, and dating from the 13th century, 'instrument' does indeed mean (from the Old French) 'a means, device or apparatus' for making music. But the earlier Latin *instrumentum* was a much broader term, covering tools, legal documents, mechanisms, implements, utensils and other means used to produce mechanical effects.

By the 14th century, an 'instrument' had also extended its reach to cover jurisprudence – a written document by which formal expression was given to a legal act, which might include commissions, authorizations and other declarations. The word 'instrument' could also be used of body parts or organs with special functions. One thinks of Chaucer's *Prologue* to *The Wife of Bath's Tale* (*The Prologe of the Wyves Tale of Bathe*, 3.1, lines 149–150) where she states 'in wyfhode I wol vse myn instrument as frely as my makere hath it sent' (i.e., though married, I will use my genitalia as freely as God gave it – thus claiming that her sexual generosity towards others is her *natural* state – thereby claiming ownership and rights over her own personal 'instrument of communion or unity'. Notoriously, the Wife of Bath states she has had five husbands, beginning from the age of 12. Chaucer uses the term 'instrument' of male genitalia in more disparaging terms in the same *Prologue*, line 132).

The obvious issue that arises hinges on the question of what is meant by 'Instruments of Unity' when Anglicans use the term. What *type* of instrument, exactly? There is no clear answer to that question, though the context of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral suggests some kind of device being used for securing and maintaining a framework. The origins of the deployment of the term

'instrument' for Anglican polity are opaque at best, and essentially 20th century. The use of the term, by implication, is mechanistic, not symphonic. The instruments are to be used and applied to the framework of the Quadrilateral. There may be some legal inferences too, alongside hints of weights and measures. There is also, perhaps held in reserve, a hint of the potential for the instruments to be used as devices of punishment, or even an apparatus with some capacity for coercion.

But Instruments of Unity, unless they have been fully worked into a musicological analogy that would cover the whole meaning and implications of a 'symphonic gathering' (i.e., properly performed and conducted, etc), will most likely imply lightly sketched legal principles. Putting the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral together with the four Instruments of Unity, the legal-light interpretation is arguably the only viable one that Anglicans can honestly own in a spirit of humility and truthful realism.

I titled this short op-ed 'Orchestral Manoeuvres in the Dark' (OMD) after the Merseyside English electronic duo, of the same name, formed in 1978. The pair, Paul Humphreys and Andrew McCluskey, were global pioneers of minimalist synth-pop electronic music. Their music entirely hinges on the instruments (naturally), yet their motto might easily have been 'less is more'. In their performances, they consciously tried to minimize what they were doing. Rather like good jazz, their power came through the hybridity (or 'synth'), and the meaning was found as much in the spaces between the notes when the instruments were not being used.

The 500th anniversary of Henry VIII separating from the See of Rome (1534) is fast approaching. The reigning monarch remains Supreme Governor of the Church of England. The 250th anniversary of Samuel Seabury's consecration as the first (democratically elected) Episcopal bishop in America also falls in 2034. The demands for a more widespread democratic polity in Anglicanism will increase. So how might the next decade pan out? I suspect we will see a further shift toward the apotheosis of subsidiarity as Anglicanism slides from being a Communion to embrace a weaker form of Protestant federalism.

In global Anglican polity, and especially in the version carried and promoted by the Church of England's leadership, I suspect we are seeing some of the dynamics that closely match those that were illuminated and critiqued by James C. Scott's *Seeing Like a State* (Yale University Press, 1998). Scott, a political scientist and anthropologist, saw that most states, empires and imperial regimes presumed to be able to apply rational order and thinking across their domains of governance. We see this on a small scale with diocesan centres in the Church of England over-dictating to local parishes. Internationally, the post-colonial era is already teaching us that imperial knowledge ignores practical-local knowledge at its peril.

This leaves us with a puzzle over the Anglican 'Instruments of Unity'. If they can be adapted, used and performed locally, in what sense do such instruments belong to some larger whole? Looking at current maps of the Anglican Communion, I am reminded of E. F. Schumacher's observation that the person with an imaginary map, supposing it to be truthful, is usually worse off than the person who has no map at all. In the case of the latter, reliance on local conversations, gathering nearby data and advice, the use of all senses and intelligence, will likely lead that person to the place they need to go. In contrast, the person equipped with an imaginary map will

constantly struggle with the gaps between the reality encountered and what the charts have laid out. The limits of any 'blueprint' ecclesiology (even one poetically conceived) or missiology will always be found out locally, on the ground.

Appeals to formularies, doctrines and instruments of unity are unlikely to hold the Anglican Communion together in the coming decade. Anglicanism is a Protestant and Reformed polity that preserved some affective Catholic accents (in many places and provinces, but by no means is this a majority), and chose to retain its bishops. What the next decade will need is a more honest and searching quest for the basis upon which ecclesial-familial relations can continue to be cordial and collaborative, mutually supportive and constructive, and continue to be capable of offering a prophetic missional witness to the wider world. Some of this will mean separating out the common core of our calling as Anglicans, and respecting (though not necessarily liking or affirming) emerging patterns of diversification, whether that be lay-celebrants in Sydney or LGBTQ-affirming Anglicans in other parts of the Communion. I think of the sage advice imparted by Urban Holmes III:

> '. . . [our] course leads to living in the world as God sees the world. We can debate the trivial points, but the vision is largely clear. To love God is to relieve the burden of all who suffer. The rest is a question of tactics' (*What is Anglicanism?* New York: Morehouse, 1982, p. 95).

Internally, Anglicanism has sought to find mechanisms for managing (or policing) diversification, whilst seeking to find a plausible narrative for coherent catholicity and unity. Instruments and Quadrilaterals do not appear to be fit for purpose as things currently stand. So what is to be done? I offer three observations.

First, humility and truthful realism about the current state of Anglican polity need to form the basis for conversations going forward. For several decades – perhaps most of the post-war era – global Anglicanism has been captive to its own rhetorical alchemy. There has been a great deal of talk assuring congregations of church growth, revival, renewal, recovery in numbers and new forms of church. These were doubtless aspirational, and perhaps it was hoped they would be morale-boosting too. However, the base metal of mere rhetorical repetition – that change, transformation, growth and the like is coming – cannot, by some miracle of alchemy, ever transmute into the solid gold of a genuine revival. The leadership of the Church of England, and for that matter, the wider Anglican Communion, needs to be honest about the present state of affairs. Any vision must be cast from that foundation.

Second, the language of current debates – same-sex relations and equal marriage come to mind – is being incautiously recast in the face of somewhat assertions rather than patient, reasoned argument. It is not uncommon to read or hear of claims of 'the Anglican doctrine of marriage being undermined'. Anglican theology does not regard marriage as a sacrament (c.f., Article XXV of the XXXIX Articles only claims that marriage is a 'state of life *allowed* in the scriptures'), and it is not given the elevated state that would qualify it as a 'doctrine'. The 16th-century Anglican position on marriage made it easier for the Church of England to (eventually) accommodate the remarriage or divorcees in the 20th century, and also (very slowly) to get its head around the equality women should enjoy within marriage as property

owners (19th century). But these adjustments were not changes to the Anglican doctrine of marriage, because Anglicanism does not have such a doctrine. It has a contested range of theological positions on marriage, and that has been the case since 1534 and Henry VIII seeking the dissolution of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon (NB: this was a dissolution of the union, as the legal means for divorce did not exist).

Third, there will have to be a deeper and more concerted attempt to articulate and define the nature, purpose and polity of global Anglicanism that we can currently see in documents such as *Nairobi-Cairo Proposals*. The Advent 2024 IASCUFO Report kicks the proverbial can further down the road. As that kind of exercise, I want to acknowledge that this has been done quite well. But it does not resolve the fundamental and existential tensions that are now surfacing nearly a century after the 1930 Lambeth Conference (resolution 49) that sought to describe the nature of the Anglican Communion. The direction of travel does appear to be that global Anglicanism will regard the Church of England as some kind of point of origin – 'shared inheritance' and '[a] historic connection to the See of Canterbury' – but not serve as a guiding (North Pole) star to set some future course by.

The first act of creation (*Genesis* 1: 1) was conducted by God in the formless dark: from that, God creates light. Only after that can the seas, lands and heavens be delineated before the earth is filled with creatures. The musicological analogy resonates here, too. It is within the spaces, boundaries, silences and gaps that life can breathe. The difficulty of trying to police the spaces and close the gaps with prescriptive formularies, or assertive articles of faith that have been projected onto them the elevated claim of doctrine, is that they stifle the life of body. Without the gaps and silences between musical notes, there is no symphony at all – just a wall of noise that prevents others from expressing themselves. No amount of appealing to the concept of Instruments of Unity can compensate for the sense of being stifled.

Perhaps, the best way forward is to cast a more penetrating light on the revised Instruments of Unity, and fully face the fact that they are (and always were) very limited in scope and capacity. Such instruments are highly unlikely to deliver the quality of unity, catholicity and coherence that the authors of the *Nairobi-Cairo Proposals* so admirably sought. If the Anglican Communion is to be, genuinely, a 'symphony of instruments', then orchestral manoeuvres will need to be brought into the light. The musicological analogy offered by IASCUFO is rich with potential, but remains undeveloped. Symphonies need gathering, orchestration and participation if they are seen and heard to inspire and move a wider audience.

In closing, let me say that I am not ultimately convinced that symphonic was ever the right analogy to reach for in describing 21st-century Episcopalian polity. Anglicanism is more akin to forms of jazz, comprising significant innovation with some lightly outlined composition. More a case of Dave Brubeck's 'Take Five', perhaps, than a symphony from Debussy or Mozart? Anglicanism plainly lacks the formality of a conventional written symphony, as though there was some definitive or dogmatic score from which all performers across time and space might essentially produce the same sound from one generation to the next. Beethoven's 9th symphony will sound very similar whenever and wherever it is played, and a recording of it made a century ago will not be so different from what one might hear today. As is the case with any other composer's symphony.

Anglicanism does not correlate here. It is, by its own definition, ***not*** a polity of some agreed composition. It is a *genre* of music locally adapted and performed. Anglicanism might have begun in England, but it needs little by way of Englishness to be itself in Chile, Korea, within a Māori diocese or in sub-Saharan Africa. In such places, the *Book of Common Prayer* has probably never been adopted, nor the XXXIX Articles affirmed. Social and theological interpretations of sexuality, modesty, morality and marriage differ markedly across cultures. Anglicanism will react and adapt to each culture locally.

Analogically, Anglicanism has developed as a mode of music that is very far from being a symphonic form that could be learned, performed and repeated as the constituents of an orchestra might typically expect. Quite plainly, Anglican liturgy itself, globally, is *not* uniformly scripted. It is locally adapted and of infinite variety, though retaining some morphological familial identity. It is not a symphony with many instruments making some singular, coherent, scripted and notated sound wherever it is performed or encountered across time and space. Rather, Anglicanism represents a wide variety of musical repertoires and genres, with a relatively limited range of instruments.

Harmony is hard to achieve across cultures at the best of times. And unity between countries and culture can seldom be prescribed without some legislature, and Anglicanism does not possess that. Developing diversity and accepting local adaptation reside in the DNA of Anglican polity. Even Scottish Episcopalians, in the wake of the Reformation, developed a markedly different Eucharistic theology to that of their English neighbours. Anglicans in New Zealand have formally structured their ethnic diversity into their three distinct *Tikanga* (Māori, Pākehā and Pasifika), with the possibility of a fourth being added. Anglicanism in Europe contains overlapping jurisdictions with the (American) Episcopal Convocation, Church of England chaplaincies, Lusitanian Catholic Apostolic Evangelical Church, and Iglesia Española Reformada Episcopalians. There are Old Catholics in full communion with Canterbury, too, as are the Porvoo churches. Anglicans must also reckon with *the Anglican Network in Europe (ANiE) – the churches under GAFCON.* This is not symphonic. It is, however, undeniably diverse.

The IASCUFO proposals represent another iteration of top-down ecclesiology; glossed with a lightly sketched and poetically conceived blueprint (i.e., 'symphony', 'instruments', etc). But as a work of ecclesiology, the *Nairobi-Cairo* document lacks concreteness and grounded granularity. It reads Anglicanism as a settled, evolving, composed polity that just needs a few tweaks in order to sound good and continue to be performed. Thus, the endeavour of the IASCUFO proposals has little chance of success. The methods and means for this kind of ecclesiology – seeking to rescue a denomination with a serious global identity crisis and riven by political and theological factionalism – need to be different from what the *Nairobi-Cairo* document proposes. That the authors cannot see this simply highlights the problem.

Nonetheless, I continue to harbour real hope that this extraordinary ecclesial-familial network might endure (granted, as a more attenuated entity), much like a normal family. It no longer needs to live under some fealty-bondage overseen by the Church of England or the Archbishop of Canterbury, aping the weak agency of some ageing presiding parent. Such ageing colonial patrimony cannot be sustained.

The diverse scattered provinces of this Federal Anglican Family (which were only narrated as a Communion from the late colonial era) may well continue to affirm their 'historic connection to the See of Canterbury', meek though that is. Thereafter, they must turn their attention to the peoples and lands God has called them to serve, and see them and love them as God surely does. Everything else is tactics.

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