

DRAFT

A SELF-DEFINING MOMENT FOR THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

A Comment on the St. Andrew's Draft of the Anglican Covenant

The Rev. Dr. Philip Turner

I

A second iteration of a draft covenant for the Anglican Communion (the St. Andrew's Draft) is now circulating; and it is likely that some version thereof will be presented to the Bishops of the Communion when they meet in Canterbury this summer. At some point after this gathering, a covenant proposal will be circulated among the provinces of the Communion for ratification. There is no doubt that most (though perhaps not all) of the member provinces of the Communion will ratify a covenant within the next few years. The question is really not so much ratification of the Covenant, but (1) the sort of covenant that will be ratified; (2) the way in which the provinces of the Communion comport themselves during the period leading up to ratification; and (3) how the Communion might best respond to a situation in which a province rejects the covenant but there are dioceses and parishes within that province that do not.

The ratification process promises to be stressful. Already one can see forces at work that pull in opposing directions. It is important to identify what these opposing forces are. However, the basic concern of this essay is not a lack of awareness on the part of Anglicans of the political and ideological forces at work among them. It is the possibility that, as a result of attempts at too easy a reconciliation of these forces, the ensuing draft will obscure the vision of *communion* from which the proposal originated in the first place. To be specific, as one reads through the responses to the drafts of the covenant, one cannot miss the fact that the differences between them stem in large measure from two very different visions of what the purpose of the covenant is. Both seek to sustain and strengthen the communion (*koinonia*) that binds together the various Anglican provinces. Each, however, conceives the nature and purpose of the Anglican Communion in a different way.

One I will call the *confessional stance* and the other the *pluralist stance*. For those who take their stand with the first, communion requires agreement about the fundamentals of Christian faith and life. Communion grows from and expresses a shared faith and form of life. For those whose stance is pluralist, communion grows from and is expressed in common forms of worship and service. It can subsist in the midst of quite different expressions of belief and moral practice. It can be expressed most effectively

not through common confession and moral practice but through common worship, hospitality, mutual aid, and partnership in mission.

One can see the influence of these two emphases at various places in the St. Andrew's Draft itself. This draft makes a significant addition to the one written in Nassau. The Nassau Draft at 2.2 says that each member church of the Communion affirms that it professes the faith "which is uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures as containing all things necessary for salvation and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith, and which is set forth in the catholic creeds..." The Saint Andrew's Draft goes on to add, "and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear significant witness..." Behind this addition stands a concern for unity in doctrine and moral practice that can be seen, for example, in the submission of the Global South to the Covenant Design Group. (www//aco.org/commission/covenant/responses/index.cfm) One can also find examples in various private submissions and/or commentaries—balanced and thoughtful examples of which are Stephen Noll's response to the Nassau Draft (www//aco.org/commission/covenant/responses/index.cfm) and Michael Poon, "An Anglican Covenant: the Saint Andrew's Draft" (www//globalsouthanglican.org).

The pluralist concern for allowing wide ranges of theological difference can also be seen at various places in the Saint Andrew's Draft. For example, in the *General Comments* that introduce the draft, the Covenant Design Group notes that, in response to the Nassau Draft, some wondered why the Lambeth Quadrilateral is not sufficient to define Anglican belief and practice. (The implication being why do we need the restrictions contained in "formularies"?) The same *General Comments* suggest that others worried about ways in which a covenant might infringe upon the autonomy of the various provinces—implying not only that autonomy must be protected from overly centralized juridical structures but also that the creativity, diversity, and flexibility that some claim come from a plurality of belief and practice might be reduced or eliminated. Examples of these concerns can be found in various responses to the Nassau Draft. See e.g., the responses by Affirming Catholicism, the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Anglican Church of Canada, and the Executive Council of The Episcopal Church (TEC). (www//aco.org/commission/covenant/responses/index.cfm)

II

How is one to assess the value of and reconcile the differences between these two stances? Both in fact can be found in the body of the *Windsor Report* (WR) whose authors made the original suggestion for the Communion to adopt a covenant. WR, however, gives expression to a vision of communion that these stances, both individually and collectively, miss. The authors of WR anchor their understanding of communion in Ephesians and First Corinthians wherein the *koinonia* of Christians within the Body of Christ is understood as an expression of the Trinitarian life of God and as an aspect of the larger plan of God to unite all things in heaven and earth in his Son. In choosing this theological starting point the authors of WR seek both to provide scriptural warrant for their position and to align their work with the primary ecumenical documents that have been produced by Anglicans and their Roman Catholic and Orthodox brothers and sisters.

(See e.g., *Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission: The Final Report and The Cyprus Statement of the International Commission for Anglican Orthodox Theological Dialogue*) What they have to say about communion to be sure addresses present attempts by Anglicans to understand their identity, but it also addresses the wider question of Christian unity and the place of the churches within the providence of God.

For these reasons, the unity of the church and its place within divine providence stand at the base of everything WR has to say about Anglicanism and its present trials. For these reasons also the report gives a clear indication of the relative weighting within a larger frame of reference of the two stances identified above. Section B#49 of WR gives due weight to the confessional stance. It reads in part, “Communion...subsists in visible unity, common confession of the apostolic faith, common belief in scripture and the creeds, common baptism and shared eucharist, and a mutually recognized ministry.” The same paragraph goes on to say, however, “In communion, each church acknowledges and respects the interdependence and autonomy of the other.”

Here we have a nice balance between the two concerns identified above. However, the sentence that speaks of interdependence and autonomy goes on to say that in respecting the interdependence of each other, each church puts “the needs of the global fellowship before its own.” Or, as stated in B#51, “...The divine foundation of communion should oblige each church to avoid unilateral action on contentious issues which may result in broken communion.” In this way, the way of waiting upon one another, each church “is enabled to find completeness through its relations to the others, while fulfilling its own particular calling within its own cultural context.” (WR, B#49)

Given the theological foundation of WR, based as it is in the importance of unity within divine providence, the admonition to place the needs the global fellowship before one’s own follows as the strict implication of a basic premise. However, the logic of the conclusion resolves the tension between the two stances only in a formal sense. How does one determine whether or not an action on the part of an individual province that is a cause of scandal for some is not in the end a course of action that is in fact for the good of all? This is precisely the claim of many within TEC, including its Presiding Bishop, who argue vigorously that the consecration of Gene Robinson, though a scandal to some, is in the long run for the good of all.

WR has a way to resolve this sort of issue whereas the two stances identified above do not. That way is a form of conciliarism that operates at all levels and in all dimensions of the life of the Communion. WR insists that differences such as the Robinson affair are to be sorted out over time through the practice of “mutual subjection” within the body of Christ. Forbearance and restraint (rather than juridical structure) provide a space in time for the resolution of disputes that might fracture the peace and unity of the church. (WR, B#66, #67, #69, #76, #80) Forbearance and restraint in the face of potentially divisive issues in fact mark the Anglican way of being a catholic expression of Christian belief and practice. WR notes, “The Anglican Communion does not have a pope, nor any system which corresponds to the authority structure of the Roman Catholic Church.” (A#42) It goes on to contrast this more centralized means of

dispute resolution with a conciliar process of discernment over time that seeks a common understanding of Holy Scripture—one that issues from testing by the historic episcopate, the Instruments of Unity, and the synodical and common life of the church. (B#70)

A process like this cannot work if time is not provided to reach a common mind. Mutual subjection whereby people refrain from actions that will rupture communion clearly lies at the center of the way in which this form of conciliarism either works or does not work.

III

How do the two stances appear when viewed with the conciliar practice of mutual subjection in mind? For those who hold the pluralist stance the issue is not forbearance but tolerance, charity, and mutual hospitality. A plurality of belief and practice contribute to the richness of the church's life and witness. It is not mutual subjection that is called for when the peace of the church is threatened. Tolerance of difference rather than forbearance and patience for people holding this view become the paramount virtues that sustain and enrich communion in times of stress.

Critics of the pluralist stance are right to object that there are versions of Christian belief and practice that so distort its witness that tolerance of difference serves not to protect communion but to destroy it at its foundation. For those who have a more confessional stance, mutual subjection requires at a minimum restraint in respect to theological innovation and openness to correction. Michael Poon, in his response to the Saint Andrew's Draft, has given eloquent expression to this concern. Commenting on the procedures for the resolution of covenant disagreements found Appendix Two, Fr. Poon asks the question "on what basis can the Anglican Consultative Council (or, one might add, any of the other Instruments of Communion) pass a judgment that rejection on the part of a province of a request to cease and desist is compatible with the covenant without some "prior understanding of what are essential and what are matters of indifference."

He goes on to note, "At present the communion exposes itself to increasing onslaughts of doctrinal and ecclesiastical controversies." He rightly suggests that these controversies will soon focus not on differing accounts of sexual morality or polity but upon what Anglicans have claimed as the center of their communion, namely, the form and content of worship. Fr. Poon rightly points out that the "shared pattern of common prayer" Anglicans claim must be expressed "in concrete forms such as Prayer Books, catechisms, and standards for Christian formation and ministerial formation." Nevertheless, the Anglican Communion has "no agreed framework for prayer book revisions (with clear rubrics on matters of faith and order)..." or for the various catechisms in use across the communion. And so he concludes, "We may fast (be) approaching the day when we do *not* find in our churches "shared patterns of common prayer and liturgy (sic.) form to sustain and nourish our faith and life together."

[\(www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/weblog/perinting/a_response_to_an_anglican_covenant_the_saint_andrews_draft/\)](http://www.globalsouthanglican.org/index.php/weblog/perinting/a_response_to_an_anglican_covenant_the_saint_andrews_draft/)

Fr. Poon's concern is well founded. At the present moment, TEC has trial liturgies in circulation that are barely, if at all, Trinitarian; and its bishops (either willingly or by benign neglect) are allowing presbyters in many dioceses to invite people to communicate who neither are baptized nor have they declared an intention to be baptized. The justification for these changes is the same as that which obtains in the case of blessing unions between persons of the same gender—they serve the cause of “radical inclusion.” Fr. Poon is rightly concerned that innovations such as these strike at the heart of what it means to be a communion. Indeed, they do! More important, however, is the fact that they strike at the heart of what it means to be a Christian.

Fr. Poon's concern shows the strength of the confessional stance. Theological difference cannot be presumed to lie in the bin reserved for *adiaphora*. More will be said of this at a later point. His suggested solution, however, shows a weakness in the confessional stance. He is quite right to warn that an act of covenanting is intelligible only within in “wider ecclesial reality” which he understands to be a community of faith that is “submissive to a godly order.” Fr. Poon believes, however, that the “wider ecclesial reality” requires the bishops of the communion, before discussing what to do about severe conflict, to agree on a framework of faith and come to a common mind on how this framework is to be expressed at a parish level in catechisms, prayer books, and theological education. He would prefer to table discussion of the Appendix entitled “Framework Procedures for the Resolution of Covenant Disagreements” for the foreseeable future; that is until there is sufficient doctrinal agreement to make these procedures intelligible and practicable.

Given the obvious need for more doctrinal content in the Communion's self-definition, what possibly could be wrong with this position? It is surely correct to hold that there are theological statements and moral practices that cannot be tolerated without compromising Christian witness. It is surely right to hold that the Communion would be strengthened at all levels of its life if its member provinces were of a common mind in respect to common worship, Christian instruction, and the formation of its clergy.

However, getting all these matters nailed down in a quasi confessional form before the Communion has adequate means of adjudicating communion threatening disputes misses the proper relationship between confessional agreement, its contextual expression, mutual subjection, and ecclesiastical discipline (the latter being a notoriously weak spot in both the Virginia and the Windsor Reports). The Saint Andrew's Draft is quite clear that the Anglican Communion has moral and doctrinal standards. Thus it insists that each church of the Communion, reliant on the Holy Spirit, “professes the faith that is uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as containing all things necessary for salvation and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith, and which is set forth in the catholic creeds, and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear significant witness.” (1.1.2)

The previous sentence commits the Anglican Communion to a considerable amount of doctrinal content, but Fr. Poon and many others would like an even more fulsome account than this of common belief and practice. However, even if such were to be forthcoming, it would still require “contextualization” in the various provinces. Further, the manner in which belief and practice are contextualized will inevitably and properly raise questions about whether or not these adaptations are, as it were, “Christianly apt.” In short, given the cultural and national mosaic that now comprises the Anglican Communion, even within an agreed framework of belief and practice, each province would be faced with the question of whether they “recognize” a common faith and practice in the adaptations of their fellow communion partners. Even the most detailed confession would require its adaptation to be recognized as an adequate expression of Christian belief and practice. Indeed, the more detailed the confession, the more frequently the question of recognition on the part of other provinces would arise.

IV

It is for this reason that WR (and I believe the Saint Andrew’s Draft) suggest that within the boundaries of a conciliar life rooted in scriptural witness, creedal confession, common worship, shared ministry, mutual aid, and common hospitality the practice of mutual subjection is of capital importance for maintaining both the truth of the church’s witness and the unity of its life. Truth and unity are often opposed as competing values, the advocates of one accusing the advocates of the other of betraying the center of Christian belief, life, and witness. However, WR and the Saint Andrew’s Draft are based on an argument for the primacy of charity in the struggle on the part of Christians to maintain both truth and unity. It is only within a circle inscribed by the virtues of charity, lowliness, meekness, patience, forbearance, kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness (Eph. 4) that truth can be established and unity maintained.

Thus, WR is on the one hand saying to the pluralists you cannot have communion that amounts to anything if you are proclaiming a different gospel and living lives that are scandalous to most of your brothers and sisters. On the other hand, it is saying to those who take a confessional stance, no matter how detailed an account you may give of right belief and practice you will still have to contend with how these matters are “contextualized” in the various times and places the church exists. You will inevitably encounter serious disagreement about the adequacy of one or another instantiation of Christian belief and practice; and unless a space in time is provided to reconcile these differences, neither truth nor unity will be served. It is this space that is marked out by mutual subjection expressed as charity, restraint, and forbearance within a conciliar form of polity. It is also this space that is marked out and guarded by the structure provided by a covenant.

V

It is for these reasons that the Saint Andrew’s Draft should not be evaluated or amended apart from careful linkage both to its “Introduction” and appended “Commentary” The “Introduction” (like WR) roots the enterprise of drawing up a

covenant firmly in the soil of a particular form of conciliar ecclesiology. This form of ecclesiology joins unity and truth as essential and inseparable elements of the life of the church. It joins them also as necessary forms of witness to and participation in the life of God. The calling of the church is to unity and truth, and apart from them the church cannot make in an adequate fashion the witness to the world it is called upon to make. Further, the “Introduction” makes clear (#3) that “the manifold wisdom of God” that calls for the unity of all things in Christ is manifest concretely in the “faithfulness, honesty, gentleness, humility, patience, forgiveness, and love...” that God wills take form in the common life of the church. In similar manner (again like WR) the “Commentary” makes clear that the proposed covenant is intended to provide a structure that will serve this very purpose, namely, provision of a space in which the peace, unity, and faithful witness of the church can be sustained and protected in the midst of the conflicts history inevitably engenders.

VI

Both the pluralist and confessional stances deserve some attention when the final version of the covenant is proposed. Both have something important to say. Both, however, have shortcomings; and neither will adequately sustain communion if not placed within a space in time marked out by mutual subjection out of reverence for Christ. If, however, these two positions are bracketed by mutual subjection over time within a conciliar polity then certain comments on the Saint Andrew’s Draft come immediately to mind as worthy of examination in light of the ecclesiology that stands behind the covenant proposal.

1. The Preamble speaks of offering God’s love in responding to the needs of the world. It speaks also of maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and of growing up together into the full stature of Christ. If mutual subjection out of reverence for Christ actually lies at the foundation of the covenant, the preamble ought to speak directly of reconciliation as fundamental to God’s relation to the world and our relation one to another. A covenant based on an ecclesiology of a sort both WR and the Saint Andrew’s Draft envision is surely based in reconciliation. A statement should be made to that effect. If it is not the Trinitarian foundation of the conciliar life of the Communion will float free of the death and resurrection of Christ by which we are drawn into the mystery of divine life.
2. Section 1.1.5 speaks of *shared patterns* of common prayer and liturgy and Section 1.2.2 speaks of upholding and proclaiming “a *pattern* of Christian theological and moral reasoning and discipline that is rooted in and answerable to the teaching of Holy Scripture and tradition...” Pluralists will respond positively to the very open ended notion of “pattern” while those of a more confessional frame of mind will rightly say the notion of pattern, as frequently used, is in fact without theological content. As noted, Fr. Poon has warned that it is just here, in conflicts over the theological and moral content of these patterns, future threats to the unity of the Communion will arise. His warning ought not to be ignored given the fact that the liturgies now being tested and adopted within the Anglican Communion are moving in a centrifugal direction. Thus, it is all the more serious that “Pattern” as

- used here bears all the marks of what Americans call a “fudge” word. Whether intentionally or not, it serves to cover over disagreements. In noting that there are common patterns of worship and theological reflection, it should be noted as well that the whole point of a covenant built upon mutual subjection within a conciliar polity is to provide space and time to resolve the disagreements talk of patterns more often than not serves to cover over. The St. Andrew’s Draft can be improved at this point by pointing out certain necessary aspects of the common pattern and certain necessary aspects of catechetical instruction. Thus, for example, it should be made clear, particularly in light of the more controversial of pluralist claims, that the common pattern of Anglican worship and catechesis requires worship of the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit, belief that in the Eucharist Christians participate in the Lord’s death until he comes, and commitment to proclaiming Christ as the way to the Father. If the common pattern of worship and instruction is not given basic theological content such as this, it will in fact serve as an endless source of conflict rather than a statement of common commitment.
3. Pursuant to this last point, I note that in section 2.2 the call to evangelization and sharing God’s healing and reconciling mission is described in terms that will be understood almost entirely in terms of a social gospel. The relation of this section to the covenant as a whole would be helped by reference to commitment to being a light to the nations by means both of proclamation and the character of the Churches’ common life of peace, truth and unity. A reconciling mission apart from the proclamation of reconciliation and a reconciled body of fellow believers rings false to everyone.
 4. I note also that in 3.1.2 the Holy Spirit is said to call and enable us to live in mutual affection, commitment and service. This is a summary of the pluralist position. Might one add, so as more adequately to include the confessional concern, “calls and enables us to share common belief and moral practice and to live in mutual...”? This summary would nicely pose the tension that mutual subjection serves to resolve.
 5. 3.2.5 of the Saint Andrew’s Draft addresses the issue of action that might threaten the unity of the Communion and in doing so urges “diligence, care and caution.” These words echo the unsatisfactory response of the American House of Bishops to WR and the following Communiqué. In this response the American Bishops promised “extreme restraint” in respect to such action. There is not much difference between “diligence, care and caution” on the one hand and “extreme restraint” on the other. Here it seems to me the covenant ought to call specifically for mutual subjection that entails not taking such an action until such time as the larger body has recognized it as one in keeping with faithful Christian belief and practice. At this point it seems to me, the draft has failed to incorporate adequately its fundamental principle, and in so doing placed the entire covenant proposal in jeopardy.

VII

The above notes are intended to indicate points in the St. Andrew's Draft that do not sufficiently reflect the ecclesiology that stands behind it. In addition, however, there remains a question of how a Church is to comport itself if another calls an action on its part into question. There remains also the question of how the other Churches of the Communion are to relate to that Church while the dispute is being sorted out. The "Commentary" provided by the authors of the St. Andrew's Draft directly addresses such a possibility by suggesting a "Framework of Procedures for the Resolution of Covenant Disagreements". The problem arises because the procedures suggested can take up to five years before the dispute must be resolved. It may well be the case that Anglican Polity can only operate properly within extended periods of time. Nevertheless, one must ask how peace, unity, and truth are to be maintained during the course of this five-year period? If no agreement about these matters is contained in the draft, the Communion can expect two sorts of action—both of which subvert communion. On the basis of present experience, the Communion can expect the offending Church to continue with the disputed action, claiming that there is no definitive opinion as yet in respect to what they are doing. Further, on the basis of present experience, one can expect those provinces that have been offended, in a series of *ad hoc* actions, to announce either broken or impaired communion with the offending Church. The result will be a patchwork of differing sorts of Church relations within a body claiming to be a communion of churches.

The only way to prevent this sort of disorder is to include in the covenant statements to this effect.

- (1) Any Church whose actions in the view of the Instruments of Communion threaten the peace and unity of the Communion should refrain from those actions during the time the Communion is seeking a common mind on the matter in question.
- (2) Those churches scandalized by the action of the Church in question should refrain from a unilateral response to the disputed action.
- (3) If a Church should persist with the disputed action during the period of assessment, it should consider itself having renounced the force and meaning of the covenant and so understand by the terms of the covenant its participation in the councils of the communion is suspended until the Instruments of Communion indicate that full participation is again welcome.

(The following note does not concern the contents of the covenant per se. It concerns the way in which a church that persists in a disputed action should view the suspension of its participation in the affairs of the Communion. The ancient ethic of civil disobedience can serve as a guide on this matter. According to the ethic of civil disobedience, the civil character of such action depends upon several things.

1. *The action is undertaken for the good of the whole and not for personal gain or out of personal interest.*
2. *One signals that the action is an action for the common good and not an action of revolution or rebellion by insisting upon and accepting willingly the discipline of*

- the governing body of the whole. Only in this way does one make clear that one remains loyal to the body and that the action is undertaken for the good of all.*
3. *One weighs the overall consequences of such an action and refrains if such action places the safety of the body as a whole in serious danger.)*

VIII

There is a structural issue related closely to the question of how the Churches comport themselves during the period in which a resolution is sought for a disputed issue. The matter concerns who has responsibility for making a final determination in the process. As it now stands, final determinations are to be made by the Anglican Consultative Council (8.1). There are several problems connected with this provision. The first is circumstantial. The Anglican Consultative Council is at present widely perceived as a body whose impartiality is very much in question, in no small measure because so much of its budget is provided by sources from within TEC, and because its past two General Secretaries have been widely perceived as partisan. This is a problem that can be resolved if it is admitted to be a problem. A more substantial issue concerns the fact that The Meeting of Primates (not the Anglican Consultative Council) was given “an enhanced responsibility” by the Lambeth Conference of Bishops to address internal matters in the various provinces that lie beyond the ability of the province itself to sort out. (See The Lambeth Conference of Bishops, 1998: Resolution III.6) Further, the Primates, simply by virtue of their Episcopal office, have particular responsibility for the right ordering of the churches. There is also the practical matter of an expeditious resolution of an issue that could fracture the Communion. The ACC meets relatively infrequently, and it is a large, unwieldy body that might easily become highly “politicized”. Would it not, therefore, be both wise and expedient for the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is the focus of unity for the Communion, to assemble a standing committee made up of representatives chosen by and from within the Meeting of Primates and the Anglican Consultative Council. This group, under the Chair of the Archbishop, would then make a determination that might (should it prove necessary) be later affirmed or rejected by either the Anglican Consultative Council or the Lambeth Conference of Bishops (depending upon which is the first to meet.)

There is also a structural issue that will almost certainly arise at the time for ratification of the covenant. What is to be done if a given province refuses to ratify the covenant and yet there are dioceses and parishes within that province that wish to declare their allegiance to it? Given the central place of the diocese in the life and mission of the Anglican Communion, some provision needs to be made that takes into account such an eventuality, and makes it clear that refusal of the covenant by a province will not exclude from the common life of the communion dioceses that wish to be a part of it.

This observation prompts another. In order to avoid confusion, I need to be clear about a further matter. There is little evidence that the covenant design group actually contains any real confessionalists, to use my term of art. Rather, it is more likely that the

group is made up of a combination of pluralists and conciliarists (to coin another term). There is a real danger that some kind of compromise will be struck between these parties that ends up subverting the purpose of the covenant as such—a purpose I have argued entails mutual subjection in Christ of a sort consistent with WR.

The point is this. A covenant that cannot allow the conciliarity of communion to remain an Anglican reality is not a covenant but an agreement to disagree. This possibility means that a choice will need to be made as to whether one wants such a covenant at all, or whether a province prefers to stand aside, making allowance for those dioceses and units within it that wish to live by the obligations and hopes of a covenant.

My argument is that the confessionalists are right to be concerned about the limits of diversity and autonomy within the catholic reality of Anglican Christianity. Nevertheless, they are wrong to hold that a confession is the way to address their concern, and even more so in believing that a confession can be agreed upon. One need only look at other ecclesial bodies that rely on confessions as a guarantee of truth and unity to see their ineffectiveness.

In short, the authors of the St. Andrew's Draft are right in proposing that conciliarity and a covenant that supports this sort of ecclesiology is the best way to move forward as a communion. Those who prefer the path of autonomy or federal agreements designed to allow each to have his or her way must be allowed to choose that course, but it would be fatal for the communion as a whole to follow such a path.

IX

A final comment about the significance of the covenant and the process of its adoption is in order. For many, if not most, the covenant will be viewed simply as a means of dispute settlement. It certainly is that, and for this reason the Appendix containing procedures for dispute settlement is an essential part of the document. Failure to include such a procedure renders the covenant ineffective from the outset. However, to focus primary attention on the settlement of disputes is to miss the significance of the process and its outcome. The basic issue before the Communion as it struggles to adopt a covenant is that of the identity of the Anglican Communion as an expression of catholic Christianity. How is it that Anglicans propose to negotiate the passage of time in a way that both remains faithful to the apostolic witness and bears witness to the Christian Gospel in ways suitably adapted to time and place? The St Andrew's Draft makes clear that the Anglican way is not that of the Roman Catholic Church with its focus on papal authority and a uniform juridical system. As articulated in the draft, the Anglican way is also not the way of the Orthodox Churches with their focus not on pervasive synodality but upon ecumenical councils (which now seem impossible to assemble). I have indicated as well that it ought not to be the way adopted by the confessional churches of the Reformation.

The way proposed by the St. Andrew's Draft and WR is that of common belief and practice expressed in common worship, common ministry, mutual support, and open

hospitality, all sustained by the practice of mutual subjection expressed by forbearance and restraint over time within a conciliar polity. This way is the way that indeed pervades the witness of the New Testament, but it is a way that cannot prevail through time unless commonly understood and commonly supported.

I have written this response in large measure to make this final point. I can only hope and pray that in the midst of the push and pull of politics and ideological difference it will not be forgotten that Anglicans are in this debate giving identity to themselves. In its "Introduction" (#4), the St Andrew's Draft mentions a special Anglican "charism among the followers and servants of Jesus", but does not actually say what that is. Taken as a whole, however, the draft in fact puts that charism on display and in so doing asks that we take notice of it, cherish it, and offer it to the Christian churches for testing.