

## IATDC - Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission

The current Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission was set up in 2001 and given a mandate to study the nature of communion, and ways in which the relationship between the autonomous churches which make up the Anglican Communion could be sustained and strengthened. In this it was seen to be developing the work of its predecessor Commission which had produced The Virginia Report and associated statements on Women in the Episcopate. Subsequent controversies, which have led to a potential or actual 'impairment' of the relationship among the churches, have directed the Commission's attention to ways in which the renewal of a common Anglican theological tradition must accompany any discussion of the renewal of the Communion's common life. The commission finished its work in 2008.

### Meetings Communiqués and Documents

- **March 2008**  
[The third Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission final report 'Communion, Conflict and Hope: the Kuala Lumpur Report'.](#)
- **September 2007**  
[Communiqué from Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission](#)
- **October 2006**  
[Theological Resources for Anglican 'Communion' Issues](#)  
Three documents produced at the recent meeting of the Inter-Anglican Doctrinal and Theological Commission have been commended by the Archbishop of Canterbury for study throughout the Anglican Communion.
- **September 2006**  
[Communiqué from Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission](#)
- **February 2006**  
[A letter from the IATDC Chairman, the Rt Rev Professor Stephen Sykes, to diocesan bishops, theological education institutions, ACC members, and Primates of the Anglican Communion.](#)
- **October 2003**  
[Reflections offered to the Primates of the Anglican Communion by the Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury](#)
- **September 2003**  
[Communiqué from Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission](#)
- **December 2002**  
[Six Propositions for Anglicans](#)
- **October 2002**  
[Communiqué from Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission](#)
- **June 2002**  
[The Communion Study 2002](#)
- **April 2002**  
[Four Key Questions for Anglicans World-Wide](#)
- **September 2001**  
[Communiqué from Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission](#)

- **1986**  
[Booklet - For the Sake of the Kingdom](#)

# **Communion, Conflict and Hope**

The Kuala Lumpur Report of the third  
Inter-Anglican Theological and  
Doctrinal Commission

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## **FOREWORD: From the Chair of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission**

Illness prevented me from attending the final meeting of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC) but, while I very much regret that this was so, it does provide me with the opportunity to commend the work that my colleagues completed in Kuala Lumpur to a wider readership now.

When Archbishop George Carey appointed this Commission and asked me to chair its enquiry into what it is that nurtures or inhibits the common life of the Anglican Communion, I never anticipated the enrichment that would come from working with theologians from so many different parts of the Anglican world. It is widely recognised that for most of its history, members of the Anglican Communion from other parts of the world looked towards England for explanations of what it is that holds them in fellowship together. Yet those who travelled to London invariably associated most closely with the people, societies and missions through whom they had first been introduced to the Christian gospel. Such associations limited an awareness of the different types of biblical faith that were developing within the Communion as responses to the multifaceted and energising nature of that gospel message. Today, largely because of the easy access to travel and communication that we take for granted, the diversity of Anglican churches is prominently displayed - to the extent that for some observers they appear to be virtually incoherent as a world-wide Christian body. What this Commission has concluded, and what it expounds in its report, is that diversity has always been a characteristic of the church, and that part of the vocation of Anglicanism is to demonstrate how deeper unity is discovered by addressing disagreements together.

Of course readers who look for a document which will finally resolve all the controversies which preoccupy Christian people (and particularly the Anglican Communion) today will be disappointed. The only 'once and for all' language available to Christian theology has to do with the reconciling work of Christ. But what this report does offer to those who 'once far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ' (Ephesians 2.13) is a framework within which they can confront their differences. As the title suggests, 'communion' provides the context in which conflicts can be resolved: it is not a consequence of agreements reached over disputed areas of faith and understanding. It is not the task of a theological commission to ratify or to undermine political or managerial arrangements that churches may reach in response to particular circumstances of their calling. What theologians can do

is highlight the tenacity of God's purposes, evidenced in scripture and history, to hold his people together in spite of their failings - and to direct them forward in hope, towards that plan 'for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth' (Ephesians 1.10).

I believe that this third report of IATDC contributes to this purpose. I hope therefore that it will be read, critically to be sure, but also with imagination. It offers a 'transferable' method of study by which individuals or groups, as well as whole churches and dioceses, can pursue their local concerns for unity in faith, ministry and vocation. It provides a vision of 'dynamic catholicity' which sees constant change and renewal as a necessary condition, not just a challenge to the church. And at key points the Christian scriptures are cited not as 'proof texts' to bolster points being made but as tokens of the promise and the fulfilment of God's faithfulness to his people throughout the ages. A critical and imaginative reading of this report may lead to a prayerful exploration of its implications. Such at least is my prayer as the life of this Commission draws to a close.

I would add one final thing. From the experience of working with this Commission, I have learned something which has also been immensely important to me during my recent illness, and that is the power of the simple words of Jesus, 'do not be anxious'. It is anxiety that sells newspapers - and is often a powerful lever for the manipulation of political change, including change within the church. But it is not the way of Christ. The sort of communion that this report anticipates is one that is grounded in the assurance of Christ's risen presence, which enables his people to live in love and peace with all, encouraging them to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God.

At this time then, I want to express my gratitude to the remarkable group of people (within and beyond the membership of the IATDC) who have joined in conversation about the 'nature and maintenance of communion' during the course of our study, and pay particular tribute to Bishop Stephen Pickard who took the chair at the final meeting in Malaysia, and Dr Philip Thomas who co-ordinated the study process and drafted texts for our consideration throughout the period of the Commission's remit.

**Bishop Stephen Sykes**  
Chair of IATDC, 2001-07

## PREFACE: Born in Turmoil

1. On the day before the third Anglican Communion doctrine commission was to hold its initial meeting the World Trade Centre in New York was destroyed and the Pentagon attacked. International borders were closed. Members of the Commission already on their way to the meeting found themselves 'holed up' in airports and hotels around the world. Those who were able to make their way to England held a hastily improvised meeting in Wimbledon, and began a process of conversation which could include those who were stranded. That conversation began in an atmosphere clouded by dust, death and destruction and has been carried forward - on and off - over the succeeding six years in a world overshadowed by images of fragmentation, isolation and violence. In such a world, the Gospel's invitation to *koinonia* - fellowship, communion, a common participation in the purposes of God - became overwhelmingly relevant. '9/11' gave point and power to the brief given to the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC), to study the meaning of communion and how it can be nurtured within the church.
2. This brief has been held during a period when questions about unity and diversity, local and global identity, universal and particular values, have come to the forefront of public consciousness. The issues confronting the churches, and particularly the Anglican churches, have paralleled if not actually mirrored the societal and communal clashes which now dominate international news media. The question arises, does the church have any better, any different ways of confronting difference and diversity than those displayed, often so destructively, in 'the world'? This Commission, appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Secretary General of the Anglican Communion after Communion-wide consultation, wants to answer that question in the affirmative. The churches' vocation towards unity really does offer a token of hope for the unity of all humankind!
3. The possibility of a disruption to the Anglican status quo was, however, always in mind. The contentious discussion of human sexuality at the Lambeth Conference in 1998 seemingly pointed towards a breaking point, even after two decades of debate about what it was that held Anglicans together. *The Virginia Report*, presented by the previous IATDC to the 1998 Conference, had outlined the grounding of the church's *koinonia* in the life of God in Trinity. The current Commission wanted to explore to what extent this model needed to be complemented

with understandings which were more historical, pneumatological and eschatological. When in 2003 questions about the possibility of lesbian, gay or trans-gendered persons exercising priestly or episcopal ministries within the church, and the legitimacy of the church offering God's blessing to same-sex partnerships came to a head, then the question of the future of Anglicanism became the current test case for the adequacy of any theology of communion.

4. This Commission was not mandated to address the presenting issue of human sexuality in its studies. Rather it was asked to explore whether the nature of the communion that Anglicans share is sufficient to hold them together in a common calling during a time when conflicts over this issue were widespread, intense, and in the opinion of some, communion-breaking. The hopeful note sounded in this report is based on the conviction that when the church faces new challenges, it also discovers new possibilities for the Gospel to disclose fresh aspects of its meaning. The Commission believes that the unity Christ wills for the church, the *koinonia* into which he calls it, involves much more than simply an alliance of like-minded believers.
5. In the modern world there are differences which reach across cultural groups. Even though they are often expressed in theological formulations they go beyond this. They express differences of disposition and ethos. The contemporary situation is often caricatured as a conflict between liberals who do not believe enough to be thought Christian and fundamentalists who adopt notions of authority which contradict a belief in the love of God. Neither picture is thought fair by those portrayed. These differences are thought by some to express different reactions to modernity. However it is explained, the emergence of such clear differences in disposition and ethos is a distinctive feature of contemporary life in the global community. Such a characterisation of our situation does not take us far enough and tends to close down possibilities for renewal.
6. 'Communion' transcends and can therefore transform differences: networks of conviction tend merely to reinforce them. Living in a Communion which justly embraces and celebrates people of differing cultures and world-views makes a fresh apprehension of Christian truth possible.
7. An explication of this principle may be inferred from the turning point of the narrative in the first three gospels, the moment when Jesus' followers recognise God at work in new ways, beyond the boundaries of

their own experience and expectations. The encounter with a Canaanite woman and the feeding of a mixed-multitude on the hillside decisively prepare the way for Peter's great confession of faith (e.g. Matthew 16.13ff). The ensuing discourse about losing life in order to gain it appears to prepare the way for the disciples to see their Lord, quite literally, in a different light (Matthew 17.1-8). They 'discover' the Gospel as they realise how different things are when seen from the perspective of Jesus. It may not be far-fetched to interpret the vision of Moses and Elijah in conversation with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration as prefiguring a transforming moment in the life of the early church. It marked a dawning perception that accepted traditions can be re-conceived, to give a new understanding of the point and purpose of the Law and Prophets. Added gravity is given to the moment by the way it involves a return to the authorised centre of that tradition - "he must go to Jerusalem" (16.21) - where the full significance of Jesus' words about losing and gaining life receive their literal realisation. If such a reading of familiar New Testament texts is at all plausible, then it has particular point for Anglicans at this time.

8. Well-publicised controversies within the churches and the Communion present the opportunity to look afresh at foundational traditions, and what it is now that holds them together. Some theologians go so far as to speak of the 'invention' and 'reinvention' of Anglicanism. Such a notion suggests that while Anglicanism has never been defined by a fixed doctrinal formula against which new situations and challenges must be tested, it is comprised of a living, dynamic tradition which is capable of rediscovering its calling through the way it responds to the message of Christ in changing situations. The future of Anglicanism will depend on how boldly it will draw on that tradition in the face of current challenges.
9. In our own meetings and from the method of study we have adopted (described further in Part III), the Commission has sought to experience and reflect on the actual diversity of the Anglican Communion, and we have found that it can bear the weight of our differences. From that first fragmented gathering in Wimbledon, two further meetings in America and another in Africa (the seeming loci of the disputes which threaten Anglican coherence), and a final gathering in Malaysia, where Christians live in a context of historic Muslim influence, we have met face to face and learned in a real measure to deepen our communion through 'facing' our differences together. Taking this communion-building process further, we intentionally adopted a method of

consultation which invited the Communion to join in conversation with us. We invited Provinces, dioceses, Anglican theological institutions and the general public to explore threats to *koinonia* by way of *Four Key Questions* (2001). Discussion of the underlying issues that the answers revealed was then promoted by seeking responses to *Six Propositions* (2002). The unfolding character of these discussions was registered through a succession of summary documents which were widely distributed throughout the Communion. When the Commission reconvened in 2006, it was further informed by replies to *Four Further Questions for Clarification* (2006) which sought to clarify the argument. An indication of the trajectory of that whole conversation is indicated in Part III.

10. Our hopes for the future of the communion of the church are grounded in the conviction that God's people are a family bound together by common faith and sacramental ties. In some parts of the world, the term 'family relationship' has come to refer to loose associations. We prefer to think of those extended families that embrace a number of generations and are united by strong and enduring ties as a model for the church. The families we have in mind cannot easily be broken by circumstances. They nurture their members through trials and difficulties and are a source of inspiration and love. The church as the family of God comprises those open to testing through times of crisis and willing always to engage in a prior call to pursue goodness and kindness, justice and truth. For Anglicans today, grace-filled renewal and witness may be found on a pathway which leads more fully into our sharing the delights and sufferings of all in the family. The future of the Anglican Communion, as with all Christian institutions, in the end rests solely on the security of God's promise to his people (Genesis 12.1-2; Matthew 16.18). Striving in the Spirit, we appropriate that future by responding anew to the call of the Gospel, by living as Christians together, risking the possibilities of disputes and failure, while seeking to resolve them in hope and love. The Collect for our final day as a Commission captures this well:

God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit  
upon your Church in the burning fire of your love:  
grant that your people may be fervent  
in the communion of the gospel  
that, always abiding in you,  
they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service;

through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

*Collect for the Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost from the Prayer  
Book of South East Asia, adapted*



## PART I

### THE WAY OF COMMUNION: A Continuing Conversation

11. We have included within this report a narrative of our process, as we believe that embedded within the narrative itself are helpful insights into the way we have learned new things about the practice of Communion. The Commission has not been conducting an opinion poll or presenting a questionnaire, but engaging in a serious theological conversation. We have been seeking to register the concrete experience of communion among Anglican churches around the world, and to begin a process of reflection on its meaning, especially in times of change and disruption. And in offering, in this report, the story and fruits of this consultative method, we are hoping to provide a model of how ‘communion in action’ may be achieved. It is our conviction that the life of this Commission and its method of working provides not only an important indication of our understanding of the nature of *koinonia*, but also a contribution to *koinonia* within the Communion’s own life.

#### *Communion in a Time of Transition*

12. The final version of this report was put together during our meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, a country where Anglican Christians are a small minority of the population. What does ‘communion’ mean practically and theologically in such a context? Why is it important for Anglicans, both the local Anglican community, and those of us who are visiting the region? We directly experienced ‘communion’ ourselves in a number of ways, not least the welcoming care and gracious efficiency with which we were received by the people of the Diocese of West Malaysia in the Province of South East Asia. As with our earlier hosts in London, the USA and Kenya, we quite literally became their ‘companions’ (*cum* = with, *panis* = bread) in communion as we shared spiritual and physical food with them. Our gathering also reminded us that the need for engagement with Muslims is a major contextual reality for current Anglican Christian self-understanding. Additionally, it reinforced our awareness of the rapidly growing influence of Chinese churches in the development of world Christianity. It was realised that many Chinese churches define themselves as ‘post-denominational’, and by doing so they consciously challenge bodies like the Anglican Communion to ask new questions of themselves and to explain why ‘communion’ is important for Anglicans. As the comments in the Preface make clear, such a sense of engagement with the political,

religious and ecclesial realities of our current world has been a mark of this Commission since its inception, and has gradually become written into the method we have employed to facilitate our work.

13. At the same time these realities also offer us particular challenges, as members of a Communion which is called to privilege and stand alongside those 'on the edge', since, according to the gospel witness, that is where God himself chooses to be situated. Edges are important, reminding us that local situations have much to teach any apparent centre. The wind of the Spirit is blowing in new directions in our world, and it is our task to follow - striving to keep up with this fresh breeze, so that we can truly live together in the communion into which we are being drawn by the Spirit. At such a time of change and disruption new understandings of what gives coherence to the Christian community, and the place of the Anglican Communion within it, are necessary - and that is precisely what the 'Communion Study' has been exploring.

### ***Communion as Communication***

14. This has also been the period in which the internet first became a widely available tool for world-wide communication. During that first disrupted meeting in September 2001 (see Preface), the Internet and emails became a vital tool allowing those who could not be physically present to offer their contribution to the remnant who had managed to gather in Wimbledon. This experience inspired the decision to continue that sort of conversation throughout the Anglican Communion. Although there are still problems about 'information rich/poor' use of IT, over the five years of our working life the great majority of Primates, dioceses and theological institutions with whom we have sought to communicate have shown themselves willing to receive material by email. Of course ready access to email has other implications, allowing, and sometimes demanding, instantaneous reactions to unfolding events. Like all international bodies, in recent years the Anglican Communion has on occasion been affected both positively and negatively by the ease with which people can use this tool.<sup>1</sup>
15. For our own work electronic communications have provided the opportunity for conversation. It is easy to invite comments in the name of consultation, but our method has in fact offered not just consultation but actual participation in a common task. IATDC's aim has been to identify and explore issues which underlie failure of communion. The documents we have offered for study, each building upon responses previously received - the *Four Key Questions* leading to *Six*

*Propositions* and then *Four Further Questions for Clarification* (see Appendix One, and discussion in Paragraphs 55-59) - have fed into this Communion Study which attempted to gather together the perspectives and the experience of the whole Communion.<sup>2</sup> We have tried to acknowledge comments received, engage in some debate in a number of instances, and all contributions have been taken seriously and fed into our ongoing work. Regular reports on, and documentation linked to our work, have appeared on the Anglican Communion website ([www.anglicancommunion.org](http://www.anglicancommunion.org)), which we want to commend as an invaluable tool of communication for the Communion. Such a method has demonstrated the importance of *communication* as a key element among the different elements of communion. Through communication the various aspects of communion - practical, missional, canonical, and theological - can be brought into relationship with each other, and their distinctive voices 'tuned' to harmonise. It is significant that the two words 'communion' and 'communication' both relate to a common Latin root, from which the word *munus*, which appropriately and tellingly includes the notion of both 'gift' and 'duty', also derives.

### ***Communion in Process***

16. This report on the Communion Study attempts to capture important threads of that conversation, synthesise them with its own reflections (see Part III), and develop an argument which is based upon them (see 'Testing Communion', Part II paras 23-52). This is not a 'Wikipedia-theology' in which any opinion can be offered - or contradicted. IATDC, as an authorised body for theological study within the Communion during the period of its remit, has sought to give shape and substance to the whole process. Commission members have written papers relevant to the theme of our work and consulted with other leading theological voices in the Anglican Communion. At each stage of the process it has given indications of its progress to the Anglican Consultative Council, the Primates' Meeting and the Archbishop of Canterbury, as well as parallel bodies such as the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations and the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism. It has taken seriously the need for a body which is reflecting upon the importance of communion to express this in a way which is properly accountable to the wider church.
17. Our working pattern of consultative engagement has been founded upon the model of *dispersed authority*. The term - and its exposition in documents emerging from the 1948 Lambeth Conference - has

sometimes been misunderstood as negating clear decision-making among Anglicans by warning against “the temptations to tyranny and the dangers of unchecked power”.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the documentation from 1948 makes it clear that authority “is single in that it is derived from a single Divine source”, although mediated or distributed through God’s loving provision in several modes in order that it might be gathered together in “the *consensus fidelium*, which is the continuing experience of the Holy Spirit through his faithful people in the Church”.<sup>4</sup> That document goes on to suggest that the historical experience of Anglicans over the centuries and in different parts of the world is best understood by reference to an authority “moral and spiritual, resting on the truth of the Gospel and on a charity which is patient and willing to defer to the common mind”.<sup>5</sup> A fresh understanding of such authority is plainly crucial to any resolution of Anglicanism’s present difficulties. Dispersed authority implies mutual accountability and this Commission tried to model this in its relations with both the formal and informal structures of our Communion.

18. Certainly the theological method adopted by IATDC has been of a dispersed rather than a centralised character. This is the core of our argument, namely that it is the shared historic, theological and missional experiences of the Gospel which hold Anglicans together. It is this also that needs to undergird our structures and polity. Dispersed authority seems highly appropriate for a Communion which seeks to honour the ‘edges’. If the outcome of the Windsor process should result in some definitive centralisation of the Communion then one function of this report may be to constitute an appraisal of that development. As the 1948 document put it: “It may be said that authority of this [dispersed] kind is much harder to understand and obey than authority of a more imperious character. This is true and we glory in the appeal which it makes to faith”.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps it is not that dispersed authority in the present circumstances has been tried and found to fail: it is that it has been found to be too hard - and so not tried for long enough!
19. Anglicanism has always been willing, when necessary, to face new situations, and develop new warrants for doing so. Historically, it showed that it could offer a third way between extreme catholicism and radical puritanism. It has discovered, gradually, that it is possible to be a church without recourse to state patronage and be Anglican without being English. It is acknowledging that ministry is not determined by gender - and also recognising that different parts of the Communion make such an acknowledgement in different ways and at different times.

20. The contemporary world situation means that new understandings of what it means to be part of one, holy, catholic and apostolic church are necessary. The participative and communal way of studying the meaning and sustaining of communion that IATDC has been developing has the potential to disclose some of the ecclesiological 'black swans' - understandings of the church and the world which (like black swans which were unknown until discovered in Australasia) could not be imagined from the perspective of European history alone! Not all of God's future can be extrapolated from a study of the past.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Communion and the Future***

21. The future of the Anglican Communion will in part be dependent on the way and the extent to which the 'instruments of communion' (the Lambeth Conference; the Anglican Consultative Council; the Primates' Meeting) are enabled to communicate with each other and with member churches of the Communion in mutual respect and attentiveness. That is essential if they are to retain trust and affection in a period of rapid historical change. Such communication arising out of the roots of our faith must go beyond simply utilitarian concerns, and will indeed lead towards the deepening of 'communion' with each other, an intensity of communion in which we may 'discern the body' of Christ (I Corinthians 11.29). Throughout our work we have held to the vision of the church as a learning community which is being led by the Spirit on a pilgrimage into truth, which will honour yet also transfigure our shared history. The collegial method we have adopted throughout our work and in the production of this report, an approach which requires detailed listening to and engagement with a wide range of voices throughout the Communion, is an example of communion in action. It is an important model we commend to those who come after us in their work with and for the church.
22. In the following section (Part II) we offer a theological account of the theme of communion. In Part III we detail the results of the consultative process and in so doing identify key issues that remain on the agenda for the Anglican Communion.



## PART II

### TESTING COMMUNION: Conflict and Hope in the Spirit

#### *Introduction*

23. It will be clear from the previous section (Part I) that the Commission has worked at consulting widely within the Communion in pursuit of a particular way of doing conciliar theology. The Commission has also engaged with the nature of communion in the church and the issues now facing the Anglican Communion. In this we have listened to the different perspectives within our own membership. In the light of that listening we have formulated a theological argument which we believe speaks to the underlying issues facing the present and future life of the Anglican Communion. This process has confronted us with the challenges of ecclesial life presented in the New Testament and in our own Anglican tradition. We have struggled to understand how each in their own location is to be faithful to Christ and how that inculturating aspect of faithfulness may create subsequent differences in the wider church. Throughout our work we have been confronted with the presence of the crucified Christ and the transforming power of the Spirit. We have been left with a sharpened sense of the failures and fallibility we find in ourselves and the life of the church and the unremitting power of the hope in Christ to which we are called. Our theological argument is presented in this section.
24. In Matthew 12 Jesus prepares his disciples for their vocation. He warns them that he has come to bring fire on the earth (Matthew 12.49). Jesus challenged the very categories of understanding of his hearers. The peace which he brought was the peace which came through crucifixion and resurrection (Colossians 1.19-20; Isaiah 53.5). The peace which passes all understanding (Philippians 4.4-7) is also the paradoxical peace which comes to those who have entered the kingdom of God (Matthew 10.34-39). That is the peace to which the community of God's people has always been called (Ezekiel 37.26). From the very first Jesus' words and actions proved hard to understand. Even amongst the close-knit group of the first disciples there were misunderstandings, mistakes, conflicts and disputes. That did not mean that there were not clear indications about the basis upon which Christians should live. On the contrary the broad outlines were very clear indeed. As the Christians grew in number the particular issues became more complex and the formation of institutions added to this complexity. Church history is the

story of these difficulties and also of the persistent vocation to live out the gospel virtues to which this manifestly fallible community was committed.

***“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”***

25. The New Testament documents record with abundant candour the failures, conflicts and mistakes of the disciples and leaders of the early church communities. In the gospels we are told on a number of occasions that the disciples did not always understand Jesus' parables (Matthew 15.5ff; Mark 10.41-13, 4.35, 7.17ff; cf. Isaiah 6.8-10), the significance of his miracles (e.g. Mark 8.14-21) or key elements of his teaching (Mark 8.31-33). At one level who could blame them? It was not that Jesus' teaching was complex or set out in a highly abstract or obscure way. On the contrary it was expressed in the simplest of images and words. What made it difficult was that it challenged the cultural and mental assumptions which the disciples brought to their encounter with Jesus. That challenge has continued to the present day wherever Christians move from one culture to another.
26. In other parts of the New Testament such problems are also reported. There is disorder and immorality amongst the Corinthian Christians (I Corinthians 5.1-5, 6.1ff, 11.17-22; II Corinthians 2.5-11); social conflicts are referred to in Romans 15; Peter and Paul have an open breach over Jewish and Gentile fellowship (Galatians 2.11-14); and there is recurrent trouble between Paul and some in Corinth (II Corinthians 11.12-15). There are relationship problems in Philippi (Philippians 4.2); Paul and Barnabas split over their evangelistic work because of a difference of opinion about the reliability of a colleague, John Mark (Acts 15.36-41). More appalling is the dispute amongst the disciples as to who should be the greatest among them, reported just after Jesus' announcement of his impending crucifixion (Mark 10.33-45), and also at the Last Supper before his crucifixion (Luke 22.24-27). The Jerusalem church tried a form of community life which included shared property and welfare support for members (Acts 4.32-5.11) which, it would appear from the New Testament, was subsequently abandoned.
27. In the midst of all this the flame of the Gospel flickered yet burnt on with persistence. On the day of Pentecost the Spirit brought a miraculous demonstration of how the message of the mighty deeds of God was to be transformed into the language and meaning of many

cultures (Acts 2.1-15; Joel 2.28-32). But inculturation did not divide the believers. Despite the different languages spoken, all of those present at Pentecost heard the same Gospel proclaimed. That process of crossing linguistic and cultural borders continued with the spread of the Gospel. The enormously significant issue of the place in the Christian church of the Mosaic law, given by God for the people of Israel, arose very early. How far was the form of God's word in the law to be embraced by gentile Christians who were outside the law? The story of the meeting in Jerusalem of representatives from Antioch where the trouble first emerged is telling in a number of respects (Acts 15.1-35). Representatives from Antioch met with the Jerusalem apostles and elders to confront the issues. An agreement was reached as general advice for places beyond Antioch where gentiles converted as a result of the mission of Paul and Barnabas. It was an agreement for the time. Clearly it did not last and how far it was extended at the time is uncertain. Yet nonetheless those involved believed that in confronting the issue together they attended not just to each other and the rest of their communities, but to the voice of God. "It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us"(v28, cf. v22) sums up a vital element in the communication of the Gospel and the establishment of new churches.

### ***The Holy Spirit and Fallibility in the Church***

28. The presence of God among the first disciples was manifest in their experience of the Holy Spirit. Jesus had promised another counsellor after his departure, the Holy Spirit. Both the Acts of the Apostles and the letters of the New Testament speak much of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church and in the personal lives of Christians. It is by the Spirit that people confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. It is by the Spirit that they grow in Christian virtue and it is by the Spirit that they look beyond their immediate circumstances to the Kingdom of God (Luke 4.18-19; Isaiah 61.1-2) .
29. Jesus promised his disciples that the Holy Spirit would come and lead them into all truth and would testify to them of him (John 15.26ff, 16.12-15). The Spirit would inspire them to lead a Christ-like life. This work of the Spirit is clearly to be seen in the Jerusalem council. The conclusion is specific to the issue before them. They listened to each other and to the testimony about what God had been doing through their lives relative to the question under discussion. The conclusion is thus particular and limited in scope of time and place and also at the same time testifies to the presence of the Spirit in leading the church:

“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us”. Divine immanence is evident in contingent circumstances such as these.

30. Paul responded to the divisions at Corinth with the same bold theological understanding. There were in Corinth “spiritual people” with a concern for “spiritual things” (I Corinthians 12; cf 2.14-16). Paul asserts that the Spirit produces the confession that Jesus is Lord and thus this confession becomes the test of any spiritual claims (12.3). He then speaks of the Corinthians’ contributions in the congregation as gifts from God. The problem is in the way they are exercised. He suggests that the gifts could be thought of in terms of the different parts of the human body which nonetheless work in harmony, an image used at the time for political order. But the real and better argument arises out of the very nature of the Gospel itself. The “more excellent way” (I Corinthians 12.31) is that such gifts should be exercised according the gospel virtue of love. Faith and hope speak to the eschatological character of the Christian vocation; love speaks to the substantive nature of the Gospel in living form. Love gains particular expression in other contexts in different ways. In Paul’s letters it is held within the framework of dying and rising with Christ. Thus Christ becomes the touchstone for the moral understanding of the Christian and of the Christian community. The relationship with Christ which shapes the moral life of the Christians and the church community originates in their “dying and rising with Christ” in order to live to God (Romans 6). The community is thus called to live in a Christ-like way.

### *Difficulties of Growth*

31. The multiplication of Christian churches and the explosion in the number of Christians in the second and third centuries led to many more complications and demands for arrangements to deal with these new challenges. Conflicts and disputes were a significant part of this experience. Institutions were tried and developed. Some endured, others did not. An ordered ministry of bishops priests and deacons, regular patterns of sacramental life and a canon of scripture did endure. Gnostic gospels and Montanist oracles did not. Patterns of baptism and catechesis emerged in various forms and endured for a long time, but not all survived into the modern period.
32. Just as in the communities of the New Testament, conflict arose as to the nature and operation of the faith and the meaning of the Gospel in changing circumstances. Some disputes such as the conflict over the

teachings of Arius lasted a very long time, others were more quickly resolved. Disputes were complicated by differences of language such as those between Greek, Latin and Syriac, or between different usages and patterns of piety. These conflicts were often complex in origin and difficult to resolve. The great ecumenical councils of the early church struggled with such questions in order to maintain apostolic faithfulness together with a true catholicity. These struggles were often overlaid with the all too human elements of power and prestige, ambition and pride. At a time of rapid growth in the church, the life of the community had the usual elements of moral failure, conflict, mistaken paths, as well as the resilient impulse to be faithful to Christ, to be led by the Spirit.

33. These issues can be found in all periods of history because they are part and parcel of the experience of the church as a fragile and fallible community (I Corinthians 4.7ff, 5.1-5; cf. Jeremiah 8.4-11; Hosea 6.4) seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit in its worship and life. This is no less true in the specifically Anglican tradition; indeed the long running period of identification with the political powers of the nation created its own very particular form of problems. Such problems still echo in the life of Anglican churches around the world and we can expect they will arise in new churches wherever they develop. Any account of communion and any Anglican ecclesiology for today has to deal with these dynamics in ecclesial life.

### ***Ambivalence in Anglican Ecclesiology***

34. The experience of the church has resulted in a certain ambivalence woven into the fabric of Anglican ecclesiology. There is a concern to deal faithfully with both the divine character of the church as a community of people called by God (I Peter 2.9; Exodus 6.6-7, 19.5-6) and led by the Holy Spirit to live in hope of the resurrection, and also to recognise the much more messy empirical reality of the actual church community. The characteristic Anglican disposition to deal seriously with this polarity has meant that the relation between the two can be neither straightforward nor simple. One classic discussion of this issue comes in Michael Ramsey's 1936 book *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*.<sup>8</sup> Ramsey draws attention to the dynamic of this interaction between the Gospel and empirical church life. It is something like the polarity between ideal and actual. The ambivalence here highlights the pilgrim character of the life of the church and the necessity for an open textured and dynamic ecclesiology (Hebrews 11.8; Genesis 12.1-3).

35. Indeed, there are a number of polarities in such an Anglican ecclesiology. First, that between vocation and performance which points to the fallibility of the church and the central role of repentance and forgiveness in its life. Second, that tension between present action and resurrection hope which points to the contingency of our circumstances and our resolutions. Third, that between local and universal manifestations of the church which points to difference and interdependence, key elements of catholicity.

### *Change and Difference*

36. Certain cultural realities in the Anglican Communion contribute to the severity of the current dispute. The Commission recognises the complexity and ambiguity arising from any uncritical use of the word 'culture' and various meanings attached to the concept. From the beginning, the church has contained people of various ethnic, social and religious origins. All of these factors help give rise to different forms of life, commonly described as culture. As a result of the interplay between human groupings differences in culture come to be perceived and expressed. In this situation, cross-cultural and intra-cultural dialogue and interaction become a necessary expression of faithfulness to the Gospel. Any misuse of economic or political power, including culturally-based claims to inhibit, corrupt or destroy this interaction must be firmly rejected. We do not underestimate the difficulty in pursuing dialogue but despite the fact that cultural differences can sow conflict and division, they can also generate fresh insight into the meaning of our faith. Our lives as faithful people are given meaning as we first internalise and then live out cultural values and the teaching of the Gospel (Matthew 5.1-13; Micah 6.6-8).
37. Since there is always a uniqueness about our circumstances in history our understanding of material from previous ages is always to some extent inadequate. The differences between cultures create a similar challenge. If we are called to be faithful in our own particular situation then our way of being faithful may well be markedly different from the way in which Anglicans in another culture experience their vocation to faithfulness. This has been a perennial challenge for God's people: Joseph in Egypt, Daniel and the exiles in Babylon, Esther in Persia (see especially Jeremiah 29.4-7; Daniel 1) Our lives are to some extent given meaning by the degree to which we internalise the values and meanings of the institutions which we inhabit. For example, the move to synodical government in Anglican churches around the world has influenced the

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way in which authority in the church is understood and how episcopacy functions. This means that the dramatic institutional changes in Anglicanism in the nineteenth and twentieth century have affected Anglicans in different ways according to their locality.

38. The current crisis in understanding the place of people who are in committed same sex relationships in the public life of the church arises as a result of the shift in the balance of continuity and change. Change and development have always been present in the Christian church. The balance has been different at different times. The novelty lies in the extent to which the balance has shifted towards change, initially in western culture and in the churches shaped by that culture.
39. A strong emphasis on the local is characteristic of the Anglican tradition of Christian faith. Each in their own location is called by the Gospel to be faithful to Christ in the terms of that local situation. As a result of the work done at a consultation of the Anglican Mission Agencies Network, held in 1986 in Brisbane, the South to South consultations were initiated precisely to encourage that sort of local witness. However this emphasis on being faithful in terms of the local situation can easily lead to an uncritical conformity of church life to its local context. To the extent that this is the case, such conformity displaces the church's vocation to catholicity. This situation has, in Anglican experience, been complicated by the history of missionary agencies with different ecclesial styles and dispositions working in particular locations and thus producing another kind of Anglican difference.
40. Early in its life the Anglican Consultative Council engaged with the vital issue of inculturation and proposed the first IATDC. That Commission's report was published in 1986 under the title *For the Sake of the Kingdom*.<sup>9</sup> The Commission was given the task by the Anglican Consultative Council of preparing "a study of the relationship between the Church of God as experienced and the Kingdom of God as anticipated, with special reference to the diverse and changing cultural contexts in which the Gospel is proclaimed, received, and lived".<sup>10</sup> This is precisely the question that is at the root of the present events in the Anglican Communion. The report formed the basis of the first part of the Section report on Dogmatic and Pastoral Concerns at the 1988 Lambeth Conference. That section also had before it a draft paper on what was at that time the vexed issue of the ordination of women and these concerns dominated the resolutions of the Conference from this section and set the terms of the work of the second IATDC and the Eames Commission.

41. The argument of *For the Sake of the Kingdom* has not been as widely known as subsequent reports, in part because of the public and controversial nature of the questions these later reports addressed. But the underlying issues of theology were clearly addressed in *For the Sake of the Kingdom*. The report addressed the issue of pluralism and the norms of Christian judgement. It suggested that three elements interact in the formation of judgements about the meaning of the Gospel in a plural environment. “Proximately, therefore, and in practice, the basis on which the church speaks of Christ and makes its judgements is the set of institutions which mediate its relation to Christ: the Scriptures, the creeds, and - though in a different and complementary way - the sacramental life.”<sup>11</sup>
42. These elements will not necessarily produce uniformity. On the contrary, there is a long history in Anglicanism of pluriformity because “Christians in a given place and time both will and must share the cultural idiom of their geographical and social locale.”<sup>12</sup> Hence the Anglican Communion “should take the form of a fellowship that encourages local and regional initiative and nourishes styles of church life which fit - and address - particular societies and cultures.”<sup>13</sup> Where there is a lack of critical distance from the ambient culture, the report speaks of the need for repentance. In so doing it testifies to the transcendence of the kingdom of God.
43. The second IATDC arose from the 1988 Lambeth Conference which was faced with the proposal by the Episcopal Church of the United States of America to ordain women to the episcopate. The Conference recognised that there was a need for an examination of the relationships between the Provinces of the Anglican Communion and for continuing consultation in the process of reception (for which see the Eames Commission Report<sup>14</sup>). There was also a need “to describe how the Anglican Communion makes authoritative decisions while maintaining unity and interdependence in the light of the many theological issues that arise from its diversity”.<sup>15</sup> The Conference asked for “further exploration of the meaning and nature of communion; with particular reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, the unity and order of the Church, and the unity and community of humanity”.<sup>16</sup> In response, the second IATDC produced *The Virginia Report* which explored the church’s mission and identity as communion: “The mission of the Church is to be the icon of God’s life. By prayer and praise, mercy and peace, justice and love, constantly welcoming the sinner, the outcast, the marginalised into her sanctuary, the Church is revealed as communion

and is faithful to its mission".<sup>17</sup> The Report discussed how the church is structured and how the particular structures of the Anglican Communion enable it to reach the authoritative decisions that from time to time are needed to maintain unity.

44. The challenge of pluralism within the Anglican Communion in *For the Sake of the Kingdom* and the issues of division and *koinonia* as presented in *The Virginia Report* raise crucial questions about the nature of the church. The creed identifies the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic. Each generation struggles to give expression to all these marks of the church. The simultaneous need for faithfulness to the teaching of the Scriptures and commitment to the unity of the church can helpfully be discussed by reflecting on the meaning of catholicity and the way in which the principle of catholicity embraces the inevitable tensions between the local and the universal in ecclesial life.

### ***Dynamic Catholicity***

45. From the first, the local church has had a catholic dimension; it relates to the wider body of churches in space and time. Without such relationship it cannot function healthily as a local church. The communication of the Gospel is the sharing of a life, the life of the community. That life of a local community is not sufficient to itself. In the dynamic process of preaching and reception of the Gospel the communities belong to each other.
46. Within the local church there is a variety of gifts that enable the body to function freely but beyond the local church there are gifts that the local church may need to grow more fully in Christ. The experience of catholicity is an experience of delight in the gift of the other both within the local church and beyond it. The life of the wider church may be seen in terms of exchange of gifts for the building up of the whole body (I Corinthians 12; cf. Exodus 31.1-11). The enormous diversity in local expression of the faith as churches seek faithfully to live out their Christian vocation in their own circumstances provides the rich soil for the gifts which God gives to his people each day.
47. God's people have a long history of receiving the gift of the 'outsider': Hagar (Genesis 16.13), Tamar (Genesis 38, Matthew 1.3), Rahab (Joshua 6, Matthew 1.5, Hebrews 11.31), Ruth (Matthew 1.5), the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8). In churches at every level there are minorities whose gifts and experience may all too easily be overlooked by the majority. There are also churches whose members represent a

minority in the wider society. This is true in societies where other religions or other Christian traditions predominate and where atheistic materialism is dominant. Within the life of the church at every level, global, provincial, diocesan or parish, where the insights and gifts of minorities are overlooked conflict may be difficult to resolve and communion impaired. A lively sense of catholic mutual interdependence is a source of strength, encouragement and stability at every level.

48. For Anglicans the experience of catholicity has, however, been an experience of incompleteness. Anglicanism has never sought to be a world-wide church sufficient in itself. It has sought from the first to find its place in the life of the universal church, from its beginning to its eschatological consummation. "For while the Anglican church is vindicated by its place in history, with a strikingly balanced witness to gospel and church and sound learning, its greater vindication lies in its pointing through its own history to something of which it is a fragment. Its credentials are its incompleteness, with the tension and the travail in its soul. It is clumsy and untidy, it baffles neatness and logic. For it is sent not to commend itself as 'the best type of Christianity', but by its very brokenness to point to the universal Church wherein all have died."<sup>18</sup>
49. Traditional Anglican structures have developed little beyond provincial level. That has reflected an underlying provincial ecclesiology of disciplined order sufficient to provide a ministry of word and sacraments that is both catholic and apostolic. It also embodied a practical recognition of the limits of workable connection. This is reflected in the persistent refusal of successive Lambeth Conferences to see themselves as a disciplinary body and their affirmations of provincial autonomy. As a consequence when we have had to deal with global Communion issues of order we have not had extensive ecclesiological precedent. Our history has not prepared us to handle such conflicts with confidence.

### ***Resolving Conflict in Hope***

50. Conflict arises because of real differences about our faithfulness to our Christian vocation. Conflict always involves suffering, puzzlement and distress. When harnessed creatively, it can however be a gift from God (e.g. Philippians 3.7-11, 4.11-13; cf. Genesis 33.10; Isaiah 58.4-11). The path towards resolving such conflict will involve following in the steps of the crucified Christ and allowing the presence of the Spirit to bring the conflicted parties to a place of new life. Situations of conflict can, through the power of the Spirit, become opportunities to enhance our

mutual understanding and to grow in the faith. The experience of conflict can offer an opportunity for Christians in the midst of their disagreement to discover the love for the other that is at the heart of Christ's sacrifice and which characterises our vocation in Christ. Our constant temptation is to grasp at the resolution of conflict by deployment of power and by manipulation. This is not the way of Christ. There is always need for a ministry of reconciliation to guide Christians in the way of Christ and to build up the Body of Christ. Sometimes we hear of Communion being broken, and often this language is used in rhetorical exchanges about particular issues in dispute. The greater reality, however, is the brokenness of the church within which communion can and does flourish. Communion flourishes when we accept that discipleship in the church is a call to the way of the cross in the brokenness of the church to which we all contribute.

51. Such costly participation in the crucifixion and resurrection sharpens our sense of the hope we have in Christ. This hope will not permit the fallibility which we bring to handling our conflicts to be the last word. Within the day-to-day process of reconciliation and growth in mutual understanding we grow up into that unity in Christ which characterises the catholicity of the church in all its fullness.

### *Virtues for Ecclesial Life*

52. There is another side to this Anglican approach to ecclesiology. It focuses on the centrality of worship and the life of a Christian community that it might be brought to "that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and to that ripeness of and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life".<sup>19</sup> The church in pilgrimage is not simply a rescue home for sinners, though it is that. It is also a school for Christian virtues. The Collect for the Sunday before Lent in the 1662 BCP expresses this point very directly, "Send thy Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before thee". Each generation and each local church is called to manifest Christ-likeness of life in the church. Forgiving is both a gift and a habit of life learned in the community of the faithful. So also are patience, humility, trust and hope, even though the form of these virtues may in their particular expression vary from time to time and from place to place (cf. James 3.13-18; Proverbs 8). It is these Christian virtues which

will be both tested and nurtured in the differences and conflicts within the church.

## PART III

### SUSTAINING COMMUNION: The Process of Consultative Theology

53. In Part II we have offered a theological reflection on the nature of communion in the context of conflict and trustful hope in Christ. This reflection is the fruit of our earlier consultative work. In this section (Part III) we detail the process of consultative theology which has informed our argument in Part II. Among many other things we hope that this section (and the accompanying Appendix One) will prove a useful educational tool for further reflection on the way of communion in Christ.
54. In a rapidly fragmenting world, Christians need to think about what it is that binds them together. Can the Gospel offer hope to a threatened world order? Can it provide an example of the way that some things can be shared even when the movement of history seems at present to be pulling communities and cultures apart?
55. The dramatic background to our first meeting and the experience of solidarity which it gave to people who in many cases had not even met, suggested that a study of communion had much to learn from people whose everyday experience of the Gospel was repeatedly worked out in situations of crisis and change. As indicated earlier, the study proceeded with an invitation to the Communion as a whole, through correspondence with its Provinces, dioceses and theological institutions, to share understandings of the nature and importance of 'communion' and to identify things, both local and in a wider framework, which threatened its existence.

#### *The Experience of Communion*

56. Four Key Questions were circulated to gauge the way in which the reality of communion was experienced by Anglicans around the world. Those questions concerned the meaning given to the word 'communion' by Anglicans; the nature of disputes which threatened to break communion; and the ways in which Christian teachings about moral behaviour were related to the maintenance of communion. The full text of these questions appears in Appendix One of this present report and the summary of responses received from around the Communion were gathered together in a document entitled *The Communion Study, 2002*.

It can be found in the IATDC section of the Anglican Communion website [www.anglicancommunion.org](http://www.anglicancommunion.org).

57. Those responses revealed the diversity and richness of Anglican self-understanding as well as deep divisions in approaches to many of the features which have traditionally held Anglicans together. But they also enabled understanding of the importance of questions about the future of Anglicanism for many Christians. These Christians are concerned about the issues that divide them, but desperately want to hold on to a living connection with the world-wide church without which their sense of isolation would be increased, and their ability to address their particular callings to faithfulness and mission greatly diminished.
58. Anglicans claim that their tradition seeks to embody a distinctive way through theological and social conflicts, and to encapsulate in their comprehensiveness a distinct way of maintaining unity in diversity. Sustaining communion through the conflicts and challenges of our times requires trust and commitment to an ongoing process of consultation. In this process the key elements are listening, responding and being attentive to the leading of the Spirit. This is always costly and transformative because it is the way of Jesus Christ. The process of engagement is an ongoing one and the Commission considered that a practical way forward for the church in difficult times was to keep the key proposals, reflections, responses and ongoing questions before the Communion as it discerned its future in the Gospel.

### ***Underlying Issues for Communion***

59. Six Propositions were circulated in the Communion by the Commission. These arose from the *Four Key Questions* which had enquired about the actual experiences of communion that Anglicans share. It was possible from the answers received to discern some of the underlying issues which, for some, make any idea of an Anglican Communion problematic. A second stage of the study put forward six propositions for debate. They covered the place of the Bible in the church; the relationship between doctrine and ethics; the challenge of inculturation; the problem of discernment in identifying disputes of various kinds; the relation between the member churches of the Communion in responding to disputes; and structures for conflict resolution. The full text of these propositions appears in the sections which follow and in Appendix One of this report. Each proposition was accompanied by a passage of Scripture, a reflection, and questions for discussion, and these elements

recur through this stage of the report. A summary of the contributions to this debate is given in *Proposals and Prospects: a compilation of responses to the IATDC's Six Propositions* to be found in the IATDC section of [www.anglicancommunion.org](http://www.anglicancommunion.org), the Anglican Communion website. For clarity's sake we refer to the Propositions as 'Statements' in the rest of Part III.

60. Four Further Questions for Clarification followed. These questions were circulated in a third round of discussion. They related to the way Anglicans in different parts of the world could read the Bible together; the nature of covenant and its value for Anglicans; the possibilities for communion between the member churches in the context of current disputes; the choice of language used to speak about people with whom one disagreed. These questions can be found in the sections following and in Appendix One of this report. A summary of the answers received is provided in *Responses to the IATDC's four questions, 2006* and found in the IATDC section of the Anglican Communion website.

### ***An Educational Resource***

61. It should be stressed that the process as outlined above (paras. 56-60) was not just intended as a detached study. It was a way of inviting individuals and groups in the Communion to engage with the substantive issues of the Communion. As noted earlier the responses received by the Commission revealed the diversity and richness of Anglican self-understanding, but also deep divisions in approaches to many of the features which have traditionally held Anglicans together. Accordingly the next section of the report focuses on the issues identified as central for its life together at this point in its history. In particular it focuses on six key issues closely linked to the 'Propositions' or 'Statements' discussed in the Communion. Each includes an initial comment from the Commission and responses from the people of the church. The more discursive way in which the issues are treated in what follows echo the different voices which have been heard from the Communion and the way the Commission reflected upon them. It is hoped that this will provide a useful resource for ongoing discussion, education, and the formation of a holy people of God, as well as providing the theological foundations upon which a viable communion of Anglican churches can be maintained.

## *Consultative Communion: A Theology of Engagement*

### 62. **ISSUE 1: The Gospel and Scripture: The Centrality of the Bible in the Anglican Tradition**

- **STATEMENT 1:** The *koinonia* of the Anglican Communion is both greatly enriched, and at times challenged and confused, by the variety of ways of encountering Scripture. We bring our whole lives, in our different cultural and personal contexts, to Scripture, and from those places open ourselves to ‘being read by’ Scripture.
63. The debate invited by the first of the six statements drew attention to the way in which the authority of the Bible is seen by some to be confused by varieties of interpretive methods.
64. The Commission commented while introducing that discussion: “As particular members of the Anglican Communion, we bring our contextual, cultural, and personal situations to bear upon the task of ‘reading in communion’ with others across space and time. Private reading and study of Scripture takes place, by implication, within the larger framework of the church’s praise of God and proclamation of the Word in common prayer and eucharist”.
65. “The Anglican tradition of reading the Bible carries an historic deep respect for biblical scholarship, taking seriously the integrity of the canon, historical contextuality and original languages of the Bible. ‘Historical’ studies are well complemented by ‘theological’ interpretations and ‘literary’ readings. In addition, theologians in many parts of the world have called attention to issues of power and privilege in biblical interpretation and the need for Christians to listen to one another across cultural differences and economic divisions.”
66. The Commission went on to conclude: “The rich variety of material within the canon resists all human attempts to reduce it to a flat or uniform agenda. At the same time, the biblical writings are consistent witnesses to the trustworthiness of the triune God and, for all their differences of style, content, and opinion, they are clearly part of one conversation that intends to be open to hear the Word of that one God. A Ghanaian parable of individuals and community within the family helps us here: from a distance one sees the people of the family like a forest; only in closer proximity does one see the particular features of each tree. So the art of reading and living under a Scripture which is both unified and diverse is an organic part of the vocation to live together

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within our single yet richly variegated Communion. It is within this context that our ongoing and vital debates about the ‘authority’ of Scripture must take place.”

67. The conversation which has developed around those assertions reinforces both the possibilities and the complications of the issue. The determinative role of Scripture in the reasoned development of Anglican tradition is generally acknowledged, but how the Bible is used in determining the outcome of specific controversies is unclear. Through the twentieth century, processes of rapid social change from pre- to post-modernity have meant that Christians in the same church now find they are living in different cultural worlds, and the ways in which Scripture is utilised in each of them appears to be different as well.
68. Yet during the last decade a renewed emphasis on the unity as well as the diversity of Scripture means that listening to the Bible together can be a restorative as well as disturbing experience for the Christian community. Reading ‘in communion’ includes but goes beyond sharing a common lectionary. It was suggested to us that Thomas Cranmer recognised that the public reading of Scripture in the context of ordered worship permits (and indeed creates) an acceptable degree of diversity in the church. This is something that needs to be rediscovered at this time, since it is recognised that no contemporary ‘Act of Uniformity’ could achieve that end. Corporate reception of Scripture is actually the way in which communion will be nurtured and sustained in the church, as well as described or defined as a theological concept.
69. In the third round of discussion, the question of how the Bible could be read ‘together’ by the whole church was highlighted. Major differences emerged between those who thought that in principle the clarity (‘perspicuity’) of Scripture meant that a common mind could be reached about the meaning and implications of a passage, and others who felt that cultural differences between readers - as well as between readers and the text - meant that any such unanimity would be impossible to achieve. Current hermeneutical studies suggest that such pessimism is unwarranted and that the ideal of a church whose thoughts and actions are moulded by a habitual response to the message of the Bible is worth pursuing. However any expectation that interpretations of Scripture will ever be totally uncontested is discounted by the experience of history, if not the very character of the Bible itself. Knowledge of God’s purposes in Scripture will always be partial in the church, yet it will be sufficient for the patient pursuit of truth and holiness, if there is a corporate willingness to respond to what is understood in particular circumstances.

For this reason methods of cross-cultural and trans-generational reading of the Bible are to be encouraged.

70. Such a pursuit places emphasis on a humble and receptive reading of the text of Scripture. Statement 1 invited reflection on the way Scripture speaks to the whole personality of the reader; the habits of the heart and a culture's heart. Scripture reads us as much as, perhaps even more than, our reading of it, however closely we attempt to understand and interpret its message.
71. A central passage in this discussion was Luke 24.13-35. In that well known story on the road to Emmaus, two disciples were carrying their own confusions and dashed hopes about Jesus. A stranger joined them and revealed the secret of the Scriptures and sparked their faith and hope. After Jesus revealed himself to them in the breaking of the bread they were able to say "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"(v32). They returned to Jerusalem to join a gathering company of witnesses to the resurrection. Their lives were altered forever in the light of the living Word of God.
72. Even the most rigorous scrutiny of the text of Scripture must lead towards those moments of transfiguration as Christian disciples realise they are standing and living in the light of God's presence. Engagement with Scripture must be a key component in times of controversy. However the ultimate role of Scripture during disputes within the life of the church is measured not by how far it shows who is 'right', but by the way in which it invites all parties of the controversy to be 'changed'.

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73. **QUESTIONS for discussion might be:**

- *How does the Bible function as a source of authority in setting priorities and resolving disputes in your church?*
- *How is it possible for Anglicans in different parts of the world to listen to the Bible together?*

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74. **ISSUE 2: Christian Living: The Gospel and Christian Ethics**

- **STATEMENT 2:** Dividing doctrine from ethics not only creates the possibility for serious mistakes in Christian thinking but also diminishes the coherence of the life of holiness which is the Christian vocation.

75. Ethical questions, and especially questions concerning sexuality and holiness are at the centre of Anglican anxieties about communion. The discussion that our study sought to provoke was not limited to matters of sexual behaviour but looked at ways in which all behaviour could be transformed through the Gospel.
76. The Commission introduced this issue to highlight that framework. “In our initial questions to the churches, we asked whether Christian teachings about moral behaviour are integral to the maintenance of communion. The answers we received were overwhelmingly affirmative. And this indeed is our view. What we call ethical teachings are woven into the fabric of Christian doctrine. Christians are called to die to sin and to rise again with Christ into newness of life (Romans 6.4). The doctrines of the resurrection and of baptism contain a teaching about personal transformation. Indeed the very idea of communion is inseparable from holiness of life, a sharing in the very being of God (2 Peter 1.4). It belongs to the integrity of the Church that it teaches the truth that is in Christ Jesus, which is a new way of life (Mark 10.21). That life is no easy option. It involves personal struggle against temptation and a commitment to freedom from oppression. It is taken up truly as a taking-up of the cross (Ephesians 4.20-24). It is a serious mistake to think that ‘core doctrine’ does not include such teaching.”
77. The wider discussion accepted that assertion, and was willing to extend the debate beyond any single presenting issue. Anglicans have repeatedly sought to link personal beliefs with public outcomes. Ongoing interaction (not always amicable) between church and state has been a feature of Anglican order from the earliest period of Christian faith and practice in Britain. It was exemplified in the seventeenth century by the way Richard Hooker sought to integrate the continuity of God’s purposes with radically changed intellectual, social and political circumstances. The Anglican tradition has always seen theology as an agent of moral transformation, and ethical assertions as requiring theological validation. The Christian message is not understood merely as religious ideology but, most directly, by the way it confronts the reality of personal and corporate sin. The Gospel is addressed to a world which both fails to recognise and refuses to acknowledge the goodness and justice of God. Anglican history shows many examples of the conviction that situations of evil are not simply to be confronted but redeemed.
78. This tradition continues today with important Anglican contributions to thinking about international debt, justice and peace issues, and the

HIV/AIDS pandemic. There is no reason why similar attention should not be given to issues of human sexuality, including homosexuality (issues which are intellectual, social and political as much as personal in origin) under the present circumstances in which the Communion finds itself. This will involve more than theoretical considerations: it would ask quite personally and directly, in what way does the Gospel offer good news to Christians with differing sexual orientations. A holistic Anglican tradition will seek to combine the best elements of traditional moral philosophy with the practice of theological ethics, involving spiritual issues of vocation and discernment. This will need first, an appreciation of the interdependence of ‘command ethics’ (in which the central issue is obedience to God’s instructions) and the ethics of ‘human flourishing’ (in which the central issue is the fulfilment of the humanity which God has created). Secondly, attention must be extended to the way in which innovations in Christian belief and practice can be understood, evaluated and judged within an Anglican fellowship. What is not possible is that the discussion of belief and practice, doctrine and ethics, should be carried on independently of each other.

79. The link between belief and behaviour is made particularly clear in the Pauline epistles. Ephesians 4.1-6 provides a case in point. In this passage doctrinal teaching is followed by the ethical imperative of “living a life worthy of the calling you have received”. A life of virtues such as humility, patience and forbearance is the way to maintain harmony and unity within the body of Christ. For the bonds of affection in the Anglican Communion to hold together, sound doctrine, together with ethical living and the practice of the Christian virtues, are both vital.

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80. **Those bonds might be safeguarded if at every level the question is asked:**

- *Where do you see Christian doctrine informing or challenging ethical questions which arise in your own situation?*

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81. **ISSUE 3: Responding to the Gospel where we are: Context and Culture**

- **STATEMENT 3:** The reality of the incarnation implies that the Gospel is always proclaimed in specific cultures. Inculturation always runs the risk of syncretism, in all cultures, without exception. One of the gifts which comes from membership of the

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Anglican Communion is that other Provinces hold up a mirror to each of us, enabling us to question whether the Gospel has been compromised among us.

82. 'Particular and national churches' inevitably display characteristics of their own cultural heritage and are called to bear their witness within those settings. This creates a tension between affirming and critiquing the social setting in which they find themselves. It can also cause problems in the relationship between different churches as they seek to understand how Christians in a different environment are trying to work out appropriate responses to remain faithful to the Gospel. This tension between the one and the many in the Anglican Communion is one potential source of misunderstanding which needs to be acknowledged.
83. The theological motif of the incarnation is important for understanding the issue of 'inculturation', and the Commission's discussion began there. However, as that discussion broadened, other themes - centred around the Pentecost experience - began to emerge.
84. So, the invitation to discuss the third statement began: "The incarnation of Jesus Christ is God's self-revelation to the world. Jesus' ministry on earth included both the acceptance of a particular culture and a moral confrontation with elements in that culture. When Jesus in turn commissioned his disciples, they too were to pursue the mission which the Holy Spirit would give them by relating to their society incarnationally. The theological concept of inculturation denotes the process whereby the church becomes incarnated in a particular culture of a people".
85. "Inculturation occurs when dialogue is sought at the level of trust between Christian message and praxis *vis-à-vis* local beliefs and values. Thus, as Christianity carries the structures and theology of the church into the conversation, so the same must grow out of local symbols, and, in so doing maintain the cultural and spiritual integrity of the local people. Inculturation, properly understood, is openness to a way whereby the Christian Gospel is interpreted and reinterpreted in an ongoing process of faithful reciprocity among peoples in the different contexts and cultures of the global church.
86. "However, inculturation is not limited to religious cultural beliefs and practices. In its broadest sense, it includes all endeavours aimed at making the Christian message relevant to the local context. It is also an interaction and integration of the Christian message and socio-political and economic reality. True inculturation entails a willingness to

incorporate what is positive, and to challenge what is alien to the truth of the Christian faith. It has to make contact with the psychological as well as the intellectual characteristics of the people. This is achieved through openness to innovation and experimentation, an encouragement of local creativity, and a readiness to reflect critically at each stage of the process - a process that, in principle is never ending.”

87. Contributors to this debate agreed that the historicity and particularity of Anglican understandings of the church means that it takes questions of context seriously. At its best - as in the 1978 Lambeth Conference treatment of inculturation - context and culture are considered within the framework of catholicity. It involves a two-fold encounter, during which the church discovers something about its own inner reality as a community of the resurrection, and also discovers resources for attending to the needs of the world. Consequently Anglicans are always open to the possibilities of a ‘local option’ in the way they fulfil their calling, but will insist that the ‘local’ is held in a dialectic tension with ‘universal’ opinion, as far as that can be ascertained.
88. This interplay between the many and the one follows directly from the theological model outlined in the previous paragraph. It emphasises the way in which the grace of the covenant is constant, yet renewed, restored and realised throughout the pilgrimage of God’s people as they move towards its completion. The once-for-all character of Christ’s coming must be appropriated by succeeding generations in each and every place. On this understanding the dominant theme of inculturation is not just that of *incarnation* (as is often assumed and was so assumed at the beginning of this discussion) but an implication of the *Pentecost* experience - hearing about the scandalously particular works of God in the mother tongue of new converts, who are thereby incorporated into membership of a single multi-cultural and cross-generational community.
89. On that basis it might be argued that the Anglican experience of companionship links, partnerships in mission, inter-Anglican networks, mission societies and religious orders (not to mention the availability of cheap air travel and the Internet) can all act as significant ‘instruments of communion’, almost irrespective of more formal ecclesial structures. These partnerships take on increasing importance, theological as well as practical, at a time of temporary disruption in the relationship between different parts of the Anglican world. Reflection on these relationships may begin to provide theological articulation to new dimensions of *koinonia* which are emerging in the new world- (and church-) order.

90. In the passage suggested for reflection on the issue, Acts 17.16 - 34, Paul is seen to be proclaiming and making relevant the Christian message in a local context. Within this encounter he recognised a particular cultural symbol which he used in two ways. First, to provide a point of contact between the Christian message and local people. But second, to present an implicit challenge to assumptions which make it difficult for that message to be received and understood.
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91. **QUESTIONS for discussion might be:**

- *What are the issues in your own cultural situation which need to be reconsidered in the light of the Gospel?*
  - *How do you think the genuine and meaningful expressions of communion that your church experiences with Anglican Christians in other parts of the world will be able to survive current disagreements in the Anglican Communion?*
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92. **ISSUE 4: The Limits of Diversity: Encountering Disputes and Failures**

- **STATEMENT 4:** Since the beginning of Christianity disputes have arisen in which the truth of the Gospel is seen to be at stake. Not all disputes are of such significance, but some are. In a Communion made up of many different churches, discernment is required to identify what in any particular context are the crucial issues for the life of the church.
93. Introducing this issue, the Commission commented: “Identifying what disputes are significant in the Church is a longstanding challenge in Christianity. The Scriptures themselves bear witness to varieties of understanding within the people of God. This diversity of interpretation has sometimes given rise to lively disputes: for instance, in the Hebrew Scriptures, about the obligations of the covenant, both for God and for Israel, or in the New Testament about the demand that Gentile converts to faith in Christ should be circumcised in accord with the law. In some such conflicts, fidelity to the covenant, or to the Gospel, was seen to be at stake. In others, legitimate diversity of interpretation is reflected in the diversity of scriptural witness: for instance, in the Hebrew Scriptures there are two versions, with differing emphases, of the pre-exilic history of Israel, and in the New Testament there are four gospels, which give four distinctive perspectives on Jesus and the Gospel”.

94. “We can therefore expect diversity of practice and of theological interpretation to continue within a communion of churches, especially when the individual churches are reading the Scriptures and practising the Christian faith in hugely different contexts and circumstances. Even within the New Testament, it is clear that some Christians thought others were not being faithful to the Gospel and, on the issue of circumcision, a council was held at Jerusalem to resolve the issue. From the beginning, conciliar processes and conciliar decision-making have enabled the Church to identify those issues on which unity must be maintained and to reaffirm its faith in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, often in innovative ways. Within the conciliar process, an openness to the fresh reading of Scripture and of Christian tradition, together with a willingness to listen to one another and so to what the Spirit may now be saying to the churches, has been vital to the faithful proclamation of the Gospel in changing circumstances.”
95. Throughout the biblical narrative and the history of the church, decisive choices have been made about significant issues of Christian faith, order and practice. Such a demand means that there is always a possibility of serious disagreement in the church. Some disputes are peripheral, and differences of opinion about them can be accepted relatively easily, but some are crucial - and must in due course be decided upon, if the church is to retain its unity, holiness and claim of catholicity. In times of controversy, vital questions arise about how to tell the difference between peripheral or local disputes, and those which are crucial, normative and universal.
96. In the present debate on human sexuality many participants are looking for a list of fundamental doctrines which guarantee Anglican identity, or for a catalogue of acceptable practices, ‘lines in the sand’, which define the limits of Anglican fellowship. The Commission is persuaded that while numerous attempts have been made by Anglican theologians to identify core doctrines or fundamental articles, that quest has never been settled beyond dispute. In the present intellectual climate it is even clearer that such a strategy would conceal still more foundational problems of authority. Who decides the content and extent of such doctrines? And how could they be used to resolve contentious issues in the life of the Communion?
97. In situations of dispute it is not possible to exclude any area of human life or behaviour from theological scrutiny: any issue can become crucial for the maintenance of the church’s faithfulness. The example of flags being displayed in the sanctuary of a church is an instructive case

which has been considered by the Commission. In some situations that would be regarded as amongst peripheral issues (*adiaphora*) - until, for instance, such a time when the flags bore a swastika and the churches concerned were in Nazi Germany. Some members have pointed to other situations when a flag can represent the threat of 'unopposed Empire' or xenophobic nationalism. Such examples illustrate the way in which previously unconsidered things, in a changed context, can present vital challenges to Christian confession. Key questions for the church's faithfulness today have to do with human sexual activity, that of hetero- as well as homosexual orientation.

98. Despite its reluctance, *a priori*, to exclude any opinion or practice, Anglicanism is not in principle unable or unwilling to make costly decisions. Indeed decisive points in the establishment of Anglican 'communion' presume that the discernment of God's will and purposes is a constant and ongoing process. Thus the historic standards of Anglicanism (The Thirty-nine Articles, Book of Common Prayer and Ordinal) can be seen as a covenantal expression of the way in which English Christians established their own identity among the controversies of the 16th and 17th centuries. The Lambeth Quadrilateral does not (as it is sometimes erroneously supposed) define the boundaries of Anglican fellowship, but it did commit Anglicanism in the 19th century to a series of normative practices whereby the wider unity of the church might be furthered: Scripture is *read*, tradition *received*, sacramental worship is *offered*, and the historic character of apostolic leadership is *retained*. From this interplay the Anglican community is nurtured and sustained.
99. A Scripture passage that commends itself for reflection in relation to this discussion is Acts 15.1-35. This text indicates that disputes and dissensions of a theological and doctrinal nature were quite common from the first days of the church. The matter of circumcision being essential for salvation could have turned away many believers from Christian faith and the church. Such issues could only be resolved through face-to-face meetings. This passage is very important because the Anglican Communion is also struggling with many challenges to its unity, fellowship and theology.

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100. **QUESTIONS for discussion might be:**

- *In what ways can church councils, synods, bishops and theologians be seen to maintain a balance between faithfulness to common*

*belief and effective engagement with changing local circumstances?*

- *If a covenant is more than a constitution, what implications does this have for decision-making by churches that are in covenantal relationship with each other?*
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**101. ISSUE 5: Life with Others: Accountability and Competence**

- **STATEMENT 5:** Disputes in the church may be on many issues. Issues of discipline, such as church teaching on sexuality or the recognition of ministerial orders may be important in some contexts: specific issues of poverty, justice and peace in others. Attention to the concerns of other churches within the Communion is important for putting those of each local church into a proper perspective.
102. In what is often a media-led world, some controversies gain disproportionate attention. It is not necessarily those who shout loudest who are attending to the most important issues. On this statement, the Commission commented: “We recognise the importance of addressing together the issue of human sexuality, and of homosexual practice in particular. It has become for many a church-dividing issue. For others the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate still lingers as a crisis of faith. For still others, the persistence of white supremacy stifles the spirit of Communion. We also weigh the importance of the world-wide distribution of wealth, issues of justice in varying contexts, and the goals of peace and the cessation of violence. Often the developed world puts its own hot-button issues in the forefront and misses other equally important issues, such as global warming. Our Communion serves us when it puts all the issues on the table, omitting none.”
103. However this implies a mutual accountability concerning the things that are contentious amongst us. The Commission had already advocated the importance of mutual accountability (*paraklesis*) for the maintenance of communion in the church.<sup>20</sup> This involves comfort, encouragement, exhortation and direction, as well as the word into which it is usually translated, ‘admonition’. It is something which should function at every level of church life, and there seems no reason why, in a fellowship of autonomous churches, such accountability should not be exercised between as well as within each of them. The problem that has become clear during current controversies is that it is uncertain where

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responsibility for *paraklesis* within the world-wide Communion lies, or when it is appropriate for such an exercise to be undertaken.

104. To clarify *when* some communion-wide decision is to be made, we have introduced the criteria of *intensity*, *substance* and *extent*:<sup>21</sup> the more these characteristics feature in a controversy, the wider the scope for a ministry of mutual admonition. As to *where* that decision should be made, it is held that the current dispute deserves consideration at the level of a relationship between Provinces, at present embodied in the Primates' Meeting. The Primates have been reluctant to accept the 'enhanced' role that successive Lambeth Conferences have urged upon them, but in October 2003 they indicated that they were looking for an appropriate mechanism to fulfil that sort of role. Some way may need to be found by which all the instruments of communion, acting together, can make binding judgements to undergird and secure the unity of the churches and enrich their communion of service and love. It must be clear that this should not be seen as a bureaucratic or merely organisational response to resolving disputes. A decision by the Primates should not be reduced to the outcome of a majority vote of the personal opinions - for the time being - of those present. The process is one of theological discernment throughout, and 'admonition' should not be seen as a matter of institutional censure, but corporate submission to the Gospel, in the pursuit of a common mind.
105. For various reasons, some participants in the present debates seem intent on loosening the links in the Communion by speaking of it in terms of a confederation, or becoming 'cousins, not brothers and sisters' in Christ. Others have suggested that a constructive way forward may be to allow a form of associate status within the Communion. These proposals seem to amount to a refusal to accept the possibility of external criticism; theologically, they dilute Anglican fellowship from something grounded in covenant love, to a matter of historic association.
106. A passage for reflection might be II Corinthians 1.23-2.11. There is obviously tension in this passage between the Apostle Paul and the church at Corinth and also in the church over the behaviour of one member. It raises questions about dealing with disputes, administering discipline and discerning the appropriate pastoral response. It is also an example of wisdom coming from the voice of the apostle from beyond the local situation.

107. A QUESTION for discussion might be:

- *How far can membership of a Communion of churches help a local church to discern what are the crucial issues in its own situation?*
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108. ISSUE 6: Dispute Resolution: Finding Appropriate Structures

- **STATEMENT 6:** At every level, the practice of *koinonia* requires that there are those who have the responsibility to arbitrate in disputes and conflicts vital to our shared life. Such arbitration gains its force from the ties that bind us together in a voluntary communion. The church then, needs to develop structures for testing, reconciliation and restraint.
109. The Commission commented: “We should not be surprised when conflicts and disputes occur in the church. Such things arise for many reasons, for example, failure of communication, misunderstandings, jealousy etc. Conflict also occurs because of the sheer richness of the Gospel of Christ and the difficulty of deciding amidst a number of possibilities what is the faithful way forward in a particular situation.
110. “In a voluntary society like the church we rely heavily on the ties that bind us together as the body of Christ to help us find a way of resolving our differences and disputes. The church places a high premium on face-to-face relations as the natural means through which it tries to discern what is right, test disputed practices and exercise discipline. Conflict resolution and the kinds of sanctions exercised in the church are thus primarily persuasive rather than those of a coercive and judicial kind.”
111. However, this does not mean that arbitration can be avoided in disputed areas at a level appropriate to the strength and extent of the dispute. Indeed, the church would be failing in its duty if it did not work hard at all levels of its life - parish, diocese, province, region and beyond - to deal with disputed matters, striving for reconciliation and implementing appropriate sanctions when necessary.
112. The church needs those who will exercise a ministry by which disputes are resolved and structures which allow such arbitration to take place. These structures will be both formal and informal and involve face-to-face relations as befits the community of Jesus Christ. For Anglican unity to be maintained in this way, it will be necessary to overcome deep seated suspicions about centralising power in the Communion. *The Virginia Report* pointed to the need for greater clarity in the relationship between the instruments of communion. This might be achieved by

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clearly differentiating the roles of Lambeth Conference, Anglican Consultative Council and Primates' Meeting as aspects of collegial, communal and personal authority in the church, as expounded in the ecumenical statement, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*.<sup>22</sup> The Archbishop of Canterbury, now identified as the 'focus of unity', holds the unique office of gathering the Communion in its representative parts, and speaking for it while consensus is achieved.

113. The Commission agrees that if any 'enhanced role' were adopted by the Primates then this must be paralleled by additional responsibilities undertaken by each of the other instruments as well. What is essential is that the different charisms of guidance and discernment exercised by each of the instruments must deliberately and consistently act together. Too often meetings of the decision-making bodies appear to outsiders to be preoccupied with their own, apparently unrelated, programme objectives; at worst, they seem intent on merely winning time, in the hope that seemingly intractable problems will go away. Mutual accountability and communication are needed for communion to function. A personal, and even more, a theological vocabulary of disagreement is necessary in order to allow communication to continue across frontiers of disagreement. A key to this will be found by establishing a common language of collegiality to unite the episcopate, along with an agreed understanding of what is implied when that collegiality is broken or impaired. The working of the whole body must amount to more than the sum of its separate parts. The purpose of 'dispersed authority' is to draw to itself the *consensus fidelium*.
114. The above process of listening, responding, reflecting and questioning, points to the dynamic aspect of communion in the body of Christ. Communion is not a steady state reality that one either has or does not have. It has to be nurtured through open and persistent conversation where there is mutual trust and forbearance, always thinking the best of the other, always hoping and praying for new ways of sharing in the riches of the Gospel. Sustaining communion is in fact a continual consultative process. It is through such an endeavour that the Lord of the Church is graciously present and calling the church onward and upward.
115. A passage for reflection might be Matthew 18.15-17. In this passage Jesus offers guidance for a community dealing with sin and failure of one of its members. There are aspects of this teaching that are particularly helpful for the life of the Anglican Church. Most clearly there is an expectation of face-to-face relationships at all levels of dispute resolution.

**116. QUESTIONS for discussion might be:**

- *How are disputes addressed and conflicts resolved in the practice of your church?*
- *What sort of language (theological or otherwise) is appropriate for speaking about Christian people with whom you disagree?*

***Conclusion to Part III***

117. This section has sought to capture insights which progressively unfolded throughout our consultative study of communion. We do not believe that such a summary exhausts all that can be said about the issues it has raised. Indeed, the hope of the Commission is that further clarification of these issues will be found as churches and groups continue to utilise the material from the study as found in Appendix One. What is recorded above might be seen as a ‘worked exercise’ from that process at a particular period of time, and what follows represents our conclusions to the process, as far as it has been taken.

## PART IV

### CONCLUSION: Hope in Communion

#### *Changing Patterns of Communion*

118. The Windsor Report 2004 has pointed towards some ways to hold the Communion together at this time. Our study supports the contention that the future life of the Communion will depend on a renewed sense of commonality. Our communion will be enriched as we work at resolving our conflicts through the continuing process of faithful Christian living to which the Anglican tradition aspires. This has to be undertaken within the brokenness of the body of Christ.
119. Part of the difficulty in sustaining that vision is derived from hierarchical views of power and authority, so prominent in social, managerial and political life. These are pressed on the decision-making bodies both by an uncomprehending media, and by knowing manipulation and abuse of power within the church itself. An emphasis on the life of communion and the work of the Spirit seeks a different frame of reference, such as that in the classic discussions of the Anglican Communion at the 1920 and 1930 Lambeth Conferences. In the second of these, two prevailing types of ecclesiastical organisation were described: “that of centralised government, and that of regional autonomy within one fellowship”.<sup>23</sup> It is the latter form which Anglicans share with Orthodox churches and others. Self-governing churches of the Communion grew up “freely, on their own soil”.<sup>24</sup> This has contributed, at provincial level, to limitations of self-understanding and of understanding about the demands of communion within the world-wide fellowship of churches. Hence our focus on catholicity. We have sought to explain the need for the gifts of the Spirit - and for virtues such as patience, humility, trust and hope - in sustaining a conversation with one another despite the current serious conflict within the Anglican Communion. This is why we have spoken of dynamic catholicity.

#### *Growth in Communion*

120. At this time of uncertainty the possibility of serious disruption to the life of the Anglican Communion has to be contemplated. The question must be asked whether existing ‘instruments of communion’ are capable of theological (not just managerial) development so that they can utilise the possibilities opened up by the Windsor process to address questions

about legitimate diversity and unity. If there is not the time or will to achieve this, it appears that Anglicans will become increasingly marginalised and fragmented as a movement within world Christianity.

121. Even if the worst fears of Anglicans who value their fellowship and solidarity are realised, the Anglican tradition will not disappear. Communion functions at a number of different levels. IATDC has identified theology, canon law, history and culture, communication, and voluntary commitment rather than coercion, as essential aspects of communion. Yet real communion can exist in many of the elements separately. The Commission is persuaded that ‘thick’ ecclesiology, concrete experience of the reconciling and healing work of God in Christ, should take priority over ‘thin’, abstract and idealised descriptions of the church. Communion ‘from below’, is real communion - arguably the most vital aspect of *koinonia* with God and neighbour, and it is from ‘below’ that the Commission has worked in its conversations with the churches, and in its reflections in this report.
122. What is needed now is a clearer understanding of how these different aspects of communion co-exist at different levels or horizons of the church’s experience. The obligation to seek ‘the highest degree of communion possible’ within the church is a laudable ambition, a vocation even. Yet unless we are clear what sort of communion is anticipated for congregational, local, regional or global fellowship, the terminology can be used merely to justify higher level organisational arrangements without ever analysing how they contribute to communion itself. It may well be that communion at a local or congregational level (“where two or three are gathered together...”) may theologically represent a ‘higher’ communion than an ideal expressed in merely institutional, canonical or juridical terms. At the same time it must be insisted that the experience and commitments of local communities will be enlarged and maintained by participation in wider expressions of fellowship (which the parallel work of this Commission on ‘The Anglican Way: The Significance of the Episcopal Office for the Communion of the Church’, to be found in Appendix Two, advances) just as the life of dioceses, provinces and the Anglican Communion itself pursues its fullness as a part of the *koinonia* of the People of God.
123. If Anglican fellowship at the level of shared doctrines and ideals or common participation in mission is unable to enjoy the support of coherent global structures, then the Anglican Communion will be immeasurably weakened. In the light of the Gospel weak and fragile things are not to be despised. Talk of broken communion has often been

a form of exchange to gain rhetorical advantage and carries with it an all too facile notion of communion in the church. Such a notion glosses over far too lightly the actual brokenness of the church community. It also eclipses the vocation of each individual and community to walk in the steps of the crucified Christ. The Anglican theological tradition cannot be content with any claim to communion which separates the Gospel of Christ from the aspiration of faithful Christian discipleship within a Communion which is both diverse and united, broken and being restored.

### *Hope in Communion*

124. Hope in communion has a double meaning in the context of this report. In the first instance the report points to ways in which Christian hope in the possibility of life together might be nurtured and enhanced. This relates to a fundamental commitment to conciliar processes which maintain face-to-face engagements through times of conflict and division. We continue to persist in the hope that working and believing together in the service of the Gospel is an indestructible feature of the faith we cherish. We have set our hope on Christ and so we hope in the communion to which we are called.
125. In the second instance we hope in communion in the sense that hope itself is only made real as we share together in the mission of God in the world. Hope in Christ is kept alive and burning within us as we participate together in the sharing of the Gospel. Hope is fractured when we separate from our brothers and sisters in Christ. Hope grows as communion is widened and intensified. At this time of conflict Anglicans are faced with a costly and difficult journey. However, we have together accepted the Gospel invitation to take up the cross and follow the upward call of Christ in faith and hope and love.



## APPENDIX ONE

### *The Communion Study as an Educational Resource*

The study process which gave rise to the foregoing report should have continuing relevance in building communion in the church, at local and parochial as well as diocesan and provincial levels. For convenience, the essential questions and issues for debate are listed below, in the hope that groups will follow through the process for themselves, and come to their own conclusion about the nature and sustaining of communion. Enrichment of such local studies may be gained by referring to the Report itself, and to summaries of the communion-wide discussions, which can be found on the Anglican Communion website.

### *Four Key Questions for Anglicans World-Wide*

- When we speak of the Anglican Communion, what do we mean by the word “communion”?
- What is it that makes some disputes so crucial that failure to resolve them threatens a break in communion?
- In what ways are Christian teachings about moral behaviour integral to the maintenance of communion?
- In answering these questions we shall be asking how far does the Virginia Report meet the relevant situations that have arisen in the Anglican Communion since its publication?

From an exploration of what the concept of ‘communion’ actually means to Anglicans today, it is necessary to turn to a consideration of some of the underlying issues which make communion problematic for a world-wide Christian fellowship.

### *The Six Propositions (or Statements) for debate*

#### **Proposition 1:**

The *koinonia* of the Anglican Communion is both greatly enriched, and at times challenged and confused, by the variety of ways of encountering scripture. We bring our whole lives, in our different cultural and personal contexts, to scripture, and from those places open ourselves to ‘being read by’ scripture.

**Proposition 2:**

Dividing doctrine from ethics not only creates the possibility for serious mistakes in Christian thinking but also diminishes the coherence of the life of holiness which is the Christian vocation.

**Proposition 3:**

The reality of the incarnation implies that the Gospel is always proclaimed in specific cultures. Inculturation always runs the risk of syncretism, in all cultures without exception. One of the gifts which comes from membership of the Anglican Communion is that other Provinces hold up a mirror to each of us, enabling us to question whether the gospel has been compromised among us.

**Proposition 4:**

Since the beginning of Christianity disputes have arisen in which the truth of the Gospel is seen to be at stake. Not all disputes are of such significance, but some are. In a Communion made up of many different churches, discernment is required to identify what in any particular context are the crucial issues for the life of the church.

**Proposition 5:**

Disputes in the church may be on many issues. Issues of discipline, such as church teaching on sexuality or the recognition of ministerial orders may be important in some contexts: specific issues of poverty, justice and peace in others. Attention to the concerns of other churches within the Communion is important for putting those of each local church into a proper perspective.

**Proposition 6:**

At every level, the practice of *koinonia* requires that there are those who have the responsibility to arbitrate in disputes and conflicts vital to our shared life. Such arbitration gains its force from the ties that bind us together in a voluntary communion. The church then, needs to develop structures for testing, reconciliation and restraint.

After discussing some principles underlying issues of communion that are faced by Anglicans today, it is important to address some of the practicalities involved.

***Four further questions for clarification***

1. Anglicanism has always given a high place to the reading of Scripture as the ground of its worship and teaching. How is it possible for Anglicans in different parts of the world to listen to the Bible together?
2. The IATDC and the Windsor Report are both emphasising the notion of ‘covenant’ as a basis and expression of communion. If a covenant is more than a constitution, what implications does this have for decision-making by churches that are in a covenantal relationship with each other?
3. How do you think the genuine and meaningful expressions of communion that your church experiences with Anglican Christians in other parts of the world will be able to survive current disagreements in the Anglican Communion?
4. What sort of language (theological and otherwise) is appropriate for speaking about Christian people with whom you disagree?



## APPENDIX TWO

### THE ANGLICAN WAY: The Significance of the Episcopal Office for the Communion of the Church

Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission,  
October 2007<sup>25</sup>

#### *Preamble*

At this time in the life of the global Anglican Communion tensions and rifts between Provinces - and bishops - have seriously impaired the fellowship (*koinonia*) of the baptised. The reasons for these difficulties are complex and no one would imagine that it is an easy matter to restore fellowship across the churches of the Communion. In such circumstances we can forget that our life together is a gracious gift bestowed by the Lord. It is a gift that serves the mission of God in the world and has a direct effect on the integrity and power of our witness to the gospel.

How can we proclaim one Lord, one faith and one baptism when the gift of *koinonia* seems to be so easily set aside for a supposedly greater goal? What can be more fundamental to our life on earth than our essential interconnectedness with others and the world.<sup>26</sup> What can be more at the heart of Christian life than the sacrament of communion in Christ's body broken for us and blood poured out for the world? This *koinonia* is given by God in creation and renewed in Christ and the Spirit. It is a gift which subsists in the whole body of Christ prior to its embodiment in an 'instrument of unity' or particular ecclesial office. Furthermore, like all gifts of God, it can only be a blessing as it is faithfully received and shared by all. It is critical for this truth to be grasped by an often anxious and fearful church that is often tempted to seek heroes or managers to heal its inner life.

All ministries are charisms of the Spirit for the building up of the body. This is not just a *role* but charism of the ministry. As eucharistic president and teacher of the faith the bishop lives and ministers as sign and servant of ecclesial communion and communion with the Triune God. Bishops therefore bear a particular responsibility for the maintenance and nurture of communion as God's gift to all.

The ordinal is clear that bishops of the church have a great and grave responsibility to the Lord of the Church for the fellowship of all the baptised. Their actions have consequence for the whole body of the faithful for we are all 'members one of another' (Romans 12.5). Accordingly we offer these ten

theses on the role and responsibilities of bishops for the well-being of the communion of the whole church. In the theses that follow it should be abundantly clear that the nurture of *koinonia* is not an optional extra or luxury for the episcopate. Rather, it is of the essence of the sacramental charism of episcopal ordination and serves the baptised who have been called by God to bear witness to the glorious gospel of Christ in a broken and violent world hungry for peace, freedom and healing.

The following theses identify the bishop's ministry in relation to the gifts and responsibilities that nurture and grow communion. We were asked to write a contribution that would be helpful to the programme of the Lambeth Conference 2008. It is not therefore a comprehensive theological treatment of episcopacy.

Thesis one sets the episcopate within the life of the whole church. Theses two to seven identify aspects of the office of bishop. Theses eight to ten focus on the place of the episcopate in the life of the church. Our overall concern is the significance of the episcopate for the maintenance of communion in global Anglicanism. However, we also deal with local, diocesan concerns, recognising that the way a bishop fosters communion at the micro level has implications for the way a bishop contributes to the fellowship of the baptised at the macro level. It will be clear from the theses that follow that the deeper issue concerns not only what a bishop does but who a bishop is for Christ and the people. The significance of the episcopate for the renewal of *koinonia* and mission is directly related to how a bishop bears witness in life and service to the holy and triune God.

### **Thesis One: The bishop serves the *koinonia* of the gospel into which the baptised are incorporated by God the Holy Spirit**

God calls all people into a covenantal relationship of love, mercy and justice. By baptism the people of God become participants in the visible body of Jesus Christ. The bishop is called to serve this communion principally as president within the eucharistic community and by ordering those ministries which build up the body. The eucharistic role endows the bishop with responsibilities of representation, as through this ministry parts of the body are brought into sacramental relationship with each other. The bishop is the focal person who links parishes within a diocese not only to one another but also the diocese to the wider church within the Communion and ecumenically. This fundamental theological truth challenges all parochial conceptions of the episcopate that fail to transcend ethnic, social, and cultural realities in which the episcopate is, by nature, necessarily embedded.

Bishops of the Anglican Communion have primary responsibility for Anglicans. However, the nature of the episcopal office means that bishops are called to lead the church towards a deeper *koinonia* amongst all God's people, and in so doing represent the wider Christian community to the diocese. This universal and ecumenical ministry belongs to the bishop's role as a symbol of unity. Yet this symbol is ambiguous because the church is divided and torn. In this context the bishop is a sign of a broken church looking to its Lord for healing and hope through the power of the Spirit.

**Thesis Two: The bishop's evangelical office of proclamation and witness is a fundamental means by which those who hear the call of God become one in Christ**

Bishops in the Anglican Communion are called to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and provide oversight for the witness and the mission of the church in all its aspects. This evangelical office of the bishop is founded upon the good news (*evangelion*). The bishop encourages all God's people to be bearers of the good news of Jesus and to practice personal evangelism through words and actions. This evangelical office includes a prophetic element through which the bishop gives voice to the concerns of a world that seeks justice and a creation that needs care and renewal.

The bishop is called to cherish and nurture the evangelical office always bearing in mind 'how beautiful are the feet of the one who brings good news' (Romans 10.15, Isaiah 52.7). At the heart of this witness is a threefold injunction: to know Christ; to know the power of his resurrection; and to enter into the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings (Philippians 3.10). This dimension of the office gives a fundamental unity to all mission. It is enacted in the eucharist where the bishop gathers and sends the people to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. Through this office the kingdom of God expands and people discover their oneness in Christ the Lord and Saviour. Given its centrality for the establishment of communion for all peoples it is clear that the nature and character of the bishop's evangelical office will occupy a significant part of the collegial life of the episcopate.

**Thesis Three: The bishop is a teacher and defender of the apostolic faith that binds believers into one body**

Bishops vow to guard the apostolic faith. The historic succession in the episcopate is a sign of communion with the apostolic church through time and space. As witnesses to the 'faith once delivered to the saints', bishops are expected to be more than guardians intent on preserving orthodoxy; they are looked upon to be teachers who are able to bring the Scriptures and the creeds

of the church to life in the present day. Their effectiveness as teachers will depend upon the strength of their own educational formation and upon their openness to the questions and concerns of their contemporaries. Very often it is when the Christian tradition interacts with new ways of thinking that previously forgotten or unexplored aspects of Christian truth are disclosed. Growth in theological understanding thus requires a lively memory of the Christian inheritance and capacity to use this to interpret new facts and fresh experiences. In this interaction new insights arise for faith. A bishop's vocation as a teacher is intertwined in a life of prayer and spiritual discipline. This is the crucible in which wisdom is formed and courage found to apply it to everyday life.

Bishops have a special responsibility to encourage attempts to translate the historic faith into the language, ideas and stories of the people. The aim of this is to foster a genuine inculturation that produces both worship and theology that are accessible to the people. Unless this happens the gospel is not understood, the church does not put down deep roots, and communion is weakened as apostolic teaching is misunderstood and distorted. When it does happen, the flourishing of true faith fosters genuine communion across cultures.

In licensing clergy and lay workers, bishops signify that those whom they license are faithful ministers of the Word that gathers and sends the people of God. This means that they must be well equipped theologically for this ministry and mission. The bishop must ensure appropriate theological education and ministerial formation for the diocese. Bishops do well to raise up and support the work of theologians within their dioceses, and to make continuing theological education a high priority for their clergy and lay leaders. A scripture-formed people needs teachers and theologians to help build up the faith of the community and provide resources for the discernment of the Spirit in times of confusion and spiritual hunger.

### **Thesis Four: The bishop has oversight (*episcopo*) of the household of God for the good order of the church**

Bishops are commissioned and sent to be stewards or overseers of God's household within their jurisdiction. They call the people of God into the full expression of the diverse gifts and ministries given by the Holy Spirit. They oversee processes of discernment and selection of candidates for holy orders, ensuring they are well prepared for their ministries, supporting them pastorally and practically, and providing for the good order of ministry in the diocese.

Oversight includes sharing of responsibilities among clergy and lay people. This involves mutual accountability, good communication and willingness to learn from one another. This reciprocity between bishop and people is reflected in the decision making processes of synodical life. This pattern of working together is empowering for all and is a gift to be nurtured at all levels of the life of the church.

The bishop has to ensure the well-being (e.g., spiritual, social, economic) of the diocese in service of its mission. Harnessing resources, fund-raising and financial management of diocesan affairs involves complexities of oversight requiring specialised ministries. Providing *episcope* in this area highlights the administrative and managerial character of the work of a bishop, somewhat akin to a CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of a large organisation. Bishops ought not to underestimate the distorting effects on their oversight of management models associated with the global market economy. This can lead to a management ethos focussed on strategic plans, goal setting, tasks, competition and successful outcomes. This is appealing because it seems to offer clarity and control but the price is often loss of the personal and relational dimension of ecclesial life. The bishop who manages well is one who is aware of the danger of management becoming the basic lens through which *episcope* is practised. This issue raises a question of how bishops handle matters across diocesan and provincial boundaries. At these levels even *koinonia* may become a thing to be ‘managed’ at a distance (i.e., avoiding face-to-face relations) rather than resolutely pursued together with patience.

**Thesis Five: The bishop is called to co-ordinate the gifts of the people of God for the building up of the faithful for the furtherance of God’s mission**

The bishop has the duty of co-ordinating and encouraging the gifts and talents of all the baptised. The Spirit gives varieties of gifts to all God’s people to build up the church for mission. In the secular context of many cultures, success in life is mostly determined against a background of ruthless competition and individualism. In the church ‘we are all members one of another’ (Romans 12.5), and gifts are not the property of any one person but reside in the whole body for the purpose of strengthening the church to serve God’s mission.

Sometimes bishops - like all people - are threatened by the gifts of their brothers and sisters in Christ. They can become jealous, guarding all power and responsibility to themselves, and thereby thwarting the work of the Holy Spirit. Personal prayer and discernment of one’s own gifts, however, turns

one to the nurture of the gifts of others. When a bishop's life is marked by joy in the ministry of others that bishop will be able to share in ministry with other bishops in a non-competitive and generous manner. This is a key to the building of *koinonia* beyond the local diocese. Specialised training in team building and collaborative leadership is critical.

**Thesis Six: The bishop serves the *koinonia* of the gospel through care, encouragement and discipline of the pastors of the church**

To facilitate care of the people of God is fundamental to the episcopal office. To do this the bishop has, so far as is possible, to know and be known by all. Face-to-face relationships of generosity and graciousness are vital for this is where trust is nurtured. Communion in Christ involves sharing in holy friendship, in counsel, prayer and guidance as well as visitation of parishes on special occasions, such as confirmation.

It is clearly not feasible for a bishop to be able to get to know everyone personally. However, the bishop has a special responsibility to care for the pastors who share in the bishop's *episcopate*. Caring for the pastors includes attention to their welfare including practicalities of life as well as their spiritual and vocational health, ensuring continuing ministerial and theological education and ongoing formation. One of the most important ways in which the bishop cares for the pastors is by being an example in the development of habits of self-care and attention to the spiritual disciplines. Such a witness draws people together and raises their sights to new possibilities for freedom in the Spirit.

A bishop's responsibility for the encouragement and discipline of clergy is built upon an exchange of trusts that only comes through patient companionship with others. This is the context in which the bishop can offer guidance and admonition, and call the pastors to honesty, care and mutual accountability. What is true in diocesan life is true at the level of the Communion. Mutual accountability at the international level is the result of a genuinely shared *episcopate*, exchange of trusts and mutual accountability at the diocesan level.

**Thesis Seven: The bishop serves the *koinonia* of the gospel through a ministry of mediation to recall the broken and conflicted body of Christ to its reconciled life in him**

Dealing with conflict is a significant feature of a bishop's work. Most obviously the church is made up of frail and foolish people. The upward call of Christ presumes we are sinners in need of God's grace, forgiveness and

mercy. In this context, *koinonia* is necessarily a partial and vulnerable reality. A bishop's vocation involves tending this *koinonia* through the wise handling of conflict. A ministry of mediation and reconciliation in situations of conflict is relevant at local and wider levels of the church's life. The challenge for bishops is how to harness conflicts so that through this process a deeper *koinonia* in the gospel emerges. Learning to be a reconciler is a life-long task and bishops may benefit greatly from special training in mediation.

**Thesis Eight: The catholicity of the episcopal office connects the baptised across boundaries of culture, class, gender, race and lands and enables the church to realise its oneness in Christ**

Catholicity means that the apostolic faith is expressed in the diverse contexts of the world. The gift of God in Christ is for all people, and the Trinitarian faith expressed in the doctrine and worship of a particular church is to be that of the whole church. The bishop embodies this catholic character of the gospel and through the communion of bishops with each other the communion of the whole people is made possible and real. This also means that a bishop has particular responsibility to strive for a reality in which the eucharist in a diocese is one celebrated by and for the whole church. It is ironic and a cause of sorrow that the sacrament of unity is an occasion of division.

The catholicity of the office means the bishop is an agent of the fullness of the one faith expressed through myriad local forms. Inculturation that is authentic plumbs the heart of the Christian faith. This requires active engagement with the local cultures so that any stumbling blocks to the hearing, receiving and enacting of the Gospel be removed. When this occurs the gifts of the people are harnessed for authentic mission in that time and place. A bishop must truly know the local cultures and values of the people that the bishop has been called to serve and lead. This can be a real challenge, for the bishop is chief pastor within and across particular ethnic, racial, and cultural contexts. Yet in this role the bishop has to ensure that the one catholic faith finds expression through these particular identities without becoming subsumed by them. The catholicity of the office requires a way of life that is constantly in dialogue with others (especially including other bishops) across many boundaries.

Catholicity also means that the decisions that come from any local place are not simply 'local' decisions, but affect all. Bishops have a particular responsibility to bring the church catholic into local processes of discerning the apostolic faith. They also have a responsibility to represent their diocese to the rest of the church, to interpret to the Communion the realities of their

local place. This means explaining not simply the end results of decisions reached, but being able to give theological explanation of the discernment of the Gospel in the culture, and of the catholicity of such decisions. Bishops need the courage and wisdom to be able to hear the voice of others whether within or outside their contexts.

**Thesis Nine: The bishop serves the collegial life of the church through the nurture of strong bonds with bishops of the Anglican Communion and those who share *episcopate* in other Christian churches**

The episcopate is by nature and calling collegial. Each Anglican bishop shares in the *episcopate* of the whole not as though each were a piece of the whole, but as a particular expression of the whole, and as one that cannot exist without the whole. In the first instance this occurs between the bishops in a diocese (i.e., diocesan bishop, assistant and suffragan bishops). Therefore all are called into open relationship with each other in the Communion and with those called to exercise *episcopate* in the wider church. Collegiality means more than working with those with whom one has an affinity. Rather it involves seeing one's ministry not as one's own but as shared with others. At a Provincial level, collegiality involves many practical aspects of co-operative work, study and prayer, and shared responsibility with Synods in Provincial governance. It has particular importance in contexts where the Christian church is in a minority or in a multi-faith context. The patterns of local collegiality-in-communion are a gift to the wider Anglican Communion.

As bishops seek counsel, journey with each other, and pray with and for each other, real relationships grow. But such solidarity is a costly gift. Real relationships are fragile and tainted by sin. If relationships amongst some bishops within a Province are fraught with tensions, refusals of dialogue or other patterns of manipulation undermine collegiality. It is no surprise that these weaknesses show up at the international level. Yet it is of the essence of the episcopate that bishops give themselves over to collegial mutuality in the service of communion. Given the present state of the Anglican Communion it is the special collegial responsibility of the bishop to be at prayer for and with fellow colleagues. This is particularly relevant for those bishops who are in conflict with one another. Their failure to attend fervently to this ordinal vow weakens the body of Christ for which they have responsibility. This in turn weakens the bonds all the baptised share with one another.

**Thesis Ten: A diocesan bishop is given responsibility for *episcopate* in the particular place where the bishop is principal pastor**

It is important for the coherence of the mission of the church that in one place there should be only one principal or chief pastor. Within particular and complex circumstances (for example, where indigenous people have been subjugated), it may be necessary, with the consent of the chief pastor, to provide a specific pastoral ministry of support to a section of a population. However, sight should never be lost of the desirability that a Christian church in a particular place should be a single assembly of people of all kinds.

There are occasions when a church falls out of sympathy with its bishop on a matter of doctrine or conduct. It must not be the case that the mere fact of ease of modern communication and travel becomes the excuse for choosing a leader in another territory to be one's chief pastor. In the case of serious and extensive conflict, it becomes the duty of a diocesan bishop to provide pastoral support in particular congregations. When a diocesan bishop fails to undertake this duty the matter becomes a provincial responsibility.

### ***Conclusion***

The theses outlined above cover a broad range of episcopal responsibilities. There will undoubtedly be matters that have not been dealt with that are significant for bishops in the exercise of their daily office. The intention throughout has been to reflect on the nature of the episcopate in relation to the issue of communion. This focus has been explored at the diocesan level and in relation to the Communion. We are convinced that how a bishop handles the complex and delicate issues surrounding the *koinonia* of the church at the local level of the diocese will influence the way a bishop nurtures communion beyond the diocese.

We have tried to offer a brief outline for a theology of the episcopate that is grounded in the received wisdom from scripture and tradition and also alive to the realities that bishops face as they serve the church's *koinonia* in the gospel. Where relevant we have also tried to indicate areas that might become subject of training and professional development for bishops. More detailed work is currently being conducted in this area by other bodies in the Communion.

We offer this present document as a work in progress. We hope that we have provided a small resource to promote discussion and learning concerning the character of the episcopate. Throughout the diversity of episcopal practices, attitudes and ways of leadership we wonder if there might be room for reflection on the idea of an 'episcopal character' along similar lines to what

has been referred to as the 'baptismal character'? We hope and pray that the bishops of the Anglican Communion may find it useful in their difficult but sacred calling to serve the Lord of the Church who desires that all may be one in Jesus Christ.

# **The meetings of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission**

**2001**

September

Marie Reparatrice Retreat Centre  
Wimbledon, England

**2002**

October

Virginia Theological Seminary  
USA

**2003**

September

Virginia Theological Seminary  
USA

**2006**

September

St Julian's Retreat Centre  
Limuru, Kenya

**2007**

September

Kuala Lumpur, West Malaysia

## The membership of the Commission and meetings attended

- **The Rt Revd Professor Stephen Sykes**, Church of England, Chair (01, 02, 03, 06)
- **Mrs Clare Amos**, Anglican Communion Office, Acting Secretary (07)
- **The Very Revd Dr Victor Atta-Baffoe**, Church of the Province of West Africa (01, 02, 06, 07)
- **The Rt Revd John Baycroft**, Anglican Communion Office, Secretary (02)
- **The Revd Canon Gregory Cameron**, Anglican Communion Office, Secretary (03, 06)
- **The Rt Revd Dr Samuel R Cutting**, Church of North India (06, 07)
- **The Revd Dr Kortright Davis**, Church in the Province of the West Indies (02, 03)
- **The Rt Revd Dr J Mark Dyer**, The Episcopal Church (02, 03)
- **The Rt Revd Tan Sri Dr Lim Cheng Ean**, Church of the Province of South East Asia (01, 02, 03, 06, 07)
- **The Revd Professor Joseph Galgalo**, Anglican Church of Kenya (01, 02, 03, 06)
- **The Revd Canon David Hamid**, Anglican Communion Office, Secretary (01)
- **The Revd Dr Bruce Kaye**, Anglican Church of Australia (02, 06, 07)
- **Professor Esther Mombo**, Anglican Church of Kenya (01, 02, 03, 06)
- **The Rt Revd Dr Matthew Owadayo**, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) (01, 02, 06)
- **The Revd Canon Luke Pato**, Anglican Church of Southern Africa (01, 02, 03, 06, 07)
- **The Rt Revd Associate Professor Stephen K Pickard**, Anglican Church of Australia (01, 02, 03, 06, 07 Acting Chair)
- **The Rt Revd Paul Richardson**, Church of England (01, 02, 03, 06, 07)
- **The Revd Professor Nicholas Sagovsky**, Church of England (01, 02, 03, 06, 07)
- **Dr Eileen Scully**, Anglican Church of Canada (02, 03, 06, 07)
- **Dr Jennie Te Paa**, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand & Polynesia (02, 03, 06, 07)
- **The Revd Canon Philip H E Thomas**, Church of England, Assistant to the Chair (01, 02, 03, 06, 07)

- **The Rt Revd Dr N Thomas Wright**, Church of England (01, 02, 03, 06)
- **The Very Revd Dr Paul Zahl**, The Episcopal Church (02, 03)
- **The Rt Revd Héctor Zavala**, Anglican Church of the Southern Cone of America (02, 03, 06, 07)

#### Observers

- **Mrs Clare Amos**, Anglican Communion Office (06)
- **Mr Wen Ge**, China Christian Council (07)
- **The Revd Dr A Katherine Grieb**, The Virginia Theological Seminary (02, 03, 06)
- **The Revd Canon Philip Groves**, Anglican Communion Office (06)

#### Administrative Staff

- **Mrs Christine Codner**, Anglican Communion Office (01, 02)
- **Ms Frances Hiller**, Anglican Communion Office (01, 02)
- **Ms Gill Harris-Hogarth**, Anglican Communion Office (06)
- **The Revd Terrie Robinson**, Anglican Communion Office (03, 06, 07)



## Endnotes

1. Cf *The Windsor Report* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2004), Foreword, p.11
2. Our initial approach sought to engage the Anglican Primates, dioceses and theological institutions as our primary conversation partners in order to gain properly representative opinion from within an episcopally ordered family, but we also extended this partnership to any individuals and groups who were interested.
3. Committee Report on ‘The Anglican Communion’ in *Lambeth Conference 1948* (London: SPCK, 1948), p.85
4. *Ibid*, p.84
5. *Ibid*
6. *Ibid*, p.85
7. Stephen Pickard offered a paper to the Commission on ‘innovation’ in theology which has since appeared as ‘Innovation and Undecidability: some implications for the Koinonia of the Anglican Church’, *Journal of Anglican Studies* 2/2 (2004), pp.87-105.
8. *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1936)
9. London: Church House Publishing, 1986
10. *Ibid*, Preface, p.1
11. *Ibid*, para 58
12. *Ibid*, para 94
13. *Ibid*, para 95
14. *Women in the Anglican Episcopate* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1998)
15. *The Virginia Report* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1999), Introduction p.3
16. Lambeth 1988 Resolution 18.1
17. *The Virginia Report*, 2/17, p.11
18. Ramsey, p.220. (Such a view might see the church as the new Israel: those who ‘struggle with God’ cf. Genesis 32.22-32.)
19. Ordination of Priests, 1662 BCP. ( See also Psalm 133.)
20. See ‘Reflections offered to the Primates of the Anglican Communion, October 2003’, Available at [www.anglicancommunion.org](http://www.anglicancommunion.org).

21. Ibid
22. World Council of Churches (1982)
23. Lambeth Conference 1930 (London: SPCK, 1930), p.153
24. Ibid
25. This document on the role of the episcopate in sustaining the unity of the Church was prepared at the request of the Archbishop of Canterbury as a training document for bishops, particularly with the 2008 Lambeth Conference in view. The original draft was completed at the October 2006 IATDC meeting in Kenya. This was then revised following consultation with other Communion bodies, and completed at the October 2007 IATDC meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
26. The terms '*koinonia*' and 'communion' can become so much a part of the discourse of a fractured and divided church that they lose their force and significance. *Koinonia* has to do with a fundamental connectivity between God, the world, and all living things, including of course human life. The African word '*ubuntu*' captures something of this primary oneness. In the Genesis story human beings are called 'earthlings' or 'groundlings' (Genesis 2). This underscores the fact that we are 'of the earth' and are intrinsically related to other living things, the whole created environment and God. Such *koinonia* is encoded into the very being of creation. The story of redemption is a story of Christ rejoining people, races and the rest of creation. This is the good news which overcomes sin and broken bonds. There is no other community on the earth with a mandate to bear witness to the remarkable miracle of our oneness in the triune God. What is even more remarkable is that God invites the body of Christ to become the new experiment in the communion of the Holy Spirit. Bishops serve this *koinonia* which is nothing less than the way of creation, salvation and the life of the world to come.

## IATDC Communiqué September 2007

The Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission met between Monday, 10 September and Sunday, 16 September in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Commission is grateful for the warmth of the welcome it received from Bishop Ng Moon Hing, Bishop of the Diocese of West Malaysia, and the efficient help given by the clergy and staff of the Diocese who were responsible for much of the local organisation in preparation for the Commission's meeting. Bishop Lim Cheng Ean, former Bishop of the Diocese and a member of the Commission, also provided invaluable assistance. On the Sunday morning members of the Commission worshipped with several local congregations.

The Commission regretted that its Chair, Bishop Stephen Sykes, was unable to be present because of illness, and members of the Commission sent their good wishes to him. In Bishop Sykes' absence the meeting was chaired by Bishop Stephen Pickard, Assistant Bishop of Adelaide in the Anglican Church of Australia.

The Commission was joined for this meeting by Mr Wen Ge of Nanjing Theological Seminary, China. Mr Wen Ge's presence at this meeting resulted from the visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury to China in October 2006, and the desire to build closer relationships of friendship and co-operation between the Anglican Communion and the China Christian Council. We appreciated the ecumenical perspective that Wen Ge was able to bring to our deliberations.

The work of the Commission concentrated on three areas: drawing to a completion the work of the Communion Study on which the Commission has been working since its formation in 2001, revising the document on Bishops and Communion which it had originally produced during its meeting in 2006, and preparation for the 2008 Lambeth Conference.

The major task of this Commission meeting was to bring to a conclusion the consultative study on the Communion. This has been accomplished successfully, producing a significant report on the nature and sustaining of Communion. The report will be offered to the Archbishop of Canterbury whose predecessor in that office established the present Commission following the Lambeth Conference of 1998. The Commission hopes to publish its report in full during the next few months and it will be presented to the Lambeth Conference.

In relation to the document on Bishops and Communion, entitled *The Anglican Way: The Significance of the Episcopal Office for the Communion of the Church*, the Commission was grateful for the attention and appraisal that the document had received from the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations, and in its revision took account of the comments that IASCEER had made. The Commission also emphasised that the document was produced to meet a particular need, with the provision of resources for the Lambeth Conference in mind, and to link particularly to the bishop's role in fostering and upholding Communion, the overall focus of this Commission's work.

The Commission took up the invitation it had received to reflect on the Draft Text for an Anglican Covenant which has been published by the Covenant Design Group. It also discussed possible contributions in the area of theology and doctrine which it might be able to offer during the forthcoming Lambeth Conference.

With this meeting the work of the Commission draws to a close. From its first gathering, held in disrupted circumstances (due to the events of 9/11) in September 2001, through meetings in England, the United States, Kenya and now Malaysia, members of the Commission have enjoyed working together, perceiving their mutual engagement in Commission meetings and by e-mail as an example of 'communion in action'.

Those present in Kuala Lumpur were:

The Rt Revd Professor Stephen Pickard (Acting Chair), Anglican Church of Australia  
The Revd Canon Dr Philip H E Thomas (Assistant to the Chair), Church of England  
The Revd Dr Victor R Atta-Baffoe, Church of the Province of West Africa  
The Rt Revd Dr Samuel R Cutting, Church of North India  
The Rt Revd Tan Sri Dr Lim Cheng Ean, Church of the Province of South East Asia  
The Revd Dr Bruce N Kaye, Anglican Church of Australia  
The Revd Canon Luke Pato, Anglican Church of Southern Africa  
The Rt Revd Paul Richardson, Church of England  
The Revd Dr Nicholas Sagovsky, Church of England  
Dr Eileen Scully, Anglican Church of Canada  
Dr Jenny Te Paa, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand & Polynesia  
The Rt Revd Hector 'Tito' Zavala, Anglican Church of the Southern Cone of America

#### **Observer**

Mr Wen Ge, China Christian Council

#### **Acting Secretary**

Mrs Clare Amos, Anglican Communion Office

*Administrative staff*

The Revd Terrie Robinson, Anglican Communion Office

## Theological Resources for Anglican 'Communion' Issues

### IATDC 'Communion' Issues - October 2006

Three documents produced at the recent meeting of the Inter-Anglican Doctrinal and Theological Commission have been commended by the Archbishop of Canterbury for study throughout the Anglican Communion.

In common with other commissions and networks, the IATDC considered the proposal of the Windsor Report for the creation of an Anglican covenant which could express the way in which Anglicans in different parts of the world live together. [‘Responding to the Proposal of a Covenant’](#) reflects on the biblical and ecclesiological background to the idea of covenant, and observes ways in which the concept of covenanting may be fruitfully employed to demonstrate a way in which Anglicans seek to stay together in times of controversy.

The Archbishop had invited the Commission to give attention to the particular role of bishops in maintaining the unity of the church. The equipping of bishops for their work and ministry is expected to be an important element in the next Lambeth Conference (2008), and the Commission has offered [a number of theses](#) as a theological and doctrinal under-girding for that process.

The ongoing work of the IATDC, a study of ‘the nature and maintenance of communion, and especially the Anglican Communion’ was resumed, and a [‘Summary Argument from the “Communion Study”](#)’ incorporates insights gained from the most recent, third round of conversations with Anglican bishops and theological teachers which the Commission has been facilitating.

The Chair of the IATDC, the Rt Rev Professor Stephen Sykes, commented: "The meeting in Kenya was very good indeed, and I think we are developing a really positive assessment of things which hold Anglicans together today. The three papers that were produced indicate something of our understanding so far, and I hope they may prove to be useful as the Anglican Communion continues to explore its identity as a world-wide Christian community".

The Archbishop has remitted all three papers to the St Augustine’s Seminar (4 to 11 November 2006) which will be undertaking preparatory work on the Lambeth Conference agenda. The theses on the Episcopal office will also be offered to the Theological Education for the Anglican Communion (TEAC) training programme, and responses to the idea of an Anglican covenant forwarded to the Covenant Design Group.

The IATDC expects to meet in Kuala Lumpur next year in order to complete and develop the overall Communion Study.

## Responding to a proposal of a covenant - October 2006

### 1. A theology for the life of a covenanted community

1. Everything about being Christian – worship, prayer, mission, fellowship, holiness, works of mercy and justice – is rooted in the basic belief that the one God who made the world has acted in sovereign love to call out a people for himself, a people through whom he is already at work to anticipate his final purpose of reconciling all things to himself, things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1.10). This is what the creator God has done, climactically and decisively, in and through Jesus Christ, and is now implementing through the Holy Spirit. But this notion of God calling a people to be his own, a people through whom he will advance his ultimate purposes for the world, did not begin with Jesus. Jesus himself speaks of the time being fulfilled, and his message and ministry look back, as does the whole of earliest Christianity, to the purposes of God in, through and for his people Israel. The Gospels tell the story of Jesus as the story of how God's purposes for Israel and the world reach their intended goal. Paul writes of the gospel of Jesus being 'promised beforehand through God's prophets in the holy scriptures', and argues that what has been accomplished in Jesus Christ is what God always had in mind when he called Abraham (Galatians 3; Romans 4). The earliest Christian writers, in their different ways, all bear witness to this belief: that those who follow Jesus, those who trust in his saving death and believe in his resurrection, are carrying forward the purposes for which God called Abraham and his family long before. And those purposes are not for God's people only: they are for the whole world. God calls a people so that through this people – or, better, through the unique work of Jesus Christ which is put into effect in and through this people in the power of the Spirit – the whole world may be reconciled to its creator.
2. A key term which emerges from much Jewish and Christian writings and which brings into sharp focus this whole understanding of God and God's purposes is *covenant*. The word has various uses in today's world (in relation, for instance, to financial matters, or to marriage), but its widespread biblical use goes way beyond such analogies. God established a covenant (*berit*) with Abraham (Genesis 15), and the writer(s) or at least redactor(s) of Genesis, in the way they tell that story, indicate clearly enough that God's call of Abraham, and the covenant established with him, was intended to be the means whereby God would address the problem of the human race and so of the entire created order. Genesis 12, 15 and the whole story address the problem set out in Genesis 3-11: the problem, that is, of human rebellion and death and the consequent apparent thwarting of the creator's plan for his human creatures and the whole of creation (Genesis 1-2). And these texts claim – this claim is echoed right across the Old Testament – that God has in principle solved that problem with the establishment of this covenant. Already the story offers itself as the story of God's uncaused, gracious

and generous *love*: God is under no obligation to rescue humans, and the world, from their plight, but chooses to do so and takes the initiative to bring it about. As the story develops throughout the Old Testament this *covenant love* is referred to in various terms, e.g. *hesed*.

3. The covenant with Abraham is then dramatically developed as God fulfils a promise made in Genesis 15, namely that he would rescue Abraham's family from slavery in Egypt. The story of the Exodus, with God bringing the Israelites through the Red Sea and pointing them towards their promised land, reaches a climax when they arrive at Mount Sinai and are given the Law (*Torah*) as the covenant charter, prefaced by God's declaration that Israel is to be his holy people, a nation of priests chosen out of and on behalf of the whole world (Exodus 19). The Law is meant to sustain Israel as the *covenant community*, the people who are bound to the creator God as in a solemn marriage vow (as in Hosea), and to one another as God's people, and through whom God's purposes are to be extended in the world. This vocation and intention is sorely tested as Israel repeatedly rebels against God, and the covenant is repeatedly renewed (Deuteronomy 31; Joshua 9, 24; 2 Kings 11.17; some have suggested that the Psalms provide evidence of frequent, perhaps annual, 'covenant renewal'). The prophets regularly call Israel back to the obligations of the covenant, obligations both to God and to one another. But Israel, the bearer of God's covenant promises which ultimately embrace the whole world, proves unfaithful, and is driven into exile – which the prophets interpret in terms of the covenant, understanding exile as covenantal punishment for covenantal disobedience. This is the more striking in that the covenant always envisaged Israel's being given the promised land, and the land being blessed when Israel is obedient to the covenant (see Deuteronomy, and e.g. Psalm 67).
4. It is at this point that there emerges the promise of a *new covenant*, through which (this is the point) God will at last do in and through Israel what the earlier covenants intended but did not bring about. Jeremiah 31 (similarly, Ezekiel 36) speaks both of the forgiveness of the sins which had brought the earlier plans to ruin and also of a new knowledge of God which will come to characterise God's people. It is this ancient promise which the earliest Christians saw as having been fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus himself, indeed, spoke at the Last Supper of his forthcoming death as establishing the new, sin-forgiving covenant, and of the bread and the wine as somehow symbolizing that event, with that significance – and thus also effectively symbolizing the way in which his followers could find new life, together as a community and as individuals, through feeding on him and his saving death. From that moment on, believing in Jesus, following him, seeking to live out his accomplishment through mission in God's world (bringing it to new fruitfulness and justice, as Israel's obedience was to bring blessing to the land), take place within what can with deep appropriateness be described as the *new covenant community*, constituted and reconstituted as such again and again not

least precisely through sharing (*koinonia*, 'communion' or 'fellowship') at his table. According to Paul, all those who believe in Jesus belong at this table, no matter what their personal, moral, ethnic or other background, and are thereby to be renewed in faith and holiness and energised for God's mission in the world. Baptism, the sign of entry into the renewed covenant, marks out not just individuals but the whole community of the baptized. To live as God's covenant people is thus the basic call of Christians, of the church of God. To speak of being in covenant with God and with one another is nothing new for Christians. Indeed, not to do so – even by implication – is to call into question the classic model of Christian faith and life.

1. [We recognise that this early Christian understanding of the new covenant community raises sharply the question of the relationship between the emerging Christian family – most of whom, in the early period, were of course themselves Jewish – and the continuing community of those Jews who did not recognise Jesus as Messiah and Lord; and, today, the question of the relationship between Christians and Jews. This is not the place to discuss this complex issue, but it would be inappropriate not to mention it.]
  
5. There are indications that the earliest Christians drew on existing models within Judaism of what a 'new covenant community' might look like. In a way markedly similar to what we find in the Dead Sea Scrolls, the early Jerusalem Church held their possessions in common, and those in any individual family who were in need were the responsibility of all (hence the problems about widows in e.g. Acts 6 and 1 Timothy). Though a strict sharing of everything was not followed in the Pauline churches, we should not underplay the practical meaning of *agape*, 'love', in Paul, but rather give it its full meaning of mutual practical support (e.g. 1 Thessalonians 4.9-12). Paul chooses a special term ('*koinonia*') that has both commercial and social implications to describe his covenant friendship with the Philippians. They were in 'partnership' together for the spreading of the gospel and the mission of the church to the Gentiles in God's name. Although Paul and the Philippians are in different locations doing different tasks, they are nevertheless partners 'in Christ', sharing the risks as well as celebrating the successes of the gospel. The point is that Christians are to think of themselves as *a single family*, in a world where 'family' means a good deal more in terms of mutual obligations and expectations than in many parts of today's Western world at least. The community of the new covenant thus quickly came to see itself – and to be seen by the watching, puzzled and often hostile world – as marked out from all other social, cultural and religious groupings, with the marking-out being primarily its devotion and loyalty to Jesus as Lord and its belief that the one God of Abraham had, by raising Jesus from the dead, fulfilled his ancient promises and launched the final stage of his world-transforming purpose. The new covenant

community thus exists to set forward the mission of God in the power of the Spirit, and is therefore called to a shared, common life of holiness and reconciliation. The message of forgiveness and healing for the world must be enacted and embodied by the community that bears the message.

6. From the beginning, this vocation constituted a severe challenge for Jesus' followers, and there never was a time when they met it perfectly. The early church proceeded by a series of puzzles, mistakes, infidelities, quarrels, disputes, personality clashes and a host of other unfortunate events as well as by faithful witness, martyrdom, generous love, notable holiness (remarked on with great surprise by some pagan observers, who didn't know such lifestyles were possible), and a genuine openness and obedience to God's often surprising and dangerous call. Since (in other words) being an early Christian seems to have been no less challenging and often perplexing than being a modern one, it is no surprise that the early Christians quickly developed a sense of how God guided his people and enabled them to discern the way forward both in new mission initiatives and in matters of dispute within their common life. Central to it all was the sense of the presence of the risen Jesus Christ in their midst ('where two or three are gathered in his name', as Jesus himself puts it in Matthew 18), so that the covenant community is not a mere human institution following an agenda but a fellowship of disciples together seeking to know, listen to, worship, love and serve their Lord. In particular, the community we see in Acts, the Epistles and the writings of the second century was constantly concerned to invoke, celebrate and be deeply sensitive to the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit. Repeatedly this involved fresh searchings of scripture (for the earliest Christians, the Old Testament; for the next generation, the apostolic traditions as well) and serious prayer and fasting, waiting for a common mind to emerge.
7. In and through it all the *unity* of the church – unity both within local churches and between different churches – emerges as a vital strand, not least as persecution mounts and the church finds itself under dire threat. Indeed, the *koinonia* of the new covenant community, as the people who give allegiance to Jesus as 'Lord' in a world where there were many 'Lords', notably the Roman emperor, meant that from the beginning there was a necessary (and dangerous) political implication to the founding and maintaining of a trans-ethnic and trans-national covenant community. All kinds of attempts were made to fracture this unity, and many early writers devote attention to maintaining it, to guarding it, and to re-establishing it when broken. It is at that point (for instance) that Paul works out his position about 'things indifferent' (those aspects of common life about which the community should be able to tolerate different practice), as well as his position about those things (e.g. incest) which the community should not tolerate at any price (1 Corinthians 5, 8). The vital unity of the covenant community needs the careful and

prayerful use of quite sophisticated tools of discernment, tools that were already developed in the earliest church and are needed still.

8. It is this complex yet essentially simple vision of the people of God which is invoked when the church today thinks of itself as a 'covenant community'. That is not to say that all uses of the word 'covenant' in today's discussions necessarily imply that the 'covenants' we enter into (for instance, those between different Christian denominations) are somehow the *same* as the fundamental biblical covenant between God and his people. But the use of the word in today's church carries, and honours, the memory of the biblical covenant(s). It seeks to invoke and be faithful to the themes we have explored above: the sovereign call of God to belong to him and to work in the power of his Spirit for his purposes in the world, and the consequent call to the unity, reconciliation, and holiness which serve that mission.
9. There is no sense, of course, that introducing the notion of 'covenant' into talk of mutual relationships between Christians implies the establishment of a *further* 'new covenant' over and above *the* 'new covenant' inaugurated by Jesus Christ. Rather, all use of covenantal language in relation to the church today must be seen as a proposal for a specific kind of recommitment within that same covenant, in particular situations and in relation to particular communities. And, once we start talking of being in covenant with one another, we are immediately reminded of our participation in the covenant which God has made with us in Jesus Christ. The horizontal relationship with one another is dependent, theologically and practically, on the vertical relationship with the creating, loving and reconciling God we know in Jesus and by the Spirit.
10. The notion of 'covenant' has not been prominent to date within Anglican traditions of polity and organisation ('covenantal' language has, of course, been familiar from teachings on, for instance, baptism and marriage). But the picture of the church developed by the sixteenth-century Reformers, by great theoreticians like Hooker (who explored the notion of 'contract'), and by many subsequent writers, sets out models of church life for which 'covenant', with the biblical overtones explored briefly above, may serve as a convenient, accurate and evocative shorthand. Recent discussions of Anglican identity, addressing the uncertainty as to how Anglicans are bound together around the world, have explored the notion of 'bonds of affection', the powerful though elusive ties that hold us together in friendship and fellowship. This kind of *relational* bonding, we believe, remains central to any appropriate understanding of our shared communion.
11. It is out of that relational understanding of worldwide Anglicanism that the proposal for a 'covenant' has now grown, and it is in that sense that the proposal is to be understood. The IATDC, the Windsor Report, and the Primates, have all suggested that we seek to work towards a more

explicit 'Anglican Covenant', not in order to bind us to new, strange and unhelpful obligations, but rather to set us free both from disputes which become damaging and dishonouring and from the distraction which comes about when, lacking an agreed method, we flail around in awkward attempts to resolve them. This is not seeking to introduce an alien notion into an Anglicanism which has never thought like this before. Rather, it seeks to draw from the deep scriptural roots in which Anglicanism has always rejoiced, and from the more recent awareness of 'bonds of affection', a more explicit awareness of those covenantal beliefs and practices which resonate deeply with many aspects of Anglican tradition and which urgently need to be refreshed and clarified if the church is to serve God's mission in coming generations. To the suggestion that such a new move appears to be restrictive or cumbersome, there is an easy reply. When the ground is soft and easy, we can walk on it with light or flimsy shoes. When it gets stony, muddy or steep we put on walking boots, not because we don't want to be free to walk but because we do.

## 2. Reflections on some models of covenants for today

1. Since the idea of 'covenant' has a long and powerful biblical tradition, it is filled with possibilities for the ordering of our life together as Anglican Christians. Discussions about entering into a possible covenant by member churches of the Anglican Communion raise urgent questions about how we can move forward together and what we ought to do. What sort of covenant might help to order our life together in fruitful ways? Because it is used primarily to define the relationship between God and Israel, the term 'covenant' has an overwhelmingly positive sense in scripture, as we have seen. At the same time, the term 'covenant' is ambiguous enough to require further clarification. Several models of covenant have been proposed and it is useful to tease out their strengths and weaknesses on the way to framing the covenant that will be most useful.
2. A 'largely descriptive' (WR62:118) covenant that simply reiterates 'existing principles' carefully worded to avoid any controversy or mention of the issues dividing us will probably not be of much use for overcoming those divisions. On the other hand, an overly specific and detailed covenant tied entirely to the present controversies may not be of much help in the future for the next set of issues that arises. A covenant that consists merely of conforming constitutions and canon law throughout the Anglican Communion, helpful as that would be, would not pick up on the inter-personal and relational issues so prominent within the biblical examples of covenant. Nor would it address the 'bonds of affection' that commit us to discovering together the truth to which the Spirit of God is leading us. Any 'workable' covenant must reflect carefully negotiated 'content' as well as 'form' or 'methodology'. It should clarify and simplify, reflecting both 'narrative' and 'visionary' aspects of

covenant. Narrative aspects of covenant recall the context and circumstances leading to the present moment, while visionary aspects of covenant point to the goals and future directions towards which we move in hope. A biblical example of a 'covenant' that combines narrative and visionary components is the Book of Deuteronomy. It has the typical 'shape' of a covenant in two parts: recitals (statements of past history, the present situation and the desired future) and commitments (binding agreements between the partners to the covenants).

3. A covenant for the Anglican Communion should reflect the memory of Anglican historical traditions and also summarise our present understanding of 'the Anglican way'. In addition, it should provide a way forward, a way of re-committing to the whole project of an Anglican Communion understood as God's gift and God's commandment: a vocation to be realised rather than a fact already achieved. The covenant as a vision for mission both stresses the importance of the work to be done and binds its members to one another for greater effectiveness in accomplishing it.
4. Most importantly the covenant envisioned for the Anglican Communion is not static. Instead, it is a dynamic process like a marriage covenant. Just as the marriage partnership grows as it is tested by unforeseen circumstances and new situations, so the provinces of the Communion can expect to change and grow in ways they might never have expected. In a marriage, the partners grow together, walking alongside one another into the unknown future. So also in the Church 'we walk by faith and not by sight'.
5. Two possible models of covenant have received considerable attention, both as to tone and content: The covenant draft included in Appendix Two of TWR has been described as 'juridical' in style: a 'set of house rules' designed to prevent misconduct and/or to specify procedures for dealing with it. By contrast the draft covenant produced by IASCOME is considered to be 'motivational' in form, providing a 'vision for Anglican faithfulness' to God's mission in relational terms quite apart from a juridical context. Each of these has both strengths and weaknesses as suggested above. A covenant that is entirely 'motivational' may lack the ability to require serious commitments and thus achieve too little. On the other hand, a 'juridical' covenant may achieve too much, actually provoking the schism it intends to prevent, by its judgements separating 'the wheat and the tares' prematurely, which for now should be left to grow together (Matthew 13). A serious question has framed our preliminary discussions of these matters: would a covenant create more divisions or fewer divisions among us?

### 3. The issue of persistent conflict in relation to a covenant and its operation

1. The power of the gospel as it intersects with new cultural and linguistic situations, unanticipated circumstances, and the complexities of an incarnated Christian existence produces both surprises and conflicts on a regular basis. Because the gospel has been both relational and incarnational from the start, it is entirely predictable that from the start Christians have been arguing about what it meant in the new cultural contexts in which they found themselves. The gospel was proclaimed to Gentiles as well as to Jews; it travelled from Jerusalem, Judaea, and Samaria to the ends of the earth; it became written as well as oral; it was translated into a variety of languages; it travelled by land and sea accompanying monastics and pilgrims, monarchs and military operations, explorations and empires. Moreover, the gospel continues to expand and develop, assuming ever new forms as it intersects with new questions and new cultural contexts. There never has been a time when the church did not experience conflicting interpretations of the gospel and the need to renegotiate its life together by some form of covenant renewal or ecclesiastical settlement.
2. Over time, the Church has learned that not all conflicts are on the same level of importance. Some differences of opinion are minor or matters of temporary or local significance. Other have lasting effects, involve large numbers of people, affect multiple situations, and treat issues of great weight and substance. The principle of 'subsidiarity' suggests that disputes of local importance can most efficiently be decided at the local level; on the other hand 'what pertains to all ought to be decided by all'. In discerning whether a conflict should be addressed at the local level, the universal level, or at some level in-between, the three criteria of 'intensity, extent and substance', as proposed in our report of 2003 commend themselves. If a conflict has become intense, it is less likely to be resolved easily at the local level; if its scope is extensive, involving many people in multiple locations, a universal solution is probably required; if the matter is substantial rather than trivial or peripheral, a larger structural resolution seems indicated.
3. These observations suggest an important corollary to the concept of covenant-making: any covenant requires an instrument to interpret it. There is no such thing as a self-interpreting covenant any more than there are self-interpreting scriptures. A covenant implies an interpretive body to decide on what level of polity it is best addressed and whether or to what extent it has been breached. This result is more than a curiosity in a tradition such as Anglicanism where authority is dispersed rather than centralised in a pope and/or magisterium. The subtle interplay between persuasion and coercion characteristic of the Anglican way complicates any simplistic attempt to resolve conflicts by appealing them to one figure or body. Nevertheless, issues of intensity, extent, and substance require a solution in a way that will be satisfactory to the great

majority. Otherwise resentment grows and mistrust materialises in ways harmful to the spread of the gospel, the mission of the church to anticipate the reign of God.

#### **4. Staging a covenantal response to conflict**

1. The proposal for a covenant from the Windsor Report is an attempt to find a way for Anglicans to walk together with love and openness. As a pilgrim community Anglicans have often explored institutional possibilities. Just as Paul had his 'ways' in order to serve the churches (1 Corinthians 4.17), so Anglicans have sought to find 'ways' of serving the gospel. By stepping out in faith Paul began his mission to the gentiles, and in a further step went to Macedonia (Acts 16.9). Some centuries later, Theodore (Archbishop of Canterbury 668-690) sought to reform and renew the life of the church through the instrument of synods. The church has regularly approached new situations by living faithfully one step at a time.
2. The present proposals for a covenant will inevitably take time to emerge, since the covenant is recognised as a significant institutional development. These proposals are an attempt to discern the will of God for the life of the Anglican churches around the world.
3. Anglicans now face the challenge of dealing with an acute conflict. Some churches in the Communion have acted in a way which other churches find contrary to Christian belief and practice. This is a conflict over an element of the faith within the church. For the Anglican Communion this is complicated by the fact that the conflict is among churches within the Communion as well as within individual churches. It is not just a question of how to deal with an individual person within a parish. It involves relations between institutions, between churches with their constitutions and organisations; their polities, by which they have agreed to walk together in obedience to the will of God.
4. In order to maintain unity and meet new challenges, Anglicans have in the past developed new institutional arrangements, such as the informal gathering of bishops at Lambeth. We have created Networks to listen to each other and Commissions to serve the churches of the Communion in various aspects of their life and mission. Just as the Lambeth Conference has evolved its modes of operating, so perceptions of the role of the Lambeth Conference have changed over the years. The development of appropriate institutions is part of a pilgrimage of discernment as Anglican churches seek to walk together with love and openness in the service of Christ.
5. The present crisis is now urgent, substantial and a source of conflict and pain for many Anglicans across the world. Responding to conflict is never easy. We recoil from the hurt it brings and shudder at the implications of

failure which it seems to have for our fellowship and witness to the love of Christ. But conflict should prompt us to greater contact not less, to more intense commitment to love each other and to understand the forces at play in our own faltering pilgrimage.

6. Love binds us together and provides the basis for honesty with each other especially where there is profound disagreement and division. In such a situation Anglicans will again return to the scriptures. There are many examples of conflict in the churches of the New Testament. Matthew reports on a way of dealing with conflict in stages (Matthew 18.15). Paul often had to deal with conflict. Acts 15 reports conflict in the early church over the circumcision of gentile Christians. This conflict did not lead the protagonists to distance themselves from each other. On the contrary they came together openly to lay before each other their differences. They testified to their experience of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church and by the same Spirit sought to live together in openness and love.
7. Lobby groups are a natural form of persuasion in any large community. However, this process is open to corruption when persuasion and influence are exercised in private. Such a tendency can have the effect of corroding the trust and openness which is vital to our walking together. It may be that there should be some code of ethics among us in regard to private lobbying activities. Such a code would inform our common understanding and fellowship.
8. The faith which we bring as Anglicans to any encounter will include our essential commitment to listen to scripture together, to be aware that in our pilgrimage we walk by faith a step at a time in humility. We will be aware that our tradition of dispersed authority emphasises the priority of loving persuasion and we will be conscious that we are part of the One Holy Catholic Church of Christ and stand in the shadow of the saints of God who have gone before us. We live out the catholic faith in engagement with each other in the wider fellowship of Anglican churches. The test in what we do will be that given by Jesus himself; 'by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another' (John 13.35).

## **5. Bringing theology to bear in situations of conflict**

1. The covenanting process is about how the churches of the Anglican Communion relate to each other in their common vocation. Conflict often arises because of different theological perceptions on matters in the life of the Communion. This is true whether or not the issue at stake in a conflict is located in the ethical part of the theological spectrum. The life of the Anglican Communion would be enhanced by the contribution of a serious theological consideration of the subject of any conflict of sufficient 'intensity, extent and substance'. A body which was able to

provide such a contribution would greatly assist in clarifying the theological issues at stake.

2. Such a body would be concerned with doctrine because it would address matters of truth about the faith we share. It would therefore be made up of the best of our theologians, people whose competence and wisdom as theologians was recognised and respected by all. The body should have the power to co-opt consultants to advise them on any specific aspects of any question they were considering.
  3. The task of this body would be to clarify the issues at stake, to identify the agreements and disagreements and to shape a view of these things in the light of the Anglican heritage of scriptural faith.
  4. It should report publicly and its report should go to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Anglican Consultative Council, the Primates Meeting and the Lambeth Conference. The effect of such a sequence of reports would be to introduce into the sensibilities of the common life of the Anglican Communion a growing corpus of wisdom on the nature of Anglican faith in relation to matters drawn out of the actual life of the churches. That wisdom would be available to any of the institutions of the Communion.
  5. Such a body could be created very quickly. In the present circumstances this would greatly encourage many that there is a forum which directly addresses the issue in conflict at a significant level of recognition in the Communion.
- 6. The covenant proposal and the vocation of Anglicans to communion in a fallen world**
1. The communion that Anglicans share is a precious gift. The present crisis in the Anglican Communion constitutes an opportunity to re-commit ourselves to one another in renewed obedience to God's call. A covenant which expressed that commitment would not be something entirely *de novo* but rather a development of the 'bonds of affection' which bind us to one another. In making such a covenant at the present time we would be acknowledging that in specific situations, especially situations of conflict, threat or opportunity, God calls his people to discern his will afresh and to re-commit themselves to him and to one another. There is much we can learn here from the annual Methodist Covenant Service as it has been incorporated into the Church of North India.
  2. In a situation of conflict the discernment of God's will for his people is not an easy task. It demands fresh study of scripture, the careful presentation of arguments, patient listening to one another and preparedness to wait in uncertainty and hope until a clearer understanding of the truth emerges. All of this will, for God's people, be

grounded in love for one another, trust that we are together committed to seeking God's way, and hope that the Holy Spirit will indeed lead us into all truth (John 16.13). This need for patience with some person, or with an entire body, that expresses contrary views is expressed very clearly by Augustine, when he says,

Let him, again, who says, when he reads my book, 'Certainly I understand what is said, but it is not true', assert, if he pleases, his own opinion, and refute mine if he is able. And if he do this with charity and truth, and take the pains to make it known to me (if I am still alive), I shall then receive the most abundant fruit of this my labour. ... Yet, for my part, 'I meditate in the law of the Lord' (Psalm 1:2) ... hoping by the mercy of God that he will make me hold steadfastly all truths of which I feel certain; 'but if in anything I be otherwise minded, that he will himself reveal even this to me' (Philippians 3:15), whether through secret inspiration and admonition, or through his own plain utterances, or through the reasonings of my brethren. This I pray for ... (*De Trinitate* 1.1.5, translated by A W Haddan, revised by W G T Shedd, ed. P Schaff, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Series, vol. III, Edinburgh: T and T Clark/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprinted, 1993).

Augustine speaks of a commitment to truth that entails dialogue with the other – who is my sister or my brother in Christ. He speaks of an increasing understanding of truth within the Body of Christ and of the human grasp on truth as corporate and fallible. Within the communion of the Church he looks to the other as someone through whom he may grow in knowledge of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

3. In the same Spirit, Anglicans, bound together in communion, need each other in order to grow in faith, knowledge and love (cf. 2 Peter 1.5-7). We are committed to encouraging one another and to learning from one another's experience of discipleship in particular situations. Since we are weak, fallible and living in a fallen world, there is always the need for humility and mutual forgiveness. Anglicans, like all Christians, have to face honestly the ways in which hurt has been given within the Body of Christ, for example, through colonialism, patriarchy and other mechanisms of exclusion. We know that truly to discover the mind of Christ we have to go by the way of self-emptying, humility and obedience which is also the way of the cross (Philippians 2.5-11). A re-affirmation of our commitment to one another in covenant would thereby become a re-commitment in hope of the reconciliation of all things in Christ, who has established our peace by the blood of his cross (Colossians 1.20).

## The Anglican Way: The Significance of the Episcopal Office for the Communion of the Church - October 2006

### Preamble:

At this time in the life of the global Anglican Communion tensions and rifts between Provinces – and bishops -- have seriously impaired the fellowship (koinonia) of the baptised. The reasons for these difficulties are complex and no one would imagine that it is an easy matter to restore fellowship across the churches of the Communion. In such circumstances we can forget that our life together is a gracious gift bestowed by the Lord. It is a gift that serves the mission of God in the world and directly impacts on the integrity and power of our witness to the gospel.

How can we proclaim one Lord, one faith and one baptism when the gift of koinonia seems to be so easily set aside for a supposedly greater goal? What can be more fundamental to our life on earth than our essential interconnectedness with others and the world.<sup>[1]</sup> This koinonia or oneness is given by God in creation and renewed in Christ and the Spirit. It is a gift which subsists in the whole body of Christ prior to its embodiment in an 'instrument of unity' or particular ecclesial office. Furthermore, like all gifts of God, it can only be a blessing as it is faithfully received and shared by all. It is critical for this truth to be grasped by an often anxious and fearful Church that seeks heroes and leaders to heal its inner life.

Bishops bear a particular responsibility for the maintenance and nurture of koinonia. Their actions impact upon the whole body of the faithful for we are all 'members one of another' (Romans 12:5). The ordinal is clear that bishops of the Church have a great and grave responsibility to the Lord of the Church for the fellowship of all the baptised. Accordingly we offer these ten theses on the role and responsibilities of bishops for the well-being of the communion of the whole church. In the theses that follow it should be abundantly clear that the maintenance of koinonia is not an optional extra or luxury for the episcopate. Rather, at this time in our history the furtherance of koinonia bears directly on the peace and freedom of the baptised. It is they who have been called by God to bear witness to the glorious gospel of Christ in a broken and violent world hungry for peace, freedom and healing.

The following theses identify the bishop's ministry in relation to the gifts and responsibilities that nurture and grow communion. Thesis One sets the episcopate within the life of the whole church. Theses two to seven identify aspects of the office of bishop. Theses eight to ten focus on the place of the episcopate in the life of the Church. Our overall concern is the significance of the episcopate for the maintenance of communion in global Anglicanism. However, we also deal with local, diocesan concerns, recognizing that the way a bishop fosters communion at the micro level has implications for the way a bishop contributes to the fellowship of the baptised at the macro level. It will be clear from the theses that follow that the deeper issue concerns not only what a bishop does but who a bishop is for Christ and the people. The significance of the episcopate for the renewal of koinonia and mission is directly related to how a bishop bears witness in life and service to the holy and triune God.

## **Thesis One: The Bishop serves the koinonia of the gospel into which the baptised are incorporated by God the Holy Spirit**

Through the gospel God calls all people into relationship and establishes a covenant of love, mercy and justice. By baptism the people of God become participants in the visible body of Jesus Christ. The bishop is called to serve this new fellowship by actively fostering the koinonia of the Body of Christ. Just as the eucharist is the focal event which connects communities of faith together so the bishop is the focal person who links communities of faith not only to one another but to the wider Church. As a result the bishop has a universal and ecumenical role. This fundamental theological truth challenges all parochial conceptions of the episcopate that fail to transcend ethnic, social, and cultural realities in which the episcopate is, by nature, necessarily embedded.

Bishops of the Anglican Communion have primary responsibility for Anglicans. However, the nature of the episcopal office means that bishops are called to lead the Church towards a deeper koinonia amongst all God's people, and in so doing represent the wider Christian community to the diocese. This universal and ecumenical ministry belongs to the bishop's role as a symbol of unity. Yet this symbol is ambiguous because the Church is divided and torn. In this context the bishop is a sign of a broken Church looking to its Lord for healing and hope through the power of the Spirit.

## **Thesis Two: The bishop's evangelical office of proclamation and witness is a fundamental means by which those who hear the call of God become one in Christ**

Bishops in the Anglican Communion are called to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and provide oversight for the witness and the mission of the Church in all its aspects. This evangelical office of the bishop is founded upon the good news (*evangelion*). The bishop encourages all God's people to be bearers of the good news of Jesus and practice personal evangelism through words and actions. This evangelical office includes a prophetic element through which the bishop gives voice to the concerns of a world that seeks justice and a creation that needs care and renewal.

The bishop is called to cherish and nurture the evangelical office always bearing in mind 'how beautiful are the feet of the one who brings good news' (Romans 10:15, Isaiah 52:7). At the heart of this witness is a threefold injunction: to know Christ; to know the power of his resurrection; and to enter into the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings (Philippians 3:10). This dimension of the office gives a fundamental unity to all mission. It is symbolised in the eucharist where the bishop gathers and sends the people to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. Through this office the kingdom of God expands and people discover their oneness in Christ the Lord and Saviour. Given its centrality for the establishment of communion for all peoples it is clear that the nature and character of the bishop's evangelical office will occupy a significant part of the collegial life of the episcopate.

## **Thesis Three: The bishop is a teacher and defender of the apostolic faith that binds believers into one body**

Bishops vow to guard the apostolic faith. The historic succession in the episcopate is a sign of communion with the apostolic Church through time and space. As witnesses to the 'faith once delivered to the saints', bishops are expected to be more than guardians intent on preserving orthodoxy; they are looked upon to be teachers who are able to bring the Scriptures and the creeds of the Church to life in the present day. Their effectiveness as teachers will depend upon the strength of their own educational formation and upon their openness to the questions and concerns of their contemporaries. Very often it is when the Christian tradition interacts with new ways of thinking that previously forgotten or unexplored aspects of Christian truth are disclosed. Growth in theological understanding thus requires a lively memory of the Christian inheritance and capacity to use this to interpret new facts and fresh experiences. In this interaction new insights arise for faith. A bishop's vocation as a teacher is intertwined in a life of prayer and spiritual discipline. This is the crucible in which wisdom is formed and courage found to apply it to everyday life.

Bishops have a special responsibility to encourage attempts to translate the historic faith into the language, ideas and stories of the people. The aim of this is to foster a genuine inculturation that produces both worship and theology that are accessible to the people. Unless this happens the gospel is not understood, the Church does not put down deep roots, and communion is weakened as apostolic teaching is misunderstood and distorted. When it does happen, the flourishing of true faith fosters genuine communion across cultures.

In licensing clergy and lay workers, bishops signify that those whom they license are faithful ministers of the Word that gathers and sends the people of God. This means that they must be well equipped theologically for this ministry and mission. The bishop must ensure appropriate theological education and ministerial formation for the diocese. Bishops do well to raise up and support the work of theologians within their dioceses, and to make continuing theological education a high priority for their clergy and lay leaders. A scripture-formed people needs teachers and theologians to help build up the faith of the community and provide resources for the discernment of the Spirit in times of confusion and spiritual hunger.

#### **Thesis Four: The Bishop has oversight (episcopo) of the household of God for the good order of the Church**

Bishops are commissioned and sent to be stewards or overseers of God's household within their jurisdiction. They call the people of God into the full expression of the diverse gifts and ministries given by the Holy Spirit. They oversee processes of discernment and selection of candidates for holy orders, ensuring they are well prepared for their ministries, supporting them pastorally and practically, and providing for the good order of ministry in the diocese.

Oversight includes sharing of responsibilities among clergy and lay people. This involves mutual accountability, good communication and willingness to learn from one another. This reciprocity between bishop and people is reflected in the decision making processes of synodical life. This pattern of working together is empowering for all and is a gift to be nurtured at all levels of the life of the Church.

The bishop has to ensure the well-being (e.g., spiritual, social, economic) of the diocese in service of its mission. Harnessing resources, fund-raising and financial management of diocesan affairs involves complexities of oversight requiring specialized ministries. Providing episcopate in this area highlights the administrative and managerial character of the work of a bishop, somewhat akin to a CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of a large organisation. Bishops ought not to underestimate the distorting effects on their oversight of management models associated with the global market economy. This can lead to a management ethos focussed on strategic plans, goal setting, tasks, competition and successful outcomes. This is appealing because it seems to offer clarity and control but the price is often loss of the personal and relational dimension of ecclesial life. The bishop who manages well is one who is aware of the danger of management becoming the basic lens through which episcopate is practised. This issue raises a question of how bishops handle matters across diocesan and provincial boundaries. At these levels even koinonia may become a thing to be 'managed' at a distance (i.e., avoiding face-to-face relations) rather than resolutely pursued together with patience.

**Thesis Five: The bishop is called to coordinate the gifts of the people of God for the building up of the faithful for the furtherance of God's mission**

The bishop has the duty of coordinating and encouraging the gifts and talents of all the baptised. The Spirit gives varieties of gifts to all God's people to build up the church for mission. In the secular context of many cultures, success in life is mostly determined against a background of ruthless competition and individualism. In the church 'we are all members one of another' (Romans 12:5), and gifts are not the property of any one person but reside in the whole body for the purpose of strengthening the Church to serve God's mission.

Sometimes bishops – like all people -- are threatened by the gifts of their brothers and sisters in Christ. They can become jealous, guarding all power and responsibility to themselves, and thereby thwarting the work of the Holy Spirit. Personal prayer and discernment of one's own gifts, however, turns one to the nurture of the gifts of others. When a bishop's life is marked by joy in the ministry of others that bishop will be able to share in ministry with other bishops in a non-competitive and generous manner. This is a key to the building of koinonia beyond the local diocese. Specialized training in team building and collaborative leadership is critical.

**Thesis Six: The bishop serves the koinonia of the gospel through care, encouragement and discipline of the pastors of the Church**

To facilitate care of the people of God is fundamental to the episcopal office. To do this the bishop has to know and be known by all. Face-to-face relationships of generosity and graciousness are vital for this is where trust is nurtured. Communion in Christ involves sharing in holy friendship, in counsel, prayer and guidance as well as visitation of parishes on special occasions, such as confirmation.

It is clearly not feasible for a bishop to be able to get to know everyone. However, the bishop has a special responsibility to care for the pastors who share in the bishop's

episcopate. Caring for the pastors includes attention to their welfare including practicalities of life as well as their spiritual and vocational health, ensuring continuing ministerial and theological education and ongoing formation. One of the most important ways in which the bishop cares for the pastors is by being an example in the development of habits of self-care and attention to the spiritual disciplines. Such a witness draws people together and raises their sights to new possibilities for freedom in the Spirit.

A bishop's responsibility for the encouragement and discipline of clergy is built upon an exchange of trusts that only comes through patient companionship with others. This is the context in which the bishop can offer guidance and admonition, and call the pastors to honesty, care and mutual accountability. What is true in diocesan life is true at the level of the Communion. Mutual accountability at the international level is the result of a genuinely shared episcopate, exchange of trusts and mutual accountability at the diocesan level.

**Thesis Seven: The bishop serves the koinonia of the gospel through a ministry of mediation to recall the broken and conflicted body of Christ to its reconciled life in him**

Dealing with conflict is a significant feature of a bishop's work. Most obviously the Church is made up of frail and foolish people. The upward call of Christ presumes we are sinners in need of God's grace, forgiveness and mercy. In this context, koinonia is necessarily a partial and vulnerable reality. A bishop's vocation involves tending this koinonia through the wise handling of conflict. A ministry of mediation in situations of conflict is relevant at local and wider levels of the church's life. The challenge for bishops is how to harness conflicts so that through this process a deeper koinonia in the gospel emerges. Learning to be a reconciler is a life-long task and bishops may benefit greatly from special training in mediation.

**Thesis Eight: The catholicity of the episcopal office connects the baptised across boundaries of culture, class, gender, race and lands and enables the church to realise its oneness in Christ**

Catholicity means that the apostolic faith is expressed in the diverse contexts of the world. The gift of God in Christ is for all people, and the Trinitarian faith expressed in the doctrine and worship of a particular church is to be that of the whole church. The bishop embodies this catholic character of the gospel. This means that a bishop has particular responsibility to strive for a reality in which the eucharist in a diocese is one celebrated by and for the whole church. It is ironic and a cause of sorrow that the sacrament of unity is an occasion of division.

The catholicity of the office means the bishop is an agent of the fullness of the one faith expressed through myriad local forms. Inculturation that is authentic plumbs the heart of the Christian faith. This requires active engagement with the local cultures so that any stumbling blocks to the hearing, receiving and enacting of the Gospel be removed. When this occurs the gifts of the people are harnessed for authentic mission in that time and place. A bishop must truly know the local cultures and values of the people

that the bishop has been called to serve and lead. This can be a real challenge, for the bishop is chief pastor within and across particular ethnic, racial, and cultural contexts. Yet in this role the bishop has to ensure that the one catholic faith finds expression through these particular identities without becoming subsumed by them. The catholicity of the office requires a way of life that is constantly in dialogue with others (especially including other bishops) across many boundaries.

Catholicity also means that the decisions that come from any local place are not simply 'local' decisions, but affect all. Bishops have a particular responsibility to bring the church catholic into local processes of discerning the apostolic faith. They also have a responsibility to represent their diocese to the rest of the church, to interpret to the Communion the realities of their local place. This means explaining not simply the end results of decisions reached, but being able to give theological explanation of the discernment of the Gospel in the culture, and of the catholicity of such decisions. Bishops need the courage and wisdom to be able to hear the voice of others whether within or outside their contexts.

**Thesis Nine: The bishop serves the collegial life of the Church through the nurture of strong bonds with bishops of the Anglican Communion and those who share episcopate in other Christian churches**

The episcopate is by nature and calling collegial. An Anglican bishop participates in an episcopate shared with all other bishops. In the first instance this occurs between the bishops in a diocese (i.e., diocesan bishop, assistant and suffragan bishops). Therefore all are called into open relationship with each other in the Communion and with those called to exercise episcopate in the wider church. Collegiality means more than working with those with whom one has an affinity. Rather it involves seeing one's ministry not as one's own but as shared with others. At a Provincial level, collegiality involves many practical aspects of cooperative work, study and prayer, and shared responsibility with Synods in Provincial governance. It has particular importance in contexts where the Christian church is in a minority or in a multi-faith context. The patterns of local collegiality-in-communion are a gift to the wider Anglican Communion.

As bishops seek counsel, journey with each other, and pray with and for each other, real relationships grow. But such solidarity is a costly gift. Real relationships are fragile and tainted by sin. If relationships amongst some bishops within a Province are fraught with tensions, refusals of dialogue or other patterns of manipulation undermine collegiality. It is no surprise that these weaknesses show up at the international level. Yet it is of the essence of the episcopate that bishops give themselves over to collegial mutuality in the service of communion. Given the present state of the Anglican Communion it is the special collegial responsibility of the bishop to be at prayer for and with fellow colleagues. This is particularly relevant for those bishops who are in conflict with one another. Their failure to attend fervently to this ordinal vow weakens the body of Christ for which they have responsibility. This in turn weakens the bonds all the baptised share with one another.

**Thesis Ten: A diocesan bishop is given responsibility for episcopate in the particular place where the bishop is principal Pastor**

It is important for the coherence of the mission of the Church that in one place there should be only one principal or chief Pastor. Within particular and complex circumstances (for example, where indigenous people have been subjugated), it may be necessary, with the consent of the chief Pastor, to provide a specific pastoral ministry of support to a section of a population. However, sight should never be lost of the desirability that a Christian church in a particular place should be a single assembly of people of all kinds.

There are occasions when a church falls out of sympathy with its bishop on a matter of doctrine or conduct. It must not be the case that the mere fact of ease of modern communication and travel becomes the excuse for choosing a leader in another territory to be one's chief Pastor. In the case of serious and extensive conflict, it becomes the duty of a diocesan bishop to provide pastoral support in particular congregations. When a diocesan bishop fails to undertake this duty the matter becomes a provincial responsibility.

## **Conclusion**

The theses outlined above cover the broad range of episcopal responsibilities. There will undoubtedly be matters that have not been dealt with that are significant for bishops in the exercise of their daily office. The intention throughout has been to reflect on the nature of the episcopate in relation to the issue of communion. This focus has been explored at the diocesan level and in relation to the Communion. We are convinced that how a bishop handles the complex and delicate issues surrounding the koinonia of the Church at the local level of the diocese will influence the way a bishop nurtures communion beyond the diocese.

We have tried to offer a brief outline for a theology of the episcopate that is grounded in the received wisdom from scripture and tradition and also alive to the realities that bishops face as they serve the Church's koinonia in the gospel. The theses are incomplete and are currently being developed more intentionally in relation to the scripture tradition and the ordinal. Where relevant we have also tried to indicate areas that might become subject of training and professional development for bishops. More detailed work is currently being conducted in this area by other bodies in the Communion.

We offer this present document as a work in progress. We hope that we have provided a small resource to promote discussion and learning concerning the character of the episcopate. Throughout the diversity of episcopal practices, attitudes and ways of leadership we wonder if there might be room for reflection on the idea of an 'episcopal character' along similar lines to what has been referred to as the 'baptismal character'? We hope and pray that the bishops of the Anglican Communion may find it useful in their difficult but sacred calling to serve the Lord of the Church who desires that all may be one in Jesus Christ.

[1] The terms 'koinonia' and 'communion' can become so much a part of the discourse of a fractured and divided church that they lose their force and significance. Koinonia has to do with a fundamental connectivity between God, the world, and all living

things, including of course human life. The African word 'ubuntu' captures something of this primary oneness. In the Genesis story human beings are called 'earthlings' or 'groundlings' (Genesis 2). This underscores the fact that we are 'of the earth' and are intrinsically related to other living things, the whole created environment and God. Such koinonia is encoded into the very being of creation. The story of redemption is a story of Christ rejoining people, races and the rest of creation. This is the good news which overcomes sin and broken bonds. There is no other community on the earth with a mandate to bear witness to the remarkable miracle of our oneness in the triune God. What is even more remarkable is that God invites the body of Christ to become the new experiment in the communion of the Holy Spirit. Bishops serve this koinonia which is nothing less than the way of creation, salvation and the life of the world to come.

## Summary Argument from the IATDC's 'Communion Study' - October 2006

Anglicans value being part of a world Communion, but successive controversies have made it increasingly unclear what it is that they have in common. The contention of this document is that Anglican 'communion' will be maintained and nurtured, not just by preserving existing ecclesiastical structures but through a renewal of the theological tradition which brought the Communion into being.

To speak in this way of 'renewal' does not mean just a reinforcement of that tradition. As will be seen as the argument progresses, Anglicanism has developed by way of faithful responses to the gospel by churches facing concrete challenges in particular circumstances. At critical moments in their history they have been inspired to draw resources from their theological and spiritual inheritance which enabled them to address seemingly new situations in new ways. Such moments of renewal were eventually judged to be consistent with the tradition from which it was drawn, and generally won recognition and support from others who shared its patrimony. It is that sort of response which is required by the Anglican Communion at the present point of its history, as it faces circumstances threatening to disrupt its life and call into question the tradition itself.

### A theological crisis

Previous Doctrine Commissions have begun this task. *The Virginia Report (1998)* especially developed the notion of *koinonia* as an analogy of the Trinity. For various reasons the argument which TVR presented has not yet been absorbed into the way members of the Anglican Communion think about their relationships with each other. Further consideration needs to be given to two key points of the case which was made: the adequacy of the theological analogy itself, and its connection to the treatment of Anglican institutional order which it presented.

Regrettably, it has been the second of these, the institutional section of the report, detailing processes by which 'instruments of communion' could address disagreements and articulate consensus, which has been given most attention so far. Since then, the seeming inability of those instruments' to deal with disputes over homosexuality (among other things), means that confidence in such institutional arrangements needs further underpinning. Theology, not just organisational considerations, must guide responses to this changing situation.

The argument which is being developed by the present Commission now supplements the Trinitarian model of communion with increased attention to how actual experience of 'communion' is grounded in the promise of covenant-love reiterated throughout the Hebrew/Christian scriptures. Ecclesialogically, this offers a description of the church more ready to cope with the realities of struggle and growth, conflict and change, in the life of the people of God. It was pointed out by the authors of *To Mend the Net* – among others – that too close an identification of the doctrine of the church with that of God in Trinity idealises institutional decisions made by particular ecclesial bodies. It

runs the danger of confusing a theological *is* with an empirical *ought*. There is always a tendency for history to get lost in ideology, especially at times when the interpretation of a historical tradition is disputed.

As was asserted in the above introduction, Anglican ecclesiology has always been delineated in response to specific contingencies of history. It describes the self-understanding of a theologically identifiable group of particular, regional churches which embody reformed, catholic faith, and trace their original existence and inspiration to the mission or ministry of the Church of England, or churches closely associated with it. The Anglican Communion developed as a fellowship of churches which recognised themselves in that description.

The diversity of cultures in which these churches are now found, and their remoteness from the historical circumstances in which their fellowship was originally grounded, means that the tradition which drew them together in the first place is under severe strain. At some points it shows signs of breaking up. This situation is not only a result of particular ethical or doctrinal disputes; it also reflects major realignments which have taken place within world Christianity during the last decades of the twentieth century. The IATDC is undertaking a serious reflection on central elements of the Anglican tradition and the polarisation of opinion over key features within it. It has been drawn into consideration of the way in which the terminology of 'covenanting' is being utilised in current Anglican debate. It is especially aware of changes which are taking place as a result of the shifting 'centre of gravity' in the Christian movement towards the global south. It has also been conscious of the way in which, in a fragmented world, it is not only the church which longs for a deeper sense of *koinonia*. The scope of God's covenant love embraces the whole of his creation.

### **The renewal of Anglican tradition**

At its inception the Commission determined to undertake the Communion Study, with which it was mandated, through active conversation with the churches of the Anglican Communion. Its progress has been marked by the circulation of Four Key Questions to every diocese and theological centre in the Communion, and an ensuing debate on Six Propositions which developed from them. This process revealed deep divisions in approaches to many of the features which have traditionally held Anglicans together. A third round of questions sought clarification of that situation, and a consideration of some of the proposals made in the Windsor Report (2004) for resolving conflict and maintaining unity in times of dispute.

The major areas of discussion in the Study concerned:

- **The centrality of Scripture** – the controlling place of scripture in the reasoned development of Anglican tradition is generally acknowledged, but the role of the Bible in determining the outcome of specific controversies is unclear. Through the twentieth century processes of rapid social change from pre- to post-modernity have meant that Christians in the same church now find they

are living in different cultural worlds, and the ways in which scripture is utilised in each of them appears to be different as well. Yet during the last decade a renewed emphasis on the unity as well as the diversity of scripture means that listening to the Bible together can be a restorative as well as disturbing experience for the Christian community. Reading 'in communion' is not simply a matter of sharing a common lectionary! Cranmer's conviction that hearing scripture in the context of ordered worship permits (and indeed creates) an acceptable degree of diversity in the church is something that needs to be rediscovered at just the time when it is recognised that no contemporary 'Act of Uniformity' can achieve that end. Corporate reception of scripture is actually the way in which communion will be nurtured and sustained in the church, as well as described or defined as a theological concept.

In the third round of discussion, the question of how the Bible could be read 'together' by the whole church was highlighted. Major differences emerged between those who thought that in principle the 'perspicuity of Scripture' meant that a common mind could be reached about the meaning and implications of a passage, and others who felt that cultural differences between readers – as well as between readers and the text – meant that any such unanimity would be impossible to achieve. Current hermeneutical studies suggest that such pessimism is unwarranted and that the ideal of a church whose thoughts and actions are moulded by a habitual response to the message of the Bible is worth pursuing. However any expectation that interpretations of the scripture will ever be unanimous or uncontested is discounted by the experience of history if not the very character of the Bible itself. Knowledge of God's purposes in scripture will always be partial in the church, yet sufficient for the patient pursuit of truth and holiness if there is a corporate willingness to respond to what is understood in particular circumstances. For this reason methods of cross-cultural and trans-generational reading of the Bible are worth promoting.

- **Moral Theology** – Anglicans have repeatedly sought to link personal beliefs with public outcomes. Ongoing conversation (not always amicable) between church and state has been a feature of Anglican order from the earliest period of Christian faith and practice in Britain, but was exemplified in the seventeenth century by the way Richard Hooker sought to integrate the continuity of God's purposes with radically changed intellectual, social and political circumstances. The Anglican tradition has always seen theology as an agent of moral transformation, and ethical assertions as requiring theological validation. The Christian message is not understood merely as religious ideology but, most directly, by the way it confronts the reality of personal and corporate sin. The gospel is addressed to a world which both fails to recognise and refuses to acknowledge the goodness and justice of God. Anglican history shows many examples of the conviction that situations of evil are not just to be confronted but redeemed.

This tradition continues today with important Anglican contributions to thinking about international debt, justice and peace issues, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. There is no reason why similar attention should not be given to issues of human sexuality, including homosexuality (issues which are intellectual, social and political as much as

personal in origin) under the present circumstances in which the Communion finds itself. This will involve more than theoretical considerations. A holistic Anglican tradition will seek to combine the best elements of traditional moral philosophy with the practice of theological ethics, involving spiritual issues of vocation and discernment. This will need first, an appreciation of the interdependence of 'command ethics' and 'human flourishing' (the debate between so-called deontologists and consequentialists). Secondly, attention must be extended to the way in which innovations in Christian belief and practice can be understood, evaluated and judged within an Anglican fellowship. What is not possible is that the discussion of belief and practice, doctrine and ethics, should be carried on independently of each other.

- **Context and culture** – the historicity and particularity of Anglican understandings of the church means that it takes questions of context seriously. At its best – as in the 1978 Lambeth Conference treatment of 'inculturation' – context and culture are considered within the framework of catholicity. It involves a two-fold encounter, during which the church discovers something about its own inner reality as a community of the resurrection, and also discovers resources for attending to the needs of the world. Consequently Anglicans are always open to the possibilities of a 'local option' in the way they fulfil their calling, but will insist that the 'local' is held in a dialectic tension with 'universal' opinion, as far as that can be ascertained. This interplay between the one and the many follows directly from the theological model outlined earlier. Without it there is a further danger of confusing 'is' and 'ought'. It emphasises the way in which the grace of the covenant is constant, yet renewed, restored and realised throughout the pilgrimage of God's people as they move towards its completion. The once-for-all character of Christ's coming must be appropriated by succeeding generations in each and every place. On this understanding the dominant theme of inculturation is not the *incarnation* (as is often assumed) but an implication of the *Pentecost* experience – hearing about the scandalously particular works of God in the mother tongue of new converts, who are thereby incorporated into membership of a single multi-cultural and cross-generational community. On that basis it might be argued that the Anglican experience of companionship links, partnerships in mission, inter-Anglican networks, mission societies and religious orders (not to mention the availability of cheap air travel and the Internet) can all act as significant 'instruments of communion', almost irrespective of more formal ecclesial structures. These partnerships take on increasing importance, theological as well as practical, at a time of temporary disruption in the relationship between different parts of the Anglican world. Reflection on these relationship may begin to provide theological articulation to new dimensions of *koinonia* which are emerging in the new world- (and church-) order.
- **Limits of diversity** – the existence of covenantal religion requires decision-making. Throughout the biblical narrative and the history of the church, decisive choices have been made about significant issues of Christian faith, order and practice. Such a demand means that there is always a possibility of serious disagreement in the church. Some disputes are peripheral, and differences of opinion about them can be accepted relatively easily, but some are crucial – and

must in due course be decided upon, if the church is to retain its unity, holiness and claim of catholicity. In times of controversy, vital questions arise about how to tell the difference between peripheral or local disputes, and those which are crucial, normative and universal?

In the present debate on human sexuality many participants are looking for a list of fundamental doctrines which guarantee Anglican identity, or a catalogue of acceptable practices, 'lines in the sand', which define the limits of Anglican fellowship.

- The Commission is persuaded that the while numerous attempts have been made by Anglican theologians to identify core doctrines or fundamental articles, that quest has never been settled beyond dispute. In the present intellectual climate it is even clearer that such a strategy will conceal even more foundational problems of authority. Who decides the content and extent of such doctrines? And how could they be used to resolve contentious issues in the life of the Communion? One suggestive analogy has been offered: the Anglican understanding of the church is not that it is like a balloon which deflate (or explodes) once its fabric is in any way punctured, it is more like a bird's nest – which can consist of different numbers or arrangements of ecclesiological 'twigs' and still be fit for its purpose.
- The latter quest, for beliefs or practices that can be excluded by definition from Anglican fellowship, appears to contradict the unconditional nature of the covenant. It is not possible to exclude any area of human life or behaviour from theological scrutiny: any issue can become crucial for the maintenance of the church's faithfulness. The example of flags being displayed in the sanctuary of a church is an instructive case which has been considered by the Commission. In some situations that would be regarded as a peripheral issue (*adiaphora*) – until, for instance, such a time when the flags bore a swastika and the churches concerned were in Nazi Germany. Some members have pointed to other situations when a flag can represent the threat of 'unopposed Empire' or xenophobic nationalism. Such examples illustrate the way in which previously unconsidered things, in a changed context, can present vital challenges to Christian confession. Key questions for the church's faithfulness today have to do with human sexual activity, that of hetero- as well as homosexual orientation.
- The theology of the covenant, in which the *koinonia* of God is expressed and a communal response invited (the new covenant instituted through the blood of Christ (Mt 26.26), pointing towards the obligations of a 'new commandment' (Jn 13.34) or 'communion' in the new wine of the kingdom (Mt 26.29)) could be used as a warrant for the central proposal of the Windsor Report – an Anglican covenant which can be used motivationally, not just juridically as a way of testing the limits of diversity.
- While a consideration of what could comprise an 'Anglican' covenant should concentrate attention on the nature of Anglican identity, it is unlikely to provide a simple answer to questions about Anglican comprehensiveness. No Covenant

will be able to define conditions upon which all unforeseen controversies could be settled in the future, and it is difficult to envisage how an Anglican instrument for authoritative interpretation of, or compliance with a Covenant could be fashioned in the present climate of suspicion in the Communion. What current discussion about an Anglican Covenant could achieve is a renewed attention to the theological tradition which creates Anglican unity, and to demonstrate how, at the deepest level of covenanting, the way our trusts – a key element of *koinonia* – are formed and will endure. As one of our correspondents put it, covenant religion spells out the possibility of ‘*assurance of faith without presumption*’.

Despite its reluctance, *a priori*, to exclude any opinion or practice, Anglicanism is not in principle unable or unwilling to make costly decisions. Indeed decisive points in the establishment of Anglican ‘communion’ presume that the discernment of God’s will and purposes is a constant and ongoing process. Thus the historic standards of Anglicanism (39 Articles, BCP and Ordinal) can be seen as a covenantal expression of the way in which English Christians established their own identity among the controversies of the 16th and 17th centuries. The Lambeth Quadrilateral does not (as it is sometimes erroneously supposed) define the boundaries of Anglican fellowship, but it did commit Anglicanism in the 19th century to a series of normative practices whereby the wider unity of the church might be furthered: scripture is *read*, tradition *received*, sacramental worship is *offered*, and the historic character of apostolic leadership is *retained*. From this interplay the Anglican community is nurtured and sustained. It can be argued that the proposal for an Anglican covenant extends that process as a way of enriching the sense of an Anglican identity and vocation amid the tensions and disputes that arise from being part of a global community. A covenant, which rehearses the theological tradition from which Anglicanism has developed, and establishes clear commitments for the way it can maintain its cohesiveness, seems the most likely way to secure its communion for the foreseeable future. The one thing that Anglicans cannot permit at this time is for disputants to refuse to allow their opinion to be submitted to theological scrutiny. Those involved in disputes must not only listen to each other, but also attend to the wisdom of the wider Christian community.

- **Accountability and competence** – but who are the scrutineers? The Commission has already advocated the importance of mutual accountability (*paraklesis*) for the maintenance of communion in the church. This involves comfort, encouragement, exhortation and direction, as well as the word into which it is usually translated, ‘admonition’. It is something which should function at every level of church life, and there seems no reason why, in a fellowship of autonomous churches, such accountability should not be exercised between as well as within each of them. The problem that has become clear during current controversies is that it is uncertain where responsibility for *paraklesis* within the world-wide Communion lies, or when it appropriate for such an exercise to be undertaken.
- To clarify *when* some communion-wide decision is to be made, we have introduced the criteria of intensity, substance and extent: the more these

characteristics feature in a controversy, the wider the scope for a ministry of mutual admonition. As to *where* that decision should be made, it is held that the current dispute deserves consideration at the level of a relationship between Provinces, at present embodied in the Primates' Meeting. The Primates have been reluctant to accept the 'enhanced' role that successive Lambeth Conferences have urged upon them, but in October 2003 they indicated that they were looking for an appropriate mechanism to fulfil that sort of role. The existence of a Covenant may provide the setting in which all the instruments of communion, acting together, can make binding judgments to under gird and secure the unity of the churches and enrich their communion of service and love. It must be clear that this should not be seen as a bureaucratic or merely organisational response to resolving disputes. A decision by the Primates should not be reduced to the outcome of a majority vote of the personal opinions – for the time being – of those present. The process is one of theological discernment throughout, and 'admonition' should not be seen as a matter of institutional censure, but corporate submission to the gospel, in the pursuit of a common mind.

For various reasons, some participants in the present debates seem intent on reducing the Communion into something more like a confederation – becoming 'cousins, not brothers and sisters' in Christ. Others have suggested that a constructive way forward may be to allow a sort of associate status within the communion for those who are unable or unwilling to adopt the theological and doctrinal stance implied by the Covenant. Politically, this appears to amount to a refusal to accept the possibility of external criticism; theologically, it dilutes Anglican fellowship from something grounded in covenant love, to a matter of administrative convenience.

- **Structures for communion** – for Anglican unity to be maintained in this way, it will be necessary to overcome deep seated suspicions about centralising power in the Communion. *The Virginia Report* pointed to the need for greater clarity in the relationship between the instruments of communion. This can be achieved by clearly differentiating the roles of Lambeth Conference, Anglican Consultative Council and Primates' Meeting as aspects of (respectively) collegial, communal and personal authority in the church. The Archbishop of Canterbury, now identified as a 'focus of unity' holds the unique office of gathering the Communion in its representative parts, and speaking for it while consensus is achieved. If it is agreed that an 'enhanced role' should be adopted by the Primates (a proposal which the IATDC has supported under certain circumstances, as indicated above) then this must be paralleled in additional responsibilities undertaken by each of the other instruments as well. What is essential is that the different charisms of guidance and discernment exercised by each of the instruments must deliberately and consistently act together. Too often meetings of the decision-making bodies appear, to outsiders, to be pre-occupied with their own, apparently unrelated, programme objectives; at worst, they may seem intent on merely winning time, in the hope that seemingly intractable problems will go away. Mutual accountability and communication are needed for communion to function. A personal, and even more, a theological vocabulary of disagreement is necessary in order to allow communication to

continue across frontiers of disagreement. A key to this will be found by establishing a common language of collegiality to unite the episcopate, along with an agreed understanding of what is implied when that collegiality is broken or impaired. The working of the whole body must amount to more than the sum of its separate parts. The purpose of 'dispersed authority' is to draw to itself the *consensus fidelium*.

### **Changing patterns of *koinonia***

The Windsor Report has pointed towards institutional or canonical ways to hold the Communion together at this time. If that is possible, the future stability of such agreements will depend even more on a deepened sense of commonality, and this can only come from a theological renewal of the Anglican tradition, associated with the elements outlined above. More so, the proposals it contains envisage not just the possibility of maintaining communion across divisions of opinion, but enriching it by resolving such divisions through a continuing process of drawing on and drawing out the implications of a vision of faithful response to the gospel to which the Anglican tradition aspires.

Part of the difficulty in sustaining that vision is derived from hierarchical views of power and authority, so prominent in social, managerial and political life, which are pressed on the decision-making bodies – both by an uncomprehending media, and by knowing manipulators of arguments within the church itself. An emphasis on covenant, Christology and the work of the Spirit seeks a different frame of reference. Attention is drawn to the classic discussions of the Anglican Communion at the 1920 and 1930 Lambeth Conferences. In the second of these, two prevailing types of ecclesiastical organisation were described: 'that of centralised government, and that of regional autonomy within one fellowship'. It is the latter form which Anglicans share with Orthodox Churches and others. Self-governing churches of the Communion grew up 'freely, in their own soil'. Even then the term 'Anglican' did not hold racial or geographical connections but was grounded in 'the doctrines and ideals for which the Church of England has always stood'. The radical implications of this self-understanding need to be re-appropriated as an affirmation of Catholicity (and the claim to catholicity by a sub-tradition of Christianity) in the post-modern dilemma in which Anglicanism now finds itself.

It is for historical reasons (the formative experiences of the Church of England), rather than institutional order that 'communion with the See of Canterbury' is significant for Anglican provinces today. Attention to this history, with its associated doctrines and ideals, along with a re-consideration of the comparison drawn from Orthodox ideas of autocephalicity and communion, informs the IATDC's thinking at this stage of its study. Orthodoxy offers a way of deepening understanding of what Anglicans have learned to call, somewhat unsatisfactorily, 'impaired communion'. Theological tradition, 'Orthodoxy', not any form of institutional unity is what gives the Eastern churches their identity. Orthodox churches can be notably contentious. Severed relationships and even an excommunication of the Oecumenical Patriarch – Orthodoxy's first among equals – have all been known in recent years. Yet the impulse towards unity within the tradition also holds out the possibility of the restoration of communion after

a period in which it has been breached. It is the existence or non-existence of communion which is crucial for Anglicans. More is involved than establishing minimal conditions for a fraternal relationship.

### **'The highest possible degree of communion'?**

The rhetoric of schism must be avoided during the present time of uncertainty. Yet the possibility of serious disruption to the Anglican Communion has to be contemplated. The question must be asked whether existing 'instruments of unity' are capable of theological (not just managerial) development in such a way that they can utilise the possibilities opened up by the Windsor process to address questions about legitimate diversity. If there is not the time or will to achieve this, it appears that Anglicans will become increasingly marginalised and fragmented as a movement within world-Christianity.

Even if the worst fears of Anglicans who value their fellowship and solidarity are realised, the Anglican tradition will not disappear. Communion functions at a number of different levels. The IATDC has identified theology, canon law, history and culture, communication, and voluntary commitment rather than coercion, as essential aspects of communion. Yet real communion can exist in many of the elements separately. The Commission is persuaded that 'thick' ecclesiology, concrete experience of the reconciling and healing work of God in Christ, should take priority over 'thin', abstract and idealised descriptions of the church. Communion 'from below', is real communion – arguably the most vital aspect of *koinonia* with God and neighbour., and it is from 'below' that the Commission has worked in its conversations with the churches, and in the theological construction it is developing now.

What is needed next is a clearer understanding of how these different aspects of communion exist at different levels or horizons of the church's experience. The obligation to seek 'the highest degree of communion possible' within the Church is a laudable ambition, a vocation even. Yet without specifying what sort of communion is anticipated for congregational, local, regional or global fellowship, the terminology can be used merely to justify higher level organisational arrangements without ever analysing how they contribute to communion itself. It may well be that communion at a local or congregational level ('where two or three are gathered together...') may theologially represent a 'higher' communion than an ideal expressed in merely institutional, canonical or juridical terms. At the same time it must be insisted that the experience and commitments of local communities will be enlarged and maintained by participation in wider expressions of fellowship (which the parallel work of this Commission on 'The Significance of the Episcopal Office for the Communion of the Church' advances) just as the life of dioceses, Provinces and the Anglican Communion itself pursues its fullness as a part of the *koinonia* of the People of God.

If Anglican fellowship at the level of shared doctrines and ideals or common participation in mission is unable to sustain the support of coherent, structural communion 'from above', then it will be a weaker and more fragile thing as a global fellowship than might otherwise have been the case. In the light of the gospel weak and fragile things are not to be despised. But the Anglican theological tradition cannot be

content with any claim to communion which separates the gospel of Christ from the reality of his Church.

## Communiqué September 2006

The Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission met between Monday, September 4th and Sunday, 10th September at St Julian's Retreat Centre, Limuru. The Commission is grateful for the warmth of the welcome from the staff of the Centre, from the Primate of the Anglican Church of Kenya, the Most Revd Benjamin Nzimbi, and for the work of Professor Esther Mombo and Professor Joseph Galgalo, of St Paul's Theological College, Limuru, who were responsible for much of the local organisation in preparation for the Commission's meeting. On the Sunday morning, members of the Commission worshipped with several local congregations.

The work of the Commission concentrated on three areas: continuation of the work of the Communion Study on which the Commission has been working since its formation in 2001, reflection on the proposal for an Anglican Covenant, and preparation for the 2008 Lambeth Conference.

The Commission received the responses to the third round of consultation undertaken with the bishops and theological institutions of the Anglican Communion during the early part of 2006. Four questions had been formulated by the Chairman which reflected the current situation of the Communion, and had been circulated for response. The Commission considered how responses received could be incorporated into its ongoing study, and hopes to move towards the publication of its report in 2007.

The Commission also produced a paper "Responding to a Proposal for a Covenant", in which it reflected on the proposal of the Windsor Report for the establishment of an Anglican Covenant in the life of the Communion. The paper considers the biblical and ecclesiological background of the concept of covenant, and offers particular observations on how the concept of covenant might most fruitfully be employed in the development of a covenant for the Anglican Communion.

The Commission also gave attention to the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury to offer theological resources to the forthcoming Lambeth Conference for the equipping of bishops for their ministry and work. Work was undertaken to formulate a number of theses in relation to the Bishops' ministry in fostering and upholding the Communion of all the baptised, and this work will be made available to the Saint Augustine's Seminars which are undertaking preparatory work in relation to the Conference.

It is the intention of the Commission to meet again in September 2007 in Kuala Lumpur, where it will conclude its work on the Communion Study.

Those present in Limuru were:

The Rt Revd Professor Stephen W Sykes (Chair), Church of England  
The Revd Dr Philip H E Thomas (Assistant to the Chair), Church of England  
The Revd Canon Gregory Cameron (Secretary), Anglican Communion Office  
The Revd Dr Victor R Atta-Baffoe, Church of the Province of West Africa  
The Rt Revd Dr Samuel R Cutting, Church of North India

The Rt Revd Tan Sri Dr Lim Cheng Ean, Church of the Province of South East Asia  
The Revd Professor Joseph Galgalo, Anglican Church of Kenya  
The Revd Dr Bruce N Kaye, Anglican Church of Australia  
Professor Esther M Mombo, Anglican Church of Kenya  
The Rt Revd Dr Matthew Oluremi Owadayo, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion)  
The Revd Canon Luke Pato, Church of the Province of Southern Africa  
The Revd Professor Stephen Pickard, Anglican Church of Australia  
The Rt Revd Paul Richardson, Church of England  
The Revd Dr Nicholas Sagovsky, Church of England  
Dr Eileen Scully, Anglican Church of Canada  
Dr Jenny Te Paa, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand & Polynesia  
The Rt Revd Dr N Thomas Wright, Church of England  
The Rt Revd Hector 'Tito' Zavala, Anglican Church of the Southern Cone of America

#### Observers

Mrs Clare Amos, Anglican Communion Office  
The Revd Dr A Katherine Grieb, The Episcopal Church  
The Revd Canon Philip Groves, Anglican Communion Office

#### Administrative staff

Ms Gill Harris-Hogarth, Anglican Communion Office  
The Revd Terrie Robinson, Anglican Communion Office

*A letter from the IATDC Chairman, the Rt Rev Professor Stephen Sykes, to diocesan bishops, theological education institutions, ACC members, and Primates of the Anglican Communion.*

For some years now the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission has been carrying out a study on the nature of communion, and doing this in conversation with representative leaders of the Anglican Communion. You may recall the 'Four Key Questions' in 2002 and 'The Six Propositions' which were circulated in 2003. Responses to these documents have been shaping our discussions, and although it has been necessary to suspend meetings of the Commission since then – because of financial restraints – the work which has already been done enabled the IATDC to prepare documents offering advice to the Primates for their meeting in 2003, and to present a condensed summary of the argument we have developed so far to the Lambeth Commission when it began its work, in June 2004.

When the ACC met last year, it urged that the Commission's project should be resumed, and we are delighted that funding has been arranged for a full meeting, to be held in Kenya, later this year. Consequently I am writing to you now to request your further help in the discussion, by responding to a series of questions which are listed below. We would like to receive your responses by the end of May, 2006.

The context for the issues we are raising now can be understood by referring to the IATDC web-site where you will find summaries of the responses received to the Key Questions ("The IATDC Communion Study, 2002") and Six Propositions ("Prospects and Proposals, 2003") as well as the Reflections offered to the Primates and the Summary Argument, referred to earlier. What we would like now is to have your comments on some or all of the following issues:

1. Anglicanism has always given a high place to the reading of Scripture as the ground of its worship and teaching. How is it possible for Anglicans in different parts of the world to listen to the Bible together?
2. The IATDC and the Windsor Report are both emphasising the notion of 'covenant' as a basis and expression of communion. If a covenant is more than a constitution, what implications does this have for decision-making by churches that are in a covenantal relationship with each other?
3. How do you think the genuine and meaningful expressions of communion that your church experiences with Anglican Christians in other parts of the world will be able to survive current disagreements in the Anglican Communion?
4. What sort of language (theological and otherwise) is appropriate for speaking about Christian people with whom you disagree?

I realise that you have many calls upon your time, but am sure that you agree with me about the need for the widest possible participation in the conversation that is now being resumed. Any further comments on the overall approach that the IATDC is taking, as it is outlined in the Summary Argument which has been circulated, would be greatly appreciated.

We will value your personal insights, but previously some diocesan bishops have also set up study groups to give a wider framework for the discussion, and theological colleges used the questions as a basis for staff meetings. We also welcome contributions from individuals, and especially lay people, so we will be pleased if you feel able to spread the contents of this letter as widely as possible. However, to include your contributions in the agenda of the Commission's next meeting, we would ask for replies before the end of May. We expect to provide you with some interim document by the end of the year, and that further discussion will be incorporated into the preparations for the 2008 Lambeth Conference.

Could I ask you to reply to my assistant  
The Rev Dr Philip Thomas,  
The Vicarage  
Heighington  
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England DL5 6PP  
[Philip.Thomas@durham.anglican.org](mailto:Philip.Thomas@durham.anglican.org)

or the Commission Secretary,  
The Rev Canon Gregory Cameron,  
Anglican Communion Office  
St Andrew's House  
16 Tavistock Crescent  
London W11 1AP  
[gregory.cameron@anglicancommunion.org](mailto:gregory.cameron@anglicancommunion.org)

Thank you for any time you are able to give to this process. We believe that it is, in its extent and duration, a unique procedure among our churches, and in its own way, a contribution to building and sustaining the communion of our Communion.

Please be assured of my prayers and the prayers of the Commission for your ministry - as I hope our efforts might be included in your prayers too.

Very sincerely,

+Stephen Sykes,  
Chairman of the IATDC

## **Reflections offered to the Primates of the Anglican Communion by the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury**

The Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, which has been charged to consider the ways in which communion may be protected and nourished, submits the following theological reflections to the Primates in response to the exceptional circumstances with which the Anglican Communion is now confronted, as part of the fruit of our ongoing studies.

1. 'In Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us' (II Cor. 5.19). Everything in the life of the Church depends upon this unique gift. It is the good news of grace to which the Church has been sent to bear witness.
2. The Scriptures are the unique source for this Gospel, and the Church lives in the light of and in dependence upon that testimony.
3. In all its words and deeds the Church is called to give a two-fold account of itself: to speak the words of life to the world, giving an account of the faith by which it lives, and at the same time each part of the Church is called to submit an account of its stewardship of the Gospel to other Christians.
4. Christian history reveals a plurality and diversity of accounts of the faith, though there is but one Gospel. Divergences of interpretation give rise to different traditions. Moreover, because human words are used and specific human situations are addressed, these accounts of the faith reflect the differing contexts of the proclamation.
5. Furthermore, because of human sin, ignorance and frailty, it is to be anticipated that omissions, mistakes or distortions may occur in any account given of the faith.
6. As a result it becomes vital that the account each part of the Church gives to other Christians of its stewardship of the Gospel contains the possibility of openness to correction. Communion in the Church requires this mutual accountability. By it, faithfulness in the truth is encouraged, partial understandings are enriched, errors are challenged and unity (which is the priceless gift of the Spirit) is enhanced.
7. In this document, we concentrate on one aspect of mutual accountability, namely *paraklesis* - a New Testament word with a range of meanings from "comfort" and "encourage" to "appeal" to "admonition" and "direction". Paul charged members of the Church to "admonish one another" in Christ (I Thess 4.18, 5.11). It is evident from the letters of Paul that he was often obliged to offer a critical assessment of the faithfulness of one of his congregations (see, for example, Gal 1:6) himself. Moreover he exercised this form of over-sight in relation to congregations which he had not personally founded (Romans 12.1ff)

and in relation to those congregations in which some no longer recognised his apostleship (II Corinthians).

8. In II Corinthians, Paul hammered out a fresh statement of his apostolic authority, in great personal pain, under the imminent threat of a total breakdown of relations with the Church in Corinth. He saw this authority as grounded in the dying and rising of Jesus Christ, and thus as characterised by the power which is perfected in weakness.
9. Living life worthy of the calling with which we have been called involves humility, gentleness, patience, speaking the truth in love, putting away bitterness, wrath and anger, and being kind, tender-hearted and forgiving one another (Ephesians 4). We are in this way to 'make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Ephesians 3). Mutual admonitions may involve discernment and the exercise of judgment; but encouragement in faith and thus building up the body in love, is the primary motivation. The virtues involved go beyond mere civility.
10. Bishops are as open to admonition in respect of their conduct as other Christians. Gregory the Great regarded it as a compliment to a leader's humility, if those over whom he ruled felt able to rebuke him (Pastoral Rule II, 8). This has implications for the life of bishops, as the Pastoral Epistles (which were a major source for the 16th century revision of the Anglican Ordinal) make clear. 'Timothy' is instructed to 'set believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity' (1 Tim 4:12). If, for example, a bishop's lifestyle becomes a stumbling block that bishop should hardly be immune from or expect to avoid constant challenge. This constant challenge is bound to affect adversely that bishop's episcopate.
11. The cost of genuine dialogue between Christians of different convictions is considerable, even given the kindness of speech and conduct mentioned above. If conservative voices are not to be driven out, it must be possible for an admonition about recent issues to do with homosexuality to be delivered, clearly argued from biblical sources. Not all such arguments are well expressed or would be supported by scholarly writing; but it is a mistake to dismiss all of them, as if their sole basis were literalism or naïve fundamentalism.
12. On the other hand, if progressive voices are not to be ignored, new knowledge has honestly to be confronted. Though there is still much uncertainty, it is evident that the existence in some people of homosexual inclinations has to be understood in a way not available to biblical writers. It has to be recognised as a cost of the engagement of the Gospel with the world, that Christians remain open to changing ideas with their attendant uncertainties and controversies.
13. Not all features of the life of the Church are equally close to the "truth of the Gospel". Although what the Church is, speaks and does ought never to contradict the Gospel, aspects of its life may be relatively immaterial to the substance of the Gospel. Thus, W R Huntingdon assures his fellow Americans

that 'a flutter of surplices' would not be thought to belong to the unity of the Church (see *The Church Idea*); A M Ramsey, on the other hand, argues that episcopacy is related to the content of the Gospel (*The Gospel and the Catholic Church*)

14. It would be convenient if there existed a permanently valid and unchallengeable list of fundamentals of the faith, and a corresponding list of secondary questions or adiaphora. But the continuing fact of controversies between and within the denominations shows at least that there is no universal agreement among Christians. Frequently moreover, though there is agreement at a general level on some doctrine or practice (for example Holy Communion), interpretations in detail tend to be diverse or even contradictory. It was the considered judgment of the nineteenth century Anglican theologian William Palmer, for example, that the doctrine of fundamentals was not an infallible guide when it came to the resolution of controversial questions.
15. Yet it is equally true that the Church, for good reasons, consistently renews its understanding of the substance of the faith, by which it lives and prays for the coming kingdom. As it does this, it has to wrestle with the fact that not all features of the life of the Church are of equal importance; some lie closer to the heart of the Gospel than others.
16. The questions which now confront the Anglican Communion concern the blessing of same-sex unions, the ordination of non-abstinent homosexual persons to the diaconate and priesthood, the appointment of such a person to the office of Bishop and related issues of Church order. How is the Church to make right judgments in relation to such matters? What weight ought to be given to such innovations? How significant for Christian faith and practice is ECUSA's decision to appoint a non-abstinent homosexual person to the office of Bishop within the Anglican Communion?
17. In the present situation the Primates are called to determine first what weight should be given to the above decisions. How central to Christian faith and practice, for example, is the decision of ECUSA? Finding an answer to this question is not easy, though in the light of the controversy surrounding the Episcopal appointment and the decision of the diocese of New Westminster, Canada, there is a strong indication that the matter is neither light nor a matter indifferent (adiaphoron).
18. In making such judgments the usual distinctions between matters of faith and morals begin to collapse, in much the same way as distinctions between doctrine and ethics, while useful, often give way to an appreciation of the interwovenness of matters of faith and life. This reality is at odds with the mistaken view that 'core doctrine' does not involve deep connection with Christian teachings about moral behaviour (as apparently the *Righter Judgement* [1996] holds).

19. If the Primates decide that the matter is of great weight with respect to the nature of Christian faith and its practice then it would seem that an innovation of such significance requires the broadest consideration and endorsement by the rest of the Anglican Communion.
20. Some matters are judged not to touch or significantly impact upon Christian faith and practice. They are judged either non-fundamental or adiaphora - neither commanded nor forbidden. If the Primates decided that the matter before them belonged at this end of the spectrum, this suggests that responsibility and freedom for determining the matter would occur at an appropriate 'lower' level of decision making in the Anglican Communion (e.g. a province or national church). However, it should also be noted that in Anglicanism if a proposed change is considered amongst the adiaphora and is also known to be a matter of significant dispute, there has been a reluctance to proceed. This compares with the Pauline principle (1 Cor 8-10; Rom 14) about not proceeding with actions, even if adiaphora, if they cause another to stumble.
21. A problem arises over innovations about which there are different views in the Church concerning the relative weight or significance to be accorded to a matter. Such are the matters in question. How ought the Church to proceed in such situations? A principle here might be that if the dispute is: intense (eg. generates high degree of sustained and unresolved debate that threatens the unity of the Anglican Communion; or that requires urgent attention) extensive (eg. not confined to one section or region of the Church; has significant implications for mission and ecumenical relations; has a wider social impact) and substantial (concerning an actual issue, and not for example, simply being generated by the media) then the matter cannot remain simply for the local Church (e.g. the diocese) to handle.
22. A word of caution here. It is not envisaged that the first 'port of call' for disputed matters in the Communion would necessarily be the Primates. Rather, historically Anglicans have dealt with their conflicts in consonance with the principle of subsidiarity. Indeed, Anglicanism has a natural inbuilt reticence to 'stealing' from lower levels the decision making responsibilities that are properly theirs. So it is not the case that strong action from above in a particular case would become the Anglican norm for settling disputes. But if a matter arises of crucial importance to faith and life, or if a matter generates such dispute that it threatens the bonds of the Anglican Communion, the Communion as a whole, through its highest levels of authority, has a responsibility to be properly involved in the handling of the dispute. A process which involves mutual accountability and receives wisdom from the whole of the Communion commends itself in such circumstances.
23. While the processes and structures for dispute settlement in our Church may yet require further development this ought not override the very great moral authority and responsibility of those charged by the church to exercise a 'care for all the churches' in the Anglican Communion (cf. II Cor 11.28). In 1989, for

example, Primates endorsed the guidelines set out in the Report of the Eames Commission, and adopted them for the life of the Communion.

24. At this exceptional juncture in our history many are looking to the Primates to hear the call of the churches for the leadership (paraklesis) that befits those who hold such a high office. We pray with the Primates that, as they listen for the voice of the Spirit, and are nourished by the Word, they may be emboldened to find new and fresh ways to exercise the charism of their office (episcopate) for the common good and peace of the churches.

### Three questions for reflection

1. **How crucial to Christian faith and communion are the blessing of same-sex unions, the ordination of non-abstinent homosexual persons to the diaconate and priesthood and the appointment of such a person to the office of Bishop?**

If these matters are deemed of crucial import to the communion of the churches then they ought to be dealt with beyond the local level of the Communion's dispute settling processes by those who have responsibility for the 'care of the churches' of the Communion.

If the matters are deemed not essential a second question arises:

2. **How significant is the nature of the disputes regarding these matters?**

If the Primates decide that the dispute is not that significant in respect to its intensity, extent and substance then the matter has to be handled differently under the operation of the principle of subsidiarity, and decided at the appropriate lower level.

If the Primates decide that the nature of the dispute is of such significance - with reference to its intensity, extent and substance - that it makes for the disunity of the Church then the matter needs to be addressed at the higher levels of the Communion.

If the Primates decide that the matters ought to be responsibly dealt with as part of their calling and authority as leaders of the Communion then the question arises:

3. **What processes of accountability, admonition and healing are appropriate in the Communion?**

It needs to be recognised that in making a judgment as to whether the matter under consideration is of such significance that it is of crucial import for the communion of the churches, or not, the primates, whatever they decide, are already exercising an apostolic authority on behalf of the whole Communion. The making explicit of such an authority may indeed be a significant development in the life of the Communion, but it is evident from the history of

the Church that new developments in the exercise of wider authority take place at times of crisis and challenge.

The Commission have for two years been engaged on a study of communion in a fruitful dialogue with members of the Anglican Communion throughout the world, and is continuing to seek to understand more deeply what are the appropriate processes of accountability, admonition and healing in a rapidly changing situation. The urgent need for effective ways to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace so that the Gospel may be preached and God be worshipped in spirit and in truth has at this time given a sharp focus to the wider reflection of the Commission on Communion. In response to the Archbishop of Canterbury's invitation, we offer our theological reflections in a spirit of dialogue under the paraklesis of the Spirit, hoping that they will aid the Primates in making their judgement on the demands of communion in Christ at the present time.

## **IATDC Communiqué September 2003**

The Commission, now two-years into its study of the meaning and maintenance of 'Communion', met under the Chairmanship of the Rt Rev Professor S.W. Sykes from 4-9 September as guests of Virginia Theological Seminary. The work of the Commission is being pursued as an active conversation with member churches of the Anglican Communion, a process which was approved at the Anglican Consultative Council meeting in Hong Kong in 2002. Several hundred dioceses and theological centres, a number of parishes and individuals have participated in this dialogue by responding to the Four Key Questions and Six Propositions on ways in which Anglicans understand and experience koinonia.

Whenever the Commission has gathered it has been vividly aware of the need for the sort of trust and solidarity which Communion anticipates. The initial meeting of the Commission was disrupted by terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, and the next overshadowed by the mounting rhetoric which preceded the invasion of Iraq. On this occasion members were acutely conscious of the controversy surrounding the election of a non-abstinent homosexual priest as the next Bishop of New Hampshire. The circumstances of our meetings have demonstrated how urgent it is, within the church as much as throughout the wider human community, to encourage good argument on disputed matters so as to nurture the unity promised by the gospel in an increasingly polarised global context.

We have been made aware by our correspondents of the variety of threats to koinonia which they face, and also the high value which is placed on membership of a worldwide Communion of Anglican Churches, especially in situations where Christian discipleship can be a lonely, challenging and dangerous calling. The response which the Commission is making seeks to learn from that evidence. It is developing an argument which tries to discern how God addresses his creation and how his people receive and respond to his word; it is taking seriously the way the Gospel addresses theological and ethical disputes; and, in a world so challenged by global and local tensions, it is asking how recent developments in Anglican polity may impact on its developing understanding of Communion.

During its meeting the Commission also gave the document *To Mend the Net* further consideration, it discussed the papal encyclical, *On the Eucharist and the Church*, and began to explore ways in which theological education resources might be shared throughout the Communion, perhaps in concert with the Theological Education Initiative being commissioned by the Primates Meeting. The next phase of the Commission's work will be to integrate the three lines of its discussion - continuing reflection on the responses to the Six Propositions which have been received, developing a response to the document *To Mend the Net*, and working on the processes by which the Communion can sustain its life. Together it is hoped these will lead into the development of a dynamic description of how our life as a Communion can be carried forward.

The generous hospitality and resources of the Virginia Theological Seminary were again greatly appreciated by the Commission, which next year expects to meet in Kenya.

The Commission will report its proceedings as usual to the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates, and the Anglican Consultative Council. Compilations of replies received to the Six Propositions and other information about the study process can be seen on the Anglican Communion web-site.

**Stephen Sykes**

*Chairman*

9 September 2003

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The Rt Revd Professor Stephen W Sykes (Chair)

The Revd Dr Philip H E Thomas (Assistant to the Chair)

The Revd Canon Gregory Cameron (Secretary)

The Revd Professor Kortright Davis

The Rt Revd J Mark Dyer

The Rt Revd Tan Sri Dr Lim Cheng Ean

The Revd Dr Katherine Grieb (Observer)

Dr Esther M Mombo

The Revd Canon Luke Pato

The Revd Dr Stephen Pickard

Dr Jenny Te Paa

The Rt Revd Paul Richardson

The Revd Dr Nicholas Sagovsky

Dr Eileen Scully  
The Rt Revd Dr N Thomas Wright  
The Very Revd Paul F M Zahl  
The Rt Revd Tito Zavala

Not present on this occasion were:

The Revd Victor R Atta-Baffoe  
The Rt Revd Dr Samuel R Cutting  
The Revd Dr Bruce N Kaye  
The Rt Revd Dr Matthew Oluremi Owadayo

Administrative staff:

Mrs Christine Codner  
The Revd Terrie Robinson

## Six Propositions for Anglicans

### Introduction

When the Commission began its work we posed four questions to Anglicans world-wide. A summary of the answers received can be found in 'The Communion Study, 2002' and our discussion has continued in response to what has been said. A summary of the conversation so far - in deliberately non-technical language - has been expressed like this:

- Communion is God's gift - and it is good for you. Human beings are not meant to exist on their own. It is in fellowship with God and neighbour that we find lasting fulfilment and real life.
- This 'communion' is offered to everyone in the Gospel, to be received by faith, sealed in baptism, and sustained by faithful participation in the family of God's thankful people.
- It is not easy to love your neighbour. In our world it is difficult enough to even meet one. And at times disputes and controversies can threaten to disrupt even the most Christian communities.
- What enables Christian people to walk together in the footsteps of Jesus is their common Faith, which is intimately linked with their shared calling to a corporate life of holiness.
- You cannot often specify in advance what distortions of belief or behaviour could disable the Christian fellowship, but listening to God's Word together, entering in to the story and actions of His salvation, and keeping in touch with other parts of the family, helps sensitise it to things which could be really damaging.
- Anglicans share a 'family likeness' with other families around the world. They do not look much like each other, but when they do happen to get together they realise how much they have in common.
- They all face different problems - although even the same problem can look different when it is viewed from another angle. Some communities are especially worried about personal issues, like homosexuality or whether gender determines who is competent to lead the churches. Most are more concerned about how their fellow Christians and fellow citizens possibly survive under the threat of prejudice, poverty, violence or the enormity of human suffering.
- Each church has to face its own problems, but in a communion there must always be ways for them to help each other with their tasks. After all, communion is God's gift - and no one church has ever unearthed the full extent of all his promises!
- What many people are wondering at the moment is whether there might be some better ways for Anglican churches to support each other as they discover the significance of their life together. It is not just a matter of money (although that can certainly make a difference). The biggest help we can offer each other is the chance see ourselves in a new way. We can learn from each other about good things that God offers his people. We have insights, ideas, convictions to share that can help us on the way, and clarify our sense of common purpose in God's service together. (Philip Thomas, England)

To continue the study process the Commission would like to test SIX PROPOSITIONS, arising from these discussions, which follow. We want to encourage churches, theologians, and individual Anglicans to share something of their own experience, and tell us as frankly as possible how they see the theological issues confronting the Anglican Communion today.

+ **Stephen Sykes (Chairman)**

## **Responses**

Below you will find:

- Six propositions which summarise essential issues from the Commission's discussions so far;
- A passage of Scripture related to each issue;
- A comment on the six propositions from individual members of the Commission; and
- A series of questions to which we would especially like your reaction.

We are seeking to do our work, not in splendid academic isolation but as an act of positive collaboration with the whole Communion. That is at least one aspect of what is meant by *koinonia*, communion!

What we would value is your comments on this material. We will appreciate however much you care to offer to our deliberations. Reaction to the whole approach will be welcomed; responses to each statement would be excellent; but comment on particular issues will be valued too.

From the questions we will particularly value insight into the concrete, everyday experience of your church - Province, diocese, congregation - in celebrating and sustaining the gift of communion.

### **Proposition 1:**

**The *koinonia* of the Anglican Communion is both greatly enriched, and at times challenged and confused, by the variety of ways of encountering scripture. We bring our whole lives, in our different cultural and personal contexts, to scripture, and from those places open ourselves to 'being read by' scripture.**

*A passage for reflection: Luke 24:13-35*

As particular members of the Anglican Communion, we bring our contextual, cultural, and personal situations to bear upon the task of 'reading in communion' with others across space and time. Private reading and study of scripture takes place, by implication, within the larger framework of the church's praise of God and proclamation of the Word in common prayer and eucharist.

The Anglican tradition of reading the Bible carries an historic deep respect for biblical scholarship, taking seriously the integrity of the canon, historical contextuality and original languages of the Bible. 'Historical' studies are well complemented by 'theological' interpretations and 'literary' readings. In addition, theologians in many parts of the world have called attention to issues of power and privilege in biblical interpretation and the need for Christians to listen to one another across cultural differences and economic divisions.

The rich variety of material within the canon resists all human attempts to reduce it a flat or uniform agenda. At the same time, the biblical writings are consistent witnesses to the trustworthiness of the triune God and, for all their differences of style, content, and opinion, they are clearly part of one conversation that intends to be open to hear the Word of that one God. A Ghanaian parable of individuals and community within the village helps us here: from a distance one sees the people of the village like a forest; only in closer proximity does one see the particular features of each tree. So the art of reading and living under a scripture which is both unified and diverse is an organic part of the vocation to live together within our single, yet richly variegated, Communion. It is within this context that our ongoing and vital debates about the 'authority' of scripture must take place.

**A Katherine Grieb** (USA)

**Esther M Mombo** (Kenya)

**N Thomas Wright** (England)

**How does the Bible function as a source of authority in setting priorities and resolving disputes in your church?**

**Proposition 2:**

**Dividing doctrine from ethics not only creates the possibility for serious mistakes in Christian thinking but also diminishes the coherence of the life of holiness which is the Christian vocation.**

*A passage for reflection: Ephesians 4:1-6*

In our initial questions to the churches, we asked in what way Christian teachings about moral behaviour are integral to the maintenance of communion. The answers we received were overwhelmingly affirmative. And this indeed is our view. What we call ethical teachings are woven into the fabric of Christian doctrine. Christians are called to die to sin and to rise again with Christ into newness of life (Romans 6.4). The doctrines of the resurrection and of baptism contain a teaching about personal transformation. Indeed the very idea of communion is inseparable from holiness of life, a sharing in the very being of God (II Peter 1.4). It belongs to the integrity of the Church that it teaches the truth that is in Christ Jesus, which is a new way of life (Mark 10.21). That life is no easy option. It involves personal struggle against temptation and a commitment to freedom from oppression. It is taken up truly as a taking-up of the cross (Ephesians 4.20-24). It is simply a mistake to think that 'core doctrine' does not include such teaching (as apparently the Righter Judgement of 1994 does).

+ **Stephen Sykes** (England)

Where do you see Christian doctrine informing or challenging ethical questions arising in your own situation?

**Proposition 3:**

**The reality of the incarnation implies that the Gospel is always proclaimed in specific cultures. Inculturation always runs the risk of syncretism, in all cultures without exception. One of the gifts which comes from membership of the Anglican Communion is that other Provinces hold up a mirror to each of us, enabling us to question whether the gospel has been compromised among us.**

*A passage for reflection: Acts 17:16-34*

The Incarnation of Jesus Christ is God's Self-revelation to the world. Jesus' ministry on earth included both the acceptance of a particular culture and a moral confrontation with elements in that culture. When Jesus in turn commissioned his disciples, they too were to pursue the mission, which the Holy Spirit would give them by relating to their society incarnationally.

The theological concept of inculturation denotes the process whereby the church becomes incarnated in a particular culture of a people.

Inculturation occurs when dialogue is sought at the level of trust between Christian message and praxis vis-à-vis local beliefs and values. Thus, as Christianity carries the structures and theology of the church into the conversation, so the same must grow out of local symbols, and, in so doing maintain the cultural and spiritual integrity of the local people. Inculturation, well understood, is openness to a process whereby the Christian gospel is interpreted and reinterpreted in an ongoing process of faithful reciprocity among peoples in the different contexts and cultures of the global church.

However, inculturation is not limited to religious cultural beliefs and practices. In its broadest sense, it includes all endeavours aimed at making the Christian message relevant to the local context. It is also an interaction and integration of the Christian message and socio-political and economic reality. True inculturation entails a willingness to incorporate what is positive, and to challenge what is alien to the truth of the Christian faith. It has to make contact with the psychological as well as the intellectual feelings of the people. This is achieved through openness to innovation and experimentation, an encouragement of local creativity, and a readiness to reflect critically at each stage of the process - a process that, in principle is never ending.

**Victor Atta-Bafoe** (Ghana)

**Luke Pato** (South Africa)

What are the issues in your own cultural situation which need to be reconsidered in the light of the gospel?

#### **Proposition 4:**

**Since the beginning of Christianity disputes have arisen in which the truth of the Gospel is seen to be at stake. Not all disputes are of such significance, but some are. In a Communion made up of many different churches, discernment is required to identify what in any particular context are the crucial issues for the life of the Church.**

*A passage for reflection: Acts 15:1-35*

The Scriptures themselves bear witness to varieties of understanding within the people of God. This diversity of interpretation has sometimes given rise to lively disputes: for instance, in the Hebrew Scriptures, about the obligations of the covenant, both for God and for Israel, or in the New Testament about the demand that Gentile converts to faith in Christ should be circumcised in accord with the Law. In some such conflicts, fidelity to the covenant, or to the Gospel, was seen to be at stake. In others, legitimate diversity of interpretation is reflected in the diversity of Scriptural witness: for instance, in the Hebrew Scriptures there are two versions, with differing emphases, of the pre-Exilic history of Israel, and in the New Testament there are four Gospels, which give four distinctive perspectives on Jesus and the Gospel. We can therefore expect diversity of practice and of theological interpretation to continue within a communion of churches, especially when the individual churches are reading the Scriptures and practising the Christian faith in hugely different contexts and circumstances. Even within the New Testament, it is clear that some Christians thought others were not being faithful to the Gospel and, on the issue of circumcision, a council was held at Jerusalem to resolve the issue. From the beginning, conciliar processes and conciliar decision-making have enabled the Church to identify those issues on which unity must be maintained and to reaffirm its faith in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, often in innovative ways. Within the conciliar process, an openness to the fresh reading of Scripture and of Christian tradition, together with a willingness to listen to one another and so to what the Spirit may now be saying to the churches, has been vital to the faithful proclamation of the Gospel in changing circumstances.

**+Paul Richardson** (Papua New Guinea and England)

**Nicholas Sagovsky** (England)

In what ways can church councils, synods, bishops and theologians be seen to maintain a balance between faithfulness to common belief and effective engagement with changing local circumstances?

#### **Proposition 5:**

**Disputes in the Church may be on many issues. Issues of discipline, such as Church teaching on sexuality or the recognition of ministerial orders may be important in some contexts: specific issues of poverty, justice and peace in others. Attention to the concerns of other churches within the Communion is important for putting those of each local church into a proper perspective.**

*A passage for reflection: 2 Corinthians 1:23-2:11*

We recognise the importance of addressing together the issue of human sexuality, and of homosexual practice in particular. It has become for many a church-dividing issue. For others the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate still lingers as a crisis of faith. For still others, the persistence of white supremacy stifles the spirit of Communion.

We also weigh the importance of the world-wide distribution of wealth, issues of justice in varying contexts, and the goals of peace and the cessation of violence. Often the developed world puts its own hot-button issues in the forefront and misses other equally important issues, such as global warming. Our Communion serves us when it puts all the issues on the table, omitting none.

**Paul Zahl (USA)**

**Kortright Davis (West Indies)**

How far can membership of a Communion of churches help a local church to discern what are the crucial issues in its own situation?

**Proposition 6:**

**At every level, the practice of koinonia requires that there are those who have the responsibility to arbitrate in disputes and conflicts vital to our shared life. Such arbitration gains its force from the ties that bind us together in a voluntary communion. The church then, needs to develop structures for testing, reconciliation and restraint.**

*A passage for reflection: Matthew 18:15-17*

We should not be surprised when conflicts and disputes occur in the church. Such things arise for many reasons, for example, failure of communication, misunderstandings, jealousy etc. Conflict also occurs because of the sheer richness of the gospel of Christ and the difficulty of deciding amidst a number of possibilities what is the faithful way forward in a particular situation. In a voluntary society like the church we rely heavily on the ties that bind us together as the body of Christ as a way of resolving our differences and disputes. The church places a high premium on face-to-face relations as the natural means through which it tries to discern what is right, test disputed practices and exercise discipline. Conflict resolution and the kinds of sanctions exercised in the church are thus primarily persuasive compared with those of a coercive and judicial kind. However, this does not mean that arbitration can be avoided in disputed areas at a level appropriate to the strength and extent of the disputed. Indeed, the church would be failing in its duty if it did not work hard at all levels of its life - parish, diocese, province, region and beyond - to deal with disputed matters, striving for reconciliation and implementing appropriate sanctions when necessary. The church needs those who will exercise a ministry by which disputes are resolved and structures which allow such arbitration to take place. These structures

will be both formal and informal and involve face-to-face relations as befits the community of Jesus Christ.

**Stephen Pickard** (Australia)  
**+ Matthew Owadayo** (Nigeria)  
**Bruce Kaye** (Australia)

How are disputes addressed and conflicts resolved in the practice of your church?

## **IATDC Communiqué, October 2002**

The initial meeting of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission had been disrupted by the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, so this year's meeting was the first occasion for all members to come together. Assembled at Virginia Theological Seminary, and charged by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Anglican Consultative Council to articulate 'the meaning and maintenance of communion', the Commission was once again vividly aware of the volatility of human communities. Dramatic preparations were being made for the anniversary of September 11, rhetoric for regime change in Iraq was gathering force, and during the meeting news was received of the murder of a Congolese priest as he was travelling to a meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council.

The Commission, twenty-two theologians and teachers from all parts of the Anglican Communion under the Chairmanship of the Rt Revd Professor Stephen Sykes, was also acutely aware of conflict and potential divisions within the church. Papers commissioned for the meeting and extensive correspondence with dioceses and centres of theological education around the world were discussed. Over 100 replies were received to questions about the nature of communion, threats to its integrity, and the degree to which 'moral teachings' define, but also at times divide, Christian identity. What has become clear is that alongside well-publicised differences over attitudes to homosexuality, questions of gender and ministry or the possibility of lay-presidency at the Eucharist, most Anglicans are even more concerned about the way appropriate expressions of fellowship could provide mutual support for churches living under the threats of poverty, ethnic tensions, violence and enormous human need. An underlying theology of communion (koinonia) will need to engage all these issues.

The Commission is committed to continuing its task in conversation with the Anglican Communion as a whole, and especially with churches of the global South. In a second stage of consultation, responses are being sought to a series of about the nature of conflict in the church; the role of Scripture; the proper integration of doctrine and ethics; the way in which local, contextual questions are addressed and how far the interdependence of Anglican provinces can be a source of strength in this responsibility, along with the need to find structures of 'testing, reconciliation and restraint' which are appropriate to an Anglican understanding of authority in the Church.

The Commission greatly appreciated the generous hospitality of Virginia Theological Seminary and expects to meet next from 4-9 September 2003. A review of responses to the first phase of the Commission's work, *The Communion Study, 2002: Four key questions for Anglicans*, will be sent to dioceses along with an outline of the future course of its study. Additional details will be shown on the IATDC pages of the Anglican Communion web-site: [www.anglicancommunion.org](http://www.anglicancommunion.org).

### **Participants**

The Rt Revd Prof Stephen Sykes, England, Chairman  
Dr Jennie Te Paa, Aotearoa/NZ and Polynesia

The Revd Dr Stephen K Pickard, Australia  
The Revd Dr Bruce Kaye, Australia  
Dr Eileen Scully, Canada  
The Rt Revd Dr Samuel Cutting, India (not able to attend)  
The Rt Revd Paul Richardson, England  
The Revd Prof Nicholas Sagovsky, England  
The Revd Canon Dr Tom Wright, England  
Dr Ester Mombo, Kenya  
The Revd Joseph Denge Galgalo, Kenya  
The Rt Revd Dr Matthew Owadayo, Nigeria  
The Revd Canon Luke Pato, Southern Africa  
The Rt Revd Héctor Zavala, Southern Cone  
The Rt Revd Dr Lim Cheng Ean, South East Asia  
The Revd Victor Atta-Bafoe, West Africa  
The Very Revd Dr Paul Zahl, United States  
The Revd Prof Kortwright Davis, United States  
The Revd Dr Kathy Grieb, Observer, VTS  
The Rt Revd Dr Mark Dyer, IASCER Cross Appointment  
The Revd Dr Philip Thomas, England, Assistant to the Chairman  
The Rt Revd John Baycroft, ACO, Secretary  
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**The Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission**

**THE COMMUNION STUDY,  
2002**

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## THE I.A.T.D.C. ‘COMMUNION STUDY’, 2002

### Preamble

Following the decision of the Commission in September 2001, the Primates and Provincial Secretaries of the Anglican Communion were circularised, outlining the process that was envisaged. In January every diocesan bishop and, as far as could be established, all Anglican theological colleges in the Communion were sent the four agreed ‘key’ questions:

- When we speak of the Anglican Communion, what do we mean by the word “communion”?
- What is it that makes some disputes so crucial that failure to resolve them threatens a break in communion?
- In what ways are Christian teachings about moral behaviour integral to the maintenance of “communion”?
- How far does *The Virginia Report* meet the relevant situations that have arisen in the Anglican Communion since its publication?

Press releases were sent, through the Provincial Secretaries, to Anglican newspapers and journals, and the questions were also posted on the Anglican Communion web-site.

The following responses were received by the end of June:

<u>Diocese</u>	<u>Province</u>
Adelaide (Women’s Affairs Committee)	Australia
Akure	Nigeria
Bloemfontein	Southern Africa
Bradford	England
Brisbane	Australia
Christ the King	Southern Africa
Christchurch	New Zealand
Colombo	Sri Lanka
Coventry	England
Durham	England
Edinburgh	Scotland
Florida	ECUSA
Fort Worth	ECUSA
Glasgow	Scotland
Hong Kong (for Province)	Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui
Johannesburg	Southern Africa
Llandaff	Wales
Kenya (Provincial consultation)	Kenya
Louisiana	ECUSA
Lui	Sudan
Manchester	England
Maryland	ECUSA
Matabeleland	Central Africa
Malaita	Melanesia
Melbourne	Australia
Muhabura	Uganda
Montreal	Canada

Mundri	Sudan
Mynanmar (for Province)	Mynanmar (Burma)
New Jersey	ECUSA
New Westminster	Canada
Nigeria (Doctrine and Theological Committee)	Nigeria
Niger Delta West	Nigeria
Norwich	England
Ottawa	Canada
Oxford	England
Port Elizabeth	Southern Africa
Quincy	ECUSA
Rhode Island	ECUSA
Ripon and Leeds	England
Rochester	England
Seychelles	Indian Ocean
Singapore	South East Asia
Southern Africa (Province)	CPSA
South Kerala	Church of South India
Southern Cone (House of Bishops)	Southern Cone
Southwell	England
Tennessee	ECUSA
Texas	ECUSA
Thika	Kenya
Torit	Sudan
Uruguay	Southern Cone
West Missouri	ECUSA
Utah	ECUSA
Western Australia (Social Responsibilities Commission)	Australia
Western North Carolina	ECUSA
Worcester	England
Winchester	England

<u>Theological College</u>	<u>Location</u>
Anglican Bible College	Kafanchan, Kaduna, India
Bible and Leadership Inst.	Zaki-Biam, Nigeria
Bishopdale College	Nelson, N.Z.
Carlisle and Blackburn Theological Training Institute	Carlisle, England
Episcopal Seminary of the SW	Austin, Texas
Formation Biblique et Theologique	Mauritius
Kano TEE Department	Kano, Nigeria
Kgolagano College	Botswana (Ecumenical)
Lanka Bible College	Colombo, Sri Lanka
Moore Theological College	Sydney, Australia
Provincial TEE Programme	Nairobi, Kenya
Ridley College	Melbourne, Australia
St Francis College	Brisbane, Australia
St George's College	Jerusalem
Seminario San Andres	Mexico
South East Institute for Theological Education	Canterbury, England
Trinity College	Bristol, England
Vancouver School of Theology	Vancouver, Canada
Wyclif College (?)	Toronto, Canada

<u>Individuals</u>	<u>Role/responsibility</u>
Dr Marcia Cameron	Sydney, Australia
Thomas Dageforde	St Louis, Missouri
Canon Peter Davison	Vernon, B.C., Canada
Bishop Jane Holmes Dixon	Suffragan bishop <i>pro tempore</i> , Washington, U.S.
The Rev Samuel L. Edwards	Forward in Faith/North America
Professor George Egerton	Associate Professor of History, University of British Columbia
Orville Endicott	Lawyer, Hon. Assist Priest, St James' Cathedral, Toronto
Dr Tom Frame	Anglican Bishop to the Australian Defence Force
Manuel Guedes-Viera	Lay member of Synod, Igreja Lusitana
Ivan Head	Warden, St Paul's College, University of Sydney, Australia
David Hannon	Lay member of Church of Ireland panel which responded to <i>The Virginia Report</i>
The Rev Timothy Nakayama	Retired former missionary in Japan
The Rev Prof. Stephen Noll	Vice Chancellor, Uganda Christian University
The Rev John Roberts	Rural Dean of Brackley, Peterborough, England
Donald Smith	Baptised member of All Saints, Bangalore (CSI)
The Rev Toni Stuart	Rector, St Matthews Church, Sacramento, California
Dr Derek Walter	Churchwarden, Tasmania & member of General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia
Dr Louis Weil	California, U.S.

This total of 96 responses (59 from dioceses, 19 colleges, 18 individuals) may seem to be a disappointing return from the number of bishops (846) and colleges (327) who were personally contacted. It is worth noting though that many more than 96 individuals have been involved. It is worth noting that dioceses from 21 different Provinces replied, and that altogether communications came from 28 provinces. Many diocesan responses and almost all those from colleges were composite replies. Quite a wide range of consultation was evident in some of the submissions, and in seven instances this led to a provincial-level of response. Furthermore, the process seems to have raised awareness of the theological issues involved in a number of current controversies: several provinces – including even the Church of England – have indicated that they will look again (or often, to be truthful, look for the first time) at implications of *The Virginia Report*. To some extent it may be claimed that the 'Communion Study' is beginning to create, as was hoped, a renewed field of discourse within the Anglican Communion.

It can also be said that the paucity of the response does not in itself limit the usefulness of the study as a whole. The questions were not circulated as a survey, and replies do not constitute votes in a poll. Anglican decision-making is never simply a matter of establishing majority opinion about any question. A prior claim is the accumulation of wisdom, the discernment of truth. The value of the replies received is not so much their number but what each or any one

of them might add to the developing understanding of how the church is held and sustained in communion. In launching this study the Commission foresaw that, incidentally, it could also act as a communion-building exercise. Even the limited number of responses received suggest that to some extent this study models ways in which the communion of Anglican churches can be maintained: the reluctance of so many people in positions of responsibility to join in the consultation seems equally to represent one of the most significant threats to their doing so.

There follows an inevitably brief selection of some of the insights which have been offered, but first, a commentary by the Chairman, Professor Stephen Sykes, on the significance of the questions and the implications of responses offered to them.

# CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTARY ON RESPONSES MADE TO THE IATDC STUDY ON KEY QUESTIONS UNDERLYING ISSUES OF COMMUNION

## What do we mean by the word 'communion'?

Five somewhat different responses can be detected among replies received:

- 1.1 For some the word is primarily, **theological**, expounding the Greek term *koinonia*/communion. It means that the basis of the Anglican Communion is our being adopted into the *koinonia* of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Though fundamental, this use of the term is obviously not distinctively Anglican; such communion is shared with all baptised Christians, even with those with whom we differ over important areas of faith and order. Many Anglicans recognise this reality by welcoming at Holy Communion those who have been baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity, and are in good standing in their own churches.
  
- 1.2 For some the word signifies those linkages which connect the legislatively autonomous provinces with each other, such as the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conferences, the ACC and the Primates Meeting. Of these so-called instruments of unity, being in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury is by some (but by no means all) provinces identified as an element in their own constitutional identity. The Archbishop appears to have, by tradition, the right to invite (or not to invite) bishops to the Lambeth Conference – a right which has been exercised to exclude churches and bishops which have formally gone into schism or disregarded the canon law of their own provinces (for example in South Africa, England and North America). This aspect of communion is at least quasi-judicial. It is currently being suggested that there should be an explicit corpus of international Anglican canon law. This aspect of communion might therefore be called **canonical or proto-canonical**.
  
- 1.3 At the same time, in order perhaps to distinguish Anglicanism from the very strong tradition of Roman Catholic international canon law, some writers emphasise the importance of the **voluntary** element in the Anglican Communion. It is, in all circumstances, true that one enters baptism by voluntary decision, not by compulsion. No law can compel anyone to remain in any communion, including the Roman Catholic. For

Anglicans however it is always stressed that communion comes about, and is maintained, through voluntary agreement.

1.4 A fourth aspect of communion emerges in the recognition of the role of certain cultural and historical links, which have been (and in some cases still are) powerful in maintaining communion. Such features include the use of English and the involvement of the UK in colonial government. There are numerous parts of the Anglican Communion where this is not the case, but where they do exist they are frequently important in creating and sustaining (on both sides) a sense of kinship. This may be spoken of as the **historical/cultural** dimension to communion.

1.5 Finally, of considerable significance are the more or less formal modes of communication between parts of the Anglican Communion. **Communicational** instruments include (traditionally) the exchange of letters, and (in the modern world) telephone calls, faxes and e-mail. Mission societies have played a large role in the forging of contacts by the work of missionaries and other workers and travellers. Expressions of support through gifts of money or talents strengthen the sense of involvement. At the heart of such communication, of course, lies the theological conviction of openness to the other, based on sharing in a common nature, a desire to understand and be understood, a genuine care, and the mutual giving and receiving characteristic of a family.

2. In summary there are five aspects of communion:

- Theological
- Canonical or proto-canoical
- Voluntary
- Historical/cultural
- Communicational

These are not separate items, but aspects of a single reality, intertwined with each other like strands of a rope. Missionaries preach and teach the faith (communicational); but baptismal faith is God's own gift (theological); it is preached by people of a certain language and culture (historical/cultural); and meets with a response (voluntary); it arrives already embodied in certain rules and arrangements (canonical or proto-canoical). Moreover it is not a static reality. Understandings of the faith develop; canon law responds to new challenges; historical and cultural factors constantly shift; modes of communication change; the desire to remain in communion fluctuate with circumstances. If we are to interpret a given state of communion it is obviously important to acknowledge the interconnectedness of these organic shifts of perspective. It is often quite difficult to be sure at a specific time precisely what changes are under way.

3. What happens to communion when there is a dispute? Cultures which are used to litigation will obviously ask whether legal process can resolve the matter? Church law, of course, except in England is not civil law, and its decisions may not be enforceable. This is where the voluntary aspect of communion is important. The parties to a dispute have to *desire* that the dispute should be resolved by the decision of a church process or court. If there is no formal procedure, the parties may proceed to a solution either (a) by discussion, or (b) by pre-emptive action. In the first case the voluntary character of the process is still more obvious; both parties have to desire an outcome (even one disappointing to themselves) and both have to be ready to consent to the outcome. But in church disputes it is not infrequently the case that one or both parties identify one outcome as consistent with the truth of God. It is more attractive, in this case, to 'solve' the issue by pre-emptive action. In the end of the day not even canon law can prevent a schism from occurring in the church. It is clear however that the church which has developed a respect for the authority of its corporate decision-making procedures is less prone to schisms than a church which emphasises freedom of individual choice. Disputes are not, of course, of equal seriousness. This is the subject matter of the next question.

#### **Disputes which threaten a break in communion.**

4. Although on the face of it this was a question about the *content* of particular disputes, a lot of correspondents drew attention to the *context* of disputes as an important characteristic influencing their character.
  - 4.1 Some insist that local culture determines the content of disputes rather than theology. This, one may comment, seems a rather extreme view. After all, the dispute is about the Christian faith. Though the interpretation of the Christian faith may be influenced by a certain local culture, there has to be something universal about the faith or otherwise communion would be simply impossible.
  - 4.2 Some point out that different regions of the Anglican Communion lay emphasis upon different matters. The 'West' stress issues of gender and sexuality; the developing world, poverty, oppression and AIDS. This is a relative not an absolute matter. Poverty, oppression and AIDS are issue in the West; gender and sexuality are also pertinent in the two-thirds world. But it is a matter of emphasis, and on whose agenda is made to count when an international assembly meets. There is a widespread perception that the Western agenda predominates. In this sense one particular part of the earth exercises its power (of numbers, influence and rhetoric) to define what is said to be crucial.
  - 4.3 It is important, however, to note that the question of context cannot and does not simply disappear. For example, if the West says that the world church must discuss the question of homosexuality because it is an important item in its own culture, it is quite possible for the two-thirds world to respond (and parts of it have responded in this way), this subject is crucial because a decision, or non-decision of a certain kind would disqualify that part of the world church from being regarded as fully Christian. In other words the context from which a dispute arises cannot, of itself, be a reason for asserting that the dispute is of no importance.
  - 4.4 What then makes the content of a dispute 'crucial'? Here the correspondents undoubtedly face a difficulty. On the one hand, it must be the case that a church which confesses the Nicene Creed acknowledges the possibility of dispute of world-wide importance – a 'crucial' matter affecting the very heart of the faith itself. On the other hand, there seems to be no protection of the word 'crucial' from rhetorical abuse. It is suggested, for

example, that only arrogance and obsessiveness, or a kind of moral childishness, will insist on the ‘cruciality’ of this dispute or that.

- 4.5 At this point it is worth observing that ‘crucial’ is one of a group of related words frequently used to designate closeness to the heart, core, fundamentals, essence or substance of the faith. Anglicans have tried for centuries to identify fundamentals and distinguish them from secondary matters (see my essay in Sykes and Booty on the ‘fundamentals’). Lutherans also used this distinction, and developed the concept of the *status confessionis* (the state of confessional identity) to speak of an issue on which no compromise is possible. Roman Catholic theology and ecumenism have spoken of ‘the hierarchy of truths’ as a way of indicating that not every item in the dogmatic definitions of Catholic theology is equally close to the heart of the matter. All these ways of speaking correspond to a common-sense idea that certain theological are more important (‘fundamental’, ‘crucial’, ‘substantive’) than others.
- 4.6 But common-sense does not solve either of two consequential problems, the questions of (a) authority (ie. *who* has the authority to decide that a question is ‘fundamental’, ‘crucial’ etc.), and (b) content (ie. *what* is said to belong to the ‘heart’, ‘core’, ‘fundamentals’). Article 20 of the Thirty-nine Articles (‘Of the authority of the Church’) bestows a certain limited authority on ‘the Church’ to make decisions about controversies of faith. But it does so subject to the authority of Scripture in all matters relating to salvation; and it does not further specify who precisely speaks for ‘the Church’. It is also necessary to add that the authority of the Articles themselves is differently understood in different parts of the Anglican Communion.

#### **‘Teaching on moral behaviour’ and the maintenance of communion**

5. On the whole the responses indicate a positive acceptance of the fact that Christian teachings about moral behaviour is integral to the maintenance of communion, though certain caveats are entered against a too simplistic interpretation of this fact.
- 5.1 The grounds for believing this to be true are generally biblical. It is said by some, for example, that the Ten Commandments have been received by the Church, and that Jesus teaches the Two Commandments in which all the law is summed up. Some responses specifically distanced themselves from the ‘Righter Judgement’ (in response to the charge that teaching that a homosexual person in a partnership could be ordained to the priesthood or episcopate was a heresy), which asserted that for Anglicans the ‘fundamentals’ did not include moral teachings. It is also, one might add, specifically permitted by the rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer for a priest not to administer communion (ie. literally to ex-communicate) to someone judged to have given offence to the congregation by being ‘an open and notorious evil liver, or [to] have done any wrong to his neighbours by deed or word’, subject to the jurisdiction of the bishop. In principle, therefore, the maintenance of communion must involve at least some teaching on moral behaviour. Twentieth-century history suggests that a Church may have to declare teaching about racial purity or ethnic segregation to be heretical.

- 5.2 However the responses also enter caveats. The first of these relate to ‘changing times’. It is necessary for a church to be alert to the fact that complexities within circumstances require careful judgements. Examples are polygamy and issues surrounding the medical prolongation of life. From Anglican history a question on which a new judgement was made is the control of conception by artificial means.
- 5.3 Other responses indicate the need to be alert to a degree of relativity in respect of context. There is sensitivity to the possibility of confusing cultural contexts, if norms from one area are imposed on another. No one area has a monopoly on truth. It may be added that though the general principle may be conceded, it is difficult to know what belongs to the ‘heart’, ‘core’, ‘fundamentals’ etc of Christian teaching, and what is a contextual variant on it. Also it is not infrequently the case that disagreement about an ethical issue may arise within one area or context, between people of broadly similar cultural background but of different theological traditions or commitments.
- 5.4 Another caveat relates to the need to ensure the possibility of repentance in relation to ethical behaviour. This again may be fully conceded. But the question which is posed relates to *teaching* about ethical behaviour, not to ethical behaviour. The precise issue is whether or not the maintenance of communion involves some measure of common teaching on ethical matters.
- 5.5 Finally it is also asked whether, even granted the importance of moral theology, it is necessary to enshrine that teaching in legislation (in the church’s case, canon law)? Should not the moral questions be left as matters of conscience? This plainly draws on the *voluntary* aspect of communion noted above. It is also consistent with the idea that the church is not obliged to make decisions about every matter. The difficulty with this view emerges once it is alleged that a refusal to make a decision about a matter is an aspect of lack of faith; in other words, there are certain matters which cannot be left as matters of individual conscience. In this case though it can be generally conceded that many things can be left as a matter of conscience, it is not possible to include every course of action in this permission. So the question of *content* has to be raised: is this specific issue (whatever it is) a matter on which a non-decision is not possible?

### **Application of these three questions to current disputes**

6. It seems generally accepted that teaching about moral behaviour could, subject to certain caveats, be relevant to maintaining communion.
  - 6.1 It would need to be determined that the moral behaviour in question was not a context-specific issue. In the case of sexuality, there is acute disagreement internal to the main context in which the issues arise. Furthermore the fact that an international gathering (the 1998 Lambeth Conference) did issue guidelines on the matter is consistent with the conclusion that the teaching in question is not confined to one part of the communion.
  - 6.2 It is important that this specific teaching about moral behaviour should not be confined to people identifiable as absolutists or people with undeveloped moral formation. The consistency of the teaching with the greater part of Christian tradition tends in the direction of this conclusion, short of complete certainty. To describe all people holding such a view as 'fundamentalists' is plainly abusive.
  - 6.3 At the same time it is not self-evident or unchallengeable that this particular issue is 'crucial' in the sense that to teach about it in a certain way (or to fail to do so) is to depart from the 'fundamentals' (etc) of Christianity. Whether a given issue is, or is not close to the heart of the faith is not determined by mere assertion. It has to be accompanied with argument: whether or not it is taught in Scripture, and in what way. What studies are relevant to understanding the situation, are all part of the consideration of the subject. Anglicans are used to enjoying communion with people who have been baptised, but who do not agree with them on all matters. What precisely is being said about *this* issue? That teaching of this kind is so seriously misleading that it is necessary for the sake of truth to separate oneself entirely from it? Again mere assertion would not be sufficient. It would need to be supported by open argument and argument would need to be tested.
7. The question also plainly relates to the *who* of authority? Given that the Church has authority in these kinds of disputes, who speaks for the Church? Is the Archbishop with the Primates? Is the Lambeth Conference? What role is accorded to the non-episcopal voice of the ACC? How do the international bodies relate to the provincial?
  - 7.1 The precise point raised by *To Mend the Net (TMTN)* concerns the rejection of advice or opinion of the 1998 Lambeth Conference by certain ECUSA diocesan bishops and synods. It is asked, are they simply free to do this under the rubric of 'reception'? Given that this has occurred, is there nothing that other parts of the church which concur with the Lambeth resolution can do? The suggestion of *TMTN* is that the Archbishop of

Canterbury and the Primates already have the requisite authority, and have the duty, to begin a quasi-canonical disciplinary process.

7.2 In connection with this, it is said by *TMTN* to be a weakness of *The Virginia Report* that it failed to recognise the need for international mechanisms by which authoritative decisions could be made on issues which threatened communion.

7.3 The response of *TMNT* to the problem of maintaining communion is, thus, to strengthen the canonical (or proto-canonical) procedures. The five-fold aspects of communion we have uncovered suggests, however, that other responses are possible. It would be important to bear in mind the strong *voluntary* character of communion in the Anglican Communion and to be meticulous about seeking consent to the strengthening of international canonical procedures. It would be wise to recognise the role played by *communication* in this matter (as IATDC explicitly does). We need to address the issue of *culture and history* by ensuring that non-English speaking parts of the Communion are included in the discussion. The *theological* character, both of communion and partial communion needs to be explored – the Eames Commission has already carried out much of this work in relation to the ordination of women to the episcopate.

### **Commentary**

8. It is unavoidable that a judgement will have to be made, explicitly or implicitly, about the claim that the issue is crucial to communion. All disputes are not of equal importance although the Vestiarian controversy (in which one party regarded the issue as indifferent and therefore fit for the legislation of the magistrate, and the other as a matter of real importance because of its implied connection with popery) indicates that people can become very heated about relatively small things. Not all disputes are equally important in all contexts. But the disagreement about sexuality is (at least arguably) of international importance, and has already been discussed in an international forum.

8.1 Is this dispute, however, ‘crucial’, in the sense that it threatens communion? Though there are those who do not think it of such importance, there are also those who believe that it is. Their argument is that to advance or condone this teaching is such a departure from the norms of Anglican theology that it is a Christian duty to separate oneself from it. The fact that this argument has been proposed, and the fact that steps have been taken to create an alternative centre of allegiance in certain place (eg. the Denver ordinations),

makes a judgement unavoidable on whether or not the issue is crucial, as the proponents argue.

- 8.2 Who makes this judgement? In the first instance, of course, it is made by the province in which the claim is advanced or that action is taken. The judgement may be explicit in the form of a resolution from a synod or meeting of bishops, or implicit in its refusal to deal with this issue (a refusal being one way of judging that the issue is not crucial).
- 8.3 Secondly, the judgement may be made at an international level by one or more of the international bodies charged with the duty of preserving communion, the Primates (with a special focus on the Archbishop of Canterbury), the ACC, and the Lambeth Conference. It is correct to say that the role of these bodies is proto-canonical. One or other of them could be developed in a more explicitly canonical direction.
9. By what criteria would such a judgement be made? It would be very convenient if it could be known in advance of a dispute what the relevant criteria for resolving it were. For example, if it were the case that there was a known and limited quantity of ‘fundamentals’, then a criterion would obviously be whether or not it belonged, or was closely related to one of the fundamentals. Unfortunately it has never been the case in Christian history that what constitutes the fundamentals has been known for certain.
- 9.1 If the criteria for what is crucial are not certain, is there then no alternative to sheer assertion? Is each Christian judge of what is ‘crucial’? There is plainly a role for the judgement of individual conscience. Synodical government, for all its flaws, seriously attempts to discern what such a judgement might be. There is plainly a role, also, for learning in the enlightenment of conscience, and thus for scholars and the processes of reasoned argument. In an episcopal church, furthermore, considerable though not exclusive responsibility is given to bishops to maintain the church in the true faith, and so to make representative judgements.
- 9.2 Thus though the criteria for what is crucial are not unchallengeably certain, and cannot be decided in advance and apart from the issues of a particular controversy, nonetheless commonsense confirms that not all disputes are a threat to communion. It has therefore to be *publicly argued* that this is (or is not) such a dispute. Then a judgement has to be made (by bishops in a synodical forum) of a kind which either confirms or does not confirm that this issue is crucial.

9.3 An open procedure of this kind is greatly to be preferred to various kinds of avoidance. Avoidance is detectable in vague exhortations to beware the dangers of schism, or warning about unbalanced mentalities, in generalities about approaches to ethical issues. Although these may be well meant and true in themselves they are only tangentially relevant to the issue, whether the Church may teach a particular doctrine about sexuality and act on the basis of that teaching. Frequently the imprecision is phrased in a kind of code, whose intention is to lend general support to one side or another of the argument without explicit consideration of the issues involved. This code, though a convenient device for a limited circle, is nonetheless unhelpful to general communication.

Stephen Sykes,

July 2002.

## The Communion Study: summaries and selections from responses received

This is not a consensus document. To synthesise all the points made even from the 100 submissions received would be almost impossible, and in any case the nature of the questions encouraged response more by way of assertion rather than through developed arguments. Furthermore the purpose of the study was to expose issues surrounding notions of ‘communion’ and the Anglican Communion, rather than at this stage to foreclose discussion on them. So this summary sets out simply to trawl through the responses received, to note some striking assertions and register elements of significant debate. It does not pretend to offer a scientific analysis or weigh competing viewpoints in the balance, although it may provide an indicator of some of the anxieties and aspirations shared by Anglicans today. It presents, in the phrase used by the Ottawa diocese to describe its own document, “snatches of overheard conversation” which might provide the basis of more sustained debates in future.

### **Question 1 – what is meant by ‘communion’ and the Anglican communion**

1.1 The question is not straight forward. The communion of Anglicans is “easier to describe than prescribe” (Montreal), and even that is difficult: “I know it when I see it” said another bishop.

1.2 Some formal definitions were offered – the 1930 Lambeth conference statement for instance, while several cited *The Virginia Report* (3.1) “The confession of a common faith, the celebration of the eucharist, a life of common prayer, the service of an ordained ministry, conciliar structures, shared service and mission sustain a life of Anglican belonging”.

1.3 When it came to practical examples – as will be seen –maintaining communion was often taken to involve much more than merely institutional re-organisation. Ripon and Leeds offered a striking affirmation “The church is a sacrament of God’s purposes for his creation, ‘the purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth’ (Eph 1:10). The churches calling requires it to be upward looking – to God – and out-ward looking – to the world – rather than inward looking” They go on to envisage the church representing and articulating “the ‘eager longing’ of the creation for reconciliation”.

As the Chairman has noted however, respondents tended to construe their understanding of how this sort of hope might be fulfilled in a number of distinctive ways.

**1.4 Theologically**, a variety of approaches emerged.

1.5 There was a steady emphasis on the biblical use of the terms eg. Coventry offered a contrast between Hebrew (and incidentally Islamic) thinking and the use of *koinos/koinonia* in secular and New Testament usage. Mundri, in Sudan offered an extensive catena of biblical references to communion including, movingly, an emphasis on the fellowship of suffering/persecution (Phil 3.10) and anticipated reunion among the heavenly host with their saints and martyrs (also Torit). In such testimony ‘communion’ is almost spoken of as an apocalyptic rather than simply a political reality.

1.6 Many others stressed the divine source of Christian fellowship. It involved a “participation in something, rather than association” insisted Akure, with primacy of “the vertical” relationship with God as the basis for horizontal relationships.

1.7 For others, Anglicanism represented “*communio in sacris*” (eg. Brisbane, Melaita ); it is a “sacramental and only secondarily institutional reality” with a need to distinguish communion from federation – or religious clubability (Florida) A number of contributors (eg. Norwich) observed that common ministry has already been lost. Others remark that the whole idea of ministerial collegiality is being marginalised as the parish rather than the diocese or province became, in popular thinking at least, the unit of Anglican communion. A renewed theological identity seems necessary if Anglicans are to be “more than a voluntary association of national churches bound together by human will”, and the cultural and historical shift towards leadership from the ‘two-thirds’ world was testing the tendency of “narcissistic independent operators” in the West to individualism (Louisiana)

1.8 Recourse was frequently made to the image of the family as the natural model for Anglican unity – although Ripon and Leeds wonder whether the Pauline “household of faith” or Johannine (and African?) theme of “friendship” might offer a more realistic basis? However the Bishop of Worcester opened up the family metaphor, in which he saw a combination of genetics (irrevocable) and covenant (marriage/adoption), both of them immutable. Yet some things can still rupture family life. He went on, “However they are extreme and their extreme nature cannot be stated in advance of their happening. Indeed to state them in advance is to make the family itself a conditional entity, which is something a family cannot be. The attempt to ‘toughen up’ the authority structures of the Communion – as in *To Mend the Net* – is fraught with the danger that any family would face if the weight of authority is inappropriately asserted – it can provoke precisely the tendencies towards separatism that it wishes to prevent. The encounter between Ahab and Elijah over the question of who was the ‘troubling of Israel’ has permanent relevance here.”

1.9 This reference to current controversies amplifies the conversation going on in the background (and sometimes not very far in the background) in several of the contributions. A number of writers consciously looked for a ‘toughening up’, at least of the doctrinal definitions of communion. eg. “*TVR* fails to sufficiently identify the fundamentals of the Christian Faith that must be the basis of communion with the Holy Trinity” (Singapore) – or “biblical truth should bridge the various disputes” (Thika).

1.10 A typically weighty contribution from the Bishop of Rochester stated: “Throughout the New Testament and the early church there is an underlying assumption that some agreement in faith is necessary if communion is to be real. In his earliest letters, St Paul was emphasising the importance of holding onto and passing on the apostolic paradosis (1 Cor 15; 2 Thess 2.15). The latter parts of the New Testament, understandably, are even more concerned to uphold right believing as an aspect of belonging (1 Tim 3 & 4; 2 Tim 2; 2 Peter 2; I John 4; Jude). St Irenaeus points to the agreement in faith among all the Churches (*Against Heresies* 1.10.2) and this is a primary consideration for others also as they seek to maintain communion with fellow-Christians (see, for example, St Cyprian’s letter to Stephen of Rome)”

1.11 Numerous responses allude to the Lambeth Quadrilateral as a basis for union, and some (eg. Lui) look for credal conformity, the denial of which “breaks any unity of life or purpose”. Ridley College notes that *koinonia* has an element of toughness: without some corporate discipline, no identity is possible: “It is one of the marks of Western Anglican theology that it seems to enjoy the notion of mystery about the centre of faith at the same time as being emphatic about more peripheral matters”.

1.12 While the historic markers of Anglican identity are widely respected, many see them as providing a starting point for outworking communion rather than the final definition of its limits. Montreal quotes a helpful definition by ARCIC *Church as Communion* (para 45) but then adds an emphasis it takes from *The Virginia Report* that communion “is not a union of the identical, but reconciliation of diversity in love”. It quotes, “[The Anglican way] entails a

willingness to contain difference and live with tension, even conflict, as the Church seeks a common mind on controversial issues” (TVR p14). The theological college in Mexico values “the moral maturity of living with inconclusive issues”.

1.13 An attractive essay from the Vancouver School of Theology traces ideas of communion from the writings of Hooker (*EP* V.56.5) and the Prayer of Humble Access. Accordingly, the Anglican Communion is not just an accidental coming together of the like-minded but an historical adventure of finding the reality of Christ in diversity and circumstances. Drawing on their enlarged experience of communion in an ecumenical setting, they urge the pursuit of unity through a re-appropriation of classical Anglican spirituality, citing among others, William Countryman: “If Anglicanism is to survive as a communion – that is, in maintaining actual communion among its very diverse members across the world – it will do so only by acknowledging the centrality of its spiritual tradition .... In so far as we decline to do so, we shall probably try to substitute, at the heart of Anglicanism, the kind of doctrinal and disciplinary rigidity that we have both rejected and coveted in the Reformed and Roman traditions. If we do so, we will tear Anglicanism, both as a community and a tradition, into increasingly small pieces” (*The Poetic Imagination: An Anglican Spiritual Tradition* (1999) p190).

1.14 The nature of this conflict, between conservative and more liberal approaches to Anglican authority and sources is significantly exposed in the personal submissions from Bishop Jane Holmes Dixon and the Rev’d Samuel Edwards. Bishop Dixon notes “We are only at risk for a break of communion when one party to a dispute asserts that his or her authority in interpretation of scripture is higher than that of another, or when we abandon our respect for the place of tradition and reason in resolving disputes to an exclusive struggle over authority in the interpretation of scripture.” Anglicans still pursue the *via media* she contends, and the “intentions and actions of my office ... were for unity, not disunity”, but “we do not have the authority to hold back one church until the whole Communion is of one mind on a particular point of dissension.”

1.15 Father Edwards, whose congregation of Christ Church, Accokeek, were in contention with Bishop Dixon, argues that the Anglican Communion must decide whether “communion is grounded in God’s definitive revelation of Himself as Trinity of Persons in Unity of Substance ... (or) the product of mutual consent between members of the ecclesiastical programme sufficient to preserve the institutional structure.” For him the loss of the classical understanding of scripture and tradition admits beliefs at a foundational level which are “not merely diverse but divergent”. Unless some things are “incapable of compromise or surrender” then “the only sure qualification for membership in the Anglican Communion seems to be whether one’s bishop is invited to the Lambeth Conference.”

1.16 In different degrees, this sort of division is characteristic of many (perhaps most) contributions. It is not something that can just be dismissed as a difference between the two-thirds world and the West.

1.17 A suggested way between these two approaches is perhaps sketched in the Southwell contribution (written by Prof Tony Thiselton) when it notes that the Lambeth 1988 Resolution “acknowledges permitted degrees of communion.... *De facto* the broader basis of a shared recognition of Scripture, the major creeds and gospel doctrine is narrowed in focus by criteria that entail a mutual recognition of ministries, and often in turn, mutual admission to communion”

Theological issues recur throughout the responses of course, notably in the way the *Virginia Report* is evaluated in Question 4, but even in the way communion is identified more than just theology is involved.

**1.18 The Voluntary nature** of Anglican association is a significant modifier of theology. “The Anglican Communion is not a body that votes on membership according to certain rules, rather it is a body to which one chooses to belong or not according to each Province’s acceptance of the Lambeth Quadrilateral” (Christchurch). It is a communion of churches “who wish to be in the Anglican family and accept the corporate wisdom of sister Churches as a balance to their own individual freedom” (St George’s, Jerusalem). Apart from theological definitions, there is a question of the ‘will’ to hold the Communion together.

1.19 This tension between freedom and submission to a common mind causes Uruguay to wonder about reactions to the Lambeth resolution on sexuality: if membership of the Communion is voluntary, how is it that some can so easily ignore what it sees as the consensus?

1.20 The clearest assertion of the voluntary character of Anglicanism perhaps comes from Moore College. Communion is experienced where believers gather under the Word in a particular place. “It is important that we do not confuse this historical entity (the Anglican Communion) with either the spiritual reality achieved by Christ or the physical manifestation of that entity in the local churches.” The Anglican Communion is simply a network to encourage proclamation and obedience to the gospel. It should not be confused with the Church (gathered in heaven) or churches (gathered on earth around the word). Anglicans are fragmenting because of inadequate views of Scripture, and as common cause is lost “the bonds of association unravel”.

1.21 Others see the whole idea of common cause, achieving ‘consensus’, as becoming problematic. If the Anglican Communion lacks a viable central authority which carries meaningful sanctions, it becomes less of an identifiable “communion, and more an increasingly informal ‘association’ .... Anglican identity is less clear as the Communion diversifies and grows away from British cultural heritage” (Tennessee).

**1.22 The historic links** that generated Anglican loyalty have inevitably become tenuous over recent decades. “We valued what we inherited from the British Empire” agreed Mauritius “but we are not stuck with inherited values.” “Common history” (Johannesburg) is still important for many, but for others it needs radical reinterpretation: being Anglican “has nothing whatever to do with the See of Canterbury” (Glasgow) - the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury may be valued, but only as that of an English bishop. “Moving beyond the *English church* is an important challenge” (Rhode Island).

1.23 Familiar things still have significant value. “Communion has a human face” states Bloemfontein, valuing “... common baptism and roots in a particular set of traditions and styles” beyond any single body of beliefs or moral code. “We can’t choose our family” said a correspondent from Bradford – but despite tensions there are still family characteristics which matter. You can still “recognise the ‘sense’ of an Anglican church elsewhere despite differences” (Manchester)

1.24 For some though, the links of history are rather too prominent, and represent a problem that must be addressed. “Colonialism the *material* basis, missionary societies the *effective* basis for Anglican identity” (Hong Kong) – but neither factor is adequately recognised in *TVR*. The Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui demand and requirement to become a church which is both Chinese and Christian is offered as a paradigm for reflection by Anglicans globally. Others point to “... the heavy-handedness of the powerful Western branch of the Communion that sought to over-ride the African/Asian component at the last Lambeth Conference. We have to take into account the evil of the world and the reality that Satan will use any foothold to divide and destroy” (Port Elizabeth).

1.25 Anglicans who trace their allegiances directly back to the Church of England are especially facing the post-modern implications of the loss of common culture. No Act of Uniformity – or the thinking which evolved from it – is any longer possible (Melbourne). Rochester cites Nicholas Sagovsky on the importance of the ‘living norm’ of actual life corresponding to ‘linguistic norm’ of Scripture in the early church. But the hermeneutical gap between the two is widening rapidly.

**1.26 Communication** becomes of vital importance in situations which threaten a breakdown of relationships. Fundamental to the maintenance of communion is the need for churches to be “more intentional about communicating .... Ongoing dialogue and common heritage are a binding force that continue to exercise greater power than any of our legalities...”(Maryland) This involves more than simply the spread of information. Adelaide amplifies: “catholicity, our shared communion within Anglicanism, is able to be secured ... only as a result of ongoing and careful maintenance of relationship between provinces and individuals, and ongoing and careful negotiation of shared meaning.”

1.27 Partnership links take on added value in situations where misunderstandings may divide. “In a shrinking world ‘belonging’ to others is very important” (W.Missouri) We are “proud of our peculiar traditions” (wrote Myanmar/Burma – where the dangers of isolation are perhaps better known than in most other parts of the world) yet they are “happy to be part of the wider Anglican Communion too”.

1.28 MRI/Partners in Mission and the Cycle of Prayer are noted as tangible ‘instruments’ of communion, but communication is costly in terms of effort and resources. In a changing situation throughout the Communion, the sharing of financial resources must be re-thought. An American bishop notes the iniquity of the West using money to “influence, reward or punish fellow Anglicans in other parts of the world .... The tail is wagging the dog” (Tennessee).

## **Question 2 – ‘Communion-breaking’ issues**

2.1 The lack of an Anglican magisterium is both a “blessing and a curse” (Louisiana) – a blessing, in that it means spiritual responsibility has to be taken personally, but a curse in that it is not easy to transcend individualism. This dilemma recurs in attempts to identify and address the presenting issues which threaten communion – attitudes to homosexuality predominate, the gender of priests and bishops, and for some the prospect of lay presidency at the eucharist are all major but not the only controversies in view. In what follows such issues are viewed differently by those who emphasise the blessing or the curse, the element of freedom or the longing for authority, commitment to locality or the importance of the universal, in Anglican polity.

2.2 Many value elements of freedom. The strength of Anglicanism is to “promote plurality – dialogue and openness” (Colombo). We need to acknowledge “varying definitions of sin” (New Jersey). “Accountability” is necessary, for this is what enables the “celebration of diversity” (Kenya). Others regret the defensiveness and insecurity of some of their partners and “the inability of many people and church leaders to dialogue within good Anglican parameters” (W.Missouri), or warn against the “arrogance, obsessiveness, lack of respect for one another, lack of listening to one another and recognising the differences that exist among us as we try to be faithful to following Jesus Christ” (Western N. Carolina). It is possible to identify ‘my issue’ as exclusively identified with faithfulness to the gospel. Appeals to ‘conscience’ or ‘tradition’ need to address underlying questions of where authority lies.

2.3 A more consistent response however is from those who seek some defined limits to freedom. There is a given baptismal koinonia yet “most Anglican faithful are over-shadowed with individualism and freedom of opinion and action” (Niger Delta West). The limits of freedom can be over-stepped. “The theological concept of communion as involving unity within limits is consistent throughout the New Testament Scripture and the Rule of Faith of the patristic period. It is also at the heart of the Protestant Reformation. The Reformers themselves justified their departure from the Church of Rome on the basis that the Roman Church had departed from the apostolic faith”, wrote Prof Stephen Noll, Vice Chancellor of the Uganda Christian University. Numerous other references were made to the need for safeguarding the deposit or fundamentals of the faith, or re-stating the ‘irreducible minimum’ basis upon which communion can be maintained. And this must be carried through by responsible authority: “Our government is not democratic, but Episcopal and synodical ... A healthy church applies healthy discipline: it recognises sin, seeks repentance and exercises pardon” (Bishops of Southern Cone)

2.4 But there is also a reluctance to approach the chasm of divorce too readily. Manchester warns of danger when “the sound of trenches being dug is louder than that of bridges being built”. Adelaide draw attention to Miroslav Volf’s treatment of the ministry of reconciliation (*Exclusion and Embrace*, p30) which sees the balancing of identity and difference as the most pertinent political and theological concern of the contemporary age.

2.5 What are seen as crucial issues often conceal more deeply-seated problems. “Disputes do not only cause break in communion, they make clear that such a break has already occurred” (Florida). Dr Ivan Head drew attention to the way in which the schism between Rome and Constantinople took some 200 years to become absolute. He comments that the instantaneous nature of modern communications raise the level of volatility and heat in any and every contentious matter. Johannesburg similarly notes that “lack of communication [previously] buffered us from our differences”.

2.6 Time is available for a reconciliation of differences to be achieved, as long as a state of “convergence rather than divergence exists”, with a clear distinction being made between diversity and *divergence* (Fort Worth). In an interesting illustration, Bishop Iker acknowledges as legitimate the difference between an Anglo-Catholic interpretation of the Mass, and the rising practice of Lay Presidency in Sydney. “The intention is to celebrate redemption in Christ. While there would be great disagreement about the act of communion, there is overwhelming agreement ... on the saving work of Jesus Christ in His death, resurrection and ascension.” He is not alone in regretting that “institutional transgressions” (like the Singapore/Denver consecrations) attract such immediate attention, because “they are easy to see, perhaps even impossible to miss”. By contrast, orthodox leaders find it hard to take seriously “outrageous statements of unbelief”, and repeatedly postpone responding to them.

2.7 There are no winners when schism takes place. There is a simple response from Muhabura “disputes become crucial when we fail to resolve them”. Mundri and other Sudanese churches refer to their own experience of reconciliation after schismatic succession – and appreciate the mediating role of Archbishop of Canterbury at the time. They are among those who can see a place for increased intervention from the Primates in times of crisis. Niger Delta West cites *To Mend the Net* approvingly, speaks of “the hierarchy” as a toothless bulldog – and calls for moral and political sanctions to be imposed in the interest of resolving conflict.

2.8 Yet it is possible to reach a point of divergence which takes the issue beyond dialogue. “When a dissident jurisdiction has been set up by those who believe that the legitimate limits of dialogue have been overpassed” (Montreal) which went on to reflect on

Non-Jurors/CSI/Frank Weston's 'excommunication' of Bishop Perceval, and to compare AMiA with the Donatists (the only other schism based on a moral issue).

2.9 The loss of a 'universally' acknowledged ministry marks a significant diminution of communion: "where there isn't mutually recognisable and interchangeable ministry we cannot contain diversity" asserts Ripon and Leeds, contrasting the experience of the early church and the role of Irenaeus. Such division takes place more readily under voluntary understandings of communion -- "in ECUSA we are a confederation of dioceses" (Quincy) -- where links appear to be more easily dispensable than when sacramental or doctrinal thinking is uppermost. Some correlation may be possible between differing understandings of communion and the implications drawn from it for what constitutes a 'communion-breaking' issue.

2.10 However order is not the only issue (especially if seen from within a scale of degrees in communion) as expounded by Southwell. Their document continues: "On one side a degree of caution is needed over any 'single issue' criterion. This is because a belief-system in Anglican theology might be said to less like a gas balloon (one prick and it collapses), than a birds nest which may invite the question, how many twigs can be extracted before it falls apart? Yet some 'twigs' remain more crucial and critical than others .... On the other side Scripture speaks of 'foundations' .... Note that Paul did not seek to excommunicate those who had honest doubts about the resurrection. However, we need not assume that these doubters sought to *promote* their doubts. Honest exploration may be less a necessary cause for a break in communion than a positive promotion of false beliefs" -- and refers to *Believing in the Church* (1981) especially 'Markers and Signposts' pp286-302.

2.11 Most seem agreed that the withdrawal of fellowship, or withdrawal from fellowship, is not something that can be contemplated simply by the application of formulae. "Only apostasy can break communion with God," states one contributor, (Melbourne) therefore any existing or potential break in the life of the church "must be faced with a profound openness to the possibility of our being wrong". Issues that sustain or break communion are not straight-forward precisely because the life of the church is lived under the provisionality of the Spirit.

2.12 Context influences what constitutes a crucial issue. Glasgow draws attention to the perennial importance of "non-theological issues", and Johannesburg to how in its own experience of internal differences, the environment of provinces, dioceses, and even parishes, shapes different world-views and consequently throw up different issues which appear to be of critical importance. The same point may be found in a global fellowship. What is seen as a threat may be factor of where it is seen from! "In a discussion about Anglicanism, the sociology of the Communion (rich Western churches and poor but large Southern churches) needs to be taken into account"(Oxford).

2.13 Yet to take *context* seriously is an identifying feature of Anglicanism. "The Reformation insistence on providing the Scriptures in the vernacular (citing *TVR*) opened the possibility that the faith is expressed in the language, symbols and imagery of different cultural contexts .... For example, issues of justice and human rights including human sexuality, the family and status of women, racial equality, religious freedom and the use and distribution of resources demand attention. Our response to these issues is conditioned by our particular cultural context, our way of interpreting the Bible, our degree of awareness of being part of a wider human community, and our attentiveness to the response of other ecumenical partners and to the concerns of those of other faiths" (Port Elizabeth). The Province of Southern Africa explicitly finds itself "... rescued from remaining trapped in historical traditions which can now be seen to have been 'culture bound' ... yet clearly this is not to say 'anything goes' ... Uncomfortable as it is to acknowledge, we are not in a position to answer the question [about limits of diversity] at this juncture". The uncomfortable calling is to learn

how to trust one's fellow Anglicans – and how the Holy Spirit lead us into Truth – and part of the difficulty comes by the way that in different contexts churches feel justified in responding to similar situations in different ways.

2.14 The central problem however is in distinguishing what are matters which can be decided as essentially matters of local context, and other issues which are of universal principal. A telling example of the way this dilemma arises is provided by the Nigerian Doctrine Committee's reflection:

“On Women's Ordination, the Church of Nigeria concluded after several meetings in 1992 and 1993 that the time was not ripe for feminine ordination. Thus the Women Ordination carried out in Kwara Dioceses in December 1993 was declared irregular. Cultural differences motivated this decision .... The most sensitive issue in the 20<sup>th</sup> century ... is the issue of Homosexuality and Lesbianism. To the European nations, it is a dawn of a new era which the church must embrace, but the Anglican Church of the South in the Kuala Lumpur Statements issued in 1997 made a share disagreement with the recent church discipline and moral teaching championed in some provinces of the North on the canonisation of homosexual practices and the blessing of same-sex unions. On the perimeter of the Holy Scriptures, this move was declared unacceptable. This conference pointed out the need to carry provinces and dioceses along when issue affecting the common interest of all is on board. In order not jeopardise the spirit of true unity, all must reach an agreement before embarking on radical changes with respect to church discipline and moral teaching.

2.15 “Our diversity and openness are among the great attractions of our tradition” states Utah which has come to accept gay and lesbian people in their churches as a matter of course. This is not an issue in local congregations, “and either governance or credal conformity would impair our tradition in my experience and perspective. I know it would satisfy certain members of our communion, but I don't see that as part of our mission to make every single member alike or content with all aspects of our practice as a church”

2.16 It is not only the innovators who sense the need to respond to demanding contexts. “Having set one's own culture under judgement (fetishism, human sacrifice) it is disturbing to find fellow Anglicans defending unbiblical cultural pressures – there is a price to be paid in presenting a church without blemish, stain or wrinkle (Eph 5.27)” (Makurdi Bible Institute, Nigeria). Christians living under pressure to conform to external political or cultural forces find it “easy to feel undermined” by the seemingly easy compromises made in other parts of the Communion (Matabeleland). Yet the priority given to facing cultural challenges are quite individual. Traditionalists in Melanesia would like women wearing trousers to be placed under discipline – a pressure that church leaders resist, yet it seems that homosexual practices among young men are generally condoned as a pragmatic way of postponing marriage and the inevitable economic implications it brings (Malaita).

2.17 Still, despite the anomalies of local decision making, the demands of the universal recur eg. “While the human situation and contexts are always important, taking account of these cannot mean a change to the fundamentals of the Faith of the Gospel given by Christ” (Singapore).

2.18 Specific threats are often seen as potentially communion-breaking. Sexuality and questions of order are not the only issues to preoccupy Anglicans: as some pointed out, it seems that two-thirds of the world want justice, the other third, just more sex (eg. Christ the King). “A Christian morality which speaks predominantly about sex and little about the use of money or power, for example, is failing to demonstrate what it believes God cares about.” (Trinity College, Bristol)

A list of particular issues identified as threatening local communion includes:

- Neglect of orphans and widows (Akure)
- Transformation and cultural change – affecting liturgy and Christian understanding
- Interfaith dialogue
- Assumed superiority of a particular language and culture/colour (Lui)
- Initiation/’born again’ pressures – styles of mission – re-baptism (Malaita)
- Africanisation – God, ancestors, dreams, healers (Southern Africa)
- Gate-keepers of communication – who knows what?
- Polygamy (of renewed significance especially in S. Africa)
- Power, wealth and relationships
- Caste and gender (Colombo)
- Cremation (Kenya)
- Traditional initiation practices and genital mutilation
- Wealth and warfare (Coventry)
- Erosion of a culture of trust (Edinburgh) – grace and spirit over law
- Unilateralism/ ’provincialism’
- Uses of Scripture – which may reflect deeper differences about the vision of God.

2.19 There are serious questions about how Scripture and theology should be marshalled in the face of such questions. While “a characteristic Anglican appeal to Scripture” is seen in *TVR* as an identifying mark, differing interpretations/relative emphases given to reason and tradition can make this into a cause of, not a solution for, differences of opinion. (Ripon and Leeds).

2.20 Indeed differences will arise as to whether an issue has theological significance at all. “Homosexuality is not about morality but about theology and anthropology in Christ” (Christchurch), but others take the opposite point of view. In the light of subsequent events, a response concerning the way conflicts arose in New Westminster becomes significant. Bishop Ingham wrote:

I serve a diocese where there are deep divisions over the blessing of same-sex unions (we do not call them ‘marriages’) Those who oppose them do so on the grounds of Scripture and the ethical teaching of the Church. Those who support them believe they are a pastoral, not doctrinal innovation, a matter of justice, and not prohibited by Scripture. Neither side disputes the authority of Scripture nor the importance of doctrine. They disagree on their application to this question ...

There is a dynamic of power behind the dispute.... The issue is no longer primarily theological, but has become a struggle over decision-making and direction in the church. In this context it is natural for some people to resort to threats of division because this is a tactic of power”. He goes on to speak of the way attempts at reconciliation are only seen as coercion or compromise – *koinonia* becomes distorted by the lens of power, and adds “... If some of the solutions being proposed were taken seriously one wonders whether the English Reformation (the decision of a local province to break with the universal church) would ever have happened in the first place.”

2.21 A correspondent from Norwich (this diocese sent number of individual responses from differing perspectives) cites Rowan Williams’ tests for any contentious innovation: how

far does it manifest the self-less holiness of God, and how far build up holiness of community (in *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, ed. Robin Gill, 2001). Another draws attention to his speech to the Lambeth Conference “Being in the Body means that we are touched by one another’s commitments and thus by one another’s failures”, noting the primeval instinct that touch can endanger purity. The life of the Body of Christ is not lived out of commitment to untainted ritualistic purity. It has more to do with helping each other to carry on the journey.

2.22 It is important then to try to see issues from the perspective of companions on the way, rather than exclusively from one’s own point of view. The Bishop of Winchester, interpreting the experience of partners from some of the most pressured dioceses in the Anglican Communion recognises: “a perception that ... some participants have ceased to be serious about looking to Scripture (indeed have allowed themselves to become culturally disabled from looking seriously to Scripture)... This situation becomes still more intractable when these perceptions coincide with one or more of the following: the pervasive anxiety, anger and suspicion caused by the ‘world-power’ behaviour of the USA; the particular pressures experienced by Churches living in predominantly Islamic environments; the view-point/experience of a Church that is living through an experience of ‘genocide’ and its aftermath.”

2.23 The danger of a selective reading of Scripture and Christian tradition is not new. “Warnings about ‘a Province being bound by its culture’ (TVR 4.14) reflect precisely Paul’s concern about the distinctive distortions of Gospel truth in Roman provincial first-century Corinth. Today this applies no less to post-modern, neo-pragmatic cultures in America and the West as to any province in the Far East or Africa.” (Southwell)

### **Question 3 – ‘Moral teachings’ and the maintenance of communion**

3.1 Most responses accept that the gospel includes a moral dimension. “Christianity is not just a religion but also a way of life.... Moral teaching based on the tenets set forth in the Holy Bible becomes paramount to the maintenance of unity” (Nigeria). Baptism leads towards “accepting the life we share” (Akure), and this shared life is shaped in part by moral teaching. Some distinguish *kerygma* and *didache* – the proclamation of the gospel from its moral application – although Rochester insists that the *didache* was rigorously applied to new converts before baptism.

3.2 Several contributors distinguished the moral teaching of individuals from the formal practices and policies of churches. It is to the latter that the issue of communion is addressed – and various suggestions are made about the need to reinforce universal values eg. the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s summary of the Law (eg. Western Australia), Scriptural teaching (Torit), an agreed Anglican catechism (Kenya), the content of holy living (Winchester).

3.3 It is when there is a dispute over moral teachings that difficulties arise. For many, attention to those disputes constitute part of the teaching ministry of the church. “Dialogue within koinonia: (disagreements are not sufficient reason to) step outside koinonia” (Bloemfontein). “It is not a matter of weakness that a church is unable to make instant decisions in relation to complex matters” (Brisbane).

3.4 “The sacrament of communion begins with an admission of failure not a declaration of virtue! .... A fundamental form of communion or fellowship is a *pre-requisite* for determining issues about moral teaching and behaviour” (Manchester). It is how we regard those with whom we differ – are they fellow believers or not? – which will determine how we

approach their teaching/behaviour (Melbourne). It is argued by more than a few respondents that agreement over moral teachings are a consequence, not a pre-condition, of *koinonia*.

3.5 Yet sweet reasonableness does not always mark discussion of disputed issues. Over some issues “coercion not reception is the order of the day” (Fort Worth). And while “Anglican practice in general and canon law, in particular, does not envisage a breaking of communion over disputes concerning moral teaching.” (Montreal), Bishop Iker would respond that traditional practices and canon law does not envisage situations in which bishops (in many people’s eyes at least) turn away from orthodox beliefs.

3.6 “Biblical teaching about moral behaviour is integral to the maintenance of communion because it returns everyone to the authority of the scriptures as normative for Christian living that it contains all things necessary for salvation”(Nigeria). “To live in moral obedience is such an important part of the Gospel message that we must strive to maintain a balance between belief and action or lose the communion that we cherish” (Southern Cone)

3.7 While most recognise that moral teaching is integral to the proclamation of the gospel, many also believe that they are not necessarily the same thing. “The Christian imperative – to love one another – is the one irreducible insofar as moral behaviour is concerned. Bearing this in mind, Christian ‘teaching’ about moral behaviour has varied with the ages (ie.slavery) and therefore should not be considered ‘integral’ to the maintenance of communion” (Texas). Adelaide interestingly notes the Western attachment to ‘Just War’ theory as a cultural reading of Scripture which would not be recognised by many in other cultural traditions.

3.8 The cultural conditioning of ethical systems – which is not necessarily the same thing as the cultural relativism – means that emphasis has to be on the “we need to expand the meaning of ‘moral’ and ‘behaviour’”(Rhode Island). There is a “need to recognise challenge towards compassion, forgiveness, healing, self-worth and respect for the dignity of others as well as the unquestionable value of love...” (Llandaff) or to distinguish “morality – love as he loved us – and moral codes which are derived more from culture than theological principle” (Maryland).

3.9 If that is allowed, “it may be inappropriate of Lambeth to pronounce policy on matters that instead fall within the remit of free decision by national Churches” (Oxford). “Christian teachings should not be imposed on other parts of the Communion” (Matabeleland).

3.10 While the question of homosexuality is plainly foremost in many people’s minds, it is also recognised that “explosive issues of gender and sexuality” are closely linked to ethical questions of “power, culture and control” (Rhode Island). And, asks Worcester, what makes the Lambeth resolution on sexuality more fundamental than those on international debt or ecumenical commitments?

3.11 While no respondents firmly advocated using the threat of a break in communion as a tactic to inhibit the promotion of particular moral teachings, it was generally assumed that the maintenance of communion did require some consonance in moral thinking. Certainly, since “the Righter Judgement it is not sustainable as an argument to distinguish between ‘doctrinal’ and ‘ethical’ questions and make that distinction between church-dividing issues and ones that are not” (Worcester). To do this would be the same as suggesting that the division between German churches in 1930’s was ‘merely’ to do with qualifications for ordination, and no-one could seriously accept that.

3.12 If belief and behaviour are to be dealt with together, then the radical call of the gospel needs to be applied to them both. Ripon and Leeds engaged in an extended reflection on the

Parable of the two sons (Luke 15): despite differing patterns of behaviour, both sons were kept within the Father's heart who went out to reconcile and embrace. Moral behaviour does not finally determine fundamental relationships! They also quote Wolf:

For all their differences, the two brothers – the one in a distant country and the other at home – were so much alike; the expectations of the one and the demands of the other were governed by the same logic. Who could object to that logic? And yet the objection emerges from between the lines of the very discourse that makes the need for clear-cut rules of inclusion and exclusion so plausible. The rules are necessary to preserve social ties, the older brother says. But in addition to separating him from the father and the brother, his anger over the transgression of the rules makes him break some rather significant rules. He insists that he worked like a slave for his father (v29), but fails to mention that he also worked for himself as the heir of two-thirds of the property. He claims that his brother devoured the father's property (v30), but fails to tell that what the younger brother 'devoured' belonged also to the younger brother. Most significantly, he projects onto his brother evil that his brother did not commit: the brother's 'dissolute' living, which in the original seemingly implies no immorality (Bailey 1992, 124) he makes into 'devouring the property with prostitutes' (v30). Obsession with the rules – not bad rules, but salutary rules! – encourages self-righteousness and the demonization of others. (*Exclusion and Embrace*, pp156-165)

#### **Question 4 – the impact of *The Virginia Report***

4.1 The most regular response was that *The Virginia Report* had not been read, was not available, or was not known to respondents. There was a moving responses from one diocese where they were not able to read the report on the internet because the nearest terminal was 89km away, "and the road is in the hands of rebels!" Another apologised for a delayed reply, as mail could only be posted when someone crossed the border. Anglican reports should not be written with the idea that they will be read in studies or common-rooms.

4.2 Where the report was known, some complained that it was "too academic in tone" (Sevchelles), or that it was not given a fair hearing. Where it is quoted, it is presented "reactively" (Louisiana). "The dilemma of all reports is that they speak authoritatively for those who seek to make a point which they perceive the Report makes on their behalf. Otherwise it has no authority for them" (Quincy). However some did claim that the significance of the report was being found in local decision-making at diocesan/parochial level, in collaboration across divides of theology, in the reconciliation of those previously estranged.

4.3 The Trinitarian framework was appreciated by some, although others saw it as too idealised – or too limited by an imminent rather than economic model of the Trinity (Adelaide). The framework needs Christological (historical-structural) /pneumatological (provisional) additions (Melbourne). *TVR* had not set out to provide answers to specific disputes (Montreal) but disputes now coming to a head and the vision needed to be earthed ("Hegel, the crafty rogue, lives") in history and a realistic doctrine of sin (Wycliffe College)

4.4 "The Report is sophisticated at the two 'edges': on a 'high' Trinitarian theological idealism; and on some specific empirical factors that arise from eg. meetings of Primates (4.17), learning and reception, and issues of local concern The Report may need the same level of detail on the middle ground that spans the space between the ends" (Southwell)

4.5 Some actually see the Trinitarian basis in baptism as too inclusive – seeking "unity at the expense of truth". External rites are not enough "the reality of a person's participation depends even more on whether the Christian faith he or she may understand and profess is the

Faith once and for all delivered by Jesus Christ ... the fundamentals need to be more exactly and fully defined” (Singapore)

4.6 They are not alone in seeking less subtle treatments. Southern Cone, and Uruguay urge attention to *To Mend the Net* as a more adequate foundation than *TVR* – “but advisory committee reports should not take the place of Lambeth and the Primates’ Meeting .... We suggest that Lambeth take on resolute authority, not only a pastoral role, and that the Primates meeting acquire disciplinary powers”. Winchester sympathises with criticisms that *TMTN* makes of *TVR*. The enhanced role envisaged for the Primates Meeting would be welcomed in a number of dioceses (eg. Niger Delta West).

4.7 Others however are reluctant to adopt the proposals of “centralists/imperialists” (Christchurch), accept an “Anglican Vatican”(W. North Carolina) or become dependent on “control mechanisms”(Oxford). “Resist temptation to become a joint magisterium ..... more missional, interpersonal and local” (Bloemfontein). Certainly communion depends on more than “offices, meetings and councils” (Rochester) – what is needed is renewed attention to unity in faith, but some see it as worrying if the Primates should begin to write doctrine (Ripon and Leeds). Resolutions are one thing, making law quite another.

4.8 And who will keep the Primates honest? Ottawa told the story of an Eastern Rite bishop making his first visit to a parish. He was surprised at the basic level of questions about Jesus and the way of salvation that he was asked, and challenged the priest as to why the congregation did not have such basics down pat. Sir, they do, was the reply, they are just making sure that you do too!

**4.9 *TVR* and ‘Eames’ introduced useful new vocabulary** which needs further elaboration

4.10 *TVR* changes the basic paradigm of Eames – both propose *koinonia* but Eames in terms of reception and provisionality “a process moving from periphery to centre”: *VR* emphasises universality of fellowship, and reverses direction of reception progressing from the centre (New Westminster). Western Australia – see it as unrealistic to expect agreement or accommodation: best to aim at recognition of differences.

4.11 Several noted that the “instruments of unity” were unduly tipped towards the episcopate – the A.C.C. alone reflects the synodical element of Anglican polity. Lay participation is reduced even more.

**4.12 Subsidiarity** – avoid overtones of European usage “There is no central body to do the devolving in the Anglican Communion!” (Glasgow) – important to avoid proliferation of decision-making therefore need more clarity of status of documents/resolutions. Need to “delineate those things that we must decide together and those things that are best left to the local province” eg. who ordained – local; sacramental theology – universal; selection / ordination of bishops both local and communion wide (Rhode Island)

**4.13 Impaired communion** – what impairs/what permits commonality? Reflect on ecclesiology of Provincial Episcopal Visitor – what degree of communion achieved / maintained – is this an expediency of mistrust or comprehension? / Recognise good intentions, and recognition of minorities yet “Act of Synod has had (albeit unwittingly) the disastrous side effect of encouraging ... some people to declare themselves ‘out of communion’ with their bishop” (Oxford). Denver consecrations –interpret and implement *VR* (and provision of ‘flying bishops’) rather than simply labelling them as rebels(Matabeleland).

4.14 How is it possible to ‘restore’ communion after it has been breached? What about the practice of penance and discipline (Melaita)

**4.15 Reception** - how do we know when a proposition is ‘received’ – and how much diversity can be contemplated in the meantime?

4.16 Some other snippets: the role of Archbishop of Canterbury as Chairman disadvantages C of E (Durham); Ottawa – the quest for ‘communion’ represents a pastoral/evangelistic need – those on both sides of the divide are “looking for something”: what is it? Simply quoting the Bible is not enough – problems over the interpretation of scripture reveal “irreconcilable differences”(Montreal) - instinctive rather than informed arguments prevail and are therefore more difficult to untangle. “The reputation of the Church, never something which seemed to bother Jesus, has always bothered us.” (Coventry)

4.15 And the future? Does the renewed emphasis on **Canon Law** imply that *TVR* has been tried and found lacking, or has it (like Chesterton’s view of popular notions of Christianity in his time?) just not been tried!

Philip Thomas,

July, 2002

## **Four Key Questions for Anglicans World-Wide**

In what seems a rapidly fragmenting world, Christians need to think about what it is that binds them together. Is it something that could offer hope to a threatened world order? Could it provide an example of the way that some things can be shared even when the movement of history seems at present to be pulling communities and cultures apart?

Anglicans have often claimed they have discovered a middle way through theological and social conflicts, and to encapsulate in their comprehensiveness a distinct way of maintaining unity in diversity. There are many issues, in the churches and beyond them, that are testing those convictions at the moment.

Following the publication of *The Virginia Report* in 1997, the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission has been charged to study "The nature, basis and sustaining of communion in the Church, with particular reference to the Anglican Communion". Four questions have been identified which appear to underlie this issue:

- When we speak of the Anglican Communion, what do we mean by the word "communion"?
- What is it that makes some disputes so crucial that failure to resolve them threatens a break in communion?
- In what ways are Christian teachings about moral behaviour integral to the maintenance of communion?
- In answering these questions we shall be asking how far does the Virginia Report meet the relevant situations that have arisen in the Anglican Communion since its publication?

Responses are being sought from Anglicans across the world

**Consultation period has now closed**

## **Communiqué Marie Reparatrice Retreat Centre in Wimbledon, England, 14-18 September 2001**

The International Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC) met from 14 to 18 September at the Marie Reparatrice Retreat Centre in Wimbledon, England, under the chairmanship of the Rt Revd Professor Stephen Sykes.

This was the first meeting of a newly constituted Commission, appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. It was scheduled to be held at Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS), in Alexandria Virginia, on the outskirts of Washington DC. The devastating events of the 11 September necessitated a transfer of the venue to England, as many members were either passing through London en route to the USA, or beginning their journey in the United Kingdom. Due to the disruptions in air travel, and the pastoral commitments of those based in the United States, we had to proceed in the absence of some members. We recognised that such a situation would be far from ideal, but it was important to begin the work with as many as could be present.

The IATDC was asked by the Archbishop of Canterbury to focus on an area that is of critical importance to the Anglican family at this time: "The nature, basis and sustaining of communion in the Church with particular reference to the Anglican Communion". This will involve analysis of the limits of diversity within a communion of Churches, some further reflection on collegiality and interdependence, and the implications of being in communion with the See of Canterbury. In the circumstances, with several members unable to be present, it was not possible to enter in depth into the substantive issues related to the mandate. However the Commission was able to identify the key questions that will need to be faced in the study of "communion", and to outline the processes and resources that might enable us to move the study forward when the full complement of members are together. As the first meeting of the Commission, some time was necessarily spent in mapping out a timetable for the work, and discussing some practical details of process and management of the studies to be undertaken.

Among the highlights of the discussion at this preliminary stage were:

- an assessment of the way the Churches of the Communion and individual theologians are evaluating The Virginia Report (1997) of the previous doctrine commission;
- an analysis of the main proposals in *To Mend the Net*, a volume prepared for and presented to the Primates' Meeting in 2001 and referred by that meeting to the IATDC;
- the consideration of the concept of "the fundamental articles" of Christian faith

Questions which will give direction to the work were identified, along with an overarching question related to the relevance of The Virginia Report:

1. When we speak of the Anglican Communion, what do we mean by the word "communion"?

2. What is it that makes some disputes so crucial that failure to resolve them threatens a break in communion?
3. "In what way are Christian teachings about moral behaviour integral to the maintenance of communion"?
4. "In addressing these questions, we shall be asking how far does the Virginia Report meet the relevant situations that have arisen in the Anglican Communion since its publication". The members recognised that complementary work on "communion" is being undertaken by the Inter Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations (IASCER). It was agreed that relevant papers and study material will be shared between IASCER and IATDC to ensure coherence in the respective studies.

The meeting was undergirded by daily offering of morning and evening prayer and celebration of the eucharist. In addition to the formal sessions, time was devoted each day to a reflective study of 1 John. The members attended the Sunday eucharist at Christ Church Wimbledon where they were warmly received by clergy and parishioners. The prayer life of the meeting was very profoundly affected by the tragic events in Washington and New York earlier in the week, and the grief, anxiety and distress felt by the whole world were at the heart of our intercessions.

The Commission was grateful to the Sisters of the Marie Reparatrice Retreat Centre for their most gracious hospitality and loving attention to our needs and for their willingness to host the meeting at such short notice.

IATDC will next meet at VTS, Alexandria Virginia, USA, from 5 - 11 September 2002.

The members and staff of the Commission are:

The Rt Revd Prof Stephen Sykes England, Chairman

\*Dr Jennie Te Paa Aotearoa/NZ and Polynesia

The Revd Dr Stephen K Pickard Australia

\*The Revd Dr Bruce Kaye Australia

\*Dr Eileen Scully Canada

\*The Rt Revd Dr Samuel Cutting India

The Rt Revd Paul Richardson England

The Revd Prof Nicholas Sagovsky England

The Revd Canon Dr Tom Wright England

Dr Ester Mombo Kenya

The Revd Joseph Denge Galgalo Kenya

The Rt Revd Dr Matthew Owadayo Nigeria

The Revd Canon Luke Pato Southern Africa

\*The Rt Revd Héctor Zavala Southern Cone

The Rt Revd Dr Lim Cheng Ean South East Asia

The Revd Victor Atta-Bafoe West Africa

\*The Very Revd Dr Paul Zahl United States

\*The Revd Prof Kortwright Davis United States

\*The Revd Dr Kathy Grieb Observer, VTS

\*The Rt Revd Dr Mark Dyer IASCER Cross Appointment

The Revd Dr Philip Thomas England, Assistant to the Chairman  
The Revd Canon David Hamid ACO, Secretary  
Mrs Christine Codner ACO, Administrative Assistant  
Ms Frances Hiller ACO, Administrative Assistant

(\*unable to attend the Wimbledon meeting)

**Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission**

**For the Sake of the Kingdom.**

**God's Church and the New Creation.**

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## **Preface**

It was at the third meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in Trinidad in 1976 that the idea was conceived of a representative commission to consider theological and doctrinal questions which concern the Anglican Communion as a whole. The proposal was endorsed by the 1978 Lambeth Conference, and the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission was subsequently established.

The Commission was given its initial brief by the Anglican Consultative Council in these terms:

Church and Kingdom in Creation and Redemption, being a study of the relationship between the Church of God as experienced and the Kingdom of God as anticipated, with special reference to the diverse and changing cultural contexts in which the Gospel is proclaimed, received, and lived.

The Commission met three times, in England (1981), Barbados (1983), and Ireland (1985). In each place we were warmly received by the local church and these contacts formed a significant part of the context of our discussions. We continued our work between each ten-day meeting by correspondence, and members contributed a wide range of papers, the titles of which are listed in Appendix 1. Copies of these papers are available at the ACC office. As the Commission's work developed, responses were elicited from a number of provincial doctrinal commissions and individual theologians around the Anglican Communion. These responses contributed considerably to our work.

The Commission was not established to be - and would itself firmly disclaim any pretensions to being - a supreme authority for the Anglican Communion on disputed questions of doctrine. Such a role would not accord with our Anglican understanding of 'dispersed authority'. Nor have we tried to tackle the host of specific theological questions which are 'biting' around the world. This Report has a more modest aim: to suggest a broad framework of theological understanding within which the answers to more specific questions can be developed.

Inevitably this gives the Report a somewhat abstract character. Nevertheless we believe it proposes principles which are applicable to many of the questions that trouble different churches of our Communion. It will, however, need 'translation' into the terms of local questions and circumstances. This can only be done at local level, and we hope that each of the churches of the Anglican Communion will make its own 'translation', bringing to the Report its own questions and illuminating it with its own stories. The Report is to be part of the background material of the 1988 Lambeth Conference, and we hope it has a useful contribution to make. That will only be true to the extent that each diocese and Province takes seriously the application of the Report to its own pressing theological concerns.

Every member of the Commission has made his or her own distinctive contribution to our work, and it would be invidious to single out individuals. It should be said, however, that we are particularly indebted to the creative contribution of Bishop Lakshman Wickremesinghe, who died before our third meeting. His personal struggle with the question of what it means to be a Christian in a culture shaped by another great world religion and in a context of oppression of minorities gave an urgency to our discussions which kept us aware of the life-and-death reality of the issues with which we were wrestling.

All our members would testify to the richness of cross-cultural dialogue in the Commission. We are not all professional theologians, and such value as the Report has will reflect as much the results of the interplay of insights from the diversity of our worldwide Communion as the theological expertise of individual members. Perhaps that in itself says something of the way in which the Holy Spirit leads the Church into truth.

KEITH RAYNER  
*Chairman*

## 1 Introduction

### *The Commission's Task*

1. During the last ten or fifteen years, the Anglican Communion has become increasingly aware that it needs to form a common mind on a variety of pressing theological and doctrinal issues. These issues have been posed partly by ecumenical dialogues and partly by theological movements that have grown out of modern social, political, and economic developments in many parts of the world. In particular, increasing contact between the church and non-Christian cultures has raised in sharp form the problem of the relation between church and culture, while various 'liberation' theologies have seemed to suggest that the Kingdom of God could be achieved as an earthly reality.
2. These issues were not and are not peculiar to Anglicanism; but in many parts of the Communion they have come into particularly sharp focus. Anglican Christianity often arrived -in the Caribbean, for example, and in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific - in the wake of, or in close association with, British colonial administration. Its identity has thus inevitably been seen as closely tied to British culture, and its strengths and weaknesses have been understood in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of that culture. Particularly in the decades since the Second World War, there has been a natural and often harsh reaction against the colonial legacy; and one consequence of this reaction has been questioning or rejection of a Christianity heavily marked by its alien context, and apparently identified with the civilization of a colonizing power. The fact of this reaction has been an obstinately inescapable datum for our Commission: it quickly became clear to us that to be 'Anglican' not only *could* no longer be, but in fact *was* no longer, a matter of being 'English'.
3. The Anglican Consultative Council's appointment of a theological commission to look at these questions under the rubric of 'Church and Kingdom' reflects an insight of some importance. In so far as there has been a classical 'theory' about the nature of Anglicanism it has been closely connected with specific moments in the history of England: it has rested on the vision of a certain symbiosis of church and nation. Accordingly, when Anglicanism ceased to be the preserve of one nation and even of one realm (there is more than one nation in Britain), and gradually became a Christian family dispersed over the globe, it did so, on the whole, without a theology of its own identity independent of the English crown and the English law, and it has only developed such a theology in a somewhat piecemeal fashion. Anglicanism is often rebuked (not always justly) for having only a confused doctrine of the church; and it is true that one of the things our present difficulties press upon us is the need for clarification in this area - for an Anglican account of the nature of the Christian community *in itself* (not just as a civilization at prayer). Such a clarification is a necessary first step towards a theology of Anglican identity.
4. Hence the Commission's task was defined as an exploration of the complex relations between the Gospel and social or cultural forms in the light of the central assertion of the Gospel itself - that the Kingdom of God is at hand; that what God wills to effect through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus is a new realization of his rule in the hearts and lives of human beings. The Kingdom is promised, then, but (as it has been put) what happens is the church. Every Christian theologian thus has the job of striving to understand the unity and the distinction of church and Kingdom. So our examination of Gospel and culture, church and context, has had to return constantly to the question of the meaning of that promised kingdom.

Given the terms of this assignment, we have not sought to deal directly or explicitly with the question of Anglican identity - though we suspect that this Report can serve to illustrate an Anglican perspective on the problems with which it deals. We are also aware that we have said almost nothing about those questions affecting the *internal* structure of the church that have so often preoccupied Anglican writers (the nature of

episcopacy, for instance). In a report of limited length, we have been obliged to concentrate our attention on what we believe to be the necessary preconditions of more detailed work on such questions as these. There is still - and always will be - much more to be done.

5. In our theological work we have made certain assumptions about how to proceed. The Commission has itself embodied the tensions it was formed to investigate; its members have come from widely divergent backgrounds, with different experiences and consequently with different ideas of Christian priorities. We have not been free to assume that any one starting-point was obvious, or that any one method was the natural one to follow. In the event, we have written out of the conviction that the concrete experience of particular Christians in particular localities does indeed, as is often claimed, possess theological significance: that is to say, the meaning of God's promise of his Kingdom is empty apart from some grasp of why it is good news *here* and *now*, and of those events and processes which are seen as embodying and pointing to the Kingdom in this or that bit of actual human history.
6. Thus we recognize that this document is - like all theological reflection - provisional; the history of good theology is a story of constant renewal in fresh circumstances. And we recognize too that there is a certain irony in the character of the Report. While we affirm the multi-cultural, multi-lingual nature of Anglican Christianity, we compose our report in English. While we insist on the need for a theology rooted in the particular, we produce a consensus document, inevitably full of generalities. Even these ironies, however, call attention to two affirmations which, in the light of our experience together, we confidently make: that theological variety - even theological tension - can enrich our understanding of God's truth; and that we have found ourselves able to live with this variety, to pray within it, and to discover through it that we do not lack a common language of faith, hope, and love. The pages following exhibit the skeleton of this common language.
7. The fact that we have, as a Commission, grown together and felt ourselves deeply enriched by one another is evidenced by the very existence of this Report. Yet we know that the highly specialized 'community' of a team of theologians (however diverse their backgrounds) in regular personal contact is not easily translated into relations of larger bodies to each other. It is well known how true this can be in ecumenical dialogue! The closer people get to each other in the work of a commission, the less 'representative', in one sense, they become of their diverse constituencies. But this too has a positive side. The experience of our work together shows that theological variety need not mean a co-existence of sullenly non-communicating, self-sufficient worlds of discourse. Encounters change people and their systems: we may not want, at the end of the day, to change our initial priorities, but we shall at least see their fuller context and implications, and be made newly aware of common roots for diverse aspirations. Mutual probing and criticism can, in this light, be anything but destructive, although it will not be painless - as, once again, we have discovered.
8. There are three warnings that we should give. One is that we cannot and do not set out to resolve all the specific and local issues which concern the churches of the Anglican Communion today. That remains, if we are right, the task of the local and regional churches to whom we write, with their specific struggles, achievements, frustrations, and celebrations. We can only indicate the wider considerations of principle that a Christian community in a particular place might bring to its reflections and its planning.

- 9 It is important, in the second place, that this report be read as a whole: often, especially in our earlier sections, we have primarily been interested in raising questions, and indicating, as candidly as possible, some of the problems we ourselves confronted quite starkly and specifically in our earlier meetings as a Commission. We do not, by listing such matters, intend to foreclose conclusions or to weight the argument, but simply to report what our own initial conversations so rapidly brought to light.
- 10 A third warning is also in order. We have written of finding a 'common language'. Some readers may object to the imprecision of the language we use, some to our use of, or allusion to, what they think of as mere slogans; some to our lack of reference to the language of what they may regard as 'classical' theological, ecclesiastical, or ecumenical texts, ancient *and* modern. It needs to be said again that we have tried not to assume the absolute priority of any one traditional style or 'canon' beyond the Bible, the ecumenical creeds, and the basic structures of our sacramental life. What we have searched for is a language that does not speak only to and for those familiar with the 'classical voices of Augustine, Aquinas, Hooker, Barth, and so on, or only to and for those habituated to the conventions of contemporary ecumenical dialogue. Of course we have not been able to avoid phraseology that will sound controversial or even partisan to some; but necessarily abbreviated and condensed formulae may be the only way of marking out common ground in an enterprise like that of this Commission. And what in one person's ears may be a wearisome or unintelligible cliché ('liberation' is an often quoted example) will be a word or phrase representing matters of life or death to others.
- 11 Verbal fastidiousness can be an effective defence against the challenges and difficulties of listening. On this Commission we have all had to learn our way out of instant, confident, and dismissive reactions to each other's language. Our plea in this report for real mutual attention in the presence of scriptural revelation arises directly from our life as a group. In entering this caution against an easy reading of this report, a reading without imagination and self-questioning, we hope to open to the reader some possibility of sharing in a process for which all of us are profoundly grateful, and which this report intends not only to summarize but to celebrate.

## 2 Identifying Questions

- 12 The Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission first met in 1981 at Woking, just south-west of London, England. To many of us as we arrived, our assignment looked both a little vague and even perhaps a little dull. We had been instructed, by the Anglican Consultative Council, to take up the problem of the relation between the church and the Kingdom of God in the light of the doctrines of creation and redemption. As it turned out, however, the assignment was anything but dull, and not so much vague as it was rich and complex. No sooner had we introduced ourselves and begun to talk than we realized that this broad and apparently abstract issue focused a number of burning, difficult, and very concrete problems. This discovery came about as members of the Commission attempted, in their opening sessions, to explain to one another what this issue of church and Kingdom meant - practically and immediately - to them and to the churches they represented.
- 13 In the course of that initial exchange, it quickly dawned on all of us that our several situations were in many respects very different from one another; and this fact was reflected in the different issues that were foremost in our minds as we considered the question of church and Kingdom. For some of us the central problem was that of the cultural strangeness of Anglicanism - and indeed of Christianity - in a society with strong and mature religious traditions of its own. For others the primary problem was that of the 'establishment' style of Anglican theology and practice in settings where the burning issue was that of the economic and political oppression and degradation of the great majority of the population. For yet others it was the issue of the disengagement of the church from a culture and a social order with which it had become all too thoroughly identified. These different perceptions of the church's situation - all of them corresponding to experienced realities - were accompanied, moreover, by different theological approaches, which had only this in common, that they were, to one degree or another, dissatisfied with characteristic Anglican stances on a wide range of issues having to do with the relation of church and society.
- 14 What these differences, and the conflicts which naturally accompanied them, made clear to all of us was the importance and centrality of the problem we had been set. What is meant by the rule, or kingship, or Kingdom of God? Where and how is it manifested? Can the saving presence of God - and so the presence of his Kingdom - be discerned in the insights and teachings of non-Christian cultures with the religious traditions or ways of life which they embody? Can the Kingdom be identified in social and political movements which arise without reference to the church and sometimes in conflict with it? And then too - whatever replies one might give to this set of questions - what is the role of the church itself in relation to God's Kingdom? Does it in itself *embody* the Kingdom in such a way that we can say the new creation is actually present in the church now? Or would it be better to speak of the church as a *sign* of the Kingdom, pointing to it, directing and urging us toward it? Or again is the distinction between embodiment and sign in fact a misleading one in this context? These questions bear directly on the proclamation of the Gospel of the Kingdom today - and not least because they raise the issue of the degree to which the Gospel can be adapted to *any* culture or historical movement (not excluding those that like to think of themselves as Christian) without surrendering its distinctive content.
- 15 Here, then, was a wide range of searching questions, generated out of the problems which actually face the churches of the Anglican Communion today. As our discussions continued, however, it became apparent that there were other, perhaps even more fundamental, issues which had to be taken up if these questions were to be addressed constructively. How, for example, could Christians discuss *either* church *or* Kingdom without acknowledging that the meaning of both is determined by Jesus Christ in his ministry, death, and resurrection and in his coming as judge and deliverer? For if Christians as 'church' do in fact have a relation to God and God's Kingdom, that relation is constituted by God in Christ and through Christ, who is thus the central reality for Christian faith and thinking. Further, we were reminded that both

the Gospel of the Kingdom - the good news which is Christ himself - and therefore the mission of the church assume that human life and history have somehow gone systematically wrong, and that this wrongness has consistently been understood in Christian tradition to be rooted in that perversion of human choice and love which we call 'sin' - not in creatureliness as such, not in chance or fate, but in the historical sphere of rational beings acting in liberty. To understand, then, the practical meaning of God's Kingdom, or of the church's relation to the world, account would have to be taken not only of creation and redemption, but also of the evil which spoils and denies the one and is healed by the other.

- 16 Finally, and by no means least in importance, there arose the issue *how and on what basis* Christians go about answering questions of the sort we were posing. No doubt it is easy - and correct - to say that God's self-disclosure in Christ is the central point of reference for Christians as they seek to understand God, themselves, and their world. But how is this self-disclosure mediated to us? How does it become a revelation in which God's Kingdom grasps us and becomes real for us? Anglicans have always pointed to the Scriptures when confronted with this question, and then, secondarily, to the ecumenical creeds and other traditional expressions of the new life which God discloses and confers in Christ. None of these witnesses, however, speaks in a vacuum. They not only speak *out of* a particular historical situation, with its own problems and ways of thinking. They also speak *to* such a setting, to minds already formed, e.g., by culture or by the interests of a social class or a profession; by accepted notions of what is or is not likely to be true; and by forms of personal, political, or social commitment. Is it possible, then, that such factors - the mental spectacles through which believers read and understand the Scriptures and the deliverances of tradition - can themselves mediate God's self-disclosure? Thus the question of scriptural and traditional authority at once involved us in reflections on problems about interpretation and the norms of interpretation in various actual situations; and this led us back by another route to the questions with which we began - the questions of the church's relations to culture and history and to the various forms of struggle for personal, social, and political renewal or liberation.
- 17 In addressing these issues in this report, the Commission does not intend to provide - or to be seen as providing - final or definitive answers. The reasons for this should be obvious. For one thing, the members of the Commission are not themselves in agreement on all the questions which have been raised, and it would be dishonest to pretend otherwise. More important, however, is another consideration. The practical and theoretical problems which have been created for the churches of Christ by the cultural, political, and intellectual changes of the latter part of the twentieth century cannot be solved ahead of time on paper. The disagreements, debates, and inquiries which accompany these changes are part of a process in which churches are seeking, in relatively novel circumstances, to reaffirm and re-appropriate their identity and mission. In such a situation, there are of course many common affirmations which can be made, and there is much which can be said both to clarify issues and to exclude misunderstanding or one-sided solutions. The process of discovery itself, however, cannot be interrupted, for the way to the truth lies through it. This report, therefore, is an interim assessment of the situation. It aims, of course, to record agreements, but also to measure and map problems and help churches and their leaders to set their own concerns and preoccupations in wider context.

### 3 Belonging and not Belonging

- 18 We start, then, with the fact of the Anglican Communion, which represents one stream of tradition in the life of the universal people of God. Throughout the world, individual dioceses are united within themselves through the ministry of their bishops and pastors. They are joined to one another regionally in organized provinces and national churches. They share the heritage of post-Reformation English Christianity - a heritage which encompasses the tradition of the ancient and medieval churches but also includes its own theological style and agenda as well as its own ways of worship and pastoral administration.
- 19 If these churches belong to one another, however, and to a particular tradition within the church universal, they also belong to the places where their life is conducted and their work carried out. Each is set in a particular cultural world, which, although it is not static and continues to grow and be modified by its encounter with other cultures and experiences, has an identifiable style or idiom of its own. These cultural worlds differ - in the traditions and values they live by, in the habits of thought and behaviour they encourage. They differ not only from one another, but also from the world of Christian experience and tradition which is carried by Anglicanism. Even in England, where one would expect Anglicanism to be automatically 'at home', churches increasingly recognize that they represent something which in fact is relatively marginal to their cultural setting. To be sure, in England as elsewhere, our churches 'belong' to their settings. Their members, people and clergy alike, are shaped by the customs and beliefs which prevail in the world of their daily life. Hence they are naturally disposed to see, express, and exploit the continuities between those customs and beliefs on the one hand and their Christian faith and life on the other. Nevertheless, they also discover obstacles and discontinuities which make complete assimilation to local culture both difficult and problematic. Wherever they exist, churches both belong and do not belong to the cultural world which is their immediate setting.
- 20 But it is not only a cultural world which is the setting of any particular church. It is also a social and political milieu. Wherever Christianity takes root, it builds itself, in one way or another, consciously or unconsciously, into an established structure of political and economic power. It makes institutional and social space for itself within the system which, in a given place and time, orders the distribution of wealth, privilege, and influence - and may indeed be, or become, partly responsible for the shape which that system takes. In doing so, it is, from one point of view, taking the steps necessary to assure its continued existence in an organized form. No community or institution can exist or function for long in despite of the constitutional, legal and economic systems which prevail in a given place. From another point of view, however, this means that churches can become involved with social and political systems that rest on a foundation of manifest injustice and oppression, and may even openly endorse such systems.
- 21 Anglicanism itself is a case in point. In England the legal establishment of the Church of England in the post-Reformation period intensified the close relationship that already existed between the church and the civil authorities. When Anglicanism went abroad in the colonial period, this involvement of church and state persisted, though in varying forms, with two kinds of consequences.
- 22 On the one hand, the church used its alliance with civil authority to promote Christian ideals and enhance human dignity. Educational and medical facilities were provided for colonized peoples, and in many places the groundwork was laid for the eventual attainment of national independence. On the other hand, missionaries and colonial administrators alike were, even at their best, deeply paternalistic. However good their intentions, they were inclined to treat the local people as children who in their eyes never grew up. Well-meant missionary slogans like 'the Bible and the Plough' or 'Christianity, Commerce, and Civilization' were all too easily corrupted to justify

economic exploitation and the dominance of English culture. In this way the church became an unthinking accessory to economic exploitation and political servitude.

- 23 Thus the close relationship between Anglicanism and the civil administration of colonial territories was inherently ambivalent. It allowed scope for the church's social and moral witness, but at the same time it blunted the critical, prophetic edge of that witness. The point is, however, that this ambivalence admirably illustrates a perpetual tension in the church's life. A church belongs and yet does not belong to the social and political system under which it operates. Its life is both continuous and - even if sometimes only implicitly and in principle - discontinuous with the structures of its society.
- 24 Whether one thinks in cultural or in social-political terms, therefore, Christian churches - and so Anglican churches - live in a situation of tension. They belong and they do not belong; they are at once natives of their places and foreigners in it, at once lovers and affirmers of its life and critics of its ways. Normally, no doubt, this tension exists in a subdued and even suppressed form. Christians, like other folk, prefer to think that things are fundamentally all right; they prefer to stick with what is familiar. Sticking with what is familiar, however, can sometimes result in moral and theological blindness. It can induce believers to miss points of conflict and discontinuity, where the churches have a critical - and necessarily also a identical - witness to bear on behalf of truth, righteousness, or justice. For this reason, the tension which is built into Christian existence must be admitted, explored, and understood. We have to ask why and how it is that Christians, as we have put it, belong and do not belong, and what this tension means - or ought to mean - in day-today practice of the faith.

#### 4 Church and Kingdom in the Order of Redemption

- 25 Here is where our assigned questions about the church, the Kingdom of God, and their relation becomes directly relevant to the practical problems of the Anglican churches in their different cultures and societies. The tension between belonging and not belonging, between affirmation and criticism, which accompanies Christian existence does not stem from some regrettable or accidental circumstance. It is built into the very meaning of the word 'church', as a moment's reflection will show.
- 26 It is easy enough to say in general terms what the word 'church' refers to. It denotes certain organized human communities or assemblies, taken either individually or collectively. If, however, one wants a notion of what these groups mean by calling themselves 'church', then it is necessary to observe what they say about themselves in the common actions - that is, the liturgies - in which they characteristically engage when gathered. In these liturgies, they read and expound sacred books; they offer prayer and praise; they initiate members by a ritual of washing; they solemnly celebrate a sacred meal. Further, in each of these actions they refer their shared life to a transcendent source which is named 'God' and 'Christ' and 'Spirit'; and they testify that this transcendent reality to which their actions point is experienced as redemptive - as at once liberating and fulfilling.
- 27 If, though, they are asked to locate or characterize this redemptive reality more narrowly, Christians will point in the first instance to Jesus the Christ, the crucified, risen, and expected Lord. He is the church's foundation, the principle of its life, the one in whom, through the Spirit, it has access to God. The existence of this phenomenon called 'church' does not revolve primarily around a creed, or a set of doctrines, or an ethical programme, but around Christ himself, whose meaning for human existence creeds, doctrines, and ethical prescriptions attest and explain. A particular group is called 'church', then, because its members have met and know a good - a grace - that touches their experience even though it is beyond them. This good thing both evokes their repentance and brings forgiveness, and they claim it for themselves by accepting a call to fellowship with Jesus Christ - a call to be his disciples, to share in his life, and to be, as St. Paul put it, 'in Christ'. This does not mean that such persons are a spiritual and moral elite; for their fellowship with Christ and in Christ is that of disciples and forgiven sinners - beginners upon a way. It does mean, however, that their common life in all its dimensions signifies Christ. He is what the church stands for.
- 28 What Jesus the Christ stood for and stands for, however, is the Kingdom of God. The Gospels make it plain that the theme and promise of Jesus' ministry, the redemptive reality which he proclaimed, was the *basileia tou theou*, the 'reign' or 'kingship' or 'Kingdom' of God. They also make it plain that the relationship between Jesus' ministry and this Kingdom was a very special one. The aim of Jesus' ministry was not to build or create that Kingdom by carrying out some sort of plan or programme. Rather, his mission was to announce and signify it - to open people's eyes to the fact that God was with them in a new way for grace and for judgement.
- 29 In his preaching, teaching, and healing, therefore, Jesus brought the reality of God's 'new thing' home to people: he gave them a taste of what his ministry promised. What it promised was the putting of the world to right - the fulfilment of all the good things that had been foreshadowed both in the proclamation of the prophets and in the history of Israel. His ministry promised the actualization of God's righteous will, and so the defeat of evil and the triumph of justice and goodness. It promised fellowship with God and all his redeemed people, and the knowledge of God 'face to face'. Jesus' ministry promised these things, moreover, not for individuals taken in isolation, but for persons in community. Implicitly, therefore, it pointed to a new life in the shape of a new social order, a new style of life together. This promise of redemption, manifested in signs, and attested by the 'righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14.17) experienced in the Christian community, would be fully realized in

the restoration of all things at the coming of Jesus in power and glory, when the whole creation would be transformed.

- 30 At the same time, Jesus' ministry aimed at evoking a particular response to the promise of God's Kingdom. This promise was the one thing worth living for, the 'one pearl of great value', for whose sake the merchant 'went and sold all that he had' (Matt. 13.46). Hence, of people who were confronted with the good news of the Kingdom, Jesus required repentance, 'change of mind'. That is, he did not demand merely that they mend their ways, but that they change their style of acting and living by changing the whole way in which they saw, estimated, and valued things. They were to set their hearts primarily on God's reign and God's justice, and care for that more than they cared for 'getting on' in the world. What is more, Jesus exemplified the 'change of mind' that he preached. He surrendered his life out of trust in God and in God's promise and out of fidelity to God's will. He became a victim - even a fool - for the sake of God's Kingdom.
- 31 In the end, therefore, there is no way of understanding the role of Jesus in relation to the kingship of God without taking account of his death and resurrection. He was executed at the hands of the Roman authorities and raised to a new life with God; and these are not just interesting or astonishing circumstances, but the events in and through which his manifestation of God's reign was accomplished. The rejection and death of Jesus are a measure of the alienation which divine love and the human repentance it evokes must overcome. There is a gulf - a gulf which is concretely symbolized in the violent rejection and killing of Jesus by those for whom he came - between the world as human beings have made it and that same world transformed as God's Kingdom. Jesus' self-surrender in death - his walking with us and with us in the path of repentance - marks the way to God's new creation. Further, the fact that the one who thus gave himself up was vindicated by God in the resurrection means that the promise of his ministry, the promise of God's reign, was no deception. It has been fulfilled in his own person. He has been revealed, in his own person, as the very 'grace and truth' which he had conveyed by word and deed - as the one in whom and through whom God's reign is realized.
- 32 In the light of the resurrection, then, the world of human life takes on a new aspect. It can now be seen to have the Kingdom of God - that divine reign which has 'come true' in Christ and can even now be tasted and experienced in the Spirit - as the reality that frames it, and thus gives it meaning and defines its destiny. The world, we might say, has the Kingdom of God as its 'horizon'. Yet, as this metaphor suggests, the resurrection does not abolish the distance between God's Kingdom and the world as human beings have made it. What God has in store for those who love him still lies on the other side of repentance, self-surrender to God and death to individual and corporate egotism with its fearful refusal of love. The Kingdom of God is indeed the world's horizon, but at the same time its *transcendent* horizon. It is not something which is simply given in the common sense, everyday world of unchallenged untransformed perceptions. 'Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life' (Rom. 6.3-4). This new life is lived not only by faith but in hope. We may not know what the reign of God will be like when fully come, but we are led to link it with the revealing of God's Son from heaven and the resurrection of the dead. The baptized Christian receives the Spirit as a pledge of the day when this mortal body will be changed to be like Christ's already glorious body.
- 33 When we talk about the church, therefore, and say that it has Christ as its foundation, or that it lives 'in Christ', or that it stands for Christ, this in the end is no different from saying that the church refers itself to, and has as its principle in the strictest sense, the Kingdom of God. As a body of disciples and beginners, taken on by grace and forgiveness, the church touches and experiences the beginnings of the 'new thing' which God is doing - and does so because, in Christ, this 'new thing' is already

accomplished. Further, the church, as a body of disciples, is engaged in the same business as its Lord: that of opening the world to its horizon, to its destiny as God's Kingdom. Not only by proclamation but also by deed, the church is called to let God's Kingdom show in the world and for the world - to give the world a taste, an inkling, of the glory which shall be revealed'. Finally - and again as a body of disciples - the church follows the way of repentance, because that is the way along which God's Kingdom is found. While baptism signifies repentance for the remission of sins - a radical conversion from darkness to light and the beginning of a new life - those who follow Christ have nevertheless to repent and to take up the cross daily. To be 'church' is always to be turning to God, always to be in transition to a better mind, always to be answering afresh the call of God in Christ as events and circumstances make that call concrete. When Christians assemble as the church of God for worship they lift up their hearts to Christ as the Lord who already has received all authority in God's Kingdom and who is awaiting the final overcoming of opposition to his reign. This tasting of the powers of the age to come, by sharing in the Holy Spirit (Heb. 6.4-5), inspires the church with the hope of glory but also brings it constantly under the judgement of Christ's rule and authority. Christ comes as judge; he stands at the door and knocks and comes in to sup with those who hear his voice and open the door.

- 34 It is important not to terminate this thinking about the church merely on the assembly at worship or on a diocesan or provincial body. We have spoken of the church as 'a body of disciples'. These disciples are usually to be found dispersed in their communities as (from one point of view) 'aliens and exiles' (1 Pet. 2.11) and it is in their various vocations and in the business of their ordinary lives and in their engagement with their neighbours that the world is made aware of its destiny as God's Kingdom. When ordinary Christians act in the world they exercise what a recent ecumenical document calls 'Christian authority' by which 'men perceive the authoritative word of Christ' (ARCIC *Final Report*, Authority I, 3, p. 53). Often, indeed, Christians act collectively in their work and witness; for the most part, however, they appear not as members of the church but as persons having roles and tasks in society. In the latter capacity they make decisions and respond to events that make the call of God in Christ concrete, and thus become the occasion of repentance and of the active witness to which it leads. There is ambiguity in this, for all do not respond in the same way to what the occasion may seem to require. Nevertheless, the effective witness of God's people to the presence and coming of the Kingdom of God resides more in the meaning and quality of their lives than it does in the decisions and acts of church councils.
- 35 But if all this is true, it is not hard to identify the ultimate source of that tension in which Christians and Christian churches live with the world around them. On the one hand, the Kingdom of God which is revealed and established in Christ affirms the world as God's. The world is the subject of redemption and so the object of God's love. There is continuity between its present life and its fulfilment in Christ. On the other hand, the Kingdom of God which is established and revealed in Christ stands to this same world as 'beyond' - a transcendent hope - and therefore questions and relativises it. Thus the crucified and risen Lord embodies a redemption which at once affirms the world and judges it; and the church, a segment of its world, lives uneasily on the borderline between belonging and not belonging.

## 5 World and Kingdom in the Order of Creation

- 36 The Christian experience of redemption, however -which is the experience of God's Kingdom in Christ - has implications which go beyond questions about the life and mission of the church. It also has something to say about the world itself and about the world's relation to God's Kingdom. When St. Paul describes the saving work of Christ as new creation (2 Cor. 5.17), his very language intimates the understanding of the world which the Gospel presupposes. His words are rooted in what in his day was already an established tradition regarding creation and fall, and it is this tradition which tells us in effect what sort of world it is for which redemption in Christ is both possible and necessary.
- 37 The doctrine of creation - developed over many generations by Jewish and Christian exegetes - is based not only on the opening chapters of Genesis but on a whole series of scriptural passages, some of the most prominent of which are in the Psalms and Isaiah 40-55. What these passages envisage is a divine act of creation that embraces 'all things visible and invisible' - the whole of the natural order and humanity within it. The teaching which they set out is neither an alternative to, nor a substitute for, scientific accounts of the structure and history of the natural order. What science studies is the world which we inhabit in all its immensity and richness. The doctrine of creation, on the other hand, affirms that this same world owes its very being to God and belongs to God. Destined from the beginning to be God's Kingdom, to be transparent to his loving will, the world subsists through God's Word and in God's Spirit, having been brought into existence 'out of nothing'. Hence creatures are, and become themselves most perfectly, not apart from God but in openness to God - even as God manifests his being as love by calling the world into existence, caring for it, and sustaining it. What the doctrine of creation sets forth, then, is the fact that the world is for God precisely because, at the same time, God is *for* the world. Thus the whole of the universe - this visible physical and material universe - is God's creation, which can and does 'declare the glory of God' (Psalm 19.1).
- 38 In the Genesis stories of creation, a special place is assigned to the making of humanity, which is presented as the climax of God's creative undertaking. The first of these stories dignifies 'Adam', male and female, as the creature made after God's 'image and likeness' (Gen. 1.26-27). The second shows God moulding the first human out of the earth, breathing life into this creature, and finally settling him and his companion in a Garden to live off the bounty of God. Closely examined, these stories carry a wealth of meaning at many levels. As God's 'image', Adam is set over the other creatures of God and thus given a calling under God to foster and continue the work of creation. Here the human being is portrayed in a way that portends all its creative activities - as farmer, technologist, artist, scientist. But Adam's fellowship in the second story is not only with the creatures of other species, animate and inanimate; he is given a companion, another of his own kind, with whom to share life. And here humanity is symbolically portrayed in its essentially social character - as the bringer to birth of families, nations, and cultures. As the image and likeness of God, then, this Adam is created to be 'with' an 'other', to be one who communicates, shares, and co-operates - a creature whose life is tied up in language in the most inclusive sense of that term. And as such, of course, this human being is an 'answerable' creature, one that exercises freedom in its calling under God to be accountable to others and for others and in this way to reflect and manifest the creative love and power of God.
- 39 In all this, one theme is very clear. The stories of creation are an affirmation of the world, not just as something which is 'very good' in itself, but even as something which, because it is *for God*, is in principle holy. Despite the groaning and travailing of creation, people who have faith see that the world, including humanity, reflects God and by its very being praises and points to God. Conversely, God is never unmindful of or absent from the world. God is present for it as the context and horizon of its being, providing, ruling, and overruling for the sake of the fulfilment which Christ

brings and embodies - the day which will mean that God is 'everything to every one' (1 Cor. 15.28).

- 40 No sooner is this said, however, than it is necessary to recall that the stories in Genesis about the origins of things turn immediately from the narrative of creation to that of the fall. The first thing to be said about the world is that it is God's work and the sphere of God's kingship - that the very logic of its being points to God not merely as the source but as the completer and fulfiller of its life. But almost before this witness of faith has been completed, a second proposition is added: God's world is spoiled, alienated from him, and handed over to bondage. Alongside the mystery of creation is set the mystery of sin. Humanity - Adam - rebels against God, against the source and archetype of its own being.
- 41 The story of Adam's fall has figured largely in Christian tradition - and rightly so. Certain Christians may often regret and criticize speculations to which the story has given rise - speculations, for example, about the way in which sin is inherited or contracted. What they cannot question, however, is that the story of the fall intends to tell people something about themselves - not just as individuals but collectively - and that what it has to say rings true. 'Adam' means 'humanity'; and - as St Paul would have put it - we (not just 'I') are *in Adam* - caught together with the rest of our race in a state or condition of sin which feeds on itself. What is more, the evil which this story contemplates is not rightly understood simply as an affliction of helpless humanity by hostile non-human forces, or as a matter of mere limitation or ignorance. Whatever role in the origins of our fallen state may have been ascribed to Satan, Christian theology has consistently claimed that the sin in which humanity is 'tied and bound' is grounded in human choosing. That choosing may be shaped by factors which are as much social and historical as they are individual. Sin is not re-invented by each successive person who is born into the world. It belongs to the structures of human life together, as well as being personal and individual. Nevertheless the story of Adam's fall is right when it locates ultimate responsibility for moral evil in the human act of choice. Even though there seems to be a tragic inevitability about moral evil, its root must be sought in the perversion of human willing and loving. The Creator made human beings to be with one another and with God; 'Adam', however, wants autonomy - not the freedom which is born of love, but the freedom which consists of being 'in-dependent', not beholden, self-sufficient. Such freedom, however, is in the end self-defeating and self-destructive. And that is the heritage of the 'first Adam': God's creation spoiled.
- 42 Nor is this insistence on human fallenness a matter merely of abstract doctrine. To moderns who, to one extent or another, enjoy the benefits of the revolution of communications, the evidence of human evil is great enough to be almost numbing to the will. People do not merely become accustomed to the sorts of evil which are done and suffered in individual and familial relationships. More and more they are aware of the social and collective dimensions of sin and of the self-righteous zeal with which hatred, moral indifference, the oppression of one group or class by another, the wastage of the earth's resources, the escalation of the arms race, and the active violence of nation against nation are justified and even glorified. In the face of these realities, people tend naturally either to look for scapegoats on whom the problems can be blamed or else to take refuge in cynical resignation. But no one, if the story of Adam contains the truth which Christians have found in it, can pretend to be uninvolved in human sinning. The evil in which humanity is caught cannot be distanced by projecting it on others or by claiming tacitly to be above it all. No one is personally and individually responsible for all - or even for much - of the evil which the world contains; but neither does any one stand apart from it. It is not only this person or that who has gone wrong, but Adam; and Adam's capacity to get things wrong seems to increase with human power and ingenuity.

- 43 A Christian appreciation of the world as creation, then, states the presuppositions of the message of redemption in Christ. The world is God's creation. As such, it is good. Both the natural order and the world of history - of human decision and action - have their ground and their end in God, who is present in them and for them to finish his creative work. Yet this same world - secondarily but not less truly - is spoiled, nor is any person, group of persons, or realm of activity exempt from the effects of the systemic perversion of choosing and loving. Thus God's Kingdom is native to the human world and foreign to it: native by God's creation and providence, foreign by human sin. The tension between grace and judgement, affirmation and criticism, is present not merely in the message of the New Testament but throughout the Scriptures.

## 6 God's Kingdom: A Yes and a No

- 44 It is this tension which provides the framework within which Anglican churches can appreciate and weigh the issues - about the relation of church and culture or about the relation of church and political order - which now confront them.
- 45 The genesis of these problems in their contemporary form is familiar to everyone. The spread of Christianity in the modern era was one aspect of a general expansion of the power and the influence of the nations and peoples of western Europe. This colonialist movement did not always take the form of literal colonization, but it invariably led - in spite of real humanitarian achievements - to the economic, political, and cultural subjection of local populations. At the same time, it helped to bring about a world order in which, as never before, peoples in many parts of the world find themselves inter-related parts of a single economic and political 'scene'. What in the final analysis enabled these developments was the industrial and the technological revolution which accompanied the era of colonial expansion. These revolutions have made increasingly swift travel and communication possible between widely distant parts of the earth. They have transformed the economy of nation after nation, in every section of the globe. Most important of all, perhaps, it is they - and the values and ideas they generate - which have come to define the common cultural milieu of the contemporary world.
- 46 Today, however, with the disappearance of traditional colonial empires (though not the world which they helped create), formerly subject peoples are rediscovering and reasserting their own political, economic, and cultural integrity. They seek, both at a domestic and an international level, to reverse the political and economic injustices which in part are the legacy of the colonial era.\* By the same token, they seek to reaffirm their cultural identities - to re-appropriate, where necessary, the customs, values, and insights that belong to their local or regional ways of life. To be sure, these efforts do not, and cannot, contemplate a return to the state of affairs which prevailed before the beginnings of the centuries-long colonial era. The possibility of a relatively isolated existence for any people or culture has become almost inconceivable. Already we live in a world in which, quite apart from considerations of economic interdependence, there is a lively interchange of political and religious ideas, as well as of styles of art, dress, and life. The setting of these efforts to achieve integrity and justice is a global and international one to begin with, and the issues therefore concern peoples everywhere.

\* Though political independence has now been attained in most countries of the 'South', their economies are, nevertheless, still appendages to the economies of the 'North', in whose favour the international economic order is heavily biased. See *Brandt Report*, Pan Books, London 1981.

- 47 They also concern the Anglican churches, which first became a world-wide communion, and only later discovered themselves as such, in the course of the movement of colonial expansion and its aftermath. Planted in North America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and the lands of the Pacific, these churches still, to one degree or another, represent something of an English presence in a series of non-English environments. To be sure, if displaced 'Englishness' were the sole problem, its solution might best be left to time and changing circumstance. Where matters of language are concerned - or styles in art and architecture, or customs in the worship and pastoral administration of the churches - one would expect that the natural tendency of communities and institutions to adapt to their setting would gradually erode any intolerable foreignness. The truth is, however, that the problems go much deeper than this obvious problem of 'Englishness' and touch issues of theological substance.
- 48 The first such problem is that created by the struggle of peoples in the Third World for economic and political liberation. The experience of oppression and of the action and thought involved in overcoming it have become, in such settings, a matrix which

reshapes both the life of the churches and the style of theological reflection which goes on in them. Not only is this the case, but it appears to Christians who are involved in this struggle that traditional forms of worship, of piety, and of theology are tied up with a social and economic system which is insensitive to the cry of the poor for justice and therefore resists significant social change. For such persons, it is the experience of oppression and struggle itself which provides the vantage-point from which the true meaning of Christian faith can be discerned; and this experience is therefore an occasion when God's presence and God's will are grasped.

- 49 A second such problem is that of the relation of Christianity and Christian theology in their traditional forms to the religious thought, symbols, and insights of non-Christian cultures. At bottom this is an issue about the validity of the forms of religious experience and practice embodied in such cultures; hence it requires, if it is to be addressed usefully, not so much a history as a theology of religions. Christians have to ask whether their faith is truly and ultimately 'foreign' in the setting of a cultural and religious tradition that has no relation to that of the Christian West, or whether, on the contrary, such a tradition may provide a source of illumination for Christians in their understanding and communication of the Gospel of Christ - even while, at the same time, it is illumined and interpreted by that Gospel. Is there a revelation of God in the history and common experience of non-Christianized cultures?
- 50 Each of these issues, then, raises a challenge, not to Anglicanism particularly or specifically, but, more broadly, to long-standing western or European forms of Christian life and theology. These are perceived as alien to the experience of peoples whose life and sensibility are shaped primarily by the struggle against oppression and injustice, or by a cultural and religious tradition foreign to western and European ways of thought. Hence the question is raised whether, in such settings as these, Christian faith does not necessarily take new and indigenous forms, as indeed it did with the conversion of the peoples of western Europe. And if this is so, is it not reasonable to think that God has somehow truly spoken and bestowed himself through these modes of experience to illumine the meaning of the Gospel in a fresh way?
- 51 To raise this question and to deal with it soberly is not an easy thing. It is the sort of question which tends to evoke quick, unconsidered, and emotional responses from people on every side of it - not least because it requires everyone to step mentally outside of commitments and habits of mind which have become settled. On the other hand, there are some fairly clear principles which can help people to understand and discuss the question.
- 52 First of all, it is crucial to take note of the historical setting in which all these questions of ours are raised. Everything we have said hitherto has stressed the fact that historical - and therefore cultural and social - context is a central factor in people's understanding and appropriation of the Gospel of Christ. If this is so, however, it is incumbent on us to acknowledge and identify the situation or setting that is presupposed by the questions we are addressing. And the most important thing to notice is the fact that these questions are not generated as issues specific to any particular culture. On the contrary, they arise out of the meeting and interaction of previously isolated traditions. Their setting, then, is from the start multi-cultural and international - a fact attested by the very composition of this Commission. Merely to raise them is to put oneself in a special and peculiar sort of situation: that of a person who both belongs and does not belong to his or her own specific setting as, say, African or English or Polynesian or North American. In other words, the questions themselves define a context in which every cultural or national setting is important, and none can be assumed to be intrinsically more important or less in question than any other.
- 53 In the second place, it is important to consider what it is that makes it possible for believers to come together in such a context: to speak as representatives of widely differing experiences and ways of life and yet as people who belong together. The explanation does not lie simply in our common Anglicanism. No more can it be sought

simply in the fact that modern technology has created a common space for meeting. People's capacity to take such a stance depends on their acknowledgement of the universality of the redemption which Christ represents and carries and of which the church, through the Holy Spirit, has foretaste. What undergirds and supports such dialogue, in short, is the faith, grounded in the death and resurrection of Christ and confirmed through the gift of the Spirit, that the human world in all its variety is at once from God and for God: that its transcendent horizon is God's Kingdom.

- 54 In the light of that faith - which is the only light by which the church, as church, can judge anything - one positive affirmation is clearly required. That the message of God's redemption in Christ is truly addressed to every nation indicates that there is, in the life and history of every people, that which looks toward or opens itself to Christ. This can only mean, however, that in the historical experience of every people the Creator God provides, through that divine Word 'in whom all things consist', the basis on which the Kingdom can be recognized and appropriated. Whether one thinks of the experience of struggle for justice and peace, then, or of religious traditions and practices which mediate experience of the ultimate 'Other' as the horizon and goal of human existence, it is natural and right to see in them ways which God employs to be present with his people and to be known to them.
- 55 At this point, though, two other considerations come into play. First of all, when Christians make this judgement, they do so not from some vantage-point above time and history, but as people who know themselves and their destiny through God's gracious gift of himself in Christ. What they can affirm about the presence of God in the world's struggles for justice and for peace, or in the insights embodied in the traditions of other religions, they affirm not in spite of, but because of, their knowledge of God in Christ. It is the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, and therefore the justice and peace made known in God's at-one-ment of humanity in Christ, which for them remain regulative and whose traces or lineaments they are glad to discern and affirm wherever it is possible.
- 56 Then in the second place, just because, in the light of God's redemption in Christ, believers are aware of the reality of sin in their own individual and common lives, they know that it is at work in their world as well, spoiling God's creation and his gifts. They know that even the search for peace and justice can produce violence and oppression as its fruits, and that depth of religious insight - Christian and non-Christian alike - can be perverted to the service of falsehood.
- 57 To be sure, none of this means - or should be taken to mean - that God is not at work in the world, revealing himself and therefore known in the political and religious life of peoples everywhere. It does mean, however, that in all particular situations there are critical judgements to be made
- serious judgements, but also judgements which must be nuanced, interrogative, provisional. And the question is how
  - on what basis and in what spirit - such judgements are to be made.

## 7 Pluralism and the Norms of Christian Judgement

- 58 What constitutes the ultimate basis of judgement for Christian believers is Christ himself. He is the one who represents and embodies the world's (and the church's) transcendent horizon, the Kingdom of God. The church is joined to Christ, however, and therefore knows Christ, through certain characteristic institutions and actions which mark and define its life. The English Reformers - in this agreeing with their contemporaries on the European continent - defined these as the preaching of the Word of God and the administration of the sacraments (Article 19). They further located the normative form of the Word of God in the Scriptures even while insisting that the baptismal rule of faith of the early church, the Apostles' and the Nicene creeds, attests and conveys the same central truth as the Scriptures. Proximately, therefore, and in practice, the basis on which the church speaks of Christ and makes its judgements is the set of institutions which mediate its relation to Christ: the Scriptures, the creeds, and - though in a different and complementary way - the sacramental life.
- 59 The Scriptures and creeds, however, must be interpreted reliably if they are to be understood and applied correctly. Thus the question arises in what light, by reference to what context or framework of understanding, they are to be interpreted. To this question, Anglicans have traditionally returned a twofold answer. The proper settings or contexts in which Scripture and creeds are understood are those supplied by tradition and reason.
- 60 By 'tradition', of course, one may mean the deposit of faith itself - the witness of the Scriptures and of the ancient baptismal confession. For our purposes, however, it is a second sense of 'tradition' which is most important. In this sense, 'tradition' refers to the continuing life of the Christian community itself - the patterns of behaviour and habits of belief which are transmitted from generation to generation in the church. This tradition finds its primary, though by no means its sole, vehicle in the liturgies of the assembled community of believers. These provide a setting of symbolic word and action by which the Scriptures and creeds, as they are recited or explained, are illumined and enabled to 'speak'. To put the matter in other words, the church's liturgy carries the common mind of the community; and it is this 'mind', with its characteristic questions, interests, and assumptions, that receives, and in receiving interprets, the Bible and the creeds. Since, moreover, the 'mind' in question is one which has been formed over many generations by engagement with the very Scriptures and creeds it interprets for us, its testimony is a weighty one.
- 61 A second, and not less important, instrument of interpretation is what seventeenth-century Anglican teachers called 'reason'. Like 'tradition', this term has a wide range of meanings. Most fundamentally, perhaps, it signifies the native capacity of human persons to grasp and share the meanings of things through words and symbols. It also refers, more narrowly, to a particular manifestation of this capacity: the ability to think about things in consecutive, logical fashion. When understood and defined in this way, however, reason cannot be disentangled from the interpretative work of tradition, nor even from that of faith itself, since both of these involve the capacity to grasp and understand reality through the use of words and symbols.
- 62 In practice, however, the word 'reason' had a further meaning as well. It referred not only to the mind's ability to grasp and handle ideas, but also to generally accepted notions of what fits or is 'reasonable' in the world as human beings see and experience it. Part, in other words, of what 'reason' meant was 'common sense' in the proper and serious sense of that phrase: not just a shared human capacity to think and understand, but a shared set of understandings and ideas. Defined in this way, reason was thought by seventeenth-century theologians to be independent of the specific norms and traditions of any Christian community, because it represented a heritage that belonged not to believers as such but to all human beings. Thus the importance of reason in the interpretation of Scriptures and creeds lay in the fact that as an instrument of understanding and criticism it was a gift of the Creator shared by

Christians and non-Christians alike. It represented not the church's, but humanity's, 'common mind'.

- 63 In the present-day world, of course, thinkers are likely to take a somewhat different view of reason in its character as 'common sense'. They are vividly aware of the fact that what people take to be 'reasonable' tends to vary from time to time and from place to place. For them, therefore, what the seventeenth century called 'reason' is, in significant part, a matter of culture. It refers to the way of seeing things and asking about them which determines, for a given group of people in a given time and place, what 'makes sense', whether that group represents a critical minority or the majority in a particular society. Even when characterized in this way, though, reason is just as important a factor in the understanding and interpretation of Christian faith as the seventeenth-century divines took it to be. It does indeed signify the common standards of judgement - about matters of fact and value alike - which believers share with non-believers, even though it can no longer be understood as a universal norm but is more or less specific to a given society or culture. Reason too, then, as the common mind of a culture, works to influence what people will notice in the Scriptures and creeds, how they will see them, what questions they will direct to them, and in general what sense they will make of them.
- 64 How, though, are we to assess the roles of tradition and reason? Anglicans, in the spirit both of the early church and of the Reformation, have always insisted that Scripture is the primary and sufficient norm of faith. They have also tended to translate this principle into a conviction that Scripture can be read and understood in absolute independence both of the church's tradition and of the 'reason' - the secular tradition, if you like - which a particular culture or society embodies. Yet it is not certain either that such a state of affairs is possible or that, if possible, it would be a desirable one.
- 65 The Scriptures and creeds are not, to be sure, infinitely malleable. They cannot be made out to say just anything at all. On the other hand, their speaking is always *in a setting*, and it is always in relation to what that setting regards as interesting and reasonable that they are heard to speak. Without context - in a vacuum, as it were - they would not be heard at all. The contexts afforded both by the mind of the church and by that of a broader culture, by tradition and by 'reason', are thus the primary sounding-boards of God's word.
- 66 Now it is true that these sounding-boards operate for the most part automatically and unconsciously. The interests, attitudes, values, and convictions which make them up are the set of common assumptions which provide the basis of a shared life, and as such they are seldom brought into focus themselves. Hence there is bound to be selectivity and distortion about the way in which they make the Scriptures heard. For the most part the Scripture will be heard in a way which accords with the 'givens' - the world-view, the social ideology, the concerns and problems - of the society, culture, or sub-culture which hears them. A certain amount of selectivity and distortion is involved in the very act of translation from one language to another; for languages 'carry' cultural worlds. Yet - and this point needs stressing - such selectivity and distortion may well be a price that has to be paid for genuine insight into the Scriptures. The bias of a given tradition or point of view may bring to light truth which only it can serve to discern. In any case, such selectivity, and the distortion which may accompany it, are part of what is meant by bringing the message of the Scriptures 'home' to people; for home is the social and mental world in which they live.
- 67 Furthermore, in the process of understanding and interpreting the Scripture, there is a way in which selectivity and distortion can be - not finally or absolutely but significantly - corrected. For it happens, and not rarely, that there is conflict between what the Scriptures and creeds say in one context and what they say in another. The frequent dissonance between tradition and reason - between the 'sense' which Scripture makes in the life of the church and the 'sense' it makes in, say, a

secularized culture - is one example of this. Another example might be the dissonance between the way Scripture is heard in a culture shaped by Islamic tradition and in one shaped by Hindu or Buddhist belief and practice; or that between the message it conveys to oppressed and marginalized groups and the message it conveys to dominant or comfortable groups in society. Such dissonances serve an interpretative purpose. They compel people to bring into focus the tradition and the reason, the common mind, in the light of which they have been reading and understanding the Scriptures, and to let the Scriptures themselves challenge that mind in the face of another reading of them.

- 68 The Scriptures and the creeds never speak apart from a context, then; hence our understanding of them is always conditioned - by culture, by social structures and attitudes, by a given world-view. On the other hand, the Scriptures and the creeds speak in many contexts, both in the history of the church itself and in the various cultures and societies of the contemporary world; and it is this fact which, in the end, can set them free from the narrowing or distorting effects of any particular way of reading them. The pluralism of the world church - and of the Anglican Communion - creates problems for everyone. It requires everyone not merely to tolerate differences (which may, in the circumstances, be all too easy a course) but also to focus and to face the contextual factors which may have distorted or narrowed their own understanding of the Scriptures, the creeds, and so of the Christ whom these institutions mediate. But if pluralism and the dissonances which accompany it are sources of discomfort, they can also prompt and enable new insight and 'change of mind'.
- 69 To many people, this word 'pluralism' will be alarming. It may suggest *relativism*, the idea that there are no final criteria for what we say or do, and so no ultimate truth: that all we have are the conventions of the setting in which we happen to find ourselves. This is not what we mean by pluralism. In order to make our understanding of pluralism clear, however, it will be useful to differentiate three ways - each with disturbing implications - in which relativism is commonly understood.
- (i) The most radical and general kind of relativism maintains that cultures and languages constitute, for all practical purposes, closed systems that are opaque to each other. There are no full and adequate translations from one human context to another. If this is the case, there can be no sense in talking about 'humanity' as a whole or about a common goal or destiny for human beings. Yet the Gospel carries a missionary mandate: it is proclaimed on the assumption that it is relevant to everyone of whatever race, class, culture, language, or religion.
- (ii) Relativism can also be maintained in a more modest form. We may take it that in fact there is a common humanity and a common core of human experience, including what is identified as religious experience, but that the articulation of this experience differs from culture to culture, so that no one expression of it can claim centrality or authority. Yet the Church claims that God has spoken and acted decisively in Jesus of Nazareth: other 'religious' utterances are judged by the Christian in the light of this belief.
- (iii) More modestly still, relativism might be said to hold within the Christian community. Within the broad compass of a general commitment to the memory or inspiration of Jesus, many theological emphases are legitimate; and no doctrinal or credal statement can limit the possible plurality of Christian views. Yet the church has traditionally claimed and exercised the right to block off certain avenues of theological development, right up to the present time. (Several churches have recently declared the theological defence of apartheid to be heresy.)
- 70 Our own use of 'pluralism' does not represent any of these varieties of relativism. The *first* kind is, in fact, very difficult even to state intelligibly. Imperfect communication and translation do not imply totally sealed-off mental worlds. People of different cultures recognize each other as human beings, and, however difficult a foreign

language or culture may appear, they will enter into tentative conversations expecting to find a picture of human existence that has something in common with their own. A language that had no way of talking about being a body, being born, loving, coupling, dying would not be a human language at all. Our physical nature and our mortality provide the beginning of a common 'agenda', and it has yet to be shown that there could be *human* languages, in any worthwhile sense, with which we could not begin to engage on the basis of this kind of assumption.

- 71 But this extreme of relativism does remind us that we learn to know only within the limits of history and locality, speech and body. We cannot arrive at a universal standpoint, a theoretical account of our total situation. If the notion of a general or universal account of human nature emerges at all, it does so as a distant and elusive assumption on which people begin to operate *in* the process of encounter and conversation - that is to say, *in* the experience of human variety, not in an escape to some supra-human vantage point. As we shall see, this has implications for our view of the theological task.
- 72 The *second* kind of relativism raises more problems. On the one hand, we are bound to say that there can be no 'theology of religions' from a standpoint beyond all particular religious traditions: theology has to 'stand' somewhere, and to think otherwise is to betray an abstract and individualistic understanding of religion itself. The very idea of a 'religious experience' divorced from the life of specific religious communities is fraught with difficulties. On the other hand, people of differing traditions and commitments do talk with one another, and may recognize common ground; many faiths allow that their utterances about God have a provisional character, and some would see their systems as open to illumination from the experience of others.
- 73 This is a delicate and difficult area. To be a Christian at all is to be committed to acting on the assumption that the humanity manifest in Jesus Christ is, at the very least, the central point of reference for our thinking about the nature, capacity, and destiny of human beings as such. Classically, Christians have held and preached in common that God is united with Jesus of Nazareth in a direct and decisive manner; that in Jesus, truly divine and truly human', we are granted to see both the nature of God as unreservedly compassionate and generous, and the glory of human nature as it wholeheartedly responds to God. And this confession is not a metaphysical conclusion in the abstract, but is bound up with the experience of drastically new human possibilities that arise out of the history of Jesus.
- 74 But many would add that particular human beings experience such renewal outside the world of Christian tradition, and even in the context of other religious confessions. If this is so, however, the Christian is still bound to say that it is only by reference to Christ that the experience itself is possible. We do not intend here to attempt a resolution of these issues, but to indicate what is in fact the unavoidable structure of Christian judgement. We are not in a position either to state categorically that saving grace is wholly inconceivable outside the number of those who explicitly confess the name of Christ, or to adopt an easy indifferentism, for which one model of human destiny is automatically as satisfactory as any other. Once again, we are to beware of static and generalizing solutions: the degree to which we can recognize a certain 'Christ likeness' in contexts other than the Christian church depends upon the actual events of encounter and exchange between particular Christians and non-Christians.
- 75 The *third* variety of relativism is perhaps least complex. Christianity is a faith with historical foundations, and this means that we cannot properly talk about Jesus and his work in any way we choose. The events at the origin of the Christian community - the 'agenda' set by Jesus living, dying, and rising - are what basically and primarily establish the distinctiveness of that community. The church is a body of people living under the sign of cross and resurrection, judging and understanding themselves in this light. This is what the church proclaims itself to be when it performs the sacraments of baptism and eucharist and reads the Scriptures; without these things,

there would be no body recognizable as the 'church'.

- 76 If so, variety in Christian utterance cannot be unlimited; it is limited by its 'charter of foundation', the event of Jesus Christ. This event, of course, is perceivable only through the medium of that primary witness which we call Holy Scripture: both record of and response to God's act, it marks out authoritatively the ground on which distinctively Christian speech and interaction occur. It is itself a variegated witness, far from monolithic, yet it is held together, in a way not always easy to spell out, by its relation to the story of a particular community and then of a particular human being and his effect in remaking and expanding that community to embrace the ends of the earth. Christian theological debate cannot but take place in the presence of this central testimony of faith, and in the confidence that it is *indeed faithful* testimony.
- 77 But human responses to this testimony have varied enormously, and continue to do so. This variety is not a tragedy or a problem to be overcome; it witnesses precisely to the scope, the strangeness, and the mystery of that transforming event which lies at the root of the church's existence. 'Doing justice' to Christ and to Scripture must therefore involve the continuing meeting - and sometimes even collision - of differing perspectives and interests, a meeting which entails a continuing enlargement of horizons. We engage with the church's own varied history of reading the Bible, and with the multiplicity of contemporary readings in diverse intellectual and cultural milieus, trusting that we approach the full dimensions of the reality in question only as we continue in these encounters. We do not come to see 'truth as an object; we do not arrive at a high ground from which to comprehend the whole work of God. But our continuing exploration in dialogue and listening rests on the trust that, so long as we go on sharing the common ground of attentiveness to the scriptural witness and sacramental fellowship, the truth of God's dealings will be with us as a hidden pulse or rhythm in all our reflection, or (to change the metaphor) as the unseen pivot in the endless oscillations of Christian debate and self-understanding. The Holy Spirit, who guides into all truth, may be present not so much exclusively on one side of a theological dispute as in the very encounter of diverse visions held by persons or groups of persons who share a faithfulness and commitment to Christ and each other.
- 78 In our rejection of each of the varieties of relativism mentioned, we have ended up by saying that there is indeed a 'sovereign' truth, something beyond our fashions and fancies, but that it is to be known only in the continuation of active human encounter. It is this that we mean to point to when we speak of 'pluralism'. If relativism denies that the notion of truth has any comprehensive meaning, pluralism, in the sense intended here, testifies to a truth more comprehensive than all our particular standpoints. And in Christian terms, to the extent that we remain bound in a narrow loyalty to our given perspective, imagining it to be final, 'objective', or 'scientific', we keep truth, life-giving truth, at a distance. We can only begin from faith and commitment (in 'secular as much as in religious encounters); but that faith is challenged and enlarged in listening. If we refuse such listening, we need to be called by the Gospel to conversion and repentance, renewed attention to the Gospel and to one another in the presence of the Gospel.

79 What is essential, then, in the processes of interpretation by which the church makes judgements is an attitude which is analogous to - and may even be a part of - the repentance which the Lord called for in all his disciples. That the Scriptures speak in a variety of social situations and cultural contexts is a sign to us that the risen Christ and the Kingdom which he represents are indeed the transcendent horizon of every human society and culture, and that the bias of each particular tradition can bring into focus the meaning of God's Kingdom in a way which requires serious and critical attention. That such contexts not only illuminate but also narrow and distort the scriptural message is a sign that the risen Christ and the Kingdom he represents are indeed, in every context, a *transcendent* horizon, apprehended only by way of 'change of mind', repentance. The church grasps the Scriptures and is grasped by its Lord not apart from the challenges and dissonances which pluralism occasions, but in the repentance which these call for and make possible. The discovery of God's will or God's way is an enterprise for *historical* beings; it takes place as we grow, move, and discover ourselves and our world in *time*, the time in which God's Word has addressed us through Jesus Christ.

## 8 Repentance and the Variety of Religious Cultures

- 80 These considerations give some guidance for our churches as they approach the questions which have been raised about the 'indigenization' of Christian faith in previously non-Christian cultures. To be sure, they are far too general to resolve issues which are specific to any particular place or culture; but the key principle of what we have called 'repentance' provides a regulative norm. 'Repentance', it must be stressed, does not in this context simply mean a general willingness to take on 'new' ideas or a settled disposition to prefer the unfamiliar to the familiar. It means the change of mind which is evoked by the manifestation of God's reign in the crucified and risen Christ. Hence it means repentance on the basis both of faith in Christ and of commitment to the institutions - Scriptures, creeds, and sacraments - through which such faith is evoked and enlivened. No more than faith itself can repentance surrender its own foundations.
- 81 One of these foundations is the acknowledgement in faith that there is no human culture in which Christ and the Gospel of the Kingdom cannot be received, and therefore that there is, as we have said, that in every culture which answers to Christ. The doctrine of creation testifies that no people is a stranger to God or to the Christ in whom all things consist. Furthermore, the fruits of the Spirit, which are a foretaste of the Kingdom, can be - and we know this because in fact they *are* - manifested in the medium of the language, ethos, and mind-set of widely differing traditions. And since the first work of repentance is to acknowledge the signs of the Kingdom in this world for what they are, where that occurs faith will greet it with rejoicing - even if the language is strange, even if the face of Christ is lit up from an unaccustomed angle.
- 82 In the first instance, then, repentance discerns and acknowledges, in each cultural world or medium in which the Gospel is heard and bears fruit, the continuities between the faith which is received and the medium which receives it. That such continuities exist is attested simply by the fact that the Gospel can be heard and lived by people whose sensibilities and outlook have been shaped in that setting. To discern them, moreover, is to recognize that God has borne witness to himself in the traditions - including the religious traditions - which have formed the culture in question. This judgement does not apply to some settings and not to others. The cultural worlds whose 'reason' has, in various ways, shaped the tradition of western Christianity - those of Palestinian Judaism, of Roman Hellenism, of the Celtic, Germanic, and Slavic civilizations - must be included in this judgement, together with the ancient cultures of Africa, the Americas, and the East. Christian faith also takes shape in the matrix of the industrial and technological culture which grew out of the European Enlightenment: in this secularized world too one must seek to discern testimonies - openings for faith - which illumine the meaning of God's Kingdom. Christian faith takes - and rightly takes - forms which reflect the genius of each of these 'ways'. Where there is not engagement between the Gospel and the culture, the Gospel neither takes root nor is illumined and interpreted for others.
- 83 But there is also a second aspect of the life of repentance. If the first is to discern and acknowledge the signs of God's Kingdom which the Gospel uncovers in every culture, and which in their turn testify to the truth which is in Christ, the second is to recognize that no human way of seeing and living is adequate to the transcendent reality of God's Kingdom. If every culture receives and illumines the Gospel, every culture is also challenged and judged by its promise. Christian faith comes to belong to its cultural world - as much by the way it speaks *to* the world as by the way it speaks *from* it. Without belonging, it can say nothing; but its way of belonging is always that of a life which points 'beyond' - to the transcendent hope which relativises every culture. Churches of the 'first world' have shown a marked tendency to let this truth escape them and so to fall into a kind of idolatry - to exchange, as St. Paul says in his very concrete way, 'the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man' (Rom. 1.23). But such idolatry, as the Apostle argues, is the very root of sin. No culture embodies or defines in itself the meaning of God's Kingdom in Christ.

- 84 As, then, there are two aspects of the repentance which marks the way to God's Kingdom, so there are two sides to the 'indigenization' of the Gospel. The life in Christ belongs in every culture and transcends every culture. The church, therefore, as a sign of that, points beyond both its culture and itself to the horizon of hope which gives meaning to both.

## 9 Repentance and Movements for Liberation

- 85 The principle of repentance makes it essential to take heed of movements for social, political, and economic liberation - particularly but not exclusively in the Third World - and of the theologies which have grown up with them. Among these are the Latin American theologies of liberation, African and Black theologies, Asian theologies, feminist theologies, and others. As we have seen, these movements appeal to a certain kind of shared experience -the experience of oppression and degradation and the struggle to overcome it - as the context in which the faithful may learn the concrete meaning of God's Kingdom. The struggles of the poor and the marginalized for full human dignity, for freedom and justice, are themselves seen as signs of the Kingdom, signs of God actively present in this world, both sustaining and challenging his people. To seek God's Kingdom and his righteousness will therefore involve concerned and appropriate participation in such struggles for social, economic, and political change as make for authentic humanity in community. To stand aloof from such concern is to deny the claims upon us of God's sovereignty.
- 86 'Liberation theology' has, for many people, come to suggest an uncritical adoption of Marxist methods and goals. Three points need to be emphasized: first, there is, as we have indicated, a considerable variety among the theologies that have arisen out of the experience of oppression; second, not all of these find Marxist analysis and rhetoric relevant to their situation; and third, even those that do use Marxist concepts and language are not in any sense committed to an identification of the Christian hope with any variety of materialist aspiration, let alone any form of totalitarianism. They are, however, wholly committed to bringing the light and the judgement of the Gospel to bear upon the political and economic life of mankind.
- 87 Fundamentally, then, these theologies of liberation are themselves a call for repentance. They testify that the struggles against injustice and inhumanity in certain structures of society are a sign of God's Kingdom which calls for 'change of mind'. Hence they have a message not only for disadvantaged societies but also for materially more comfortable nations, where relative prosperity serves to camouflage or to rationalize less obvious but still serious forms of inhumanity. Where churches are concerned, this call is also a challenge to perceive and acknowledge the social and political bearing of the Gospel and to reassess established theologies. From the perspective of the theologies of liberation, much traditional theology appears to function as little more than ideology - rationalization of the existing social order - and thus to be hostile to essential change.
- 88 These challenges demand serious attention. In the modern era, the proposition is often advanced that 'religion and politics don't mix'. If this statement is taken to deny that religious commitments and political attitudes are often correlated, it is manifestly false, as any historian or sociologist could testify. Similarly, if it is taken to deny that God's sovereignty extends over all areas of human life, it is theologically indefensible. Even when they refuse to 'talk politics', moreover, official and unofficial church groups engage in tacit political action by giving effective consent to the established state of affairs. Finally, it is difficult to find any nation where there are not groups of Christians actively engaged in the pursuit of social aims by political means. The question, then, is not whether religion and politics mix. It is whether churches are prepared to acknowledge, first, that the Gospel is addressed to human beings in the social as well as the individual dimension of their lives; and second, that the Scriptures - and Christian tradition as well - evince a firm, if frequently ignored, bias in favour of the underprivileged and the put-upon. Indeed the Scriptures teach us to praise God on the ground that 'he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree' (Luke 1.52).
- 89 In focusing upon these truths, then, theologians of liberation and the movements they represent have not only called attention to the fact that justice and righteousness, like sin, are social and structural as well as personal and individual. They have also revealed to churches everywhere the obligation of believers to signify God's Kingdom

for the world by action which makes space for justice to be done; and this means taking the side of those upon whom social and political systems inflict injustice, no matter who or what such persons happen to be in a particular society.

- 90 In contemporary movements for liberation, then, it is right to recognize, in the light of Scripture and of Christian tradition, a sign of God's Kingdom, and a sign which summons to repentance. At the same time, once this principle is asserted and granted, it is neither unreasonable nor faithless to notice that these movements raise theological and practical issues of great difficulty - as discussions in the Commission have revealed.
- 91 Liberation theologies have been charged with identifying Christian redemption with the accomplishment of their political and social aims and thus jeopardizing its transcendent dimension and its relevance to whole realms of human experience and concern which are not focused on political issues. Again, there is a difficulty occasioned by the fact that churches are not constituted as political action groups or as political parties, but as communities which include all sorts and ages of human persons and embrace every type of human interest, from education and nurture to art and thought. Furthermore, churches as churches do not have a detailed social or economic programme to offer; they invite human beings to share and grow in a kind of life - the life in Christ. This allegiance ranges them on the side of those whom the world forgets and despises; but it provides them with no specific recipe for thought and action which can be uniformly applied in all circumstances, and hence with no licence to tie the name of God to any type of political or social system as a matter of principle. In practice, and in a particular set of circumstances, it may be perfectly clear what aims Christians are called to forward and what moral stand they are called to take - as, for example, in racist societies. Circumstances and issues, however, differ from place to place, and the available tools of social analysis are not - in spite of the claims of those who sell the several brands of them - so sharp and exact or so scientifically objective as to make decisions about the conditions which foster justice and freedom easy or self-evident. The righteousness of a cause is not in itself a guarantee either of the soundness of the methods adopted to pursue it or of the desirability of the results which those methods can achieve.
- 92 Such reflections underscore the seriousness and critical rigour with which Christians must answer the call of God to responsible action in the social order. The same spirit of repentance which acknowledges the call of God's Kingdom in the struggle of the oppressed for justice will also refuse to identify God's Kingdom with any human system which promises, or professes to have provided, justice once and for all. The object of the Christian faith - God's Kingdom in Christ - is manifested and anticipated in the world; but it also stands as the world's 'beyond', as an absolute future. Hence the commitment of believers to the cause of the oppressed and the downtrodden is a continuing critical commitment which on the one hand can - and indeed must - accept relative solutions and, on the other, can never rest content with any achievement. The Kingdom of God is a principle both of affirmation and of challenge.

## 10 The Church and the Mystery of God's Kingdom

- 93 In all this, we must not lose sight of an issue internal to the life of Anglican churches. It has been the boast - and not infrequently the achievement - of churches in the Anglican tradition to encompass differing styles of piety, differing idioms in theology, and differing agenda for Christian witness and action. At times this has been accomplished only at the cost of vagueness in teaching, refusal to address fundamental theological issues, and a settled bias against serious and rigorous theological thinking. It remains true, however, that there is a legitimate - and indeed a necessary - place in Christian life for pluriformity; and it has been the genius of Anglicanism to recognize this in practice, even if Anglicans have not always troubled themselves to reflect critically on the grounds and limits of such pluriformity.
- 94 Both the common experience and the shared reflection of this Commission have served to bring this truth strongly home to us. If the church, because it lives 'in Christ' by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, is a sign and agent of God's Kingdom in and for the world, it is so - always and necessarily- in a radically 'located' fashion. The church exists in particular places and at particular times, and the truth which its life and action carry is conveyed only to the extent that it too is 'located'. This means, as we have seen, that Christians in a given place and time both will and must share the cultural idiom of their geographical and social locale. It also means that their life and witness both will and must address the issues, moral and political, with which historical circumstance confronts them in that locale. The church belongs to all its many places and times, and it is in this fact that its legitimate pluriformity is, in the end, rooted.
- 95 'Belonging' and pluralism: these are centuries-old, correlative marks of the Anglican spirit, which has always sought to speak in 'a tongue understood of the people', and which still seeks to do so even when 'the people' speaks, much more obviously than in the past, in many tongues. It is natural and appropriate, therefore, that the Anglican Communion today should take the form of a fellowship that encourages local and regional initiative and nourishes styles of church life which fit - and address - particular societies and cultures.
- 96 The church, however, does not have the source and principle of its life in any one society or culture or in any group of them. It lives only in and from that transcendent 'horizon' of human life which is the Kingdom of God as realized in the risen Christ, and it exists to be a sign of that Kingdom in and for the many social and cultural 'places' in which it lives. For this reason, there can be no careless or unqualified affirmation of 'belonging' and of pluralism, even for Anglicans. It is not enough to speak a language 'understood of the people'; that language, whether spoken or acted, must convey, in its place, the 'beyond' of God's grace and judgement in Christ. The idiom may be - indeed it *is* - manifold; but still 'there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all' (Eph. 4.4-6).
- 97 97 This unity is found, in the first instance, precisely through the continuing fellowship of churches that belong in different places. For Anglicans, such fellowship is based in a common set of institutions: Scriptures, ecumenical creeds, sacraments, the historic threefold ministry. It comes to practical expression, however, through practical acts of sharing, through mutual consultation, and through mutual admonition and criticism. We have already argued that pluralism can serve the cause of a deeper and fuller understanding of the Gospel and so of a deeper and fuller unity in Christ; but it can do so only on the condition that churches do not eschew their responsibility to one another, a responsibility that includes hearing as well as speaking, learning as well as teaching. And this in turn can only occur, in the Anglican Communion, through a common willingness to take up difficult - even divisive - issues for the sake of the truth of the Gospel. For too long Anglicans have appeared willing to evade responsible theological reflection and dialogue by acquiescing automatically

and immediately in the co-existence of incompatible views, opinions, and policies.

- 98 To affirm pluralism, then, is to affirm not one but two things. On the one hand it means to assert that there is good in the existence and continuing integrity of a variety of traditions and ways of life; on the other hand, it means to assert that there is good in their interplay and dialogue. For Christians, moreover, such affirmation of pluralism has a special meaning. It embodies a recognition that every human culture has God's Kingdom as its horizon in creation and redemption. At the same time, it acknowledges that, in the dialogue between traditions, people's understanding of the meaning of God's Kingdom, and of the Christ who bears it, may be enhanced. Pluralism, when understood in this way, is a stimulus to the repentance by which believers discern and turn to God's Kingdom.
- 99 It is important to reiterate, however, that the stimulus to repentance is not the same as its ground. It is not pluralism, but the risen Christ as the bearer of God's reign, who is the ground of Christian repentance as well as of Christian faith, because he is the one in whom the unity of humankind is established and promised. Pluralism is to be affirmed not as it divides people, and not as a recipe for indifferentism, but as the context in which the heirs of God's Kingdom may engage with one another more richly and variously than hitherto and may thus be enabled the better to know and to follow Christ - the Second Adam, the new humanity - who embodies the mystery of God's Kingdom, and into whom all are called to 'grow up'.

## **APPENDIX 1 Papers Prepared for the Commission**

Christian Identity in Cultural Context *Bishop Lakshman Wickremesinghe*  
Real Presence Image of God *Helen Oppenheimer*  
Liberation and the Political and Social Dimension *Dr Rowan Williams*  
Kingdom and Church: Some Preliminary Notes *Dr Richard A Norris Jr*  
Creation in the Bible and Tradition *Professor John Pobee*  
Theology of Liberation in Latin America *Dr Jaci Maraschin*  
Sin and Evil in Creation Redemption and the Cross *Dr Helen Milton*  
The Church in Liberation Theology *Canon Sehon Goodridge*  
The Gospel and Context *Canon J Hartin*  
The Church in Relation to the Kingdom *Archbishop Donald Robinson*  
The Secularization of Christianity *Archbishop Keith Rayner*  
The Church in Relation to the Kingdom *Canon Martin Mbwana*  
Creation, Fall, and Redemption *The Revd George Braund*  
Christian Identity in Cultural Context *Archdeacon George Connor*

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