

CHURCH, COMMUNION OF CHURCHES AND THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

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This paper is intended to point to some major concepts and features in Anglican ecclesiology and to mention some significant moments or phases that have shaped it. It will also reflect briefly on the direction that our ecclesiology is taking, as the Churches of the Anglican Communion face challenges, both positive and negative.

I come to the study of ecclesiology from a background that is neither theoretical nor exclusively academic, but from practical experience in inter-church relations, both inter-Anglican and ecumenical. For 10 years I headed the Canadian Church's mission and partnerships with churches and councils of churches in Latin America and the Caribbean. Like so many church jobs, it was multifaceted and this was where I first sensed the reality of what is called *koinonia* or communion—depth of fellowship, that went beyond what political alliance could provide. The sharing of resources was based on the conviction that the resources were not ours (in Canada) to begin with, but were given to us by God, to serve the Church. It was taken for granted that the Church meant the body of the faithful in Canada and beyond. *Koinonia* required a mutual concern, and caring. A mutual responsibility. We were somehow all connected.

During that time at the office of the Canadian General Synod, I was, by virtue of the position, also required to staff the Metropolitan Council of Cuba. During those 10 years, the diocese of Cuba went through a number of crises related to the episcopate and its security, and much ecclesiology was learned on the hoof providing for Metropolitan care where explicit canons were lacking. Now, as Director of Ecumenical Affairs and Studies at the Anglican Communion Office, ecclesiology is at the heart of my work. The search for visible unity of Anglicans with other Christians cannot be undertaken without consideration of what the Church is, why she is presently divided, and what is required to restore unity.

Why is ecclesiology important?

Why do we need to consider ecclesiology? And what is it, anyway? Canon law has been described as 'applied ecclesiology'.¹ We need, therefore, to take some time to look at the ecclesiology that we hope we are applying through our systems of canons and constitutions. A shared ecclesiology must surely precede a shared applied ecclesiology.

Ecclesiology is the study of the Church. It is a branch of theology. Some Christians think that it is a branch of theology that can be left aside, and indeed, some do leave it aside, thinking that what is important is the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and our relation to God. Even within my office at the ACO in London there are some who would argue that what we believe about the Church is not important, but that what is important is that we get on and live the Christian life. I do not disagree

* This is an edited version of a paper delivered to a Consultation of Anglican Communion Legal Advisers convened in Canterbury in March 2002. A report on that consultation appears on p 399.

¹ See R Ombres, 'Why then the law?' [1974] *New Blackfriars* 296 at 302. See also N Doe, 'Towards a critique of the role of theology in English ecclesiastical and canon law' (1992) 2 *Ecc LJ* 328; M Hill, 'Gospel and order' (1997) 4 *Ecc LJ* 659; and D Hope, 'The letter killeth but the spirit giveth life' (1997) 4 *Ecc LJ* 694.

with this sentiment. If a Christian were to be totally consumed about things to do with the Church but not about Christ and his mission, then that would certainly be a distortion. But an attitude that suggests that ecclesiology is not important at all, does ignore some rather important features of our faith.

Church and the New Testament

First of all, you cannot read the New Testament without coming across the word church, *ekklesia* in Greek. It occurs even on the lips of Jesus, in Matthew 16:18 when he says to Simon 'And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it'. St Paul begins many of his epistles by words such as 'to the church of God that is in Corinth' (1 Cor 1:2) or 'to the churches of Galatia' (Gal 1:2). One cannot read the New Testament and avoid ecclesiology. We know that from the start the disciples lived the Christian life in community, not in isolation. That community of fellowship and love, that band of Christian disciples, is the Church.

Christ, the Spirit and the Church

It is impossible to dismiss the word 'church' as being simply a loose collective term for the association of believers, however, as if it were a word analogous to 'club' or 'group'. As soon as you begin to study Christology, the study of who Christ is, you run into the biblical phrase 'body of Christ'. This term is used, not only for Christ's physical body which was born of Mary and which hung on the Cross, or his resurrected body which appeared to the disciples, but it is used by Paul to refer to the believers who are mystically incorporated into that body, which is the Church. 'You are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets...' (1 Cor 12:27). Paul speaks in realistic and graphic terms of the Church as the body of Christ, even to the extent of drawing parallels with Christ's suffering and the sufferings of the Church. 'I am now rejoicing in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church' (Col 1:24).

It is also very difficult to get far with a study of the Holy Spirit, pneumatology, without running into church as well. The Holy Spirit moves among the people of God, building up leadership in the Church, filling us with gifts, enabling, bringing alive, within the Church, the memory and the very life of Jesus. The Spirit speaks to us in the Church through the inspired Word and acts to unite us in the Baptismal and Eucharistic liturgies. It is the Spirit that makes the Church what it is—the Body of Christ.

Church and the Creeds

And, of course, we cannot avoid noticing that our Creeds also say something about the Church. The Nicene Creed has us confess that we believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Notice that we do not recite the bare and simple affirmation 'I believe in the Church'. The Church that we believe in already has some theological characteristics: she is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic. There is an ecclesiology—an understanding of the Church—imbedded, therefore, in the very words of the Nicene Creed. Even in the shorter, condensed Apostles' Creed, the Church is described. We say we believe in 'the Holy Catholic Church'. So not only is Church an article of the faith of Christians, but it is already, in the creeds, a Church that is understood theologically in certain ways. So ecclesiology is not peripheral to the Christian religion. It has to do with the nature of the Church and has a bearing on how the Church carries out her mission, which is 'to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ'.²

² ECUSA, *Book of Common Prayer*, p. 855.

The Unity of the Earliest Communities

One of the marks of the Church that we see in the Nicene Creed is that she is one. There is an intimate connection between ecclesiology and unity. Any reflection on the nature of the Church must include a consideration of how the Church maintains unity. Ecclesiology and unity, ecclesiology and ecumenism are like two sides of the same coin.

The Christians of the New Testament and the sub-apostolic age are members of the same body as us today, and not members of some different organisation. It is vitally important to recall that the Church in the Book of Acts is the same Church that we belong to today, here, and now in the 21st Century. So it behoves us to look closely at what characterised early Christian life together—and three qualities stand out in the scriptures.

Fellowship of Love, Faith and Worship

The first is that the community was a fellowship of love. John 13:35 shows that this was a fundamental principle of our fellowship: 'By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another'. This was no mere warm, fuzzy, kind of love, that comes from people simply enjoying each other's company. It was a more profound love that transcended all barriers. St Paul teaches that there are no divisions within the Church: 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:28). All are one within the fellowship. The early Church's sharing of resources, not unlike what carries on in present day partnership, is seen in Paul's great collection among some of the Churches for the poor who were in the Church at Jerusalem (cf. 1 Cor 16:1–4).

The second strong mark of this community was that it was a community of faith, of those who believed in Jesus as Lord, as the promised One of God, who inaugurated God's kingdom of justice, love and peace. Holding the faith in common was a central feature. St Paul speaks in Ephesians (4:5) of one Lord, one *Faith* and one Baptism.

The third attribute that cannot escape notice is that the early Church engaged in worship. We know from the Acts of the Apostles (1:14) that the disciples were constantly devoted to prayer and we get a picture of the life of the Church that is centred on worship: (2:42) the disciples devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. The sacramental life, hinted in Acts, gets fuller, eucharistic, description in 1 Corinthians (10:17) 'because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread'.

Early Administration

Besides these traits of the life of the Church from the earliest days, there are also some other hints which should be of interest to canonists. There existed, not too long after the resurrection, necessary ways and means to serve the fledgling Church—embryonic canonical administration, if you will. Now it is far from a blueprint for ecclesial organisation. It is a mistake to look to the New Testament for guidelines, canons and constitutions which support the ecclesial life. Nevertheless, if one looks at 2 Cor 3:1 for instance, we find an intriguing reference to 'letters of recommendation' which seems to imply that as early as St Paul, there was a way for Christians moving from one local community to another to have their membership in the greater fellowship recognised, officially. Here we have the beginnings, not only of a functioning ecclesiology, but of applied ecclesiology, the first signs of Church paperwork and procedures.

Early Disunity

In the early Church there were problems of disunity as well. We have the leadership divisions between Paul, Cephas and Apollos cited in 1 Cor 1:12, for instance. In addition to such local disputes there were challenges that threatened the unity of the entire body. The case of whether the circumcised and the uncircumcised could share table fellowship at the eucharist is the pre-eminent case. St Paul recognised that the unity of the entire Church was at stake, since the eucharist was at the very heart of the life of the Church. The Council at Jerusalem in Acts 15 came to the compromise decision that the Church has stuck with ever since, that there is no distinction between the baptised in this new fellowship, but that certain practices that are offensive to the fellowship were to be laid aside, such as eating food offered to idols. It is perhaps some comfort to be reminded that both local disputes and disputes that threatened the entire fellowship were there from the start. Concern for ecclesiology, the life of the Church, is not something new, but something that was going on with in the life of the Church from the earliest days.

Koinonia, Communion

Some key technical terms must be understood, even in a basic introduction to ecclesiology. The first one is communion, a translation of a biblical word *koinonia*. It means fellowship, participation. It is a word that is used to describe theologically the nature of the relationship of the three persons within the Holy Trinity: the relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Its theological meaning has to do with love, with loving, interdependent relationship, with equality, with giving and receiving, with sharing life. When extended to the Church, we are to understand that the Church is communion because of the way that she is related to, and gifted by, the Holy Trinity, and receives these same qualities from the life of God the Holy Trinity. Thus the Church, as *koinonia*, is directed eternally towards the life of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the purpose of the Church is made clear, to bring all into communion with God, who gathers the whole creation under the lordship of Christ and binds us to his Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The writer of 1 John summarises this truth in this way: 'This life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship (*koinonia*) with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ' (1 John 1:2–3). The very being of the Church is dependent upon the outpouring of God's gracious love, the love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So we call relationships within the Church to be 'communion', patterned after the intimate relationship within the Godhead.

Communion—World Wide Fellowship

Beyond the theological use of this word, communion, we come to its use in Anglicanism. We call our world-wide fellowship of Churches a 'Communion'. It is highly significant that we chose this theological word to describe ourselves. It was chosen for its theological meaning. We do not describe our global family as the 'Anglican Federation', or the 'Anglican Alliance' or the 'Anglican Association'. We are the Anglican *Communion*. There is a Lutheran World Federation, a World Alliance of Reformed Churches, a Methodist World Council, but our choice of words is different: Anglican Communion.

When we use this theological expression to describe the qualities of our common life together in Christ, we are always to remember that it draws its power and meaning from the qualities of the Holy Trinity itself: community, equality, sharing, partici-

pation, solidarity, love. It underlines the truth that the fundamental nature of the Church is relational: she is related to God, her members are related to each other, and our churches are related in a community of interdependent, participatory relationship.

So we Anglicans have taken this New Testament word to characterise and underpin our relationships with each other. In many African languages there are words like *utu*, *uhuntu*, *ubuntu* which speak of belonging to one another in a loving, committed, supportive and inclusive sense. This is not unlike what we understand by *koinonia*, communion. It includes generous forgiveness of one another's faults, and, as a result, being open and generous in our relationships. At its best the Anglican Communion seeks this way of relating. We believe that the *koinonia* of the Churches, certainly of the Anglican Churches, but the eventual communion of all the Churches can reflect something of the loving relationships within the Trinity. In this way our relationships can show to the world something of the love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Sacramental Dimension of koinonia

It is not a coincidence, either, that we use the same word communion to refer to the sacrament of the eucharist, which is the Holy Communion. This is because of the unity, love, grace and divine relationship that are imparted by that sacrament. We can affirm as Christians that the connection we have with other baptised persons is one which is not like the connection that members of the Rotary Club share. It is not like belonging to the same fitness club, or having graduated from the same school. It is being joined to each other in a mystical, sacramental, grace-full way, because of our communion with God, established in Baptism and nurtured in the Holy Communion. It includes a relationship with all the baptised faithful: with those around the world today, and those who have gone before us—this great cloud of witnesses who surround us in this stadium of life, cheering us on, supporting us with their prayers, inspiring us with their example.

It is a priceless gift that Anglicans enjoy, this intuitive sense of *koinonia* or communion. At the heart and centre of Anglican pilgrimage lies the concept of communion. It should give us the ability to understand the unity of the Church and the potential unity of the human community in a unique way, because we can look beyond political and social organisation to something that is a divine gift, something sacramental and graceful. It means that Anglicans approach Church unity, not with ideas of creating larger and larger denominations, of merging organisations, but with an understanding of revealing the God-given unity that is already there, re-establishing relationship, sacramental and mutual, which has been obscured or broken. It gives us an understanding of how the Church can be manifest locally (in the diocese and province—more about this shortly), and yet have a universal dimension. A point of importance to all who embrace a 'communion' ecclesiology, made repeatedly by the eminent Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas, is that by her very nature, the Church, if a communion, is incompatible with individualism.³

Local Church—Parish or Diocese

Next we turn to some terminology that is perhaps more clearly focussed in earthly reality than *koinonia*, which is of course real, but also a mystical, sacramental concept. First of all we need to be clear what Anglicans understand by the term 'local church'. If you were to ask an average Anglican what she understands by the phrase

³ Thomas F Best, Günter Gassman (eds), *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia*, World Council of Churches, Geneva, 1994. p 105.

'local church' she would answer 'the local congregation, or parish'. Anglicans seem to be fundamentally a congregational people. The local parish is what people think of when they think 'church'. The local parish is as deep an involvement as most of our people want from church life. It is even a struggle in many parts of the world to get neighbouring Anglican parishes and congregations to co-operate with each other. Any bishop who has had to amalgamate parishes, perhaps due to dwindling numbers, knows just how fiercely some Anglicans cling to the notion that the church is their congregation and none other.

Yet, fundamental to the catholic ecclesial structure which we have inherited is the understanding of the local church as the *diocese*. This is basic to our ecclesiology, since we are an episcopally ordered communion of churches. We believe, therefore, that it is the bishop, with his or her presbyters and deacons and the whole people of God gathered which represent and make visible in some way the fullness of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church in a given place. The bishop exercises pastoral oversight over the life of the local church and is the chief celebrant of the sacraments. That is why at the synodical gatherings of the people of God in a diocese, the bishop normally presides, just as he or she presides over the eucharist. The bishop shares this ministry of oversight in pastoral care and in sacramental leadership with the clergy. This is the essence of the licensing of clergy at the services which are variously called institutions and inductions. We know, as Anglicans, that the local church cannot be the parish, since a congregation and its priest have no way to provide for continuity in ministry, lacking the bishop who is required to ordain. Bishops are chief ministers of the local church but serve the communion of all the local churches, in space and in time, as they take counsel together and seek to discern and articulate locally the apostolic faith which they are entrusted to teach. The bishop's ministry of guarding the faith of the Church means that he or she must be in continuity with the Church back through the ages to the apostles, and the faith taught by a modern bishop must be the same faith of the apostles. The bishop must also ensure communion and coherence with what the people of God in other local churches are discerning and teaching. All this because Christians are not alone. Our communities are organically linked to every other, in every place and time, since we are the body of Christ. Bishops are key to this link. This technical meaning of local church being the diocese is shared not only by Anglicans, but also by Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Old Catholic as well as many Lutheran Churches.

Province

Anglicanism has developed another stratum of ecclesial life beyond the diocese—the province. These can be national churches, such as the Church of England, or the Anglican Church of Canada, but can also extend beyond national boundaries taking in several sovereign territories, such as the Church in the Province of the West Indies and the Church of the Province of Central Africa. The notion of province is not a recent invention. It also is part of our inheritance from the pre-reformation days, when groups of dioceses were gathered into provinces under an Archbishop or Metropolitan. The Council of Nicaea (325) mentions the grouping of dioceses into a province under a metropolitan bishop, who essentially cared for the orderly election and consecration of new bishops within the jurisdiction.⁴ This is the ancient understanding of the term 'province', and this is what is meant, even today, by the province of Canterbury, or the province of York or the province of Rupert's Land. This ancient usage continues alongside the more common use of the term today in Anglicanism: to refer to a self-governing Church, be it a national Church, or one which comprises several nations. The Anglican Communion is organised currently

⁴ Canon IV of the Council of Nicaea.

into 38 provinces around the world. A province generally has a constitution and body of canons and a set of liturgical texts over which it maintains self-governing authority.

Key Phases in the Development of Anglican Ecclesiology

Having defined some key terms that are used in Anglican ecclesiology, we now turn to some key moments or phases in the life of the Church that helped to sharpen our theology of the Church. It is not so much by design, but more by accident that certain historical phases or moments have shaped our understanding of the Church.

The Undivided Church

Anglicans understand our Churches to be directly connected to the undivided Church of the earliest Christian age. We believe that we are members of the same Church as the apostles, as Paul, Matthew, John—the Church which had witnessed the Risen Christ, the Church of those who knew our Lord Jesus Christ personally in the flesh. We are, in the words of the Creed, members of an Apostolic Church, the same Church founded by Jesus Christ and teaching the doctrine of the Apostles. However, we are no longer simply a group of Palestinians and Greeks. We, the members of the Church which is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, are now close to a thousand million members world-wide. Our small sub-group within this great Church, we call the Anglican Communion. However, we have never thought we were the whole Church. It is a basic understanding in Anglican ecclesiology that we are simply a part of the Church of God. Reinforcing this understanding is the definition of the Anglican Communion offered by the 1930 Lambeth Conference:

The Anglican Communion is a fellowship, within the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of those duly constituted dioceses, provinces or regional Churches in communion with the See of Canterbury, which have the following characteristics in common:

- (a) they uphold and propagate the Catholic and Apostolic faith and order as they are generally set forth in the Book of Common Prayer as authorised in their several Churches;
- (b) they are particular or national Churches, and, as such, promote within each of their territories a national expression of Christian faith, life and worship; and
- (c) they are bound together not by a central legislative and executive authority, but by mutual loyalty sustained through the common counsel of the bishops in conference.

The Conference makes this statement praying for and eagerly awaiting the time when the Churches of the present Anglican Communion will enter into communion with other parts of the Catholic Church not definable as Anglican in the above sense, as a step towards the ultimate reunion of all Christendom in one visibly united fellowship.⁵

Note the distinct lack of particular doctrines, other than a reference to the Book of Common Prayer. Note the clear reference to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. Note also the clear assertion that we are part of the Universal Church but not the whole of it.

⁵ Lambeth Conference 1930, resolution 49.

Reformation

So Anglicans understand that the Church to which we belong predates the Reformation, but the Church of England, was, nevertheless, decisively marked at the time of the upheavals of the 16th century. It is not necessary to go on at length about this period, other than to recall that the most significant factor, one might argue, would be the breaking of *communio* with the See of Rome. This rupture appears to have implanted upon the Anglican ecclesiological psyche the notion that independence from central authority is 'a good thing'.

At the time of the Reformation, the Church of England did not have a reformer like Calvin who included in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* an exposition for the government of a reformed Church (just as a lawyer might). Neither had we a Luther whose understanding of the Church was stripped down to 'the congregation of the saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments rightly administered'.⁶ The members of the Church of England continued to believe that they were members of the same Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ, which had been planted in that land centuries before. The same faith was proclaimed, the same sacraments celebrated and the same ministry of bishop, priest and deacon continued. What was different was that some characteristics of the Church, which had been forgotten, laid aside, or distorted were 're-received' (to use the word of ARCIC), including the biblical basis for theological reflection; the vernacular liturgy; and the right of a national Church to govern itself.

Although the time of the Reformation was critical for the future development of Anglicanism, and our understanding of the Church, it is worthwhile noting that Anglicans today do not require that a Church pass through the Reformation in order to be in communion with us. It is not necessary to have passed through the Reformation to be part of the Anglican Communion. The Churches in Spain and Portugal have not experienced the Reformation of the 16th century. They arose, like the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht, out of disputes with Vatican I theology of papal supremacy. It is true that they embrace, or have received, those distinguishing marks: vernacular liturgy, self-governance, etc mentioned above, but they are not strictly speaking products of the Reformation.

Colonial Expansion and the Missionary Movement

It was perhaps inevitable that a Church of a nation that was to become a global colonial power would follow the colonists to the far flung corners of the world. When military, or traders or settlers journeyed afar, they expected to have the ministrations of the Church available, as they did at home in the parishes, so chaplains accompanied the expansion of empire. The first Anglican celebration of the Holy Communion in North America was probably presided over by Robert Wolfall, a priest on board a ship belonging to the explorer Henry Hudson, somewhere in Frobisher Bay on 3 September 1578. The first Anglican celebrations of the Holy Eucharist in Cuba were likely around 1560 when English troops occupied Havana, at least 300 years before missionaries from ECUSA came to the island. The East India Company employed chaplains aboard their ships as did the Levant company developing trade in the Middle East.

One of the effects of colonial expansion was that the Church of England could no longer ignore the fact that the church had extended beyond the shores of England. It forced some reflection on how unity in faith and in sacramental life could

⁶ *Augsburg Confession* VII.

be maintained across great distances. This was a time when ecclesiological themes began to be addressed again. The same pressure was on other Churches such as the Roman Catholic, which followed different colonial powers as they spread around the world. It was still the case, however, until the issue was forced by the US War of Independence, that the administration and oversight of these far flung colonies rested in England, with the Bishop of London, in fact.

This was also the time when mission societies, such as SPCK and SPG were born to support the work of the Church and the clergy in the colonies. Over the years missionary societies followed the empire, or in the case of the USA following independence, the economic sphere of influence of that country. CMS (India, Africa), SPG (Canada, West Indies, later Africa and India), UMCA (Africa), and the mission work of ECUSA in Philippines, Brazil, Mexico, Central America, China. The significance of the mission societies for the development of the ecclesiology of the Communion cannot be overestimated. These societies kept the awareness of the Church overseas before the Church of England and ECUSA.⁷

US Independence

Although a political struggle, the US War of Independence also had an effect on the development of the Church in that land and in England, and subsequently on the Communion. Anglicans in the newly formed republic of the United States of America faced many challenges. Many of the clergy left as they were loyal to the crown. The flow of funds from England was halted. Reorganisation of their church structures was required and urgently. There was a struggle in the mind of the faithful about how to be connected with the mother Church of the past, but be loyal to the independent future of the new country. Certainly the relationship between crown and church could no longer be tolerated.

The consecration of the first bishop to serve outside the British Isles and Ireland, Samuel Seabury, in Aberdeen in September 1784, marked a turning point. Of course, he had to be consecrated by the non-juring bishops in Scotland, because the English bishops were unable to consecrate someone who could not swear the oath to the Crown.

Anglicanism continued to develop on both sides of the Atlantic, in communion, but independent. The ecclesiastical landscape in the new republic was vastly different in tone and climate from England. We must remember that the first religious settlers in that country were those who would want to be separated from the established church, and an independent, even congregational tone marks almost every denomination, and perhaps even the Episcopal Church, in that country to this day.

Eventually, the appointment of bishops for overseas, beginning with the consecration of Charles Inglis in Nova Scotia in 1787 became commonplace and bishoprics and eventually provinces were founded in the colonies by Royal Letters Patent and

⁷ Generally the Church extended into areas where the British Empire (or the US economic power) ruled. There were some interesting exceptions: Madagascar passed from British to French possession at the end of the 19th century, but Archbishop Benson refused to withdraw Anglican bishops and clergy at the transition, suggesting that the Church of England had a right to be in places beyond where the British Empire reigned. There was, however, a general reluctance to initiate mission work where other branches of the Church were established. This meant, for instance, that there was little mission work undertaken in Latin America, except where the Church of Rome had made few inroads, such as among the Mapuche of Southern Chile who had never been conquered by the Spanish *conquistadores*. It was after the Anglican Congress of 1963, and a subsequent meeting of Anglicans in Cuernavaca, Mexico, in 1967 which determined that Latin America was “baptised but not evangelised”.

these colonial churches began to evolve their own synodical life, quite independent of England.⁸

The Ecumenical Movement

The next major phase which gave impetus to the development of an Anglican understanding of the Church was the ecumenical movement. Anglicans have been at the vanguard of the ecumenical movement of the 19th and 20th centuries. It was an Anglican Bishop, Charles Brent, a one-time US missionary bishop in the Philippines and later Bishop of Western New York, who first proposed that the unity of Christians must be based on agreement in faith, which led to the setting up of the first Faith and Order Conference in Lausanne in 1927. The formation of the World Council of Churches in 1948 was with the full support of Anglican provinces and with considerable impetus from key Anglican leaders such as Bishop (then) William Temple and Bishop George Bell.

Lambeth Conferences, since the first, have also focussed to a major degree on the relations between Anglicans and other Christians. Formal ecumenical conversations have been held at the level of the Communion with some Churches for decades. For instance, with the Orthodox, after some very early bilateral discussions between the Church of England and several Orthodox Churches in the first half of the 20th century, the formal Communion-wide conversations began in 1973. With the Roman Catholic Church discussions at the global level began in 1970. With the Lutheran World Federation around 1975. One of the significant outcomes of these and other discussions is that they hold up a mirror to each side, so that we must examine in a close and detailed way who we are as Church as we engage in the ecumenical conversations. And our inward reflection is fed by what we hear our partners say about their understanding of Church. So, our ecclesial identity has been sharpened over the years by engagement in dialogue.

Today's Face of Anglicanism

So we arrive at today, when Anglicanism is a global phenomenon. The global nature of modern Anglicanism affects how we understand ourselves to be a Communion of Churches. Apart from the Roman Catholic Church we are the most widespread geographically. Anglican congregations are to be found in 165 countries, organised in 38 provinces and 8 extra-provincial Churches.

It is hard to think of a place in the world where there is not an Anglican congregation. There is one in Ulan Bator in Mongolia. There is one at the most northern tip of Baffin Island just south of the North Pole. There are congregations in Tierra del Fuego, next step Antarctica. There are more Anglicans at worship on Sunday in Nigeria, or in Uganda, than in England. The largest Anglican diocese in the Americas is French and Creole speaking, the diocese of Haiti, with more members than the diocese of New York. There are 50 Anglican congregations in the diocese of Cuba, one of the last Marxist-Leninist states left in the world. The most Anglican country in the world is Barbados, where over 70% of the population are members of the Church. There are islands in the Solomon Islands where the entire population are Anglicans—100%.

Anglicans in England really cannot be forgiven any longer for thinking that Anglicanism is what goes on in the Church of England. Of course, the very word

⁸ Strange things occurred at that time, due to the colonial mentality. For instance, in 1841, George Augustus Selwyn, the first bishop of New Zealand, was given *jurisdiction* by an Act of the British parliament—in the South Pacific.

Anglican simply comes from the Latin for 'English', but in no way does the Church of England own Anglicanism today. Most Anglicans have never been to England, and are never likely to. Most, if they speak English at all, speak it as a second or third language. Anglicans in England can easily be unaware of just how scattered and isolated Anglican communities can be. Because of the historic nature of the Church in this land, you are never really very far, even on foot perhaps, from a centre of Anglican worship. This is not the reality in which most members of our Communion live and it has implications for how we understand the local congregation: is it a territorial parish, concerned with a geographical area, which is surely an unrealistic expectation in many places, or is it a gathered community?

The complexion and pattern of distribution of Anglicans globally present some challenges to the way we understand Church and communion. It is no longer appropriate uncritically to adopt models and concepts that come from the island of Great Britain, as arguably, this is no longer the context out of which the majority of today's Anglicans reflect on the challenge of being Church.

The Lambeth Conference

The growth of empire, the independence of the United States, the expansion of mission work meant that before long there were pressures on Anglicans, now scattered quite widely beyond England, to meet to discuss and address issues of common concern. These were, at first, doctrinal issues. So the movement began towards the first Lambeth Conference.

In terms of the span of Church history the Lambeth Conference is a relatively recent phenomenon. The first gathering was in 1867. It arose out of a moment of doctrinal controversy. One missionary bishop in South Africa was being accused by other missionary bishops of heresy.⁹ The case by 1865 ended up in the Privy Council in London, absurdly, a judicial committee with no ecclesiastical figure present. The dispute raged on in letters and debate, and eventually, it was the Canadian bishops who petitioned the then Archbishop of Canterbury Charles Longley, to call together all the bishops of the Anglican Church throughout the world to discuss this and other matters.

So, 76 bishops attended the first Conference held at Lambeth Palace, and this important instrument of Anglican unity was born. It was not universally hailed at its birth. The Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Durham, two of the most senior bishops in the Church of England, refused to attend. Certainly it was not understood that this would be a regular feature, if not the most characteristic feature of inter-Anglican affairs from that moment on.

It is important to note that the Conference was seen to be necessary to address an issue which was dividing the Communion. It was seen to be a way to strengthen the unity of the Communion, not through legislative authority, but through the experience of bishops taking counsel together, in the context of prayer and discussion, for the good of the whole Church.

⁹ The offending man was John Colenso. He held two beliefs which caused a stir: Colenso did not believe that Zulus who failed to become Christians were subject to eternal damnation. He also questioned whether the Bible was the Word of God (he was a mathematician, and by examining the mathematical figures in some parts of the Old Testament, he saw that the numbers were impossible, and concluded that the whole of the Bible could not be true in all its parts). Another missionary bishop, Robert Gray led a movement to depose Colenso, basically for teaching heresy.

The Anglican Consultative Council

Other structures serving the communion of Anglican Churches developed even later. The constitution of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) was approved at the Lambeth Conference of 1968. The ACC was set up to share information, advise on inter-Anglican relations (division and formation of provinces), agree policies in world mission, and collaboration, dialogues and relations with other Christian Churches, and inter-Anglican communication. It is the only body in global Anglicanism that has a constitution and legal standing. It meets every 3 years.

Every province of the Communion is assigned from 1 to 3 members depending on its population. As the Council is made up of bishops, other clergy and laity, some say that this is the 'synodical' instrument of global Anglicanism, inasmuch as the whole people of God are represented. This is an analogy that cannot be taken too far, since there are not bishops, clergy and laity from each province, only from those with a right to 3 members. Furthermore, not all Anglican jurisdictions are present. The extra-provincial Churches have no voice or vote, unless a member from one of these Churches happens to be made a co-opted member. So the ACC is not entirely representative of the Communion, and some evolution is clearly still required to make it so.

The Primates' Meeting

The first Primates' Meeting was held in 1979 and the meetings are supposed to be for 'mutual counsel and pastoral care'.¹⁰ It has met about every 2 years, although in recent years the tendency is towards annual meetings, at the specific request of the Archbishop of Canterbury. In practice, the Primates' Meeting, as a meeting of *bishops* does provide for a way for the global episcopate of the Anglican Communion to be consulted, in a limited, but somewhat representative way, between Lambeth Conferences. It is thus a useful instrument for individual Primates to test out regional concerns within the wider Church.

From the start, Archbishop Coggan expressed the desire that the Primates' Meeting should be 'in the very closest and most intimate contact with the ACC'.¹¹ This sentiment has been expressed in the Lambeth Conference resolutions from 1988 and 1998,¹² but, apart from the joint meetings of the Standing Committees of the Primates and the ACC, this close working relationship has not been developed.

The Archbishop of Canterbury

The Lambeth Conference, the ACC, and the Primates' Meetings, are three of what *The Virginia Report* calls 'the world-wide instruments of communion'. There is a fourth: the Archbishop of Canterbury. The first three instruments are meetings or councils and are all recent in origin, relatively speaking. The office of Archbishop of Canterbury is the only instrument with a history longer than 150 years, which is not in itself a long time in the history of the Church.

The Archbishop is the bishop of the Church of Canterbury, which, as the most ancient See in the Church of England, has a primacy within England itself and by extension throughout the Anglican Communion. It is a touchstone of Anglican

¹⁰ "The Virginia Report" in *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998*, Harrisburg PA: Morehouse, 1999, p 61.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p 62.

¹² Lambeth Conference 1988 resolution 52; Lambeth Conference 1998 resolution III.6 (d).

identity and a visible sign of our Anglican unity to be in communion with the See of Canterbury.¹³

However, the implications of a relation of communion with the See of Canterbury are not straightforward. For instance, being in communion with the See of Canterbury does not make a Church Anglican. There are 6 Lutheran Churches in Northern Europe which are in communion with Canterbury, but which remain Lutheran. It seems, then, that confessional identity actually becomes secondary when relations of communion are established. The Bonn Agreement of 1931 between Anglicans and Old Catholics states explicitly

Intercommunion does not require from either Communion the acceptance of all doctrinal opinion, sacramental devotion, or liturgical practice characteristic of the other, but implies that each believes the other to hold all the essentials of the Christian Faith.¹⁴

Establishing relations of communion does not mean that distinct denominational or confessional traditions must disappear. So the Old Catholic Church of Switzerland is in communion with the See of Canterbury, but remains Old Catholic. Similarly the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland, in communion with Canterbury, remains Lutheran.

Furthermore, a relationship of communion with the See of Canterbury does not appear to mean that such a Church is automatically in communion with Anglican Churches everywhere. The Old Catholics are, but the 6 Lutheran Churches in Northern Europe which have signed the Porvoo Common Statement are not in communion with all Anglicans. This is an anomalous situation, but it appears that the Churches of the Anglican Communion are not willing to let a decision related to the Archbishop's own Church automatically determine their own relations. In ecumenical dialogue, we now use a term we have taken from classical logic—transitivity—to summarise this problem. If A is in communion with B, and B with C, what is the relation of A to C? The Anglican-Lutheran International Working Group has been focussing on this particular question of transitivity, and hopes to complete a report which may shed some light on this question, and perhaps point a way forward.¹⁵

The Chair

Besides the relationship of communion with the Archbishop and his Church, there is another way that the Primate of All England serves as an instrument of the Anglican Communion. The Archbishop of Canterbury has a Primacy of honour among the bishops of the Communion. It is important to distinguish between Primacy and Supremacy. Supremacy is primacy of jurisdiction, of which the Archbishop has none.

The Primacy of honour manifests itself in the personal role of the Archbishop in presiding over, chairing and convening the structures of the Communion. Chairmanship is a vital role. The ancient chair of Augustine in Canterbury Cathedral is perhaps one of the most potent symbols of our Communion. Chair in Latin is of course, *sedes*, whence the English 'See'. The other instruments of the Communion are presided over by the Archbishop, either in an honorary capacity (in the case of

¹³ Lambeth Conference 1930 resolution 49.

¹⁴ Statement agreed between representatives of the Old Catholic Churches and the Churches of the Anglican Communion at a Conference held at Bonn, 2 July 1931.

¹⁵ The report has been completed and is to be presented to the authorities of both Communion by the end of 2002.

the ACC which elects its own chairman¹⁶), or in an active convening and presiding role, in the case of the Lambeth Conference and the Primates' Meetings. At present, the Archbishop of Canterbury is the only link which interweaves all the other instruments, besides the Anglican Communion Secretariat which staffs them all (with the exception of the Archbishop who has his own staff). Effective chairing can strengthen *koinonia* and fellowship. A chairman gathers and a good chairman makes sure that all voices are heard and that none dominates. A chairman facilitates the discussion and tries to enable those around the table to really hear and listen to each other. A good chairman senses when there is a common mind emerging, or when resolution is not possible.

A chairman is not automatically a spokesman, however. I believe that there is place for a spokesman for the Communion, and that it could quite naturally fall to the president of the instruments, but only to the extent that his remarks and statements reflect adequately the sentiment, consensus or stage of discussion which is around the table. The right to speak on behalf of Anglicanism is not necessarily a charism inherent simply in being the incumbent of the See of Canterbury.

The fact that we treasure as one of the instruments of our Communion, a personal ministry of an Archbishop of Canterbury, who has a Primacy of honour, and an essential role of convocation and presidency, gives Anglicans much in common with Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches who also possess, with some slight differences, personal ministries of unity, in the Bishop of Rome and in the Ecumenical Patriarch.

Anomalies in Communion Life

The question of who is an Anglican today is not without some ambiguity. Participation in all the instruments of the Communion may not be necessary for a Church to be Anglican. Conversely, participation in all the instruments of the Communion may not make a Church an Anglican Church.

For instance, it sometimes causes confusion that we include among the list of Anglican provinces the United Churches in South Asia which incorporate former Anglican dioceses. These are the Churches of Pakistan, North India, South India and Bangladesh. These four Churches are members of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) and send their Moderators to the Primates' Meetings and in 1998 sent all their active bishops to the Lambeth Conference. Moreover, they contribute to the inter-Anglican budget. So in terms of the way they participate in the life and structures of the Communion, these Churches are technically indistinguishable from the Church of England or the Episcopal Church, USA. Yet, in terms of global Christianity, there is the anomaly that these Churches may also appear in lists of the Methodist or Reformed families. (Ecumenically, this anomaly is good news, but ecumenical progress can cause confusion as Communion seek to compile membership figures for their own family.) They are not strictly speaking 'Anglican'. Despite the ambiguities involved, Anglicans officially include these four Churches in the list of the 38 Anglican provinces.

There are also Anglicans who are not part of organised provinces. Anglicans living in the Anglican Church of Bermuda, the Episcopal Church of Cuba, the Church of

¹⁶ The fact that the ACC has both a "president" and a "chairman" makes little sense in many languages (such as Romance languages) which would translate chairman and president with the same word. I doubt it would be possible to consider holding a meeting of the ACC under a chairman, with the Archbishop of Canterbury not present.

Ceylon, the Lusitanian Church of Portugal, the Reformed Episcopal Church of Spain, the Anglican Church in Venezuela, the Episcopal Church of Puerto Rico, or the Falkland Islands are not part of any provincial structure. As such they do not have a voice or presence on the ACC, unless someone from one of these Churches happens to be co-opted to membership. Yet, they are not less 'Anglican' for this fact. Their bishops do get invited to the Lambeth Conference, and the metropolitan concerns are cared for by different arrangements, sometimes directly by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Nevertheless, one must ask why the synodical expression of the Communion's life at the world level systematically excludes Anglicans from these Churches.

There is also a situation which arises from time to time, when a new province is formed, but it is not immediately a member of the ACC, for that body only meets every three years, and must give assent to the admission of new members. At the time of the 1998 Lambeth Conference, such a situation arose concerning the Anglican Church of the Central Region of America. This province had just been granted autonomy from the Episcopal Church, USA in 1997 and was inaugurated, and its new Primate installed early in 1998. Since the ACC would not meet until 1999 the Central American province had not been approved for membership in that body. There arose, then, at the time of the Lambeth Conference in 1998, some question as to whether Central America should appear among the list of provinces in the report. Fortunately it did, but after a bit of a fight. However, the official list in the Anglican Communion's website did not include this province until after 1999.

I personally believe that this is absurd. It is astonishing if Anglicans were to decide which Church is a province of this branch of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church simply by constitutional membership in a body formed a scant 30 years ago. But we do not, as Anglicans, have a clear, consistent and inclusive way of listing who we are, at a given moment. This causes confusion when other Communion or organisations like the World Council of Churches seek information from our official sources.

Other anomalies crop up in the yearbooks and directories of provinces. *The Church of England Year Book* is often used as a ready source of Anglican information by bodies such as the World Council of Churches, given the lack of anything that resembles an 'Anglican Communion Directory'. But it continues to list the *Chung Hua Cheng Kung Hui*, the Holy Catholic Church in China, among the provinces of the Communion. Apart from the diocese of Hong Kong, which divided into three dioceses and recently became a province in its own right, the *Chung Hua Cheng Kung Hui* has become subsumed into the post-denominational China Christian Council. When I asked officials at the Church of England as to why they still list the Holy Catholic Church in China as a province in their yearbook, they answered that there are former Anglicans in that (former) province who are now members of the China Christian Council, but that they had to be accounted for. But, following that line of argument, the *Church of England Year Book* should also list among the provinces the Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon, whose former Anglicans, (with the exception of those in Sri Lanka and Myanmar), are now to be found in the United Churches in the Indian Sub-Continent.

Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral

It was just a couple of years after the first Lambeth Conference that the Roman Catholic Church met in the first Vatican Council, which declared the conditions under which the Pope can exercise a ministry of infallibility. The reaction to this

claim by Rome echoed around the entire Christian world, and it is not surprising that Anglicans began to reflect more closely on what would be required, according to the standards of the ancient, undivided Church, for a reunion of Christians. In the USA, one evangelical priest, William Reed Huntington first wrote his ideas for a reunited Church in 1870. By 1886 these achieved an endorsement by the US House of Bishops, and in 1888 the now famous four-fold formula was endorsed by the Lambeth Conference in resolution 11. As this formula now has an almost canonical status within Anglicanism, it is useful to have the 1888 resolution quoted here:

That, in the opinion of this Conference, the following articles supply a basis on which approach may be by God's blessing made towards home reunion:

- (a) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, 'as containing all things necessary for salvation', and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
- (b) The Apostles' Creed, as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
- (c) The two sacraments ordained by Christ himself—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—ministered with unfailling use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him.
- (d) The historic episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his Church.

The status of the Quadrilateral is evolving within Anglicanism, and evolving rapidly. At first it was not originally conceived as a framework for an Anglican ecclesiology, but it began as a blueprint for reunion. It has been used as such by Anglicans, as a basis for ecumenical conversations, and subsequent Lambeth Conferences have often cited the Quadrilateral in reference to ecumenical engagement. In 1998, the Lambeth Conference took this a step further, and reaffirmed the Quadrilateral, not only 'as a basis on which Anglicans seek the full, visible unity of the Church', but also recognised it 'as a statement of Anglican unity and identity'.¹⁷ Then, the Primates' Meeting in Porto, Portugal in 2000, issued a communiqué which included a remarkable statement:

We believe that the unity of the Communion as a whole still rests on the Lambeth Quadrilateral: the Holy Scriptures as the rule and standard of faith; the creeds of the undivided Church; the two Sacraments ordained by Christ himself and the historic episcopate. Only a formal and public repudiation of this would place a diocese or Province outside the Anglican Communion.¹⁸

The Quadrilateral is thus evolving from its earlier ecumenical function to becoming a touchstone for the communion that Anglicans themselves share.

But, we need to be honest and ask if it is possible to consider the Quadrilateral as some skeletal framework for inter-Anglican unity. It is a major characteristic of the Quadrilateral that it does not actually include anything uniquely peculiar to Anglicans. The four items are common to the majority of Christians. This might be its genius, because it means that it is a suggestion offered for Christian unity that is not purely Anglican, but in fact quite widely shared already, and clearly rooted in the patristic tradition. William Reed Huntington left no footnotes in his work that

¹⁷ Lambeth Conference 1998, resolution IV.2

¹⁸ *A Communiqué from the Primates of the Anglican Communion*, 28 March 2000, <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/acnsarchive/acns2075/acns2094.html>

might indicate his sources, but it is quite evident from the study of the history of the Church that the Fathers paid attention to these four aspects of the life of the Church—scripture, creed, sacrament and ministry—even if they might not have treated them together as a four-fold unit.¹⁹ But since Roman Catholics and Anglicans, for instance, share all four aspects of the Quadrilateral, but are not in communion with each other, one has to understand the possible limits of its use in maintaining communion among Anglicans. This is surely because the Quadrilateral is only a framework, not a full-blown ecclesiology. It is, in the words of a report to the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1947 by a commission of eminent theologians of the day, ‘a bony skeleton’. The commission went on to say that ‘clothed in the flesh and blood of the fullness of the Tradition it may be used by God to bring unity in the truth.’²⁰ It is not clear then, that the bare statements of the Quadrilateral are themselves a sufficient basis for unity, or only a starting point for discussion, which needs to be fleshed out in the light of the fullness of the Tradition of the Undivided Church.

In addition, there is no one authorised interpretation of the Quadrilateral. Moreover, as a geometric metaphor, it has some built-in ambiguities. A quadrilateral is a shape with 4 sides in geometry. But, by definition, there is no particular shape to this 4 sided polygon. There need not be equality of the sides. It could be a square, a rectangle or a trapezium. Is one, or are some, of the 4 elements of the Quadrilateral more basic than others? In practice, in ecumenical dialogue it is the fourth item that has caused the most debate.

Episcopally Led, Synodically Governed

It might be argued that part of the genius of Anglican ecclesiology is the way our Churches have, on the one hand, maintained and treasured Episcopal ministry with the bishop as chief pastor of the local Church and the link with the Catholic Church in space and time, while on the other hand developed the synodical life of the Church, involving all the people of God in governance and decision-making. Synodality is understood to be fundamental to the being of the Church in Anglican ecclesiology.²¹

Every province has a synodical gathering, as does every diocese of the Church. The task of synods in every province and diocese is one of consultation, deliberation and law-making. There is also an expression of synodical life at the global level, as we have already seen, in the Anglican Consultative Council. However, this body is only consultative, and not legislative in character.

The involvement of laity and clergy in decision making, along with their bishop, is a characteristic of Church life that is unique to Anglicans, Old Catholics and a few Lutherans. The Roman Catholic Church, as was pointed out in the ARCIC agreed statement *The Gift of Authority*, has yet fully to develop expressions of the synodical

¹⁹ G L Prestige, the Patristics scholar, in his work *Fathers and Heretics* (London: SPCK, 1948) asserts that ‘The Fathers ... recognised in the Bible itself something which the Church had instituted ... it is wholly to their credit that they also recognised the need for comparing its witness with that of the other great formative contributions of the apostolic and subapostolic Church to spiritual order and discipline—that is, in particular, the sacraments, the creeds, and the episcopate.’

²⁰ E S Abbot, et al., *Catholicity: A Study of the Conflict of Christian Traditions in the West* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1947) p 55.

²¹ Synodality, as used in recent ecumenical statements, refers to the faithful, in each local church, walking together in Christ. It is derived from the Greek *syn-hodos* meaning ‘common way’. It indicates the manner in which believers and churches are held together in communion as they live, work and journey together in Christ who is the Way.

life.²² The Orthodox Churches have synods, and in their understanding the whole Church is represented at synods. But their synods are meetings of bishops only, who, as representative persons, bring their see or community with them. Most Protestant Churches do not have bishops in the same sense as Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Old Catholics or Orthodox, as persons with particular responsibility for the local and universal dimensions of the Church's life. Thus, their decision-making may be democratic, but not necessarily synodical in our understanding.

A Communion Beyond Anglicanism

The Lambeth Conference, often cited as a key instrument of Anglican unity, is less and less Anglican. In 1998, there were bishops present who were not, strictly speaking, from Anglican Churches: Bishops from the Churches of North India, South India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, for instance. Bishops from the Philippine Independent Church, the Old Catholic Churches of the Union of Utrecht, the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, all Churches with which Anglicans are in full Communion. Also present were bishops from the Church of Norway and the Church of Sweden. The Conference was thus a conference of bishops of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church which were in communion with the See of Canterbury, but who may not be themselves Anglican, but rather Lutheran, Oriental or Latin in tradition. In a sense we are experiencing a new form of world Christian fellowship which goes beyond Anglicanism, at the international level in the Lambeth Conference. These relationships are hopeful signs for Anglicans about the developing visible unity of the universal Church. They witness to what has been called the 'radical provisionality' of Anglicanism: the Anglican Communion is not destined to remain for ever. Or rather, our Communion of Churches is not destined to remain Anglican.

Now most Anglicans do not mind this blurring of the boundaries of our Communion, but see it as one of our strengths. Others feel rather threatened by this blurring, as they see it as a loss of identity. This open-endedness of Anglicanism is a threat to some who would wish that there be a strengthening of 'Anglican identity'. Some have already suggested that we need to find a new name for the Communion of Churches we have been calling the Anglican Communion, as it now embraces Eastern Christians (Mar Thoma), Old Catholics and some Lutherans. One suggestion, which does not sound very elegant but which certainly describes this emerging Communion is 'The Communion of Synodical Catholic Churches'.

The Experience of Other Communions

I believe that the communion of the Churches must precede the instruments that serve that communion. Communion is sacramental, ecclesial, mystical. The Anglican Communion existed even before we had the Lambeth Conference, and certainly before the ACC and the Primates' Meeting came to be. The nurturing and servicing of communion is not something that can be left in the hands of an administrative bureaucracy.

The Lutheran World Federation is consciously calling itself a 'Communion' now. It has 250 staff in Geneva. The Anglican Communion Office has a staff of 17. I wonder if, in reality, the LWF is still fundamentally a Federation, not a Communion, and hence the requirement for a huge bureaucracy to maintain the relationship. It is not a papacy or a curia at the heart of Lutheranism, but certainly administrative committees and bureaucracy.

²² ARCIC, *The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III*, Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1999, § 57.

Similarly, in the Roman Communion we find that the Vatican structures, once supposed to be the court of the bishop of Rome, the curia, are now a huge bureaucracy, which works hard at ensuring coherence and keeping everyone 'in line', functioning as the glue that keeps the world-wide Church together. One can therefore ask the question of our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters, if there is a reality of communion between local churches in their system, between bishops and their dioceses and other bishops and their dioceses, if there is such a machinery that is required to keep it all functioning.

I make a distinction between the papacy, and the office of the bishop of Rome and the curia. The bishop of Rome has played a great role within Christendom long before there was an elaboration of the kind of complex bureaucracy we see in the present day Vatican, and it was that earlier role, perhaps, which served, through the personal ministry of unity, the communion of the Churches that might be fruitfully recovered in a future reunion. The present Bishop of Rome is aware of the challenge of recovering a role for his office which would serve the communion of all the Churches and has issued a challenge to all Christians to help him reform the role of the papacy in his encyclical letter *Ut unum sint*.²³ Anglican and Roman Catholic theologians are convinced that such a role can be recovered.²⁴ Our own Anglican *Virginia Report* raises the question, too, which Anglicans have not yet begun to answer.²⁵

Orthodoxy contrasts with the Lutheran and Roman systems, and in many ways is closer to our own. In Orthodoxy, the mystical communion of the Churches, sacramental communion, is primary.²⁶ Communion between local churches (dioceses) is based upon an existing unity in faith, ministry and sacramental life, and not on common, centralised administration or leadership. There is little bureaucracy at all serving the communion of Orthodox Churches. The Orthodox cling to the synodical life of the Church, but as I mentioned, since they regard the bishop, seated in synod as a person who is truly representative of the whole local church, and hence the principle is maintained, in their understanding, that the entire Church be represented in decision making. This is the same principle which operates among Anglicans, perhaps, but with a different route to achieve it. It is interesting that the Orthodox look at the Lambeth Conference and understand it to be a true expression of synodality, since they would feel that the bishops are there *along with their local church*. It is true, that at recent Lambeth Conferences, the bishops have been invited by the Archbishop of Canterbury 'to bring their dioceses with them'. Like Anglicans, the Orthodox understand the bishop to be the link between the local and the universal and the Church here and now and the Church in every age and place, and are thus seen to be the key agents of communion, maintaining the unity, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church.

²³ 'This is an immense task, which we cannot refuse and which I cannot carry out by myself. Could not the real but imperfect communion existing between us persuade Church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject, a dialogue in which, leaving useless controversies behind, we could listen to one another, keeping before us only the will of Christ for his Church and allowing ourselves to be deeply moved by his plea "that they may all be one ... so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (Jn 17:21)?' *Ut unum sint* § 96.

²⁴ 'We envisage a primacy that will even now help to uphold the legitimate diversity of traditions, strengthening and safeguarding them in fidelity to the Gospel. It will encourage the churches in their mission. This sort of primacy will already assist the Church on earth to be the authentic catholic *koinonia* in which unity does not curtail diversity, and diversity does not endanger but enhances unity. It will be an effective sign for all Christians as to how this gift of God builds up that unity for which Christ prayed'. *The Gift of Authority* § 60.

²⁵ 'Is there a need for a universal primacy exercised collegially and respecting the role of the laity in decision-making within the Church?' *The Virginia Report*. p 42.

²⁶ Cf. Anglican-Orthodox Dialogue, *The Dublin Agreed Statement 1984* (London: SPCK, 1985) § 20.

Recent Developments

There have been some developments in recent years that are pushing the Anglican Communion to develop further its ecclesiological self-understanding.

For instance, the Lambeth Conference of 1998 recommended the establishment of a new commission—The Inter Anglican Standing Commission on Ecumenical Relations (IASCER), which would undertake a number of tasks related to the ecumenical life of the Communion. Most significant is this item listed among the purposes:

To ensure theological consistency in dialogues and conversations by reviewing regional and provincial proposals with ecumenical partners and, when an agreement affects the life of the Communion as a whole, after consultation with the ACC, to refer the matter to the Primates' Meeting, and only if that Meeting so determines, to the Lambeth Conference, before the Province enters the new relationship.²⁷

The terms of reference for IASCER were also endorsed by the ACC and the Primates' Meeting, and so the Commission can be said to have the full support of all the instruments of the Communion. The remarkable thing is that, for the first time, a commission is charged with caring for the maintenance of communion among Anglicans, with particular reference to challenges that might arise due to ecumenical agreements. The specific reference to the roles of the ACC and the Primates, and the Lambeth Conference, if required, hints at an emerging, systematic way of preserving *koinonia* when impairment threatens, of caring for the communion that already exists. It is clear that this resolution assumes that there are limits to provincial autonomy.

IASCER was established to serve the ecumenical agenda, which is not surprising, since it is the ecumenists around the Communion who are acutely aware that it is harder to put back together once broken apart, than it is to maintain communion where at all possible. However, perhaps a model is developing here which can be applied when other aspects of Church life and developments within one province have the potential to jeopardise the communion of the Churches.

Autonomy

Even though IASCER has the highest level of endorsement possible in our present Communion structures, there are still murmurings that such a body will impinge on provincial autonomy. Much is said about the autonomy of provinces of the Communion, and indeed much is assumed. But is autonomy a fundamentally Christian concept? Is it a 'stand alone' ecclesiological principle?

Provincial autonomy is a notion with a long pedigree in Anglican thought. Bishop Stephen Bayne, the one time executive officer of the Anglican Communion at the 1963 Anglican Congress in Toronto described the autonomy of provinces in this way: 'The Anglican Communion is not an organisation by which older and stronger Churches can extend their influence over younger and weaker Churches. We are not interested in branch offices around the world. We care rather for a household within which many Churches, representing many cultures and peoples, can take their self-reliant and buoyant place in full brotherhood, each giving and teaching, each receiving and learning. Therefore our organisation must both reflect this and nourish it.'²⁸

²⁷ Lambeth Conference 1998 Resolution IV.3.

²⁸ John Howe, *Anglicanism and the Universal Church* (Anglican Book Centre, Toronto 1990) p 79.

But there are dangers with this approach. Can provincial autonomy be a principle which is upheld without some necessary balances in place? Self-reliance, for instance, is hard to justify, in Gospel terms, as a Christian concept. Who is self-reliant? We Christians need each other, and we need, not only those within our own context and culture, but those beyond. We are not alone, and not without responsibility for each other. We are reminded again of Paul's concern for the Church in Jerusalem and his launching of an appeal for it throughout the empire (cf I Cor 16: 1-4). This is clearly not self-reliance, but interdependence. However, interdependence does not need to dispense with the right to self-govern.

Anglicans might look again at the experience of the Orthodox Churches. An Orthodox Church in a country where Orthodox Christians are a minority will be described as 'autonomous', which means self-governing in internal matters. However, these autonomous Churches are under the supervision of the Ecumenical Patriarch. 'Autocephaly' means the right to be completely self-governing. However, it is interesting that for the Orthodox autocephaly is only granted after some very rigorous and careful scrutiny of the life of the Church. Guarantees are sought from the Church becoming autocephalous that this *privilege will not be abused* and that *koinonia* will be maintained. Here we find that the right to self-governance is upheld, but within limits.

As provinces have been born and developed, perhaps the eagerness to establish independent life has been encouraged without sufficient attention to the life of the whole Communion, as if we do not believe *communion* as an ecclesiological principle to be important. Perhaps additional guidelines could be recommended in the loose corpus of ACC resolutions that currently make up the Communion's 'guidelines for the creation of new provinces and dioceses'.

Dispersed Authority

It is often said that authority in Anglicanism is dispersed, that there is no central authority but a dispersed one. It is telling that in the mind of many, including many Church leaders, dispersed authority is understood to refer to authority for decision-making to be centred in the provinces as opposed to some central body. This misunderstanding is surely a product of the growing tendency to see autonomy as an Anglican *sine qua non* principle. But classical Anglican theology has understood 'dispersed authority' to refer, not to the geographic dispersal of the centres of decision making, but to the sources of authority in Anglicanism being 'Scripture, Tradition and Reason'.

The Lambeth Conference of 1948 produced a noteworthy report which commented on the way authority for Anglicans is understood to be 'dispersed'. It is worthwhile quoting this extensively:

Authority, as inherited by the Anglican Communion from the undivided Church of the early centuries of the Christian era, is single in that it is derived from a single Divine source, and reflects within itself the richness and historicity of the divine Revelation, the authority of the eternal Father, the Incarnate Son, and the life-giving Spirit. It is distributed among Scripture, Tradition, Creeds, the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments, the witness of saints, and the *consensus fidelium*, which is the continuing experience of the Holy Spirit through His faithful people in the Church. It is thus a dispersed rather than a centralised authority having many elements which combine, interact with, and check each other; these elements together contributing by a process of mutual support, mutual checking,

and redressing of errors or exaggerations to the many-sided fullness of the authority which Christ has committed to His Church.²⁹

Has the assumption of provincial autonomy worked to distort our classical understanding of dispersed authority, leading Anglicans to argue that it is contrary to our tradition to expect that there can be binding decisions made beyond the provincial level? Yet, as the Virginia Report raises in a pointed question, 'Is not universal authority a necessary corollary of universal communion?'³⁰ It is remarkable how the language of the 1948 report is redolent of *koinonia* ecclesiology, grounding the authority in the divine source of the Holy Trinity, with a strong emphasis on *mutuality*.

Given the character of the present instruments of Anglican unity, a communal expression of the mind of the Church at the international level can only be consultative. But if, at the world level, the Anglican Communion seeks at all to discover the mind and will of Christ in order to guide its mission and ministry, does that discernment not demand of the Churches of the Communion a certain recognition of the authority of Christ speaking within the Church? Do the Churches of the Communion need, not only to be able to consult with each other, but to be accountable to each other in order to grow in the Gospel together? In certain cases, do the Churches of the Communion not need to act and move together as a sign of unity in this broken and fragmented world? Is the Anglican principle of provincial autonomy taking on a more secular understanding, coloured by a latter-day culture of individualism and 'doing one's own thing' rather than some ecclesiological rule or doctrine of the Church? Does the reluctance to consider authoritative decision-making at the level of the Communion mean that divisive issues are being addressed effectively and authoritatively at the provincial level?

As the Communion faces more and more divergence on key issues, does the reluctance to deal with authority at the Communion level mean that the future shape of the Anglican family will be less a Communion and more a loose federation? If this is the case, we still need to stop and ask ourselves a theological question: whether federation or association is truly what God wants for the relationship of Churches. It is ironic that this is a time when some Christian families are now beginning to explore the implications of a deeper, committed and mutually accountable relationship, and hence are beginning to refer to themselves as 'Communion'. This is the direction officially being explored by the Lutheran World Federation and World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Are Anglicans, on the other hand, moving away from Communion towards federation or alliance, through an unbalanced emphasis on autonomy and a misunderstanding of dispersed authority?

Whither Anglican Identity?

Some Anglicans are becoming nervous because the hallmarks of the Communion are becoming less readily visible. Some may fear that the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral itself may be under reassessment. Indeed, there are pressures on each of the four articles.

Scripture: Anglicans would all agree (or almost all agree) that the truth of the revelation of God is attested to definitively in the canon of Scripture. But there are no commonly held hermeneutical principles that allow Anglicans to interpret the Scriptures together. So appeal to Scripture does not necessarily lead to unity in belief or communion in faith.

²⁹ *The Lambeth Conference 1948. The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops; together with Resolutions and Reports* (London, SPCK, 1948) pp 84–85.

³⁰ *The Virginia Report*, p 54.

Creeds: The Nicene and Apostles' Creeds are held everywhere among Anglicans. I can think of one diocese—Chile—which has changed the Apostles' Creed, however, to read 'the Holy *Universal Church*'. And new alternatives are appearing. The Church of England's *Common Worship* has a section with 7 'authorised affirmations of faith' in addition to the 2 standards.

Sacraments: The Inter Anglican Liturgical Consultation at its most recent meeting urged the ACC to perform a survey to ascertain the extent to which elements other than bread and wine are used at the Eucharist. So much for the Quadrilateral's wording regarding the sacraments: 'unfailing use of ... the elements ordained by him (Christ)'.

And, of course, there is special concern about the article related to the Historic Episcopate locally adapted, as ecumenical agreements, particularly with Lutherans but also with other Protestants begin to take shape, and some fear that the former unwavering insistence on episcopal ordination is weakening.

When you throw into this mixture the reality that in present day Anglicanism a common liturgical heritage is no longer uniformly recognisable through a common ritual genealogy from the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1662, and people get nervous about the future of Anglican identity. All of this, combined with a lack of central authority or a central body of canons, makes the landscape look less tidy.

Although some fear a loss of identity, I, for one, have little time for the strengthening of *Anglican* identity, if that identity is going in a direction that does not build greater unity among Christians generally. What is important to an ecumenist is the communion of churches in general, not just the communion of some churches. More division, along the lines of *confessional* identity is not what the world needs, and not what the Church requires if she is to be effective in her mission and her vocation to be a sign of reconciliation. I believe that the vocation of Anglicanism is not geared towards self-preservation. Anglicanism is only provisional. Provisional means that in its present form it may disappear or be reshaped into something greater, something that is more inclusive. I don't believe that the future of Anglicanism lies in an understanding of Church that is *fundamentally new*, I hasten to add. Anglicans are not called to abandon what we believe to have been truly taught and lived throughout the ages, and Anglicans are conscious that we are in communion with all those who have gone before, back through history to the apostles and thus to Christ. But the newness must surely be in a direction that will more fully manifest the unity which Christ has given to his Body.

I believe that the direction of our identity is towards a renewed, and deeper communion, *koinonia*, not only with those who participate in the instruments of Anglican Communion, who contribute to the Inter Anglican Budget, or those now linked by binding ecumenical agreements, but with all Christians. This requires a certain humility and reaffirmation of our historic self-understanding that we are but *part* of the Church. Our identity might be furthered as we examine the extent to which autonomy is enshrined, or even assumed, in our provincial life, and how it can be tempered with a more profound understanding of our interdependence. We might seek to develop the balance which synodality and episcopal leadership bring to ecclesial life. We might recover an understanding of authority in the Church that reflects its divine origin, and whose dispersed elements are nevertheless in organic relation to each other. And our *koinonia*, our communion might more consciously be nurtured along the marks of that inner *koinonia* of the Blessed Trinity, based on communication, sharing, mutuality, respect, love and binding fellowship.