

Fulcrum Submission to the Lambeth Commission on the Anglican Communion¹

Key Questions 1 and 2: Implications of Recent Decisions? There are Limits to Mission Inculturation

The ‘inculturation’ of the Gospel is essential to its planting, growth and flourishing. The good news does need to be earthed deeply in local cultures, so that people feel at home and that they know that the good news comes from God, rather than from another country. However, there are key limits, and often these limits are best seen by outsiders.² In engaging with gay cultures in the USA and Canada, it is appropriate that Anglicans from other cultures, as well as those from these countries, question whether these recent decisions go beyond the limits of inculturation. We consider that they do.

Key Question 3: Autonomy and Communion? Interdependence not Independence

We agree with the analysis of Norman Doe in his recent article ‘The Meaning of Autonomy’³ that ‘provincial autonomy’, historically and canonically, does not mean that provinces may do whatever their wish irrespective of the expressed concerns of the Anglican Communion.⁴

Key Question 4: Relating without Full Communion? A Reduced Lambeth 2008

Meeting together is crucial and the cross involves sacrifice. Not all who meet together, however, should necessarily have voting rights. A series of gradations of discipline,⁵ which could include ‘observer status,’ is now needed for those who defy the expressed concerns of the Anglican Communion. We strongly recommend that the Lambeth Conference in 2008 is held. If the South African location proves to be unacceptable to many bishops from the Global South, then another location in Africa, e.g. Nairobi, should be found. The conference should be smaller than that of 1998, with the ratio of bishops invited reflecting the number of Anglicans in each province. Gene Robinson, a particular focus of disunity, should not be amongst those invited nor any other practicing gay bishops subsequently consecrated.

Key Question 5 and 6: Communion within Individual Churches? Alternative Episcopal Oversight not Parallel Provinces

A separate province for ‘conservatives’ in ECUSA, or in the Church of England, is a retrograde concept and would lead away from a united church to parallel provinces. Parallel lines do not meet. We recommend, instead, ‘Alternative Episcopal Oversight’ which goes beyond the ‘Delegated Episcopal Pastoral Oversight’ offered currently by ECUSA in that ordinations would be included.

Key Questions 7 and 8: Canterbury Intervention? Appeal Court and Gradations of Discipline

Rather than a move to ‘Curial Centrism’ on the one hand or to a loose ‘Federal Network’ on the other, we recommend that the ‘Communion’ model be developed further.⁶ In the search for an appropriate metaphor for intervention, we suggest ‘healing the wounded body’ as both biblical and organic. This would be in line with the document ‘True Union in the Body’.⁷ The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Primates should have an appeal court to consider particular cases, which could invoke gradations of discipline regarding invitations, and speaking and voting rights at meetings. Genocide in Ruanda, and human rights abuses in Zimbabwe are the sort of historical examples which could be considered as well as the recent actions of ECUSA and of the diocese of New Westminster.

Concluding Comments

We have kept the above submission deliberately short as requested. We attach an appendix of four key quotations by Adrian Hastings, Robert Runcie, Max Warren and Philip Jenkins, which have informed our thinking.

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¹ For details of Fulcrum: renewing the evangelical centre, including a short article by Graham Kings, ‘Anglican Communion: Long Term Solutions not Dissolution’, see www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk

² It was considered by most members of the European Council of Churches that the Serbian Orthodox Church had gone beyond the limits of inculturation in giving backing to Serbian Nationalism in the campaign for ‘Greater Serbia’. This resulted in the fragmentation of the former Yugoslavia and the Bosnian and Kosovo wars. See also the quotation by Philip Jenkins in our appendix.

³ Norman Doe, a canon lawyer, is a member of the Lambeth Commission. ‘The Meaning of Autonomy’ may be seen on www.anglicancommunion.org/ecumenical/commissions/lambeth/documents/autonomy.pdf

⁴ See also the quotations on ‘autonomy’ from Adrian Hastings and on ‘interdependence’ from Robert Runcie, in our appendix.

⁵ The document, if not the non-organic metaphor, ‘To Mend the Net’ has many helpful insights, in particular its suggestion of a gradation of disciplines. Drexel W. Gomes and Maurice W. Sinclair (eds), *To Mend the Net: Anglican Faith and Order for Renewed Mission* (Carrollton: The Ekklesia Society, 2001).

⁶ See the quotation on ‘power’ from Max Warren in our appendix and the perceptive article by Philip Turner ‘Tolerable Diversity and Ecclesial Identity’, *Journal for Anglican Studies* 1.2. Dec 2003, pp.24-46.

⁷ For *True Union in the Body*, see www.anglicaninstitute.org/trueunion/true-union.pdf

Appendix

to Fulcrum Submission to the Lambeth Commission on the Anglican Communion

The following four quotations have informed our thinking for the submission:

1. Prof Adrian Hastings on Provinces Losing Some of Their ‘Autonomy’

Traditional Anglican theology placed almost all of its eggs in the bishop and the diocese. There was neither a theory nor a practice of the province and yet what has developed over the last century or so is a network of ‘autonomous churches’ or provinces, not of dioceses. While diocesan bishops certainly have authority, it has been cut down in a fairly unCyprianic way by the development of provincial authority. If dioceses lose a great deal of their autonomy by the development of provinces, it is certainly possible for provinces to lose some of theirs through the development of a genuinely interprovincial and international authority.

Reluctance to take that step may reflect the innate nationalism of the Anglican tradition rather than anything genuinely theological.¹

2. Dr Robert Runcie’s Opening Sermon at the Lambeth Conference 1988²

As you enter this cathedral, your eye is caught by its massive pillars. In their strength, they seem to stand on their own feet, symbols of strong foundations and sturdy independence. Yet their strength is an illusion. Look up and see the pillars converting into arches, which are upheld not by independence but through interdependence...

Are we being called through events and their theological interpretation to move from independence to interdependence? If we answer yes, then we cannot dodge the question of how this is to be given ‘flesh’: how is our interdependence articulated and made effective; how is it to be structured? Without losing a proper – but perhaps modified – provincial autonomy, this will probably mean a critical examination of the notion of ‘dispersed authority’. We need to have confidence that authority is not dispersed to the point of dissolution and ineffectiveness... Let me put it in starkly simple terms: do we really *want* unity within the Anglican Communion? Is our worldwide family of Christians worth bonding together? Or is our paramount concern the preservation of promotion of that particular expression of Anglicanism which has developed within the culture of our own province?... I believe we still need the Anglican Communion. But we have reached the stage in the Growth of the Communion when we must begin to make radical choices, or growth will imperceptibly turn to decay. I believe the choice between independence and interdependence, already set before us as a Communion in embryo twenty-five years ago, is quite simply the choice between unity or gradual fragmentation.’³

3. Canon Max Warren's Perspectives on Power and Unity

In his autobiography, Max Warren reflected in precise, incisive philosophical mode on the issues of unity and diversity. He had aptly headed his chapter on the ecumenical movement with a quotation from the poet, philosopher and theologian Samuel T. Coleridge: 'The individuality is most intense where the greatest dependence of the parts on the whole is combined with the greatest dependence of the whole on the parts':⁴

The more I thought over this issue the more I am convinced that it was really bound up with how we envisage the dynamic character of society. If a society is to be genuinely dynamic then it must accept the inevitability of tension. But too much tension makes administration impossible. This means that a society like the Christian Church must make provision both for co-ordination of activity and for diffusion of power. How this is to be done is the great difficulty. At bottom it raises the whole issue of power. The desire to co-ordinate activity almost inevitably leads to the pursuit of power. Diffusion of power can degenerate into anarchy. I think that a possible solution can be worked out empirically, *not* theoretically, by drawing a distinction between organs of co-ordination and organs of voluntary action. Organs of co-ordination are necessary. Without them no community can exist beyond the smallest unit. But those who serve on these organs of co-ordination must be, in general, people whose 'bent' and 'spirit' drives them in the direction of co-ordination. It is an outlook on life which is a valid one and quite indispensable if the complexity of our world is to be brought under any effective control at all – if, theologically speaking, it is to be 'baptised into Christ'.

On the other hand, organs of voluntary action must exist if there is to be spiritual experimentation and initiative. The complexity of our world needs not only the co-ordinating mind. It also needs the critical mind. The critic, by definition, is the agent of judgement. And by virtue of this role of judgement new experiments are initiated. These organs of voluntary action call for a rather different temperament and attitude.⁵

4. Dr Philip Jenkins on the Global South and North and Church Expectations

I would make a caveat about what we might call the usefulness of the rising churches of the global South and their relevance to the ecclesiastical debates in the North. As I tried to argue repeatedly in the book,⁶ the Southern churches will define themselves according to their own needs and interests. In understanding recent rhetorical uses of the Solid South – for instance, within the Anglican Communion – I describe what I call the "two dreams" that have dominated Western Christian approaches over the past half century or so. One is the Liberation Dream, the idea that the new Third World Christianity would deploy the radical texts of the biblical tradition in the service of insurgent liberation theology. The other is the Conservative Dream, the more modern idea that the conservative churches of the South would cling to fundamentalist readings of the Bible and help restrain liberal trends in the North, especially in matters of gender and sexual orientation. My argument is that both expectations, liberal and

conservative, are substantially wrong. Each in its different ways expects the Southern churches to reproduce Western obsessions and approaches, rather than evolving their own distinctive solutions to their own particular problems.

As an analogy, I like to imagine the situation in the eighth or ninth century in what was still, numerically and culturally, the Near Eastern heart of Christianity, in Syria or Mesopotamia. I imagine a meeting of church leaders who have gathered to hear a report from a traveler from a not so antique land, from the remote barbarian world of western Europe. The traveler delights his listeners by telling them of the many new conversions among the strange peoples of England and Germany, and the creation of whole new dioceses in the midst of the northern forests. Impatiently, the assembled hierarchs press him to answer the key question: this new Christianity coming into being, is it the Christianity of Edessa or of Damascus? How do they feel about the crucial issues of the day, about Monotheletism or Iconoclasm? When the traveler tells them, regretfully, that these issues really do not register in those parts of the world, where religious life has utterly different concerns and emphases, the Syrians are alarmed. Is this really a new Christianity, they ask, or is it some new syncretistic horror? How can anyone not be centrally concerned with these issues? Is not this what Christianity is all about? So Syrian Christianity carried on debating itself to exhaustion, while the new churches of Europe entered a great age of spiritual growth and intellectual endeavor.⁷

¹ Adrian Hastings, 'Michael Ramsey, Donald Coggan and Robert Runcie' in Edward Carpenter, *Cantuar: The Archbishops in their Office with a new introduction and additional chapters by Adrian Hastings* (London: Mowbray, 1997), p. 543.

² Adrian Hastings commented that 'this was probably the most authoritative single piece of teaching [Runcie] ever developed.' *ibid* p 545.

³ Hastings *ibid* pp. 544-5, citing Adrian Hastings, *Robert Runcie*, (London: Mowbray, 1991) pp. 154-5.

⁴ Samuel T. Coleridge, *Hints Towards the Formation of a More Comprehensive Theory of Life* (London: John Churchill, 1848) cited in Warren, *Crowded Canvas: Some Experiences of a Life-time* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974), p. 147.

⁵ Warren, *Crowded Canvas*, p. 157.

⁶ Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: OUP, 2002).

⁷ Philip Jenkins, 'After the Next Christendom.' *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, Vol. 28, No. 1 Jan 2004, pp. 20-22.