

The topic this paper has been requested to address is as follows:

“Reasons for the Anglican Communion from a Missiological Perspective: Arguments for an ecclesiology which might speak to our mission in the Anglican Communion and in defence of us holding together.”

I have précised the title to be: **What is the Anglican Communion for?**

What is the Anglican Communion for?

Chris Sugden

“We are firmly set on our task of putting a dynamic missionary emphasis at the heart of our life as a Communion” Called to Live and Proclaim the Good News – Lambeth 1998 Report of Section II p. 77

1. The Context of the Communion

1.1 The Global Historical Setting When we need to locate the Anglican Communion missiologically, we need to locate it in its **global historical setting**. This is true to its roots - in the separation of the English from the Roman Church when the interests of reformers to indicate that their's was no new sect but was continuous with the church throughout history and the interest of the king to indicate that he was the sole sovereign coincided. In the world of today the world Anglican Communion has a potentially vital and unique role to play.

The current global historical setting is analysed particularly acutely by Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori in *Transnational Religion and Fading States*¹ Rudolph and Piscatori argue that following the end of the cold war, the “anarchic space” between states has increasingly been occupied by Non-Governmental Organisations. This was because the threat of war shifted from war “outside”, between states to conflicts within states. The arena then of international engagement was increasingly occupied by people such as environmentalists and development activists who shared the same purposes and practice irrespective of their national locations. Transnational networks and solidarities emerged which bypass the nation state system. Global NGO fora have broken the monopoly of states on the representation of domestic opinion. This transnational civic society does not seek to replace the state but provides an alternative, complementary to the state, for representation and bringing change.

The Anglican Communion, like other global religious organisations, formal and informal, has found increasing significance and influence in this space. One writer suggests that the Roman Catholic Church is the first citizen of the global civic society.

To ask "What is the Anglican Communion for?" is to ask at least "What will the Anglican Communion represent in this transnational civic society space?"

¹ *Transnational Religion and Fading States* by Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori (Colorado, Westview Press, 1997).

It is here we then have to ask what is meant by the Anglican Communion?

Is it the Anglican Communion as expressed in and represented by its organizational hierarchy – its instruments of communion? This is the Communion from above.

Or is it the Anglican Communion as expressed in and represented by the countless interactions, visits, friendships, and partnerships that criss cross the Communion between individual Anglicans, parishes, mission agencies, and clergy of all ranks. These are neither organized nor monitored by the central hierarchy or bureaucracy. They represent in a most significant way the Anglican voluntary principle. This is the Anglican Communion from below.

Both above and below are necessary. Rudolph makes very clear that while the energy and development of such transnational civic society from below is very dynamic, their ability to make an international impact and to effect change in the local context depends on whether they are linked by a transnational civic society from above: “Without connections to higher and more formal policy levels in civil society and the state, these networks may fail to generate consequential social change”²

The Anglican Communion in God’s goodness in this divided world does provide an important framework within which many Christians especially in Africa and South Asia, but throughout East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, can be in a world fellowship on an equality with those from the economically advantaged nations.

I ask what we mean by the Anglican Communion to help us clarify what might be at risk in matters of impaired communion. The commission’s questions relate primarily to the Anglican Communion from above – the governance hierarchy. The most complete expression of the Anglican Communion from above is I suggest the Lambeth Conference – if for the purposes of argument we accept that the basic ecclesial unit is the diocese (not the province) and that the bishops are sovereign symbols of unity. If the Lambeth Conference is at risk, the Communion from above is at risk. If the Lambeth Conference is ignored then the Communion from above is ignored.

If the Communion from above breaks down, what will be the impact on the Anglican Communion from below? It would prejudice its role as a transnational religious organisation in the transnational civic society space. The Communion from below will continue to maintain and strengthen precisely those informal and grass-roots links which sustain its life but lack the strength and integrity of being a coherent multi-cultural global fellowship.

1.2 This setting is one in which people no longer find their primary relationships determined by geography but rather in a mixture of networks and localities.³ This gives rise to the notion of “permeability” of geographical jurisdictions. “Mission Shaped Church”, a report by the Church of England with a foreword by the Archbishop of Canterbury says “The

² Rudolph and Piscatori Preface op.cit p. 15

³ The Church of England Report Mission Shaped Church – church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context (Church House Publishing 2004).

notion of permeability offers a framework for both respecting and crossing parish boundaries. The argument for permeability is the need for the Church's mission to engage with people in the way they live their lives in a mixture of networks and localities. The safeguards are the stress on diocesan identity, Episcopal brokerage, complementary mission aims and the mutual affirmation of diversity".⁴ The Lambeth Conference noted in 1998 noted that "people's places of living are marginal to their places of meaning".⁵ We have to ask whether the Anglican Communion is best any longer defined in the context of mission by solely geographical considerations?

1.3. This setting is one in which there is no truth except your truth and my truth. We cannot live like this in a healthy society. In the UK the Hutton Inquiry found that allegations made against the UK government were unfounded. Some responded by attacking Lord Hutton as being one-sided and unrepresentative. They would not accept his findings on a simple matter of fact – did a reporter correctly report an interview that he had been given by a weapons inspector – no; did the BBC adequately check whether his report was accurate; no. This is the media culture that dominates British society. The Anglican Communion is called to witness not to the truth it has constructed but what it has received, and been given in its vocation as stated in its motto: "If you hold to my teaching, you really are my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth shall make you free."⁶

2. What is the Anglican Communion for from a theological perspective?

What the Anglican Communion is for, is what any communion or fellowship of Christians is for – to witness to the kingdom of God, the love of the Father in Jesus Christ, and the life of the Spirit which energises it. The mission we are engaged in is not the mission of the church, it is the mission of God. And the mission of God as expressed in Jesus ministry was the mission of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God was the fulfillment of God's promises and purposes in creation. Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom is at hand, repent and believe the gospel. The prayer of the kingdom, (the Lord's prayer), spoke of the new relationships with God, by which we could call God Abba, Father and the new relationships between people (those who are forgiven by the Father must in their turn forgive). New relationships with the physical creation were expressed in Jesus' healing miracles and ultimately in his resurrection which vindicated his claim that the kingdom had come in his ministry. The mission of the kingdom is about transforming all human relationships. The Lambeth Conference report on Mission and Ministry in 1988 stated: "His [Jesus'] mission was to announce and signify it [the kingdom of God]- to open people's eyes to the fact that God was with them in a new way for grace and judgement. This aim Jesus accomplished primarily through preaching, teaching and healing, and through his life, death and resurrection. These become the Church's model for mission."⁷ The Lambeth Conference of 1998 resolved: "proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, forgiveness through the cross of Christ and deliverance from the power of Satan, will seek: spiritual renewal of God's people;

⁴ Op cit p 139

⁵ Called to Live and Proclaim the Good News – Lambeth 1998 Report of Section II (Morehouse Publishing 1998) p. 17

⁶ John 8.32

⁷ The Truth Shall Make you free – the Lambeth Conference 1988 Report on Mission and Ministry p 31.

transformation in the lives of children and youth, transformation in the relations between ethnic groups and nations....transformation in our worship and proper use of Scriptures.”⁸

Paul takes this concept of the kingdom and expresses it in the language of the new age and life in the Spirit. He shows how these new right relationships with God made possible through Jesus’ ministry, death, resurrection and giving of the Spirit addressed and transformed the most fundamental corruption of human social relationships in his day: the divide between Jews and Gentiles. So in the Roman correspondence he tells the Jewish Christians that the Gentile Christians are enabling them to recover their heritage in Abraham, righteousness by faith. He tells the Gentile Christians that they are grafted in to a Jewish tree so should not despise the “weak in faith” Jews. In the Ephesian correspondence he argues that the mystery which the Church is to declare to the principalities and powers of evil who bring division out of the differences that God placed in creation, is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body. Throughout Paul’s understanding of unity is unity that brings together Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female in the one Christian people and family of God. This unity is the evidence that the cross has been effective in breaking down the barriers of hostility between these separated groups.⁹

So for Paul communion, Christian fellowship, is highly dynamic; it is an expression of the life of the Spirit in transforming human social relationships. It is empowered by the Spirit. It is a first fruit, and an earnest of our inheritance in the final kingdom of God. It is costly, achieved by Jesus who reconciled both groups to God in one body through the cross. For John communion draws these groups into the close relationships of the Godhead.¹⁰

The mission of the church is the mission of the one triune God. This requires unity and consistency in what the church is heard to say is the word of the one God. The one Catholic Church is a necessary corollary of the mission of the one God: it is founded on the nature of the dominical commission to make disciples of all nations, to teach them all that Jesus taught and to gather into one the people of God.

For this reason it is most important that churches in one part of the communion do not put stumbling blocks or hindrances in the way of the witness of churches in other parts of the communion. Anything that anyone does in one part of the communion that hinders mission in another part is a very serious matter. We are accountable to God and one another in our mutual support and interdependence in the mission of God. There is a biblical principle not to proceed with actions even if adiaphora that cause another to stumble (1 Cor 8-10, Romans 14). The Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission reported in 2003:

20. It should also be noted that in Anglicanism if a proposed change is considered amongst the adiaphora and is also known to be a matter of significant dispute, there has been a reluctance to proceed. This compares with the Pauline principle (1 Cor 8-10; Rom 14) about not proceeding with actions, even if adiaphora, if they cause another to stumble.

⁸ Resolution V.4 in Called to Live and Proclaim the Good News – Lambeth 1998 Report of Section II op.cit. p. 15

⁹ The references are to Romans 4, Romans 11 and 14, Ephesians 2-3, Galatians 3.28

¹⁰ The references are to Romans 8:23; Ephesians 2 14-16; John 17.

21. A problem arises over innovations about which there are different views in the Church concerning the relative weight or significance to be accorded to a matter. Such are the matters in question. How ought the Church to proceed in such situations? A principle here might be that if the dispute is: intense (eg. generates high degree of sustained and unresolved debate that threatens the unity of the Anglican Communion; or that requires urgent attention) extensive (eg. not confined to one section or region of the Church; has significant implications for mission and ecumenical relations; has a wider social impact) and substantial (concerning an actual issue, and not for example, simply being generated by the media) then the matter cannot remain simply for the local Church (e.g. the diocese) to handle.¹¹

The Church of England in South Africa still remains formally outside the Anglican Communion not least because its stance on apartheid was judged to be less than fully Christian and would therefore hamper Christian witness against such racism. The Virginia report specifically counsels that "Attentiveness, in the Christian community, is a specific quality of interacting among members of Christ's body. Christian attentiveness means deciding to place the understanding of others ahead of being understood. ...keeping these needs and agendas [of others] in mind when making one's own decisions and developing one's own practices."¹² Communion that honours Christ is about mutual fellowship and accountability in discerning the mind of Christ.

Anything less than a mutually recognizing communion does not express the depth of fellowship and oneness that Jesus prayed for, and which the Spirit promises and yearns for in the hearts of believers. Unity in diversity alone does not adequately express the fulness of this communion or the oneness of God. Unity in diversity alone strains at the very notion of Catholicity. Unity in diversity alone cannot be the watchword of any solution to this current crisis because it is not an adequate expression of the oneness of God, the oneness of his mission and the oneness of his people. Unity in diversity alone could be applied to the Hindu religions of India, as it was by western orientalist who classed them all together in one religion of Hinduism, unknown in India. The inclusivity that is sought in Christian faith and community must be held within the understanding of Catholicity and within the understanding of the transformation of life entailed by the command to make disciples of the nations according to the teaching of Jesus. Why teach and disciple if your intention is not to transform?

3. The implications of being a Communion in obedience to the Mission of God.

The Bible's focus on the mission of the kingdom of God as transformation poses for us a question as we address the current crisis. Do we accept sub-optimal ethics which base policy on non-normative situations as an unavoidable expression of our existence in the world as we find it, by proposing faithfulness as the criterion for accepting relationships which might otherwise be highly promiscuous? Or do we witness to the transforming power of the resurrection? In making this choice we will need to ask to what else might we need to apply the principle of sub-optimal ethics? Might we accept abortion on demand as a lesser evil than the exposure of girl babies in China? Might we accept an allowable level of study of child pornography on the internet as a lesser evil than paedophilia?

¹¹ IATDC on www.anglicancommunion.org/ecumenical/commissions, paras 20 and 21.

¹² The Virginia Report (Morehouse Publishing 1999) page 40

Further, even if sub-optimal ethics are to be allowed (as in Moses allowing divorce) it is clear that for the New Testament, sub-optimal ethics were not allowable for those having oversight of the church (an overseer was to be husband of one wife in a setting in which the image of the church and its relationships are described as family). We have to ask seriously if sub-optimal ethics are compatible with a united confession of one Lord, one faith, one baptism?

A united confession of Jesus as Lord requires ethical as well as ecclesiological and eucharistic communion. It is well pointed out in the Virginia report that "in some cases it may be possible and necessary for the universal Church to say with firmness that a particular local practice or theory is incompatible with Christian faith. This was said for example to those churches in South Africa which practiced and justified racial discrimination at the Eucharist." ¹³ The 1998 Lambeth Conference clearly set itself against some aspects of culture in affirming "Unlike our society, the Gospels see sin and debt as fundamentally inter-related". ¹⁴ Similarly in addressing the issue of polygamy, while the Church extended fellowship to polygamists within the church as a pastoral requirement, there was no provision for a polygamist to be ordained to the priesthood, preside at the Eucharist or be consecrated to the episcopate. There are clear ethical guidelines in scripture as to who may represent the unity and truth of the church in its oversight.

4. What makes the Communion Anglican?

This testimony comes from a submission to the Commission:

"The Eames Commission will have accomplished its mission if by the end of the year we do not have to go to a different church every Sunday in a creative search for a proxy of an orthodox Episcopal church to join. The churches of other denominations we have attended are warm and friendly and traditional, but they are not Anglican. Do you know what I mean? There is no place in the diocese to "drive to" and no clergy person (as yet) in the diocese to provide pastoral leadership, much less episcopal oversight. We have resigned our leadership positions in our diocese and parish, and long for a new faithful orthodox Anglican community in our area."

How do independent provinces regard themselves as Anglican? Is it just through positive law of governance? How much weight does that carry with the average church goer? What qualities and assumptions do they expect to find in a church which identifies itself as Anglican? What was the Anglican consensus?

The Anglican Church brought about a particular expression of the church. It was marked by freedom to express its mission in culturally appropriate forms, especially in the language of scripture and worship. It was marked by rejection of centralised and imposed bureaucracy using Latin. It exercised freedom to enable mission in its culture but was very concerned to stress its continuity with the original catholic church by emphasising the scriptures, the teaching and practice of the church of the first five centuries as being most approximate to the time and will of

¹³ Virginia Report op.ci.t p 34

¹⁴ Lambeth Report 1998 op cit. p 7 quoting Chad Myers, New Economy of Grace, Sojourners, July/Aug 1998.

the Lord, and engaging with the law of things - how things were in creation and how new discoveries were revealing them to be.¹⁵ To be Anglican is formally to be in communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury. In practice it is to have a way of formulating Christian understanding in one (and possibly more) cultures different from a central controlling culture.

A.A way of reading scripture as our primary, governing authority. This is to engage scripture as our source with what God makes known through our other human faculties and experience (referred to in the classic formulations as reason but which actually refers to culture and new experience) and to ensure that any conclusions reached are in faithful continuity to the understanding and practice of the first five centuries of the Church which were closest to the life and teaching of Jesus and the apostles. This is in contrast with systematizing approaches which make logical constructions out of tendencies in the scripture, an approach which is in danger of making the scripture conflict with what God has made known in other ways. This way of reading scripture has proved very acceptable to churches founded in non-English cultures as it enables the church to engage in the translatability of Christian faith into their own culture. This means that scripture is to be read in the Anglican communion for transformative and pastoral purposes to change people towards the fulfilment of God's will, not primarily conceptual purposes to cohere with theological and philosophical systems.

B.A way of doing mission. The pastoral focus of the Anglican church, to be the church of the nation and for the nation; to take responsibility for all those within its community, has defined its mission approach as wholistic – requiring it to relate the mission of God to every situation of humanity.

C. Catholicity and order in arranging competent authority. The Episcopal focus of the Anglican church recognizes that God gifts, calls and chooses some to be leaders whom he gives to the church. The apostles were gifted called and chosen to lead the church, and bishops are seen to be their successors, gifted, called and chosen by God. Their role in the Bible, in early Christian tradition and in many cultures today is more akin to that of a father in a family than a chairman of a committee.

Being Anglican therefore does not refer to a cultural mode of English culture - a church of Anglos and Anglophiles (although such is its class setting in some parts of the world). Neither does it refer to the conceptual world we inhabit - a via media or sweet reasonableness between competing authorities. It is about our focus in mission, the whole nation, in obedience to scripture read in the light of culture (reason, the law of things) and in continuity with the tradition of the whole church. This has a major contribution to make as a global Christian fellowship because it combines the understanding of catholicity (not defined by but often

¹⁵ For discussion of this approach see Bishop H.R. McAdoo *The Spirit of Anglicanism – a survey of Anglican Theological Method in the Seventeenth Century* (London, Black, 1965) p 309-315. "The theological method of Anglicanism, unlike theological movements whose emphasis is chiefly on the transcendental, will always take account of natural theology. It will have, for want of a better word, a certain quality of humanism, for no human experience or field of enquiry can be alien to an outlook in which concern with the Creation and the Incarnation are to the fore. It will hold that theology owes to men a rational consideration of their problems, and its method will be one of liberality rather than of liberalism. It will have a historical consciousness in respect of doctrinal content and the the meaning of continuity. It will have an element of practical divinity which it will integrate into its concept of spiritual life." *Op.cit.* p 315.

expressed in terms of liturgy) of the one gospel for the whole world and therefore the one people of God with a protestation that this must be founded on the scriptures and not the church's interpretation, however venerable.

5. What does the Anglican Communion witness to?

5.1. The Anglican Communion is therefore to ensure that the gospel of Jesus Christ is transmitted from generation to generation and culture to culture with the freedom to be expressed in the life of that culture and in faithfulness to the Catholic Creeds and formularies. For this the worldwide Communion is needed lest we become captive to our cultures.

5.2. Anglican identity is communion wide and is formed in the mutuality of the identity of its members. Thus for Paul the oneness of the church required to be expressed in the mutual self-identity and recognition on the one hand by the Jewish Christians that the Gentile Christians were fully members of the Christian body without circumcision, and by the Gentile believers that God had not rejected his Jewish people. Anglican identity is not shaped by continuity with the past as such; it is shaped by its engagement of scripture, tradition, and the sense of things under apostolic leadership and in mutual recognition of the standing of each culture in which Christians seek to obey Jesus. It is not shaped by its continuity with dead white males. The mutual recognition is at this point in doubt. More awareness and respect needs to be given to the contribution of cultures in World Christianity to Anglican identities. How the Communion receives and respects the contribution of its members from Africa, Asia and Latin America at this point is of crucial significance for Anglican identity. It was the Gentiles' inclusion which prevented the church becoming a marginal Jewish sect. Is the Anglican Communion in danger of becoming an expression of the ethics of western liberal elites?

5.3. The Anglican Communion is committed to embrace the gospel as a national commitment rather than being an ecclesiastical outpost of Rome. Indeed the early Anglicans accused Rome of being wedded to the past. The early Anglicans believed that God would speak to the English culture direct. Such cultural freedom comes as a result of obedience to the gospel, for without the gospel we could not discern in what areas cultural freedom could be expressed and in what areas central biblical themes needed to be preserved. The council of Jerusalem gave the Gentiles cultural freedom to express the gospel within a few clear limits.¹⁶

5.4. The Anglican Communion should be an expression of World Christianity rather than Global Christianity- but is it? Lamin Sanneh poses a question to the identity of the Anglican Communion. He defines World Christianity as “the movement of Christianity as it takes form and shape in societies that previously were not Christian” where “Christianity was received and expressed through the cultures, customs and traditions of the people affected”. Global Christianity “on the other hand, is the faithful replication of Christian norms and patterns developed in Europe”.¹⁷ The Anglican Communion has the potential to be an authentic gathering of senior Christian leaders in World Christianity who are mission leaders in their own right. For that reason the platform it provides for such leaders to come

¹⁶ Acts 15:28-29

¹⁷ Whose Religion is Christianity: The Gospel beyond the West by Lamin Sanneh, (Eerdmans 2003)

together, discover each other and what God is doing around the world, is highly creative and influential in developing missiological reflection and practice.

The Anglican Communion is at a crossroads. For some the current crisis has been precipitated by heterodox leadership in the Communion in an economically powerful province, which in the view of some is over-represented and over-influential in the central counsels and bureaucracy of the communion. Arbitration is being sought from a centre in Canterbury. This would suggest that elements of a “global Christianity” are at work here.

Dr Michael Poon of Macau in the Province of Hong Kong argues that this crisis is a time for the Communion to come to a maturity, to move on from the Mother Church relationship of the Church of England. He counsels against seeking just to manage the crisis. “The rules and resolutions adopted in the history of the Communion (dated from Lambeth 1868) so far are conventions which had served to keep adolescent children together within a family, during a period when the missionary societies are devolving their responsibilities to native churches. Is it not the time to move from custodianship to full status as heirs of the true promise? This is to say, in the past we have been at pains to devise means to keep the family together. It is more fruitful to think through how the family members can move on as an Apostolic Fellowship: as successors of our apostolic forefathers to bless and connect with other families (to follow through the analogy) and the wider world? Some radical restructuring of the Communion for mission is called for. Our Communion in the past decades have succumbed to the administrative style of governance, with bishops acting as chief administrators, and the instruments of unity as consensus building devices which we hope somehow are able to smooth out the uneven voices in the Communion. The present crisis serves as a wake-up call. Would there be a day when we can see more theological output from the chief-servants of the Church, marked by true scholarship and faithful witness, as Alexandria, Jerusalem and Carthage did in the Mediterranean world before Rome became the overlord?”¹⁸

In contrast to this vision, one dimension of the current crisis is the real possibility that a powerful church (Rome/ ECUSA) might be able to secure acceptance of its doctrinal and ethical stance, despite the disagreement of other less powerful provinces (in the Roman / American global empire) and thus become the defining centre of the Communion. Church history would tell us that any solution that the Commission adopts will not be static but on a trajectory. It must be recognized that one trajectory would be an ECUSA defined communion – an expression of a global Christianity with its cultural and theological centre firmly in western culture. This would not be the World Christianity which Lamin Sanneh commends. Neither would it express the ancient canonical principle that what affects everyone should be decided by everyone.

6. What will this communion witness to in the way it deals with this issue?

6.1 What is the issue? It is not the issue that it was presented with at the end of the primates meeting. The commission was set up in the context of what a significant number of primates regarded was an agreed stand-still on an episcopal consecration until it should report. That stand-still has in the mind of those primates not been observed. Those primates who regarded the

¹⁸ Michael Poon The Communion post-November 2nd 2003 – self-examination from East Asia. www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk

consecration as inevitable joined them all in warning that it would result in a tear in the fabric of the communion.

That tear has now happened. The consecration has taken place. Numbers of bishops and provinces have declared themselves out of communion with the formal leadership of ECUSA as a result.¹⁹ Those in ECUSA who have not received the consecration of Gene Robinson say that they are experiencing a process of imposition on them of strange and erroneous teachings, and

¹⁹ The Primates of the Global South: "A state of impaired communion now exists both within a significant part of ECUSA and between ECUSA and most of the provinces within the Communion. By its actions, ECUSA is held solely responsible for this division. In addition to violating the clear and consistent teaching of the Bible, the consecration directly challenges the common teaching, common practice and common witness within the one Anglican Communion. "

The Archbishop of Tanzania has said that his church will not be in communion with bishops who consecrate a practicing homosexual as bishop, or who ordain a practicing homosexual as a clergyman, or any clergy who bless a same sex union.

The Archbishop of South East Asia: [We are no longer in communion with the Presiding Bishop of ECUSA and all those Bishops and Dioceses \[Appendix A\] who voted for the confirmation of Dr Gene Robinson's election and those who joined in the consecration of the same.](#)

The Church of Kenya will not recognise the ministry of this one Bishop and that "all those churches of our great Communion that have so far deviated from the norms and historic faith of the Church, have by their own action, impaired communion."

The Archbishop of Nigeria has said that his church will boycott all meetings attended by the ECUSA: [By this unfortunate action, they have departed from the faith, order and unity of the Anglican Church. They have impaired Communion](#)

The Archbishop of the Congo: [the Anglican Province of Congo strongly condemns homosexuality and wishes to disassociate itself from relations with Dioceses and Parishes involved in homosexuality.](#)

The Archbishop of the West Indies [As a consequence a state of impaired communion now exists both within the Episcopal Church \(USA\) itself and between the Episcopal Church \(USA\) and the overwhelming majority of the Provinces within the Communion, including the Province of the West Indies.](#)

The Presiding Bishop of the Southern Cone: [this Province now shares only a profoundly impaired communion with ECUSA and, in faithfulness to the Word of God, we cannot accept this consecration as a valid one. Impaired communion means that we cannot share fellowship, ministry, Eucharist or gifts with those who have affirmed or participated in the consecration of Gene Robinson, nor with those who perform or permit blessings of same-sex unions outside historic Christian marriage, nor with any clergy who are sexually active outside marriage.](#)

The Archbishop of Uganda [The Church of the Province of Uganda \(Anglican\) cuts her relationship and Communion with the Episcopal Church of the United States of America \(ECUSA\) on their resolution and consequent action of consecrating and enthroning an openly confessed homosexual](#)

The Archbishop of Central Africa [you have broken our fellowship. To sit with you and meet with you would be a lie. We are not one. We do not share the same faith or Gospel. You should resign and let someone else lead; someone who shares the faith of the Communion-the faith of the church catholic.](#)

The Bishop and diocese of Egypt [In fact, by their actions, they have chosen to step out of communion with the Anglican Communion. It is not those upholding the historical and Biblical positions of the Church who are creating division and disrupting unity](#)

are experiencing a form of witch hunt against them, threatening their property and positions. They find this a strange form of inclusion. Senior visitors to ECUSA indicate that the time has come for the Communion to make a choice between two versions of Anglicanism present in North America.

Three issues have now actually torn the fabric of our communion: the presenting issue of disagreement on sexuality; the political issue of the decision-making process in the Communion, and the issue of authority with reference to scripture and mutual accountability. The commission cannot undertake its deliberations as though that had not happened. While it may be considering impairment of communion in a process of reception, it is actually facing a de facto process of rejection. The Virginia report allows for the possibility of rejection in the process of reception but does not explore or address it.²⁰

So the commission is now meeting not in a context of preparing for what might happen, but in a context of what has happened and the results that have already followed from that. The commission cannot live in a theoretical abstract world of what only existed as possibilities on October 17. It must take into account what has happened since then. It must include in the implications of the ECUSA and New Westminster decisions what has actually happened in the rest of the world as well as in North America. The terms of reference of the Commission have therefore been superseded by events subsequent to it being established. The Commission is now addressing a situation in which communion has been broken from two sides: first by a diocese and province who have put themselves outside the communion by acting on their own admission autonomously outside the agreed decisions of the communion; and second by provinces who have in response declared that they are now formally treating ECUSA's leadership as outside the Communion. An existential break in communion has now taken place. This is to be distinguished from a juridical and legal break, which are the canonical consequences of the prior and actual break. Relationships have been broken with and by ECUSA. ECUSA has forfeited its visas to much of the Anglican Communion. The question is whether its passport is still valid and whether a communion of autonomous provinces can become a world without borders – a contradiction in terms.

Will the commission treat this matter with the serious urgency it requires? A precious fabric of enormous complexity and venerable antiquity, woven from the strands of millions of Christians from many cultures and many centuries, valued and respected throughout the world has been torn. There is no use for the fabric of a torn skirt or shirt, a torn curtain or tablecloth. It must be urgently repaired or replaced. It should be met with embarrassment and urgency.

We are faced with an occasion when many primates perceive that the difficulties caused to them by their actions are not being taken into account, when agreements they thought were in place were broken, when decisions that had been made at the Lambeth Conference are ignored, and the clear and strong advice of the primates meeting in Brazil is flouted. As a result they perceive that this fellowship has been clearly broken. This breaking of communion matters so deeply to them, because it is not a man made fellowship but one brought about by Jesus himself which they value so highly.

²⁰ Virginia report op cit p 38

Does this break entail a breaking of Eucharistic fellowship? If the high point of communion and unity is expressed in the Eucharist, then there is a great obligation to maintain the highest level of Eucharistic fellowship. Unity in and through the Eucharist must not be watered down. The New Testament clearly teaches this. If we have anything against anyone we should first be reconciled with the brother before proceeding to eat the Lord's supper.²¹ Unreconciled people cannot appear together at the table of the Lord. Therefore if that Eucharistic fellowship is to include those who are held to have transgressed against the Lord's fellowship and the bible's teaching, is not that Eucharistic fellowship watered down? Does then the notion of impaired communion, or impaired Eucharistic fellowship make any sense? It sounds like being a little bit pregnant. You are either in communion or not, reconciled or not. Perhaps the term suspended communion may make more sense.

Withdrawal from Eucharistic fellowship reflects on and confirms a fracture of fellowship that some perceive to have already taken place in the previous actions. It is not that a break in eucharistic fellowship is a new break - it represents a break that has already taken place. Paul's confrontation with Peter over his refusal of table fellowship with Gentiles was not a new break, but an expression of a break that had already occurred because Peter "was not acting in line with the truth of the gospel".²² But this confrontation was not a final break - it was to facilitate a reconciliation. Even when Paul urged that a man in the Corinthian church be put out of the fellowship for sleeping with his father's wife, it was for the purpose that "the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord."²³

This paper recommends that the Commission needs to hold its nerve with reference to due and proper processes in the Communion for seeking the mind of the Church with regard to the consecration of practicing homosexuals as bishops and the blessing of same sex unions and recognize as consonant with the teaching of the Anglican church and validate the statements and actions of those Archbishops and others who have repudiated such an action. An emergency situation has been created which requires the suspension (not the cancellation) of full fellowship with those who are out of step, with the goal of eventual reconciliation. The Commission should validate the statements of those who have recognized and pointed out the incoherence of the ECUSA action with the agreed understandings of the communion. It should also validate the statements and actions of those within ECUSA who have raised similar objections. It should say that these statements and actions are neither schismatic nor proto-schismatic. In this way the Commission will be giving respect to the Anglican Communion's own processes of discerning the mind of Christ for the Church. To reduce the level of Communion between most of the churches because of the action of one diocese with the majority vote of only one province would be to let the tail wag the dog.

²¹ Matt.5. 23-24

²² Galatians 2.11-21

²³ I Corinthians 5 1-5

6.2 What is at stake: the Anglican consensus and common ground has been severely undermined.

The Anglican Communion was able to express itself as a global Communion, part of one holy Catholic and apostolic church without a centralized bureaucracy or curia and with a light canonical touch because there was a very clear common ground which all accepted. This common ground and the resulting communion was based on and expressed the communion with and between the Holy Trinity. The common ground was not a lowest common denominator. The scriptures, the creeds and the formularies defined the universal faith held in common. It was therefore possible to build up national churches with the security of knowing that what people were committing themselves to was truly universal. The basis for claiming the Anglican Communion is part of and expresses one, holy, Catholic and apostolic church was the common ground of the universality of the faith which all received. Commitment to Christian faith as a revealed faith in scripture enabled the church to understand the common ground as something that it received and did not create. Commitment to the local expression of the Body of Christ was ipso facto commitment to the global Christian family since the whole of the global was present in the local and vice versa. National churches therefore saw themselves as part of the global Body of Christ sharing one life and expressing their oneness through participation in the Eucharist. There was also commitment to the interpretation of the scripture in the light of the universal tradition of the first five centuries. There was also commitment to engage with the national culture and society to produce a faithful expression of the bible and the gospel in that culture, but not so that culture would become determinative.

The Anglican Communion was able to allow for provincial autonomy in governance because of commitment to this common ground which was truly universal. Provincial autonomy was limited by what conformed to the universal as understood by the rest of the Communion lest the mission of the one God be compromised by legitimizing contradictory actions of its members.²⁴ Because of this commitment to the common ground, the communion was able to function on the basis of relationships and trust in a family of churches. There is no need for a heavy burden of canon law in a family. But remove the common ground and we are only left with canon law, which soon becomes canonical fundamentalism.

This common ground held together the three streams of catholic (including catholic charismatic), evangelical (including evangelical/charismatic) and liberal together in the same church. Evangelicals have developed significantly in their understanding of the social dimension of mission and have become deeply socially involved. The Catholic tradition has received deeply from the input of the charismatic movement.

Appeals to the common ground may provide too many reasons for an overcautious approach to developing the expression of the mission of the God through the Communion. This is precisely where the issue is joined in this current crisis - between those who for biblical reasons and as a prophetic action want to expand the category of the poor and oppressed who are welcomed into the symbolic leadership of the church and those who for biblical reasons see this as

²⁴ See further Impaired Communion - a non-western perspective by Vinay Samuel, Church Times October 2003 and www.anglican-mainstream.net.

fundamentally undermining the very common ground on which the Communion is based. Different narratives about the mission of God and human freedom underlie this conflict.

One narrative is that the theological implication of the consecration is an assault and challenge on the common ground on which the communion is based. Behind the consecration is the aggressive nature of the western culture undermining the notion of universal truth and moral norms. The argument for innovation is that the common ground of universality in truth and moral norms no longer holds in a pluralistic world. Thus Bishop Griswold can say " In that situation (Northern Nigeria) because the Islamic community is absolute in its views, the only way to survive if you are a Christian is to be equally resolute in your theology.... The Church in Nigeria and other places is absolutely obliged, as far as I can see, to take a firm line and say "we find this aberrant and contrary to how we understand tradition and scripture."²⁵

However the Islamic community is absolute in its views both in Northern Nigeria and the State of New York. So the criteria of how the church shapes its response has to do then with demography rather than its common ground of faith, and Christianity surrenders its claim to universality to Islam. Further, such a view implies that the Christians of Northern Nigeria are necessarily accommodating their faith and practice to their own absolutist context for their own safety, whereas in fact their clear witness in their context has often been at great cost.

Why does the leader of ECUSA no longer appear willing to work with the agreed consensus? Why does he want to innovate Christian morals and practice, in contradiction to the stances of Anglicans elsewhere (such as in Northern Nigeria) and yet urge that he is still in the Anglican Communion in fellowship? We have to note that the liberal strand in the Anglican tradition is practically absent in the regions where the Church is growing, and is numerically and financially declining even in its English homeland. How is this strand able to survive? Is it through social action involvement with other agencies, its inherited finances and the power of patronage? Is it possible that the liberal strand sees the growth of the more orthodox, catholic, evangelical and charismatic Anglican churches as a threat to its own power and influence and knows that on the basis of democratic representation it is unable to and therefore unwilling to work for consensus. Might it be that it is using a particular issue to force the issue and claim that the conservative majority in the church is actually oppressive and hegemonic to vulnerable minorities? Is it possible that the liberal tradition is appropriating the language of liberalism and freedom (see below) to consign orthodoxy to rigidity and authoritarianism? Is it possible that the liberal strand is wanting to challenge the universality of the common ground in order to be able to introduce innovations with no fear of being held accountable?

It is very clear that in the current crisis it is the beliefs and practices of the orthodox that are under threat and will be compromised by any formal acceptability of impaired communion as a level of equal being in the communion. That is why many non-western primates have already declared themselves to have broken relationships with ECUSA. It is also clear that those who stand to lose if the Commission maintains the present level of communion are those making innovations that have been already judged to be unacceptable.

²⁵ Presiding over crisis and maybe schism - Interview with Bishop Frank Griswold, www.belief.net/story/138/story_13863_1.html.

These questions must be dealt with by the Commission for the simple reason that all previous decisions of the Communion with reference to the presenting issue have been flouted. There is no reason to believe that this Commission's work will be heeded unless clear bona fides and processes are established that would remove the suspicions of many that the concern to preserve the Anglican Communion at a level less than a federation or even a company (with impaired communion as an acceptable relationship between full members) is driven by concerns to retain institutional power and influence while rejecting the teaching and practice of the Communion.

6.3 Two conflicting narratives of freedom

The previous section has raised questions of institutional power and influence for the simple reason that matters of cultural engagement and expression are not just matters of ideas. Culture is manufactured and driven by engines of culture, by institutions and money. The whole culture of academic scepticism which has pursued the church in the west in the last 100 years comes not from popular culture, but is driven by the scepticism which finds institutional form in the media and universities.

These institutions establish their legitimacy by devising and propagating narratives about themselves. So the media can justify intense criticism of governments even to the extent of being de facto oppositions through the narrative of impartiality and independence. Universities justify teaching young people to be sceptical about all authority through the narrative of independence of mind and thought of autonomous individuals. The notion of autonomous individuals who have to validate their existence by rejecting dependence on all other authorities than themselves is not true to the lived experience of many peoples and cultures, but is heavily invested in by elites in western countries through these institutions.

The institution of the Anglican Communion, precisely because it is set in and engages with culture, is affected by the dominant cultural narratives of those cultures within which it is set. This applies both to all provinces and also to the central governing bodies and institutions. We must ensure therefore that the culture of the central governing bodies and institutions, at the level of instruments of communion are not overly influenced by any one culture.

We need to ask whether the fact that despite the operation of the Communion's decision-making procedures at the Lambeth Conference and Primates level, ECUSA has gone ahead with this action indicates that there is a bias in the central instruments of communion which is able to delegitimise the decisions of these bodies?

In the western culture there is a current war about issues of sexuality. What are the options? There is the option to try and recapture the culture for Christian morality; to try and preserve the Christian culture. However it is questionable whether western culture has ever been Christian or whether such a concept is theologically acceptable. We cannot recover or preserve what we never had. The clock cannot be turned back

There is the option to regard the culture as totally pagan and try and transform it through the gospel. This is the option of those churches which remain separate from engaging with their culture (but of course are completely subject to it) and develop Christian faith in a private domain.

Thirdly there is the option that the Church is not called to baptise or reshape a culture, but to live out God's life in it, to find where God is at work in the culture and evaluate it as to what should be retained, what removed and what transformed. The focus here is the mission of the church in developing the expression of its faith in a particular culture.

The latter has been the characteristically Anglican approach. However in the last 40 years there have developed the hermeneutics of suspicion. This suggests that whenever the church appeals to its tradition or its authoritative teaching, it always makes the wrong judgement. More than that it uses its tradition and authority to mask its own vested interests. So the church is suspect. It must listen to the voice of God present in its culture in the voice of the poor and the marginalised. Thus the voice and interests of those who present themselves as outcast and excluded become the voice of God to the church.

Thus what is happening is that the narrative of freedom for the oppressed is being used with relation to the consecration of Gene Robinson and what it represents for the church. The community which he represents has interpreted freedom as the western culture understands it to represent the freedom of human flourishing in sexual freedom. They experience mainline heterosexual culture, and in particular the culture of the church as rejecting them. Therefore in the name of freedom and the welcome to the marginalised, all the teaching, tradition, and consensus of the church throughout time and space is trumped.

The question is, who is in the margins. As far as the Anglican Communion is concerned most of them are themselves the poor. Who therefore are the poor and marginalised to whom the church should be committed? In the scripture the category of the poor never included those who deviated from the biblical teaching on sexuality. Issues of sexuality were never given a privileged place nor was biblical teaching on morality accommodated to their situation.

The competing narrative of freedom in the scriptures is that human flourishing is to be found as humans seek to conform their will to the will of their creator to discover and express their true identity, meaning and purpose. Our own Communion text is "If you hold to my teaching you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."²⁶ Then we can be truly free to be who we are. Evidence of the truth of this is that in western society, the conception of freedom based on autonomous reason has led to terrible intolerance and totalitarianism as represented by fascism and communism in the twentieth century and the millions of deaths they caused because it was regarded as irrational and inhuman to oppose their iron cages of rationality. It has also led to a current movement towards anarchy in western society since the only authority is now the individual. The call for respecting the autonomy of Anglican provinces to innovate in contravention of the teaching of the scripture and the mind of the global church is an expression of this western notion of freedom. This western narrative of freedom as untrammelled human autonomy is understood from a Christian point of view to be the sin of Adam, the sin of pride. It has also led in the USA to intolerance, a rooting out of the church of those who disagree with the resolutions of the General Convention. We are faced with a contradiction whereby compliance is required of ECUSA parishes to the bishop and the resolutions of the General Convention which are sovereign. But the bishop and the General

²⁶ John 8.32 in full

Convention bear no accountability to comply with any higher law. This situation is only explicable as an expression of sovereignty prevalent in 1540 rather than 2004. It will not be long before such a process would be extended to the wider Anglican Communion who would be forced to accept those who are in good standing with the current ECUSA leadership.

The two-thirds world church does not want to impose its own culture on the west or the western church. But it is saying that just as they in receiving the gospel had to create Christian communities under the rule of Christian teaching to address pagan and immoral practices, so the church today globally must present a clear witness. The church is finally not responsible for a culture, but is responsible for maintaining a clear moral vision. To accommodate itself to any one culture would be destructive of the responsibility the church has to contemporary society. Bishop Griswold's concession to Anglicans in Northern Nigeria actually traps their moral stance as determined by their culture rather than by their obedience to the word of God and the mind of the church.

If therefore the language of freedom for those who reject biblical teaching on sexuality is inadmissible on biblical grounds; if the language of freedom for human flourishing is based on a notion of human autonomy which sets aside the will of God, we may need to conclude that the language of the periphery is being used by those at the centre of the institutional power to legitimize and sacralize their own immoral vision. And the reason they are doing this is because the Anglican church in western society for all its small numbers is a cultural icon. Anglicanism has been chaplain to the Anglo culture and as a church is over-represented in its English and North American national establishments. It also has an international worldwide communion. It is at the heart of Anglo culture. It is a great prize to capture its symbols and soul for the cause of religious and cultural sanction for homosexual practice.

We are dealing here with the aims of those who want to exercise cultural power. Culture is not produced in the mass or by the masses. It is produced by institutions of power as we have noted. What we are seeing is a process of universalizing the preferences of an elite in North American society (in the leadership but clearly not in the whole membership of ECUSA), first within its own society and then through the Anglican Communion in the world. It is no accident that these issues are focused on the consecration of a bishop. Such preferences of elites are always suspect in the bible, since they are always promoted to protect them from wider criticism and perpetuate their power. It is imperative in a church which is truly universal and which bears good news to the poor to resist these preferences in the interests of preserving the universal nature of the gospel.

The non-western churches received biblical morality as the morality of a universal faith. They received this in the past through the western church with all the weight of imperialism behind it. But they subjected their own cultural preferences to that faith and morality not only because it represented the might of a supposedly successful culture, but because it represented a universal faith in the will of the one God for all the peoples of the earth witnessed to in the experience of the church of all the ages. This they held on to and embraced beyond the end of the age of empire. The non-western churches now find that those Christians who were highly critical of the western missionary movement for imposing external standards on those of other cultures are themselves now seeking to impose their own elite preferences on the world Anglican Communion from the centre of world economic power.

This brings us to the economic issues that are raised and expressed in this crisis.

7. What does the Communion witness to by who pays for it?

Economic questions cannot be avoided. Paul made economic support for the Jerusalem church part of the expression of fellowship and gratitude that the Gentile churches were to show to the Jewish Christians.²⁷ The fundamental issue then as now is the issue of mutual respect. The older Jerusalem church needed to learn to receive from its new offshoots in alien and hostile cultures.

The refusal of the Province of Uganda to accept any financial gift from ECUSA was to show that they were utterly serious in refusing any indication that while they disapproved of ECUSA's actions they were content to use their money. This would have led to them not being respected.

Could it be suggested that the accounting of the communion be done in terms of its total turnover and the amount that each province delivers itself be calculated as an expression of its national annual salary (rather than in terms of a single global currency). Thus for example the Province of Uganda might cost the salary of 1 million Ugandan working days of its average national salary, and the Province of Canterbury on 100,000 working days of the average national salary of its members. We would then see who contributes most to the activities of the communion. That would be an important step to giving respect to the extent to which provinces in the two-thirds world fund themselves in their normal church life. To ensure that this respect continues and grows, the question of how the interconnection between provinces is funded must be totally divorced from any issue of governance or instrument of communion. For currently the notion that the operation of the Communion is funded by ECUSA is rightly or wrongly perceived to be part of the equation of dis-ease. The current situation of the supposed economic role of the central ECUSA bureaucracy in the communion must be addressed head on and totally divorced from the way in which the instruments of communion work.

8. The case made in this paper presents the following challenges to the innovators

The claim that provinces have untrammelled autonomy such that contradictory ethical practice is legitimized on the grounds of cultural appropriateness leads to there being different gods for each culture, fatally undermines the claim of the Christian faith to be a universal faith, the ability of Christians to fulfill the dominical command "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you", and the integrity of the dominical promise that the "Spirit would convince the world of sin and of righteousness and judgment". Witness to the unity of the one triune creator God of all the earth by his people would be fatally compromised. A church which accepted such contradictory practice would be a witness to different tribal gods.

Why should such a devastating challenge be made to the universality of the Christian faith unless people wanted to introduce innovations with no risk of being held accountable?

²⁷ 1 Cor 16. 2-3; 2 Cor 8-9.

The claim for untrammelled autonomy undermines the reality of communion which assumes and expresses the ability of Christians from different cultures and histories of faith to recognize in each other true Christian identity.

Were a claim to redefine communion to allow for untrammelled autonomy from a powerful western culture to succeed in the face of the already expressed objections, it would raise questions about how the central institutions of the Anglican Communion are managed and in whose interests. How could the Communion in any sense claim to represent good news to the economically poor when their opinions and objections are discounted? It would announce that the Anglican Communion is merely an extension of a form of elite western Christianity around the globe, run in its interests, and that those who associated with it were treated as dependent adolescents. It would be an insult to the self-respect of people in the very cultures which the Anglican tradition in its theological processes claims to take seriously as part of its theological method. Would the creator God be so demeaning of the dignity of his non-western people and their cultures? The Anglican Communion would have become as insensitive to national cultures and conscience as the medieval Roman Church from which it separated.

The claim for untrammelled autonomy in a situation where clear objections have been raised undermines the communion that we are called to enjoy and express at the Eucharist. The world knows that there are major disagreements on fundamental matters over which relationships have been sundered. If the eucharist is still celebrated together with those who have stepped beyond the agreed family framework, it will speak of less than the full reconciliation and forgiveness that God extends through the work of Christ on the cross. Our reconciliation together is meant to express and reflect the reconciliation that God achieved in Christ. That is why reconciliation is required between people and repentance is required before the Lord before participating. That is why we celebrate the peace before we receive the bread and the wine. How can we repent before God whom we have not seen if we do not repent before and with the brother or sister whom we have seen?

The claim for untrammelled autonomy rewrites the inter-cultural consultative processes which the Anglican Communion has determined to discern the mind of Christ for his Church.

The claim to allow for legitimate diversity does not appear to apply within ECUSA to those who disagree with these innovations. Is there not a fundamental contradiction here revealing the very intolerance of which they are accusing others?

The innovation claims are made on the basis of an understanding of human freedom which runs counter to that which is given us in the scriptures. This “innovative” truth will not make anyone free. Such an expression of human freedom in the twentieth century was found to be disastrous for human flourishing. The Anglican Communion is now being asked to embrace untrammelled human autonomy as fundamental to its life.

9. Where is the communion going?

By its decisions the Commission will affect our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. God works across the generations. Will the Commission set the communion on a course of keeping an open door for innovations driven by those with the ability to do so in response to the

changing pressures of western culture; will the Commission set the Communion on a road no longer to be one, holy Catholic and apostolic church believing and witnessing in its unity to the one triune God, but rather to where the logic of untrammelled provincial autonomy seems to point, to be many individual churches believing in different gods?

Or will the Commission see the future of the Communion in the places where it is growing through the witness of the Alpha and Emmaus courses, the joyful and courageous witness of churches like Uganda, Kenya and Nigeria? Will the Commission enable the communion to be able to set limits to diversity and ensure that those limits are observed?

What vision will the decision of the Commission present of a mission centred Communion in 2030? Will it be of a genuinely world-wide communion, expressive of one Lord, one faith and one baptism, reflected in shared understanding of doctrine, faith and practice? Will it under God's grace be transforming both its own members and the diverse social conditions in which those members live and move? Will it be a highly respected community, consulted in transnational civic society on a par even with the United Nations, to serve the world by manifesting the kingdom and bringing the good news of the kingdom to the poor wherever they are to be found?

What expression of unity will the decision of the Commission represent? The Anglican Communion focuses its unity on relationships and spiritual fellowship with a light canonical hold rather than on precise formulations and defined structures. This has allowed it to become the church of the people in many diverse cultures. But its strength to do this resides in its unity in Christ, at the foot of the cross, in obedience to the scriptures. The less unity is based on this biblical foundation, the more there will be a need for structures to become ever tighter lest the organisation fall apart.

To what kingdom then will the communion be a witness? Will it be the kingdom of God or witness to another king, the sovereignty of human autonomy?

10. Conclusion

This paper calls on the Commission to

1. **Begin from the mission of God** which is to define the being and doing of the church
2. **Address the question that now faces the communion** following the precipitate action of consecration and the subsequent responses.
3. **Recognise the situation in ECUSA as an emergency situation** which requires the suspension (not the cancellation) of full fellowship with those who are out of step, with the goal of eventual reconciliation.
4. **Validate the statements** of those who have recognised and pointed out the incoherence of the ECUSA action with the agreed understandings of the communion.

5. **Validate the statements and actions of those within ECUSA who have raised similar objections.** They should say that these statements and actions are neither schismatic nor proto-schismatic.
6. **Recognise the nature of the choices before it**, choices which are both theological and which represent matters of social and economic disparity between the disputing parties;
 - for World Christianity or Global Christianity
 - For respecting, having confidence in and standing by the processes and decisions of the church seeking the mind of Christ on these matters in intense study and prayer for over ten years or for introducing innovations which have yet to commend themselves to the Communion as a whole.
 - for maturity or adolescence (in which some are regarded as yet to develop to the level of others in their understanding).
 - For Anglo-centricity or genuine respect for different centres of theological wisdom and action.
 - for Communion defined by mission or by preserving the church as one particular type of social institution reflecting a dominant culture;
 - for maintaining in the relationships of the Anglican Communion as high an expression of communion that our hearts long for, that expresses the unity of the persons in the trinity and that represents and calls for our transformation, or settling for sub-optimal ethics in a pluralistic world.
 - Communion from below or Communion from above;
 - to relate to a world defined by networks and localities or only by geography;
 - for truth as truth as constructed or truth as received to express a clear moral vision.
 - For understanding freedom as untrammelled human autonomy or freedom to flourish in accord with the will of our creator.
 - For talking about this as an issue of transformation and discipline, or as an issue of affirmation, inclusion and acceptance of sub-optimal ethics.

These are the key choices because what the Commission recommends will witness to its vision and understanding of what the Communion is and is to be. The choices are as deep as those between Paul and the Judaizers in the first century about the acceptability of the Gentile Christians as equal heirs of the promise to Abraham. If these choices can be made in coherence with the mission of God, and in demonstrating appropriate respect to churches in cultures that are economically and socially very disparate then the current situation will not be a cause of breaking of the Communion but will set the stage for a new chapter of greater obedience and effectiveness. For it was through respect given to those regarded as newcomers, less schooled in the traditions and theology of the Hebrew Christian tradition, into the issues of power, theology and leadership, that the Jewish Christians could discover their own heritage. It will be as we genuinely include in Anglican identities the theological and missiological contributions from Anglican traditions other than English Catholic and liberal traditions that we will discover the true nature of the identity of the Anglican Communion. It is the solemn task of this Commission to decide whether to enable or forestall that process.

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