

Towards a Symphony of Instruments:

A Historical and Theological Consideration of the Instruments of Communion of the Anglican Communion

A Working Paper

prepared by

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Unity, Faith & Order

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the unity and cohesion of the Anglican Communion by offering an exposition and reappraisal of the role of the four Instruments of Communion in the common life of the Communion. The Commission hopes that this short study will help Anglicans throughout the world to understand the Instruments better and then to go on to re-focus them in the service of our common life. Our hope is that a fuller appreciation of the nature and function of the Instruments will lead to a deepening of our communion with God the Holy Trinity in worship and with one another in fellowship and to renewed energy for mission and service in a world beloved of God.

In the task of mission and evangelization Anglicans are guided by the widely accepted Five Marks of Mission. These are set out and expounded in the text of the Anglican Communion Covenant (section 2):

‘to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God’
and to bring all to repentance and faith;

‘to teach, baptize and nurture new believers’, making
disciples of all nations (Mt 28.19) through the
quickenning power of the Holy Spirit and drawing
them into the one Body of Christ whose faith, calling,

and hope are one in the Lord (Eph 4.4–6);

‘to respond to human need by loving service’,
disclosing God’s reign through humble ministry to
those most needy (Mk 10.42–45; Mt 18.4, 25.31–45);

‘to seek to transform unjust structures of society’ as the
Church stands vigilantly with Christ proclaiming both
judgement and salvation to the nations of the world,
and manifesting through our actions on behalf of
God’s righteousness the Spirit’s transfiguring power;

‘to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and to
sustain and renew the life of the earth’ as essential
aspects of our mission in communion.

1 The Ecclesiology of the Anglican Communion

1.1 It may be helpful to start with a very basic question that is rarely asked when divisive issues within the Communion are being aired. The question is, ‘What is the Anglican Communion?’ What is it theologically speaking, or more specifically, ecclesiology speaking? Even official Anglican reports do not always address this rather obvious question.¹ The way in which we think and talk about the Communion

¹ Bruce Kaye, *Conflict and the Practice of Christian Faith: The Anglican Experiment*

affects the way that we act with regard to the Communion. Uncertainty about what exactly the Communion is, or aspires to be, is bound to affect our conversation within the Communion about matters of unity, authority, autonomy, and mutual responsibility. It is also bound to have an impact on our ecumenical relations and dialogues. Before looking at the Instruments of Communion in themselves, we should ask, ‘What is the nature of our communion as Anglicans?’; only then should we tackle the question, ‘What instruments are appropriate to realize and sustain this communion?’²

1.2 So what sort of animal is the Anglican Communion? Is it, for the sake of argument, an international organization, a kind of NGO, that tries to do useful work throughout the world and brings people together in a common cause, but whose *raison d’être* is essentially practical and pragmatic? Or is it more like a voluntary organization or society that groups of people can opt into or out of as it suits them, depending on whether it can offer them something that appeals to their taste or

(Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009; Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2011), 122, points out that neither the *Windsor Report* nor the earlier *Virginia Report* dealt with this question.

² See Michael Poon, ‘The Anglican Communion as Communion of Churches: On the Historic Significance of the Anglican Covenant’, 2010, paper circulated to the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission for Unity, Faith and Order (IASCUFO).

preferences? Or is it in truth an expression of the Christian Church—the Church that is the visible manifestation of the mystical Body of Christ, into which we have been placed by the prevenient action of God the Holy Spirit through the power of word and sacrament and in which we are bound together in a unity that is God-given? The consistent and unwavering testimony of the historic Anglican formularies, the Lambeth Conference, and individual Anglican theologians has been that the Churches of the Anglican Communion belong to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ. It is against the background of that witness that we need to consider what the Anglican Communion is in reality.

1.3 The Anglican Communion is sometimes referred to as a ‘church’—hence the common expression ‘the Anglican Church’. Sometimes there is a journalistic ploy going on here: the British media in particular love to conflate the Church of England and the whole Communion and to play on the tensions and conflicts of both. The fact that the Archbishop of Canterbury is both Primate of All England and the president of certain of the Instruments of Communion lends itself to this kind of journalistic sleight of hand.

1.4 Sometimes those speaking for Anglicanism also refer to the Communion as a church, so endorsing the journalistic phrase ‘the Anglican Church’. The tendency to do this is understandable. When there is a strong sense of ecclesial density, as there is in the Lambeth Conference, for example, it is easy to slip into the language of ‘church’.

There is a powerful sense of ‘being the church’ together, and that is not an illusion because the Anglican Communion contains strong elements of ecclesiality, of a church-like character.

1.5 So is the Anglican Communion itself rightly described as a church? First, it is important to emphasize that the Anglican Communion has a strong ecclesial character. In the New Testament, the Church is described in several metaphors: the living Body of Christ, the chosen people of God, the immaculate bride of Christ, a royal, prophetic priesthood, and the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Communion surely partakes of the nature of the Church in this biblical sense.

1.6 Anglicans speak of the Church in four main ways: as the universal Church (the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church); as the diocese; as the parish or congregation; and as national or regional groupings of dioceses. In an episcopally ordered polity, such as that of the Anglican Communion, the fundamental building block of the Church is the diocese, considered as the portion of the people of God that is entrusted to the pastoral care of the bishop as its chief pastor, working collegially with the other pastors, the parish and cathedral clergy. The faithful are gathered by their bishop through the ministry of the word, the sacraments, and pastoral care. Symbolically, if not always literally, they are gathered around the bishop. The diocese is the locus or place of the bishop’s ministry and is sometimes referred to, ecclesialogically speaking, as ‘the local church’. Of course, a diocese is made up of those

parishes or congregations that fall within its geographical bounds, but those parishes or congregations are not independent of the diocese in which they are placed, but depend for their vital ministry of word, sacrament, and pastoral care on what the bishop provides or permits and are under the oversight and jurisdiction of the bishop. So although for most Anglicans the parish is closer to home and more immediate in their experience than the diocese, looked at ecclesiologically the diocese is the fundamental unit of the Church.

1.7 In the sixteenth century the language of ‘particular churches’ proved useful to distinguish the Reformation understanding of the integrity of national churches, particularly the Church of England, from the Roman Catholic understanding of one holy Roman Church which extended into various nations and was in principle (and is now in reality) universal. For the Reformers, the Church of Rome was one ‘particular church’ among others.³ The Lambeth Conference of 1930 also spoke of the Churches of the Communion as ‘particular or national churches’ (resolution 49).⁴

³ Article 19 of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion mentions the patriarchal Churches of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, and Rome. Article 34 refers to ‘every particular or national church’.

⁴ Roger Coleman (ed.), *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences 1867–1988* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1992), 83.

1.8 When the Churches of the Anglican Communion come together to carry out their essential activities as churches—proclaiming the gospel, teaching the faith, celebrating the sacraments, exercising pastoral care and oversight, engaging in conciliar consultation—these activities impart an ecclesial character to their common life. The Anglican Communion has a common faith, grounded in the Holy Scriptures, inscribed in the ecumenical creeds, and supported by the historic formularies. It has a common ordained ministry in the historic threefold order of bishops, priests, and deacons (albeit with some impairment with regard to interchangeability, because Anglican Churches are not all in the same place at a given time with regard to the question of whether women should be ordained to the threefold ministry). It has a common sacramental life that involves mutual eucharistic hospitality and (subject to that degree of impairment that has already been mentioned) interchangeable eucharistic presidency. It has conciliar structures for consultation, discernment of God’s will, and decision-making about its common life. The ecclesial character of Anglicanism can be strongly affirmed; it helps to determine what the Anglican Communion is and should therefore shape its Instruments of Communion. But does that make the Anglican Communion a ‘church’ as such?

1.9 In fact, the various elements that contribute to the ecclesial character of the Communion are not sufficient to make the Anglican

Communion a single church. Strictly speaking the Anglican Communion is not a church. The term 'the Anglican Church' is a misnomer. There is no such entity as 'the Anglican Church', unless that expression refers to an Anglican Church in a particular country. The Anglican Communion is not formally constituted as a church. To be a duly constituted church requires not only many informal links and ligaments that bind it together as one community, but also more formal structures. In particular, a church needs a unified structure of oversight, embedded in a common discipline or law which is enforceable as a last resort. A church also requires a coherent overall policy with regard to its liturgy, its doctrinal and ethical teaching, and the question of who can be ordained. Although the Anglican Communion is sustained by several informal links and connections (the various networks such as the Network for Inter Faith Concerns, diocesan companion links, the Anglican Alliance supporting shared relief and development work, theological education exchanges, the mission agencies, and not least the Mothers' Union), more formal, constitutional provisions, sufficient to sustain a church, do not exist in the Anglican Communion.

1.10 Each member Church of the Anglican Communion has its own canons (though there is significant overlap between them)⁵ and its own

⁵ See *The Principles of Canon Law Common to the Churches of the Anglican Communion* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2008); Norman Doe, *Canon Law in the Anglican Communion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

liturgy (though with a common root and template in the Book of Common Prayer, and much family resemblance).⁶ Moreover, each Church takes responsibility for its doctrinal and ethical teaching (though there is a common focus in the Anglican and broader Christian tradition), and each Church decides what categories of person it will ordain or not ordain. A Church must maintain discipline on the basis of its canons, a discipline that is carried into effect through its structures of oversight. But the Anglican Communion does not have any way of ensuring that, for example, a recommendation agreed by the Lambeth Conference or the Primates' Meeting is implemented across the Communion.

1.11 If the Anglican Communion clearly has a profoundly ecclesial character, yet is not formally constituted as a church, what does that make it? The answer is not far to seek. The Anglican Communion today is precisely what it has consistently defined itself to be, that is to say a communion or fellowship of Churches. It is made up of Churches that are in a particular relationship to each other, a relationship of ecclesial communion. What does this mean?

1998).

⁶ Paul Avis, 'The Book of Common Prayer and Anglicanism: Worship and Belief', in Stephen Platten and Christopher Woods (eds), *Comfortable Words: Polity and Piety and the Book of Common Prayer* (London: Canterbury Press, 2011), 133–51.

1.12 The relationship of communion between certain Churches is to be understood as a particular expression of the *koinonia*, the sharing, the having-in-common and mutual participation about which much is said in the New Testament.⁷ In English-language Bibles *koinonia* is translated as fellowship, communion, participation, or sharing. After the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the new converts ‘continued in the apostles’ teaching and *koinonia*’ (Acts 2.42). St Paul draws out the mystery of the Lord’s Supper when he states that the cup of blessing is a *koinonia* in the blood of Christ and the bread that is broken is a *koinonia* in the Body of Christ (1 Cor 10.16). Paul concludes his Second Letter to the Corinthians with an early trinitarian blessing that includes the words ‘the *koinonia* of the Holy Spirit’ (2 Cor 13.13). He thanks God for the Philippian Christians’ very practical *koinonia* in supporting his ministry of the gospel (Phil 1.5). The author of the First Letter of John writes to the recipients of his letter ‘that you may have *koinonia* with us and ... with the Father and with his Son’ (1 Jn 1.3). In the Farewell Discourses of St John’s Gospel, the image of the vine and the language of the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son and of the disciples in both, as they abide in his love and his truth, are speaking the language of *koinonia* (Jn 14–17). The communion or fellowship that Christians enjoy with God and with one

⁷ See Anglican–Roman Catholic International Commission (ARCIC), *Church as Communion* (London: SPCK/CTS, 1990).

another in the Body of Christ is the gift of God and the fruit of Christ's saving work. The World Council of Churches (WCC) Faith and Order document 'The Nature and Mission of the Church' puts that point like this:

31. It is only by virtue of God's gift of grace through Jesus Christ that deep, lasting communion is made possible; by faith and baptism, persons participate in the mystery of Christ's death, burial and resurrection (cf. Phil. 3:10–11). United to Christ, through the Holy Spirit, they are thus joined to all who are 'in Christ': they belong to the communion—the new community of the risen Lord. Because *koinonia* is a participation in Christ crucified and risen, it is also part of the mission of the Church to share in the sufferings and hopes of humankind.⁸

The report goes on to describe the manifold expressions of communion in the life of the Church:

32. Visible and tangible signs of the new life of communion are expressed in receiving and sharing the faith of the apostles; breaking and sharing the

⁸ 'The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement', Faith and Order Paper 198, World Council of Churches, December 2005.

Eucharistic bread; praying with and for one another and for the needs of the world; serving one another in love; participating in each other's joys and sorrows; giving material aid; proclaiming and witnessing to the good news in mission and working together for justice and peace. The communion of the Church consists not of independent individuals but of persons in community, all of whom contribute to its flourishing.

'The Nature and Mission of the Church' also brings out the wider, cosmic scope of the communion that is the gift of God through Jesus Christ:

33. The Church exists for the glory and praise of God, to serve the reconciliation of humankind, in obedience to the command of Christ. It is the will of God that the communion in Christ, which is realised in the Church, should embrace the whole creation (cf. Eph 1:10).

When we map this fundamental reality of communion (*koinonia*) on to the relationship between Churches, we see that communion involves the three dimensions of recognition, commitment, and participation: firstly, recognition of one another, on the basis of apostolic faith and order, as sister Churches belonging to the one holy catholic and apostolic Church; secondly, mutual commitment to live and act together in fellowship and to do this through appropriate conciliar

channels; and, thirdly, unrestricted mutual participation in the sacramental life of the Church, that is to say, a common baptism and a shared Eucharist celebrated by a common ordained ministry. These three dimensions of mutual recognition as Churches, mutual commitment, and mutual sacramental participation are the key components of ecclesial communion.

1.13 So we may say that the Anglican Communion is a particular expression—moulded by history, geography, culture, and politics, as well as by doctrine, prayer, and worship—of communion. It participates in the communion that is the deepest reality of the triune God and of God's relationship with humankind and of the relationship of humans with one another in God. Because it is constituted as a communion of Churches, the Anglican Communion models in a specific way the unity or communion of the one Church of Jesus Christ. It reaches out towards the ultimate eschatological unity of the Church in the purposes of God. And it makes a significant contribution to the quest for church unity in fulfilment of Christ's high-priestly prayer and the apostles' frequent exhortations to the New Testament communities that they should live in harmony and unity with one another. Although the Communion is not constituted as a single church, it has an ecclesial character. All that we do in our Communion life is done, so to speak, on behalf of the Church of Christ. As a Commission we believe that the Communion should seek to behave more like a church. It should want to be more church-like. It should be moving in a churchward

direction. While the autonomy of the Churches of the Communion must be upheld, their interdependence calls them to act together as one in the fellowship of Christ's Church.

1.14 However, the experience of mutuality in the Spirit and in the means of grace that the Anglican Communion has stood for historically and still aspires to realize cannot be sustained without a structure. A relationship of communion requires a *polity*—that is to say a set of properly constituted structures or instruments to facilitate the common life that the Communion has freely agreed on, instruments that will enable the Communion to carry out its common tasks. We might say that polity is the concrete application of ecclesiology to the organization of the Church; or, looking at it another way, that ecclesiology is theological reflection on the whole life of the Churches, including their polity. Polity is a proper concern of the Church, deserving of its best study and reflection.⁹ Theological reflection on polity calls for a high level of spiritual gifts and skills. Richard Hooker's *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, written in the late sixteenth century, models this high calling. But what sort of polity is appropriate to Anglicanism today? The polity of the Anglican Communion as such is located to a large extent in its 'Instruments of Communion', as the *Windsor Report*

⁹ As Philip Turner has underlined: 'Communion, Order, and Dissent',

www.anglicancommunioninstitute.com/2010/02/communion-order-and-dissent,

accessed 11 November 2015.

and the Anglican Communion Covenant describe them. So what sort of ‘Instruments of Communion’ do we need? Can we suggest some criteria?

1.15 First and foremost, the instruments that structure Anglican polity should be ecclesologically and missiologically appropriate and effective. That is to say, the instruments need to be suited to *the nature and mission of the Christian Church*, to its divine commission and ordering, and to its place in the mission of God. The polity of any church or family of churches should be consonant with fundamental ecclesiology and missiology. The way in which the churches structure themselves and their common life cannot be divorced from their mission. As Dan Hardy puts it, ‘Anglican polity is based on a humble confidence in Anglican Christianity as a mediation of the engagement of the triune God with the world.’¹⁰ Anglican polity should be capable of effectively serving God’s ways with the world.

1.16 Secondly, Anglican polity should honour the God-given constitution of the Church of Christ by giving a central place to *word and sacrament*. The Christian Church is created and sustained by the power of word and sacrament working together and by the ministry that serves them. The ministry of the word consists of the interpretation, exposition, and application of Scripture in the light of

¹⁰ Daniel W. Hardy, *Finding the Church* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 158–9.

the resources that the Christian tradition can bring to bear and in dialogue with contemporary culture and with other relevant disciplines. Theological reflection, grounded in the Scriptures, should be central to our common life as Anglicans. Our first priority should be to submit ourselves corporately to formation by the word of God over time.¹¹ Even though we cannot agree on everything, we should continue to gather around the open page of Scripture in the expectation that God has more light and truth yet to break forth from his holy word. But the sacramental character of Anglican common life is also vital. Our communion is essentially eucharistic. The conciliar life of the Christian Church is premised on eucharistic communion. The councils of the Church, at every level, are eucharistic events, and the Anglican Communion is a eucharistic community.¹²

1.17 Thirdly, the Instruments of Communion should be adapted to the nature of the Anglican Communion as a specific *historically contingent* expression of the Church. They should take seriously the concrete, diverse reality of the Communion as it has emerged in history across the world. There is a particular experience or range of experiences of what it is to be Anglican. Anglicans believe that, notwithstanding all

¹¹ Ephraim Radner and Philip Turner, *The Fate of Communion: The Agony of Anglicanism and the Future of a Global Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006).

¹² See Hardy, *Finding the Church*, 156.

their mistakes and failings, the Communion has been led and guided by the Holy Spirit to bear witness to Christian truth in word and deed and in the way it has expressed communion between Christians and churches. The instruments should be realistic and workable, grounded in Anglican experience, and not just a beautiful dream. But they should not be absolutized: Anglican conciliar structures came into being at a certain point to meet the needs of that time. They have evolved since then and should continue to develop to meet fresh challenges.

1.18 Fourthly, the Instruments should be designed *to serve churches*. As they do their work, they need to recognize that the Anglican Communion, though not formally a church itself, is made up of churches. What is important about the Anglican Communion is that it is composed of churches in communion. A church is not necessarily the same as a province. The term ‘province’ is sometimes convenient, but it can become misleading if it is over-used. Unlike the word ‘church’, ‘province’ is not a biblical or theological term, but is borrowed from the administrative division of the Roman Empire. There is nothing wrong with that as such, and because ‘province’ suggests a geographically discrete part of a larger whole it resonates to some extent with the reality of Anglicanism. But it also plays into the damaging misconception that the Anglican Communion is constituted as a global church with various local branches that report to head office, so to speak. The term ‘province’, in any context, has connotations of relation to the centre; the province is not the centre,

but is peripheral. The use of the term ‘province’ for the member bodies of the Communion seems to have crept into Anglican discourse partly by accident.¹³ In Anglican ecclesiology the so-called ‘provinces’ are more properly understood as churches. There are exceptions and anomalies: there are provinces that are made up of more than one particular or national church; some churches consist of more than one province; and some member Churches of the Communion are legally styled ‘the Province of ...’. Nevertheless, the important point is that they are ‘churches’, with all the privileges and responsibilities of churches.

1.19 Now *churches* have responsibilities both to their own mission context and to the whole Church, the Church Catholic. Their responsibility to their mission context points to the truth in the ‘autonomy’ of the member Churches of the Communion that is often appealed to; the member Churches of the Communion are, without

¹³ See Colin J. Podmore, *Aspects of Anglican Identity* (London: Church House Publishing, 2005), 69–70: ‘Resolution 52 of the 1930 [Lambeth] conference had been clear about the distinction between a province and a church, approving “the association of Dioceses or Provinces in the larger unity of a ‘national Church.’” In fact, however, all of the autonomous Anglican churches formed after 1930 consisted of single provinces, and as their number grew, so did the solecism of referring to each member church of the Anglican Communion as “a province”, however many provinces it actually comprised.’

question, self-governing Churches. Their responsibility to the wider Church points to the truth in the ‘interdependence’ of the member Churches that is sometimes invoked; though self-governing, they are neither self-sufficient nor solitary. From time to time these two spheres of responsibility, the local and the universal, come into conflict. When churches are in communion, with the mutual commitment that that entails to maintain the common sacramental and conciliar life, their responsibility to govern themselves can pull in one direction and their responsibility to consider the common good of the wider fellowship can pull in another direction. That tension is something that needs to be worked out by member Churches in dialogue with the wider fellowship. But in this situation member Churches must always act as *churches*, embodiments of the Body of Christ, and that means remembering at all times that they are placed by God in a relationship of communion with other churches within the universal Church. To adapt the seventeenth-century poet and Dean of St Paul’s Cathedral, John Donne, no *church* is ‘an island, entire of itself.

1.20 Fifthly, churches are bound together by certain *bonds of communion*. Today we are understandably suspicious of the image of bonds. Just a few years ago some of us celebrated the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade in certain parts of the world. As churches we affirm the equal worth, ability, and dignity of all people. We rightly emphasize that the gospel brings liberation and that Christ sets us free. Yes, free from oppression, free from sin, free from self-obsession, but

not free from mutual care! St Paul called himself the slave of Christ. Martin Luther wrote in his treatise of 1520 *On the Freedom of a Christian*: ‘A Christian is a perfectly free lord, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant, subject to all.’¹⁴ We are bound together in mutual care in the service of Christ. Anglicans have sometimes spoken of ‘the bonds of affection’, and when there is genuine affection between Anglicans (of which there is a great deal) that is a cause for rejoicing. But in times of tension affection is a rather weak and all too human thing on which to base what holds us together as Anglicans. The fundamental ties are ‘bonds of communion’, and the Instruments of Communion are intended to make these effective and fruitful.

1.21 Sixthly, Anglican polity and its structures, the bonds of communion, should express and embody *the conciliar nature of the Christian Church*. Conciliarity stands for all the ways in which the Church consults within itself about its life and mission by gathering together in representative ways to wait upon God in prayer, especially with regard to divisive issues. Since the Church is bound to do this continually, conciliarity is an essential dimension of the Church’s being and an expression of its communion. The WCC Canberra Assembly of 1991, building particularly on the 1975 Nairobi Assembly’s concept of

¹⁴ *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 596.

‘conciliar fellowship’, underlined the conciliar dimension of the Church’s communion:

The goal of the search for full communion is realized when all the churches are able to recognize in one another the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church in its fullness. This full communion will be expressed on the local and the universal levels through conciliar forms of life and action. In such communion churches are bound in all aspects of their life together at all levels in confessing the one faith and engaging in worship and witness, deliberation and action.¹⁵

Conciliarity stands for the whole Church sharing responsibility for its well-being and is an ongoing activity of the Church. It requires patient study and dialogue, gifts of empathy, a sense of perspective, and plenty of time. Radner and Turner have aptly described conciliarity as a process of submitting ourselves to the whole body over time.¹⁶

1.22 The Council of Jerusalem of Acts 15 is often seen as the first Church council. The councils of the early Church gave us the ecumenical creeds. After the formal breach between East and West in

¹⁵ The Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches, ‘The Unity of the Church: Gift and Calling’, Canberra, 1991, 2.1.

¹⁶ Radner and Turner, *The Fate of Communion*, 12.

1054, Western councils ceased to be representative of the whole Church. In the late Middle Ages theological reflection on the conciliar character of the Church received a major impetus in reaction to an unprecedented trauma, the Great Schism of the West. The Schism was caused by the split in the papacy that began in 1378, where there were first two, then three, claimants to the papal throne, and continued until 1417 when the Council of Constance re-unified the papacy. When the sixteenth-century Reformers appealed to, and prepared for, a General Council, they were continuing the conciliar tradition of the Western Church. The Reformers wanted a free and representative council to reform abuses in the Church and to tackle the divisions of their time. Anglicans acknowledge that general councils, though not infallible, have very considerable authority. The mainstream churches today express the essentially conciliar nature of the Church in ways that, in varying degrees, are representative and constitutional and that require consent, according to their polity. When Christians come together in council or synod they should have a sense that they have been convened by the Holy Spirit and should therefore prayerfully seek the will of God for God's Church.¹⁷

¹⁷ See further on conciliarity Paul Avis, *Beyond the Reformation? Authority, Primacy and Unity in the Conciliar Tradition* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2006); Francis Oakley, *The Conciliarist Tradition: Constitutionalism in the Catholic Church, 1300–1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Paul Valliere, *Conciliarism: A History of Decision-Making in the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

1.23 Finally, in this ‘conciliar economy’¹⁸ *all Christians play their part according to their calling, whether lay or ordained*, whether bishop, priest, or deacon. As Dan Hardy says, polity should ‘incorporate all the people of God in their different callings and situations in the mission of the Church’.¹⁹ The whole body shares responsibility but comes together in a representative way to take counsel. Within the body there are particular ministries. The apostolic ministry is set within an apostolic community.²⁰ By virtue of their calling and ordination bishops have a special but not exclusive responsibility for faith and order, doctrine, and worship. But bishops are bound to consult the faithful and to seek both their wisdom and their consent (*consensus fidelium*). The unity of bishops and people enables conciliarity to be exercised in personal, collegial, and communal ways.²¹ The personal element provides

2012); Norman Tanner, *The Church in Council: Conciliar Movements, Religious Practice and the Papacy from Nicaea to Vatican II* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2011).

¹⁸ See Radner and Turner, *The Fate of Communion*, 122.

¹⁹ Hardy, *Finding the Church*, 262.

²⁰ See Paul Avis, *A Ministry Shaped by Mission* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2005).

²¹ See *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), M26.

leadership; the collegial element shares responsibility and decision-making; the communal dimension facilitates consultation and allows consent to be given or withheld.

1.24 In the life of the Anglican Communion as a whole a *personal* ministry of leadership is provided by the Archbishop of Canterbury; the *collegiality* of the bishops is expressed in the Lambeth Conference and the Primates' Meeting; and the *communal* dimension, where representation necessarily comes strongly into play, is provided by the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC). Although the roles of the various Instruments of Communion have evolved in response to historical developments, they do embody essential principles of ecclesiastical polity. However, that does not of course mean that they always work as effectively as they might or that they do not need to be renewed. In the discussion that follows we explore the origins, development, and current form of the Instruments, beginning with the Lambeth Conference and then looking at the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and asking how their roles might become more effective and fruitful.

2 The Lambeth Conference

2.1 The origins of the Lambeth Conference

2.1.1 The first Lambeth Conference, in 1867, came about mainly in response to pastoral issues within the Anglican Communion—a term

that was already current at that time—and in response to a request from bishops in Canada.²² Around the middle of the nineteenth century there was a broad movement, particularly in England, the United States of America, and Canada, in support of the Church gathering in council. Diocesan and national synods had been springing up across the Communion. The Convocation of the Clergy of Canterbury had been revived in 1853 and the Convocation of York in 1861 (under Archbishop of York Charles Thomas Longley, who, as Archbishop of Canterbury, would convene the first Lambeth Conference six years later). The publication of the radical theology symposium *Essays and Reviews* in 1860 had created a demand for a national council of bishops to respond to what was seen at the time as a dire threat.

2.1.2 Bishops from overseas had previously attended the great celebration of the third Jubilee of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in London in 1852. But there were unresolved issues concerning the relation of the churches of the British Empire and Dominions to the British state: to what extent did the structures of the established Church of England apply in self-governing territories? The theology and practice of Bishop Colenso of Natal and the resulting

²² It seems that the term ‘Anglican Communion’ was first used in 1847: Podmore, *Aspects of Anglican Identity*, chap. 3: ‘The Anglican Communion: Idea, Name and Identity’; Paul Avis, *The Identity of Anglicanism: Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 19–21.

schism from his metropolitan, Archbishop Gray of Cape Town, precipitated a major theological and constitutional crisis. The controversy focused on two areas that are a cause of tension within the Communion today: the interpretation of Scripture (in Colenso's case, the Pentateuch) and human sexuality and marriage practices (including, at that time, polygamy).

2.1.3 Ecumenical—if that is the right word for those days—challenges had also helped to concentrate the mind of Anglicans. The Roman Catholic hierarchy, complete with territorial dioceses and cathedrals, had been restored in England and Wales in 1850 (the so-called 'Papal Aggression'; the Pope referred to the Church of England as 'the Anglican schism'); and in 1854 Pope Pius IX had promulgated the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.²³

2.1.4 So for a number of reasons many bishops in various parts of the Anglican Communion felt the need to confer together in order to guide the Communion through turbulent times, but it should be noted that, even in those days, not all those who were invited chose to accept the invitation, for various reasons.

²³ A. M. G. Stephenson, *The First Lambeth Conference 1867* (London: SPCK, 1967) and, more concisely, A. M. G. Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences* (London: SPCK, 1978). Documentation in R. T. Davidson, *Origin and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878* (London: SPCK, 1888).

2.2 Conciliarity and collegiality

2.2.1 In the mid-nineteenth century the challenges of the times generated a rediscovery, among some Anglicans, of the conciliar nature of the Christian Church. As we have already noted, the heart of the conciliar tradition is that the whole body of the Church should take responsibility for the Church's life and mission. Moreover, according to the conciliar tradition, it should do so in a way that (a) is representative (through appropriate instruments of representation); (b) is constitutional (the distribution, scope, and limits of authority are laid down); and (c) has the consent of the faithful (decisions are offered for consent through appropriate representative channels, so that all Christians can be said to participate, at least to that extent, in what is decided). The most notable expressions of conciliarity have been the General or Ecumenical Councils of the Church, where the bishops gather to attempt to address doctrinal and pastoral issues, and the Church's synods, where the bishops meet with other representatives of the people (there have also been many regional or national councils). But the conciliar life of the Church should not be limited to formal councils and synods. The Lambeth Conference can be seen as a conciliar event in a non-judicial mode. Here the bishops come precisely to *confer* and not to take decisions that are binding on the member Churches.

2.2.2 The Lambeth Conference is a significant expression of the collegiality of the episcopate which, in turn, forms a vital dimension of the conciliar character of the Church. It belongs to the ministry of

bishops that collectively they should care for the unity of the Church and that, as they come together, they should model that unity.²⁴ The 1978 Lambeth Conference spoke of ‘the guardianship of the faith’ as ‘a collegial responsibility of the whole episcopate’ (resolution 13).²⁵ The Anglican Communion Covenant text states that the Lambeth Conference ‘expresses episcopal collegiality worldwide, and brings together the bishops for common worship, counsel, consultation and encouragement in their ministry of guarding the faith and unity of the Communion and equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4.12) and mission’ (3.1.4, II).

2.2.3 Episcopal collegiality is intimately related to the communion of the Church: collegiality is not only a salient expression of ‘visible communion’ (Archbishop Longley’s phrase: see 2.3.2), it is also one of the key constituents of visible communion. In other words, the manifest collegiality of the bishops is not merely ornamental or functional: it is constitutive of the visible fabric of the Church. Collegiality manifests itself in several ways, but underlying them all is the acceptance of a shared responsibility for the welfare of the Church,

²⁴ See House of Bishops of the Church of England, *Bishops in Communion:*

Collegiality in the Service of the Koinonia of the Church, House of Bishops Occasional Paper (London: Church House Publishing, 2000).

²⁵ Coleman (ed.), *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences*, 183.

for maintaining its unity and leading its mission. The bishops are not detached from the portion of the people of God entrusted to their care, but bring to the Conference the needs and concerns of the faithful. They remain ‘bishops in synod’, and it is helpful if they can consult their people before they set off from their dioceses. The collegiality of bishops is grounded in the sacraments, and underpinned by the bishops’ unity in baptism and the Eucharist. Collegiality is eucharistic at its heart.

2.3 The authority of the Lambeth Conference

2.3.1 The first formal gathering of Anglican bishops was designated a ‘conference’ by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Charles Longley, who called it. He was insistent that the meeting would not be a synod or council of the Church. In his opening address he said: ‘It has never been contemplated that we should assume the functions of a general synod of all the churches in full communion with the Church of England, and take upon ourselves to enact canons that should be binding ...’. Similarly, in connection with the 1878 Conference, Archbishop Tait ruled out any attempt to define doctrine: ‘there is no intention whatever’, he said, ‘at any such gathering that questions of doctrine should be submitted for interpretation’.²⁶ Of course, that did not mean that the bishops would not engage in theologically informed reflection or that their advice would be detached from doctrinal

²⁶ Davidson, *Origin and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878*, 18.

considerations. What Longley and Tait were seeking to guard against was any suggestion that the Conference might assume the role of a *magisterium* that would issue decrees of a doctrinal nature, which Anglicans throughout the world would be required to accept. Articulating doctrine that is already accepted and defining doctrine in a fresh way are not the same thing.

2.3.2 In his letter of invitation to the first Conference Archbishop Longley invited those bishops who were ‘in visible communion with the United Church of England and Ireland’ (as it was until 1870, when the Church of Ireland was separated from the Church of England and disestablished by Act of Parliament) to come together ‘for brotherly communion and conference’ and for ‘brotherly consultation’, in the context of celebrating the Holy Communion together. Longley invited them to gather ‘under my Presidency’. While Longley explained that ‘Such a meeting would not be competent to make decisions, or lay down definitions on points of doctrine’, he went on to say that ‘united worship and common counsels would greatly tend to maintain practically the Unity of the Faith, while they would bind us in straighter [i.e. straiter] bonds of peace and brotherly charity’.²⁷

2.3.3 At various times of stress within the Communion the suggestion has been made that the Lambeth Conference should be awarded—or

²⁷ Stephenson, *The First Lambeth Conference 1867*, 187–8.

award itself—higher powers, that it should be upgraded from a conference to, say, a synod or a council. Then, it is suggested, the Conference would be able to take decisive action in directing the affairs of the Communion, perhaps to give rulings on doctrine that would be binding, perhaps to intervene in the internal affairs of member Churches that were in difficulties. What the Canadian ‘provincial synod’ asked for in 1865 was not in fact a conference, but a ‘General Council’ of the Anglican Communion, and this formula has been put forward on subsequent occasions.²⁸

2.3.4 However, the essential character of the Lambeth Conference has not changed since 1867. It remains a gathering of the bishops of the Anglican Communion (now including the United Churches of South Asia with their various traditions), who come together at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury and under the presidency of the archbishop, precisely to *confer*: to pray, to worship, to engage in Bible study, to share experiences and concerns, and to seek a common mind. But that does not make the Conference a mere talking shop. As the Anglican ordination services show, it is inherent in the office of a bishop to guide and lead the flock of Christ and to teach and guard the faith. The bishops could, if they wished, remain mute as far as the outside world is concerned, talking only among themselves. But this

²⁸ Davidson, *Origin and History of the Lambeth Conferences of 1867 and 1878*, 33; Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, 113–14.

would be a missed opportunity, if not a dereliction of duty. So if the bishops at Lambeth are to speak to the Church and the world, it will be in fulfilment of their specific episcopal responsibilities: they will speak words of Christian teaching, guidance, or warning and give encouragement to the faithful to persevere in the way of Christ amid all the challenges of the modern world. In this way the resolutions and perhaps, even more, the section or committee reports help to build theological capacity for the Communion. Although the Lambeth Conference of 2008 was found to be deeply fruitful by the participants, it was in a sense the exception that proves the rule in that it did not overtly address the Church and the world. Lambeth Conferences have a teaching or guiding responsibility. Future Conferences will need to resume this role, and the Anglican faithful look to the bishops for this.

2.3.5 But what do we mean when we say that the bishops together have a responsibility to teach the faith and to guide the Communion? It is not simply a matter of passing resolutions, especially if political pressures somewhat stifle the process of waiting on God. Processing resolutions may not be the most helpful way in which bishops can fulfil their role at the Lambeth Conference. The teaching office is a delicate, dynamic ecology of listening, mutual learning, and mutual admonition, stating a considered view and allowing it to be heard and evaluated by the faithful, and then considering again. This is how the cycle of wisdom works. So when the bishops gather in Conference, the first mode of teaching is actually to listen, to take counsel together, to

engage in self-criticism before God, and to submit themselves to a process of discernment of the truth through prayer and study of the Scriptures. Where a common mind is not attainable, the bishops should exercise restraint and keep a wise silence. The teaching office involves a hermeneutical exercise, homing in on the truth of a situation by patient, interpersonal interpretation and receptivity and then stating it in a way that can be discerningly received by the faithful and to which they can make their own responses in due course. The lead that bishops seek to give to the Church takes its place in an ongoing process of reception. In such a profoundly interactive way the bishops guide the Church and help to hold in faithfulness to the apostolic faith.

2.3.6 So what authority do the pronouncements of the Lambeth Conferences have? How should they be regarded by Anglicans and Anglican Churches throughout the world? Sometimes it is said that the Lambeth Conference has ‘no authority’. This is only true if what is meant is purely authority that is legally binding. But juridical authority is not the only form of authority. There are several other authentic forms and modes of authority.²⁹ It is true that the Lambeth Conference has no juridical authority, in the sense that it cannot enforce its mind

²⁹ Paul Avis, *Authority, Leadership and Conflict in the Church* (London: Mowbray, 1992), chap. 2; S. W. Sykes, *Power and Christian Theology* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006); J. P. Mackey, *Power and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

on the member Churches of the Anglican Communion, which remain self-governing or autonomous. The resolutions of the Conferences need to be received, adopted by the national or general synods of the Churches of the Communion, and incorporated into their own church law before they can become binding for those Churches. But that is not the end of the story, and the fact that ‘provincial autonomy’ imposes a limit on the scope of Lambeth Conference resolutions is certainly not the most important thing or even the first thing that needs to be said about the authority of the Conference.³⁰

2.3.7 The authority of the Lambeth Conference resides in the office and ministry of those who compose it: the bishops of the Anglican Communion. Its authority is not something extrinsic that some external body imparts to the Conference. The office of bishop is the most representative ministry in the Christian Church. Bishops gather up in themselves what it means to be a baptized disciple, a deacon, and a priest. Bishops gather and guide their people through their ministry of word, sacrament, and pastoral care. Bishops preside in the ministry of the word, the sacraments, and oversight throughout the diocese, the portion of the people of God entrusted to their charge by the Church. They do this in collegiality with presbyters and in consultation with the lay faithful. As chief pastors, bishops represent their dioceses: they represent the ‘local’ church to other ‘local’ churches, both when they

³⁰ See the discussion in Doe, *Canon Law in the Anglican Communion*, 346–8.

take part in the consecration of new bishops and when they express the conciliarity of the Church in conference, synod, or council. As the *Virginia Report* puts it, the bishop ‘represents the part to the whole and the whole to the part, the particularity of each diocese to the whole Communion and the Communion to each diocese’.³¹ Their office also reflects something of the four credal marks of the Church—unity, holiness, apostolicity and catholicity—since bishops have a special, though not exclusive, responsibility for the welfare and well-being of the Church, in terms of its unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity, helping the Church to be the Church, and all this is reflected in their ordination.³² As the Windsor Continuation Group (WCG) points out, the fact that the Lambeth Conference is ‘a body composed of those who by their ordination to the episcopate have been given apostolic responsibility to govern means that the resolutions of a Lambeth Conference may be considered to have an intrinsic authority which is

³¹ *Virginia Report* (London: Anglican Consultative Council, 1997), 6.10.

³² See *Episcopal Ministry: The Report of the Archbishops’ Group on the Episcopate 1990*, GS 944 (London: Church House Publishing, 1990); *Women Bishops in the Church of England? A Report of the House of Bishops’ Working Party on Women in the Episcopate* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004); Paul Avis, *Reshaping Ecumenical Theology: The Church Made Whole?* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2010), chap. 7: ‘Episcopacy: Focus of Unity or Cause of Division?’

inherent in their members gathered together'.³³

2.3.8 Since the 1998 Lambeth Conference, the Communion has witnessed the unprecedented situation of some bishops publicly repudiating, by their words and their actions, particular resolutions of the Lambeth Conference, notably those concerned with human sexuality or the integrity of provincial boundaries. In response to those who have repudiated certain resolutions of the Lambeth Conference out of hand, it is important to re-affirm that the moral and pastoral authority of the Anglican episcopate should be quite sufficient for any faithful Anglican and for any provincial synod of the Communion to accept. 'The resolutions may not always be perfectly expressed, they may not get the balance of various elements quite right and they may need to be revisited at a later date, but they should never be dismissed out of hand.'³⁴

2.4 The future shape of the Lambeth Conference

2.4.1 Most Lambeth Conferences have seen it as their business to pass

³³ The Windsor Continuation Group, 'Report to the Archbishop of Canterbury', 2009, in *One Love: Report of ACC-14* (London: Anglican Consultative Council, 2010), para. 66.

³⁴ Avis, *The Identity of Anglicanism*, 61. See Owen Chadwick, 'Introduction', in Coleman (ed.), *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences*.

numerous resolutions, but it has to be said that these have varied considerably in their importance. It is probable that the law of diminishing returns applies to Conference resolutions. The Conference might be well advised to exercise restraint—a self-denying ordinance—in generating resolutions, so that when it has something rather major to say, the message comes across loud and clear, and is not drowned in a sea of words. At the least, the resolutions could be layered in importance, as the *Windsor Report* suggested, so that the crucial ones stand out.³⁵ Even better, the Conference might decide that resolutions were not the most appropriate vehicle for what they wanted to say and that ‘affirmations’ or a pastoral letter (as attempted by Lambeth 1988) might be more helpful.

2.4.2 We might imagine that, at times when tensions were running high in the Communion, it would not be possible for the Lambeth Conference to make any public statement at all. That does not mean that it should not meet. The Lambeth Conference held in 2008 was designed to be without resolutions: it needed to fulfil a different function on that occasion. It is likely that strong tensions will persist in the Communion and in the episcopate for the foreseeable future, but that need not mean that meetings of the Lambeth Conference to come can have nothing to say. It should be possible for them to identify areas on which they can agree and thus to make certain affirmations to the

³⁵ *The Windsor Report* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2004), 78.

Church and the world on those topics, bracketing out areas of violent disagreement and so avoiding an unseemly and destructive split.

2.4.3 However, for that to be possible, the Conference needs to be expertly planned and skilfully facilitated, making a space for diverse voices to be heard, but avoiding polarization and gathering consensus. The bishops themselves need to accept a degree of mutual accountability. As the *Virginia Report* points out, ‘Bishops are responsible for their words and actions at Lambeth, before God and the whole Church.’³⁶ The ‘loyalty to the fellowship’, of which Lambeth Conference resolutions themselves have often spoken, must remain the key—and one is not free to ignore the fellowship.³⁷

2.4.4 Various suggestions have been made that are intended to make the Lambeth Conference more effective in the life of the Communion. Some of these proposals founder on the question of money, a

³⁶ *Virginia Report*, 6.20.

³⁷ Encyclical Letter for Lambeth Conference 1920, 14, in *The Six Lambeth Conferences 1867–1920* (London: SPCK, 1920): ‘The Lambeth Conference does not claim to exercise any powers of control. It stands for the far more spiritual and more Christian principle of loyalty to the fellowship. The churches represented in it are indeed independent, but independent with the Christian freedom which recognises the restraint of truth and love. They are not free to ignore the fellowship ... The Conference is a fellowship in the Spirit.’

commodity that is not going to be more plentiful in the foreseeable future. For example, the suggestion that a Conference, of similar size to those that have been held in recent decades, should meet more frequently than every ten years, while perhaps desirable in theory, is not financially viable. In fact, meeting every ten years is probably about right in terms of the huge planning, administrative, and logistical operation that is involved in setting up a meeting of the Lambeth Conference. After all, the other Instruments of Communion continue to function during the intervening years. If financial pressures were particularly tight, the alternative to no Conference at all might be one or more of the following: a Conference that (a) was shorter, and/or (b) did not include spouses, and/or (c) was confined to diocesan bishops, as the Conferences were before 1998; but to restrict the membership in that way (c) would be to exclude those who, by virtue of their ordination, fully share in episcopal responsibility for matters of faith and order.

2.4.5 For reasons that we set out in section 3 on the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury as an Instrument of Communion, we believe that the Lambeth Conference should continue to meet from time to time, that it should do so at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and that it should be convened at the historic seat of the archbishop, that is to say within the archbishop's diocese and at his

cathedral.³⁸

2.5 Conclusion to reflections on the Lambeth Conference as an Instrument of Communion

2.5.1 We have considered briefly the origin, purpose, and shape of the Lambeth Conference, which has been gathered by the Archbishop of Canterbury approximately every ten years since 1867. There is no substitute for the Lambeth Conference. It has a unique role among the Anglican Instruments of Communion. It embodies the collective pastorate of the bishops. As the corporate gathering of the most representative ministers of the Anglican Communion, it has considerable spiritual, moral, and pastoral authority. It includes within itself the greater part of the other Instruments of Communion, and there is some useful overlapping that points to the communion or harmony of instruments: the Archbishop of Canterbury belongs among his fellow bishops as first among equals, and the primates take their place among the bishops too; the episcopal members of the ACC are also members of the Lambeth Conference. Its public statements should be made more sparingly in future, but they carry weight and should be accorded full respect by all Anglicans and reflected on carefully and prayerfully. The Anglican Communion will continue to need the

³⁸ The 1978 Lambeth Conference (resolution 13) suggested that a Lambeth Conference ‘could well be held in some other province’. Coleman (ed.), *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences*, 183.

considered guidance of its bishops acting collegially: the Lambeth Conference has proved its worth over a century and a half as an effective instrument for this purpose.

3 The Ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury

3.1 The early history of the See of Canterbury

3.1.1 The office of Archbishop of Canterbury goes back to the mission of Augustine, who was sent by Pope Gregory I ('The Great', Pope 590–604) in AD 596 to convert the Anglo-Saxons in England. Augustine, named after an even more famous bishop, St Augustine of Hippo, was a monk and an abbot, but not yet a bishop. Most of what we know about Augustine's mission comes from *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* by the Venerable Bede, which was completed in the monastery of Jarrow in the north-east of England in 731.³⁹ To compile his work Bede had access to documents that had been preserved at Canterbury since the days of Augustine. Bede describes the origin of Augustine's mission like this: 'Moved by divine inspiration ... [Gregory] sent the servant of God, Augustine, and with him several other monks, who feared the Lord, to preach the word of God to the

³⁹ J. Robert Wright, *A Companion to Bede: A Reader's Commentary on The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

English nation.’⁴⁰ The monks sensed that they were venturing into the unknown, to a land of pagan darkness and violence: they did not expect to return home. On their way to England they lost their nerve, and Augustine’s commission needed to be reinforced by Gregory with words of authority and encouragement.

3.1.2 Augustine was not going to a country that had not known Christianity, though Gregory probably thought that he was sending him to a non-Christian England.⁴¹ The Christian faith had arrived with the Roman armies and their followers centuries before. The Celtic expression of Christianity continued to flourish in western Britain. Patrick evangelized Ireland in the second half of the fifth century and, according to tradition, founded the See of Armagh. David, who died around 601, consolidated Christianity in Wales. Columba set sail across the Irish Sea in 563 and landed on Iona, where he founded the first of his many monasteries. Columba died in the year in which Augustine reached England, 597. In England itself the Anglo-Saxon invasions had driven Celtic Christianity back to the margins and replaced it with

⁴⁰ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation and the Lives of St Cuthbert and the Abbots*, Everyman Library (London: Dent, 1910), 33 (chap. xxiii). For Gregory see R. A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁴¹ Robin Fleming, *Britain after Rome* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2011), 131.

pagan rites.⁴²

3.1.3 Augustine and his band approached the town of Durovernum Cantiacorum (the modern Canterbury), holding up a silver cross and a painting of Christ crucified. They requested a meeting with Æthelberht I, the ‘over-king’ among the Saxon kingdoms. Æthelberht had a Christian wife, Bertha (who had come from Paris in 560), and was not himself antagonistic to Christianity, but it was several years before he was converted and underwent baptism, probably in the spring of 601. Meanwhile, Augustine had been invested with additional authority by his consecration to the episcopate, probably at Arles in 597–8.⁴³ In 601 Augustine also received reinforcements from Rome and a mandate from Gregory to consecrate some of the recent arrivals as bishops. The party included Mellitus, who became Bishop of London, and Paulinus, who evangelized the north of England, becoming Bishop of York in 625 (the bishop of that see being first mentioned as early as 314) and baptizing Edwin, King of Northumbria, two years later. (In 735 the then Bishop of York, Egbert, was elevated to Archbishop.) Augustine did not carry out Pope Gregory’s instructions to make Londinium

⁴² See H. Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (Batsford/Book Club Associates, 1977); Barbara Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain 600–800* (Harlow: Pearson, 2006); Malcolm Lambert, *Christians and Pagans: The Conversion of Britain from Alban to Bede* (New Haven: Yale, 2010).

(London) his seat.

3.1.4 Shortly after his arrival, Augustine consecrated an existing Roman church in Canterbury as his Cathedral Church of Christ. This first cathedral was destroyed by fire in 1067, the year after the Norman Conquest. The cathedral was rebuilt by Archbishop Lanfranc, extended by Archbishop Anselm, and consecrated in 1130. The crypt contains Roman and Saxon fragments, though it is mainly Norman. In the second half of the fourteenth century Archbishop Sudbury remodelled the choir and nave. St Augustine's Chair, made of Purbeck marble, probably dates from the thirteenth century. Canterbury Cathedral is still, of course, the 'seat' of the archbishop and for that reason it has a special significance for Anglicans throughout the world.

3.1.5 Every new Archbishop of Canterbury swears, on a Book of the Gospels that is believed to have been brought over from Rome in 601, to preserve the rights of 'this Cathedral and Metropolitan Church of Christ'.

3.1.6 Archbishops of Canterbury are primates of the first metropolitan see of the English Church (and thus of the Anglican Communion) to be founded after the mission of St Augustine—in other words, as part of the Western Church and under the Roman jurisdiction until the Reformation. To date there have been 104 Archbishops of

Canterbury.⁴⁴

3.1.7 In the medieval period a succession of popes re-affirmed the primacy of the See of Canterbury.⁴⁵ In the mid-fourteenth century the Pope settled the competing claims of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York with the wisdom of Solomon by decreeing that the former was Primate of All England, while the latter was Primate of England.

3.1.8 Several archbishops of Canterbury have undergone martyrdom, beginning with Alphege in 1012, who was hacked to death in Danish captivity because he refused to be ransomed. Thomas Becket was killed in his cathedral in 1170 by knights who believed that they were carrying out the wishes of King Henry II. Archbishop Sudbury (more a political victim than a martyr) was killed in the Peasants' Revolt in 1381. Thomas Cranmer was burned at the stake under the Roman Catholic Queen Mary in 1556. In 1645 William Laud was sent to the executioner's block by Parliament; his king, Charles I, followed in 1649.

⁴⁴ See further Edward Carpenter, *Cantuar: The Archbishops in their Office* (London: Cassell, 1971).

⁴⁵ This is documented in [Lambert Beauduin], 'The Church of England United not Absorbed', a paper contributed to the Malines Conversations in 1925: see A. Denaux and J. Dick (eds), *From Malines to ARCIC: The Malines Conversations Commemorated* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 35–46.

3.2 What has the Lambeth Conference said about the office of Archbishop of Canterbury?

3.2.1 Since Archbishop Longley called the first Lambeth Conference in 1867, various Lambeth Conferences, particularly the more recent ones, have made formal statements about the office of Archbishop of Canterbury, and we take the most significant of these in review now.

3.2.2 The Lambeth Conference of 1897, in requesting that there should be further Conferences in the future, every ten years, acknowledged that it would be for the archbishop to gather such Conferences.⁴⁶

3.2.3 The 1930 Conference underlined the constitutive role of the Archbishop of Canterbury when it defined the Anglican Communion as ‘a fellowship, within the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church’ of dioceses, provinces, and regional churches that are ‘in communion with the see of Canterbury’.⁴⁷

3.2.4 Interestingly, in the proceedings of the 1948 Conference, which is notable for its elaborate statement about authority, the office of

⁴⁶ Lambeth Conference 1897, resolution 2, in Coleman (ed.), *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences*, 16.

⁴⁷ Lambeth Conference 1930, resolutions 48 and 49, in Coleman (ed.), *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences*, 83–4.

Archbishop of Canterbury is virtually invisible.⁴⁸

3.2.5 The 1958 Lambeth Conference recommended that a 'Consultative Body' be established 'to assist the Archbishop of Canterbury in the preparation of the business of the ensuing Conference' and 'to consider matters referred to the Archbishop of Canterbury on which he requests its aid and to advise him' and, furthermore, 'to deal with matters referred to it by the Archbishop of Canterbury or by any bishop or group of bishops'. The resolution recognized that the archbishop would be 'ex officio Chairman' of this consultative body and would 'summon' its members to meet.⁴⁹

3.2.6 The 1968 Conference's section report on unity made a quite low-key statement about the place of the Archbishop of Canterbury within the Communion. While emphasizing the collegiality of the episcopate, the report recognized that within the college of bishops there must be a president. It observed that 'this position is at present held by the occupant of the historic See of Canterbury, who enjoys a primacy of honour, not of jurisdiction'. It added that this primacy involves 'in a

⁴⁸ *The Lambeth Conference 1948: The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops; together with Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1948). The classic statement on authority is in section report IV, III (pp. 84–6).

⁴⁹ Lambeth Conference 1958, resolution 61 (a) and (b), in Coleman (ed.), *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences*, 134.

particular way, that care of all the churches which is shared by all the bishops'.⁵⁰

3.2.7 The 1978 Lambeth Conference section report dealing with the Anglican Communion within the universal Church affirmed (though the text is not a model of clarity) that the basis of the Communion 'is personally grounded in the loyal relationship of each of the Churches to the Archbishop of Canterbury who is freely recognised as the focus of unity'.⁵¹ The 1978 resolutions described the archbishop as the 'President' of the Lambeth Conference and of the ACC and affirmed that it remained the prerogative of the archbishop to call a Lambeth Conference, but recommended that he should make his decision in consultation with other primates.⁵²

3.2.8 The Conference of 1988, in urging that the primates should have a strengthened 'collegial role', also recognized that the meetings of the primates were presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury. This Conference also recommended that, in the appointment of any future Archbishop of Canterbury, the Crown Appointments Commission

⁵⁰ *The Lambeth Conference 1968* (London: SPCK; New York: Seabury Press, 1968), 137.

⁵¹ *The Report of the Lambeth Conference 1978* (London: CIO, 1978), 98.

⁵² *Ibid.*, resolutions 12 and 13 (p. 42).

(now the Crown Nominations Commission) should 'be asked to bring the primates of the Communion into the process of consultation'.⁵³ Subsequent practice has reflected this concern by providing for the Primates' Meeting to elect one of its number to be a voting member of the Crown Nominations Commission, while the Secretary General of the ACC has a non-voting seat.⁵⁴

3.2.9 In the light of the appalling failure of ecclesial structures in the Rwanda genocide, the Lambeth Conference of 1998 raised the question of in what circumstances the Archbishop of Canterbury should have 'an extra-ordinary [sic] ministry of episcopé (pastoral oversight), support and reconciliation with regard to the internal affairs of a Province other than his own for the sake of maintaining

⁵³ Lambeth Conference 1988, resolution 18.2 (a) and (b), in *The Truth Shall Make You Free: The Lambeth Conference 1988* (London: Church House Publishing, 1988), 216; Coleman (ed.), *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences*, 207.

⁵⁴ See further *Working with the Spirit: A Review of the Crown Appointments Commission and related matters* (London: Church House Publishing, 2001), 57 (para. 3.82); *To Lead and to Serve: The Report of the Review of the See of Canterbury* (London: Church House Publishing, 2001) ('the Hurd Report'), 48. These reports suggested that the Chair of the ACC should be a voting member of the Crown Nominations Commission (formerly the Crown Appointments Commission) and that the Secretary General of the ACC should in future have a vote.

communion within the said Province and between the said Province and the rest of the Anglican Communion'.⁵⁵ The Lambeth Commission that produced the *Windsor Report* had this question as part of its mandate, but did not directly address it. The constitutional position is that the Archbishop of Canterbury visits member Churches of the Communion at their invitation.

3.3 How have other reports of the Communion described the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury?

3.3.1 The *Virginia Report* (1997) described the Archbishop of Canterbury's ministry in the Communion as that of 'a pastor in the service of unity', offering care and support to the Churches of the Communion by invitation of the member Churches. It went on to say that 'the interdependence of the Anglican Communion becomes most clearly visible when the Archbishop of Canterbury exercises his primatial office as an enabler of mission, pastoral care and healing in those situations of need to which he is called'.⁵⁶

3.3.2 Interestingly, the *Virginia Report* describes the Archbishop of

⁵⁵ Lambeth Conference 1998, IV, 13,

<http://www.lambethconference.org/resolutions/1998/1998-4-13.cfm>, accessed 11 November 2015.

⁵⁶ *Virginia Report*, 6.2.

Canterbury as ‘Primate of the Anglican Communion’.⁵⁷ This title has not been picked up since the *Virginia Report* and it is not difficult to see why. Although the archbishop does have a degree of primacy—*primus inter pares*, first among equals—among Anglican bishops by virtue of his presidency of the Lambeth Conference, the Primates’ Meeting, and the ACC, it is strange to describe him as ‘Primate’ of the Communion, as though his metropolitan jurisdiction extended throughout the Communion, as a sort of universal archbishop. The archbishop does not have any primatial jurisdiction outside the Church of England.⁵⁸

3.3.3 The *Windsor Report* (2004) describes the Archbishop of Canterbury, ‘both in his person and his office’, as ‘the pivotal instrument and focus of unity’, observing that ‘relationship to him became a touchstone of what it was to be Anglican’.⁵⁹ It therefore seems rather inconsistent when, a few pages later, the report suggests that the Archbishop of Canterbury should not be counted among the Instruments of Unity, but should be seen as ‘the focus of unity’—but then on the same page again places the archbishop among the

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.6.

⁵⁸ On the Archbishop of Canterbury’s primatial authority and related questions see Podmore, *Aspects of Anglican Identity*, chap. 5.

⁵⁹ *Windsor Report*, para. 99 (p. 55).

‘Instruments of Unity’.⁶⁰

3.3.4 The *Windsor Report* seeks to strengthen the role of the archbishop. He should not be regarded as a mere ‘figurehead’, but as ‘the central focus of both unity and mission within the Communion’. He has ‘a very significant teaching role’, and Anglicans should be able to look to him ‘to articulate the mind of the Communion especially in areas of controversy’. He should be able ‘to speak directly to any provincial situation on behalf of the Communion when this is deemed advisable’. He should have complete discretion about when to call the Lambeth Conference or the Primates’ Meeting together and sole discretion about whom to invite and on what terms. However, the report goes on to guard against any suggestion that it is giving the archbishop some kind of arbitrary power by recommending that he should have the benefit of a Council of Advice in exercising this discretion.⁶¹

3.3.5 The report of the WCG (2009) puts the archbishop firmly back among the Instruments of Communion. It points out that the pivotal presidential role exercised by the archbishop at the 2008 Lambeth

⁶⁰ Ibid., paras 105, 108 (p. 58). It is not entirely clear what is implied when, in Appendix 1 (pp. 79–80), the Anglican Communion Office is discussed in the context of the Instruments of Communion.

⁶¹ Ibid., paras 109–12 (pp. 59–60).

Conference, evidenced by his three presidential addresses, has 'highlighted the extent to which there is scope for the ministry of a personal primacy at the level of the worldwide Communion'. The report urges, however, that this ministry should be exercised in personal, collegial, and communal ways, as the WCC's Faith and Order report *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982) had proposed for all ordained ministry.⁶² The collegial mode of the archbishop's ministry is found in conjunction with the bishops through the Lambeth Conference and the Primates' Meeting; the communal context is provided at the global level by the ACC. The report of the WCG makes a couple of tentative suggestions about how the archbishop might be assisted in carrying out his role.⁶³

3.3.6 The text of the Anglican Communion Covenant contains a descriptive statement about the role accorded to the archbishop within the Communion:

We accord the Archbishop of Canterbury, as the Bishop of the See of Canterbury with which Anglicans have historically been in communion, a primacy of honour and respect among the college of

⁶² *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, M26.

⁶³ The Windsor Continuation Group, 'Report to the Archbishop of Canterbury', paras 62–4 (p. 13).

bishops in the Anglican Communion as first among equals (*primus inter pares*). As a focus and means of unity, the Archbishop gathers and works with the Lambeth Conference and Primates' Meeting, and presides in the Anglican Consultative Council. (3.1.4: I)

3.3.7 It is worth noting that (1) neither this statement nor the proposed arrangements for the outworking of Covenant commitments entails any executive role for the Archbishop of Canterbury; but equally (2) the Covenant does not envisage a purely symbolic role for the archbishop; the archbishop is not only a 'focus' but also a 'means' of unity: this is to echo the language of 'instrument'.

3.4 Conclusion to reflections on the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury as an Instrument of Communion

3.4.1 In order to understand Anglicanism, we must grasp the unique role of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Canterbury itself is important because it is historically the first metropolitan see (the seat of the archbishop who has primatial authority) of the Church of England and therefore—for originally historical reasons, but Anglicans take history seriously—of the Anglican Communion.⁶⁴ It is significant that the Archbishop of Canterbury is also a diocesan bishop, the chief pastor of

⁶⁴ Avis, *The Identity of Anglicanism*, 61–2.

a 'local church'. It is clear from the history of the century and a half that has passed since the first Lambeth Conference, and from the formal statements that the Anglican Communion has produced since then, that the Archbishop of Canterbury has had and continues to have a pivotal role with regard to the identity, unity, and coherence of the Anglican Communion—all matters that are currently of great importance and urgency for Anglicans. It puts the archbishop's Communion role in perspective when we call to mind that the archbishop is prayed for in Anglican celebrations of the liturgy around the world.

3.4.2 It was the Archbishop of Canterbury who, in 1867, initiated the Lambeth Conference in the face of doubts and opposition, and it is the Archbishop of Canterbury who continues to invite the bishops of the Communion to attend it. From time to time the archbishop may exercise some discretion, in the interests of Anglican unity, harmony, and coherence, over whom he invites and whom he chooses not to invite. He presides over the Conference's proceedings and guides its deliberations. That is to say that the archbishop is the convener, host, and President of the Lambeth Conference, which many would consider the most significant of the Instruments of Communion. There is thus an intimate connection between the ministry of the archbishop and the Lambeth Conference of all the bishops. The archbishop also convenes the Primates' Meeting and presides over its business. Constitutionally, the archbishop is President of the ACC.

3.4.3 The office of the Archbishop of Canterbury is not only integral to the way in which the Anglican Communion is made up, as a worldwide fellowship of self-governing but interdependent Churches, but is also a criterion of membership of the Communion, for it is not possible for a Church to be a member of the Communion without being in communion with the archbishop as bishop of the See of Canterbury. Through communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Anglican Churches are held in communion with the Church of England and with each other, while those Churches that are in communion with the Anglican Communion are also in communion with the See of Canterbury. 'The litmus test of membership of the Anglican Communion is to be in communion with the See of Canterbury. Of course, this cannot be the only condition for membership of the Communion. A common faith and order; a shared tradition of liturgy, theology and spirituality; and participation in the [other] instruments of the Communion are also involved. But it is the ultimate criterion.'⁶⁵

3.4.4 The communion that Anglicans receive thankfully from God is both conciliar and sacramental in nature: indeed the two aspects are bound together in Anglican (and any other traditionally catholic) ecclesiology. It is as a eucharistic body that the Anglican bishops come together in the Lambeth Conference to take counsel one with another as they gather around the open page of Scripture. The intimate

⁶⁵ Ibid., 62.

connection between the conciliar and the sacramental dimensions of communion are particularly clearly manifested when the archbishop presides and often preaches at the opening Eucharist of the Lambeth Conference in Canterbury Cathedral, the bishops being, as it were, gathered around the throne of St Augustine. But that opening celebration of the Eucharist also makes it clear that the archbishop is set in the midst of the college of Anglican bishops and intends to exercise his unique responsibilities in consultation and collaboration with his fellow bishops. Except at meetings of the ACC, the archbishop relates to the Anglican clergy and lay faithful around the world through their bishops, not directly. But at the ACC the communal nature of the archbishop's ministry becomes apparent: it is exercised in consultation and collaboration with the bishops, other clergy, and lay people of the Communion who are present representatively and symbolically in the ACC.

3.4.5 In this section we have used the male pronoun for the Archbishop of Canterbury. That is currently applicable and so it would seem a little artificial to say 'he or she' every time; but it may not, and probably will not, always be the case that the archbishop is male.

3.4.6 The ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury depends hugely on the personal spiritual, moral, and theological qualities of the person who exercises it: that is undeniable. But essentially it is the office that matters, and the office is greater than any one occupant of it. The office of archbishop has been shaped by history, struggle, and conflict. It has

been moulded by the prayer and the scholarship, the leadership and the witness, even to martyrdom in some cases, of previous incumbents.

3.4.7 Whoever may be the occupant of the office at the time, the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury commends itself to the Anglican Communion and to the universal Church as a paradigm of episcopal oversight that is personal and pastoral and that guides, leads, and challenges. This ministry is one that is manifestly both catholic and reformed, stretching back as it does beyond the Reformation to the mission of St Augustine of Canterbury in the early European Middle Ages, but reshaped at the time of the Reformation by the authority of the gospel and the Reformation imperatives of word, sacrament, and pastoral care. It is a ministry that is not hierarchical and unaccountable, but constitutional and accessible and that knows its limits, but also one that is aware of its potential for good in terms of the unity and mission of the Church of Jesus Christ.

4 The Primates' Meeting

4.1 The idea of primacy in the Anglican Communion

4.1.1 An Anglican primate⁶⁶ is the chief bishop or archbishop of one of

⁶⁶ The discussion that follows on the Primates' Meetings and the ACC in sections 4 and 5 of this paper has drawn on a number of sources, including an important research paper, 'The Anglican Communion Instruments of Unity', Australian General Synod Office, 2000.

the provinces of the Anglican Communion.⁶⁷ Some of these provinces are stand-alone ecclesiastical provinces (such as the Church of the Province of West Africa), while others are national Churches comprising more than one ecclesiastical province (such as the Church of England). Since 1978, the primates have met regularly at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is regarded as the *primus inter pares* of the primates. While the gathering has no legal jurisdiction, it acts as one of the Instruments of Communion among the autonomous provinces of the Communion.

4.1.2 In stand-alone ecclesiastical provinces, the primate is the metropolitan archbishop of the province. In national Churches composed of several ecclesiastical provinces, the primate will be senior to the metropolitan archbishops of the various provinces, and may also be a metropolitan archbishop (e.g. the Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia). In those Churches that do not have a tradition of archiepiscopacy, the primate is a bishop styled 'Primus' (in the case of the Scottish Episcopal Church), 'Presiding Bishop', 'President-Bishop', 'Prime Bishop', or simply 'Primate'. In the case of the Episcopal Church in the United States, which is composed of several ecclesiastical provinces, there is a Presiding Bishop who is its primate; but the

⁶⁷ The concept of a primate is usefully and accurately outlined in [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primate_\(bishop\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primate_(bishop)).

individual provinces are not led by metropolitans.

4.1.3. The Moderators of the United Churches of North and South India, which are united with other originally non-Anglican Churches, and which are part of the Anglican Communion, while not primates, participate in the Primates' Meetings.

4.1.4 An Anglican primate may be attached to a fixed see (e.g. the Archbishop of Canterbury is the Primate of All England). He or she may be chosen from among sitting metropolitans or diocesan bishops and retain his or her see (as with, for example, the Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia), or he or she may have no see (as in the Anglican Church of Canada). Primates are generally chosen by election (either by a synod consisting of laity, clergy, and bishops, or by a House of Bishops). In some instances, the primacy is awarded on the basis of seniority among the episcopal college. In the Church of England, the primate, like all bishops, is nominated for election by the College of Canons of the cathedral by the British sovereign, in his or her capacity as Supreme Governor of the established Church, on the advice of the Crown Nominations Commission.

4.1.5 In the Church of England and in the Church of Ireland, the metropolitan of the second province has since medieval times also been accorded the title of Primate. In England, the Archbishop of Canterbury is the Primate of All England while the Archbishop of York is Primate of England. In Ireland both the Anglican and Roman

Catholic Archbishops of Armagh are titled Primate of All Ireland; while both the Anglican and Roman Catholic Archbishops of Dublin are titled Primate of Ireland. As both of these positions predate the 1921 partition of Ireland into two jurisdictions, they relate to the whole island of Ireland. The junior primates of these Churches do not normally participate in the Primates' Meeting.

4.1.6 The role and idea of a primate has changed over time, and to this extent the office is a creature of different contexts and cultures. What a primate is; how the office of primate is regarded; how it functions, and the authority associated with the office vary throughout the Anglican Communion. Primates are primarily focused on provincial matters and act in a representative manner on behalf of their province in the wider Communion. To this extent primates are a sign of communion shared across provincial boundaries, and as such they mediate between more local and wider expressions of Anglican faith and life. Not surprisingly, precisely because primates function in this way the office of the primate will also become from time to time a sign of tensions within the Communion. This points to the inevitably provisional nature of the office of primate as a sign of ecclesial communion.

4.2 The Primates' Meeting: origin and focus

4.2.1 The Primates' Meetings were established in response to resolution 12 of the 1978 Lambeth Conference, 'Anglican conferences, councils, and meetings':

The Conference asks the Archbishop of Canterbury, as President of the Lambeth Conference and President of the Anglican Consultative Council, with all the primates of the Anglican Communion, within one year to initiate consideration of the way to relate together the international conferences, councils, and meetings within the Anglican Communion so that the Anglican Communion may best serve God within the context of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church.⁶⁸

4.2.2 There had previously been meetings of the primates. The Lambeth Consultative Body existed from the beginning of the century to 1968, when it was replaced by the ACC. A Lambeth resolution in 1958 revised its constitution. This affected the membership, which became the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, the primates of the national or provincial Churches, and other members appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury to represent other dioceses under his jurisdiction. This body was not limited to the primates but was in a sense a forerunner of the Primates' Meeting.

4.2.3 The Primates' Meeting started in 1979. Like the Lambeth Conference, it has a consultative rather than an authoritative role. It has never had an official constitution, although a memorandum drawn

⁶⁸ Coleman (ed.), *Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences*, 83.

up by Bishop John Howe for the Archbishop of Canterbury formed the basis for its functions:

The Purpose of the Primates' Meetings might then be:

i.

To confer on matters on which the Archbishop of Canterbury might wish to consult the Primates, including matters concerning the Lambeth Conference.

ii.

Bearing in mind the terms of reference of the Anglican Consultative Council:

a)

to refer suitable matters to the Anglican Consultative Council;

b)

to confer on the implementation of policy and proposals from the Anglican Consultative Council;

iii. To share information and experience.⁶⁹

4.2.4 The purpose of the Primates' Meeting is twofold: to enhance cohesion, understanding, and collaboration in the family; and to share information among the Churches, not least about the implementation of ACC recommendations made by the ACC under its terms of

⁶⁹ John Howe, *Highways & Hedges: Anglicanism and the Universal Church* (Toronto, Ontario: Anglican Book Centre, 1985), 93.

reference in its constitution. The meeting can also consider procedures which the Anglican Communion might wish to follow.⁷⁰

4.3 Changing roles

4.3.1 The role of the Primates' Meetings has evolved over the years. The 1988 Lambeth Conference resolved that it 'Urges that encouragement be given to a developing collegial role for the Primates Meeting under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, so that the Primates Meeting is able to exercise an enhanced responsibility in offering guidance on doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters.'⁷¹

4.3.2 The Working Papers for the 1988 Lambeth Conference stated:

The calling of regular Primates' Meetings was endorsed by Lambeth 1978. This reflected the need for a more effective means of exercising episcopal collegiality through the consultation of the Primates. Those meetings, at regular intervals, are a 'meeting of minds' through which individual provincial and international concerns can be tested by collective discussions between acknowledged leaders who will

⁷⁰ John Howe, *Highways and Hedges: A Study of Developments in the Anglican Communion 1958–1982* (London: ACC, 1985), 83, 84.

⁷¹ Lambeth Conference 1988, resolution 18.

attempt to reach a common mind.⁷²

4.3.3 There has been a move over more recent years for the Primates' Meetings to develop a more 'collegial' role than was originally envisaged. At the 1997 Primates' Meeting in Jerusalem it was said:

The Meeting had evolved since the Lambeth Conference 1978 and the meetings had taken different forms. Archbishop Eames pointed out that the *Virginia Report* regarded the Primates' Meeting as being in the first place, collegial. This was echoed by the other Primates.⁷³

4.3.4 The collegial focus was re-affirmed at the 1998 Lambeth Conference in Resolution III.6. This resolution also included the recommendation that the Primates' Meeting occur more regularly than the ACC. The Primates' Meetings have followed a pattern of meeting usually every two years (although there are some three-year gaps). The ACC tends to meet every three years (although early on there were some two-year gaps). The intention has been for the primates to meet

⁷² 'Dogmatic and Pastoral Concerns', para. 100, in 'Working Papers for the Lambeth Conference 1988' (prepared in 1987), 34; also in *The Truth Shall Make You Free*, para. 121, p. 111.

⁷³ Meeting of the primates of the Anglican Communion and the Moderators of the United Churches, St George's College, Jerusalem, 10–17 March 1997, 9.

every two years. The growing significance of the primates was seen when they gathered quickly following the consecration of Gene Robinson in 2003, offered some clear directives, and commissioned the work that resulted in the *Windsor Report*.

4.3.5 The Dar es Salaam meeting of 2007 worked hard to develop a pastoral response (rather than discipline as such) to the situation in the Episcopal Church and associated cross-border interventions. In the end the proposals offered were not taken up. From this perspective the 2007 Primates' Meeting might be understood less as an example of inappropriate interference in the internal polity of a member Church and more as a demonstration of the way in which provincial autonomy actually works in the Anglican Communion.⁷⁴

4.3.6 Lessons learned from Dar es Salaam in 2007 were reflected to some extent in the outcome of the 2009 Meeting of Primates in Alexandria. The primates recognized that 'the role of the Primates' Meeting has occasioned some debate.' They stated that 'when the Archbishop of Canterbury calls us together "for leisurely thought, prayer and deep consultation", it is intended that we act as "the

⁷⁴ A lesson from Dar es Salaam might be that proposals in the form of documents are most persuasive when accompanied by people to engage with others over the relevant matters. Such face-to-face engagements are the best way to enhance communication and engender trust.

channels through which the voice of the member churches [are] heard, and real interchange of heart [can] take place”.⁷⁵ The consultative and collegial dimension to the Primates’ Meetings was emphasized:

We have the responsibility each to speak to the other primates on behalf of the views and understandings held in our own provinces. We are called to mutual accountability and to bear faithful witness to what is held dear in the life of our Provinces and to the inheritance of faith as our Church has received it. Together we share responsibility with the other Instruments of Communion for discerning what is best for the well being of our Communion. We are conscious that the attitudes and deliberations of the primates have sometimes inadvertently given rise to disappointment and even disillusion. We acknowledge that we still struggle to get the balance right in our deliberations and ask for the prayers of our people in seeking the assistance of the Holy Spirit to support and direct us in discharging our responsibilities before God.

The Alexandria Primates’ Meeting pointed to the importance of the Primates’ Meeting of mutual sharing, listening, and bearing one

⁷⁵ See the address of Archbishop Donald Coggan to the Lambeth Conference 1978, in *The Report of the Lambeth Conference 1978* (London: CIO Publishing, 1978), 123.

another's burdens for the sake of Churches.

4.4 Dublin 2011: consultation, collaboration, and collegiality

4.4.1 The gains from 2009 were also evident at the Dublin meeting of February 2011, which focused on common counsel and collaboration. The spirit of this meeting was experienced as extremely positive by those who attended. The fact that not all primates attended highlighted ongoing tensions in the Communion which invariably became focused in the primates. Notwithstanding this fact, the Dublin meeting articulated in a clear and concise way an understanding of the purpose and intent of the Primates' Meetings.⁷⁶

4.4.2 The primates stated that their meetings 'bring the realities, expectations and hopes of the context from which they come, thus representing the local to the global, learn the realities, expectations and hopes of other contexts, and carry home and interpret the global to the local'.⁷⁷

4.4.3 The primates together give leadership and support as the

⁷⁶ 'Towards an Understanding of the Purpose and Scope of the Primates' Meeting: A Working Document, Approved by the Primates Meeting January 29, 2011', http://www.anglicancommunion.org/media/68360/prim_scpurpose.pdf, accessed 11 November 2015.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Communion lives out the Marks of Mission; seek continuity and coherence in faith, order, and ethics; provide a focal point of unity; address pressing issues affecting the life of the Communion; provide guidance for the Communion; address pressing issues of global concern; and are advocates for social justice in these situations.

4.4.4 The primates sought to accomplish their work through:

prayer, fellowship, study, and reflection;

caring for one another as primates and offering mutual support;

taking counsel with one another and with the Archbishop of Canterbury;

relationship building at regular meetings;

being spiritually aware;

being collegial;

being consultative;

acknowledging diversity and giving space for difference;

being open to the prophetic Spirit;

exercising authority in a way that emerges from consensus building and mutual discernment, leading

to persuasive wisdom;
the work of the Primates' Standing Committee.

4.4.5 The primates affirmed their commitment thus: 'In our common life in Christ we are passionately committed to journeying together in honest conversation. In faith, hope and love we seek to build our Communion and further the reign of God.'⁷⁸

4.5 The primates and the Windsor process

4.5.1 The *Windsor Report* expressed the hope that the Primates' Meeting 'should be a primary forum for the strengthening of the mutual life of the provinces, and be respected by individual primates and the provinces they lead as an instrument through which new developments may be honestly addressed' (Appendix 1, para. 5).

4.5.2 Recommendations in the December 2008 report of the WCG to the Archbishop of Canterbury gave major significance to the collegial dimension of primates with the Archbishop of Canterbury to 'offer support and advice to one another and in the life of the Communion' (para. 69).⁷⁹ The report also sounded a cautionary note that 'more than one model of primacy exists in the Anglican Communion and the diverse expressions of primatial authority can lead some to have

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ 'Report to the Archbishop of Canterbury', in *One Love*, 157.

concerns about the primates' meeting'. However, it suggested that 'Because of this intrinsic relation with their episcopates and the faithful of their provinces, the Primates' Meeting may be thought to have a "weight"—not from the individual primates but from their representative role' (para. 69).

4.5.3 The WCG recognized the delicate nature of the exercise of primatial authority—'the primates collectively should not exercise more authority than properly belongs to them in their own Provinces'—but also noted that 'the primates also have a high degree of responsibility as the chief pastors of their respective provinces to articulate the concerns of that Church in the counsels of the Communion. When they speak collectively, or in a united or unanimous manner, then their advice—while it is no more than advice—nevertheless needs to be received with a readiness to undertake reflection and accommodation' (para. 70).

4.6 Conclusion of reflections on the Primates' Meeting as an Instrument of Communion

4.6.1 The regular gathering of primates of the Anglican Communion makes an important contribution to the Anglican way of conversation and seeking wisdom. The need for mutual sharing, listening, bearing one another's burdens, and offering of guidance arises out of deep commitment to a consultative and collegial way of being the Church.

4.6.2 What also emerges from the foregoing is a clear sense that the Primates' Meetings are woven into the fabric of an Anglican vision for

being the Church, which values both autonomy and freedom for a high degree of self-regulation as well as an outward orientation and sense of interdependence and accountability to the wider body. In other words the Primates' Meetings, in order to operate as a part of the Body of Christ, have to function in relation to the body and encourage a natural reciprocity between their own deliberations and the wisdom of the wider body. In this sense how the primates conduct their life together becomes a micro-example of what it means for Anglicans to live in a godly way in a worldwide fellowship of churches.

4.6.3 The foregoing conclusions also mean that the fractures and tensions of the wider body will also emerge from time to time among the primates.⁸⁰ Indeed this should not be surprising at a number of levels: personal dispositions can be a source of conflict; structural relationships by which the 'bonds of affection' are expressed in the Communion give priority to conversation, persuasion, compromise, and consensus (a messy process at the best of times!); constitutional arrangements and expectations of primates differ; the cultural contexts in which Holy Order, leadership, authority, and power operate vary. For these reasons the Primates' Meeting will function as both a source

⁸⁰ It is such internal conflict that explains in part Ephraim Radner's statement that 'no one looks to it [the Primates' Meeting] for leadership at present'. See his paper 'Can the Instruments of Unity be Repaired?', 5 October 2010, 2, www.anglicancommunioninstitute.com, accessed 11 November 2015.

of unity and a site of tension and fracture in the Anglican Communion. It is thus a fragile Instrument of Communion and relies upon mutual commitment to build relationships and to bear one another's burdens and in this way fulfil the law of Christ.

5 The Anglican Consultative Council

5.1 Origins and purpose

5.1.1 The ACC was established by a resolution of the Lambeth Conference in 1968 (subject to approval by a two-thirds majority of member Churches).⁸¹ The ACC is unique among the Instruments of Communion in a few ways. First, it is the only one of the Instruments to include lay people, deacons, and priests. With respect to lay people, while the ACC may not have originally intended lay representation, nonetheless from earliest days of its formation lay representation was integral to its function.⁸² However, lay people are still a minority on the

⁸¹ Lambeth Conference 1968, resolution 69, in *The Lambeth Conference 1968: Resolutions and Reports* (London: SPCK, 1968), 46.

⁸² Michael Poon notes this in relation to Lambeth Conference 1968, resolution 69, concerning the establishment of the ACC. It is also clear from this resolution that lay people were not excluded, and so it is not surprising that they soon became part of the membership. See Poon, 'The Anglican Communion as Communion of Churches', para. 26.

ACC.

A second feature of the ACC is related to its constituents. Lay people, deacons, and priests come from the most local of settings for the Church, that is, parishes, chaplaincies, and other highly localized ministries. This gives to the ACC a decidedly ‘ground-up’ voice in the wider counsels of the Church.

5.1.2 Thirdly, the ACC has a constitution to govern its functioning. Its creation required the agreement of two-thirds of the Churches in the Anglican Communion. Neither the Lambeth Conference nor the Primates’ Meeting required any approval from member Churches. The ACC is authorized by the Communion as a whole. It is also the only inter-Anglican body with a secretariat continuously in existence and supported by the Communion. Like the Lambeth Conference and the Primates’ Meeting it has a consultative rather than a jurisdictional role. This was echoed in the report of the WCG, which also drew attention to the function of the ACC in symbolizing ‘the communal dimension of the life of the Church. It is not understood as a synodical body, as its name indicates. It is consultative.’⁸³ The report also noted that

The ACC tends to be accorded particular significance
by those provinces whose liturgies emphasize the

⁸³ The Windsor Continuation Group, ‘Report to the Archbishop of Canterbury’, para. 71.

baptismal covenant and who therefore desire to find the contribution of the whole people of God in the life, mission and also governance of the Church at every level of the Church's life expressed in a conciliar gathering at the world level. (para. 71)⁸⁴

5.1.3 The problem of infrequency of meetings and changing membership of the ACC was recognized, and the report wondered whether 'there may be other ways in which the involvement of the laity should be made effective in the discernment and guidance of the Communion and not only at the world level' (para. 71).

5.1.4 It was in the context of the need for more effective communication and consultation across the Communion that the WCG report discussed the role of the Joint Standing Committee (JSC) of the primates and the ACC. The report noted that the JSC is 'not a separate Instrument of Communion, but it does contain representatives

⁸⁴ The matter is more complex than this. For example, the Anglican Church of Australia has not emphasized the baptismal covenant of the Episcopal Church prayer book, yet it is committed to synodical structures and conciliar models of church governance. It is not alone in this. The Episcopal Church baptismal covenant has a lot to do with US styles of individual rights. See Bruce Kaye, *An Introduction to World Anglicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 223–7.

of all four Instruments' (para. 72):

The crux is how the committee works and the various parts dovetail. In many senses, it is still in an early stage of development. As it develops, it will be important to stress the links to all four instruments so that it is not just seen as a branch of the ACC. It will also be important to ensure that the membership reflects the breadth of opinion in the Communion. If the membership becomes polarized, it will lose its ability to act effectively on behalf of the whole Communion. It would be strengthened by the Archbishop of Canterbury being present throughout the meeting. (para. 72)

5.1.5 In the Anglican Communion Covenant the previously established JSC appears as 'the Standing Committee of the Anglican Communion', responsible to the primates and the ACC. Essentially the change of name, which was agreed by due process, represents a formalizing process in that the primate members have been made actual members in the ACC constitution, replacing the informal arrangement that pertained before 2009. The Covenant proposal invests this body with a coordinating role with responsibility for monitoring the functioning of the Covenant and for referring matters for advice to the primates and ACC and where appropriate recommending to any Instrument or to the member Churches various actions regarding member Churches that are deemed non-compliant with the Covenant.

5.2 The primates and the ACC: interrelated Instruments

5.2.1 The fact that the Primates' Meetings and the ACC are interrelated ought not be a surprise for Anglicans. It is consonant with the Anglican idea of the Church as episcopally ordered and synodically governed.⁸⁵ From a practical point of view the fact that the two bodies are interrelated makes sense precisely because the fortunes of both have been closely bound up with each other over the last three decades. The interconnectedness of the two bodies is readily apparent from statements emanating from the Instruments of Communion calling for close cooperation between the two bodies. There was from the outset recognition that both bodies needed a close working arrangement if both were to serve the interests of the Communion. One Anglican ecclesiologist, Bruce Kaye, has argued that the ACC has been marginalized in recent years during a period in which the primates began to exercise what has been called an 'enhanced authority', a development observed to some extent in a shift in focus from a conciliar or consultative to a collegial focus.⁸⁶ Others will disagree with this

⁸⁵ The phrase 'episcopally ordered' is more accurate from an Anglican ecclesiological point of view than the more familiar phrase 'episcopally led'. This latter phrase imports unwarranted judgements regarding the nature of leadership of clergy and laity in the Anglican idea of the Church.

⁸⁶ Bruce Kaye, 'The Sidelining of the Anglican Consultative Council in a Time of Turmoil', in J. Fairbrother (ed.), *To the Church, to the World: Essays in Honour of the Right Reverend John C. Paterson* (Auckland: Vaughan Park Anglican Retreat Centre,

assessment. Different views on this matter highlight the sensitive nature of the relationship between the Primates' Meetings and the ACC.

5.2.2 However, the strength of either body can vary and is subject to various contingencies, for instance the latest disturbance in the Communion and/or changing membership. Furthermore both bodies are vulnerable to political pressure and manipulation. Neither body can be expected to deliver on things for which it was not established. In times of great stress it is inevitable that structures designed for certain purposes are asked to deliver in areas beyond their brief. What can then occur is a progressive inflation of the rationale and brief of a particular body. This may or may not be a good thing, but it does increase the possibility of disappointment and controversy and expose ecclesial bodies to criticism and claims of ineffectiveness.

5.2.3 The ACC may have struggled to find a voice in recent years in relation to an ascendant primates' role in the Communion. It may also have been subject to political manipulation by sectional interests. For

2010), 67–74. Kaye's view finds support in the research paper from the Australian General Synod Office 'The Anglican Communion Instruments of Unity'. This paper notes the move 'from seeing a "council" of bishops to a "college" of bishops' along the lines of Roman Catholic usage. The communal and consultative roles have been more muted.

both reasons some may consider that it has failed to deliver what they wish to effect in the Communion. However, the claim that the ACC is, as a consequence 'defunct' is premature and needs to be treated with caution.⁸⁷ Such a claim belongs to a wider critique of the present Anglican Communion. In this respect it ought to be noted that the call by some for the abandonment or dissolution of the ACC (in, for example, a new covenanted membership of the Anglican Communion) paves the way for a new type ACC formed from those Churches that have signed up to the Covenant. In other words even advocates of a kind of 'purified' Anglicanism cannot dispense with a body like the ACC, nor with its primates and their meetings. In Anglican ecclesiology both bodies evidently have a part to play.

5.2.4 It may be that in the future an even greater integration between the primates and the ACC can be achieved. This may be associated with a more positive mandate for the ACC in relation to strategic priorities. This enhanced function would involve listening to stories of being church from around the global Communion. In the light of this the ACC would be in a unique position (drawing as it does from local expressions of the Church and from across all orders and the laity) to highlight, for example to the primates, priorities and issues worthy of attention. On this basis the ACC may have a stronger commissioning-type role within the life of the Communion. Such a positive and even

⁸⁷ See Radner, 'Can the Instruments of Unity be Repaired?'

celebratory note for the work of the ACC would give to its deliberations a natural missional focus.

5.3 The Primates' Meeting and the ACC: authority, power, and persuasion

5.3.1 Neither the Primates' Meetings nor the ACC has legislative authority to determine matters of faith and doctrine for the whole Communion. No such body exists in a Communion of churches where the accent is upon local autonomy and interconnecting links through which a wider fellowship of churches is built.⁸⁸ This is reflected in the brief for the primates and the ACC to be bodies for consultation, listening, recommending, connecting, facilitating, and communicating. This is not to suggest that Anglicans throughout the world are rudderless with regard to belief and worship. Even a cursory examination of the provincial constitutions and/or organizational arrangements of the Communion and of course the existence of the Lambeth Quadrilateral highlight commitments—in diverse ways—to

⁸⁸ The phrase 'provincial ecclesiology' may have some currency here. For example, the phrase is used in the Third IATDC's final report, *Communion, Conflict and Hope: The Kuala Lumpur Report* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2008), para. 49. Although the word 'provincial' can have a number of different meanings and caution is required in its use in relation to the idea of a church (see 1.18 above), the phrase 'provincial ecclesiology' does have the advantage of highlighting the importance of local autonomy in relation to a defined place.

the ancient apostolic faith enshrined in Scriptures, Creeds, Prayer Book heritage, liturgies, and canons of the Church. The question is not about the existence or otherwise of apostolic faith and order, but rather about the location for determining faith and discipline in the Churches of the Communion. It may be helpful to see authority to determine such matters as operating in a series of concentric circles from the nexus of the parish and diocese and extending to national and provincial levels. Authority beyond these domains is of the persuasive and moral kind: advice, recommendation. This can be observed in the way the Primates' Meetings and ACC have actually worked or failed to work over time.

5.3.2 From 1979 the Primates' Meeting functioned to 'enhance cohesion, understanding and collaboration in the family and to share information among the Churches'. It did this by conferring with the Archbishop of Canterbury, referring matters to the ACC, and conferring with regard to the implementation of recommendations from the ACC. In 1988 the brief had sharpened such that the Primates' Meeting was asked 'to exercise an enhanced responsibility in offering guidance on doctrinal, moral and pastoral matters'. In 1998 Archbishop Eames pointed out that the *Virginia Report* regarded the Primates' Meeting as being, in the first place, collegial. Mutual accountability within the Primates' Meeting was recognized in 2009 at the Alexandria meeting. Within this unfolding and expanding brief for the Primates' Meetings (and more regular gatherings) the essential authority remained of a moral or persuasive rather than juridical kind. Indeed the

latter is not possible within an Anglican ‘polity of persuasion’.⁸⁹ The fact that there are some who might wish it were otherwise and the fact that there are others who rejoice because the present situation suits their purposes is both inevitable in the Anglican idea of the Church and a cause of significant conflict from time to time.

5.3.3 The ACC is, as its name implies, a consultative body for the Communion. Its authority comes by virtue of the agreement of the provinces that such a body could attend to matters relevant to the life of the member Churches of the Communion. But it is an authority to consult and to make recommendations. It has no power of enforcement as such. Again its work is premised on goodwill, moral suasion, and the ‘bonds of affection’.

5.3.4 Recent controversies in the Communion have led many to call for sanctions, for authority with bite and the capability to enforce decisions. Not surprisingly, such bodies as exist cannot deliver such things. The matter was discussed extensively in the *Windsor Report* and followed up in the WCG, whose own report stated that:

The principle of autonomy-in-communion described in the *Windsor Report* makes clear that the principle of

⁸⁹ The phrase was coined by Archbishop Jeffrey Driver in his unpublished PhD thesis, ‘Beyond Windsor: Anglicanism, Communion and Episcopacy’, Charles Sturt University, Australia, 2008.

subsidiarity has always to be borne in mind. If the concern is with communion in a diocese, only diocesan authority is involved; if communion at a provincial level then only provincial decision. But if the matter concerns recognising one another as sharing one communion of faith and life, then some joint organs of discernment and decision, which are recognised by all, are required. (para. 55)

This led the WCG to articulate the move to ‘communion with autonomy and accountability’ as being a better articulation of the ecclesiology which is necessary to sustain Communion. However how such an accountability would work is itself controversial. For example, only a structure that was deliberately framed to allow direction from the top down would fully meet the aspirations of those who demand more effective global discipline. The correlate of a stronger top-down discipline is reduced provincial autonomy. This would raise other problems for the Churches of the Anglican Communion. There remains disagreement in the Communion about the extent to which, if at all, the proposed Covenant would lead to a more centralized top-down approach to decision-making. This is reflected in more recent debate throughout the Communion about the Covenant at synodical and provincial gatherings. One of the issues in such debates concerns the unintended consequences of the Covenant. The conversation on such matters continues.

5.3.5 The above reflections point to the fact that in Anglicanism discipline of a juridical and canonical kind operates up to the provincial and national level. There is at present no international canon law that might enable decisions to carry force at law, and any suggestion that the Communion should move to a common canon law would be controversial and unlikely to succeed. It could be argued that, in the nature of the case, the present position ought to remain, in keeping with the Anglican idea of the Church. A change in this regard would require the consent of the provinces. One suggestion that might be acceptable is that the member Churches should incorporate some common Communion-related enactments into their canons. The recent Covenant proposals speak of ‘enhanced mutual discernment and accountability’. Some are relaxed about this. Others believe this implies too strong a move in the direction of greater disciplinary capability at the international level. Others regard such proposals as not delivering sufficient discipline. Certainly the current Instruments of Communion cannot administer discipline that is legally binding, but can only exercise the force of moral suasion. Perhaps this is what discipline has to look like within a provincial-type ecclesiology, that is, non-judicial, non-coercive; in short a discipline of persuasion and mutual accountability. Some will say ‘that’s not much’ and will want something far stronger, but that will require a different kind of Anglican Communion.

5.4 The Primates' Meetings, the ACC, and Anglican unity

5.4.1 There are various voices and groups in the Anglican Church at this time who argue that these two Instruments have failed to assist the unity of the Church. Indeed some say that these two Instruments have served to exacerbate the problems of being together and to some extent concentrated the conflict. As a result, the Instruments are, as noted above, pronounced 'defunct' or 'paralysed'. This arises in part because the instruments are being asked to do work that they are not equipped to perform: to deliver in areas in which they lack authority. They are consultative bodies, and the authority they exercise is consonant with this; it is an authority of moral suasion. Such bodies do not have juridical authority. The idea that such bodies can be invested with new powers and authority raises questions about the character of Anglican polity. The Instruments are Instruments of a particular ecclesial body, that is, Anglican. Focusing on the Instruments per se while ignoring the character of the body in whose hands such Instruments are held creates confusion and raises expectations that may not be realizable.

5.4.2 The Instruments are organically related to the body of the Church and specific to that body. Altering the Instruments may involve change to the ecclesial body. For example, in Anglicanism strengthening the Instruments of Communion to include greater powers of sanction and discipline will involve readjusting the balance between provincial autonomy and mutual accountability. In a polity of persuasion where the accent is on hospitality, invitation, conversation, mutual discernment, admonition, recognition, and respect, the injection of

powers to discipline and perhaps exclude would require the consent of the whole. Furthermore, within a polity of persuasion the sharpest and most important ways of exercising discipline and mutual admonition will be precisely through those forms of life that mark Anglicanism out. These include persistence in difficult conversations, not inviting to the conference table according to conscience, and freedom for the voice(s) of protest. Such things are some of the ways in which Anglicans can respond to conflict and profound—and perhaps irreconcilable—differences. This is a particular kind of discipline that requires the practice of considerable inner discipline. The significance of this is easily missed. The kind of inner discipline referred to here involves humility, patience, and love and nurtures a resilient wisdom and sympathetic heart that sustains a people in Christ even through sharp and painful difference over lengthy periods of time.

5.4.3 The Primates' Meetings and the ACC operate within such a polity, and their effectiveness has to be judged in relation to this ecclesial ethos and not some imagined church in which sanctions and discipline operate in a more overt and definitive manner. If the Primates' Meetings struggle to fulfil their mandate and the ACC is divided by sectional interests, this is a sign of the deeper divisions and conflicts that beset the wider Church. In this sense the Primates' Meetings and the ACC hold a mirror to the rest of the Church of our shared and imperfect life. To this extent (a) the struggles of the primates to collaborate in the ministry of the gospel, and (b) the efforts

of the ACC to encourage the Churches of the Communion to engage in practices that honour the incarnate Lord, both bear witness to a *koinonia* in the gospel refracted through flawed and fragile human lives and societies.⁹⁰ In this sense the Primates' Meetings and the ACC are a sign and instance of our wounded unity and a litmus test of how the Communion handles and/or harnesses the conflicts that beset it.

5.4.4 The foregoing comments are not a recipe for inaction, but they do beg the question of what kind of action or change is called for and is possible. In the present circumstances a question is how the Primates' Meeting and the ACC might assist in the repair of Communion. As indicated above, this is difficult given that these particular Instruments are in fact part of the problem—but only part—and symptomatic of a wider failure. Perhaps, as outlined above (5.2.4), a closer working collaborative relationship between the primates and the ACC might be a helpful development. An important step in this direction has already begun through the role of the Standing Committee. However, as identified earlier, there are opportunities in the ACC for some quite positive developments in terms of strategic goal setting. This could be a collaborative exercise with the primates. Such a move might go hand in

⁹⁰ It might be more accurate to speak of a low-grade *koinonia* with respect to such matters. This is precisely how the Anglican Church of Australia has functioned throughout its history, and there are numerous examples of how resilient ecclesial communities (e.g. many dioceses of the Communion!) function in similar ways.

hand with a deeper engagement and participation of the laity in global Anglicanism. The ACC is the place to address the clerical weight of the Instruments and give more opportunity for the gift of the voice of the laity at an international level. This matter is deserving of greater attention.

5.5 Provisional Instruments for an incomplete Communion

5.5.1 The Primates' Meetings and the ACC serve the *koinonia* of the Church as they point the fellowship of Churches of the Anglican Communion to the incarnate Lord who galvanizes their trusts and guides their mutual consents. Because the Body of Christ is an unfinished reality and its pilgrimage is undertaken amid the struggles of being human together—with all its conflicts, friction, fractures, and regrets—the Instruments of Communion will be signs of the as yet unrealized communion that we hope and pray for. In this sense the Instruments are provisional signs of an incomplete communion with God and each other in the world. It is deeply attractive to attempt to resolve conflicts and divisions either too quickly or via solutions that are essentially political and/or ecclesiastical but lack a critical theological element. Often unintended consequences of such actions only deepen fractures and divide people for longer periods of time and make the task of mediation even more difficult and cumbersome.

5.5.2 Yet our impaired communion is not bereft of life, for it also lives out of a wholly undeserved gift of an indestructible bond in Christ.

This primary bond in the Spirit sustains the people of God and propels them forward towards a new day when God will be 'all in all'. This relativizes all talk of irreparable brokenness and directs us to even deeper realities of the one-in-Christ bond. This may sound too good to be true when all we can see and experience is fracture and disturbance. Whence arises hope for a new future in such a context? The good news is that our life together is inwardly fortified by the intensity of God's nearness even in the darkness. To deny this is to deny our fundamental situation and capitulate to the powers, and to relinquish hope in God.

5.5.3 An Anglican theology of communion has to be developed from within the fractures, imperfections, and wounds of the life of the Body of Christ. Such an approach might move the Communion towards a deeper unity. What might this look like for the Primates' Meetings and the ACC? Can such bodies enable the Communion to find a deeper unity in God? The call in this regard was succinctly stated in the 2007 Kuala Lumpur report of the Third Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC):

Sometimes we hear of Communion being broken, and often this language is used in rhetorical exchanges about particular issues in dispute. The greater reality however, is the brokenness of the church within which communion can and does flourish. Communion flourishes when we accept that discipleship in the church is a call to the way of the cross in the

brokenness of the church to which we all contribute.⁹¹

5.5.4 The IATDC 2007 report was mindful of the well-known words of Michael Ramsey, who, in speaking of the catholicity of Anglicanism, referred to its incompleteness and untidiness:

For while the Anglican church is vindicated by its place in history, with a strikingly balanced witness to gospel and church and sound learning, its greater vindication lies in its pointing through its own history to something of which it is a fragment. Its credentials are its incompleteness, with the tension and the travail in its soul. It is clumsy and untidy, it baffles neatness and logic. For it is sent not to commend itself as 'the best type of Christianity', but by its very brokenness to point to the universal Church wherein all have died.⁹²

In a very specific sense these words offer a powerful comment on the Instruments of Communion and highlight the importance of nurturing a strong relationship between these Instruments. What this might involve is briefly developed below.

⁹¹ The Third IATDC's final report, *Communion, Conflict and Hope: The Kuala Lumpur Report*, para. 50.

⁹² A. M. Ramsey, *The Gospel and the Catholic Church* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1936), 220.

6 Towards a Symphony of the Instruments of Communion

6.1 Issues and proposals

6.1.1 The first section of this paper set out some principles of the ecclesiology of the Anglican Communion as the framework for considering the Instruments of Communion. Sections 2–5 provided a more detailed examination of the four Instruments: the Lambeth Conference, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primates’ Meeting, and the ACC. In section 5 some issues were identified in relation to the development and recent function of the Primates’ Meeting and the ACC. This final section highlights some underlying issues that have emerged in the earlier sections and makes some tentative proposals for the future understanding and functioning of the Instruments.

6.2 The concept of an Instrument

6.2.1 The concept of Instruments of Unity had its origins in the ecumenical movement in the 1970s.⁹³ The adoption by Anglicans of

⁹³ Poon, ‘The Anglican Communion as Communion of Churches’, para. 37: ‘The term “instrument of unity” was used in discussions on the ecclesiological significance of the varieties of “Christian councils” that have emerged in the post-War years. Lukas Vischer insisted that Christian Councils should be “instruments of unity”. By this he meant the ecclesial reality should not be sought in Christian Councils but in the communion among the Churches. “As structures, Christian Councils have only *an*

such language can be traced to the seventh meeting of the ACC in 1987,⁹⁴ though as early as the 1968 Lambeth Conference the ACC was

instrumental ecclesiological significance in the promotion of this communion.” This instrumental and provisional role was underscored in the 1982 “Consultation on the Significance and Contribution of Councils of Churches in the Ecumenical Movement” in Venice and the 1986 Second Consultation on Councils of Churches as “Instruments of Unity within the One Ecumenical Movement” in Geneva.’ For Vischer see Lukas Vischer, ‘Christian Councils: Instruments of Ecclesial Communion’, *Ecumenical Review*, 24:1 (1972), 72–87, at 77, 80. See also Hervé Legrand, ‘Councils of Churches as Instruments of Unity within the One Ecumenical Movement’, in Thomas F. Best (ed.), *Instruments of Unity: National Councils of Churches within the One Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988), 55–71; more generally see Konrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1991).

⁹⁴ Poon, ‘The Anglican Communion as Communion of Churches’, para. 38: ‘The “instruments of unity” concept appeared in the Seventh Meeting of ACC in 1987. It was used in the Report “Unity and Diversity within the Anglican Communion: A way forward” as a collective name for the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lambeth Conference, Anglican Consultative Council, and the Primates’ Meeting. Before this, Lambeth 1978 used the term “structures in the Anglican Communion”; in 1984 the Secretary General used the term “inter-Anglican organization” in his ACC-6 Opening Speech.’

referred to as ‘an instrument of common action’.⁹⁵

6.2.2 The concept of ‘instrument’ was invoked in the *Virginia Report* of 1997. However it is attached in a rather loose manner to a range of phrases, for example ‘Instruments of Communion’; ‘instruments of Anglican belonging at the world level’ (5.28); ‘international Anglican instruments of unity’ (6.23); ‘worldwide instruments of communion’ and ‘instruments of interdependence’ (6.34); ‘instruments of the Anglican Communion’ (6.32). Furthermore the report states that the episcopate is ‘the primary instrument of Anglican unity’ (3.51), and it recognizes the need in the Anglican Communion for ‘appropriate instruments’ (5.20). The ACC is identified as ‘unique among the international Anglican instruments of unity’ (6.23). Three things are to be noted from the *Virginia Report*: first, an uncritical acceptance of the language of ‘instrument’; second, a loose association of ‘instrument’ with a range of phrases relating to matters of ecclesial structure; and third, ‘Instruments of Communion’ was evidently the preferred general identifier regarding ‘instruments’.

6.2.3 Certainly since the *Virginia Report* the language of instruments has become part of the stock-in-trade of international Anglican discourse. In Michael Poon’s view the ‘uncritical use of concepts from the ecumenical movement’ such as the concept of ‘instruments of unity’

⁹⁵ See Lambeth Conference 1968, resolution 69.

aggravates what has been termed as an ‘ecclesial deficit’ in Anglicanism.⁹⁶ He states:

The last decade saw the creation of concepts and structures to uphold the Communion at international level, without thinking through their ecclesial implications and their connection to the ecclesial realities of the particular Churches. So the Communion structures unwittingly set Anglican Churches worldwide on a collision course with one another. These terminologies came from specific Protestant denominational settings; but there was

⁹⁶ Poon, ‘The Anglican Communion as Communion of Churches’, para. 37. The idea of an ‘ecclesial deficit’ was discussed in the Windsor Continuation Group’s ‘Report to the Archbishop of Canterbury’. In section D of that report, paragraph 51, it was noted that ‘a central deficit in the life of the Communion is its inability to uphold structures which can make decisions which carry force in the life of the Churches of the Communion, or even give any definitive guidance to them’. The report then noted that ‘Other commentators will argue that such mechanisms are entirely unnecessary, but this touches upon the heart of what it is to live as a Communion of Churches.’ The ecclesial deficit concerns both the determination of the limits of diversity in the fellowship of Anglican Churches and the capacity to exercise authority to discipline Churches that disregard such limits. What this means is that the notion of an ‘ecclesial deficit’ is an essentially contested ecclesiological concept.

little discussion and explanation of what they mean in Anglican terms ecclesialogically.⁹⁷

6.2.4 There is little to suggest that the concept of ‘instruments’ has been subject to any critical assessment as to its appropriateness or what it might signify. Instruments are things that you use to achieve certain ends. A hammer is an instrument for striking a nail in order to build or repair some structure; a dentist’s drill is an instrument. This tool-like quality is reflected in the etymology of ‘instrument’ meaning a ‘tool or apparatus.’ It is originally connected with a musical instrument. Interestingly it also includes the sense of ‘arrange and furnish’. The adjective ‘instrumental’ points to something that is ‘serviceable’ or ‘useful’.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Poon, ‘The Anglican Communion as Communion of Churches’, para. 38.

⁹⁸ In the late thirteenth century the usage is in relation to a ‘musical instrument’, from the Latin *instrumentum* meaning ‘a tool, apparatus, furniture, dress, document’ and from *instruere* meaning to ‘arrange, furnish’. The broader sense of instrument as ‘that which is used as an agent in a performance’ is from the mid fourteenth century. ‘Instrumental’ as ‘musical composition for instruments without vocals’ appears from 1940. ‘Instrumental’ (adjective) is from the late fourteenth century; ‘of the nature of an instrument’, from instrument + al. The meaning as ‘serviceable, useful’ is from 1600. ‘Instrumental’ as a musical composition for ‘instruments only’ is attested by 1940. See *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*.

6.2.5 The musical background to ‘instrument’ offers a wider framework in which to consider the concept. For example, in music instruments belong to a rich environment that includes harmonic, orchestral, and symphonic dimensions. In this context instruments play a part in an organic offering directed to successful performance. In this sense the instrument comes to life only as it is integrated into the musician’s own existence. Referring to the way in which an external object (in this case a musical instrument) becomes an extension of the user, the philosopher of science Michael Polanyi states: ‘We pour ourselves into them and assimilate them as part of our own existence. We accept them existentially by dwelling in them.’⁹⁹ This requires a ‘purposive effort’, ‘commitment’, and ‘a manner of disposing ourselves’.¹⁰⁰ The external object becomes an instrument or tool when it is assimilated into the operation of the user. A merger takes place and the instrument becomes an extension of the body.

6.2.6 However, this assimilation is neither automatic nor simple and can disintegrate. For example when attention is directly focused on the instrument or tool rather than on the purpose for which it is being used the capacity of the user to achieve the intended goal is seriously

⁹⁹ Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), 59.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 60–1.

diminished.¹⁰¹ Thus if a pianist switches attention from the performance to the particulars—the act of striking the keys—the performance will suffer. An actor who becomes fixated on the next word and gesture can be paralysed with ‘stage fright’. In both cases fluency is restored only as the pianist or actor casts his or her mind forward beyond the particulars to the purpose of the act. The fundamental problem arises when the *focal awareness* shifts from the purposive intent of the activity to something that ordinarily lies in the *subsidiary awareness*.¹⁰²

6.2.7 This brief discussion indicates that the concept of an instrument is complex. An instrument is originally an external object differentiated from the user. The transposition of an external object into an instrument, as noted above, requires skill whereby the object external to the user becomes part of his or her own existence. The move from object to instrument involves the overcoming of a natural distance

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 56.

¹⁰² See the insightful work of Michael Polanyi on focal and subsidiary awareness in *Personal Knowledge*. Polanyi refers to ‘The kind of clumsiness which is due to the fact that focal attention is directed to the subsidiary elements of an action is commonly known as self-consciousness’ (p. 56). In this context Polanyi states that ‘a serious and sometimes incurable form of it is “stage fright” where the actor becomes fixated on ‘the next word, note or gesture and thereby loses the sense of flow and context sweep of the performance’.

between person and object. Overcoming this distance belongs to the skill of knowing and doing. The skill and intuitive connection between user and instrument through intelligent effort and imaginative endeavour (which cannot be explained simply as the effect of repetition of a task) is the basis for successful achievement of the purpose. The wisdom built up in such processes transcends the mechanical and technical and enters the domain of personal knowledge.

6.2.8 Michael Polanyi likens the process by which we move from technical and mechanical action to personal knowledge, to a person being blindfolded and having to use a stick (with a probe at the end of it) to explore a particular space.¹⁰³ The stick and probe at the end eventually become an extension of the hand. At first the sensory data

¹⁰³ Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 61. Polanyi observes that if we are blindfolded we ‘cannot find our way about with a stick as skilfully as a blind man does who has practised it a long time. We can feel that the stick hits something from time to time but cannot correlate these events. We can learn to do this only by an intelligent effort at constructing a coherent perception of the things hit by the stick. We then gradually cease to feel a series of jerks in our fingers as such—as we still do in our first clumsy trials—but experience them as the presence of obstacles of certain hardness and shape, placed at a certain distance, at the point of our stick ... When the new interpretation of the shocks in our fingers is achieved in terms of the objects touched by the stick, we may be said to carry out unconsciously the process of interpreting the shocks ... we become unconscious of the actions by which we achieve this result.’

flowing upwards from the probe at the tip of the stick to the palm are difficult to discriminate. Slowly the blindfolded person learns to discriminate more finely between different surfaces, densities, and so on. A mental picture is built up in the mind. This occurs through a growing organic connection between the probe and the person; the natural discontinuity of the probe from the user's hand is slowly overcome; an organic reintegration is achieved.

6.2.9 This illustration reminds us that an instrument can function as an important heuristic or finding mechanism. But the quality of this is entirely dependent on the degree to which the user achieves a high level of organic connection between himself or herself and the instrument. In this process the nature of the entity changes from external object to instrument as extension of the self. The foregoing discussion points to two key issues for instruments: human agency and purpose.

6.3 Instruments, human agency, and purpose

6.3.1 Instruments have an inescapable *personal dimension*. When there are complaints about instruments and mechanical type behaviour of structures, often the real issue concerns the depersonalizing of the instruments in question. The problem is masked in Anglicanism when the Instruments of Communion are identified merely as parts of the *structure* of polity.¹⁰⁴ This is only partly true. The fuller picture is that

¹⁰⁴ This problem emerges in the IATDC's *Virginia Report* of 1997. In this report the language of instrument was linked to the need for 'enabling structures' to maintain

the instruments are gatherings of *human agents in particular sets of relationships*. The loss of the sense of human agency and participation in the use of the Instruments is of course a feature of contemporary life, and it is usually associated with questions of power and bureaucratic technique that is depersonalizing.

6.3.2 A second and related issue for instruments concerns their purpose, or more particularly what happens when there is a *loss of focus* on the purpose for which an instrument is intended. When ‘the eye is taken off the ball’ and becomes fixed on the instrument as such, then the focal awareness shifts to a secondary element. This can arise from anxiety and lack of confidence or lack of well-formed habits of use. When this occurs it means that the end or purpose becomes of secondary importance; it moves into a subsidiary awareness. The result is poor performance because the focus is no longer on the purpose for which the instrument is being deployed, but rather the focus has shifted to the instrument. The horizon of the deeper purpose has receded from view and the instrument becomes the focus.

communication and coherence across the Communion. Personal and relational life was stated to be prior to such structure, the latter being necessary in order to enable the former to be maintained (5.4). This may sound benign language but it betrays an implicit dislocation of personal agency from structure. The form of the relationship between the two depersonalizes structure and makes it secondary to relational life.

6.3.3 The proper focus for the Instruments of Communion is communion with God and each other in the service of God's mission in the world. Communion is strengthened as more and more parts of our lives and church are directed to God's purposes. The Instruments of Communion are means through which the life of the Church can be directed towards God. In this context the Instruments have a subsidiary function, John-the-Baptist-like, pointing to a greater reality and calling. This does not remove the important practical function of the Instruments of Communion. They remain highly pragmatic ways to enable complex communities of faith to realize their life and purpose in the world. However all this is merely enhanced and deepened as the Instruments are set within their true horizon of the purposes of God. As such they are invested with their true significance, that is, to enable the people of the Church to follow Christ in the world. In recent years Anglicans have interpreted this movement outwards in terms of the Five Marks of Mission. The Instruments of Communion are intended to serve these marks. The Marks of Mission are the proper horizon towards which the Instruments are directed.

6.3.4 In times of crisis the Instruments become easily overburdened. What this means is that they become the main focus and cease to point to God in the Church. People become preoccupied with the operation of the Instruments in a highly structuralist and mechanical manner. They not only lose focus but become depersonalized. Under these conditions, not surprisingly the Instruments are often

pronounced meaningless and inadequate for the purpose for which they were created. Often this is simply a sign that we do not know how to use the Instrument any longer or do not believe it can do what it is supposed to do. Then it ceases to be a living instrument and appears as a peculiar artefact, irrelevant and meaningless. The issue can be stated succinctly: ‘If we discredit the usefulness of a tool, its meaning as a tool is gone.’¹⁰⁵ In an ecclesial context this not only spells the end of the Instrument; more importantly it is a sign of a dismembered body. This reveals the deeper wound of the body and the pain caused through a disordered ecclesial spirit (Gal 5.13–21).

6.3.5 Recovering a *proper focus on purpose* and on the *personal dimension* of the Instruments of Communion is the prerequisite for their healthy operation. When the Instruments remain locked in the language of *structure* they remain disconnected from the life of the Church ‘like a wave of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind’ (Jas 1.6b). Two things are required: (a) the persistent focus on the purpose of the Instrument as a means through which God actively reconnects people with each other in Christ the Lord; and (b) human agents who steadfastly insist that the Instruments are not simply structural artefacts but are constituted by people in relation. In this way we will find that the Instruments of Communion are active and vital constituents of our common life in the Body of Christ, rather than simply elements of our

¹⁰⁵ Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge*, 57.

common law.

6.4 Instruments as gifts of the Spirit

6.4.1 One of the great insights of the Anglican Communion may be the way in which it values—within an episcopal ordering of the Church—the symphony of bishops, clergy, and laity working together in communion. This is a significant challenge for Anglicans in the world today, and this challenge is especially—but not solely—focused on the Instruments of Communion. What is required is a clearer understanding of the role and function of each Instrument of Communion. This should take into account the specific gifts and responsibilities for governance as well as the representative functions entrusted to bishops and the how these might best work together with the whole body of the faithful.

6.4.2 The Instruments of Communion are not just quirks of Anglican governance, but particular ways of facilitating practices that attend to the incarnate Lord and enhance the life of the Body of Christ. It is more accurate from a theological point of view to understand the Instruments of Communion as intensifications or concentrations of ecclesial communion. As such the Instruments are particular focal points of what binds us together in Christ. When the people who constitute the various Instruments of Communion seek wisdom together they embody and re-present what the whole Church is called to do and be. As they concentrate God's gift of oneness (in all its diversity and tensions) they simultaneously enhance the Communion

of whole Body of Christ.¹⁰⁶

6.4.3 The work of the Instruments is one of facilitating the overflow of Christ's bond with the world through the Spirit. In this way ecclesial structures of governance serve the strengthening of our oneness with God in the world. This points to a truly missional focus and a trinitarian dynamic as foundational for Instruments of Communion. It means that the instruments have a gift-like character. From what has been said above it is clear that this gift-like character is deeply personal and reminds us of the 'indescribable gift' of Jesus Christ. God in Christ is the up-close and personal gift of God for the life of the world. The life of Jesus shows us that God's gift is fragile, suffers and sacrifices even as the joy of God is present, and provides the wider horizon. It is for good reason that the gift of Jesus is marked at key points with the symbols of cradle, table, towel, bread and wine, cross and grave, and empty tomb. The gift-like character of the second person of the Trinity reminds us of the greatness and the contingent nature of such a gift. If we now speak of Instruments of Communion as gifts they have to be understood against the gift of Jesus. This means that the Instruments are intended to reflect personal and costly engagements between people and ought be set against the horizon of God's work in the world and hence be

¹⁰⁶ It is an ecclesial version of the concept of 'the butterfly effect'. Theologically this is grounded in the deep interconnectedness of the whole of creation.

outward-looking. Such a rich backdrop for Instruments as gifts has not been a strong feature in the development of the understanding of the Instruments. While the gift-like character of the Instruments was flagged in the *Virginia Report* of 1997 this depiction remained undeveloped in that report.¹⁰⁷

6.4.4 The fact that the Instruments have emerged in history—often in times of conflict and uncertainty in the Church (e.g. the first Lambeth Conference)—points to the fact that the Instruments are contingent and therefore provisional and unfinished. The Instruments will probably undergo change and modification as the contexts and circumstances of being the Church also change and evolve. The contingent nature of the Instruments goes hand in hand with their gift-like character. Indeed a gift is a gift only as it is opened, unwrapped, and used. That is what we do with gifts. The Instruments are gifts of the Spirit that have emerged through a process and within specific historical contexts. This means that the Instruments represent both gift and task for the Church. Their operation and ongoing value for Communion require active human participation and an imaginative effort to follow what the Spirit is saying to the Church as the future

¹⁰⁷ See *Virginia Report*, 1.14: ‘The instruments of communion which are a gift of God to the Church help to hold us in the life of the triune God.’ Unfortunately this statement remains quite disconnected to the lengthy sections of the report on Communion and the Trinity, which is argued as the basis for the life of the Church.

unfolds. This also means that there will be an inevitable messiness about the way the Instruments function as gifts *from* and *of* God. All this points to Instruments not as signs of a steady-state Church but as signs of work to be done and an expectation that new things will emerge as people engage faithfully and joyfully, seeking wisdom and bearing witness to Christ in the world.

6.4.5 A current danger for Anglicans in relation to the Instruments of Communion is that we may jettison or spurn the gifts given for our common life now and a hoped-for future life together in the Kingdom of God. This can happen when the Instruments are reduced to a merely human achievement and when those who inhabit the Instruments fail to recognize the Spirit at work willing the good through such Instruments.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ The late Daniel Hardy said that ‘greatest threat to Anglicanism today is that ... the personal will (what each person wants), and the will of sectional interests in the Church are displacing love for the truth ... What is needed is to move radically in the opposite direction: attentiveness to the truth, to the infinite identity of God in acting (in Christ through the Holy Spirit) in the world to bring it to its final end: attentiveness to God for God-self. All will depend on *whether we can ‘place’ everything in relation to the truth of God’s own life*, as that is found through the right kind of attentiveness to the richness of God’s presence and blessing as they are found in worship and corporate life when they respond to God’s purposes for the world’ (Daniel Hardy, ‘Anglicanism in the Twenty-First Century: Scriptural, Local and

6.4.6 An important task in respect to the Instruments of Communion is to recover a gift-centred approach to such locations for common counsel in international Anglicanism. As Instruments they (the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lambeth Conferences, primates, ACC) remain vulnerable to distortion and misuse. For example, when the Instruments are abstracted from their human agency and are treated as things and/or objects apart from the body they become disembodied tools. As such they are more easily subject to political misuse and manipulation by sectional interests of all persuasions. These differing groups have their own ideas concerning the nature of communion and how it needs to be repaired, and this is easier to prosecute when the Instruments are objectified. One effect of reducing Instruments to such artefacts of human manipulation is that it generates false expectations concerning what is possible and at the same time takes away their gift-like character.

6.4.7 A gift-centred approach to the structures of our polity is resistant to unreal expectations about their ability to provide quick solutions. A gift-centred approach belongs to an environment that fosters purposive effort, commitment, and collaboration informed and energized by God.

Global', unpublished paper given at the American Academy of Religion, 2004). Such a placing of everything in relation to the truth of God's life involves what has been identified above as a purposive effort, commitment, and a manner of disposing ourselves that befits the fruit of the Spirit.

In this sense it is a reminder of the moral weight and vision of a godly *ecclesia* to which we are called together and not apart. This points to the fact that a gift-centred approach belongs to the language of conversion. The Church is being called back to the ultimate goal to display imperfectly but truly God's Christ-like communion with the world. From this perspective the Instruments of Communion might be recognized as having a sacramental or quasi-sacramental character as signs and mediations of the presence and work of God in the Church for the sake of the world. Furthermore this approach necessarily points the Instruments of Communion beyond their immediate focus on the internal life of the Church towards the world where God is at work to bring all things to his holy ways. The unfinished nature of this work of God is the deeper missiological horizon for the role and significance of the Instruments of Communion.

6.4.8 The approach suggested here implies something very different from a 'puncture repair kit' approach to the problems and challenges of Anglicanism. The wound needing healing cannot be fixed with a patch. Healing and repair can come only through deep listening and forbearance. The Instruments are in fact persons in relation seeking divine wisdom through common counsel. The danger is that the search for wisdom can be displaced by a desire to state opinions without adequate listening and attending to each other. When this happens the Instruments are depersonalized and fail to achieve their true purpose. In these circumstances they become rather blunt instruments at best

and we are not surprised by calls for different instruments that will fix the problem; revamping or removing some Instruments; and/or enhancing the authority of one Instrument and diminishing another. Such proposals might well be needed in order to improve communication and facilitate a deeper engagement between people. This may well belong to the evolution of the Instruments as identified above. But there are no quick-fix solutions to the need for careful and respectful listening. This requires a disposition and intent that goes beyond mere statement of opinion.

6.4.9 This paper has intentionally deployed the phrase ‘Instruments of Communion’ rather than ‘Instruments of Unity’. It has done so in the belief that the gift-like character of the Instruments is enhanced by the language of ‘communion’ rather than the language of ‘unity’. Interestingly, ‘communion’ was the original term in relation to Instruments and was only later replaced by the term ‘unity’. In our present context ‘Communion’ is a broader and theologically richer term than ‘unity’. Unity has unfortunately been too easily associated with structural and legal elements in the *ecclesia* of God. The institutional dimension of communion is important, but it is not the only or the most significant aspect of union with God and each other. ‘Instruments of Communion’ opens up possibilities whereas ‘unity’ language, at least in our present ecclesial context, tends to close down the perceived range of possibilities. Furthermore, the language of communion strengthens the relational dimension of the language of instruments. The recovery

of communion terminology is of a piece with the recovery of the role of human agency and theological focus on God that underlies the purpose of the Instruments of Communion. Language may not solve the problems but it has a part to play in changing expectations and attitudes.

6.4.10 It is legitimate to ask whether the language of ‘instruments’ might be replaced. The matter was extensively canvassed in an earlier (unpublished) paper prepared for IASCUFO. As noted earlier in this paper, the appeal to Instruments of Communion is relatively recent and was clearly part of the discourse of the *Virginia Report* of 1997. There does not appear to have been any conscious process of reception of the language of ‘instruments’ in the *Virginia Report* and subsequently. Moreover, as discussed in this section of the paper, there remain significant problems associated with the language of ‘instruments’ that seriously distort the nature, perceptions, and functioning of the familiar Anglican Instruments of Communion.

6.4.11 Finding a more acceptable language than ‘instruments’ is challenging. Nothing as yet commends itself, especially given the way in which the language of ‘instruments’ has become set in the general discourse and mind of the Church. This paper has adopted a different approach. First, it has argued for the recovery of a more nuanced and richer appreciation of what an instrument is and how it functions in relation to human agency and purpose. Second, the paper has developed the gift-like character of the Instruments of Communion

and set this within a distinctly theological framework. Third, the paper has suggested a consistent use of 'Instruments of Communion' rather than 'Instruments of Unity' in order to emphasize a stronger relational dimension.

6.5 Towards a deeper harmony of Instruments

6.5.1 The reflections above bring to the fore the importance of the recovery of a proper and richer relationship *between* the Instruments of Communion. We do not simply need a renewal of the working of the Instruments of Communion; we also need a deeper harmony between the Instruments of Communion. Indeed, these two approaches are complementary. Renewal of the Instruments requires a renewal of communion and communication between the Instruments. The two are co-related. This fact emerges when the history and changing fortunes of the four Instruments of Communion are examined. What can be observed at times is a competitive spirit and tensions that often end up in open conflict. Such things may be symptomatic of deeper issues; however, this simply confirms the view that the Instruments of Communion are a litmus test of what is happening in the Anglican Communion. It also means that the Instruments are uniquely placed to intentionally and prophetically recall the Communion to its true purpose in God's kingdom. In this sense the Instruments are less reactive and more proactive in their work, not simply responding but also anticipating. However this requires a new level of cooperation with

each other and with the purposes of God. Through such a cooperative engagement with God and with each other the Church will be enabled to move towards a greater symphony of the Instruments of Communion.

