



THEOLOGY TODAY

A Newsletter from the Institute of Anglican Studies at St George's Cathedral, Perth
~ committed to building up a well-informed and thinking Anglican Community.

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ANGLICANS

1. **Who are they?**
2. **What's their problem?**
3. **What's the solution?**
4. **Will our Diocese agree?**
5. **Do Anglicans have a future?**

WHO ARE THE ANGLICANS?

(Apologies to 1066 and All That.)

We don't know where the first Christians to arrive in Britain came from; maybe they were Phoenician traders, or possibly Roman soldiers. We do know that two bishops from Britain attended a Council of the Church at Arles in Gaul, now known as France, in 314AD. There is a reference to bishops from Britain signing up to the decrees of an Ecumenical Council of the Church at Nicea in 325.

But the British church was to be threatened. From across the sea came Angles, Saxons and Jutes from the area we know as Scandinavia. They took over Britain and pushed the ancient Brits either far north towards Scotland, west into Wales or south-west to Cornwall. Britain became "Angle-land" or England. The Celtic Christians were active in the work of spreading the gospel, and saints like Ninian, Columba and David came from their Celtic outposts to spread the gospel.

The big event of the sixth century was the arrival in 597 of Augustine, who had been sent by Pope Gregory to take the gospel to the English. Augustine discovered that King Ethelbert of Kent had a Queen named Bertha, who was both British and Christian, and with her support was able to convert King Ethelbert. He was baptised and became a great supporter of Augustine, who had been named by the Pope

as first Archbishop of Canterbury. So we have a very mixed Church at that time. Some were very much in the Roman mould, while others valued the old Celtic Church.

St Hilda, who was Abbess or head of a monastery at Whitby near York, for both men and women, offered her Abbey as a place for a conference, so that the rival groups of Roman and Celtic Christians could sort things out. They had different dates for Easter, for example, and many different customs, and so they met to discuss matters, with the result that Rome won. The Celtic Christians just had to bite their tongues and let Roman customs prevail.

The ninth and tenth centuries were interrupted by Norsemen from Scandinavia, who were called Vikings whenever they went on the warpath, which seems to have been most of the time.

The next turning point was in 1066. William the Conqueror arrived from Normandy and did battle at Hastings with King Harold of Kent, who got an arrow in his eye for his trouble. The English were soundly defeated and henceforth England was ruled by the Normans. Some of the Normans were great men who did much for the Church, including Lanfranc, Anselm and Thomas á Beckett.

In 1216, King John declared that the Church was free to elect bishops without reference to the King. The Church joined the nobles in getting King John to agree to a document we know as the Magna Carta, in which it is stated that "Ecclesia Anglicana" - the "Church of England" - should be free.

By the time we reach the fourteenth century, change was in the air. A reformer named John Wycliffe was propounding the doctrine of "sola scriptura", meaning "only the Bible".

So what have we got at this point? We've got a church that is partly Celtic but largely Roman, seemingly orthodox, but

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there were strong winds of change blowing. Certainly, the Church of England was more flexible than most European churches.

And then we come, of course, to Henry VIII, who was a fascinating character and a convinced Catholic. He believed in the traditional teaching of the Church. The Pope gave him the title “Defender of the Faith” for his opposition to Luther. He also had a great love for money and women. Henry was disappointed that his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, could not provide him with a male heir. Catherine’s uncle, Emperor Charles V of Spain, had the Pope under his control at that time, so there was little possibility of the Pope granting Henry a divorce. Henry, prompted by Archbishop Cranmer, declared himself head of the Church of England.

When Henry died, he was succeeded by his son Edward VI, then nine years of age. During Edward’s time the Regents who looked after him were ardent Protestants, and the First Book of Common Prayer was published (in English) in 1549, and an even more thorough-going Protestant version in 1552.

Now Edward VI was succeeded by Queen Mary, who turned back the hands of time. She wanted the old Roman Catholic ways reinstated. Mary set the record for burning people whose religious views she disagreed with – more than 300 perished in that way.

Mary was succeeded by Elizabeth, who wanted these disputes about religion to end and for people to agree to differ, and in her reign a compromise Prayer Book was published in 1559. But those who had been exiled during Mary’s reign were returning with their Protestant ideas. The more extreme people among them, who were known as Puritans, said “no” to the idea of a national church and “no” to the notion of royal supremacy. There was civil war, which led to the execution of King Charles I and to rule by Parliament without a King under the protection of Oliver Cromwell.

The interesting thing was that people got tired of this arrangement, including some of the Puritans. Charles II was crowned and a period we know as “The Restoration” ensued. The Puritans were put in their place, and a definitive version of the English Prayer Book published in 1662. So here we have at last a Church which is not Roman Catholic, nor is it Puritan. Well, what is it? It is just the good old Church of England, or in its worldwide expression nowadays, the Anglican Communion. At the time, there was a new-found spirit of religious toleration.

Everyone seemed happy with this kind of situation – so happy in fact that they became very relaxed about religion. The Church of England was ready for revival. It came with John Wesley, who had a wonderful conversion experience. He sent his followers through the length and breadth of the country to preach the gospel out-of-doors. They wanted people to experience personal conversion through faith in the atoning death on the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Again, the high sense of morality among these revivalists led to great movements to improve conditions in society for child workers, and for an end to slavery in the outposts of the Empire.

In 1833, there was another revival. The occasion was the preaching of the National Assize Sermon by John Keble on the topic “National Apostasy”. Keble was furious that the British Government had closed down some bishoprics in Ireland and was using the money to boost the state coffers. His sermon was a call to arms. One of the foremost leaders was John Henry Newman, who came to be disappointed in the lack of progress in the revival. He eventually became a Roman Catholic, was made a Cardinal and was “beatified” in 2011.

This Anglican Communion has certainly become a world-wide phenomenon. The Archbishop of Canterbury is a symbolic leader and there are independent Anglican churches in England and in 53 other Provinces and Churches who are in communion with Canterbury including the Mar Thoma Church of South India represented here in Perth.

What is this Church like as we experience it in Australia? Within Anglicanism in Australia, there are those who value the Reformation and rightly believe that we are saved by grace through faith and not by any works of our own. This finds expression in the Articles of Religion which have accompanied the Prayer Book since 1571. Others value the Catholic tradition and a liturgy which is similar to that of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches. And within both these groups, and outside them, there are Anglicans who are very liberal and avant-garde, and Anglicans who are very traditionalist and conservative. Many see Anglicans as those who tread the via media, or middle-way

WHAT’S THEIR PROBLEM?

A big issue facing our church today (not least in England) is the question as to whether women are eligible to be ordained as Bishops. Obviously, we have answered that question in the affirmative in this diocese and that position is allowable under the Constitution of our Church. There are many dioceses in the world who will not agree to this. The other difficult matter concerns the welcoming of partnered gay and lesbian people into the church and especially their ordination and the blessing of same-sex unions. This latter issue is as yet unresolved in the Australian church.

WHAT’S THE SOLUTION?

The Archbishop of Canterbury supports a process which has produced a covenant asking Anglicans to agree not to take decisive steps in controversial matters until everything has been worked through and we come to a common mind. Anglican Provinces are invited to sign the covenant if they agree. Here is a summary:

THE ANGLICAN COVENANT

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

1. **Inheritance (Lambeth Quadrilateral)**
2. **Evangelism, Aid and Development**

3. **Anglican Tradition**

- *Unity and Sacraments*
- *Communion of Churches*
- *Central Role of Bishops*
- *Instruments of Unity*

4. **Basic Obligations**

- *Common Good*
- *Provincial Autonomy*
- *Quest for a Common Mind*
- *Consultation and Mediation*

5. **Breach of Covenant?**

- *Provincial Discipline*
- *No Coercive Action*

6. **Arbitration**

- *Canterbury and Anglican Consultative Council*
- *Commissions and Mediators*
- *Loss of Participation the Only Sanction*

Copies of the proposed Covenant and detailed notes will be available for Parish Discussion Groups in 2012.

NOTES TO GET YOUR DISCUSSION STARTED:

PART ONE

How should Anglican Provinces get along together?

Lambeth in 1930 made this comment:

“Every Church in the Communion is free to build up its life... this freedom naturally and necessarily carries with it the risk of divergences to the point even of disruption. In case any such risk should actually arise, it is clear that the Lambeth conference as such could not take any disciplinary action. Formal action would belong to the several Churches of the Anglican Communion individually.”

A number of questions arise:

1. Is the Anglican Communion nowadays being massaged towards confessionalism? That is to say, are we moving away from emphasis on relationship towards obedience to formularies eg the Lambeth Quadrilateral (Scripture, Creeds, Sacraments, and Apostolic Ministry), Prayer Books and Articles of Religion?
2. Is the Covenant partisan? Is the interest in the Covenant really coming from the communion as a whole, or just from those who are disapproving of the Episcopal Church in the United States?
3. Where is power to be found? Is there a search for a new centralism? The standing committee of Primates and Anglican Consultative Council can only advise and not compel. Those seeking a single clear statement have documents like the Jerusalem Declaration (GAFCON) with which many would agree, although the Statement has no canonical status.

PART TWO

Can we sign up to a Covenant if we do not really understand what it means?

There is a suspicion in some quarters that a form of primatial oligarchy is being promoted, eg Lambeth and ACC meetings often devolve into share groups to discuss a restricted number of topics. Professor Marilyn McCord Adams believes there is a danger that Anglican Provinces will be manipulated towards a preferred way of operating.

PART THREE

Is it true that the Covenant is permissive and not coercive?

That the Anglican colours are not red or green but rather amber? Let’s not do anything straight away but let’s be ready to move if we ever get to a point of being sufficiently in agreement. Which leads to these all important questions:

Does the Anglican Communion continue to believe in diversity or have we reached a point where we want to reduce the amount of diversity and become a confessional church rather than a communion of self-governing provinces? Do we really need another document? Are the instruments of unity we already have – Archbishop of Canterbury, Anglican Consultative Council, Lambeth Conference, and Primates’ Meeting – insufficient?

There are hints in the Covenant that disciplinary action might be taken against provinces which unilaterally take a different position from the majority, eg losing representation on international Anglican bodies. Is this a recipe for the centralisation of a (Roman) Catholic kind?

WILL OUR DIOCESE AGREE?

A group to explore this matter was set up by the Archbishop of Perth under the chairmanship of The Reverend Dr David Wood. Other dioceses may have set up groups too.

The committee found itself in agreement with the conclusions of The Reverend Dr Bruce Kaye, former General Secretary of the Anglican Church of Australia:

‘[The covenant] re-shapes the framework of relations on a theoretical basis rather than dealing with the actual issue in dispute. It prejudices the question of what kind of framework is appropriate or possible for relations between provinces in the Anglican Communion. It establishes a framework that invites political activity to get decisions that will raise more issues on which decisions will be sought.

‘... No matter how it is moderated, brought into line with the reality of life in the provinces, or the influence of history in forming a Christian tradition of provincial responsibility, it remains in the end a method that sets the framework to decide before any consideration of the substantive issue at stake.

‘... These kinds of reasons suggest that the Windsor process and its covenant have been a mistake. They have not and

will not deal with the conflict. They are more likely to create conflict. It is not too late to go back to a more appropriate approach, even though the current method has delayed that engagement and allowed for fragmentation of ecclesiastical institutions in Anglicanism world-wide.’

Bruce Kaye, *Covenant and Fundamental Issues for Anglicans*
<http://worldanglicanismforum.blogspot.com/>

DO ANGLICANS HAVE A FUTURE?

Whilst most Anglicans are very happy to live in a Church with a wide spectrum of opinion, they support the movement towards Christian unity. Indeed, some of us are keen on what’s called “the New Ecumenism” as we try and find not only how the great religions of the world diverge from one another, but to discover those points in which we converge. Unity isn’t the same thing as sameness – but rather agreement on Gospel truth and respect for one another’s opinions. If we can accept this, we have a future!

“Theology Today” hopes you will enjoy robust discussion on the proposed “Anglican Covenant”.

*The Right Reverend Brian Kyme,
Director, Institute of Anglican Studies, St George’s Cathedral*

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

HERETICS,
COUNCILS &
CREEDS

Wednesdays 12, 19 & 26
October, 5.15-6.15pm

Dr Bill Leadbetter, Cathedral Scholar and Dean of Studies for the Anglican Diocese of Perth, explores the earliest days of Christianity and the struggles between heresy and orthodoxy in this series of three lectures:

Session I - Apollos to Arius examines the leaders of divergent movements in early Christianity;

Session II - Jerusalem to Chalcedon discusses the ways in which the Church sought to solve such conflicts and the growth of conciliar authority as a response to them; and

Session III - Apostles’ Creed to Athanasian Creed looks at the increasingly complex ways in which statements of belief came to be formulated in response to the challenges of the time.

**Venue: Lower Burt Memorial Hall,
38 St Georges Terrace, Perth**

Entry per session: \$10.00 at the door (\$7.50 concession)



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- Bishop Brian Kyme

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