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# The Vocation of Anglicanism

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## I

### The Universality of the Gospel

I believe in painting a fairly wide canvas. I would like to begin with the universality of the gospel and the way in which the gospel spread in all directions in the very earliest times of Christian history. So it spread very quickly not only within the Roman empire but it spread to places like Armenia, India and Ethiopia. Even within the Roman empire it spread to places furthest away from Rome like Egypt. Armenia then became the first nation to call itself Christian and in Ethiopia a christendom emerged before it emerged in western Europe. Ireland, I recognise, maybe an exception in this regard.<sup>1</sup> Of course, there was always a tendency among Christian historians to present the movement of the gospel as being from Jerusalem to Rome and there were very good apologetic reasons for this. Christians wanted to show themselves as a legitimate religious group and they wanted to show themselves loyal to the Roman empire. This tendency to stylise the movement of Christianity from Jerusalem to Rome is found very early. Indeed it is found within Scripture itself: the book of the Acts of the Apostles I suppose is a very clear example of this tendency.<sup>2</sup> As I have said, there are good reasons why Christian historians presented the movement of the gospel in this way. Nevertheless, this tendency has obscured other aspects of Christian history. It has obscured for example the fact that the gospel took root not only within the *pax Romana* but also in the Persian empire. The Persian empire at that time was the other great super-power to Rome and nothing shows the universality of the gospel more than the fact that it spread in both mutually hostile super-powers.<sup>3</sup>

Along with the universality of the gospel there is also what I will call the 'translatability' of the gospel.<sup>4</sup> In other words the gospel can be universal because it is translatable, because it can be interpreted into the cultures, the thoughtforms and the languages of many, indeed of every group of human beings. Not all religions, not even all universal religions are translatable in this way. I was very struck by this about 18 months ago when I happened to be in Nigeria and the present Archbishop of Nigeria who was then the

1 See further 'Aziz 'Atiya, *Eastern Christianity*, London, 1968.

2 cf. I. H. Marshall, *Acts*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1980, pp 19ff.

3 W. G. Young, *Patriarch, Shah and Caliph*, Rawalpindi, 1974.

4 I owe this term to Professor Lamin Sanneh of Yale Divinity School.

Bishop of Lagos invited me to join him in a mission to the islands in the Bay of Lagos. Most of the people living on these islands were nominal Muslims and we always began our visit to each island by visiting the mosque which was usually the only public building on these islands. Around these simple village mosques there was Arabic calligraphy and naturally I asked the people who came to meet us who were all Muslims, whether they could read this Arabic. They said 'no'. So as part of Christian mission, I read this Quranic Arabic to them and told them what it meant! Of course it was not *all* of Christian mission because then the Bishop went out and preached and prayed with these people.

But what this incident had alerted me to was the fact that in a strange sort of way Islam, wherever it may be found, is tied to Arab culture, to the Arabic language, to the Quran in Arabic. I thought to myself that the gospel is not tied in this sort of way to any language, to any culture, to any way of thought. This is what I have chosen to call the translatability of the gospel. Now, as I say, the translatability of the gospel in the early years ensured its universality, ensured the fact that different groups of people were able to accept the gospel and that the church was rooted among these people. But, paradoxically, translatability also has another consequence and that it is that when the gospel is completely interpreted in the thought forms, the language and the way of life of a particular culture, that in itself can become an obstruction to other cultures which have not yet received the gospel. This rapidly became the case especially after the conversion of Constantine but perhaps even before then. And so cultures like the Armenian came particularly to be identified with Christianity and therefore other cultures kept themselves away from this expression of the gospel. If you go today to modern Iran, or to Turkey and you ask an Iranian or a Turk whether he or she is a Christian, they will say 'no, we cannot be Christians because the Christians are the Armenians and the Assyrians!' So you see how translatability has had the opposite effect of what perhaps might be imagined.

The emergence of Christendom in the West and also the emergence of Islam in the Middle East ensured the limitation of the gospel to particular cultures and to particular geographical areas. This state of affairs I suppose is typical of what we call the dark ages, though I suppose Ireland must again count as an exception in this respect because I am aware that mission to Europe, for example, continued from Ireland during the dark ages. But it became fairly characteristic of the Western Christian world. The Christian communities of the Middle East were ghettoised by the emergence of Islam and remain so to this day, though there are signs of renewal in the ancient churches.

Western Europe became isolated from the rest of Christianity, indeed to the point that when the Mongols asked the Pope for missionaries the Pope was unable to respond in any meaningful way and the result of all this was

that eventually the Mongols became Muslims rather than Christians.<sup>1</sup> I suppose that if there was a significant change it occurred at the Reformation. A sense of world mission, of the universality of the gospel, was born again at the Reformation, but not in any of the churches of the Reformation. Now I do not know why this is; it may be that the Reformers themselves and their immediate successors were more concerned to purify the Church and reform the Church. It may be that the help of the State which many of the Reformers had to invoke was not conducive to a universal concern for the gospel. It may be that at the Reformation certain churches, like the Church of England, became so completely identified with a particular ethnic grouping that a sense of world mission was obscured. Bishop Colin Buchanan wrote a preface just before the New Year for the Church of England newspaper in which he called for the disestablishment of the Church of England and was immediately attacked by MP's of a certain political grouping who said 'Let not the Bishop of Aston think that the church belongs to bishops, it belongs not to the bishops but to the English people!' This certainly was part of the Reformation inheritance of the Church of England and these may be some of the factors why the churches of the Reformation did not produce a sense of mission, a calling to world mission.<sup>2</sup> But, there was a very strong consciousness of world mission in the Counter-Reformation. This new sense, a regained sense of universality of the gospel, was recovered by the Counter-Reformation and once again the gospel was taken to areas where it had not previously gone. So St Francis Xavier, for example, took the gospel to Japan and the gospel also reached South America.

If the churches of the Reformation did not produce a sense of world mission how is it that we have a world-wide Anglican Communion today? There are two main reasons for this. The first is what I call the *coincidental*. I mean coincidental in the strict sense in that the expansion of English speaking peoples into colonial territories was naturally accompanied by the export of the Anglican church to these places. This happened in the Americas, it happened Africa and it happened in Asia.

About two years ago I was in Canada, in the diocese of Halifax, and I was taken to see the oldest church in Canada, St Paul's, Halifax. As we approached the church I saw a huge notice which said 'This is the first British church on Canadian soil'. Somehow I regretted that sentiment. If it had said 'This is the first Christian church on Canadian soil' or even 'the first Anglican church', I would have found it perhaps more acceptable. But it illustrated for me this coincidental spread of Anglicanism; indeed even the first missionary societies, like the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, were not aimed primarily at evangelising those people who had never heard of the gospel before but were aimed at ministering to the settlers.

- 1 For the whole story see Igor de Rachewiltz, *Papal Envoys to the Court of the Great Khans*, Faber, London, 1971.
- 2 M. Nazir-Ali, *Church, Culture and Change* in R. Draper ed, *Communion and Episcopacy*, Cuddesdon, 1988, pp 97f.; also, *Anvil*, Vol 5 No 2, 1988, pp 125 f.

The second is what we might call the *evangelical*. I use the term in its broadest sense but it is really related to a consciousness that became quite prominent in the Church of England towards the end of the eighteenth century, that what the bishops and the convocations would not do, other Anglicans who were called, should do. This was manifested in different ways: for example, it was lay people who took up the fight for the abolition of the slave trade at first and then of slavery itself. Thus there arose a voluntary movement of lay and some clerical Anglicans. The campaign against sub-human conditions in English factories, and the emancipation of women and children from these factories were also voluntary initiatives by Anglicans. It was under this voluntary principle that Anglicanism first recovered a missionary sense. Towards the end of the eighteenth century some Anglicans got together and said 'We must take the gospel to places where it has not gone before'.<sup>1</sup>

The coincidental and the evangelical produced different kinds of Anglicanism. In India right up to the time of partition, there were three kinds of Anglicanism that co-existed. There was first the Anglicanism of the ecclesiastical department of the government of India and it specialised in building huge churches in the cantonments which the churches there now cannot maintain! The Indian army and the British army were employed to do these things. Salaries of church officials there were commensurate with salaries paid to civil servants. The 'ecclesiastical department-of-the-government-of-India kind of Anglicanism' was extremely well-heeled. Then there was what at its best might be called Catholic Anglicanism, but at its worst, it was merely high church. The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was responsible for this. And then thirdly, there was what at its best was evangelical Anglicanism, but at its worst merely low church; the Church Missionary Society was in the main responsible for that. So there were these three different kinds of Anglicans and when at partition the dioceses had to take over all three aspects, it was very difficult to do and it was done with great difficulty with blood, sweat and tears.

This was not simply a problem in the sub-continent; it remains a problem to this day in the church of the province of Tanzania for example, where half the country was evangelised by Catholic Anglicans of UMCA and the other half by BCMS. So the Church is still trying to bring these two kinds of Anglicanism together.

There was another aspect to the recovery of a sense of world mission among Anglicans and that had to do with fraternal assistance. And here I think Anglicanism displayed a very mature and charitable Christian spirit which was far in advance of its times. On several occasions in the nineteenth century Anglican missionaries were sent to help in the renewal of ancient churches of either the Middle East or of India. There was a

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1 D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, London, 1989, ch. 2, 3 and 4.

mission of help to the Assyrian church of the East which is still remembered by the Assyrian Christians. This mission occurred at a time when they were persecuted and when other Christians were trying to proselytise them. The Anglicans did not proselytise but sought the renewal of the Church from the inside.<sup>1</sup> Somewhat different was the Anglican mission of help to the Indian Syrian church. Now this *did* result in a secession because the reforming party in the Indian Syrian church which had been heavily influenced by CMS missionaries in the end seceded from the main body of the Church and by rather obscure means secured a succession from Antioch. It exists today as the Mar Thoma Syrian Church which in its discipline and in its liturgy continues to be recognisably a church of the oriental tradition. But in its theology and in its preaching is very evangelical Anglican! It is quite odd to see this: there is this great liturgy with clouds of incense and that sort of thing, then it comes to the sermon and you hear this CMS type of sermon preached! The CMS missionaries, to give them their credit, did not want this secession; it was the Indian Syrian Christians themselves who wanted it. The Mar Thoma Church, like the Old Catholics and the Philippines Independent Catholic Church, is a church not of Anglican origin but in full communion with the Anglican Communion.<sup>2</sup>

### Anglican Ecclesiology

That is the way that the world wide Anglican Communion came to be. Does it, therefore, have an ecclesiology? Is there an Anglican ecclesiology? Or is it all a coincidence, an accident, call it what you like. Here I would like to introduce you to a man called William Reed Huntington, an American theologian of the nineteenth century. Reed Huntington was responsible for articulating what later came to be called the Lambeth Quadrilateral. In articulating it Huntington was moved by his desire to see the churches in the United States come together. But the implications of the Quadrilateral were much wider than that: the 1888 Lambeth conference which endorsed Huntington's Quadrilateral came to see this very clearly and adopted the Quadrilateral as an Anglican programme of unity with other Christians. What were the terms of this Quadrilateral? They were a common adherence to Scripture, common adherence to the historic creeds, a common adherence to the sacraments and a common adherence to the apostolic ministry of bishops, priests and deacons.

Huntington and the Lambeth conference of 1888, and indeed the Lambeth conference of 1920, which issued the appeal to all Christian people, all emphasised the importance of the Quadrilateral for Christian union. Anglicans were saying that these four conditions were necessary for future

1 Henry Hill ed, *Light from the East*, Toronto, 1988, pp 100ff.

2 Alexander Mar Thoma, *The Mar Thoma Church: Heritage and Mission*, Tiruvalla, 1986, pp 10ff.

Christian unity.<sup>1</sup> In this way Huntington and the Lambeth conferences were prophetic because now the ecumenical consensus, as it is represented in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (the Lima document) and other ecumenical documents produced by the World Council of Churches (together with the Vatican), acknowledge these elements as necessary for Christian unity, yes, even the ministry of bishops, priests and deacons! But the Quadrilateral has another significance which is sometimes overlooked; in effect Huntington and the Lambeth conferences later were saying that these were the matters necessary for Anglican unity as well. These were the matters that kept Anglicans together, not simply a common ethos, not simply a spiritual aspect of the British empire and later the Commonwealth of nations, not simply a common history. These elements of faith and order were what created and sustained the Anglican Communion and would sustain and create a future unity of all Christians in communion with each other. Many ecumenical dialogues are building on these foundations.

Huntington is also to be remembered for something else and that was his distinction in his book *The Church Idea*, the distinction that he drew between what he called the Anglican principle and what he called the Anglican system. Now the Anglican system for Huntington was choir boys, cathedral spires, bishops in choir robes (as we saw at the Lambeth conference, all 520 of them!) and even synods perhaps. This was the Anglican system and he felt that in some ways and at some times the Anglican system obscured the Anglican principle. What is the Anglican principle? Huntington did not invent the Anglican principle; he discovered it in the 39 Articles and in the preface to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

Briefly the Anglican principle can be summed up as follows: it is the right and duty of every local church to be and to become the Catholic Church in that place. In this principle there are two poles: on the one hand there is the pole of catholicity and on the other hand there is the pole of locality. As things were in the sixteenth century, a time when the nations of Europe were coming to a sense of national consciousness, it was inevitable that locality would be expressed in terms of a national church and so it happened that the Church of England came to be an incarnation of the Anglican principle. But that does not mean, said Huntington, that locality must always be expressed in this sort of way. In other words, we must not become prisoners of what was a given historical circumstance.<sup>2</sup>

This came home to me very strongly last year in Belfast during the meeting of young Anglicans when I overheard a conversation between some English young Anglicans and some African young Anglicans.<sup>3</sup> The English young people were saying 'It is not enough to say that the principle of

1 See further J. Robert Wright ed, *Quadrilateral at one Hundred*, Cincinnati, 1988, pp 8ff.

2 William Reed Huntington, *The Church Idea: an Essay Towards Unity*, 4th ed, New York, 1899.

3 *Love in any language*, Report of the first international conference of Young Anglicans, Belfast, 1988.

locality has been fulfilled in having a national church, the Church of England, because we know that having a national church has actually disenfranchised those people who do not form the dominating group in the nation. And so it is the wealthy and the educated and the landed who have had a very great say in the affairs of the national church.' They were saying that at least now in the twentieth century there was a very good case for expressing locality in other ways, in expressing it at the level of parish or even of a basic community. However it is expressed, they wanted to affirm the church's acceptance of people from all sorts of cultures and backgrounds. Now certainly they had in mind the alienation of the working class from the church as it has indubitably occurred in England. I know an Anglican vicar in Oxford who is prominent in the peace movement and he is from a working class, East End of London background. He says that when he first told his parents that he had a vocation to the priesthood they nearly murdered him because this was class treachery! To have a vocation to the Anglican priesthood for an East End family was the equivalent of being a traitor.

There is undoubtedly this alienation. In a borough in the East End of London out of twenty-four Anglican churches in the last fifteen years fourteen have closed and church attendance there is critical. This is not an exaggeration. So the young people had that in mind. They also had in mind the new presence, or the relatively new presence, of ethnic minorities in England. If you say with some of those responding to Colin Buchanan that the Church of England is the church of the English people then what about the other people who live in England? But mostly I think the young people had in mind the very many sub-cultures that have emerged in many societies, England not excepted, and of which young people are particularly aware. How is locality to be expressed? The Africans said that the danger in Africa now is that of single tribe dioceses, because the different tribes could not live together in a single diocese and they were alarmed at this prospect where the catholicity of the Church would be dealt a blow by an undue emphasis on locality.

The other pole in the Anglican principle is catholicity and the catholicity that Anglicans understand is based on the provisions of the Lambeth Quadrilateral. It is a catholicity that takes very seriously the autonomy of local churches as well as their interdependence. I was talking to some Anglicans and Roman Catholics recently and their common perception was that where interdependence or even dependence might have been overexpressed in one communion, in another it has not been expressed enough. Similarly where autonomy has been expressed too much perhaps in one communion it has not been expressed enough in the other. So in the ARCIC process, both Roman Catholics and Anglicans, I hope, are learning from each other in this matter. But if one takes the Quadrilateral seriously and if one takes the communion that is between the churches seriously then we must talk about both autonomy and interdependence; we cannot simply continue to talk about autonomy. An ecumenical statesman said once that



the Anglican Communion had discovered the conciliar model of the Early Church by mistake! I don't know whether it was a mistake or providence but certainly the way in which Anglicans have understood the communion that is between the churches is not very distant from the way in which it was understood in the patristic period by people like Cyprian. Cyprian had great respect for the *Cathedra Petri*, Peter's chair in Rome, but he had no hesitation in telling the Pope where the boundaries were, when it came to the affairs of the African province.<sup>1</sup>

### Provisionality and the Search for Unity

We still await the maturation of a theology of communion that is now evolving in ecumenical discussion, but as we talk about ecumenism we have to note one other aspect of Anglicanism and that is its provisionality. Anglicans are perhaps unique in this respect and successive Lambeth conferences, successive Archbishops of Canterbury, successive Anglican theologians have made it quite clear that Anglicanism regards itself as provisional. That is to say it does not claim to be 'the' Church but claims only to be part of the Church and looks forward to the reunion of Christian churches.<sup>2</sup>

Of course if you say that you are provisional you must be prepared to give up something and this is perhaps where Anglicans have been rather weak, because on the one hand we have made a claim for provisionality, on the other hand we are not willing to give up anything, not even Lambeth conferences! This means that whereas the theological and ecclesiological agenda that Anglicanism produced has been taken on by the ecumenical movement, in things like the Lima document, Anglicans themselves have actually fallen behind in the search for Christian unity. There has been a definite loss of nerve.

This can be traced to the history of union in South India, where successive Lambeth conferences encouraged Anglicans in South India to look for Christian unity and when the Church of South India came up on the horizon they got scared and shied away. And it is only now, 40 years after the inauguration of the Church of South India, that Anglicans are coming into a proper relationship with that church, very often on Anglican terms. And so I think one has to ask, 'we have celebrated the centenary of the Lambeth Quadrilateral but where are Anglicans in terms of the recognition of their own provisionality?'

This year is the centenary year of the publication of *Lux Mundi* which did many things for Anglicanism, one of which was to establish incarnational

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1 Letter 59 in R. B. Eno ed, *Teaching Authority in the Early Church*, Wilmington, Delaware, 1984, pp 87f.

2 For a convenient summary of the evidence, see *The Emmaus Report*, ACC, London 1987, pp 11ff.

theology as the basis for a great deal of Anglican thinking.<sup>1</sup> I suppose if you wanted to ask what the strength of Anglican theology has been in the last 100 years or so you would have to say that it has been a strong doctrine of the incarnation as a basis for theological reflection. But while the doctrine of the incarnation allows identification it does not give adequate provision for coming to terms with conflict and struggle, so Anglicans have been rather good at being pastors and rather bad at being prophets. Many Anglican churches throughout the world are heavily involved in situations where the incarnational model on its own does not work, where one has to bring in a proper theology of the cross, a proper theology of suffering into play as well. Where the issue is not identification (as it may be for the Anglicans of the established Church of England) but prophecy, one has to ask what are the tools that we are able to provide now for people like Archbishop Desmond Tutu in South Africa or many of the Anglican bishops in South America or Anglican bishops in Africa in countries such as Kenya. These people are now having *nolens volens* to exercise a prophetic ministry vis à vis their society or their government.

A Kenyan bishop recently preached a sermon on Daniel. After he had preached the sermon which was about the fact that it was not always necessary to obey the state, that there were conditions where it may not be right to obey the powers that be. After he had preached the sermon, the government newspapers responded saying, 'Yes, the bishop has preached a very good sermon, but what has the book of Daniel to do with modern Kenya?' The next week the bishop preached another sermon on the text 'All Scripture is inspired by God' (2 Tim. 3:16). The newspapers came back again and said, 'Well, yes, all Scripture may be inspired by God but is it all relevant to our situation? Is it timely to say all these things, in these critical days when the economy is in a state of crisis?' So the third week the bishop preached yet another sermon on the text 'be instant in season and out of season' (2 Tim. 4:2). That is the kind of prophetic ministry that bishops are having to exercise and not only bishops but all Christians are having to exercise, in the Anglican Communion.<sup>2</sup>

Too often a theology of the established church has been dominant among Anglicans even when the church is not established and we must for our own sakes and for the sake of the world identify traditions within Anglicanism that allow for dissent. Now these traditions exist. There is first of all the tradition of the Non-jurors, those people in the Church of England who were unable to take the oath to William and Mary and were deprived of their livings if they were clergyman, of their sees if they were bishops. But the Non-jurors, because they were freed from the encum-

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1 Robert Morgan ed, *The Religion of the Incarnation: Anglican Essays in Commemoration of Lux Mundi*, Bristol, 1989, examines some of the contemporary implications.

2 David Gitari, *Let the Bishop Speak*, Nairobi, 1988.

branches of the establishment, were able to be quite creative in liturgy and in things like Christian unity. They were the first people, as far as I know, who were ecumenically minded where Anglicans are concerned because they began discussions with the Eastern orthodox churches, for example. Their creativity in liturgy ultimately resulted in the Scottish Book of Common Prayer which is in a very different tradition from the 1662 book. This tradition has survived in the American book and in many other Books of Common Prayer.<sup>1</sup>

Then there are the Tractarians, the beginnings of the Oxford Movement and the renewal of Catholic Anglicanism. The issue with which it began was the suppression of the Irish bishoprics. The question was not whether they ought to be suppressed but who had the right to suppress them and so Tractarianism as it developed had within it a dynamic which could, even within the established church, challenge the state. It is not an accident, therefore, that the Anglo-Catholics in the nineteenth century were greatly involved with the poor, in addressing social issues and were in the forefront of change.<sup>2</sup> I regret to say that that aspect of Catholic Anglicanism is not greatly in the forefront in England these days at any rate. Catholic Anglicans seem to have withdrawn and to be very much concerned with ceremonies and sacraments and priests and bishops and so on. Very few of them retain this prophetic aspect of the Tractarian revival. But of course it has not died out elsewhere; one of the reasons why the church in the province of Southern Africa can take the stance that it does is because it has been schooled in the Tractarian tradition which has provided for it what it needs to articulate its dissent.

## II

### Diversity and Communion

One of the things that impressed those who were at the Lambeth Conference last year was the sheer diversity of the Anglican Communion as it was represented in the bishops gathered there. There were about 520 bishops from a vast range of cultures and languages and colours and intellectual backgrounds, all sorts of things, an incredible diversity. And I am sure that those who were at the Lambeth Conference were at first, like myself, overwhelmed by this sheer experience of diversity. The diversity in itself speaks very eloquently of what the Anglican Communion has become,

- 1 J. Dowden, *The Scottish Communion Office, 1764*, OUP, 1922 and C. O. Buchanan, 'Anglican Liturgy' in *A New Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship*, SCM 1986, pp 322-325.
- 2 A continuing example of this tradition is the Community of All Saints. See further Peter Mayhew, *All Saints: Birth and Growth of a Community*, Oxford, 1987.

not only in terms of growth in numbers but in terms of expansion into all sorts of cultures. It is said that the Anglican Communion is the most widespread of the Christian communions after the Roman Catholic church, not the most numerous, mind, but the most widespread. This means that it exists across a range of cultures and that it has to wrestle with the particular problems this diversity creates.<sup>1</sup>

When the first Lambeth Conference was called there were about 70 bishops present. If you looked at the photograph of that conference in 1867, you find a company of rather stern looking Anglo Saxon gentlemen, looking back at you. Of course they looked stern in those days; it was a sort of fashion: if one posed for a portrait one looked stern. The picture does not really change very much through the years up to 1888 and even into the twentieth century. Certainly Bishop Crowther from West Africa and Bishop Azariah from India appear but the picture basically remains the same. Even the 1948 Lambeth conference, which was extremely important, did not really show a basic shift in the pattern.<sup>2</sup> The shift was, nevertheless, happening and it was very obvious in 1988 when the largest delegation of bishops was from the continent of Africa. I cannot say that all the bishops from the continent of Africa were black because thank God there are still some white bishops there.

That shows the commitment of the Anglican Communion to catholicity. But the largest delegation was from Africa and this despite the disproportion in the way that bishops are represented at the Lambeth Conference. So the United States of America, for example, with about 3 million episcopalians, was represented by 119 bishops, (not all the bishops in the episcopal church because if you count suffragans and others then the figure is well over a 140!). By contrast the 4 million Anglicans in Uganda were represented by only 21 bishops. Despite this the Africans were the largest single contingent. The Burmese bishops, some of whom did not speak a word of English, were there for the first time since 1948 and almost all of the Japanese bishops were there for the first time largely because the conference provided for simultaneous translation into various languages including Japanese and Swahili. So there was this great experience of diversity but there was also at the same time a tremendous experience of *fellowship* and of *communion* with each other. In fact if anything held the Lambeth Conference together it was the experience of fellowship that the bishops had in their small groups where they studied the Bible together and prayed before the day's business began and then they continued their business in the same groups in which they had studied the Bible together. This experience of fellowship and of communion, not surprisingly, became the paradigm for the theological reflection that went on at the Lambeth

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1 See the introduction to *The Truth Shall Make You Free: The Report of the Lambeth Conference, 1988*, London, 1988, pp 1ff.

2 See further Alan M. G. Stephenson, *Anglicanism and the Lambeth Conferences*, London, 1978.

conference.<sup>1</sup> And so if you look at the report or the pastoral letters that the bishops wrote you will find repeated references to fellowship, to communion. This emphasis on fellowship and communion was not only because the bishops had experienced fellowship and communion. A further reason was that the Anglican Communion has faced and is still facing a serious challenge to its unity in the emergence of new questions. One of these questions, of course, has to do with the ordination of women to the priesthood and episcopate. But it is not the only question that is facing Anglicans; another has to do with inclusive language in the liturgy, not only about men and women, but about God. I was present at a meeting of a liturgical commission of a certain province in the Anglican Communion and they were examining a new inclusive liturgy that even the chairman thought heretical. Whether it was or not I do not know, but we are now exploring frontiers and where one is exploring frontiers there is risk, there is danger, there is challenge.

The activities of certain bishops who regard their role as prophetic and certainly as exploratory in a theological sense has also raised questions about the fellowship and the communion that exists between the churches of the Anglican Communion. William Reed Huntington, the American theologian, and the Lambeth conferences of 1888 and of 1920 in their articulation and their affirmation of the Lambeth Quadrilateral set out the conditions under which Anglicans would come into communion with Christians of other traditions. But the Lambeth Quadrilateral was not simply about relations with other Christians, it was also a statement about what held the Anglican Communion together. What united Anglicans was also the basis for unity with other Christians and so the provisions of the Quadrilateral which have to do with Scripture, with the historic creeds, with the sacraments and with the apostolic ministry came to be understood as the basis for the communion between the churches of the Anglican Communion, as well as a programme for communion with Christians of all kinds.

Liturgical unity was another way in which the churches of the Anglican Communion displayed their fellowship. I use the word unity because it was unity, not uniformity. One often finds Anglicans in all sorts of places talking about 'The Prayer Book' but when you actually go further into the matter you discover they are talking about different prayer books! There was a sense, however, in which liturgy united Anglicans and continues to unite them, despite the very thorough revision that has occurred. The revision that has occurred of liturgy has also caused a convergence in the liturgical practice of different Christian traditions and we welcome this. Despite this revision, despite the incorporation of new insights, despite the ecumenical convergence, there remains a recognisably Anglican way of worship and there remains a family resemblance, in the liturgies of the Anglican Communion. So the Lambeth Quadrilateral, liturgy and also the complete inter-

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1 *Report*, p 5.

changeability of ministries which was and is based on a common order, remain the bases for Anglican unity.<sup>1</sup>

It is often said that Anglicanism has no confessional basis: since there is no such thing as the Westminster confession of faith, what has kept Anglicans together has been the recognition of a common order. The reason that the ordination of women to the priesthood and to the episcopate is causing such difficulty in certain circles is precisely because this unity and order is under threat. While the doctrinal, liturgical and ministerial basis for Anglican unity is clear, we have to agree that compared with some other world communions the Anglican Communion is under-developed in structures that nurture communion. Now we may also say that some world communions are over-developed. There is such a thing as over-development. But if they are over-developed, then Anglicans are under-developed in this matter.

### **The Structures that sustain Communion**

It is only recently that Anglicans have begun to think in a systematic way about how there may be structures that sustain and nurture communion. The Lambeth conference of 1988 did a great deal of work in this area and it said several things about structure. First it reaffirmed the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury as a focus for unity. One has to say here immediately that the primacy of the Archbishop of Canterbury is not merely a primacy of honour. Anyone who works at Lambeth Palace or at the ACC realises that. It is primarily an office that gathers people together. Secondly, it is an office that facilitates the sustenance and the nurture of communion between the churches. Sometimes the Archbishop of Canterbury has to act as a referee between provinces and even within provinces. So it is not simply a primacy of honour. On the other hand, Anglicans do not wish to turn the Archbishop of Canterbury into a universal primate: that would be untrue to an Anglican understanding of history and also of theology. Then there is the Lambeth Conference of bishops and Professor Owen Chadwick, addressing the Lambeth Conference, said that wherever and whenever there has been a Christian church with bishops, these bishops have had to meet. This does not mean that other people cannot meet; it does not mean that clergy and lay people may not meet. Bishops, however, as guardians of the faith and as *foci* of the church's unity in their own dioceses also need to meet together for consultation. The Lambeth Conference is an Anglican way of allowing the world-wide Anglican episcopate to meet together. While the Lambeth Conference has considerable moral authority, it has no legislative authority unless what it says is also endorsed by the individual provinces of the Anglican Communion. Acceptance of the decisions of the conference, or of any other inter-Anglican body, by the provinces is an essential part of Anglican

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1 *Report, Mission and Ministry* paras 177-209. See further M. Nazir-Ali, *Liturgical Development in the Anglican Communion: A view, paper for Lambeth 1988*.

ecclesiology. Then out of the Lambeth conference was born the Primates' Meeting. This has become increasingly important because it is a smaller body and so can meet more frequently, with thirty or so heads of churches meeting together to consult about common problems and opportunities in mission. Finally, there is the only forum which is communal and is not simply collegial; the Anglican Consultative Council, where bishops, clergy and lay people meet together for consultation.

There is very possibly a fifth way in which the structures that sustain communion have developed. It is recognised that the Anglican Communion has no common confession, but it is also recognised that there must be some way in which Anglicans affirm their common heritage and different provinces already have a declaration, which bishops at the time of their installation, or clergy at the time of their institution take. The Church of England has it for example and it has been suggested that perhaps there ought to be a common declaration which all Anglicans can take at particular times in the history of their church and in their personal history.<sup>1</sup>

The danger, of course, is that such a declaration and indeed the structures I have outlined earlier, may make the Anglican communion even more parochial than it already is and make Anglicans even more difficult to unite with. The draft of a declaration was presented to the conference. The declaration would say something like this:

(1) The Church of Ireland or England or Kenya, or wherever it may be, declares itself to be united under one divine head in the fellowship of the one holy catholic and apostolic church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

(2) It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds to which faith the formularies of this church bear witness and which the church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation.

(3) It celebrates the divinely instituted sacraments particularly those of baptism and holy communion as ordinances of the universal church.

(4) It expresses its continuity with the apostolic tradition of faith and witness, worship, fellowship and ministry by means of the historic episcopal order. It is in communion with each of those churches which preserve the historic threefold order of the ordained ministry and are in communion with the see of Canterbury.

(5) It looks forward to the unity of all Christians based on a common recognition of the place of Holy Scripture, the catholic creeds, the dominical sacraments and historic order in the church of God.

There is an attempt here to develop the structures of the Anglican Communion in such a way that they do not exclude ecumenical enterprise. Now at this point I would like to address myself to the question of Anglican

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1 *Report, Dogmatic and Pastoral Concerns*, Paras 107-131. See also Resolutions 18 and 19 and also Appendix 5, Para. 20.

relations with united churches as they come into being with Anglican participation. The history, of course, of Anglican responses to united churches is not good and we have the rather shoddy treatment that was meted out to the Church of South India at the time of its union and even at the time of the union of North India, Pakistan and Bangla Desh. The outgoing Anglican metropolitan said at the time that Anglicans wanted unity down to the last Indian! In other words, as long as it is far away its alright but don't let it come near! This is a kind of judgment on the Anglican Communion, particularly as it has pioneered ecumenical thinking in terms of the Lambeth Quadrilateral.

What the Anglican Communion is now moving towards is a position where it is said that if a church goes into union, if an Anglican province goes into union, without compromising Anglican principles as they are outlined in the Lambeth Quadrilateral, then the new united church would be as welcome in Anglican councils as the previous Anglican province was and on this basis the united churches of South India, of North India, of Bangla Desh, of Pakistan have been afforded full membership of the Anglican Consultative Council, of the Lambeth Conference and now of the Primates' Meeting, so they are fully represented in Anglican instruments of unity and of communion. The reason for this is not simply to be fair to these united churches but also to encourage Anglicans to go into unity schemes on a local, national, or regional basis.<sup>1</sup>

Communion is not simply an Anglican concern. It is now a feature of most ecumenical discussion and we find that the ARCIC Final Report, for example, uses it as a basic way of talking about the Church. So the local bishop is the focus of the communion of the local Church, and the bishops in communion with each other and the churches in communion with each other constitute the world-wide Church.<sup>2</sup> Not only is communion not simply an Anglican affair, it is not even simply a matter for internal Christian ecumenism; it has wider implications than that. Once again the ARCIC Final Report finds that the communion that exists between churches and between Christians is to fulfill the commission of the church, the divine commission that the church has received from her Lord.<sup>3</sup> So from *communion* I want to come to *commission*.

### **From communion to commission**

The Lambeth Conference recognised that Anglicans have been rather good at pastoral forms of ministry. They have been good at nurturing the faithful, at looking after those that are within the fellowship of the church, but they have not always been good at mission. The Lambeth bishops say quite clearly that the time has now come to shift from an emphasis on pastoral

1 *The Emmaus Report*, ACC, London, 1987, pp 38ff, ACC-7; *Many Gifts One Spirit*, ACC, London, 1987, pp 93-94 and Resolution 17. See also the Lambeth 88 Report, Ecumenical Relations, paras 93-97 and passim, Resolution 12.

2 *The Final Report*, Authority in the Church I, para 8.

3 *Ibid.*, p 53.



models of ministry to missionary models of ministry everywhere in the world.<sup>1</sup> It is easy to talk about mission and everybody does so nowadays but what actually is mission? Perhaps we can identify here some areas which Anglicans would affirm as mission.

### *1. Mission as presence*

There are many parts of the world where the Christian Church can only be present. When Islam became a dominant force in the Middle East; this ghettoised the ancient churches in the Middle East and they remain so to this day. That is the negative aspect. The positive aspect of it is that these churches continued to be found in the Middle East; they are still present there. Similarly, after the revolution in the Soviet Union, the Church in many ways disappeared from the public horizon but it continued to be there. About two years ago I had the occasion to meet a young man called Valeri Barinov. He was, according to his own confession, a rather wicked soldier in the Soviet army and he was constantly being stockaded for being drunk and disorderly. On one such occasion he was in solitary confinement and he looked out of the only window in his cell and all he could see was the top of the steeple of a church which, of course, had a cross on it. This set Valeri Barinov thinking. He had no books, access to no audio-visual material, nothing in this solitary confinement. But looking at this cross on top of this steeple led finally to his conversion. He became a Christian and not only did he become an orthodox Christian but he also became a leading jazz musician and was able to express his Christian faith and his political dissent in terms of jazz music. For this he was sent to a psychiatric hospital. In the Soviet Union that seemed to be a standard qualification to achieve prominence in those days. Finally, he was expelled. That illustrates for me how simply the presence of the church can be mission. The ancient churches in the Muslim lands are very familiar with this.

But Anglicans too have had long experience of such mission, if you go today to what is called the Persian or the Arabian Gulf, the only church buildings there are very often Anglican church buildings. This is because of the much derided chaplaincy system. A very senior English bishop once said to me that the chaplaincies in the Gulf were rather racketty things. I do not know what he meant but that was the word he used. Well, racketty or not, the fact remains that the enormous Christian presence in the Gulf today, of people from the Indian subcontinent, from the Philippines, from Korea, from western countries can now only find a place to worship in Anglican church buildings. The Anglican Church in Abu Dhabi, at St Andrews Church, for example, has 24 congregations worshipping from the eastern orthodox, oriental orthodox, and Mar Thoma to Anglican, Baptist and Pentecostal. They have to use that building, they are not allowed to worship anywhere else. This is a case where the presence of the church has resulted in fact in a great expansion of the Christian Church. You find now,

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1 *Report, Mission and Ministry*, paras 10-13, Resolution 44.

for example, that eastern orthodox and oriental orthodox, who have been out of communion for fifteen hundred years, now share the same vestry!

## 2. *Worship as mission*

Then we come to a closely related aspect of Christian mission and that is worship as mission. Once again the ancient churches of the Islamic lands provide us with a model here because they were prevented from evangelism, social involvement, any kind of mission. The only way in which they could continue to 'proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' was through liturgy, so that consciousness of liturgy as Christian mission is something that is very prominent among them. I was very struck by this when Pope John Paul II visited Karachi. As usual, he celebrated mass with about 100,000 people in the national stadium and he chose John chapter 6 as the text of his sermon. The service was televised live on Pakistan Television and, of course, John Chapter 6 is a very difficult text, 'he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has life indeed'. At the time I thought, 'Is this the right sort of text to preach about in a country that is predominantly Muslim?', but for weeks afterwards Muslims were asking us, 'What did the Pope mean by talking about drinking the blood of Christ and eating his flesh?' And I saw how liturgy could be about mission.

## 3. *Mission as identification*

Thirdly, there is mission as identification and this I think is an Anglican strength based on the strongly incarnational theology that Anglicanism has developed since the last century. This is the centenary year of the publication of *Lux Mundi*. Incarnational theology allows Anglicans to develop a strong sense of identification in a missionary situation. But once again I think the most dramatic model for this is a Roman Catholic monk who used to be an Anglican at one time, a man called Bede Griffiths who lives in India and who is trying to incarnate Christianity in Hindu forms, not simply Indian forms but Hindu forms. He claims that he is Christianizing Hinduism. His opponents might say that he is Hinduizing Christianity. He is attempting to express the Christian faith in terms of Hindu religious language, Hindu thought-forms, even Hindu iconography!<sup>1</sup> Identification is becoming an increasingly important way of carrying out christian mission. The Indian theological educational system, which I believe is one of the most exciting in the world, requires seminarians to go and to immerse themselves in a particular religious or social situation for six months to a year and then to allow the experiences gained during that immersion to dictate the kind of theological work they are going to do when they come out of seminary. One such Indian student was sent to a slum in Bombay. He lived in the sort of hut that everybody lived in, he ate the same food that they ate, he wore the same clothes and he suffered from

1 See, for example, his book *The Marriage of East and West*, London, 1982.

the heat and so on as everybody else did and yet he realised that there was still a distance between him and the other slum dwellers. He could not work it out; he had done everything he could to identify, what was the reason for this distance? Then he got cholera, the easiest thing to get when you work in a slum in the subcontinent, and as he recovered from this cholera he realised that now, finally, he was accepted because he had even shared their disease. There was nothing else left to do. Mission as identification. I think the Anglican Communion needs to apply the insights gained through the strongly incarnational theology of *Lux Mundi* and its successors in this kind of way.

#### 4. *Mission as action*

Although Anglican incarnational theology has been very strong, correspondingly the theology of the cross in Anglicanism has been rather weak and so Anglicans have found it difficult to come to terms with mission in situations of conflict and it is only now that prophets like Archbishop Desmond Tutu are enabling Anglicans to develop a proper theology of suffering. But in some other parts of the Christian world, in Latin America, in the Roman Catholic church in Latin America and in some of the protestant churches, there has grown up a very strong theology of mission as action, of mission not simply as identification but acting on behalf of the poor, of taking sides. This is one thing that Anglicans find very difficult to do, to take sides! The obsession with balance is so great that it sometimes excludes the possibility of taking sides with anyone. Liberation theology has taught us that it is necessary sometimes to take sides even though this may cause some people to look upon Christians as people who are politically biased. Advocacy, assistance, enabling, bias to the poor all these are about taking sides. What is even more important is the claim of those who are engaged in mission as action that theological reflection is only valuable if it is reflection on this kind of ministry. It may be said that this is an exaggeration and that there is great value in speculative theology, in historical theology and in classical Biblical exegesis and interpretation. There may be, but I think the concerns that liberation theology is throwing up are extremely urgent.

#### 5. *Mission as dialogue*

Then there is mission that has to do with dialogue. In some situations Anglicans have for a very long period lived with people of other faiths and ideologies, and they have come to have dialogue with them not only about religious questions but sometimes about questions that have to do with the human condition. The most important dialogue that we have had in Pakistan with Muslims, in the last fifteen years or so, had to do with the ways in which Christians and Muslims understand human rights. Both of us said we were committed to human rights, and yet both of us in different parts of the world were doing things that did not illustrate this commitment terribly well. So we had to ask each other 'what is your commitment to human rights if apartheid can be justified by an appeal to the Bible?' So said

Muslims to Christians. Similarly, Christians said to Muslims, 'What commitment do you have to human rights if you insist on bringing back seventh century penal law?' So dialogue is not just about specifically religious and theological matters but it may have to do with the human condition as such.

#### 6. *Mission as evangelisation*

Now you may say isn't all this evangelisation? It is; but there is such a thing as intentional evangelism. This is a phrase used by the World Council of Churches. When we have identified with and acted for the poor, for example, when we have had dialogue with people of other faiths and witnessed to them in that context, there comes a time when we must articulate the gospel verbally, in intentional evangelism. The Stuttgart statement of the WCC points out that however positively we view the human condition, evangelism is necessary *at the very least* because the Gospel *fulfils* the hopes and aspirations of all human beings, because it makes explicit what may have been implicit and hidden as a result of the activity of the Divine Word, and because it brings assurance and comfort to men and women regarding their ultimate destiny.

#### 7. *Mission as unity*

The beginnings of the ecumenical movement are to be found in the perception of Christians involved in mission that Christian disunity obstructs Christian mission. So the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 was a watershed not only in mission but also in ecumenism. Of course one welcomes very much the spectacular entry of the Roman Catholic church into ecumenical dialogue. I certainly have noted that since the Roman Catholic church has entered ecumenical dialogue ecumenism is carried on now more and more at an international level, bilateral or multilateral, and this is not in itself bad. Bilateral and multilateral international dialogue clarifies a great deal for us: it removes doctrinal confusion, it brings about agreements about ministry and authority and so on. But maybe the need now is to recover the insights that people at the Edinburgh Conference had about grassroots ecumenism: in the end Christian unity that is going to make an impact will be unity that is found in the local community. And this is why perhaps the witness of the united churches of South Asia is so important.

#### **From commission to culture**

In talking about mission we have already discussed aspects of culture, so to communion and commission we must add *culture*. The Anglican principle requires the local church to be and to become the catholic church in that place. In other words it requires a dialogue with the local culture. It might be suggested that because of the Anglican principle, Anglicans should be far ahead in inculturation and contextualization when they are compared with other Christian churches, but this is not so. In Africa, for example, the Roman Catholic church, since the Vatican Council, has surged ahead in the

contextualization of liturgy. The independent churches of Africa are in fact a creation of the dialogue between the gospel and culture. Anglicanism, in much of Africa, remains caught in the Anglican *system* rather than the Anglican principle. So you still have choir boys and archdeacons and rural deans and so on rather than getting to grips with the culture and allowing the Gospel to be articulated within the discourse of that particular culture.

I believe that inculturation should include a recognition of the sacramentality of cultures in Africa, Asia and Latin America, where the spiritual is very real. They are cultures where the supernatural and the spiritual are a natural part of discourse.<sup>1</sup> One of the great weaknesses of liberation theology is that it fails to take the sacramentality of many cultures in the two-thirds world seriously.

Secondly, it should take into account seriously the existence of cohesive communities which once again are found in great abundance in Africa and Asia and Latin America. We cannot theologise in these cultures in the same way as theology is done in the more individualistic cultures say in North America; community has to be taken very seriously.

Thirdly, the Bible has to be read in context. It is a great contribution of liberation theology that people reading the Bible in particular religious, social, economic and political contexts will see different things in the Bible. So you cannot peddle a biblical theology that has been developed in France or Germany or England. The Bible has to be read in context.

### **From culture to context**

Culture leads to a final reflection on context. What is the difference between culture and context? I would say that culture has to do with the more permanent marks of a particular people: their language, their artifacts, the whole area of discourse of a particular culture, as well as their literature if they are a literate culture.

Context has to do with more immediate problems. Once again at the Lambeth Conference there was a huge diversity of contexts, not only of cultures, but of contexts that the bishops brought with them. On the one hand there was the Archbishop of Burma who travels round on a bicycle in his diocese because that is all that it can afford, on the other hand there is the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church in the USA who has huge resources at his command. These diversities of contexts actually also illustrated different approaches to certain problems. One example is the question of AIDS. I have visited the Episcopal Church in the USA several times and I have had the opportunity to see the ministry of the Episcopal Church with those who live with AIDS. This is a most remarkable ministry because it is a ministry not only to people with a certain illness but to a people who belong very largely to a clearly identifiable sub-culture, ie the homosexual sub-culture. This ministry has been very resource intensive. In the United

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1 See Vincent Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered: An Epistle from the Masai*, SCM, 1978.

States of America that is quite possible. So hospices, medicines and even friendship are based on resources which would be beyond the reach of many other nations and churches.

Uganda also has a serious AIDS problem, perhaps 20% of the population are HIV positive and many of them in the younger age bracket, people at the peak of their lives. It is impossible to imagine that the church in Uganda could respond to it in the same way as the Episcopal Church of the USA has done. An egg in Uganda costs ten shillings and the average salary of a parish priest in Uganda is one hundred and fifty shillings. In other words you can buy fifteen eggs in a month! It is obvious that the Church in Uganda cannot respond to AIDS in the same way as in the USA. And yet by the way in which the Church in Uganda has responded to AIDS, mainly by the moral education of its younger people, by co-operating with the state in its efforts, it has been relatively successful in controlling the spread of the AIDS epidemic and not only of AIDS but of other sexually transmitted diseases. The state coined the slogan 'love carefully', the church coined the slogan 'love faithfully'. Both have worked. While I am on the subject of AIDS, it may be appropriate to remark that we had invited Dr Jonathan Mann who is heading up the World Health Organization programme on AIDS to come and talk to the bishops on AIDS. Before he came he sent us some preparatory material, part of which was the transcript of his interview with a select committee of the House of Commons in London and I was very interested to see, while reading this transcript, that more than half of the questions that this select committee asked Dr Mann were about AIDS in Africa; its origin, could it be controlled, did the African nations have the resources to address the problem etc. Not many questions about AIDS in Britain! This alerted me to the possibility of racism where diseases such as AIDS are concerned and I think the Lambeth Conference has produced a very wise statement on AIDS.<sup>1</sup>

A second example concerns human rights. We all, of course, fully support the prophetic ministry of the church in Southern Africa, of its Archbishop, of its bishops, of its clergy and its laity and indeed of all the churches in Southern Africa. But I cannot help feeling sometimes that human rights issues that get an airing in international conferences are very often issues about which the West has a feeling of guilt and this enables this airing. I believe there are other equally serious human rights issues facing the Anglican communion and the world-wide church which are not given commensurate attention. I would like to mention here the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism and indeed some of the African bishops from Nigeria and the Sudan were crying out aloud about it. But they were not, I believe, heard; people could not hear what they were saying because the West does not share in the guilt in this situation. We were also facing a very serious problem about human rights which Christians and other religious minorities and certainly women in Iran face; again very little was said about

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1 *Report, Social Order*, Paras 161-194 and Resolution 29.

that. One can multiply these kinds of issues almost indefinitely. The problem is to discover a way of addressing human rights on a basis of merit and of justice rather than simply feelings of guilt.

Because of the disciplined way in which the section on *social order* worked, the Conference was able to think meaningfully about particular *categories* of problems which affect a whole range of situations. So there was reflection on coercion, for example, and its relation to society's concern for law and order but also in relation to justice. There was reflection on the situation of the family, which had, as its basis, the report of the International Project on the Family. There was also some consideration of environmental issues, though detailed work on this has yet to come. Perhaps the forthcoming ecumenical convocation in Seoul will give the churches an agenda. The Environment will certainly be a major concern of future Lambeth Conferences.

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