

WHY THE COVENANT IS A BAD IDEA FOR ANGLICANS

Bruce Kaye 30 September 2009

2003 was a very difficult year for the Anglican Communion. Things had been tough since the row at the 1998 Lambeth Conference, but inter provincial conflict broke out in earnest in 2003 following authorised liturgical blessings for same sex unions in Canada and the consecration of a gay man Gene Robinson as bishop of New Hampshire.

The institutional response in the Anglican Communion was to establish a Commission to advise what to do. In late 2004 the Windsor Report recommended a covenant to contain the conflict by putting pressure or sanctions on dissident provinces. A draft was offered and quickly rejected and there have been three subsequent drafts, the latest of which, The Ridley Cambridge draft, is to go to provinces for consideration and adoption once the final section has been modified. It is this last section that contains the business end of the covenant and crystallises the Windsor strategy for conflict.

That strategy is to provide disciplinary mechanisms to influence the behaviour of combatants. If a province breaks ranks then it will be excluded from the ‘instruments’ of the Communion (the Lambeth Conference, the Primates meeting and the Anglican Consultative Council). It might later be re-admitted on the condition of restored relationships.

There are four reasons why this covenant is not a good idea for Anglicans.

1. It is against the grain of Anglican ecclesiology (what we think the church is)
2. It is an inadequate response to the conflict in the Anglican Communion
3. In practical terms it will create immense and complicating confusion about institutional relationships and financial obligations.
4. It does not address the key fundamental issue in this conflict, how to act in a particular context which is relevant to that context and also faithful to the gospel.

In a previous posting on this Blogg ‘THE COVENANT IS COMING READY OR NOT’ I claimed that this whole process had been exceptionally speedy given the kinds of decision making arrangements that operate in provinces around the Anglican Communion. I think that is a reasonable claim, though I should add that the Covenant Design Group (CDG) have gone to a lot of trouble to consult widely and give every impression of having taken submissions very seriously. A number of provinces and individuals have responded to the various drafts. There is a list of these on the Anglican Communion web site. The CDG have also sought responses from a consultative response group of people, of whom I was one. The process has been open, but it has been very rushed for a proposal that has such long term consequences.

In subsequent weeks I hope to post expositions of the four reasons above. Here I outline in very brief terms the issues under each heading.

1. It Is Against The Grain Of Anglican Ecclesiology (What We Think The Church Is)

Within the broad spectrum of the New Testament understanding of the church Anglicans have evolved over a long history an ecclesiology which gives priority to the local and institutions designed to provide for a disciplined ministry of word and sacraments. In institutional terms that has meant a pattern of local parishes, dioceses and a province. That model has been sustained in the ups and downs of a very long thousand year resistance to the more universally centralised model put in train by Pope Gregory VII in the eleventh century. This pattern has also retained a notion of proximate connection and the idea that the true dynamics of catholicity in the church function in a context where there is genuine connection and therefore proximate relationship.

The crucial issue is the ecclesiological significance of any international arrangements between provinces occasioned by the spread of Anglicanism around the world and the globalisation of human communities, including the Anglican communities. This has meant a recognition that the kind of connection, or one could say unity, that is appropriate at each horizon of parish, diocese of province and then Anglican Communion, which has historically been described as a fellowship of churches. The question is not what is the highest degree of communion possible in each arena, but what is the appropriate character of communion in each arena. From its beginnings in the Virginia Report the quest for the 'highest degree of communion' has been an inadequately formed ambition.

The ecclesiastical structures in Anglicanism have not by any means encompassed all the lines of connection between Anglicans and Anglican churches. There are religious orders, independent societies such as missionary groups and other specific activity societies such as the Mothers Union, to say nothing of the innumerable networks that connect Anglicans, aside from the official ecclesiastical structures. These are part of the ecclesiological mix in Anglicanism, which are eclipsed in the current covenant discussions.

2. It Is An Inadequate Response To The Conflict In The Anglican Communion

This conflict arose over disagreements about the place of homosexual people in the public life of the church. It was a combination of conflicts within the Episcopal Church in the US and others, principally in Africa who objected to the actions of The Episcopal Church on these matters. This conflict was related to other issues said to be necessarily related to it and going back to the ordination of women. The Episcopal Church has been unable to sustain the internal divisions without some institutional separation and a good deal of public hostility. The issue before the Anglican Communion arose because this boiled over into conflict between provinces.

Responding to this inter provincial conflict by establishing mechanisms to control parties hardly does justice to the long history of conflict in christian history even in

the New Testaments itself. Such conflict is appropriately dealt with in relational terms and through conflict resolution methods which are well known in the wider community. These were not tried.

The theological issues to do with the actual conflict have not been the subject of serious communion level engagement. This has allowed the argument to be enlarged to include other matters and to make them the basis of continuing conflict.

The contextual issues that necessarily and properly affect the judgments that Christians make on such matters was referred to in principle in the first IATDC report before all this arose, but has been eclipsed in subsequent efforts.

The appropriate way to respond to this conflict was to embrace it directly and help those involved to engage with each other on the actual issue at stake.

3. In Practical Terms It Will Create Immense and Complicating Confusion about Institutional Relationships And Financial Obligations.

It has been suggested that there might be a two level belonging in relation to the covenant. But what happens when a province declines to accept the covenant for reasons to do with the structure of their provincial constitution, or some part of the text of the covenant that does not relate to the current conflict? What happens when one part of a province does something legitimate within the terms of the provincial constitution but which is regarded as in conflict with the terms of the covenant? If one diocese goes ahead with lay presidency at the Eucharist will that diocese be excluded from the covenant when the province of which that diocese is a part cannot successfully challenge the actions of the diocese because of the terms of the provincial constitution? Will the province be excluded from the covenant? In general after sexuality will there be a different cohort of provinces excluded on some other issue so that there will be those out on some subjects and in on others?

The difficulty with the covenant is that it multiplies the institutional expression of differences and thus makes the accommodation or resolution of those differences all the more difficult.

4. It Does Not Address The Key Fundamental Issue In This Conflict; How To Act In a Particular Context that Is Relevant To That Context And Also Faithful To The Gospel.

In the USA human rights is a determinative element in society, indeed it is a foundational and constitutional commitment of the nation. The Episcopal Church was drawn into the civil rights movement of the 1960s in support of the oppressed and disadvantaged. The currents of that same movement shaped approaches to issues within the church. Their new Prayer Book with its baptismal ecclesiology meant that all members of the church by baptism were entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership of the church. That came to have significance for the position of women in the public life of the church, being members of the General Convention and being ordained. The same currents flow in the consideration of gay and lesbian people in the church.

The debate in The Episcopal Church is crucially about how to make a judgement about the proper adjustment to the social context in witnessing to the gospel. That is the same issue in regard to homosexuality in Nigeria though it is set within a different context with totally different assumptions.

Even a cursory reading of church history shows how Christians have had to adjust over time and in different contexts on matters which they previously thought to be fundamental and non negotiable. This is not an argument for anything goes. It is simply to draw attention to the complexity and difficulty of living in the world without being of the world, of testifying to Jesus' Kingdom which is not of this world, while living in this world.

In a rapidly changing world this is one of the most important and difficult issues facing Christians. It is clearly at issue in the present Anglican conflict, but it has been neglected in the way in which the present conflict has been approached.

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This posting offers a fuller explanation of the first of these four reasons.

1. IT IS AGAINST THE GRAIN OF ANGLICAN ECCLESIOLOGY

Preliminary Comments

(1) Some introductory comment is appropriate about the claim to speak of an Anglican ecclesiology. Many texts on ecclesiology set out to show that the specific elements in a Roman Catholic, or Lutheran or some other ecclesiology can be read down from the New Testament or a portrayal of the gospel. The logic of this kind of argument is that a particular ecclesiology can be said to derive directly from scripture and further it is sometimes suggested that ecclesiology should be determined by what is claimed to be in scripture. One form of his argument can be seen in sixteenth and seventeenth English Puritanism. Richard Hooker's argument against this was based not so much on what was actually said in scripture on church order, but that specific tradition ecclesiologies had to recognise that there was a testable tradition of the providence of God in the ongoing formation of specific ecclesial characteristics and practices. Scripture was not an adequate resource on its own for dealing with this question.

(2) That does not mean that an ecclesiology can be simply invented out of a particular historical tradition such as Anglicanism. The apostolic material contains essential and fundamental material on the character of the church as a community of God's people who live according to the Spirit in the light of the gospel. For example, scripture makes it clear that God gives "gifts" in the church for the encouragement and building up of the life of the community and that the gospel virtue of love is to be the necessary and fundamental quality of relations in the church. These are

foundational for any ecclesiology and are principles and truths against which other things are to be measured.

(3) However when it comes to practices as to how a specific church might conduct its affairs, arrange its order and ministry and exercise its discipline, there is already in the New Testament considerable variety. This is true even amongst churches founded by the one person, the apostle Paul. That variety has continued into church history and variety of practice can be found not only between traditions but also, admittedly to a lesser extent, within traditions.

(4) So when I speak of an Anglican ecclesiology I have in mind the pattern of practices that generally are found in the Anglican tradition of faith. Of course some practices are seen to have different significances by different Anglicans within this tradition. The obvious example is the way in which the ordained ministry is viewed. There has been a very long history of different views on how Anglicans legitimate or interpret the common practice of having three orders of ministry. Much conflict in the history of Anglicanism has centred on these differences, though in general the fact of a threefold order of ministry disciplined in some way by an ecclesial judicature is the common, almost universal practice in Anglican churches.

(5) The current disputes in world wide Anglicanism have principally to do with these practices that have formed over time into institutional arrangements. The dispute over same gender relations has principally to do with a place in the public life of the church, whether it relates to the ordination of gay or lesbian people or clerical blessing of same sex relationships. It has to do with the intersection of a moral view about such relationships and the accepted institutional arrangements in the church. Similarly the practice of territorial dioceses for the purpose of ministry and discipline is another tradition created arrangement that is in dispute.

(6) In the last fifty years there have been experiments in practices to do with relations between provinces that have emerged around the world. Regional officers were tried briefly but ineffectually, an international theological college in Canterbury was tried but did not work. Some provinces have established Communion study centres. Relations between provinces have been thought of as an informal fellowship of churches. This view has prevailed almost universally, and strong theological arguments have been used to legitimate this model of the Anglican Communion as a fellowship of churches. It is represented in the vast array networks between groups of Anglicans around the world.

(7) Now it is being proposed to entrench a form of judicature for inter-provincial relations. Throughout their history Anglicans have changed their institutional arrangements for parishes, dioceses and provinces. The re-emergence in the nineteenth century of synods of the whole church for governance purposes in a diocese or province is an example of what was at the time an experimental innovation. In that case there was some reasonably extensive experience of such decision making. Furthermore there were significant arguments as to how such changes could be explained. The idea of institutional innovation is not new and the present proposal is just one of a long history of such proposals. However the present proposal is novel in that it is applied to inter-provincial relations. This means that there is little precedent to refer to and not much readily available theological argument to call upon in evaluating it.

(8) One of the substantial difficulties in the present conflict is that it draws these recent institutional experiments into a conflict over differences about sexuality in the public life of the church. That combination has driven the more gently developing institutional innovations in inter-provincial arrangements into overdrive. It is not surprising that this combination has created tension and conflict.

(9) In claiming that the covenant is against the grain of Anglican ecclesiology I want to acknowledge two things and defend them. First, when I refer to Anglican ecclesiology I have in mind the practices and institutional elements in church arrangements that have been generally adopted in Anglican churches over the course of the history of the tradition. Clearly, within the tradition there are obvious exceptions to what I am portraying. The period of the Royal Supremacy in England is a long and obvious example. I regard that pattern as a direct result of national political circumstances that have not been directly repeated elsewhere. It is essentially a local exception, which, even within the confines of the British Empire, proved to be unexportable.

(10) This is not to say that external political forces or local cultural considerations are necessarily excluded from the appropriate formation of ecclesiastical arrangements. On the contrary the practices of the church must inevitably relate to the local circumstances, not least because they are the circumstances in which Christians are to bear faithful witness to Christ. The influence of republican political attitudes on the shape of the constitution of the US Episcopal church, or of Chartist attitudes on the formation of synodical styles in some parts of Australia, or of tribal traditions and attitudes in Nigeria are not necessarily malign. They might be, and they should be tested against the foundational virtues of ecclesial relations.

(11) So the picture of Anglican ecclesiology I have in mind here is drawn from the practices of Anglican churches over a long period of history and to that extent it is inevitably selective. I think the selective element is reasonable and the points I am seeking to make are kept at a fairly general level. Clearly others may wish to interpret this history differently and that could provide a basis for conversation on that point. I have tried to reflect this desire to keep matters at a fairly general level by speaking of the “grain” of Anglican ecclesiology.

(12) The second point I want to note here is that the argument about the arrangements in the proposed covenant have to satisfy two levels of warrant which operate differently on the question. Clearly any proposed arrangement must satisfy the general foundational qualities of the life of any Christian church. Any institutional arrangements that do not facilitate or encourage the pre-eminence of love in relations in the church are clearly inadequate. However within a specific tradition such as Anglicanism such institutional innovations or reforms need to be able to show some reasonable continuity with the historic practices in that tradition and have arguments that might support the proposed innovation.

(13) This is the context in which I wish to assert that the proposed covenant is against the grain of Anglican ecclesiology.

Four elements in the Anglican tradition of ecclesiology provide the basis for this claim:

I. It is apostolic in that it looks back to the apostles and to Jesus Christ through a lineage of the history of the presence of God in the community of the faithful. Scripture is thus the ultimate standard but not the only one for the knowledge of God and the character of the Christian vocation.

(14) This point is clear in many Anglican formularies such as the Thirty Nine Articles and almost all the provincial constitutions of Anglican Provinces around the world. From time to time a number of Anglicans have espoused a doctrine of scripture alone, albeit in quite a variety of formulations and emphases. The doctrine has been explicitly rejected at various times in the history of Anglicanism especially in regard to ecclesiology. It is not represented in the general pattern of constitutions and canons of Anglican Provinces around the world.

(15) This point focuses our attention on the historical character of Anglicanism as a tradition of Christian faith and practice. It draws attention to the practices in Anglican history that must be engaged with as we move towards any new arrangements.

II. It embraces institutions to express its life and continuity but does not regard these institutions as ever anything other than penultimate. They are necessary and serve the greater good of providing for the ministry of word and sacraments and sustaining the faith of the community.

(16) There is a long history of changing institutional arrangements. Even the universally accepted practice of a threefold ordered ministry of bishops, priests and deacons have been modified in their actual operation. They have also been viewed in very different ways and given different theological significance. This pattern can at least be regarded as in some sense the result of divine providence, as the Preface to the 1662 Book of Common Prayer does, even though it bases this on an historical claim that is patently inadequate. Indeed Anglicans often find themselves in trouble in conversation with their ecumenical friends because they do not wish to affirm the absolute significance of the form of the ordered ministry as Roman Catholics or Presbyterians wish to do, and yet are not really prepared in practical terms to give up these arrangements. JB Lightfoot made this point in the nineteenth century when his eyes were not on the tradition of Rome but of Geneva.

(17) This point draws attention to the reformability of institutions and to an openness to innovation. The question is not can institutional arrangements be changed in Anglicanism, but in what way and on what grounds. In the present experiment on the global scene. Some have suggested that the moves to more global organisational arrangements since the middle of the twentieth century have more to do with serial British and US imperialism. That may be true and would mean that residual currents from the experience of empire would be present on all sides in this conflict. Yet on the other hand, especially in the last twenty years, distance between people around the world has dramatically shrunk because of extraordinary transport and communication technology. Anglicans around the world are much more visible to each other.

(18) It should be noted, however, that being more visible is not the same thing as being more connected. Further, those who are more visible are generally bishops with access to the media and attend the mainly Episcopal so called “Instruments of Unity”.

(19) The dramatic transformation in global communications might suggest that some move beyond the traditional provincial pattern of Anglican judicature might be appropriate. But as with republicanism in the US, Chartism in Australia and tribal structures in Nigeria, the kinds of changes arising from such globalism do not necessarily provide the model for changes in Anglican practices. Rather the values internal to the provincial range of Anglican ecclesiology need to be indentified and related to the foundational ecclesial virtues in any evaluation of proposed innovations.

III. The jurisdictional aspects of these Anglican institutions move from the local out to the regional. They are marked by authority dispersed in the community, a strand of conciliar principles and the sense that this proximity is necessary for effective power in a community ordered by agreed persuasion.

(20) The general pattern of jurisdiction, used principally to provide for a disciplined ministry of word and sacrament, begins in parishes and moves to dioceses and in some cases with appeals beyond to provinces. For bishops discipline is generally exercised at the provincial level. This pattern facilitates the involvement of the whole church through appropriate representatives and thus displays not only a significant element of dispersed authority but also a strong strand of conciliar principles. It also reflects the character of the authority in the church. Discipline operates effectively when there are reasonable levels of effective connection between those in different places in the institution. In a voluntary community the capacity for an office holder effectively to require action from another is directly related to the quality of the bond between them. Proximity yields the kind of persuasive power that is not only essential in a voluntary society, but is an adequate expression of the love and respect that are part of the foundational character of the church.

IV. Catholicity is the dynamic which mediates the connection between the local and wider fellowship and provides the balancing forces that sustain this regional community in the mainstream of apostolic Christian faith.

(21) All Anglican provinces claim to be apostolic and Catholic. Not in the sense of being Roman Catholic, but in the sense of being part of that great company of believers who have followed Christ from the time of apostles and of Christ himself. The Anglican attachment to the apostolic period provides a number of implications. Catholicity is one of them. Early Christians were shaped by a gospel which called for a personal response and which was also addressed to all. As a result of the mission of some and the testimony of Christians, local groups of Christians emerged with different patterns of group life. This diversity is clearly visible in the churches founded by Paul which suggests that there was no strict franchise pattern of group life. Yet it is clear that these Christians had a clear sense of the presence of God in their own lives and in the life of the Christian groups to which they belonged. That meant that they recognised the presence of God in their own church and those other churches which constituted a wider fellowship to which they belonged.

(22) The local church did not and does not exist on its own. It belongs with others and to a wider circle of churches. Its connection with them is the dynamic of catholicity. This dynamic helps them not to be captured by their local circumstances, to be unwitting prisoners of their local culture, or indeed to becoming a caricature of their own local ecclesial practices or attitudes. Such a dynamic holds churches to each other so that they are encouraged and enabled to retain an appropriate balance between their proper engagement with their neighbour and a faithfulness to the gospel universally addressed to all.

(23) It is important to recognise that proximity makes a difference to the kind of connection or fellowship that can exist between individuals or groups. The kind of connectedness in a parish community is necessarily and appropriately different from what pertains between parishes in a diocese or between parishes and the diocese itself. In the same way differences are to be found as you move from the diocese to the province. The pattern of relationship and texture of fellowship at each of these horizons cannot be the same. The move from province to global communion is a large leap as compared with those up to the province. The oft repeated phrase for fellowship (koinonia) as the ambition for the Anglican Communion as “the highest degree of koinonia possible” represents a serious mis-statement of the issue. The question is rather what would be the most appropriate pattern of fellowship for this kind of global community of provinces. As with the parish, the diocese and the province, we need to clarify what kind of thing this Anglican Communion is so that we can design appropriate institutions. There is a disturbing lack of focus on this in the journey towards the covenant.

(24) History has created in Anglicanism a tradition which sees the jurisdictional connection extended to where there is reasonable proximity to provide the basis for effective persuasive authority that would enable discipline. In this respect it has stood against the universal jurisdictional claims of Roman Catholicism on and off for a millennium while wishing for fellowship with Roman Catholics that recognised their own Anglican tradition. As Anglicans spread around the globe and provinces were created wider connections beyond the province have been sustained and developed. These connections have been those of fellowship and openness to the dynamic of the belonging of catholicity. There are serious underlying values involved in so called provincial autonomy in Anglicanism. It is not really autonomy. Rather it is local or proximate responsibility.

(25) The trouble with the covenant and its jurisdictional ambitions is that it has brought together two things. On the one hand an emerging Anglican experiment in practices that might be appropriate to a changed situation brought about by increasing awareness of each other around the world through technological and political change. On the other hand serious conflict within and between some provinces over the place of homosexual people in the public life of the church. The second has been very powerful and elicited the desire of some to control the perceived deviations of others.

(26) This combination has driven the ecclesial experiment into a mode of institutional jurisdiction. It has been a very unfortunate combination of forces and they have come to focus in the move to a covenant. That covenant owes more to the

current of external cultural notions of authority and power and has lead Anglicans to lose focus on the essential elements of their ecclesiological traditions and its underlying values. The covenant has thus become a bad idea for Anglicans because it goes against the grain of their ecclesiology.

(27) Not only so the covenant is not an adequate response to the conflict in the communion. It will only lead to more confusion and trouble. Moreover it misses the key issue at stake in the globalised world in which Anglicans are called to witness, namely, how to act in a particular context which is relevant to that context and also faithful to the gospel. These are matters I will take up in later postings.

(28) The argument set out above have grown out of work represented in several recent books:

Bruce Kaye, *Web of Meaning. The Role of Origins in Christian Faith* (Sydney: Aquila Press. Distributed from 2009 by Broughton Press, Melbourne, 2000).

Bruce Kaye, *Reinventing Anglicanism. A Vision of Confidence, Community and Engagement in Anglican Christianity* (Adelaide: Openbook, 2004).

Bruce Kaye, *An Introduction to World Anglicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Bruce Kaye, *Conflict and the Practice of Christian Faith: The Anglican Experiment* (Omaha, Nebraska: Cascade Books, 2009).

WHY THE COVENANT IS A BAD IDEA FOR ANGLICANS - 3

It will complicate and confuse institutional relations

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See the posting <http://worldanglicanismforum.blogspot.com/2009/11/why-covenant-is-bad-idea-for-anglicans.html>
2. It is not an adequate response to the conflict in the Anglican Communion
See the posting <http://worldanglicanismforum.blogspot.com/2010/01/final-text-of-covenant-is-still.html>
<http://worldanglicanismforum.blogspot.com/2010/01/final-text-of-covenant-is-still.html>
3. In practical terms it will create immense and complicating confusion about institutional relationships and financial obligations.
4. It does not address the key fundamental issue in this conflict, how to act in a particular context which is relevant to that context and also faithful to the gospel.

This posting offers a fuller explanation of the third of these four reasons.

In Practical Terms The Covenant Will Create Immense and Complicating Confusion about Institutional Relationships which will make the resolution of this conflict more difficult.

1. In earlier postings on this blog I have raised a number of issues that lead me to think the proposed Covenant is not a good idea for Anglicans. There have been postings on this Blog to which I have sought to respond. I hope to continue to respond. I appreciate the argument and am challenged by the points. Along with points raised with me directly by email I will continue to puzzle over this important issue. Many Provinces will be turning their minds to formulating a response to the covenant proposal. Different provinces will do this in different ways. All should in some reasonable degree engage with their people on this question.
2. The third point counting against the covenant is that it will multiply the institutional expressions of differences between provinces. There are many and various differences between provinces at the moment, to say

nothing of those within provinces. There is nothing essentially wrong with that. Indeed it is to be expected as provinces seek to be faithful in their own context to their Anglican tradition of faith. The covenant has the potential to bring some of those differences into institutional expression and in so doing re-shape the dynamics of relations between those provinces.

3. Historically differences of approach to mission and ministry can be seen in different provinces. To some extent some of those differences could be seen to correspond to the missionary history of those provinces. In Africa Asia and South America. The historical footprint of an evangelical or catholic missionary presence remains. Everyone who travels within the Anglican Communion knows this. There are informal acknowledgements of the pedigree of CMS or SPG or some other group. These differences are not fundamental and Anglicans who move between them may experience some social pressure, or bring some feelings with them to make them a little uncomfortable.
4. During the latter part of the twentieth century these sorts of differences have grown into a more mature and engaged relationship. That process has taken time and it has involved contact, engagement and easy institutional access to the provinces for all. One only has to look at the question of liturgical style in such things as episcopal or clerical dress and liturgical choreography. At the beginning of the twentieth century these were, in the language of today, fellowship breaking issues. They defined the limits of fellowship and in large measure of contact.
5. Looking back over a longer period of time they look odd and inconsequential. One only has to look at old photos, for example of the Lambeth Conference bishops, to see how much tied up with a particular period of time they are. Imagine how that process of conflict maturing into engagements and resolution if those differences were institutionally embedded in some kind of covenant. The process of living together, of maturing and moving to a situation where it could be seen that these differences were not such as to constitute a separation institutionally. It would have been vastly more difficult.
6. I am not suggesting that simply with the passing of time we will all get over the current differences and that they are simply a matter of fashion or something similar. But I do want to underline that those of our predecessors who were caught up in these divisions did not think of them as mere fashion. They were deeply important issues about the way they thought of their Anglican faith. They were “gospel issues” because they were seen to have a direct bearing on the way in which the meaning of ministry, church, sacraments and thus the world of faith in which we lived. Legal cases in England did play a part in the working out of these differences in that country, but not I think a particularly constructive one. They had a modest effect on the long term resolution of the conflicts. They had no very great effect elsewhere in the world.

7. This illustration points to another element in relations between groups of people. The kinds of conflicts we are concerned with here arise where people differ within a framework of relationships and a desire to continue to live within that framework. In the current instance that framework is the shared christian faith and practice within the Anglican tradition. Such a framework will inevitably and properly contain differences and from time to time conflicts.
8. Conflict is endemic in Christianity generally and also in its sub traditions. Some conflicts can be resolved by agreement. However many conflicts and differences are not resolved by agreement. Yet we properly speak of resolution of these conflicts when the parties involved have come to an understanding and commitment to continue to live together within the framework they share. This dynamic of conflict, engagement, and resolving is an ongoing process in the life of the church. In a sub tradition like Anglicanism that means that from time the framework gets adjusted and moderated a little. But in the main the resolving of conflict has to do with a combination of commitment to the relationships which constitute the framework and a willingness to engage and continue with the other.
9. The New Testament word for this process is love. That is why love is the prime Christian virtue especially in ecclesial life. When Paul had to deal with divisions in Corinth and with the disruption at ecclesial occasions when tensions and conflicts were on display he did not argue in the ultimate for agreement. With the conflict in 1Corinthians 12 he accentuated the divisions by naming the differences as of divine origin. They were gifts. He offered the model of a body as a way think about difference and coherence. However this was not his final answer. He clearly saw some gifts as more important than others. There were higher gift and should be desired. So in this more dynamic mode he offered a better way, a more excellent way of understanding this situation of diversity and conflict. They should love one another. Faith and hope were crucial marks of the Christian gospel but the greatest, most enduring, most centrally gospel virtue was love.
10. Jesus said that it was more worthy to invite into your home those who would not invite you back, that is to say, those with whom you did not have a continuing close social relationship. Rather hospitality was to be open ended and driven by open ended love. Love is the gospel dynamic that enables christians to live positively and creatively and openly with those from whom we differ and with whom we are in conflict.
11. The current conflict between Anglican provinces over the place in the public life of the church of homosexual people will only be resolved over time and with much difficulty. Just as the Anglo Catholic revival at the beginning of the twentieth century showed up serious and fundamental conflicts between Anglicans so at the beginning of the twenty first century has this issue. For many on both sides of the argument it is a gospel issue. The covenant strategy adopted by the Primates and endorsed by other parts of the organisational arrangements in the Anglican Communion has two serious faults here. First it institutionalises the conflict. It seeks to

constrain institutionally. Second it seeks to do so by re-drawing the framework of Anglicanism, and of the Anglican Communion.

12. It is all too quick and it lacks a rigorous enough commitment to the frailty of our human life and the Christian vocation of loving across difference. It does not take the disagreement and conflict seriously enough and it points to the wrong part of our Christian tradition to work through the conflict and it has a diminished view of the life of the church.
13. In all of this it will in practical terms make things more complicated and more difficult for Anglicans to live with their differences and resolve them. The difficulties are already with us in more complicated form by the formation of The Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans for the purposes of breaching existing provincial arrangements which go back centuries in Anglicanism. The formation of an alliance of interested Anglicans who share a particular point of view on this issue in order to promote that point of view is not surprising and the history of Anglicanism is littered with examples of such initiatives. The sadness in the present case is that it seems to see itself as an arbiter over against the rest of Anglicans in their institutional frameworks and so can foster and encourage steps which have the effect, as the covenant will do, of institutionalising the terms of this conflict.
14. It has been suggested that there might be a two levels of belonging in relation to the covenant. But what happens when a province declines to accept the covenant for reasons to do with the structure of their provincial constitution, or some part of the text of the covenant that does not relate to the current conflict? What happens when one part of a province does something legitimate within the terms of the provincial constitution but which is regarded as in conflict with the terms of the covenant? If one diocese goes ahead with lay presidency at the Eucharist will that diocese be excluded from the covenant when the province of which that diocese is a part cannot successfully challenge the actions of the diocese because of the terms of the provincial constitution? Will the province be excluded from the covenant? In general after sexuality will there be a different cohort of provinces excluded on some other issue so that there will be those out on some subjects and in on others? In all of this confusion where will financial obligation lie. Will it be a case of no taxation without representation?
15. A serious difficulty with the covenant is that it multiplies the institutional expression of differences and thus makes the accommodation or resolution of those differences all the more difficult.

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4. THE FINAL TEXT OF THE COVENANT IS STILL AN INADEQUATE RESPONSE TO THE CONFLICT IN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

1. In my previous postings I argued that the covenant ran against the grain of Anglican ecclesiology. I have received a number of email responses to this argument and am grateful for the engagement. Some have posited comments on the blog and I will try to respond to these by way of developing this next part on the argument.
2. The question here is what would be the best way to respond to a conflict of the kind we have seen in the AC? You could say that this is a hypothetical question since the conflict has arisen and a particular response has been pursued, namely the Windsor Process. If it is a done deal why persist with the initial question? I do not myself think it is a done deal and in any case going back to the initial question will help to demonstrate the fundamental character and weaknesses of the Windsor Process approach.
3. The present conflict arose in the first instance as a conflict within the Episcopal Church. In 1971 the General convention declined to agree to the ordination of women as priests, but did agree to their ordination as deacons. Supporters of the ordination of women continued their campaign and in 1974 eleven women were ordained by a retired bishop in Philadelphia. Four more were ordained in Washington in 1975 and the General Convention in 1976 agreed to the ordination of women as priests and regularised these ordinations. The issue arose in other provinces and in 1988, twelve years after the GC decision, the Eames Commission was established to see how the emerging difference in practice and attitude could be handled in the Communion. Their fourth and final report was published in 1997 and the following year the Virginia Report was published. It seemed as if the conflict could be contained and that dissenting parts of the Communion were prepared to live with women priests elsewhere.
4. But then at the 2000 General Convention in Denver the House of Bishops showed signs of wanting the mandatory character of the GC decision on the ordination of women to be enforced in all dioceses. There were notably three dioceses who had declined on principle to ordain any women (Fort Worth, San Joaquin, and Quincy). More pressure was attempted in succeeding years.
5. The year of the Denver General Convention Chuck Murphy and John Rodgers were consecrated as missionary bishops to the USA by Emanuel Kolini (Rwanda) and Moses Tay (SE Asia) and the Anglican Mission in America was formed in Amsterdam as a mission to US from Rwanda – the bishops were to be part of the house of bishops of church in Rwanda. Four more consecrations were conducted in 2001 by Kolini and Yong Ping Chung from Malaysia.
6. The optimistic view following the Eames Report that tolerance would work fell apart when the TEC began to insist on conformity on the issue of the ordination of women. That pressure pushed forward the deployment of international alliances.

7. This short narrative shows that the institutional conflict emerged in the first instance in relation to the ordination and consecration of women. The conflict over the place of homosexuals in the public life of the church had already been raised by some ordinations in the TEC. In 1989 Bishop Jack Spong ordained a man in an openly homosexual relationship and the following year retired bishop Righter did the same. In 1995 Righter was charged and acquitted by a Court of Trial of a Bishop on the grounds that homosexuality was not within the field of core doctrine. There was a heated and at times unseemly debate on the subject at the 1998 Lambeth Conference.
8. It took centre stage in 2003 with the approval of liturgies for same sex relationships in Canada and the election and confirmation of a man in a public homosexual relationship as bishop of New Hampshire. It has continued to hold centre stage and the institutional responses are what occupies the public life of the Anglican Communion, and finds expression in many of the provinces of the Communion.
9. What we see here is an internal conflict in the TEC being exacerbated by provincial restriction of accepted dissent which grew into a Communion issue by others getting involved in the TEC conflict and by issue of whether homosexuality was acceptable in some provinces of the Communion. The restriction on tolerated dissent on the ordination of women in TEC from 2000 was the precursor of a similar approach on the issue of homosexuality from provinces mainly in Africa. The issue was not just about the correctness or otherwise of a particular view of homosexuality in the public life of the church, but the degree to which diversity of view on this subject could be tolerated within the Anglican Communion. The TEC had restricted dissent on the ordination of women, now others want to restrict dissent in the Communion on homosexuality.
10. The level of commonality within the life of a church or province is not the same as between provinces within the Anglican Communion. As proximity is diminished from Parish to Diocese to Province to Communion, so also must inevitably the level and character of commonality – or to use what has become the jargon of this debate the character and level of communion. Provincial constitutions differ as to the way in which they construe that communion. Some are highly centralised like Nigeria and England and to some extent the US, others are more decentralised like Japan and Australia. What that means for purpose of dealing with diversity and commonality within a province is that different challenges present themselves. In some cases diversity has to be struggled for and in others commonality is the point of the struggle.
11. Whether we like it or not history has left world wide Anglicanism organisationally as a collection of provinces. Furthermore discipline has canonically been clearly left in the hands of the provinces and the dioceses within the province. That is why the Anglican Communion has been quite properly described as a fellowship of churches. It is sometimes suggested that we do not want to reduce the Anglican Communion to a loose federation. Federation is an ambivalent term. In US political history it has pointed to a tendency to centralise government power away from the states that go to make up the union. But in most other traditions it describes a tendency to reserve to

local political entities local responsibilities usually over against those of a central political power. There are endless variations on this theme and the Anglican Communion is just one of them. In the broader context of the use of federal language the Anglican Communion is a loose federation and has historically been so. However describing it as a federation, or even a loose federation, does not always illuminate the issue or advance the argument. It certainly does not end the argument.

12. The real issue is what kind of connection and commonality is appropriate to this kind of fellowship of churches, and in that context what is the appropriate way to deal with conflict between the member churches.
13. There are some preliminary points to note before attempting to answer the second of these questions. First this is a matter between provinces, that is to say it has to do with institutional relations. That means the issues of responsibility are much more complicated than in personal relations. In personal relations the individuals concerned are themselves responsible for their actions. In institutional relations there is inevitably a nest complex issues of representation and group decision-making. One of the problems in processes of consultation with provinces is that the provinces have different patterns of representation and responsibility for different kinds of things. Where some provinces may have a Standing Committee, or even a Primate who can speak authoritatively on some subject, most do not. This means the representing a province's view on something can be quite complicated and certainly will very likely take quite some time. Furthermore such processes are fraught with political possibilities, so that other extraneous issues may come to influence decision making of a particular topic.
14. Secondly the issue before Anglicans world wide is not just disagreement. It is hostility. The language of the debate, even in its more moderated moments, make that quite plain. The debate at Lambeth 1998 and the character of many of the internet exchanges show more than simple disagreement. I think that shows not only that this is an issue that is important to at least some people, but also that they think that it affects the character of their institutional relationships within the communion. For them the framework of institutional relationships is challenged by this disagreement.
15. The Windsor process moved on the framework question and that is what has lead to the Covenant proposals. To begin with the covenant looked for a way of deciding in a juridical way a dispute between provinces. As the draft text of the covenant have emerged they have understandably moved away from this starting point. The process has run into the hard rock of the historical reality of the looseness of the institutional relationship between provinces. It is has struggled to come to terms with what has come to be called provincial autonomy, though that term has been recognised as inadequate. In my view a better way to describe the situation is to speak of provincial responsibility. What the covenant seeks to do is moderate, or diminish that responsibility for the sake of a higher level of commonality on this issues – and presumably any others that might be raised in the future.

16. The Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission at its meeting in Limuru in 2006 suggested that there should be a standing doctrine commission which could be deployed to address issues of conflict. ‘Such a body would be concerned with doctrine because it would address matters of truth about the faith we share. It would therefore be made up of the best of our theologians, people whose competence and wisdom as theologians was recognised and respected by all. The body should have the power to co-opt consultants to advise them on any specific aspects of any question they were considering. The task of this body would be to clarify the issues at stake, to identify the agreements and disagreements and to shape a view of these things in the light of the Anglican heritage of scriptural faith.’
17. This is a useful suggestion that has not been taken up. However it does not go far enough. It deals only with the conceptual or theological matters in dispute. Conflict in Anglicanism is a richer and more profound thing than ideas. Conflict arises because of a determination to be faithful with one’s whole being. The clarification of theological issues may well be helpful but it is conflict that is our concern here.
18. The issue in conflict resolution is to resolve conflict. That can happen in a number of ways. After serious engagement they may come to agree on the question. Alternatively they may come to understand the other person’s point of view and recognise that it has some merit. They may come to a view that enables them to live with the disagreement and develop strategies to ease that process. In institutional relations the issues are much the same, though they take a lot longer to tease out and the conversation within each province is a complicating aspect of the process.
19. Such a process means the actual issue in dispute gets to be the main item on the agenda. It means there is engagement and conversation on the issue as it arises in the different context of the conflicted provinces. That engagement then can inform any discussion about the re-shaping of the framework of relations between provinces in the Communion.
20. The covenant model sets out to decide on an issue and to have institutional arrangements in place that will enable some kind of restructuring of relationships between provinces on the basis of that decision. It is the reverse order and has some clear disadvantages. It re-shapes the framework of relations on a theoretical basis rather than dealing with the actual issue in dispute. It pre-judges 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. The effect of this is to leave in the hands of these political forces operating at a global level, and to an extent outside the restraining proximity of life in the provinces, issues which are likely to narrow the terms of relations between provinces.
21. Even in the much attenuated section four of the Covenant now published these issues have not gone away. The language has been greatly modified and the terms appear as much less juridical. All of this is welcome. However the final text of the covenant at section 4.2.4 makes it very clear that what is being

attempted here is a decision about structural relationships between provinces, most likely one or more provinces on a given issue in dispute.

22. 'Where a shared mind has not been reached the matter shall be referred to the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee shall make every effort to facilitate agreement and may take advice from such bodies it deems appropriate to determine a view on the nature of the matter at question and those relational consequences which may result.'
23. In the end the logic of the Windsor process cannot deny itself. 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.
24. From the initial formulation of its approach, even to its much moderated form at the end this way of dealing with conflict in this religious tradition is essentially inadequate. By seeking to raise the perimeter fence and give it a gatekeeper it has already allowed, and very likely will continue to allow, fragmentation. In such a world wide set of relations it is much better to have the existing looser framework that keeps the arguments within that fence, rather than to raise the fence and thus drive the argument outside the field.
25. 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.

5. THE COVENANT DOES NOT ADDRESS THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES FOR ANGLICANS IN THIS CONFLICT

In previous blogs on this site I have offered three arguments against the proposed Anglican covenant.

- i. It is against the grain of Anglican ecclesiology (what we think the church is)
- ii. It is an inadequate response to the conflict in the Anglican Communion
- iii. In practical terms it will create immense and complicating confusion about institutional relationships and financial obligations

I come now to the fourth consideration, which I originally presented as

It does not address the key fundamental issue in this conflict, how to act in a particular context which is relevant to that context and also faithful to the gospel.

In a further posting I hope to come back to a question that has been put to me by a number of correspondence, namely, what to do if not the covenant. But first of all let me try to uncover what I think are the fundamental issues in this conflict.

THE PRESENTING ISSUE

2. The presenting issue is clearly the place of homosexuality in the public life of the church. It is not how the church should advocate for the rights of gay people, though many Anglicans differ on whether and how such advocacy should be done. It is not how individual gay people are treated as ordinary members of the church, though that is also a point on which many Anglicans differ. The differences reach serious conflict proportions when the public life of the church is involved either by way of church authorised liturgies to be conducted by clergy, or the ordination of gay people. This is so because these actions involve significant church decision and imply a general church policy. It is because the ordained and the liturgy are public and authorised elements in church life that the issue is so controverted.
3. The timeline of the conflict makes this fairly clear. It also makes it reasonably clear that there is a link with the earlier disputes about the ordination of women, though there are two things that distinguish this question. For many Anglicans ordination is not as important question as sexual ethics. A contrast is made between church order and a moral question that relates to the way Christians live. Whether such a distinction is easily made or sustainable is not the point. Serious conflict arises because people believe that something is important. Even where this distinction is made

serious institutional conflict did not erupt over the ordination of women. There was disruption and it contributed to a groundswell as the sexuality issue came onto the agenda. But it did not create the kind of conflict that came later.

4. However the issues have a certain similarity in that they both arise as Christians try to respond to social forces around them. It is no accident that the move towards women's ordination followed the emergence and influence of the feminist movement, especially in western countries.

5. The homosexuality issue really began in the United States.

1989. Bishop Jack Spong ordains man in openly homosexual relationship

1990. Retired Bp Righter ordains openly homosexual man

1995. Righter Acquitted by Court for trial of a bishop on grounds it is not core doctrine

2003 June. Gene Robinson [in openly homosexual relationship] nominated bishop of New Hampshire. November Robinson ordained.

2009 December. Mary Glasspool elected as Assistant bishop in Los Angeles in a long term lesbian relationship

6. Again it is no accident that these moves in The Episcopal Church followed increasing social pressure for Gay rights in the United States and increasing social acceptance of Gay and Lesbian relationships.

7. But it is not enough to say that the TEC was simply responding to a change in the social climate. There were other issues at play besides the social context. Two things happened which turned the question for TEC into an issue of gospel faithfulness. The new Book of Common Prayer came in 1976 not only with wide, though reasonably conservative liturgical revisions, it also came with a new baptismal liturgy which expressed a new baptismal theology. This baptismal covenant theology meant that baptism represented a covenant in which membership of the church came with all the rights and privileges of participation in the life and mission of the church. That language of rights resonated at the time with the rising civil rights movement. TEC had become deeply involved in and committed to this civil rights movement and many Episcopalians discovered that such engagement in a social movement gave them the opportunity to influence things in society for good. It also resonated with an earlier and often darker history of involvement in slavery. The experience of the civil rights engagement played into the internal life of the church facilitated by the new baptismal theology.

8. By these steps TEC brought together a baptismal covenant theology of the church, a commitment to social engagement within the framework of that theology and a view of mission that included this kind of outreach. These forces have contributed to the way in which issues of gender relations generally and of gay and lesbian relationships have been approached in TEC. It has been a classic example of a church trying to engage with the social conditions in which they are called to witness to the gospel in ways that are

faithful to the gospel and appropriate to the terms in which they are to be witnesses.

9. It has also been a struggle in which TEC members were increasingly divided. There had been sustained and persistent dissent on the earlier question of the ordination of women. Several dioceses declined to act on the canon passed in 1976. That situation had been acknowledged but nothing was done to compel compliance. After the 2000 General Convention more pressure was applied to these dioceses. In other words sustained dissent was being pressured to comply with the canons duly passed by the General Convention.
10. While these trends within TEC were going on the wider christian world was witnessing a revival in conservative Christianity, at times Pentecostal in style and at other times evangelical and conservative theologically. That evangelical revival was well on display in the US, and also in TEC. The founding of Trinity School of Ministry in 1975 was an expression of that evangelical revival and also a marker for the future. Evangelicals were on the move in TEC and were going to train people for ministry in line with that revival. They declared they were going to train future leaders upon the authority of the Bible.
11. These various movements provided the soil in which the divisions, now openly on display amongst US Anglicans, grew. My point here, however, is to draw attention to the fact that the divisions within the TEC found their focus on the way in which Anglicans could properly and faithfully engage with their host society. There were, of course, other factors but the issue of how to treat issues of gender relations arose in the attempt to be faithful and engaged witnesses in the very particular society that is the US. Disagreement arose from different ways of making that judgement; different way of construing the way scripture had a place in that endeavour and how it related to other theological considerations that can be found in the tradition of Anglican theology. For the people involved these were matters of conscience, but for some, the restriction of dissent and the ordination of Gene Robinson were steps too far.
12. This US story draws attention to the two issues, which are fundamental to the current conflicts.
 - I. How are Anglican to judge appropriate engagement in faithful witness in the society in which they live?
 - II. What is the appropriate shape of loyal dissent from duly identified majority views in the church? This might alternatively be put in terms of the extent and shape of diversity within the church.
13. There is another very significant aspect of the current conflicts, which has emerged in Africa. The relationship between the actions of African bishops and the evangelicals in TEC is a contentious story and there is an emerging literature on it. I am not concerned with that aspect of the question here. Rather I am concerned with the theological significance of the so called "border crossings". "Border crossings" is not strictly a helpful term since there have been border crossings in Anglicanism for decades and indeed

centuries. Border crossings were what enabled the missionary movement to function. Border crossings are the common element in inter provincial inter dependence. A multitude of societies, organisations and religious orders move across diocesan and provincial borders to serve in those dioceses and provinces. Cross border traffic is crucial to the inter dependence that has for centuries marked the life of Anglicans world wide.

14. That long history has been somewhat varied at times in terms of respect for the local diocesan and provincial churches and their constitutions and canons. In general however these things have been worked through with reasonable success.
15. The difference in the recent “border crossings” is that they have been carried out in defiance of the responsibilities of the local church. In fact they have been carried out in order to establish an ecclesiastical jurisdiction in opposition to the local church.
16. The question here is the character and authority of the tradition of provincial and diocesan responsibility for church discipline, especially clerical discipline. This tradition is embedded in the constitution and canons of most, if not all, the Anglican provinces and dioceses around the world including in some of those supporting these actions. It relates to the character of the Anglican appeal to the first four ecumenical councils when these local traditions were established. It also relates to the character of the appeal by the English reformers of the sixteenth century to the authority of scripture in the context of that appeal to the early church.
17. This is the third fundamental issue at stake in the present conflicts.

III. What is the theological authority of the ecclesial tradition of provincial and diocesan jurisdiction?

18. Various claims have been made as to how the issues in conflict should be approached. The authority of the Bible is a prominent one, but this often means a particular construal of the authority of the Bible and how it works in theology and in the life of the believer and in ecclesial life. Conscience appears as a warrant, as do the discovery and guidance of a spiritual life or journey.
19. All these in some way have a place in the debate, as do other elements in our Anglican heritage. Things like the fallibility of the church, the role and power of catholicity, eschatology and christian hope and above all the gospel virtue of love which comes to its most significant manifestation when it is exercised across profound difference. There are issues of plurality, which can be found in the report of the first Inter Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission [For the Sake of the Kingdom](#) and of catholicity and ecclesial life in the recent report [Communion Conflict and Hope](#) of the third IATDC.
20. One aspect of the Windsor Process with its originating impulse in the Virginia Report is that the unity of the church has been made the central category in this dispute. The difficulty with this as a category for argument in the present cultural context, and indeed in the context of some aspects of

modern Anglican history, is that it is too easy to confuse notions of unity with those of compliance, or even uniformity. It is not easy in such a context to uncover what is the suitable shape of the unity that is to be sought in the kinds of relationships appropriate to the character of the Anglican Communion. The pattern of unity in a parish is not the same as in a diocese, a province, or in the Anglican Communion. It is thus not surprising that debates in the Primates meetings have turned to issues of compliance, only to founder on the institutional realities of the constitutions and canons of the different provinces.

21. This approach also feeds the idea reflected in the recent commentary on the Jerusalem Declaration (*Being Faithful. The Shape of Historic Anglicanism Today*) that the tipping point in the current crisis was the issuing of open invitations to the Lambeth Conference rather than using those invitations as a means of disciplining others perceived to have strayed from orthodoxy. The GAFCON response has been cast in terms of the “Instruments of Unity” having failed to exercise discipline over heterodox provinces. It is interesting that notions of orthodoxy and heterodoxy have become part of the terms of mutual criticism. Orthodoxy clearly has a community element to it. It is the territory within the borders of central belief. It has about it a border security quality. That sits comfortably with notions of discipline, especially at the borders. What is being claimed is that it is already clear that particular attitudes to homosexuality are part of the central beliefs of Anglican Christianity and as such should apply in every cultural context, and also that such a definition of Anglican Christianity must be enforced in relations between provinces. All of these claims seem to me to require a degree of explication and defence that has not yet been offered. Such explication can only sensibly be undertaken if the underlying fundamental issues involved in this area of Christian faith and practice are properly engaged and differences clarified.

22. Those fundamental issues are in my view:

- I. How are Anglicans to judge appropriate engagement in faithful witness in the society in which they live?
- II. What is the appropriate shape of loyal dissent from duly identified majority views in the church? This might alternatively be put in terms of the extent and shape of diversity within the church.
- III. What is the theological authority of the ecclesial tradition of provincial and diocesan jurisdiction?

23. Any attempt to address the current conflicts in world wide Anglicanism must deal directly with these fundamental issues. The Covenant process does almost nothing to assist this process. In a future posting I hope to offer some suggestions as to how these issues might be addressed and also the conflict surrounding them on the presenting issue of homosexuality in the public life of the church. Though it is hard to resist the feeling that the Windsor Process

and its covenant has taken us down a track which makes the resolution of these conflicts much more difficult.