



Papers from the 2008 Modern Churchpeople's Conference

Saving the Soul of Anglicanism: the nature and future of the Anglican Communion

Anglicanism: blessing or curse, the Irish experience

Rt. Rev. Dr Michael Jackson, Bishop of Clogher

After being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, Samuel Beckett, a rather abstruse and retiring person by all accounts, found himself interviewed on French radio. An exuberant interviewer said, in French of course: *Mr Beckett, how does it now feel to be recognized as one of the foremost English writers of our time?* To this Beckett, an Irishman, replied simply: *Au contraire.*

I recount this only to make the point that the Church of Ireland is not the Church of England-in-Ireland today. I go on to say that the Church of England is not the Anglican Communion, and I say this not out of any truculent xenophobia, as I worked very happily in the Church of England for almost eight years. An example of such misperception may be found in the still recent Cyprus Report of 2006, fascinating in so many of its theological applications though it be across the Anglican and Orthodox worlds. At one point it states that the Anglican Communion does not ordain women to the episcopate. This is patently incorrect as a number of Provinces of the Communion does. This number includes the Church of Ireland, although we do not as yet have a bishop who is a woman. For us the decision rested largely on the basis of a baptismal theology where there is no gender differentiation or discrimination. My wider point is that, too often the stance of the Church of England on a particular issue, adopted I have no doubt for particular reasons locally appropriate, is not a default setting for the Anglican Communion in its constituent Provinces. As Anglicans, we rightly retain a tremendous affection and respect for the



Church of England and the Archbishop of Canterbury but our own local histories have resulted in our developing differently through time and through experience.

Background

The Church of Ireland is an autonomous Province of the Anglican Communion. We number no more than a quarter of a million people with about five hundred clergy and twelve bishops. Our history is complex and has contributed to making us who we are. It brings us into many of the discussions which churches need to conduct today: the impact of colonialism on shared history; the legacy of politics and, particularly in our context, violence and what the world calls 'The Troubles;' ecclesiastical disestablishment (1870) followed quite quickly by national partition (1922). The Church of Ireland is one church in two different jurisdictions between which there is the residue of a bitter social history. Although we are one and remain at one, we display marked differences of numerical size, emphasis of expression and theological nuance in

each part of the island of Ireland. Something important to remember is that, in each jurisdiction, the Church of Ireland is a minority. In the Republic of Ireland, it is a numerical minority to the overwhelming Roman Catholic majority. In Northern Ireland, it is a numerical minority to the combined numbers of Presbyterian and Roman Catholic people and to each of those churches individually. From the chronological outline given above, you can see that, ecclesiastically, Disestablishment came around the period of the Evangelical Revival and, politically, was followed by the 1916 Rising, Civil War, Partition and the creation of Northern Ireland. All of this took its toll on a church which had until recently been living a rather eighteenth century life well into the nineteenth century. Internationally, in the eighteenth century, Charles Inglis, first bishop of Nova Scotia, was Irish and, in the nineteenth century, the bishops of Meath, Clogher and Down consecrated the first bishop of the Episcopal Church of Spain.

The Republic of Ireland

One of the fault lines in understanding contemporary Ireland is the reaction to Europe and membership of the European Union. For a number of reasons – predominantly The Troubles of the 1960s and, following that, a fluctuating attitude towards Europe on the part of the Westminster Government which for various periods was responsible for direct rule of Northern Ireland – Northern Ireland itself has historically taken little active interest in its European membership. The Republic of Ireland, for a number of other reasons – economic necessity, having no structural political link with Great Britain and Northern Ireland, a tremendous sense of isolation as a young country to the far west of the continent of Europe and being an off-shore island in every sense – embraced Europe as a lived concept and as a living reality from early on. Much of this emotional Europeanization

had to do with concrete economic benefits. Infra-structural funding and inward investment met with a well-educated, young work-force who, at that time, had low wage expectations. Along with this was a very attractive corporation taxation system. Such a combination resulted rather quickly in an emotional identification with being European.

Northern Ireland

One senses little of such an outward-looking spirit in Northern Ireland focused on Europe. To my mind, the above analysis of the Republic of Ireland still holds despite the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty by those who voted: NO in the Referendum on June 12th 2008. This particular negative has thrown Europe politically into a spin, with the Republic of Ireland now both the toast of Euro-sceptics and the focus of disbelief on the part of those who ask: How could those who have themselves received so much deny others so much? Although, mercifully, now much more peaceful, Northern Ireland is a struggling fledgling democracy, manifesting to all the world its uncomfortable immaturity along with the uneasy suspicion shown by politicians towards one another. Party political structures still stand on the embers of negativity and diminishment of the other, of the opposition, as fine-tuned during The Troubles, even though everyone involved knows that it simply is not possible to go backwards. A significant difficulty for those who historically have been the majority – that is the Protestants – is that continuing to go forwards requires the recognition that London, Belfast and Dublin are all part of the political furniture of the future. There is political devolution but it is coupled with on-going economic dependence on both London and Dublin. The latter sticks in the throat of many in the Protestant community.

Impact on The Church of Ireland

I labour this slightly because it has resulted in distinctions inside the Church of Ireland which are certainly visible to the outsider and to the visitor, even if we ourselves contrive not to see them. It would be all too easy to descend into caricature to describe or explain this - and I have no intention of doing so because the Church of Ireland is my church and, were it not for it, I would be greatly impoverished both in my discipleship and in my vocation. What is more, caricatures reinforce prejudices and prejudices, in diminishing other people, diminish us ourselves. They also prevent us from being properly radical because foregone conclusions make going to the root of the thing seem much less urgent. In a rapidly changing world, where so many of the things which assume importance are in fact ephemeral, we as followers of Jesus Christ have no option but repeatedly to go to the root. But, within the Church of Ireland, the distinctions are strong and they are deep. The European revolution in 1789 and the substantial irrelevance of Europe in NI are somehow symptomatic of this. The Church of Ireland in NI overwhelmingly sees its natural allies as other Protestants and much of its energy, often unvoiced, is spent in dealing with the expectations that such links are what will, of themselves, make us 'more acceptable, truer Protestants.' The difficulty is that other Protestants are very clear that the Church of Ireland is Catholic as well as Reformed and do not see the Church of Ireland as containing such obvious natural allies for themselves. In the Republic of Ireland, the Church of Ireland, as a very small minority of 3-4%, has gone through more than ninety years of change, adaptation and accommodation. A recognition that small numbers are statistically where we are but not the only definition of what we can contribute, issues in a somewhat more self-confident identity, not least in relation to the majority Roman Catholic Church. Again, I would stress that this is

but to paint with a very broad brush. Diversity itself demands of any of us, wherever we are on a spectrum, respect for others and seeks to elicit their respect for us. This spirit, in the midst of genuine strains and differences of emphasis, remains alive across the Church of Ireland. Often it is hard work - but it is hard work for everyone who wants to make it work. It is worth it.

Back To Politics And History

It may seem strange that political matters which really make no contribution to the mission of the church seem to feature so prominently in what I have said. Lying behind the arrival of Anglicanism as a religious system in Ireland was the Anglo-Norman invasion and conquest of 1169. This resulted in the occupation of much of eastern Ireland and the first real taste of colonization. By degrees, the English crown took control of Ireland and the importance of this for the church is that its leaders were Englishmen, whether as abbots, bishops or deans. Particularly in the Province of Leinster in the east of the country, *Anglicization* was well advanced well before the Reformation made it in any sense *Anglican*. All of this background made it a lot easier for the Reformation to take root in Ireland, once England became Protestant.

The European Reformation followed a pattern of Protestant state religion. The English and, by extension, the Irish version made church and kingdom Protestant. In 1560, the Church of Ireland was established by the Irish Parliament. The Irish Parliament represented the parts of Ireland which were under English rule. The circularity of argument is clear for all to see, viz. the introduction of Reformation laws presented no real difficulty but it was only in the parts of Ireland where the King's writ ran that such changes were introduced. The fact that many of the changes were imperceptible might seem to offer a soft landing for the Reformation in Ireland but this changed with

The Modern Churchpeople's Union

General Secretary, Rev. Jonathan Clatworthy, MCU Office, 9, Westward View, Liverpool L17 7EE

☎ 0845 345 1909 ☎ +44 (0)151 726 9730 ✉ office@modchurchunion.org 🌐 www.modchurchunion.org

Registered charity no. 281573

the much stronger Protestantizing emphasis of Edward vi, son of Henry viii, particularly in relation to the new doctrinal understanding of Holy Communion. Popular theological resistance combined with linguistic problems, so often unspotted by colonizing regimes (the overwhelming majority of the population spoke only Irish until the time of The Famine, for example), caused serious difficulties. Therefore there emerged aggression and repression and insurrection in the large areas of Ireland where English was not the first language and where the past had somehow managed to cling on rather convincingly. A more aggressive application of Reformation theology ran straight into the confusion about the roles of what has come to be referred to as 'religion and politics' in Ireland. The Edwardian doctrinal reforms were seen as further English aggression against the Irish who lived beyond the scope of English law. Resistance was strengthened by Counter-Reformation missions from Rome and from Roman Catholic monarchs in Europe. The part of the church which accepted the combination of royal control and Reformation ideas and worship became recognized by law as the Church of Ireland. As you can well imagine, were you a Roman Catholic, you would write a totally different history of the same period - and this has to be acknowledged. Increased immigration in the early seventeenth century combined with a major influx of Scottish and English clergy and the foundation of Trinity College Dublin in 1592, specifically for the education of clergy for the Church of Ireland, all gave Reformed Anglicanism a tremendous push and lift in Ireland. It strengthened its position of influence and alienated it from the vast majority of the population all in one fell swoop.

Tudor and Stuart monarchs took a different route of Plantation. This was an attempt to control Ireland by transferring large areas of land to Protestant planters from England and Scotland in the three more unruly Provinces - Ulster, Munster

and Connaught. The suppression of the 1641 Rebellion was pivotal in this. The linking of the Rebellion with Roman Catholicism and its failure gave scope to discriminatory measures specifically directed against Irish Catholics barring them from freedom of worship, education, land ownership and entry to the professions. James ii, a Roman Catholic, tried and failed to restore land to the Catholic Irish. Both the attempt and the failure created what is referred to as 'the siege mentality' whereby the Protestant landowners henceforth saw the Catholic Irish as their natural enemies and were determined to retain tight control of Irish politics and land in the face of Irish Catholicism. It was in such fertile ground that Irish Anglicanism was to sprout and flourish! This was compounded by legislation in 1704 which extended the discrimination to include Protestant Dissenters in what was a concerted attempt to confine political rights, office and ownership of land to members of the Church of Ireland alone. The fact that these measures were largely a failure seems only to have added to the resentment which they caused. The combination of religion and politics - broadly speaking (a) the Church of Ireland itself seeking to convert the Roman Catholics and (b) the government along with the powerful lobby of Protestant landlords keeping wealth and power in Protestant hands - continued until Catholic Emancipation (1829) and Ecclesiastical Disestablishment (1870) changed the face of Irish life once again.

One character in particular deserves special mention in the early period - James Ussher (1581-1656). Best known for dating the creation of the world to 4004 BC, Ussher casts light on this period in many important ways. As first Professor of Divinity (1607) in Trinity College Dublin (founded 1592) of which he was an alumnus, and subsequently as archbishop of Armagh (1625-1656), he shaped the newly Protestant Church of Ireland. As an historian he wove a view of

an independent Irish church only lately corrupted by popery. At the same time revitalized Catholicism was strengthening its hold on the Irish people. A Calvinist in theology, he was responsible for the Irish Articles of Faith (104 of them) adopted by the Irish Episcopal Church at its first Convention in 1615. The English Thirty-Nine Articles (1562) had not at that time been accepted in Ireland. The flavour of the One Hundred and Four Irish Articles is clear from the following: they teach absolute predestination, affirm that the Pope is antichrist, make no mention of the threefold ministry or of the necessity of episcopal ordination. They remained the official statement of faith in the Church of Ireland until 1635 when a Convocation adopted the English Thirty-Nine Articles. Ussher continued to require subscription to the Irish Articles for a time and it seems that they influenced considerably the text of The Westminster Confession. Here I think is a source of the uneasiness which even today the Church of Ireland has about its Anglicanism and its Calvinism. There is a body of people, clergy and laity alike, who are antipathetic to what is referred to as The Elizabethan Settlement of 1559. To be fair to Ussher, this is not all that can be said of him. After the 1641 Rebellion he remained in England, seeking to effect reconciliation between Churchmen and Dissenters. So eirenic was his mind, or so nimble was his footwork, that on his death he was afforded a state funeral in Westminster Abbey by Oliver Cromwell.

Disestablishment is the polity which obtains today in the Church of Ireland. There are three Houses: a House of laity where numerically there are twice as many members as in the House of clergy and a House of bishops, currently twelve in number. The origins of Disestablishment lie with William Gladstone and his desire to address increasing unrest in Ireland following from the 1801 Act of Union. It abolished the Irish parliament and created 'The United Church of England

and Ireland' as a continuing Anglican Establishment. The Irish Church held on to its privileges, one of which was the collection of tithes from occupiers of the land. This continued against a backdrop of outbreaks of rural violence along with protesting against tithes. The government switched the levying of tithes from tenant to landlord - to ensure they got them - with devastating effects for the finances of the Irish Church. As part of his plan to bring peace to Ireland by meeting popular grievances, Gladstone's government disestablished the Church of Ireland from the Church of England despite opposition from the Church, as was only to be expected. Few turkeys, after all, are known to vote for Christmas! Disestablishment resulted in a Representative Church Body acting in a trustee capacity and administering the funds along with a General Synod to make laws for the Church and to govern its life. The model had been 'test run' by George Augustus Selwyn in New Zealand.

This has all resulted in a Province of the Anglican Communion, which internally before Disestablishment had four Provinces, namely Armagh, Tuam, Dublin and Cashel, now reduced to two, namely Armagh and Dublin, each with an archbishop, and ten other bishops, six in today's province of Armagh and four in today's province of Dublin. Two dioceses are completely in Northern Ireland; four dioceses straddle the jurisdictional border; six are completely in the Republic of Ireland. Numbers are stable overall and rising in the Republic of Ireland with the influx of members of up to 170 nationalities during the past ten years, some of whom are Anglicans from other Provinces.

Complexities of Contemporary Disestablishment

I have given a long introduction, however simplified and simplistic it may be, in order to begin to illustrate the complexities which Irish Anglicans carry and are seen to carry, whether they are really aware of

them or not. A sense of national identity, political affiliation – whether it be an emphasized sense of being Irish or British – is part of this legacy. A sense of holding the baby when there is neither bath nor water is also a legacy of such a history. A contemporary Disestablishment has no obvious way of relating to Governments whose political and economic policies affect in a primary way the secular lives of members of the whole society or of influencing such policies. Disestablishment has indeed freed the Church of Ireland from the aspects of Establishment which would associate it with a system of national religion derived from the Reformation. Such associations would be entirely inappropriate in the two-jurisdiction Ireland of today. But the Church of Ireland continues to carry associations with its complicated past. In the Republic of Ireland in particular, the birth of a new state resulted in members of the Church of Ireland in particular emigrating or lying low in order to ensure their personal survival. This issued in a sustained period in which members of the Church of Ireland as citizens of Ireland substantially walked away from the new structures of the Irish Free State and the subsequent Irish Republic – and this was at a time when the first President of Ireland was a member of the Church of Ireland, Dr Douglas Hyde. This also caused tensions between members of the Church of Ireland in the new Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, particularly at times when membership of the British Commonwealth was a more potent focus of identity than it now is. This all also pervaded the language which people use: loyalty and disloyalty, for example, are tremendously emotive terms. When this combines with the overlap of political belonging and religious affiliation in the expression of cultural identity, the Church of Ireland still has significant problems which will, probably, never be solved.

Irish Anglicanism Today

No generation can be responsible for the performance – good or bad – of its predecessors. It is however responsible for the performance of its own generation and its successors and for what it does with its history as inherited. I say this to set in context the task which lies before the Church of Ireland in our own generation if we wish to be a constituent and contributory member of the Anglican Communion world-wide. As with the rest of the world, we are part of a globalizing identity which is becoming both more varied and more monochrome at the same time. This is one of the ironies of modern life, namely that the greater choice we have, the more predictable and indeed impressionable we become. With the rapidity of communication, this means that opinions are formed and changed by virtual realities every bit as much as they are by living experience. A Press Release, a statement, a personal opinion – all now have an undifferentiated authority in our minds as we follow our instincts to websites which underwrite our theological presuppositions. The fascinating thing is that we in the church are living in a highly politicized environment at a time when the institutional church is struggling in the western hemisphere. But the politicization of church life is almost entirely internalized with factions delineated and defined in relation to two, and seemingly two only, caricatures: ‘traditional orthodoxy’ and ‘liberal secularism.’ In this context, I often remind people of a number of things. The first is that what is one of the most traditional parts of the Christian faith, namely the Nicene Creed, came about through a theological novelty – the word *homoousios* (of the same being/nature) – which unlocked an impasse in the fourth century. The second thing is what I often offer as a working definition of tradition as follows: Tradition is the church interpreting, not the church reminiscing.

Authority and diversity, particularly the extent and the limits of both, affect the

The Modern Churchpeople's Union

General Secretary, Rev. Jonathan Clatworthy, MCU Office, 9, Westward View, Liverpool L17 7EE

☎ 0845 345 1909 ☎ +44 (0)151 726 9730 ✉ office@modchurchunion.org 🌐 www.modchurchunion.org

Registered charity no. 281573

Church of Ireland within the *a la carte* of what is the Anglican Communion today. It may not quite be true to refer to the Anglican Communion as a riot of colour, but diversity lies right at the heart of it and with diversity comes not only change but conflict. One of my fellow-bishops is a biologist by training and his perspective on things ecclesiastical is fascinating. Genetics, habitat, statistics based on the experimental method itself – all of this is normal and the tensions embedded in it are normal in a way of life which is at the same time developmental and traditional *and* generally conservative. I repeat what I said earlier: Tradition is the church interpreting, not the church reminiscing. And, within this context, I think that one of the most important works of a bishop is, from within the tradition, to give permission for experiment. After all, it is somehow what the bishops at Nicaea did, and what we have from that theological experiment is something entirely traditional in the form of the Nicene Creed.

I would like to argue that within Anglicanism: diversity is here to stay, in fact that diversity is our friend, and also that permission to experiment needs authority. The absence of any or all of these leads to what I can only call: an anarchy of tyranny. I say this because enforced uniformity issues in exclusivity *and* the withholding of permission to experiment leads to the same end. My understanding of the dynamic and organic understanding of authority is that it requires diversity if it is to take all three strands of the Anglican theological method together and in creative and progressive tension: Scripture, Tradition and Reason.

The Church of Ireland is primarily a pastoral and a parochial church and through its history this has been an abiding strength. I grew up in the Church of Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s and in those days it was fairly similar across the board. Furthermore, it was often described as being high in doctrine and low in practice. A number of things has

changed all of this. The first is that, since the extensive Primacy of Archbishop Robin Eames as archbishop of Armagh, there has been in the Church of Ireland a sustained sense of an Anglican Communion of which we are part and in which one of our number has played a long and varied role. Another of our archbishops played a significant role in the burgeoning of ARCIC, Archbishop McAdoo of Dublin and Glendalough. To many of you here, this may be an everyday occurrence in your Province, but to us in Ireland it gave a sense of hope that there was a Communion beyond our geographical insularity and also that we had a contribution to make to its forward march and future development.

The second thing to which I must refer, and by now it will seem rather quaint, is liturgical revision. The days when there was officially one Book of Common Prayer in English across the known Anglican world are long gone, even if they were ever a working or workable reality. The era of liturgical and Prayer Book revision has been a period of pulling a church into what I can only call a contemporary and vernacular methodology. It has, at the same time, blown wide open a sense of security in an unchanging past and has forced the hand of people in grappling with modernity. It is, to my mind, a creative enrichment of the totality of the tradition but not everyone, even yet, sees it as that. It has forced everyone's hand in understanding the word: traditional as both ancient and modern at the same time. It has 'flushed out' many prejudices.

The third thing is that economics really does move everything forward, although it does so primarily for those who feel the privilege but do not question it. As Ireland has moved into the driving seat in terms of its own economy, things are changing rapidly. Modernity and post-modernity are now part of the weave of a society which is in fact asking more and more questions of a direct theological nature in non-ecclesiastical contexts.

The Modern Churchpeople's Union

General Secretary, Rev. Jonathan Clatworthy, MCU Office, 9, Westward View, Liverpool L17 7EE

☎ 0845 345 1909 ☎ +44 (0)151 726 9730 ✉ office@modchurchunion.org 🌐 www.modchurchunion.org

Registered charity no. 281573

Surely this has to be healthy. Yet the churches institutionally are increasingly paralyzed by their own systems as they stand, in facilitating the debate. More and more, people see them as little other than chaplains to the past rather than heralds of the future. The Inter Faith area has rapidly become part of the Irish religious scene. Whatever conclusion one wishes to draw from what the Archbishop of Canterbury said about England and Sharia Law, the question he raised among others was one about the ramifications of religious identity in a secular society. Behind this, of course, lies the issue of whether one is in fact better to work hard at making the secular norm function for everyone rather than seeking to integrate aspects of a legal code which goes with a religious identity into the legal and societal weave of what is a pre-existing host culture. All I want to say is that, in preparation for Lambeth 2008, there is now a resource entitled *Generous Love: an Anglican theology of Inter Faith Relations* which seeks to be Christian, Christological, theological and Anglican in its thought pattern and approach. It deals with pairs of words like: sending and abiding; presence and engagement; dialogue of ideas and dialogue of life. To my mind this is an important way in which to open and deepen channels of communication.

My wider point is that an Anglican methodology has it all to play for in contemporary Ireland. It is important, as I said earlier, that we should not be prevented from living a future because of our historical past. We need repeatedly to discover anew in our own day the depth and the riches of the Anglican triad of Scripture, Tradition and Reason. The words of Richard Hooker remain pertinently probing in contemporary Anglicanism as 'holy charity' moves towards 'unholy enmity': 'A more beautiful and religious way for us were to admire the wisdom of God, which shineth in the beautiful variety of things, but most in the manifold and yet harmonious dissimilitude of those ways,

whereby his Church upon earth is guided from age to age ...' To me the important thing is that people of genuinely and generously liberal sentiment engage widely with fellow-Anglicans, particularly those with whom mutually there are areas of *disagreement*, and right across the Anglican Communion – and that such engagement be on the basis of human respect and of ground which is and which will remain in common. All of us are called individually and corporately in a primary sense to be *foci* of unity. Each of us is a living Christology in discipleship and in ministry. And in modelling the person of Christ we live out a unity and a diversity all in one, according to our own capacities and to God's equipping.

For the moment, I simply wish to say that, as it is presented, so much of the current debacle and impasse in the Anglican Communion purports to be about the authority and interpretation of Scripture. I, like many other people, am increasingly less convinced. It seems to me that there are, on all sides of this, entrenched factions and conclusions which people have already reached. Different and opposing people are using Scripture selectively and synthetically – as, of course, we *all* do to an extent – to substantiate a position which they already hold and a conclusion upon which they have already decided. It is such intransigence as this which has resulted in the successive and repeated walking away and walking apart.

In relation to the ethical matters which lie within and behind the tensions there are, of course, issues in Scripture which give guidance in terms of guidelines, expectations and norms of being and relating as well as of behaving – and all of these categories are conceptually different. Inclusivity and exclusivity are both reactions, in our current context, to a relativism which is part of the air we breathe. Both are a response to something which is superficial and does not bring us to the heart of the issue. I am convinced

that within the widest scope of theological issues within the Anglican Communion, issues the range of which affects each of us at the deepest level of faith and practice, including issues of justice, exploitation, human trafficking, poverty, shortages of water and food, selective access to the world's resources and of course pollution and human rights, there has to be a place for a mature exploration and expression of sexual ethics. However, I am equally convinced that the issues in human sexuality are primarily pastoral issues. It is the comprehensive lack of both grammar and vocabulary in this area which has turned a process of listening into megaphone diplomacy. The doctrine of God is of far greater importance than the doctrine of behaviour and it to God we should listen before and after we listen to ourselves alone.

Windsor and the Covenant

I have tried again and again with The Covenant but I find it extremely problematic. I accept that The Windsor Report tried to steer a course between federalism and curialism, but perhaps because I come from a Disestablished Province of the Communion, I am unconvinced that it avoided the latter. I accept, once again, that it tried to establish a modern working understanding of autonomy-in-relation but it seems to me seriously to misunderstand the level of acceptance of the Instruments of Unity – whatever in fact they are – and offers them in an undifferentiated package for rapid consumption to a now tired Anglican digestive system. This is compounded by Windsor's apparent lack of confidence in the ACC, the only real place within these Instruments where the lay people of the Communion potentially get a voice. One of the enduring indictments of what I can only call the 'on the hoof' ecclesiology of a crisis-driven Anglican Communion will remain the Draft Covenant which came out of the Tanzania Meeting of Primates in early 2007. I say this not because I

have a difficulty with its search, however faltering and inchoate, to offer some vocabulary of cohesion across the contemporary Anglican world but because it is comprehensively un-Anglican in its methodology and, towards the end, it is threatening and punitive in its conclusions. Sometimes the accusation is levelled at the Anglican Communion that it is a Golf Club with no Rules. I have to say that I would be extremely alarmed if the minatory tone of the Tanzanian Draft were to become, if I may adopt a phrase incautiously used of The Windsor Report in its day, 'the only show in town.' The total absence of arguments for anything in the prose emanating from Dar Es Salaam from that fundamentally Anglican and inter-related triad of Scripture, Tradition and Reason is an expensive mistake. Furthermore, it weakens the leadership which this document purports to give into an Anglican world which is now in difficulties with itself and therefore increasingly out of dialogue with other churches and Faiths. The document is fraught with further worrying assumptions: first, that there is no evidence of pastoral sensitivity shown by those who are leaders of the leaders and: secondly, that there is an underlying assumption that a Primatial pronouncement might of itself be more authoritative than any other pronouncement by virtue of being a pronouncement of the Primates *per se*. Like any of you, I know that authorship-by-committee is a painful business. However, knowing the depth of feeling evoked by the Windsor Report along with its Draft Covenant, inadequate and overblown all in one, and by the unexamined assumptions which Windsor contained of what appeared to many to be 'creeping curialization' of the Anglican Communion, I am surprised that the Draft Covenant emanating from Dar Es Salaam thought it might 'do the business.' The Draft Covenant carries the sting in its tail and comes across in the final analysis as uncharitable. What lies before those attending The Lambeth Conference is a slimmed-down document, the St An-

The Modern Churchpeople's Union

General Secretary, Rev. Jonathan Clatworthy, MCU Office, 9, Westward View, Liverpool L17 7EE

☎ 0845 345 1909 ☎ +44 (0)151 726 9730 ✉ office@modchurchunion.org 🌐 www.modchurchunion.org

Registered charity no. 281573

drew's Draft Covenant. It at least has learned the lesson that covenanting must be generous and conciliatory if it is to be binding and enriching. My own thinking is that if a Covenant as such is to happen, it would be much more useful and helpful were it to take as its template something like the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888, rather than by prolixity to give hostage to confessional fortune.

I hold doggedly and dearly to the primacy of Scripture. It forms the bedrock of both my faith and my action. It constantly and properly confronts me with inadequacies and failures along with inspirations and opportunities. At the same time, I see no way in which contemporary people can continue to fly in the face of what, for example, a scientific discipline such as Genetics may yet reveal about why any of us is as we are. But throughout my main point is that the dynamic, pro-active theological method of Scripture, Tradition and Reason contains within it an elasticity of approach and a faithfulness of intention to new situations, problems and difficulties: with Scriptural authenticity; within the total Tradition; informed by Reason both in terms of Hooker's understanding of the natural law as revealing something vital of God and in terms of rigorous criticism, scholarly acumen and scientific credibility. For none of these I make an apology in an Anglican world. The Church of Ireland is not a confessional church and the Anglican Communion is not a confessional Communion. Anglicanism is built on a foundation of the saving work of God in Christ but also on the utter provisionality of existing ecclesial institutions and earthly articulations of belonging. This is to do nothing more radical than to say that Anglicanism, in its self-definition, takes eschatology very seriously. I see a great deal of sense in the final sentence of the Editorial of The Church Times of June 20th 2008 following events in St Bartholomew's Church, London: 'The challenge for the Lambeth Con-

ference, and for GAFCON before it, is to demonstrate how Christians can disagree profoundly and yet recognize the working of the Holy Spirit in those with whom they disagree.' This, my friends, is where The Tower of Babel meets The Day of Pentecost and is redeemed in the encounter.

The Anglican method of Scripture, Tradition and Reason is a blessing and not a curse particularly if we embrace the richness of the designation: catholic and reformed and also espouse the definition: *ecclesia semper reformanda*. The reformation of the church is, of course, a purposeful re-orientation of the church first and foremost on its Lord and Saviour; but that re-orientation has further repercussions, involving the re-integration of individual and community; and both must involve a re-focusing on whoever, at whatever time, is our neighbour. This is not a self-selective process. It is a missionary imperative with ministerial consequences. We must remember that the groundwork for today's Anglican Communion was laid by Thomas Bray and the missionary self-confidence of SPG and SPCK with that wonderful combination of mission and literature. From as early as 1701, missionaries of the English, Irish, Welsh and Scottish Churches as they later became, moved further and further into the unknown but inhabited world to serve not only British colonists but also, more importantly, indigenous people and slaves. Today for tomorrow this re-orientation, this re-formation, perpetually asks more of us in relation to those beyond us and beyond our comprehension. It repeatedly asks of the church that it re-engage with society as it exists. If we insist on scolding society, we need by the same token to love its members, otherwise it cannot have good reason to take us seriously.

BCP Preamble and Declaration

I now want to look further at the self-definition of the Church of Ireland from

within an Anglican context and to show that it has much to offer within the European framework as well as seeking to be honest about some of our difficulties and dilemmas. The nature of Irish Disestablishment is set out in The Preamble and Declaration of 1870, the date of Disestablishment. The pillars of this include:

- (a) An acceptance of the Canonical Scriptures of OT and NT as given by inspiration of God, containing all things necessary to salvation.
- (b) A continuity with the faith of the Primitive Church, set also in the context of self-understanding as 'the Ancient Catholic and Apostolic Church of Ireland.'
- (c) A maintaining of the three orders of bishops, priests or presbyters and deacons.
- (d) A re-affirmation of its being Reformed and Protestant combined with an intention to re-affirm the Primitive Faith and to reject innovations in doctrine and worship in line with the Reformation.
- (e) A receiving and approving of the Book of the Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, Form and Manner of Making, Ordaining and Consecrating bishops, priests and deacons.
- (f) on communion it says: 'The Church of Ireland will maintain Communion with the sister Church of England, and with all other Christian Churches agreeing in the principles of this Declaration; and will set forward, so far as in it lieth, quietness, peace and love, among all Christian people.'
- (g) a General Synod as the chief legislative authority and exercising such administrative power as is necessary for the church and consistent with its Episcopal constitution.

One of the important things to notice in all of this is that, at the very point when the Church of Ireland seems to be cutting itself off from the elasticity of the English

Reformation – an elasticity alive and well to this day – it affirms its identity as 'the Ancient Catholic and Apostolic Church of Ireland.' This is no mere antiquarian or sentimental retrospect or self-indulgence but an assertion that we are entitled to draw on the totality of the tradition within Ireland rather than being confined by any modish manifestation of tradition on either side of the Reformation. The strain and strand of genuine catholicity is an assertion which, in a context of world Christianity where ecclesiologies now seem to be endless in their permutations, is of tremendous importance in enabling members of the Church of Ireland creatively to remain together in the things which really matter in the proclamation of faith, in the ministry of word and sacrament and in the humble offering of pastoral concern to whomever is our neighbour.

Porvoo

Anglicanism has been a blessing to the Church of Ireland in another specific way - through its membership of Porvoo - and that is a genuinely *fresh expression of church* which takes seriously historic and personal episcopacy. It is a contemporary response, focused on the future, to the current untidiness of national churches founded and functioning differently from one another but all having emerged from the Protestant Reformation and having sought to maintain an episcopal polity. One of the very important gifts and insights of Porvoo is to locate once again serialized episcopal succession as apostolic within the total apostolicity of the church. The importance of this and the working through of it, which is only in its infancy, is entirely in line with the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral; accepts that there are three orders of ministry and realistically that the most usually exercised and accessed is priesthood or presbyterate; facilitates dialogue, understanding and co-operation with other Protestant churches in Europe which have *episcope*

but do not have personal episcopacy. The most interesting thing which Porvoo has given is a structured opportunity for the Church of Ireland directly to engage with responding to the ever-changing European situation for Christianity in conjunction with European Churches in the Nordic-Baltic countries in particular. With people of up to 170 different nationalities now living in Ireland and with the virtual disappearance of borders within Europe, this is an important and exciting blessing in ecclesiological, missiological and pastoral terms and an opportunity with a heightened degree of understanding to respond to the religious and spiritual needs of people in a fluid Europe.

So: Is Anglicanism in Ireland a blessing or a curse?

It is a blessing because:

- (1) It connects Irish Christianity as a whole with a way of being theological and ecclesiological which is creatively and experimentally catholic and reformed. It also facilitates the Church of Ireland in being actively ecumenical. The church is, after all, an experiment in Godly living, no more, no less.
- (2) It expresses locally, and if I may also use the word indigenously, a methodology of Anglican thinking which is traditional and radical, in this way preventing us from being simply sentimental or small-spirited. This methodology is one of dynamic interaction of Scripture, Tradition and Reason to create a new and generous synthesis of contemporary witness in each generation.
- (3) In its Disestablishment it inherits a working understanding of the central tenets of the sister Church of England while being able readily to relate with other parts of the Anglican Communion and world particularly in mission which has always been a strong emphasis in the life of all the Irish

churches. Likewise, as I have sought to show, more recent forays into Northern European Lutheranism enable it to contribute to the new possibilities of Protestant episcopalianism in Europe by virtue of a shared episcopal polity. From within these islands, the Church of Ireland is one of the churches, for example, which can already participate within Porvoo in the episcopal ordination of women.

To use the word: curse is one step too far although I can and must identify some on-going and escalating problems:

- (1) Our history, which has perforce woven its path through colonization, through the rank politicization of a national religion by which Roman Catholics, Presbyterians and Baptists were excluded from the expression of faith, conviction and contribution in church and state, is a bitter and a difficult legacy. At the same time our history, theologically and ecclesologically, has given us something which now is a blessing – a continuity and a belonging. We need to use it wisely and generously.
- (2) The Church of Ireland is a minority in both parts of Ireland. We need to work hard at being a critical minority which contributes, rather than cosy-ing up to a local majority or disappearing into our own self-pity and bereavement at the loss of the glory days of yore.
- (3) Catholic and Reformed stand in uneasy tension in Ireland, coming out of my previous point that in both parts of Ireland we are a minority seeking an identity. Within ourselves, in every parish and diocese, we have no option but to model diversity *together* and to grapple with *communion* as a local living reality *together*. Otherwise we crumble from internal denominationalism to internal sectarianism, fuelled by an inertia bred of mistrust of ourselves. We are from time to time

on the verge of this and it is far from a pretty sight.

- (4) The greatest curse, if I may use the word at all in relation to a gift of God to the world – which is what the church to me always has been – but one marred by human politicking, contrivance, ambition and bitterness and yet not dismembered as the Body of Christ – is the stagnation, the stand-off, the uneasy prowling around one another and the loss of active energy for matters of justice in the face of agendas of self-righteousness which have come about through the current attempts to dismantle com-

munion within the Anglican Communion.

The Church of Ireland may well not seem to be a typical member of the Anglican Communion. We make no claim to be a significant member. We have a great deal of internal work to do to enable new growth and fresh responses; we need desperately to regain a sense of joy in our inheritance; we need urgently to regain a confident grasp of the essentials of our Anglican method of being an eschatological community living in a secular world of transience. But we do really want to be part of a real, personal Anglican Communion. And we want the rest of the Communion to keep trying too.