



Read the Archbishop's presidential address on the first day of the Anglican Consultative Council meeting in Accra, Ghana.

The ACC is unique amongst the Instruments of the Anglican Communion, in that it gives a key role to the laity. And that is so vital to the life of the Anglican Communion because so much of the thinking of the Instruments is about clergy, Bishops, Archbishops, Primates, but the life of the Church is lived at the very local level, by the whole people of God.

At the local level many people live the lives they are given. They think the ways that they have learned growing up, and they are like all Christians in that the Holy Spirit works in their lives no more and no less than amongst clergy, the Bishops and the Archbishops. For we all begin as Christians in the same way. We need to admit our sin, we need to believe that Christ died for us, and we need to confess his Lordship over our lives individually and across society. As Paul says in Romans, "There is no distinction".

The task of the Church has been since the first Pentecost, to declare the marvellous works of God and to call people to live out their trust in Christ, living out the life to which they are called as may best for them be, and to the best of their ability and understanding, as God gives them strength.

Yet the Church is a body made of different parts, I Corinthians 12, and no part may say to any other part, "I have no need of you". And in the same way as the grace of God is scandalous to those outside the life of the Church, so is the love of Christians and between Christians a scandal to those outside the love of the Church, and the life of the Church. And tragically, it is also a scandal to many Christians.

The scandal of grace is that God forgives sinners. God forgives terrible sinners, and if we are like Jesus with Zacchaeus up the tree, or like the woman caught in adultery, or all those in the churches to which Paul wrote his letters, or the churches of Revelation 2 and 3 addressed by the glorified Christ, then we seek to welcome sinners, saying that they can attend the Church before they believe in the God of the Church, and knowing that they will believe before they begin to behave, to learn Christian behaviour. We do not seek good people to come to church, but we seek sinners who are finding that journeying with God requires them to allow themselves to be transformed by the Spirit into the pattern of life which God calls.

To those outside the Church this grace of forgiveness from God and to one another, is appalling, a scandal, for it seems to deny my right to justice or revenge. But when a person realises that we worship a crucified God, it makes sense to forgive in the same way as we have been forgiven.

And there is one more way in which we are all like each other, identical. It is that we will all face judgement, and the more we are entrusted with responsibility in the Church the more we have responsibility at the judgment. The only way I come before God without condemnation (Romans 5:1) is that in the words of the old hymn in England, Rock of Ages, I plead the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to your cross I cling".

I want to take some words from Genesis 12, the first three verses:

“Now the LORD said to Abraham, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

Abraham is an example of conversion and friendship with God, because he had to learn that God’s hope comes only when we rely exclusively and entirely on God. Abraham cannot have children, has no land, has nowhere that is home. His life is without fruit. He obeys God without evidence that it is reasonable. He does no reconnaissance. He does not send people ahead of him to see what the land is like. He does not have a strategic plan. His first test is that there is famine (in verses 10 to 20 of Chapter 12) and so he leaves the land and fails in faith. But he is not condemned, for he trusts God who is the giver, free, and only by promise, of what he seeks: “well-being, security, prosperity and prominence”[\[1\]](#).

Our first scandal as Christians is grace.

Our second scandal is the fact that we live by gift alone (Paul to the Corinthians in I Corinthians 4:7 “What have you that you were not given, therefore why do you boast?”). Yet, like Abraham we live in a world that does not believe in gift, in an economy that does not believe in gift, but one that depends on contract and exchange. But we serve God in this world, where God’s economy is based on gift and covenant and failures forgiven. The Church must reflect God’s world, not the contractual world around us. And the contractual world sees God’s world as scandalous, for it depends on the God we cannot see. It depends on grace and generosity, not obligation and contract.

The third scandal of unity and interdependence, is worse in many parts of the financially richest world.

That is because we live in a culture where community and mutual responsibility have almost been eliminated philosophically over the last 75 years.

They have not vanished. You find them in families and in small communities, but they are no longer the main way we relate to each other, and to others around the world.

We love those close to us, not those further away. There is often compassion, but there is also absolute individualism. That sense of individualism, of not accepting outside authority, authority outside oneself. Indeed, of treating such authority with immense suspicion lies behind the fact that in the UK and in many parts of Europe, the majority of people now belong to no faith at all.

They're not Christians. They're not Muslims. They're not pagans. They're not Jews. They're not Hindus. They do not belong. For years I've been told by principally Christians around the world that Islam would take over Europe. I've always said that would not happen. The greater danger

was the secular 'nones'. I mean those who when asked about their faith, say 'none'. 'I have no faith.'

The result is clear. In the last few weeks, as part of our discussions about sexuality and the rules around sexuality in the Church of England, I talked of our interdependence with all Christians, not just Anglicans, particularly those in the global south with other faith majorities.

As a result, I was summoned twice to Parliament and threatened with parliamentary action to force same-sex marriage on us, called in England 'equal marriage'.

When I speak of the impact that actions by the Church of England will have on those abroad in the Anglican Communion, those concerns are dismissed by many. Not all, but by many in the General Synod.

And remember, that in the Church of England, Archbishops do not chair the General Synod and do not organise its business or its debates.

Secularism is growing in huge parts of the world, including even the USA, where the 'nones' are the fastest growing group in religious affiliation.

Amongst the UK for those under-30, young adults, the 'nones' are up to 75% in some parts of the country.

In much of the financially richest world, we are now living in a time of post Christianity, seen by large numbers as a superstition left behind, or even not seen at all, simply unknown.

A popular television show, a reality TV show, features two well-known characters (I won't name them to save distraction) one of them in his early 20s and the older one said to him in one of the shows, "Haven't you heard of what Moses did?" And he said, "Who's Moses?"

So, the older character said, "Well, don't you ever read the Bible?" "Bible? Why would I read that?"

And that would be common.

Another person I know well, a really lovely man in his mid-30s well educated, trained, university degree, had never, ever, once in his life, been to church for any reason at all, even weddings or funerals until a few years ago he started dating the daughter of a bishop.

I bumped into him and commented that if you were going to find out about church your first service being Easter Day in one of England's largest cathedrals, was probably getting in the deep end.

But we are in a completely different culture in the financially rich world to 30 years ago.

We replace morality and Christian faith with personal control over our bodies. Birth with genetically designed babies is not far away. And death is something that so many believe we have a right to choose in the way and at the time we want. For we are told that that is our right and no one, least of all Christians, may take that away from me. Even my predecessor but one, George Carey, has spoken strongly in favour of assisted suicide

in the House of Lords.

Modern European global north moralities, a morality for the wealthy, the powerful and the intellectually well educated, it is a morality that does not believe in human sinfulness and failure. It does not believe in forgiveness. It does not believe in hope.

This is where the Church struggles.

People think of the Anglican Communion as one body and so we are. We are also one body with all Christians everywhere. Of all churches.

But the Communion is made up of remote parishes in Papua New Guinea and huge churches on Wall Street. The Church is prayed for and we are prayed for by Christians in the plains of Africa, the villages of England and the jungles of Amazonia and hundreds of other places.

And it is there in the local church that profound transformation happens every day. That those in despair find the hope of God.

It is there that people are affected by the challenges of the world and see the opportunities of the future. It is there that prophetic voices speak to the Church every day. It is there that people are affected by the decisions made by political leaders for good and ill and where Christians serve in their communities.

And it is at the local level that intentional discipleship is necessarily lived differently in each place because of different cultures. For we are not the same although we are one.

This is one of the basic reasons why as well as being interdependent as provinces we are also autonomous.

There is no good reason why one group in one part of the world should order the life and culture of another.

Such control was colonial abuse, and we are trying to move away from it and such control is often neo-colonial abuse. Money, power, access to resources should never call the tune. Yet such is the lust for power of all human beings (and I point to myself, I include myself, for I sin like everyone else) that one group always seeks to tell another what to do.

That is why in a post-colonial world, where every day we face more attacks on Christian faith and Christian churches, we have to find marks and signs to show we are one and yet marks and signs that do not result in the imposition of one powerful group's values on another.

It does not matter whether an Instrument of Communion calls itself the Archbishop of Canterbury as a focus of unity, or calls itself the Primates' Meeting the Lambeth Conference or anything else.

Any submission to the will of those outside our own province must be voluntary, never compelled.

That is the heart of our understanding of the Anglican Communion, both catholic and reformed.

But it raises a huge question.

How can we bridge the gap between interdependence and autonomy without the abuse of power?

The Chicago Lambeth Quadrilateral from the 1880s sets what guides our belief, the boundaries of our belief. It says that we believe that we are guided by Scripture, properly interpreted. We are guided by the two Dominical Sacraments of baptism and communion. Some provinces believe in more sacraments, but none believe in less.

We have the historic Episcopacy, locally adapted, and we have the Creeds. That was adopted by the Lambeth Conference of the 1880s: 1887.

The Five Marks of Mission are what we do. They are the signs of Anglican character, which were developed in a report to ACC Six in Badagry in Nigeria in July 1984, almost 40 years ago.

They are the theme of this conference. Let me remind you, just very briefly:

Tell: Every Christian should be confident in proclaiming the good news of Jesus. The Church must proclaim the good news of Jesus.

Teach: How does every Christian in their own context show that they understand what it means to be transformed by Jesus, by knowing the scriptures, by prayer, by fellowship, by the work of the Spirit, essentially?

Three, tend: That one is obvious. How do we look after one another? We are gathered here across different contexts facing different challenges.

All of us though, are adopted children of God made in His divine image.

Four, transform : The Church seeks to transform the injustices of the world and to bring peace and reconciliation and to have the capacity to disagree without hatred. How badly we have failed on that over the centuries.

Treasure: we are facing a climate crisis in the Creator's creation. It is our duty to obey the Creator and to overcome that crisis.

The Instruments of Communion, thirdly, set out how we are organised. how we're brought together.

It is the Quadrilateral that sets out the basis of our belief. It is the Marks of Mission that set out the objects of our action.

The Instruments of Communion are much less important. They're about, simply, organisation. They set out how we relate.

They are: first, the Lambeth Conference of Bishops which first occurred in 1867. Second, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in post-reformation form from the 1530s and going on developing, but in origin from 597 AD. Third, the Anglican Consultative Council from the 1960s and fourth, the

Primates' Meeting from the late 1970s.

The Instruments have grown and changed over the years. They've responded to changes caused by wars, colonialism, decolonizing, corruption and failure, heresies and schisms, technological and scientific advance. They have never had the character of Synods with either doctrinal or ethical authority over the Communion, but they do have moral force.

But history shows us that when times change, so must the Instruments of Communion. The post Second World War era is ending. It is collapsing around us, as we sit here.

The international order is ending. Wars and technological destruction are growing. Climate change is increasing. The power of international bodies like the UN is failing. Commerce and modern economics is losing the fight to grow faster than the populations and to meet increasing needs.

Not least because of human selfishness. The future of this world, the world in which we live, the world in which the church lives, is for shaping.

It may be wonderful and generous particularly if the 2 billion Christians act as one, declare the beautiful, support the generous, love one another.

We can play our part as the Anglican Communion. A crucial part. That is God's call. Bless. Be a blessing to the world around us.

It has been so since Abraham was called as a blessing.

That is why, last week, for the first time, a week ago, for the first time since the Reformation, The Pope, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland (a Presbyterian) and myself went together on a Pilgrimage of Peace. None of us as passengers, none of us as second, none of us as first, in order to go to Juba in South Sudan and pray for peace and speak to the leaders publicly and privately.

We did that to be, to seek, to bless, the efforts of the churches for peace - ALL the churches - and it was rough, tough stuff in front of 100,000 people on two occasions at the John Garang Stadium.

It was extraordinary, and there was an enormous sense of the Spirit of God being released by the unity of these churches, the perceived unity.

When times change so must the Instruments of Communion. If we have another world war, of which many are talking, the Instruments must be capable of keeping us linked and seeking peace. If climate change brings natural terror, after terror, the Instruments must be effective in promoting mutual hope and advocacy for those who suffer most.

If one part of the world, the richest part, seeks to keep the rest at bay, behind fences and wires and walls, and refuses those who need to move to survive the hope of asylum, the Instruments must give us the tools for mutual help. Tools which mean that we consciously, explicitly say that obedience to God comes ahead of loyalty to country.

That was not popular when I said it last Monday night, to some members of parliament.

My desire is to see Christ glorified in truth and in my heart of hearts, I can say that it is that truth that I aim for, and I believe that we are seeking to follow. I may well be wrong. I get things wrong.

But let me be clear about one thing before other people outside this room gather to tell me what I must do.

I will not cling to place or position as an Instrument of Communion.

The role of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the See of Canterbury, is an historic one. The Instruments must change with the times.

I will not cling to place or position. I hold it very lightly, provided that the other Instruments of Communion choose the new shape, that we are not dictated to by people, blackmailed, bribed to do what others want us to do, but that we act in good conscience before God seeking a judge that is not for our power, but exists for the new world with its extraordinary and terrifying threats. To proclaim Christ and turn our opportunities into realities to bless the world.

That is the test.

We are in a true world crisis, in which global south although economically poorer is in many ways richer in culture and community.

A crisis, as we all know, is a moment of decision and the churches and the Communion must listen the Holy Spirit. And while doctrine and actions are called to be the same, always the Five Marks, the Quadrilateral, those are our foundations.

The Instruments may change. Sin is to be condemned. We are to seek Christ and to obey.

But that is where we find our difficulty, because as the well-mannered but extremely rough, English General Synod joked this last week, we are deeply in disagreement, not through lack of integrity, corruption, lying or surrendering to the culture but because we do interpret Scripture differently, we understand the work of the Spirit differently, and we look at these things with different cultural lenses. And are therefore all always wrong to some degree.

And that takes me back to Abraham because he was prone to mistakes, he sinned, but he loved and trusted God and held nothing back. He left his home and country. He was ready to sacrifice his son. So much of what we do leaves God out of our thinking, but God is to be trusted, even when the Church is sinful. We have been worse as a Church, infinitely worse, and we found God faithful to rescue us from our lostness.

So let us trust the Lord Jesus Christ as Abraham trusted God. And that is live in that trust, even when we see great errors, even sin amongst us all sinners. Do not fail to correct it but let us act in love, for Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians, Chapters 12 and 13, that we need each other and when we

act without love, we are nothing.

Now God said to Abraham (Chapter 12, verse 1, Genesis) and Abraham obeyed and God out of nothing brought forth the people Abraham never saw or knew, a people who we are, called to bless the world, to show the Kingdom and to bring salvation to the last.

[1] Brueggemann, Genesis, page 119

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