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Autor: Podmore, Colin

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Collegiality, Conciliarity and Primacy: An Anglican Perspective

Colin Podmore

1. Anglican Ecclesiology

Some brief opening remarks about Anglican ecclesiology may help to explain my approach. First, I need to point out that we lack – at the level of the individual Anglican churches and still more at that of the Communion – agreed definitions in respect of much of our ecclesiology. The Church of England’s ecclesiology, like that of the other Anglican churches, is to a considerable extent implicit in its history, its structures, its canon law and its liturgy, rather than set out explicitly in authoritative statements. Admittedly, ecumenical agreements (insofar as their conclusions have been ratified synodically) and statements by the House of Bishops, often arising out of reflection on ecumenical dialogue, are beginning – but as yet only beginning – to change that. Thus Anglican ecclesiology needs to draw on history, canon law, liturgy, practice and ecumenical dialogue in order for the underlying theology to be discerned. (In that context, it is perhaps worth reminding ourselves that the Church of England was an integral part of the Western Church for the first nine of the fourteen centuries of its history, and that much of its structure and law not only derives from that period but also continued essentially unchanged after the separation.) Of course, individual Anglican theologians, some of them very distinguished, have through the centuries written about Anglican ecclesiology, but the Anglican tradition does not give them authoritative status. In particular, for all his importance as a seminal theologian of the Anglican tradition, Richard Hooker does not have the status for Anglicans that Martin Luther has for Lutheranism or John Calvin for Calvinism; we are not Hookerans or Hookerists. What Hooker has to say about the governance of the Church needs to be checked against the actual structures of the Church of England in his day and subsequently, as reflected in law and in practice – and against our tradition as it has developed since his day.

Secondly, I must question whether it is appropriate to speak of ‘Anglican ecclesiology’ at all. There is not a single ‘Anglican Church’; the Anglican Communion consists of many Anglican churches, each with its own distinctive history and identity. These separate churches also have their

own canons, their own liturgies and, most importantly, their own distinctive structures or polities. And precisely because Anglican ecclesiology is often implicit in history, structures, canons and liturgy, and these differ significantly between the Anglican churches, I would argue that there is not a single Anglican ecclesiology.¹

The Anglican Communion is an invention of the early to mid-nineteenth century.² Its three original components were the Scottish Episcopal Church, the Protestant Episcopal Church in the USA and the United Church of England and Ireland (including what is now the Church in Wales and also an overseas appendage known as ‘the Colonial Church’, most of whose dioceses now belong to newer churches within the Communion). Before the 1840s these three churches did not have interchangeable ministries and, in England at least, the idea that they belonged together was a belief advocated by high churchmen rather than an established fact. Of only one of these churches could the term ‘Anglican’ (in origin an ecclesiastical synonym for ‘English’) properly be used. Their histories and structures were very different.

Let me give just one example. Many in the Anglican Communion regard the Church of England primarily as what they call a ‘province’ of the Anglican Communion – ‘province’ meaning in this context an independent or at best interdependent church within a communion of separate churches. Many in the Church of England, by contrast, regard their own church as two ancient provinces, detached – maybe even just temporarily detached – from the Western Church of which, for the first two-thirds of their history, they formed part. ‘Province’ in the Church of England context refers to two entities with common structures (albeit with minor local differences), common law and common liturgy. The word is the same, but the history and self-understanding are radically different, and that has consequences in terms of differing ecclesiology.

It is now 158 years since the first known use of the term ‘Anglican Communion’ to describe these churches and 138 years since their bishops first met together in a Lambeth Conference. But the polities of the individual churches of the Communion still reflect the differing emphases of

¹ Cf. Colin J. Podmore, *Aspects of Anglican Identity* (London: Church House Publishing, 2005), pp. x, 70.

² Cf. Colin J. Podmore, ‘The Anglican Communion: Idea, Name and Identity’, in: Podmore, *Aspects of Anglican Identity*, pp. 26–41.

the three traditions that came together to form it. There has been a synthesis to some extent, but it is arguable that the crisis in which the Anglican Communion has found itself since 2003 reflects a divergence between the distinctive traditions that came together in the Communion, and also that that divergence may yet prompt further unravelling. (It is interesting to note the similarity with the Old Catholic Churches which, as Mattijs Ploeger has pointed out, also fall into three groups with different backgrounds – (1) Netherlands; (2) Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Czech Republic; (3) Polish – which were and, he says, to an extent still are reflected in different theological approaches.³ However, there is also a difference, in that only the Dutch Church was more than twenty years older than the Union of Utrecht, whereas the youngest of those that originally made up the Anglican Communion, the American Church, had been constituted as such for over eighty years by the time of the first Lambeth Conference.)

To argue that there is no single Anglican ecclesiology is not to say that the ecclesiologies of the different churches do not have a great deal in common. To varying extents, the Anglican churches share a common history – or at least overlapping histories; there are commonalities in their canon law; their liturgies are influenced to varying degrees by the English Book of Common Prayer; and they are bound together in the Anglican Communion which has, to some extent at least, developed a shared ecclesiology – often inspired or influenced by shared ecumenical dialogue. But none the less, there are also fundamental differences, which can sometimes be masked when a common terminology is invested with differing meanings. I have long been concerned that there is sometimes a lack of realization of these differences in polity and hence in ecclesiology. Perhaps we need an ecumenical dialogue within the Anglican Communion, with a title like ‘Anglican Ecclesiologies: Towards Further Convergence’. Without such a discussion, we may continue to make the dangerous assumption that when we use the same words we mean the same things.

Finally, I should make it quite clear that as a member of the Church of England my comments are offered very much from that point of view. I have no expertise in the ecclesiology of other Anglican churches, and it is to their representatives that we should look for an exposition of their traditions, of how far they share in the traditions described in this paper

³ Mattijs Ploeger, ‘Catholicity, Apostolicity, the Trinity and the Eucharist in Old Catholic Ecclesiology’, pp. 7–27 in this volume, at p. 8.

and of how their traditions differ. Furthermore, though I am employed by the Church of England, this paper offers a personal view.

2. Collegiality

Collegiality was the subject of an Occasional Paper of the English House of Bishops, published in 2000 under the title *Bishops in Communion: Collegiality in the Service of the Koinonia of the Church*.⁴ That paper noted that although certain Anglican and ecumenical documents touch on collegiality, ‘there is no fully developed ecumenical or Anglican theology of collegiality’.⁵

Furthermore, there is a confusion of terms. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* said that ‘the ordained ministry should be exercised in a personal, collegial and communal way’.⁶ *Bishops in Communion* virtually makes the terms ‘conciliar’ and ‘synodal’ into synonyms for ‘communal’,⁷ but I would argue that this is mistaken. In their root meanings, ‘conciliarity’ in particular, but also ‘synodality’ (in its narrower sense relating to synods), are terms which describe means of taking counsel and ultimately making decisions in the Church. As such, they can apply to gatherings of bishops, or of bishops and clergy, in which laypeople are present only as invited advisers, not as representatives, and therefore do not have the right to vote and may even not be permitted to address the assembly. (Only since 1970 has the word ‘synod’ been used in the Church of England to describe a body which includes representatives of the laity as voting members.) ‘Communal’, by contrast, is not a means of taking counsel and making decisions, but is said by *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* to be one of the ways in which the ordained ministry ought to be exercised. Episcopal and clerical councils and synods are ‘conciliar’ and ‘synodical’, and they are in essence ‘collegial’, but they are ‘communal’ only insofar as their ordained members consult the laity in some informal manner. ‘Conciliar’ and ‘synodical’ are therefore not synonyms for ‘communal’.

⁴ *Bishops in Communion: Collegiality in the Service of the Koinonia of the Church. An Occasional Paper of the House of Bishops of the Church of England* (GS Misc 580: London, 2000).

⁵ *Bishops in Communion*, p. ix.

⁶ *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper no. 111 (Geneva: WCC, 1982), pp. 25–26: M26.

⁷ *Bishops in Communion*, p. 20.

In its primary meaning, 'Collegiality' refers to the fact that, as the Second Vatican Council put it, 'The order of bishops is the successor to the college of the apostles in teaching authority and pastoral rule; or, rather, in the episcopal order the apostolic body continues without a break.'⁸ James Pereiro has commented thus:

Apostolic succession ... is not the mere handing of certain powers to an individual, it involves his inclusion into a corporate order, the college of bishops. Collegiality belongs to the very essence of the episcopal ministry, as the bishops are not – except in the case of the Bishop of Rome – successors of a particular apostle; they are rather the members of the college that takes the place of the apostolic college. As such, they have responsibility not only in respect to the particular Church in which they are centres of unity, but they also share in *solidum* in the '*sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum*', in the anxious care for all the Churches. Each bishop is bound to have such concern and solicitude for the whole Church, and reflect it in every aspect of his pastoral ministry (*cf. Lumen Gentium*, 23).⁹

Episcopal ministry is thus essentially collegial in nature. When Roman Catholic texts refer to the 'College of Bishops' they mean the universal episcopal college. Moreover, in his 1998 apostolic letter *Apostolos Suos*, Pope John Paul II reaffirmed his earlier statement that 'episcopal collegiality in the strict and proper sense belongs only to the entire College of Bishops, which as a theological subject is indivisible'; national or regional episcopal conferences merely 'constitute a concrete application of the collegial spirit'.¹⁰ For Anglicans, by contrast, it is natural to speak of the collegial nature of episcopal ministry being expressed in a national or provincial 'college of bishops'.¹¹ In the Anglican – Roman Catholic report *The Gift of Authority*'s comment that the communion of local churches

⁸ *Lumen Gentium*: Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, 22. Cf. Walter M. Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), p. 43.

⁹ James Pereiro, 'Newman and Manning: The Ecclesiological Issues', *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 1 (2001), pp. 86–102, at p. 98.

¹⁰ Pope John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter Apostolos Suos On the Theological and Juridical Nature of Episcopal Conferences* (1998), paras 12, 14.

¹¹ E.g. *Bishops in Communion*, p. 44: 'At national level, the bishops, as a college, consult with clergy and laity through the General Synod.' Paul Avis comments that 'Roman Catholic collegiality is focused on the universality of the college of bishops, whereas mediaeval (and Anglican) ideas give more weight to national expressions of collegiality': Paul Avis, *Beyond the Reformation? Authority, Primacy and Unity in the Conciliar Tradition* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), p. 161.

with each other 'is expressed through the incorporation of each bishop into a college of bishops',¹² the indefinite article – 'a college of bishops' – is noteworthy.

In addition to their share in the 'care of all the churches', within their dioceses bishops exercise individually a ministry which is shared by them as a body; collegiality therefore also has the practical benefit of preventing their personal oversight from becoming individualistic.¹³ Collegiality involves consultation – most frequently between the bishops of a particular group of dioceses, province or national church, but also internationally – about the pastoral and other issues that arise in their own dioceses. In the Church of England such consultation takes place not only in the House of Bishops of the General Synod, but also in informal meetings of members of that House, in the so-called 'Bishops Meeting' which is attended by all the bishops (not just the diocesans and those suffragans who are elected by their fellow suffragans to membership of the House), and in regional meetings of the bishops of neighbouring dioceses. Often the problems are similar, and the bishops' individual decisions are informed by discussion with those who have identical responsibility in other dioceses. Moreover, it is often desirable that, as far as possible, bishops of the same part of the country, province or national church should follow a common policy in dealing with comparable cases – especially where there is a mobility of clergy¹⁴ and people between the dioceses concerned.

Collegiality does not only involve consultation about the individual exercise of the responsibility for 'pastoral rule' that is held in common. It also involves the corporate exercise of shared responsibility, most notably that for 'teaching authority' – guarding and teaching the faith. The House of Bishops explored this in its 1986 statement *The Nature of Christian Belief*.¹⁵ As the statement said, bishops' collegial responsibility for guarding and teaching the faith means that 'Bishops ... have to work under a discipline of mutual responsibility and accountability'.¹⁶ Collegiality en-

¹² *The Gift of Authority: Authority in the Church III. An Agreed Statement by the Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission* (Toronto, London and New York, 1999), p. 28: para. 37.

¹³ Cf. *Bishops in Communion*, p. 28.

¹⁴ 'Incardination' does not exist in the Church of England.

¹⁵ *The Nature of Christian Belief: A Statement and Exposition by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England* (London, 1986).

¹⁶ *The Nature of Christian Belief*, p. 36: para. 70.

tails the bishops ‘seeking as one body the wisdom and insight that come from the grace of God’s Holy Spirit in and through corporate prayer and reflection, and expressing to the rest of the Church and to the world the common mind given to them as a result’.¹⁷ In *Bishops in Communion*, the House commented:

The college has a duty to prevent the premature closure of debate and to encourage the waiting upon the guidance of the Holy Spirit ... [This] involves the delicate and complex task of making room for those of different opinions while guarding and promoting unity ... Speaking collegially does not mean speaking in full agreement on every subject. An agreed statement may reflect the diversity of opinion and dilemmas that exist within the Church at any particular place and time.¹⁸

All of this means (I would add) that it is desirable for the membership of the House of Bishops to reflect the full range of legitimate views within the Church. Great problems would arise if a significant group felt alienated from that House because there was no member of it in a position to feed in their insights.

The term ‘Collegiality’ always refers to bodies in which bishops are involved, but there are at least two other senses in which a bishop participates in collegiality. Even within their own dioceses, bishops do not minister purely alone and as individuals. Oversight is exercised collegially (I quote again from the Common Worship Ordination Services): ‘As chief pastors, it is [the bishops’] duty to share with their fellow presbyters in the oversight of the Church.’ In the Common Worship Ordination Services – for the first time in an authorized Church of England liturgy – the term ‘presbyter’ is used in the text of the rites. It is always used in contexts where presbyters are mentioned in association with the bishop and this is because of the understanding that the bishop and his priests form a ‘college of presbyters’.

A third sense of the term ‘Collegiality’ arises from the fact that in the Church of England most diocesan bishops have bishops of ‘suffragan sees’ within their dioceses who act as their assistants or on their behalf. One way of understanding their relationship to the diocesan is to speak of collegiality of bishops within a diocese. The 1990 Cameron Report *Episcopal Ministry* stressed that ‘It is important to be clear that this is a novel exten-

¹⁷ *The Nature of Christian Belief*, p. 34: para. 64.

¹⁸ *Bishops in Communion*, p. 30.

sion of the concept of collegiality'.¹⁹ While recognizing that there are collegial elements in the relationship between a diocesan and his suffragans, the report was concerned that 'to invoke collegiality in too precise a sense must mean a departure in principle from the norm of moniscopacy'. Most members of the Group believed that 'the diocesan bishop's role as personal minister of unity and as pastor of the "local church" of his diocese is of supreme importance and that legislative arrangements and provisions for the appointment of suffragan bishops must not violate that principle'.²⁰ Not surprisingly, a working party of suffragan and former suffragan bishops from the Northwest of England took a more positive view of this use of the notion of collegiality.²¹

3. Conciliarity

Conciliarity and decision-making

Conciliarity is an expression of communion. The local church is a diocese, headed by its bishop,²² but local churches are bound to each other by structures or bonds of communion. These are structures of law-making and law-enforcement, or (to put it another way) of consultation and decision-making on the one hand and of jurisdiction and discipline on the other. In the Western Catholic tradition of which the Anglican tradition is a local expression, these two sets of functions – legislation and jurisdiction – became separated. Conciliarity is about taking counsel together and about making decisions, rather than about the enforcement and application of decisions.

Decisions vary in their importance and hence in the level at which they can be taken. Some are purely of very local significance – the times of Sunday services, for example. Others are of wider significance, and therefore need to be taken in a wider forum or at a higher level. Some can be taken at the level of the diocese, but many require to be taken at

¹⁹ *Episcopal Ministry: The Report of the Archbishops' Group on the Episcopate* (London: Church House Publications, 1990), p. 194: para. 435.

²⁰ *Episcopal Ministry*, p. 195: para. 437.

²¹ *Suffragan Bishops: House of Bishops Occasional Paper* (GS Misc 733, 2004).

²² 'The unity of local communities under one bishop constitutes what is commonly meant in our two communions by "a local church" ...': *The Final Report of the Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission* (London, 1982), p. 55: Authority in the Church I, para. 8.

provincial or national level, at the level of one of the communions of churches which are an expression and consequence of the Church's disunity, or even at the universal level. Few would argue, for example, that it would be right for an individual church or even an individual communion to remove a clause from the Nicene Creed (and the Western Church's addition of the *Filioque* to the Nicene Creed continues to be controversial for that reason).

Within the Anglican Communion views differ as to where the appropriate level of decision-making about particular questions lies. For example, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the USA said of the consecration of the then Canon Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire in 2003, 'We thought it was a local event'.²³ But if, to quote the Virginia Report, the bishop is 'one who represents the part to the whole and the whole to the part, the particularity of each diocese to the whole Communion and the Communion to each diocese',²⁴ does not the whole Communion have a legitimate interest in every episcopal consecration? If so, it must be questioned whether criteria as to eligibility for the episcopate can be decided at a diocesan or even a provincial or national level. The Archbishop of Canterbury underlined the need for candidates for the episcopate to be acceptable beyond their own diocese and even their own province when he commented, with regard to the withdrawal of the then Canon Jeffrey John from his appointment as Bishop-designate of Reading, 'There is an obvious problem in the consecration of a bishop whose ministry will not be readily received by a significant proportion of Christians in England and elsewhere'.²⁵ The Church of England takes the view (reflected in the Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993) that because holy orders, like the Nicene Creed, belong to the whole Church rather than to individual churches or even individual communions, to change the criteria of eligibility by opening holy orders to women requires agreement not only on the part of the Communion but also a much wider ecumenical consensus,

²³ Reported in the *Guardian*, 6 March 2004.

²⁴ 'The Virginia Report', 'The Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission', in: *The Official Report of the Lambeth Conference 1998* (Harrisburg PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1999), pp. 17–68, at p. 57.

²⁵ Statement by the Archbishop of Canterbury, 7 July 2003 (*Church Times*, 11 July 2003, p. 2).

and that any decision to do so in advance of such a consensus must be held to be provisional.²⁶

Ecumenical and general councils

The Anglican tradition honours the councils of the Church, and in particular the ecumenical councils of the undivided Church.²⁷ The 1559 Act of Supremacy allowed the decisions of the first four ecumenical councils to be used as proof that something was heresy, as well as the decisions of 'any other General Council wherein the same was declared heresy by the express and plain words of the ... canonical Scriptures'.²⁸ However, Article XXI teaches that general councils 'may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining to God'.²⁹ In other words, their decisions may in the end not be 'received'. If, as I believe, there is such a thing as objective

²⁶ Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993, reprinted in: *Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993: Report of a Working Party of the House of Bishops* (GS 1395: 2000), pp. 33–37. (An Act of Synod is defined as 'the embodiment of the mind or will of the Church of England as expressed by the whole body of the Synod' [*Standing Orders of the General Synod*, S.O. 40], and this Act of Synod was approved by the following majorities: Bishops, 39-0; Clergy, 175-12; Laity, 194-4.) See also the House of Bishops paper 'Bonds of Peace' (GS 1074, 1993) and the supporting paper 'Being in Communion' (GS Misc 418, 1993).

²⁷ The abortive *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum* (completed in 1553 as a replacement for the mediaeval canon law but never promulgated) said '... we freely grant great honour to the councils, and especially to the ecumenical ones' (that is, the councils of the undivided Church) but 'even among the councils themselves we make a huge distinction': of the first four, from Nicaea to Chalcedon, it said 'we embrace and accept them with great reverence': *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum*, 1.14: *Tudor Church Reform. The Henrician Canons of 1535 and the Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum*, ed. Gerald L. Bray (Church of England Record Society, vol. 8, 2000), pp. 180–183.

²⁸ Parliament could also declare something to be heresy, but only if its judgement was ratified by the clergy in Convocation: Act of Supremacy 1559 (1 Eliz. I, c. 1), s. 20 in: Geoffrey R. Elton (ed.), *The Tudor Constitution: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 367–368. The homily 'against Peril of Idolatry' in the *Second Book of Homilies* spoke of 'those six councils which were allowed and received of all men', and Richard Field (1561–1616) and Henry Hammond (1605–1660) accepted the authority of the first six ecumenical councils; cf. Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 'Oecumenical Councils'.

²⁹ Article XXI of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion.

truth, even a council of the Church stating something as true does not of itself make it true. Article XXI adds that ‘things ordained by [general councils] as necessary to salvation neither have strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Scripture’. This, however, is just another way of saying what Article VI says – ‘Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation’. (This is, incidentally, another reason why members of the Church of England are not required to believe in the ordination of women to priesthood and episcopate. It may or may not be ‘consonant with Scripture’, which was the claim made by the then Bishop of Guildford moving Final Approval of the ordination of women to the priesthood in 1992, but it would be difficult to argue that its rightness could be ‘read therein or proved thereby’ such that it could be said to be ‘required by Scripture’ and Anglicans therefore required to believe in it.)

The councils whose decisions are, in part at least, authoritative for Anglicans include the general councils of the Western Church up to the Reformation: some of their decisions still form part of the canon law in force in the Church of England. One might add that although the decisions of the Second Vatican Council have no authority in the Church of England of themselves, it is an observable fact that much of the teaching of that council too has been received in the Church of England.

Anglican Communion bodies

Since the Reformation it has not been possible for the Church of England to be represented at a council of the Church above the national level. There are, however, three international Anglican structures: the Lambeth Conference of all bishops, the Anglican Consultative Council (consisting of bishops, clergy and laypeople) and the Primates’ Meeting (consisting of the senior bishop of each Anglican Church). The Anglican Consultative Council has proposed that in future the members of the Primates’ Meeting should form the episcopal component of the ACC.³⁰ These consultative structures are not and do not claim to be general councils. Their members

³⁰ ACC 13 (2005), resolution 4 (www.aco.org/acc/meetings/acc13/resolutions.cfm).

represent only a small part of the Church and they cannot therefore make final decisions on subjects which properly belong to the Church as a whole; any decisions on such subjects are bound to be provisional in character. What is more, they have no binding authority, and are therefore not full expressions of conciliarity rightly understood. This is not to say that they should not have some binding authority in matters which touch the Communion as a whole, or that it should not be a condition of membership of the Anglican Communion that in such matters churches abide by their decisions – but merely that as yet such authority has not been conceded to them. The present crisis in the Anglican Communion has posed the question as to whether a communion which lacks ‘bonds of communion’ which actually bind can continue in any meaningful sense to be a communion at all.³¹

The Anglican body that comes closest to being a council (in that it makes pronouncements on matters of faith and order and on social and moral questions which have moral though not juridical authority) is the Lambeth Conference. Some Anglicans are critical of the fact that it consists only of bishops. The Porvoo Common Statement does indeed say that ‘the personal, collegial and communal dimensions of oversight find expression at the local, regional and universal levels of the Church’s life’.³² But to say that oversight should be exercised personally, collegially and communally at the universal level is not to say that we ought to be working towards creating a universal House of Clergy and a universal House of Laity. The Anglican ecumenist Dr Mary Tanner has pointed out that oversight is exercised communally at the universal level when members of the episcopal college listen to their local churches and bring their insights into the college, and when they convey the mind of the college to the local church. For oversight to be exercised communally at the universal level

³¹ The question of ‘bonds of communion’ has a bearing on that of whether the Anglican and Old Catholic churches can be said to form a single communion. In 1950, the Anglican ecumenist Claude Beaufort Moss asserted that the Church of England’s formal relationship with them was precisely the same as that with another Anglican church. The future Bishop of Bristol Oliver Tomkins (then secretary of the World Council of Churches’ ‘commission on intercommunion’) disagreed, one of his three reasons being that ‘the bishops of the two groups of Churches do not meet in common council’ (Leslie W. Barnard, *C. B. Moss (1888–1964). Defender of the Faith* [London: Mowbray, 1967], pp. 141–142).

³² *Together in Mission and Ministry. The Porvoo Common Statement with Essays on Church and Ministry in Northern Europe*, GS 1083 (London: Church House Publishing, 1993), p. 25: para. 45.

it is not necessary for there to be structures for direct clerical and lay participation at that level.³³ And what is true of the universal level is surely true also at the level of the Anglican Communion (which despite its wide geographical extent cannot be described in any sense as ‘universal’).

National and provincial councils or synods, and diocesan synods

When we come to national and provincial councils – or synods – we are on much firmer ground. Synods are, of course, an expression of synodality in its broader sense – an aspect of the life of the Church, in which all the faithful are, as the word ‘synod’ or ‘syn-hodos’ suggests, on the Way together. The ARCIC (Anglican – Roman Catholic International Commission) report *The Gift of Authority* suggests that ‘in the local church the Eucharist is the fundamental expression of the walking together (synodality) of the people of God’.³⁴ This paper will, however, confine itself to looking at synods in the narrower sense relating to synodical government.

Synodical government in the Church of England is rooted not in the protestant Reformation but in the mediaeval Church. Before the Reformation the two English provinces each had a provincial synod, called a Convocation, consisting of an Upper House (of bishops) and a Lower House (of clergy). The two houses were not equal, but the Lower House did enjoy a veto over the proposals of the Upper House. These Convocations continued to exist after the Reformation, unchanged in structure though without the abbots and priors who had made up three quarters of the membership of one and half of that of the other. They did not meet between 1741 and 1852, but were then revived and still have a separate existence, though in 1970 most of their powers passed to the General Synod, in which a House of Laity is added to the Houses of Bishops and Clergy formed by joining

³³ Mary Tanner explains that structures for clerical and lay participation at the universal level were not what was intended when the suggestion of oversight exercised in a communal way at that level was first proposed, at a consultation in Geneva in 1979 – for which, see *Episkopé and Episcopate in Ecumenical Perspective* (Faith and Order Paper no. 102; Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), p. 8. The reference to oversight at the universal level did not find its way into *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* itself. See Mary Tanner, ‘A Case for Reform: Personal, Collegial and Communal’, in: Elizabeth Templeton (ed.), *Travelling with Resilience: Essays for Alastair Haggart* (Edinburgh: Scottish Episcopal Church, 2002), pp. 103–119.

³⁴ *The Gift of Authority*, p. 27: para. 36.

together the relevant houses of the two Convocations. Diocesan synods of clergy also existed in the mediaeval Church of England, though they were not held between the seventeenth century and 1851. In 1868 the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury agreed that diocesan synods should not be held, but instead there should be diocesan conferences of clergy and laity ‘convened, presided over and directed by the Bishop’.³⁵ These were replaced in 1970 by diocesan synods consisting of a House of Bishops, a House of Clergy and a House of Laity.

Ten principles of synodical government in the Church of England

I have looked at the history and practice of synodical government in the Church of England in my book *Aspects of Anglican Identity*.³⁶ Here, I shall simply set out ten principles that I deduced from that account. Supporting evidence and amplification may be found in the book.

1. *Synods are a necessary and permanent feature of the life of the Church, not just an episodic occurrence.* Their existence continues between meetings and when they are finally dissolved at the end of an electoral period new synods are immediately elected. It is the duty of each diocesan bishop ‘to consult with his diocesan synod on matters of general concern and importance to the diocese’.³⁷
2. *A synod is a representative gathering of the whole Church at the level concerned, and at levels up to and including the national level, involves representatives of the clergy and (except in the case of the Convocations at the provincial level) of the laity as full members.* The principle of lay representation originated at the Reformation, when it was expressed through the role of the House of Commons, and the ‘temporal’ (lay) members of the House of Lords, in Parliament. However, not until 1970 did the power to legislate by canon pass from the Convocations of bishops and clergy to a General Synod including lay members. Indeed, only since 1970 have ecclesiastical assemblies with lay members been termed ‘synods’.

³⁵ See Podmore, *Aspects of Anglican Identity*, p. 116.

³⁶ Colin J. Podmore, ‘Synodical Government in the Church of England’, in: Podmore, *Aspects of Anglican Identity*, pp. 103–123.

³⁷ Synodical Government Measure 1969.

3. *The Church is not a democracy, however.* Synods therefore do not represent the members of the Church in numerical proportion (which would result in a huge majority of lay members); instead, the partnership between clergy and laity is expressed by the clergy and the laity having approximately equal numbers of members.³⁸
4. *Synods can exist at every level of the Church's life above that of the parish and must exist at the level of the diocese, the province and the national church.* There are now deanery synods, which consist of a House of Clergy and a House of Laity – though personally I would question whether the Church of England was right in 1969 to bestow on a gathering of clergy and laity meeting apart from their bishop the name of a synod of the Church.
5. *The fact that synods, and not mere conferences, exist at the provincial and national levels is an indication of 'ecclesial density' at those levels.* The Church of England has a corporate identity at the national level, as it did – like other national churches such as the Gallican Church (Church of France) – before the Reformation. In this it differs from the Roman Catholic Church today, in which (as the present Pope said when he was Cardinal Ratzinger) 'the national level is not an ecclesial dimension'³⁹ and national bishops' conferences have no ecclesiological status (as Pope John Paul II's apostolic letter *Apostolos Suos* made clear⁴⁰). The Church of England's bishops attend meetings

³⁸ This parity of representation can be traced back to a decision of the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury in 1868 that if a vote was taken in a diocesan conference 'the Clergy and Laity should have an equal voice' (Podmore, *Aspects of Anglican Identity*, p. 116). In 1869, by contrast, a Lay Conference of the Church of Ireland found it 'expedient' that in the General Convention called to approve a constitution for the newly disestablished church there should be two lay delegates for every clerical delegate, a proportion maintained in the General Synod elected in 1871. Cf. Alan Acheson, *A History of the Church of Ireland 1691–1996* (Dublin: Columba/APCK, 1997), p. 201.

³⁹ *The Ratzinger Report*, quoted in: John L. Allen, *The Rise of Benedict XVI. The Inside Story of How the Pope was Elected and What it Means for the World* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 215.

⁴⁰ For example, according to *Apostolos Suos*, para. 22, doctrinal declarations of Episcopal Conferences must either be approved unanimously (in which case they derive their authority not from the conference but from the separate teaching authority of each individual member) or receive the '*recognitio*' of the Holy See (in which case they derive their authority not from the conference but from that of the Pope). In neither case does any authority attach to the Episcopal Conference as such.

of the General Synod not just at the head of the representatives of their own dioceses but also as members of the Church of England's corporate episcopal leadership at the national level. This is symbolized by the fact that the bishops mainly sit together, rather than with members from their dioceses. The General Synod is not a federal conference at which largely autonomous dioceses are represented by delegations casting 'block votes'. Each member speaks and votes as an individual, exercising those responsibilities on behalf of the whole national church.

6. *By the same token, the powers of a diocesan synod are limited. It may not 'issue any statement purporting to declare the doctrine of the Church on any question'. A diocesan synod cannot take actions which touch the faith and order of the Church. (Diocesan synods may, however, be consulted by the General Synod on matters of faith and order and thus play their part in discerning the mind of the Church of England on such matters.)*
7. *A synod is a gathering of the whole Church around (and indeed under) its bishops, never over against them. (When the Synod meets in Westminster, the bishops sit in the centre of the circular Assembly Hall.) The diocesan bishop is the president of his diocesan synod and the archbishops are the presidents of their provincial synods (the Convocations) and of the General Synod. A diocesan synod cannot pass a resolution against the will of the diocesan bishop, though Canon C 18 of the Canons of the Church of England states that 'Where the assent of the bishop is required to a resolution of the diocesan synod it shall not lightly nor without grave cause be withheld.' Similarly, the General Synod cannot pass a resolution against the will of the House of Bishops (since on any matter 25 members of the Synod, which is less than half of the membership of the House of Bishops, can require a vote to be taken by Houses, requiring a majority in each House), though the House of Bishops' veto is one which it wisely exercises very sparingly. It should be noted that although the Archbishops are the presidents of the General Synod and of their Convocations, in terms of synodical government (rather than jurisdiction) it is not the Archbishops but the House of Bishops (or Upper House), which is the equivalent at the national and provincial levels of the diocesan bishop at the diocesan level – something which the name 'Archbishops' Council' for the Church of England's national executive body may tend to obscure.*

8. *Within the General Synod, the bishops have a particular role as the guardians of the faith and order of the Church and of its liturgy.* Draft liturgies are introduced into the Synod by the House of Bishops. When the synodical revision process for a liturgy or any other ‘provision touching the doctrinal formulae or the services and ceremonies of the Church of England or the administration of the sacraments or sacred rites thereof’ is complete it is considered by the House of Bishops, which may make any further amendment it thinks fit. The Synod can only finally approve a liturgy or other such provision in a form previously approved by the House of Bishops. Furthermore, final approval of liturgies and of measures (which form part of the statute law of England) or canons providing for permanent changes in the services of Baptism, Holy Communion and the Ordinal require a two-thirds majority in each House.
9. *A Synod is concerned not just with the internal life of the Church but also with the needs and issues of the world and with the Church’s mission in that world.* Thus it is one of the functions of deanery and diocesan synods, as well as of the General Synod, ‘to consider and express their opinion on any ... matters of religious and public interest’.
10. *Finally, a synod is a spiritual and liturgical – indeed eucharistic – body.* As *The Gift of Authority* comments, ‘This is why the bishop as president of the Eucharist appropriately presides at the diocesan synod.’⁴¹ Traditionally, a Synod, like a canonical election, was said to be ‘celebrated’.

These ten principles combine to produce a distinctive synthesis between episcopal governance and synodical representation of the whole Church, including the laity, which is unusual if not unique. On the one hand, the Church of England does not have the type of episcopal system of governance (exemplified in the Roman Catholic Church today) in which the clergy and laity have at most a purely advisory role. On the other hand, it does not have the sort of representative, quasi-democratic polity typical of some other churches, to which episcopacy can appear to have been ‘bolted on’ as an additional adornment. (In some of these, a synod with decision-making authority is presided over by a layperson, alone or jointly with the bishop; the bishops may not even be voting members.)

⁴¹ *The Gift of Authority*, p. 29: para. 39.

Furthermore, in the Church of England's synods laypeople and clergy play distinct roles, and there is a numerical and constitutional equality between them; both Houses have real decision-making power, including a power of veto. However, this does not mean that there is an equality between laity, clergy and episcopate, still less that bishops are now somehow subordinated to synods. On the contrary, the Church of England remains a truly episcopal Church, led and governed by its bishops – but the bishops act not in isolation but in partnership and constant dialogue with the clergy and laity through the synods, and with their consent.

4. Primacy

In *Aspects of Anglican Identity* I have also written about Primacy.⁴² Again, I shall simply summarize my conclusions here.

Primacy

'By virtue of their respective offices' (I quote from Canon C 17), 'the Archbishop of Canterbury is styled Primate of All England and Metropolitan, and the Archbishop of York Primate of England and Metropolitan.' Although the title of *primate* (or 'bishop of the first see') was originally used of all metropolitans, it was later applied to the chief bishop of a state or people.⁴³ Thus the Archbishops' primacy relates to the English nation and not just to the Church of England more narrowly defined, still less only to their own respective provinces. They are Primate of All England and Primate of England, not Primate of the Church of England or Primate of the Province of Canterbury or of York. (Similarly, in France the Archbishop of Lyon enjoys the – now purely honorific – style *Primat des Galles*.) The primacy of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York is therefore above all about their role in national life, though I do not propose to discuss that now.

⁴² Colin J. Podmore, 'Primacy in the Anglican Tradition' in: Podmore, *Aspects of Anglican Identity*, pp. 58–78.

⁴³ Frank Leslie Cross, Elizabeth A. Livingstone (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Third Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), s.v. 'Primacy'.

In the Anglican Communion, the term ‘primate’ has come in recent years to refer to the senior bishop of each member church, whether or not it is a national church and regardless of whether the bishop concerned is the occupant of a primatial or metropolitan see – or indeed of any see at all. These bishops (who do not include the occupants of two of the Communion’s four oldest primatial sees, York and Dublin) form the so-called ‘Primates’ Meeting’.

Metropolitan jurisdiction

Since the Archbishops of Canterbury and York are also metropolitans, it is difficult to separate out precisely which (if any) of their functions in the life of the Church of England as a whole are primatial rather than metropolitan. What is clear is that all of their powers and responsibilities within their respective provinces are metropolitan, and it is to their role as metropolitans that I shall now turn. The term *metropolitan*, which first appears in the canons of the Council of Nicaea (325), refers to the senior bishop of a group of dioceses (called a province), who came to possess rights over the other bishops of the province (later described as his suffragans⁴⁴). Since AD 735, the English Church has consisted of two provinces, Canterbury and York, under their respective metropolitans.

In English law, the diocesan bishops of each province are still sometimes referred to as the suffragans of the metropolitan (though use of the term for those bishops with sees who assist diocesan bishops has almost driven out that older usage). The Church of England’s diocesan bishops are required to take an oath of due obedience to the metropolitan. It is sometimes alleged that the Archbishop of Canterbury has no jurisdiction outside his own diocese, but this is, of course, complete nonsense. I quote again from Canon C 17: ‘The archbishop has throughout his province at all times metropolitan jurisdiction, as superintendent of all ecclesiastical matters therein, to correct and supply the defects of other bishops.’ The Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993 gives an interesting example of this jurisdiction. If a diocesan bishop is unwilling to ordain, institute or license women priests, this is done by the archbishop or his commissary ‘in pursuance of his metropolitan jurisdiction’.⁴⁵ Thus an archbishop can ordain,

⁴⁴ *Episcopal Ministry*, p. 181: para. 403.

⁴⁵ Episcopal Ministry Act of Synod 1993, s. 11.(2).

institute and license clergy throughout his province on his own authority. The archbishops also have decision-making powers for their whole provinces on a range of matters concerning the clergy, including ordination of the divorced and remarried, permissions to overseas clergy and discipline. In some matters, clergy and others can appeal to the archbishop against decisions of their diocesan.

In the nature of things, it is difficult to quantify the influence that the archbishops enjoy over the diocesan bishops of their provinces. Such influence must, in part at least, rest on the fact that they are not merely senior colleagues but metropolitans to whom the bishops have promised 'due obedience'. The bishops frequently seek advice from the archbishop about a range of matters. In responding, the archbishop has to be careful not to become involved in any matter that might later come to him on appeal. The archbishop and his bishops also exchange information (for example, the texts of major addresses). An important aspect of the relationship is that the archbishop gives his diocesans pastoral care, for example in cases of illness or bereavement.

In addition to their permanent metropolitanical jurisdiction, the archbishops have, under Canon C 17, a power of holding metropolitanical visitations.⁴⁶ Furthermore, 'The archbishop has throughout his province ... during the time of his metropolitanical visitation, jurisdiction as Ordinary, except in places and over persons exempt by law or custom.'⁴⁷ Canon G 5 (Of Visitations) reads as follows:

1. Every archbishop, bishop, and archdeacon has the right to visit, at times and places limited by law or custom, the province, diocese, or archdeaconry committed to his charge, in a more solemn manner, and in such visitation to perform all such acts as by law and custom are assigned to his charge in that behalf for the edifying and well-governing of Christ's flock, that means may be taken thereby for the supply of such things as are lacking and the correction of such things as are amiss.
2. During the time of such visitation the jurisdiction of all inferior Ordinaries shall be suspended save in places which by law or custom are exempt.

Thus an archbishop can, for the period of a metropolitanical visitation, exercise ordinary jurisdiction in the dioceses of other bishops of his province, and during that time their jurisdiction is suspended. Although metropolitani-

⁴⁶ Canon C 17.4.

⁴⁷ Canon C 17.2.

cal visitations were last held in the late seventeenth century,⁴⁸ the important fact is that the canons promulgated in the 1960s specifically provide for them.

Presidency

So far, we have been looking at the application of canons (jurisdiction). When it comes to the making of canons (legislation), the archbishops' role is more one of presidency and not one of individual action. Each is the president of his provincial Convocation and they are joint presidents of the General Synod. In terms of jurisdiction, the relationship between the bishop and his diocese is mirrored at the provincial level by the relationship between the archbishop and his province (and more particularly, between the archbishop and the bishops of his province), but in terms of synodical decision-making, the counterpart at provincial or national level of the bishop in his diocese is, for most purposes, not the archbishop(s) but the House of Bishops collectively.

Canon C 17 says that, as well as exercising jurisdiction, 'the archbishop is, within his province, the principal minister'.⁴⁹ The sentence that follows mirrors a similar sentence about the diocesan bishop within his diocese (Canon C 18.4), but again, this should not mislead one into thinking that what is true of the bishop within the diocese is true of the archbishop within the province. The diocesan bishop has 'the right... of conducting, ordering, controlling and authorising all services...', but that is not true of the archbishop. The archbishops can approve forms of service for use throughout their provinces, but the only liturgical presidency that belongs as of right to the archbishop is that of being 'the chief consecrator at the consecration of every bishop'.

Ecumenical implications

In *Aspects of Anglican Identity*, I tell the story of the development towards a quasi-primatial role for the Archbishop of Canterbury within the Anglican Communion (the Virginia Report spoke of him as 'the Primate of the

⁴⁸ Report of the Working Party on Ecclesiastical Visitations, *Ecclesiastical Law Journal* ii (1990–92), p. 350.

⁴⁹ Canon C 17.4.

Communion'⁵⁰), and of recent calls for that role to be developed further. Time does not permit me to repeat that here. In conclusion, I want instead to share with you my conclusions about the ecumenical implications of the Anglican practice of primacy with metropolitical jurisdiction.

Anglican reflections on primacy have a tendency to be influenced by the recent usage of the Anglican Communion. The 'primacy' currently enjoyed and exercised by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the context of the Anglican Communion makes it easy for Anglican commentators to sympathize with a primacy of honour and presidency, with the primate as the focus and even to some extent the spokesman of the churches. However, because the Archbishop of Canterbury has no jurisdiction over the autonomous churches that make up the Communion, concentration on his Anglican Communion role often makes the notion of primatial jurisdiction seem alien to what commentators might call 'the ethos of Anglicanism'. This tendency is strengthened by the fact that many of the bishops in the Anglican Communion who are described as 'Primates' have a similar position within their own churches – one of presidency without jurisdiction.

It is here that the primacy of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York within England is of importance. As I have outlined, as far as the *application* of canons is concerned, they not only have a metropolitical jurisdiction 'at all times', with decision-making powers in certain matters, but canon law even makes provision for them in some circumstances to exercise ordinary jurisdiction in the other dioceses of their respective provinces. (I should stress that the powers of the archbishops, like those of diocesan bishops, are always to be exercised within the constitutional limits laid down by canon law.) To be consistent with the polity of their own church, members of the Church of England who oppose the attachment of jurisdiction to universal primacy have to show why jurisdiction, and in some circumstances even ordinary jurisdiction, are appropriate at the provincial level, but not at the universal level. (It is important to underline that the Archbishops' primacy within England does not offer any basis for suggesting that a universal primate should, as an individual, have *legislative* power.)

Another reason why national primacy and metropolitical jurisdiction tend to be neglected in Anglican – Roman Catholic discussions of primacy

⁵⁰ 'The Virginia Report', p. 57.

is that in the Roman Catholic Church today the provincial structure is weak and in some countries seems effectively to have fallen into desuetude. Structures at the national level remain underdeveloped, and ecclesiological significance is ascribed only to the individual dioceses and to Rome. In the Roman Catholic Church as presently constituted, it would seem, little of ecclesiological significance exists in the space between universal jurisdiction and the jurisdiction of the diocesan bishop. In many countries there is now no bishop who is perceived as being, by virtue of his see, the Roman Catholic Primate. That is not the position of the Church of England, in which, notwithstanding the primary ecclesiological significance of the diocese and (in theory) the universal Church, the provinces and the national church continue to be invested with the ecclesiological significance that they enjoyed before the Reformation.⁵¹

The real area for debate with the Roman Catholic Church would therefore appear to be that of subsidiarity. Which primatial powers need to be exercised above the provincial and national levels? And on which occasions and for what causes is it appropriate for the ordinary jurisdiction that normally belongs to a diocesan bishop to be exercised by a superior ordinary, at whatever level? The Anglican experience of primacy in the Provinces of Canterbury and York is of a real but sparingly used metropolitan jurisdiction at the provincial level, with the *temporary* exercise of ordinary jurisdiction remaining a possibility (and thus part of what defines the relationship between metropolitan and diocesans) but a possibility of which use is in practice never made. This would suggest that with properly developed provincial, national and perhaps even regional levels, jurisdiction (referring to the application of canons, as distinct from legislative power) at the world level would rarely be invoked, and ordinary jurisdiction – direct intervention in the affairs of a diocese – hardly ever. The jurisdiction of a universal primate would remain very much a ‘longstop’, but it would be real. The English House of Bishops’ comment on papal jurisdiction in its response to Pope John Paul II’s encyclical *Ut Unum Sint* reflects this position:

⁵¹ I agree with Paul Avis’ statement that ‘the two most fundamental manifestations of the Church are the universal Church and the local Church (diocese); provinces and parishes are dependent on these, but are no less truly ecclesial realities’. Cf. Paul Avis, ‘Anglicanism and Eucharistic Ecclesiology’, pp. 28–45 in this volume, at p. 37.

The claim that the Bishop of Rome has by divine institution ordinary, immediate and universal jurisdiction over the whole Church is seen by some as a threat to the integrity of the episcopal college and to the apostolic authority of the bishops, those brothers Peter was commanded to strengthen. This is not an argument for a primacy of honour only, or for the exclusion from a universal primacy of the authority necessary for a world-wide ministry in the service of unity.⁵²

For members of the Church of England the Anglican Communion can serve as ‘a window into catholicity’, and the ministry of the Archbishop of Canterbury as its focus of unity makes Anglicans sympathetic to the need for such a ‘personal service of unity’ at the universal level. Nonetheless, in other ways the Archbishop of Canterbury’s role as ‘Primate of the Anglican Communion’, like the use of the term ‘primate’ in Anglican Communion circles more generally, gives only a partial impression of what primacy involves. While the Primacy of Canterbury gives Anglicans an insight into the need for primacy internationally, in ecumenical discussions it might be more helpful (or at least less confusing) to take, as the Anglican example of what primacy entails, the Primacy of the Archbishop of York.⁵³

Deutsche Zusammenfassung

Es gibt keine explizite anglikanische Ekklesiologie, vielmehr sind Elemente für eine solche aus der Geschichte der Kirche, ihrer Liturgie und ihrem Kirchenrecht zu erheben, neuerdings auch aus ihren ökumenischen Dialogen. Es käme dabei aber auch nicht *die* anglikanische Ekklesiologie heraus, die für die *Anglican Communion* als Ganze kennzeichnend wäre. Der Begriff *Anglican Communion* und die damit bezeichnete Grösse sind im 19. Jahrhundert entstanden; Letztere umfasst Kirchen, die untereinander Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede aufweisen, was sich eben auch in den Ansätzen einer umfassenden ekklesiologischen Reflexion niederschlägt. Insofern vertritt der Autor hier nur die (persönliche) Sicht eines Glieds der Kirche von England.

Der Begriff «Kollegialität» (die Ausdrücke «kollegial» oder «synodal» sollten übrigens nicht als Synonyme von «gemeinschaftlich» [*communal*] und den damit verbundenen Erfordernissen der Partizipation der Gläubigen innerhalb einer jeden Ortskirche verstanden werden) verweist auf eine fundamentale Dimension des bi-

⁵² *May They All Be One. A Response of the House of Bishops of the Church of England to Ut Unum Sint* (House of Bishops Occasional Paper, GS Misc 495, 1997), p. 18: para. 47.

⁵³ I am indebted to Prebendary Dr Paul Avis and Dr Mary Tanner for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

schöflichen Dienstes. Diese zeigt sich in der gegenseitigen Konsultation und der gemeinsamen Lehrverantwortung der Bischöfe untereinander, aber sie manifestiert sich auch innerhalb einer Ortskirche, d.h. eines Bistums, in der Verbindung des Bischofs mit seinen Presbytern (und – was einige eher für problematisch halten – mit seinen Auxiliarbischöfen).

Der Begriff «Konziliarität» verweist auf die Gemeinschaft, in der die von Bischöfen geleiteten Kirchen in unterschiedlicher räumlicher Ausdehnung stehen, und auf die damit verbundenen Aufgaben der in gemeinsamer Beratung gefundenen Entscheidungen in Fragen des kirchlichen Lebens. Dabei ist oft kontrovers, welches die angemessene Ebene (Kirchenprovinz, nationale Kirche, *Anglican Communion*, bis hin zur universalen Ebene) für welche Entscheidungen (z.B. betreffs Frauenordination, Weihe von homosexuellen Amtsträgern) ist. Die früheren ökumenischen Synoden und die westlichen Generalsynoden sind in vielen Dingen für den Anglikanismus massgebend, wobei freilich verbindlich für den Glauben (*required to believe*) nur das ist, was von der Schrift bezeugt wird. Für die *Anglican Communion* in ihrer Eigenexistenz sind die Lambeth-Konferenz, *the Anglican Consultative Council* und *the Primates' Meeting* übernationale Konsultationsforen, aber sie haben keine Entscheidungsbefugnisse. Solche kommen hingegen in unterschiedlicher Weise den Synoden auf nationaler, provinzieller und diözesaner Ebene zu. Eine synodale Kirchenleitung kennt die Kirche von England schon seit vorreformatorischen Zeiten, sie verlor aber nach der Reformation während längerer Zeit ihre Bedeutung. Die wichtigste diesbezügliche Institution ist seit 1970 *the General Synod* mit ihren drei Abteilungen: *the House of Bishops*, *the House of Clergy* und (neu) *the House of Laity* (mit insgesamt ca. 575 Mitgliedern). Gleich strukturiert sind auch die Bistumssynoden.

Im Blick auf die Praxis der synodalen Kirchenleitung der Kirche von England lassen sich zehn Grundsätze namhaft machen: 1. Synoden sind ein notwendiges und permanentes Element im Leben der Kirche. 2. Eine Synode repräsentiert auf der jeweiligen Ebene die Kirche als Ganzes und umfasst in der Regel gleichberechtigte Delegierte des Klerus und der Laienschaft. 3. Eine Synode ist insofern nicht demokratisch, als Klerus und Laienschaft nicht nach ihrer absoluten numerischen Stärke vertreten sind, sondern zahlenmässig (und auch verfassungsmässig) von gleicher Stärke sind. 4. Synoden sind oberhalb der Ebene der Pfarrgemeinde überall möglich und sind auf der diözesanen, provinziellen [*Convocations of Canterbury and York*] und nationalen Ebene [*Church of England*] sachlich notwendig. 5. In den (nationalen und provinziellen) Synoden kommt eine korporative Identität der Kirche von England als einer nationalen ekklesialen Grösse zum Ausdruck. 6. Insofern sind die Entscheidungsbereiche der Diözesansynoden eingeschränkt. 7. Eine Synode versammelt sich stets mit (und unter) den Bischöfen und steht zu diesen nicht in einem formalen Gegenüber-Verhältnis. 8. In der Generalsynode nehmen die Bischöfe eine besondere Verantwortung für Glauben und Ordnung sowie für die Liturgie der Kirche wahr. 9. Eine Synode befasst sich nicht nur mit dem inneren Leben der Kirche, sondern auch mit den Problemen der Welt und der Sendung der Kirche in die Welt. 10. Eine Synode ist eine geistliche und liturgische, ja eucharistische Grösse. In diesen Grundsätzen wird eine vielleicht einzigartige Synthese von bischöflicher Leitung und synodaler Repräsentation sichtbar, die dem Episkopat nach wie vor die Führungsaufgabe überträgt.

Was den mit dem Begriff «Primat» bezeichneten bischöflichen Leitungsbereich angeht, so sind einmal die historischen Rechte und Pflichten der Erzbischöfe von Canterbury und York in ihrer Eigenschaft als Metropoliten zu nennen, die gegenüber den Bischöfen (die ihnen bei ihrer Weihe «gebührenden Gehorsam» versprechen) und ihren Ortskirchen Appellationen entgegennehmen und (theoretisch) auch Visitationen ausüben; in gewissen kanonisch umschriebenen Fällen haben sie auch das Recht der Jurisdiktion in einer Diözese ihrer Provinz. Sie sind auch die Vorsitzenden der beiden *convocations* und (gemeinsam) der einen *General Synod*. Im Blick auf die *Anglican Communion* hat sich die Bezeichnung «Primas» sowohl für den Erzbischof von Canterbury wie auch für die leitenden (*senior*) Bischöfe der (nationalen) Mitgliedskirchen der *Anglican Communion*, die sich zum *Primates' Meeting* versammeln, herausgebildet. Aber in beiden Fällen handelt es sich um einen Primat ohne damit verbundene Jurisdiktion (welcher Art auch immer). Im Gespräch mit der römisch-katholischen Kirche und nicht zuletzt im Blick auf die *Anglican Communion* in ihrer gegenwärtigen Verfassung wäre zu überlegen, ob nicht ein klar definierter, dem Subsidiaritätsprinzip verpflichteter Primat mit Jurisdiktionsvollmachten (selbstverständlich ohne gesetzgeberische Implikationen) zu konzipieren ist, der um der Aufrechterhaltung der Einheit der Kirche willen nötig erscheint.