

**‘A Double-Minded Man: Unstable in all his ways’? Discerning the ‘Mind of the Church’ within Anglicanism.**

Thank you all for this opportunity to speak at the 2014 Jessie Nicholson Memorial Lecture. It’s a particular privilege to speak in honour of Jessie Nicholson: I did not know Jessie myself, though in a way, for two reasons, I feel have.

Firstly, through the passionate testimony of others who did – a woman, I hear, of discerning tastes when it came to all things ecclesial and Anglican (appropriate for our topic tonight), a woman of great strength and determination, with an unswerving conviction – perhaps after the pattern of that great Anglo-Catholic bishop Frank Weston – that justice must undergird the catholic and sacramental expression of Anglicanism. She was a woman who exuded pure energy, dynamism, and dedication throughout her life to serving the Church.

The second reason it feels like I’d known her, if I might be so bold as to say, is because – although of course unique – she sounds like something of an exemplar of a certain ‘breed’ of the Anglican faithful (often, I dare say, lay women) who can be found all over the Anglican world, parish after parish, through every generation. Faithful servants of the Church, but not passively so – instead with a fierce dedication to its principles and tradition, and often rather unswerving ideas about how things ‘ought’ to be!

I don't know whether I would have made it onto her list of 'Proper Priests' – but it does give something to spur me on. I would like to return at the end to considering what Jessie might have made of what I'm going to say – though I must admit, as I did to Mary earlier this week, that it will be somewhat unapologetically 'Anglican nerdy'.

Thank you too, Ian, for your kind introduction, as you have heard I have recently been appointed as Assistant Curate at Christ Church South Yarra – my wife Kirsty and I were ordained deacons in Oxford in June last year and priests here in Melbourne in November. Before returning to Australia, we had spent the past two years studying at the University of Oxford and undertaking ministerial formation at Ripon College Cuddesdon in the UK. I'm particularly grateful to the Australian Church Union for supporting that study – I was privileged to receive the ACU bursary in both 2010 and 2011 and the funds from that went directly toward tuition fees at Oxford and Cuddesdon.

At Oxford I completed a Masters of Theology, exploring the role of the Anglican Communion Office (ACO), based at St Andrew's House in London, in facilitating the shared discernment of Anglican identity, ecclesial polity, and mission and witness. My thesis focused particularly on the origin, development and potential direction of competing narratives within Anglicanism regarding the nature and proper exercise of provincial autonomy. The emphasis of the MTh at Oxford is on practical theology – and so I was most interested to see how the themes I was exploring were played out through real projects at the 'sharp end' – as it were – of meaning making within Anglicanism. To that end I was privileged to spend a month-long internship with the Office of the Anglican Observer to the United Nations (Helen Wangusa) in New York while also completing a placement at the parish of Trinity Wall Street. I was also able to work with the ACO in preparation for the most recent Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission dialogues and was invited to assist the final meeting of the Bible in the Life of the Church project and contribute to the drafting of their final report which was recently presented to the Anglican Consultative Council.

And so it might be said that I've been bitten by the Anglican bug – I'm by no means an expert, but I have become enraptured by the chase for that elusive thing which is 'Anglican identity'! Throughout my investigations into the outworkings of the ACO, and particularly the nature and place of Provincial Autonomy in the Communion, it became evident that behind much of the rhetoric and report-writing there were unquestioned, untested and unelaborated assumptions and 'ecclesial tropes'. One of which is this term – the 'mind of the Church'.

And so my 'purpose' in this lecture tonight – what I intend to achieve – is a little bit risky from my point of view. Rather than present the work I have done in the past, I intend to build on it in order to formulate some musings into a possible future area of research. I'm considering at the moment about whether to pursue further doctoral studies, and – if so – where might be a fruitful line of enquiry. And so tonight I'd like to start that process with you and to begin to investigate one of the areas which I've been mulling over. The caveat of this is that I'll probably raise more questions than I answer and bring to surface, rather than settle, some of the underlying currents which are shaping contemporary Anglicanism. So my plea to you is – go easy on me! As I said to a friend on Facebook recently: "How do you solve a problem like Anglicanism?" – I don't have the answer to the million dollar question!

And so – "A Double-Minded Man: Unstable in all his ways'? Discerning the 'Mind of the Church' within Anglicanism." Anglicans recently have made much of this term the 'Mind of the Church', it is a term which has much power behind it and which calls for further explication – it's a 'loaded' term which assumes much. It's a term which might be used to shut down discernment, or to make claims of orthodoxy and heresy. I'd like to relate the use of this term to the context of Anglican Provincial polity which has characterised the past 50 years – a polity which, I think, is less than helpful and which has made the task of discerning the 'Mind of the Church' particularly problematic.

I should clarify also that there are two ways the term 'Province' is used in Anglicanism – the first, classic, sense is as an ecclesial Province of dioceses led by a Metropolitan bishop, like the Province of Victoria or the Provinces of York and Canterbury in England. However, more recently the term has been applied to autonomous “national” churches within the Anglican Communion as recognised in the Constitution of the Anglican Consultative Council. It's in this latter sense that I use the term exclusively.

So having unpacked the term 'Mind of the Church' and related it to the context of Provincial polity in international Anglicanism, I'd then like to tackle three of the 'problems' associated with the discernment of the Church's mind – We don't know what it might be – We don't know where to find it – and, when we think we have found it, We don't know what to do with it. In particular I'll address these problems by unpacking some of the familiar 'tropes' which slip a little too easily, of late, off the Anglican tongue: Subsidiarity, Dispersed Authority, Adiaphora. Following this, I'd like to open up the discussion to brainstorm and forecast where it all might lead.

First, however, a few clarifications. The 'Mind of the Church' might rightly be applied, as indeed it has been, to ecumenical, inter-Provincial, Provincial, Diocesan or more local levels of discernment. My interest is primarily at the inter-Provincial level as the forum for international Anglicanism. You may wish to challenge whether this is the correct focus – is that kind of polity the future of Anglicanism?

Secondly, I do not intend to engage particularly with the processes of HOW we as Anglicans come to form a 'Common Mind' but, rather, where we locate that 'mind' to be and discern what it might be.

Finally, the words from the Epistle of James which I 'take as my text' – "A double-minded man: unstable in all his ways" – has recently been used to evaluate, in quite an *ad hominem* way, the previous archbishop of Roman Williams.<sup>1</sup> This is certainly not my intention – my focus is very much on Anglicanism as an institution rather than embodied in an individual.

And so, where does this term 'Mind of the Church' come from and how has it entered into the Anglican vocabulary? The genesis of its modern use seems to have been within Roman Catholicism and particularly the decrees and constitutions of the Second Vatican Council. The English term 'Mind of the Church' is used in two Vatican 2 documents – the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, and the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*). It translates the Latin *sensus Ecclesiae* in the former and *mens Ecclesiae* in the latter. It refers to the authoritative teaching of the Church by which the laity must order their lives and participate in the secular world, and which Biblical Scholars (VD – 23) should heed in continuing the work they have begun. The 'Mind of the Church', according to Vatican 2, refers to a source of authority rather than the capacity for reception which the *sensus fidelium* of *Lumen Gentium* more properly describes. This point is important because within Anglicanism, perhaps as a result of its more 'dispersed authority' and its affection for the axiom of *lex orandi, lex credendi*, the two dimensions of authority and reception become fused (or confused) in what the Windsor Report describes as the *consensus fidelium* – or the authority of the ecclesial opinion poll.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bray, G. "Editorial: A double-minded man" *Churchman* 126, no. 02 (2012): 99-102.

<sup>2</sup> See Windsor Report, s. 68ff. The term *consensus fidelium* does indeed have a legitimate place within reception doctrine as the expression of the resulting agreement and judgement manifest in the *sensus fidelium*, and this was explored by John Henry Newman a century before in his article "Consulting the Faithful on Matters of Doctrine" (1859). However what is problematic for Anglicans is the recent lack of nuance around these terms and their collapse into the 'democratisation of doctrine'

Perhaps keen to pick up on Vatican 2's identification of the 'Mind of the Church' with ecclesial authority, the term appears three years later in the resolutions of the 1968 Lambeth Conference where it is ecumenical in scope: bishops are encouraged to engage in "responsible experimentation" with ecumenical partners in order to "keep in touch with the common Mind of the Church". "Responsible experimentation" – it all sounds very 1960s!

'Mind of the Church' pops up again in "For the Sake of the Kingdom", the 1986 report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC), where it is equated with 'tradition' which along with reason, according to the report, is the context in which Scripture is received. It might be said that this report moves the concept from a 'disembodied source of authority' to a contextual climate in which the authority of Scripture is received. The report's successor – the 1997 report of the IATDC, commonly referred to as the Virginia Report – follows this usage but it develops the concept into the shared consensus of the Provinces – expressed through the 'Instruments' of Communion – Lambeth, the ACC and Primate's Meetings (3.51). The Archbishop of Canterbury, who until recently has been counted among the instruments, is the one tasked by the Windsor Report with articulating the 'mind' of the Church (s.69).<sup>3</sup> Within the Virginia Report, however, the 'Mind of the Church' slips back and forth between the perhaps weaker term 'mind of the Communion' (3.43) (reflecting shared consensus) and the stronger 'mind of Christ' (5.12, 5.21) (reflecting divine providence). The proposed Anglican Covenant prefers the stronger sense – whereby the Instruments of Communion allow churches (and by that it is meant 'Provinces') to be conformed to the mind of Christ (s.3.1.2).

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<sup>3</sup> On the recommendation of the *Windsor Report*, the ACC 2005 Meeting in Nottingham passed Resolution 2 clarifying a preference for regarding the Archbishop of Canterbury as a 'Focus of Unity'.

And so the 'Mind of the Church' seems to be being used by Anglicans in quite different ways. It can express representation: this is how Keith Rayner uses the term when speaking to our General Synod of the role of bishops at Lambeth, they represent the 'Mind of the Church' in their dioceses. It can be used to express total consensus as the final stage in an ongoing process of reception, as articulated in the Grindrod Report (s.90ff) which greatly influenced the 1988 Lambeth resolution on women in the episcopate. It can refer to a 'majority opinion' expressed through the instruments of Communion, or an appointed Standing Committee – as the Covenant might have it. The 'majority opinion' is also how the Chair of WATCH in the UK last year used the term in relation to the consecration of women as bishops.<sup>4</sup> It can represent a shifting boundary of orthodoxy relative to contemporary contexts and circumstances – this is the sense in which it is used by The Episcopal Church in their report 'To Set Our Hope on Christ' (a response to the Windsor Report's invitation to set out a rationale for recent policies and actions in regard to human sexuality). And it can represent once-for-all absolutism which is the mind of Christ. The nub of the issue for Anglicans is, when we say 'Mind of the Church' do we mean it to be authoritative or descriptive?

This brief 'unpacking' of the term is not intended by any means to be a comprehensive survey of its use within Anglicanism and beyond – but rather to give a bit of an indication, from a wide variety of sources, as to how it has been used and its problematic status within the context of inter-Anglican disagreement and controversy.

So, it seems, when it comes to discerning the 'Mind of the Church' we Anglicans haven't made up our minds! Compounding this problem, over the past 50 years there has been a rapid movement within Anglicanism to streamline its polity, perhaps to give a clearer sense of order to its lines of authority.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk/archives/005502.html>

This is the codification of the Provincial structure of autonomous national churches, which I'd like to spend a brief time giving some context to.

Conceived hierarchically, the zenith of Anglican organisation is the Province which is both autonomous and autocephalous. Although the thirty eight provinces which together form the Anglican Communion have a great diversity in their internal ordering and governance, the provincial model provides a consistent standard for their inter-relation as members of the Communion and representation within the 'Instruments of Communion'.<sup>5</sup> This provincial emphasis is largely related to the cultural and political familiarity of the sovereign nation-state as a twentieth century ideal, given particular expression in the report of Committee IV on 'The Anglican Communion' at the Lambeth Conference of 1930, and which is worth quoting from at length as a 'sign of the times':

It is consistent with the past history of the Church, and may be of real advantage, that Provinces or Dioceses within the borders of one national territory should be associated in one organisation sometimes spoken of as a 'National Church.' ... The peculiar function of a 'National Church' is two-fold. On the one hand (to quote from the Constitution of the Church of India), "the liberty of a regional Church has enabled and may in any place enable the God-given genius of great nations to find its appropriate expression in the worship and work of the Church." On the other hand, a 'National Church' by its intimate connection with the nation as a whole can effectively influence the national life. A 'National Church,' however, must be on its guard lest the spirit of nationalism weaken its loyalty to the whole Catholic Church, lest it lend itself to unworthy political ends, and lest it expose itself to undue interference by the secular state.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The actual make-up of the Anglican Communion is not quite so clear-cut: there are also six extra-provincials, five of which are under the oversight of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the sixth a Metropolitan Council.

<sup>6</sup> Conference of Bishops of the Anglican Communion, *The Lambeth Conference, 1930. Encyclical Letter from the Bishops. With the Resolutions.*, 161-162.



This sentiment was endorsed by the Conference as a whole which passed Resolution 49 identifying a key characteristic of each constituent part of the Anglican Communion that “they are particular or national Churches, and, as such, promote within each of their territories a national expression of Christian faith, life and worship.”<sup>7</sup> This movement was halted somewhat by the onset of the Second World War, but picked up again soon after with the 1948 Lambeth Conference.

The modern Communion is the inheritor of this model; today the boundaries of most provinces are coterminous with the countries in which they are located. As a consequence of this inheritance there has been an increasing assumption within the Communion that the Province, as a national church, is the most basic complete unit of ecclesial polity – this is, however, hotly disputed.<sup>8</sup> The proposed Covenant relied heavily on this assumption. While pragmatic it is also problematic, owing more to the ordering of church structures alongside secular models of government than to theological discernment as to where authority lies within the church.

This assumption is also evident in the operation of two of the three ‘Instruments of Communion’. Membership of the Anglican Communion is formally recognised through inclusion in the Schedule of the Articles of Association of the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) which lists only provinces. Similarly, the Primates’ Meeting is a gathering of only the “chief Archbishop or bishop” of each Province at the invitation of the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>8</sup> For example in The Episcopal Church the stakes for asserting the priority of either the province or diocese are high: this has been the substantial issue in disputes over property and jurisdiction in The Episcopal Church, the most recent example being in South Carolina where the courts will essentially be asked to decide whether the diocese has a legal and autonomous identity apart from the national church. See B. Smith, "SC Episcopal schism now over name, property", The State Newspaper, 6th Jan 2013, Charleston, South Carolina available at <http://www.thestate.com/2013/01/06/2579442/sc-episcopal-schism-now-over-name.html> The conflict is articulated further in Turrell, "A Dim Mirror," 492-496.

<sup>9</sup> Anglican Communion Website, "What is a Primate?"

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/communion/primates/definition.cfm> (accessed 11 October 2012)

The problem with this polity is that to a large extent, the provincial facade has been retrofitted in various parts of the Communion.<sup>10</sup> While the provincial model provides a convenient uniformity for identifying the Communion's constituent parts, the reality of diversity and complexity in each Province's internal governance and structures of authority make for an artificial ecclesial polity.<sup>11</sup> Although internal diversity is not in itself problematic, it is when attempting to relate diverse provinces as if they were alike that discerning some 'mind' between them becomes increasingly complex.

This review of the present state of international Anglican polity is intended to give some context to the problematic nature of discerning the 'Mind of the Church' within Anglicanism. The term itself assumes much but, as we have seen, it is not as straightforward as its somewhat flippant use might suggest. Likewise, the somewhat monolithic edifice of autonomous National Churches which appears to be our current international polity is not as consistent nor so easily comparable when you scratch a little beneath the surface.

And so I'd like to probe a little deeper into this problematic nature by proposing three specific problems relating to our discernment of the Church's 'mind' and putting them in conversation with three other sometimes flippantly used 'tropes' in Anglican ecclesiology.

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<sup>10</sup> The Anglican Church of Australia, for example, did not constitute itself as a single Province until 1962. For a detailed history of this process see J. Davis, *Australian Anglicans and their Constitution* (Canberra: Acorn Press, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> "Correspondence between Rowan Williams and Bishop John Howe, Episcopal Bishop of Central Florida", available at <http://www.kendallharmon.net/t19/index.php/t19/article/7039/> certainly conveys this perspective. For more detail on the complexity of the Communion's international polity see N. Doe, *Canon law in the Anglican communion : a worldwide perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

The first problem is that we've lost our mind – that is, we're undecided as to where we might find it. And, I suggest, our search has been taken off course by the slippery principle of 'subsidiarity'.

The Virginia Report defined subsidiarity as the principle that "a central authority should [perform] only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level."<sup>12</sup>

Subsidiarity properly understood and applied ought to prioritise relationship so that it becomes not simply the hierarchical ordering of independent jurisdictions within a cohesive polity but an instrument of relationship occupying the dynamic tension between the autonomy of the unit and its corporate identity. A theological framework insists that this relational character is defined primarily by our relationship with God and through it our communion with each other.<sup>13</sup>

And so, 'subsidiarity' is not a dirty word, but the actual application of this principle within the life of the church has proven to be somewhat dubious. And when applied to 'where' we might discern the 'mind of the church', it gives up different answers depending on, unfortunately, the political context in which the question is asked.

I'd like to illustrate this through one example. At the Episcopal Church's 2012 General Convention, the Standing Committee on the Structure of the Church put forward a resolution (A090) which sought to formally enshrine the principle of subsidiarity into the ordering and decision making of that Province's ecclesial polity. While this proposal may seem to be one which both empowers the local and invests in its self-determination, the proposed amendment read together with their proposed budget provided the basis for substantial funding cuts to local ministries previously supported by the National Church. The justification and rationale for this decrease in funding was to be "based in [the] subsidiarity principle to emphasize local ministry."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, *The Virginia Report* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1997), § 4.8.

<sup>13</sup> I should go into this further at a later time.

<sup>14</sup> Executive Council of the General Convention, "Draft Proposed Budget 2013-2015" <http://www.generalconvention.org/> (accessed 19th October 2012)

Not only was the principle of subsidiarity invoked to justify an actual reduction in the National Church's support for local programmes, but the Standing Committee's report also identified the General Convention as "the Church gathered in its fullest embodiment" and, as such, the most proper level of authority in discerning "the good of the whole". A cynic might say the Convention (or at least the Standing Committee, as the proposal was not passed) wanted to have its slice of subsidiarity and eat it too – telling dioceses to find their own funding (under the guise of affirming local ministry), while bolstering the authority of the national church. Those who were present at Stanley Hauerwas' public lecture at St Peter's Eastern Hill last week might recall his critique of hierarchies – saying that they themselves are not problematic, as long as there is equality. The problem is all things are not always equal, and there's the rub for subsidiarity.

Internationally, subsidiarity has been looked to in Anglicanism to bear much upon its shoulders. The IATDC commended it "in order to resist the temptation of centralism" while acknowledging that "the life of the Church at the local level was never seen as simply autonomous."<sup>15</sup> The Lambeth Commission on Communion attributed the failure to properly discern the balance of this tension within subsidiarity as a major factor contributing to recent Anglican tensions.<sup>16</sup>

I propose that subsidiarity is too slippery a concept to help us discern where we might look to find the 'mind' of the Church. It pigeon-holes decision making and discernment into a hierarchy of levels which don't map so easily onto Anglican polity, and leaves open the question of how each 'level' ought to relate to each other 'level'. Subsidiarity has been asked to bear too much – and it has failed. We're still not sure where we might 'seek' the Church's mind.

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<sup>15</sup> Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, *TVR*, § 4.9.

<sup>16</sup> Lambeth Commission on Communion, *Windsor Report*, ¶ 39.

The second problem I'd like to probe becomes apparent whenever we have a meeting of minds – that is, our oft repeated 'dispersed' (or is it dissipated?) authority. In other words, we have trouble discerning what indeed the 'mind of the church' might be saying?

The rhetoric of authority being 'dispersed' is part of the Anglican aversion to centralised or definitive authority structures, an aversion echoed at the first Lambeth Conference and at every one since, and more recently in a series of Communion reports including *For the Sake of the Kingdom*, the *Virginia Report*, and *Communion, Conflict and Hope*. By all reports it seems to be a pervasive Anglican ideal.

The concept of 'dispersed' authority really came into its own following the report of the *Committee on the Anglican Communion* presented to the Lambeth Conference of 1948:

Authority, as inherited by the Anglican Communion from the undivided Church of the early centuries of the Christian era is ... a dispersed rather than a centralised authority having many elements which combine, interact with, and check each other.<sup>17</sup>

The authority of that report is somewhat ambiguous (although perhaps a case-in-point of 'dispersed authority?') as its content was not reflected in any of that Conference's formal resolutions and nor was it widely reported on at the time as being a significant advancement or articulation of Anglican self-understanding.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless it has come to acquire a greater sense of authority than perhaps originally recognised.

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<sup>17</sup> "Report of the Committee on the Anglican Communion," in *Lambeth Conference 1948* (London: SPCK, 1948), 84.

<sup>18</sup> For a comprehensive and critical study of this report's impact and reception see J. Britton, "'Dispersed Authority' Critique of the 1948 Lambeth Report," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 68, no. 2 (1999).

The context of the 1948 report is worth highlighting: coming immediately following the Second World War where Europe had seen the danger and destruction brought by totalitarian and autocratic regimes it is hardly surprising that Anglicans from across the globe touched by the horrors of war might instead wish to imagine their Communion as having an authority not centred in a single charismatic individual or institution but instead “having many elements which combine, interact with, and check each other.”<sup>19</sup> The idealism of the report, however, does not extend to providing any detailed commentary on exactly how different structures and elements within the Communion might combine and interact, much less provide a check or balance, amongst themselves. Ever since, this kind of discernment, effectively discernment about how the ‘mind of the church’ might be sought and where authority might reside, has been lacking. Asserting either the ideal or fact of ‘dispersed authority’ does not go far enough.

If ‘dispersed authority’ is to be of any value to the Anglican Communion then it must go beyond the polemics of anti-centralism and provide some account of how what is dispersed might also be gathered and held together. I do not mean to discount nor discredit the validity of ‘dispersed authority’ itself as descriptive of a characteristically Anglican model of ecclesial polity; but it has become something of a flippant trope, an underdeveloped ecclesial cliché, which leaves us naively in the lurch when coming to discern any kind of authoritative ‘mind’ in the Church.

The third and final problem is that we Anglicans are – most surely – out of our minds. That is, should we succeed in locating and discerning the ‘mind’ – we’re paralysed into inaction because we don’t know what to do with it. We can argue all night about what is, and what isn’t, ‘adiaphora’.

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<sup>19</sup> "Report of the Committee on the Anglican Communion," 85.

The concept of *adiaphora* was not just rediscovered within Anglicanism during the last decade, it was reinvented. Defined by the 2004 *Windsor Report* as “things which do not make a difference”<sup>20</sup>, this contemporary usage has marked a radical departure from its original context in sixteenth and seventeenth century Reformation debates. However, it has also proven through its unchallenged claim to the crown of classical Anglicanism to be something of a red herring.

The modern appropriation of *adiaphora* is far removed from its original Reformation sense as those areas of Christian life and worship which are neither “commanded nor forbidden by the divine law revealed in Scripture.”<sup>21</sup> *Adiaphora* is not unqualified indifference but rather relates specifically to those things for which Scripture provides neither explicit mandate nor prohibition. While the authority of Scripture in what it prescribes and proscribes is assumed, controversy arose in the Reformation context as to how the church ought to respond to matters of *adiaphora*. The Tudor answer to this controversy was that in these matters the magistrate had power to legislate and to demand conformity.

However, the *Windsor Report* characterises *adiaphora* as those things deemed unimportant, ultimately irrelevant and “non-essential” to the faith and order of the Church. The *adiaphora* are those beliefs and practices for which there may be a tolerable diversity and even, perhaps, a certain measure of contradiction permissible in internal polity. Like ‘subsidiarity’, which *Windsor* sees as closely related, *adiaphora* assumes an ecclesial polity composed of a central core of essential doctrine and praxis with gradating levels of importance attached to all else in a concentric orbit around the core.

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<sup>20</sup> Lambeth Commission on Communion, *Windsor Report*, ¶ 87.

<sup>21</sup> B. J. Verkamp, “Limits upon adiaphoristic freedom : Luther and Melanchthon,” *Theological Studies* 36, no. 1 (1975): 59.

Subsidiarity and *adiaphora* are mapped one on top of the other so that decision making must occur at the ‘level’ or ‘orbit’ appropriate to an issue’s proximity to the central core: the international Communion, or perhaps even an ‘Ecumenical Council’, at the centre and, one supposes, the parish or perhaps the parish’s flower arranging guild at the periphery.<sup>22</sup>

It is unfortunate that the *Windsor Report* claims *adiaphora* to be “a major feature of Anglican theology” as the term itself and its translation as things ‘indifferent’ is not used in any Lambeth Conference resolutions or reports, nor any resolutions of the ACC, nor any Communiqués of the Primates’ Meeting, nor any other source or commentary on Anglicanism (except of course in relation to its historic Reformation context) until its reintroduction into the Anglican vocabulary over the past decade or so.

There are two problems for discerning the ‘mind of the Church’ in relation to this recent appropriation of *adiaphora*. The first is, in claiming *adiaphora*, any action which seems contrary to the ‘mind of the Church’ can be justified and vindicated because it simply ‘doesn’t matter’. Alternatively, in rejecting a claim to *adiaphora* (ie. asserting that it ‘does matter’!) the Church (at whatever ‘level’ it may be: parish, diocesan, national, international, ecumenical, etc) presumes, perhaps presumptively, to have already ‘made up its mind’.

And so, we’ve unpacked the term ‘Mind of the Church’ and seen how it is being understood in different ways by Anglicans, we’ve explored the problematic Provincial polity which is its context, and we’ve probed three particular problems in relation to three common tropes in contemporary Anglicanism. So what might we say in conclusion?

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<sup>22</sup> This contrast is made in the *Windsor Report*, ¶ 38



Well – we might well ask, WWJD? (Is everyone familiar with WWJD?) – What Would Jessie Do? It's an important question to ask – not only because this is the Jessie Nicholson lecture – but because it grounds all of this admittedly somewhat esoteric discussion in the lived experience of Anglicans. Why does it matter? I suggest that for Jessie it might matter a great deal – someone who by all accounts knew her own mind and, if she had a list of 'Proper Priests', I can bet she'd have had an idea of what 'Proper Anglicanism' might look like.

She might have challenged, too, the 'double-mindedness' which has seemed to become something of a hallmark of Anglicanism – particularly, dare I say again, in the Liberal Catholic tradition. We take a certain pride in holding together extremes, walking a *via media*, having a somewhat fuzzy, luke-warm, and decidedly English identity: as my Principal at Cuddesdon would say, there's no problem in Anglicanism that can't be settled with a nice pot of tea. If only he were right.

I'd like to suggest though, that real double-mindedness happens when – as an institution – we fail to keep all the balls in the air, and they drop, entrenched, in one camp or the other. Anglicanism is an elusive thing and it seems more and more that those who think they've 'settled' it have in fact misjudged the question. It's particularly frustrating, I must say, from an academic perspective as I frequently find myself trying to answer questions which perhaps don't have answers.

Perhaps it is in the pursuit that we are at our most stable – each foot touching for a moment on the ground, rather than losing our balance doing a clumsy hop.

Who are my influences and who is currently writing about this?

In a sense – everybody! Classic texts such as ‘Authority in the Anglican Communion’ edited by Sykes, Authority in Crisis? By Runcie, Paul Avis on Anglican identity, authority and Communion, closer to home Stephen Pickard on contemporary Anglicanism and particularly the Instruments, Bruce Kaye on ecclesiology... at the ACO Phil Groves (particularly on contemporary movements like Indaba), interesting commentaries from local contexts (ie USA) from Hasset and Radner & Turner, and evangelical commentators like Andrew Goddard. A great place to look though is through blogs, official reports, current movements, ‘free’ commentary and recent journals – it is much more effective at giving the ‘feel’ than somewhat staid and out of date books! Look too at key figures such as Rowan Williams and – it remains to be seen – Justin Welby.

10 Possible Questions: