



From the Editor

Plurality and Identity in the Modern World

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We live in a world of strange contradictions. On the one hand modern technology through the Internet brings people together in astonishing and unprecedented ways. Yet at the same time people are diminished in their relationships because of the very nature of the technology. We see that our fully engaged three-dimensional personal encounters are squeezed out in favour of two-dimensional bytes. At one and the same time we are connected in a vast and expanding plurality yet have our more immediate and coherent social identity corroded and changed. These social phenomena provide the context within which ecclesial reflection can and must take place. The issue of how plurality and connecting identity hold together is no less a question in the church than it is in the broader political life of humanity at large.

In 1996 that late and great scholar Adrian Hastings gave a series of lectures at the Queen's University in Belfast, Ireland, which were published the following year under the title *The Construction of Nationhood*.¹ Hastings put forward a fresh and better understanding of the nation and nationalism than was available at the time in what was known as the modernist view of nationalism.² In broad terms that view contended that nationalism grew during the course of the eighteenth century within the framework of the new nation state. On the contrary, said Hastings, nationalism can be found coming to a high point in England in the late sixteenth century. He portrayed England, though he sometimes refers to Britain, as being the prototype of the nation and nation state. He envisaged nationhood emerging out of one or more ethnicities. By far the most important and widely

1. A. Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood. Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

2. The view was mainly represented by E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

present factor in his thesis is that of an extensively used 'vernacular literature'.³ Nation he said 'is a far more self-conscious community than an ethnicity'.⁴ A 'nation possesses or claims the right to political identity and autonomy as a people, together with the control of specific territory'. 'A nation-state is a state which identifies itself with one specific nation'.⁵

Hastings makes a further point about the way in which peoples become communities, ethnicities, states and nations. 'Some may be disturbed by the idea that, in a sense, texts can produce peoples. But there is really no alternative. A community, political, religious, or whatever, is essentially a creation of human communication and it is only to be expected that the form of the communication will determine the character of the community'.⁶

The nation-state was not the only political form that Hastings thought was available in the modern world.

The nation-state does not inherently belong to modernity and if Britain, for long the prototype of modernity, pioneered the nation-state, it also pioneered the non-national world empire. While France's empire was conceived, if unrealistically, as an extension of its nation-state, Britain's was not. That does not make it less modern. Indeed it may be the political reality of Britain's global empire which looks in another fifty years time more like the real prototype of the political structuring of modernity.⁷

This model of empire highlights something of a contrast in the British experience since one of the achievements of the British nation-state was the establishment of a highly centralized government. This internal governmental structure stands in some marked contrast to the character of the political, social and legal connections between the metropolitan centre and the overseas colonies.⁸ This was highlighted to me when I was visiting the Anglican Province of the Indian Ocean to speak at its General Synod in 2002. I arrived first in Mauritius as the guest of the Anglican bishop, Ian Ernest. Mauritius had been controlled by the French from 1715 to 1810 when it was taken over by

3. Hastings, *Nationhood*, p. 2.

4. Hastings, *Nationhood*, p. 3.

5. Hastings, *Nationhood*, p. 3.

6. Hastings, *Nationhood*, p. 20.

7. Hastings, *Nationhood*, pp. 6–7.

8. Relations between London and the colonies was not in fact entirely uniform as can be seen even in the changes over time in the way India was administered.

the British on terms that allowed French settlers to keep their property and use the French language. The law of France was to be used in civil and criminal matters. It became independent in 1962 and a republic in 1992. There were no original indigenous people and today the population is a mixture of Indian, African, Chinese, French and English ethnicities. Despite 152 years of British control less than 8 per cent of the population are Anglicans while 24 per cent are Roman Catholic, 17 per cent Muslim and 48 per cent Hindu. Mauritius is now an independent nation-state fully cognisant of its plurality and a growing national identity.

The General Synod was to be held on the small island of Reunion about 270 km south-west of Mauritius. Reunion was first claimed by France in 1638 and has remained in French control ever since, apart from a brief period during the Napoleonic wars. It is now an overseas Department of the French Republic and elects representatives to the National Assembly in Paris. The language is French and the public institutions are all French. It is part of France. The contrast with Mauritius could hardly be greater. The Republic of France retained its connection with the former colony by incorporating it into the metropolitan nation-state.

This pattern is similar, or at least analogous, to the constitutional incorporation of former 'colonial' or mission dioceses into the Episcopal Church in the United States of America. These churches constitute Province Nine in the Episcopal Church.⁹ They send representatives to the General Convention and are in many respects like the overseas departments of the French Republic. It is a very different pattern from that found in the overseas Anglican churches from the time of the British Empire. What Hilary Carey has recently said in relation to settler churches generally in the British Empire is true also of the Anglican churches, despite lingering nostalgia in some quarters. 'Yet, the Christian churches of the settler empire were, eventually, both nationalised and internationalised. In the former colonies, they acquired organisations and religious characteristics that increasingly owed less to empire and more to rising nations, with their independent legislatures and constitutions, into which they had been planted.'¹⁰

9. 'Province Nine. The Ninth Province shall consist of the Dioceses of this Church in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela.' *Constitution and Canons* (New York: Church Publishing, 2006), Canon 9, p. 42.

10. Hilary M. Carey, *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World, c. 1801-1908* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

Inevitably within a larger society that is held together by institutional structures or shared social habits, the accommodation, even cultivation, of diversity within that society can create significant political and relationship questions. The vast movement of people across the globe and across the borders of nation-states during the course of the twentieth century has left many nation states much more diverse and multicultural than they were at the beginning of the century. That pattern is likely to continue. The experiments in a government policy of multiculturalism in Canada, the United States and Australia illustrate how the diversity can be shaped differently in different circumstances.¹¹

In 1995, just after I had become General Secretary of the Anglican Church of Australia, I had the opportunity to take afternoon tea with the vicar of Littlemore in the diocese of Oxford in England. I had read most of the publications of the Revd David Nicholls and it was therefore with great anticipation that I knocked on his front door and spent an enchanting afternoon among his books, listening to his ruminations on politics and the church. David Nicholls was a historian and political scientist, and a graduate of the London School of Economics and Cambridge University. He taught in the University of West Indies in Trinidad and returned to Oxford to continue teaching. He had written extensively on pluralism and the book I had found the most interesting was *The Pluralist State*. The book deals with the political ideas of John Neville Figgis and his contemporaries. In the book Nicholls reports favourably on Figgis's suggestion that the principal bulwarks against ecclesiastical tyranny were 'the devolution of power and decision-making to small groups within the church, and the ultimate supremacy of conscience. "Within the Catholic society let there be groups as many as you will" ' he declared.¹² This neatly expresses David Nicholls' concerns with the way in which plurality within the church is fundamental to its life and health as indeed it is to human society generally.

There are, as Benedict Anderson¹³ has rightly pointed out, many other 'nations' or communities besides those housed in nation-states. Besides those more ethnically shaped communities discussed by Anderson we may note, in a slightly different key, the business corporation, either in its local form or as a multinational enterprise, as an example of such a nation or community. How the business corporation is structured has

11. See Mark Lopez, *The Origins of Multiculturalism in Australian Politics, 1945–1975* (Carlton, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2000).

12. D. Nicholls, *The Pluralist State* (London: Macmillan, 2nd edn, 1975).

13. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991).

been debated in a long and extensive literature with views ranging from the multiunit hierarchical model of Alfred Chandler Jr¹⁴ to the more open-ended flexible circular network model of David Limerick.¹⁵ To a large extent the design of such an institutional arrangement depends upon the founding circumstances and the purpose for which the enterprise exists. Non-government organizations that provide services in all parts of the world similarly are designed in ways that represent their origins and their purposes. Activist groups such as Greenpeace also shape their structure in order to achieve the purposes for which they exist. Community groups within society are similarly shaped in order to relate effectively to the wider society in which they operate and the purposes for which they operate.

These are matters that arise in the human condition. They not only form an important part of the context within which the church lives and operates, they inevitably influence the way in which Christians are able to think about the life and structure of their ecclesial communities.

This is the more so for Anglicans who have such a distinctive and powerful heritage of the church in relation to the state. The long centuries when Anglicanism was the religion of the English state have inevitably left their mark for both good and ill upon Anglican sentiment. But Adrian Hastings is correct in pointing to the fact that Anglican churches born outside the English state soon found that they could not replicate the precise structures of the relationships with the state that existed for the Church of England. This became very apparent after the American War of Independence when Episcopalians sought to put together a constitution for themselves in the light of the new political arrangements that pertained in their land. They could not establish their church on the basis of a church state relationship such as they remembered from England. Yet, in a bold experiment in contextualization and in principle not too distant from the establishment thinking in Anglican England, they established for themselves a constitution that in many respects mimicked the Constitution of the

14. Alfred D. Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1977). Alfred D. Chandler and Herman Daems, *Managerial Hierarchies: Comparative Perspectives on the Rise of the Modern Industrial Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

15. D. Limerick, 'The Shape of the New Organization: Implications for Human Resource Management', *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Relations* 30 (1992), pp. 38–52. D. Limerick, B. Cunnington and F. Crowther, *Managing the New Organisation. Collaboration and Sustainability in the Postcorporate World* (Sydney: Business and Professional Publishing, 2nd edn, 1998).

new American Republic. The particular character of the Constitution of the Anglican Church in Nigeria similarly shows the influence on local social political and cultural forces. The same is true in the Anglican Church of Australia. When constitutions for dioceses were established they reflected the independent political attitudes which prevailed in the different colonies in Australia at that time.¹⁶

These questions of innovation and continuity have become strikingly important in the last 15 years for relations between Anglican churches scattered around the world. Various international institutional arrangements have been tried and are regularly changed. In recent times some of these institutional arrangements have been called by some 'Instruments of Unity', though other arrangements and institutions continue without this kind of special designation. The question before Anglicans around the world, not only within their own provinces, but also in relations between these churches, is therefore not unprecedented either in the way in which Christians have thought about the political life of humanity at large or the way in which Anglicans have thought about the institutionality of their Christian communities.

How that institutionality is shaped has a great deal to do with both the character of that community and the purpose for which it exists. The character of the community is not adequately defined by its being made up of Christian people who subscribe to certain doctrines. Rather the function and character envisaged for the actual relationships involved is what defines the shape of community. There is a world of difference between the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion (EFAC) and The Anglican Church in North America (ACNA). EFAC is a voluntary society of individuals who join together to promote activities such as bursaries, newsletters and conferences, in support of their evangelical point of view. ACNA presents itself as a province of dioceses, networks and clusters (regional or affinity based). Its constitution provides for a Provincial Council, the appointment of an archbishop and a range of other things which make it clear that what has been established is an ecclesiastical structure to provide a ministry of word and sacraments. In other words it is a church.¹⁷ The doctrinal commitments they make simply tell us the entry standard for membership. What makes it a church is what it sets out to do.

16. See B.N. Kaye, 'The Strange Birth of Anglican Synods in Australia and the 1850 Bishops Conference', *Journal of Religious History* 27.2 (2003), pp. 177-97.

17. The constitution and canons of ACNA are available on their website at <http://www.acnaassembly.org/index2.php/acna/page/113>

Within the mainstream Anglican ecclesial pattern there are clearly different patterns of relationships at different places in the community. The structure of the organizational arrangements will depend upon what kind of community those structures are designed to serve and in relation to what purpose. The purpose in a parish might, for example, be taken from the terms of the ordinal. The purpose of the ministry within the parish is to bring the community to maturity of Christian life and faith.¹⁸ That is a different purpose from what is properly espoused by, for example, a church welfare organization. It is also necessarily different from the purpose for which a diocese exists and significantly different again from the purpose of the more scattered community of a province.

So the question for Anglican churches around the world in the present circumstances has a great deal to do with what we think that 'imagined community' of Anglican churches around the world actually is and the purpose for which it exists. The way in which plurality lives with some degree of identity will be an important aspect of that question. Generally speaking the diocese sustains an appropriate and disciplined ministry of Word and Sacrament in the parishes and takes jurisdictional responsibility for that purpose. In most provinces jurisdictional responsibility for the Episcopal Ministry is taken by the provincial structures. Each step in this movement from parish to diocese to province to Anglican Communion envisages different institutional arrangements that are appropriate to the purpose of each entity and the different relationships each houses. They are increasingly relationally directed rather than jurisdictionally determined.

Adrian Hastings' reference to the texts that create communities and shape the character of the nation applies *a fortiori* to the church. However, the texts of the New Testament do not provide blueprints for the specifics of our present arrangements or the particularity of our present challenges, even though they do address some of those things for their own day. One thing that does stand out from the general principles which are embedded within the New Testament is that the central gospel character of love should be the determining mark of the community that lives by the Gospel. The real question is the one posed by Jesus. 'By this shall all know that you are my disciples, if you love

18. I have in mind here the exhortations in the ordination services in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, a document that is embedded in most Provincial constitutions. Later Anglican prayer books have tended to substitute this description of the goal of the ministry for a job description of the clergy somewhat in the style of modern employment arrangements.

one another' (Jn 13.35) and repeated in a different form by Tertullian, 'See, they say, how they love one another'.¹⁹ Love exists and prospers in diversity as well as adversity and is often corrupted in uniformity. The much spoken of quest for unity in the church is fraught with ambiguity and misconception. What is central is that we love one another.²⁰

These issues of diversity and plurality and the character of the Christian community are well on display in this issue of the *JAS* and are approached in different ways. We publish here articles from a conference held in Cambridge to celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of George Augustus Selwyn, first bishop of New Zealand. The Cambridge conference followed a similar conference in Auckland in April 2009. Eleven papers (ten of them presented at the Auckland conference) have been edited by Allan Davidson. They are being published by Bridget Williams Books, Wellington, and will appear later this year. Five of the papers look at the Selwyns in New Zealand, four examine aspects of Bishop Selwyn's involvement in Colonial Anglicanism and pan-Anglicanism, and two look at his role at Lichfield and his legacy as a correspondent.

Jeremy Morris provides here an introduction to the Cambridge conference and Rowan Williams' final reflection at the conference is also included. William Jacob writes on Selwyn's contribution to the Anglican Communion and Colin Podmore draws attention to the diversity of traditions that go to make up the totality of worldwide Anglicanism, focusing on two important streams in the various dynamics that contribute to the confluence that is worldwide Anglicanism. In the context of current activity in the Anglican Communion Mark Chapman's perceptive analysis of Rowan Williams' political ideas and his advocacy of interactive pluralism is particularly timely. Emma Wild-Wood draws attention to the specific character of the self-understanding of Anglicans in the Congo, raising again the general question of identity and perception in intra-group communication and understanding. Essentially the same issue is presented in a different form in the way in which David Walker deals with a question of different ways of belonging in rural England. These articles reflect vigorous diversity within the framework of Anglican Studies.

19. Tertullian, *Apology*, ch. 39, quoted from Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1950).

20. For a fuller exposition of this theme see Bruce Kaye, *Conflict and the Practice of Christian Faith: The Anglican Experiment* (Omaha, NE: Cascade Books, 2009).