



Editorial

Communication, Argument and Conversation for Anglicans

Bruce Kaye

Fred Hoyle was one of the most distinguished astro-physicists of the twentieth century. In 1957 he published a science fiction book, *The Black Cloud*. This was the story of a black cloud of immense intelligence that settled itself between the sun and the earth, gradually freezing the earth. A special group of highly intelligent scientists was set up in a country house in Nortonstowe, England and with highly complex computers tried to communicate with the cloud. This did not work and one scientist connected the information stream directly to his brain and died. His brain was not up to handling the material.

While the scientists reviewed this development the gardener, a simple person, wandered into the radio shack and put the earphones on and conducted a conversation with the cloud. He was able to converse and obtained an extensive story about how the cloud had been looking for the beginning of the universe, and had searched for some super nova which had occurred in the vicinity of the universe. Fred Hoyle, with tongue in cheek, was trying to say that the way in which the physicists had learned to think was inadequate. A different kind of thinking was required to communicate with this different and more powerful intelligence.

Communication with others is often made difficult by what we bring unstated and often unknowingly to the conversation. The easy option is simply to disagree and walk away. The harder, and in the church the more appropriate, option is to argue. Argument is disagreement in embrace. It is the determination to find with our fellow Christians some way of loving each other through times of division and conflict. Anglicans around the world are experiencing just how difficult this can be. Yet the vocation to love is central to our witness and to our own integrity as Christians and Anglicans.

It is one of the very great strengths of the recent IATDC report *Communion, Conflict and Hope* that it places this aspect of our Anglican faith centre stage and points to the eschatological hope in Christ that sustains such a vocation. In their central argument they strike a remarkable note of practical and theological realism in the history of the church. There

has always been conflict, not just because we are inadequate and fallible but because we bring our fallibility with us to our Christian vocation. It is faithfulness to live Christ-like lives that drives our fallibility into the experience of conflict in the church. It is true of course that there are evil people from time to time that corrupt the church, but mostly it is simply the fallible faithful.

The authors of *Communion, Conflict and Hope* lay out this point right at the beginning of their argument. 'The New Testament documents record with abundant candour the failures, conflicts and mistakes of the disciples and leaders of the early church communities.'¹ Not content with just the New Testament period they go on to refer to the history of the church more extensively.

The great ecumenical councils of the early church struggled with such questions in order to maintain apostolic faithfulness together with a true catholicity. These struggles were often overlaid with the all too human elements of power and prestige, ambition and pride. At a time of rapid growth in the church, the life of the community had the usual elements of moral failure, conflict, mistaken paths, as well as the resilient impulse to be faithful to Christ, to be led by the Spirit.

These issues can be found in all periods of history because they are part and parcel of the experience of the church as a fragile and fallible community.²

The IATDC report goes on to apply these matters to the Anglican tradition and its ecclesiology. This approach has the effect of shifting the horizon of attention to divine immanence rather than human agency and in turn to issues of hope and transcendence. In that context the Commission's emphasis on catholicity and engaged conversation is crucially important at the present time for Anglicans.

Such engaged conversation involves attentive listening and that is important not only in relation to the present disputes but also in the way we engage with each other generally. A very interesting and positive project in this process began with the challenge of Alexis Bilindabagabo, the bishop of Gahini in Rwanda when he was travelling in the USA in 2004 with a choir of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa young people. He disagreed with the 2003 General Convention decisions and asked 'Why has no one come over to talk with us?'³ This led to a remarkable initiative on the part of a group of Americans who responded to Alexis Bilindabagabo's

1. Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, *Communion, Conflict and Hope* (London: The Anglican Communion Office, 2008), para. 25.

2. *Communion, Conflict and Hope*, paras 32-33.

3. T. Presler, 'Listening towards Reconciliation: A Conversation Initiative in Today's Anglican Alienations', *Anglican Theological Review* 89.2 (2007), pp. 247-66.

challenge. There is something very Anglican about this consultative private initiative taken with the knowledge and encouragement of both churches.

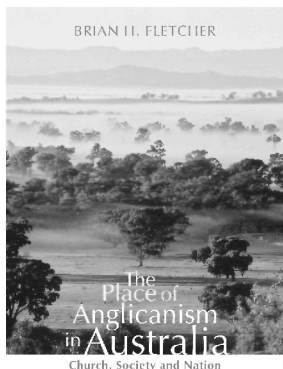
This issue of the *JAS* provides two different examples of engaged conversation. We publish three papers from a Japan–Korea consultation of Anglican theologians. The first paper by John Hiromichi Kato, bishop of Tohoku, sets the scene for the consultation and the two following papers develop two important interpretative arguments about the context of north Asian Anglicanism. We also publish a review article by Christopher Wells of an important book by Gillis Harp. The book sets out a re-interpretation of one of the heroes of the Episcopal Church in the USA and also the history of that church. The review shows that history writing is itself a conversation with the past and the present. However, we begin with an article of the controverted covenant proposals before the Anglican Communion by a widely experienced historian and diplomat.

We hope to publish more of both these kinds of conversations in the future.

This issue of the *Journal of Anglican Studies* will be the last published by SAGE. From January 2009 *JAS* will be published by Cambridge University Press. As Editor I register here our appreciation to SAGE for their collaboration with *JAS* and in particular we have been grateful for the sustained professionalism of the staff at SAGE.



The Place of Anglicanism in Australia: Church, Society and Nation
Brian H Fletcher



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In this revisionist history, Emeritus Professor Brian H Fletcher highlights the way in which Australian Anglicanism has interfaced with Australia as a modern nation after Federation and has represented something distinctive in the post colonial world.

Professor Fletcher writes the place of Anglicanism in 20th century Australia into the record book. He contends that the Anglican Church in Australia remained externally united as a major creative force in shaping the nation after Federation, while examining the causes of its internal diversity and division.

Drawing on extensive primary sources, Fletcher fills an important gap in our knowledge of both Australia and the particular brand of Anglicanism which developed here.

About the Author

Professor Fletcher taught history at Sydney University and is a committed parishioner at St Albans Church, Epping in the Diocese of Sydney. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, of the Royal Australian Historical Society and of the Federation of Australian Historical Societies. He was foundation chair of the Board of Trustees for the *Journal of Anglican Studies* and still occupies that position.

Fletcher writes an easily assimilated historical narrative and is author of 9 other histories, most recently, *Magnificent Obsession: the story of the Mitchell Library*, Allen Unwin, 2007.

Fletcher was awarded the 2007 annual History Citation by the History Council of NSW.

Commendations

The author of this work provides a positive and nuanced assessment of the social significance of Anglicanism in Australia and expounds a case that future historians will need to take into account. *Dr. David Hilliard Associate Prof. Dept Hist. Flinders University*

The whole text is mercifully devoid of trendy jargon. It is critical work which will be of value to academics and students; and who will wish to engage with its detail and its scholarly judgments.

Em Prof. Deryck Schreuder FAHA FRHS LL D Centenary Medal

Market/Readership

- Historians, both Anglican and mainstream Australian academics
- Anglican parishioners
- Students of Church History
- General readers interested in social history