

Who Do You Say That I Am? Identity and Meaning in a Divided Church.

**A Seminar Paper for Ripon College, Cuddesdon
March 2nd, 2005**

History has shown that the passage of time does not heal the wounds of conflicts. It only allows new issues to foment in the rich humus of those which are still half remembered, and often wholly unforgiven. The Anglican Conflict of recent years has yet to become history. We are still remembering - and we have barely begun the process of forgiving. Like it or not, Anglicans are caught up in a conflict in which wounds inflicted on its life of communion need to be shared in a common process of understanding leading to reconciliation and, if future conflicts are to be avoided, the sharing needs to occur while the conflict is still fresh in the collective memory and while the wounds are still hurting.

These wounds are particularly painful because they touch on the identity of individual Anglicans, and of the Communion as a whole, in all its diversity and ways of thinking and articulating the Christian faith. They are painful because it is the Christian faith by which Anglicans live which gives meaning and purpose to the life of the Church and which describes, or sets, the individual in a meaningful context in which to understand herself and others and so contribute to the building of a peaceful society. This context is the social fabric of the Church's life.

The recent conflict has torn the fabric of Anglican society. Furthermore, it is arguable that the despondency and disillusion which we too often experience in the parishes can be traced to a collective loss of meaning, caused by the gradual disintegration of the social fabric, or contextuality, of the Anglican life of communion. This loss of meaning, along with a sense of purpose in its life together, is shaped in the unconscious and takes the form of an anxious, if unspoken, question: 'In what way are we called to live as a particular coherent and peaceful society with a particular identity which has something to say to the world of today?' But the question also pertains to the individual's uncertainty about meaning and identity as these are defined within the wider community. For this reason, I shall argue that loss of meaning in the life of the Church (and, unless otherwise specified, I understand the term 'Church' to be interchangeable with that of 'communion'), is borne of a fundamental inability to connect with the meaning which shapes what is different in the 'other', a difference which constitutes the vitality and meaning of who that person is in Christ: - his or her Christian identity.

The conflict of the past few years, (such conflicts rarely have a specific starting point) draws on a rich legacy of unresolved difference dating back to the Reformation, and possibly beyond. It challenges Anglicans today to arrive at an

understanding of what it is to be Anglican by embracing at depth the difference which makes the self understanding of ‘other’ Anglicans disturbing and sometimes threatening. The challenge to the life of communion at every level of the Church’s life is both spiritual and relational. It calls for a life in the spirit which springs from a theology of non particularity, of being able to encounter the Christ I know in the Christ I do not know, or to put it more succinctly, of recognising the need to reconnect with the Christ in the ‘other’ as an outworking of the essential integration of Pneumatology with Christology when thinking about the life and nature of the Church.¹ While it would be presumptuous to suggest a ‘method’ for making such a reconnection it could, nevertheless, be argued that ways do exist for bringing together the cognitive and spiritual, in a sapiential ‘knowing’ which might give purpose to a church’s life and ministry and so yield meaning. The recent conflict, and for that matter the Windsor Report itself, appears to have overlooked the need for this kind of knowing which, when brought into play with the cognitive process², might prepare the way for meaningful and genuine reconciliation, although the Report explores ways in which a purely functional unity might be achieved.

Meaning and purpose

Bringing together the cognitive and the spiritual suggests that meaning and purpose are interdependent and that, initially, Anglicans who have been caught up in this conflict, either directly or indirectly, might allow the intuitive, or spiritual side of the common mind to inform the rational decision making process. Thinking about the life of the Church as primarily spiritual allows us to associate purpose with the will and purpose of God for the Church’s highest good, a precept which informs much of Richard Hooker’s understanding of an integrated and coherent ecclesial life. Thinking about God’s purpose for it in the world does not necessarily involve the spiritual assuming a greater importance than the rational, but instead enables the rational and the spiritual to mutually inform and test one another and so allow the structuring of the Church’s life together, its polity and praxis, to form a richer context in which meaning can be sought. It is in this richer context that Anglicans today might be able to ‘connect’ with their deep, and perhaps unacknowledged, yearning for reconciliation, first with God and subsequently with others.

Identity, meaning & who we are in Christ

If, as Richard Hooker suggests, God’s purpose for the Church is for its highest good, arriving at a sense of what this good might be involves making new and more meaningful connections in the discernment of truth, as this truth is constitutive of meaning and as meaning imparts something of the truthfulness of God in who Jesus Christ is for the Church of today. Where truth is worked out within a context which allows people to connect with their need for forgiveness, it acquires a greater significance than the propositional ‘truths’ which inform the certainties and identities of separated parties. This presumes that truth and meaning are intrinsic to one another and that, taken together, they allow us to make sense of human experience in the light of the Christian Gospel. Making sense of human experience tells us who we are in

¹ See John Zizioulas ‘Christ, the Spirit and the Church’ in *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, St. Vladimir Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York: 2007 Ch.3 pp.126ff

² ‘Relating objectively to facts and the denotations of words’ in science and psychology ‘the relationship between brain and mind’ Oxford English Dictionary

Christ and is therefore bound up with the individual and collective sense of identity. In the life of the Church, failing to engage at a deeper level, by short circuiting or avoiding the spiritual has, in the past, led to shallow and superficial ideas of unity.³ This ultimately shallow unity allows the Church to continue to avoid addressing the deeper problem of disunity and loss of meaning. Meaning is lost when the social becomes disconnected from the dynamic of the spirit.

We see this disconnection when, in the social life of the Church, self understanding is too easily associated with polarising issues, causing competing identities to be increasingly disconnected from the movement, or dynamic life of the Spirit of Jesus Christ in their midst. A dynamic ‘spirit led’ dimension is implicit in much of Richard Hooker’s thinking, where Hooker seeks to address the need for reconciliation in the Church. For Hooker, the social and theological coherence of the Church depends on the integration of separated identities in Christ leading to an understanding of what it means for the will and purpose of God to be destined to the highest good of all. Hooker himself was addressing the problem of the meaninglessness which comes with disconnection – with the rupturing of the fabric of the Church as society, but he attributed this disconnection to the severing of its life and polity from the life of God and from God’s ongoing purpose for the Church. In today’s Church, this disconnection of its social (or political) life from the dynamic of the Spirit in the inner life of God also makes it increasingly difficult for those called to ordained ministry to connect with this inner life and with God’s ongoing purpose for their ministry, a ministry in which they are called to be communicators of meaning to those they serve.

Dynamic & Truth

If pragmatic solutions to conflict are symptomatic of a non-dynamic way of thinking about the Church, whereby issue driven party agendas define identities and inhibit its renewal, loss of dynamic in the Church’s life together becomes a problem of sociality. We experience a disintegration of the deep sociality of the Church as a slowing down of the dynamic movement towards the ‘other’ in a continual, or ongoing, rediscovery of the hidden Christ, in those whose churchmanship and theology may feel alienating. This loss of momentum in its relationships is also symptomatic of a *spiritual* deficiency in the intellectual life of the Church as a whole. Where differing theologies are reduced to static ‘truths’ polarised into competing issue driven agendas, the truth itself is separated from the dynamic of the Spirit, a dynamic which Hooker associates with the being of God himself and with his will and purpose for the highest good.

Furthermore, where Christians are divided, each party remains convinced of its ‘truth’ and, as the recent conflict has shown, of its exclusive right to be considered ‘truly’ Anglican. The way in which truth is conceived and subsequently appropriated

³ The *Virginia Report* describes the life of communion as one which is ‘held’ and ‘supported by a web of structures’. ‘The Virginia Report’, ‘The Dublin Report’ *Being Anglican in the Third Millennium, Anglican Consultative Council X, Panama City*, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Morehouse Publishing, 1996, James M. Rosenthal, & Nicola Currie, (comps.) p.242.3:1 Hereafter referred to as *The Virginia Report*

by one party or another is defined by the manner in which scripture is read.⁴ When scripture is handled as an arbitrator of propositional truth claims, we lose sight of the truth of God as it is revealed in the ongoing life of Christ. It becomes dislocated from the movement or dynamic of the Holy Spirit. Where one or other party or identity appropriates the truth, it ceases to be the living embodiment of God's continuing revelation of himself in the dynamic of the Spirit at work in the transforming work of the word.

The ongoing and transforming word allows us to think of scripture as informing the life of the Church in a dynamic and sacramental way. Employing sacramental language in conjunction with a shared life in the Spirit allows us to understand the process of transformation to be in God's movement towards his people in the abiding presence of Christ. His presence is centred in the Eucharist and recognised and received in the reading and teaching of the word of God in scripture. In both cases, the movement of God's Spirit frees Anglicans from the prison of static thinking. This static, or non dynamic thinking, imprisons the truth while at the same time 'binding' and alienating different Anglican identities. But the abiding Spirit of God, as it continuously transforms our understanding, is also the repeated covenantal forward movement of encounter which underpins the whole of Salvation History and which reveals truth in new and unexpected ways. Scripture has shown it to be the movement of reconciliation in God's invitation to be in relationship with him, and subsequently with one another. It affects the whole social dynamic of the Church as well as that of the individual's ongoing journey with God.

The Lambeth Conference of 1988 describes this reconciliation as 'God's life with us' in which Christ himself is 'the question that disturbs us'.⁵ The questioning of Christ begins in his abiding presence in the midst of the Church's life but it also concerns his identity. In this respect, the question which he puts to Peter, 'Who do you say that I am?' disturbs our certainties, or individually held truths. It points to a relationship in which God is always inviting us forward into truthful dialogue and away from the 'truths' which shape our understanding of our own exclusive identities. The question put to Peter obliges us to constantly surrender *a priori* held convictions, as it does in God's dialogues with Job. For this to be possible, in the life of the Church, the dialogue needs to begin in the place of understanding which the 'other' has.

Renewed self understanding therefore involves a crossing of boundaries between God and human beings, and between separated parties in the Church. Crossing boundaries entails a kind of 'wrestling' – and ultimately transforms conflict itself; conflict between human beings and between God's people and God himself. It does so as it allows for a transformation of human understanding about God and about truth. Having encountered or 'wrestled' with God, truth is apprehended directly, as it was for Jacob, and becomes 'real' as the truthfulness of God understood at the deepest level and in the way others understand God to be.

⁴ Rowan Williams 'The Discipline of Scripture' *On Christian Theology* [Series: Challenges in Contemporary Theology], Blackwell, London: 2000

⁵ *The Lambeth Conference 1988, Dogmatic and Pastoral Concerns*, 'Communion with God and the Life of the Christ'. P.82:6. See also *The Virginia Report*: 'The good news of the Christian Gospel is that Jesus' life among us is God's life – God breaking down the barriers of our bondage and sinfulness'. P.232:2.7 and 237:2.9

I have already suggested that the question ‘Who do you say that I am?’ implies Christ’s movement towards the Church in the dynamic of his presence in the Spirit but it is asked, or spoken, into a historical context, as well as into the social and relational one of Church (especially Church as Communion). Christ’s movement occurs in time and describes the activity of salvation – how salvation is ‘worked’ in the Church and world of today. The question invites response from the Church’s forward movement of its actual life, its activities and the ordering of its structures and polity, so that the outworking of this dynamic in a Church which is divided along the old fault lines of identity issue-driven agendas is that of reconciliation.

If we think of transformation as inherently dialogical, the question put to Peter also challenges our concerted will for a deeper understanding of the different ways in which God is true and faithful to all members of his Church, irrespective of difference. This frees identities and allows what Richard Hooker termed ‘the collective will’ to be connected in the deepest sense to the will and purpose of God for their highest good. Truth becomes synonymous with the faithfulness of God in the person of Jesus Christ who continues, in a dynamic sense, to be revealed in the face of the other.⁶

Loss of this dynamic in its relational and intellectual life reinforces the barriers between competing Anglican identities and weakens the fabric of its sociality. It also impoverishes Anglican worship. This too has negative implications for the life of the Church. We feel the effect of this static theological and social climate when worship reinforces the truth claims of one or other party identity, either in a barren ritualism which has become disconnected from a deep experience of God, and so devoid of meaning, or in a vapid sentimentalism which is equally out of touch with the vitality and ‘hard edged’ quality of God’s continuing dialogue with the world of today. In both cases, the static thought climate which polarises identities also paralyses Church life, ultimately leading to a perception of the Church as self serving, introspective and irrelevant to the real and deeper needs and preoccupations of people.

The middle way

A non dynamic intellectual and spiritual state not only inhibits meaningful worship but also risks stifling Anglicanism’s particular voice, the voice of the reconciling ‘middle way’. Anglican tradition, and Anglican theology, builds on the way in which this implicitly reconciling voice allows Anglicans to be communicators of the way God is ‘true’ to the world and to the wider Church in all its diversity and difference. It does so without claiming that Anglicanism is in any way superior to other denominations⁷, so that properly employed, the Anglican ‘voice’ is in harmony with that of the Spirit who ‘convicts’ the world in truthfulness, rather than allowing one or other party to employ the truth in an arbitrary fashion in order to condemn or

⁶ David Ford *Self and Salvation: Being Transformed*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge:1999 especially ch. 1

⁷ As with the differences encountered between Anglican ‘sub-denominations’, discussions become polarised thus channelling or ‘funnelling’ the debate into one which is chiefly concerned with establishing who or which party is ‘truly’ Anglican. Compare recent controversies in the Communion with, for example, ARCIC I in which the Roman Catholic Church defends its position on those issues which divide Anglicans and Roman Catholics from the basic premise that the Catholic Church is synonymous with ‘universal’. See preface to ‘ARCIC I: The Final Report’ in *Anglicans and Roman Catholics: The Search For Unity* p.15-18.

exclude. The truthfulness of the Anglican voice, as it is true to a deep understanding of what it means to be Church in the world today, also connects at a deep and intuitive level with the self understanding and experience of people and so conveys meaning.

Dynamic apophatic at the service of communion – How truth and meaning are connected

When the activity of individual churches and the practical outworking of individual vocations also engages with the Spirit in this way, they too become ‘meaningful’, allowing every aspect of ministry and of the Church’s life to be truthful in the fullest sense. That is to say, where meaning is found, or recognized in the life and work of the Church, it becomes concomitant with truth. But, as the foregoing discussion suggests, this is a truth derived from ‘not knowing’, rather than ‘knowing’. It is apophatic and at the same time part of the movement of God’s own life – in direct contrast to the arbitrary truths which define certainties within a non dynamic structure or ‘closed belief system’. Not knowing, but at the same time knowing, who God is suggests, paradoxically perhaps, the need for a deeper life together *in* God, in which God is both ‘known’ and ‘not known’ in the wrestling and questioning involved in a shared journey of discovery: discovering who God is in the place of intuitive understanding, or meaning, which others have, and of who he is in a person’s own continually changing, as well as developing, self understanding.

Apophatic truth can also become the binding factor in relationships between parties in the Church. For the Church to convey meaning, and so to be truthful, suggests that party identities need to derive from a place of ‘not knowing’ as a surrendering of the particular understanding of God appropriated by a particular identity. This apophatic way of knowing and not knowing God through the neighbour’s experience of him might now permit the freedom and dynamic of God’s Spirit to reshape our common life at every level, allowing that life to become more truthful.

These ideas are not new. I have already suggested that Richard Hooker supplies the definitive model for a settled historical church, as a community which is deeply integrated within God’s purpose. He thereby lays implicit claim to an apophatic way of thinking about the Church, as a body of people reconciled in God by what he calls ‘collective deduction’. It is from this place of ‘collective deduction’, or intuition, that reason is brought to the service of truth.⁸ Where Hooker connects the will and purpose of God with the dynamic movement of the Spirit, movement and purpose become synonymous with God’s activity, so that the activity of God in the world and in the Church *is* his will and purpose for its good. Hooker sees this purpose being worked out, or realised, by participation in a shared belonging in Christ. This is the basis for our own understanding of the ‘fabric’ of Communion. Allusions to this fabric – especially to the way in which it has been torn – occur frequently in the record of exchanges between separated parties in the Anglican conflict of recent years.

⁸ For our belief in the Trinitie, the Coeternitie of the Sonne of God with his Father, the proceeding of the Spirit from the Father and the Sonne, the dutie of baptizing infants, these with such other principall points, the necessitie wherof is by none denied, are notwithstanding in scripture no where to be found by expresse literall mention, only deduced they are out of scripture by collection *Laws I.14:2*

Anglicanism and the Meaning of Communion

Although Hooker does not describe the Church specifically as a communion, the depth of meaning which he gives to participation, as integration within the dynamic of God's ongoing purpose for its highest good gives added significance to the idea of a society working within a coherent theological system. Its coherence derives from its inner life in God, not simply from the visible, and superficial, unity of the system itself. It is therefore from its life in God that the Church as a society acquires meaning and it is God who, in rooting it as an integrated body within the Trinitarian mystery of his own inner consistency, informs it with ongoing life and meaning for the world. Hooker's thinking brings together the consistency of God's purpose for the Church (initially revealed in God's laws) with his own inner being. Furthermore, God works 'for his owne sake' and not simply 'that any thing is made to be beneficall unto him, but all things for him to shew beneficence and grace in them.'⁹ In other words, God works in order to inform his work with the meaning which derives from his purpose for the Church's highest good and to reconcile and mark different identities with the truthfulness which is characteristic of Christ himself. The same principle holds true for the Church of today. When the coherence and meaning of its life and witness reflect God himself, the inner and outer life of the Church are integrated within the inner consistency of the Trinity – the dynamic 'being and acting' of God – and the Church acquires a new common identity as a holy society.

Communion as a Reflection of God – Holiness

Where separated identities find a new and shared meaning, in being reconciled into the dynamic of God, they also become more intuitively aware of the possibilities which exist for moving 'in rhythm' and discerning (or, in Hooker's terms, deducing by collection) God's purpose for the highest good of a holy society. His purpose is that they move towards God in a covenantal relationship which is reflected in a deeper understanding and honouring of opposing integrities. A covenantal response to God and movement towards him also enables the work and activity of the Church to be 'graced' and transformed in such a way as to reflect the loving purpose of God for all his people. But this 'working' is also part of the *historical* process. It occurs in the movement of time and in the contextuality of the events and circumstances which touch the lives of people and in which meaning is sought.

If holiness is 'made' within the movement of history, we are once again challenged by Christ's question. The question which he puts to Peter 'Who do you say that I am?' requires that each identity seeks out the holiness of the other. In this way, the activity of reconciliation is informed by the need to understand others in their difference and diversity at the deepest level. Their holiness, as it is intrinsic to their identities, is revealed as having been shaped by the stories they have to tell (their history) and by their individual contextualities – the history of circumstances and events which shape the religious thinking of the individual and of the churches. It is in this respect that tradition acquires a special significance.

⁹ *Laws I.1.2:4*

Tradition as the Locus of Unity - Holiness

Richard Hooker allows us to think of tradition as serving the revealed truth of scripture. Tradition becomes a conceptual space in which truth is connected to the dynamic of God's action in history. This allows us to see tradition as a context in which not only scripture, but the different 'histories' of the Church's life can be interpreted in such a way as to reveal in new and sometimes surprising ways God's purpose for its life together.

For this reason, life together involves an open and questioning search for meaning and understanding. It requires a willingness to fully enter into the traditions of others; that collection of events and circumstances which comprise their self-understanding and which dictate their reading of scripture. Crossing the boundaries of tradition without confusing or diminishing separate integrities, allows for the subsequent transformation of that life to its highest good – one which is dependent on a new and deeper understanding, or collective wisdom, giving meaning to its life and ministry to the world.

The transformation which comes from renewed encounter is also part of the historical process of the world's own contextuality, re-told and 'worked through' in a given culture, so the meaning which is found in the life of the Church through reconciliation connects with the meaning which many in the world are seeking. The Spirit at work in the Church is the same Spirit which speaks through the cultures and languages of the world. It follows that separated traditions, or 'cultural' identities, in the Church need to re-learn one another's truth languages if they are to rediscover the kind of truth which gives meaning and which best describes the will and purpose of God for the Church and for the world. Tradition, as the culture context of a particular identity, now becomes the *locus*, or context, for a process of transformation which transcends the barriers of issue driven conflict by allowing truth to be discerned collectively, in diverse ways which lead to a rediscovery of common meaning and so to meaningful unity.¹⁰ The Eucharist, as it supplies the common language of exchange and encounter with God, makes this rediscovery possible.

Tradition as Context – The Eucharist

The Eucharist now becomes the method and language for renewed encounter which permits the rediscovery of truth in a new understanding. The life of communion, as it is modelled on the Eucharist, is therefore sacramental in a particular way – the way of moving forward into reconciliation. Thinking of transformation in eucharistic terms supplies a basis on which to construct a method for healing division in the reconciling of separated party-denominational identities. When the healing which comes with renewed understanding occurs at an inner, or deeper, collective level it generates trust. We 'connect' or 'hear' one another in a *positive* expectation of the way others understand God to be. In this way meaning 'speaks' truth into the

¹⁰ In a lecture delivered at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, November 10th, 2000, Rowan Williams argues that tradition represents the 'locus' of unity for the Church. He stresses Hooker's fidelity to reformed thinking in this respect, since Divine action as the locus of unity supersedes any understanding of tradition as essentially autonomous, with particular properties and characteristics pertaining to one or other group.

heart of conflict without precluding divergent understandings or interpretations of scripture.

Who do you say that I am?

Instead, this kind of positive expectation *hears* the question posed by Jesus to Peter, ‘who do you say that I am?’ being spoken to the other and *waits* in, and with, Christ for the answer. The hearing and waiting involve knowing and not knowing and both depend on trust. Waiting involves setting aside any feelings of one’s own prior knowledge or innate superiority in a will to, even if briefly, ‘not know’ who Jesus is in seeking him in the integrity of another. In this ‘not knowing’, which becomes an aspect of the *via negativa*, we are able ‘to talk things into new connections and so cause their boundaries to become vaguer’.¹¹ Things acquire new meaning and a different significance with the talking, and it is from this new meaning that the language and activity of worship acquire greater significance.

Jesus Christ –Meaning in Worship

As a result of the will to encounter the other from within the depth of their integrity, and so to understand and arrive at new meaning, the language and activity of worship now pertain to the whole Christian way of life, even if the worship which expresses the intuited meaning of different identities does not always share the same priorities or have the same focus. The Church’s ‘ordinary’ life, in terms of its relationships and of its activity, is now informed by a depth of meaning which is discovered in worship, so that we see the Spirit of Jesus Christ supplying the dynamic for reinterpreting the language of culture in the activity of worship in such a way as to allow for the crossing of conceptual boundaries.

As I have already suggested, this boundary crossing allows for the ongoing re-interpretation of truth and makes a worshipping community inclusive in the deepest sense. It is also when worship informs the renewed life of a reconciled community of believers that language itself begins to exceed the limits of the spoken or written word and to include all ways in which groups and individuals might rediscover and reinterpret meaning and truth, beginning in their acceptance of one another and in their receptivity to Jesus Christ in worship.

As the focus of worship, Christ is also the ultimate *locus* of unity. He becomes the universal embodiment of truth as meaning and, in that sense, ‘classic’.¹² That is to say, the meaning of a particular history is continually reinterpreted in him, allowing truth itself to remain at the same time contingent to all other revelatory histories and contextualities. This kind of contingency, the result of allowing the question ‘who do you say that I am?’ to be answered in the language and thought of other contextualities does not relativise truth (as some might suppose) but enriches it,

¹¹ Rowan Williams ‘Sacraments of a New Society’ in *On Christian Theology*

¹² David Tracy employs the use of the word ‘classic’ to indicate the universality of certain classic texts, so named because of their resonance with individual and corporate experience. They are classic in calling forth a response from the reader which is one of recognition and understanding. The classic, understood in this way, also integrates the particular history within the wider historical sphere of understanding. *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*, New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981 ch.3 especially p.10

so that the question which Jesus poses to Peter challenges conflicting parties in the Church when they fail to wait on one another and to hear the other's truth from within their life together in God. To quote Rowan Williams;:

Jesus is God's participation in, and ordering of, the systems of human communication that constitute the unity, the possibilities of relation, the "sense" of human existence in the world, and is also our participation in the "communication" and relatedness that is the creative life of God.¹³

Where communication is translated into corporate worship it becomes part of God's own sacramental activity of 'making' and thereby inherently transformative. At the same time, we can understand this activity to be the outcome of a dynamic form of communication between people whose lives are caught up in the life of God. In their worship, the spoken Word or *Logos* proceeds from, and returns to, the will and purpose of God. Hearing this word 'spoken' from within a deeper unity in Christ is the first step in learning the kind of language which breaks down the barriers of hostility, as it draws on the resources of the continuing historicity of the community in a continuous dialogue of question and response. This dialogue also finds expression in the liturgical dialogue of corporate worship, as a seeking after meaning in the questioning of God.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion was prompted by the uncertainty which I sense surrounds the Anglican Church as a communion with respect to its identity, meaning, and purpose. I have argued that the problem is essentially a spiritual one but that it is also intrinsic to the nature of Anglican sociality. It involves a loss of meaning and purpose in its life together. Thus the burden of my discussion has been that meaning is only to be rediscovered in a universal and ongoing process of reconciliation. This requires that worshipping communities and decision making bodies, which are intrinsic to one another but at the same time comprised of conflicting identities, have greater confidence in their life together in Christ, as his life is held in the inner life of God, and in the way in which the Church's life is informed by the dynamic movement of his abiding Spirit in their midst. I have sought to indicate that reconciliation, and the meaning which comes with it, calls for the transformation of party and issue driven identities, along with the language and truth perceptions with which these identities are too easily associated. In both cases, they have become disconnected from the dynamic of the Spirit. For this reason, I have suggested that intuitive thinking permits a rediscovery of the truthfulness of God's purpose and of the way in which he acts in the life of the Church. Within the collective life of the Spirit, dialogue leads to a new discernment of God's truthfulness and of the way he acts in the world and Church of today, and so reveals the meaning which others hope to find in their answer to Christ's questions to Peter, 'Who do you say that I am?'.

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¹³ Rowan Williams, 'The Finality of Christ', *On Christian Theology* p.93