

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From the Rt Revd Christopher Hill

Sir,

The Society, and the Anglican Communion, are indebted to Norman Doe for his proposition that there is an unwritten *ius commune* among the Churches of the Anglican Communion, although there is no formal, explicit *corpus* of binding canon law globally applicable ('The Common Law of the Anglican Communion' (2003) 7 Ecc LJ 4). Into the discussion I hope Norman Doe's article will stimulate, I offer an oblique comment by way of analogy.

How does the Anglican Communion reach global decisions on matters of faith, if at all? When the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches required responses to its document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (1982) from 'Confessional Families' worldwide, only the Lambeth Conference could have any potential for response. Similarly, and more explicitly, the *Final Report* of the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission (1981) was addressed to the whole Anglican Communion which had originally established it with the Vatican on the Roman Catholic side.

Though the Lambeth Conference has no power to decide either global canons or rule of faith, individual Provincial Churches of the Communion were asked to study and report on both documents in preparation for Lambeth 1988. The Church of England did so in a Report from the Faith and Order Advisory Group (1985) which gave the documents a nuanced welcome and acceptance. All the provincial responses were examined by a group of consultants and bishops representing the Communion. Their *Emmaus Report* (1987) catalogued the detailed responses and was laid before the Bishops of the 1988 Conference, which after debate carefully pronounced a consensus.

Certainly not a juridical decision, yet a *de facto* and practical mechanism for receiving—or rejecting—and declaring ecumenical and other statements of faith. A similar mechanism could be evolved for discerning and expressing an Anglican Communion consensus on the common law of the Anglican Communion.

+ Christopher Stafford
6 Broughton Crescent
Stoke-on-Trent
ST12 9DD

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