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AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY AND THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

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by

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It is a common place to say that we live in a time of significant change in Australian society. Technology is changing the face of our cities and our lives. The population of Australia is changing radically, even though there might have been a slow down in immigration in the last few years. The way in which our economic life operates changes almost every week. Government policy and the style of government are arenas of change. Authors speak of, the reinventing of Australia, the end of uncertainty, the virtual republic, and Australia's cultural wars in the 1990's. These are some of the signs which indicate that in Australia we live in a time of change.¹

The institutions of our society are changing. They are changing because of external forces, not least of which are the impact of our region upon our society and the globalisation of the world economy. There are internal forces at work as well, which make the changes in our institutions possible. Who could have imagined the collapse in the credibility of banks in Australian society? The values which they are now presumed to foster and encourage, are simply commercial. Loyalty, wisdom, prudence, reliability and commitment to the interests of the customer are no longer values which we associate with banks. There have been value shifts in our society which make these institutional changes possible.

So we are witnessing movement in the values of our social life. That has an impact on the way in which we live our lives. In general we now accept as a positive value the idea of women having a career and reaching the higher levels of professional and business activity. That is a new value in modern Australia. The environmental movement, multiculturalism, the recognition of Aboriginal people, our relationship to our regional neighbours, prompting the question as to whether we are ourselves Asian, are all indicators of a shifting scene of values in our society.²

1 See H MacKay, *Re-Inventing Australia*, Pymble, 1993. P Kelly, *The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s*, St Leonards, 1992. M Wark, *The Virtual Republic: Australia's Cultural Wars of the 1990s*, Sydney, 1997.

2 See S Fitzgerald, *Is Australia an Asian Country?*, Sydney, 1997,

The question of who we are, that is to say our identity, gathers a number of these issues together. The publisher of the recent book by Mackenzie Wark, makes the point, that the author “takes a fresh look at recent debates about gender race culture and the media and suggests that our sense of national identity no longer resides in our past, but is continually being reinvented.” Who we are, our identity, touches on the questions as what we regard as important or valuable and how we see our lives as having meaning. It is because identity involves values and meaning, that it is contested in public debate about the community’s identity.

This contested arena in public debate in Australian life has affected the Anglican Church, indeed the Australian identity issues have precipitated some of the major debates which are reshaping the Anglican Church in Australia.

It is in this context, I want to argue four theses:

1. Who we are is important to us
2. Community identity is always contested
3. Australian identity needs Anglican input
4. Anglicanism needs to participate in Australian identity

1. WHO WE ARE IS IMPORTANT TO US

Who we are has both an individual and a group or social dimension to it. These two overlap and interact with each other. I want to explore first the individual dimension.

(1) The individual dimension

Literature is replete with examples of people being “named“ as a way of identifying their character. Sometimes that naming is for specific purposes. For example, in Shakespeare’s Henry V, Act III Scene 1, King Henry exhorts his soldiers to march again, against the French town of Harfleur. “*Once more unto the breach dear friends, once more*”, he says. In that extraordinary speech he appeals to the character of his listeners,

*“On, on you noblest English
whose blood is fed from fathers of war-proof!
Fathers like so many Alexanders,
have in these parts from morn till even, fought
and sheathed their swords for lack of argument.”*

Then further he addresses the Yeomen before him,

*“And you good Yeomen
Whose limbs were made in England, show us here
The mettle of your pasture, let us swear
That you are worth your breeding; which I doubt not;
For there is none of you so mean and base
That hath not noble lustre in your eyes.”*

Henry appeals to a characterisation of the identity of his hearers in order to motivate them to action.

In the Old Testament, Abram has his name changed by God to Abraham, to indicate that he is the recipient of the promise and the covenant. Jacob the twister is changed to Israel, the Prince of God. And in the New Testament, Simon the fisherman, was changed into Peter the Rock, upon which Jesus will build his church.

Naming individuals was a way of identifying them for some purposeful action or meaning. The same can be said when we portray people. To paint the portrait of someone is, in part, to interpret and to characterise that person's identity. Sutherland's portrait of Winston Churchill was so offensive to his wife Clementine, that when Churchill died, Clementine cut it up and threw it out. Kenneth Clark in his book *Civilisation*, constantly uses portraits to discern the character of individuals. I remember having my portrait painted by Judy Cassab, and the whole exercise of the sittings was an attempt, by the painter to discern the character of the sitter, and so the painting becomes a kind of symphony of form and freedom of identity and interpretation. A painting is a visual naming. A characterisation of a person's identity.

When I was an undergraduate at university, I studied child growth and development in educational psychology. Then, books spoke about the socialisation of children, it was a process discovering some distinctness in the relationship between the child and the parent. It was a discovering of a working sense of identity. There was connection, but there was also disconnection.

Each of these examples illustrate how identity is shaped by the interaction of synchronic and diachronic elements. Things that live from the past. Our heritage as yeomen, or English nobles on the eve of a battle, or those contemporary things which affect us, such as are encountered by the growing child.

Our identity is that space marked out by the intersection of these various influences. But it is also the case that our identity is not entirely singular or simple. Our identity is made up of a range of

different identities. The identity which I have in one part of my life, may be different from that which I have in another part. It is effected not just by my role, but my perception of who I am in that different situation. These different identities are held in a coherent way by our consciousness. It is that balance, that coherent whole, which touches, comprehends and extends into the separate identities which constitutes who we are. That consciousness comes to bear when we do something which is uncharacteristic of ourselves, and we self-consciously say, "I was not my self when I did that". Not saying, that we did not do it, but that my conscious understanding of who I am, is different from that which is revealed by that action.

Such an identity is not fixed, either externally or internally. The extremes of fluidity of personality, we call personality disorders. Eysenk was surely correct, when he drew attention to the social character of madness. No one's identity is rigidly fixed. It is a dynamic conception.

It is dynamic and not always settled even for the subject. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in one of his most powerful poems, poses the questions as to who I am. He perceives what other people say of him, but knows from within himself in his self-consciousness, that he is internally something quite different.

Bonhoeffer's poem not only highlights the dynamic character of our identity as individuals, but, in the conclusion of his poem, he draws attention to something which is fundamentally Christian as well. For Christianity is about faith and commitment. About the unselfconscious belonging to God. About the individual's abandonment to the grace and providence of God. Bonhoeffer finishes his poem, "*Who am I? They mock me these lonely questions of mine. Whoever I am, thou knowest, O God, I am thine.*"³

The Christian insight into human identity is that finally it belongs to God, it is in the ultimate future, that we will know as we are known. Our true selves, the real and complete knowledge of us, is to be found in God and for us only in his future eschaton.

That insight draws attention to several important elements about identity and the contingent character of our lives. It highlights for us that ultimate values are implanted in our lives and it underlines the dynamic character of our identity as human individuals.

³ From D Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, London, 1971.

(2) **Group dimension**

But we are not totally isolated individuals. Indeed we are only ever social individuals. We did not need John Donne to tell us this truth, but he did express it well when he said that, “*No man is an island complete unto himself.*” There is thus a social character to our own individual identity, and there is also a group dimension to identity.

Groups aggregate in identity differentiations. They come to share in commonalities and thus constitute themselves as an identifiable group. Such groups can be occasional for a purpose which is quite specific. A group which has a clear identity occasionally comes together for the Clean Up Australia Campaign. They are attached to each other by a common cause. Or the purpose for joining with others might be much broader and more diffuse. For example, a sporting team, though it has the focus upon participating in particular events, nonetheless is a continuing activity. The very continuity of the association, brings with it an implication of a more diffuse and ongoing identity for that group.

A more diffuse purpose is implied in membership of an RSL Club, which membership brings an individual into a group which is distinct, but whose identity is reasonably diffuse as compared with much more specific function orientated groups.

Even so, a group who has an identity can be more enduring and less manifestly defined by a specific purpose. A religious group, or an ethnic group can have local and broader associations and whose purposes for the members of that group are not specific and often multiple.

Groups continually exist beyond their physical gathering in the minds and identity sense of the individuals who belong to them. This is the startling and helpful thesis of Benedict Anderson, when he talks about the way in which people belong to “imagined communities”.⁴ Mackenzie Wark in his recent book, talks about this in terms of a virtual republic. “The whole point”, he says, of a virtual republic, “is to create a people aware of itself as a people.”⁵

The Christian insight on this social dimension, goes somewhat beyond the imagined quality of the community. According to the Christian tradition individuals are social individuals by the creative and redemptive purposes of God, for the benefit of the whole group as well as for the benefit of the individuals. That quality of interaction and

⁴ B Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London, 1991.

⁵ op cit p.17.

belonging between the group and the individual and the divine provision of that dynamic, is expressed in the New Testament. The apostle Paul describes the differences which individuals bring to a group as gifts from God. They are gifts for growing the common good, and that common good is maturity in Christ. That common good is not a common good of uniformity, but of diversity and dynamism within the group which is created by the redemptive purposes and activity of God. Local groups in this understanding are part of a wider whole for analogous reasons. Such sociality is part of the mission of God in the human condition. It is part of God's exploration into the creation in order to produce a community of people. That mission is itself, in Christian understanding, an expression of the divine character marked by outreach or love, by redemption and by community. Christian thinkers have used the Doctrine of the Trinity as a way of explaining and monitoring this process of the redemption of humanity.

Who we are is important to us, both as individuals and as members of multiplicities of groups. For who we are, our identity, is an important way in which we speak about meaning, value and purpose in our lives.

2. COMMUNITY AND IDENTITY IS ALWAYS CONTESTED

In the interplay between groups and individuals and between groups and groups, the question of an identity of a particular group, the designation of this group for example as Anglican or as Australian, inevitably raises matters of dispute and difference. Because of the difference that is built into the very character of even quite narrowly defined groups, the question of the identity of that group involves an inter play between those internal differences.

One can see this in relation to both the Anglican Church, and Australia. In a recent essay Richard White says, "*That when it comes to naming even the simplest realities 'Australian', we get into difficulties because we are inevitably touching on questions of power and identity.*"⁶

The term Australian in the nineteenth century was not unreasonably used initially to describe the Aborigines. The concept developed in the course of the nineteenth century and in the twentieth century, so that

⁶ W Hudson and G Bolton, *Creating Australia. Changing Australian History*, Sydney, p.17.

Richard White can describe ‘Australian’ in our modern sense as a European construct. But in fact it was a European construct already in the nineteenth century, because indigenous people who lived on the continent of Australia did not themselves think of themselves as constituting a totality. They were not Australian, they named themselves according to a variety of kinship and linguistic associations. The development in the use of the term ‘Australian’, shows not only the European conceptual influence, but also the rhetorical purposes for which the term was used.

In a recent book of essays entitled *Creating Australia*, a group of historians have tried to identify the issues that they believe are currently at stake in the writing of Australian history. In the introduction, the editors, Geoffrey Bolton and Wayne Hudson, say that they are concerned with two things. Firstly, to affirm the multiplicity of diversities which exist within the compass of the term Australian, and secondly, to underline the idea of creativity in particular cases, what they call instances of Australian agency, of capacity to respond originally to specific challenges and problems.⁷ Such an approach, they believe, will help us to go beyond the gloomy assessments that arise from generalisations about the character of Australian identity.

The point can be well illustrated by that discrete group within the Australian group, called the Anglican Church. In the development of the Constitution of The Anglican Church of Australia, which went on from 1850 until 1962, surely one of the most extended set of discussions to create a constitution for a particular group of people, issues of identity were crucial. It was disputes about the identity of the community which was to inhabit the Constitution which took so long to resolve.

In his history of the development of the Constitution, John Davis draws attention to many examples of this point, Perhaps one might suffice here. He draws attention to the attachment in the Diocese of Sydney, with the connection of the Church of England, because it implied a connection with the Reformation documents of the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-nine Articles. Underlying that commitment however, was also a commitment to the canon law as it existed in the Church of England in the early part of the twentieth century, which continued to forbid the use of vestments and other Anglo catholic practices. That commitment led Sydney based

⁷ op cit pp. 7ff.

Anglicans in 1948 to support parishioners at All Saints Canowindra in their opposition to a new prayer book authorised by the Bishop of Bathurst. This “Red Book case” went all the way to the High Court, and prompted the Sydney synod to pass an ordinance forbidding the wearing of vestments in the diocese. The new constitution was seen by the older evangelical leaders in Sydney as a protection for reformation doctrine.⁸ The contribution that Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher made when he came to Australia in 1950, was not so much a Constitution, as is sometimes suggested, but rather his advice to the people in Sydney, that the Church of England was about to review its canon law, and that it was highly likely that the protected place for the Reformation styles of clerical dress and practices would be diminished. The people in Sydney became less interested in the English nexus and turned to the national constitution for support.

What lay behind the argument in regard to the Constitution was actually a dispute about the identity of the community for whom the Constitution was intended. Thus for example on 12 May, 1955, Donald Robinson, then a lecturer at Moore College, declared, “We only remain united by maintaining two denominations in one organisation, and allowing members of both to call themselves, Anglican. But the real problem that we have to face is that there is no unity between these two diverging views at the local level of worship, which is the only valid test of unity”.⁹

The issue of vestments and ecclesiastical style and issues to do with worship and liturgy, clearly were vital questions about the identity of the community for whom the Constitution was intended in the 1950s. It is interesting, and not insignificant in any consideration of the identity of Australian Anglicans, that such issues are not now so keenly felt. Other issues have become more important, even vital.

A similar question can be seen in the debate about the ordination of women and the case in the Supreme Court of New South Wales, *Scandrett v Dowling*. That case is really about the relationship between church and state and raised but did not answer important questions on this topic,. It also touched on questions to do the binding character of the rules of the church Constitution. The case concluded that the rules were binding only in so far as questions as property were involved. But the case was not judged as to whether or not the

⁸ See S Judd and K Cable, *Sydney Anglicans*, Sydney, 1987, pp. 252ff.

⁹ *Australian Church Record*, 12 May 1955.

ordination of women involved a matter of property. The parties before the court agreed that the case would be argued without reference to any question about property being involved in the action of Bishop Dowling. We do not know whether the court would have said a question of property is involved in this matter if it had been asked to rule on that question. The conclusions drawn from this judgement differ according to the direction in which individuals wanted to move in their description of the identity of the community for whom the Constitution is intended. Some say, that the Constitution only binds legally in matters which obviously involve property. Anything else is purely voluntary. Because there is so little in much of the life of the Church which involves property, it is said, therefore what the Constitution represents is nothing very substantial. Thus the ties that bind are not many and hardly enforceable. But the court did not say that. In fact the court hardly said anything. All it said was that according to the Act in New South Wales, which enabled the Constitution to come into effect, property was the clue to the entry of the legal system into the affairs of the church.

In an age of electronic communication, computers and the internet, we are increasingly familiar with the notion of intellectual property and the ambiguities, pervasiveness and fluidity of that notion. With radical ubiquity property touches every aspect of our lives, and almost certainly every aspect of what goes on in the community of Anglicans. The court judgement therefore is only of the most limited value and says almost nothing.

But it does actually provide yet another peg on which to hang a discussion about the identity of the community of people for whom the church Constitution was intended. In so far as it does that, it illustrates how in the Anglican Church, as indeed in Australia generally, community identity is always contested. It is contested because what is at stake are matters important to the life and direction of the individuals and the groups involved. What is at stake are questions of meaning, of direction and of decisions, and decisions often involve by implication resources, personal action and obligation.

3. AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY NEEDS ANGLICAN INPUT

Recent debate about Australia's identity is almost entirely devoid of reference to religion in a community, the vast majority of whom, are

religious. The Anglican Community is a significant part of that broader Australian Community. Furthermore, part of their identity as Anglicans, has been regularly shown by surveys to mean something beyond their immediate ecclesiastical activity. It is a significant community within the whole, whose identity reaches out to others in the community.

In 1981 Richard White broke new ground with his book, *Inventing Australia*.¹⁰ He tried to show that there were different kinds of identities, which made sense of what Australia was like; the indigenous people, Australia as a prison, a working man's paradise, another kind of America, a new national place, a diggers home, a place where every man had his Holden. The images he identified, were images of identities that people participated in. Richard White's book has shaped most of the subsequent debate about the nature of the Australian character.

Hugh Mackay in 1993 published his work, *Reinventing Australia*.¹¹ He drew attention to the anxiety which was sweeping across Australia like an epidemic, and in a variety of ways he showed that the institutions of Australia were being redefined. Gender relationships, marriage, work, money, multiculturalism, law and order. All represented areas where institutions were being redefined, and the consequence was that the very notion of Australia was being reinvented before our very eyes.

The year before, Paul Kelly had published the *End Of Certainty*,¹² which took a more political trajectory through the debate about Australian identity. Here he argued that what he calls "the Australian settlement", collapsed in the 1980's. The Australian settlement was the terms upon which the early years of Federation Australians had lived together. It had certain key pillars, which Kelly identifies as, the White Australia Policy, trade protection, central arbitration of wages and working conditions, state paternalism and imperial benevolence, whether from Britain, or the United States of America. Paul Kelly argued, these pillars collapsed in the 1980's and the certainty which had existed for ninety years came to an end.

I have already referred to the book edited by Wayne Hudson and Geoffrey Bolton, it is an extraordinarily stimulating selection of

10 R White, *Inventing Australia. Images and Identity 1688-1980*, Sydney, 1982.

11 See note 1 above

12 See note 1 above.

essays. Richard White revisits his land mark book, sharpens the ideas and clarifies questions. What is it that we mean by Australia? He appeals to Benedict Anderson to say that we think Australia is a conceptual question, it is not equivalent to the nation. It is not equivalent to the continent, even including Tasmania. It is not even equivalent to the aggregation of the institutions which exist. It is an idea in the minds of people with which they associate and to which they belong.

Given the commitment of the editors of this book to underlining the multiplicity of identities which constitute Australia, and the creative contribution or agency of individuals in particular circumstances, it is extraordinarily puzzling that they have failed to include in their discussion any serious treatment of religion in Australia. In the index there is no reference to religion. There are references to Protestant and Catholic, but most of those references appear together by way of a contrast. So in an essay dealing with ethnic identities, reference is made to conflict between Catholics and Protestants. It is a puzzle that a community of such large numbers and of such enduring existence in the history of Australia, should have been eclipsed from the discussion about Australian identity so totally, as has been done in this book.

What the book has lost is a number of useful examples of the very thesis which the editors have sought to enunciate. Would not the ecumenical movement in Australia have been an example of their thesis, about multiplicities of identities and the agency of individuals in particular circumstances to take creative action? One could say the same thing about either the Roman Catholic community or between Irish and Italian Catholicism, or the interplay between the political conservatives and more democratic liberals. Even the experience of Anglicans in the development of their Constitution would have provided a fascinating case study of the thesis that the editors have set their hands to.

No sensible account of Australian identity can ignore the religious dimension to the life of the Australian community. Even on the most narrowly empirical grounds, Anglicans in Australia must be reckoned to be part of the discussion about Australian identity. They are after all a sizeable group of people; 22% of the population identify themselves as Anglican. Over 300 thousand Australian Anglicans attend church

regularly.¹³ Furthermore, belonging to this church community is seen by them to have an influence upon the way in which they view their lives and the way in which they make sense of their social experience.

The Anglican community also offers the possibility of another way of looking at some of the broader social institutions. For example, the Constitution of the Anglican church offers another model of federalism from that which has come to evolve out of our federal Constitution. The centralising tendencies of the national constitution have increasingly given the Federal Government more leverage in political life in Australia. That has not happened in the similarly federal Constitution of The Anglican Church of Australia. It would be an interesting contrast in studies to see why, and in what ways, these different constitutional models contributed to the maintenance and evolving of an identity for the community. It would also itself constitute a model for a study of change in a dispersed “imagined community.”

However, there is a more important reason why Australian identity needs Anglican input. This profound reason relates not just to Anglican input, but religious input, of which, of course, the Anglican input is but one aspect. We live in an age that the idea that the state is secular, that the nation state is dominant, is subject to increasing and manifest falsification. Religion has persisted in the modern age, and furthermore it has persisted in the public arena. One recent study on religion on the world scene was so impressed by that persistence, that it is entitled the *Revenge of God*.¹⁴ It is true that the religious shape of that presence has changed and we witness in recent days the rise of the sect and the rise of religions of private individuality. These are still minority activities compared with the main religious communities. However, in a context of dissatisfaction with so called institutional religion, they are pointers to the persistence of religion in the human condition.

There is something fundamental and profound which Christianity contributes to this discussion. It is expressed in the view of Augustine, that the city of God is enduringly present in the human condition while yet not belonging to it. The human condition makes best sense in the

¹³ P Kaldor, J Bellamy, M Correy and K Castle, *Winds of Change: The Experience of Church in a Changing Australia*, Sydney, 1994, p. 344.

¹⁴ G Keppel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World*, Cambridge, 1994.

light of a notion of God's providential presence in it, and his continuing absence from it. Sometimes this has been expressed in the interplay of imminence and transcendence. I prefer the terminology of presence and absence. However one speaks of this point the reality is that the human condition aspires after God, but never totally clearly, never completely, only ever partially. The Christian interpretation of aspiration and hope, of repentance and forgiveness of grace and law, are not just religious ideas as if they belong to one small discrete department of the human condition. They are ideas which pervade the total experience of any human person and the interpretation of them is part of the discussion about the identity of us all, and of any discrete community to which we belong.¹⁵ An Australian identity needs this Christian input.

Within the broad conspectus of Christianity the Anglican form of Christian faith has a particular contribution to make at this point. Anglican Christianity has had to come to terms with relations with other social institutions and communities in a very fluid and open ended way. It has done this by making distinctions between core and periphery matters, and it has persisted with a theological commitment to a view of the Christian community with porous borders.¹⁶ This pattern may partly due to its origins in Celtic Christianity. It may be partly due to the experience of the Reformation in the sixteenth century as a state orchestrated process at the institutional level in which the church participated, and for which the church had to find some justification or explanation in terms of its own theological tradition.

In a situation where the social institutions of Australia are open to church involvement¹⁷ this Anglican tradition is particularly apt and its contribution can only be ignored at some considerable cost to Australian identity discussion and excluded from debate only by either an act of editorial hubris or a significant failure of nerve or imagination by Anglican thinkers. Australian identity, for empirical, historical and conceptual reasons needs Anglican input.

15 See O O'Donovan, *The Desire of the Nations*, Cambridge, 1996,

16 See B Kaye, *A Church Without Walls. Being Anglican in Australia*, Melbourne, 1995.

17 See BN Kaye, *An Australian Definition of Religion*, University of New South Wales Law Journal, Vol. 14 no. 2 (1992), 332-351 and Richard Hooker and Australian Anglicanism, *Sewanee Theological Journal*, vol 36, 1993, 227-245.

4. ANGLICANISM NEEDS TO PARTICIPATE IN AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY

When we speak of Anglicanism it is important at the beginning to make some conceptual clarifications. Clearly The Anglican Church of Australia, can be used to describe a number of different things. As a phrase, it can be used to describe the synodical structure, the organisational arrangements that exist at regional and national level, (Diocesan synods and General Synod). Those organisational structures can be thought of as The Anglican Church of Australia. But The Anglican Church of Australia cannot in any sense be regarded as comprehended by those organisations, or captured by the reach of those organisations. There are many other institutions and organisations which are manifestly Anglican in character, which serve the community of Anglican Christians in Australia, but which are not part of, or controlled by, nor even in some cases related to the synodical structure.

The conceptual distinctions are analogous to those which Richard White has made in regard to Australia. People belong to a community, and that community is an idea in their minds with which they associate. That idea, that “imagined community”, may have local, regional, national and international connotations and the connotations may be varyingly important in those respects for different Anglicans even though their actual direct participation may be focussed for obvious practical reasons in more local or regional activities.

The Anglican church’s relationship to Australians and their institutions has changed dramatically during the course of our history. The organisational aspect of Anglicanism, enjoyed a monopoly when the Colony was founded. The monopoly dissolved in the early part of the nineteenth century. It retained a leadership, especially as represented by its institutional leaders, who were elite players in Australia’s society. Now, at the end of the twentieth century, the Anglican Church is but one contributor amongst others. We are at the end of a time of very distinct change in the pattern of Anglicanism’s relationship to Australians and their institutions.

That change affects the dynamic of the interface between the Anglican community of Christians and the other communities which overlap with that community and go to make up Australia.

The dynamic which arises from engagement and interaction from dissent and argument is changing, as the pattern of the relationship between Anglicans and others itself changes.

Yet it must be underlined that within the Anglican heritage, there is a strong tradition of commitment to engagement across the interface, between the Anglican community and other communities. Anglicanism, by its tradition, has had porous boundaries and an outward looking disposition, which is actually the source of vitality and creativity. Of course, this element in the Anglican tradition has not always been honoured. The 1662 Act of Uniformity in England in this respect was a very low point in Anglican faith. It narrowed the band of interaction to a single line and blocked the porosity of the borders.

In a better light, and for Anglicans in Australia, it is in this arena of the borderlands that the “agency”, to which Bolton and Hudson referred, is to be found. It is also here that the cultivation and renewal of that “agency” among Australian Anglicans will be cultivated.

It is for that reason, for the very life blood and vitality of Anglicanism, that Anglicans need to participate in the dynamic which is Australian identity.

CONCLUSIONS

I have sought in this paper to argue four theses.

1. Who we are is important to us, because it touches upon meaning and value in our lives and how we make decisions.
2. Community identity is always contested.
3. Australian identity needs not just for imperial reasons, but for reasons of its own integrity, to have Anglican input.
4. Anglicanism needs for its own vitality and integrity to participate in the arena of discourse of contest and argument, of life and exchange, of interaction and activity, which is Australian identity.

Those theses concern not just Anglicans, but Australians generally, and in particular those who are concerned with the life and renewal of our Australian community and its institutions.