

Homosexuality and the Construction of 'Anglican Orthodoxy': The Symbolic Politics of the Anglican Communion

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ABSTRACT

The Conflict over 'homosexuality', which has embroiled the Anglican Communion over the past 15 years, has not primarily been a conflict about homosexuality, or even about sexuality *per se*. Rather, we argue that the conflict has been so intense because 'homosexuality' has become a salient symbol, to which different Anglican constituencies (Evangelical, Liberal, and Anglo-Catholic) have brought their own agenda. The conflict does not simply reflect a pre-existing division between 'liberal' and 'conservative', but the emerging schism reflects the construction of a new religious-cultural identity of 'Anglican Orthodoxy', which has increasingly polarised the Communion. Drawing on interviews with 70 Anglicans directly affected by the conflict in the UK and North America (including and with particular focus on 18 bishops and archbishops) we explore the symbolic politics of homosexuality and the emergence of new configurations of Anglicanism. We suggest that the symbols of the conflict and the competing parties to the conflict are mutually constitutive constructions, and that attention to the processes of symbolic construction and manipulation are important for understanding the conflict.

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THE CRISIS IN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

Since the mid-1990s, the global Anglican Communion has been caught up in an increasingly intense conflict over the role of gays and lesbians in the church. In the lead up to the Lambeth conference in 1998 (a decennial conference of Anglican Bishops from across the globe) the dispute began in earnest at the international level (Bates 2005: 158ff, Hassett 2007:55ff). The conference drafted Resolution 1.10, which was intended to serve as a compromise resolution but did little to quell the conflict. It identifies “homosexual practice as incompatible with scripture” while it also “calls on all our people to minister pastorally and sensitively to all irrespective of sexual orientation and to condemn irrational fear of homosexuals” (Lambeth 1998 1.10 (d)). Since the resolution left the more militant parties on both sides feeling dissatisfied, it may well have intensified the situation.

Lambeth 1998 thus failed to resolve the tension building both *within* and *between* different national churches (‘Provinces’) of the Communion. In the year 2000, some conservative ‘Global South’ bishops began ordaining ‘missionary bishops’ to the United States, arguing that The Episcopal Church had forfeited its right to be seen as a legitimate church because of its failure to act decisively against homosexuality, and as such the southern bishops asserted that its actions were not an incursion into the territory of legitimate bishops (Hassett 2007: 132ff). In 2002, the synod of the Diocese of New Westminster in Western Canada passed a motion in favour of public rites for blessing same sex unions. A number of conservatives walked out of the synod. It was in 2003, however, that the situation erupted into a full crisis, when openly gay candidates were put forward as the bishops of New Hampshire and of Reading in the Diocese of Oxford. After a considerable controversy within the Church of England, Jeffrey Johns withdrew his name, but the consecration of Gene

Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire was approved by the General Assembly of the Episcopal Church (TEC). Such was the ongoing rancour that several hundred bishops boycotted the Lambeth 2008 meetings, many of whom attended an alternative meeting in Jerusalem the month before, called the Global Anglican Futures Conference (GAFCON).

This crisis in the Anglican Communion represents a new development in its history; although the transnational network of churches has experienced bitter theological disputes in the past hundred years, such tensions did not threaten to split-up the Communion, as the current crisis most certainly does. In this paper, we argue that homosexuality as such is not the cause of the dispute, but that it represents a “presenting symptom” (a term we have taken from interview respondents) of a wider range of tensions and grievances within its member churches. The position one takes on ordaining gay and lesbian bishops and blessing homosexual partnerships has become a symbolic marker around which differing (and competing) interests within the Communion are constructing strategic partnerships. Some opponents of homosexuality are using the dispute to frame a new religious identity as ‘Orthodox Anglicans’. This conflict cannot simply be reduced to the effects of a so-called “culture war” between “liberals” and “conservatives,” terms which do not fit well in a number of the local socio-political cultures discussed here, these basic poles stemming from a US context. Such a binary is further complicated by the transnational nature of the dispute within Anglicanism, as well as the different concerns that differing constituencies in these Provinces attach to the question of homosexuality. To counter such an interpretation of the conflict, the issue of homosexuality is described as a symbol, in the broad sense developed by Kniss (1997). The essay demonstrates how this “cultural object” has been constructed and is

being deployed in ways that are effectively redrawing the moral and ecclesial map of Anglican identities and creating, at least provisionally, a binary opposition which threatens to create a schism in the global Communion, as well as within national Anglican churches. While other papers stemming from our research focus on organisational factors (references withheld), here we are concerned primarily with the role of symbols in the construction of religious identities, and their role in the process of reconfiguring the basic fault-lines within a religious community.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The vast majority of the writing on the conflict has come from theologians and leaders of Anglican Churches worldwide. This growing literature is primarily concerned with taking positions on the issue itself, or with holding the unity of the Church together, and not with understanding the social sources and dynamics of the conflict *per se* (cf. Gibson 2002; Radner & Turner 2006; Groves 2008; O'Donovan 2009). A much smaller literature has attempted to explain why this conflict has been so heated, and why it has emerged at this historical moment. The most straightforward explanation is that offered by Philip Jenkins (2007: 235-50). For Jenkins, the development of the conflict over homosexuality in the Anglican Communion is largely demographic. Over the course of the 20th Century, the Anglican Churches of the global South have grown dramatically whilst the Anglican Churches of Great Britain, Canada, and the USA have shrunk both in absolute numbers and in comparison to the general population (cf. Bruce 2002). Thus, for example, regular attendance in the Church of England amounts to less than a million, compared to the 17.5 million members claimed by the Anglican Church of Nigeria (Chapman 2006:9).

Even if this latter figure is greatly exaggerated, it still points to a demographic shift in the Anglican churches worldwide.

The churches of the Global South tend to be more conservative in matters relating to homosexuality (although there are notable individual and national exceptions); the Northern churches are not only losing members, but also are tending to become more liberal in questions of sexuality. Such ‘liberalisation’ is not evenly spread through the Northern churches, however. Alasdair Crockett and David Voas (2003) found that the divide between the pro-gay (young and liberal) anti-gay (older and conservative) in the Church of England was more marked than in the society as a whole, with young, liberal Anglicans less likely to hold negative views on homosexuality than their non-religious peers.

Miranda Hassett (2007) has argued that the conflict cannot be explained simply in terms of the changing demographics of the Anglican Communion and their different perspectives over the role of homosexuality. Drawing on fieldwork among conservative dissidents who had left TEC, and among Ugandan Anglicans, Hassett shows how the conflict has been orchestrated to a considerable degree by dissident American Episcopalians who have used their international relationships and alliances as leverage within the national religious field. *Guardian* journalist Stephen Bates’s *A Church at War* (2005) uncovers further evidence for the linkages between northern conservatives and southern bishops, but assigns more weight to the influence of the Evangelical wing of the Church of England (see also Hunt 2002). The North American conservative dissidents we have interviewed have often emphasised the importance of international partners (particularly bishops) as allies in their struggle within the local diocese or in the national church. One dissident put it bluntly: “without them, we’d have been sunk”. This he argued was the fundamental advantage

of conservative dissidents in the Anglican Church, compared with those in other “liberal dominated” denominations (North America 5).

Over the last twenty years, there has been a resurgence of sociological studies concerned with schisms and intra-denominational conflict, and these have considerable bearing on the conflict in the Anglican Communion. This work illuminates conflicts between fundamentalists and their opponents (Ammerman 1990), over the accommodation to the modern world (Kniss 1996, 1997), the ordination of women (Chaves 1997), as well as the broad-sweeping changes that occurred within the Catholic Church at Vatican II (Wilde 2007). Most of the research in this area has focused on religious conflict in the United States and has endeavoured to comprehend such conflicts within the particular moral universe of American religion (Kniss 1997), as well as the cleavages between liberals and conservatives (Wuthnow 1988; Wellman 2008). This literature thus needs to be adapted to a transnational religious organisation like the Anglican Communion, where the tradition has not (at least until recently) been divisible into ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ camps, and these terms do not work at all well for describing the particular moral universes in which many Anglican churches are situated (not least the UK and Ireland, but also churches of the Global South).

Schisms and internal conflict within denominations are generally understood in the sociological literature as the product of intensifying internal divisions, rather than reflecting doctrinal disagreement *per se*. Liebman, Sutton and Wuthnow (1988), in their study of American denominational schisms, identify a series of factors that correlate with increased likelihood of denominational schism. Those churches which suffer a serious split are typically large and growing; they tend to have congregational polities, whereas churches with Episcopal leadership, and that appoint clergy at the

synodical or presbytery level (rather than at the parish level), and which are members of networks or federations, are less prone to schism. Sutton and Chaves (2004) refine this argument, adding that schism is often a reaction against efforts by church elites to achieve organizational consolidation. They also emphasize that those mobilizing dissent require the ideological and social resources to do so, and the confidence that they possess sufficient reasons to expect the loyalty of a large segment of the faithful.

Some aspects of the conflict within the Anglican Communion do not fit particularly well with the patterns these studies describe, although we see the ideological resources as highly important in the Anglican case. While the Anglican Communion as a whole may be growing (though this is certainly open to question), the Anglican Provinces in which the conflict is most pronounced are shrinking; they are by definition both episcopally led and integrated into a federation (the Anglican Communion); the most conflicted Provinces are also those in which organizational elites are frequently criticized for *not* consolidating power. If anything, the leadership of the Anglican Communion has sought to consolidate authority in response to the conflict and division (most recently by means of an Anglican Covenant, reference withheld).

While we accept the basic arguments about factors outlined above that tend to encourage conflict, division and schism, the ways in which the Anglican dispute does not seem structurally preconditioned for such conflict suggests the importance of carefully considering the dynamics of constructing and deploying symbolic resources; as we will suggest below, these symbolic-ideological resources were not given before the crisis, but have emerged in the midst of the conflict. This is by no means to suggest that the current Anglican dispute is predominantly over questions of doctrine; rather, it is to complement the more structural arguments by showing how such

symbolic elements are themselves shaped by the denominational conflict, and are mobilized by differing groups in different ways and for various purposes. The parties to the conflict and the symbols they use are mutually constitutive: the symbols deployed as ideological resources in the conflict have emerged from longstanding divisions and are contributing substantially to the alignment of the basic structures of the Anglican Communion (not to mention individual Provinces) itself.

More than any other work, Mark Chaves' *Ordaining Women* (1997) has demonstrated the role that denominational fights can be thoroughly symbolic. His work shows that denominational policy often functions less as a guide for practice than as a marker of the denomination's place in the American religious field, whether as a 'liberal' denomination that ordains women, or as a 'conservative' one that does not. In fact, Chaves shows that policies on the role of women have historically made little difference to the actual role of women within ecclesiastical organisations. In short, official church policies are more symbolic markers of a denomination's place in the religious field than a reflection of, or guide for, church practice, and struggles over the ordination of women have had much more to do with the attempt to place a given denomination in this larger denominational field. We show below, however, that symbolic and ideological resources are not always already given. In other words, it is not always a matter of dissident groups simply using pre-existing symbolic identities and markers; rather, some important symbolic resources have been constructed in the course of the conflict itself (particularly the notion of 'Anglican Orthodoxy') as a means of bringing together groups which would have previously had little common cause, and other symbols, notably homosexuality, have taken on new salience.

Kniss's (1997) research on the history of conflict in American Mennonite communities likewise provides an important re-conception of symbols as both stakes

and resources in intra-denominational struggle. Kniss argues that symbols have not been taken seriously enough by students of social movements, having often been treated either as epiphenomenal to the ‘real’ material factors (resource mobilization theory, orthodox Marxism), or else understood as purely instrumental or strategic devices (such as framing theory). Symbols differ from forms of power such as material resources, which can be divided up; this can result in conflicts that are surprisingly intense, particularly when compared to struggles over other kinds of resources. Kniss shows how these disputes can become especially intractable, because symbols are not divisible, like material resources are.

Some symbols are more salient than others, and such salience may vary over space and through time. Kniss observes that conflicts over abstract symbols are less likely than over concrete ones, because they are more ambiguous and can be interpreted and re-interpreted in a variety of ways. Conflict is more likely over concrete symbols, particularly those that Kniss calls ‘cultural objects’ (forms of attire, the organisation of space for worship), or ‘symbolic practices’ (the legitimacy of certain forms of rituals or the qualifications for particular offices of authority or honour). These are closest to the ‘surface of social life...[and so] are more likely to be the object of contention’ (1997: 136).

Despite the very significant differences between Kniss’s American Mennonites, and the traditions and structures of the global Anglican Communion, the list of contentious issues in both historical and contemporary Anglicanism has certainly tended to focus on concrete symbols: the legitimacy of marrying previously divorced people, whether women can serve as priests and bishops, the content and form of shared rituals (the Prayer Book), as well as the more recent conflict over gay bishops, and the blessing of same-sex unions. Although there are clearly identified

communities within the Anglican churches (Anglo-Catholic, Evangelical and Liberal, as we shall discuss below), conflicts between them have historically not tended to focus on the more abstract symbolic codes that these groups embody, but rather on the more visible, tangible symbols that also represent issues of concern to the various parties. Thus, while there exist vast and significant differences among Anglicans on points of theological belief (interpretation of the Nicene Creed, the divinity of Jesus, the efficacy of the sacraments, etc.), these doctrinal issues are not the primary questions that have brought the Communion to the point of schism. Instead, it is the more concrete question of homosexuality that has provided a focal point for groups with different theological concerns and agendas (some of whom have reinvented themselves as ‘Orthodox Anglicans’) to rally around.

What seems to give the question of homosexuality its particular power is the way that it has come to serve as a “condensational symbol”, in Edelman’s (1964) terms, particularly for those with the newly formed ‘Orthodox Anglican’ identity. For Edelman, condensational symbols are distinct from “referential symbols” (which point to concrete and transparent realities) because of their ability to evoke powerful emotions. In subsequent work (1988), he argues that these symbolic constructions are essential for the definition of opponents and enemies, as well as for gathering and mobilising allies. Thus, the construction of effective condensational symbols has been an important component of organising opponents of the ‘liberal agenda’.

In her work on Vatican II, Melissa Wilde (2007) argues that adherence to particular beliefs had an impact on the capacity of different groups of bishops to organise social and doctrinal change. This led ultimately to significant and sweeping changes in the practices of the Catholic Church. The progressive bishops were as successful as they were because they accepted the notion of collegiality (that

assembled, the bishops councils have the same authority as the Pope) whereas the traditionalists held on to the Vatican I conception of the centralised authority of the Pope, and were therefore slow to organise in opposition to these changes. The new symbolic re-configurations of the Anglican tradition have already led to widespread institutionalisations of these symbols, most significantly in the Global Anglican Futures Conference (GAFCON, to be discussed below) as well as to the formation of a separate, “Orthodox Anglican” Province in North America—the latter representing a radical departure from the traditional, geographically bounded, dioceses of the Anglican (and Roman Catholic) tradition. While the final outcome is yet to be seen, the concrete effects of the new symbolic configurations are already clearly being felt.

HISTORICAL CONFIGURATIONS OF ANGLICANISM

The Church of England, and following it, the Anglican Communion, has long been a rather ‘big tent’, encompassing a variety of different traditions, brokered by the ‘Elizabethan compromise’ in the sixteenth century. This was given liturgical and theological support by the *Book of Common Prayer*, and by the influential writings of Richard Hooker. While it would be inappropriate to suggest that nineteenth and twentieth century configurations of Anglicanism are identical to the original parties to this compromise, there has long been an identifiable ‘Catholic’ stream in the Church of England, and at least some conservative Evangelical Anglicans trace their spiritual lineage to the Puritans (cf. Packer 1994). Perhaps the greatest stretch would be to see the Liberal stream as the inheritance of the sixteenth century Humanists. Nonetheless, if Hooker’s theology managed to integrate such disparate social and theological currents into a coherent Anglicanism, it is in part because of the insistence in his theology of understanding the relative authority of Tradition, Scripture and Reason in

light of each other. These represent the emphases of each of the major wings of the church: Anglo-Catholic (Tradition), Evangelical (Scripture) and Liberal (Reason).

The Anglo-Catholic (or 'High Church') party, like the other parties of contemporary Anglicanism, in its current form owes a great deal to the 19th Century revival of 'Catholic' spirituality and liturgy, not least as it was given impetus by the 'Tractarian' movement, also known as the 'Oxford Movement'. This group put great stock in recovering and reconstructing the traditions and teachings of the church, a renewed appreciation and appropriation of the writings of the Church Fathers, and fostering a 'Catholic' understanding of the sacraments and orders of ministry (particularly the apostolic succession and the authority of bishops). Anglo-Catholic services place strong emphasis on 'traditional' liturgical worship, often including bells, and incense. Some Anglo-Catholics, with a very 'traditional' view of the priesthood, have objected to the ordination of women; some have likewise objected because it introduces a further barrier to full communion with the Roman Catholic Church.

The Evangelical Anglican party likewise owes a great deal to the movement's 19th Century history, and has in many ways long been the mirror image of the Anglo-Catholic party. The Evangelicals tend to emphasise the most 'Protestant' aspects of the Anglican tradition, and they put particular emphasis on the authority of scripture, giving less emphasis on the traditions, rites and structures to which the Anglo-Catholics are particularly attached. Because they pay less heed to the church's traditions or structures of authority, and tend towards liturgically simpler (and sometimes less recognisably Anglican) services, the Evangelicals have often been referred to as 'Low Church' Anglicans.

The 'Liberal' or 'Broad Church' party in Anglicanism has been the least well defined, and has undoubtedly been the least well organised of the three parties. The 'Modern Churchpeople's Union', founded at the end of the 19th Century, is perhaps the best representative of the core of the Liberal party. Their founding 'objects' insisted that 'dogma is capable of reinterpretation and restatement in accordance with the clearer perception of truth attained by discovery and research'. From the beginning, they were firmly committed to working toward greater inclusiveness, and better ecumenical relations (Churchmen's Union for the Advancement of Liberal Religious Thought 1899). Because of the strong opposition between Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals, the liberal party was sometimes able to portray itself, in opposition to the 'High' and 'Low' Church factions as being 'Broad Church'.

If the Anglo-Catholic, Evangelical and Liberal constituencies of the Anglican Tradition are identifiable groups, there has always been overlap and blurring at the boundaries, though the different borders have been much more rigidly maintained and defended at various times. The Venn diagram in Figure 1 represents the three parties, along with the theoretical possibilities of overlap, with no attempt to account for the different size of the communities. Estimating these would, at present, be an insurmountable task, given the significant differences between Provinces, and the manner in which such boundaries are more precarious and contested than usual at present; furthermore, the leaders of each group are prone to exaggerate the size of their constituency. Research on the comparative strength of Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical Parishes within the Church of England alone highlight the difficulties of even rough estimation (Francis and Lankshear 1996); that these constitute the primary

‘parties’ within Anglicanism, however, has been, nonetheless, universally accepted¹ (Chapman 2006).

[note: FIGURE 1 to appear about here]

The areas in figure 1 where Liberals overlap with Evangelicals, and where they overlap with Anglo-Catholics on the other, have long been well populated territories, with relatively porous boundaries in both directions, though many may hold one identity to the exclusion of the other. In many respects, the current occupant of the See of Canterbury, Archbishop Rowan Williams, is a good exemplar of a Liberal Anglo-Catholic, as would be another former Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey. Donald Coggan, 101st Archbishop of Canterbury, could be seen as a representative of someone in the interstice between Liberals and Evangelicals, as would many proponents and sympathizers of “Post-Liberal Theology.” Many who identify themselves as ‘Open’-Evangelicals are also in, or at least close to, this overlap between Liberals and Evangelicals, even as this position has certainly become harder to hold in the wake of the present conflict.

For many years, by far and away the most problematic borderland, relatively uninhabited in most periods of Anglican history, and carefully guarded from both sides, has been the frontier between the Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals, sometimes seen as the primary distinction between ‘High’ and ‘Low’ Church Anglicans. These two groups have long viewed each other with deep suspicion, and have run competing associations, seminaries and mission societies (both home and foreign). In fact, the

¹ Charismatic Anglicans also have played a minor role in the current crisis, but they are relatively marginal in terms of both numbers and influence. For the purposes of the present dispute, Charismatic Anglicans are best conceived as part of the Evangelical party (although not accepted by all Evangelicals), rather than a party unto themselves.

term ‘Anglo-Catholic Evangelical’ would have, until very recently, been seen as a contradiction in terms. Evangelicals have been known to refer to Anglo-Catholics as ‘Biscuit Worshippers’ for their highly ‘Catholic’ liturgical sensibilities, fondness for Rome and the Virgin Mary, love of tradition, and emphasis on the importance of the Episcopacy. Anglo-Catholics have often, in turn seen their ‘Low Church’ co-religionists as “Bible Thumpers” who are Anglican in little but their name, holding a ‘Low’ view of the traditions, sacraments, priesthood and apostolic succession of the episcopate, and holding services hard to distinguish from those of the Baptists. The new ‘Orthodox Anglican’ identity, forged in the context of the homosexuality disputes, is to a very great extent an attempt to suture together parts of these two parties long in fierce competition , or at very least, deeply suspicious of one another.

The conflict over homosexuality is in the process of re-drawing the boundaries within the Churches of the Anglican Communion. Even if the conflict is not about sexual orientation *per se*, homosexuality has become the most salient symbol of the conflict, and a marker that constructs a divide between ‘Liberals’ and ‘Orthodox Anglicans’. Whether the new divisions within Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical communities (marked by the response to the ‘homosexuality question’), or the suturing of the conservative communities will be successful in the long run, only time will tell.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Our focus on the dynamics of conflict in the current crisis of the Anglican Communion allows us to examine the processes of symbol construction, and the attendant reconfiguration of the longstanding parties of the church in light of new identities and boundaries that have been constructed. A case study method, using

semi-structured qualitative interviews with purposively sampled key leaders of the church, offers the possibility of gaining further insight into the processes of the Anglican conflict as it has unfolded, with particular attention to the place of symbolic conflict in the dispute. In this essay, we explore the ways in which symbols are being interpreted, constructed and deployed by differing agents involved in the conflict, as well as the attendant (and very concrete) reconfiguration of the parties of the church.

The data in this paper is derived from an ongoing study of the Anglican conflict, and to date includes 70 interviews in the United Kingdom and North America, including 18 interviews with influential bishops and archbishops as well as 52 activists, clergy and involved laypeople (primarily in two particularly conflict-ridden North American dioceses). In the essay we draw in particular on our interviews with bishops as they have proven the best able to give insight into the conflict in its most international dimensions. We use the other interviews primarily as background. Given the Episcopal structure of the Anglican tradition, Bishops have particular responsibilities in the decision-making processes of the church, and are privy to conversations at the highest levels of the church, both nationally and internationally. Subsequent papers will deal with the conflict as it is manifest closer to the ground, in dioceses and parishes, as well as with the more structural aspects of the conflict (references withheld), and the role of communication networks.

For this study we recruited senior or influential bishops, those who have made some, though (as we learned) not all, of their various thoughts about the current crisis known, with the thought that these key leaders would be best positioned to help us further understand both the social and theological dynamics of the crisis. Because our sample of bishops consists of a relatively small number of well-known and influential individuals, we are unable to give the exact number of representatives from the

different Provinces, or the precise proportion of representatives of the different wings of the church without risking breaking our commitment to absolute anonymity and confidentiality. Given the current climate, in which relations are sometimes not only hostile but also litigious (especially in North America, but potentially, also in the UK), the exercise of particular caution is called for in this matter.

We have conducted interviews with representatives in the Churches of England and Ireland, The Episcopal Church of Scotland, The Episcopal Church (USA) and the Anglican Church of Canada, as well as in the new ‘Orthodox Anglican’ Province of North America. The greater part of our sample of bishops are from the UK, and the greater proportion of the activists, deans, priests and involved laypeople, were sampled from conflict hotspots in the USA and Canada. All of our bishops are church leaders with not only diocesan, but also national and international responsibilities, reputations and profiles. Our initial sampling frame for bishops was designed to gain an understanding of the conflict from the vantage point of actors with the widest possible range positions on the ‘homosexuality question’, as well as good representation from each of the three traditional wings of the church (Anglo-Catholic, Liberal and Evangelical). The bishops we interviewed fall roughly into even parts in favour, against, and those who try to take some kind of via-media on the homosexuality question. Amongst the Bishops, our response rate was 75%, with good representation of a range of positions on the current debate, as well as from the different wings of the church. We have no information about the reasons for non-participation for those who declined; all but one (who was ‘already overcommitted’) simply never responded to our initial request, nor to our attempts to follow up. Our sample of bishops is exclusive of representatives of churches in the Global South. As a result, we can say nothing with certainty in this paper about the internal dynamics

of, for example, the Anglican Church in Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, and Kenya, and our ability to discuss the perspectives leaders in those churches bring to the international conflict is very limited. These are undoubtedly important perspectives, but have already been carefully documented and insightfully studied by Hassett (2007), and we intend to develop these avenues in our own further research.

We conducted our interviews with bishops face to face, at a location of their choosing, and using a semi-structured interview format. The interview schedule was designed to elicit the bishops' reflections on the conflict, as expert informants, rather than to elaborate on their personal position on the debate. Unsurprisingly, the positions that they took on the debate informed their observations about the conflict, and all were keen to talk about their own views on the matter. While we found the bishops sometimes stuck close to an established script, we were often surprised by their candour, and several referred to our guarantees of anonymity and confidentiality, as they discussed Episcopal colleagues, or the challenges and difficulties in their dioceses.

Interviews consisted of eight questions, and interviews were scheduled for one hour in duration. We began by asking the bishops to reflect on why they thought that the current conflicts were so intense relative to other conflicts in the history of Anglicanism, followed by a series of questions designed to get them to think aloud about the relationship between the current conflict and differing positions within the church on the nature of the Bible, God and the church itself. We asked them questions about structural/organisational factors that might have intensified the conflict in the communion, including their thoughts about the changing (global) demographics of the church and about the role of para-church pressure groups. Finally, we concluded our interview with a question about whether there was anything that they thought was

important for a complete understanding of the current crisis, but which we might not have thought to ask them. The focus on the ‘symbolic politics’ of the conflict was something that had not been on our agenda when we began our interviews, and emerged from these conversations.

FINDINGS

In presenting our findings, we begin with a discussion of the way that the bishops understand the question of homosexuality largely as, in their words, a ‘presenting symptom’ (or ‘presenting issue’), and what they see as the underlying disease. We then discuss how the homosexuality question has become a symbolic marker which has divided Evangelicals and Anglo-Catholics, who now find themselves at odds with some of those in their own party in the church. We then show how Evangelical and Anglo-Catholic opponents of gay bishops and same sex blessings have created a new umbrella identity, “Orthodox Anglicans”, and how they have constructed their opponents as “liberals” (despite the fact that many who differ with them on the question of homosexuality do not understand themselves in this way). In this way, we demonstrate how responses to the ‘homosexuality question’ and the newly constructed identity of ‘Anglican Orthodoxy’ are in the process of reconfiguring the basic organisation of parties in Anglicanism.

The homosexuality conflict is so intense, at least in part, because it constructs and demarcates a new fracture on the Anglican terrain, one which cuts through even the traditional parties, and is used to challenge the basic organisation of the Anglican Churches, both nationally and internationally. While there may be widespread agreement about the secondary nature of homosexuality as a presenting symptom, this

does not mean that the bishops agree among themselves on what the underlying disease is, and there is, at this moment, no consensus on how it ought to be treated.

Homosexuality as a ‘Presenting Symptom’

The bishops we interviewed took the position that that the current conflict was not solely about homosexuality, and with one exception, did not tend to think that the conflict was not even *primarily* about sexuality. Rather, more than half of the bishops used the same metaphor to describe the relationship of homosexuality to the conflict in the Communion in medical terms. They described homosexuality as the ‘presenting issue’, ‘presenting problem’ or ‘presenting symptom’²; differing views on homosexuality are not the cause of the problem, rather, other differences are coming to the fore in the context of arguments about sexuality.

Having explained why he is convinced that homosexuality is wrong, incompatible with Scripture and with Christian faith, Bishop John argued that those within the church who are advocating blessing same sex unions, or allowing for practicing gay and lesbian clergy and bishops are effectively changing the Gospel. Saint Paul, he argued, included gay sex on a list of sins from which Christians need to repent, and some modern church leaders are undermining this teaching by advocating the acceptance of same-sex relationships. As he explained, changing what counts as ‘sin’ changes the very nature of the gospel:

So in a sense the very real issue: the debate in the church isn’t about homosexuality at all. Homosexuality is the presenting problem. I think we all wish it was a different one but it’s the presenting problem of how seriously we

² This was not a metaphor we had heard used prior to beginning our research, but it has become a commonly heard phrase, finding its way even into discussions in the mainstream media, at least in the UK (see Gledhill 2010). To date we have been unable to identify its origins, or when the phrase became commonly used.

take the authority of the Bible and especially of how seriously we are committed to the faith of the apostles.

Bishop Luke, on the other side of the dispute (in favour of full inclusion of gays and lesbians), also used the language of the 'presenting issue'. In Britain and North America, he explains that some conservatives get very upset about the question of homosexuality because it suggests to them that

the church is abandoning its historic traditions. And so, all the other issues about the authority of scripture, what the church has historically taught, the understanding of marriage... It seems that suddenly in giving way pastorally to the needs of gay and lesbian people, you're running a coach and horses through the whole tradition, so people get very anxious about it. So, apart from the personal issues, you get both positive and negative reactions because people have got agendas of their own.

You've got all those other issues. So it's become a political issue. It's a campaigning issue. So it's the presenting issue for a battle for power in the church.

While Bishop Luke, like a number of other bishops we talked to, recognises that the homosexuality issue is deeply personal for individuals, including some who have 'unresolved issues' with their own sexuality, this does not account for the intensity of the conflict as a whole. Rather, it has much more to do with the way that the sexuality issue has become 'political' and a 'campaigning issue', part and parcel of a 'battle for power in the church'.

Many of the bishops acknowledged the 'symbolic' nature of the conflict, and several of the bishops argued, much as Kniss (1997) does, that this symbolic

component of the dispute is one of the primary reasons it seems so intense and so intractable. Bishop Timothy, who was the first to make us think seriously about the symbolic dimensions of the current conflict, makes a comparison with the conflict in Northern Ireland, where tough legislation had swept away political patronage, and resulted in substantial change. But, he explains,

what trips you up is the symbolic stuff because that's the enduring stuff: 'I have walked down that road for the last 150 years'... [These may not be issues of substance but] they have a visceral connection with identity... with who people are. So they're not negotiable. And I guess that in some elements the gay issue has become symbolic which means that they're not negotiable.

Despite Bishop Timothy's helpful analogy, in the Anglican 'sexuality' conflict, it is not so readily apparent how the particular symbols connect to particular religious identities and the groups that hold them. Or perhaps, it would be more accurate to say that the use of such symbols is in the process of reshaping Anglican identities and the primary historical 'parties' of Anglicanism.

Widening Divisions Within the Evangelical Party of the Church

Bishop David, who considers himself an 'open' Evangelical, lamented the way in which the Evangelical wing of Church has become increasingly divided between more 'open' (or 'liberal') Evangelicals and hard-line conservatives on the question of sexuality. Some of his fellow Evangelicals, he argues, often see themselves as the heirs to the Puritans, who never got their chance to 'complete the Reformation'. He argues that some of these had long been "itching for a fight", and had been quite explicit that the sexuality question was their chance for a "call to arms" that might be taken up by a broader constituency. The sexuality question was thus from the start

immediately embroiled and embedded in longer-standing issues, concerns and politics, including the question of how the Bible operates as an authoritative text in the Church—something which is of central importance for Evangelicals. Bishop David explains that while

... all Anglicans will say that the Bible is our fundamental authority...

Evangelicals will almost stop there even though they are paying lip service to tradition and reason... And then classic Anglicanism will talk about the Bible interpreted through tradition and with the use of reason and taking into account experience... There are a number of ways of configuring that ground. ...but all of us would start with the Bible.

But of course the conservative evangelical will be suspicious of what everybody else means by the authority of the Bible. And that suspicion eventually has led to: 'okay, let's test it out, let's see what they mean by this'. And the feeling of having perhaps retreated and been sucked into the church as a whole has now been challenged: 'okay, let's see what the colour of their money is and what they really mean by the authority of the Bible'. And then you run into the hermeneutical questions... You've got this one issue taken as a litmus test for... liberalism.

Bishop David is not an advocate of blessing gay unions, nor of consecrating gay bishops, but he does see it as an issue on which Christians can legitimately disagree. When we suggested that it is often most difficult to hold a position in the middle as an issue gets increasingly polarised, Bishop David expressed a considerable amount of exasperation.

I think that's right! Of much more concern, and this is part of that, is that we don't seem to be able to discuss in that area now. A banner is raised, a word is

said, a phrase is used and you know immediately which side of this divide you're on. And people listen out for trigger phrases, for symbolic phrases and words. So that middle area of intellectual debate, of real honest grappling, is getting evacuated as people just make it into a political scrap instead of a theological debate. I think Rowan Williams is classically one of those people who gets castigated from both sides as he tries to hold us together. What I'm saying is that we need to be able, within Anglicanism, to have the big tent that allows us to have the same tools and reach different conclusions with integrity and to live with that integrity of difference. Why this issue, for instance? There are seven texts on this issue and two thousand verses on poverty in the Bible. So I say, "For heaven sake, don't make this a Communion breaking issue".

Bishop David here explains the way that the symbol of homosexuality marks a divide, or better, constructs a sharp boundary between those who 'really' accept the authority of the Scriptures, and those whose orthodoxy, and even the authenticity of their Christian faith, is questionable. By making the question of gays in the church the 'litmus test' of orthodoxy, a new division is formed, dividing even the Evangelical wing of the church; it becomes very difficult for Anglicans who identify with, and consider themselves part of, the Evangelical wing of the church, but who do not share the view that such this issue ought to be the dividing line between authentic Christians and apostates.

When we interviewed Evangelicals who are resolutely opposed to gay blessings and gay bishops, and who do see it as a communion-breaking issue, they found the idea of 'real' Evangelicals who could take a different view of the seven

biblical texts thought to refer to homosexuality difficult to comprehend. Bishop John even seemed a bit surprised at the suggestion when it was put to him:

I think the issue is that I can cope with somebody that's a Christian seeking to be equally faithful to the Bible as I'm trying to be and who comes to a different conclusion but really wants to take the Bible seriously and argues on the basis of the Bible and says that I haven't understood it properly. I might disagree with them but I can take that. But what I think is very difficult is for them to say, 'I am a Christian and I respect the authority of the Bible' but in a very cavalier manner, 'I'm willing to dismiss the plain teaching of the Bible and 2000 years of the history of the church on holiness.'

Although he knows other Evangelicals, including colleagues in the Episcopacy, who do not see the issue as one which must divide the damned from the saved, Bishop John is only able to see such a position as 'cavalier', and a dismissal of both Scripture and tradition, rather than something over which Evangelicals can—and do—disagree.

New Anglo-Catholic Divisions

In England and the USA in particular, some Anglo-Catholics have, in the past several decades, objected vociferously to women priests, and more recently, to women bishops, but, with a few notable exceptions, English (or Irish, Scottish or Welsh) Anglo-Catholics have made very little noise about homosexuality in the church. Evangelicals have been more open to the question of women priests and bishops, but have been more likely to be opposed to greater inclusion of gays and lesbians. One bishop went so far as to describe the Anglo-Catholic tradition in England as 'a bit camp' (Bishop Matthew), and another suggested that in England 'the [Anglo-]Catholic wing is absolutely riddled with' homosexuality. "This," Bishop

Luke explained, “is an agenda that they just don’t want to talk about, for obvious reasons. Women are the issue. They can’t deal with the gay issue, because the gay issue comes right close to home’ (Bishop Luke). This is certainly less true outwith the United Kingdom, where (conservative) Anglo-Catholics have been an important constituent part of the protest against the elevation of Gene Robinson, particularly within the USA. Several of the dioceses where there was the fiercest reaction to Gene Robinson (San Joaquin, San Antonio, Quincy) are strongly Anglo-Catholic dioceses, and were also, before leaving the Episcopal Church, the remaining holdouts to women’s ordination.

Anglo-Catholics are increasingly divided, not unlike the Evangelicals, between ‘Affirming’ Anglo-Catholics, and more their more traditionalist fellows. The former group tends to be open on the question of both women in the priesthood and episcopate, and on the question of homosexuality. For Conservative Anglo-Catholics, the Evangelical’s concern with Scripture is distinctly secondary. “It’s not just scripture”, Bishop Christopher explains, “It’s how the apostolic teaching is passed on and received and re-received in the church and what role scripture has to play in that process that are going on all the time, of course”. For conservative Anglo-Catholics, objections to gay bishops and blessing same sex unions stem much more from their understanding of the history of the church’s teaching on the theology of marriage (and what such a theology of marriage has to say about God), as well as worries about driving a further wedge between the Anglo- and Roman Catholic Churches. ‘Deviation’ from the church’s historic teaching on such matters would mean that the Church stopped being the Church. Bishop Christopher reflects on some of the various challenges to the Church over the course of the twentieth century, setting the question of homosexuality in the church in a broader context, as he understands it:

In the '30s you have the confessing church issue and the Barmen Declaration and so on because the church was faced with an issue where it had to say, or at least some people had to say, "Being a disciple of Christ is simply inconsistent with the Nazi state". Similarly, with South Africa, it happened on the question of race. In other parts of the world, it may happen on tribalism or the refusal to worship the emperor in Japan which resulted in so much persecution for Christians there. So I think that this sexuality issue in the contemporary West is just the issue that has presented itself. We may like it or not like it but that's just the way it is.

If the reasoning is noticeably different for traditionalist Anglo-Catholics compared with the Evangelicals, the position that this issue marks the boundary between the Church and a fallen world, is nonetheless partially parallel. The remaining difference is whether there are two issues (women priests *and* homosexuality) or just one (which can be *either* women priests *or* homosexuality). If there is only one issue, it is more likely that traditional Anglo-Catholics will be more concerned about women (as is the case in The Church of England) than about homosexuality in the priesthood.

Constructing 'Orthodox Anglicanism'

A number of the bishops we interviewed talked about their surprise at the new alliance between Anglo-Catholics and Evangelicals on the same side of the sexuality question, particularly in North America, but also, though to a lesser extent, in England, where they strategic partnerships have formed because of their shared opposition to what they identify as 'the liberal agenda'. Despite their alliance against liberals, 'they're very very different in the concerns they have about the liberal agenda' (Bishop Peter), as we discussed above. Not only are their specific anxieties

different, but so too their style of being Anglican. The GAFCON experience in Jerusalem (2008), a meeting of bishops from the ‘Global South’, as well as conservative critics from around the world against the acceptance of homosexuality, was marked by ‘the astonishment of Evangelicals, who are not used to any liturgy, or robes, or anything like that. Suddenly they find themselves in a High Church liturgy, both conservative African and High Church Catholic and others, where the host is being elevated’ (Bishop David).

Of the two GAFCON participants that we have interviewed in the project to date, one, an evangelical, emphasised the great unity among the ‘orthodox Anglicans’, or ‘historic, orthodox Anglicans’ who participated in the event. The other, a conservative Anglo-Catholic, was somewhat less sanguine. He suggested that among the conservative dissidents,

I think there is tension. For instance, there were people [at GAFCON] who ordained women and people there who didn’t ordain women. And the declaration itself recognizes it and says that you work through those kinds of things. Whether the tension will be greater than the need for unity is the question. I don’t know the answer to that. But yes, undoubtedly, people who are in some ways unlike each other now see the need to hang together (GAFCON participant 2).

The Jerusalem declaration was produced as the key statement emerging from the GAFCON conference in Jerusalem. Rather than simply being the expression of a self-evident ‘Anglican Orthodoxy’, this is a compromise document, an attempt to *create* Anglican Orthodoxy by means of compromise between conservative Evangelicals and conservative Anglo-Catholics, each of whom have historically emphasised different (and even contradictory) elements of the Anglican tradition.

The fourteen points of the Jerusalem Declaration, which is formulated as a statement of faith for Orthodox Anglicans, includes apostolic succession and the four Ecumenical Councils for the Anglo-Catholics, and the 39 Articles for the Evangelicals. The Declaration's statement on the Bible in particular, betrays this attempt to suture together the two traditions: "The Bible is to be translated, read, preached, taught and obeyed in its plain and canonical sense, respectful of the church's historic and consensual reading" (GAFCON 2008 no. 2). It is far from obvious that the Evangelicals' 'plain sense' and the Catholics' canonical, historic and consensual readings mean the same thing, or are so readily reconciled with one another.

The declaration inserts a statement intended to exclude same sex marriage between a statement on clerical orders and the Great Commission. Given the importance of homosexuality as a marker of the liberalism that both groups oppose, it is inconceivable that the Conference would not have included it in its major statement. Otherwise, there might be Anglicans who could probably agree with the statement as a whole, but who might take a different view on the question of sexuality, or who might at least not see it as an issue that is worth a schism.

Constructing the Opposition

Conservatives often present 'liberal' as a self evident, and common-sense category. For those who are so marked, it is not always nearly so obvious what it means to be 'liberal'. Bishop David, who identifies himself an Evangelical, feels that he is often discredited by his fellow religionists because he sees homosexuality as a matter of *adiaphora*, an issue over which there can legitimately be disagreement in the church. Describing the response of some of his fellow Evangelicals to his attempt

to avoid the polarising terms of the debate on homosexuality, he often finds himself castigated as a ‘liberal’, an identification he does not accept.

Bishop Timothy, who does identify himself as a ‘Liberal’, finds that the notion of what it means to be ‘liberal’ is caricatured both within and without communities that think of themselves in this way. Conservatives, he says, often treat Liberals as if they are simply accommodating to whatever the culture dictates. Conservatives can then set themselves against whatever they see as ‘liberal’ accommodating positions, and might thereby think of themselves as standing ‘in a position over and against the world’, and as taking a principled stand.

Bishop Kevin expressed some doubt about whether ‘liberal’ was a meaningful designation outside of the parameters of the current conflict, and as such a group has been identified by the new alliance of conservative Evangelicals and traditionalist Anglo-Catholics. He asks

to what extent is ‘liberalism’ an invented category that allows these folks to gather, and ignore their own differences? *<Hmmm>* To what extent is it the straw man that they’ve erected to legitimise their own struggle for control of the church? When I ask people ‘what is a liberal, in your view?’, I get a thousand different answers, except that they’re bad people, and not real Christians. We’ve placed ourselves outside the church, and all this. Now if I were just to speak personally, I would be, I suppose be a liberal on the sexuality issue, but I’m not a liberal on a WHOLE *<laughing>* lot of other things. *<yeah>*. I’m not a liberal liturgically... I’m not a liberal—I get letters from priests in the diocese wanting to throw the communion table open to everybody baptised or not. And I say ‘You cannot do that. The Eucharist is the meal of the baptised’. And, there’s a lot of pressure on language, and language

change, and I am not liberal about that. So I don't really know if I am a liberal, or what one is. So, I suspect it's a kind of invention, and one of the difficulties in this discussion is stereotyping <yes>, and it, of course it happens in all directions. I'm not saying that only conservatives do stereotyping.

The conservatives might provide 'a thousand different answers' for why they would identify Bishop Kevin as a 'liberal' (and there is no doubt that they do), but there is one clear point of agreement between Bishop Kevin and his conservative interlocutors: that the distinction between the groups is most clearly marked by where one stands on the question of homosexuality. This has become the most salient symbol of the conflict, a hook onto which the new 'Orthodox Anglicans' have managed to hang a number of different complaints, and which liberals use to (over) simplify the concerns of conservatives. It serves as a salient marker which, in the view of those aligning themselves with GAFCON, separates the sheep from the goats and the wheat from the chaff.

Sometimes this symbolic marker operates even in the absence of the actual positions different churches and leaders take on the sexuality question. Bishop Martha, for example, describes how misinformation and misunderstanding have been prevalent between different churches within the Communion. During a conversation she had with an African bishop at Lambeth 2008:

[He] said at one point, "I don't understand how [your country] thinks it can approve same sex relations!" I said we haven't. And he said, "Yes you have!" To which I answered, "No, actually we haven't." So I asked him, "Why does your church accept that bishops can have more than one wife?" He answered, "It doesn't." So I added: "Well, I have been told that your church does!" He

said, "I have been told that your church accepts gays weddings!" I said "It doesn't." He exclaimed, "Why would someone tell me if it wasn't..." And then he stopped and said "Oh..."

The way that the conflict within the Communion has been constructed, with two inherently opposed and mutually exclusive positions is far from an accurate description of the situation, though responses to the symbol add to the polarisation of positions.

CONCLUSION

The Anglican Communion is in the process of being reshaped around the symbolic marker of homosexuality, creating a new dividing line that joins together portions of the Anglo-Catholic and Evangelical parties (oddly enough, those who had previously been furthest removed from one another) as "Orthodox Anglicans," and increasingly divides them from Anglican constituencies that they identify as 'liberals'.

This is not simply a re-enactment of the so-called Cultural Wars (Hunter 1992), if such a bi-polar cleavage in fact ever existed. While there is currently something of an emergent bi-polar conflict under way in the churches of the Anglican Communion, such a conflict is built upon the conjunction of particular actors (particular sections of the Anglo-Catholic Evangelical parties) who have, for a time, joined forces. It is not at all clear, however, that their concerns about 'liberalism', how they understand and configure such a concept, nor their understanding of what it means to be a faithful Christian amount to anything like the same thing. Rather, they have been able to organise, for the time being at least, around a symbolic boundary marker: the church's response to homosexuality.

To suggest that these are emerging divisions does not mean that they will be absolute, nor that, in the end, they will necessarily be final. Much depends, in all likelihood, on the successful suturing of conservative Anglo-Catholics and Conservative Evangelicals into ‘Orthodox Anglicans’. This term gives expression to the attempted merger of conservatives from two radically different wings of the church, and was the key rhetoric in the organisation of the GAFCON meeting in Jerusalem, as well as in organisations such as the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans (born of GAFCON), the group ‘Anglican Mainstream’, and the new Anglican Church in North America, a province for conservatives who have left The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of Canada. When a prominent Evangelical like J.I. Packer (and self-identified heir to the Puritans) is invited to give the commencement address at Nashotah House (29 May, 2009), the most Catholic of Anglo-Catholic seminaries in the USA, one observes that there are some very serious attempts underway to build bridges across the Anglo-Catholic-Evangelical divide.

Such developments highlight how the work of Chavez and Kniss helps to problematize any simple reduction of the dispute to being primarily over homosexuality, or to the American “Culture Wars.” As Chavez observed over disputes in the USA over women’s ordination, different parties in the conflict sought to articulate a position that enabled them to develop a wider external alliance with partners in other denominations, and to position themselves within the national religious field as a ‘conservative’ or as a ‘liberal’ denomination. These institutional reference groups helped individual denominations maintain or enhance their *external* standing or prestige within the wider community of Christian churches, without necessarily having a direct impact on the *internal* practices of the denomination. The difference in the case of the Anglican Communion is that when the different parties in

the dispute have sought external support to bolster their cause, they have not needed to look outside the Anglican tradition, but have been able to forge alliances across the traditional churches parties, and with international partners in other member Churches of the Communion.

These alliances are forged among groups with a variety of different primary concerns. For some the primary concern is the ordination of women; for others, it is the marginalization of the authority of Scripture, of the divinity of Jesus, or the call to mission and church planting. For others the primary concerns include justice for the oppressed and the poor, human rights, or sharing in the open hospitality of the grace of God. Faced with this complex network of different concerns among Anglicans, Chaves' work is helpful for his recognition that the alleged topic of an intra-denominational quarrel may not be what the quarrel is primarily about. While those who rally against the acceptance of homosexuality generally do have reservations about same-sex relationships, frequently these are not their principal concern, nor is blocking such development their ultimate agenda. In interviews some have even expressed serious private reservations about the position taken by their camp. The symbol of homosexuality is the public 'presenting issue' of the dispute within the Communion, but precisely what it symbolises differs among the various parties and interest groups within the churches.

Kniss' work on the role of symbols in religious conflict is useful for recognizing how, despite the fact that the symbol of homosexuality is a presenting issue, once established, it nonetheless can become a ground that subsequently admits of no compromise. Having become a concrete signifier for an intense collection of differing agendas, the question of homosexuality has an unambiguous impact on

church practices like ordination and marriage, so that compromise or minimization of the issue has become difficult, if not impossible.

Despite the power of the symbol to unify diverse groups, however, the conservative coalition is built on what is a potentially unstable theological alliance, premised mostly on a shared common enemy. Whether this will be sufficient to hold them together, particularly as they separate from the institutions they see as dominated by Liberals (the Anglican Church of Canada, and The Episcopal Church). There are real sources of latent tension, including not only styles of worship, but matters of doctrine. The Evangelicals will likely have difficulty with Anglo-Catholic emphases on the doctrine of the church and the nature of the sacraments, their warmth of feeling towards Rome, the place they accord the Virgin Mary, and their high view of the orders of ministry. The Anglo-Catholics may find more charismatic forms of worship, a particular emphasis and hermeneutic toward Scripture (largely devoid of reference to the Church Fathers) problematic, as well as the fact that many Evangelicals support the ordination of women to both the priesthood (and even the episcopate). A further potential ‘deal breaker’ is that in some of the ‘lowest’ Evangelical Anglican churches (especially in Sydney, Australia) there is considerable support for lay people presiding at the Eucharist: this is without question anathema to all Anglo-Catholics, even as it is seen as a point of principle for some Evangelicals. By contrast, those Anglicans who seek to inhabit the ideal position of the “*via media*” or to either straddle the boundaries between the Liberal and Anglo-Catholic positions, or between the Liberal and Evangelical, will find it increasingly difficult to do so as long as the ordination of gay bishops remains the symbolic test for Anglican “orthodoxy” or of divine “inclusiveness”

This problematic nature of the symbolic element of the dispute is illuminated by Edelman's distinction between a "referential" and a "condensation" symbol. The idea of an "Anglican Orthodoxy" has an apparent resonance among a variety of Anglicans in the current climate, and it appears to serve as a powerful rhetorical resource for both consolidating alliances and identifying opponents. The emotive power of this symbol, however, has no clear and concrete referent, as the differing attitudes among our sample of bishops demonstrates. While in the present context, symbols like an "Anglican Orthodoxy" is able to serve as a screen for a powerful range of hopes and agendas for the future of the Anglican Communion, those who mobilize around it will also likely discover that, in future moments or situations, their differences may be at least as numerous as those things they presently share in common.

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Figure 1: prominent identities within the Anglican Communion
(as represented by our interview subjects)

