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## Editorial

I have long regarded myself as an ecumenical Anglican. I would prefer not to have to qualify my denominational identity at all; but when it seems unavoidable, I choose 'ecumenical' ahead of those other widely-used adjectives, 'evangelical', 'Anglo-Catholic', or 'liberal' – although each of those has significantly flavoured my experience since I chose, as a young adult, to become an Anglican.

Perhaps my non-Anglican upbringing (our family was Presbyterian) helped me in later years to avoid too narrow a vision of what it means to be Anglican. That vision has been expanded through contact with missiologists from all traditions since the late 1980s, and more recently by my work with the ecumenical Theological Education by Extension College of Southern Africa. In my experience, Anglicanism at its best is open to diversity, humble about its glories, frank about its limitations, glad of its provisionality, and generous in its dealings with other traditions.

So I approached the theme of this *ANITEPAM Journal* a little nervously. That phrase, 'The Anglican Way', had me worried. Does it not suggest a degree of arrogance about who we are and what we stand for? Would not 'Anglican Ways', or something else that sounds just a little less sure of itself, be truer to our character?

My nervousness has largely been put to rest by the articles included in this *Journal*. From Rowan Williams' penetrating reflections on an Anglican approach to theological education, to Grant LeMarquand's wide survey of African biblical scholars, the contents of this issue challenge us to catch a broader vision of who we are, what we do, and where we are headed.

The 'Anglican Way', I suggest, is not a particular style, model or ideology of being Anglican. Rather, it names the journey – the Way – that we take towards a vision that we have not yet attained. We are 'Anglicans on the Way', on a pilgrimage towards the fullness of God's will, with other pilgrims. And our theological education programmes have a vital part to play in helping us to make that journey, through forming our Church's leadership in the kind of 'Anglican Way' explored in these pages.

I hope that this issue of the *ANITEPAM Journal* will nourish our African theological education institutions for the journey. With it, I bid a formal farewell to ANITEPAM as I return to parish ministry after 18 years in missional and theological education. It has been an honour to serve you in this way.

—Mike McCoy

Rowan Williams

## Theological education and the Anglican Way

If you were to ask what it is to acquire a musical education, it would be a rather odd answer which left out the ability to play an instrument or to sing; and that is what I want to use as a very basic analogy to think through what we might mean by Theological Education.

It is possible, you see, to learn quite a lot about, let us say, the history of music, about musical theory. It is possible even to recognise patterns of a page of black marks on a white background which tell you how a composition moves. But it would be strange, as I have said, if that were all pursued in the absence of any acquisition of a skill – any capacity to do something in a particular way. Just as we might say it would be very strange to learn a language without learning how to speak it – although that is (as you all know) the way many of us learn languages. As the late Ronald Knox, born in this city [Birmingham], remarked, "It is a great mystery that the average English person can spend six years at school learning French and on arrival in Paris is able to say only 'Where is the Tourist Office?'"

So in thinking about what is theological education, I want to think about what a theologically educated person might be like. Just as, in relation to musical education, I might be reasonably sure of being able to identify what a musically educated person is like. I would know what sort of skills to look for and listen for in that case.

Now I want to suggest that a theologically educated person is somebody who has acquired the skill of reading the world, reading and interpreting the world, in the context and framework of Christian belief and Christian worship. That means that a theologically educated person is not someone who simply knows a great deal about the Bible or history of doctrine, but somebody who is able to engage in some quite risky and innovative interpretation, and who is able, if I can put it this way, to recognise holy lives. Because I think that the skill that belongs to being a theologically educated person is a very significant part – the skill of

knowing what an exemplary life looks like, lived in the context of doctrine and worship.

We are used to hearing that theology is the science of God. God is the object of theology, and that is perfectly true. But since God never sits around waiting for us to make observations, as a good many theologians have reminded us in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, since God is not simply an area of study that we can easily demarcate, we depend in theology on people who have some skills in living and knowing in God's presence.

Which is why, when St Thomas Aquinas in the 13<sup>th</sup> century tried to define theology, he put it in terms of studying the narratives of those people by whom divine revelation reaches us. And that means, I believe, that theology is inevitably, consistently to do with human lives, not in any sense that excludes theology having to do with God – far from it: but in recognition of the fact that because God is not an object lying around for examination, God's impact upon and the difference God makes to human lives is where we are bound to begin. The word of God, the self communication of God, is always bound up with the actual and concrete transformation of human situations – corporate and individual.

I am speaking simply of Christian theology, and I will take it for granted from here on that my focus is to be Christian theology. From the vantage point of Christian theology that should not surprise us at all. Christian theology begins from the series of events – events of transformation.

At the very beginning of what we might call Christian theology is the revelation of God to Moses, the exodus, the establishment of the covenant people. In other words, theology there begins when a people has been created, when the act of God is seen as having drawn together the whole community under law, under common understanding and discipline, to glorify God and communicate who God is. Out of that comes that further phase of theological understanding driven by the event, the change that we call the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

These are moments in the human world when the level of change, of transition or transformation is so high and so deep that people feel driven to talk about something other than just the forces of history or the conventions of society. To say that theology begins in revolution sounds a very dangerous observation, and yet in terms of the Bible it is not, again shouldn't be, all that surprising. Theology begins when something in the human world and human lives has struck at such depth that we need

language more than just the conventional language of human agency and historical forces.

Theology arises then when the world looks new. One of the saddest things that can be said about theology is that it has become stale; that it no longer speaks of transformation. Because the impulse to do theology arises when the world looks different from what you thought it was. The New Testament is riveting, exasperating, exhausting, inexhaustible because it is the work in progress of the people whose world is in "in the business" of being reformed, reshaped. The Bible, I think, only really comes to life when we see it in terms of that kind of work in progress.

Great changes are afoot, and we don't yet know quite what we shall find to say about the immense new landscape that has opened in front of us. I will come back in a while to the implications of that for the actual processes of teaching theology, but I think it may be important to hold in our minds for a little bit that notion of theology as having its origin, its energy, in a sense of the new landscape. Because one of the implications of that is that theology will be stale and dreary and boring when people are no longer aware that God has made a difference, whether in individual lives or in corporate lives, in persons or in history. Again I will return to say more about that, but let it stand for a moment as a working account of one of the things that makes good theology good.

Theological education is bound, if all that is true, to be regularly a matter of looking at the patterns of human lives. Theology has a great deal to do with biography and with history – the Bible containing many examples of both. It is out of those narratives, out of those stories and transactions that the ideas emerge, and I would venture to say that a bad theological education is one which never gets you from the ideas to the narratives; and a good theological education is one that pushes you inexorably from the narratives to the ideas.

A theologically educated person, I said earlier, is one who is able to read, to interpret the world in this context. That means somebody who, as I said, has the skill to recognise a life of holiness or a discipleship; and that entails the skill to understand what kind of change, what kind of difference in the world has to do with God. And that is why theology is inevitably a component in the business of Christian discernment.

The skills of discernment have a lot to do with living in this theological environment, in such a way that the world can be recognised, ordered – not explained, but seen in a way that makes sense. And those changes and

those challenges that matter from God's point of view can be rightly identified. And in that sense, of course, theology does not set out to give you a map of another world, but a set of instructions for this one.

People caricature theology frequently, don't they? And to speak of a 'theological point', in some people's vocabulary, means to speak of something that can have no possible practical impact. It is about another world; and when that great 19<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Nietzsche made his attack on religious language in general, and Christian language in particular, he did so on the grounds that religious language created pseudo objects and then created a pseudo science about those pseudo objects. In other words, Nietzsche assumed that theology was about another world; and it is a caricature that comes home when people start talking about the supposed medieval debates on angels dancing on the points of needles. Some theology admittedly reads like that – early, medieval and modern, not to say post-modern. But in fact to look at the history of theology, the way in which theological controversies arise, are dealt with, are resolved or not resolved, is to see again and again that the disciplines there, the discernments there, are about finding your way in the world, understanding what a life looks like that is lived in response to the God of Jesus Christ.

And that is not an academic matter in the narrow sense. All of this, I think, indicates very clearly why theology is an uncomfortable partner in the academic enterprise. The history of theology once again strongly suggests that where the academy, the mainstream intellectual life of a culture is concerned, theology can't live with it and can't live without it, and very often the culture can't live with it and can't live without it either. An uncomfortable partner in the enterprise because universities on the whole do not set themselves the task of educating people in the discernment of holiness. Why should they? And yet there is something in the level of critical questioning which theology ought to bring to the intellectual enterprise overall that is essential to intellectual health.

All that by way of rather general introduction, and it is meant to convey the overall idea that theology is, yes, a practical discipline, a discipline about acquiring skills for living, to use the contemporary jargon. But those skills for living are shaped by a whole set, a whole heritage of narratives, perspectives, images, metaphors – each one of them traceable to some great upheaval in human understanding which creates a responsibility, a sense of (let's use the word) *obedience* in those who are drawn in by them, which is to say the least unusual in the intellectual world. Theology is

about personal transformation, theology is about holiness, theology is about obedience; and in a sense in which that last rather contentious idea might be true. Again I will come back to it a little later.

But perhaps it is time now to turn to some of the particular areas of theological education which we associate with the enterprise, and see how they look in the light of that rather general set of definitions. I will speak about biblical study, about doctrine and about church history in particular.

I have already begun to hint at how I think biblical study ought to be grounded in the sort of theological education that I am concerned with here. The Bible is the primary record of the primary difference God makes. It begins, of course, by recording the greatest difference of all – the difference between things being there and things not being there, and associates that with God. And in Christian scripture that primordial difference between being and non-being is latched on with an enormously ambitious theological pun at the beginning of St John's Gospel – latched on to the life of Jesus of Nazareth as the one who makes the difference between being and non-being within the world's history.

But the narrative of Hebrew scripture, what Christians call the Old Testament, evolves in a series of upheavals. The uprooting of Abraham from his native land, the release from slavery of the people of Israel, the betrayal and exile that follows the abandonment by God's people of God's justice, the restoration of the people around more liturgy. And within its contours we are not allowed at any point, I think, to come too quickly to a generalised version of what all this is about and who this God is. We have to watch the story in its process. We have to attend to and be involved in the drama of the narrative.

And that already gives us the clue we need to turn to Christian scripture. Be patient, don't assume the end of the story is come. God is a God who upturns the conventions and the ideas and the images we have, and he does it centrally, focally, forever, in the life and death of Jesus. We watch them again as Christian scripture evolves, we watch people in that new landscape trying to find the words for it. To say that is not in the least to say that the Bible does not tell us the truth. The way the Bible tells us the truth is by showing us how God's reality, in its freedom and majesty, impresses itself upon human life. We read the impress, we read the impact, we begin to understand who it is that we are dealing with, and that is as true of the New Testament as of the Old.

Frequently as I read Paul's epistles I read the impatient inarticulacy of

someone whose vision is bigger than his language, and that is what makes Paul so intensely worth reading, so inspired, so much a vehicle of God's spirit. Watching him struggle, sometimes very impatiently, with ideas that are getting away from him is precisely to be drawn into what Paul sees and what Paul knows – to meet Paul's God. There is an extraordinary moment when Paul realises that he has dug himself in far more deeply than he originally intended to in an argument, and suddenly breaks away, saying, "I don't know where this is going but..." – as he does, of course, so memorably at the end of his most agonised excursions: Romans 9-11.

How am I going to bring all these ideas together, Paul asks at the end of chapter 11, when he has been wrestling with the fate of Israel; and he can say only, "O the depth and mystery of God". And it is not a short cut because you have watched him getting there. I had a friend years ago who complained about the way in which theologians would revert to talking about mystery when things were getting difficult; and it is a good discipline I think for any theologian to save the language of mystery, if you like, until the very last moment. That is to say, to follow through argument, definition, refinement of terms as bravely and consistently as you can and not to give up too soon. Only when you have demonstrated that you are at the end of that story can you afford to say with Paul that you don't know where to go, but God does.

Now that means, I think, that a person who is educated in reading the Bible is a person who, you can say theologically, by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, has been brought into that relationship with the God of the Bible which allows them to recognise in the language of the Bible their own faith and their own narrative.

And that is something rather different from quarrying the Bible for little bits that happily remind you of how you feel. That is not biblical theology. It may be a useful form of apologetical psychology, but it is not particularly theological. But to find in that language, that narrative, that register of exploration, something of the faith that transforms your own life; that I think is to see what biblical understanding is.

And it is not a million miles away from what Martin Luther said when claiming that the Christian response to reading the Bible always had to be, if you heard the words, this is about *you: datae loquitur*, this is about you. The Christian comes into the biblical world – a strange world, a world in which images and ideas and words are not always what you expect. But the education of the Christian in the biblical world is an education in the skills

of analogy and connection. Which is why, of course, throughout Christian history some of the most interesting and challenging and unexpected uses of the Bible have been the picking up of biblical narratives to describe the story of the soul.

From very early on, from the Greek fathers to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the stories of Abraham or of Moses have been picked up to tell you that this is about you, to invite you to see your own struggles with God, the speaking, revealing, living God in the contours in the shape of what has emerged in biblical story. And some of you here will know, of course, one of the greatest, latest classical versions of that in Charles Wesley's hymn "Come O thou traveller unknown" which takes the story of Jacob wrestling with the angel as the model of Christian life, Christian struggle and discovery. That means that being a biblically educated person is a great deal more than knowing the texts.

Some of you may have come across a novel by Fulton Wilder, that great American writer of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, called *Heaven is my Destination*. Set in the America of the Depression, it describes the adventures of a travelling text-book salesman who is also a kind of undercover evangelist. It is a very, very funny book indeed, and a very poignant one. And one of the most comical and poignant moments is when this travelling evangelist meets on a train another travelling evangelist who challenges him as to whether he really knows the Lord. George, the salesman says, Yes of course he does, and the Evangelist says, All right then, so what is Ephesians 4.11? And they swap texts for several minutes until George makes a small mistake in his quotation. The other leaps on him saying, You think you know the Lord, brother, but you don't. I don't regard that as biblical education in any very interesting sense, because it has absolutely nothing to do with what that other great American writer, William Stringfellow, called being a biblical person. That is living under the vision and under the judgement of the God of the Bible. To know how to live a life in that light, in that perspective, in that presence – that is being biblically educated, I would say.

And so a theological education that is designed to produce people who are really literate in the Bible; that I think has to be an education which looks very carefully and patiently at the contours of these stories. It does not immediately rush off to the historical critical question – what really happened? Did anything really happen? What are the interests of work in this text? I think it concentrates primarily on seeing how the text itself –

the words on the page – bring to birth a picture of human life in God’s presence. And how that narrative, that process of bringing something to life, can connect with your own process of coming to life.

Now I would like to say something of the same about Christian doctrine overall. Doctrine as sometimes taught in history of theological education has been very much the finished product, as if a particular kind of problem-solving exercise had been gone through, eventually producing a settled solution; a formula that told you what you needed to know. And again I would like to think of doctrine, as with scripture itself, as the process of finding the words for a new landscape, which like any such process is going to be in many ways vulnerable and rather bumpy.

When I was regularly teaching theology I used to encourage my students to think of the history of doctrine as the history of discarded solutions, as if for just a moment some person with a light in their eyes says, “I think I’ve got it, I think... oh no, I haven’t”. And that is very much how the process evolves, I think. Someone comes up with what looks like the answer to the question of humanity and divinity in Jesus, and ten years later the solution lies in ruins around them, and all you know is that you cannot do it that way.

It is something that many scholars of the Eastern Orthodox Church are very good at underlining – that there is in all good doctrine a powerful element of the negative. We may not know what exactly to say, but we know we can’t say *that*. And simply formally, and as a matter of historical fact, many of the definitions of those early centuries work rather like that. We don’t quite know what to say positively, but we must avoid saying that or that or that, because that will say less than we want to say. So even if we are never be going to be able to say all that we want to say, we shall know that to stop too soon with this or that formula would be to condemn us to being stuck with less than we really want to say. We can’t tell all the truth: we can tell the truth consistently, intelligently (we hope) and then once again, as I said earlier, come to the point when we say: that is as far as we can go, but we have done the work.

And a doctrinally educated person therefore is, I believe, somebody who can see what sort of human anxieties, aspirations, tensions, prayer, love, sin and grace led people to think it mattered to talk about Jesus in this way, to talk about God in this way, to talk about the sacraments of the Church in this way. It was not a word game. It wasn’t a way of passing the long winter evenings.

If I am to be coherent, consistent in what I think about myself as an inhabitant of this new world, and if I believe that this new world is something into which the reality of Jesus has projected me, what must I say about Jesus that does justice to the newness of the force of the projection? What must I say about Jesus that doesn’t trivialise or shrink the impact of this change that has been made? And so the early church moves, can I say inexorably, towards some of those very technical and very complicated distinctions and sub-divisions that are going on in the great debates of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. Yes, we must say that what is at work in Jesus is the life of the creator, nothing less. No, we must not say that replaces any element in humanity. Yes, we must say that the suffering of Jesus is real human suffering. No, we mustn’t say that that somehow turns God into a suffering human being and no more. And so the tightrope walk continues through those two centuries, because it is all to do with how you do justice to the newness of the new creation.

And a doctrinally educated person is then, I’d say, one who knows why that newness matters; why it matters to find words for it. When – as it has happened quite a lot in the 20<sup>th</sup> century – that classical language of trinity and incarnation has become remote or difficult for people, it is I think fair to ask the question, What has happened to the sense of newness, that that language has become so difficult and so stale? And very often what has happened is quite simply that the doctrinal language has lost its roots and its mooring, and we have to relearn it from those for whom newness means something.

And that of course is why doctrine is renewed in understanding and expression from what might you call extreme situations. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the extreme situations faced by Christians under persecution brought forth new levels of appreciation of understanding of classical language and classical doctrine which were not just a repetition of the text book formulae. Barth and Bonhoeffer, coming out of the Germany of the Third Reich, both in their different ways reaffirmed the depth and fullness of the classical doctrinal tradition, I would say. Bonhoeffer is quite wrongly thought of here as some sort of liberal revisionist; but that is another story. And it was because of the questions posed to people in that situation: What is it that is different about Christian profession and Christian community? What is it that makes allegiance to Christ creative of a different space from that which is dominated by political oppression?

Later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century we heard this again from Christians in Latin

America and in Africa. And I expect we shall go on hearing it from there. I think here particularly of the way in which the work of Dietrich Bonhoeffer was (so to speak) dusted off and revived by theologians in the 1980s in South Africa when the Kairos Document was prepared, expressing something of that great act of resistance in the name of the lordship of Christ against human tyranny, which was associated with the Barmen declaration in 1935.

And I want to say a few words also about education in church history. Church history has tended sometimes to be a little bit of a Cinderella subject in theological education. When it has been done people don't always quite see why it is done, whether there is a theological reason for doing it. It becomes another bundle of anecdotes, facts about the past which may or may not be interesting (probably not very); stories about people far away, speaking foreign languages with strange names, with very bizarre ideas.

Now I don't think that will do as an approach to church history, because one of the things that comes out of being a biblically educated and doctrinally educated person is some sense of what it means to belong to the body of Christ. That is to be part of a community which has no spatial or temporal boundaries, but in which every participant has something to give and something to receive. And as I've tried to argue elsewhere, understanding what the body of Christ means gives a very different complexion to church history. Those odd people in the text books are actually our brothers and sisters in Christ, and frequently you would much prefer that they weren't, almost as much as you would prefer that some of your contemporaries weren't! But these are people in whom Christ is given to you.

Church history is the record of holy lives – frequently dramatically failed holy lives, or holy lives whose holiness takes an awful lot of recognition because it is not holiness quite as you know it or think you know it. But again, what matters here is a kind analogical skill, a skill of making connections. The temptation, the failure, the blunder, the discovery of figures in the Christian past is a matter of how Christ in his Body speaks to you, giving you something that you need for your holiness and your discernment. Now the difficulty is that church history frequently falls apart into two equally unhelpful poles. There is the kind of church history which looks at the past as answering the questions: That is the story, that is how we got here, and it all ends happily because it ended with

us. And there is the kind of church history which says we have to be deeply conscious of the absolute cultural gulf that separates us from everybody before 1550 or 1700 or 1981 or whatever. Both of those are unhelpful simply as historical method, but they are totally insupportable as theological method.

Part of the challenge, the proper difficulty of studying church history and being educated in church history, is being able to cope both with the continuity and with the gulf. These are people deciding to be disciples of the same Lord that I try to follow. These are people speaking of that discipleship in categories that are so strange that it will take me a lot of patience to learn what they say and listen to it effectively. Yet both those elements are true and essential in the process.

And a view of the Church which supposes that nothing happens between the New Testament and yesterday is one which is not only intellectually shabby and indefensible, but one which is spiritually impoverished. God has given me, whether I like it or not, a very large number of companions on the journey, each one of whom will have something distinctive to say – however well I hear it, however easily I digest it. And it takes me back to where I started – and the question of reading the Bible. And I would want to add at this point that an educated reader of the Bible is also somebody who knows how to read the Bible in company – in company with other Christians now, in company with Christians through the ages. The rather odd view which has prevailed in quite a lot of western Protestantism, that the essence of reading the Bible is the communication from the page to the individual's soul, everything else is if you like icing on the cake, would have seemed very strange to our Lord and the disciples, the first generations of Christians, and indeed most Christians up to about 1850. Christians, like Jews, believe that the Holy Scripture was something you read together and heard together and talked about together. Calvin is very clear when he writes about the biblical interpretation and authority in the 16<sup>th</sup> century – that the community drawn together by the Holy Spirit is the community in which you read in the Spirit, so that the Word comes alive for you together as a community. It is a great mistake to think of Calvin or of the Reformers as individualists in this respect. So a proper reading of church history, an education in church history is also, I would say, a coming into the company of the readers of the Bible. And how people read it in the past, as I have indicated, can be deeply surprising and deeply alien; but is that surprise

and that alienness different in kind from the surprise that we sometimes encounter as we read the Bible with our own contemporaries? I suspect it is not of a different order.

I could say more about those three areas, but I think you may begin to see what I am trying to convey here. A theologically educated person is someone who is reading the world, I've said, in the context of the narratives that have brought God alive, savingly and transformingly. That means that a theologically educated person reads the Bible as a record of the changes impressed upon the human world by the living God. A theologically educated person encounters Christian doctrine as the struggle for words large enough and resourceful enough not to be completely misleading about the mystery, the scale of the living God. The theologically educated person is the person who reads the history of Christian communities as an invitation to read the Bible in company and to find education and discipleship in that process.

And in all this we come back again to the issue that I touched on right at the very beginning – of obedience. Now, obedience as a theological virtue sounds very alarming, very pre-modern, very unattractive. And it does so, I suppose, largely because obedience is usually enjoined on people by those who have the power to make things difficult for them if they don't obey. But the greatest theologian of obedience in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Karl Barth once again, meant by obedience (I think obedience in theology) that absolutely faithful attention to the otherness of what you are dealing with, that springs you from the trap of your own preoccupations and preferences.

Somewhere in all of this business of theological education we have to come to terms with that sense of an otherness, an elsewhere – not another place, another realm, another world, but that which is not simply on the map of our concerns, our security, our ideas. An obedient theology is one which seeks to be formed by what is there, and a holy life is one which lets itself be impacted, be impressed by the will of God. For Karl Barth, that meant, of course, that an obedient theologian was someone who was free to be the most dramatic possible nuisance in church and world. Obedience to the otherness of God: such a person would be obedient to no other constraints and no tyranny that could be concocted on the face of the earth. That is to put it dramatically. But then of course, the 1930s was a dramatic period.

What obedience means for us is a far tougher, far more complex matter

to work out. And yet, I would dare to say that a theology that does not somehow tackle that issue of obedience somewhere along the line as part of the education we are talking about, will fail to be theology. And that is an obedience, of course, which challenges a great deal of what we often mean by the term. With 'obedience' we say and we think of passivity or docility, not a characteristic very obvious in the life of Augustine or St Thomas, let alone Luther or Karl Barth. Whatever obedience means there, it does not mean docility. Obedience can mean, again, Paul throwing down his pen with exasperation and saying, "I don't know what more to say; it is too big for me to speak of". That's obedience. It's St Thomas Aquinas saying at the end of his life, "All I've written seems like so much straw compared with what has been shown to me". It is Luther throwing his inkpot at the devil. It is Barth wonderfully, at the end of a deeply boring and conventional parish mission, designed to make everybody feel a great deal worse, deciding (as he tells us) to preach a sermon on little angels with harps and sheets of music. Because he felt he had been listening for a week to a mission all about how 'I' ought to feel, and not about how God was; therefore he wanted to turn the whole thing back to praise, and that's obedience.

So with all the awareness that we're bound to have of what a slippery word obedience is, I'd like to put in answer to the question, "What is theological education?" It is that element of an education in proper obedience, the passionate attention to what is there, to the extent that I am changed by that attention, and set free by it from other pressures to conformity.

I haven't attempted to outline anything like a reputable academic syllabus for theological education. I used to do that sort of thing, and now happily I'm free from it. But I want to propose to you at least that if we try to answer the question, What is theological education? in the broadest possible sense, we need to put it the context of our discovery, discernment and of holiness. And also our discovery of one another as believers. Theological education can be just as much the unexpected encounter with another believer's vision as it is the absorption of a biblical idea or a doctrinal formula. It can be and should be a discovery of the body of Christ in that way. And if I may, in conclusion, relate this to the context in which this lecture is being delivered: I would say that if our Anglican Communion is to discover itself as something which exemplifies the body of Christ, rather than just a set of national groups opting to be more or

less friendly to each other – usually less these days – we need a theological education like this.

It's a bold statement and perhaps an arrogant one, but I won't make too much of an apology for it. I think that we have suffered a great deal from visions and models of education that have not sufficiently directed us to the centrality of the body of Christ as the theological theme, as that which more than anything else holds for us the newness of the new creation, the difference of where we are and how we relate.

We have a very long way to go in making our Anglican church a coherent, communal, obedient, renewed family of congregations. And yet we share the reality given in Christ by our baptism, the reality of Christ's body. The theological education we need in the Communion, I believe, is something which will make that come alive for us, which will make us literate in reading scripture and doctrine and church history, which will deepen in us those skills of discernment that we need in respect of our own calling and the calling of others, which will set us free from being simply an ecclesiastical organisation preoccupied with policing itself in various ways, which will perhaps make us a more effective servant of the world into which God calls us – the world in which God invites us to recognise him, respond to him, praise, be glad in him, a world which is on the way to becoming that new creation which is really the context, the locus of any theology worth the name.

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*This lecture was delivered at the Centre for Anglican Communion Studies (CEFACS) in Birmingham, England in November 2004. It is reprinted with permission.*

**Njongonkulu Ndungane**

## **The heartlands of Anglicanism**

**W**hat does it mean to be Anglican? What is it about Anglicanism that has led so many to conclude that it provides the most productive spiritual soil for living out the Christian faith? What is it that we have, which we dare not lose?

These questions lead us to the heart of the Archbishop of Canterbury's profound and stimulating reflections, "The challenge and hope of being an Anglican today". We need to be confident in our response if we want to find good answers to the other questions we face about the nature of the shared life of the Anglican Communion.

Archbishop Rowan offers his own description of our distinctive Christian inheritance. This he depicts as having the three strands of "reformed commitment to the absolute priority of the Bible for deciding doctrine, a catholic loyalty to the sacraments and the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons, and a habit of cultural sensitivity and intellectual flexibility that does not seek to close down unexpected questions too quickly".

It is indeed within the territory encompassed by these strands that I find my own experience and understanding of Christianity. These describe the rich heartlands of Anglicanism – the solid centre, focussed on Jesus Christ, to which we are constantly drawn back by the counterbalancing pull of the other strands, if any one threatens to become disproportionately influential.

These Anglican heartlands are the subject of my reflections – the historic fertile middle ground, which is in danger of being forgotten amid polarising arguments and talk of schism.

I am not offering specific solutions to the predicament we face, even as I recognise that changes are inevitable. Rather I want to underline and affirm that the territory on which we debate our future can only be that of these broad rich heartlands of our Anglican heritage. It is not something to be fought out at the limits of conservatism or liberalism, as if they were

the only possibilities before us.

Furthermore, the means by which we engage in deliberations and pursue our solutions must also be those of our Anglican heritage – discernment sought through the God-given, God-graced virtues of trust, tolerance and charity across the variety we encompass; and through following the due processes of our structures. We must honour our inheritance as both episcopally led and synodically governed. The role of the historic episcopate as a focus of unity is vital, while at the same time we are not a church constituted in its bishops alone. Therefore clergy and laity, the whole people of God, must be included in wide debate, alongside the deliberation of Primates and Bishops at Lambeth.

To be enabled to do this, we must better engage with Anglican tradition. We need a fresh understanding of tradition not as dry forensic history, but as holy remembering of God's abiding with his people, through the centuries. We must own our history – the living and life-giving history of God at work among us – in order to find our place of participation within the unfolding narrative of God's redeeming acts in and through his church.

This is the heart of Anglicanism. We must not lose this middle ground.

### **Middle ground—the heartlands of Anglicanism**

At its best, our living faith draws on the strengths of all three threads of what Archbishop Rowan describes as our reformed, catholic and intellectual/cultural components. It is not that we draw singly on one or another, as we find it most appropriate to some particular situation.

Rather, in all circumstances we find a richly-textured, maturing faith flourishes as we allow God to meet us through the creative interplay of insights, encouragements, challenges, even admonitions, from all three elements taken together.

Anglicanism is not a tradition that has operated through binary polarities and sharp distinctions – this versus that, in versus out, us versus them. Rather, Scriptures, creeds and historic formularies, together with the ordered sacramental life of worship, and with careful, prayerful reflection, provide the magnet that continually draws us toward the centre – one baptism, one church, one faith, and most of all one Lord “in whom all things hold together” (1 Cor 1:17).

It is because Jesus Christ, second person of the Trinity made flesh, is our goal, our end, our *telos*, the central focus and direction of our lives, that

Anglicanism has found through the ages that we can afford to live with messiness, ambiguity and anomaly at the edges. Through that permeability many have found a warm invitation to come closer, and so to recognise and accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Let no-one imagine that to speak of this Anglican middle ground implies a bland and mediocre faith. By no means! This is no shallow, casual approach.

The greatest Anglicans of past and present are characterised by radical holiness of life, an uncompromising dedication to prayer and Bible study, and tenacious pursuit of the truth as they wrestled with the issues of their day. This is a life lived under the authority of all these three-fold strands of faith: of Scripture, of Church order and structures, of Christian tradition. It is the life of obedience and self-discipline, and often costly self-denial, for, especially in our relations with one another, as Paul reminds the Corinthian church, even where “all things are lawful”, it may well be that “not all things are beneficial” (1 Cor 10:23). All of us would do well to remember this.

Nor does accepting the inevitability of messiness at the margins of the community of faith mean ‘anything goes’. We are all permanently under the three-fold testing and purifying scrutiny of the refining fire of God's holiness (Zech 13:9), of the two-edged sword of Scripture (Heb 4:12), of minds transformed by the renewing Spirit (Rom 12:2) – constantly challenged by truth and invited by love to “hate what is evil and cling to what is good” (Rom 12:9) and so to move towards greater Christ-likeness. It is on this basis we dare to engage with the complexities of contemporary life around us. The catholicity that saves us from narrowness and introspection is, as the Archbishop of Canterbury reminds us, fundamental to our foundations.

We are a sacramental community, living out our faith in theological and institutional continuity, conscious of being part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church that is united with Christ, the vehicle of his mission in the world.

Sometimes we speak of the need to ‘baptize culture’. This is no cursory wipe with a damp cloth to produce a superficial religious veneer. Baptism is the radical transformation that comes through burial with Christ and being raised with him – every culture must die to the priorities, the loyalties, the idols, of this world, and find new, authentic, life-giving, contemporary expression, transfigured under the lordship of Jesus, Saviour and Redeemer. When confronted with such narrowly drawn

choices as ‘Are you liberal, or conservative?’ my response is that these are not the categories through which I live as a child of God, and a member of the body of Christ, though I recognise both conservative convictions and liberal instincts within myself, as I do also catholic commitment, not least to the Divine Office and the Eucharist. Rather, I know that I must engage with the Lord more broadly, in every dimension of my humanity – with all my heart, mind, soul and strength – and in every way that he reaches out to meet me, if I am really to mature in faith.

I need the full breadth of all three strands, all three dimensions, of faith. I need the vibrancy of a living relationship with him, which comes cloaked in mystery beyond my comprehension, and is fed through the sacraments and the ordered life and worship of the Church, as well as through private prayer and contemplation; I need the inspired written word of Scripture – with its unique authority, to “teach, reprove, correct and train in righteousness”, all of which I require, if I am to become in any way “proficient, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16). And I need to engage with the circumstances and culture in which I find myself – to discern what reflects God’s kingdom, to discern where the gospel good news is required to bring sight to the blind and freedom to the oppressed, and so to be fully part of God’s mission to his world.

None of these are independent of the other two. Scripture helps me understand and enunciate my relationship with God. His Spirit mysteriously at work in me turns Bible study from dry intellectualism to living encounter. The sacrament of his Body and Blood nourishes me, and gives me strength for life’s journey. The institutional life and structures of the Church anchor me and provide a framework for active faith. The challenges of the world drive me to my knees, and more deeply into the pages of Scripture, which then together fuel and give shape to my intellectual wrestling.

In different times and places, the emphasis may lie more with one thread than with another – there is a creative and dynamic diversity even at the heart of my own faith – just as there is the creative and dynamic diversity within the unity of the Godhead who is also distinctly Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Here I should like wholeheartedly to endorse Archbishop Rowan’s understanding of the interrelationship of unity and truth. Jesus is the Truth, and our unity is in him. Both start and end with him – they are both gifts, and both ‘prior’ to us and our choices, and to a very great degree,

unity is indeed “generally a way of coming closer to revealed truth”. If the body is not whole, the whole body suffers, including our understanding of the truth. Both unity and truth must be pursued together to the best of our God-graced ability – neither is optional within our Christian vocation. And both lead to Jesus.

I find this endless returning to Christ, to the centre, to the middle ground, a continuing dominant reality not just in my personal faith. I also find it in my own experience and understanding of the Anglican Church, in all its diversity, at every level, from Communion, and Primates’ meetings and Lambeth Conferences, through to provinces, dioceses, parishes. We grow best when we have that level of complimentary difference which can indeed “provoke one another to love and to good deeds” (Heb 10:24).

It is not easy to live with a spectrum of perspectives – it is challenging even when we are fully confident we are all firmly within the Anglican heartlands. But this wrestling together offers us the possibility of treasures that cannot be found in more monochrome approaches to faith.

We need people, even communities and provinces, who are deeply immersed in each of these streams, catholic, reformed and intellectual/cultural, so we can together forge a fuller understanding of how to live faithfully in our current times. The continuous rebalancing interaction within this approach characterises the best of Christian tradition throughout the last two millennia – for we are a church that is built on the prophets and the apostles, from the time of Peter and Paul onwards. This is the tradition in which we stand.

### **Tradition: Holy remembering**

It is important that we know Anglicans mean when we speak of tradition – which, since the seventeenth and eighteenth century divines, we have considered our touchstone alongside scripture and reason. This is not as clear as it might be in the Windsor Report. First, let me say what it is not. Tradition is not a dispassionate history of institutional life, the dry and dusty account of some external observer. If that were the case, it would be hard to see why we should pay tradition more than limited attention. No. Tradition is holy remembering – remembering as Scripture teaches us to remember. “Remember how the Lord brought you out of Egypt” is God’s word to future generations in the Promised Land. “Do this in remembrance of me” are Jesus’ words to us, as we meet Sunday by Sunday, breaking bread and sharing wine, and finding ourselves joined with

him and all that he has won for us through his one self-giving sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Holy remembering is far more than casting our mind across a widening gulf of years. Holy remembering is both to recall and to participate. It is to be caught up into the unfolding narrative of God's involvement with his people in every time and place. It is to recognise God at work in our church throughout the centuries, and to know ourselves in living continuity with his faithful people in every age. To remember is to take our place within God's story of redemption. Understanding tradition as the invitation to live in continuity with God's actions through his church shapes our understanding of the task before us now. It challenges us to see the fingerprints of God upon our history, and to ensure that we too can say that "what we have received from the Lord, we have passed on" (cf 1 Cor 11:23).

This is why catholicity is an intrinsic part of Anglican self-understanding. This is why we have to go forward in a way that preserves the best of Anglicanism as today's foundation for tomorrow. We cannot be content to remedy our current disagreements with a quick fix, nor allow the diminishing of the broad and rich resources that have fed our own Anglicanism, and truly provide the coherent core of our faith.

### **Tradition: God's grace in Anglican structures**

We should acknowledge the great extent to which our current structures, even if not perfect, have been richly used by God, and have well served the spiritual life and ministry of the church. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral has been an invaluable touchstone to our common life, and our life in relation to others, pointing to the centrality of Scripture, Creeds, Biblical Sacraments and Historic Episcopate, in our life, our ecclesiology, our theology and our spirituality. The Instruments of Unity have evolved and developed over time, shaped to address and serve the needs of the Communion. Further renewal, transformation and revision should be our starting point rather than turning to radical replacement, if we are not to lose their strengths in our attempts to overcome their weaknesses.

Similarly, the degree of autonomy we enjoy in our provinces has allowed hugely productive expressions of mature Christian faith appropriate to our regions of the world, and from which others have then learnt. As we are a church that is both episcopally led and synodically

governed, they also provide effectively for full participation of clergy and laity alongside the episcopacy in deliberating and decision-making.

Thus it is the Provinces that have the final say – through their constitutional processes and the deliberations of their synods. This is ultimately where the future of Anglicanism lies – this is where the authority to take decisions is found. We should be entirely clear about this – no matter what certain groups or the media say. Anglicans should not be daunted when the press makes much of this group's statement or that group's communiqué, as many do not carry substantive authority.

Rather, we should encourage the whole people of God to contribute to forging our future together. The Primates' meeting next year, and the Lambeth Conference in 2008, must take extensive counsel, but, as is well known, these are not authoritative decision making bodies. And, as gatherings solely of bishops, they are certainly not representative of all the fullness of Anglicanism. Bishops must exercise collegiality with their clergy and people, as well as with one another.

Therefore, as both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Joint Standing Committee of the Primates (in the document *Towards an Anglican Covenant*) have pointed out, this means that we have a lengthy process before us. It cannot be 'solved' in the next year or two – and to attempt to do so would be dishonouring both to the Windsor process, and, more importantly, to the people of God who count themselves Anglican.

I also hope we will abide by our tradition and our structures – and the recommendations of the Windsor Report – when it comes to observing the integrity of one another's provinces, dioceses and parishes. It is one thing to say, as the Archbishop of Canterbury does, that our present structures are not adequately developed to cope with the diversity of views that inevitably arise in our contemporary life. It is quite another to ride roughshod over them, even as we seek ways of improving them.

Comparable considerations apply to the respect owing to the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury, which, as has been shown at many times in the past, encompasses far more than merely the person holding office at any one time.

### **Tradition: God's grace in Anglican style**

There are other hallmarks of the way of being Anglican, certain styles of relating to each other that reflect the gift of God's grace. I find these characterised particularly by tolerance, trust and charity, as we have lived

out our diversity.

First comes tolerance. This flows from the way we define ourselves through the strong centre of scripture, the creeds, the councils and other historic formularies, rather than by boundaries; and from our repeated experience that God, ultimately, will deal with the ‘mess at the margins’. (And let me repeat – this is certainly not accepting ‘anything goes’.) Anglicanism is in this way a vibrant commitment to the teachings of Jesus’ parable about the enemy who sows weeds in the wheat-field. We do not live by attempting to uproot each potential weed at the earliest possible moment – we know that this risks ruining the rest of the crop (Matt 13:24-30).

Looking back over the centuries, there is plentiful evidence that through exercising considerable tolerance – sometimes more than others have thought tolerable – Anglicanism has survived and held together. Holy remembering tells us this is God’s way for us, and therefore gives us confidence that the Lord will continue to see us through.

Then there is trust. We must believe that we are each acting in good faith. No one is deliberately setting out to disobey God. We are all sincere in trying to follow what is right – upholding truth, pursuing justice. We must recognise as brothers and sisters in Christ those who call on Jesus as their Lord. We may think they are wrong on various issues, but that is different from doubting their sincerity, the validity of their faith or their membership of the body of Christ.

As Paul tells the Corinthians, we know there is vast diversity within Christ’s body – so vast it is likely to stretch our understanding of legitimate faith to the limit, just as seeing is incomprehensible to the ear, or hearing to the eye (cf 1 Cor 12:14ff). It is God alone who decides who is a member of Christ’s body, among those who claim to follow him. We must wrestle with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, encouraging one another in pursuit of the truth; and if any of us are misguided in our sincerity, we too can trust Gamaliel’s words to the Sanhedrin: “If this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow [it]” (Acts 5:38,39).

A related God-gifted virtue is the spirit of charity. Paul, to the Corinthians again, tells us this is patient, kind, not insisting on its own way, not irritable, nor resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (cf 1 Cor 13:4ff).

Such charity oils the wheels of the continual attentiveness to each other that is intrinsic to relationship within the body of Christ. This is the listening that is not just done with our ears, but with our hearts, and on our knees. This charity, this love, is one of the gifts of the Spirit, and just as we have seen it often in the past, so we should strive to live within its ambit in our current differences. God’s gifts of tolerance, trust and charity have provided grace for that other aspect of Anglican style – the diversity found not least within our church walls on Sunday mornings.

Our liturgical wealth, historically rooted yet finding contemporary, contextual, expression, provides scope for the full celebration of word and sacrament in our worshipping life. High church, evangelical, charismatic, and more – each bring their own particular riches, while all resonate with something undeniably Anglican. Whether it is awe and adoration, gospel proclamation, faith re-energised, encultured expression – there is room for all and there is need for all. Of course, each tradition may draw strength from the others, and that is good – but we need them to flourish as they are, overflowing with heavenly grace into our common life. We do not need some lowest-common denominator compromise, but the full glorious panoply that God, who is both One and Three, grants through his richly diverse creativity.

### **Anglican tradition: Holy remembering in Southern Africa**

The history of Southern Africa and of the Church in this part of the continent offer us powerful insights, both into the strength of the Anglican heritage, and into the problems we may cause ourselves when walking apart seems the only option.

First, the good news. We have lived through centuries of colonialism and over four decades of legalised racism. By God’s grace we avoided the blood-bath many predicted would ensue, and instead now enjoy one of the most enlightened constitutions in the world. The broad inheritance of Anglicanism has helped us face all this with confidence – and the three-fold threads of our tradition can be seen in our experience. Spirit-led cultural critique has directed our search for authentic, African, expressions of faith, unmasking the trappings of colonial practices and teachings, while leaving the core of belief intact. So too, the Anglican church was able to play a leading role in opposing apartheid, countering both those who tried to defend it from scripture and others who argued that political

engagement was unspiritual. South Africa's ability to embrace the possibilities of forgiveness, and the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (chaired and guided, of course, by Anglican Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu), were grounded in principles of restorative justice that are wholly gospel shaped. It was engaging reformed, catholic and cultural/intellectual components together which gave us this comprehensive strength.

We were also enabled to hold together within the Anglican Church, knowing we stood in firm agreement on the heart of faith, when we held differing views even on such major issues as how to oppose apartheid, the armed struggle and sanctions. Today, there is not full accord on the ministry of women – but never the suggestion that this might be a church-dividing issue.

However, another, less happy, Southern African Anglican distinctive is the way that the fall-out of differences within Anglicanism, rooted in the nineteenth century, still remain on our agenda. This makes me very wary of solutions that prescribe separation or some weakening of the ties that bind us. Our long experience shows that this does not make problems 'go away' but leaves a lasting and often little less difficult legacy. Let me mention some examples.

In 1866, Bishop Colenso of Natal was excommunicated after lengthy dissent with Bishop Gray of Cape Town across a wide range of issues. (Indeed, the first Lambeth conference was convened largely as a result of this dispute.) In 1985 our Provincial Synod recognised and affirmed his "courageous leadership ... in the areas of pioneering biblical scholarship, cross-cultural mission and the pursuit of social justice".

Today the Synod of Bishops is still exploring how we can appropriately acknowledge the fruits of Colenso's ministry in the life of our Province. Almost one and a half centuries later, the issue is still with us.

There are other anomalies of Anglican history with which we are still faced, particularly the Church of England in South Africa, and the Ethiopian Episcopal Church. Then there is the parish of Wynberg, which predates Bishop Gray's arrival, and has an autonomous status within the Diocese of Cape Town, and with which, more happily, we now have an ever closer relationship.

My point in listing these is to say that separation brings its own complications, which re-echo down subsequent centuries. All these current 'cousin' relationships have roots over a century old, and the anomalies they

bring are likely to remain with us for the foreseeable future. We are forced to ask whether it would have been better if those concerned had worked harder at holding together.

## Conclusion

Brothers and sisters in Christ, let us take heart from Peter's words in his second letter, "Do not ignore this one fact beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance" (2 Pet 3:8,9).

So we should be in no hurry to find quick solutions tailored to addressing our current problems. We rather need to take thorough care in discerning answers that lie fully within the tradition that we have received, so that we too may pass on the great riches of our Anglican heritage. To do this requires methodical and comprehensive exploration of all that is in the Windsor Report, and in Archbishop Rowan's reflections. I see them as significant foundation stones of the future we are trying to build.

We will find authentic Anglican answers if we conduct our debate within the fertile territory of the rich Anglican heartlands, engaging with one another in a godly spirit of tolerance, trust and charity, and having confidence in the living tradition of our Anglican structures, as part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, through which the Lord has preserved us, guided us and led us, so mercifully in the past.

God has given us so much – let us be faithful to him, and to those who will come after us, by preserving and passing on the rich essentials of his gift. Let us stand firm upon the middle ground.

Cape Town, 10 July 2006

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*This article was written as a letter to the Primates of the Anglican Communion in response to the Archbishop of Canterbury's reflection, "The challenge and hope of being an Anglican today" (see the ANITEPAM Bulletin No. 51 [August/September 2006], pp.5-8). It is reprinted with permission.*

Clare Amos

## Anglican theological education: What next?

In 2004 TEAC (Theological Education for the Anglican Communion), the theological education working party of the Anglican Primates, sent out a questionnaire about 'The Anglican Way' to Primates and theological institutions within the Anglican Communion, as well as a number of other potentially interested parties, such as Anglican Communion Networks and mission agencies. The questionnaire largely focused on training for ordained ministry – though it is important to say that the brief of TEAC relates much more widely than this. We are tasked with working to strengthen theological education for all Anglican Christians – laity, licensed lay ministers, deacons, priests and bishops.

We asked questions such as

- What do you believe are the particular Anglican elements and themes that are particularly relevant today and need to be concentrated upon in your context? In the global context?
- What are the 'ignored aspects' of Anglicanism that need to be better taught and developed in your context (local or global)?
- What kinds of resources on Anglicanism (for example, CD-ROM course, Web-based course, correspondence course, local course or resources listed in Question 2 above), presently not available, would be helpful to you in your context?
- (Recognising that much Anglican training goes on in ecumenical institutions) Do you believe that your students are receiving good Anglican formation and background within this ecumenical training?
- Do you believe that there are particular Anglican approaches to mission/interfaith concerns?

Several members of TEAC had felt that it was important to include that last specific question, which is certainly very relevant in the African context.

With about a 35% response to the 300 or so questionnaires that had

been sent out, we felt (in questionnaire terms) that we had received a fairly good response. The report on the questionnaire and its findings can be found on TEAC's section of the Anglican Communion website at [www.anglicancommunion.org/teac/reports/index.cfm](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/teac/reports/index.cfm).

But below is a selection of the interesting comments we received, some of which might be of particular interest to members of ANITEPAM:

- "We are a Communion of people covering a broad theological spectrum – modelled on the Trinity."
- "An ability to engage with (and support those who engage) in public theology."
- "The incarnational and sacramental theology of Anglicanism is important – we have a responsibility to live the gospel towards our neighbour and towards creation."
- "A concern for the whole people of God reflected in healthy synodical government and in faith applied to social issues, to interchurch and to outreach."
- "Anglican Christianity is identified by the opportunity it offers for a church of the people to emerge in each context, aspiring to be a church of the community."
- "We offer a way of doing holistic mission, a Via Missia."
- "We are not sufficiently aware of other parts of the Communion."
- "There is a potential of the Anglican Communion to initiate a new kind of fellowship reaching back towards the western world."
- "The mission focus of African Anglicanism is significant: it is an inherited commitment from its founding agencies."
- "The vibrancy which has been inculturated into African spirituality is significant and it is important to bring that vibrancy into our traditions."

If I were to try and pin down one clear thread that ran through almost all the answers, it was that there was a positive appreciation for the Anglican tradition of 'diversity in unity'. In the current context that is surely interesting: whatever 'polity' evolves in relation to the Anglican Communion over the next few years, it seems that this diversity/unity tension is one that many Anglicans treasure and would not wish to lose.

## What is 'the Anglican Way'?

As part of the background information that went with the questionnaire, we sent out what is called 'The Anglican Way brief'. This is a document that was drawn up by the The Anglican Way Target Group of TEAC at their initial meeting in November 2003. TEAC has been working through five sub-groups; the Anglican Way Target Group is commissioned to draw attention to the specific 'Anglican' needs of clergy and laity.

In drawing up the initial detailed brief for their work, the members of the Anglican Way Target Group<sup>1</sup> felt it right to set out a working definition of 'The Anglican Way', and it was this that accompanied the questionnaire.

This original (November 2003) definition of the Anglican Way read as follows:

- a. The Anglican Way, though rooted in its history and historical formularies, nevertheless is not fixed but continues to be shaped by its multiform cultural settings. The Anglican Way is a particular expression of the Christian Way (Acts 9:2).
- b. Understanding and describing a distinctive theological method incorporating, for example, 'contemplative pragmatism', 'inhabiting doctrine', doing theology by preaching, liturgy, hymnody, artistic creativity, etc.
- c. Scripture, tradition and reason: Reading the Bible together, corporately and individually, with a keen and critical sense of the past, a vigorous engagement with the present context, and patient hope for the future.
- d. Awareness and critical assessment of other defining characteristics commonly associated with Anglican identity – for example, spirituality nurtured by Word and Sacrament, Lambeth Quadrilateral, Book of Common Prayer, distinctive polity, comprehensiveness, unity in diversity, *Via media*, bridge between denominations, balance of freedom and order, balance of pastoral, mission and prophetic, exercise of ministry, etc.
- e. The polity of the Anglican Way includes the threefold order of bishop, priest and deacon, intended to be united collegially with the laity in synod; and the interaction of provincial, diocesan and parish structures, governed by constitutions and canons.
- f. An approach to mission which is holistic, incarnational and transformational, and which shapes the engagement of the church with the world in each context.

- g. Acknowledgement of provisionality, incompleteness and vulnerability as potential strengths.
- h. The four formal instruments of unity (Archbishop of Canterbury, Lambeth Conferences, the Anglican Consultative Council, the Primates' meeting) offer cohesion to global Anglicanism, limit the centralisation of authority, rely on bonds of affection for effective functioning, but are put under strain in situations of acute disagreement. Other emerging instruments of unity include Anglican networks, commissions and taskforces.
- i. Awareness of Anglicanism's past and present failures, and its susceptibility to particular kinds of abuse (for example, aspects of colonial heritage, excessive association with power and privilege, hierarchical authoritarianism, clericalism at the expense of the ministry of women and laity, its identification with Englishness, etc).

Partly as a result of the responses received back in the questionnaire, the brief was amended at a June 2004 meeting of TEAC, when the following three points were added:

- j. The Anglican Way encompasses communion (*koinonia*) with the united churches and other churches in full communion with the See of Canterbury. These relationships enrich our understanding and experience of *koinonia*.
- k. The Anglican Way is deeply committed to building ecumenical relationships, and strives to define itself through statements made in ecumenical dialogue.
- l. The Anglican Way is an interplay between witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ; yearning for and working towards mutual respect, peace and just relations with other faith communities; and a prophetic critique of religious and political ideologies.

One of the interesting and slightly unexpected side-effects of the work of TEAC has been that this 'Anglican Way brief' (as we still call it) has begun to acquire a bit of a life of its own. Published on TEAC's website, and therefore fairly widely available, it has been read and shared by a number of people semi-independently of other TEAC documents and has a certain 'status' as a definition of what the Anglican Way is.

It is important to remember, however, that it is 'work in progress', and was originally produced for a pragmatic purpose. But of course we are pleased if people are finding it useful more widely.

## **‘Non-negotiables, riches and weaknesses’**

This article was written the morning after a key residential meeting of TEAC’s Steering Group took place (2-4 November 2006).<sup>2</sup> One of the functions of our meeting was to prepare for a consultation on ‘The Anglican Way in theological education’ which is due to take place in Singapore in May 2007. At that meeting we intend to produce a discrete and concrete piece of work (or perhaps several different resources) which will assist in learning/teaching ‘The Anglican Way’ among Anglican Christians.

In preparation for the consultation, we are seeking to commission a series of short articles, each about 2,000 words in length, which will be looking at the ‘non-negotiables, riches and weaknesses’ of Anglicanism from a variety of perspectives, with each article focusing on a particular perspective. We are asking contributors to look at what is distinctively Anglican in relation to each of these perspectives (which should take up the first two-thirds of the article) and then explore more briefly whether they think that we have captured the essence of this in the Anglican Way brief.

Again I want to emphasise that TEAC considers the Anglican Way brief as still ‘work in progress’; so if the writer has suggestions as to how to amend the brief to take account of the perspective they are writing on, we would be glad to hear of it.

We will need the finished articles by the end of March 2007. We are seeking contributors from as wide a geographical range as possible, and feel strongly that writers based in Africa have a key contribution to make in many of these areas.

The perspectives that we have identified so far that we want to have covered are these:

- “ Hermeneutical perspective
- “ Doctrinal perspective
- “ Liturgical perspective
- “ Biblical perspective
- “ Historical perspective
- “ Ecclesiological / Church polity perspective
- “ Covenant perspective
- “ Servanthood perspective
- “ Contextual perspective

- “ Mission perspective
- “ Ecumenical perspective
- “ Interfaith perspective
- “ Educational perspective
- “ Political perspective
- “ Social justice perspective
- “ Peace and reconciliation perspective
- “ Ecological /creation perspective
- “ Women’s perspective
- “ Laity / ministry perspective
- “ Indigenous people perspective
- “ Family life / ethical perspective
- “ ‘The future of Anglicanism’ perspective

But we are open to discussion if somebody wishes to write from a perspective which is not covered in the above list. Please contact me, Clare Amos, at <clare.amos@anglicancommunion.org> as soon as possible, if you would like to offer to write for us as part of this project.

## **A personal postscript**

To conclude, I want to make three brief points relating to the Anglican Way that come from me personally, though of course informed by my work for TEAC. I sometimes feel that my own working life, in which I juggle a number of different responsibilities – working with TEAC, for the Anglican Communion’s Network for Inter Faith Concerns, for the Anglican world mission agency USPG as their theological consultant, editing *The Reader* (the national journal for Church of England Readers/lay ministers), doing occasional teaching in initial ministerial education and continuing education contexts – somehow itself exemplifies ‘the Anglican Way’ in its complexity, richness and occasional sense of frustration. The following insights stem from the ‘mix’ of these responsibilities.

### **1. The Trinity in theological education**

First, I think that ‘The Anglican Way’ needs to take seriously the doctrine of the Trinity – not just as a formula, but as a deeply embedded theological principle, which affects how our theological thinking is done, and how the worshipping and missionary life of our churches is effected. Part of the task that the Network for Inter Faith Concerns has set itself in

preparation for the 2008 Lambeth Conference is to prepare a statement of 'An Anglican theology for relationships with people of other faiths'. This will be expressed in an overtly trinitarian way. I believe that others within the Anglican Communion need also to take up this 'trinitarian' challenge. For example I am aware of a considerable amount of work which looks at Christology from the African context, but I am not so aware (though this may be my own failing) of theological explorations of the Trinity from an African, particularly Anglican, perspective.

## 2. Relating to other faiths

Second, but linked to the first, I do believe that a priority of theological education within the African context must be to equip both clergy and laity to respond to contexts where a key issue is relating to peoples of other faiths, specifically both Islam and African traditional religions. It was not in fact me, but rather voices speaking with strong African links, who insisted that the question about theological education and interfaith issues should form part of that Anglican Way questionnaire. But I am quite sure that it was right. And I do think that there are concepts such as 'hospitality' and 'embassy' (both beloved of the great Anglican bishop and scholar Kenneth Cragg) where Anglicans have a special contribution to make in developing a theology of interfaith relations.

## 3. An 'Anselmic' vision

And third, I feel that there is something particularly 'Anselmic' about 'The Anglican Way'. By 'Anselmic', I am referring to the great 11<sup>th</sup> century scholar and churchman St Anselm, and mean a willingness for the 'academy' and the 'worshipping community' to treat each other as friend rather than foe – and for each to acknowledge its need for the other dimension.

In my capacity as editor of *The Reader* I commissioned a feature by The Revd Dr Jeremy Worthen, principal of a theological education course based partly in Canterbury, England, which explored the interaction of these two dimensions. The article was then reprinted in *Anglican Episcopal World* and can be viewed online at [www.anglicancommunion.org/aw/downloads/122/aw122b.pdf](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/aw/downloads/122/aw122b.pdf). I believe African Anglican theological education has a very important contribution to make to this 'Anselmic' vision.



I cannot end this article without a final word of tribute to the work that Mike McCoy has done over the last three years, both directly for ANITEPAM and the various points in which he has assisted the work of TEAC, most notably his manifold contributions to TEAC's residential meeting in South Africa in January this year. Thank you, Mike – and good wishes for your future ministry.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Terry Brown of Melanesia, Dr Esther Mombi of Kenya, Revd George Hobson (who lives in France but has also close links with Rwanda), Revd Oge Beauvoir of Haiti, Canon Andrew Norman of the Archbishop of Canterbury's staff; later joined by Dr Sathi Clarke of India, and Revd Dr John Corrie, formerly of CEFACS.

<sup>2</sup> Thanks to the generosity of ANITEPAM's Corresponding Secretary, this article is 'hot off the press'.



Michael McCoy

## Peace or pieces?

### Anglican unity, communion, and the mission of God

ONCE upon a time, and over quite a long time, a young church arrived on a small island beyond the western shores of a large continent. The young church lived and proclaimed good news among the angular people of that island, and they were gradually won over to its ways. Indeed, they formed such a close relationship that, as it got older, the church became known not simply as the church *in* that Angle land but as the church *of* Angle Land.

And even in its middle age, despite the upheavals of invasion, conquest, revolution (of sorts), civil war, and rapid change, the Church of Angle Land continued to live the good news in its local communities.

And then, when it was quite old, and seemed ready to give up and retire, it was called to travel to distant countries and to start the whole process all over again. And behold, like Abraham and Sarah – and to its own great surprise – it bore many daughters and sons, and the family grew beyond all expectations, and it lived in many countries, spoke many languages, and followed many different customs. And in time, in our time, the family began to wonder what it was that still held it together...

### Born in mission

Broadly speaking, that is the story of Anglicanism. Born in the mission of unnamed early travellers and Celtic monks, and consolidated in the mission of Augustine of Canterbury fourteen hundred-odd years ago, the church among the Angles became the Church of England. The mission to the people of England resulted in the close identification of church and nation, of gospel and culture. And from that potent matrix came missionaries who, whether in the Dark Ages, the Middle Ages or the Colonial Age, dared to carry the gospel to different nations and cultures,

and eventually to plant the seeds of what we now call the Anglican Communion.

Anglicanism has often been criticised, from within and without, as being too English, too middle class, too tied to the social and political establishment of the day. There is some truth in that. The Anglican custom of a newly-enthroned bishop blessing the city from the cathedral's west door made sense in Christian England; in post-Christian societies, or in those where Christians have always been a minority, it can send out the wrong signals about the church's relationship with the world around it.

However, Anglicanism is too diverse a thing to permit blanket criticisms. Any gathering of Anglicans from different continents quickly shows how pluralistic our Communion is.

What, then, holds us together? Anglican unity is usually located in the person and office of the Archbishop of Canterbury and in the other 'instruments of communion': the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, and the Primates' Meeting. These instruments are personal and symbolic (the Archbishop of Canterbury), consultative/collegial (Lambeth, the Primates' Meeting) or consultative/administrative (the ACC). They are valuable, but it is hard to see how they can reflect or produce unity of any depth, particularly as each of them has, in different ways, become an arena of contestation in recent years.<sup>1</sup> The 1998 Lambeth Conference, for example, exposed deepening tensions over human sexuality, and in the years since then – marked most visibly by reactions to the election of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire and moves to authorize rites for the blessing of same-sex couples in mid-2003, and by the processes that led to and followed the Windsor Report – we have learnt just how deep they are. How will the 2008 Lambeth Conference handle these tensions?

At a more theological level, the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral might be viewed as a potential rallying point for Anglican unity. But it seems not to have been invoked very often in the current debate, perhaps because it was devised as (and largely remains) a statement of the essentials that Anglicans wish to see in a united Church, and because it is so minimalist.

Some believe that there is something else, something less tangible but just as real, that unites us. Immodestly called 'the genius of Anglicanism', it suggests that there is a distinctively Anglican ethos, found in our spirituality, theological method, liturgical emphasis, and so on.<sup>2</sup> There is truth in this too. Anglicans share some distinctive characteristics that

persist across cultural and linguistic differences. But our alleged 'genius' is a very fragile thing. In spirituality, theology, liturgy, and lifestyle, world Anglicanism is no longer (if ever it was) the Church of England flourishing exotically among the natives of the colonies. It is extraordinarily diverse, and the fragility of our unity is exposed by wide differences over a number of issues, of which human sexuality is now the most prominent.

The tensions are sometimes characterised as symptomatic of the North/South divide. This view may be partly true; but it too easily distracts us into debating global church politics. Similarly, they are often portrayed as the battle between 'orthodoxy' and 'apostasy'. This too is less than helpful, as it avoids the deeper theological and missiological issues that underlie the tensions. Blaming Anglican disunity on the arrogance and theological liberalism of some in the North, or on the fundamentalism and biblicism of some in the South, obscures the need for each local church to respond appropriately to its own context. If we try to define and enforce some universal Anglican norm, we risk denying the validity – the necessity – of diverse, contextual ways of being Christian and doing mission. There can be no single way of being Anglican, and any attempt to find one will amount to little more than a compromise that masks continuing deep divisions, and satisfies no-one.

The question that arises, then, is this: Can the centre hold? What is the centre anyway? Do we still have one? Or is Anglican unity just the smile on the face of the Cheshire catechism?

Such questions are not unique to Anglicans, of course, although they arise with extra force within our Communion owing to our avowed commitment to unity-in-diversity. The tensions are, in part, symptoms of the major transitions of our time from certainties to uncertainties, from accepted universals to scattered and disputed particularities, from integration to disintegration, from unity to plurality. These transitions are felt more keenly in the cultures of the global North; in the South they are only beginning to be acknowledged. It is little wonder, then, that there are tensions within Anglicanism. Questions about unity and authority, and about 'orthodoxy' or 'apostasy', are symptoms of the fundamental shifts affecting us all. The answers of the past no longer satisfy. The centre no longer holds, it seems: things fall apart.<sup>3</sup> But do they have to?

### Where is the centre?

The question of *unity* cannot be raised without also raising issues of

*mission*. In the twentieth century the ecumenical movement helped us to recover the insight of John's gospel that mission is the flip-side of the unity coin (see Jn 17.20-21). If that is true for the wider Church, it has to be true *within* a confession too. Could genuine Anglican identity and unity be found in a renewed vision for mission, and specifically in a rediscovery of the missional foundations of the church's being?

One pointer to this lies in contemporary discussions about the renewal of the church in the West. The churches in Europe, for example, face the realities of living in a post-Christendom situation. One of these is that the church has been marginalised, and can no longer act as if it were the recognised and respected guardian of society's norms and values. Since at least the middle of the twentieth century there have been voices telling us that the 'Christian' West is once more a mission field. Lesslie Newbigin was one of the more influential voices; but others have taken up his call for a recovery of the Church's missional identity.<sup>4</sup> The Church of England, through *Mission-Shaped Church*<sup>5</sup> and related publications, has engaged in a wide-ranging discussion of what it means to be missional while remaining an established 'national' church. The aged matriarch of Angle Land is on a quest to rediscover her youthful passion.

But in the Global South this passion has always been present. Most of the Anglican Provinces in the majority world were founded less than two hundred years ago, and many of them commemorate martyrs who were known personally to recent and present generations. Many of our Provinces in the South are acutely aware of their missionary origins, and – particularly for those living in nations where they are part of a Christian minority – their identity as Church is intimately connected with their commitment to evangelism and other forms of witness.

### The missional church

The focus in the Church of the North on re-inventing the church for mission in the third millennium, and the realisation that the Church of the South lives in a perpetual state of mission, helps us to recognise more clearly that the church in *every* age and context is called to be missionary. Here, it seems, Anglicans worldwide have something in common: a shared sense of missional calling. And yet, as I suggest below, this calling itself remains an arena of dispute.

For some Anglicans, this has led in turn to a renewed appreciation for the foundational role of the Scriptures in defining who we are as the

people of God. After all, are we Anglicans not united in our commitment to the centrality of the Scriptures to our faith? Indeed we are – but yet again, we enter an arena of contest, this time over the interpretation and use of the Bible.

I am not qualified to pursue this line of discussion, as I am not a biblical scholar. But if our avowed commitment to the Scriptures means anything, it must mean taking them very seriously indeed. It means being less cavalier in our treatment of the sacred texts. But this does not mean that we must opt for biblical literalism or fundamentalism. It calls for a careful, nuanced and deeply respectful willingness to listen again to the witness of the Bible, and to hear themes, voices and accents to which we have often been deaf: those of a missionary God speaking to (and through) a missionary community. The voices are many, because the biblical contexts are many and diverse.<sup>6</sup> But through the plurality of the biblical witnesses, we discern the unity-in-diversity of the Trinitarian God who sends, the God who is sent, and the God who travels with the sent. The missionary God of the Scriptures is the bedrock of our identity as the sent people of God – the missional community, the Church, whether we be in the North or in the South.

Can our rediscovery of mission at the heart of the Scriptures, of the church's identity, of the very nature of God, also be a significant 'instrument of communion' for Anglicans, and indeed for all God's people? Can the mission of God, the *missio Dei*, provide a pluriform community like the Anglican Communion with a centre, an integrating principle? I believe that it can, as long as we come to terms with the diversity of opinion among Anglicans about the meaning of the word 'mission', and with the diversity of missional practice.

### Is there an Anglican understanding of mission?

Anglicans, I suggest, have never had a single model of mission. The founding of the church in Angleland saw a confrontation between two rather different models: that of the indigenous Celts, and that of Pope Gregory, whom Augustine of Canterbury served. Canterbury (backed by Rome) prevailed.<sup>7</sup> In the colonial era a thousand or so years later, the approaches of SPCK and SPG clearly did not satisfy all Anglicans, leading to the formation of the Church Missionary Society and other agencies, and thus to the spread of different visions of Anglicanism (and of mission) as the Anglican Communion was born.<sup>8</sup>

#### The Five Marks of Mission

The mission of the church is the work of Christ:

- to proclaim the good news of the reign of God
- to teach, baptize and nurture new believers
- to respond to human need by loving service
- to seek to transform the unjust structures of society
- to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

*Anglican Consultative Council  
(1984, 1990)*

Following the Anglican Congress in Toronto in 1963, which rekindled an interest in mission (expressed then in terms of 'mutual responsibility and interdependence'), the need grew for some kind of understanding of 'mission'. Between its 1984 and 1990 meetings, the Anglican Consultative Council produced a definition of mission that became known throughout the Communion as 'The Five Marks of Mission'.

The Five Marks have given Anglicans a widely accepted definition of mission that helped us to focus on holistic mission during the Decade of Evangelism. But they have not won acceptance in every part of the Communion. I discovered this during the first 'Encounter in the South' in Limuru, Kenya in January 1994. I referred approvingly to the Five Marks in a paper I gave at that conference. In the discussion that followed, a senior bishop from South East Asia criticised the Five Marks for including justice and environmental issues as dimensions of mission. These had been no part of Jesus' mission, he argued; only the first mark (which he understood to mean personal evangelism) came close to a truly biblical theology of mission. In short, he equated mission with evangelism.

The bishop's attack on the Five Marks led me to reflect on them more critically. Were they adequate? Could they be defended as a comprehensive and coherent framework for an Anglican view of mission? In time I came to agree with the bishop (though for very different reasons, and with different results) that they were *not* adequate. Through the Communion's mission commission MISSIO (1994-1999), I urged that the Five Marks be revisited. MISSIO's final report to the ACC said as much: it offered a missiological critique of the Five Marks, and suggested either rewriting them (see the text box on the next page) or finding a different kind of definition altogether.<sup>9</sup>

**The Five Marks of Mission (revised)**

In mission, the whole people of God live the good news of the reign of God as they:

- witness to Christ's forgiving, saving, reconciling love for all people
- build welcoming, celebratory and transforming communities of faith
- stand in solidarity with the poor and needy
- challenge injustice and oppression
- protect, care for and renew life on our planet.

*Michael McCoy /  
Anglican Board of Mission – Australia, 1997*

**Character, not method**

We need, I suggest, an understanding of mission that sets out the *character* or *nature* of mission, without trying to spell out in every detail the *ways* in which that mission is enacted (which is what the Five Marks try to do). We need to give the local church everywhere the freedom to discern the shape of its own contextual mission response and to work out the questions of focus, method, and agency within a broadly agreed

missiological framework.

It is odd, then, that MISSIO's successor, the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism (IASCOME) appears to endorse the traditional Five Marks without further comment.<sup>10</sup> To be fair to IASCOME, however, its final report to the ACC offers at least two fresh elements to the Anglican Communion's thinking about mission.

**Context, not content**

The first is the chapter entitled 'Mission in the context of our blessed but broken and hurting world', in which it defines mission in a variety of ways, as God's people respond to a range of contextual needs: dispossession, conflict, natural disaster, poverty, broken relationships, HIV/AIDS, and so on.<sup>11</sup> This approach suggests (although it does not declare) that there is no universal, timeless, definition of mission that has only to be put into practice (again, as the Five Marks try to do). Rather, mission is the faithful witness and action of God's people in a potentially infinite number of ways. I am reminded of the pregnant definition that closes David Bosch's *Transforming Mission*: Mission 'is the good news of God's love, incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world'.<sup>12</sup>

**A Covenant for Communion in Mission**

The second important contribution of IASCOME – and the one that may well have the greater impact – is the idea of the 'Covenant for Communion in Mission'. Taking its cue from the Windsor Report's proposal for an Anglican Covenant,<sup>13</sup> IASCOME has recommended a creative advance on that proposal: that we enter into a covenant not just of communion, but of *communion in mission*.<sup>14</sup>

The Windsor Report's draft Anglican Covenant makes a number of passing but important references to mission as one aspect of our shared communion.<sup>15</sup> These suggest that a vision for mission was never far from the Lambeth Commission's collective mind as it wrestled with the complexities of its mandate. But the chief concern of its draft Anglican Covenant is to find ways of (re)building Anglican unity through a variety of institutional processes and relationships.

IASCOME's proposal is subtly but significantly different: that we base our sense of communion, of common purpose, on *God's call to be a missional people*. That is, our missional identity is not just one element contributing to our unity as Anglicans, but the foundation on which it is to be built.

The Anglican Communion grew out of a vision for world mission. The recent Decade of Evangelism highlighted this founding perspective and encouraged churches of the Communion to explore what this perspective might mean for a new era... One way of expressing this re-emerging perspective is to say that we are a family of churches who find their *communion in mission*.<sup>16</sup>

The 'Anglican Covenant' and the 'Covenant for Communion in Mission' are only drafts, commended to the Communion by ACC-13 for study. It seems that they are being given very serious attention, and are likely to form the basis of our continuing quest for unity. IASCOME's proposal is clearly not intended to replace that of the Windsor Report, but rather to complement it, to put a missional frame around it.<sup>17</sup>

Will Anglicans worldwide unite around a shared vision, a covenant to serve God's mission in a broken and hurting world? IASCOME clearly hopes so. But we probably have a long journey ahead of us before we reach that level of mutual commitment. There is much brokenness and hurt within our Communion that remains to be healed.

## Can we unite in mission?

If we are to get to the point of entering into a Covenant of Communion in Mission, I believe that we shall have to reach a common mind in areas such as these.

### 1. *Unity in mission*

We need to agree about the character of the *missio Dei* – or, at the very least, to agree to disagree without excommunicating one another.<sup>18</sup> This is theologically and strategically prior to the business of working out *methods* of mission. IASCOME's report does not give us the tools to do this, although its contextual definitions of mission point the way.

Our institutions and programmes of theological education can play a key role here. Where else do Anglicans have the space and the motivation to reflect critically on the identity and purpose of God's people? And how else are the emerging leaders of our churches to be energised, inspired, and equipped for their role of giving God's people a vision for mission? It is vital that our theological educators and students engage with the challenge of defining and articulating the foundational nature of the *missio Dei* in all our varied contexts.<sup>19</sup>

### 2. *Community in mission*

Second, we need to agree that God's mission is the bedrock of all we are, do, and say as the Church in the third millennium. Again, this is unfamiliar ground to Anglicans. We have worked for so long with a mission-less ecclesiology rooted in the Christendom paradigm – even though the majority of us do not live in the nations of historic Christendom – that it will require a transformation of our thinking and living. One of its implications, though, is a (re)discovery of a genuine vision for the *local* church as the sign, instrument and foretaste of God's mission through the *catholic* Church in each context. The IASCOME report builds on the work of its predecessors in holding such a vision before the Anglican Communion. But we don't really need standing commissions to remind us of our missional calling: our eucharistic liturgies present it to us every time we celebrate the sacrament, sending us out into the world with the instruction, 'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord'.

Again, our institutions and programmes of theological education can play an important part in (re)building Anglican ecclesiology on missional foundations, by ensuring that their curricula include the teaching of

courses with missional *dimensions* as well as missional *intentions*.<sup>20</sup> But our courses must also take care to emphasise the *servant* nature of the Church and of its ministry. One of the particular weaknesses of much African theological education, in my experience, is the tendency to allow the clericalisation of Christian ministry (which is a Communion-wide phenomenon, unfortunately) to combine with cultural attitudes towards leadership, thus producing ordinands who seek status and power. The result, all too often, is power struggles and conflict in local churches, draining their energy away from their primary calling to be witnessing servants of the world. Our institutions and programmes of theological education need to offer curricula that subvert these tendencies and nurture generations of servant leaders who are mission-focused.

### 3. *Diversity in mission*

Third, we need to recognize that our commitment to the universal *missio Dei* through the community of God's local people will lead to a great diversity of mission models, strategies and practices. This will test our self-image as a Communion, and may reveal just how nervous we are of genuine diversity. But it is the only way in which mission can be faithfully done, enabling us to 'go in peace' – to do God's mission differently from one another, yet with a common mind. IASCOME agrees: 'A *communion in mission* is characterised at one and the same time by a celebration of commonality and difference'.<sup>21</sup>

How can our institutions and programmes of theological education help us to celebrate both commonality and diversity? Too often, the institutions themselves demand conformity from their faculty and students – conformity to a particular vision of Anglicanism, a particular theological or ecclesial framework.<sup>22</sup> If we cannot celebrate diversity within our institutions of theological education, how on earth will we do so in the wider Church? Perhaps one answer is to encourage stronger links between theological education programmes in different dioceses and Provinces, so that staff and students experience for themselves different ways of being Anglican and of doing theology, *in a conscious effort to recognise and affirm the diversity of our Anglican heritages*.<sup>23</sup> ANITEPAM exists, in part, to encourage this kind of mutual enrichment.

## Peace or pieces?

'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God'

(Matthew 5:9). There are painfully few signs at present that Anglicans worldwide are ready to make peace or to celebrate anything, let alone our differences; but those must remain our goals if we are to experience genuine communion in mission. Without a sense of celebration in the context of peacemaking, our fragile bonds of affection will shatter.

If the Anglican Communion really wishes to hold together and to be a community of peacemakers, rather than break into pieces, then the only viable source of unity will be a full-blooded commitment to the mission of God as the basis for our life together as a Communion.

Will this become a reality? We should join IASCOME in praying and working to make it so. And our institutions and programmes of theological education can play a critical role in this, (1) by building their curricula firmly on missional foundations, (2) by equipping ordinands for a servant-ministry that leads the people of God into being a sign, instrument and foretaste of God's *basileia*, and (3) by encouraging a wider Anglican identity that embraces diversity within a shared commitment to serving God's mission in the world.

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*An earlier version of this article was prepared for a study resource in the Diocese of North Carolina, Episcopal Church (USA). It has been revised and used here with the permission of the Revd Dr Leon P. Spencer, Dean of the Diocesan School of Ministry. It also bears some resemblance to an article that appeared in interMission: An Australian Journal of Mission 4.1 (February 1998), pp. 22-33.*

### **Appendix: A Covenant for Communion in Mission<sup>24</sup>**

The Lambeth Commission in its *Windsor Report* 'recommended and urged the primates to consider the adoption by the churches of the Communion of a common Anglican Covenant which would make explicit and forceful the loyalty and bonds of affection which govern the relationships between the Churches of the Communion'.<sup>25</sup>

IASCOME has discussed ways to take forward the mission imperatives in the Communion following the Partners in Mission process and the Decade of Evangelism. The idea of a Covenant for Communion in Mission has emerged as a key proposal. We believe that a Covenant enshrining the values of common mission that could be used as a basis for outward-looking relationships among the churches, mission organisations and societies, and networks of the Communion would provide a significant focus of unity in mission for the Anglican Communion.

In Scripture, covenants are central in the Old Testament to God's relationship to Noah, Abraham, Moses, and to the people of Israel. Jeremiah and Ezekiel foretell the coming of a new covenant – in which God will give God's people a new heart and new life and will walk with them, and they with him. In the New Testament Jesus inaugurates this New Covenant. It was marked by the breaking of his body and the shedding of his blood and celebrated in the central Christian meal of the Eucharist and effected through the Resurrection of Jesus the Christ for all

people for all time.

IASCOME considered in depth the nature of covenant. We recognised that within our cultures a covenant is a serious and significant agreement. Covenants are fundamentally about relationships to which one gives oneself voluntarily, while contracts can be seen as a legally binding document under a body of governing principle. Covenants are free-will voluntary offerings from one to another while contracts are binding entities whose locus of authority is externally to oneself. Covenants are relational: relational between those who are making the covenant and relational with and before God.

As Anglican churches, we have a tradition of covenants that help to clarify our relationships with other ecumenical churches, such as the Porvoo Agreement between Anglican Churches of Britain and Ireland, Spain and Portugal with the Lutheran Churches of the Baltic and Nordic countries. Another example is the Called to Common Mission covenant between the Episcopal Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

We recommend for consideration by the ACC and testing within the Communion the following nine-point covenant. We believe it provides the basis for agreements between Anglican churches at the national level – but also may be used by local parishes/congregations, mission movements and networks, companion diocese links, etc. We believe the Covenant for Communion in Mission thus provides a focus for binding the Communion together in a way rather different from that envisaged by the Windsor Report.

[The covenant is deliberately general in its principles. In its understanding of mission it builds on the Five Marks of Mission of the 1984 and 1990 Anglican Consultative Councils.<sup>26</sup> It provides a framework within which those entering into the covenant can identify specific tasks and learnings that relate to their particular situations.]<sup>27</sup>

### A Covenant for Communion in Mission

This Covenant signifies our common call to share in God's healing and reconciling mission for our blessed but broken and hurting world. In our relationships as Anglican sisters and brothers in Christ, we live in the hope of the unity that God has brought about through Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit.

*The preamble recognises that the world is one that has been graced by God but that God's work through Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit, is to seek to heal its hurts and reconcile its brokenness. The preamble reminds us that as Christians we are called to share our relationships in the mission of God to the wider world, bearing witness to the kingdom of love, justice and joy that Jesus inaugurated.*

Nourished by Scripture and Sacrament, we pledge ourselves to:

*The nine points of the covenant are predicated on Scripture and the Sacraments providing the nourishment, guidance and strength for the journey of the covenant partners together.*

- Recognise Jesus in each other's contexts and lives

*The nine points begin with Jesus Christ, the source and inspiration of our faith and calls for those covenanting for mission to look for, recognise, learn from and rejoice in the presence of Christ at work in the lives and the situations of the other.*

- Support one another in our participation in God's mission

*Point two acknowledges that we cannot serve God's mission in isolation and calls for mutual support and encouragement in our efforts.*

- Encourage expressions of our new life in Christ

*Point three asks those who enter into the covenant to encourage one another as we develop new understandings of our identities in Christ.*

- Meet to share common purpose and explore differences and disagreements

*Point four provides for face-to-face meetings at which insights and learnings can be shared and difficulties worked through.*

- Be willing to change in response to critique and challenge from others

*Point five recognises that as challenges arise so changes will be needed as discipleship of Christ is deepened resulting both from experience in mission and encountering those with whom we are in covenant.*

- Celebrate our strengths and mourn over our failures

*Point six calls for honouring and celebrating our successes and acknowledging and naming our sadness and failures in the hopes of restitution and reconciliation.*

- Share equitably our God-given resources

*Point seven emphasises that there are resources to share – not just money and people, but ideas, prayers, excitement, challenge, enthusiasm and calls for a move to fair sharing of such resources particularly when one participant in the Covenant has more than the other.*

- Work together for the sustainability of God's creation

*Point eight underscores that God's concern is for the whole of life – not just people, but the whole created order – and so we are called to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.*

- Live into the promise of God's reconciliation for ourselves and for the world

*This last point speaks of the future hope towards which we are living, the hope of a reconciled universe – in which ‘God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven’ for which Jesus taught us to pray.*

We make this covenant in the promise of our mutual responsibility and interdependence in the Body of Christ.

*The conclusion provides a strong reminder that we need each other, are responsible for each other, and are mutually interdependent in the Body of Christ.*

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### **For discussion and reflection**

1. In your experience, what holds Anglicans together in your parish? In your diocese? In your theological education institution?
2. What place (if any) does a commitment to mission have in your shared identity?
3. Would your parish / diocese / TE programme be willing to adopt the ‘Covenant for Communion in Mission’ in the journey towards Anglican unity? Discuss the reasons for your answer.
4. Differences over what mission is, and how it should be done, can cause significant conflict. What would it take for Anglicans in your parish / diocese / TE programme to come to a shared vision for mission?
5. Devise a statement about ‘mission’ that, in your view, could unite Anglicans.
6. IASCOME says that “communion in mission is characterised at one and the same time by a celebration of commonality and difference”. What are the commonalities with other Anglicans that you can celebrate? And the differences?
7. This article calls for “a (re)discovery of a genuine vision for the *local* church as the sign, instrument and foretaste of God’s mission through the *catholic* church in each context”. What would it take for your parish / diocese / TE programme to live out such a vision? What is the role of the diocese and Province in facilitating and supporting this vision?

### **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Some argue that the Lambeth Conference should be discontinued, or that the ACC should be abolished and replaced by a more participatory international Anglican Congress (see Stephen Platten, *Augustine’s Legacy: Authority and Leadership in the Anglican Communion*. [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1997]). The Virginia Report (in *Being Anglican in the Third Millennium: The Official Report of the Tenth Meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council, Panama 1996* [Harrisburg, Pa: Morehouse Publishing, 1997], pp. 223-288) asks some pointed questions about Anglican Communion structures, but does not call for any dramatic changes to them.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Stephen Sykes, *Unashamed Anglicanism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), pp. 211-226.

<sup>3</sup> For a summary of the growth of modernism and post-modernism and the implications for Christian mission, see Craig Van Gelder, ‘Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition’, in George R. Hunsberger, & Craig Van Gelder (eds), *The Church Between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 113-138.<sup>4</sup> Anglicans like Robert Warren, John Thomson, and Paul Avis in England, and Loren Mead, Arlin J. Rothauge, Wayne Schwab, and Titus Presler in the United States (to mention only a few) have drawn their churches’ attention to the need to journey from Christendom to the new mission reality of our time. References to some of their works are given at the end of this article. See also the publications of the Gospel and Our Culture Network in North America.

<sup>5</sup> Mission and Public Affairs Council, *Mission-Shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> See Lucien Legrand, *Unity and Plurality: Mission in the Bible* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990).

<sup>7</sup> See John Finney, *Recovering the Past: Celtic and Roman Mission* (London: DLT, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> Someone (Timothy Yates?) has perceptively suggested that SPG (later USPG) was in reality the Church (of England’s) missionary society, while CMS was a society for the propagation of the gospel.

<sup>9</sup> See *Anglicans in Mission: A Transforming Journey. Report of MISSIO, the Mission Commission of the Anglican Communion, to the Anglican Consultative Council, meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland, September 1999* (London: SPCK, 2000), pp. 19-21. I rewrote the Five Marks while serving the Anglican Board of Mission – Australia (ABM) in the late 1990s; the text box on page 42 contains the revised version. It places diverse mission practices under an integrating principle, ‘the reign of God’, which was of course the heart of Jesus’ mission. However, it is silent on interfaith

dialogue, the gospel and culture, reconciliation, healing, and other important contemporary themes.

<sup>10</sup> See *Communion in Mission: Report of the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Mission and Evangelism 2001-2005 to the thirteenth meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council in Nottingham, including the interim report to ACC-12, 'Travelling Together in God's Mission'* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2006), pp. 67-68. See also footnote 28 below. I am dismayed that IASCOME's name perpetuates the hoary phrase 'mission and evangelism', as if they were different activities carried out in parallel. This problematic distinction is not helped by the presence in IASCOME's report of two chapters headed respectively 'Evangelism' (Ch 4) and 'Mission in the context of our blessed but broken and hurting world' (Ch 5). The report acknowledges that evangelism is 'an essential part of the total mission' (p. 68), but the two separate chapters still leave the impression that 'mission' and 'evangelism' have yet to be properly integrated in Anglican thinking.

<sup>11</sup> *Communion in Mission*, pp. 79-89.

<sup>12</sup> David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 519.

<sup>13</sup> Lambeth Commission on Communion, *The Windsor Report* (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2004), pp. 48-50 and 65-71.

<sup>14</sup> *Communion in Mission*, pp. 21-41. The English text is given below, in the Appendix to this article.

<sup>15</sup> See Articles 1, 3, 5, 7, 15.

<sup>16</sup> *Communion in Mission*, p. 42; emphasis in original.

<sup>17</sup> The Covenant for Communion in Mission seeks several commitments from churches in the Anglican Communion that are also present in the Anglican Covenant – but only in very general terms. So IASCOME's perspectives may be – should be – built into the Anglican Covenant, even if they remain separate documents.

<sup>18</sup> Apart from anything else, this will require a whole-hearted commitment to missiology – a field of theology that is still unfamiliar to many Anglicans.

<sup>19</sup> The *ANITEPAM Journal* No. 48 (November 2005) reflected more fully on the theme of mission in African theological education.

<sup>20</sup> I discuss these terms in my article, 'Restoring mission to the heart of theological education', in *The ANITEPAM Journal* No. 48 (November 2005), p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> ACC, *Communion in Mission*, p. 42; emphasis in original.

<sup>22</sup> In my own theological formation in the 1970s, I experienced equal and opposite pressures to conform, first in the evangelical college I attended in the UK, and then in the Anglo-Catholic seminary in which I spent a term on my

return home to South Africa. Mostly the pressures were unspoken and unconsciously exerted; but they were there nonetheless.

<sup>23</sup> The same principle and approach should apply, of course, to Anglican attitudes to other Christian traditions.

<sup>24</sup> This text, with the exception of the paragraph noted in footnote 27 below, is reproduced from *Communion in Mission*, pp. 21-24, with permission. Footnotes 25 and 26 below are from that text, but have been renumbered to be consistent with the numbering in this article.

<sup>25</sup> *Windsor Report*, pp. 62-64.

<sup>26</sup> To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God; to teach, baptise and nurture new believers; to respond to human need by loving service; to seek to transform unjust structures of society; to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

<sup>27</sup> This paragraph and its associated footnote are not included in the published version of the Covenant (see *Communion in Mission*, p. 22). However, they are in the version of the text supplied to me by the Director of Mission and Evangelism in the Anglican Communion Office in June 2006. I have left them in, as they make a revealing point about the Five Marks of Mission being the missiological basis of the Covenant.

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Joseph Wandera

## Being Anglican in a liturgically ecumenical setting

### A case study from Kenya

As a newly appointed lecturer at St Paul's United Theological College, Limuru, an ecumenical seminary in Kenya, my wife and I went to worship at the old College Chapel.<sup>1</sup> The Kiswahili service is the second after the English service. The congregation was composed of people from the surrounding community, some of whom work with the college and some students. The first service, in English, is attended mostly by students from the seminary. The seminary also has a midweek service for students and staff conducted in English in addition to the daily Morning Prayer. The Kiswahili service was conducted by an ordained Anglican priest, a student pursuing his Bachelor of Divinity degree.

The Chapel was full to capacity and anybody coming in late would be sure to miss a place to sit. The lively singing in the church was accompanied by vigorous dancing led by a youth dance group. Everybody in the church was dancing, save for mothers who had to remain seated and hold their babies. The woman seated next to me gave ululations as the music went on and on. I tried to join in the dance but felt this was unfamiliar Pentecostal territory as I was not used to it. I had just returned my studies in Europe, where services did not have as much singing. In my earlier theological training, I had been taught to follow the liturgy strictly. We were hardly challenged to consider 'other ways'. The service was quite participatory, with young people leading the singing, dancing and involved in other aspects of the service. Having just returned from a context where at a Communion service, the gospel was always read by a priest, it was refreshingly different at this service to see a young girl read the gospel as the rest of the church stood in reverence.

The Holy Communion liturgy was familiar, even though the written service was followed with a lot of flexibility. The priest picked and chose

what was, to him, relevant and contextual. The service concluded with the Holy Communion led by the priest using the 1662 service, but in Kiswahili. The service had lasted three hours in total.

The sermon's theme was based on the book of Romans: 'If God is for us, who can be against us?'. It was repetitive and simple and without much exposition of the text. The main theme of the sermon was that despite what the faithful may be going through in their lives, God is on their side as the Bible promised, and that they should not be worried.

### In what way does this service convey the 'Anglican way'?

As I went away from the church service, I began to reflect on it. I was reminded of the course I attended as a seminary student for three weeks in August 2001 in Canterbury, on the topic of Anglican spirituality. Together with Anglican seminarians from other parts of the world, we were exposed to Anglican spirituality through daily lectures. We had morning and evening prayers at Canterbury Cathedral using the Anglican liturgy. We recited the Psalms and the music was led by different choirs. There was also Holy Communion in the context of the Word.

The course I attended in Canterbury and my experience of Anglican worship in an ecumenical context at my seminary in Limuru, Kenya, where Anglicanism is taught, has made me reflect on the question of being Anglican in an ecumenical setting or being Anglican away from the seat of Anglicanism (Canterbury). The things that I reflected upon in the area of liturgy or worship — although specific to the Anglican Church — can also apply to other churches that are products of the missionary enterprise and still share communion with their mother churches.

At theological college and at the short course I attended in Canterbury, I was taught that Anglican forms of worship are offered in the forms of daily prayer (divine office) and the eucharist. According to Richard Giles on the Anglican approach to worship, 'these are forms of liturgical (as distinct from unstructured) prayer, in which an unchanging given framework is enlivened by variable features — readings, prayers and songs — which reflect the church's liturgical year and respond to events of the day'.<sup>2</sup> However, my observation of worship in the service under consideration portrays a different reality on the ground. Here, there is 'no unchanging, given framework' to use Giles's words. How then is Anglican worship reflected in Africa, in a context different from Canterbury?

When Anglican tradition(s) is passed on from Europe to Africa (in this case, Kenya), it undergoes transformation. This transformation is also a dynamic process in an attempt to make liturgy contextually relevant. However, there is always a tension between Anglican tradition as passed on to us from the northern hemisphere, and the local context. The following section offers an analysis of the Anglican service that I attended, and reveals both transformation and tension in liturgy.

### **Analysis of the service**

1. *Music*. One clear, distinctive feature in this service was the expressive and celebrative aspect of the worship, especially as expressed through music. This was different from the traditional hymns that would normally be sung in a traditional Anglican church. In the service that I attended, music was contextual and touched on issues that people are struggling with, such as power, sickness, alcoholism, and poverty. The choruses may not be different theologically from the traditional hymnals which had similar theology — for example, war in *Onward Christian soldiers*. It was clear that the context, rather than the liturgical calendar, determined the songs used in the church. The role of music in Africa is educational and teaches morality, for example. Music is also empowering and challenges people as well as warning them. Unlike the services I attended in Canterbury, dances were an important part of church music. Listening to the songs mainly sung in Swahili and led by young people, I could easily pick out the words. The following two songs sung in Kiswahili (but for which I have provided an English translation) will illustrate my observations:

#### **Song 1**

*Simba wa Yuda ananguruma* (The Lion of Judah is roaring)  
*Simba wa Yuda ananguruma — Simba* (The Lion of Judah is roaring — the Lion)  
*Akinguruma wagonjwa wanaona* (When he roars, the sick get healed)  
*Akinguruma vipofu wanaona* (When he roars, the blind see)  
*Simba wa Yuda akinguruma — Simba* (The Lion of Judah roars — the Lion)  
*Akinguruma vivete wanatembea* (When he roars, the lame walk)  
*Akinguruma walevi wanaokoka* (When he roars, those who take alcohol get saved)  
*Simba wa Yuda ananguruma — Simba* (The Lion of Judah roars — the Lion)

#### **Song 2**

*Pale Kalvari yote yamekwisha* (At Calvary all was finished)  
*Pale Kalvari magonjwa yamekwisha* (At Calvary sickness was finished)

*Pale Kalvari vipofu wanaona* (At Calvary the blind see)  
*Pale Kalvari mapepo yamekwisha* (At Calvary the demons were finished)  
*Pale Kalvari vijana waokoka* (At Calvary the youth get saved)  
*Pale Kalvari yote yamekwisha* (At Calvary all was finished)

There was generally a jovial mood in the service. It is probably for this reason that Prof. Esther Mombo has spoken and written about African Christianity as having created its own unique flavour of religion and has assumed a more charismatic character.<sup>3</sup>

2. *Sermon*. The sermon was simple to follow and straight forward. There was less exposition in the course of the sermon, but more repetition of a particular text in applying to concrete life situations. The preacher used a number of stories from real life situations to illustrate his points. The sermon addressed the daily challenges which people faced in life such as poverty, disease and hunger. I do not remember seeing the preacher refer to any sermon notes. Nevertheless, the congregation was very attentive and responsive — as could be seen, for example, with their interjections of ‘Amen’ in the course of the preaching.

3. *Liturgy*. Although this was a Holy Communion service, the only Anglican identity I saw there was the pastor’s attire — the traditional Anglican vestments composed of a black cassock, a white surplice, and a black stole — and the Kiswahili Anglican liturgy tailored on the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* which the pastor used very sparingly in the service. The pastor also used the familiar Anglican form of blessing at the end of the service. The rest of the Holy Communion liturgy was flexibly followed.

Being liturgically Anglican in the African context means that we consciously integrate the experiences of the local context into the liturgy. As one scholar on spirituality has lamented, ‘A detached, and *a priori*, approach to doctrine gave birth to a similarly structured theory of the spiritual life which was separated from the core of human experience’.<sup>4</sup> However, in the case study above, the Anglican liturgy seeks to address people’s experiences such as poverty, sexism, disease, illiteracy, and so on. This is evident in the songs, the sermons and the involvement of all people in the service. It would be totally inappropriate from the Kenyan experience to insist on judiciously following the traditional Anglican liturgy if that does not provide space for the people to worship God through their lived experiences. Yet in some parts of the liturgy one could still feel being part of the global Anglican community.

My experience of Anglican liturgy in the service in Kenya indicates that

spirituality is dialogic, meaning that the theory and practice of liturgy operates on the frontier between contemporary experience and the tradition, and the latter is not simplistically applied as the measure of the former. Thus, the contemporary challenge of defining who an Anglican is in the context of liturgy in Kenya is that there is no single trans-cultural category; rather, such a definition is rooted in the people's lived experiences of God's presence in history — a history that is always specific.

## **Challenges of teaching Anglican liturgy in the context of ecumenical theological education**

### **1. The ecumenical context**

Teaching the Anglican way in terms of liturgy, music and preaching within the context of theological teaching in Africa is faced with the challenge of having students from various groups of Anglicanism: thus we have 'high', 'middle' and 'low' Anglicans. This challenge is directly related to the fact that Africa was evangelised by different groups. According to Esther Mombo, the development of Anglican liturgies in Eastern Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Sudan) was influenced by the different characteristics of two mission societies. The Church Mission Society (CMS) was 'low church', while the Universities' Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) was 'high'.<sup>5</sup>

Theological educators in Kenya today — and I believe the world over — must take seriously the ecumenical/intercultural context for teaching theology. One important context for theological education for Anglicans in Kenya is the ecumenical context such as is provided at St Paul's United Theological College, Limuru. Here, Anglican students are not taught separately from other denominations, but intermingle with them as part of the learning process. Even though students are provided with opportunities to learn the 'Anglican way' in small separate groups, for example during denominational classes, there is still considerable emphasis on learning together with students from other traditions. Also, students are required to spend a considerable part of their training in Anglican parishes where they can observe as well as participate in Anglican church services.

The opening up of the College Chapel to the community around and within the College enhances ecumenicity and intercultural contacts as we get the students to interact with ordinary Christians from other

denominations and experience how they worship God. Ecumenical liturgy therefore becomes an opportunity for training Anglican laity and clergy who will serve God and humanity in an increasingly plural and globalized world.

Unfortunately, many theological educators in Africa have not developed contextual ways of thinking theologically, liturgically and ministerially in general. I have encountered, for example, some theological educators who simply cannot appreciate anything 'charismatic' in liturgy and who speak in a derogatory way about 'Pentecostals'. Does this not call for a serious process of decolonizing the mind from exclusivist inclinations? While it is important to be critical of charismatic/Pentecostal ways — for example, their sometimes lack of depth in theological reflection as seen in their repetitive songs, their tendency towards biblicism in interpreting scripture at the expense of serious reflection on biblical texts, their selective use of the bible at the expense of preaching from the 'whole' bible — it is also good to recognize the lessons they offer to Anglican liturgy and spirituality. This is especially important because Anglicans, at least in Kenya, are increasingly going the charismatic way.<sup>6</sup>

The big spontaneity of renewal in Anglican churches clearly indicates the fact that African Anglicans want to express their faith in African terms. However, the tendency of some African Anglicans to dismiss new experiments in liturgy, rather choosing to stick with the old, may be a reflection of the tension which exists between issues of African identity as Anglicans on the one hand, and their cultural context on the other.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, it seems to me that the majority of Kenyan Anglicans have no interest in romanticizing tradition just for the sake of it. The Anglicans I saw in the case study I have given are supremely interested in worship that meets their existential needs for wholeness and the supernatural.

Christians are seeking a different kind of spirituality from one which was passed on to us by the early missionaries. In the context of theological education, this may mean creating space for an oral liturgy, a narrative theology, and participation by the whole community of God's people in the life of the church. Such spirituality may in fact be more holistic and appealing to the African world than the older version of Christianity.<sup>8</sup>

### **2. Place of laity and young people**

While liturgy at Canterbury was exclusively clerical, the Chapel service at St Paul's was not clericalised. The role of the clergy in Anglican liturgy

in Kenya is slowly but surely being re-defined, from a position where the clergy are the main focus of attention in the church service to that where clergy are simply part of the leadership of the liturgy. The service at St Paul's is only one example. In rural parishes where the parish covers a large geographical area, the clergy only come to do Communion perhaps once every month or so, and even then the service is quite participatory. Indeed, the association of 'spirituality' with the clerical state came into being from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is during this period that the most frequent usage of spirituality as having to do with the clergy was seen. Only in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century did the word 'spirituality' become established in France in reference to the spiritual life of laity and ordinary people. In a positive sense it was used to show a personal, affective relationship with God.

The Anglican liturgy in Kenya points in the latter direction. There is now an increasing involvement of the laity in the planning and running of the liturgical life of the churches. This is enriching because the clergy can learn from the laity in terms of what they value in worship, as well as enhancing participatory Anglican ministry. Also, theological education in the world today must create space for the laity. It is in this regard that Cephas Omenyo, writing on the charismatization of the mainline churches in Ghana, observes that 'there is wider participation in worship, sharing of testimonies and words of encouragement by the laity'.<sup>9</sup> In the Kenyan context today, where the number of ordained priests is limited and the church is growing rapidly at least numerically, the involvement of the laity is inevitable.

In a context such as Kenya, where the number of young people in churches is sometimes larger than that of adults, they cannot be treated as passive participants. This is a challenge to the curricula of theological colleges — ministry to and by children. Where the subject of ministry by and to children has found space at all in the curriculum of theological education, it has still remained peripheral. Writing from a Ghanaian context, Omenyo observes that 'a number of young people have discovered their leadership potentials and gifts, which they try to put to use in the Church, thus giving a practical meaning to the Reformation maxim, "priesthood of all believers"'.<sup>10</sup>

The involvement of laity at the service included other aspects like reading notices or being treasurer. Being Anglican in this context means being church where there is no discrimination on the basis of creed or

gender, as indicated in Galatians where believers are all one in Christ.<sup>11</sup> Theological education should encourage the participation of the laity in church affairs, young and old, as an important aspect of being Anglican today. The challenge of theological education is to prepare those that are going to be clergy to equip all in the household of God.

As well as the above, theological education should take note of tradition and context. This will help students to connect between tradition and context within the Anglican way. Theological education must encourage students towards being contextually relevant, and to seek harmony among various forms of worship.

### **3. Preaching of the Word**

The use of the Bible in the service in our case study above was different from what one might find in other churches. Here, the Bible was made alive to issues facing the worshippers. Such issues involve poverty, diseases, and lack employment. Also, the reading was not necessarily part of the lectionary readings for that day, but was chosen by the preacher himself. This raises the issue, How do we read the Bible as Anglicans? For many Anglican congregations in Kenya today, the lectionary readings are not strictly adhered to in services. Even when readings are taken from the lectionary, preachers have considerable flexibility on what text to preach from on that occasion.

Attending services in many Anglican churches in Kenya today has increased my awareness of the *function* of a text within a specific context. I now recognize the necessity of reading the Bible with honesty about context and culture, and with an eye to the effect of the text on a social group or individual. Theologically, I am convicted that all valuable scripture should elicit a response from the community reading it. In my context, specific things are needed, such as the further validation of women's spiritual experiences, deeper involvement of women in political and ecclesial leadership, greater consideration of the material and political rights of the underprivileged and suffering parts of humanity, and an affirmation of ecological imperatives for sustainable development. For this reason texts that emphasize the need for a praxis response to Christian conviction should be celebrated. Those texts that espouse the opposite message — those that legitimate the subjugation of any group or the earth and its non-human inhabitants — should be carefully and contextually interpreted. Conversely, at the very point of complexity and difficulty, the

Bible can bring liberation, transformation, and meaning.

It is a great relief for me to find courses such as 'The Bible in Africa', 'post-colonial reading of the Bible', 'Power and oppression in the New Testament', being offered at St Paul's. This will go a long way to mainstreaming issues of marginality, not just in the liturgical life of the church but also in her other sectors, such as leadership structures.

### Conclusion: What is the 'Anglican way' in the context of worship in Kenya?

Being Anglican in Africa today implies a continuing search for a new world of possibilities, a new future which must be constructed every day. Being Anglican in Kenya offers lessons to the wider Communion in terms of its being rooted in experience, being dialogical, for example by accommodating charismatic renewal within the framework of Anglican worship traditions, and going beyond clericalism by purposely including all in worship services.

As I settle into the worship life at St Paul's, Limuru, I consider it a wonderful privilege that our students can learn to be Anglicans in such a rich ecumenical context. And I hope that many of them will take risks to attend services that the community around them frequent, where authentic experiences of being 'Anglican' can be encountered outside the guarded contexts of normal college worship.

I use the word 'risk' because such a move entails the possibility of being challenged by other ways. Being Anglican in the Kenyan context, and in other parts of the world, must of necessity have an intercultural missionary dimension. This is because we are called to mediate between different cultural orientations, make bridges between people of other faiths, be signs and instruments of solidarity, and also be forerunners of a global world

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The origin of St Paul's can be traced back to the early years of missionary activity in East Africa. In 1875, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) founded a settlement for freed slaves at Frere Town, near Mombasa. In 1888, the Revd E.A. Fitch began a divinity class to offer practical skills and Christian leadership training to these freed slaves.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Giles, *How to be an Anglican* (Canterbury: Canterbury Press, 2003) p.64.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by Matthew Davies, 'Anglican women in Africa: "The priority is for

life"' in *ANITEPAM Bulletin* No. 51 (August/September 2006), p.9..

<sup>4</sup> Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History*, pp. 32-53.

<sup>5</sup> Esther Mombo, *Anglican Liturgies in Eastern Africa*, in *Oxford Guide to the Book of Common Prayer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 277.

<sup>6</sup> Revd Dr Joseph Galgalo observes in an article that 'most churches, especially those in the urban areas, are also "redesigning" their church services to make them as attractive as possible in an attempt to measure up to the Pentecostals' typically colourful services'.

<sup>7</sup> Esther Mombo, *Anglican Liturgies in Eastern Africa*, p. 283..

<sup>8</sup> Anderson, *African Anglicans and/or Pentecostals*, p. 37.

<sup>9</sup> Cephas N. Omenyo, *Christianization of the Mainline Churches in Ghana*, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, pp. 13, 14.

<sup>11</sup> Galatians 3:28 (RSV).

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Dickson Chilongani

## An African praying tradition and Job 7

The Anglican Communion is a multicultural body of believers, with members from the entire world. A big issue in the Anglican Communion is to what extent there is an 'Anglican Way' and to what extent Anglicans are free to express their Anglicanism within their own cultures and traditions. It is not easy to discern where our culture is in accord with God's will and where it needs to be challenged, nor to discern where our faith has been influenced by culture more than God.

The Anglican Way began in a specifically British culture, and one of the gifts of African Christians to the Anglican Communion is the ability to highlight where Anglicanism has mistaken English culture for faith. Worship and prayer may be one area where western cultural styles have unnecessarily restricted the worship of African Anglicans, and within that topic the British 'stiff upper lip' (i.e. the culture of not showing emotions) may have unduly restricted Anglican praying patterns.

In this article I will compare Job 7 and the African praying tradition, in the hope that such reading will encourage Anglicans in Africa to worship and pray as Africans rather than as Westerners, and help the Anglican Way become less bound by its cultural origins. In this sense, Christianity will continue to become authentically African.

### Traditional African prayers

John S. Mbiti is a scholar who has written extensively on traditional African prayers. He points out how the praying tradition is indigenous to Africa<sup>1</sup>, an integral part of African religion, and an African way of life:

In traditional life...praying is living spiritually just as walking or sleeping is living physically. Just as you live, so you pray, as an integral part of being a human being. Just as life is a mixture of joy and tears, success and struggle, progress and failure, so is praying since it belongs to life.<sup>2</sup>

In traditional African religio-culture, prayer covers every aspect of human life without exception. It is offered in life and death, sickness and healing, prosperity and poverty, work and rest, war and peace, planting and harvesting, sacrifice and offerings, and so forth. According to Mbiti, traditional African prayers are primarily directed to God, and secondarily to spiritual intermediaries (i.e., the ancestors).<sup>3</sup> In actual fact, even when such prayers are directed towards the ancestors, God is still considered as the Ultimate Recipient.

Mbiti has further pointed out that in African religion, praying is not only worship, but also a rhetorical monologue, a platform for the pray-er's questioning and heart searching in the presence of God and other spiritual realities. In many prayers, especially those concerning suffering, people confidently address spiritual realities as if they were talking to them face-to-face.

Among the prayers offered at the time of suffering and adversity are the prayers of anguish and anger. Isaiah Majok Dau<sup>4</sup> points out that the heart of these prayers is wrestling and struggling with God over the pain and suffering encountered. Occasionally, this wrestling expresses itself as sharp irony. Among other things, the sufferer may complain and even quarrel with God for an alleged failure to intervene during the hour of dire need.

This complaining to God is understandable in the light of Ernst Wendland's seven principles underlining a Bantu worldview.<sup>5</sup> A Bantu worldview includes the principle of 'experientialism', i.e. the free expression of feelings and emotions according to context. In mourning rituals for instance, those who are bereaved express their deep sorrow and emotions without restraint.

Such free expression of feelings and emotions is integral to Bantu prayer. This is particularly so in prayers of anguish and anger when strong feelings can be expressed to God and the ancestors. According to Mbiti, God and the ancestors may even be rebuked — very politely — if they are considered to be acting unreasonably. In the following prayer, for instance, a man is so angry with God over a child's death that he threatens to kill God if he sees Him:

I don't know for what Imana [God] is punishing me: if I could meet with him I would kill him. Imana, why are you punishing me? Why have you not made me like other people? Couldn't you even give me one little child? Yo-o-o-o! I am dying in anguish! If only I could meet you and pay you out!

Come on (Imana), let me kill you! Let me run you through with a sword, or cut you with a knife! O Imana, you have deserted me! Yo-o-o! (Woe is me!).<sup>6</sup>

This strong irony can certainly puzzle outsiders. However, Mbiti describes it as ‘an outstanding dimension of African spirituality’, adding that it should not be carelessly dismissed by those who only betray their ignorance about traditional African religious feeling and practice.<sup>7</sup>

In respect to the prayer quoted above, Mbiti’s argument is that, firstly, in this prayer Imana is not being rejected. But as Dau puts it: ‘He is being indicted for not doing for the plaintiff what he has done for others’.<sup>8</sup> Imana has allowed the children of others to live but has forgotten the one child of the plaintiff, indeed he has forgotten the plaintiff himself; hence the legitimacy of the plaintiff’s complaint, and the bitterness of his protest.

In fact, Dau considers this savage irony as an expression of faith in the God who is both immanent and transcendent:

Strong words such as these express both faith in and anger with the God whose presence and absence are experienced at the time of pain and suffering. Faith in the fact that he is present even if his presence is not felt and anger in the fact he does not seem to intervene when he is needed most.<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, the conviction that the plaintiff has been forgotten is not taken as a reason for doubting God’s goodness or that of His created order. Rather, the ‘sorrow that death brings is the point being made in the prayer’.<sup>10</sup> The praying person expresses his deep, deep feelings of sorrow that have arisen because of death and tells God that He could have planned things better so that we would not be subjected to death:

O great Nzambi [God], what thou hast made is good, but thou hast brought a great sorrow to us with death. Thou shouldst have planned in some way that we would not be subject to death. O Nzambi, we are afflicted with great sadness.<sup>11</sup>

In short, in African religion there is room for the expression of emotion and particularly prayers of anguish and anger. But I should emphasise the two guiding principles that Mbiti<sup>12</sup> has further pointed out. Firstly, these prayers are offered out of conviction rather than out of disbelief. The praying person offers such a prayer out of the conviction that God exists and hears prayers.

Secondly, such questioning is not the same as blaspheming God. According to Mbiti, this is because in a society where life is corporate in every aspect, the individual shares the faith of the community in which he plays an integral part. Consequently, to blaspheme God is to blaspheme the faith of the community and indeed the community itself, for it is upon that faith the community is built. Dau does not exaggerate when he affirms that ‘in African traditional society, there is room for complaining, quarrelling or even fighting with God but there is no room for atheism’.<sup>13</sup>

## An African reading of Job 7

This ability to express anguish and anger is not something unique to African culture, but is, I suggest, deeply embedded in the Judeo-Christian tradition when it is freed of its English culture. A supreme example of this can be found in the Book of Job and especially the prayer of chapter 7. The context of this chapter is crucial. Job has undergone extreme loss. Following his lament in chapter three, Job and his three friends make their speeches in three cycles, each cycle of speech following this format: Eliphaz-Job-Bildad-Job-Zophar-Job.<sup>14</sup> Chapter 7 therefore is Job’s first speech in response to Eliphaz’ first speech.

Following his first test, Job’s response is to acknowledge God’s sovereignty in the hope that God will finally intervene to defend him. So he blesses God’s name in 1.21b: ‘the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord’. But instead a second trial follows, and this coupled with God’s silence has made Job wonder whether God is responsible for his suffering. Moreover, throughout his speech Eliphaz has insisted that God is the ultimate source of Job’s suffering, and sin is the cause of it (cf. 5.6-7). In this speech and, indeed, throughout the rest of his speeches Job holds the view that God is responsible for his suffering, but constantly dismisses the view that he has committed any sin to deserve this.

Job opens his speeches in 6.2-3 by responding to Eliphaz’s warning that vexation kills a fool (cf. 5.2). He justifies his vexation by arguing that his affliction is unbearable because it proceeds from Shaddai. In 6.4 he goes on to say:

For the arrows of the Almighty are in me;  
my spirit drinks their poison;  
the terrors of God are arrayed against me (NRSV).

The picturesque metaphor of God as the archer targeting human beings is common in the Old Testament.<sup>15</sup> The arrows are generally considered to be the sicknesses or calamities that He sends upon human beings. Job begins to see himself as the target at which God, like the Canaanite god of pestilence, Resheph<sup>16</sup>, has shot.

From now on, Job begins to complain to God whom he perceives as the principal source of his misfortunes. In Job 7, he does this in the form of a complaint which corresponds neatly to a traditional African prayer of anguish and anger.

I have pointed out that a traditional African prayer of anguish and anger consists of three basic features. Firstly, in praying the sufferer addresses God and other spiritual realities directly, as if they were physically present. In Job's case, he has so far addressed God indirectly. But from 7.7 onwards, a monologue emerges where he begins to address God directly as if he sees Him face to face. He tells God:

Remember, O God, that my life is but a breath;  
my eyes will never see happiness again (NIV).

Secondly, in an African prayer of anguish and anger there is room for a sufferer to express inner feelings and emotions depending on context. Job displays this aspect of prayer when he refuses to restrain his feelings by remaining silent. In verse 11 he says:

Therefore, I will not restrain my mouth;  
I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;  
I will complain in the bitterness of my soul (NRSV).

Thirdly, in an African prayer of anguish and anger there is room for complaining, quarrelling and fighting with God. Occasionally, this wrestling or struggling expresses itself in sharp irony. Since Job has reached the stage where he sees God, the sovereign ruler of the universe, as the one who is responsible for his misfortunes, he begins to wrestle, quarrel and fight with Him. In doing this, he uses rather savage irony. In 7.12, for instance, he demands to know why God is treating him as one of the mythological monsters — the Sea (*yām*) and the Dragon (*tannīn*):

Am I the Sea, or the Dragon,  
that you set a guard over me? (NRSV)

These primordial figures of chaos were defeated at creation but they continue to be restricted and kept under guard lest they break out again.

By comparing himself to a chaos monster, Job wonders whether he is such a threat to the cosmic order that God must keep him under control.<sup>17</sup>

Job moves on to accuse God not only of failing to comfort him, but also of continuing to assault him. In 6.8-9 he has already asked God to bring his life rapidly to an end. In his view, this would have been a comfort especially in knowing that he has never denied the words of the Holy One (6.10). However, God has so far refused to fulfil this wish. The friends, who could be another source of comfort, are also deserting him. Job's only remaining source of comfort is his bed, that is, deep sleep. But even then, he complains with sharp irony that God keeps assaulting him with nightmares and frightening visions:

7.13 When I say, 'My bed will comfort me,  
my couch will ease my complaint',  
7.14 then you scare me with dreams  
and terrify me with visions (NRSV).

Job makes it clear to God that he would prefer death, even strangling, to his present life (vv. 15-16). But again, he sees God as the obstacle, for God keeps watching over him to the extent that he cannot escape. Rather sarcastically, he rebukes God and urges Him to get lost so that Job may die peacefully: 'Let me alone for my days are a breath' (7.16b).

By means of rhetorical questions, Job complains to God for paying so much attention to humanity in general:

7.17 What are human beings, that you  
make so much of them,  
that you set your mind on them,  
7.18 visit them every morning,  
test them every moment? (NRSV)

The question 'what are human beings?' is intended to enquire what is special about human beings that has caused God to pay so much attention to them. In Psalm 8.3-4, the phrase is used as an expression of wonder and praise to God for creating human beings and for elevating them above other creatures. In this context, however, Job uses it negatively 'to charge God with a tyrannical and relentless control over them, shown in daily inquisitions and unremitting examinations'.<sup>18</sup> Job says all this with special reference to himself as God's target (v. 20).

In drawing out the similarities between Job and the African praying tradition, there are two issues I would like to address. Firstly, Wendland has

correctly pointed out that in their traditional cultural setting, African people would not be sympathetic to Job for implicating God in personal/individual suffering.<sup>19</sup> He argues this because such individual suffering would in African culture more normally be associated with witches or some grumbling spirits. In contrast, God is more often associated with misfortunes that affect the whole community.

Although Wendland's general observation sounds correct, the point he misses is that Job's anger towards God has to do with his *state of desperation*. There are stages through which people go when faced with illness. In the example cited, the case above, the pray-er is so desperate that he confronts God directly and threatens to kill Him. Such a person might be aware of what the witch (Kiswahili, *mchawi*) has done to his child. Nonetheless, he still hopes that, finally, God will intervene to help him. But evidently God is not in a hurry to do so. Consequently, the man gets extremely desperate and his desperation leads to anger – not anger against the *mchawi* concerned, but against God whose help is slow in coming. This kind of anger cannot be expressed by the community, because it is personal anger and the community does not go through that kind of feeling.<sup>20</sup>

The second issue that must be noted is that Job's experience of wrestling, quarrelling and fighting with God has led some scholars to conclude that he practically blasphemes God just as 'the Satan'<sup>21</sup> had predicted. As Peake puts it: 'He [Job] comes perilously near to fulfilling the Satan's prediction that he would curse God to his face'.<sup>22</sup>

As an African Christian reader, however, I would take the opposite view. The first guiding principle, as I have pointed out, is that in traditional African prayers of anguish and anger there is room for the sufferer to express deep feelings and emotions, but there is no room for atheism. As traditional Israel was also a corporate society, I would suggest that Job shares the faith of his community.<sup>23</sup> It means that he does not own his faith, for it is owned by the community to which he belongs. Therefore, although Job expresses his negative feelings and anger towards God, he does not reach the stage of blaspheming his faith, for it is also the faith of his community.

The second guiding principle is that, in African religio-culture, such anger and wrestling arises out of conviction rather than out of disbelief. Job addresses God in such a manner because he believes that God exists and that He is good to others, although he himself has been forgotten. In other words, his prayer is a kind of reminder for God to do to him what

He has done to others. From this perspective, Job's expression of his feelings and emotions cannot be taken as a rejection of God's goodness or His created order. In contrast, the significance of Job's outcry is that it expresses the deep sorrow that his misfortunes have brought. This interpretation is similar to that found in the rabbinic tradition, namely that 'A man may not be held responsible for what he does in his anguish'.<sup>24</sup>

## The Anglican way

Job 7 is just one of several texts in which the biblical writers feel free to express strong emotions to God, especially anguish and anger. It has to be said that such strong language has not been characteristic of Anglican prayers, perhaps because of its roots in British culture. Whatever the cause, a case can surely be made that the traditional African prayer of anguish should be acceptable with African and Anglican Christian prayer. On the basis of what has been said, my suggestions are twofold.

First, there is a need for traditional African prayers of anguish to be included in African Christian liturgies. I am aware that efforts are being made to include African prayers. But even the Liturgy of the Anglican Church of Kenya — one of the most famous African liturgies — has never taken African prayers of anguish into account.<sup>25</sup> I have demonstrated that these prayers correspond with the biblical praying tradition rather than contradict it. In my opinion, such prayers will enable African Christians to approach God naturally as their Father and be free to express their deep feelings and emotions. It is rather disappointing to see that most Anglican liturgies and prayers used by the Anglican Church in Africa are translations of Western liturgies — often from the Alternative Service Book 1980, which is no longer even used by the Church of England.<sup>26</sup> Such liturgies and prayers only help Africans to restrain their feelings before God rather than express them. Thus they are forced to worship and pray as Westerners while in actual fact they are Africans. Put simply, for Christianity to be authentically African, African Christians should be encouraged to pray in accordance with their praying tradition, for it is also a biblical tradition.

Second, I urge other members of our Anglican Communion not to be suspicious of African liturgies and prayers. I have pointed out that a few African liturgies have already been written. But I wonder how many Anglican churches in the West use them? To a large extent, this suspicion proceeds from the assumption that traditional African prayers are pagan

because they were directed towards the ancestors rather than God. However, Mbiti's collection of 300 traditional African prayers has revealed that about 90 percent of the prayers are addressed to God, and the remaining 10 percent assume that God is nearby in the background.<sup>27</sup> Anthony Gittins' collection of African, Jewish and biblical prayers has further demonstrated that there is much in common between traditional African and Old Testament prayers. The similarities include who the prayers are addressed to, the nature of the prayer, the content and the structure of prayer.<sup>28</sup>

This article has demonstrated that this common element is also notable between Job and the African praying tradition. Like African people, Job does not give up praying even when he is in deep sorrow. In fact, it is prayer that sustains him throughout his experience of suffering. Another similarity is in the way Job expresses his personal and deep feelings before God, even when it involves a rather savage irony. This expression of feelings and emotions is an important feature of prayer for it shows how the praying person is open and honest before God. It is also an expression of trust and faith in God whom he approaches as a Father. The picture here is of a child who feels deeply loved by the father to the extent that he is free to express his deep feelings and emotions, believing that the father will understand him. This, I suggest, is something the African Church can offer the whole Anglican Communion to bring them into a fuller expression of prayer and worship.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> John S. Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, 71ff. According to Mbiti, the first missionaries thought they were teaching African people how to pray. But this was more like saying 'yes' to the already existing tradition (p. 70).

<sup>2</sup> Mbiti, *Bible and Theology in African Christianity*, 72. In African Christianity, praying is also lifestyle rather than a Sunday or weekly occasion and, since there is no separation between worship and prayer, to attend a Sunday or weekly service is to attend an occasion of prayer (p. 69).

<sup>3</sup> John S. Mbiti, *The Prayers of African Religion*, London: SPCK, 1975, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Isaiah Majok Dau, *Suffering and God: A Theological Reflection on the War in Sudan*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2002, 164-165.

<sup>5</sup> Ernst Wendland, 'The Foundation of Religious Belief: Key Aspects of the Chewa and Tonga World-view', in *Bridging the Gap: African Traditional Religion and*

*Bible Translation*, eds. Philip C. Stine and others, UBS Monograph Series 4, Reading: United Bible Societies, 1990, 65-129. The other principles are the principles of synthesis, dynamism, gradation, communalism, humanism, and limitation.

<sup>6</sup> Mbiti, *The Prayers of African Religion*, 86-87.

<sup>7</sup> Mbiti, *The Prayers of African Religion*, 44.

<sup>8</sup> Dau, *Suffering and God*, 164.

<sup>9</sup> Dau, *Suffering and God*, 165.

<sup>10</sup> Dau, *Suffering and God*, 166 cf. Mbiti, *The Prayers of African Religion*, 15.

<sup>11</sup> Mbiti, *The Prayers of African Religion*, 98.

<sup>12</sup> Mbiti, oral interview, 20/11/2003.

<sup>13</sup> Dau, *Suffering and God*, 165.

<sup>14</sup> The third cycle of speeches is problematic in the sense that Bildad has a shorter speech, Zophar has none, and Job has a much longer speech than usual.

<sup>15</sup> cf. Deut. 32.23, 42; Ps. 7.13-14; 38.2; Lam. 3.12-13; Ezek. 5.16.

<sup>16</sup> Job knows that God is not Resheph — the lord of pestilence, the underworld and the arrows — yet God is now acting like Resheph.

<sup>17</sup> cf. Gerald J. Janzen, *Job*, Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985, 81.

<sup>18</sup> R. N. Whybray, *Job – Readings: A New Biblical Commentary*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998, 56.

<sup>19</sup> Wendland, Ernst, 'The Foundation of Religious Belief', 118.

<sup>20</sup> John S. Mbiti, ([john.mbiti@freesurf.ch](mailto:john.mbiti@freesurf.ch)) 2003. My final question 18 November. E-mail to: Dickson Chilongani ([dickson@chilongani.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:dickson@chilongani.freeserve.co.uk)).

<sup>21</sup> In the Book of Job the term 'Satan' is accompanied by the definite article 'the'.

<sup>22</sup> A. S. Peake, *Job*, CB, Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1905, 102.

<sup>23</sup> I am aware that Job could not be an Israelite, for he is simply portrayed as a man from the land of Uz, but the Book is written from the perspective of Jewish theology. Communitarian and corporate aspects are evident in the way Job offers sacrifices for his entire household (1.4-5) and how people bring their gifts to him (42.11-12).

<sup>24</sup> TB, Baba Bathra 16a-16b, as cited by Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, AB, Garden City: Doubleday, 1965, 60.

<sup>25</sup> See Anglican Church of Kenya, *Our Modern Services*, Nairobi: Uzima Press, 2002.

<sup>26</sup> For example, the liturgy of the Anglican Church of Tanzania.

<sup>27</sup> Mbiti, *The Prayers of African Religion*.

<sup>28</sup> Anthony J. Gittins, *Heart of Prayer: African, Jewish and Biblical Prayers*, London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1985.

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Grant LeMarquand

## **‘And the rulers of the nations shall bring their treasures into it’**

### **A review of biblical exegesis in Africa**

In 1991 R.S. Sugirtharajah published the first edition of his important compilation *Voices from the Margin*<sup>1</sup>. Although this welcome volume broke new ground in helping to make the West aware of the presence of other voices in the scholarly biblical discussion, it struck me at the time that the book was not marginal enough. There were few African voices in the book, for example, and the few that were represented were from South Africa and fit into the paradigm (already familiar to most of the Western scholarly world) of ‘liberationist’ readings. A small but important part of the work dealt with ‘popular’ readings of the Bible. There was little in Sugirtharajah’s volume which dealt with the primary paradigm of biblical studies in Africa, usually referred to as ‘inculturationist,’ although, as we shall see, any label which attempts to describe all that happens when the Bible is read in Africa will be overly constraining. This short review will attempt to discuss some of the more important works and trends in African biblical scholarship in the few decades.

But first a few words about the term ‘Africa.’ This review will restrict what is said about the continent of Africa to what is sometimes called sub-Saharan Africa. I do this not because I have any wish to de-Africanize northern Africa and the Horn of Africa, but simply because including that part of the continent will make the discussion even more complex. The nations of the northern part of Africa are predominantly Muslim. Those in the Horn live in a mountainous region of the continent which shares as much in common with the Middle East as with Africa south of the Sahara. The majority of Christians in these areas are from the ancient Coptic Orthodox Church in Egypt or from the Ethiopia Orthodox Church. These venerable traditions have much that is interesting to teach us about the Bible, but such a discussion must wait for another venue. Even if we

leave North Africa to one side, the continent is still an amazingly diverse and complex reality with dozens of nations, and hundreds of languages and cultures. Much of Africa is rural, and many Africans make a living by subsistence farming. But Africa is urbanizing quickly and many of the largest cities in the world can now be found south of the Sahara.

The churches in Africa are also diverse. Many African Christians belong to 'mission-founded' churches: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican. But many hundreds, even thousands, of denominations know as 'African Independent Churches' or (better) 'African Instituted Churches' add to the colour and complexity of African Christian life.<sup>2</sup> Many of these groups are separatist, having left mission-founded churches to found something which allowed the worshippers to feel more at home; many were also seeking a version of living the Christian life without the restrictions laid on them by missionaries and their western traditions. And African Christianity has grown. From perhaps eight million Christians in the early twentieth century (most of those living in Egypt, Ethiopia and South Africa) there are now estimated to be almost half a billion Christians in Africa.<sup>3</sup>

This review will not be restricted to Anglicanism in Africa, but it should be noted that the Anglican churches in Africa have been an important part of the spread of Christianity, especially in those parts of Africa colonized by Great Britain, although the growth of Anglicanism church in the Congo, Mozambique, Angola, Liberia and other places shows that Anglicanism has not been restricted to those places assigned to Britain during the famous Berlin Conference of 1885 which sliced up the African continent and assigned the pieces to various Western colonial powers.

Along with growth in numbers, the Africa churches began, by the mid-twentieth century to take responsibility for governing their own affairs. Along with self-governance came also the need to take responsibility for theological training of its pastors. For much of the twentieth century that training has followed Western models and used Western texts. As African theologians and church leaders have reflected on this mode of theological training they have, time and again, found it wanting. And so, out of pastoral need, Africans began the task of 'self-theologizing.' The emergence of African biblical scholarship in the latter half of the twentieth century, therefore, is an aspect of the growth of Christianity in Africa, and is an important part of the attempt of the African churches to

address pastoral needs from African perspectives. There is much to be learned from how the Bible is preached, used in worship, referred to in public discourse, and even used by some in a magical way. There is much to be gained from studying the ways that the Bible has been translated into African languages, or the way that biblical themes have been portrayed in African Christian art.<sup>4</sup> This review will be restricted primarily to published works of biblical scholarship. A review of these wider uses of the Bible in Africa will need to wait for another day.<sup>5</sup> I will survey selected works from two different genres of literature: monographs, most of them published versions of doctoral theses, and articles from journals and edited volumes, in order to highlight the major issues present in contemporary biblical scholarship in Africa.

## Monographs

In his important study of African doctoral work on the Old Testament, Knut Holter points out that doctoral dissertations are the apex of the scholarly productivity of many African scholars. After returning home to Africa from doing research overseas (there are still only a few places in Africa itself where biblical studies can be pursued at the doctoral level) many graduates are swallowed up by the tasks of academic administration, teaching, church leadership and simply finding food to feed their families.<sup>6</sup> We will restrict ourselves to four dissertations which reveal some of the pressing concerns of biblical exegetes in Africa.

The first doctoral thesis earned by an African writing in English was John S. Mbiti's<sup>7</sup> 1963 Cambridge dissertation, "Christian Eschatology in Relation to Evangelisation of Tribal Africa" which was later published as *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background*.<sup>8</sup> It is important to take note of Mbiti's methodology. Although the degree which he earned was in New Testament studies and his supervisor was the eminent New Testament scholar C.F.D. Moule, Mbiti also acknowledges the insight and help which he received from G.I. Jones, an anthropologist, and Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, a missiologist. Mbiti's study was unusual because he foregrounded a pastoral problem as the context of his biblical research. In the world of biblical studies dominated in the West by the quest for objectivity rather than relevance, the uncovering of past history rather than present meaning, Mbiti's work was radical.

The issue which Mbiti explored was the disjunction between African culture and the Western cultural Christianity of those who evangelized his

home area of Ukambani in Kenya, as well as the disjunction between African culture and the Bible itself. The presenting problem was what Mbiti perceived to be the difference between the concept of time in the New Testament, the futuristic eschatology of the teaching of the Africa Inland Mission (a dispensationalist theology stressing the second coming of Christ, the millennium, and the rapture) among the Akamba and what Mbiti took to be the African conception of time. He argued that the New Testament occupies a middle ground between the concept of time of the missionaries which is vertical and future oriented, and the more horizontal and present oriented concept of African thought.

Mbiti has been criticized on a number of grounds, particularly for seeming to imply that Africans have little or no concept of the future, and for generalizing from Akamba ideas to Africa in general. His method of reading the New Testament with one eye on the context of the first century and one eye on the African missionary and cultural context was seminal for African exegesis.

Another Anglican, John S. Pobee from Ghana, published his *Persecution and Martyrdom in the Theology of Paul* in 1985.<sup>9</sup> Although the African context is nowhere mentioned explicitly in the text of Pobee's book, it is clear that he had his eye on the African situation as he wrote in the preface Pobee outlines the reason for his choice of topic: "Though a happy and privileged sojourner in Cambridge, my heart was bleeding for my motherland, Ghana, which had come into the grip of a corrupt and ruthless tyrant and government. While I laboured to follow my calling as a New Testament scholar, I also agonized over the fate of loved ones back home, my parents and the Church of God."<sup>10</sup> Mbiti's thesis highlighted the missionary and cultural context; Pobee's the context of suffering in a post-colonial world.

The Roman Catholic scholar, Teresa Okure from Nigeria, like Pobee, confines her mention of Africa to the preface of her published dissertation. There she states:

My interest in mission dates back to my childhood days, and was inspired by my living experiences of mission in the African context. I was often struck by the contrast between certain statements of Jesus found mostly in John's Gospel concerning his mission from the Father and the actual conception and exercise of mission which obtained in my context. This contrast belonged mostly in the order of the attitude of the missionary to the work and the people, and of the method in the exercise of mission.

The whole experience raised for me a number of unanswered questions concerning the relationship of the mission exercised in my context to the mission of Jesus. In the course of my biblical studies, however, I had completely forgotten that I had these questions. The choice of the topic for this work was therefore not consciously connected with them. This was largely due to the biblical discipline itself which, like most theological disciplines of this century was, and to a large extent still is, literary and academically oriented, not designed to address real life issues. It was only afterwards, indeed as I was reflecting on a suitable preface for this book, that I remembered that I had had these questions, and that here in the pages of this book I had finally found personally satisfying answers to them.<sup>11</sup>

Like Mbiti, Okure did not study the Bible simply in order to find out more about the Bible itself, but because she believed that the Bible could throw light on her own context as a member of a group which had been a recipient of mission, with all of the ambiguity which that implied.

Okure's approach to the Bible also highlights an issue rarely discussed in Western exegesis: the issue of faith. In the West biblical scholarship has been done primarily within the academy. There, in the interest of 'objective,' 'scientific' scholarship, critical methods have been used to uncover the meaning of the text in its original context. The faith stance of the scholar is considered to be, even hoped to be, irrelevant in the unbiased search for truth. Liberation theology, feminist theology, and indeed post-modernist thought have chipped away at the assumptions behind this kind of detached scholarship.

In Africa, however, there is no rift between biblical scholarship and a believing scholar. Faith and exegesis go hand in hand. Perhaps the most eloquent (and least polemical) illustration of marriage of faith and scholarship is also in the preface to Okure's monograph. After acknowledging the help of parents, supervisors and funding agencies we read an acknowledgement unlike any I have seen in a thesis written by a Western scholar:

This litany of acknowledgements would be incomplete without the special mention of Jesus. The statement of the Psalmist applies most aptly in my case: "If the Lord had not been my help," this work would never have seen the light of day (*Psalms* 94:17). Jesus' unfailing help sustained me most tangibly throughout my entire course of study in ways that might be described as miraculous....For the schooling in trust which he provided for me through these trying circumstances, I am deeply grateful to him. It is

but a small token of gratitude that I should dedicate this book to his Mother on this feast of her birthday, September 8, as her birthday present.<sup>12</sup>

A more radical approach to the biblical text is found in the work of Musa Dube, a Methodist from Botswana. Dube's monograph, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*<sup>13</sup> is a work of far-reaching implications. Based on her Vanderbilt University doctoral dissertation, Dube attempts to understand the story of the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-28) against the background of postcolonial theory. The central thesis of the book is that literature (including the Bible) is a tool often employed by colonial writers in order to justify the subjugation of conquered peoples. She examines texts from the 'classical period' (*The Odyssey* by Homer) and from the modern colonial period (*Heart of Darkness* by Conrad) in order to reveal a rhetorical pattern to such imperialist literature. According to Dube this literature portrays subjugated peoples as in need of the colonizer due to their inferior culture and intellect. Often women in these colonial stories are portrayed as helpless and in need of saving by the superior culture of those who are in reality their oppressors. Dube goes on to suggest that the Bible is also a colonialist book. She argues that the Exodus, far from being a book sympathetic to the downtrodden as many liberation readers have argued, is actually deeply implicated in the colonialist project, since the goal of the Exodus from Egypt is the dispossession of the Canaanites through their violent expulsion or extermination. The only survivor of the downfall of Jericho, Dube points out, is Rahab, who betrays her own people in order to save herself. The Rahab 'pattern' is replicated in the story of the Canaanite woman in Matthew 15 who is, in reality, a subject of patriarchal and imperial domination. Dube's work is deeply skeptical of scripture. "Feminist attempts to reclaim the stories [of the Bible]," she writes, "...should also be accompanied by a decolonizing reading which must begin with an acknowledgment that most of the so-called canonical texts are not only patriarchal but also imperial." (95) Even Jesus is considered "an imperial and patriarchal symbol."<sup>14</sup>

In the end it is not clear if Dube's arguments are not simply anti-biblical and even anti-Christian. Her work must be taken seriously for she has rightly emphasized the pain caused to Africa and other subjugated peoples by the colonialist project, but Dube's view of the Bible, and especially of Jesus, are certainly at odds with what most African exegetes tend to emphasize, as a comparison of Dube with Okure will easily show.

## Articles

The second genre which has been important for the development of biblical scholarship in Africa the scholarly article published in journals and books, most published within Africa itself. It should be noted that the monographs discussed above were all published in the West. We are beginning to see volumes of biblical studies published within Africa itself, but the development of publishing companies has not been simple. There are more than fifty countries in Africa. Each has a different currency. The movement of published work between African countries is quite difficult, and attempts made by African publishers to find distribution networks outside of Africa has proved futile up to this point. Although African journals and scholarly books have a very limited readership, more and more is being produced and the quality of this material is increasing.

An obvious difference between the dissertations and most African biblical studies articles is that articles are written without the constraints of the (usually Western) dissertation supervisor. Freed from the dominating interests of the senior mentor, journal articles and essays in collected volumes tend to reflect the interests of the author more directly. Various approaches are taken in these studies. Many authors start with a biblical text and, after an exegesis of the text often using the traditional Western methods of biblical scholarship, the author will then ask 'so what?': why is this text important for Africans? This tends to be the method of approach common among Roman Catholic scholars in Africa as can be seen in the explicit instructions given to members of the Pan-African Association of Catholic Exegetes (l'Association Panafricaine des Exegetes Catholiques)<sup>15</sup>:

### Scientific rigour and inculturation

We would like to remind you that the PACE congresses have the objective to unite scientific rigour with inculturation. The papers should show evidence of high scientific exegesis, but contextualized. Thus, for the paper to be accepted for publication in the Acts of...[the] Congress, attention should be paid to critical exegesis, theology and their application in the African context. In relation to that, the editorial board suggests to everyone to:

- 1) limit his/her discussion to one specific text (or a number of specific texts). This text should be exegetically analysed, using any of the generally accepted exegetical methods (e.g. historical-critical, semantic, grammatical, literary);
- 2) set out a theological exposé of the text, drawn from the analysis;

- 3) apply the exegesis and the theological message adequately to the African context;
- 4) show evidence of the use of basic exegetical and theological resources in the notes.

In other words, members of the association are expected to do serious exegetical study of the biblical text, but they are not to consider that their work is done once the text has been understood in its literary or historical context – the Bible must be applied to the African situation. Exegesis is incomplete without hermeneutics. This approach is clearly at variance with the usual Western approach to biblical studies. In most Western religious studies departments – or even in seminaries - a student may ask their Old or New Testament Professor what the implications of a text might be for theology, ethics or pastoralia, and receive the answer, ‘That’s not my job; go and ask the homiletics professor, or the systematic theologian, or the liturgist...’ Africa does not have the luxury of such specialization which divides the theological curriculum into compartments which may never talk to one another. Biblical scholars in Africa are also theologians who are concerned about the life of the church.

An example of such an approach can be seen in the paper by Patrick Adeso<sup>16</sup> entitled “Sufferings in Job and in an African Perspective: Exegesis of Job 42:1-6.” In this essay Adeso addresses the issue of Job’s suffering and especially the divine response to Job found in chapter 42. This exegetical section of the paper includes an analysis of the literary context of Job 42 in the light of the rest of the book, a structural analysis of the passage in question, and a discussion of the theological issues raised by the text. Adeso then turns to the African context, reminding readers of the problems of war, famine, political-economic crises, and epidemic of HIV/AIDS, before ending on a note of hope – that God has not abandoned Africa, but is present in Jesus even in the midst of great suffering.<sup>17</sup>

As well as the quest to find answers for Africa in the light of the biblical text, another approach often found in studies by African scholars is the attempt to understand a biblical text in the light of Africa. African scholars have often asserted that since the cultures of Africa have more in common with the Bible than the cultures of the Western world, Africans have an access to the text that many Western readers do not have.<sup>18</sup> During my years of teaching in Africa I certainly found it to be true that the first-hand understanding of circumcision rites, sacrificial rituals, the making of blood covenants, the belief in the proximity of the spiritual world of

dreams and vision, of exorcism and healing, the reality of polygamy and levirate marriage, all made the text of the Bible a more easily accessibility reality for African theological students than it was for students in the Western world.

An excellent example of the attempt to clarify the meaning of a biblical text by reference to a parallel in the African context is Justin Ukpong’s<sup>19</sup> study of Luke 16:1-13.<sup>20</sup> Ukpong argues that the an examination of this parable by Jesus, often described as “puzzling, mystifying, and unedifying,”<sup>21</sup> only appears this way because the reader has been conditioned to identify the rich man in the parable with God, although the rich man is clearly called unjust in the story. In contrast to this usual reading Ukpong argues that the story read in the light of “exploited peasant farmers of West Africa as a s the concerns of the international debt burden of the Two-Thirds World”<sup>22</sup> produces quite a different reading; that “the manager of the estate is not the villain he is often thought to be, but the hero of the story, for having acted on behalf of the exploited peasant farmers.”<sup>23</sup>

Another fascinating recent study is by Sammy Githuku, an Anglican priest who teaches in Limuru, Kenya. Githuku examines the verse in 2 Samuel 24:1-10 and asks a question that few other readers have been able to answer effectively: ‘Why does David feel guilty for counting his soldiers?’ Verse 10, for example says that David’s ‘conscience is stricken’ that he admits his ‘sin,’ his ‘guilt,’ and his ‘foolishness’ in taking this action of counting. Githuku argues that in his own culture (he is a Kikuyu from central Kenya) there are traditional taboos around counting livestock and even family members. He suggests that some similar taboo may have weighed on David’s conscience.<sup>24</sup> If Githuku’s reading is correct, Africa has helped us to read a text which would have been difficult to understand without Africa’s help.

Many of these short studies by African scholars are unknown in the West because they are published in Africa and few Western libraries have purchased these materials.<sup>25</sup> As well as the Proceedings from PACE mentioned above, those interested in African biblical studies should see, *The African Journal of Biblical Studies*, published by the Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS). NABIS has also published a series of essay collections in their ‘Biblical Studies Series’ which includes the following volumes under the General Editorship of S.O. Abogunrin: *Biblical Studies and Women* (2003), *Christology in African Context* (2003), and *Decolonization*

of *Biblical Interpretation in Africa* (2004). Acton Publishers in Nairobi are now producing a series of volumes entitled 'Biblical Studies in African Scholarship', the latest volume of which is called *Interacting with Scriptures in Africa*, edited by Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole and Ernst Wendland (2005).

There is a growing interest in African biblical studies in the Western world as well. Knut Holter, a Norwegian, edits and publishes the *Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa*, a little journal in which African scholars can interact with one another and learn of publications and events of common interest. Holter also edits the monograph series published by Peter Lang called 'Bible and Theology in Africa' which has produced five volumes to date. The massive work edited by South African Anglican scholar Gerald West and Musa Dube entitled *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends* includes dozens of articles by Africans from all over the continent. The fact that a major Western publishing house produced this volume means that some of the fruits of African scholarship are now easily available to Western scholars who may not have been aware that such scholarly discussions were even taking place.

## Conclusion

Since the Anglican Congress in Toronto in 1963, the Communion has held up "mutual responsibility and interdependence in the Body of Christ" as an ideal to which Anglicanism should strive.<sup>26</sup> It is no secret that at the moment Anglicanism is going through some turmoil which makes this ideal appear to be a long way off. One of the most troubling aspects of this unrest has been the way in which Africans have sometimes been denigrated. It has been fairly common, for example to read comments in the church press about Africans and African church leaders which have not been based on knowledge of what actually takes place in that wonderful and complicated place. Sadly some of what has been written by Western Anglicans has been (to be blunt) imperialist and racist in its tone. Sometimes the Bible has come into the discussion, with accusations being made that Africans simply do not know how to read scripture properly, that they are ignorant of modern interpretative methods. One way to combat stereotypes is to get to know the 'other' as a real person. It is my hope that this short review has given readers a glimpse into one little bit of the intersection between the Bible and Africa.

There are pressing problems for African biblical exegetes. There is rarely enough money for African scholars, seminaries, and universities to

buy sufficient books needed for research. Most scholars, since they want their work to be known outside of their own ethnic group, are writing in their second or third language. Publishing houses in Africa have a very small market for scholarly books. The best educated theologians have a very short teaching and research life since they are usually snatched up into denominational leadership or academic administration very quickly. War, political unrest, access to adequate health care, and lack of clean water, intermittent power supplies for lighting and computers (if there are computers) all play havoc with the running of theological institutions.

According to the book of Revelation, when the New Jerusalem comes down from heaven, "the rulers of the nations will bring their treasures into it" (Revelation 21:24). If any of these "rulers of the nations" are biblical scholars many of them may turn out to be scholars who have sought to be faithful readers of the text for and with their people in the midst of poverty, powerlessness, and religious pluralism. It may be that the most significant readings, at least in the eyes of the Creator, are not those of the detached, objective scholarship of the rich Western world, but the interpretations of committed, engaged scholars, church leaders and lay people, seeking to be faithful in their own context. We have much to learn from them.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Voices from the Margin: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World* (London: SPCK).

<sup>2</sup> See for example, David Barrett, *Schism and Renewal in Africa: An Analysis of Six Thousand Contemporary Religious Movements* (Nairobi: Oxford, 1968). The subtitle's mention of 'six thousand' movements and the date of the book should both be noted carefully – the explosion of Christians and semi-Christian movements has not stopped in recent years.

<sup>3</sup> David Barrett, et al, *World Christian Encyclopedia* (second edition; N.Y.: Oxford, 2001): I:12.

<sup>4</sup> For a fairly comprehensive list of publications (up to about the year 2000) concerning various ways in which Bible and Africa have interacted see my "A Bibliography of the Bible in Africa," in *The Bible in Africa: Transactions, Trajectories and Trends*, eds. Gerald West and Musa Dube (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 633-800.

<sup>5</sup> I will also need to leave aside the important exegetical work of such ancient African interpreters as Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Anthony, Tertullian, Augustine and other early 'African Fathers' and, for other reasons the enormous corpus of white South African scholarship – some of which is available in English and much in Afrikaans.

<sup>6</sup> *Old Testament Research for Africa: A Critical Analysis and Annotated Bibliography of African Old Testament Dissertations, 1967-2000.* (Bible & Theology in Africa, 3; New York: Peter Lang, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> Mbiti is an Anglican priest from Kenya.

<sup>8</sup> *New Testament Eschatology in an African Background: A Study of the Encounter between New Testament Theology and Africa Traditional Concepts* (London: Oxford, 1971).

<sup>9</sup> Pobee also studies at Cambridge. The dissertation was published in the University of Sheffield's Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series (number 6).

<sup>10</sup> Pobee, *Persecution and Martyrdom*, vii.

<sup>11</sup> *The Johannine Approach to Mission: A Contextual Study of John 4: 1-42* (Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe 31; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1988).

<sup>12</sup> Okure, *The Johannine Approach to Mission*, vii.

<sup>13</sup> St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000.

<sup>14</sup> Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, 115-16.

<sup>15</sup> The Pan-African Association of Catholic Exegetes has held twelve Congresses, most of which have resulted in the publication of proceedings, the latest publication being Jean-Bosco Matand Bulembat, ed. *Prophecy and Prophets in the Bible: Requirements of Prophetism in the Church as Family of God in Africa: Proceedings of the Eleventh Congress. Cairo, Egypt: September 6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>, 2003* (Kinshasa: Association Panafricaine des Exegetes Catholiques / Panafrican Association of Catholic Exegetes, 2004). Proceedings for the last several Congresses may be obtained from the General Secretary of PACE, Jean-Bosco Matand Bulembat, at <apeca\_pace@yahoo.com>.

<sup>16</sup> Adeso is a Catholic priest who teaches in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

<sup>17</sup> Paper presented at the 12<sup>th</sup> Congress of PACE, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, September 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Kwesi Dickson, "Continuity and Discontinuity Between the Old Testament and African Life and Thought," *African Theology en Route: Papers from the Pan-Africa conference of third world theologians, December 17-23, 1977, Accra, Ghana*, eds. Kofi Appiah-Kubi and Sergio Torres (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979), 95-108; reprinted with some changes in *Bulletin of African Theology* 1 (1979): 179-93.

<sup>19</sup> Ukpong is a Roman Catholic priest who teaches in Nigeria.

<sup>20</sup> "The Parable of the Shrewd Manager (Lk 16:1-13): An Essay in the Inculturation Biblical Hermeneutic, 'Reading With': An Exploration of the Interface between Critical and Ordinary Readings of the Bible. *African Overtures*. eds. Gerald West and Musa Dube, *Semeia* 73 (1996):189-210.

<sup>21</sup> Ukpong, The Parable of the Shrewd Manager, 189.

<sup>22</sup> Ukpong, The Parable of the Shrewd Manager, 189.

<sup>23</sup> Ukpong, The Parable of the Shrewd Manager, 208.

<sup>24</sup> "Taboos on Counting," in *Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa: Papers from the International Symposium on Africa and the Old Testament in Nairobi, October 1999*, eds. Mary Getui, Knut Holter and Victor Zinkurature (New York: Peter Lang, 2001 / Nairobi: Acton, 2001), 113-17.

<sup>25</sup> As well as the Proceedings from PACE mentioned above, those interested in African biblical studies should see, *The African Journal of Biblical Studies*, published by the Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies (NABIS). NABIS has also published a series of essay collections in their 'Biblical Studies Series' which includes the following volumes under the General Editorship of S.O. Abogunrin: *Biblical Studies and Women* (2003), *Christology in African Context* (2003), and *Decolonization of Biblical Interpretation in Africa* (2004). Acton Publishers in Nairobi are now producing a series of volumes entitled 'Biblical Studies in African Scholarship', the latest volume of which is called *Interacting with Scriptures in Africa*, edited by Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole and Ernst Wendland (2005)

<sup>26</sup> See Eugene Fairweather, ed. *Anglican Congress 1963: Report of Proceedings* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1963), 117-22.

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