

Introduction

National Anglican Identity Formation Project

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This series within the *Journal of Anglican Studies* focuses on issues to do with national Anglican identity formation. This concern arises because Anglicanism has spread around the globe and embedded itself in local society and culture. This may be one of its distinguishing characteristics in the second half of the twentieth century. One result of this is that local Anglican Churches, in pursuit of their vocation, have developed in a variety of ways. Thus it is no surprise that the Anglican Communion presents a picture of great diversity of expression, style and practices. The present divisions in the Communion are in large part related to this inculturating habit. The recent report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission (IATDC) recognized the relationship between division and the process of inculturation which is such a feature of Anglicanism.[1]

Diversity, and to some extent conflict and division, is almost built into this dynamic interplay of gospel and culture for, 'If we are called to be faithful in our own particular situation then our way of being faithful may well be markedly different from the way in which Anglicans in another culture experience their vocation to faithfulness.'[2] This is not to say that all difference and conflict is simply a product of the inculturating habit. As the IATDC notes, 'In the modern world there are also differences which reach across cultural groups. Even though they are often expressed in theological formulations they go beyond this. They express differences of disposition and ethos.'[3]

Whatever the reasons, there is great diversity among Anglican churches around the world. These churches seek to be faithful to their Anglican

1. *Communion, Conflict and Hope*, The Kuala Lumpur Report of the 3rd Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission, 2008.
2. *Communion Conflict and Hope*, para. 36.
3. *Communion Conflict and Hope*, para. 5.

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heritage in the gospel and do so in relation to the particularities of their own situation. However, this very process creates an issue of the national identity of Anglican churches around the world.

This is the context for the present Anglican National Identity series. It is intentionally focused on the two-thirds world in order to give voice to those parts of the Anglican Communion often not heard in the international arenas of scholarly debate and where the question of national identity and Anglicanism is a live issue. The series is focused on the actual practice of local situations in the education of those who are to minister in the church. The question of interest is what really shapes the identity of Anglicans in their national setting. The series seeks people who work in theological institutions training ministry candidates (lay and ordained) to reflect on the teaching of Anglicanism in their local context. By this means we try to observe how theological education in local contexts develops themes that might contribute to an Anglican Way in national identity and theological formation.

The six articles in the present issue of the *Journal of Anglican Studies* offer reflections on the teaching of Anglicanism within theological educational settings in Africa, Asia and New Zealand. The articles come from people who are or have until recently played an important role in theological education and ministerial formation of candidates for ministry in the Anglican Church in their local cultures. The articles highlight some significant issues for the teaching of Anglicanism within local cultures.

Increasing Professional Mix in Theological Educators

Three of the seven contributors are laywomen. Janet Trisk teaches at the College of the Transfiguration in Grahamstown, South Africa. Esther Mombo is Professor of Theology at St Paul's Limiru, Kenya and Dr Jenny Plane Te Paa is Principal, St Johns College, Auckland. The fact of women teaching in Anglican settings outside of European and North American contexts is in itself important. There is certainly much more to be done on this front but it is a healthy sign for the future. Of the four male contributors Michael Fape is now Bishop of Remo, Nigeria and formerly Dean of Archbishop Vining College of Theology, Akure, Nigeria. The Revd Luke Pato is Director of Justice Ministries at the South African Council of Churches and was formerly the Principal of the College of the Transfiguration in Grahamstown, South Africa, The Revd Dr Victor Atta-Baffoe is Dean of St Nicholas Seminary, Cape Coast, Ghana and the Revd Dr Albert Sundararaj Walters was until recently on the faculty at Seminari Theoloji, Seremban, Malaysia.

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To identify the contributors is to immediately draw attention to the ethnic mix of this group of theological educators. Our authors highlight an emerging portrait in theological education in local Anglican churches: a professional mix marked by ethnic pluriformity, men and women, lay and ordained. Also refreshing is the fact that two articles have been jointly written by men and women scholars. Having been involved in theological education for almost two decades in Australia I am acutely aware of how difficult it has been to employ women full-time in theological education in the Anglican church let alone appoint them as principals of colleges and to nurture the scholarly life of faculty such that joint collaboration on common projects actually occurs.

Some of the above issues emerge clearly in the article by Joseph Galgalo and Esther Mombo from Kenya. They discuss the 'engendering' of theological education and the increasing participation rates by lay as well as ordained and especially among women students. Theology is being opened up to the whole people of God and a space is being provided for careful reflection, critique and fresh engagements with church and society. They note that the process of engendering theological education 'challenges the traditional assumptions of what are normative—Western theological model, African patriarchy, and male-centred theology—and proposes alternatives that are truly inclusive, affirming, relevant and fruitful for a meaningful life of faith'. The authors also draw attention to the danger of politicization of theological education in the Anglican Communion. We will return to this matter below.

Agenda for Contextualization

The six articles all point to increasing attempts at contextualizing the faith. What is interesting is the particular local situations in which this takes place and some of the tensions that necessarily arise. The recently established Network for Contextual Theology has been an important forum for discussion of this development. All the authors have insights concerning the necessity and the challenges of a contextualized faith. Victor Atta-Baffoe makes the telling point that even after 240 years of Christianity in Ghana the Anglican Church is still shaped by Western traditions and has yet to develop a truly indigenous curriculum. This is made more difficult because the indigenous teachers of theology have been trained in European contexts. From West Malaysia Albert Walters argues that the Anglican Church in Malaysia 'is still considered a Western vestige and outside the mainstream of the nation's life and development'. He distinguishes between a 'Church in Malaysia' and a 'Malaysian Church'.

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The context for theological education and Anglican national identity and Christianity *per se* in West Malaysia is Islam.

Contextualization is a significant focus for theological education in South Africa. Here the accent seems to be on a process of listening to the culture and discerning the ways of God from within the context. It is related to newer forms of pedagogue. The New Zealand ethnic mix provides one of the key frameworks for theological education at St John's Auckland.

It is impossible to read these articles and not be struck by a sense that something new and fresh is happening in theological education in the local Anglican contexts. But it is also clear that efforts towards richer inculturation have a way to go. It is a project still on the drawing board and there are numerous tensions and historical baggage from the past. The Anglicanism that accompanied the colonial era has proved a mixed blessing.

In this context we do well to note that the idea of 'contextual theology' is a contested concept. For example, the Anglican theologian, John Webster has registered a concern that talk of theology as contextual

> readily suggests that contexts are given, transparent and self-evident to those who operate in them, and that they require no theology for their elucidation; and it can also more alarmingly, make context into a fate before which theological reflection is passive, to which it must adapt or reconcile itself if it wants to survive. At its best, of course, attention to 'context' can remind theology that there is no pure language of Zion, and that theology's conceptual equipment is borrowed from elsewhere. But at its worst it is a form of spiritual laziness, an unwillingness to admit that theology must go about its own business if it is to speak prophetically and compassionately about the gospel to its neighbours. Much better, therefore, simply to speak of the 'occasions' towards which theology directs itself.[4]

Webster's note of caution is worthwhile though he may have overstated his case. The late Daniel Hardy has drawn attention to the fact that context is from the Latin *contexere* meaning to 'braid', 'weave' or 'connect'. As such the word denotes a dynamic 'intertwining' of peoples and cultures with God. This suggests a far richer theological account of the idea of context.[5] It is clear from the articles in the present edition of the *Journal of Anglican Studies* that engagement with local context and the reshaping of theological education and ministerial formation is not an optional extra for a future vibrant and relevant Anglican Christianity.

4. See J. Webster, *Word and Spirit: Essays in Christian Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), pp. 4-5.

5. See Daniel Hardy, *Christ and Context*: *The Confrontation between Gospel and Culture* (ed. H.D. Regan and V. Pfitzner; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), pp. 22-23.

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Impact of Broader Social and Political Context

All our contributors identify aspects of the broader social and political world which impacts upon the formation of the Anglican way in local settings. HIV/AIDS is clearly a critical issue in the African context. Trisk and Pato note that almost all students at the College of the Transfiguration have lost family members due to AIDS-related deaths. In South Africa, Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria, poverty, economic exploitation and unemployment generate despair in regions of great natural wealth. Galgalo and Mombo point to gender disparities in society and the challenge this raises for theological education. Walters draws attention to resurgent Islam as the fundamental context for Christianity in Malaysia. This is also echoed in African contexts. The impact of secularism is a critical element shaping the development of a distinctly Anglican ethos and theological program at St John's College in Auckland, New Zealand. However, secularism is a global phenomenon and its influence upon African and Asian contexts cannot be avoided.

The articles point to the fact that a vibrant and relevant Anglican identity has to be forged within broader social and political contexts. A Christian tradition such as Anglicanism, with its deep and abiding commitment to incarnational and inculturated gospel life, will of necessity only find its life and purpose as it engages with local cultures and issues. Where it does this faithfully and creatively the resulting national identity will be life-giving and missional in the richest sense of that word. Yet to speak of 'creative' and 'faithful' identifies a continuing source of tension within Anglicanism. It is a tension that all of our contributors recognize and seek to respond to in various ways. There are no short-cuts on the Anglican way.

Formation for Mission

A common theme running through the articles is a renewed emphasis upon development of curricula which connects the theological tradition with local cultures. Michael Fape outlines the comprehensive approach to this matter being undertaken in the Nigerian context. Thus alongside more traditional core courses in biblical, theological, pastoral and mission studies he identifies new areas being developed that include African traditional religion, Islam and Christianity, Independent African Christian Church Movements, cultural anthropology and liberation theology in an African context. He refers to a paradigm shift in theological education reflecting a more contextualized curriculum. Ghana, Kenya and South

Africa all exhibit similar trends. The challenge is to achieve good quality integration as opposed to a seemingly endless number of extra courses for study. But this problem is present everywhere in the Communion.

The Islamic context in Malaysia and the religious mix of that environment impacts upon theological and formational aspects of ordination and lay training. The ethnic mix of the New Zealand context poses particular challenges for ministerial formation for mission.

In all articles a renewed emphasis upon curriculum development is directed to a formation programme which is focused on mission. This accent on mission includes evangelism and wider missional engagements to address the social and political concerns. Victor Atta-Baffoe refers to the need for a richer and more contextualized spiritual formation in order to renew the pastoral ministry of the Church and its leaders.

Theological Education as a Contested Site

The articles raise an important issue not immediately present but lurking not far below the discourse. Hints of it are present in most of the articles. Albert Walters comes close to the mark in identifying the pressure for theological schools to become 'training centres for mission work rather than centres for theological reflection'. From another angle Bishop Michael Fape points to the capacity for renewal of the life of the church through a broad-based missionary focused theological education. Galgalo and Mombo draw attention to the wider global conflicts in Anglicanism and highlight changes occurring at the local level in theological education. Engendering theological education is not an unproblematic exercise but rather embroils institutions in larger political and ecclesial tensions. The development of new curriculum more in tune with local needs and contexts has to be integrated into traditional core curricula. This is never simple and generates tensions within institutions and in local dioceses with different agendas.

The articles suggest that theological education and ministerial formation are undergoing transformation and that institutions with such a focus are in fact contested sites within the ecclesial world of Anglicanism. National Anglican identity is a highly conflictual and emergent process. Theological institutions, precisely because they have such a potential impact on the shape of such national identity, become sites of contest. Are such institutions fundamentally training institutes for ordained and/or lay mission fieldwork? Or are they places for more rigorous theological reflection to build an informed and intelligent engagement of the church with society? Perhaps they are intended to bridge both these options.

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Who has power to determine the curriculum, theological content of subjects, pedagogical methods, appointment of faculty etc.? Amid the tensions and conflicts of the Anglican Communion the resolution of such matters at the local level is often contentious and affected significantly by pressures beyond the local. Is the formation of national identity and the crafting of the Anglican way in the hands of the bishops and the ruling ecclesiastical figures of a local church, or is it in the hands of theological educators?

Anglicanism has always wrestled with questions concerning the purposes of theological education and its role in the formation of national identity. In the late nineteenth century John Henry Newman discussed this matter in terms of the clash of the three powers: ecclesiastical/political; worship/sacramental; the philosophical/critical.[6] Faithfulness of the Church to the Gospel required a healthy balance between these three powers. Newman recognized that the prevailing danger in the church was the marginalization of the theological/critical element. Newman's insight remains relevant for Anglicans striving to engage with their local context. The formation of a distinctively Anglican way in the gospel necessarily generates conflict. Theological education and the institutions devoted to this work are in the eye of the ecclesiastical storm so to speak. The danger is that new forms of church ideology and global pressures will re-colonize theological institutions. The articles in this volume indirectly point to the significance of and fragile nature of theological education as a site containing both threat and promise in the formation of national identities. The Anglican way remains a contested and dynamic concept and so do the institutions that foster it.

Conclusion

The articles in this edition point to a diverse and dynamic range of engagements of the gospel in local contexts. The articles show that Anglicans are alive to the need for a vibrant inculturated faith and also mindful of some of the significant difficulties and ambiguities in the project of addressing national identity in theological education and formation. Anglicanism is extremely interesting on the ground; it remains in a constant state of flux and this dynamism is part of what belongs to the Anglican way. It is for this reason resistant to demands for uniformity in theological method and mode of engagement.

6. John Henry Newman, *The Via Media of the Anglican Church* (2 vols.; London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1877), Vol. 1, *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church Viewed Relatively to Romanism and Popular Protestantism*, 3rd edn, pp. 40-41.

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This means that when the bishops at Lambeth discuss the nature of the Anglican Way they need to take stock of the great diversity of expressions of Anglicanism on the ground and identify common threads running through a multi-textured weave. The articles also invite the bishops of the Communion to engage with each other regarding their hopes and concerns for theological education and its contribution to the formation of Anglican national identity in local churches of the Communion. As blood is to the body so is good quality theological education in the Church.

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