

WORLD MISSION AND THE HISTORIC EPISCOPATE IN THE APOSTOLICITY OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

An address to the Bilateral Dialogue between the United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church USA, by the Very Rev’d Titus Presler, Th.D., D.D., Dean and President and Professor of Mission and World Christianity at the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, Austin, Texas, given at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, 16 January 2004

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The stated topic of the January 2004 dialogue between the United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church USA is *Apostolicity and Mission*. An overall concern articulated by the dialogue organizers is to discern how the episcopate assists and enhances the service of the gospel, and not vice versa. We are to inquire how the historic episcopate, locally adapted, supports the overall apostolicity, or “sent-ness” of the church, and how the historic episcopate is a sign, though not a guarantee, of the apostolic faith. Within this overall concern, the topic suggested for Prof. Billy Abraham of Perkins School of Theology and myself is to illuminate how the our respective churches have remained faithful to the apostolic faith through mission.

I come to this topic as a missiologist, that is, as a scholar of the theology, history and practice of Christian mission. My principal focus as a missiologist has been on the interaction between the Christian gospel and local cultures. Shona Christianity in Zimbabwe has been a major research area for me, and this arose out of the time I spent there with my wife and family as an Episcopal missionary. Currently I am conducting research in my homeland of India, where I was born and grew up as the child of United Methodist missionaries engaged in theological education at the Leonard Theological College at Jabalpur, a United Methodist institution in Madhya Pradesh. Thus to this ecumenical dialogue I bring some experience of the global mission work of United Methodism. Indeed, I have a vivid and fond memory of our family visit to John Subhan, the first convert from Islam to become a United Methodist Bishop, at his home in Nagpur, Madhya Pradesh.

Mission theology is a major interest of my current reflection and writing, with a growing emphasis on the nature and formation of missionary identity. I have just come, for instance, from teaching in the Mission Personnel Orientation for outgoing Episcopal missionaries that is being held over these two weeks at the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, where I am Dean and President, and Professor of Mission and World Christianity. For the past six years I have served on the Standing Commission on World Mission, which advises the church’s General Convention; I was secretary, 1998-2000, and chair, 2001-03. In addition to my commitments in the international cross-cultural dimension of mission, from my experience as an inner-city

parish rector I bring strong interest in more local mission in the multi-cultural and Hispanic realities of the USA today.

Following a definition of terms, I propose to do three things in this address. First, I explore Anglican and Episcopal faithfulness in mission and highlight the difference between the voluntary society pattern of mission work in the Church of England and as the more ecclesiocentric pattern of mission work in the Episcopal Church USA. Second, I highlight the role of the historic episcopate in Episcopal mission and its catalytic role in the communion as a whole. Third, I survey major themes in the decline and rise of world mission in the Episcopal Church in the latter part of the 20th century.

Terms of Discourse

I turn now to setting forth my understanding of the terms we are using. Acknowledging that mission is a feature shared by virtually all religions today and not a peculiarity of Christianity,¹ I define religious mission as the spiritual vision and the practical means through which people project their religious faith and work and invite the participation and adherence of others. This definition applies equally to the Islamic Center of Austin, Texas; the New Earth and Blessed Peace Buddhist Meditation Society in Cambridge, Massachusetts; the Bahai Foi Centre d’Information in Montreal; the Hare Krishna Temple in Newcastle-upon-Tyne; and, closer to home, the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, and the Anglican and Global Relations Cluster of the Episcopal Church. In diverse ways all of these groups project their religious faith and work and invite the participation and adherence of others.

On the basis of its Latin root in the verb *mittere*, meaning *to send*, I define Christian mission most briefly as the activity of sending and being sent in Christ. More expansively, I define Christian mission as the activity of sending and being sent across significant boundaries of human experience to bear witness in word and deed to God’s action in Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. The stipulation of “significant boundaries of human experience” alludes to a connotation so inherent in the common understanding of mission that is virtually a denotation, namely, that we are on mission when we are bearing witness with persons and communities who are different from ourselves. That difference may be social, economic, racial, ethnic, linguistic, geographic, or, as is usually the case some combination of these. Yes, it is true that we are carrying

¹ While Christianity and Islam used to be identified as the two great missionary religions, developments in the latter part of the 20th century emphasize the missionary thrust of many other religions. The Ramakrishna Mission founded by Swami Vivekenanda has long had mission outreach in the Global North, as have numerous other more recent Hindu movements, including the Hindutva forces in contemporary Indian politics. Likewise, many Buddhist groups have been quite missionary in their presence and outreach. Elsewhere, I have shown that the Liberation War in Zimbabwe transformed Chivanhu, the traditional religion of the Shona people, into a missionary religion (*Transfigured Night: Mission and Culture in Zimbabwe’s Vigil Movement* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1999)).

out God’s mission when we do anything that is God’s will — anything that accords, say, with the mission statement of a congregation, conference or diocese — but the term mission retains its robust distinctiveness when it is distinguished from this more inclusive faithfulness that I term *ministry*. Mission, in brief, is ministry in the dimension of difference.

With mission defined so intrinsically as sending and being sent in Christ, the question how our church has been *apostolic* in mission can seem tautological, for, on the basis of its root in the Greek verb *apostello*, the conference organizers quite rightly equate apostolicity with *sentness*. The organizers go on, however, to define the question as one of how our churches have through mission been faithful to the apostolic faith, that is, the faith that the mission church is sent to offer, share and proclaim. What is and what is not the apostolic faith is today very much in dispute, as it has been in most periods of Christian history. The fiery quality of today’s debates about whether the Episcopal Church has fulfilled or departed from the apostolic faith in the consecration of a homosexual bishop press in upon us Episcopalians daily, but the nature of the debate is not in itself unique in any way. With the Lambeth Conference of 1888, and with the import of Anglican liturgy Sunday by Sunday, I affirm a mainstream Episcopal and Anglican understanding that the Nicene Creed is “the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.”²

Concerning definitions of terms, it is important to explore the Episcopal Church’s official view of mission. The church’s current Catechism, unlike earlier catechisms, quite specifically undertakes to define mission. To the question, “What is the mission of the Church?” the Catechism responds, “The mission of the Church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.” A follow-up question, “How does the Church pursue its mission?” prompts the response, “The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the gospel, and promotes justice, peace and love.”³ Since the Prayerbook’s authorization in 1979, These catechetical statements have proved to be touchstones for the missional formulations of many dioceses, parishes, seminaries and other groups in the church. Indeed, the fact that the Baptismal Covenant and the Catechism highlight mission has been a major factor in stimulating church groups to engage the missional question of what God is calling them to be and do. The catechetical statements specify theologically the purpose of mission as reconciliation between God and humanity and specify the ministries that fulfill that mission. The definitions I have suggested are more simply descriptive, setting forth what distinguishes religious mission from other kinds of religious activity and what distinguishes Christian mission from the broad range of Christian ministry.

From a theological standpoint, the Episcopal Catechism could have given its missiological statements firmer ground by locating mission decisively in the character and activity of God, rather than by associating mission with the activity of the church. An alternative sequence might read:

²Book of Common Prayer, p. 877.

³Book of Common Prayer, p. 855.

Q: What is the mission of God?

A: The mission of God is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.

Q: What is the mission of the Church?

A: God invites and calls the Church to participate in God’s mission of reconciling all people to God and each other in Christ.

The question of how the church fulfills its mission would follow as the Catechism presently has it, “. . . as it prays and worships . . .” and so forth. The point here is that God is a missionary God, yearning and working for reconciliation with humanity. Mission neither begins in the church nor belongs to the church, for it begins in God. The church is faithful in mission as it responds to God’s invitation that we join God in offering our life and labor in reconciling the world with God.⁴

In the midst of all these clarifications, the question how the Episcopal Church has remained faithful to the apostolic faith through mission retains some ambiguity. On one hand, it can be taken as asking whether in its mission work the church has shared the apostolic faith or some other, perhaps sub-Christian faith. Reviewing the course of Anglican and Episcopal mission history will shed light on this question. On the other hand, the question can be taken as asking whether the church has been faithful in fulfilling the “sentness” that is central to apostolicity. Has the church persevered in mission, in responding to God’s call to bear witness to Christ over the significant boundaries of human experience? Has the church been willing to be sent to minister in the dimension of difference? Or has the church been content to nurture its own life, unencumbered by encounters with the other who is different? Reviewing Anglican and Episcopal mission history will shed light on this question, as well.

For the question whether and how the church has been willing to be sent in the dimension of difference, this study focuses on the global dimension of that sentness. Anglican and Episcopal mission initiatives have had many local expressions over the centuries — with the poor, with women and children, with the sick, with immigrants, with victims of war, and many others. The global dimension of mission is equally important. It has warrant in the universal horizon of God’s salvation as anticipated in the Old Testament; in the inclusive embrace expressed in Jesus’ ministry and teaching; in the missionary character of the early Christian movement; and in the cosmic soteriology found everywhere in the New Testament. “A missionary is someone who leaves home,” says Jane Butterfield, mission personnel director for the Episcopal Church.⁵ This straightforward and empirical marker highlights the fact that global mission, while not better or more meritorious than other forms of mission, is an especially costly

⁴ These themes are developed in my introduction to world mission, *Horizons of Mission* (Boston and Cambridge: Cowley Publications, 2001).

⁵ In personal conversation.

discipleship, both for the individual and for the church at large.⁶ The church’s faithfulness in international and cross-cultural mission is, therefore, an especially useful marker of the church’s faithfulness to the apostolic faith, the church’s willingness to leave home and minister in the dimension of difference.

Turning to the “historic episcopate”, an important concept for our topic, the phrase occurs in the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral as the fourth characteristic of the proposed basis for Christian unity: “The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.”⁷ What is meant is the institution of bishops as an order of ministry in the church, with such ordination viewed as a sacramental rite.⁸ The adjective *historic* refers to the view that the Anglican episcopate stands in the line of bishops extending back to the apostles of Jesus through the successive laying on of hands in the ordination rites through Christian history. This apostolic succession is viewed as a sign of the Anglican tradition’s continuity and unity with the life and faith of the universal church as extended through time since the ministry of Jesus and through space throughout the world.

It is with these understandings of mission, apostolicity, the apostolic faith and the historic episcopate, that I address two questions: How has the Episcopal Church remained faithful to the apostolic faith through mission? How has the historic episcopate helped or hindered the church’s faithfulness to the apostolic faith through mission?

I. APOSTOLICITY IN ANGLICAN AND EPISCOPAL WORLD MISSION

A review of Anglican and Episcopal mission history is appropriate with a view to inquiring into whether and how the Anglican tradition and its American Episcopal expression has been faithful to the I first explore the role of the historic episcopate in the difference between the voluntary society pattern of mission organization in the Church of England, and what I term the ecclesiocentric pattern of mission organization in the Episcopal Church USA. Exploring this difference also provides opportunity to highlight major features of the history of Anglican and Episcopal mission work.

The Voluntary Principle in the Church of England

Although many people consider world mission as somehow intrinsic to the ethos of Protestant and Anglican churches, the fact is that the reformations in European Christianity that occurred in the 16th century issued in churches that for roughly 200 years

⁶ The peculiarly sacrificial quality of cross-cultural, international mission is discussed in *Horizons of Mission*, 44.

⁷ *Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 877-878.

⁸ This understanding differs from the United Methodist understanding prevailing today, in which elders and deacons are the two ordained orders in the church, and in which bishops are viewed as elders with a wider oversight in the church’s life.

were preoccupied primarily with their internal struggles for viability and which continued to view the world primarily through the lens of state-establishment, where Christian concern and vision stopped at national borders. Certainly, the state-established Church of England long displayed little concern even its own Anglicans outside the British Isles, in the American colonies and in India, for instance, let alone for bearing witness to Christ among non-Christians. American Anglicans long sought a bishop for their pastoral care, but they were consistently refused by successive archbishops of Canterbury.

With such lack of official interest in church life and work beyond Britain, it was finally the initiative of concerned individuals that prompted Anglican mission outreach. In the 1690s, English rector Thomas Bray was asked to help organize Anglican Church work in Maryland. Disturbed by the low morale of the Anglicans he found in the colonies, their lack of resources and their lack of vision for vital outreach, he founded the first two mission societies within Anglicanism. Notably with four laymen, not with a bishop, he established in 1698 the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), which grew rapidly to become a major book distributor and publisher to this day, now with autonomous branches in the USA, India, Ireland and Australia.

Bray followed this first society with another in 1701, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), which was intended both to minister to Britons overseas and to evangelize non-Christians living under the British crown. Formed as a Society by Royal Charter, the SPG had state recognition and official position in the Church, but it needed to raise its own funds, so, again, it did not have the official support of dioceses and their bishops. It became a major missionary-sending agency with an initial focus on the American colonies, where it worked with American Indians and African Americans and founded some of the oldest parishes of what is now the Episcopal Church. Gradually its work spread to many parts of the world, mostly to areas of British influence. Since the Anglo-Catholic revival of the 19th century, the society has promoted a High Church style of Anglicanism. Anglicans in areas of SPG work tend, as a result, to have a high view of clerical orders, enjoy incense and bells in their worship, and exercise caution about ecumenical cooperation. Significantly, they have been slower in affirming the ordination of women to priesthood.

As an example, the Anglican episcopate in southern Africa, where the SPG was very active, is characterized by a distinct sense of privilege, somewhat high and lifted up, and this has contributed to turmoil in the episcopate in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi.⁹ On another side, I suggest that when the strong sense of episcopal vocation in the Anglo-

⁹ In Zimbabwe, turmoil has been prominent and constant during the tenures of the three first African bishops of Mashonaland, now Harare — Peter Hatendi, Jonathan Siyachitema, and Nolbert Kunonga — from 1981 to the present. Similar turmoil characterized the episcopate of Elijah Masuko in Manicaland, 1981 to 1999. In Zambia, Bernard Milango, bishop of Northern Zambia and archbishop of the Province of Central Africa, was effectively barred from ministry in his diocese by widespread protests in 2002, and his translation to a diocese in Malawi later that year was delayed by further controversy and struggle.

Catholic movement is combined with the movement’s social engagement, its fruit includes the prophecy of Trevor Huddleston and Desmond Tutu, figures who certainly have advanced the mission of the church as bishops.¹⁰

The 19th century blossoming of Anglican and Protestant mission work was energized by the founding of more “voluntary societies ” like the SPCK, the fruit of a general evangelical awakening in the 18th century. They are termed “voluntary” because they were founded, organized and funded by interested individuals, not by the governing central structures of churches. Concerned that the Church of England continued to be relatively inactive in world mission, a group of Anglican evangelicals known as the Clapham Sect founded the Church Missionary Society (CMS) in 1799. Best known among them was William Wilberforce, who as a member of Parliament was active in the abolition of the slave trade and slavery itself in the British Empire. The CMS both addressed such injustices in the international system and pursued world evangelization with a vision that such work was a prelude to the inauguration of God’s kingdom in a coming millennial age.

Whereas the SPG was chartered to operate within areas of British rule, the CMS sought to initiate work outside the British colonial structure and so express the universality of mission. While initially distrusted by English bishops on account of its autonomy, by the mid-1800s the CMS had the support of numerous bishops and was integrating mission throughout the world into the ethos of the Church of England. Consistent with its evangelical roots and in contrast with the SPG, the CMS promoted a Low Church style of Anglicanism. Anglicans in areas of CMS work — east Africa, for instance — tend, as a result, to be more revivalist, less eucharistic, and more ready to affirm the ordination of women.

One inheritor of the CMS heritage is the presently retiring archbishop of Uganda, Livingstone Mpalanyi Nkoyoyo. The archbishop’s Kampala residence, still termed a palace after the Church of England’s terminology, was constructed by Nkoyoyo on a fairly grand scale — not, however, as a display of elevated status but for a remarkable ministry of hospitality he and his wife Ruth offer to many visitors from both within and outside Uganda. Reflecting the evangelical CMS background and the East Africa Revival of the 1930s which it nurtured, the archbishop’s episcopal visitations are characterized by ongoing revivalism. “Wherever I go, I have an altar call,” he told me, and there he does not mean simply the invitation to communion! With such mission

¹⁰ Huddleston, a member of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, was a prominent anti-apartheid activist while a bishop. Tutu’s participation in the struggle began while he was a parish priest and extended through his time as secretary of the South African Council of Churches, bishop of the Diocese of Johannesburg, and archbishop of Capetown and the Anglican Church of Southern Africa. In retirement, his leadership of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission cemented his global reputation. Tutu is today the best known and most respected Anglican bishop of the 20th century, easily eclipsing William Temple, archbishop of Canterbury earlier in the century.

spirit in the episcopate, it is not surprising that the three most populous Anglican provinces in the communion today, outside of Britain, are Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya.

Mano Rumalshah, the current bishop of Peshawar in the United Church of Pakistan frequently points out that an underside of the diverse emphases of the English voluntary mission societies is competing theologies and ecclesiologies. Anglicans in some parts of the world actually identify themselves primarily as CMS Christians or SPG Christians. Evangelization by both societies in Tanzania, for instance, has made the unity of that particular Anglican province hard to live out.

The major mission policy-maker in 19th-century English mission was not a bishop but Henry Venn, a layman and general secretary of the CMS from 1841 to 1872. He is best known for setting forth as a chief goal “establishing a Native Church upon the principles of self-support, self-government, and self-extension.” Keenly aware of the twin perils of missionary paternalism and indigenous dependency, Venn counseled missionaries to develop local leadership that would enable new churches to stand on their own as soon as possible. These “Three-Self Principles” anticipated by more than a century a current view that the missionary should work him/herself out of a job. Strikingly, Venn recommended for each local effort what he called the euthanasia of a mission:

It is important ever to keep in view what has been happily termed “the Euthanasia of a Mission” where the Missionary is surrounded by well-trained Native congregations under Native Pastors, when he gradually and wisely abridges his own labours, and relaxes his superintendence over the Pastors till they are able to sustain their own Christian ordinances, and the District ceases to be a Missionary field, and passes into Christian parishes under the constituted ecclesiastical authorities.

In theory, this principle helped to moderate patterns of missionary direction and indigenous subservience. As for the role of the historic episcopate, the ideal of self-government was meant that while episcopal oversight of a new work would initially be provided nominally by foreign bishops from afar through the CMS, direct and local episcopal jurisdiction would arrive in the form of an indigenous episcopate, ordained as the “Native Church” became stronger and its clergy experienced enough to assume the mantle of bishops.

Accordingly, the CMS initiated the first mission venture to be directed by an African bishop. Consecrated in 1864 as the first non-European bishop of the Anglican Communion, Samuel Adjai Crowther, a former slave, developed church work in the Niger River delta in eastern Nigeria. In the imperial heyday of the “Scramble for Africa” that commenced in 1885, however, Henry Venn’s successors were not nearly so open to indigenous leadership, and Bp. Crowther’s three successor bishops after his death in 1891 were all Europeans. Thus even the CMS ultimately recommended the appointment of English bishops for its mission work.

While today the British societies are smaller than they once were, the spread of Anglicanism around the world was due chiefly to their work. This says several important things about Anglican mission history. First, Anglicanism was spread not by top-down policies of the Church of England hierarchy, but by the initiative of grassroots groups that were passionate about mission and that developed networks of support at the parish level. Mission vision, not ecclesiastical ambition, is responsible for the existence of the Anglican Communion. As mission work grew, bishops were appointed to oversee the church in mission areas. Mission policy, however, was formulated and implemented by the societies. Second, because these groups were voluntary rather than official, they were able to preserve their activism and their particular theological, geographical and strategic emphases from being blunted by the perennially competing priorities of central church structures. This accounts for the staying power of Anglican mission over the last three centuries. Third, in the context of the Church of England’s state-established link with a major colonial power, the societies’ central role preserved a critical distance between mission work and colonial policy. Contrary to popular stereotypes today, Anglican mission was *not* simply the religious instrument of British imperialism, and it was certainly not primarily the instrument of alliances between the state and the episcopate of a state-established church.

The American Ecclesiocentric Model of the Missionary Church

For Anglicans living in the anti-royalist fervor of the American Revolution and its aftermath, establishing the Episcopal Church as an autonomous body, not governed from England and yet in full communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury, was a survival strategy mandated by their desire both to maintain Anglican worship and to be accepted as loyal citizens of the new United States. This American innovation formed the first non-British province of what came to be known as the Anglican Communion and established what has become the communion’s distinctive pattern of relationships: full local autonomy in legislative decision-making; full inter-provincial communion, united through the Archbishop of Canterbury; and committed consultation, since 1867 chiefly through the Lambeth Conference of bishops. Beyond survival, the American experience was a breakthrough for Anglican mission, for it created the concept of an indigenous Anglican Christianity outside Britain. It is probably not coincidental that the consecration of Samuel Seabury as the first American bishop in 1784 was followed by an act of Parliament in 1786 that authorized the consecration in England of bishops for dioceses abroad.

However innovative, the new American church was so small and weak that one historian dubbed the period 1789-1835 as “The Church Convalescent”! In the early years the American church naturally focused on settling its internal life, not on mission. It adapted the Book of Common Prayer to the American situation, obtained its first bishops, organized dioceses and established a form of government that was new to Anglicanism. With General Convention modeled on the United States Congress, Episcopal polity from the beginning was more clearly and more centrally organized than in the Church of England. This centralized, inclusive and democratic polity was a fundamental condition

for the two centralized modes of mission that developed in the American church: the centralized missionary society and the appointment of missionary bishops.

The western frontier of the growing nation was the initial mission horizon for Episcopalians, and it slowly widened to include the world. The 1792 General Convention adopted a short-lived plan to direct and raise funds “for supporting missionaries to preach the Gospel on the frontiers,” but, interestingly, most of the early frontier work was carried out by diocesan committees, presumably with the support of their bishops. Further afield, Africa became one focus of interest through the Liberia project of the American Colonization Society, founded in 1816 to help freed slaves return to that continent.

The pivotal event was the 1835 General Convention’s decision to amend the constitution of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, founded in 1821, to read: constitution to read, “The Society shall be considered as comprehending all persons who are members of this Church.” Although certainly solving the membership problem, this change had a strongly theological motivation, as expressed at the time by Bp. George Washington Doane of New Jersey:

By the original constitution of Christ, the Church as the Church, was the one great Missionary Society; and the Apostles, and the Bishops, their successors, his perpetual trustees; and this great trust could not, and should never be divided or deputed. The duty . . . to support the Church in preaching the Gospel to every creature, was one which passed on every Christian by terms of his baptismal vow, and from which he could never be absolved.

It is significant for our topic that “preaching the Gospel to every creature” is regarded here as inherent in apostolicity and that that bishops are regarded as the apostolic trustees of that apostolic obligation. At the same time, legislating that every Episcopalian was — and still is today! — a member of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society emphasized that the Church as a whole is called to mission, which defines the Church’s nature. Thus mission cannot be delegated to one part of the Church, still less to the purely voluntary inclinations of some of its members. Instead, it must be embraced by the whole Church and expressed through the missionary activity of each of its baptized members. Here we see strong precedent for today’s emphasis on baptismal mission and on the missional nature of the Church.

Reinforcing also today’s recognition that local and global concerns are inter-related and equally important, the 1835 convention declared the unity of the mission field:

For the guidance of the Committees it is declared that the missionary field is always to be regarded as one, THE WORLD — the terms domestic and foreign being understood as terms of locality adopted for convenience. *Domestic* missions are those which are established *within*, and *foreign* missions are those that are established *without*, the territory of the United States.

This insistence on the unity of mission contrasted with the quite exclusive emphases of English Anglican societies, with some devoted to domestic concerns and others to foreign.

II. THE ROLE OF MISSIONARY BISHOPS IN ANGLICAN GLOBAL MISSION

Creating the office of missionary bishop, a bishop sent to establish the Church in a particular area, was the third major contribution of the 1835 General Convention. Again, Bp. Doane expressed the theological foundation of this innovation:

A missionary bishop is a bishop sent forth by the Church, not sought for of the Church; going before to organize the Church, not waiting till the Church has partially been organized; a leader not a follower, in the march of the Redeemer’s conquering and triumphant Gospel . . . sent by the Church, even as the Church is sent by Christ.

Doane was very clearly stressing the apostolic role of a bishop as one sent to preach the gospel. This perspective was premised on a fairly high-church view that the presence of a bishop means that the Church itself is present and that a bishop in such circumstances has the authority to “grow the Church” from that simple fact of presence. One is put in mind of the statement of Ignatius of Antioch, “Where the bishop is, there is the Church.” As an evangelical voluntary society, the CMS, by contrast, believed that the episcopate should be the crown, not the foundation, of Church growth and that, in any case, the first bishop should be an indigenous Christian, not a missionary.

The 1835 convention employed the new office first to build the Church’s work on the western frontier and elected missionary bishops for the northwest and southwest. Jackson Kemper was consecrated at convention as the Church’s first missionary bishop, and through his constant mission travels he laid the foundations of the Church in Missouri, Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska and Kansas. The first missionary bishop with a non-US jurisdiction was William Boone, elected in 1844 to be bishop of Amoy and Other Parts of China, where Episcopal missionaries had first arrived in 1835. Liberia, where the DFMS sent missionaries in 1835 and 1836, received a missionary bishop in 1851 and its first African American missionary bishop, Samuel Ferguson, in 1884. In Japan, the third major area of 19th-century Episcopal mission, the three Episcopal missionaries who arrived in 1859 were the first non-Roman Christian missionaries in that country’s history, and Channing Moore Williams became missionary bishop in 1866.

The innovation of missionary bishops took hold with the Church of England and its missionary societies. It is striking how many missionary bishops, in addition to Jackson Kemper and Channing Moore Williams, are commemorated in the Episcopal Church calendar. George Augustus Selwyn had an important role in establishing the church in New Zealand/Aotearoa before his death in 1870. John Coleridge Patteson, missionary bishop of Melanesia, and his companions were martyred in the South Pacific in 1871. James Hannington, a CMS missionary appointed bishop of Eastern Equatorial

Africa was martyred with his companions while on their way into Uganda in 1885. Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky was a Lithuanian Jew educated and converted in Germany, who then prepared for the Episcopal priesthood at General Seminary in New York, learned Mandarin on the boat to China as an Episcopal missionary, later became bishop of Shanghai and died in Japan in 1906, having translated the Bible into Mandarin and finishing the work blind and chair-ridden by a stroke. Charles Henry Brent is commemorated principally on account of his ecumenical work in the Faith and Order Movement, but his ecumenical convictions were shaped powerfully by his missionary episcopate in the Philippines.¹¹

On the side of indigenous bishops whose early appointments were crucial in the strengthening of indigenous churches, the chapel at Partnership House in London, where CMS, USPG and several other English Anglican mission agencies are housed today, Samuel Adjai Crowther is depicted in stained glass, alongside three other pioneering leaders of Anglican churches with which both the CMS and the SPG were involved: Bp. Vedanayakam Samuel Azariah of South India, Bp. Tsae Seng Sing of China, and Bp. Joseph Sakunoshin Motoda of Japan. Clearly, the historic episcopate has been regarded by many streams of Anglicanism as an important catalyst for the church’s participation in God’s mission.

At this point I wish to highlight two major reservations concerning the role of the historic episcopate in the mission of the Anglican Communion. One concerns the history of the Episcopal Church. The major Episcopal mission fields in the 19th century were China, Japan, Liberia, and many parts of Latin America, with a focus on Central America, the Caribbean and Brazil. The role of American Episcopal bishops was strong in these areas, though in the case of China that was limited to Taiwan after 1950. In many instances the establishment of a missionary district was followed by that of a missionary diocese, headed, typically, by a missionary bishop, and then finally its incorporation in the Episcopal Church as a regular diocese. The result was that after World War II the Episcopal Church USA was virtually a communion of its own within the Anglican Communion, with many international jurisdictions, numbering 21 even as late as 1973.

Obviously, this was not an ideal trajectory for local and indigenous self-determination on the more typical Anglican model of provincial autonomy. Instead, it perpetuated a colonial model that even the Church of England, supposed handmaid of the great colonial power of the modern period, had never presumed to institute. In a number of Latin American jurisdictions, a vigorous missionary episcopate gave a strong start to the life of the church, but its perpetuation over decades, followed by indigenous bishops leading dioceses still integrally part of the USA church sometimes led to stagnation. While the Brazilian church became autonomous in 1965, Liberia joined the Province of

¹¹ Although not commemorated in any calendar, notable service was rendered by George Wyndham Hamilton Knight-Bruce, the pioneering bishop of Anglicanism in Zimbabwe. He gave up the post of bishop of Bloemfontein in South Africa, to become an SPG missionary and the first bishop of Mashonaland in Rhodesia.

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West Africa only in 1982, the Episcopal Church in the Philippines became autonomous only in 1990, the church in Mexico in 1995, and the Central American Province in 1998. With the exception of Brazil, all of these jurisdictions are weak and still in search of identity and viability. The centralized, ecclesiocentric mode of Episcopal mission and the strong hand of expatriate missionary bishops may be a factor in this phenomenon.

Over the past few years, the Episcopal Church has continued to have eight non-USA jurisdictions. The 2003 General Convention actually authorized the re-incorporation of the Diocese of Puerto Rico, at its request, and that occurred at convention, and the new incorporation of the Diocese Venezuela, previously extra-provincial in the Anglican Communion, was also authorized and is now in the process of occurring. We on the Standing Commission on World Mission have supported these moves from the perspective of accepting the now longstanding international character of our church, understanding that national boundaries should not define the Body of Christ, and realizing that insisting on an autonomy that may not be viable may do greater harm in the long run.

The second reservation I offer arises out of the general experience of the Anglican Communion around the world, as expressed at an international consultation held in 2001. In its final report the conference noted that Anglican governance is characterized by episcopal leadership in the form of bishops in the historical episcopate, and by synodical governance in the form of conventions, councils and synods that include all orders of ministry among their members. “In some parts of our communion,” said the conferees,

the role of bishops in leadership has grown out of proportion to synodical governance. Simply put, bishops sometimes exercise power at the expense of councils. The result is that the participation of the whole people of God is diminished. In turn mission is diminished. Where lay people, and often the clergy as well, are excluded from the decisions that resolve particular issues or determine the future direction of a church, hurt, anger, frustration, and despondency are often the results. In some settings, incessant conflict between people and bishop ensues. In others, valuable leaders simply withdraw from the life of the church.

Naturally, the conference crafted a recommendation that the Anglican Consultative Council address this issue in a variety of ways.

The conference was also concerned about the accountability of bishops to the whole people of God rather than to narrow sectional interests:

The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886 and 1888 recognized the need for the episcopal office to adapt to local culture. We rejoice in the wonderful variety in modes of leadership that have emerged, along with locally adapted worship, theology, and pastoral care. At the same time, we grieve to see dioceses where bishops appear more accountable to their class or ethnic group than to God. We are aware of whole societies and large numbers of clergy who live in harsh and unnecessary poverty. However, no office in the Church should be sought to advance

personal security or to protect group interest. We need leaders who serve God by serving even the neighbor who is different.

The ACC might consider including in its recommendation for review of canons a request that provinces look critically at the relation between their particular adaptation of the episcopate and the Gospel's model of the leader as one who serves. The Council might request that provinces consider canonical revisions to nurture a style of leadership closer to that of Jesus and the early Christian communities.

III. THE DECLINE AND RISE OF EPISCOPAL WORLD MISSION

I turn now to the late 20th-century decline and rise of global mission engagement in the Episcopal Church, for it bears on the question of how the church has remained faithful to the apostolic faith through mission. Close to 500 Episcopal missionaries served outside the United States in 1933. By the mid-1970s there were fewer than 70. What happened? And what’s happening today to cause that number to climb again beyond 200?

The decline was steep, even aside from the missionaries who left China in 1950 under pressure from the new Communist government. Five crises of new awareness in the mission thinking of the Episcopal Church prompted mission cutbacks during the late 20th century, and each crisis has moved world mission in new directions. These crises were not peculiar to the Episcopal Church, for they were experienced by mainline Protestant denomination, as well, including the United Methodist Church. The five types of new awareness are highlighted as crises because they were experienced as such by people at the time. In retrospect, we may view a particular development in a relatively neutral or even hopeful light, but people in the churches, especially those involved in world mission, experienced them as crises. And they were experienced more or less simultaneously, though with differing intensity at various times in various communities and churches.

First, a crisis of confidence in the universal validity of the Christian gospel prompted skepticism among mainline churches about evangelism, conversion and church-planting. Religious diversity is home territory for the gospel, for, despite recurring persecution during its first three centuries, the Christian movement grew exponentially in the exuberantly multi-religious environment of the Mediterranean world. Nevertheless, religious diversity felt like a new situation to Christians in the relatively mono-religious environment of mid-20th-century Europe and USA. They needed to step back and take their bearings. Dialogue with people of other religions, not proclamation, was seen as the urgent need.

Second, a crisis of guilt and repentance for political colonialism and cultural imperialism prompted Christians in the Global North to fear that mission was just meddling, what a student in one of my classes called “toxic mission.” Doubt deepened when supposedly Christian nations ignited two world wars and allowed the Holocaust.

The global power of Euro-American finance, technology and culture made many suspect that mission from the north would repeat the colonial past. In the 1970s, church leaders in the Global South called briefly for a moratorium on missionaries.

Third, in the 1960s came a crisis of responsibility as the church recognized the interlocking realities of poverty, racism and injustice in urban America. The General Convention Special Program of 1967 responded by granting church funds to empowerment movements within the USA. Funding for world mission was reduced radically on account of the shift in priorities. “Why send missionaries abroad,” many asked, “when we’ve got so many problems unsolved at home?” Disenchantment with new policies prompted a drop in giving, which further reduced world mission funding.

Fourth, came the crisis of institutions. People felt reluctant to support missionaries who would represent anything so fallible as an institutional church. They realized that injustice depends not only on personal sin but also on the complicity of institutions, including churches. Lacking grassroots congregational support, world mission shared the general malaise of the institutional church.

The cumulative effect of these four crises was bivalent. On one hand, the crises prompted reconsideration and withdrawal from some expressions of the mission impulse: evangelism, for instance, and international mission. On the other hand, in each of these crises the church was pondering and expressing its discipleship, indeed its mission, in new ways: inter-faith dialogue, for instance, and costly work for racial and economic justice in the United States.

Ironically, the fifth crisis for world mission was the crisis of success. Bearing witness in the dimension of difference created self-governing churches around the world that became enthusiastically self-propagating and, albeit more slowly, self-supporting. By 2000 Christians numbered constituted a third of the world’s population, or 2 billion people, including 81 million Anglicans, and about 60 percent in both categories live in the Two-Thirds World. Equally significant, the indigenous churches became self-theologizing, and today any North American theological curriculum that does not include Global South theologians is regarded as seriously deficient. However slow in implementation, the mission movement had always expected missionaries to work themselves out of their jobs. As westerners made way for indigenous pastors, doctors, nurses, teachers and theologians, it looked like there might be no further need for missionaries.

With all these downsizing influences, why is the number of Episcopal missionaries rising again beyond 200 — admittedly still a small number when compared with United Methodism, but in proportion to our size as a church not a great deal smaller than the so-called Board Missionaries of the Board of Global Ministries?¹²

¹² Statistics from EL Msn issue & from UMC website.

Forming relationships and building community in Christ have become increasingly central. The Partnership in Mission principle articulated by the Anglican Consultative Council in 1973 moved Anglicans from need-based mission to relationship-based mission arising out of invitations:

The emergence everywhere of autonomous churches in independent nations has challenged our inherited idea of mission as a movement from “Christendom” in the West to the “non-Christian” world. In its place has come the conviction that there is but one mission in all the world, and that this one mission is shared by the world-wide Christian community. The responsibility for mission in any place belongs *primarily* to the church in that place. However, the universality of the gospel and the oneness of God’s mission mean also that this mission must be shared in each and every place with fellow-Christians from each and every part of the world with their distinctive insights and contributions. If we once acted as though there were only givers who had nothing to receive and receivers who had nothing to give, the oneness of the missionary task must make us all both givers and receivers,¹³

Companions in Transformation is the title and central theme of the vision statement presented to the 2003 General Convention by the church’s Standing Commission on World Mission:

Companionship is the central characteristic that God’s missionary people are developing in the Episcopal Church in the 21st century. God is calling our church as a whole to be a companion with other churches in the Anglican Communion and beyond. Dioceses and parishes are living out their call to be companions with dioceses and parishes in other countries. Individual missionaries are ministering as companions in their places of service.

Literally, companions share bread together. Theologically, companions share in Christ the bread of life. Today the missionary and the mission community journey with others and form community in Christ. In such companionship both missionary and supporting community are transfigured as they experience the gospel life of their companion communities. The personal and communal presence of companionship coheres with an Anglican theological emphasis on incarnation as the culmination of God’s presence in the world.¹⁴

In explicating this companionship, the commission states that in the 21st century, God is calling Christians and the church to be a mission companion that is a: witness, pilgrim, servant, prophet, ambassador, host, and sacrament.

¹³Anglican Consultative Council, *Partners in Mission, Second Meeting: Dublin, Ireland, 17-27 July 1973* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1973), 53.

¹⁴ Standing Commission on World Mission, *Companions in Transformation: The Episcopal Church’s World Mission in a New Century* (Harrisburg: Morehouse, 2003), 5

Mutuality in mission means that fixing problems abroad is no longer the focus, nor do stubborn problems at home invalidate mission. Indeed, cross-cultural encounters shed light on issues at home. The DFMS insistence of 1835 that the domestic and foreign are inter-related was eroded in the late 20th century, but there is a growing conviction today that global community means that local and international mission are intimately related and that we need both. Not only are today’s Episcopal missionaries acutely aware of the mistakes of colonial mission, but they tend to be critics of America’s globalizing culture as they search for more life-giving ways of building community.

Sending missionaries is complicated, yet when the personal dimension of missionary presence was subtracted and mission was reduced to funding development projects, alienation was the result in inter-church relationships. Today Episcopalians are rediscovering how personal presence can be a sacrament of the global Christ as the church both sends and receives in mission.

In relating to other religions, Anglicans today realize that witness means listening and learning as well as proclaiming. Inter-religious encounters need people who will live in the interface, and missionaries are generally the people willing to do that. Episcopalians also recognize anew that in the global religious dialogue, Jesus’ gospel is a gift that needs sharing, especially among the many who have never heard it.

Such intuitions helped Episcopal global mission begin to flourish again in the last 25 years. A number of grassroots groups were founded to supplement the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society: the Episcopal Church Missionary Community in 1974, the South American Missionary Society/USA in 1976, Episcopal World Mission in 1982, Sharing of Ministries Abroad/USA in 1985, and Anglican Frontier Missions in 1994. Missionaries from all groups are increasing, and they do almost anything one can imagine: evangelism and justice advocacy, parish ministry and eco-consulting, AIDS work and church-planting.

Important for the role of the historic episcopate in the church’s global mission today is the companion diocese movement, which I suggest is the single phenomenon that has done more to catalyze inter-Anglican encounter and global mission than any other over the past 30 years. There are literally hundreds of inter-diocesan relationships throughout the communion today, and about 85 of the 100 domestic Episcopal dioceses have companion dioceses in other parts of the world. Many of these relationships began with encounters between bishops, many of these occurring at the Lambeth conferences. The longest surviving relationship and one of the most active and productive is between the Diocese of Oklahoma and the Diocese of West Ankole in Uganda, the fruit of a meeting between the bishops of those two dioceses at Lambeth 1978. For many of the American bishops, there was no particular preceding interest in the world church or in global mission. Instead, simple friendship prompted a desire for engagement, and this developed into mutual mission. Such companionship, I suggest, recapitulates the movement of the incarnation that is so central to Anglican theology and mission. Companion diocese relationships have introduced thousands of Episcopalians to the world church every year through and short-term missions.

SUMMARY NOTES

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Mission as ministry in the dimension of difference

Anglicans vigorously faithful to that apostolicity, that sentness

Advantages and disadvantages of the voluntary and ecclesiocentric mission

Episcopate has significantly hampered mission in some instances

Historic episcopate has had a central catalytic role in many situations