



## The Postcolonial Paradox: Becoming Less than Whole(s) Producing Parts that Exclude *Other* Parts

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to address coexistent Anglican faith identities that have flourished in contexts after the colonial period. Thus far these identities have been treated as differences in viewpoints. Metaphysically speaking member differences are included as 'parts' of the one 'whole' Body of Christ. Without a postcolonial metaphysical and theological critique that decolonizes the Body of Christ, as the Church, then parts repeatedly seek, to redefine, restore or reform the 'whole' to maintain the whole's coherence and empowering the former part. Ignoring the metaphysical aspect of ecclesial identity postpones the emergence of a postcolonial Anglican Communion where multiple faith identities can coexist.

**KEYWORDS:** Anglicanism, coexistent faith identities, metaphysics, postcolonial, The Windsor Report, whole-parts

### *Introduction*

This article is part of a much larger research project in which I am attempting to fundamentally rethink what it means to be incorporated into the Body of Christ as church(es) in postcolonial contexts. The project encompasses many dimensions addressing identity, communion and unity. My primary motivation for this article emerges from whose differences have been included or legitimated as part of Anglican identity and whose differences have been perceived as a threat to this identity and thus disciplined or excluded.

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*Suspending Inclusion/Exclusion Questions*

The approach that I will take in wrestling with the question of differences will be easier to grasp if the reader can suspend their particular theological and even ideological preferences to be available to try on another approach to global and contextual Anglican relations. Opposing sides have failed to engage each other's differences. At the same time fundamental metaphysical-theological principles have been manipulated fostering these polarized contexts. The suspension that I invite the reader to practice requires making a shift from asking who is included or excluded. The shift suggests that we even move beyond the way Episcopal Divinity School's Angus Dun Professor of Mission and World Christianity Ian Douglas described the Anglican controversy being about 'Who has the power to say who is or is not an Anglican?'<sup>2</sup> Rather I will argue that who is in and who is out is the limiting concern of what I shall name 'first-generation power analysis'. The approach I take is immersed in power analysis but cannot be written off as merely further extensions of the now increasingly hallow words to some Anglicans that all are welcomed.

When we think of incorporation into the Body of Christ we often think of Baptism or as unity and membership in the Body of Christ grounded in both scripture and theology. Some biblical images that similarly address these divine-human relationships are 'I am the vine, you are the branches' and in 'my house there are many rooms'.<sup>3</sup> Thomas Aquinas, the medieval metaphysical-theologian, described the Body of Christ as a whole with parts.<sup>4</sup> Brian Tierney explained a shift from the mystical Body of Christ to a juridical interpretation of the church as a corporation.<sup>5</sup> Both the mystical Body of Christ and subsequent juridical principles considered the church as a whole with member parts. Unlike vine-branches and house rooms metaphors, whole-parts require church(es) to be organized like the metaphysical Body of Christ.

2. Ian T. Douglas, 'Anglicans Gathering for God's Mission: A Missiological Ecclesiology for the Anglican Communion', *The Journal of Anglican Studies* 2.2 (2004), p. 10.

3. Jn 15.5 and Jn 14.2.

4. Desmond P. Henry, *Medieval Mereology* (Amsterdam: B.R. Gruner, 1991), pp. 218-328; Thomas Gilby, *Between Community and Society: A Philosophy and Theology of the State* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1953), pp. 107-23; and Guy Mansini, 'On the Relation of Particular to Universal Church', *Irish Theological Quarterly* 69 (2004), p. 184.

5. Brian Tierney, *Foundations of The Conciliar Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), pp. 132-513.

Since at least the conciliarist controversy these words ‘whole-parts’ have been used generically, sociologically and anthropologically in ecclesial contexts. Frequently these various whole-parts’ uses have been carelessly conflated obscuring their particular theological meaning and desired authority. Until *The Windsor Report* in an unprecedented manner cited whole-parts 11 times, these terms were of little interest to most Anglican theologians.<sup>6</sup> The one exception has been the work of the English Anglican theologian Paul Avis, who in his earliest work criticized traditional metaphysical whole-parts’ usage to his most recent work where he fully adopts it.<sup>7</sup> The clearest whole-parts statement that the authors of *The Windsor Report* claimed is that the Anglican Communion is a whole and the provinces are its parts.<sup>8</sup> These assertions of whole-parts in *The Windsor Report* carry more power and potential ecclesiological transformation than any other section of *The Windsor Report* including the covenant. Indeed whole-parts provide the metaphysical-theological justification for a covenant. Despite the weight of whole-parts *The Windsor Report’s* claims have thus far bypassed theological scrutiny.

#### *Introducing a New Power Analysis*

I offer a radically new paradigm to address global Anglican relations by introducing a second-generation power analysis and employing a postcolonial lens to assess the consistent metaphysical deployment of whole-parts. Letty Russell, once Professor of Theology at Yale Divinity School, stated that:

The critical principle of feminist ecclesiology is the table principle. It looks for ways that God reaches out to include all those whom society and religion have declared outsiders and invites them to gather round God’s table of hospitality. The measure of the adequacy of the life of a church is how it is connected to those on the margin.<sup>9</sup>

The table principle is not just related to feminist ecclesiology but has also been associated with other identity-based theologies including

6. Lambeth Commission, *The Windsor Report* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2004), paragraphs 9, 10, 16, 17, 23, 33, 51, 61, 65, 67 and 69.

7. Paul Avis, *Theology of The Reformers* (New York: Marshall, Morgan and Scott, 1981), p. 73 and *The Identity of Anglicanism: Essentials of Anglican Ecclesiology* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), p. 46.

8. *The Windsor Report*, paragraphs 16 and 17.

9. Letty Russell, *Church In The Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), p. 25.

feminist, black and queer. Inclusion at the table in these theologies recognizes historically oppressed persons based upon the marginal categories of class, race, gender and sexual orientation and asks 'Who is not at the table?'

Over the last several decades the table principle has been one of several influences transforming The Episcopal Church (TEC) through its ordination of women and the election and consecration of its first out gay bishop. Influential in this transformation of TEC was the former Presiding Bishop of TEC (then ECUSA) Edmond Browning, who in his installation sermon at Washington Cathedral said:

My friends, I have said to this Church that there will be no outcasts. The hopes and convictions of all will be honored. Do not ask me to honor one set of views and disregard the other. I may agree with one, but I will respect both. I say this because I believe Baptism is the sacrament of inclusion. The unity of this church will not be maintained, not because we agree on everything, but because we will leave judgment to God.<sup>10</sup>

First-generation power analysis engages Browning's outcast but does not wrestle with how do two or more different faith identities coexist within the same church as implied by Browning's tolerance of such differences. First-generation power analysis does not question the construction of identity rather its exclusive focus has been on including the excluded parts with priority for the marginal categories of people to the exclusion of others who may offend the purity of this principle. Browning's statement was more inclusive than what has come to be understood as inclusion. I propose a second-generation power analysis that probes the metaphysical construction of the table as a whole and the composition of its parts. By looking at the composition of the parts of the church's table as whole we will begin to see the impact of a series of ecclesiological events on the church as the Body of Christ and on the metaphysical whole. These events, when translated into whole-parts' changes, make visible an incoherent metaphysical Body of Christ and colonized Anglican Communion whole.

#### *Mapping Ecclesiological Whole-parts Changes*

The Anglican Communion has not remained ecclesiological static in the postcolonial period. Every major and minor change to ecclesial

10. The Most Reverend Edmond Lee Browning, Installation Address of the Presiding Bishop at Washington National Cathedral, Washington, DC, January 11, 1986 (repr. in New York: Diocesan Press Service [now Episcopal News Service], packet DPS-86004).

relations in both the wider Christian church and the Anglican Communion has had an unaccounted impact on the whole and its parts. For example schisms and reforms have always changed the whole. It could be said that the English reformers redefined the whole saying to Rome you are a part as England is an equivalent part. The English reformers argued that the whole is not the Roman Catholic Church but rather the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. You might recognize this as branch theory, which became a popular way of talking about this reform and change through the work of the Anglican theologian William Palmer in the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> While the relationship between the colonial Church of England (COE) and the British Empire is disputed by contemporary Anglican theologians from Australian Anglican Rowan Strong who sees a direct connection, to Rhodes Professor of Imperial History at King's College, London, Andrew Porter, who sees an ambiguous connection and Paul Avis who outrightly rejects such a connection, most Anglican theologians readily share the missiological language that the COE during the colonial period made 'foreign parts'.<sup>12</sup>

In metaphysical terms to make parts there must be a whole. Therefore if the COE once a part was making foreign parts then it must have been a whole before *The Windsor Report* argued that the Anglican Communion is a whole. If so, we should be able to say that the former colonial parts of the COE became their own wholes as they achieved their territorial independence. From this perspective wholes such as TEC or any other Anglican church are unlikely to wish to become part of another whole sacrificing their privilege of shaping their own Anglican identity and continuing to legitimize whose differences are included and excluded. The whole-parts translation that I am proposing is very different from autonomous province language that erroneously suggests part status without adhering to metaphysical-theological whole-parts principles. The risk is that the Anglican Communion will become a whole in the same way that the COE made its foreign parts. The process of parts becoming their own wholes producing new parts while excluding others fosters a colonizing pattern.

What has been the impact of these ecclesial relations changes on the metaphysical whole, the Body of Christ and Anglicanism's desire to

11. William Palmer, *The Ideal of the Christian Church* (London: James Toovey, 1847).

12. Andrew Porter, *Religion versus Empire: British Protestant Missionaries and Overseas Expansion, 1700–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 13; Rowan Strong, *Anglicanism and The British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 60; and Paul Avis, *The Identity of Anglicanism* (London: T&T Clark, 2008), p. 53.

be a postcolonial part of the Christian, reformed catholic story? By insisting on whole-parts language *The Windsor Report* authors make the Anglican Communion vulnerable to a postcolonial evaluation of the integrity of its metaphysical participation in the Body of Christ. By not mapping any ecclesiological events in terms of whole-parts principles Anglicans have lost sight of the metaphysical–theological requirements of whole-parts principles where there is only one whole, one Body of Christ in which all are parts. The English reformers minimally knew this but contemporary Anglicans have lost their ecclesiological bearings. Whole-parts have been arbitrarily used failing to carry the authority that *The Windsor Report* authors sought as their foundation.

### *Sharpening Our Focus*

Whole-parts principles, through a second-generation power analysis, expose the incoherence of the Anglican Communion's ecclesiology through and after the colonial period. *The Windsor Report* authors would have had more evidence to argue that each of the 44 churches of the Anglican Communion had become their own wholes and had ceased to be a part of something greater than their achieved post-colonial independence. Through this argument *Windsor* would have invited a global ecclesiological conversation rather than dictating impossible whole-parts requirements.

The recent case of TEC deposing Bishop Robert Duncan of the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh underscores what is at stake by not engaging a postcolonial whole-parts critique.<sup>13</sup> TEC's House of Bishops deposed Bishop Duncan for breaking communion with TEC. The language of communion suggests that TEC sees itself as its own whole. However, within 24 hours Bishop Duncan was in communion with the Province of the Southern Cone. This action, in terms of whole-parts principles, means that the Southern Cone is its own whole and can receive former parts such as TEC. Both TEC and the Southern Cone are in communion with the See of Canterbury who the authors of *The Windsor Report* see governing the Anglican Communion as a whole along with the other instruments of unity.

13. *The Episcopal Church, Constitutions and Canons* (New York: Church House Publishing, 2003), p. 120 and September 19, 2008 letter from the Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori on the Deposition of a Bishop, Bishop Robert W. Duncan, <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/documents/Duncan.Robert.9.19.08.pdf>. Accessed 22 March, 2009.

Given these ecclesiological events then what are the specific whole-parts principles that *The Windsor Report* is referring to when they stated that the Anglican Communion is a whole and the provinces are its parts? Parts of the metaphysical whole of the Body of Christ do not, according to Thomas Aquinas, have the freedom to determine their own identity or refer to their own communion.<sup>14</sup> Clearly TEC's actions as a part are dissonant with the metaphysical Body of Christ whole. The Thomistic principles in which metaphysical wholes are based preclude parts from including or excluding other parts. Therefore, if we choose to engage whole-parts principles as *The Windsor Report* has, then the Bishop Duncan scenario is utterly absurd from a metaphysical-theological perspective.

We can certainly acknowledge that TEC had the canons to make the disciplinary decisions they made. Critics have quibbled over the timing of the decision and due process questions. Most agree on both sides of the controversy that the House of Bishops' decision was inevitable. The metaphysical question of communion that I am raising through the Duncan example attempts to move beyond these canonical, even ideological, questions and divisions. To do so, we must determine which whole-parts principles allow, for a part, TEC to depose a bishop and, for another part, the Southern Cone to receive this bishop if the worldwide communion is the whole.

Kathryn Tanner, the Dorothy Grant Maclear Professor of Theology at the University of Chicago's Divinity School, has referred to whole-parts principles in her book *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda for Theology* but Tanner's whole-parts principles are anthropological ones dating back only to 1920.<sup>15</sup> Anthropological whole-parts principles use the metaphor of the whole and its parts as a means of describing cultures. Anthropological whole-parts principles are merely a heuristic to help conceptualize structural relationships. Anthropological principles allow for many temporary, changeable wholes. Through anthropological principles it is possible to justify the Duncan scenario with all the ecclesial actors' whole-parts actions. However, these whole-parts assertions cannot be traced back to the order of the metaphysical Body of Christ. Therefore, when theologians insist that one church is the whole producing many churches as many bodies of Christ, they are appealing to anthropological whole-parts principles

14. Henry, pp. 230–32.

15. Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture: A New Agenda For Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), p. 61.

and not to metaphysical theology. When theologians use metaphysical whole-parts principles as Thomas Aquinas did, they share a commitment to one whole where all are equivalent parts.

### *Postcolonial Questions*

Second-generation power analysis asks therefore about the composition of the table, how it is constructed, the relation of the whole to the parts. By mapping Anglican ecclesiological event changes it is possible to observe the inconsistent application of medieval metaphysical principles that privilege one whole as well as account for the otherwise subtle manipulation of the whole to serve the needs of opposing part(s). Closed wholes such as ascribed to churches as parts of the Body of Christ prioritize a single identity or as Laurel Schneider, Associate Professor of Theology, Ethics, and Culture at Chicago Theological Seminary, refers to as 'the Logic of the One', leaving minority parts to follow.<sup>16</sup>

Postcolonial theologians like Schneider are asking a new set of questions than asked either by liberation or the aforementioned identity-based theologians. By not questioning the power of whole producing parts, one identity reigns while other identities are masked as mere difference in viewpoints. Then opposing parts search for space within, outside, and at the periphery of the table or they create new tables claiming the authority of the former table. In the Introduction to *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* the authors reflected on the deficiency of the liberation theologies:

Liberation theologies dramatically challenged the hierarchies built on those binaries. But inasmuch as they content themselves with exalting a single, liberatory identity such as the poor, or the people, blacks or women, they remain, we have suggested, more or less within the same modern paradigm. Postcolonial theory, Spivak argues, turns its critical glance not specifically at the putative identity of two poles of a binary opposition, but at the hidden ethico-political agenda that drives the differentiation between the two.<sup>17</sup>

I am arguing that a metaphysical critique in a postcolonial context begins with questioning the Christian tradition of conflating churches as bodies with the metaphysical Body of Christ. Postcolonial theology

16. Laurel Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 4, 9-10.

17. Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra Rivera, *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), p. 11.



challenges the prioritization of one closed whole, one coherent identity, unity, and temporary differences fundamentally rethinking what it means to be church. Such an analysis challenges the singularity of any church as a solitary, closed whole with one coherent identity in which Anglicans as parts must participate without differentiation. Without a second-generation power analysis that maps ecclesiological event changes to the whole, parts will continue to become their own wholes in contradiction to the metaphysical Body of Christ without methodologically acknowledging an alternatively based ecclesiology.

As an alternative to *The Windsor Report* claiming that the Anglican Communion is a whole, I continue with my demonstration of how two opposing parts foster reformed wholes and thereby claim the authority to include and exclude the others' differences at their own will.

### *Metaphysical Power Play I*

The Anglican Communion Network that is part of The Common Cause Partnership, established shortly after the contested consecration of Gene Robinson and under the direction of Bishop Robert Duncan, has encouraged and fostered transnational alliances that link disenfranchised American dioceses with orthodox provinces throughout the Anglican Communion. Transnational alliances organize like-minded Anglicans throughout the world. The challenge is how to organize in a manner that does not replicate and produce additional closed wholes that include some and exclude others.

Long before diversity became a signal for inclusion through the marginal categories of first-generation power analysis, places of worship were diverse in that people were in a variety of unaccounted places in their faith identity development. The transnational alliances preclude this possibility as now transnational provinces closely manage who is included and excluded by a statement of shared beliefs. In this way transnational alliances have set themselves apart from those who they claim have left Christianity by consecrating an out gay bishop or for some ordaining women. These alliances use a variety of means and proposals on how to do this while remaining in the Anglican Communion. Some call for a new non-contiguous province that includes orthodox transnational alliances to the exclusion of offending churches like TEC and Canada.

The fundamental problem with transnational alliances is that they fail to wrestle with the metaphysical Body of Christ as the whole and all others as parts and so with *The Windsor Report* authors they succumb to metaphysical power plays that perpetuate colonial patterns of

parts becoming their own reforming though also excluding wholes. These innovative ecclesial strategies exclude offending differences to maintain extreme versions of unity while legitimating fragmentation for the sake of the Gospel. It has been argued that this strategy is better than schism but when we turn our attention to the metaphysical Body of Christ it is as scandalous as schism as it presumes a superiority that only God holds for all parts.

### *Metaphysical Power Play II*

Orthodox Anglicans do not stand alone as marginalized parts desiring to be wholes managing and excluding the other parts. In Regius Professor of Divinity at Christ Church, Oxford, Marilyn McCord Adams's December 2007 Chicago Consultation paper, 'Shaking the Foundations: LGBT Bishops and Blessings in the Fullness of Time' she responds to these exclusivist tendencies arguing that a passionate, non-negotiable and liberal commitment to tolerance and inclusiveness has produced a problem for American Episcopalians who favored Robinson's election and consecration.<sup>18</sup> Adams makes a distinction between:

Liberal emphasis on tolerance and inclusion sets liberals up for paradox, however, a paradox which pits the liberal's conscientious procedural beliefs against the liberal's conscientious content beliefs about the nature of Kingdom-coming. To dissolve it, liberals will have to make and observe an important distinction between toleration that makes conscientious disagreement about important matters no bar to individual participation, and toleration that allows the opponents' conscientious beliefs to set institutional policy.<sup>19</sup>

Adams's model is a politically astute one but it is not based on either a postcolonial theological interpretation, such as R.S. Sugirtharajah who argues that, 'Living in multiple contexts means reforming Christian identity', or metaphysical whole-parts principles.<sup>20</sup> While Adams locates colonialism with the See of Canterbury, stating that 'the Archbishop of Canterbury is ex officio colonial god-father, who feels the burden of keeping the Anglican Communion together', she does not

18. Marilyn McCord Adams, 'Shaking the Foundations: LGBT Bishops and Blessings in the Fullness of Time', *Anglican Theological Review* 90.4 (2008), pp. 713-32.

19. Adams, p. 721.

20. R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2003), p. 126.

acknowledge the equivalent colonizing principles associated with the metaphysical principle of one whole, as one coherent identity that plagues both TEC and COE, and the entire Anglican Communion to different degrees.<sup>21</sup>

Adams describes the Church this way:

At the deepest level, God organizes church and cosmos into Christ's organic body-politic whose members are interdependent and united under the direction of Christ their head. The real unity and eventual functional harmony of the Church are not in jeopardy because they are guaranteed by God.<sup>22</sup>

Adams is right here but her 'head-members' metaphorical reference is another form of reference to whole-parts principles based on the assumption of one coherent whole and that unlike parts cannot coexist. In her procedural reading Adams affirms all beings are a part but saves the privilege of the whole for those whose content she prefers to be in power setting the policy. Adams dramatically sets up her argument as opposing political sides of a non-reconcilable argument that must necessarily decide to exclude one part for the benefit of the other part. By so doing Adams makes her own metaphysical power play too.

#### *Is a Different Anglican Conversation Possible?*

It is obvious that whole-parts are not suitable to the way Anglicans organize their ecclesial lives. A postcolonial critique has exposed the way Anglicans deploy metaphysical power plays, arbitrarily manipulating whole-parts to their benefit. These power plays contribute to an incoherent metaphysical Body of Christ and postpone the emergence of space for opposing faith identities to coexist without polarizing divisions. The metaphysical whole when applied by churches becomes one closed whole. Postcolonial wholes are open, overlapping and multiple. This would seem to be paradoxical on metaphysical and theological levels. So how does the Anglican Communion resolve their metaphysical-postcolonial theological paradox? By interrupting self-serving power plays I hope to have inspired a modified *Windsor* conversation to assist Anglicans in rethinking what it means to be incorporated into the Body of Christ as less than colonizing whole(s) producing parts that disorder the metaphysical Body of Christ and exclude others.

21. Adams, pp. 731–32.

22. Adams, p. 714.