



## 'I Found Space for My Voice'

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The statement in quotes was made by David Joy, Associate Professor of New Testament at United Theological College in Bangalore, India, Anglican priest and author of *Mark and Its Subalterns: A Hermeneutical Paradigm for a Postcolonial Context* (2008) at the conclusion of the May 1–3, 2008 'Church, Identity/ies and Postcolonialism' conference.<sup>2</sup> The conference was held at the University of Manchester in England and hosted by Peter Scott, Director of the Lincoln Theological Institute and Senior Lecturer in Christian Social Thought.<sup>3</sup> This volume includes several of the many more papers presented at the conference. Preceding these papers, I offer an overview of the postcolonial theological vision that inspired this conference. Also, I give the reader a glimpse of the organic vision, as it continues to unfold with additional institutional collaborators and scholars from India, Australia and Africa, hosting future conferences.

### *Small but Inspiring*

'Church, Identity/ies and Postcolonialism' was an intimate conference with less than 30 participants creating spaces for papers, informal conversations and panel discussions. Everybody who attended the 2008 conference participated fully as: presenters of papers, panel hosts Chris Baker, Director of Research, William Temple Foundation and part-time Lecturer in Urban Theology at the University of Manchester and Kevin Ward, Senior Lecturer, African Religious Studies at the University of Leeds, Laurie Green, Area Bishop of Bradwell in the

1. Joseph F. Duggan is a doctoral researcher at the University of Manchester, England and a priest in the Diocese of Nevada in The Episcopal Church.

2. David Joy, *Mark and Its Subalterns: A Hermeneutical Paradigm for a Postcolonial Context* (London: Equinox, 2008).

3. Peter Scott, *Theology, Ideology and Liberation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

Diocese of Chelmsford in the Church of England who talked about what it was like to grow up in the British Empire and those who had come eager to engage the postcolonial.<sup>4</sup>

Describing the May 2008 conference in the Lincoln Theological Institute's July 2008 newsletter, Joy writes, 'this conference created a new atmosphere of open discussion...space for all kinds of views and voices...open to listening to "the other"...a sense of solidarity and fellowship beyond our ethnicity and culture'.

### *The Beginnings of a Postcolonial Theological Movement*

Postcolonial scripture scholars like R.S. Sugirtharajah, Musa Dube and Fernando Segovia, to name just a few, have been reading the scriptures through a postcolonial lens for at least a decade.<sup>5</sup> During this time, there has been a postcolonial criticism section that has met at the annual Society for Biblical Literature meeting in the United States. The works of these scripture scholars have often crossed over into theology too, as they have addressed hermeneutical questions of interest to the broader discipline.

Then, works by Kwok Pui-lan and Catherine Keller led theology as a discipline beyond these contributions to bringing a postcolonial theological critique into feminist theology and beyond.<sup>6</sup> 'Church, Identity/ies and Postcolonialism' introduced a postcolonial theological critique to theological and ecclesiological questions of identity and mission for churches and national contexts, beginning at the May 2008 conference with the Anglican Communion. The way we as the conference organizers used 'postcolonial' goes much further than merely 'what-follows-the-colonial', thus engaging Fernando Segovia's challenge to encourage a postcolonial theological critique.<sup>7</sup>

4. Chris Baker, *The Hybrid Church in the City* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2007); Kevin Ward, *A History of Global Anglicanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and Laurie Green, 'Global Urbanization: A Christian Response', in Ian T. Douglas and Kwok Pui-lan (eds.), *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism: The Anglican Communion In The Twenty-First Century* (New York: Church House Publishing, 2001).

5. R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2003); Musa Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2000); and Fernando Segovia, *Interpreting Beyond Borders* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

6. Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005) and Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra Rivera, *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2004).

7. Segovia, *Interpreting Beyond Borders*, p. 12.

The papers in this volume represent the emerging work of an organic movement of scholars, all working across differences in geography, faith and disciplines to introduce a decolonizing theological critique to both ecclesiological and political questions that otherwise bear the remnants of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Matt Davies, Editor of *Episcopal Life Online*, called 'Church, Identity/ies and Postcolonialism' a 'pioneering conference' and the authors of the papers in this journal are among the still very few pioneering theologians working in postcolonial theology today.<sup>8</sup>

The three 'Church, Identity/ies and Postcolonialism' goals are: to offer a postcolonial theological framework for the identity questions to be raised at Lambeth 2008, to begin addressing the postcolonial theology literature gap by producing publishable work and to encourage a new generation of postcolonial theologians by inspiring them to ask questions about power with love.

#### *One Hundred Days Prior to Lambeth 2008*

Working with Peter Scott and the Lincoln Theological Institute, it was our desire to offer a conference one hundred days prior to the Lambeth Conference 2008 to provoke theological discussion on questions of identity, specifically related to colonialism and the Anglican Communion, anticipating the two Lambeth 2008 themes on identity and mission.

'Anglican Identities and the Postcolonial' was held on Monday, July 21st. It was a much shorter version of the May 2008 conference. As a Lambeth Fringe Event, it was co-sponsored by the Lincoln Theological Institute and the *Journal of Anglican Studies*. The postcolonial theorist, Robert J.C. Young, spoke along with a panel of three bishops, representing three dioceses, including James Tengatenga from Southern Malawi, Mano Rumalshah from Peshawar and Stephen Pickard, Assistant Bishop from Adelaide, Australia. All the bishops reflected on their contextual colonial legacies and postcolonial future(s).<sup>9</sup>

8. Matt Davies, 'Colonial Legacies, Anglican Identities Addressed at pioneering conference in Manchester', [http://www.episcopalchurch.org/79901\\_96871\\_ENG\\_HTML.htm](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/79901_96871_ENG_HTML.htm)

9. Robert J.C. Young, *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); James Tengatenga, *Church, State and Malawi: The Anglican Case* (Zomba: Kachere Series, 2006); and Stephen Pickard, 'Many Verandahs, Same House? Ecclesiological Challenges for Australian Anglicanism', *Journal of Anglican Studies* 4.2 (2006), pp. 177–200.

*Address Postcolonial Theology Literature Gap*

The May 2008 conference went much further than addressing current challenges facing the Anglican Communion. 'Church, Identity/ies and Postcolonialism' was part of a long-term vision inspired by R.S. Sugirtharajah's theological critique in his essay on 'Complacencies and Cul-de-sacs: Christian Theologies and Colonialism' in the edited collection, *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire*, co-edited by Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra Rivera. Sugirtharajah stated, 'While other disciplines have grappled with the wider cultural implications of the empire, European colonialism has never been a popular subject for theological inquiry in Western discourse despite the very substantial links between the churches in Britain and the missions in the colonial world'.<sup>10</sup>

The 2001 work of Ian T. Douglas and Kwok Pui-lan, *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism: The Anglican Communion In The Twenty-First Century*, is at least one exception to Sugirtharajah's 2004 critique. Nonetheless, all Anglicans, especially theologians and bishops, should take very seriously Sugirtharajah's assessment of theological scholarship and the need for more research. For example, Anglicans must be willing to ask how does the legacy of colonialism shape questions of identity and mission. Without wrestling with questions such as this one, the risk is replicating colonialism through proposed accommodations and solutions to contemporary Anglican controversies.

*Contentious Questions About Power Asked in Love*

This is delicate work as the question of the relationship between the Church of England and the British Empire is an open and at the very least, a contested question by some scholars and in some contexts. Andrew Porter's *Religion versus Empire* (2004), Rowan Strong's *Anglicanism and The British Empire* (2008) and Paul Avis's *The Identity of Anglicanism* (2008) represent, respectively, assessments of colonial theology as ambiguous, convinced argument and outright rejection of the claim that there is a relationship between the Church of England and the British Empire.<sup>11</sup> This provocative question requires thoughtful,

10. R.S. Sugirtharajah, 'Complacencies and Cul-de-sacs: Christian Theologies and Colonialism', in Catherine Keller, Michael Nausner and Mayra Rivera (eds.), *Postcolonial Theologies: Divinity and Empire* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), p. 22.

11. 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.

insightful and compassionate theologians to bridge indigenous memories in former colonial contexts with otherwise inconsistent theological scholarship.

What we remember, what we forget, what gets recorded and the silences in between are all about the work of power analysis. Postcolonial theological critique is nothing less than assessing the power exercised during both colonial and neocolonial periods that enhances or diminishes Anglican agency. How does Anglican theology play a decolonizing role in the future Anglican Communion and the broader world?

Director of the Lincoln Theological Institute, Peter Scott summarized it well in his closing remarks to the May 2008 conference, 'Love should have the first and not the last word in speaking about power'.

*A Sampling of the Postcolonial Voices You Will Hear*

'Church, Identity/ies and Postcolonialism' brought together student and faculty paper presenters of both genders from diverse ethnic and cultural contexts including Africa, Australia, England, China, Germany, India, Ireland and the United States. The papers that follow represent a small sampling of all the quality papers presented at the conference, including: Stephen Pickard (Assistant Bishop in the Diocese of Adelaide) and Steven Shakespeare (Liverpool Hope University, England). Emerging postcolonial theologians offered papers including: Robert Heaney (Regents College at Oxford University), Amos Kasibante (University of Birmingham) and Joseph Duggan (Lincoln Theological Institute at the University of Manchester). Collectively, the conference scholars represent a new generation of postcolonial scholars working in an inter-disciplinary context.

The authors of these papers ask questions that have been, for the most part, previously ignored in theological literature:

'The Postcolonial Paradox: Becoming Less Than Whole(s) Producing Parts that Exclude *Other* Parts' – Joseph Duggan challenges *The Windsor Report's* claim that the Anglican Communion is a whole and the provinces are its parts. Duggan demonstrates an unchallenged colonizing pattern in contemporary Anglicanism.

'Coloniality and Theological Method in Africa' – Robert Heaney provocatively argues that 'African theologies...raise and direct the question to the Western academy: what form will your theology take given the violence...which incursive Christian theologizing played a part in perpetrating'.

'The Ugandan Diaspora in Britain and Their Quest for Cultural Expression within the Church' – Amos Kasibante focuses on ways in

which Ugandan Anglicans have lived their Anglican identity away from home and how political events in their home country have placed pressures on negotiating their multiple identities.

‘Church of the In-Between God: Recovering an Ecclesial Space Downunder’ – Stephen Pickard expanded his postcolonial reflections initially given in his 2006 *Journal of Anglican Studies* article, ‘Many Verandahs, Same House? Ecclesiological Challenges for Australian Anglicanism’. Pickard is committed to demonstrating the way place and identity work together in his Australian postcolonial context and beyond.

‘A Walk on the Wild Side: Church and Identity Beyond Western Humanism’ – Steven Shakespeare argued the way animality and humanity have shaped human identities. Sexuality, he writes, has become a central postcolonial dimension ‘to defining what makes us human’. Shakespeare suggests that ‘The suppression of wildness’ contributed to Anglican controversies.

#### *Continuing the Postcolonial Theology Conversation*

The work initiated in Manchester will continue with David Joy as host of ‘Envisioning Postcolonial Theologies to Decolonize the Body of Christ’ January 21–23, 2010 at United Theological College collaborating with the Lincoln Theological Institute at the University of Manchester and The Society for Biblical Studies in India. The Bangalore meeting will be the first time that postcolonial theologians and postcolonial theorists will meet to think through shared postcolonial questions. Before the Bangalore conference, engagement between postcolonial theologians and theorists has been limited to the writing of theologians such as, Susan Abraham at the Harvard Divinity School, who will be one of the speakers in Bangalore.<sup>12</sup>

Additional inter-disciplinary meetings are planned: Jan 24–26, 2012 in Australia offered by Whitley College and the Melbourne College of Divinity with Mark Brett as host, the author of *Decolonizing God* (2008), May 28–30, 2014 in Kenya offered by St. Paul’s University in Limuru, with Esther Mombo as the host.<sup>13</sup> Also, plans are evolving for a meeting at the University of Manchester in 2016 that seeks to bring together theologians writing in former colonial contexts to engage

12. Susan Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence in Postcolonial Theory: A Rahnerian Theological Assessment* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

13. Mark Brett, *Decolonizing God: The Bible in the Tides of Empire* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008).

the postcolonial with scholars, some for whom the colonial may remain an open and contested question. Through all of these discussions the hope is to transcend differences in memories of the colonial, collaboratively addressing the postcolonial.

All of these meetings, like the May 2008 conference, will publish papers in either peer reviewed journals such as this one, or in books as edited collections, thus beginning to address the literature gap noted earlier by R.S. Sugirtharajah. For future information on confirmed speakers for all of these conferences and other updates, visit the Divinity After Empire section of the Lincoln Theological Institute's section of the University of Manchester's website, <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/postcolonial>, or check the Postcolonial Theology Network group on Facebook.