

INDIGENIZATION IN THE ANGLICAN COMMUNION

There were three stages of mission in Protestant experience: Replication, mostly during the 17th century; the Indigenous Church Model (from the mid-1800's); and Contextualization (the 1970's and subsequent).¹ The purpose of this paper is to consider the application of the indigenization model in the Anglican Communion; with reference to the relevant resolutions of various Lambeth Conferences. Reference will also be made to the application of the model in practice, and through the evidence of the liturgy; the former in the context of Sri Lanka where the writer has some personal experience, the latter through consideration of the 1989 revision to the Book of Common Prayer in New Zealand – A New Zealand Prayer Book.

What is Indigenization?

The Replication Model sought to duplicate the church, along the lines of formal correspondence, in the receiving culture. The Church that resulted was virtually indistinguishable from those “at home”; hardly surprising given that most of the clergy were expatriates. Perhaps the principal “indigenous feature” during this period was the availability of scripture in the local language. This was the direct result of Article 24 of the 39 Articles, which provided that the prayer of the Church should be in a tongue understandable to the people.²

“Indigenization” was expected to reproduce Christendom in another culture, by drawing on its people, symbols, forms and materials to express the religious life in a way that would be locally meaningful.³ The script, however, would still be provided from outside until such time as the local church passed the “three-selves” test and became: self-financing, self-governing and self-propagating.⁴ It tended to perpetuate a Western style Church since clergy education was based on the Western model. Essentially, over time indigenization changed the cast of players without rewriting the script.⁵

Through contextualization the gospel message encounters a particular culture, leading to the formation of a faith community which is culturally authentic and authentically Christian. Control of the process resides within the context rather with an external agent or agency.⁶

In the Anglican Communion contextualization was first on the agenda in the 1988 Lambeth Conference, which is regarded as a watershed year for that reason. The 1958 Conference is regarded as the beginning of the end of the period of indigenization.⁷ At that time there were only

¹ P. Hiebert, Anthropological Insights for Missionaries, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 50

² Philip Tovey, Inculturation of Christian Worship: Exploring the Eucharist (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 130

³ Hiebert, 55.

⁴ *ibid*, 50.

⁵ Hiebert, 53.

⁶ *ibid*, 56.

⁷ Tovey, 134.

15 independent provinces – versus 27 in 1988 – and many of the overseas bishops were still expatriates.⁸

Indigenization through the Lens of Lambeth

The first evidence of indigenization at Lambeth occurred in 1867, right at the beginning. Resolution 8 allowed each province to make adaptations to the services of the Church as its circumstances may require.⁹ At the next Conference in 1878, Recommendation 10 provided that Books of Common Prayer, suitable to the needs of native congregations in heathen countries, should be framed.¹⁰

In 1897, Resolution 19 held that the Church should be adapted to local circumstances, and the people should be brought to feel that no foreign customs are laid upon them.¹¹ Resolution 45 recognised the exclusive right of each bishop to sanction additional services¹²; while Resolution 46 conferred the right to adapt the services in the Book of Common Prayer to local circumstances.¹³

In 1908, Resolution 21 provided for the training of native churches in self-support and self-government; and recognized the importance of the establishing a native episcopate.¹⁴ Resolution 24 exhorted that every effort should be made to render public worship more intelligible to uneducated congregations and better suited to the widely diverse needs of the various races within the Anglican Communion.¹⁵ Resolution 25 gave National and local Churches liberty to adopt native forms of marriage and consecrate them to a Christian use.¹⁶

In 1920, Resolution 34 recognized the efforts of missionary societies and boards to establish self-governing, self-supporting, and self-extending Churches, with the objective of withdrawing outside control to allow the free expression of their national character. In particular the resolution called for giving the widest freedom to indigenous workers to develop the work in their own countries on lines in accordance with their national character.¹⁷ Resolution 43 provided that each national and regional Church should determine its own constitutional and canonical enactments.¹⁸

Resolution 4 of the 1930 Conference anticipated that the nations of Asia and Africa would further enrich the Church by characteristic statements of the Gospel, and by characteristic examples of Christian virtue and types of Christian worship.¹⁹ Resolution 36 of the 1978 Conference

⁸ Tovey, 134.

⁹ Roger Coleman, ed., Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences, (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1992), 2.

¹⁰ *ibid*, 9.

¹¹ *ibid*, 19.

¹² *ibid*, 24.

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ *ibid*, 31.

¹⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶ *ibid*, 32.

¹⁷ *ibid*, 55.

¹⁸ *ibid*, 57.

¹⁹ *ibid*, 69.

encouraged every particular Church to strengthen its own identity in Christ and its involvement with its community, expressing its faith through the traditions and culture of its own society.²⁰

These, then, are the resolutions that shaped the development of indigeneity within the Anglican Communion; starting, as has been noted, from the very first Lambeth Conference.

The Church in Sri Lanka

The development of the Church in Sri Lanka illustrates how indigenization was implemented. The life of its first indigenous Bishop is a case in point. The Most Revd. Lakdasa De Mel was educated at a private school in Colombo, Royal College; and was sent to Oxford for his university studies, and then to Cuddesdon for ordination training. After his parish experience he was consecrated as the Assistant Bishop of Colombo in 1945, the first Sri Lankan to be a Bishop of the Church. In 1950 He became the founder Bishop of the newly carved-out Missionary Diocese of Kurunegala. Among his notable achievements was the creation of what is known as the “Baddegama” setting for the 1938 Ceylon Liturgy, and the construction of the Cathedral in Kurunegala in local architectural idiom²¹. In 1962 he was appointed Metropolitan of the Church Province of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon. Subsequently, the Church of Pakistan and the Church of India formed separate provinces, which led to its dissolution²².

The Diocese of Colombo today is structured very like a Canadian Diocese. There is one Diocesan Bishop, assisted by four Archdeacons, who are themselves assisted by a number of Regional Deans. All of the Bishops and clergy are now Sri Lankan. The legal entity is still The Incorporated Trustees of the Church of England in Ceylon.²³ There are similar organizations within the Diocese: The Board of Christian Education, The Board of Social Responsibility, The Church of Ceylon Youth Movement, The Council of Synod, The Board of Women’s Works, The Liturgical Commission, the Joint Theological Commission and the Research and Planning Committee to provide a representative sample.²⁴ Among other issues, the Diocesan Council was addressing the possible appointment of female bishops in Scotland, human sexuality issues, cloning and SARS. Local issues included a new constitution, the ordination of women and the amalgamation of two organizations into the Cathedral Institute for Education and Formation.²⁵

The feel of the Church, to a Canadian Anglican, is very familiar. The service of worship, other than in the Cathedral where the offices are said daily, is invariably the Eucharist. The service book is a pamphlet because they are still working with the liturgy; and, frankly, it is more affordable. The liturgy is not dissimilar to the BAS. Parishes have Advisory Boards and Wardens with powers like those of similar bodies here. It is very much the same. One local variation in liturgy has been in the

²⁰ Coleman, 192

²¹ The Standing Committee of the Diocesan Council, Report of the Standing Committee 2002-2003, (Colombo: Diocese of Colombo, 2003), 22.

²² *ibid*, 23.

²³ *ibid*, inside front cover

²⁴ *ibid*, Table of Contents

²⁵ *ibid*, 3-7

Ordinal. A Brick Laying Ceremony has been added to the service for ordaining a Deacon. After the first women were ordained Deacon in 2003, they were presented with the symbols of their office, a basin and a towel. Using these they washed the feet of children. Then they were led to the Cathedral gallery where they placed bricks brought from their Home Base into an opening that had been made there. A plaque was placed to cover the opening, marking the historic ordination.²⁶

The most significant physical evidence of indigenization is that clergy celebrate barefoot in the sanctuary, and the use of the “ayubowan” bow in exchanging the peace. On occasion Sinhala or Tamil instruments and cultural dance are used during the service. In many cases the services are bilingual or trilingual to honour the various language groups.

The New Zealand Prayer Book

The revision to the prayer book in New Zealand, *A New Zealand Prayer Book or 'He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa'*, was first published in 1989. Although the primary language is English, much of the liturgy is also presented in Maori; sometimes as a separate liturgy, sometimes in parallel, on facing pages, and sometimes alternating with English in the text to facilitate a bilingual service where part of each prayer is said in each language. Support is also given for Fijian and Tongan, although not to the same extent, in recognition that the Ecclesiastical Province of New Zealand includes the island nations of the South Pacific in the Diocese of Polynesia. In the words of its preface, it is not only more faithful to the earliest liturgical traditions of the Church, but “More importantly, The New Zealand Prayer Book has been created in our own Pacific cultural setting, and shaped by our own scholarship. It belongs to our environment and our people.”²⁷

The calendar includes commemorations of people particular to New Zealand, those who spread the gospel in Asia, and makes provision for Diocesan, tribal or local commemorations²⁸.

In Morning and Evening worship inclusive language is used – Brothers and Sister in Christ.²⁹ The Invitation to worship, an abbreviation of the Venite, is presented in both English and Maori, as is the Gloria Patri.³⁰ A Maori alternate is provided for the Benedictus, the Magnificat³¹ the Te Deum, and the Nunc Dimittis.³² A page reference is given for a Maori version of the Apostles Creed.³³ A Maori version is provided for the Lord's Prayer, and the responses³⁴.

²⁶ The Standing Committee of the Diocesan Council, 121

²⁷ The Church of the Province of New Zealand, *A New Zealand Prayer Book*, (Auckland: William Collins Publishers Ltd., 1989), Preface.

²⁸ The Church of the Province of New Zealand, p 10-11.

²⁹ *ibid*, 36.

³⁰ *ibid*, 38.

³¹ *ibid*, 40, 42.

³² *ibid* 45, 47.

³³ *ibid*, 48.

³⁴ *ibid*, 49, 50.

In the Daily Service for Monday the Benedicte Aotearoa (a New Zealand version of the Benedictus) is presented. It references the southern sky; reflects local vegetation and land forms - scree, kauri, rata, kowhai; reflects local fauna - kahawai, sea lion, coral, anemone, kiwi, tui; local people - Maori, Pakeha, and includes saints and martyrs of the South Pacific.³⁵

In the Daily Devotions, themes are expressed in both English and Maori³⁶. Maori is also used in the Prayers for Various Occasions; particularly in the Prayer for the Country, and for *Karakia* before a meeting.³⁷ A Maori chant Canticle is presented – Poi, on page 154. An English translation is provided for information purposes only. It is intended to be sung only in Maori.

A similar pattern of English and Maori language is repeated throughout the rest of the services. Blessings, final exhortations, canticles, and response choices are all provided in Maori. However, only a few of the psalms have Maori translations – Psalm 136 , 146, 147, 148, 149 and 150.

The liturgy of the Eucharist is worthy of note. It is presented in three different formats: The first (pages 404 to 442) follows the format for Morning and Evening Worship, alternating portions in English followed by the same portion in Maori, to facilitate a bilingual service. This is followed by the translation of the principal sections of the Eucharistic prayer into both Fijian and Tongan. The second form, pages 476 to 493, presents the liturgy in parallel form, with Maori on the left and English on the right. The third form, pages 494 to 510, present a Maori-only liturgy.

One service form that appears to be particular to New Zealand is “Prayers in a House after Death”, which appears to be a Maori custom. It is intended for re-hallowing the house for the now smaller family. It is marked by a formal entry into the house. Where possible every room is visited by the priest, who sprinkles it with sanctified water.³⁸

The ordination liturgies are, for the most part, only in English. Only the initial versicles and responses are also in Maori.³⁹ In the Catechism, only the Section Titles and Lord's Prayer are in both languages. The rest, including the questions and responses, is only in English.⁴⁰ The Tables and Index are also only in English.

While there is a significant amount of Maori used in the prayer book, there is not really very much Fijian and Tongan. Moreover, large and important chunks are still in English. There is little evidence of Maori customs other than services for “Prayers in a House after Death. No reference was found to Maori dance, vocal or instrumental music other than the one chant – Poi. On balance, it is very much an indigenized rather than an inculturated book.

³⁵ The Church of the Province of New Zealand, 63-64.

³⁶ Ibid, 107.

³⁷ Ibid, 138, 141.

³⁸ Ibid, 871.

³⁹ Ibid, 888.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 925.

Conclusion

As may be seen from the above discussion, indigenization changed the players but not the game. The Church in Sri Lanka is run by Sri Lankans, following the traditional Anglican model they were given. The changes to an indigenous clergy and episcopate were permitted under Lambeth resolutions pre-dating the Second World War. Similarly, the changes to the liturgy in both Sri Lanka and New Zealand – the use of indigenous languages and the adaptation of local customs to Christian use were subjects of pre-war Lambeth resolutions. The use of indigenous language – Maori, Sinhala or Tamil was, in fact permitted under the 39 Articles.. Indigenization leaves a Church that is still demonstrably of English stock, whatever the language used in the worship service.

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