

**Making sense of the Coming of Age of the Church of the Global South:  
A Message to Anglican friends in Canada and the United Kingdom**

Michael Nai Chiu Poon

When I was an Anglican in Canada, Anglican ethos was defined by WASP identity (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant), the Queen's Christmas messages, gin and sherry, and perhaps a sampling of haggis on Burns' night. That was only thirty years ago. And what a different Anglican world we live in today. What's the difference? I am not referring to the many new forms of political and social injustice around the world, or to the rising political power of the Global South in the Anglican Communion. What is new in the Anglican Communion is that, as the Communiqué of the Third Anglican Global South to South Encounter (2005) puts it, the Global South has "come of age" theologically.

I am not sure whether my fellow Anglicans in the West have understood this change of status. After all, the West, especially North America (at least in districts where Anglican presence is strong), life is still rather idyllic and parochial. Life gravitates around the highways. One can still hop in one of the private cars in the garage, drive to our workplaces and hypermarkets with minimal contact with those whom we choose not to encounter. Oil supplies, and hence petrol prices, are what interest us most in foreign affairs. Engagement with the wider church is best left to the experts in the foreign offices in our churches, but is not the central concerns of Christian life.

Perhaps therefore Anglicans in the West may regard the recent critique from the Global South as incoherent polemics from those who are theologically inarticulate and conservative. This would be rather strange. After all, many of the most vocal critics were once students in theological colleges in the West, or were under the tutelage of former missionaries.

It is time for Anglican churches in the West to understand the critique from the South, not as a nuisance, but rather as a gift and an opportunity for revitalization for the whole Communion. It is something that is important for us all.

The Third South to South Encounter was a statement that deserves requires theological attention, in the following respects:

1. The Global South is inviting the Communion to engage the present crises facing the Communion on theological grounds.
2. It revisits the theological foundation of the Anglican Communion. What does it mean to be "one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church" (para. 1)? It calls the Communion to reach back to the higher traditions within the genesis of our church: For the first time, the Global South presented the Communion with an ecclesiology that is borne out of their present mission experience.
3. The Global South moves away from an institutional understanding towards a theological definition of the Church. It reminds the Communion the grounds of its uniqueness and strength: it is a community that is submissive to, and is authorized by the Word of God. The Communion for the past decades has placed

- considerable confidence in the instruments of unity, which after all, except for the office of Canterbury, have recent histories. The Communiqué reached back to the Holy Scriptures and the historic formularies as the basis of unity. It is important that Rowan Williams accepts that such instruments are not to be regarded as conditions to be met for Christian faithfulness. They are better regarded as the servants of unity ([ACNS 4063](#)). This admission opens to fresh discussion on how stewardship can be more effectively exercised in the Communion.
4. The Communiqué draws attention of the need to revisit the Lambeth Quadrilaterals, drafted in a time when North American and British bishops governed the churches in the colonial lands. The Global South appeals the Communion to a more explicit accountability in Anglican faith and order by supporting a Covenant "that is rooted in historic faith and formularies, and that provides a biblical foundation for our life, ministry and mission as a Communion" (para.22).

There is no reference to reconciliation in the discussion on holiness in the Communiqué. The omission is telling of the mentality of the gathering. At the same time, reconciliation only comes with repentance. Will the leadership in Canada and the Episcopal Church in America openly repent? That has become a necessary condition for churches in North America to remain in the "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic" church while the rest of the Communion presses on. Churches in the West would find themselves sadly privatized and marginalized, not only by their societies and nations, but by the children whom they have given birth. This prospect would be, for me, not an occasion of rejoicing, but for lament. Yet out of the fall of Rome, the unmasking of idolatry to the old country, will the destiny of the New Jerusalem be revealed.

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