

## **CULTURAL CONTEXTS IN WORLDWIDE CONTEMPORARY ANGLICANISM: BEYOND THE ANGLICAN COVENANT**

*Contextos culturales en el anglicanismo global contemporáneo: más allá del pacto anglicano*

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### **Abstract**

This research study attempts to explore the role that the notion of culture has played both, in the recent crisis within the Anglican Communion over issues of human sexuality, and in Anglican self-understanding more generally. I pay particular attention to the cultural transitions and clashes in different geo-social contexts, and to the dynamics between postmodern and postcolonial worldviews. The methodology employed here follows an inductive comparative analysis of the documents connected with the Anglican Covenant (2009). To date, there is no other academic investigation that has offered an in depth analysis of these texts as culturally contextualized identity articulations. The findings reveal a diversity of approaches to culture and a complex series of cultural clashes and alignments within this family of churches.

**Keywords:** Anglican Identity, Anglican Covenant, Church and Culture.

### **Resumen**

Este estudio de investigación intenta explorar el papel que el concepto de cultura ha jugado tanto en la reciente crisis interna de la Comunión Anglicana, provocada por asuntos de sexualidad humana, como en la auto-comprensión de lo que significa ser anglicano. Presto especial atención a los choques y transiciones culturales en varios contextos geo-sociales, y a las dinámicas entre las cosmovisiones postmodernas y postcoloniales. La metodología utilizada se basa en un análisis comparativo inductivo de los documentos relacionados con el Pacto Anglicano (2009). A fecha de hoy, no existe ningún otro

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estudio académico que ofrezca un análisis profundo de estos textos como articulaciones de identidad anglicana culturalmente contextualizadas. Los resultados muestran una diversidad de actitudes hacia la cultura, a la vez que una serie de choques y alineamientos culturales complejos dentro de esta familia de iglesias.

**Palabras claves:** Identidad anglicana, Pacto Anglicano, Iglesia y Cultura.

## Introduction

In the last decade the Anglican Communion has experienced some of the greatest challenges of its history. The crisis provoked by the consecration of its first openly gay bishop in the USA and the blessing of same-sex couples in North America exposed deep rifts in a complex and culturally diverse ecclesiological model. The official response to this crisis came in the form of an official document, the Anglican Covenant, completed in 2009.

The Covenant never saw the light as an officially recognized statement of contemporary Anglican identity. Before it was completed, some of the key national churches in the Communion affirmed, explicitly or implicitly, that they would not support the text.<sup>1</sup> Whilst the end result did not gain the expected unanimous support of the Communion, the process of editing the document has left us some invaluable insights into contemporary Anglican self-understanding. The Covenant drafting process encouraged and enabled provinces and national churches to articulate their understanding of Anglican identity within their particular cultural contexts. The three drafts of the Covenant, Nassau (2007), St. Andrew's (2008) and Ridley-Cambridge (2009), were shaped by the responses that national churches gave to the evolving document.<sup>2</sup> In their responses to the drafts one perceives a contemporary formulation of Anglican identity that is both culturally diverse and contextual.

It is beyond the scope of this study to analyze the issue of human sexuality in the recent Anglican crisis. Instead, this article attempts to explore the role that the notion of culture has played both, in the recent crisis and in the formation of Anglican identity, through a close examination of the documents associated with the Anglican Covenant. To date, there is no other academic investigation that has offered an in depth analysis of these texts as culturally contextualized identity articulations. I will pay particular attention to the cultural transitions, clashes and alignments across different geo-social contexts, as well as to the dynamics between postmodern and postcolonial worldviews. In line with these, I will seek to address the question of whether the current tensions within the Anglican Communion are primarily theological or cultural in nature.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the case, for example, of the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil and the Anglican Church of Nigeria who, for different reasons rejected the Covenant in the drafting process.

<sup>2</sup> The response of each church cited in this article is referenced using the following format: National Church Name or Country, Draft to which it responds, and Page number. E.g. The Church of Wales' response to the St. Andrew's draft, page 2, is referenced: Wales, 2.2.

## 1. The great silence: ‘culture’ in the Covenant.

One of the key things that stand out as one reads the Anglican Covenant is the overwhelming silence when it comes to the notion of culture. There are only two direct references to *culture* in the document. The first one, in the introduction, describes the Communion as “united across many cultures and languages.” (*The Anglican Covenant [AC]*, 2009, p. 2). The second reference appears in section one, in the context of biblical hermeneutics. Those who sign the Covenant document commit themselves “to ensure that biblical texts are received, read and interpreted faithfully, respectfully, comprehensively and coherently, with the expectation that Scripture continues to illuminate and transform the Church and its members, and through them, individuals, cultures and societies.” (AC, 2009, p. 3)

In the latter reference culture becomes a passive subject which can be enlightened and transformed *by* the Scriptures, *through* the church. The Covenant authors describe culture in negative terms, as something that needs to be changed. Whilst this approach to culture has been widely affirmed in Christian history, it has often been qualified and certainly always appeared in tension with other positive approaches missing in this document. The Anglican Church in Wales emphasized this in their response to the first Covenant draft:

Scripture as interpreted and applied by the church can be a source of illumination, challenge and transformation to human cultures and systems. However the church has also shown itself to be blind to aspects of human culture and how this can illuminate our reading of Scripture. (Wales, 1.3)

Niebuhr, in his classic work *Christ and Culture*, identified as the “enduring problem” (2001, pp. 1-44) how religious communities, and in particular Christian churches, responded to and engaged with culture.<sup>3</sup> He described five different approaches to that question. The two extreme ones, at each end of the spectrum, were “Christ against culture” (2001, pp. 45-82), which regarded culture in absolute negative terms, and emphasized that Christians should live outside of the wider culture; and “Christ of culture” (2001, pp. 83-115), emphasizing Christ as conforming to society or culture. In between these two extremes, he identified three central positions involving different levels of engagement with culture, one of which was Christ as the transformer of culture (2001, pp. 190-229). It is surprising that in the Covenant text, cultural transformation is not by Christ, not even by the Holy Spirit, who is reserved that role in Trinitarian theology, but by the Scriptures.

Apart from the two references to culture outlined above, there is a resounding silence on this issue throughout the Covenant document. The absence of engagement with culture in the Covenant is, to say the least, puzzling. This virtual silence could be explained by an appeal to the nature of the document, a statement of Anglican identity and means of conflict resolution that should be effective not just in the present context but also into the future. A direct reference to current cultural contexts and dynamics may have been considered inappropriate and/or unhelpful, if the Covenant

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<sup>3</sup> Although Niebuhr’s analysis of this question has been criticised by some, especially for creating a dichotomy (Christ and culture) that is theologically problematic and for employing an undifferentiated and confusing definition of culture [see: Yoder (1996) and Scriven (1988)], his work has been one of the most influential on this subject in the English speaking world.

was to survive beyond contemporary cultures. By keeping the document ‘culture-free’ the authors may have hoped to affirm its universal dimension as a statement of timeless Anglican ecclesiology and a neutral regulator of inter-Anglican relations (and conflicts). The document seems to compensate this culture deficit with general, brief, unspecific and undeveloped references to diversity of ‘contexts’. The latter seem a safe and non-controversial way to describe what is no more than a platitude in historic and present Anglicanism.

The cultural silence appears even louder when set alongside the multiple voices that appealed to culture from across the Anglican Communion in the responses to the various Covenant drafts. It is also hard to explain when much of the evidence connected with the recent crisis purports that the fundamental tensions might be more cultural than theological. Before looking at the way in which national churches have highlighted the significance of culture in their responses to the Covenant drafts, a word on definitions.

## 2. What is culture? Some working definitions

It is often said that culture is like the water in a fish bowl. The goldfish is immersed in it, lives in it and yet it cannot see it. The only time the fish misses the water is when it is taken out of it. Although this image does not do justice to the complexity, diversity, dynamic and porous nature of human culture, it does highlight at least two significant aspects. One, that culture is the fundamental social dimension in which human beings move and live and have their being. And two, that most people are blind, or at the very least partially sighted, when it comes to their own culture. In that respect, culture is sometimes identified as that which belongs to the “other”. Paradoxically, despite the latter affirmation, culture acts as the lens through which individuals perceive and interpret reality.

The aspect of culture I am interested in here is the one reflected on by the social sciences, particularly anthropology, sociology and cultural studies. It is almost impossible to define culture in a single sentence or paragraph. There are as many definitions as there are social theorists. Kathryn Tanner (1997) in her *Theories of Culture* identifies two distinct though overlapping approaches to culture: a modern one, which in the USA developed between the 1920s and 1960s, and a postmodern one, which evolved in the latter part of the twentieth century. For Tanner, in modern anthropology culture was regarded as “the defining mark of human life” (1997, p. 25), which highlights human diversity, is different according to each social group, reflects their entire way of life, and is both a human construct and something that shapes and constructs the character of its members. These were some of the key elements of a modern definition of culture.

Contemporary cultural studies agree with the basic definition of culture as “a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.” (Geertz, 1973, p. 89) Yet, it also acknowledges the historical processes that have led to particular cultural developments (e.g. imperialism, colonialism, particular revolutions), and is aware of the multilayered, complex, dynamic, diverse and porous nature of culture (Clifford, 1998; Hannerz, 1992). In this line, social anthropologist Pnina Werbner, for example, defines culture as “the historically negotiated creation of more or less coherent symbolic and social worlds.” (Werbner, 1997, p. 15)

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In broad terms, it is possible to differentiate between two types of historically-shaped, somewhat geographically-bound, and socially-shared cultures: macro-cultures and micro-cultures.<sup>4</sup> Macro-cultures refer to mainstream, dominant cultures in a particular location. Whereas micro-cultures stand for the subcultures associated with particular groups (religious, political, artistic, economic, ideological, etc). Globally, macro-cultures cross national and regional boundaries and often coexist with each other, in tension, within those porous boundaries. Globalization, consumerism, modernity, colonialism, postmodernity, postcolonialism, secularism, liberalism, conservatism, post-Christendom, are all described by sociology and cultural studies as representing dominant macro-cultures. By contrast, micro-cultures tend to reflect either local or group specific realities. The latter, may also have a transnational dimension. For instance, particular minority social groups, such as gipsy or LGBT communities, may identify themselves with a particular global or regional subculture, or micro-culture (Albro & Tully, 1979, p. 331).

In global Anglicanism, micro-cultures are connected with local or national cultural contexts, all of which coexist within wider macro-cultures. In the recent crisis, two pairs of macro-cultures, at different stages of transition, have been appealed to by both defenders and detractors of these cultures: modernity-postmodernity and colonial-postcolonial. It is worth paying attention to some of the key features of these binary transitional cultures.

Brazilian theologian Carlos Eduardo Calvani, one of the most critical voices against the Anglican Covenant, depicts some of the negative ways in which modernity influenced Christian theology in the sixteenth century. For him:

Modernity was pretentious. It affirmed itself as the “Age of Enlightenment” in contrast to the medieval “Dark Ages”. Modern thought attempted to catalogue and define everything. The theology derived from this optimism formed the backdrop for various confessions (Westminster, Formula of Concord, Augsburg, Synod of Dort, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion), all presuming to be the correct definition of faith. (Calvani, 2008, p. 109)

He goes on to describe the collapse of modernity appealing to the biblical narrative of the Tower of Babel. He writes:

But in the twentieth century, the presumptions of modernity began to disintegrate. Just as in the biblical myth of Babel, modernity built towers with intentions of unambiguousness, but they did not support diversity. The story of the Tower of Babel announces the deconstruction of human claims to universality and power. The builders inability to understand each other does not cause the tower to fall into ruins, but it exposes the tower’s fissures and cracks, its incapacity to accomplish what it set out to do. (Calvani, 2008, p. 109)

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<sup>4</sup> This distinction is based on the two types of analysis carried out by contemporary sociology at both macro and micro levels. Johnson (2008), for instance, affirms that: “The micro level involves a focus on human agency and choice and the dynamics of personal relationships and small-scale social systems of various types, particularly those involving face-to-face encounters. The macro level, in contrast, is concerned with larger-scale social systems, typically at the level of total societies.” (p.vi)

According to Calvani, central to modernity were claims to certainty, uniformity and universality, which were unable to stand the test of time. By contrast, he describes postmodernity, in positive terms:

Post-modernity is not pessimistic. It has merely lost its naïveté and no longer believes in the dreams of arrogance, unity, and power in whose shipwreck it has participated. [...] This attitude is sensitive to the inevitable expressions of chance, contradiction and randomness. (Calvani, 2008, p.112)

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Protestant theologian Maliaba Kenzo is one of the few African voices to advocate an authentic African postmodernism connected to their postcolonial contexts. He acknowledges that most African scholars reject the idea of postmodernism, citing Emmanuel Katongole (2000) and Ania Loomba (1998), who dismiss it as a “typically Western malaise” (Kenzo, 2002, p. 324). He concedes that most African academics prefer to assert their identities in relation to postcolonialism, defending a return to a cultural traditionalism, as a reaction against colonial eurocentrism (Quayson, 2000).

Kenzo, however, makes two points. One, that “it is legitimate to think about Africa in terms of postmodernism because there are historical antecedents for postmodernism in African culture, literature and philosophy, and because the current postcolonial situation calls for it.” (2002, pp. 323-324) And two, that “it is beneficial to think about Africa in terms of postmodernism because postmodernism clears free space at the margins of Enlightenment reason where true alterity can be sought and expressed.” (2002, p. 324) Kenzo approaches postmodernism in a non-chronological fashion, appealing to the notion of negritude as an authentic postmodern African expression.

The above examples show some of the ways in which postmodernism has been appropriated and redefined by individuals from different contexts. They also challenge the lineal understanding of postmodernity as ‘that which follows modernity’ in European or Western history. Finally, the notion of postmodernism, although widely accepted by social theorists and theologians, has also been challenged by some, who favour the expression ‘late modernity’ instead.<sup>5</sup> This challenge has also included a critique to the use of the term ‘postmodern’ in contexts such as Latin America where modernity never fully developed, but was imported from Europe. (García Canclini, 2001, pp. 81-87) Connected with the above, the binary represented by colonial and postcolonial discourses and cultures has also played a central role in the recent Anglican debate on culture. Colonialism is associated with the imperial advances of primarily, though not exclusively, Western nations in the Americas, Africa and Asia.<sup>6</sup> It is deeply intertwined with what South African Anglican theologian Gerald West describes as the British “imperial project.” (West, 2009, pp. 140-164) One that started with Henry VIII and reached its hay day under Queen Victoria.<sup>7</sup> In the colonial growth of global Anglicanism,

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<sup>5</sup> For a discussion on terminology, especially ‘postmodernity’ vs. ‘late modernity’, see: Doyle (2008, pp.544-548); and García Canclini (2001, p.44).

<sup>6</sup> A significant exception to Western imperialism is Japanese colonialism in Korea.

<sup>7</sup> This view, though widely accepted by most Anglican missiologists, has been challenged by some. According to Duggan there are three different interpretations concerning the relationship between the Church of England and the British Empire in the expansion of Anglicanism: “the relationship between the colonial Church of England (COE) and the British Empire is disputed by contemporary Anglican theologians from

the USA Episcopal Church also played an important role through missionary initiatives in Latin America, Japan and the Philippines. For West, “the Anglican Church in Southern Africa has been profoundly shaped by the imperial project and [...] the logic of this imperial project has been only partially deconstructed by the changing Southern African context.” (2009, p. 152).

Deconstruction is as central to postcolonialism as it is to postmodernism. So much so that the most significant aspect of a definition of postcolonialism is not ‘that which follows the colonial’ but ‘that which questions the colonial.’ (Segovia, 2000, p.74) Yet, even though social theorists often stress the emancipatory nature of postcolonial discourse, some argue that this “often dissimulate the implicit collaboration of the postcolonial in the service of neocolonialism” (Spivak, 1999, p. 361). This neocolonial dynamic, as it will become evident in the following pages, has played a crucial role in recent inter-Anglican relations.

One of the most significant contributions to the postcolonial debate in the Anglican Communion is the collection of essays, edited by Ian Douglas and Kwok, under the title *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism*. In this book, a wide range of voices from across the Communion acknowledge the direct impact that colonial history and experience has had on the formation of contemporary Anglicanism, and advocate a process of “undoing colonialism.”<sup>8</sup> Brazilian Anglican bishop and theologian Glauco de Lima, reflects on some of the signs of colonialism in the church from a Brazilian context. He writes:

In our Anglican churches, the signs and power of colonial symbols may be seen not only in the liturgical order. [...] Beyond the very order and linguistic sources of our worship, even our clothing bears witness to a colonial origin. In the vestments and trimmings of the clergy, for example, on the bishop's surplice, the sleeves finish up at the cuffs in the same way as those of the noblemen in the British court. Moreover, and perhaps more troubling, the influence of colonial symbols and patterns occurs in the methodology of theological elaboration, in the way our parishes or communities are organized, and in the canonical structures of the church. Colonial influence may be seen in the interpretation of the Bible. It is present even in the still dominant bias in many areas of the church regarding minorities who have an orientation different from the dominant cultural patterns, a bias which is profoundly oppressive for homosexuals. (De Lima, 2001, p. 3)

De Lima, like many others (Kaye, 2008, p. 43; Pui Lan, 2001, p. 49; Appiah, 1991, pp. 336-357), believe that colonialism continues to be a key cultural reference for Anglicans, and that true cultural contextualization will not be possible until this is challenged in deep and meaningful ways. That process, although under way, seems to be only in its infancy. The aspiration of those involved in postcolonial critiques of Anglican identity is that the process “will change how Anglicans think about identity today as well as how Anglicans remember and tell the story of their historical identity.” (Duggan, 2008, p. 356)

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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.” Duggan (2009, p.71). Cf. Porter (2004, p.13), Strong (2008, p.60), and Avis (2008, p.53).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. De Lima affirms: “For those of us who believe that the church is a sign and foretaste of the reign of God in the world, the task of undoing colonialism in our mission is urgent.” See: De Lima (2001, pp.4-5).

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The postcolonial context of contemporary Anglicanism has at least three different emphases. One, described above, is the critical discourse that seeks a deconstruction of existing inherited patterns and theologies, and a rearticulation and reinvention of new patterns in an inculturated manner. This is advocated by theologians from across all continents, and may be described as a theological postcolonial discourse.

A second emphasis is associated with a realignment of power and influence in the Communion. This discourse coming mostly, but not exclusively, from Africa, asserts that the demographic shift in contemporary Anglicanism gives the new numeric majority a new sense of moral authority in the Communion. This postcolonial discourse is used by conservative Anglican leaders to influence a redefinition of the rules of the game and exercise a new ecclesiastical power. It also reflects a new sense of self-confidence that evokes a postcolonial ‘coming of age’ assertiveness.

Finally, there is a third type of discourse emerging from the unique postcolonial context of indigenous peoples in the Anglican Communion. These voices come mostly from North America and New Zealand, and have been inspired by liberation theology to develop a new narrative to describe their shared history and their aspirations. This group, under the umbrella of the Anglican Communion Indigenous Network, have been active for several decades, and in some places, like New Zealand, have achieved real autonomy, though economic and social challenges remain in many parts. One of their most outspoken articulators is feminist Maori theologian Jenny Plane Te Paa. This emphasis could be described as an indigenous postcolonial discourse.

It is against the above backdrop of complementary and often competing emphases of postcolonial and postmodern discourses, that the references to culture in the Covenant draft responses need to be assessed.

### **3. Culture and identity in the responses to the Covenant drafts**

If the Covenant text remained largely silent on the issue of culture, the opposite is true of the responses by national churches to the various Covenant drafts. Anglicans from all continents acknowledged on some level the significance of culture and cultural context in Anglican identity formation and articulation. For some, certain aspects of contemporary culture should inspire the church in its local context, whilst others regard contemporary cultural trends with suspicion. They represent classic responses of inculturation and counter-cultural attitudes respectively. These will be examined below.

Sensitivity to cultural diversity was a recurring theme in some of the responses. The Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, governed by three autonomous jurisdictions, representing Maori, *Pakeha* (Anglo Saxon) and Polynesian Anglicans, stressed that it was “crucial that cultural identity and heritage are honoured in the body of Christ clearly and carefully.” (New Zealand, 1.4) The Scottish Episcopal Church also highlighted “the importance of deep cultural differences in our life together in the Communion.” (Scotland, 3.1) And the Anglican Province of Southern Africa expressed that, “all of us must be encouraged to be aware of our cultural contexts –

none is neutral, none is necessarily better or worse than any other. It is how we enunciate the gospel and live it out within them that matters.” (South Africa, 1.3).

Cultural diversity in Anglicanism operates on at least three different levels: the global, which is easily identifiable; the national, where many churches reflect a breadth of ethnic, linguistic or ecclesiological cultures; and the local, where this diversity exists within particular cities. The latter is the case of Hong Kong. This Chinese province (HKSKH), in its response to the Nassau Draft (2007), stated:

HKSKH treasures the traditional Anglican comprehensiveness and diversity that has enabled different theological and liturgical emphases – Anglo-catholic, Broad, Evangelical – to find expression under one extended canopy. [...] The cohesiveness of pluralistic societies, such as the international community of Hong Kong, depends upon the fostering of a welcoming inclusiveness within churches [...] in which the majority comes together with minority groups in an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance. (Hong Kong, 1.1)

The cultural argument used by Hong Kong reflects a context that is not unique to this territory. Many Anglican churches find themselves in pluralistic contexts, yet respond to pluralism in very different ways. Whereas in Hong Kong “mutual respect and tolerance” of diversity are essential values to uphold, the province of the Indian Ocean expressed uncertainty over a boundary-less tolerance. In addition, they warned against what they perceived as the dangerous influence of pluralism in the church. They affirmed:

As we see it today, we note that some established provinces of the west are deeply penetrated by the philosophy of pluralism and the theory that generates it. But as we analyse it closely, we have difficulty to understand the scope of tolerance that it conveys. (Indian Ocean, 2.2)

The West Indies was the first province to ask the Covenant design group to include a reference to the Anglican colonial history. They felt that in section 4.1. of the Nassau draft (2007), later to become section 2.1.1. in the final Covenant, the role of “mission initiatives” in the development of the Anglican Communion, should be qualified with a direct reference to British “colonial expansionism.” (West Indies, 1.3) The USA Episcopal Church (TEC) went even further and, in response to the St. Andrew’s draft (2008), asked the design group to reword that very section with the phrase: “impelled by the experiences of British and American imperialism and redeemed by the selfless missionary work of the church.” (TEC, 2.7) Despite these suggestions, the design group disregarded them all and the final Covenant did not make any reference to the colonial or imperial history that was so central to the development of the Anglican Communion.

It is fascinating to observe the analyses that different provinces make of the cultural dynamics in contemporary Anglicanism. Some provinces use a postcolonial discourse to attack Western imperialism and Western cultural hegemony, as a present, and not just a past, reality. The church of the Indian Ocean affirms:

Without this consensus in faith and practice that the covenant represents, we shall continue to be challenged by western imperialism. [...] Tolerance within a framework is possible when church life is

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justly determined on mutually agreed principles. This will help us to discourage unilateral imposition and diminish the extension of a western cultural hegemony. (Indian Ocean, 2.3)

The reference to “unilateral imposition” here does not refer to the interference of bishops from certain conservative provinces in the canonical jurisdictions of other autonomous national churches, which these words could describe. Rather, they relate to the North American liberal agenda which is perceived as an imposition on the rest of the Communion. Their solution to fight Western cultural imperialism is to foment doctrinal consensus. This, as pointed out above, is a basic aspect of culture in the modern worldview, and one that will be explored further later in this article.

The Korean Anglican church offers the opposite analysis. Their postcolonial critique of the Covenant text is precisely that, by encouraging a particular form of consensus-based unity, it promotes old “colonial assumptions”. These assumptions reflect the theology of conservative postcolonial provinces, described by the Korean bishops as the “extreme evangelical wing of Anglicanism” (Korea, 2.1), and serve their particular agenda. In their own words:

As Asian church leaders, we would like to point out that the Covenant does not liberate us Asian Anglicans from domination by the English or Western church. We see some Asian churches attempting to define Anglican unity even among Asians by simply repeating its colonial assumptions enshrining a specific period of the English history. (Korea, 2.2)

The anti-neocolonial rhetoric is therefore used by both groups, directing the accusation to the other. Conservative Anglicans are accused of seeking to repeat old colonial practices, using the philosophy of empire to drive their doctrinally uniform global Anglican project. And revisionist Anglicans are accused of imposing liberal views on the rest of the Communion, driven by a philosophy of pluralism. This twofold critique was echoed by Michael Doe when, as director of the USPG missionary society, he criticized the way in which liberal and conservative US Americans had been “courting and seeking to control other parts of the Communion [...] with material support.” (2009, p. 218) These strategies to influence Anglicans on the world stage through, primarily, money and resources, has clear evocations of neocolonialism. However, for Doe, there is another type of new imperialism which may prove more dangerous for Anglicans worldwide: the one promoted by the Global South<sup>9</sup> conservatives in their attempts to relocate power in the Communion. For Doe, the “last thing our world needs is the re-invention of Christendom, based now not in Rome or England but in Nigeria or Uganda.” (2009, p. 219).

Another aspect of postcolonialism addressed by some of the respondents is the dimension of independence. This notion is central to the wider postcolonial secular discourse, in as much as it asserts the sovereignty of former colonies, now independent nations. There are many examples of nationalistic postcolonial rhetoric from African, Asian and Latin American political leaders.<sup>10</sup> In broad terms, these leaders affirm the independence of their nations to run their own affairs without

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<sup>9</sup> The “Global South” is a network of mostly conservative Anglican provinces and national churches in the southern hemisphere.

<sup>10</sup> The most significant examples in recent decades are Mugabe in Zimbabwe, Gadhafi in Lybia, Chávez in Venezuela, Castro in Cuba, and the Ghandi-Nehru family in India. See: Falola (2002) & Roy (2007).

the interference of other nations. This powerful rhetoric has been mirrored by some African Anglican leaders as part of their very own ecclesio-political postcolonial discourse. Certain voices from Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda have asserted their independence and questioned historic ties with Canterbury, whilst, paradoxically, seeing no incompatibility between this assertion and their cross-boundary interference in the life of some Western provinces. In the process they have redefined their relationship with England and the rest of the Communion.

The Church of Uganda, precisely in their clarification regarding their relationship with the Church of England, affirmed that they were not interested in “breaking away from the Church of England or the Anglican Communion.” Instead, their concern was that the Church of England may be following in the footsteps of the US Episcopal Church, departing from so-called traditional teaching on human sexuality. Other Anglican provinces, however, have employed the postcolonial nationalistic rhetoric simply to affirm the autonomy of national and provincial churches. For Hong Kong and the Maori Anglicans in New Zealand the appeal to autonomy is firmly placed in their unique postcolonial contexts. Thus, the Chinese church affirmed:

There is no doubt that the autonomous governance of our Church, together with the affectionate but non-interfering ties with the See of Canterbury and other churches of the Communion, sit easily with the familiar crystal-clear policies of the PRC government with respect to religious affairs. (Hong Kong, 1.3)

The reference here to the People’s Republic of China policy on limited religious freedom is revealing. The other example, from New Zealand, is rooted in a particular colonial history, where Maori Anglicans experienced breaches of trust and perceived injustices in their dealings with the foreign settlers. In 1992 the Anglican communities of New Zealand agreed to honour the sovereignty of each constituent group in the country and enshrined, in their new constitution, a Three *Tikanga* (cultural streams) Church. These three overlapping jurisdictions gave each group (Maori, South Pacific and Anglo-Saxon) powers of self-government, alongside a commitment to share resources in a fairer way. Maori Anglicans responded to the Covenant process with a deep sense of suspicion, especially, because they felt it could undermine their hard won autonomy. According to them, “for Tikanga Maori *tinō rangatiratanga* (self determination), Christian and ethnic identity are of foundational importance. Tangata whenua (the indigenous people) have a rootedness that precedes the Anglican Communion, and would not lightly cede their autonomy.” (New Zealand, 1.3) .

Part of that autonomy, treasured by indigenous peoples, includes the freedom to deconstruct some aspects of inherited Western theology, in order to develop truly inculturated biblical hermeneutics. This aspect is central to the theological postcolonial discourse, pointed out above, and will be explored in more depth below in relation, particularly, to the Anglican Indigenous Network. Suffice it to say, at this point, that the deconstruction of inherited hermeneutics by indigenous groups is still very much in its infancy, and may be described as works in progress. The main theological area where an indigenous reading of the Bible and of the Christian tradition has made a greater impact is that of ecology.

For others, the issue of autonomy has been connected with inter-religious dialogue. In their responses to the Covenant drafts, Korean Anglicans expressed that:

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The Anglican Church of Korea has committed to the ministry of peace and reunification with North Korea, often facing opposition from other politically conservative Christians. Some Korean Anglicans attempt to create an Asian understanding of the Scriptures in inter-faith dialogues. What would happen to all these efforts valuable to Korean Anglican understanding of mission in our context if any other church questions or challenges them? (Korea, 2.1)

In addition to colonial and postcolonial critiques, some of the respondents highlighted the role that modernity played in the development of Anglican identity. For the Church in Wales, some of the effects of globalization, in the form of fostering cultural uniformity, are negative values associated to modernity. They write:

We should like to point out that free communication and easily available travel gives rise to unrealistic expectations of *uniformity* and sets up a series of false cultural norms. A false cultural norm of pseudo-uniformity is created when, in reality, the different norms of one place do not impinge upon the daily life of another. The ‘flattening’ of human culture – the sense that there is a certain ‘default’ setting – is characteristic of modernity. By contrast, Anglicanism has long celebrated diversity, but not for diversity’s sake. Rather, the varied expression of Anglicanism is born of the conviction that the Gospel, because of its richness which exceeds all particularity, can be mediated in many ways. (Wales, 3.3-4)

In an indirect and subtle way, Wales critiques what has been perceived by some as a move toward uniformity in the Covenant. In contrast, they describe historic Anglicanism as celebrating diversity, rooted in the fact that the Gospel both “exceeds all particularity” and can be culturally mediated “in many ways.” The Brazilian Anglican Episcopal Church is less subtle and more unambiguous when critiquing the modern mindset behind the Covenant text. In their view:

We are fully convinced that the time in which we live is marked by symptoms that value highly the building up of networks and other manifestations of communion in a spontaneous way in the various aspects of human life. Insisting on a formal and juridical Covenant, with the logic of discipline and exercise of power, means to move in the opposite direction, thus returning to the days of Modernity, with its Confessions, Covenants, Diets and other rational instruments of theological consensus. (Brazil, 2. 1)

For Brazil, resisting to embrace some of the positive aspects of postmodern culture, including the emphasis on relational networks, is a form of regression. The Covenant, for them, is regarded as a “rational instrument of theological consensus” from a by-gone age. This analysis, however, is only partially correct, since the reality in the world, and by extension in the Anglican Communion, is that the modern and postmodern worldviews continue to coexist alongside each other. The transition from one to the other, which will be explored below, is the cause of much of the angst and many of the tensions experienced by Anglicans today.

To illustrate the latter point, one has to listen to the critiques coming from conservative African churches. Nigeria expressed their concern with these words: “In its present state, the Covenant is out to forge a post-modern Anglican Communion, whose trappings will be accommodative of all shades of religious opinions and practices.” (Nigeria, 2.1) The fear of

theological diversity, with its implicit affirmation of uniformity, is a recurring theme in Anglican conservative discourse and is profoundly rooted in a modern worldview.

The last two examples are relevant because of the implications they have for the churches' engagement with the dominant cultures. They illustrate two opposing responses to culture. Brazil affirms the importance of a postmodern inculturation, whereas Nigeria advocates a countercultural response. They also reflect, as pointed out above, the overlapping cultural worldviews at this transitional period in history.

#### 4. Cultural Transitions and Clashes in Contemporary Anglicanism

In the initial stages of this investigation, between 2013 and 2014, my working thesis was that the clash in contemporary Anglicanism was not primarily theological or ecclesiological, but cultural. I identified two competing cultural forces: postmodernity and postcolonialism. My academic instinct, drawn from a partial analysis of the data, was that the clash between these two cultural conditions was at the centre of the recent crisis. This was confirmed by some of the rhetoric proceeding from certain quarters of the Anglican Communion.

In October of 2014, I put this thesis to the test during a two month visit to New Zealand. There, I was able to observe, hear and experience some of the realities of Anglicans in what is both a postcolonial and a postmodern context. In that process, I discovered two fundamental flaws in my initial thesis. One, that postmodern and postcolonial contexts were not exclusive of each other, or essentially opposed to one another, but could coexist in creative tension. And two, that the cultural clashes were much more complex and multilayered than I had originally anticipated. Whereas the initial premise remained unchanged, namely, the central role played by culture in the recent crisis, its ramifications were evidently more subtle and diverse.

In New Zealand, for instance, as pointed out above, the Maori communities live simultaneously in a postcolonial and a postmodern context. They have managed to preserve their indigenous social structures and cultural practices, including their language, whilst embracing many of the changes that modernity and postmodernity have brought to the wider New Zealand culture. Their response to their context is precisely to articulate a postcolonial discourse using postmodern deconstruction-reconstruction categories. The result is closer to an indigenous liberation or emancipation theology, than to a conservative theology that is suspicious of any change. A similar language is used in Brazil, Korea, Japan, and South Africa.

The responses to the Covenant drafts analyzed above also reflect the complexity of the cultural tensions in the Communion. The real clashes, drawn from the available evidence, are best described as *transitional cultural tensions*. In other words, they are found in the matrix between modern and postmodern<sup>11</sup>, and between colonial and postcolonial attitudes. Though in the case of the

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<sup>11</sup> For another perspective on transitional cultural paradigms see the work of Enrique Dussel, "Transmodernity and Interculturality" (2006). Here the author introduces a new theoretical category, the so-called 'trans-modern', "which constitutes an explicit overcoming of the concept 'Post-modernity' (since the latter *still represents a final moment of Modernity*)." (p.17) For Dussel, the trans-modern approach offers a new way for

latter it becomes more complicated, given the neocolonial experiences of many national churches. From a sociological perspective, the above transitions involve a radical rupture with the world of the past. According to Doyle Johnson:

The worldview associated with modernity [...] was grounded in the belief that the steady growth of scientific knowledge would insure continued social and intellectual progress. Postmodern theorists, in contrast, would dispute the notion that any system of knowledge, including science itself, can provide assurance of ultimate truth or guarantee continued progress. Instead, definitions of valid knowledge and progress are relative and vary for people with divergent cultural traditions or different social locations. They see many of the defining features of modernity as having been superseded, rejected, or radically transformed in ways that mark a major transition to a new era. (Johnson, 2008, p. 543)

Brazilian theologian Carlos Calvani has been one of the voices to articulate this position, and to identify this cultural transition as one of the key reasons for the recent inter-Anglican divisions. According to him, the “crisis in the Anglican Communion is not only theological, hermeneutical or institutional; it is something deeper, [...] a reflection of the overall crisis of modernity.” (2008, p. 104) For him:

The Anglican Communion was born in modernity. Institutionally speaking, it itself is a product of modernity and its crisis reveals the larger crisis of modernity. My theory is that the Anglican Communion as an institutional body is one of the last achievements of modernity in the religious arena. [...] the Anglican Communion is being challenged to interpret the signs of the times, to understand better the postmodern environment, and to rethink its existence. This requires new paradigms and a review of concepts. (Calvani, 2008, p. 104)

Ian Douglas too identifies the transition from modernity to postmodernity as a fundamental source of tensions in the recent crisis. This transition is mirrored by another shift, from colonialism to postcolonialism. For the North American Episcopal theologian:

The movement within Anglicanism from being a church grounded in modernity and secure in the Enlightenment, to postmodern or extra-modern reality is as tumultuous as the shift from colonialism to postcolonialism. [...] The transition in the Anglican world from colonialism to postcolonialism and from modernity to postmodernity is terrifying, especially for those individuals who historically have been the most privileged, most in control, most secure in the colonial Enlightenment world. The radical transition afoot in the Anglican Communion is terrifying, for it means that Anglicans in the West – especially heterosexual, white male clerics – will no longer have the power and control that they have enjoyed for so long. They thus feel anxious, confused, lost in a sea of change. (Douglas, 2001, p. 31)

According to Douglas, as a result of the above transition, Anglican church leaders are seeking “to reassert control, reassert power, put Humpty Dumpty back together again, with all the King's horses and all the King's men.” (2001, p. 31) They do so by firmly rooting their theology in modernity and by acting in a colonial fashion. “What results,” according to Douglas, “is a new confessionalism, as insecure individuals and those who fear loss of power in these changing times struggle gallantly to nail down Anglican theology and beliefs.” (2001, p. 31) A similar view is echoed by bishop Simon

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intercultural dialogue that overcomes the modern-postmodern dichotomy, and affirms the value of critical cultural interlocutors, bringing perspectives from the outside, even the “borderlands”. (p. 25)

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Chiwanga from Tanzania. Chiwanga, as Chair of the Anglican Consultative Council in 1999, affirmed that:

In these times of profound change, many who are fearful of the future seek security and solace in what they perceive as safe and sound ... Whether confession or curia, catechism or conference, constitution or council, the fearful are looking for easy answers. (Chiwanga, 2001, p. 34-35)

Calvani, Douglas and Chiwanga, all agree that among the signs of this transition is a form of cultural metathesiophobia, or deep fear of change, by a large number of Anglicans. This goes hand in hand with other modern phobias, such as fear of epistemological uncertainty, fear of paradox, or fear of pluralism. As a result, those unable to embrace postmodernity, energetically foment inherited modern patterns. In this process new forms of confessionalism, pseudo-fundamentalist biblicism, and structural hierarchization (new curialization) emerge. Australian theologian Bruce Kaye has focused his analysis on the colonial-postcolonial tensions. These dynamics are essential to understand the developing role of the Global South in the Anglican Communion. In his view:

It is easy to notice in this crisis underlying dynamics of a colonial past. The residual influence of the colonial missionary period and its styles and methods do not lie far below the surface. The demographics of the crisis make this apparent. The role of the Global South network [...] is moving from a mission and evangelism facilitator to a power bloc of churches in opposition to the churches of the former empires. (Kaye, 2008, p. 194)

The postcolonial-postmodern binary, as shown above, is insufficient to explain the recent crisis in world Anglicanism. The complexity of the cultural tensions needs to acknowledge the tumultuous shifts from modernity to postmodernity. It also needs to recognize the different cultural contexts. At the risk of oversimplifying the great diversity of cultures in global Anglicanism, I have chosen to focus on two dominant macro-cultural contexts: the Western one, largely European and Anglo-Saxon; and the postcolonial one, mostly African and Asian, but also Latin American and indigenous. On the basis of these categories it is possible to identify four types of major cultural clashes and two sets of cultural-theological alignments.

#### **4.1. The clash between Western modern and Western postmodern**

This clash between those who have a modern or a postmodern worldview in the West has been, according to some observers, the key trigger of the recent crisis. The clash is often translated as between theologically conservative and progressive groups mostly in North America, and to a lesser extent in Europe and Oceania. This is visible in the Anglican Church of Australia, where the overall church is representative of the full breadth of Anglican ecclesiologies, yet one diocese, Sydney, has presented itself as the bastion of conservative Anglicanism, and has played a key role in resourcing and financially supporting the Global South. And it is mostly connected in the USA with the so-called *culture wars* between the conservative Christian right and liberal Americans. In fact, the taking of this internal national conflict to foreign soil (mostly Africa), has globalized this clash and magnified the divisions in the Communion.

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#### 4.2. The clash between postcolonial modern and Western postmodern

The clash between modern and postmodern Anglicans has been highlighted mostly in the relationship between modern postcolonial churches and Western postmodern provinces. As pointed out above, the theological and cultural differences here have been magnified by a reference to a postcolonial nationalist rhetoric. The conflict has been presented not just as a theological one between so-called 'orthodox' and 'revisionist' Anglicans, but as one in which the colonial past, and the postcolonial and neocolonial present realities, have acted as a permanent backdrop to the crisis. This has been staged symbolically by the clash between the largely postmodern and liberal USA Episcopal Church, and the postcolonial, modern and conservative Church of Nigeria.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.3. The clash between postcolonial modern and postcolonial postmodern

This tension has been seen very clearly in South America. There, the churches of Chile and Argentina, culturally modern and theologically conservative, have been in conflict with Anglicans from Uruguay and Brazil, who share a more liberal theology and who have employed an overtly postmodern discourse. It has also been visible in Africa, where, as pointed out above, national churches like Nigeria have used an anti-postmodern rhetoric, whilst others, like Southern Africa, have affirmed postmodernity as a positive cultural paradigm. Likewise, globally, some postcolonial indigenous churches, associated to the Anglican Indigenous Network have been embarked on a process of articulating what could be described as a deconstructionist postmodern theology.

#### 4.4. The clash between Western modern and postcolonial modern

This tension has emerged, particularly, from the work of conservative US American Episcopalians in Africa. It is therefore connected with the globalization of the so-called American culture wars described above, and with the use of financial resources to gain the support of poorer churches. Kaoma (2009) gives several examples of the shift in financial relations between USA and African churches. According to him, since the 1990s conservative US groups have increased the funding of many of the conservative African churches, but many churches and institutions have refused to receive funding from conservative US Anglicans.<sup>13</sup> The reasons for this can be quite complex, from lack of trust, to fear of losing ongoing support from TEC, or suspicion of neocolonial agendas from the conservative groups. The clash between these groups is less theological and more connected with financial stability and long standing

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<sup>12</sup> This clash is also connected to competing Anglican narratives from different parts of the world based on different reported facts and different cultural expectations. See: Zink (2014).

<sup>13</sup> See: Kaoma, K. J. (2009) *Globalizing the Culture Wars: U.S. Conservatives, African Churches and Homophobia*. Somerville, MA: Political Research Associates. Kaoma affirms that regarding TEC, one Kenyan professor told PRA: 'American conservatives have been in my office several times requesting that we cut ties with TEC and other progressive funders in exchange for their funds. They have succeeded in getting small colleges into their camp, but we have refused.' 9 [Aaron Mwesigye, interview by author, Kampala, Uganda, March 2009.]

relationships with TEC. The clash is therefore more between Western and postcolonial contexts, than between modern and postmodern attitudes.

In all the above cases, groups are defined by a cultural-theological matrix, which in turn react negatively toward a different cultural-theological group. What follows are two examples of the opposite. That is, of positive alignments between Western and postcolonial Anglicans, on the basis of a shared cultural paradigm: modern or postmodern.

#### 4.5. The modern alignment between Western and postcolonial groups

This is certainly the most significant alignment of the two, under the banner of several names and acronyms: Global South, GAFCON, FCA and more recently GFCA.<sup>14</sup> It is formed by an unlikely mix of individuals. Michael Doe, commenting on the composition of the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans' alliance has observed that "support for FCA has not been as uniform as some had wanted or feared: it is easier for a coalition of traditionalists, charismatics and fundamentalists to know what they are against than to work out a shared agenda for the future." (2009, p. 215)<sup>15</sup> In fact there seems to be no shared detailed agenda, at least public, beyond the 2008 Jerusalem Declaration. This official declaration was set within a lengthier statement in which those attending the conference identified the malaise affecting Western society and, by extension, Western churches. They affirmed:

We grieve for the spiritual decline in the most economically developed nations, where the forces of militant secularism and pluralism are eating away the fabric of society and churches are compromised and enfeebled in their witness. [...] To meet these challenges will require Christians to work together to understand and oppose these forces and to liberate those under their sway. It will entail the planting of new churches among unreached peoples and also committed action to restore authentic Christianity to compromised churches. (*Jerusalem Declaration*, 2008)

This critique of pluralist, secular, postmodern culture on the one hand, and the appeal to "oppose these forces" in order to "restore authentic Christianity", on the other, are symptomatic of the cultural clash described above. The critiques of secularism by church institutions and leadership is nothing new.<sup>16</sup> However, in this particular statement there is no reference to the fact that the version of Christianity that has lost influence in the West, through "the forces of militant secularism and pluralism" is actually the "Christendom" model. One more connected with empire and modernity, than with any of the New Testament ecclesiologies they allegedly advocate. This raises an important question: does their church planting model inadvertently perpetuate Christendom rather than Christianity? The neocolonial or reversed colonial missionary work of some Global South provinces in Western countries could point in that direction. It also highlights that although the discourse of

<sup>14</sup> In the Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans official website, they distinguish between GAFCON (Global Anglican Future Conference) as the conference, and GFCA (Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans) as the movement.

<sup>15</sup> This view is also expressed by Chapman (2008), Douglas (2001) and Hall (2013), among others.

<sup>16</sup> One of the best scholarly theological critiques of secularization is by the former pope, Joseph Ratzinger, in conversation with neo-Marxist philosopher Jurgen Habermas. See: Habermas, J. & Ratzinger, J. (2006). *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.

these groups presents itself as primarily theological, what holds them together is connected less with theology and more with a particular worldview rooted in modernity. They are united by a shared modern paradigm. Their strong opposition to the socio-cultural manifestations of postmodernity, as pointed out above, is linked to the dynamics of the modern-to-postmodern transition, and to the notion of cultural metathesiophobia.

#### 4.6. The alignment between Western postmodern and postcolonial groups

Less has been written about this particular alignment. Most of these groups interact via formal and informal networks through initiatives like the recent TEC and African Primates mission network. In a communiqué issued by primates from Burundi, Central Africa, Southern Africa, Tanzania, West Africa and the USA, they expressed the desire “to build missional partnerships among our churches.” (*Communiqué*, 2014)<sup>17</sup> They described some of the themes and initial commitments of their encounter thus:

Framing our conversation in the context of human dignity and flourishing, the sustainability of our common ministry, and the care of the Earth, we found several subjects for fruitful collaboration that will allow us to share our gifts with each other. We committed ourselves to exploring pension schemes, stewardship of finances and other resources (management and investment), health services, mining and related environmental issues, advocacy, migration and statelessness, human trafficking, religious freedom, and theological education. (*Communiqué*, 2014)

The set of priorities laid out above reflects a very mixed bag of objectives: from economic to humanitarian, from environmental to educational. Despite the rhetoric of “sharing our gifts with each other”, it seems obvious that, financially at least, this is an uneven partnership. This alliance between North Americans and Africans highlights the unwillingness of many African provinces to break their relational and financial ties with TEC. However, economic dependency may become a back-door way in into a neocolonial dynamic through which TEC hopes to reduce the homophobic noise coming from within African Anglicanism. This alliance also reflects the lack of both unity and uniformity within the Global South. It accentuates the cultural, theological and ecclesiological diversity present in sub-Saharan Africa. It is also a symptom of the shift taking place in Africa itself from modernity to postmodernity, mediated by their postcolonial contexts, and articulated by theologians such as Maliaba Kenzo (2002).

A different type of alliance has been articulated by Maori theologian Jenny Plane Te Paa. She makes an indigenous plea to develop alliances between Anglicans who have experienced exclusion in the Anglican Communion. Te Paa sees a commonality in the experience of women, indigenous and gay people in the global church. “First ethnicity, then gender, and now sexuality”, she writes, and

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<sup>17</sup> The statement was signed by the following bishops and primates: Bernard Ntahoturi (Archbishop of Burundi); Albert Chama (Archbishop of Central Africa); Thabo Makgoba (Archbishop of Southern Africa); Jacob Chimeledya (Archbishop of Tanzania); Katharine Jefferts Schori (Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church); Daniel Sarfo (Archbishop of West Africa); Stacy F. Sauls (Chief Operating Officer, TEC); Mary Gray-Reeves (Bishop of El Camino Real); Ogé Beauvoir (Bishop Suffragan of Haiti) and Clifton Daniel, III (Bishop Provisional of Pennsylvania).

then asks, “how many more variations on incredibly similar themes do we need before we are compelled to say that enough is enough?” (2008, p. 127) Her proposal is bold:

I believe we need to realign ourselves strategically as radically diverse *via media* Anglicans over and above any distinctive identity-based claims to which we have previously given priority. We need with great urgency to establish a common holy-ground coalition of inclusive Anglicans. [...] We must commit ourselves to redeeming the structural injustices still affecting many and various particular groups of Anglicans. (Te Paa, 2008, p. 126, 128)

It is difficult to assess whether Te Paa’s proposal has been met with enthusiasm either by indigenous or revisionist Anglicans. From the evidence shown by official documents issued by both groups, it seems that on the ground such alliances have not crystallized. Her words are best understood in the context of pre and post Lambeth 2008, and the increasing antagonism between the most radical section of the Global South and the most liberal end of the Anglican Communion. Her views, nonetheless, highlight that both postcolonial indigenous people and revisionist westerners could, at least theoretically, operate within a common postmodern paradigm. A way forward for such intercultural collaboration may be the one advocated by Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, of developing dialogical spaces (“contact zones”) and cultural “translation” opportunities that may enhance mutual understanding between different groups and social actions. In Santos’ view this could include an intercultural dialogue-translation between, for example, feminist and indigenous groups. (Santos, 2005, p. 175-181)

## Conclusion

In the above investigation I have sought to explore the role that culture has played both, in the recent crisis within the Anglican Communion over issues of human sexuality, and in Anglican self-understanding more broadly. I have paid special attention to the cultural transitions and clashes in different national contexts, and to the dynamics between postmodern and postcolonial worldviews. In order to do so, I have analyzed all the texts connected with the Anglican Covenant, particularly the responses of the various national churches throughout the three year drafting period. As mentioned above, to date, there is no other academic study that has offered an in depth analysis of these texts as culturally contextualized identity articulations.

The findings of this research are revealing. It shows, on the one hand, that the cultural clashes and alignments between the various factions are much more complex and multilayered than often admitted. Mostly, they are found in liminal spaces where national church members and leaders find themselves in cultures that are transitioning, from modern to postmodern, and from colonial to postcolonial. On the other hand, the findings show that there is a direct correlation between modern worldviews and conservative theological agendas, and between postmodern perspectives and liberal or revisionist theologies. This latter point seems clear when looking at the evidence from the vast majority of church responses to the Covenant drafts from a wide range of cultural and theological contexts.

So, to the question of whether the current tensions within the Anglican Communion are based on theology or culture, the answer emerging from this research is both. But this *both* needs to be

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qualified. It is not both in equal measure, and it is not both in equal order. Cultural elements are by far more significant in these divisions, because they are directly involved in shaping particular theologies on a macro-cultural level (conservative or revisionist), and because they also shape attitudes to diversity, leadership and power on a micro-cultural level.

In an increasingly globalized and polarized world *and* church, Anglicans have to face a deeper challenge than that of their theological divisions. That is, how can they live with inner theological diversity globally, whilst holding on to their own cultural and theological particularities locally (and nationally). This challenge is no different from the one posed by globalization in secular contexts worldwide. In the case of Anglicanism there are also a number of unresolved postcolonial issues that clearly need to be addressed and worked through. Among them, the development of truly inculturated liturgical resources, the encouragement of indigenous theologies and the election of a *primus inter pares* in the Communion that is not necessarily associated with the episcopal see of Canterbury, or even the Church of England. How Anglicans resolve these issues and deal with the above described cultural clashes and transitions, will determine their ability to celebrate their inner cultural and theological diversity, and to fulfill their vocation of being locally inculturated and globally connected.

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