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JOHN CORRIE

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# Transforming Anglicanism: Elements of an Emerging Anglican Mission Paradigm

**Few would question that Anglicanism is undergoing significant change at present but often this is not interpreted in a missional framework. John Corrie here offers such an approach to Anglican identity, arguing that we need to see beyond current conflicts to discern an emerging missional paradigm. He argues that this paradigm will be crucial for future Anglican unity and provide an approach to mission that is integral, sacramental and Trinitarian.**

## Introduction

You don't need to be a missiologist to recognise my take on David Bosch's *Transforming Mission* in the title of this article. The point of this echo is that I want to suggest that Anglicanism needs a new paradigm for its identity if it is to survive even to halfway through this century, and that that new paradigm needs to be missional. If a new paradigm is to emerge from out of the current crisis in Anglicanism then, as Bosch suggested was the case for his own thesis, it must have significant roots in the history of the tradition. The resources for renewed identity are, in other words, already there within Anglicanism. Bosch's paradigm built upon six phases of Christian history identified by Hans Küng, taking from each of them what was of abiding significance and incorporating those elements into his own vision. Anglicanism needs to do something similar. It cannot deny its traditions and its history, but it has got stuck in an institutional and conflictual paradigm from which it can only be released by the transforming vision of mission. This transforming vision, I suggest, should enable it to transcend its divisions in the interests of a higher agenda. As Archbishop Rowan Williams has stated, the focus of the Church's life is its mission and we should unite together with the common purpose of making Christ known:

I believe that the family we belong to, the family of the Anglican Church around the globe, has to be an instrument of God's love for the world and that means that, in seeking to hold together as a Communion, we have to be seeking to serve that purpose and no other. So by attempting to work through our differences within our family we may come to a better discernment of what we're called to be in mission.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Williams 2003, online at [www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/news.cfm/2003/10/16/ACNS3634](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/acns/news.cfm/2003/10/16/ACNS3634)

In what follows I want to explore some of the elements of an Anglican missiology which could provide the framework for a missional Anglicanism as the defining characteristic of future Anglican identity. I am being *descriptive* in drawing on what is already there within Anglicanism but I also want to be *prescriptive* in suggesting that the distinctively Anglican elements we identify ought to be central to the building of a new Anglican identity. My approach will, however, not be historical in the way in which Bosch systematically analysed history. Instead, I take an essentially theological approach, although I recognise that all theology has a historical dimension. The main aim is to look forwards by answering the key question: What is characteristic of the Anglican approach to mission which ought to be constitutive of a new missional identity for Anglicanism?

We can see the missional paradigm I am suggesting already emerging in a number of ways. The 2008 Lambeth Conference adopted the agenda of equipping bishops for God's mission in today's world. This was not, as some suggested, the Archbishop's way of deflecting attention away from sexuality. Although the listening, sharing and learning approach did neatly avoid divisive debates over resolutions and statements, it also obviously generated much renewed vision for mission:

Our conversations mean nothing unless they further the business of the Kingdom of God, and reflect the Good News of Jesus Christ, offering a message of hope and faithfulness for the world. The Lord Jesus himself is the centre of our common life, and we gather in order to discern together his will for the Church. There has been a deep sense of the Holy Spirit moving among us.<sup>2</sup>

Whole sections of the 2008 Conference Indaba Reflections document are devoted to Mission and Evangelism (Section B) and mission in the context of Human and Social Justice (Section C) and the Environment (Section D). Mission has always been a passionate concern for Archbishop Rowan, witnessed by his enthusiastic support for the Fresh Expressions initiative for new ways of being church, another manifestation of an emerging Anglican commitment to the mission of the Church in the contemporary world. His approach to mission is clearly set out in his address to the TEAM (Towards Effective Anglican Mission) Conference in South Africa in March 2007 in which he gives us a pretty good definition of the mission calling of the Church:

The Church has the mission of calling all to 'know the Lord', to announce that God has made his nature and purpose clear and that we are summoned and enabled to share his loving and creative perspective on the world he has made.<sup>3</sup>

## Mission and Unity

As there is now a consensus amongst theologians and missiologists that mission is at the heart of the identity of the church, it is not necessary for me to take time establishing that basic theological point. A series of publications has emerged recently exploring 'mission-shaped church', with its 'mission-shaped spirituality' working out through 'mission-shaped parishes'. All the theological colleges want to offer 'mission-shaped training'. There is already a considerable momentum for mission.

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2 Lambeth Conference 2008, para 18, online at [www.lambethconference.org/reflections/document.cfm](http://www.lambethconference.org/reflections/document.cfm).

3 Williams 2008: 128.

Anglican thinking has already made a significant contribution to mission thinking with its 'Five Marks of Mission' which have formed the framework for a recent collection of essays.<sup>4</sup> As well as transforming Anglicanism, the new paradigm is already having a transformative influence. The new paradigm is indeed emerging, even if it has yet to be adopted as the central element of a new identity. Tim Dakin, in his contribution to *Mission in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, outlines a draft Anglican covenant with what he calls a 'mission-first architecture', confident that we are entering a 'new era in which there is a remaking of Anglicanism for the new mission of the 21<sup>st</sup> century'. This may have been much too optimistic, although there are some positive references to mission in the final approved text. For example, each church is called to affirm its 'participation in the apostolic mission of the whole people of God' (Covenant Section 1.1.8). We will return to the Covenant again below.

As Anglicans search for that elusive unity which can hold them together, Jesus' words in John 17 remind us that unity is God's gift to the Church to enable it to participate effectively in His mission: 'that the world might believe' (John 17:21). Unity can be discovered in a common agenda for mission and a commitment to serving the world together.

Roland Allen, one of the foremost twentieth-century Anglican thinkers on mission, to whom we shall return again later, recognised that mission can transcend differences between Christians:

The moment missionary-hearted people meet with any degree of intimacy, the Spirit in one recognises the Spirit in the other, and bursts through all the barriers of custom and habit of thought to greet the other. Missions make for unity, and it is in this way, I believe, unity will be attained. It will be by discovery not by creation.<sup>5</sup>

The missionary spirit in me recognises the missionary spirit in you, and that common bond created by the Spirit of mission can transcend all our other differences. Differences exist, even on the meaning of mission itself, so it would be naïve to deny or ignore the tensions but there is something in the nature of Anglicanism that enables it to live with difference for the sake of a higher unity. Its instinct is for an inclusive catholicity that would much rather hold differing perspectives together in an integrated way than see them operate independently. This is why the current crisis in the Communion is so painful, since it strikes at the very heart of this predilection for holding things in creative tension with one another. Down the centuries the Anglican tradition found a way of holding together and integrating Catholic and Protestant perspectives and, although this has never been a true balance, it has come to be known as a *Via Media*. As I have suggested in an earlier *Anvil* article, there is an approach to mission which corresponds to this, for which I have coined the phrase 'Via Missia', since it seeks to hold together other polarities such as word and deed, the one and the many, and the Spirit and realism.<sup>6</sup>

As far back as fifty years ago, A R Vidler recognized creative tensions as a characteristic way of thinking for Anglicans:

Anglican theology is true to its genius when it is seeking to reconcile opposing systems, rejecting them as exclusive systems, but showing that the principle

4 Walls and Ross 2008.

5 Allen 2006: 83, 84.

6 Corrie 2004.

for which each stands has its place within the total orbit of Christian truth, and in the long run is secure only within that orbit...when it is held in tension with other apparently opposed, but really complementary, principles.<sup>7</sup>

It is this ability to hold things together in 'creative tension' which is also at the heart of David Bosch's vision for a holistic ecumenical mission paradigm:

...both the centrifugal and the centripetal forces in the emerging paradigm – diversity versus unity, divergence versus integration, pluralism versus holism – will have to be taken into account throughout. A crucial notion in this regard will be that of creative tension: it is only within the force field of apparent opposites that we shall begin to approximate a way of theologizing for our own time in a meaningful way.<sup>8</sup>

So we are back with David Bosch and the possibility of a new paradigm for unity based on mission in creative tension. Having hopefully done enough to establish the importance of mission for the future identity and unity of Anglicanism, I want in what follows to explore three main elements of an emerging Anglican paradigm: integral mission, sacramental mission and Trinitarian mission. None of these, of course, is exclusively Anglican and they are strongly represented in other traditions. However, they are, I suggest, some of the distinctive characteristics of Anglican mission which form the basis of a common commitment.

## Integral Mission

'Integral mission' is now the preferred way of describing what is sometimes called 'holistic mission'. It emphasises the importance of an integrated approach to mission which does not treat its elements in isolation but rather brings them together in a mutually empowering way. The *missio dei* is a total vision for the transformation of the whole of reality which defines the eschatological goal of mission as bringing back the whole universe into reconciled relationship with God (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20). Evangelism is therefore never considered as an activity on its own without reference to the social and cultural dimensions of its context in which mission as social justice, stewardship of creation, healing and reconciliation are taken into consideration. It is in the context of integral mission that we do evangelism with integrity.

Anglicans are committed to such an integral and holistic view of mission and the Five Marks of Mission, although they are neither a perfect nor complete 'definition' of mission, are one of the best statements of such approach, and have been widely affirmed.<sup>9</sup>

## Five Marks of Anglican Mission

- To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new Christians
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the earth

<sup>7</sup> Vidler 1957: 166.

<sup>8</sup> Bosch 1991: 367.

<sup>9</sup> The five marks are described and explained at [www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm](http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/fivemarks.cfm).

Other Anglican definitions of mission also encapsulate integral mission pretty well. For example there is the definition of mission adopted by the Anglican Consultative Council from a statement of the Commission on Mission of the National Council of Churches in Australia:

Mission is the creating, reconciling and transforming action of God, flowing from the community of love found in the Trinity, made known to all humanity in the person of Jesus, and entrusted to the faithful action and witness of the people of God who, in the power of the Spirit, are a sign, foretaste and instrument of the reign of God.<sup>10</sup>

Or how about this from TEC, the sometimes much maligned Episcopal Church of the USA?:

The mission of God, as manifested in the Church as the Body of Christ, is no less than the eschatological restoration and reconciliation of all people to unity with God and each other in Christ.<sup>11</sup>

### **Transformational mission**

The favourite word for mission at the 1998 Lambeth Conference was 'transformation', making the goal of mission to build transformed and transforming communities. Transformation has always been a holistic word because it implies a radical new situation in every dimension of a given context. To achieve that requires an integrated approach which seeks to establish conditions where wholeness of life may be enjoyed. The aim of God's mission is therefore the transformation of every dimension of society and the created order as well as the transformation of individual lives. The 1998 Lambeth Conference called on Anglicans to work for a transformed humanity, transformed cultures, a transformed mission for the Church, and transformed relationships with other Christian communities.<sup>12</sup>

### **Incarnational mission**

Integral, holistic mission is also profoundly incarnational, another characteristic way of doing mission for Anglicans who are instinctively world-affirming rather than world-denying, believing that this world is the arena of God's mission and that he loved the world so much that his living Word in the person of Jesus 'became flesh and "pitched his tent" in our midst' (John 1:14). Incarnational mission involves the emptying of ourselves, the 'de-centering' of the self which puts privilege and status to one side, takes on the form of a servant and reaches out in unconditional love. This is expressed eloquently by Christopher Duraisingh:

An adequate understanding of the practice of mission today involves: a decentering of self, a courageous border crossing, and empowering of multiple, even contesting, voices within a shared communion.<sup>13</sup>

The incarnational approach to mission therefore brings us alongside people, working *with* them rather than *for* them, sensing with sensitivity how to be visible

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**10** Johnson and Clark 2000: 21.

**11** Douglas 2002: 217.

**12** See, for example, the Section II Report on a 'transforming church': 'the task is the transformation of the life, not only of

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individuals, but also of society, nations, and the created order' (Anglican Communion Office 1999: 125).

**13** Duraisingh 2002: 188.

and involved, but not in an intrusive or aggressive way. With this approach we are willing to listen to different points of view, and we work to be as inclusive as possible.

### **Evangelistic mission**

Some evangelicals do not like such language. They worry that the cutting edge of evangelism is blunted in a holistic approach to mission. They often make the mistake of equating holistic mission with social action or mere 'Christian presence'. This confusion is avoided by the phrase 'integral mission' because it speaks of a vigorous commitment to evangelism within an integral framework. The Lambeth 2008 Reflections do a good job of recognising the importance of evangelism within the wider vision of the *missio dei* and here again we find excellent definitions of integral mission and its relation to evangelism:

Mission is the total action of God in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit – creating, redeeming, sanctifying – for the sake of the whole world. Evangelism is giving voice to the truth of Christ as Lord to all people.<sup>14</sup>

Evangelism is the cutting edge of mission in the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour by word and deed. The Gospel is the life blood of the Church and involves mediating by proclamation, by word, and by action the good news of God's love in Christ which transforms the whole of life.<sup>15</sup>

There is therefore no reason for evangelicals to be shy of integral mission. This was one of the foundational principles for the *Dictionary of Mission Theology* which I edited, because of the importance of integral mission to an evangelical mission theology. I commented in my introduction that the boundaries of evangelical thinking have been stretching in recent years to include (for example) the affirmation of humanity within a more developed creation theology, and the inclusion of reconciliation, social justice and political engagement in the church's mission. The *Dictionary* therefore set out to chart the dimensions of an evangelical integral mission theology.<sup>16</sup>

### **Contextual mission**

Although there are principles here which apply in every context, the way integral mission is expressed will be different in different contexts. In Majority World contexts, where Anglicanism is strong and vibrant, the context may demand that priority be given to social justice and transformation. Beginning from a more integrated worldview it will be natural in such contexts to think holistically, and Anglicans here will lead the way in working out the meaning of integral mission.

Western Anglican theologians have contributed significantly to what has been called 'social Christianity', a robust commitment to applying Christian ethics to every dimension of life. Archbishop William Temple is described as 'western Anglicanism's greatest social prophet' for his influence in the post-war founding of the Welfare State<sup>17</sup> and Stephen Spencer paints a portrait of him as a prophetic, holistic missionary.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Lambeth Conference 2008, para 19.

<sup>15</sup> Lambeth Conference 2008, para 25.

<sup>16</sup> Corrie 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Bartlett 2007: 182.

<sup>18</sup> Spencer 2001.

## Unifying mission

Anglican commitment to integral mission brings together evangelicals, catholics and liberals in common service to the *missio dei*, however differently they then seek to apply it. It is remarkable how such Anglican missiologists as Max Warren and John V Taylor can sometimes sound so catholic (in the sense of being universal and inclusive) even though they had strong evangelical credentials. Max Warren, described by Graham Kings as ‘one of the most influential missiologists of the twentieth century and also one of the strategic evangelical leaders of the Anglican Communion’,<sup>19</sup> was General Secretary of the CMS from 1942 to 1963. In the post-war years he recognised the importance for mission of engagement with the ‘secular’ world and the relationship of faith to every dimension of life. In this we see the beginnings of an evangelical holistic mission theology, and his book *The Christian Mission*, written in 1951, which engages seriously with the relationship of mission to politics and history, is a good example of this.<sup>20</sup> Warren described himself as an evangelical, stating, ‘my roots are with the conservative Evangelicals. My heart is with the *third force*’,<sup>21</sup> By third force he meant those who ‘value decency and beauty in worship, have a deep social conscience, and are deeply concerned about the need for evangelism (without any clear idea of what it is) and who are genuinely ecumenical’. Kings comments that this fits what is now called ‘open evangelical’, arguably the strongest group in the Church of England, with which Kings himself identifies (although it has to be admitted that Warren was something of a universalist, a position which many so-called ‘open evangelicals’ would not wish to be that open to, even though they might well be happy to endorse his holistic approach to mission). Holistic, or integral, mission therefore does act as a unifying principle, even when there are other theological and missiological differences.

## Sacramental mission

### Sacraments and Anglican spirituality

Anglicanism is world-affirming as it seeks to live out gospel values in the world within specific historical and cultural contexts. Its spirituality instinctively embraces the whole of human life. This connects with a holistic view of mission and also with a view of the sacramentality of life so that Anglicans have what Alan Bartlett describes as an ‘outward-looking, community-transforming spirituality’<sup>22</sup> and an ‘embodied spirituality of word and sacrament’.<sup>23</sup> There is a ‘down-to-earth’ quality to this, which explains why the Oxford Movement, having reconstructed Catholic Anglicanism in the nineteenth century, had a strong commitment to urban mission. It was their sacramental theology which inspired anglo-catholic involvement in incarnational mission in the world. As Robert Dolling graphically expressed it: ‘I speak out and fight about the drains because I believe in the Incarnation’.<sup>24</sup>

Sacraments have traditionally mattered more to anglo-catholics than to evangelicals. However in recent years there has been a renewed recognition amongst evangelicals of the importance of sacraments (although there is some debate about their place within ‘new ways of being church’, since many associate them with traditions that ‘fresh expressions’ are trying to move beyond<sup>25</sup>). ‘Sacramental’ can, however, be understood in two ways: specifically in relation to

**19** Kings 2002: 17.

**20** Warren 1951.

**21** Kings 2002: 154.

**22** Bartlett 2007: 29.

**23** Bartlett 2007: 55.

**24** Quoted in Bartlett 2007: 140.

**25** See, for example, chapter 3 of Croft 2008.

the sacraments of the church and their liturgies and, more generally, in relation to a recognition that any of the ordinary things of life are potential mediators of the grace of God. In the western world there is much interest in this latter sense as an instrument of mission in a postmodern age in which spirituality is back in vogue and there is a new openness to experiences of the 'divine' in just about any context. Perhaps 'fresh expressions' therefore ought not to ignore the potential of a sacramental approach to mission!

In relation to mission, we might want to say straight away that a vague awareness of sacredness might be a point of contact but that without reference to Christ it cannot carry any gospel power to transform. But that is perhaps to jump to conclusions before we have considered the possibilities. John Drane, for example, a missiologist who has put a lot of thinking into the interface between gospel and culture, does see the possibilities. He recognises that 'there is a need for a missiological reorientation in the Church's attitude to the innate sacramentality of those who are not Christians'<sup>26</sup> and he goes on to call for a 'reimagined Christian sacramentality'.<sup>27</sup>

Sacraments are intrinsically missional in so far as they act as proclamations and demonstrations of gospel truths. Anglicans are therefore well placed to appropriate a sacramental mode of gospel communication as Anglican sacramental theology has its roots in the Augustinian tradition which sought to hold the real and the symbolic together by saying that the sign participates in the reality which it signifies. The sacrament is therefore more than merely symbolic. By God's grace it has the potential to convey that of which it speaks and thereby enable us to participate in the reality to which it points. Protestants will add that there is nothing automatic in that process (since it needs both the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the human reception of faith in order to be effective) but, in a mystical sense, God is present in the sacrament (though the agreed eucharistic statement of Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches emphasises that Christ is present in the whole action of the rite, not in the elements themselves and most Anglicans have backed away from going further into a more Catholic doctrine of 'transubstantiation', even when this is understood in a mystical sense). Sacraments thus remain within the realm of the material and the human and always point beyond themselves.

Evangelicals have traditionally been world-denying and suspicious of promoting divine revelation through creation and history which in any way undermines propositional revelation, though they have embraced a more incarnational approach to mission in recent years. Indeed, the Incarnation is the climax of God's readiness to reveal himself in and through the material: in Christ human flesh embodies the divine, not merely as a sign or symbol but as the ultimate real presence of God. The Incarnation is a unique and unrepeatable revelation of course (and evangelical sacramental theology tends more towards an eschatological approach which sees sacraments as anticipatory rather than as incarnational) but few would be able to disagree with Archbishop Rowan Williams when he speaks of 'the very specific conviction that the world is full of the life of a God whose nature is known in Christ and in the Spirit... We live in a world alive with God'.<sup>28</sup>

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**26** Drane in Hall and Rowell 2004: 49.

**27** Drane in Hall and Rowell 2004: 51.

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**28** Williams in Hall and Rowell 2004: xiii.

### Sacraments, poiesis and mission

How does all this work missiologically? We can make use of the category of 'poiesis', defined by David Bosch as the 'imaginative creation or representation of evocative images'.<sup>29</sup> So poiesis is an appeal to the imagination using oblique sacramental references which act as signs of deeper truths without stating them propositionally. A sacrament carries potential power to make metaphorical connections between the two interpretive frameworks of the human and divine. For example, our human understanding of bread as a source of life and sustenance connects with the divine truth of Christ as the Bread of Life so that our receiving of the bread of the Eucharist enables us at the same time to receive Christ by faith. This is profoundly missiologically because it is a contextualisation of divine truth. By reframing revelation in a human interpretive framework we can convey gospel truth which can be recognised and therefore received and appropriated.

Missiologically therefore the question is: what are the ordinary signs and symbols within a given cultural context which could potentially act as sacraments? God can, of course, use anything to speak to people about himself and we must also affirm that God is the one who initiates the mediation of divine presence by his Holy Spirit and his purpose is always redemptive. However, creation and all ordinary reality remains just that unless God chooses to work through it. All we can do is to create the possibility for that divine-human encounter. In some Majority World contexts, elements such as bread and water are literally the essence of life and survival. People are more in touch here with the earth and creation and it may be easier to identify elements of the natural world which have profound cultural resonance and can be brought sacramentally into the service of the gospel.

### The Church as sacrament?

We might want to say that the Church, as the 'hermeneutic of the gospel',<sup>30</sup> should be the primary missiological sacrament of grace and truth. Understanding the Church as a sacrament of salvation and of the mystery of God's presence in the world has a long Catholic tradition but it has also gained wide currency within ecumenical Protestant missiology, readily endorsed by recent Anglican thinking in relation to Mission-shaped Church.<sup>31</sup> There is nothing new in this. Liberal catholic Bishop Charles Gore (1853-1932) expounded an Anglican view of the church as the extension or continuation of the Incarnation, a divine-human mystery as the sacrament of Christ's presence in the world. Once again, though, it has to be said that there is nothing automatic or magical about this. The Church must be faithful as a community of people who believe the gospel and live by it but its witness in the world as a community of the Kingdom can only be effectively 'sacramental' by the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit. Some might look at the frailty, humanity and sinfulness of the church and wonder how it can be any kind of sacrament of gospel love – Ernst Käsemann found it 'almost frivolous to call the Church a sacrament'.<sup>32</sup> Certainly, the Church has no reason to boast or worse to imagine that it can replace Christ as the focus of the gospel. But the point of a sacrament is that it is something ordinary that, when it is offered in sacrificial service, is transformed by God's Spirit into a means of his grace. When a person who has no

<sup>29</sup> Bosch 1991: 431.

<sup>30</sup> Newbigin 1989: 222ff.

<sup>31</sup> 'The Church is a sign and disclosure of the Kingdom of God' (Church of England 2004: 94).

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Bosch 1991: 375.

other family support suffers a bereavement and the family of the Church turns out to the funeral to be with them, that is the Church acting in humble servanthood as a sacrament of grace.

### **Sacramental mission and Anglican identity**

How can this sacramental view of mission be incorporated in the future mission identity of Anglicanism and how does it represent a 'paradigm shift' in ecclesiology?

First, in so far as a sacrament points beyond itself, it calls the Church to relocate its identity not in itself and its self-absorbed preoccupations, but in the Kingdom of God in which the Lordship of Christ is pre-eminent. If the Church is meant to be 'missionary by its very nature' then mission which exalts Christ should be its preoccupation and priority. In that mode it is placing itself where God can use it as a sacrament of the truth of Christ.

Secondly, a sacrament is offered to God as a sign of the cross; the bread is broken and the wine is poured out. The Church is sacramental in its mission when it offers signs of its willingness to suffer and to stand with those who suffer. When the world experiences Christian love alongside it in its suffering, God's love and grace are mediated. This is the incarnational dimension of sacramentality.

Thirdly, sacraments are eschatological signs of hope so as Anglicanism shifts from a priority on present survival to direct involvement in universal concerns which affect the future of the planet it will relocate its centre of gravity into mission which builds bridges to the movers and shakers, the politicians, social scientists and ecologists who make decisions which affect global development. This can also work at a local level as small signs of hope are erected through urban regeneration projects, care for asylum seekers, defence of human rights, HIV/AIDS projects and a whole range of other involvements. This brings us back to our first category of integral mission, since all of these elements of the emerging paradigm are intimately related, and we will find this recurring again as we explore next the third and final element of the paradigm.

## **Trinitarian mission**

### **Invitation to participation**

Recent years has seen a great deal of attention given to the Trinity and the relationship of our Triune God with integral mission and I do not intend to go over that ground here.<sup>33</sup> The doctrine of the Trinity has always been at the heart of the Orthodox theology of mission and has come to centre stage within recent Western systematic theology.<sup>34</sup> The focus is on God's invitation to participate in the Trinity; not that the Trinity is merely a model of community, but that we discover the meaning of community as we share in the triune life of divine interrelationship. Relatedly, I would like to suggest as a starting point a theology of revelation that is essentially dialogical before it is propositional: God makes himself known relationally because he desires to draw us into fellowship with himself that we might know him as we participate in his life and it is then in that context in which he reveals propositional truth about himself. God first makes a covenant of grace, taking the initiative to establish a relationship with the people of God based on irrevocable promises: 'I

<sup>33</sup> For an introduction see Accad and Corrie 2007.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, Fiddes 2000; Gunton 1991; Volf 1998.

will be your God and you will be my people'. This invites a response of faith, hence the dialogue, not as a negotiation but as a conversation of genuine mutual respect which leads to understanding: "'Come, let us reason together", says the Lord'. The law serves as a covenant institution, inviting obedience, though not as an imposition but as the terms on which the covenant blessings can be enjoyed. As the covenant unfolds we find God putting the whole of himself into its implementation, involving first his Son and then his Spirit, who together reconstitute the terms of the covenant as a new covenant through which we can share in the Trinitarian life of the Godhead. For this to work, God must come himself in Christ and speak with us 'person to person' as it were in his Incarnation, in literal human dialogue. Then, after the resurrection of the human Christ, the Spirit takes on the dialogue within us, confirming with our spirit that we are children of God and making Christ real to us.

God's model of mission in the *missio dei* is therefore essentially dialogical. He does not first of all come to us with a set of propositions which require our assent. His approach is personal; he sets up an engagement, an encounter, a conversation, a covenant. Our testimony is, in the words of George Herbert, that 'Love bade me welcome'. There are multiple examples of this in the Bible of course but if at the heart of it is the Incarnation then our incarnational mission becomes dialogical as it follows the way in which Christ encounters people and enters into conversation with them. Bosch and Newbigin and, I believe, Rowan Williams, work with an essentially dialogical model of mission. All of the elements of this personal, relational, dialogical encounter are strongly represented in Anglican theology: grace, covenant, incarnation, Spirit and, of course, Trinity.<sup>35</sup> Anglican theology is intrinsically Trinitarian and resonates readily with the dialogical, relational view of mission which derives from the Trinity.

### **Anglicans and the Spirit: John V. Taylor**

What is perhaps not so obviously characteristic of Anglicanism is a focus on the Holy Spirit and yet we find that some leading Anglican theologians have made the Holy Spirit the key to their Trinitarian missiology. An example of this approach is John V Taylor.

John Taylor, General Secretary of the CMS from 1963 to 1973, and then Bishop of Winchester from 1974 until 1984, wrote his most celebrated work, *The Go-Between God*, in 1972.<sup>36</sup> It may have been his way of connecting with the burgeoning charismatic movement of the time, but his theology has been recognised as one of the great Anglican contributions to mission. Taylor's presupposition is that the Spirit is the driving force of mission: 'The chief actor in the historic mission of the Church is the Holy Spirit. He is the director of the whole enterprise'.<sup>37</sup> The Holy Spirit is the 'invisible go-between' with the power to make communication with the divine possible, to create encounters in which our eyes are opened to the deeper meaning behind the ordinary things of life. He is the 'immanent and anonymous presence of God'.<sup>38</sup> As the Creator Spirit he is God 'on the inside of creation', its life-giving energy, renewing, energizing, recreating; the Spirit of Life who works from deep within creation to give it relationship, coherence, order, and balance; the One who makes it possible for us to connect with the

**35** See, for example, Spencer 2007, especially chapter 3 entitled 'Mission as Participation in the Trinity'.

**36** Taylor 1972.

**37** Taylor 1972: 3.

**38** Taylor 1972: 64.

Creator God. This means that our engagement in mission is a participation in his continuing work of creation, and not merely in its redemption: 'Mission therefore means to recognise what the Creator-Redeemer is doing in his world and try to do it with him'.<sup>39</sup> To do this requires us to share in the same Spirit with which Christ in his humanity was possessed in indissoluble union: 'He who knew himself to be the beloved Son through his unique possession by the Spirit of God, shares with us now his abba-relationship with the Father by filling us with the same Spirit',<sup>40</sup> the Spirit of mission.

Taylor's profoundly Trinitarian approach brings together the relational, the sacramental, and the incarnational. We are beginning to see how the Holy Spirit brings into coherent relationship the dimensions of mission we have been considering. A sacramental encounter with God becomes universally possible through ordinary created things through which the Spirit opens our eyes to the possibility of a relationship with God which takes us beyond the ordinary. This becomes personal, living, dynamic and experienced in Christ. Nothing is automatically sacramental but the Spirit creates an awareness in all people of the possibility of a relationship beyond the merely material creation. In Christ, that relationship, as it is freely received by our own choice, becomes a participation in the Trinity and, by extension, a participation in the mission of the Trinity.

Our mission therefore becomes essentially Christ's mission in the power of the Spirit. Taylor sees our witness as re-presenting Christ in his response to the Father of unconditional obedience to the Father's will. So we are sent as he was sent so that our response of love for God should mirror his response and thereby demonstrate to the world what a liberating experience it is to choose to love God with the love with which he loved us. In this way, Christians become once again a sacrament of Christ's love; in themselves the sign and symbol of God's presence, bearing within their ordinariness and humanity the real presence of Christ. The Protestant version of that is to focus on the witness that Christians are to the world by the holiness of their lives, what speaks to the world of Christ. The world may only receive that witness as something very ordinary but by the power of God's Spirit it can be transformed into a true embodiment of the presence and truth of God and of his love. This relates to holistic mission because it affirms that every dimension of life is important to God. There is nothing in all creation that he cannot transform by his Spirit so that it becomes a witness to his presence and a partner in his mission.

It may be asked whether Taylor was thinking more as a theologian than as an Anglican but in so far as he reflects Anglican predilections I suggest that he reinforces a characteristic Anglican approach to mission. What may be needed is a re-discovery of the Holy Spirit of mission within Anglicanism if it is to be truly Trinitarian. Once again the Majority World church has an advantage here since the realm of the spiritual is so much more immediate and pervasive than in the western world which has a great deal to learn from world Anglicanism in experiencing the Holy Spirit. In whatever context, the 'paradigm shift' this time will be from the institutional to the spiritual and the personal. This will require a relational and communal ecclesiology which both transcends and transforms inherited structures and sets them free for new ways of being church. All this is of

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<sup>39</sup> Taylor 1972: 37.

<sup>40</sup> Taylor 1972: 110.

course already happening and it is surely significant that Anglicanism is at the forefront of this movement to contextualise our ecclesiology and revive its missional identity.

## Conclusions

We have seen how a new missionary paradigm for the identity of Anglicanism can be characterised as holistic, sacramental and Trinitarian and that all three of these issue in an incarnational, relational, dialogical model of mission. There is an intimate and integral synchrony between all these dimensions of mission so that they all need each other and they are all needed if a transformed missional identity is to be formed for Anglicanism. We have also recognised that this will need to be worked out appropriately in each context and that some contexts will contribute significantly to our appreciation of these principles because of their proximity to them in daily life. If the future of Anglicanism is with the Majority World churches then the paradigm will need to take root there and find profound resonance within each context.

Because the paradigm is relational it is also covenantal and so if the future of Anglicanism involves the Anglican Covenant envisaged by the Windsor process it must be faithful to all these missional characteristics. The Covenant ought to be an opportunity to put flesh on these principles so that they can be facilitated in practice. For Jesus, the heart of the New Covenant was the Passover meal, initiating a corporate sharing in the purposes of God. A future covenant relationship must therefore be a corporate sharing in sacrificial love, the free giving of ourselves to one another and the world in mission, called to service with all our human ordinariness and frailty.

I suggest therefore that it is only in mission that a ‘unity in communion’ can be formed and sustained, which is why the Covenant, as Tim Dakin suggested, should be viewed and interpreted essentially as a missional document and its section on mission, while regrettably quite general, is so important.<sup>41</sup>

Mission that is holistic, sacramental and Trinitarian gives Anglicans the grounds for a common identity, enabling each expression of Anglican faith and practice to transcend their differences in service to Christ and the world. Unity is not about

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**41** Each Church affirms ‘the imperative of God’s mission into which the Communion is called, a vocation and blessing in which each Church is joined with others in Christ in the work of establishing God’s reign. As the Communion continues to develop into a worldwide family of interdependent churches, we embrace challenges and opportunities for mission at local, regional, and international levels. In this, we cherish our mission heritage as offering Anglicans distinctive opportunities for mission collaboration’ (2.1.4) and commits itself ‘to answer God’s call to undertake evangelisation and to share in the healing and reconciling mission “for our blessed but broken, hurting and fallen world”...’ (2.2.1),

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undertaking the mission of God in Christ described in terms of the Five Marks of Mission (2.2.2). Each church commits itself ‘to engage in this mission with humility and an openness to our own ongoing conversion in the face of our unfaithfulness and failures in witness’ (2.2.3), ‘to revive and renew structures for mission which will awaken and challenge the whole people of God to work, pray and give for the spread of the gospel’ (2.2.4) and ‘to order its mission in the joyful and reverent worship of God, thankful that in our eucharistic communion “Christ is the source and goal of the unity of the Church and of the renewal of human community”’(2.2.5).

merely putting up with each other, nor even passively standing together in Christ in our Father's presence; it is also being summoned and drawn together into God's mission once we are sent out from the Father's presence, in union with Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Because of the dialogical nature of the paradigm it will always involve an on-going creative relationship, transforming and being transformed, always in a sense 'emerging', even as the universal Church itself moves ever closer to the eschatological purpose of its calling to be the 'fullness of Him who fills all in all' (Eph. 1:22).

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