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***Ecclesia Anglicana* Conference of September 2020:
Cooking Anglican ecclesiology in a Kenyan Pot?**

Julius Gathogo, PhD
jgathogom@yahoo.com
<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1718-0082>
Kenyatta University, ANCCI University & RITR-UNISA

Abstract

As the first wave of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19) was being experienced in Kenya since 13 March 2020, when a 27-year-old Kenyan woman became the first person to be diagnosed with it, some Anglicans in Kenya were contrariwise overcoming the shock, that went with it, as they undertook noble intellectual activities. As numbers went on soaring, and as some celebrated artists, scholars, clerics, and other cadres of society became early casualties of Covid-19, an *Ecclesia Anglicana* was boldly entering the ecclesiastical market-place with new rhythms hitherto unknown in Kenya's historiography. In other words, a theo-ecclesial creativity was cooking in an African pot, and cooking well from the nethermost depths of the Ocean floor, rather than from the top stratum. While the revolutionary trigger was set on 6 August 2017, it had to await the worst pandemic since the Spanish Flu of 1918-1919 before it picked up its momentum. Put it differently, the momentum picked up astoundingly during Kenya's Covid-19 lockdown, as two major conferences were successfully held during this chilling moment. The first major webinars' conference was held on 26 August 2020; while the second one was held on 16 September 2020. Characteristically, the two conferences made a bold attempt at understanding the Anglican ecclesiology by cooking it from the local resources and spiced it up through the modern science and technology. Was it a protest against theo-intellectual lockdown cutting across the continent, a phenomenon where a casual observation shows that social and ecclesial leadership has largely attracted the less intellectually-inclined sons and daughters of the land? Methodologically, this article seeks to explore, and indeed make a survey of *Ecclesia Anglicana* and attempt to understand it beyond the founders' perspectives, after interviews with some of them, and make an informed analysis. Second, this article will attempt to show how *Ecclesia Anglicana* is ushering in a new rhythm, as it beats the drums of science and technology, modern communication and social media platforms, and hopefully change the status quo for the better. It appears that nothing will slow down this rapid tempo; for if the pandemic has not, what else can do so? Third, the article will focus more on the 16 September 2020 webinar conference which, in my view, was the most climactic moment for *Ecclesia Anglicana* since 2017 when the idea was mooted and subsequently released to the public square for broader consumption. Will *Ecclesia Anglicana* help in building a more informed and/or an intellectually engaging Kenyan Anglican society?

Key words: Ecclesia Anglicana, Kenyan Anglicans, African rituals, African Christianity.

Introduction

Although the Kenya's *Ecclesia Anglicana* Conferences of 2020 were a positive move that was devoid of serious controversy, if any, the phrase itself has terrifying memories to the people of East Africa. It reminisces the Kikuyu Ecumenical Conference of 1913, held during the cold June of 1913, at The Church of the Torch, Thogoto, Kikuyu (Presbyterian Church), in the present day Kiambu County (Cole 1957). The fact that it was the first fully fledged conference on the unity of the nine missionary societies in the then British East Africa, and came after other 'minor' conferences such as Maseno 1908, Kijabe 1909, and Nairobi 1911, the Kikuyu Conference of 1913 left a bitter taste in the mouths to some, as theo-doctrinal controversies threatened the huge successes of the 1913 conference (Gathogo 2010). In particular, Bishop Frank Weston of the Church Mission Society (Anglican), Zanzibar, brought what came to be known as Westonian controversy after the Holy Eucharist was administered to non-Anglicans, and was conducted jointly with the head of the Scottish Missions, the Rev. Dr John Arthur. Weston could not also understand how Anglicans could stoop so low to an extent of taking their activities in the Presbyterian (Scottish) buildings in the name of ecumenical cooperation. Can an Episcopal Church bend to any other Church in the name of federation of missions? He would wonder.

Weston, a great missionary scholar, a polished debater, a fine preacher, and an impeccable administrator from Oxford, England, who was enthroned as the Bishop of Zanzibar on 6 November 1903, wrote a protest letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Randall Davidson. In this letter, he demanded an official enquiry into the Kikuyu Conference proceedings of 1913 (Gathogo 2010). He also demanded a formal trial of the two Bishops of Mombasa (Bishop William G. Peel) and Uganda (Bishop John Jamieson Willis) before the Archbishop of Canterbury (Randall Davidson) for breaking the purity of the Anglican Communion when they participated in the Holy Eucharist with non-Anglicans and/or delegates who were not confirmed by an Anglican Bishop. Certainly, a conference which had delegates from the protestant missionary societies could not have stood under one doctrinal position. As noted in Gathogo (2010:78), "The Conference was attended by nine missionary groups: the Gospel Missionary Society (GMS), the German Lutheran Mission (GLM), the Friends Africa Mission (FAM), Seventh Day Adventists (SDA), the Church Missionary Society (CMS), the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM), the United Methodist Mission (UMM), and the African Inland Mission (AIM)," hence the theo-doctrinal controversies that followed suit. Besides Westonian controversy, the American-rooted African Inland Missions were 'innocently' requesting the conference to allow them to be re-baptising Anglicans via immersion (Cole 1957). The Adventists were also keen on the Sabbath Day, and now Bishop Weston trailed the meeting with sensational letters that were characterised by blind denominationalism that fails to see anything good in others, hence he knew only one song, the Anglican song, and any other doctrinal cooperation was nothing but missing the arrow and its target.

Critically important to this article is that Bishop Weston wrote two stinging pamphlets in order to hammer his point home. One of the pamphlets was entitled: "*Ecclesia Anglicana*: For what does she stand?" and "The case against Kikuyu: a study in vital principles" (Cole 1957:5). Writing in 1914 to the Bishop of St. Albans (in his pamphlet, "*Ecclesia Anglicana*: For What Does She Stand?" Bishop Frank Weston, said thus:

My purpose is to submit to you, as a representative Prelate of the *Ecclesia Anglicana*, and as a most zealous supporter of her foreign missions, the thesis that at the present time, having regard to her exceedingly chaotic system of Truth, she is entirely unfit to send missionaries to heathen or Muhammadan lands. Your Lordship will guess at once that I have not always taken this view. I am now in my sixteenth year of missionary work; to it I have given my best years; and for it I have

gladly sacrificed tastes and aspirations that fail of satisfaction in the isolation of our tropical life. Why then do I now begin to doubt? Simply because the *Ecclesia Anglicana* is content to have lost her power of self-expression, so that we out here can no longer appeal to her Voice or rest upon her Witness. She has no Voice: she offers no single Witness (Weston 1914).

He went on to put up his case, thus:

In that [Kikuyu] Conference [of 1913] two Bishops and several priests of the *Ecclesia Anglicana* committed themselves to a temporary Federation of Missionary Societies, with a view to the establishment of a new, united protestant Church of East Africa and Uganda. The doctrinal basis of the present Federation is, I gather, likely to be taken over by the new Church. It involves the acknowledgment of the Bible as the supreme rule of Faith and Practice, in accordance with which we may suppose so many different Missions exist side by side; it requires an acceptance of the Apostles' and Nicene Creed, not as a supreme rule but merely as a general expression of belief; and emphasizes the absolute authority of Scripture as the Word of God, and the vital importance of belief in the atoning death of Our Lord as the ground of forgiveness (Weston 1914).

Weston was however invited by Archbishop Randall Davidson to meet with him on 7 February 1914. Two days later, the Archbishop issued a statement in which he made it clear that there would be no trial of the two bishops whom Weston had accused of “propagating heresy and committing schism” (Smith 1926:147). This did not however end the controversy right away, as Weston continued complaining, sometimes threatening to resign altogether till he cooled down and even attended the Kikuyu Conference of 1918. Certainly, *Ecclesia Anglicana* had a strong defender who however walked confidently though with doctrinal blindness that did not allow him to see anything good in other denominations of the universal Church of Christ. As will be noted in this article, a Kenyan *Ecclesia Anglicana* of the twenty-first century is certainly facing different concerns from those of the early twentieth century missionary Christianity.

Etymology of *Ecclesia Anglicana*

Etymologically, the phrase or the term *Ecclesia Anglicana* comes from the Latin medieval classics, 500 to 1500 AD. It literally means The English Church. It was initially used to describe the specific adherents, institutions, the liturgical traditions, the Churches, and the theological concepts developed by the established Church of England, the Anglican Communion, and the Continuing Anglican Churches (Blair 2005 & Smith 1978). The Churches that have emerged from an interaction with the English Church also fall within the umbrella of *Ecclesia Anglicana*. Equally, the Churches which have seceded from the Anglican Communion as a result of doctrinal and liturgical differences, also falls within *Ecclesia Anglicana*. In view of this, the African-Anglican Church falls within the broad umbrella of *Ecclesia Anglicana*. In some parts of the world, an Anglican is referred to as an Episcopalian, hence *Ecclesia Anglicana* is a big team that includes independent affiliates of the Anglican Church (Blair 2005 & Smith 1978).

Doctrinally, *Ecclesia Anglicana* and/or the Anglican Communion regards itself to be part of the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. It also considers itself as both Catholic and Reformed. To some, it represents a non-papal Catholicism; while for others (Blair 2005 & Smith 1978), *Ecclesia Anglicana* is simply Protestantism without the so-called dominant figures and/or reformers such as John Knox, Martin Luther, John Wesley, and Ulrich Zwingli among others. For self-identity, as *Ecclesia Anglicana*, the above descriptions are combined to largely understand *Ecclesia Anglicana*. This is in taking into account that the Anglican Communion is too broad, theologically and geographically, and with almost 40 Provinces globally that are in communion

with the Archbishop of Canterbury. It has over 70 million members. In turn, the Archbishop of Canterbury is the principal leader of the Church of England. He (as no woman has ever been) is also the symbolic head of the worldwide Anglican Communion, and doubles as the Bishop of the Diocese of Canterbury. In a line that goes back to 1400 years, Archbishop Justin Welby (1956 -), enthroned at Canterbury Cathedral on 21 March 2013, was by 2020 the 105th leader of *Ecclesia Anglicana*. The first one was Augustine of Canterbury. He is described in most publications as the “Apostle to the English,” who was sent from Rome in 597 AD (Blair 2005 & Smith 1978). This background has helped us to understand the background that informs the Kenya’s *Ecclesia Anglicana* group even though it is not clear whether the founders had this historical baggage in mind. A survey of the aims and objectives of its formation will however help us understand this connection in the latter.

***Ecclesia Anglicana* Group in Kenya**

The idea of establishing *Ecclesia Anglicana* Group in Kenya was mooted in mid-2017 and was conceptualized as the ideal idea of making Anglicans talk and eventually explore ways of addressing myriad of problems affecting the Anglican Communion. Was it meant to be a revival of sorts? Not really, as their objectives weren’t a mere revival of the Anglican Communion in Kenya. First, it was first conceptualized by two Clergy and one lay Church leader. That is, Rev. Enock Opuka, Rev. Evans Omollo, and Engineer Edison Ochieng (interview Boaz 10:10:2020). Second, the main point behind this was to create a forum specifically for Anglicans through which they would freely discuss issues touching on the history of their Church, contemporary happenings (as in the case of same-sex marriages that has widened the division of Anglicans in the west and in Africa), current challenges (Covid-19, and divisive electoral processes), and emerging issues (impact of Afro-Pentecostal wave to the African-Anglican) among others. Other critical issues that informed the brainstorming that brought forth *Ecclesia Anglicana* included: doctrines, traditions, liturgy, practices, and other issues affecting the Church and its future (interview Njoroge 12 October 2020).

In the case of liturgy, the pioneers of *Ecclesia Anglicana* (Kenya) navigated through the idea of changes in Anglican liturgy. Are there serious concerns in the Anglican liturgy in Kenya? Are there grey areas that needed to be attended to? Is there anything liturgical that has gone astray? What is the future of the liturgy of the Anglican Church? Has the Anglican liturgy changed and/or affected by the New Religious Movements (NRMs)? (interview Boaz 10:10:2020). Where does the Kenyan Anglican stand in light of the strong NRMs waves posing as Afro-Pentecostals despite being cultic, heretical, occultist, and sectarian? What is the trajectory of the Anglican Church in matters to do with liturgy? Has Anglican liturgy in Kenya demonstrated to be truly Anglican-Christian and truly African-Christian adherence? How have the rich elements of African heritage enriched Anglican Christian liturgy in Kenya, or failed to do so? (interview Njoroge 12 October 2020). Considering that the African-Anglican Church falls within the broad umbrella of *Ecclesia Anglicana*, how can this understanding inform our scholarly-liturgical discourses?

With some emerging challenges posing a real threat to the post-colonial African-Anglican Christianity, conceptualizing a Kenyan *Ecclesia Anglicana* had serious issues to contend with. While Bishop Frank Weston in mid-1913 and shortly afterwards dealt with doctrinal matters, all in their bid to preserve the purity of *Ecclesia Anglicana*, the twenty-first century Kenya has been dealing with a doctrinally impure environment and/or a polluted theological environment by NRMs, that poses danger to the very existence of *Ecclesia Anglicana* in Kenya. In light of this, a return to the dangers of occultism will shed light on this. In its broadest sense, the occult is a category of supernatural beliefs and practices that are considered to neither fall under religion nor

science. It encompasses phenomena such as those dealing with mysticism, magic and spirituality that may necessarily be foreign to the context (Muriuki 2006). Likewise, contemporary issues that triggered the birth of *Ecclesia Anglicana* include: politics, family, leadership, liturgical, Church structure, mission of the Church, prophetic voice of the Church, emerging doctrinal issues such as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBTQ), and homosexual relations (Kaunda 2020, Gathogo 2020b). Other marital issues that *Ecclesia Anglicana* (Kenya) has to contend with are: same-sex sexuality, polygamy concern, levirate marriage where the brother of a deceased man is obliged to marry his brother's widow, Polygyny where one man marries more than one woman at a given time, Fraternal polyandry, Serial monogamy where individuals are permitted to marry again, Straight monogamy where remarriage is not allowed, Non-sororal polygyny where wives are not related as sisters, Sororal polygyny where the wives are invariably the sisters, Sororate marriage, Group marriage, Spouse swapping largely among wayward NRMs, and the current Church in Africa and its relationship with its counterpart in the west (Kaunda 2020, Gathogo 2020b). With such confusing contemporary concerns, *Ecclesia Anglicana* has its job well-cut, and as it plays the role of the proverbial Giraffe that sees far and ultimately advises accordingly by moving away from the surging wild fire. Characteristically, membership was (and still is) constituted through a Follow-up WhatsApp link sent to targeted individuals, through direct Cell Phone calls, Skype, Zoom, Google-Meet, E-mails, Short Text Messages (SMS) and other elements of modern science and technology. Prior to the emergency of Covid-19 in Kenya, March 2020, major businesses were conducted through WhatsApp online platform. After the influx of Covid-19, the group grew bigger and as we shall see, Webinar Conferences have been conducted through Zooming and Google Meet online services, among others (interview Boaz 10:10:2020). Hence, Covid-19 has ironically strengthened the *Ecclesia Anglicana* group, though not by design, hence the national lock-down was not a wasted opportunity but a productive moment.

Armed with the above moral-ethical concerns, proponents of *Ecclesia Anglicana* forum in Kenya had every reason to roll it out for public consumption and critique. In other words, the decision to invite all like-minded Anglicans became the vogue. In words akin to those of Isaiah 1:18, the three founders of the movement (Enock Opuka, Evans Omollo, and Edison Ochieng) could find themselves talking in the tongues and words seen in Isaiah's message, thus: "[Come on!], Come now, let us reason together.... though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." The message here is the end-product, that whatever *Ecclesia Anglicana* faces, honest conversation will make it "as white as snow" and where it is as "red and wanting like crimson, it shall become smooth like wool."

Beyond softness and/or smoothness character, Wool is symbolic and critical in attempting to understand *Ecclesia Anglicana* in that it is also the most resilient fiber due to its natural crimp that helps it keep its shape. Wrinkles disappear when the garment or fabric is steamed. Such Afro-Anglo-optimism enthused this agenda from the very outset. On 6 August 2017, a WhatsApp Group for *Ecclesia Anglicana* was opened up and the journey commenced. From August 2017 to date, Anglican ecclesiology is being cooked in a Kenyan pot, and is envisioned to bring transformative growth of the larger *Ecclesia Anglicana* locally and globally, especially after the Bishop of Bondo, Prof. David Kodia, took the matter more seriously and further led in the opening of a sister group, the Anglican Writers Series (AWS) in Kenya as a progression to this. The idea here was to bring the rich oral engagements into published works. Considering that the written word lives longer than the writer, Prof. Kodia must have embraced this great opportunity strongly, and eventually understood its logic in growing a Kenyan version of *Ecclesia Anglicana* further by leading through another intellectual front. Kodia's action is well reflected in a Kenyan indigenous saying that says

thus: *Wathi wakura wongagirirwo ungi* (A good idea yields a better idea). In his WhatsApp communique to the sister group, the Anglican Writers Series (Kenya), Prof. Kodia sought to link up the two groups to the highest governing body of the Anglican Church, the Provincial Office/Synod so as to give it an official recognition within the system. Kodia (2020) addressed the members of AWS thus:

Once again we want to appreciate you so much for accepting this enormous challenge. The idea of the writing project had been mooted in our parent wall *Ecclesia Anglicana* at a time when background issues became major impediments to the success of the project. For this reason, we had consultation with some of you that ended up with the creation of this wall. We intend to develop protocol for the writing project and subsequently come up with the following:

1. An intellectual masterpiece that will inform our understanding of contemporary issues in relation to Anglican Church
2. Develop theological responses to contemporary issues affecting the Church and society
3. Identify gaps existing in our Church polity, liturgical formulation, ecclesiastical order, ecumenical relations
4. Develop a periodical for various topical issues for the Church and our training institutions
5. To empower young scholars with skills for research and writing

For this project to succeed we must ensure that The Anglican Writers Series receives acknowledgement as the research arm of the ACK and be funded through the Board of Education.

I now seek to invite comments from members.

We may have to form a working committee for proper coordination.

With the idea receiving a clear endorsement from members who debated it perceptively, *Anglicana Ecclesia* and its sister group, the Anglican Writers Series, was set to do well, especially at the theo-intellectual level. As duty allocations were being proposed and shared out, the good idea had certainly graduated into a better idea. With Prof. Kodia seemingly emerging as the de-facto leader in the second phase of *Ecclesia Anglicana* and its research and publication arm, a powerful theo-Anglicana-intellectual revolution was set in motion, so as to transform Kenya. In every movement, the emergency of a leader, besides the founders, converts the original idea into an institution that serves several generations. Without publishing on its origin, growth, fears, hopes, challenges and prospects, an institution easily loses its focus; as losing its historiography means that the people who hatched the idea are permanently relegated to the periphery. In any case, historiography (study of historical writing) aids us in examining not only history itself, but also the broader overlying characteristics that shape the recording of history itself. In this understanding, AWS has its place in history; as the agenda of transforming *Ecclesia Anglicana* remains a current and contemporary assignment that needs dedicated service.

Membership in *Ecclesia Anglicana* (Kenya)

By 15 October 2020, *Ecclesia Anglicana* (Kenya) had 14 out of about 40 Anglican Bishops in Kenya. There were other Anglican Bishops who left after being there for some times. They were expected to re-join the group later. Other notable members within the Anglican ecclesiastical ladder can be summarised as follows: approximately 40 Archdeacons, about 30 Anglican Canons, about 40 Rural Deans and over 50 other members of the House of Clergy. The number of both laity and Clergy keeps growing hence the figures could not be ascertained in concrete terms, by October 2020. Nevertheless, the group also has notable scholars in the local Universities, College Principals, Administrators, Theological Educators, Medical professionals, Lawyers, Teachers, Accountants, Surveyors and other professionals from all shades. All of them profess the Anglican faith, they were

roughly 300 Anglicans, by October 2020. The tiny group that was began by two senior Clergy and one lay person was expanding gradually by October 2020, beyond their initial expectations (Interview with Mwangi 11:10:2020, Njoroge 12:10: 2020, Okumu 13:10: 2020, Ochieng' 11:10:2020).

One notable illustrious son of *Ecclesia Anglicana* (Kenya), and who will be considered in great length, is the 30-year old Rev. Boaz Abuko Akoya. By October 2020, he was serving at St. Augustine Madaraka Anglican Church, under the All Saints Cathedral Diocese – a Diocese under The Most Rev. Dr. Jackson Nasoore Ole Sapit. Ole Sapit was by October 2020 was also serving as the Archbishop of Kenya's Anglican Province, hence the de-facto head of *Ecclesia Anglicana* in Kenya. Although Rev. Boaz Abuko Akoya was one of the most influential members of the *Ecclesia Anglicana* WhatsApp Group, he was still an Anglican Deacon serving in the capacity of an attached Clergy at Makadara Parish of All Saints Cathedral Diocese. He was made an Anglican Deacon on 19 October 2019 by Bishop Charles Asilutwa of Maseno North Anglican Diocese. This is after Bishop Asilutwa noted his huge contributions in *Ecclesia Anglicana* group, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), and the World Council of Churches where he had attended several of their high level conferences and contributed substantially. His ongoing theological training at undergraduate levels (St. Paul's University) was also critical in this consideration.

On 8 October 2020, AACC competitively selected Rev. Boaz as one of the theologians in Africa who were to attend the forthcoming international theological forum on "Misleading Theologies in Africa" that were to be at Desmond Tutu Conference Centre, AACC Headquarters, Westlands, Nairobi, on 23 – 27 November 2020. Since his invitation by the pioneers of the *Ecclesia Anglicana* group, Boaz became passionately active through contributing in most of the discussions, inviting people to the group through sending a web link and phone calls, uniting conflicting voices, and to an extent, he somewhat played the role of group moderator. Hence, he has had a lot of influence in the group. By a confluence of history and through sheer hard work, Rev. Boaz emerged eventually as one of the most active group coordinators and conveners of webinars and *Ecclesia Anglicana* conferences. A sizeable section of its membership is beholden to the Rev Boaz Akoya's passionate and dedicated appeals to the ideals and objectives of the group, a development that almost eclipses the three founders of *Ecclesia Anglicana*, just as in the military enforcement where *Amri ni kubwa kuliko anayeitoa* (command is bigger than the person giving it), hence, the spoken word grows bigger than the originator.

The August and September 2020 Webinar Conferences

While *Ecclesia Anglicana* has been there since 6 August 2017, its climactic moment came, ironically, during the Covid-19 lockdowns in Kenya (March-September 2020). Riding on the success of science and technology, in this era of globalization, members continued with live discussions as they remained in their respective houses. They could discuss Covid-19 itself, methods of combat, the distressed economy, the national politics vis-à-vis the then closed down Churches and other locked down places among other relevant areas. With locked-down Churches, *Ecclesia Anglicana* became Church within a Church, and went beyond there, as the cross-pollination of ideas went a notch higher to make it a forum of mass education. During my interview sessions with some members, I gathered that *Ecclesia Anglicana's* WhatsApp platform also became 'a house of comfort' that provided the much needed therapy, especially as members focussed on the abrupt disruptions of life that had caught up the nation like a wild fire. To others, it became a University of Life; where great ideas were raised up by its membership. To others, it was simply a good school; others saw it as a forum of self-reflection; while others saw it as a useful discussion forum even though it had some co-ordinating challenges – as members picked diverse and broad topics that

were not scientifically concluded, among other viewpoints. Nevertheless, the above noted issues largely seemed to confirm the nature of God's mysterious working, a phenomenon where an isolated oasis is always provided somewhere in the desert of dry stones, and dry bones and lifelessness. Or doesn't God in history work in mysterious ways?

Despite all this, two successful webinars were conducted. The first webinar conference of *Ecclesia Anglicana* (Kenya) took place on 26 August 2020. Its main theme was: "Which is the way for theological education in post Covid-19 times?" It was attended by about 50 members. It had one main Speaker (Rev. Dr. Linda Adolwa, who stepped in after Bishop Dr. Christopher Ruto failed to present his paper due to technological hitch) and 2 Discussants (Bishop Prof. Kodia and Rev. Patience Wanzala). The members responded actively after the key respondents. The second webinar conference was held on 16 September 2020 under the theme: "The Current Challenges and the way forward for the Anglican Church." It had about 100 members, a trend that shows how the webinar conference membership doubled after only one month. The September 2020 *Ecclesia Anglicana* Conference also had 1 Key Speaker (the Rev. Canon Professor Joseph Denge Galgalo) and 2 Discussants (Bishop Dr. Christopher Ruto and Christine Busolo - the Lay Secretary of the Provincial Synod). As in the former, members responded actively after the key respondents made their presentations.

This article focusses more on the second webinar *Ecclesia Anglicana* Conference of 16 September 2020, as it is considered the most climactic, as members later kept on calling the de-facto convener (Rev Boaz Akoya) to set more of these forums, hence the momentum had picked up in earnest. As an Anglican outfit, the management of the group was by October 2020 working for episcopal approval and/or stamp; and the group was certainly headed towards getting an official recognition by the Anglican Province of Kenya (interview Mwangi 11:10:2020). This is evidenced by a book project on *Ecclesia Anglicana: Retracing Our Steps as the Kenyan Church*, where an approval for its publication was being sought from the Provincial Synod by December 2020. By 10 October 2020, a call for papers had been made; and about 20 scholars had accepted an invite to write a book chapter or a journal article on diverse concerns in Anglican Christianity. With Bishop Prof. David Kodia leading in establishing a sister forum, the Anglican Writers Series (AWS-K), the journey towards the official recognition by the Church's Provincial Headquarters had started in earnest by 15 October 2020 (interview Okumu 13:10:2020). Hence the group maintains its Anglican identity, traditions, historicity, a blending of Reformed-Catholic theology, Anglican practices, and its ecclesiastical hierarchies and ladders. The group has withstood the tests of time despite its dynamism and the diverse theological trajectories exhibited by its membership from the various professional backgrounds. Embracing all cadres of Anglicanism is certainly a challenging task.

The September 2020 *Ecclesia Anglicana* Conference

As noted earlier, this article considers the 16 September 2020 webinar forum as the ground-breaking conference that had a far-reaching effect on the future of the group. In my view, the success of this conference can be attributed to the passionate role of Rev Boaz Abuko Akoya, as the de-facto convener. Prior to the convening of the conference, Akoya's illustriousness was clearly visible as he sought to invite and kept on reminding attendees, putting up mechanisms that would ensure that a missing speaker could be replaced easily without causing inconveniences to the group. He would take time to call people via cell phone, e-mails, short text messages (SMS), WhatsApp, Facebook, and through other workable forms of modern communication (interview Mwangi 11:10:2020). I was personally mesmerized by the many phone calls that he made to me. Who was footing his communication bills? I wondered. He would remind me to take notes of the proceedings and

eventually make an informed reflection on it so as to “help us enrich our discourses.” I felt honoured by the privilege to attend this important conference, and more importantly the opportunity to make a reflection that eventually deepened my knowledge on some issues that came up as it proceeded.

A month after the September 2020 conference, the giant Pan-African ecclesiastical body, whose continental Headquarters are in Westlands, Nairobi, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) held their Webinar Conference on 16 October 2020. Their main theme was: “Ecclesial Engagement in Public Theology: Covid-19—Unsettling Notion of Human Wholeness and Well-Being.” As a major ecclesiastical body, they invited a renowned Ghanaian Professor, J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu of Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana. Professor Asamoah-Gyadu, who was also the Director of Centre for the Study of Christianity in Africa, in Trinity Theological Seminary, Accra, Ghana, delivered a 6000 words paper, which was rich in content and composition (interview Boaz 10:10:2020). His paper was entitled: “Church Covid-19 and Public Theology in Africa.” The conference attracted 45 participants. Hence, the August to October 2020 were critical moments in reshaping Christian spirituality in the era of Covid-19.

In the landmark case of 16 September 2020 conference, it attracted 10 serving Bishops of the Anglican fraternity in Kenya, plus a retired Bishop (Joseph Wasonga), the 11th Bishop. As a discussant, Bishop Wasonga succinctly captured what the conference wanted to ignore. That is, the importance of communality in African theological discourses (interview Mwangi 11:10:2020). In other words, Bishop Wasonga sought to caution the participants that if African Christianity ignores our African heritage in the name of pursuing a uniform Christian liturgy, generic Christian theology, uniform theology, universal Christianity, uniform Christian spirituality and so on, it will be another way of preparing the demise of Christianity in Africa and/or imitating the West unapologetically. Second, Bishop Wasonga’s response also implied that there is danger inherent in propounding Euro-American Christianity confidently and reintroducing the European missionary Christianity in Africa of the 19th and 20th centuries. Such cautious remarks call for a multidisciplinary approach to the Christian mission in the twenty-first century, as theologians will need to study beyond the so-called pure-theology in order to understand certain concepts that can be best understood by “Others.” In any case, the new education skills movement of the twenty-first century emphasizes on interdisciplinary working, collaborative efforts, collegiality, joint researches, joint publication, professional learning communities, professional learning networks, joint curriculum review, problem-solving education, technology-driven education/learning (Gathogo 2015); hence, the place of communality in a context where the unborn, the living, and the dead form the membership of the African family, falls within the twenty-first skills movement in learning.

In places where some theologians embrace the western individualism or dismissively view dialogue between Africa’s religio-culture and the gospel as syncretism rather than as a natural progression of inculturation, we certainly miss the point, as this will only continue to make Christianity a foreign religion, rather than make it an African religion. Further, when we emphasize on the dichotomies between secular and the sacred, in a continent where there is a very thin line between the two, we equally find ourselves in trouble, as our articulations may be deemed irrelevant to those whom we seek to evangelise. Similarly, the failure to appreciate that there is a very thin line between culture and religion in the African context will further help in alienating Christianity in the African soil. Archbishop Desmond Tutu captures this communalistic aspect in doing theology in Africa when he says,

Africans believe in something that is difficult to render in English. We call it *ubuntu*, *botho*. It means the essence of being human. You know when it is there and when it is absent. It speaks about humaneness, gentleness, and hospitality, putting yourself on behalf of others,

being vulnerable. It embraces compassion and toughness. It recognizes that my humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together (Tutu 1989:69).

The 16 September 2020 Conference also attracted a who-is-who in not just the Kenyan Anglican episcopacy, but also in the scholarly world, beyond the theological education. It attracted the voluntary and involuntary tent-makers of the Church, the consulting team, good and audible speakers, provincial staff, the so-called sponsors, the technical team, spiritual fathers/mothers, credible moderation of the session by Prof. Esther Mombo of St. Paul's University. It also had a passionate convener, Rev Boaz Akoya, whose lifetimes in Anglican missions seems well-curved for greater duties ahead. Such youthful leadership, seen in Boaz's case, is naturally shaping up amidst the novel Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19). Boaz compares well with the key contributor during the Nicaea Conference of AD 325, whose name was Athanasius. Athanasius, a dark-skinned Egyptian and later a bishop, was by then a mere youthful Anglican Deacon (though a personal assistant to Bishop Alexander of Alexandria) who moved the motion that destroyed the heretics, the false teachings in Arianism – Arius' team. Ryan Reeves (2016:1) explains thus:

Athanasius learned his theology and pastoral skills under Alexander as a Deacon and eventually served as his secretary. He shadowed the bishop during the rise of the struggle against Arianism.... Alexander died and so Athanasius was elected to the bishopric of Alexandria on 9 May 328. His election was immediately controversial, mostly because he was below the canonical age to take this office.

On the other hand, Arius was a presbyter (priest) from Libya who announced, "If the Father begat the Son, then he who was begotten had a beginning in existence, and from this it follows there was a time when the Son was not" (Reeves 2016:1). In this conference of 325 CE, 1,800 bishops were duly invited to Nicaea, but about 300 came - and argued, fought, and eventually fleshed out an early version of the Nicene Creed which is still used in the twenty-first century beyond *Ecclesia Anglicana*. Conferences make history, and history was made via zoom on 16 September 2020.

Emergent Issues from the September 2020 Conference

In my view, three major things emerged in this conference. First, it came out clearly that Anglican Communion is intact, albeit with some challenges. The conference did not however come out sharply on the divisions between Africa and the West, especially in regard to the same same-sex marriage controversy that has remained a thorn in the global *Ecclesia Anglicana*. Considering that the conference theme was: "The Current Challenges and the way forward for the Anglican Church," certain concerns were not up for discussion. Nevertheless, such issues featured during the participant sessions, though full attention was given to the theme of the day. Second, the context of theologizing was strongly given as critical in developing an *Ecclesia Anglicana* theology for Kenyans, as only by so doing can we deliver the promise. The third critical element is the dual spirituality (African versus Christian) that was given enough weight by the key speaker (Joseph Galgalo). In the latter, Prof. Joseph Galgalo went on to highlight the key challenges as including: secularism, a phenomenon where we have sacralisation of spaces, which he referred to as the 'postmodern religious situation'. Hence 'my dress my choice,' 'my civil rights,' 'my democracy' and other slogans that have characterised postmodernity. Although 'postmodernity', as a term, is not a common vocabulary in African scholarship, but largely a western concept, it was used during the September 2020 conference to demonstrate the nature of secularisation of the twenty-first century Church in Africa. The discussion did not however address the context of theologising in a continent

where there is a thin line between the secular and the sacred. Or should we view the dichotomies of secular and sacred as in the case of the West?

Another challenge is the concern for ethnic loyalty versus loyalty to the resurrected Christ. In light of this, the key speaker noted that killing a person from the neighbouring ethnic group, even among the so-called Christians, is no longer an abomination, as ethnic loyalty seems much stronger than loyalty to Christ. In this vein, he brought up the dichotomies of “my people” versus “others.” This loyalty to ethnic warlords was witnessed in Rwanda in 1994 during the infamous genocide that claimed over 1 million people when they massacred one another along ethnic lines (Gathogo 2009:143). In view of this, Rwanda’s religious demography stands as follows: 43.7% of Rwanda’s population is Roman Catholic, 37.7% is Protestant, 11.8% is Seventh-day Adventist, 2.0% is Muslim (mainly Sunni), 2.5% claims no religious affiliation, and 0.7% is Jehovah’s Witness (Longman 2010).

Asked by some Nairobi journalists whether Christianity has failed in Africa now that the nation that boasts of being 94% Christian (Rwanda) had fought and killed along ethnic lines, without any iota of guilt and/or shame; but comfortably remained within their respective ethnic cocoons, the then General Secretary of All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), Dr Joe Chipenda, replied that “Christianity has never been tried in Africa” (Gathogo, 2001:36). Hence, it has never failed in Africa; rather it is not yet an African religion because of the way it has been presented as a foreign religion. In other words, the Euro-American Christianity that Africa is propounding ignores communality and other aspects of culture. Hence, it will remain a mere smokescreen and will not solve the myriad of problems facing Africa until something is done to make it an African religion. The work of theologians in every region is to address religio-cultures of the respective contexts that Christianity seeks to convert, without necessarily trying to be apologists of the West. Otherwise, Africa risks propagating a religion that camouflages as Christianity, but is not Christianity in the real sense; for the African worldview would only embrace a religion that ably dialogues with its indigenous heritage (inculturation), a phenomenon where such a dialogue will not be dismissed arrogantly with western jargons such as primitive, agnostic, henotheistic, deistic, polytheistic, syncretic, dualistic, pantheistic, animistic, atheistic, pagan, ancestor-worship and other demeaning and misleading phrases. There are many cases where Africans trained in the West as Church ministers have terribly failed to serve adequately in Africa after studying some theologies only tailored to suit the West. After returning to the communalistic Africa, such theologians are unable to pursue Africa’s *Ubuntu* (humane and communal sensitive) theo-philosophies that brought together the neighbouring clans and diverse ethnic groups, especially in times of crisis. Our attempts to duplicate the West through assimilation policies or indirect rules of sorts will eventually fail to deliver the promise.

A story is told of King Afonso 1 (real name Mvemba a Nzinga or Nzinga Mbemba, 1456-1543), of the Kingdom of Kongo whom the Portuguese converted to their Roman Catholic Christianity as a measure of winning the entire populace (Gathogo 2001). After he was converted to Christianity, the entire kingdom professed the Portuguese version of Catholic Christianity. Hence, the communal nature of the African worldview cannot be ignored even in the twenty-first century. Shortly after, the Kongolese aristocracy leaders adopted Portuguese titles, coats of arms, dress styles and their new names. Additionally, some middle-aged members of the kingdom were sent to Portugal to acquire the western education. Further, the Kongolese now observed Christian festivals, opened up churches, as craftsmen made Christian artefacts that were later found by missionaries of the 19th century (Fromont 2014). In my view, the challenge is on how to offer a Kenyan and/or an

African-Anglican Christian theology that emphasizes our common humanity; irrespective of our diverse political and social positioning.

Clearly, there is no universal theologian known in human history, as every theologian responds faithfully and systematically to the concerns of a given context and situation. To respond to theological concerns outside ones' context and situation amounts to downright irrelevance; and at worst, the said theologian is reduced to a mere dramatist who merely entertains; rather than heals the particular community of faith. In the nature of things, we have seen con artists, posing as afro-Pentecostals doing more harm than good to Christianity; by failing to engage in this dialogue. The challenge, thus, is the failure to face the question of Gospel and Culture squarely and offer a home-made solution that will heal our land. In light of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (Covid-19), we are all reverting to the African medicine for healing and providing healthy bodies. African medicine is a by-product of African religion – a religion and/or spirituality that permeates all pillars of culture (economics, politics, religion, aesthetics, kinship, and ethics).

Historically, one of the most celebrated recipients of African medicine, in modern scholarship, is Cecil John Rhodes (1853-1902). Rhodes, a British mining magnate, and politician in Southern Africa served as the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, from 1890 to 1896 (Gathogo 2001:36). At barely 17, Rhodes, the son of an Anglican priest, was sent to South Africa in 1870, as he was reportedly dying of cancer. The decision was arrived at after the western medicine failed to heal him. In the course of trying to save this youthful son, it was felt that adverse weather conditions in Europe were worsening his condition. It was eventually concluded that he had to be sent to Africa due to its warm habitable climate. Upon his arrival, he was administered by the uniquely hospitable Africans with their traditional medicine and healed quickly. Sadly, for Africans who remained hospitable to this “returning ancestor,” Rhodes became ruthless to them, almost immediately after he got healed. He started grabbing land from the local population with abandon. He also entered the diamond trade at Kimberley in 1871, at barely 18, and in 20 years' time, he had almost gained full domination of the diamond market globally (Gathogo 2001:36). Other European contemporaries who enjoyed the power of African medicine included: Henry Stanley, David Livingstone, Samuel Baker, and Frederick Lugard among others, even though some were not appreciative after recovering (Gathogo 2001). It is through dialogue that the significance of such indigenous resources can be explored and vice versa.

Coming from the largest Protestant Church in Kenya, Anglican theologians have to find solutions to the myriad of challenges facing Africa, and Kenya in particular. This will be done by avoiding further duplication of Euro-American theology, and embrace dialoguing African spirituality with the Gospel of Christ. This dialogue should also apply to the so-called Christian spirituality (though largely western Christianity). Such a dialogue will mean anchoring ourselves to this dialogue of purpose and appreciate both the resilience of African religion and the salvific message of Christ. Pope John II (1920-2005) embraced this dialogue when he exhorted the Church in Africa to consider inculturation as “one of the greatest challenges for the Church on the Continent on the eve of the Third Millennium” (Gathogo 2014: 213). Such a dialogue will avoid western bias and their inherent language that dismisses our dialogue (Gospel and Culture) as syncretism rather than as inculturation, as noted above. It is in such theo-academic dialogues where misleading elements in any culture (western or African) will give way, as no conventional culture advocates killings or hatred for the neighbour. There is no element of African culture that readily advocates discrimination, corruption, cattle rustling, banditry, character-assassination, stealing and other vices, as it is embedded in African religion.

In any case, scholars of religion have always insisted that all religions of the world have what is referred in scholarly world to as “the Golden Rule” of all religions and peoples’ spirituality. It cuts across all world religions, and postulates thus: “Do unto others what you would have them do unto you” (Hamilton 1995: 7). When some disgruntled leaders constitute murderers’ gangs, this should not be construed to mean that it is African spirituality and/or indigenous religion at work. It could even be the work of evil powers that would compel the African diviners, seers and medicine practitioners to undertake animal sacrifices to God among the African indigenous societies, as a measure of wading off the evil spirits. To imply that African indigenous spirituality was 100% evil is another serious error that must be nipped in the bud and be stopped from becoming a mendacious tree. In any case, clan fights and inter-ethnic fights were rare in Africa before the Berlin conference of 1884/85; and whenever they happened, there were ritualistic mitigations that were employed forthwith. It is the new dispensation that helped in overemphasising the differences rather than commonalities, as in the case of saying that the Somalis and Asians are equal in their IQs, as opposed to Africans who were seen as of lower IQ; and eventually administered a different set of school examinations that differed from what was characteristically set for the Africans. It is the new dispensation that administered Kenya African Primary Education (KAPE) to Africans, as Asians living in Kenya had a different set of Examinations, the Kenya Asian Primary Education (Gathogo, 2011). Certainly, “there were three classifications of education offered in the Kenya colony [1920-1963], namely: European Education, Asian [Education] and African Education hence KAPE. In this scenario, Asian Education was seen to be superior to African Education just as the European Education was seen as superior to the Asian Education” (Gathogo 2011:39). Post Berlin 1884/85 also emphasized the socio-cultural differences amongst the African societies rather than their commonalities as a people. Equally, this scenario affected *Ecclesia Anglicana* (Kenya), as the Church is still in the world, though not of the world. Such divisive patterns continue to follow the post-colonial African like a shadow.

Donatists’ Attempted Dialogue

The first group of people to attempt the dialogue between culture and the Gospel were the Berbers of North Africa, the Donatists (Cross 2005) of the fourth and sixth centuries AD. They were eventually crushed by the then colonizer, the Roman Empire. In this so-called Donatist controversy, of the fourth and fifth centuries, Donatists were portrayed as bad people, and books have been published in a biased way so as to drive the point home. In turn, the Donatists (named after the Berber Christian bishop, Donatus Magnus) were members of an offshoot Church which did not follow the same doctrine as some other Churches of the rest of Early Christianity in late antiquity. Donatism had its roots in the social pressures among the long-established Christian community of Roman North Africa, in the present day Berber countries – Algeria and Tunisia, during the persecution of Christians under Diocletian. Put it differently, Donatists were traditionalists who wanted the tradition of Berbers in North Africa be taken seriously. Since they were operating within the Roman Empire, Latin language was the official language which the Donatists detested (Cross 2005). When the Roman Emperor intervened, the Donatists were crushed marking the death of Christianity in North Africa. Certainly, the Roman Empire which favoured the colonies which were Latin speaking, worked in cahoots with the Church. And even though the Latin speakers, who in my view promoted Western Christianity in Africa, formed a minority in North Africa, they were still favoured by the hegemonic powers.

Like in the rest of African indigenous spirituality where God is believed to listen to the sacrifices/prayers from the truly set-apart person(s), the Donatists argued that Christian clergy must likewise be visibly holy in character rather than by mere poetry and/or oratory. For his/her ministry to be effective and their prayers and sacraments to be valid before God and people, such Clergy thus must be faultless (Gathogo 2017). Such appeals to the African heritage made the Donatist Church to survive from the fourth century to the sixth century, despite persecutions and the intense pressure from successive Roman, Vandal, and Byzantine rulers of North Africa. It only died with the extinction of Christianity in North Africa in the early European Middle Ages.

We must not 'crush' dialogue again, as did the Roman Empire, and eventually write the epitaph of Christianity in Africa or move abroad to promote a punctured western Christianity (Gathogo 2017). Clearly, Africa's ethno-philosophies of care (*Ubuntu*), that are well-rooted in African indigenous spirituality, have something to bequeath the western world; for I am because we are; and no nation or people on earth can operate as an island and survive however rich or powerful. The Covid-19 scare has demonstrated this. As the world witnessed the infection of USA (President Donald Trump) and UK (Prime Minister, Boris Johnson) leaders and their subsequent healing from Covid-19, a lot could be deduced from this. Conversely, a poor East Africa country (Tanzania) made history after she ignored modern medical precautions/prescriptions regarding Covid-19 such as social distancing, wearing of masks and locking down the country, reverted to indigenous African medicine right into the twenty-first century, and still survived. Is this another way of telling the cheerers of globalization to study it further with a view to appreciating its shortfalls in dealing with world cultures? Certainly, humanity has not yet conquered the emerging painful phenomenon, and is not effectively able to offer timely solutions uniformly across diverse contexts. In my view, the above two events (USA/UK vis-à-vis Tanzania), which shows God's mysteries, convey the message that God humbles all cultures of the world equally. Hence, a dialogue among world cultures and religions is the right thing to do. In the case of inculturation movement in Africa of the 4th to the 6th century, one wonders whether they called themselves Donatists or were merely labelled so derogatorily, in a manner akin to giving a dog a bad name as part of the hanging process.

Critiquing *Ecclesia Anglicana*

Undoubtedly, no social and/or intellectual movement is without teething problems, especially in its initial stages. Further, every philosophical and/or intellectually-engaging project has some defects. The challenge therefore is on how to put up a coping mechanism and/or mitigating procedures. In the case of *Ecclesia Anglicana*, one notable weak point is that the formative stages did not appear to have a formal way of discussing the above concerns in concrete terms. In other words, the discussion forums have always lacked a clear prefect and/or Chief Whip of sorts who regulates discussions besides the webinar sessions where Moderators do a fine job. As a participant observer in WhatsApp discussions, I have always noted that critical themes such as Church structure, doctrinal issues, mission of the Church, Kenyan elections, African rituals and Christianity, colonialism and neo-colonialism and so on, are commonly discussed concurrently. One group can be discussing neo-colonialism and another team would be discussing the lost prophetic voice of *Ecclesia Anglicana* in Kenya and so on. If one topic can be explored at a time, and switch to another one upon exhausting the previous one, then *Ecclesia Anglicana* (Kenya) will go beyond the Westonian controversy of 1914 or the Nicaea conference of 325. A lack of clear coordination is undoubtedly a serious matter that has to be addressed, as even George Orwell's (1946) *Animal Farm* shows that a regulator and/or a guide is always necessary in the vicissitudes of life. Indeed, mentors are as good as classroom teachers, as they all serve to build personalities and

make them more meaningful and resourceful. Interestingly, the characters in Orwell's (1946) book, *Animal Farm*, announced their Seven working 'Commandments' as including: Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy; Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend; No animal shall wear clothes; No animal shall sleep in a bed; No animal shall drink alcohol; No animal shall kill any other animal; and All animals are equal (Orwell 1946, Gathogo 2020a). Without a mentor or coordinator, their 'constitution' could not work; hence the need for a regulator/moderator in all sessions.

In learning from the decrees in Orwell's *Animal Farm*, we can boldly say that *Ecclesia Anglicana* will not let their noble ideas down, and will shape up for the good of the larger *Ecclesia Anglicana* and to the buoyant future. In a continent where the unborn, the living, and the dead remains critical members of the family and society, an *Ecclesia Anglicana* (Kenya) cannot afford to squander such a great opportunity availed to them by the almighty God. Indeed, as the writer of the book of Hebrews (2:3) pontificated: "How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard." Clearly, members cannot neglect and/or downplay such a transformative idea that was first revealed to two members of the House of Clergy (Rev. Enock Opuka and Rev. Evans Omollo) and one member of the House of Laity (Engineer Edison Ochieng') on 6 August 2017. This good idea has further metamorphosed to a better idea, as the cross-pollination of ideas has become the new norm.

Conclusion

The article set out to unveil *Ecclesia Anglicana* (Kenya) since the idea was mooted in mid-2017. In its findings, the article has established that *Ecclesia Anglicana*, as a Latin term, has been there since the medieval ages (500-1500). It has explored both the August and September 2020 Conferences, though it has reflected deeply on the 16 September 2020 webinar Conference, a conference that attracted more than 100 participants. With the formation of Anglican Writer's Series (AWS-K), as a sister backup to the *Ecclesia Anglicana*, the whole idea behind its formation had reached its peak by October 2020, and the future is indeed promising.

In addressing the case of dialogue between culture and the Gospel, it is worthwhile to recall that, St. Paul remains the prototype of salvation in African Christianity, as he did not abandon his Jewish heritage fully, as *muacha mila ni mtumwa* (he who abandons his culture becomes a slave of the foreign culture). At times, St. Paul, the de-facto founder of Gentile Christianity, could confess: "To the weak, I became weak so as to save some. I have become all manner of things to everyone in order to save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). Appreciating the diverse contexts of the people, swimming into their contexts, without employing outright dismissals of their respective heritages, will help in God's salvific plan for Africa and Kenya in particular. St. Paul's 'giant' conversion can be used to argue that conversion does not mean abandonment of one's culture for the culture of the missionary. Equally, his use of the past in explaining and understanding Christianity builds on his position as "the proto-type of conversion in African Christianity" (Togarasei, L. 2007:112). As noted in Lovemore Togarasei (2007: 114-115),

The conversion of Paul is significant for Christianity in a number of ways. Indeed, for F.F. Bruce, the conversion of Paul is the second most important event in Christian history after the Christ event. Not only did it mark the beginning of Paul's Christian life, it also marked the beginning of Gentile Christianity which has seen the participation of Asians, Africans, Europeans and all in Christianity. The conversion of Paul also has provided the church with a model of conversion. On his way to persecute Christians in Damascus, Paul was suddenly turned into a Christian himself.... I argue

that he had a conversion because the experience changed the direction of his life. From an ardent persecutor of the church he was turned into a passionate proclaimer of the same faith.

Togarasei (2007: 115-116) explained, thus:

The conversion of Paul changed the way Christianity was understood. Up to the time of his conversion, Christianity was understood as a Jewish sect. Paul, however, understood Christianity to be a distinct religion. As a result, he called even the Jews into this new religion. But despite this, continuity existed between Paul the Pharisee and Paul the Christian apostle. His understanding of the new religion was informed by his knowledge of the former religion. He understood himself to be worshipping the same God, even proud of his traditional roots (2 Corinthians 11:22; Philippians 3:5-6). He continued to hold Jewish scriptures in high esteem and developed his Christian theology on the basis of his Jewish background understanding, for example, the new covenant as a fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament (1 Corinthians 11:25). Indeed, scholars have observed how Paul used Jewish methods of interpreting scripture in his explication of the Christian doctrine. The use of *halakah*, *hagaddah*, typology and even allegory has been identified in his letters.

Togarasei (2007: 115-116) further explains, thus:

In explaining the behaviour of women in church, Paul continued to be influenced by his Jewish background. ... Even his understanding that salvation is first to the Jew and then to the Gentile (Romans 1:16-17) was also influenced by his Jewish background. In fact, there is a sense in which Paul's mind remained tilted in favour of the Jews in the whole picture of salvation. His argument on the grafted olive tree in Romans 11:17-32 is one example among many. Despite using the Jewish religion and tradition, Paul also made use of the Hellenistic tradition in which he had been brought up and in which he preached the gospel. He adopted the Greek letter writing style in his letters and even used Greek rhetoric in his arguments.... It is clear that Paul continued using his tradition and traditional religion to understand Christianity and explain it to others. Is it then surprising that when Africans do the same today they are accused by others of not having been converted?

In light of this, an *Anglicana*-African-Ecclesia theology will need to be rethought in light of these emerging theo-cultural realities. These realities drives us to revisit earlier, but local, attempts at indigenizing the liturgy in real life situations, the contributions of African Initiated Churches, Bolaji Idowu's indigenization strategy in Nigeria as a critical sample, Archbishop David Gitari's attempts at indigenizing music through a new hymn book, *Nyimbo Cia Gucanjamura Ngoro* (Songs to warm the heart), the works of Canon John Mbiti in view African indigenous resources as the raw materials for the Gospel, Samuel Kibicho's radical continuity of African indigenous rituals through to the Christian message, the lessons from afro-Pentecostalism whom scholars had previously ignored in their ecclesial-scholarly discourses, early Anglican initiatives, and other relevant initiatives. It will be a serious error to take such a huge issue cursorily.

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