Religion, Science, and Colonialism in the Anglican Communion
John Albert Hall lecture
University of Victoria, B.C., Center for Studies in Religion and Society, 5 pm
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Abstract: The Anglican Communion is the historic product of colonial expansion, driven by both religious fervor and economic desire. Justification for the colonial endeavor was often based in both religious and contemporary scientific understandings. This address will attempt to explore how different ways of knowing – particularly the varieties of religion and science – have influenced the development of the Anglican Communion and how they continue to shape our missional partnerships and engagement. We'll examine parallels in method (including error and misuse) in each way of knowing, noting both historical examples and contemporary opportunities for creative interchange.

Let's start with the centerpiece of this topic – colonialism. The word derives from the Latin (*colere*) "to cultivate or inhabit or tend." A colony was an outpost of the Roman Empire or a landed estate. The word's more ancient PIE root (*kwel*), meant[1] to move around or dwell, and produced words like *wheel* and *cycle* as well as *culture* and *cult.*[2] Colonialism in modern usage is the desire to plant one's own culture (and often, one's own cult or religion) in a different land. In other species colonization is a reproductive mechanism – planting cells in new hosts or geographic locations. We might use a generic definition of colonizing as 'sending out one's life forms to grow and establish themselves in a new environment.' That's the antithesis of Star Trek's Prime Directive, but it seems to be pretty central to the course of human history and much of evolutionary biology.

Colonizing behavior seeks to establish one's own kind in a new environment, often with the conviction that it can become 'home' as much as the place from which the colonizers came. For human colonizers there's often an implication that the planters have sustainable lifeways that can be maintained, and which are likely judged better than what they encounter in the new environment.[3] We can talk about Viking outposts in North America or expatriate colonies in Victoria, trying to keep their cultural trappings in a foreign land. The Israelites exiled to Babylon lamented their difficulty in doing that: "how can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"[4] They were exiles, yet some of their leaders urged more colonial responses. The reality is that colonies which become established and thrive over the long haul are usually ones that adapt to the new terrain, amalgamating the best of their heritage and the best of the new environment – and we can speak of similar processes in both human cultures and biological speciation. Adaptation, not hermetic transplantation, is the key.

Think about immigration. Young children who migrate, and the children born to immigrants, usually learn to function like native speakers in their new land, while retaining something of their parents' language and culture, and while they are already adapting to the new context, they are also transforming it.

Colonies that don't adapt either die out or survive only with immense power inputs – and we can think not only of the far reaches of the Roman Empire, which ultimately crumbled over

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[1] Online Etymology Dictionary http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=colony
[2] Robert Claiborne, *The Roots of English*. New York: Times Books, 1989, 145
[3] In contrast to refugees, who are fleeing violence or other life-limiting realities.
[4] Psalm 137

distribution and regulatory challenges, but what it would take for human beings to colonize another planet at this stage of our technical development.

The need for massive resource inputs in the form of armies and force has doomed one colonial power after another – and we might note a similar caution given the current state of human dominion over the resources of this planet. Consumerism is itself a form of colonialism, and the planet is beginning to expire under the power load. Human beings are at present like an invasive species established in a vulnerable new context, without predators or disease to staunch its growth, even though the earth system itself is beginning to adapt in ways that may well extinguish us along with countless other species. We are only just beginning to adapt or relinquish what seemed good in an earlier state of 'home,' and the challenge is really our failure to grasp that we are part of a deep web of connections, rather than individual 'cells' that can survive in hermetic isolation.

Human colonizing tendencies play a role in much of our behavior. Parents set expectations for their children – in some families more rigidly reproducing parental patterns and in others allowing greater latitude for the native creativity of offspring. Businesses seek to expand into and control new markets; governments strive to conserve their national identities and territory, often looking to expand their influence beyond their native bounds. At times all of us struggle to get partners to 'do it my way' – whether it's a certain level of domestic order and cleanliness or negotiated decision-making. The tendencies are at least partly genetic and instinctual; others are taught by culture and its norms.

Yet there are balancing forces in our heritage as well, even in the impetus to colonizing that comes in leaving home: creative urges to explore new territory, ideas, and possibilities, or the will to play with newness can also foster adaptation. Over the millennia we've developed capacities for empathy and altruism, and learned disciplines to keep selfish and imperial leanings in check. We've learned ways to see the liveliness in other perspectives than our own, both through the scientific method and religious traditions.

I'd like to explore those systemic balances to colonialism (science and religion) and look at the role they play in the context of the Anglican Communion.

Western societies are heirs of an Enlightenment tradition that began to see science and religion as adversaries, an attitude that is hardly dead.[5] At the very least, we can note examples of each worldview being exported to matters which are not immediately amenable to its methods. Great swaths of Christians were offended by Darwin's theory and its implications for theological anthropology. Many responded by denying the heuristic utility and truth of evolutionary theory as it developed over decades. Especially in the US context, something similar goes on with climate change denial. Fideistic worldviews are not always overtly religious, but they can be just as powerful. The challenges the Anglican Communion and others have experienced in recent decades share similar roots, and though not always characterized as colonial, they partake of the desire to propagate and cultivate one's cultural or cultic views in another context.

Science can be colonial as well. The XIX and XX eugenics theories, initially developed primarily in the US, when exported and cultivated in Nazi Germany eventually brought death to some 17 million innocent victims – in something very like an invasive epidemic. Scientific findings have been, and are, routinely misused for economic and political ends, particularly when scientific norms don't function – or when ethical dialogue is forgotten or refused. We might note the Tuskegee experiment, which began to study African-American men with syphilis in the

[5] Cf. Ian Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues*. New York: Harper Collins, 1997

1930s, and continued to study the progress of their disease for 40 years, never providing access to treatment with the newly developed penicillin. At the same time, there is an essential element of desiring to impose one's opinion, view, or theory on others that is central to the scientific quest. Scientific rivalries may be the best example – as each group fervently champions its perspective.

Human beings have always lived with the tension between truth known in one's local community and the possibility of discovering truth in others. We are generally more at ease with those who seem like us, and we meet strangers with a degree of caution, if not fear and loathing. At least some of that wariness is innate to survival as individuals and a species. Eve and Adam awaken to their difference from God in the Garden of Eden story, and try to avoid the divine presence; their sons have their own civil war over their 'cultural' differences.[6] The world is alight with that kind of conflict – in a Europe burgeoning with refugees, in Brexit, in the recent US election – and it tends to be more of a consuming fire than illumination. Yet in this postmodern era we are also beginning to recover a richer and more complex ability to recognize that more than one story or context or viewpoint can hold truth. I want to begin there, in the congruence rather than the divergence.

Both science and religion are ways of knowing, and I submit they have more in common than is generally recognized. Science means *knowing*, and in the Middle Ages theology was called the queen of the sciences. As one wag put it, religion tells us how to go to heaven, and science tells us how the heavens go.[7] Science seeks to understand mechanism, theology seeks meaning. Science and religion are both communities of wisdom, with tradents who pass on the best of what has been learned and standard-keepers who guide the discovery and recognition of what is wise or true. Science does that through peer review of published and reproducible results, as well as the mentoring of budding scientists. Faith communities have repositories of wisdom in scripture and oral tradition, ongoing evaluation and discernment about those traditions, and also train and form practitioners in particular ways of living and reflection.

The two communities have parallel attitudes and practices – habits and disciplines that guide the quest for knowing. The search for understanding is generally driven by wonder and curiosity, whether we speak of cell biologists, astronomers, or spiritual explorers. Each active participant in these wisdom communities brings passion and investment to the quest for a deeper understanding of eternal or universal realities. At the higher or more expansive levels of the search in each community, the adept begin to recognize patterns that underlie reality, whether we speak of a divine oneness that contains or comprises all that is, or the fractal nature of the natural world around us, or the search for a TOE or a GUT underlying the mechanism of the universe. Cosmologists are beginning to see some holographic congruence among quantum gravity and quantum information that gives hints of such a comprehension.[8]

Judgment about the truth or wisdom of what is being discovered or revealed is driven by discernment about its truth, its beauty or elegance, and its goodness or justice – and there is an art to that discernment, as well as a craft or technical skill. Those skills are the product of lengthy formation in a particular discipline, whether systematic zoology or systematic theology. Therein lies a challenge, for deep formation in one way can blind the senses to other ways of knowing.

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[6] Genesis 2-4

[7] Sometimes attributed to Galileo Galilei http://luthscitech.org/faith-and-science-resources/faith-and-science-articles/faith-and-science-quotes/

[8] January 2017, Clara Moskowitz, "Tangled Up in Spacetime." *Scientific American* 316(1): 33-37

The struggle for scientists and religious practitioners to understand one another has its roots in that formative bias as well as in what I am calling colonial behavior. All of us learn by relating the unknown to what we do know, yet there is an intrinsic human tendency to reject the foreign if it is too threatening to our own life or lifeway – for we take our biases with us into novel situations. The encounter is eased by consciousness about those tendencies, by the ability to monitor and modulate our own reactivity, and by what we are learning (or willing to learn) about the potential for greater heuristic power in the use of more than one way of knowing.

Aviation deals with these realities all the time. When flying in clouds or at night, pilots are trained to trust their instruments, at least until those instruments disagree. We're repeatedly schooled to recognize ways in which our senses and brains can fool us – a lit runway at night looks nearer than it really is, and if you don't recognize that you may fly the approach too high and land early, stalling or crashing onto the runway. The seat of your pants will fool you while making a turn in clouds, which can quickly put you into the ground if you don't trust the instruments rather than what your body seems to be telling you.

Religious adherents are formed and trained in behavioral self-examination, and also to welcome the advice and counsel of other members of the community. We are all good at overlooking our own faults, yet communities are not always fully trustworthy and may not reflect our behavior accurately. It takes both internal and external discernment, and we still don't always get it right.

There are parallels between the scientific method and the religious one. Scientists make hypotheses and set up processes or experiments to test them. When the results are analyzed, the hypothesis is either confirmed or modified and tested anew. The religiously observant person takes up a way of life, examines it at regular intervals, and modifies his or her practice and continues – in a process often called examination, repentance (turning in another, Godward direction), and amendment of life. Each method fails when the actor's sense of rightness exceeds reality, as when a scientist's confidence in experimental results exceeds the evidence, or worse, creates or manipulates data to support a much-loved hypothesis. In religious terms it's called excessive pride or self-centeredness – or lying. In each case, it's a matter of attempting to impose one's will or life-force on reality, despite evidence to the contrary – another form of colonial behavior. The ideal in both systems is interdependent behavior – that is, encouraging individual creativity within a community of accountability.

I want to encourage us to think about the value of using both lenses to examine the world around us, and the challenges it presents. As Einstein said "Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind." An integrated approach can produce far superior depth perception than using either alone, and there is abundant value in mutual discernment. In a parallel to the etymological discussion I opened with, the goal is deep conversation. That word has its roots in Latin *converso,* to turn with, to spend time with. It didn't come to mean 'talking' until the Middle Ages. *Criminal conversation* in English law means spending too much time with the wrong person – adultery. Note the connotation of building intimate community by dwelling in the presence of others. Scientific communities do that in the to and fro of conferences, peer review, laboratory jawfests, and Friday afternoon "symposia." Religious communities do it in scripture study and coffee hour, singing and praying together, as well as tending to the needs of others. Both communities understand that eating and drinking together with friends and new acquaintances, in contexts where different viewpoints and ways of seeing engage one another, can lead to greater wisdom.

So, let's take a look at colonialism and conflict in the Anglican Communion. Today the Anglican Communion is a loose federation of 38 national and regional church bodies which owe their origins to missionary efforts of the Church of England and its early outposts in the Americas and the antipodes. The Church of England developed from early Christian presence during Roman occupation of Britain in the first 4 centuries CE,[9] missionary efforts from Europe and Rome in later centuries, and the 16th century English Reformation which separated the church from Roman oversight. That Reformation was grounded in an anti-colonial premise – that the faith should grow in new and varied ways in novel contexts.[10]

As the British Empire expanded across the globe in succeeding centuries, clergy chaplains often accompanied commercial, diplomatic, and military forays, and congregations began to be established in emerging colonies in the Americas, beginning in the late 16th century, as well as in the Pacific, Africa, and Asia. The first Anglican service in North America was held on Baffin Island by Frobisher's chaplain in the fall of 1578. The first on this coast was held near San Francisco by Sir Francis Drake's chaplain in 1579, with indigenous people in attendance. Global colonizing went on with far less attention to that Reformation principle of contextual development than might have been hoped.

In recent years historically colonized peoples have pushed for recognition of their history and the often tragic effects of colonization by European and other, second generation, colonial powers (like the US). The Doctrine of Discovery[11] has gained greater public awareness as having been an authorization by religious leaders to colonize foreign and pagan lands. Several papal bulls, beginning in the mid-15th century, gave warrant to explorers and missionaries to claim foreign lands on behalf of their sovereigns and to enslave any non-Christian peoples they found. This warrant still undergirds U.S. land law. It is challenging to discern the contemporary ethics of such colonizing efforts, but at some level, the 'authorities' thought they were doing something morally right in attempting to correct or expunge whatever non-Christian cults and cultures European explorers might discover. Yet the Nazi regime was hardly different, nor the current strife in Sudan or Syria.

The big missionary expansion of the 19th and early 20th centuries continued the legacy, albeit with somewhat less violent methods. Schools and hospitals were established alongside churches, seeking to provide a more salutary mode of life in all its aspects. Many missionaries traveled abroad expecting to serve the poor, sick, and uneducated and to share their religious beliefs with people who had never heard them. They brought with them particular cultural lifeways and expectations, and imposed those to varying degrees on those with whom they worked. We know some of the results well – tropical natives were taught European values about modest dress, especially for women; polygamous societies were expected to conform to Western norms of monogamy; and religious observances were imported with all their medieval trappings, like imposing multilayered vestments originally conceived for cold stone cathedrals on churches in the tropics. There were as well strong figures who argued for missionary approaches that were more willing to include and adapt to local culture – Henry Venn, Roland Allen, and John Colenso among them.

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[9] Roman soldiers who had become Christians brought their faith with them

[10] One example: 39 Articles of Religion (1801, United States version): "It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the Primitive Church, to have public Prayer in the Church, or to minister the Sacraments, in a tongue not understanded of the people. *Book of Common Prayer* New York: Church Publishing, 1979. P 872

[11] http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/repudiation-doctrine-discovery

The residential school systems in Canada, the US, and Australia were another such response, developed out of muddled opinion about how best to deal with the problems created by European colonization. Both scientific and religious perspectives were involved in the promulgation of what amounted to cultural genocide. There were a few voices of protest, but not loud or powerful enough to stop a decades-long practice of removing indigenous children from their homes and cultural contexts, and seeking to re-educate them as members of the dominant colonial culture.

It is that tension between a strong conviction that a particular path is morally right or scientifically valid and the dissenting views of those most affected and some in the dominant culture who agree with them, to which I want to turn. The scientific method and most enduring religious traditions share the tenet of correctibility. Hypotheses unsupported by sufficiently strong results are meant to be discarded. Practices which deprive human beings of dignity are judged immoral or unjust in most circumstances. The US constitution even has quasi-religious norms that should confront imposed lifeways that do not improve one's capacity for 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.'

What would a human being with a modicum of insight say are the larger aims of life? Freedom to live as you want, without trespassing on your neighbor's right to do the same? A philosopher might term it generativity – the ability to explore and create, to leave the world better (more humane, more just) than you found it. An evolutionary biologist would probably say, to leave more of your own genetic material behind, either yours or a relative's. Those can be profoundly different definitions of success, which seem to insist on a dialogue. Without such dialogue, colonialism can subvert the freedom and creativity of other human beings, in seeking to impose a particular worldview or lifeway. Correction, negotiation, or adaptation, is required to find a creative way through. +++

Let's look at some particular examples, considering the different world views at play, and the responses that have emerged in response to conflict between them.

The Anglican Communion has been wrestling with controversies about marriage and gender at least since 19th century missionaries in Africa encountered polygamists. The challenge then, as in biblical times, had to do with cultural realities and the ongoing support of women and children. Not only did the Christian missionaries have an aversion to divorce, even of multiple wives, but those who were 'put away' were likely to be left without shelter and resources. The consensus for decades was that the women and children in such families could be baptized, but polygamous husbands could not. Today, it's fair to say that some parts of the Anglican Communion tolerate polygamy among converts and some do not, but initiating a polygamous relationship after becoming a Christian is beyond the limits of acceptable behavior. In those areas where the religious discipline of the church has accommodated a diverse response, it has recognized a clash of cultural and doctrinal realities, balanced by a desire to seek the best for all concerned. In areas where stricter discipline obtains, one finds a refusal to accommodate any pastoral variance.

The appropriate role of women in the life of the church has been a subject of controversy for centuries – really since Christianity became legal in the Roman Empire in the 4th century. Before that time, it's clear that women were involved in leadership, all of which was fairly local. Mary Magdalen clearly played an important role in the group of disciples immediately surrounding Jesus, and as first witness to the resurrection is known as "the apostle to the apostles." Several of the early Christian communities were hosted or supported by women – like Lydia, the purple-dye merchant, and others served as prophets. Even the deutero-Pauline

writings that tell women to be quiet in church are a response to actual behavior – women were teaching and speaking their minds. We know that women were designated to attend to the needs of women in the local community, and to assist at the baptism of women. Yet when Christianity became a more public and accepted reality under Constantine, the matter of women's leadership became problematic. The patriarchal culture could comprehend what looked like a domestic role, but not a public one, and women's formal ecclesial leadership receded.

In spite of that, there is plenty of historical witness to women's leadership as monastics, including as leaders of double monasteries, as patrons, and occasionally as prophetic voices – in women like Hildegard of Bingen, Hilda of Whitby, and Catherine of Alexandria. The 19th century missionary endeavor brought new opportunities for women's ministry outside the domestic sphere, and before long missionary couples and single women were leaving home to serve in foreign lands. This began a move to recover the early tradition of deaconesses, and the first women in modern times were so designated in the 1840s. The first Anglican deaconess was licensed in 1862.

Under the Japanese occupation during WWII the Bishop of Hong Kong ordained Li Tim Oi as a deaconess to serve in Macao, and later ordained her priest, there being no man available. As the first ordination of a woman priest in the Anglican Communion, it was a highly controversial move, and after the war she resigned her license, though not her orders. When the next women were ordained in Hong Kong in 1971, her status was affirmed, and in 1983 she was licensed a priest in Toronto, where she remained until she died.

Women's ordination is still controversial and far from universal in the Anglican Communion. Seven provinces do not ordain women at all; some limit their service to the diaconate, and some to deacon and priest. Twenty of the 38 provinces permit women bishops, though only 10 have thus far consecrated women as bishops (the newest, Wales, last Saturday, ordained Joanna Penberthy bishop – she is also working on a doctorate in quantum physics).[12] The arguments against women's ordination are variously located in doctrines of "headship" (i.e., that men should be the head of women as Christ is the head of the church – more common among evangelicals), ecumenical concerns (particularly about relationships with Orthodox and Roman churches, which forbid the ordination of women), and cultural norms (women can't be effective leaders because they wouldn't be accepted in the community). The differences of opinion have led to splits and departures, and the setting up of alternative or rival churches. It's fair to note that such fissiparous behavior has happened with great regularity over the last two millennia, often over matters that no longer seem substantive (e.g., colored vestments, candles on the altar, particular modes of baptism…). We might note that fissiparity is a well-recognized colonizing strategy in other species!

The latest controversy in the Anglican Communion over the place of gay, lesbian, and transgender persons in the life of the church engages similar cultural and religious realities. Some concern normal human cultural conservatism, some uphold a few passages of scripture or doctrinal positions to claim that same-sex relationships are immoral or unnatural. The greatest challenge has been to open dialogue among those who disagree. There is general lack of interest in faith communities about discussing the scientific study of sexual variation, even in non-human species. There isn't much more interest in discussing other viewpoints about the morality of same-sex relationships. Serious conversation only begins when people are willing to be at least a little bit vulnerable, open to hearing other's experience, and willing to examine their own positions more closely – i.e., to set aside some of their own colonial behavior.

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[12] http://www.anglicannews.org/news/2017/01/consecration-of-first-woman-bishop-in-wales-this-weekend.aspx

That will to converse across difference is a gift that each wisdom community can offer to the other – the scientific community from the perspective of testable hypotheses, and the religious community from the perspective of empathy and respect for another human being who shares the same substance and origin as all others. Human beings all have brains and hearts, with different functions, literally and figuratively. We cannot be fully human and fully alive without either one.

The conflict over gender and sexuality in the Anglican Communion has stiffened and even ossified on the margins, where little dialogue takes place. Those margins include both conservative and progressive viewpoints, and they are both colonial responses, in excluding the possibility of another perspective or adaptation. The creative and life-giving newness is coming from long-term relationship building (that intimate conversation), where people with varied perspectives come to respect another view, even if they don't fully agree with it.

A couple of particular examples. In the 1850s, the Bishop of Natal wrestled with how to deal with polygamists wanting to be baptized, at a time when his fellow missionaries were insistent that the husband must put away all but one wife. Colenso's studied reflection produced a change of mind and heart and of practice. He argued that the moral problem was divorce, rather than polygamy, and here he counsels his church and fellow missionaries to reconsider: "I verily believe, that, in consequence mainly of the enforcement of this rule, our blessed religion already stinks in the nostrils of this people."[13]

Ten years or so ago, an African archbishop just beginning to wrestle with the reality of same-sex relationships asked, "well if two men are living together, which one wears a dress? And who does the cooking?" He was not hurling gibes – that was the start of serious exploration. On another occasion, after hearing a Western cleric's story about his gay son, another bishop said, "Oh, I begin to understand – if it is a member of your own family." In his culture, family trumps all other relationships – you don't expel family, you are expected to care for any family member in need, and the bounds of family relationships are broad and expansive.[14] That is the beginning of entering into another viewpoint, adding another lens, and expanding the hypothesis.

I will end as I began, with a brief etymological reflection. The logic of words is central to our search for truth, both for scientists and people of faith, particularly Christians, who understand Jesus as Word of God in human form, and all human beings as reflections of that divine and creative Word.

The word *converse* comes from Latin (*con + vertere*), meaning 'to turn with.' Originally it meant to dwell – today we'd say, 'to hang out.' Its older PIE root (*WER*) eventually produced words like *controversy*, *convert*, *converge*, *universe* (all turned into one), as well as *wrestle* and *wrangle*. The hard wrestling of conversation is essential to any kind of conversion, and any kind of more universal understanding. Colonial behavior is overcome or restrained – converted, if you will – by the willingness to engage, to dwell within a local context and discover some of the other viewpoints. Those who are willing to wrestle eventually discover deeper truth than what they came with – not merely reconciliation, but a new creation, something larger or more universal.

Heisenberg was right – the observer changes reality. Colonial behavior attempts to continue what was known and practiced elsewhere, often with violent results. Repairing the damage is never entirely possible, but a new synergy might be, with the willingness to dwell and

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[13] http://anglicanhistory.org/africa/colenso/polygamy1855.html The quote is found on p 17

[14] A view that is central to Christian theology and practice

wrestle together. When living up to the best traditions of their community of wisdom, both scientific and religious practitioners know and act on this. May we in all humility go and do likewise, and teach others to do the same.