

MARIOLOGY: THEOLOGICO-LITURGICAL RELEVANCE TO THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

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Abstract

Mariology seeks to relate the doctrine about Mary to other doctrines of the Christian faith, such as those that pertain to Jesus and notions about redemption, intercession and grace. This paper is the examination of the relevance of Marian theology to the Anglican Church. The paper employed the historical and evaluative methods. The paper revealed that the Anglican Church does not see Mary as a theological figure to the Gospel narrative, rather it emphasizes Mary's role as the *Theotokos* (the God-bearer) who carries the fullness of God's grace in her womb and delivers him into the world for humankind. The paper posited that Mariology should not be neglected by the Anglican Church since it is a source of rich spirituality.

Introduction

Contemporary Christian churches (i.e., Protestants) outside the Catholic Church have always had a troublesome relationship with the doctrine of the Virgin Mary. Seeking not to stumble into the pitfalls of their separated Catholic brothers and sisters, some Protestant churches have put a sort of 'de-emphasis' on Mary as to not be associated with anything which could be confused as 'Catholic' (Hillerbrand, 2004). However, the Anglican tradition consciously avoids the pitfalls of the nuanced *hyperdulia* of Catholicism and also the modern de-emphasis on Mary. Rather than seeing Mary as a theological 'bump in the road' to the Gospel narrative, Anglicanism emphasizes Mary's role as the *Theotokos*: The God-bearer who carries the fullness of God's grace in her womb and delivers him into the world (Nwaigbo, 2001). Anglicanism also pulls from the rich and beautiful Marian dogma of the Catholic Church, but centers Jesus, rather than Mary, in the place of sole honour.

Anglicanism remains as that branch of the Protestant tradition which holds fast to the rich traditions of the church and can be, both historically and liturgically, tied to the Roman Catholic Church. While other Protestant traditions emulate these characteristics, none do so like the Anglican tradition. That being said, one can see the rich Mariology of Catholicism present within Anglican liturgy. This is where Anglicanism receives its popular slogan: “too Protestant to be Catholic and too Catholic to be Protestant.” Although a blanket statement which may be misleading at times, pertaining to Mariology it does fit well. Truly, Anglican Mariology is far too Catholic for most Protestants to be comfortable with it, but also far too Protestant for Catholics to agree.

In Anglican Mariology various methodologies are employed in the treatment of the theme including studying, understanding and teaching it in a relative form. Spiritual maternity can also be considered directly as such, by treating it as a particular question with theological meaning and content in its own right, one embracing and including the aforementioned aspects as relative to itself. Here, it is considered in relation to a union with, or connection to other mysteries. They treat mariological question in terms of co-redemption, mediation, and distribution of graces among others. This paper therefore, is aimed at examining the concept of Mariology and its theologically-liturgical relevance for the contemporary Anglican Church.

The paper is significant in several ways and will contribute to knowledge as follows:

1. It reveals the misconceptions about Mariology and help to reduce such misconception especially among Anglican and non-Anglican Church members.
2. It demonstrates in concrete terms, the importance of Mariology to improve liturgical worship in contemporary Anglican Church.
3. Lastly, it shows that Mariology is theologically rooted and therefore relevant to the contemporary Anglican Church.

An Overview of the Anglican Church (Anglican Communion)

Anglicanism is a Protestant Christian tradition that emerged during the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. It includes the Church of England and a variety of others around the world united by shared doctrine and practice under the Anglican Communion umbrella organization. The Archbishop of Canterbury is regarded as the unofficial spiritual leader of the international Anglican community

(*World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2001). The Anglican Church Mission Society (CMS) members Samuel Ajayi Crowther - who would become Nigeria's first African Anglican bishop and Rev. J.F. Schön were part of the original British First Niger Expedition in 1841. By 1857 the CMS mission was fully engaged and a diocese was established in 1864 (*World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2001). The CMS was by far the largest and most successful of the Christian missions in what would come to be Nigeria, in part because it granted converts the autonomy to lead their communities. As such, African clergy members were active participants in the early growth of the church. The CMS also encouraged legitimate commerce, condemning slavery in favor of agriculture, for example.

Samuel Ajayi Crowther (1806-1891), a member of the Yoruba who as a boy had been sold into slavery by Fulani Muslim raiders, escaped a Portuguese slave ship and was raised in a Church Mission Society school. He became an ordained deacon in 1843 in England, joined the Anglican mission in 1845, and later led a highly successful 1857 mission along the Niger River (*World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2001). In 1864 Crowther was made bishop and despite CMS policy, faced resistance from white mission personnel in his home diocese of Sierra Leone. As such, he made Lagos his headquarters and frequently participated in CMS trips throughout the Niger Delta region, among the Igbo in the Middle Belt, and among the Nupe and some Muslim Hausa in the north.

Anglican missions arrived in the north roughly at the same time as the establishment of the British Protectorate of Nigeria in 1900; as a result, Anglicanism and British colonialism were seen as one in the same by many in the north, and early missionaries to the north were poorly received. With the installation of the new Sultan of Sokoto in 1903, Sir Frederick Lugard, the first high commissioner of the protectorate, promised that the colonial administration would not interfere with religious life in the north. In effect, this limited the range of mission activity to all but the north until the 1930s.

The Anglican Communion is an association of independent Anglican churches from thirty-eight provinces with over eighty million members, being the third largest Christian body in the world, after the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches (Chapman, 2006). Each of the thirty-eight provinces has an archbishop known as a primate. Confusingly, the provinces can be individual countries such as Nigeria, Brazil, and Bangladesh, Scotland or a group of countries. For example, the Church of the Province of Central Africa encompasses Botswana, Malawi, Zambia and

Zimbabwe (Gledhill, 2015). Or a country can have more than one province, for example, India has two provinces: the Church of North India and the Church of South India. These churches are all Anglican, but they are culturally extremely different, leading to bitter disputes between some of the more conservative and liberal members. The archbishop of Canterbury is the head of the Anglican communion by precedent, but his role is that of *primus inter pares* (first among equals), and he has no direct authority to tell the different churches what to do. All the Anglican bishops from around the world usually meet every ten years in Canterbury at a Lambeth conference, though that has been indefinitely suspended.

The Anglican Church in Nigeria is the second-largest province in the Anglican Communion as measured by baptized membership (but not by attendance), after the Church of England. The Anglican Church in Nigeria currently has in its membership about 18 million out of a total Nigerian population of over 190 million (Gledhill, 2015). Since 2002 the Church of Nigeria has been organized into 14 ecclesiastical provinces. The administrative headquarters of the Anglican Church in Nigeria are located in Abuja. The current primate of the Church of Nigeria is Archbishop Henry Ndukuba.

Mariology

Mariology is the theological study of Mary, the mother of Jesus and seeks to relate the doctrine about Mary to other doctrines of the faith, such as those concerning Jesus and notions about redemption, intercession and grace. Christian Mariology aims to place the role of the historic Mary in the context of scripture, tradition and the teachings of the Church on Mary (Montefiore, 1993). In terms of social history, Mariology may be broadly defined as the study of devotion to and thinking about Mary throughout the history of Christianity.

There exists a variety of Christian and non-Christian views on Mary as a figure ranging from the focus on the veneration of Mary in the Roman Catholic Mariology to criticisms of “Mariolatry” as a form of idolatry. The latter would include certain Reformed objections (Mariolatry). There are also more distinctive approaches to the role of Mary in Lutheran Marian theology and Anglican theology (Chapman, 2006). As a field of theology, the most substantial developments in Mariology in recent centuries have taken place within Roman Catholic Mariology. Eastern Orthodox concepts and veneration of Mary are integral to the rite as a whole, (the *theotokos*) and are mostly expressed in liturgy.

The veneration of Mary is said to permeate, in a way, the entire life of the Church as a dimension of dogma as well as piety, of Christology as well as of Ecclesiology. While similar to the Roman Catholic view, barring some minor differences, the Orthodox do not see a need for a separate academic discipline of Mariology as the Mother of God is seen as the self-evident apogee of God's human creation. Mary is essentially a Mother. She was predestined from all eternity, included in the very decree of the Incarnation, to be the Mother of the Son of God made man. In that predestination is included not only her physical or biological maternity in relation to her Son, but also her spiritual maternity in regard to all the redeemed children of God, the disciples of her Son.

The title, Mary, Mother of the Church, is itself a solemn recognition of Mary's spiritual maternity, as such and in its universality, viz., as Mother of all those redeemed through her Son's love and obedience in fulfilling the will of his Father by his Passion and Resurrection (Nwaigbo, 2001). She is the Mother of God's people, Mother of the Mystical Body of Christ, including all generations. The Council's reticence regarding the use of this title does not as such in the least affect its doctrinal contents. That reticence rather was motivated by other factors, only incidentally related to this mystery. From the time of St. Irenaeus, and even before, precisely within the context of the doctrine about Mary as co-worker with her Son in the redemption, and thereafter in perfect harmony with the progressive elaboration of ecclesiology, Mary has been called Mother of the Church (Nwaigbo, 2001). Before the 1950s, this custom never created any difficulties of a doctrinal kind. After the mid-twentieth century, however, the relations between Mary and the Church were explained by way of a parallelism between the two, one involving both maternity and exemplarity on a par.

Anglicanism and Mariology

Anglican Mariology is the summation of the doctrines and beliefs of Anglicanism concerning Mary, the mother of Jesus. As Anglicans believe that Jesus was both human and God the son, the second Person of the Trinity, within the Anglican Communion and Continuing Anglican movement, Mary is accorded honour as the *theotokos*, a term that means "God-bearer" or "one who gives birth to God" (Cameron, 1978). Anglicans of evangelical or Low Church tradition tend to avoid honouring Mary. Other Anglicans respect and honour Mary because of the

special religious significance that she has within Christianity as the mother of Jesus Christ (Kalu, 2008). This honour and respect is termed veneration. Mary always held a place of honour within the English Church, but many of the doctrines surrounding her have been called into question over the centuries, most as the result of the Reformation. On the other hand, Protestantism is based upon interpretation of scripture by a variety of 16th century reformers, who mostly rejected the practice of speaking directly to Mary and other saints (Akinwale, 2010). Anglicanism has allowed for Mary and the saints to be addressed.

Anglican theologian Hugh Montefiore, while denying the Immaculate Conception and the bodily assumption of Mary into heaven, says that Christians rightly honour and venerate Mary as one of the great saints of God. God had signally honoured Mary by choosing her to be the mother of Jesus (Montefiore, 1993). Anglicans recognize the doctrine upheld at the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431) and the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) that Mary is the *theotokos*, the God-Bearer. The reason Anglicans accept this statement is because it is primarily a Christological affirmation, affirming that Christ is God (Kalu, 2008). The terms “Mother of God” and “God-Bearer,” however, are not used in the official formularies of the Churches of the Anglican Communion, and some Anglicans would not wish to use these terms (Cameron, 1978). Some Anglicans agree that the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary is sound and logical, but without more scriptural proof it cannot be considered dogmatic.

No Anglican Church accepts belief in Mary as Co-Redemptory and any interpretation of the role of Mary that obscures the unique mediation of Christ. Anglicans typically believe that all doctrines concerning Mary must be linked with the doctrines of Christ and the Church. Most Anglicans generally believe that the Catholic Church’s dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary are merely pious beliefs or legends, since there is no clear reference in Scripture to support them, although some Anglo-Catholics follow these dogmas. Anglicans recognize Mary as an example of holiness, faith and obedience for all Christians; and that Mary can be seen as a prophetic figure of the Church. As the Gospel of Luke (1:48) states “henceforth all nations shall call me blessed,” she is often considered to have a unique place of importance within the Communion of saints.

Churches of the Anglican Communion observe at least some of the traditional Marian festivals of the ancient Catholic Church. The Church of England, for example, in the Calendar of its 1662 Book of Common Prayer includes The Annunciation of our Lady on March 25 as a festival to be observed. That Calendar includes the Conception, the Nativity, and the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but does not observe them liturgically. Some later Prayer Books e.g., the 1991 Anglo-Catholics Anglican Service Book do allow them to be so observed and may even publish certain Marian devotions, and most recent Anglican Prayer Books include St Mary the Mother of the Lord as a major festival on August 15.

Spiritual Affirmation of the Maternity of Mary

Spiritual maternity is not to be conceived as a substantive reality like sanctifying grace. It is rather a quality, a role, a responsibility, in Latin *munus*, that Mary, Mother of God, fulfilled according to the designs of God and still fulfills in the history of salvation in relation to human beings (Akinwale, 2010; Cameron, 1978). It is in itself a general function enveloping and including other activities with a more specialized and restricted significance. Yet, because Mary's presence in the Church is primarily a maternal presence, as Pope John Paul II declared (cited in Montefiore, 1993), all of these subordinate roles possess a basic maternal tint or character. Just as the divine motherhood is an essential factor determining what moves the Virgin Mary to act always and in all matters as Mother of God, so her spiritual maternity also moves her to act always and in all matters as Mother of the redeemed because she is Mother of the Church. Her presence in the mystery of Christ and of the Church is at every moment a maternal presence.

Equivalently an affirmation of the spiritual maternity of Mary, Mother of the redeemed, viz., of the disciples of Jesus can be summarized as follows:

1. The spiritual maternity of Mary is affirmed in propounding and explaining the antithetical parallelism Eve-Mary as grounded in Sacred Scripture. So true is this that Vatican II summarized this argument, saying that "not a few of the early Fathers, comparing Mary with Eve, call her Mother of the living" (Litfin, 2007); and frequently claim: "death through Eve, life through Mary" (Litfin, 2007).
2. The doctrine of the Mystical Body is another reason for claiming that Mary's spiritual maternity was recognized during the patristic era. St. Augustine, in

building on this insight, stated that if Mary is Mother of Christ, Head of the Church, then she is also Mother of its members.

3. A similar application is possible by taking Christ's conception and birth as universal Redeemer and Saviour point of reference. Reflections along such lines are developed especially by St. Leo the Great (Chrysostom, 2000).
4. Another similar argument can be formulated, this one converging on Mary's presence on Calvary and on Jesus' proclamation of her maternity by extending it to include John, the beloved disciple, when he said to his Mother: “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’” (Jn. 19:26-27).

The proof for the above argument supposes that John, Jesus' disciple, represented either the Church or humankind. According to the Church's Tradition, and in view of the content and significance of the scene on Calvary, St. John acted here not as a merely private person, but in accord with the divine counsels as representative of the human race (Akinwale, 2010; *McNabb and Fennell*, 2019). Some commentators think that this can be affirmed only in an improper sense, or by way of a biblical accommodation. But in view of the nature and significance of the mystery taking place on Calvary, understanding John here as representative of all humankind has unquestionable validity, as both the historical and symbolic sense of this passage. So, indeed, has the Tradition of the Church understood and proclaimed the meaning of this passage from earliest times.

Relevance of Mariology to the Present-Day Anglican Church

The relevance of Mariology to the present-day Anglican Church is discussed in the following sub-headings:

Source of liturgical revivalism

Mary has a new prominence in Anglicanism through the liturgical renewals of the 20th and 21st centuries. In most Anglican prayer books, Mary is again mentioned by name in the liturgical prayers. Further, August 15 has come to be widely celebrated as a feast or festival in honour of “Saint Mary the Virgin” with Scripture readings, collection, and proper preface. Other ancient feasts associated with Mary have also been renewed, and liturgical resources offered for use on these festivals. Marian devotions such as the Rosary, Angelus and Regina Coeli are most commonly

associated with the Anglo-Catholic and High Church movements within the present-day Anglicanism.

Theological and methodological benefits

From a theological and methodological viewpoint, the spiritual maternity is considered as a quality, prerogative or permanent condition of the Virgin Mary as a person, as a supernatural gift, a grace bestowed by the Father of mercies so that Mary might become Mother of all the redeemed (cf. Heal, 2007). Thus, Mary as spiritual Mother of all her son's disciples frames every other aspect of this grace: its origin, important moments, forms and aspects. This maternity is a permanent, well-determined modality of her existence, and confers on her a singular dignity and special role within the life of the Church - to be Mother of the Church. This prerogative finds its basis in several events of salvation history (*historiasalutis*), first, by her participation in the mystery of the Incarnation as Mother of the Redeemer and the redeemed; and second, by her effective collaboration with her Son in the redemption of the human race from his birth until his death on the Cross.

By careful analysis of reciprocal concepts and through the study of events endowed with a wide-ranging symbolism, Mary is shown to be acting as spiritual Mother and Bride. Thus, in the mystery of the Annunciation Mary pronounces her fiat (Lk. 1:38) as mystical bride of the Word, giving birth to the Church as distinct from Christ. Of this Church Christ becomes Head, after assuming in personal union the human nature he intended to redeem (Akinwale, 2010; Cutsinger, 2000). It is helpful to keep this blending of types in mind, so as to recognize the various interrelated titles under which the Tradition of the Church has proclaimed Mary's spiritual maternity.

Mary's Exemplarity as model for the church

Among those other features of Mary's exemplarity we can propose the following as among the more important:

- i. Mary, model of the Church in devotion consisting of making one's own life a sacrifice to God.
- ii. Mary, model of the Church in the exercise of liturgical worship.
- iii. Mary, model of the Church in the basic attitudes of Christian life.
- iv. Mary, model of the Church in apostolic love.
- v. Mary, model of the Church, as the most perfect person after Christ.
- vi. Mary, model of the Church in its universality.

Mary as the church-personified

Mary, as the Church's personification, contains in herself the total perfection and sanctity of the Church. That is why after Christ, in her own personal reality, she is the most perfect model of the mystery of the Church and of all her members. Nor may it be said that Mary is a mere symbol, or that this title is to be taken as pure metaphor. The meaning is real and objective, with the same objectivity that the Most Blessed Virgin Mother of God, the mystery of the Church, and grace and sanctity. We may not always know very well or with much precision the mechanics of that spiritual influence which the Virgin Mary, as spiritual Mother, exercises over her children. She is endowed with all perfections and in some way unites in her person and re-echoes the most important doctrines of the faith (Shoemaker, 2005), and radiates over souls the most sublime gifts of salvation, drawing them to Christ with the strength of her personal influence as Mediatrix between God and human.

Mary as an example of holiness, faith and obedience

Anglicans recognize Mary as an example of holiness, faith and obedience for all Christians; and that Mary can be seen as a prophetic figure of the Church. As the Gospel of Luke (1:48) states "henceforth all nations shall call me blessed" hence, she is often considered to have a unique place of importance within the Communion of Saints.

Conclusion

The churches of the Anglican Communion are united by a common liturgy which, while it may be adapted to express both local interests and theological biases, retains a common structure, and often similar wording. The Anglican Church especially in Africa is still in the early stages of exploring the riches which African spirituality could offer for its life and its worship. This paper argues that Mariology can be a source of rich African spirituality. This is particularly true for the Anglican Church in Africa, where Marian theology has recently become more prominent, and is being discovered by many ordinary Christians.

The flexibility of teaching and structure found in the Anglican Church allows it to be enriched by a wide range of influences. Among these influences, Mariology and Anglicanism are beginning to make their presence felt, as forms of spirituality anchored in past traditions, and allowing for growth and development as the church

moves into the twenty-first century and faces the challenges of its time. The openness to theological and liturgical diversity within the Anglican Church makes it possible to introduce perspectives from both Mariology and other Christian traditions into worship and teaching. This will serve to challenge people about deepening their spirituality and will help people to discover the historical roots of their faith, in a way which is attractive and designed to meet the needs and aspirations of members in contemporary Anglican Church.

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