

FROM THE CONVENOR

Much of our everyday contact with people of other faiths comes at the "practical" level: we are concerned - as in the last issue of NIFCON NEWS - with "issues of peace-making, social justice and religious liberty".

At that level we may be too distracted in our common struggle to take time to reflect on the spiritual resources which nourish and empower us. We may find it difficult to acknowledge that the particular spirituality we have grown up with may not always be appropriate in our local context and culture. We may prefer not to discern the grace of God in the spirituality of those whom we struggle alongside or perhaps contend with.

So in this sixth issue we offer reflections from the perspective of spirituality. In particular we focus on Anglican spirituality, because we believe our own tradition has something special to contribute in a world of faiths. But, as our contributor from Samoa reminds us, finding an appropriate spirituality is on the agenda of Christians of all traditions.

It would be good to receive your thoughts and comments on this subject...

WHAT IS 'ANGLICAN' SPIRITUALITY?

When we think of 'spirituality', what do we picture in our minds? A person sitting alone, meditating with perhaps a lighted candle or a flower? Or do we think of someone sitting in a quiet place reading from the Bible? Mostly, I suspect, we picture a person, alone, meditating or praying in silence. Such a person we think of as being 'spiritual.'

When the Church of England broke from the Bishop of Rome in the mid 16th century, the leaders of the day prepared and published the first Book of Common Prayer for use in all churches. It was this book and liturgies contained in it, that was intended to give spiritual formation to every member of the English Church. It was called the Book of Common Prayer because it was intended for all members of the Church, lay and clergy alike. Apart from the pastoral services like marriage and funerals, it contained rites for the two great sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, as well as services for use each day of the week. Since that time there have been many revisions of the Book of Common Prayer both in England, and in the various provinces that now make up the Anglican Communion.

In the prayer books that are now in use around the Anglican world there are a number of fundamental characteristics which form not only the bases of our liturgical worship, but also the basis of spiritual formation for Anglicans.

1. Public and communal

First and foremost Anglican spirituality is public and communal, ie, we gather together and pray as a community. There are no private devotions in our Prayer Books. This does not mean we cannot pray privately, but it does show that we are first encouraged to learn to pray within the structures of the Christian community. Our spiritual life is nourished by reading the Scriptures together, praying together, and celebrating the sacraments together.

2. Scripture

All Anglican prayer books are Scriptural. Not only is the Bible read during each gathering for worship, but the great Scriptural teachings are embodied in the prayers themselves. When the Bible is read in church, it is read in an ordered fashion. Over a given period the whole counsel and teaching of the Bible is read and proclaimed. This does not mean that every chapter of every book is read, but the widest possible range is encompassed. Thus we are encouraged to avoid unbalanced use and knowledge of Holy Scripture, and are taught by it and nourished spiritually by it.

3. Prayer

Using the services of the prayer books also encourages a wide range of prayer. We are constantly asked to pray for the world, the wider church, those in need, etc. This widens our prayer horizons beyond ourselves and our immediate personal concerns. We are invited to offer praise and thanks to God, and to acknowledge our shortcomings - all of which are part of a balanced life of prayer.

4. Words and Actions

We are embodied persons. We are not just spirit, or mind, or body. We are all three. A healthy spirituality will engage all three human aspects. That is why we are sacramental (we use physical things like water, bread and wine, oil, the laying on of hands). All our human senses need engaging in worship so that we are formed as whole people. Therefore we use not only words, but also rituals and symbols. These form us in ways that are often difficult to describe, but nevertheless, touch our very hearts.

5. Sunday

All prayer books expect that Anglicans will gather together on the Lord's Day to praise God for all God's goodness to us in creation, and especially in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and in the sending of the Spirit. For most Anglicans this will be done by celebrating the Eucharist (Holy Communion) together. It is the Sunday liturgy that forms our weekly cycle of prayer and Christian living. In the Eucharist we experience all the above principles in action: God's Word is read and proclaimed, we pray for the world and church as well as ourselves, we experience reconciliation and forgiveness, and we celebrate together the Lord's Supper where Christ is made known to us in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup, and we are sent out to live and work to God's praise and glory. Patterns of prayer and discipleship established here become part of our daily living and praying.

6. Weekdays

All the prayer books of our tradition contain daily services, usually (but not only) Morning and Evening Prayer. In these services the psalms are used as songs of praise, thanksgiving or perhaps lament, and also for meditation. The Bible is read on some regular pattern. Prayer is offered for ourselves and the world beyond. In many places people gather together for these 'Offices'.¹ But this is not essential. It is often the case that lay persons and clergy use these forms of prayer by themselves. Even using them alone, however, unites the individual to the whole community around the same psalms and Scriptures wherever and however the individual might use them. All the revised prayer 'books around the Communion have suggestions for simplified use of these services and there have been some extremely useful revisions and simplification published (see the highly recommended *Celebrating Common Prayer* (Mowbray, London) - especially the 'Simple Form').

Anglican spirituality then, is essentially anchored in community, the Scriptures and participation in the sacraments. This, of course, does not rule out our individual prayer and meditation, but the principles outlined so briefly give a context, a shape and a formation. We learn to pray from others and with others. Our prayer book tradition is ever evolving - with current culture, responding to current needs.

The formation we Anglicans receive in community from word and sacrament flows over into our private and personal devotions, meditations and the like, but it begins in the gathered community, is formed by the gathered church, and in the fellowship of the Spirit flows into and through our daily, personal lives. Whether we know it or not, our spirituality is rooted in our liturgical traditions. No matter how often our prayer books are revised, no matter what forms they take, we are a church whose spirituality is formed and nurtured by our prayer book.

Some suggested reading:

Bradshaw, Paul, *Two Ways of Praying* Abingdon, Nashville 1995

Moorman, John, *The Anglican Spiritual Tradition* Darton, Longman & Todd, London 1983

Stevenson, K & Spinks B (eds), *The Identity of Anglican Worship* Mowbray, London 1991

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WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ANGLICAN IN KENYA

In the Kenyan Service of Holy Communion, there is a post-communion blessing that runs:

Leader: All our problems People: We send to the cross of Christ

Leader: All our difficulties People: We send to the cross of Christ

Leader: All the devil's works People: We send to the cross of Christ

Leader: All our hopes People: We send to the cross of Christ

The congregation accompany the first three responses with a sweep of the arm to the cross and their final response with a sweep towards heaven.

This prayer is based on the culture of the Turkana of Isiolo, where every social meeting starts and ends with a spiritual chant conducted by the eldest man in the village. It involves a kind of exorcism where all bad elements are

sent away to the setting sun by a sweep of hands while the peace of God and all that is good and desired is invited in. For Africans are "notoriously religious" as Professor John Mbiti has termed them.

A powerful wave of liturgical renewal has been sweeping through the Anglican Church in Africa, with a view to formulating liturgies whose baseline is the culture of the people. In the Anglican The Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa (CAPA) has a strong liturgical wing of which Bishop Gitari is currently the chairman. This committee has met on a number of times to consult and discuss practical ways of writing indigenous church liturgies. A number of Provinces have made practical efforts towards this and the Church of the Province of Kenya is among them.

In Kenya, through the Provincial Board of Theological Education and Liturgy, the first fruits of this wave of liturgical renewal was the Modern (or Kenyan) Service of Holy Communion published in 1991. Two years later we published the Modern Services which contains Morning and Evening Prayer, Baptism, Confirmation, etc. The third booklet in this series has all the remaining orders of Service - Consecration of Bishops, ordination of Priests, Deacons, Celebration and Blessing of Marriages. Since Kenya is a multi-ethnic society translation of these liturgies into vernacular languages is going on.

Music takes a central place in liturgical renewal. In this regard Kenya, and more specifically our Diocese of Kirinyaga has been in the lead especially since the publication of the indigenous church hymnal "Nyimbo Cia Gucanjamura Ngoro" in 1994. This hymnbook has brought a real revolution in worship because African tunes provoke dance and emotion. In many of our churches the book of 253 hymns, half of which are purely African melodies, has nearly replaced the Kikuyu Hymns Ancient and Modern. The book, a dream of Bishop Gitari, was compiled by the Diocesan Department of Communications headed by the Revd Joyce Karuri.

However, not all that is cultural is acceptable especially those practices that undermine scripture and interfere with the dignity and sanctity of human life. Such practices include among others: the throwing away of twin babies and children who grow the upper teeth first - such babies were considered a taboo in society. The pioneer of evangelistic work in this part of our country, the late Samuel Mukuba, once rescued a baby boy whom he found crying in the bush where he had been discarded for showing the upper teeth first. He took the boy and brought him up as his own child. That boy, Kranja, is now over 60 and is a father of sons and daughters.

Among the pastoral tribes of this country, for example the Maasai, there is the common saying that "all the cattle in the world belong to the Maasai". So when the Maasai warriors carry away cattle belonging to their Kikuyu neighbours, they do not see this as stealing. Rather they argue they are returning the cattle where they belong! In a paper he wrote on "Gospel and Culture", Bishop Gitari basing his theme on the text, "Love your neighbour as yourself" used scripture to confront and challenge this popular belief and argued in the style of Jesus: "It has been said "all cattle in the world belong to the Maasai" but I say to you, "if you love your Kikuyu brothers as yourselves, you will not take away their cattle."

There are other cultural practices that have remained a challenge to the church and its doctrines, including circumcision of girls and polygamy. In a number of areas the missionary condemnation of these practices resulted in sharp divisions with some members moving away to start independent churches based purely on cultural values. But the missionaries who came to this part of the country, being wiser, exercised a measure of tolerance and that is why the Anglican Church here did not experience splits and secessions as it did in Kiambu in the mid 40s and 50s.

Polygamy was considered a prestigious status of marriage and only the rich and powerful could enjoy the polygamous status because they could afford the heavy bride price(es). Now the church teaches the ideal of monogamous marriage as God's intention; yet while this is the widespread and the more conventional practice now, there are areas where the practice is very stubbornly in place and you will find some churches in these areas having polygamists as church elders. A lot of other prominent people in society are polygamists. And now the Church is faced with the crucial question of "what is more evil - stable polygamy, divorce and remarriage (common in the west), or the all too common concubinage?"

Female circumcision is a very old rite of passage that sees girls pass from childhood to womanhood. Much as the Anglican church has taught against this practice, it has not been easy to wipe it out particularly because other churches like the Catholic and Independent allow it. And since scripture says nothing about it, the Anglican church has had to use reason as the basis of rejection of the practice - it scars the woman's genitals painfully and further denies her right to enjoy the gift of sex. And since Anglicanism brought with it a sense of civilisation, the circumcision ceremonies work against this and nowadays even traditional diehards have to do it secretly. Those who still practise it do so secretly, e.g taking their girls to their grandmothers over long school holidays.

Probably the greatest cultural asset that Anglicanism in Kenya has built on is communalism - the people's sense of community. People still largely live in homesteads and think of each other in terms of mihiriga and mbari (clan and

family tree) and the extended family is still very much in place. And on the basis of this, the church has a very practical way of preaching about the unity of the church of which Christ is the head. Yet because of humanity's insatiable desire to be like the bigger brother, coupled with rapid (albeit mixed up) technological advancement, Africans have not seriously embraced the value of community and individualism which characterises western communities is catching up with us at a very fast rate.

There is a sense in which the African practice of veneration of ancestors has enriched the Anglican doctrine and now we recognise the place of Christian ancestors (saints) who have gone before us, as we see in this prayer of intercession:

Gracious father, we heartily thank you
for our faithful ancestors and all who
have passed through death to the new life
of joy in our heavenly home.
We pray that surrounded by so
great a crowd of witnesses,
we may walk in their footsteps
and be fully united with them in
your everlasting kingdom....

or this post communion prayer:

O God of our ancestors, God of our people, before whose face the human generations pass away, we thank you that in you we are kept safe for ever, and that the broken fragments of our history are gathered up in the redeeming act of your dear Son, remembered in this holy sacrament.... Help us to walk daily in the communion of saints....

As the church in its liturgy seeks to be more authentically Kenyan, we are all the same very conscious of our place in the worldwide Anglican Church (and the universal family of faith). Hence we aim to include ancient and universal concepts in the pages of our new prayerbooks.

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ANGLICAN IDENTITY IN TAIWAN TODAY

What does it mean today to be an Anglican in Taiwan, with its rich heritage of Chinese religion and culture?

The question raises such complex issues that giving it an adequate answer seems almost impossible. But the task becomes more manageable when we recognize that the question here presented actually has four questions hidden in it. Spreading the response out over the four helps to untangle some of the knots that the topic presents.

1 Ethnic identity.

Before the question, "What does it mean to be a Taiwanese Anglican?" can be addressed, a more urgent question, "What does it mean to be Taiwanese?" must be considered. From political, cultural, and spiritual perspectives, this is the most troubling and challenging issue facing the people of Taiwan today. The obvious answer is that Taiwanese are Chinese, and for many this is all that needs to be said. But many others assert that Taiwanese are no more Chinese than Americans and Australians are English. If so, what is this emerging Taiwanese identity, and how does it relate to the past out of which the Taiwanese have come?

In the 1950s, when the Taiwan Episcopal Church was established, its mission was almost completely that of ministering to refugees from the mainland. But in the four decades since, the mission has undergone a major change. The membership of the diocese is now made up almost completely of younger, locally-born Taiwanese who are first-generation Christians. For them, their quest for Anglican identity is being played out against the wider quest by society as a whole for Taiwanese identity.

2 Traditionalism.

In the context of Chinese traditionalism, how can Anglican identity develop? With the exception of a small aboriginal population, all people in Taiwan acknowledge the Chinese roots of their culture. And more than any other tradition, this one has exhibited the powers of its endurance. Among the most enduring parts of the Chinese heritage are its religions. In general, the Chinese, have been remarkably tolerant of religious pluralism. Most feel free to shop around the "religious supermarket" as their interests and needs dictate. But all is done in the context of Chinese tradition. When Taiwanese are faced with a religion that appears as foreign as Christianity, a conservative response tends to emerge. When asked, Taiwanese Christians usually begin by saying that they face little hostility

or pressure because of their religion. But when the issue is pressed, they will acknowledge that living a Christian life is not always easy or socially acceptable. Most frequently, stresses develop around matters of religious observance - weddings, funeral, ancestor worship, and festivals. But these are only the most conspicuous examples of points of conflict where in many less obvious ways Christians have to come to terms with a non-Christian society.

Ironically, the tolerant spirit of Chinese religion can provide a major source of conflict for Christians. Most Taiwanese take a pragmatic, utilitarian approach to practising religion. They turn to their gods in order to get the benefits of divine power for their activities. It seems quite appropriate to them to "shop around" among shrines until they obtain maximum satisfaction. When Christians take the position that they worship God more to serve him than to be served and make their commitment to him exclusive, they tend to be looked upon as unrealistic, narrow-minded, and even fanatical. Christians, in turn, regard Taiwanese folk religion as based largely on fear, coercion, and manipulation. Liberation from the fear of the dark powers of the world through entering into a loving relationship with God in Christ is perhaps the greatest reward for Christian converts from their new faith.

3 Modernization.

What impact has modernization in Taiwan had on Christian life and mission?. The process of modernization that nations in the West took two centuries to develop Taiwan has telescoped into four decades. The most evident change has been in the economy. An austere, rural, agrarian land has almost overnight become affluent, urban, and industrial. Developments in politics, education, travel and life style have been equally notable.

Although the benefits to Taiwan of modernization are undeniable, its drawbacks are also all-too-evident. Under the new glitter and freedom lies a disturbing layer of anxiety. The causes are many - threats from the mainland, fear of recession, instability of family life, erosion of traditional standards, and confusion about the purpose and worth of living. As older standards fade, the functional religion of Taiwan appears to be materialism and consumerism.

The Christian community has benefited in a number of ways from modernization. Affluence makes church support easier. Young adults with a wider world view and greater personal liberty are more open to the Good News of Christ. Those who are disillusioned with both the superstition and fear in traditional folk religion and with the shallowness of the religion of economic success find in Christianity a hope grounded in a transcendent vision of life yet related to the realities of the modern world.

On the negative side, the heavy demands of people's high-pressured existence leaves them with little time or energy to explore new possibilities in religious faith. Church programs that used to attract young people are no longer able to compete with the sophisticated amusements now surrounding them. Church leaders must search for ways to meet the challenges not only of the traditionalism of China but also of modernism imported from the West. Even committed Christians are increasingly torn between the obligations of career and Church.

4 Anglican identity.

What does it mean to be Anglican in a pluralistic Christian community? Anglicans in Taiwan, numbering less than 2000, constitute a tiny minority in a church community which itself is less than 5% of the population. They also are one among a bewildering variety of denominations. A characteristic of the Anglican tradition has been to see the Church as an institution engaged in society in ways that make its presence felt. In Taiwan, this awareness has been hard to develop. Our congregations are so new and so small that most of their effort has had to go into the struggle for survival and growth.

Yet Anglicans in Taiwan do see themselves as having special gifts to bring both to the Christian community and also to the wider society. With its richness of symbolism and with the power of its liturgical texts, the Anglican tradition of worship is seen as closer to that of Chinese tradition than the austere forms of evangelical denominations/The Anglican emphasis on the via media, the middle way, is also very Chinese. And the stress on the communal spirit of diocesan life, with the bishop as the father of an extended family, also fits well with the traditional ideals of Chinese social structure

Peyton G Craighill

NEW ASIAN CHRISTIANS IN ENGLAND

Nigel Pounds interviews Sewa and Narinder Mehat who are leaders of the Punjabi Fellowship which is part of the Parish of St Jude's, IVolverhampton. Sewa and Narinder are both Lay Readers in the Diocese of Lichfield.

Nigel: When you became a Christian, how much of your Sikh spirituality did you bring with you?

Narinder: God had always been a very special person to me as a Sikh, so in becoming a Christian it was not difficult to form a real relationship with Jesus Christ once I knew my peace had come from him and I was seeking peace. I was dedicated to the Sikh faith, to God, to belief in one God, but through the gurus - that is how I had learned God. There was no difficulty in forming a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, once I knew he had delivered the goods.

However, it was difficult to worship and accept Jesus Christ as God - that was an alien concept. That understanding only came through the Spirit as I sought God's face. In my heart I hadn't accepted Jesus Christ as God - that took 6 months. Once acceptance came I realised this was a treasure not available in the Sikh faith. Other things were and are available, but not Jesus - he is unique. Once I realised this I wanted to tell the whole world!

Sewa: I wasn't a practising Sikh, but Sikh spirituality was everywhere around in the community, the home with its prayer-room, etc. All that influenced me. When I became a Christian and as I have grown in faith so I am beginning to learn the value of some of the Sikh religious practices, particularly rising early in the morning and worshipping and dedicating the day to the Lord. I sit before the Lord for an hour and contemplate and meditate. This comes from the Sikhs who rise, wash and pray. The community worship and kitchen, being together, is also very important. In Christian circles you can feel very lonely. You can have a personal relationship with God and all your fellow Christians but not show it in the same way as within Sikhism. That active participation gives a tremendous sense of uplift, that you are part of a family. You may not agree on everything but you are committed to each other. Maybe the professionalism of Christianity gets in the way of such relationships.

Nigel: Did you feel you were being forced into an alien way of praying and worshipping?

Sewa: Coming to Christ was such a joy in itself there was no room for anything else. But with hindsight I would say we have adopted an evangelical middle-class culture. You tend to go the way you are taught without questioning. My heart is not in the style of worship we adhere to. Worship tends always to be celebration or entertainment even rather than sitting in the presence of God. I prefer sitting on the floor and quite a formal way of worship. I am looking for more. Sikhism gives room for the expression of everything from celebration to contemplation. To compensate for what I don't get from church, we have created a prayer room in the house more to our own style, to sit and meditate and sing or whatever and so fulfil our heart's desire for the Lord.

Narinder: If Jesus was there in Sikhism (of course, he is) and recognised then I would go back and worship with them. I would love to sit with them. But Jesus has given us salvation and a unique peace and that is what is missing.

Nigel: The St Jude's Punjabi Fellowship contains Christians from various faith backgrounds - Sikh, Muslim and Hindu. What are the issues for people when they are baptised?

Sewa: Counting the cost of following Christ. Some people will make some things more absolute than others, eg never setting foot in the temple again or ever partaking of certain ceremonies. Of course it is very hard to separate the secular and the religious in Hinduism or Sikhism. So people see they have to let go a lot of things, particularly religious festivals, which they hold dear. Working according to their conscience each individual must see what is absolute for them.

Then who do I marry? - if I have children who do I arrange their marriages to? There are losses of privilege by not going along with the community - how do you cope with that? It all depends on the individual's decisions. We will never tell anyone to do this or that. We try to offer the possibilities that scripture allow so they can make their own choice. For example, a Muslim girl becomes a Christian. What should she do because her parents will decide whom she will marry? That could produce agony and suffering. Yet if she does not follow that way there is the agony and suffering of losing her family.

Nigel: How much of their culture must new Christians leave behind?

Sewa: It's very little of their culture they need to leave behind. But most converts are taught by evangelical Christians. So they are taught to leave behind more than is necessary. The only aspects to consider leaving are the religious ones. Others must be weighed on their individual merit.

Narinder: As people mature in faith so many cultural things get sorted out naturally.

Sewa: You follow by example and do what others do; we assumed this was the "right way". But there are very few "absolutes". I would insist on: Christ died for the whole of humanity, he rose again, he is God. If that cost me my life then I couldn't compromise. Everything else I would consider. Some things I would not do if it would cause an offence, eg I couldn't bow down to an idol or a book to show allegiance as might be expected of me. But others may decide that's OK for them.

Nigel: How do you decide?

Sewa: Scripture and interpretation take precedence. Then decide along with our own conscience and understanding. You still have to make your choices.

Nigel: Is there anything about Anglican spirituality which helps or hinders the new Christian?

Sewa: I had never set foot inside a church, so Anglicanism didn't mean a thing to me. Anglicanism is to me a twofold path: scripture and tradition. Sometimes tradition takes precedence over scripture. I personally find that difficult, the so-called hierarchy of the priesthood doesn't help my spirituality very much. Although we are "equal" the system itself destroys that equilibrium. That is a spiritual hindrance. As you go on you discover this. The positive thing is the liturgy, the set form of prayers, creed, canon of scripture, etc. (Narinder: I love the old Prayer Book and the words.) There is freedom within the Anglican church - you can have different views. Your own local church can be part of the worldwide body of the Anglican Communion yet still do things independently.

Confession and creed help us to speak out what is in our heart, to verbalise things as we grow. These have helped me to anchor my faith. The promises of God are spoken out through words that resonate deep in your heart.

The tolerance of the Anglican church goes deep. You can disagree with your brother and still be one.

Narinder: Much depends on the leadership of the church. Tolerance wears thin when we try and put God in our mould. Mature leadership is needed which gives priority to God at the centre. You need to be firm in what you believe yet you must have compassion and mercy and understanding. Truth and love go together.

SPIRITUALITY OF SAMOA

SAMOA.. "So" = sacred. "Moa" = centre. The Sacred Centre...

When the Tahitians first arrived in Samoa they thought the Samoans were a godless people as they had no totems or idols representing the gods erected as visual symbols. Yet the people of Samoa were very religious. Much of their belief in the spirit world was linked to nature and creation. That creation itself was an expression and manifestation of the gods. The supreme god of "Polynesia" - Tagaloa - reigned in the seventh heaven. His presence in the world manifested itself in the sacred nature totems of the villages and families found in symbols of fish, rocks and trees. Nature was respected and worshipped as part of the god's blessings on humanity. Thus a balance between nature and the spirit world ensured the daily supply of food and resources for the people.

The advent of Christianity boxed the God of creation into the four walls of the church and as a result halted the free expression of humanity towards nature as God's creation. A spoon-fed Gospel arrived and along with it Western piety and theology, which the Samoans had to learn first before they could express it and understand. Over the last 165 years Samoan Calvins and Earths have emerged from the theological colleges and into the churches. The people, on the other hand, have in obedience listened and have accepted their message without question or complaint. Christianity literally converted the island nation of Samoa virtually overnight and whilst the theology of the London missionaries dictated the "do's" and "don't's" of the people, a salvific Christ who offers forgiveness and reconciliation was restricted to the practice of European civilisation. This has kept the people dependent on Western theology and rituals whilst their parallel world of the fa'a Samoa was viewed as worldly and primitive.

Today Jesus Christ is very much alive and well in Samoa. On the one hand Samoan people believe that prayers to God for health and wholeness go hand in hand with the gifts bestowed on traditional healers and Western medicine. Somehow - amidst all the Church's tradition and ritual - the traditional healers and the spirits of the dead are kept busy as the people of the Christian church return to them with their unanswered questions about health and wholeness and their search for answers to many of life's questions, which the Church is unable to articulate.

It is only when Jesus Christ is released from the Middle East and London that he will be allowed to roam freely in Samoa as a Samoan: speaking their language and sharing their lives. Samoa needs to continue to weed out the British influences on their Christian expression and theology and truly celebrate what it means to be a Samoan Christian.

The emergence of a Samoan spirituality which embraces the creation in its totality is being re-discovered in a theology of the coconut, a return to former pre-christian symbols and practices which have always been a part of Samoan culture, but which the Church alienated itself from 165 years ago.

Forgiveness and reconciliation have always existed in the form of "ifoga": to humble oneself and offer one's life and livelihood to the family who have been wronged or victimised. Jesus reminds us that our Samoan practice of ifoga is a good thing. We do not need this explained to us from the other side of the world.

Much of Samoan spirituality is not an attempt to throw out the Christ brought by the missionaries, but an attempt to indigenise and inculturate the Christian concepts that were already there: to claim Christ for ourselves in our own words, customs and culture.

la soifua ona o Iesu.

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