



**Continuity and Change in Anglican Missionary Theology:
Dr Thomas Bray and the 1910 World Missionary Conference**

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Thomas Bray (1656-1730) parish priest, Commissary to the Bishop of London for the colony of Maryland in 1695, was also the founding instigator of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 1697, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in 1701. His experience and establishment of these two societies made Bray the founder of Anglican missions. So Anglican missions began in the early

eighteenth century, not with the late eighteenth century and the Evangelical Revival, the view common to missionary and evangelical historiography.¹ At both the beginning of his concern for overseas missions, and at the end of his life, Dr Bray was convinced of the necessity of knowledge and learning as the fundamental method of evangelism. In 1699 he preached a sermon entitled ‘Apostolick Charity’ on the occasion of the ordination of colonial clergy in Sir Christopher Wren’s splendid new St Paul’s cathedral in London. In the sermon Bray propounded knowledge as the key not only for the propagation of religion, but also for the ethical outworkings of religion, known in Christianity as ‘righteousness.’ The inculcation of righteousness, the peculiar duty of ministers, was based on what Bray called ‘the Instilling of Divine Knowledge into the Minds of men, the *foundation of all Religion.*’ Religious knowledge gave its recipients a guide for their lives because it provided understanding of the nature of God and how to relate to God. Indeed, only virtuous living that was consciously done for God would be imputed by God as ‘virtuous and laudable Action.’² In short, Bray affirmed, ‘it is Ignorance which is the Natural Parent of that Atheism and Infidelity so rife amongst Men; and indeed, not only of that, but of all other Vices and Wickednesses whatsoever.’³ So virtue was caused by divine knowledge; atheism and wickedness from ignorance of that knowledge.

¹ Rowan Strong, *Anglicanism and the British Empire c. 1700-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 11-17.

² Bray, *Apostolick charity, its nature and excellence consider’d in a discourse upon Dan. 12.3* (London: William Hawes, 1699), 13.

³ Bray, *Apostolick charity*, 14.

In 1727, when Bray, who had only three more years to live, published his final work on missions, he included in his *Missionalia* collection a ‘postscript instruction’ to missionaries. Here Bray stipulated the ‘necessity’ of establishing schools among the North American Indians. Not only were schools needed in order that missionaries and Indians learn each others’ language for mutual understanding, and for the effective imparting of saving religious knowledge; but also to provide the infrastructure for translating the Bible and other books into indigenous languages. As proof of the fundamental place of schools in evangelism Bray was not afraid to cite the example of Jesuit missions, ‘who also Pave their Way in all their Conversions, in *East* or *West*, by putting up Schools where-ever they go.’⁴

This paper examines the initial shaping of Anglican mission in the work and publications of Dr Thomas Bray. It will highlight the paradigm of transforming religious knowledge that lay at the heart of Bray’s understanding of mission, and go on to examine how this knowledge paradigm was emphasized by the Enlightenment. The paper will then look at the persistence of this knowledge paradigm in Anglican missionary thinking at the 1910 World Missionary Conference. The paradigm of transforming or evangelizing Christian knowledge marks the major continuity in Anglican missional thinking in this period of two centuries. The major discontinuity was the attitude of some Anglican missionaries towards non-Christian tribal peoples. The last section of the paper examines this shift from antipathy to sympathy which emerged in 1910 amongst a minority of

⁴ Thomas Bray, ‘A postscript instruction,’ in his *Missionalia* (London: 1727), 43,44.

Anglicans, and suggests a reason why this alteration was largely confined to High Churchmen.

Bray and the Transforming Religious Knowledge Paradigm

Thomas Bray dedicated his life to a model of mission based on the inculcation of religious knowledge as propagating Christian understanding and conversion, an educational thrust that predated his developing missionary interests in the late 1690s. Having been ordained in 1682, Bray was appointed in 1690 to the parish of Sheldon, Warwickshire, by the patron Lord William Digby. Encouraged at this time by the injunctions of Archbishop Thomas Tenison of Canterbury calling for more conscientious catechizing of the young, Bray wrote his *Catechetical Lectures* (1696). The popular work was based on Bray's methods of teaching the prayerbook catechism in his parish of some 500 parishioners.⁵ Bray's biographer says that the priest was not only concerned that his young people learn their catechism but also develop their devotional life, and therefore Bray's book point to ways in which catechumens might be formed by their instruction to become models for worship at home and in church.⁶ In pursuit of this aim of educational evangelism, Bray devoted a large part of the rest of his life to the promotion and purchase of parish libraries, both in English parishes and colonies.

Bray's belief that the spread of Christian knowledge was a causal factor in producing converted lives also played an important role in his proposals for missions to

⁵ This influential work sold 3000 copies with a profit of £700, according to H. P. Thompson, *Thomas Bray* (London, SPCK, 1954), 8-11.

⁶ Thompson, *Thomas Bray*, 11-12.

the tribal peoples and Black slaves in North America. His awareness of these colonized peoples was raised by his appointment as Commissary for Maryland, and by his subsequent short visitation there in 1699. But educational mission had already been the subject of one of his first public pronouncements on colonial clergy when, in 1695, he published his *Proposals for the Incouragement and Promoting of Religion and Learning in the Foreign Plantations*, outlining the need for colonial parochial libraries.

Whereas also the Clergy, that are already in the Plantations, as well as those who are to be sent thither, cannot (Humanly speaking) be so capable of informing themselves, and of instructing others in the design of Christianity, in the Nature of the Covenant of Grace; in the Meaning and Importance of the Articles of our most Holy Faith, and in the Nature and Extent of all Christian Duties, without the Assistance of some good Commentators upon the Holy Scriptures; and one, at least, or more of those Authors, who have treated upon each, and every of those Points . . . should every Parochial Minister in the Plantations have a sufficient Library of well-chosen Books, of all those kinds before-mentioned, in which he might spend his time to his own Satisfaction, and with Improvement and Profit to himself: and others.⁷

A clergyman knowledgeable in Christian doctrine would be able to induce others to accept such saving knowledge, which would, in turn, lead those so convinced into a virtuous life in conformity with their Christian beliefs. For this reason Bray focused his proposed Anglican mission to Black slaves around schools. In 1694, when Bray was in the Netherlands chasing after King William III in support of a tax grant for the proposed SPCK, he met the king's secretary, Abel Tassin, Sieur D'Allone. In conversation with

⁷ Thomas Bray, *Proposals for the Incouragement and Promoting of Religion and Learning in the Foreign Plantations* (1695), 1.

D'Allone, Bray sparked his interest in the conversion of Black slaves, resulting in a bequest of £900 by D'Allone's explicitly for the conversion and education of Black slaves. Undoubtedly this bequest was a consequence of D'Allone accepting Bray's model of knowledge-based mission.⁸ This enabled Bray in the last days of his life to establish a trust fund for this work, known as Dr Bray's Associates, which centred around the provision of catechists and schools.⁹

As this work among Negro slaves was financially facilitated only in the last weeks of Bray's life, he wrote very little explicitly on it. But we can see from his more extensive writing on Indian missions something of the understanding Bray had of educational and knowledge-based mission. Bray's Indian missions advocacy is based on little or no personal experience of the indigenous peoples of North America; his biographer records no such encounter during his few months in Maryland. What specific knowledge he had would have come from the reports of the SPG clergy in the British colonies there. His thoughts on missions to these unencountered peoples are primarily found in his 'postscript introduction' in his final published work, *Missionalia*. Bray wrote this to vindicate the colonial clergy against charges of dereliction made in a pamphlet by Dean George Berkeley proposing a college in Bermuda for colonial clergy and missionaries. Bray also wanted to publish his own counter-proposal of a college on

⁸ Verner W. Crane, 'Dr Thomas Bray and the charitable colony project 1730' in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, (1962), 49-63.

⁹ Thompson, *Thomas Bray*, 98-100.

mainland North America, the details of which are not germane to this paper.¹⁰ But Bray did strongly dissent from some of the more compulsive methods of Berkeley, including the forcible capture of Indian children and isolating them in an institution geographically remote from their peoples. Such a method of conversion, Bray exclaimed, was not only completely incompatible with the Christian gospel, but was akin to the methods of slavery, which belonged to mammon rather than God. It would also rebound on English heads when aggrieved Indian tribes went to war over the taking of their children.

I shall only pray to God, not to deliver us to such an Infatuation, as to use the most *Unchristian*, method to propagate the Gospel, such as that of promoting War, in order to get Persons to be Instructed in our Holy Religion would appear to be! And how would the Deist Triumph over us, if we should be found Encouragers of such Methods? It is said indeed, those who are concern'd in the *Slaving Trade in Africa*, do put the Negroe Nations together by the Ears, the better to get Slaves; but what they do to serve their God Mammon, would infinitely misbecome us in the Service of Christ.¹¹

Bray was more sensitive than Berkeley to the moral issue of forcible conversion through kidnapping impressionable children. However, his emphasis on conversion as the appropriation of saving knowledge or doctrine made him susceptible to a belief in the prior requirement of 'civilization,' or the appropriation of European culture in order to understand that knowledge.

¹⁰ Samuel Clyde McCulloch, 'A plea for further missionary activity in colonial America – Dr Thomas Bray's Missionalia, in *The Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* (1946), 233-4. Berkeley's pamphlet, published in 1725, was *Proposal for the better supplying of churches in our foreign plantations and for converting the savage Americans to Christianity by a college to be erected in the Summer Islands, otherwise called the Isle of Bermuda*.

¹¹ Bray, 'Postscript introduction,' 73-4.

But the main Thing to enquire of you is, *Whether the like Method is to be taken with the American Indians, as was attempted with the African Heathen*, by endeavouring, first, to Civilize them, and then to Instruct them, and make them Christians; or rather, whether both parts ought not to go Hand in Hand, since there can be no Instruction of a People Wild and Savage, ‘till some measure Cicurated, or Tam’d, and thereby render’d Susceptible of Christian Doctrine.’¹²

These twin emphases on doctrine and civilization were further exacerbated into a Europeanization program by Bray’s conviction that the tribal peoples of North America were barely human. They were, ‘at best, Tam’d Beasts,’ whose polygamous habits needed to be reduced to monogamy and humanity.¹³ ‘To prepare them [American Indians] for the reception of the Gospel, by endeavouring, in the first place, to Civilize them.’ This meant, replacing their nomadic hunting habits which made them like ‘wild beasts.’¹⁴ Tribal peoples were, in such a condition, and in their pagan beliefs, subjects of Satan, from which they needed to be rescued by the Christian gospel.¹⁵ Bray’s plan was to have the tribal peoples voluntarily versed in European trades by married artisanal missionaries, supported by visits from an itinerant learned clergyman. These missionaries would need to be able to communicate with the indigenous peoples in their own language so as to encourage them, by the superior examples of European trades, to renounce their traditional ways of life for a settled European literate one.

Bray’s plan for an evangelizing agricultural mission was to provide the civilizing basis for conversion, a culturally-centric model that went back in North American

¹² Bray, ‘Postscript introduction,’ 57.

¹³ Bray, Postscript Introduction,’ 41, 43

¹⁴ Bray, Postscript Introduction,’ 58.

¹⁵ Bray, Postscript Introduction,’ 50-1.

Protestantism to the Praying Towns of Puritan New England, and it contrasts with the greater cultural flexibility of the Jesuit missions. Bray's agenda was to make the Indians into European smallholders and, by doing so they would transit them from brutes to humans.

It is not be apprehended by us, how they should become *Christians* before they are made *Men*, or so long as they remain in a State of Brutality. Or plainly, how they should be enlightened with Christian Instruction . . . 'till they can be perswaded to build Houses, to cultivate their Lands, to raise Provision for their Families out of the same, and to have distinct Properties, and thereby be induc'd to abide in the same Places, where they may be always found Summer and Winter. Or suppose they could be taught to Read, and be imbu'd with the Principles of Religion, whilst they live Part of the Year near the Christian Borders, what will all this signify when they run out to Hunt, or to War, the remaining Part of the Year . . . and have practis'd all along the intermediate Time the very Reverse to it?¹⁶

For Bray, the world was not only understood as comprised of a theological polarity – Christians in God's Kingdom and heathens in Satan's. There was also an anthropological opposition, corresponding with brutish nomads and civilized settled farmers. Christianity could not survive in the brutish heathen world unless that world was not just refashioned theologically, but also anthropologically, and economically.

The very *Reverse to the Christian Rule*, I mean, to which Savageness and Brutality is in all Things the most Contrary. No; besides that, Light and Darkness are not more Opposite than two such contrary Ways of Life; the Christian Faith, and Morality, is a Plant of too delicate a Texture to grow upon an unprepar'd Soil. And to prepare this unhappy Part of our Species, little better than Brutes, though

¹⁶ Bray, 'Postscript Introduction, 58-9.

in Human Shape, and indu'd with intellectual Faculties, they must be in some Measure *Civiliz'd*.¹⁷

But this classic Western Protestant mission agenda, of civilization then conversion, which had such a long history, was tweaked by Bray. He did not wish to see civilization as the pre-requisite for conversion, but rather to achieve both concurrently. The end result was not just to Europeanize new converts, but to imperialize them. 'They' as Bray put it, 'by commerce with our Planters, are render'd more tractable.' The converted Indians would, by their English Christianity, be made more conformable to their converting English colonizers.

I do not indeed mean, that nothing is to be done towards enlightening their Minds with the great Truths of the Gospel, 'till they shall be quite civiliz'd, and brought to live in full as regular Manner, as we *Europeans* do; but what I mean is this, that both Parts should be begun and carry'd on together, attempting to reduce them to Humanity, as well as to sow the seeds of Christianity among the Clans of Indians next adjoining to the Habitations of the *English*. Besides that, the Indians on the Borders are not so numerous . . .these, by Commerce with our Planters, are render'd more Tractable, and by what I could observe myself, or learn from others, have something more settled Places of Abode.¹⁸

Bray certainly intended his missions to change the cultures of the North American tribal peoples, but that agenda could not be described as imperialistic simply because it was desired change. These indigenous cultures had been interacting and changing each other for centuries before British colonization began on that continent. Bray also undoubtedly associated his mission with the interests of the colonial power. But all other

¹⁷ Bray, 'Postscript Introduction,' 59.

¹⁸ Bray, 'Postscript Introduction,' 60.

cultures in colonial North America at the time were connected in some way with imperial powers – the British, French, Spanish, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Dissenters, and the Indian peoples! Certainly Bray’s almost total devaluing of the tribal cultures does lend itself to that nebulous concept of ‘cultural imperialism.’¹⁹ However, one wonders, given the Indian reluctance to convert in any numbers, whether they were any less superior and culturally-convinced towards the British than Bray was to them?

Neither can this missionary world be reduced simplistically to binary opposites of dominant British imperialists versus inferior colonized indigenes, with Bray and Anglican missions allying to their more powerful countrymen. Bray’s own English culture was itself highly varied and very contested throughout the period of his missionary writings. No more than were the Indian tribal cultures was the English, and then British, culture a single dominant ‘thing.’ It was divided between Catholic and Protestant; and the latter between Church and Dissent. Throw into the volatile mix after 1707, Scots and Presbyterians in a single Great Britain, and it becomes plain that the history of Anglican missionary origins cannot be reduced to simple bi-polarities of imperializing incomers and colonized indigenes. Bray was attempting to promote one brand of English Christianity, both at home and abroad (the Church of England) among a plethora of others. He was attempting to evangelize other English just as much as Indians, and to do so within an imperial context of a state that was purportedly, but barely, on his side. To explain Bray’s missionary drive as simply one of imperial Christian British

¹⁹ Andrew Porter, ‘“Cultural imperialism” and Protestant missionary enterprise 1780-1914,’ *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 25 (1997), 372-3.

dominance is to miss this actual historical contestation and uncertainty within which Thomas Bray struggled to encourage Anglican missions.

However, there were Anglican assumptions of superiority, both theological, cultural, and political. Bray made no bones about the truth of Christianity versus the falsehood of a heathen society. He certainly saw Anglican missions acting to moderate Indian opposition to imperial British rule; and he had no awareness of the communities of Indian peoples as possessing what he could call a civilized life. This conviction that civilization lay with the British degraded the humanity of these tribal peoples to those of brutish sub-humans, linking as he and other Europeans did at that time, humanity, settled culture, and Christianity they could hardly be otherwise. But Bray also regarded white non-Church of England colonists - Quakers and Roman Catholics - as dubiously Christian at best, and encouraged his missionaries to proselytize among them as well as the Indians. If the Indians had to come further to make the transition from non-Christian to Christian, Bray's missionary agenda was not only about a Christian take-over of indigenous peoples. Given his Enlightenment presuppositions, it was about evangelizing among Indigenous, Black, and white colonial peoples who all needed to hear the Gospel as Bray understood it. But central to the remaking of the Indian peoples and their nomadic culture was the power of an English education; confidence in which Bray derived from his Enlightenment culture.

An Enlightenment Mission

Bray was a supporter of the Glorious Revolution that deposed the Stuart monarchy, and of the Hanoverian Protestant succession, a political change justified as avoiding autocracy by those of enlightened sensibilities in England. Bray was similarly an Enlightenment man, as long as we understand by that not the anti-clerical and anti-religious outlook usually reified by the term ‘The Enlightenment.’ Bray lived through much of the period of the early English Enlightenment that its most recent historian, Roy Porter, has identified as being more compatible with Christianity than its later French counterpart.²⁰ But while Bray was clearly a man of Enlightenment sensibilities in his advocacy of prison reform, and charitable work such as hospitals, can he be so described in his missionary thinking? He did not subscribe the idiom of the noble or child-like savage prominent in enlightened circles. Bray held to a traditional Christian orthodoxy of non-Christian peoples being heathens under the dominion of Satan, from whose empire they needed to be rescued. But while Bray saw the world in a theological polarity of European Christians in the Kingdom of God contrasted with heathens subject to the satanic kingdom of darkness,²¹ he did subscribe to the Enlightenment belief in the efficacy and the reforming power of knowledge spread by education as a remedy for the religious falsehood of such peoples.

While Porter’s view is that the English Enlightenment was compatible with religion, his religious exponents of that Enlightenment are still largely the Latitudinarian

²⁰ Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the creation of the modern world* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 2000), 9, 31.

²¹ Bray, *Apostolick charity*, 5.

and Deist believers pointed to by earlier commentators as exemplars of Enlightenment religion.²² In contrast, Bray's theology, and his model of mission, was one thoroughly imbued with the outlook of more Orthodox Christianity. But this more traditional Anglicanism was also a strong supporter of enlightened values in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, particularly the Orthodox who, like Bray, were committed to the political settlement of the Glorious Revolution. This, more 'conservative Enlightenment' has been traced in its cultural outlines by the distinguished historian of the Enlightenment John Pocock.²³ The engagement by the Anglican clergy in Enlightenment culture was due to the belief that civility, civil authority, in conjunction with reason, rather than untrammelled reason alone, would provide a bulwark against the religious fanaticism and bloodshed of the Interregnum. Religion should be 'reasonable,' 'sociable,' and 'polite'; though that did not lessen the commitment of these churchmen to redemption and salvation.²⁴

Accordingly, Bray engaged in mission from an Anglican Enlightenment perspective. He did share with other Enlightenment Europeans the belief that they, and their European culture, were the norm. Consequently, they regarded the tribal peoples of North and South America, not as other cultures, but as the opposite of themselves; as

²² See, for example, *John Redwood, Reason, ridicule and religion: The age of Enlightenment in England 1660-1750* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1976).

²³ J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and religion: volume one The Enlightenment of Edward Gibbon 1737-1764* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 5.

²⁴ John G A Pocock, 'Clergy and commerce: The conservative Enlightenment in England,' in Venture Franco (ed.), *L'eta dei lumi: Sudi sui storici* (Napoli: Jovene, 1985), 532-61, 530-2, 548-9.

barbarians. But barbarous savages, not really human because not civilized, could be made so through education. John Locke, in his very influential work, *Some thoughts concerning education* (1693), expresses this Enlightenment confidence in the transforming power of education because of the huge potential of the human mind for learning. It was a confidence expressed by Claude Helvetius, the eighteenth-century French philosopher, that ‘education can do all.’²⁵ Locke was writing for educators of European children. He believed children were *tabula rasa* for education to write on their blank minds its lessons. So, also, with Indian peoples who were seen as like children. Education could civilize, according to Locke, because it was not most of all about imparting information, important as that was, but also about the inculcation of morality or virtue.²⁶

Consequently, nowhere did Bray’s Enlightenment values show more explicitly than the belief he had in the transforming power of knowledge and revealed doctrine, through education. Transforming knowledge was the motivation for his founding the SPCK, in the belief that ‘Christian knowledge’ had a power to overcome ‘gross ignorance.’ By ‘ignorance’ Bray meant not mere information deficiency, but personal and even national immorality as a consequence of an ignorance of the principles of Christianity.²⁷ With regard to his missionary methodology advocated in 1727, this meant

²⁵ Quoted in Geraint Parry, ‘Education and the reproduction of the Enlightenment,’ in Martin Fitzpatrick, Peter Jones, Christa Knellwolf, Ian McCalman, *The Enlightenment world* (London: Routledge, 2007), 217-33, 217.

²⁶ Parry, ‘Education and the Enlightenment,’ 218-9.

²⁷ Daniel L. Brunner, *Halle Pietists: Anthony William Boehm and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 24.

that while Bray's artisan missionaries were teaching adults useful trades in Europeanizing artifacts, their wives would be teaching the children, exposing them through schooling to the transforming power of education. This evangelizing education could extend well beyond the children themselves. '{W]ives . . . might put up little Schools, as in our Country Villages. To teach the *Indian* Children to Spell and Read. Methinks by some such Methods it might not be Impracticable to bring over a whole Nation together, both to the *Civil* and *Religious* Life.'²⁸

But while civilization, or Europeanizing, was important, it was only the preliminary to Christian education and instruction which would prove the ontological circuit-breaker which would transfer tribal peoples and slaves from Satan to God. In his 1699 sermon 'Apostolick Charity' Bray spoke of this essential role as belonging to the ordained minister.

Those whose Duty it is in a more peculiar Manner than others, to turn *many to Righteousness*, are the Ministers of Religion . . . the Instructing, Inlightening, and Informing of the World, which is the foundation of all Righteousness, is peculiarly the Pastors Province. I do call the Instilling of Divine Knowledge into the Minds of men, the *foundation of all Religion*: For why? Knowledge of the true Nature of God, and of all the parts of that Religion which is to be paid to him, is a necessary Guide and Director of all Virtuous and Religious Practice, it being the same things to the Soul, as the Eye is to the Body. Nor is Divine Knowledge necessary to Men's living Vertuously, only as it is a Guide and Director to us so to live, but it is requisite also, as it is the Principle and Reason whereon all virtuous and worthy Deeds are to be founded.²⁹

²⁸ Bray, 'Postscript introduction,' 62.

²⁹ Bray, *Apostolick Charity*, 13-14.

So Bray remained all his life an advocate of the righteous force of Christian education, especially when brought to bear on the young of tribal peoples. It would be this knowledge that would take them from the dominion of Satan to the Kingdom of God, and from a life akin to brute beasts to that of civilized men. That conception of civilization was certainly made in the image of European culture; but it was only to be a tool, a means to an end, and that end was the virtuous life of heathen converted into Christians, brought about principally by the educational mission of Bray's Church of England. It was an idea that would have a long shelf life.

Anglican Continuity – Educational Mission and the 1910 World Missionary Conference

An examination of the place of education in mission at the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh points to the remarkable continuity of the emphasis on evangelizing education from Bray in the early eighteenth century to early twentieth-century Anglicanism. In his recent study of the Conference, Brian Stanley makes it clear that Anglican engagement in the conference commissions was predominantly in Commission III – 'Education in relation to the Christianization of national life.' This commission had eleven Anglicans among its twenty members, the majority of these working in missions within the British Empire.³⁰ The general importance of education in mission therefore forms a major Anglican continuity in missiology with the origins of Anglican mission under Thomas Bray. The more detailed question, however, is in what

³⁰ Brian Stanley, *World Missionary Conference*, 167-8.

specific ways did missionary education continue Bray's saving religious knowledge paradigm?

It was the Enlightenment understanding of education as not only the imparting of information, but also as having a transforming power for civilized virtue and, in Bray's case, for spiritual regeneration in its recipients, can be seen to be a major continuity from Bray to the 1910 Conference. For many of the conference respondents there was a persistence of the transforming religious knowledge paradigm found in the widespread belief in primary education as a major tool of evangelism, particularly among missionaries in Africa dealing with tribal peoples. Stanley suggests that this evangelistic understanding of primary missional education goes back to the Scottish missionary, Alexander Duff, who was pre-eminent in tertiary education in India from the 1830s.³¹ However, the evidence of this paper points to an older origin in Thomas Bray, one that more explicitly connects evangelism with elementary education for tribal peoples.

Education for proselytism, while somewhat uncomfortable perhaps for modern missionary theorists, was one that was definitely and explicitly upheld by many of the respondents to Commission III, especially missionaries from Africa and rural areas of South Asia. Lesley Weatherhead, working with the evangelical Anglican Church Missionary Society, expressed his confidence in the faith-initiating properties of Christian education and literacy in much the same tones of confidence that Bray used in his advocacy of libraries and schools for Indians and Black slaves.

³¹ Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 2009), 176.

[Primary education] has been the backbone of mission work in Uganda. Everything of the Faith is learnt through learning to read, unless the candidate is too old. The motives for coming to learn are doubtless always mixed, and often not the best, but many a man as he stumbles through the reading ‘spells his way to conviction.’³²

Missionary education for primary school children, for this evangelical Anglican, was much more than the transferring of information. It was a method and force for conversion. This connection was also one perceived by the African peoples themselves. As Stanley notes, it was significant that among the Thonga of southern Mozambique, as among the Baganda, the decision to convert was indicated by the statement ‘I want to learn.’³³ Nor, of course, was confidence in the connection between education and conversion confined to Anglicans in 1910. It had become a commonplace in many missionary circles by the early twentieth century. One Church of Scotland female missionary commented on her belief in the transformation wrought by schooling. The elementary education given by the missionaries, she said, was to lead it’s students ‘to fill their minds with the true knowledge of God and His Will towards men, that the truth may drive out the belief in native customs and superstitions by what is living and real.’³⁴ Not that such saving faith always resulted of course, from education, but the persistence of missionary confidence in the paradigm of religious conversion through education is remarkable over these two centuries.

³² Stanley, *World Missionary Conference*, 178.

³³ Stanley, *World Missionary Conference*, 179.

³⁴ Stanley, *World Missionary Conference*, 179.

In addition to the emphasis it received from Enlightenment culture, Brian Stanley provides us with another reason why education should have been such a continuously ongoing model of western missionary engagement; and that is the common Protestantism of both Bray and the delegates to the 1910 conference. Stanley notes that central to Protestantism has been the ‘the essentially individual and cognitive nature of religious belief.’ Additionally, the emphasis on the implanting of a body of Christian knowledge ‘to those deemed wholly ignorant’ encouraged the privileging of the intellectual and cultural as opposed to ethical criteria for the determination of spiritual maturity.³⁵ Consequently, western Protestant missions, with their emphasis on revelation and faith appropriated through text, were pre-disposed towards an educational model of mission that facilitated and shaped the appropriation of that sacred scripture.

But alongside this principal continuity in Anglican missionary methodology, there was a major discontinuity from that of Bray and the original thrust of Anglican missions.

Anglican Discontinuity: Attitudes to Tribal Peoples

Commission IV – ‘The Christian message in relation to non-Christian religion’ – spent most of its attention considering the relationship of missional Christianity to the world religions – Islam and Hinduism especially, but also those of China and Japan. There was, however, a smaller section devoted to what was then called ‘animism,’ or what I have referred to here as tribal religions. A recent study of missionary responses to tribal religions in the report of Commission IV assesses those responses as noticeably

³⁵ Stanley, *World Missionary Conference*, 151, 152.

sympathetic. Stanley Friesen in his 1996 work affirmed that the respondent missionaries to the commission (in total twenty-five) demonstrated an ability to distinguish between those aspects of tribal religion that were compatible or fulfilled by Christianity, and those that were incompatible or antithetical to it. This positive assessment must be qualified by the total absence of any convert peoples from these religious cultures in the missionary responses, and at the conference itself. However, Friesen does substantiate his claims that the missionaries were generally, though not unanimously, much more respectful tribal religion as one of the principal factors in maintaining corporate tribal life. Accordingly, some respondents developed missional models whereby Christianity was understood to be the fulfillment of tribal religion to a greater or lesser degree.

However, there are also indications in Friesen's work that this positive attitude to aspects of tribal religion was not a prevalent missionary view. Friesen himself admits that the missionaries advocating fulfillment models were exceptional. They were, by and large, unusually at this time, participants in the nascent discipline of anthropology, with its concern to observe and report on tribal life with as little injection of western viewpoints as possible. One of Friesen's heroes, the Anglican Bishop Henry Callaway among the Zulu in Kaffraria, remarked that, 'the opinion which restricts the knowledge of God, God's gracious saving grace and efficacious operation among men, to Christian countries, is a godless heresy,' suggesting that those holding this 'heresy' were not uncommon.³⁶ The report itself, in calling for an approach which saw tribal religions as 'aspirations after the truth,' asserted 'How superior is this conception to former times,

³⁶ J. Stanley Friesen, *Missionary responses to tribal religions at Edinburgh 1910* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 41.

when Heathenism was looked on as a creation of the devil through and through!'.³⁷ Again, the suggestion is these 'former times' were not so long ago. Indeed, one of Friesen's subjects, the missionary and anthropologist, Henri Alexandre Junod, writing in 1908, referred to the previous generation of missionaries as those who believed 'the rites and customs of African savages were the work of the devil.'³⁸ Elizabeth Chadwick of the CMS in Uganda, was certainly far more hesitant in her response about giving the title of religion to the tribal beliefs and customs she observed. Chadwick stated in summary, 'The pagans of Uganda and surrounding tribes can scarcely be said to have any definite religion, certainly not set forms of religious observance.' These views of tribal religion, as either devoid of religious content, or completely inimical to it as being the work of Satan, are very much those of Thomas Bray, and may have been more representative of the wider community of missionaries than Friesen's few respondents to the animist section of the report of Commission IV. Brian Stanley may be closer to the reality of early twentieth missions than Friesen when he says that the view that such peoples had no religion or what they had was demonic was prevalent among both evangelical and Anglo-catholic SPG missionaries. Animism, it was generally believed, had no religious contact and therefore little 'points of contact' with Christianity.³⁹

However, among the minority of more sympathetic Commission missionary respondents were some Anglicans, which does suggest there had been some important changes in Anglican attitudes to tribal culture from those of Bray. Friesen draws attention

³⁷ Friesen, *Missionary responses*, 56.

³⁸ Friesen, *Missionary responses*, 57.

³⁹ Stanley, *World Missionary Conference*, 236-7, 239.

in his study to Henry Callaway, first bishop of Kaffraria in South Africa; Robert Codrington, missionary to Melanesian peoples between 163-1887; John Roscoe of the CMS in Uganda; and Godfrey Callaway, missionary in the Transkei for fifty years from 1892-1942. Roscoe is dealt with more cursorily by Friesen because Roscoe parted company with the CMS.⁴⁰ Of the other Anglicans that Friesen addresses, all three of them were SPG missionaries. All were High Churchmen, and two of them - Codrington and Godfrey Callaway - were either explicit Anglo-Catholics or sympathetic to that position. However, Friesen does not explain why this sympathy for tribal culture developed only that it was there in these individuals. Certainly, the ability to speak and understand the tribal language; the human encounter with the authenticity of tribal peoples; and intellectual ability of missionaries and their engagement with contemporary anthropological scholarship were all ingredients in this process. But these dimensions were, of course, present in other missionaries, including some of those Friesen draws attention to, as well as many other missionaries who were less sympathetic or even antithetical towards tribal culture and religion. Of course, a sympathetic missiological model towards the culture of indigenous peoples was not confined to High Church Anglican respondents in 1910. Similar approaches came from German Lutherans, Scottish and American Presbyterians, and also so-called faith missionaries. So clearly appreciation of indigenous culture was found among Western missionaries from a wide range of Protestant Churches. So. With respect to those Anglican missionaries who shared this minority understanding of tribal cultures, I want to suggest that there is a

⁴⁰ Friesen, *Missionary responses*, 44-5

connection between their particular Anglicanism and their greater sympathy to tribal cultures than many of their peers.

Ritual Rather than Reading and Reason

Friesen finds that Henry Callaway's more considerate attitude to Zulu culture came from his scientific background as a medical doctor, re-emphasized by his engagement with the nascent discipline of anthropology. But Callaway was not merely a practitioner of early anthropological attempts at neutral engagement with tribal peoples; he was, more fundamentally, among the Zulu as a missionary who aimed at their Christian conversion. Anthropology may explain Callaway's interest and more neutral reporting on Zulu culture and religion; it does not explain his theological acceptance of the divine presence in that non-Christian culture. For example, Callaway in 1870 stated, 'I cannot but believe that the yearning of the heathen spirit – the stretching-out of spirit through dark and terrible rites – is the stretching out of the spirit after God, and is recognised and blessed by the Father of spirits.'⁴¹ The following year he expressed himself similarly:

We have been accustomed to regard the Bible as the only Revelation made by God to man, and some . . . believe its words, even when speaking of natural phenomena incidentally, to be a revelation and scientifically true. The first breach made in this dark fortress of past misbelief was the growing belief among men – arising, though they knew it not, from the greater prevalence of the real spirit of Christianity – that it was impossible that an all-loving and almighty God should

⁴¹ Marian S. Benham, *Henry Callaway MD DD first bishop for Kaffraria his life-history and work: A memoir* (London: Macmillan, 1896), 217-8.

leave the world for generations without that Light by which it could see light. And now increasing knowledge of man has brought out clearly to the light that God has not left himself without witness among them, but that God's testimony both in nature and in human spirits has aroused men to such a knowledge as is really Divine . . . We have been accustomed to despise all religious knowledge formed without Christianity, thus raising up an image of a horrible God and consigning to perdition the masses of mankind.⁴²

But this consideration of the reality of the Divine in pre-Christian indigenous cultures should not be pressed too far. Callaway did still regard tribal religious rites as 'dark and terrible.' Nor was he entirely free of the Europeanizing agenda of most western missions. In 1863 Callaway was advocating the increasing colonization of indigenous lands by Christians, that is. Britons, as able to have a more widespread religious impact on indigenous peoples than scattered missionaries.⁴³ His biographer commented, 'Dr Callaway's original plan of Englishmen to civilise and Christianise the natives could never be fully carried out.'⁴⁴

Sara Sohmer in her 1994 article on nineteenth-century Anglican missionary methodology has identified the theological background to those Anglican missions that separated conversion from civilization. She has drawn attention to the fact that such separation was confined to High Church missions, those supported by the SPG.⁴⁵ She further evinces that, with respect to the Melanesian mission in which Robert Codrington

⁴² Benham, *Henry Callaway*, 218-9.

⁴³ Benham, *Henry Callaway*, 157-8.

⁴⁴ Benham, *Henry Callaway*, 159.

⁴⁵ Sara H. Sohmer, 'Christianity with civilization: Anglican sources for an alternative nineteenth-century mission methodology,' *Journal of Religious History* 18 (1994): 175.

was formed, that more positive understanding of local cultures was due to the influence of the fundamental Anglican theologians, Richard Hooker and Joseph Butler. Hooker enabled recourse to a theology of creative human potential not entirely destroyed by sin. This anthropology provided the Melanesian missionaries with a space for human potential and the value of human cultural variety.⁴⁶ Butler gave them the foundation for valuing human conscience as an innate faculty, and consequently, a trust in the ability of all people, of all cultures, to make moral distinctions and judgements.⁴⁷

Sohmer also finds that the Oxford Movement gave these High Church missions an emphasis on the corporate or communal aspect of transcendent religion, compared with the evangelical thrust towards individual conversion. That emphasis meant that the Anglo-Catholic primary focus for the transmission of the saving Christian revelation was not on *sola scriptura*, but on the sacraments of the Church ritually celebrated in worship and prayer. The Anglo-Catholics especially, as a direct development of the teaching of the initial Tractarians, promoted an emotional response to catholic truth enshrined in highly Romanized liturgical ritual, especially around the Eucharist.

Notwithstanding the dislike of most of High Church missionaries for the extremes of Anglo-Catholic ritualism, Codrington's Melanesian mission did have substantive contacts with Tractarian thinking. John Coleridge Patteson, the leader and intellectual inspiration for the Melanesian mission, applauded the Tractarians' emphasis on devotion and worship and the limits of reason, as well as the need for aesthetic appeal in worship.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Sohmer, 'Christianity without civilization,' 182-4.

⁴⁷ Sohmer, 'Christianity without civilization,' 185-7.

⁴⁸ Sohmer, 'Christianity without civilization,' 191.

Godfrey Callaway, even more than Codrington, was directly influenced by Anglo-Catholicism. He was an Anglican monk of the Society of John the Evangelist, and thereby a member of the Anglican religious orders which were one of the most contentious and extreme facets of Anglo-Catholicism.⁴⁹ As a missionary Callaway evangelized with an explicit commitment to a ritualistic Anglicanism, including sung masses, Marian festivals, and confession. Like his namesake, Henry Callaway, he did find some aspects of indigenous religion contrary to Christianity, including shamans identifying sorcerers among tribal people which brought about their deaths, and the use of witch doctors and animal sacrifices to cure illness.⁵⁰ But Callaway was able to theologise about his Christian experience in South Africa using indigenous understandings, and to affirm the value of non-Christian religious experience. At the admission of three African novices to the Community of St John the Baptist in 1933, Callaway found himself using the Xhosa word *intlanganiso*, rather than ‘congregation,’ to describe their gathering. He did so, he said, ‘because it seems to bring out better the thought of a rendezvous, a very special occasion that draws together.’⁵¹ Later in the same reflection he thought on the fact that the father of one of the young nuns had been an adherent of traditional religion, who

⁴⁹ For the contentiousness and controversy surrounding Anglican religious orders when they developed in the nineteenth century see John Shelton Reed, *Glorious battle: The cultural politics of Victorian Anglo-Catholicism* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1996), 49-56, 201-9; and Susan Mumm, *Stolen daughters, Virgin mothers: Anglican sisterhoods in Victorian Britain* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), ch. 6.

⁵⁰ E. D. Sedding, *Godfrey Callaway: Missionary in Kaffraria 1892-1942, his life and writings* (London: SPCK, 1945), 128, 220-2.

⁵¹ Sedding, *Godfrey Callaway*.

had brought up his daughter in a polygamous home ‘with much that is good and much that is not good.’ That non-Christian man died in the mission hospital and he asked Callaway to take care of his child. Remembering this Callaway wrote, ‘I felt so conscious that this *intlangano* included some of those who were beyond the veil,’ which he connected explicitly with the Christian doctrine of the Communion of Saints.⁵² Years earlier, in 1913, Callaway had written from his Christian point of view of this good and bad in indigenous life.

I am not singing the praises of heathen life at the expense of modern civilization. Heathen life is bad; it is full of moral evil, sloth, and animal indulgence. But it has a natural goodness of its own . . . and it organizes itself to protect its own life. It is this self-protecting organization which is doomed as soon as the native people come into contact with civilization.⁵³

Two of the clearest illustrations of Callaway’s empathy for indigenous culture, and of his affirmation of pre-Christian religious experience, came in the 1920s. For the sacred Easter Triduum in 1926 Callaway used a censer made out of an African gourd, despite the fact that the local catechist despised this everyday article and would have preferred a cheap European metal one. Callaway commented on his own growing appreciation of the need to what would today be called ‘enculturate’ Christianity.

A gourd is too “common” in his eyes for use in the sanctuary. Well, we must try to bring back the aesthetic taste of the people to the beauty of common things . . . I suppose for some time longer we must expect everything to be prized that is “made in England,” and nothing to be prized that is the product of South Africa.

⁵² Sedding, *Godfrey Callaway*, 230-4.

⁵³ Sedding, *Godfrey Callaway*, 67.

This is the fault of past tendencies to exalt Europeanism and to depreciate things African.⁵⁴

The previous year Callaway had received from a Presbyterian missionary a copy of Rudolf Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, a very influential work on the concept of divine numinousness that was first published in 1923. Soon afterwards Callaway had a conversation with an old local woman, a recent convert, who told him that long before her Christian conversion she had believed in God, claiming she 'saw Him and felt the awe of His Presence.' Callaway affirmed the authenticity of this pre-Christian experience of the divine. 'This old woman, who could not give an answer probably to the simplest question, can yet speak of her experience of God in a way which is both lofty and real.'⁵⁵

But Sohmer's thesis about the influence of ritualism in separating conversion from Europeanization among High Church missionary Anglicans needs to be modified in the context of Henry Callaway's religious formation. As a young man Henry Callaway was for some years a Quaker, and only returned to the Church of England in his forties. As an Anglican Callaway explicitly repudiated 'the Puseyites' and ritualism, commenting in 1868 'We want more reality – inward reality – not more external ceremony.'⁵⁶ However Callaway was not antagonistic to liturgical worship, or to moderate degrees of beauty and ceremony in worship. Very early on in his return to the Church of England he spent much time in studying the prayerbook, affirming that its liturgy 'embodies so much that is interesting historically and doctrinally.' Later, as Bishop of Kaffraria, now a

⁵⁴ Sedding, *Godfrey Callaway*, 185.

⁵⁵ Sedding, *Godfrey Callaway*, 161.

⁵⁶ Benham, *Henry Callaway*, 118-9.

convinced, though conservative, High Churchman,⁵⁷ he was, in 1877, reporting appreciably on one church with its communion table and ‘beautiful cloth,’ old silver Communion plate, and carved pulpit. At his synod that year he oversaw a more general distribution of altar and chancel furniture and liturgical linen.⁵⁸ Henry Callaway was therefore no avant-garde Romanizing ritualist Anglo-Catholic. But he did have an appreciation for more mainstream moderate Anglican liturgy and ceremonial; that concern for ‘the beauty of holiness’ in worship that had been part of High Church tradition since the days of Lancelot Andrewes and Archbishop Laud.

Rather than merely advanced ritualism, it may have been more simply a moderate but explicit liturgical worship, especially one connected to a sacramental ministry, that enabled these missionary Anglicans to appreciate in tribal cultures the connection between the divine and the physical, and the place of religious ceremony in that spiritual connection. The link between Anglican liturgical ceremony and a more pro-active empathy for tribal culture and religion needs more study than has been possible in this paper. But if that link was indeed a contributory factor in emerging Anglican appreciation of tribal cultures then it may have been because these High Church Anglicans were connecting to an understanding of Western Christianity that had been propagated before the age of Western imperialism. They were reaching behind the Protestant Reformation to dimensions of an earlier form of Christianity that allowed them to circumvent the heavy emphasis on education, and therefore on Europeanizing culture, that so often became the adjunct to missionary education.

⁵⁷ Benham, *Henry Callaway*, 127.

⁵⁸ Benham, *Henry Callaway*, 305-6.

Ritual in religion, that central aspect of tribal cultures, gained a new appreciation in Anglicanism with adherents of the Oxford Movement. But, understood not as aping Rome, but as a valued means of emphasizing sacramental grace and the worship of God in church, liturgical ceremony also had a long-valued part in High Church tradition. As the work of Ronald Hutton demonstrates, the Protestant Reformation did not expunge ritual from English Christianity. Holy days continued; Whitsun and Rogationtide processions were stubbornly maintained; churches again began to be decorated with greenery from the 1630s; festival communions on high holy days were widely revived in the seventeenth century; and even the godly under Cromwell could not kill off the religious observance of Christmas.⁵⁹ This ceremonial religion in Protestant England was not, as Hutton observes, merely a vestigial survival of ancient paganism, but the persistence of a 'lively popular culture' with its roots in England's Christian past. It was maintained with the active support of the early Stuart monarchs and the royally-sponsored High Churchmen. Such ritualistic religion expressed its continuities with a medieval Christianity that embodied its concept of salvation in sacred buildings, ornaments, and rites. While Protestantism did, on the whole, successfully challenge this more ritualist religion in England, it could not expunge it entirely and, gradually, with ecclesiastical and royal support, a considerable quantity of it returned to play a permanent role in the parishes of the Church of England.⁶⁰ These persistent rituals in English Christianity, greatly advanced by the nineteenth-century Anglo-Catholics, and

⁵⁹ Ronald Hutton, *The rise and fall of merry England: The ritual year 1400-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 155, 159, 174, 175-6, 176-7, 209, 213-4.

⁶⁰ Hutton, *Merry England*, 260-2.

moderately so by High Churchmen, were what probably made it possible for High Churchmen and Anglo-Catholics to affirm genuine dimensions of the divine in the indigenous rituals they encountered.

An intentional and organized missionary engagement with the world beyond Europe began for the Church of England in the early eighteenth century, and Anglican missions, both High Church and Evangelical, contributed to the World Missionary Conference some two centuries later. This paper has traced a substantive continuity in the theology and practice of Anglican missions over that long reach of time in the confidence displayed in the evangelizing power of elementary education. Protestantism and the Enlightenment both contributed to Thomas Bray's conviction that the true, divine knowledge of Christianity had a transforming power, not just to produce converts but new Christians whose lives would be virtuously shaped by their new learning. That paradigm of a transforming religious knowledge still lay behind the motivation for elementary missionary schools among tribal peoples in the early twentieth century, not just among Anglicans but most Protestant missions.