As part of the series of articles on Anglican contributions to ethics, this essay points to some of the counter-narratives to historical abuses of power that are offered by postcolonial, lay, and feminist scholars. To do this, we must be willing to live in the wounds caused by colonialism, sexism, heterosexism, and clericalism in order that all people can tell their experiences and help us cultivate ears to hear the truths of other people’s experiences. This essay argues that the unique contributions of postcolonial, lay, and feminist scholars to Anglican ethics have been to create space for the voices of people who have been marginalized and oppressed to tell their own stories, and with hearts of justice and compassion to call those in dominant cultural positions to cultivate ears to hear and respond to the cries that we hear. This transformative power of telling and listening to stories participates in a process of “narrative repair” that reaches into the past in order to help us imagine a new future.

In his moving article “As We Sail Life’s Rugged Sea,” Kortright Davis begins his reflections on what God is doing in this postcolonial period by exegeting history “through the lens of the ‘Other’ side, or the ‘Our’ side—that is, the side of the poor, marginalized, oppressed, and dehumanized.”1 Whether we are actually on the other side of

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* The Rev. Dr. Libby Gibson is the Rector of St. Mary’s Barnstable on Cape Cod, and teaches as an adjunct instructor at Virginia Theological Seminary. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia and a M.Div. from Virginia Theological Seminary. This paper developed from her work as an associate rector at Church of the Holy Comforter in Vienna, Virginia and with Street Church, sponsored by the Church of the Epiphany, in Washington, D.C.

colonialism is a debate beyond the scope of this paper. But at least in the Anglican Communion, colonialism proper is part of history, if we consider colonialism the period of expansion whereby the exertion of imperial power spread Christianity in the Anglican form to many parts of the world. Even if ambiguity around neocolonialism exists, the legacy of colonialism—and reactions thereto—shape every aspect of the Communion’s ecclesiology, liturgy, theology, ethics, and biblical interpretation. As part of a series of articles on Anglican contributions to ethics, this essay points to some of the counter-narratives to historical abuses of power that are offered by postcolonial, lay, and feminist scholars.

While there is no single process of “moral traditioning” for postcolonial, lay, and feminist ethicists, as each scholar brings different cultural, sexual, and political norms to his or her work, they raise similar questions for how we interpret our share of an Anglican tradition and call for “listening to voices of the suffering and marginalized among us.” Together they offer a vision for the church grounded in counter-narratives against racism, sexism, heterosexism, and clericalism, many of which the tradition has not yet heard and/or responded to. Postcolonial literary critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak might challenge us to ask a deeper question—not just how are postcolonial, lay, and feminist theologians giving voice to the marginalized and oppressed, or how can we create opportunities for them to speak on their own behalf, but who will listen to them? Part of the task of postcolonial, feminist, and lay theologians is to invite us to question how we can create new ears to hear the experiences of those who have been wounded, forgotten, and ignored. To do this, we must be willing to live in the wounds caused by colonialism, sexism, heterosexism, and clericalism in order that all people can tell their experiences and help us cultivate ears to hear the truths of other people’s experiences.

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telling and listening to stories participates in a process of “narrative
repair” that reaches into the past in order to help us imagine a new
future. Hilde Lindemann Nelson writes about the power of narratives
to repair the damage to the sense of identity that oppressed people
endure at the hands of other people who are perpetuating a master
narrative, such as classism, sexism, or racism. She writes, “Counter-
stories, typically told within the moral space of a community of choice,
are stories of self-definition, developed in response to the twin harms
of deprivation of opportunity and infiltrated consciousness. Through
their function of narrative repair they resist the evil of diminished
moral agency.”6 In telling counter-narratives and cultivating ears to
hear them, postcolonial, feminist, and lay theologians invite all mem-
bers of the Anglican Communion into the process of narrative repair
of Christ’s fragmented church.

While this fragmentation began long before the establishment
of the Church of England, Ian Douglas traces parts of the legacy of
colonialism by noting that at its inception, the English church sought
to be an “incarnational community in local cultural realities, while
remaining part of the church catholic.”7 In the context of sixteenth-
century England, William Tyndale’s translation of the Bible and
Thomas Cranmer’s Book of Common Prayer expressed a particular
way of being church through the vernacular language and cultural
norms of that time. But rather than seeing the Book of Common
Prayer as a distinctively English expression of Christianity reflecting
the theological assumptions of that era, the English approach to wor-
ship became codified as universally relevant and then disseminated
through the economic and military hegemony of the British Empire.
As the Church of England became established alongside the politi-
cal and military powers of the colonies, local expressions of religious
identity were systematically demeaned and/or destroyed. As Glauco
S. de Lima observes, “The symbol of imperial power wedded to the

6 Hilde Lindemann Nelson, Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair (Ithaca, N.Y.:
7 Ian T. Douglas, “The Exigency of Times and Occasions: Power and Identity in
the Anglican Communion Today,” in Douglas and Kwok, Beyond Colonial Anglican-
ism, 39.
symbol of spiritual power reflected a policy that the submission of the colonized people must be not only economic, but also ideological.”

For example, Ian Douglas recounts working with a group of Maori Anglicans who considered themselves deeply Anglican (some for five or six generations), and yet when asked to define what it means to be Anglican, used words like “white,” “English-speaking,” and “Church of England.” It may take generations of counter-narratives told by Maori Anglicans before they would use different language to describe what it means to be Anglican.

We can encourage this process of narrative repair by recognizing the historical roots of Anglicanism as local and contextual, and publicly acknowledging the ways that colonialism denied other cultures the chance to develop their local and contextual expressions of the Christian faith. In the colonial expansion of the values of the Church of England, we see the propagation of the institutional church at the cost of the church as the people of God. Postcolonial scholars attempt to make room for the unique expressions of the church in local and vernacular contexts, which will require the institutional church to cultivate ears to hear that do not include a continual evaluation over and against the “mother” church. Fredrica Harris Thompsett points out that “remembering . . . can bring perspective and build tolerance among peoples. Remembering is drawing energy from past events, both good and evil. Through our memories we can convert understanding of past events into insight that illumines our future. Remembering is about looking back in order to think ahead.”

Postcolonial, lay, and feminist contributions to ethics are calling us to narrative repair by honestly engaging our past and giving voice to local and vernacular images of church that have been oppressed. Part of this narrative repair emerged for Bishop Glauco S. de Lima of Brazil in a conference on postcolonialism, about which he comments, “The presentations and conversations broke open the ground for us, helping us to make visible our painful histories, and at the same time, engaging our creativity to imagine an Anglican Communion for the twenty-first century, filled with hope for a future church beyond the colonial legacy we inherited.”

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9 Douglas, “Exigency of Times and Occasions,” 40.
10 Fredrica Harris Thompsett, We Are Theologians (New York: Seabury Classics, 2004), 26.
I hope that the insights highlighted in this essay will help us all—not just scholars of Anglican ethics—to cultivate ears to hear the counter-narratives of our brothers and sisters worldwide that are offered from the “other side” of colonialism, sexism, heterosexism, and clericalism. Given my own cultural context as an Anglo-European, well-educated, middle-class mother, wife, and parish priest living on Cape Cod, this essay is necessarily limited. My prayer is that it will catalyze further reflections on whose stories have not been heard and how we can cultivate ears to hear them.12

Racism and Poverty: Some Caribbean and African Contributions to Anglican Ethics

At the Diocese of Virginia’s annual Council in January 2012, Bishop Shannon Sherwood Johnston celebrated the diocese’s significant resources afforded by our size. He then called all lay and ordained ministers to marshal these strengths for the common cause of serving Christ. When the chaplain of Council, Bishop Jane Holmes Dixon, rose to offer her remarks, she began by observing that the language of “serving” Christ was problematic for her. Bishop Dixon went on to share her experiences as a child in Mississippi where her family had “help” who served them. A word like “serving” is not neutral for many people, as it invokes a time when African and Caribbean Americans were forced to work for lower wages and in social circumstances where they were considered second-class citizens. While Bishop Johnston’s message drew on the rich theological tradition of servant ministry, Bishop Dixon gave us the gift of hearing the language of the tradition with different ears. Indeed, we are all called to be servants of Christ, but only if this sense of servanthood includes an awareness of the injustices borne by our brothers and sisters in the past.

The appalling legacy of racism weaves many tentacles throughout the world. In a brief but powerful reflection on the culture of self-determination since the Magna Carta, Kortright Davis emphasizes that “this millennium has been a continuous spectacle of people’s efforts to wrest the power over their own affairs from others.”13 Davis reminds us that the culture of whiteness—or Eurocentrism—spread

13 Davis, “As We Sail Life’s Rugged Sea,” in Douglas and Kwok, Beyond Colonial Anglicanism, 125.
throughout the world and established cultures of racism that have yet to be eradicated. While the patterns of conquest, resettlement, and revolution played out across the Americas and were reflected in the idea of Manifest Destiny, the culture of dominance expanded throughout the world through the expansion of transnational corporations and missionary activities. Davis chillingly writes, “In the name of God and the gospel, peoples have been robbed of their cultural heritage, assaulted by a foreign spirit, and torn asunder in their souls by the lure of material gain wrapped in pious fantasy. For to control people’s fears and people’s faith is to exercise a reign of dominance that is hard to overcome.”¹⁴

Thus, part of the contribution of postcolonial theologians like Davis is to deeply lament the injustices perpetrated under the five cultures he outlines (whiteness, racism, technology, materialism, dominance). Without calling attention to the deep wrongness of the oppression, the oppressed and the oppressors cannot begin to heal. For countering oppression is not only critical to the well-being of the oppressed, but of the oppressors as well. The project of cultivating counter-narratives is not just a matter of correcting the injustices levied against the poor and marginalized, but the dominant culture must also learn to hear them in order to continue its own healing. Walter Brueggemann notes that “real criticism begins in the capacity to grieve because that is the most visceral announcement that things are not right. . . . As long as the empire can keep the pretense alive that things are all right, there will be no real grieving and no serious criticism.”¹⁵ Once people who have been oppressed feel free and safe enough to express their deep grief, the process of criticizing, dismantling, and reimagining a new reality can begin. Postcolonial theologians play a crucial role in opening dominant cultures to hear these cries of grief and distress, so that the oppressed and marginalized may begin the process of narrative repair.

And yet, we must be careful not to disregard completely the inheritance of dominant cultures, as Ghanaian theologian John Pobee artfully argues when reflecting on the process of constructing

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Christolog(ies) in Africa. Pobee talks about interrogating the depositum fidei, or at least the scriptures and creeds, as Africans both across Africa and in diaspora construct Christologies. Attention to these historical documents does not reveal literalist or fundamental interpretive stances, but rather an awareness of the past and the cultural contexts that shaped these documents. While some people in Africa would rather ignore these inherited sources, Pobee writes, “I do not believe it right to ignore one’s past. However, we need to be mindful that they are contextual and other people’s experiences which we cannot totally appropriate. Therefore, the depositum fidei needs to be treated dynamically; it is not the rock on which the church is founded. It is more like a living stream.”

This living stream bears the universality of the gospel message into the particularity of our human existence, giving dignity to African, Asian, and other ethnicities’ encounters with Christ. For example, Pobee emphasizes that many countries in Africa are poor, and not only materially poor, but marginalized and oppressed. So “Christology in Africa is about how the Word has become flesh in this context of poverty. He is Christ of the Poor. He is the Poor Christ of Africa. He is the Christ of Poor Africans. He is the Christ, the hope of the embattled Africans.”

Just as Pobee sees both the commonalities and the challenges of the depositum fidei, Kortright Davis also recalls the double-edged nature of European cultural contributions to native expressions of Christianity in his comments on his seminary training in Barbados. A British religious order ran the seminary and imposed its monastic disciplines on the Caribbean students, including the practice of keeping silence until after the morning mass.

It was a double-edged silence. It both liberated and domesticated me at the same time. It liberated me to share in that discourse between sun, sea, land, and people, without unnecessary interruptions. It made me feel bound to a particular form of discipline in

the church and its institutions, which created a distance between me and the way in which my Caribbean people generally operated. We are a noisy people. Silence is sometimes a serious form of bondage for us; but silence is also golden at times.\textsuperscript{19}

A vow of silence willingly chosen is far different from a forced silence that never lifts. Clearly, the traditions of the church carry wisdom that has passed down through the ages, even if through the very broken vessels of human carriers. So in this context, the challenge postcolonial scholars present is to call the dominant culture to proclaim the value of silence while conceding that being silenced is not the same experience for all.

Despite the heterogeneous cultures in the Caribbean, Davis notes that this silence was imposed on many people in the Caribbean by the “centrifugal fact of the plantation [that] seems to stand out as the salient historical characteristic in Caribbean existence.”\textsuperscript{20} On most plantations, the owners were practically invisible since they chose to live in the larger cities and left management of the plantations to their subordinates. “God” in these settings was seen to “sanction and protect everything that the Europeans had designed and implemented. That ‘God’ was seen to vacillate between right and wrong, justice and injustice, humanity and inhumanity, according to the circumstances.”\textsuperscript{21} In the lives of the slaves, this God, this European vision of God, was just as absentee as the plantation owners. However, the true and Living God, the God of Moses, was worshipped in the hearts of the slaves. Perhaps when Davis and other postcolonial theologians describe the pervasiveness of such oppression, no matter how painful it is for people in a dominant culture that benefited from the institution of slavery to hear, our ears must be open to hearing the stories of the slaves and learning why the profound revelation of divine freedom is so slow to come to that region. It is only when we deeply listen to these stories and the emancipatory theology emerging from the Caribbean that people in dominant cultures will truly hear the power of the story of divine freedom to counter the culture of dependence and domination. Members of dominant cultures, whether European, American, or wealthy Caribbeans, cannot tell this story of emancipation for the

\textsuperscript{19} Kortright Davis, \textit{Emancipation Still Comin’: Explorations in Caribbean Emancipatory Theology} (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1990), 2.

\textsuperscript{20} Davis, \textit{Emancipation Still Comin’}, 18.

\textsuperscript{21} Davis, \textit{Emancipation Still Comin’}, 4.
poor. Even if this story of freedom intends to lift the heavy weight of oppression, it would be another act of domination to impose even the divine gift of emancipation on the poor, oppressed, and marginalized. Narrative repair can only occur when the oppressed and marginalized tell their own stories.

In addition to calling attention to the “double-edged” nature of Eurocentric practices and traditions, Davis also points out that our understanding of racism cannot be so quickly defined as white Europeans dominating black Africans and native Caribbeans who worked on plantations. Undoubtedly, plantation society “thrived on a system that ensured to white propertied classes the permanence of a black laboring class,” and yet even after colonial plantations began to collapse, legal and social systems were in place to yield neocolonial oppression. Neocolonialism not only perpetuates the economic disparities of colonialism, but it bears forward an “elite of skinocracy” that reinforces class systems based on skin color and permeates the consciousness of members of the Caribbean upper classes, whether their heritage is European, African, Caribbean, or a mix of races. As we remember our past, narrative repair requires that first we fully narrate the oppression and marginalization, no matter how complex or difficult the story becomes. For the insidious nature of racism can best be seen in the way it is internalized and perpetuated by blacks against other blacks. Narrative repair is only possible when the past is honestly relayed, in the voices of those who have been oppressed no matter the color of their master’s skin.

Stories emanating from this region express some of this internalized racism by noting the chronic poverty of the region and the nature of the descendants from the failed plantations and then asking, “What else could normally be expected from such people? Could anything good come out of the Caribbean?” This ideology has permeated the Caribbean consciousness, causing Davis to profess, “The fact of poverty is not in itself the hallmark of a crisis; it is, rather, the complacent acceptance that poverty in the Caribbean is eternal.” Yet despite this continual narrative of negativity and pessimism, holding fast to hope, the Caribbean people continually look to the future for a fresh start. “Poverty, dependence, alienation, and imitation remain as demons

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to be exorcised; and survivalism, communalism, creole humanism, movement, and fertile creativity are the powers by which they may be exorcised."\textsuperscript{25} Drawing on the complex realities of the “Caribbean religion” and “African soul,” Davis elucidates the ways that Caribbean religion calls the Caribbean people out of complacency and toward emancipation.\textsuperscript{26}

In addition to a complex legacy of racism in the Caribbean, the legacy of colonialism in Africa presents yet a different set of issues, particularly as seen around the interaction of Anglicanism with indigenous religions. In his book \textit{Invitation to be African Anglican}, John Pobee offers a primer on the origins of the Anglican tradition, and its particular approach to Scripture, the creeds, and the sacraments. He goes on to articulate the history of the Church of England arriving on the Gold Coast of Africa, where the church’s first outpost began as a chaplaincy paid for by the Royal African Company and was primarily oriented to serve the foreigners serving the trading post and the governing authorities of the region.\textsuperscript{27} In this colonial context, the church in Ghana was known as the “English Church Mission” and became known in the vernacular as \textit{aban-mu asor}, “the Church in the Castle, a kind of appendage of the foreign presence in the Gold Coast.”\textsuperscript{28} While this image of a “Church in the Castle” may sound well-fortified and strong, in fact, Pobee reports that of the missionary churches in Ghana the Anglican church is the least vital.

As the African people self-contextualize the gospel and self-propagate their mission, Pobee cautions that to truly shake colonial dependencies, the African Anglican church must become a self-motivating church. In shaping local identity, all parties involved must feel a genuine sense of self-determination, including financial governance. If, for example, non-African decision-making structures are used at diocesan synods, many decisions supposedly reached will not be implemented because Africans did not own the process.\textsuperscript{29} Pobee (like Douglas) reminds us that Anglicanism adopted a vernacular paradigm from its origins. But Pobee diverges from Douglas in

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Davis, \textit{Emancipation Still Comin’}, 50.
  \item \textsuperscript{26} Davis, \textit{Emancipation Still Comin’}, 64.
  \item \textsuperscript{27} John S. Pobee, \textit{Invitation to be African Anglican} (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 2000), 79.
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Pobee, \textit{Invitation to be African Anglican}, 80.
  \item \textsuperscript{29} Pobee, \textit{Invitation to be African Anglican}, 87.
\end{itemize}
challenging whether the one holy, catholic, and apostolic nature of the church should be defining for the nature of the African Anglican church. According to Pobee, the exercise of searching for an African Anglican church calls us to focus on the wisdom of the ages (not just English history); remember God’s creative expressions of wisdom in Africa (not just Europe); search for vernacular idioms and language that carry the people’s faith (not just the queen’s English); engage with other Christians around the world; return to the missional focus of church; foster a sense of common humanity, that all people are created by God; and embrace the theological, pastoral, liturgical, ritual, didactic, and spiritual elements of this exercise.30

In his counter-narrative that offers expressions of African theologies with language appropriate to the African contexts, Pobee includes an explicit discussion of the ethics of power in African, tribal contexts. In many tribes, such as the Akans in Ghana, there is a well-defined hierarchy that proceeds from God through the ancestors to chiefs, the clan heads, elders, and young.31 Even though it may seem that the chief has enormous power, this power is not absolute and the chief is obligated to listen to his people in exercising his powers. Thus, in African culture, hierarchies reflect God’s creation, and “the point of having a hierarchy is to have some order in society. Too many independent commanders will make for chaos. But in the biblical view, some sort of order is better than chaos and anarchy.”32 Despite this ideal vision of power as wielded in tribes, Pobee acknowledges that too often power is sought for its own sake rather than for service. In contrast, when drawn from the example of Christ, “the power of Jesus was used in response to the genuine needs of other people. It operated out of love and mercy.”33 When earthly rulers follow Christ’s example of self-sacrifice and humility, the exercise of power will be to meet the needs of the people. In this way, theologians like Pobee and Davis who write about experiences of oppression can use their power to give voice to stories that will continue the process of narrative repair.

30 Pobee, Invitation to be African Anglican, 117–119.
31 John S. Pobee, Toward an African Theology (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1979), 143.
32 Pobee, Toward an African Theology, 153.
33 Pobee, Toward an African Theology, 152.
Sadly, deep structural oppressions exist not only in Third World countries, but within the purview of the institutional church all over the world. While not writing explicitly as “postcolonial” or feminist theologians, Verna Dozier and Fredrica Thompsett seek to give voice to laypeople whose experiences and expertise have not been heard. In this instance, the clergy in the church have come to dominate theological and ethical writing about life in and of the church. Verna Dozier begins her classic book, *The Dream of God*, by recounting an interaction with a well-educated and professionally prominent gentleman who asked about the topic of her book. When she answered, “It’s going to be about how I think the institutional church has missed the mark of what it ought to be about,” he replied, “The institutional church? What other church is there?” The rest of her book goes on to elucidate her answer, “The people of God.”

For most of church history, the concerns and voices of the clergy have dominated preached and public texts. In contrast, the voices of the laity are disappearing. Thompsett notes, “Laity have already disappeared from much conventional theology, ecclesiastical history, and even popular biblical imagery. . . . Entire histories of the church have been written that dwell on scenes of clerical life as if laity were not crucial contributors and leaders.” Thompsett goes on to assert that “memory is essential to liberation” and critically and constructively sets forth “biblical, historical, theological, contemporary, and future perspectives” of the work of the laity in order to continue liberating the laity from the established church and its overemphasis on clergy. In limiting our images of the church, she concludes, “we have settled for a church that is too small.”

Tompsett does not merely seek to flatten out the hierarchy that privileges the ordained orders over the people of God. In articulating a lay-centered ecclesiology, she fundamentally refocuses our interpretation of Scripture, so that the Bible is not merely read as a way to reinforce the religious establishment, but instead is read as the story of God’s people responding to God’s presence in their lives. Just as postcolonial African and Caribbean theologies may ultimately

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challenge us to rethink the very name of the “Anglican” Communion, lay theologians such as Thompsett force us to consider that the work of the people far exceeds the bounds of any denominational church, no matter the name. The paradigm of “total ministry” attempts to capture this shift by referring to “ministering communities” as opposed to communities gathered around a minister. By liberating the voices and work of the laity—including women and men of all ethnicities and sexual orientations—narrative repair focuses on building up communities of faithful people rather than supporting human institutions.

As we consider the institutional church’s role in supporting the people of God’s work in the world, Thompsett argues that liberating the laity from overly clerical and hierarchical institutions restores our understanding of church as “collective, corporate, expansive, and energetic, rather than individualistic, possessive, or passive.” Living into the biblical witness of a “new creation” dissolves the separations that institutions can impose and codify, so that the “collective solidarity to the biblical witness” bears the liberating power of the gospel into our institutional church today. By reclaiming the stories of the laity, we participate in the narrative repair of reshaping and correcting the story of God’s people. Thompsett states,

Frankly, the great-men–great-institutions way of seeing history is not only erroneous, but harmful. It breeds apathy and distances us from the heritage of our ancestors’ generous and energetic religious commitments. . . . This perspective calls for patient listening and careful historical reconstruction. There have been times when it is hard to hear the voices of ordinary people, times when those with less-than-great status have been silenced, ignored, or trivialized.

Digging into historical resources to “listen” to the voices of the laity and intentionally seeking to learn the stories of the oppressed and marginalized in contemporary society carry a profound ethical mandate. Mary Solberg quotes Walter Brueggemann in calling us to pay attention to the “suffering that is at the heart of our lives together, and

37 Thompsett, We Are Theologians, 9.
38 Thompsett, We Are Theologians, 29.
at the heart of God’s life with and in us.”39 In order to pay attention to suffering near and far away, we must develop different categories for understanding our lives—categories that help us to see our power and privilege by affording some degree of distance as we view our lives. Not only are we called to pay attention to and try to understand the experiences of the oppressed and suffering for their sake, but for our sakes as well. For Thompsett reminds us that “understanding itself is a moral act; with so much going on in our society and world, what we choose to notice reveals who we are.”40 For what we notice shapes who we are, and who we are shapes what we do, and the combination of being and doing reflects our identity as Christians.

Verna Dozier puts an even finer point on the harm that has come from the shift in our understanding of church away from “the people of God” to an institutional structure with its enshrined hierarchies. She observes that as a black woman, she is well used to consciousness-raising in all-white and all-male settings. They understand even if they do not respond to her protests. But tragically, she writes, “Unfortunately, I often feel more alone and isolated when I am with institutional church groups than as a black person with all-white groups or as a woman with all-male groups. . . . The cry that I raise from my lay consciousness is not even understood by many in the institutional church—either clergy or laity!”41 Lay ministry is not merely finding nice little chores to give the laity something to do at church, or worse, the jobs that the clergy are not willing to do. The ministry of the laity means “changing the port toward which the ship is headed.”42 By this, Dozier challenges laypeople to make religion relevant by bringing the concerns of the world that they meet in their personal and professional lives to the church as the people of God, where the people can respond, and if needed, seek refreshment and support in the institutional church.

Reorienting church from the institution to the people of God will include reframing how we see authority in the church. Thompsett affirms authority that rests on baptism, and therefore more appropriately

40 Thompsett, *We Are Theologians*, 58.
42 Dozier, “The Sleeping Giant,” in *Confronted by God*, 41.
with people in local congregations, rather than the traditional sources of “authority” set in primatial and episcopal offices. If we see our baptism as Christians as the primary determiner of our identity, then “from a postcolonial perspective it is important to emphasize that we are baptized into the body of Christ, baptized as Christians, not as members of this or that denomination.” Being baptized into Christ means that we are baptized into our Christian identities, which never use race, gender, class, or sexual orientation to alienate or divide human beings. Yet Thompsett quickly reminds us that Paul’s baptismal confession as expressed in Galatians 3:28 does not negate the uniqueness and beauty of the diversity of God’s people. Rather, baptism recognizes and values our mutual relational identity as one of difference and otherness. Baptism not only shapes our identity as Christians, through baptism we are challenged to recognize and affirm our complementarity with others. These legacies of equality, mutuality, and respect for difference are not obvious hallmarks of the colonial past. They are, however, essential life-lines for moving beyond colonialist practices and structures.

By embracing baptism as the source of authority in the institutional church, the church as people of God may feel a loosening of colonial-era structures that have divided and separated us, rather than creating opportunities to support and share authority in the broader church.

Sexism and Heterosexism: Postcolonial, Feminist Counter-Narratives

In listening to the voices of the oppressed and marginalized, some parts of the Anglican Communion have started to counter the legacies of racism and clericalism. Yet, the narrative repair in these contexts is incredibly complex. Kwok Pui-lan locates her story as a Chinese-American feminist theologian in response to colonialism, particularly by analyzing colonial discourse and “deconstructing Western dominant regimes of knowledge, but also in examining the interdependence of the cultural terrain traversed by both the colonizers and the colonized, as well as how the colonial systems of knowledge cast their

impact, long after the colonizers are gone. As illustrated by Kortright Davis in his discussion of poverty in the Caribbean, which endures long after the colonizers leave, certain mindsets remain which may shape a region for centuries. To counter these mindsets, Kwok writes about “postcolonial imagination” as a way of carving out space for alternative worlds and ways of knowing. Specifically, Kwok examines the connections between Christianity, colonialism, and gender, an area of study that has been neglected until recent years. She looks at biblical interpretations that explore both the patriarchal and imperial influences and the liberating possibilities within the Bible. She writes:

Given this complex history of what counted as Holy Scripture, the Bible cannot be naively seen as a religious text reflecting the faith of the Hebrew people and early Christians. Instead, it must also be seen as a political text written, collected, and redacted by male colonial elites in their attempts to rewrite and reconcile with history and to reconceptualize both individual and collective identities under the shadow of empires. A postcolonial feminist interpretation of the Bible needs to investigate the deployment of gender in the narration of identity, the negotiation of power differentials between colonizers and the colonized, and the reinforcement of patriarchal control over spheres where these elites could exercise control.

Kwok is careful to point out that women were not only oppressed by colonial, patriarchal expansionism, but also were complicit in oppressing “heathen” women by protecting their colonial positions of power due to the socioeconomic privilege of their households. Thus, Kwok writes about the second wave of feminist theologians and notes that as they “challenged patriarchy of the church and society, they did not pay sufficient attention to how white women had colluded in colonialism and slavery.” As feminist theologies have proliferated and have given voice to women’s experiences all over the world, Kwok questions what place feminism will have in the new century as we struggle to understand the impact that neocolonialism,
As Kwok imagines feminist theology, she seeks “to discern that something is not fitting, to search for new images, and to arrive at new patterns of meaning and interpretation.” Part of this search for new images and patterns involves the dismantling of Eurocentric theologies that rely on reason, tradition, and Scripture as the main sources of authority. This male, logic-centered approach has excluded the voices of women and all marginalized people. In seeking to create a more expansive understanding of theology that includes sources of authority drawn from women’s experiences, Kwok warns against an inadvertent division creeping into feminist theology. She writes, “This leads to the question whether there exists an international division of labor in feminist work, that is, will Third World feminists merely talk about stories of their lives, while First World feminists do theory?” Implicit in this distinction is the reality that most theory is heavily Eurocentric and would repeat the cycle of Western scholars using the “raw data” of the Third World to analyze and theorize. Kwok quotes Barbara Christian’s insights from her essay “The Race for Theory” that was published in 1987 about the hegemony of Western (heavily French), feminist theories, noting that “people of color have always theorized, not in the form of Western abstract logic, but often ‘in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddle and proverbs, in the play with language, since dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking.’”

In addition to developing awareness about dynamics that arise as feminist scholars seek to give voice to oppressed and marginalized women, Kwok explicitly calls for postcolonial intellectuals to acknowledge their own intellectual biases and blind spots. Drawing on the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Kwok warns against postcolonial and feminist scholars who may assume to speak for or represent the oppressed. Spivak challenges scholars to see how our intellectual privilege is also our loss, since we cannot have the life experiences and perspectives of the less fortunate. Kwok concludes with the observation that “such an honest admission of our privileged location and our limited epistemological vision does not undermine our work, but it

48 Kwok, Postcolonial Imagination, 30.
49 Kwok, Postcolonial Imagination, 74.
50 Kwok, Postcolonial Imagination, 74.
does qualify it and reminds us to listen to the voices of those who are less privileged and those whom we have the potential to oppress.”

When Anglican priest and theologian Ellen Clark-King moved to Newcastle upon Tyne in northeast England, she met a number of working class women whose unique perspectives on theology were not heard in lecture halls or theology books. So she sought to test “whether or not feminist theology could live up to its promise to listen to the voices of people—especially women—who are at the margins of society’s power structures.” While Clark-King has academic training and interests in the areas of feminist theology and liberation theology, she writes a “theology of spirituality” that is based on the lived experiences of the women she listens to. Not only do theologies based on experience “contribute to the song of God’s glory in their own distinctive way,” but such theologies also include “the experience of the whole person, rather than just their intellect,” and thus allow for theologies that are “as much of the heart as of the mind.”

While the risk of misrepresentation and speaking for another is very real, for Clark-King not telling the women’s stories felt like “opting out, which only serves to extend the silence.” Being aware of the problem of speaking for the other, maintaining continual reflexive self-awareness during the interviews, and allowing oneself to be seen in the research are several of the practices to “limit the risks of colonising behavior.” Her process of reflection and monitoring included paying attention to her personal reactions to the women and their responses, maintaining integrity about her own vocabulary and cultural assumptions, and responding openly and honestly to questions posed to her by the women. Ultimately, after lovingly sharing the voices of the women she interviewed and their theologies, Clark-King is left wondering how to incorporate their disparate and sometimes conflicting perspectives. She suggests two equally unsatisfactory possibilities: ignoring the voices of the women while the academy continues to produce theology for them, or relativizing theology and sacrificing the ability to make truth claims that apply beyond that circumstance. As we cultivate ears to listen to the voices of the marginalized and op-

51 Kwok, *Postcolonial Imagination*, 76.
53 Clark-King, *Theology by Heart*, 3.
54 Clark-King, *Theology by Heart*, 12.
55 Clark-King, *Theology by Heart*, 208.
pressed, we must be aware of these twin temptations. Like Clark-King, I do not have an answer for how we respond within academic circles, but pastorally and ethically we can embrace the healing power that comes in bearing witness to the wounds and struggles of oppressed people and work to dismantle the structures of oppression.

Those living on the margins without voice also include gay and lesbian persons. The lay theologian and dean of St. John the Evangelist theological college in Aotearoa, New Zealand, Jenny Plane Te Paa, cogently reminds us that gays and lesbians continue to experience the oppression and marginalization of indigenous Anglicans and women all over the world. Te Paa clearly does not discount or downplay the particular experiences of marginalization felt by different people under unique circumstance, but rather draws on the common, essential experience of oppression and marginalization in calling for strategic alliances to battle injustice of all kinds. Postcolonial scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak refers to this as “strategic essentialism,” whereby members of an oppressed group focus on their essential commonalities, rather than differences, in order to form broader coalitions for resisting oppression. In considering how to build “mutually enriching coalitions,” Te Paa emphasizes that such alliances of the mutually disenfranchised must be driven by a deep mutual recognition and appreciation of their powerful witness to God’s work in the world. Thus Kortright Davis asserts that

peoples across the world who acknowledge their need for greater freedom from all forms of oppression must pick up on each other’s story and own it as best they can. The feelings of suspicion and distrust among the oppressed people of the world continue to linger cancerously, and whatever lines of communication, or links of solidarity, can be forged should be effectuated with urgency and commitment.56

Therefore, Te Paa calls the oppressed and marginalized to a three-part coalition building where identity-based groups (1) recognize the common witness they share with other disenfranchised groups, (2) merge out of their “parallel and unequal universes” and share their stories of identity, oppression, and common witness, and then (3) commit to redeeming the injustices that continue

in the Anglican Communion. An integral part of this coalition building is the telling of personal stories whereby terms such as Anglicanism, postcolonialism, indigenous people, and theological education recede as generic terms and are replaced by counter-narratives that express the “mixed legacy” of living in such a complex reality. Te Paa writes:

When I paused also to consider my position as a Lay Canon, as a woman enormously privileged by the experience of being entrusted with the responsibility for the academic and administrative leadership of the only indigenous Anglican theological college in the world, I was reminded yet again of the critical importance of us each finding time and ways for sharing our stories, with generosity and with humility.

For it is in telling individual, real stories of experiences with colonialism, imperialism, domination, abuse, and suffering that we can begin to hear how these stories are narrated as we enter times “beyond postcolonialism” and begin narrative repair.

In her book *Staying Power*, Episcopal priest and theologian Carter Heyward offers a series of reflections on bearing witness to the marginalized and oppressed as part of our call to justice and compassion. As a lesbian and one of the first eleven women ordained as Episcopal priests, Heyward has experienced the wounds of marginalization and oppression in the church and the academy. From within this experience, Heyward shares a sermon she preached at the ordination of a gay friend where she offers a roadmap for all of God’s children to find their voices and break the silence. She cautions that as people who have been oppressed and marginalized find the courage to speak, they need to be on guard as to whether it is “God speaking through us and others rather than self-delusions or pseudo-sacred

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spirits passing themselves off for divine.”60 Heyward calls attention to these four markers as ways to “test” for the voices of God, which when authentic call us into mutually empowering relationships, speak embodied and sensual words, sing and speak through all of us and not as solo voices, and express compassion by acknowledging our connections and mutually empowering each other.61 As a lesbian, Heyward observes that one of the hardest parts of compassion is to remain open to forgiving people who are not repentant of their racism, clericalism, sexism, and heterosexism and thus will not receive our forgiveness.

They do not see or believe that they have done anything wrong, anything to hurt, wound, or violate us or others. This is where gay and lesbian Christians find ourselves today insofar as the Spirit is working through us. We do not deny our ongoing need for repentance and forgiveness for such sins as our own greed, our duplicity, our racism, and the harm that we do others through our internalized homophobia and misogyny. At the same time, we are ready to forgive those brothers and sisters, in this church and elsewhere, who exclude and patronize, wound and violate, us and others and who do not know what they are doing. They do not know that through their fear, confusion, and often their barely veiled hatred, they are breaking the Body of Christ, which is our body and their own body.62

Being in the wound, and hearing the stories of people who have been oppressed and marginalized, can be very difficult and we may be tempted to avoid the possibility of this pain. But quoting the psychotherapist and poet Mariel Kinsey, Heyward reminds us that “it’s what we turn our backs on / that finally comes and stares us down.”63

When we have the courage to listen to the counter-narratives told by people who have been oppressed, and open ourselves to their (and our) pain and our (and their) duplicity, Heyward celebrates the opportunity to experience God in the mutual relations that emerge. This sense of mutuality with other human beings draws on Heyward’s understanding of our participation with Christ. For Heyward, this

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profoundly Anglican concept of participation, going back to Richard Hooker in the late sixteenth century, means that just as Christ is in and with each and every one of us, we are therefore in solidarity with the poor, oppressed, and marginalized. Heyward emphasizes this point in saying, “As participants in the world and church, our lives are literally involved, ‘rolled up,’ in one another’s—they in us, and we in them. We are One Body, a unity, through mutual participation. Whenever any of us is violated, all of us suffer.”

In her understanding of mutuality, Heyward not only sees possibilities for liberating the oppressed and marginalized, but for also liberating Christology and Jesus from any group who seeks to limit both the power of Jesus acting with and within us, and our own power as we participate in God’s liberating work. God in the movement between people is “among and between us, within and beyond us, beneath and above us. God is with all of us at once and with everyone else as well.” By finding God in the dynamics between people when they mutually support and empower each other, Heyward reminds us that failing to listen to the voices of others not only denies the Christ in them, but also denies us the chance to experience God in the unique interaction with them. Thus, not only for the sake of the poor and oppressed, but also for the sake of people in dominant cultures, are we called to hear the cries of the poor, oppressed, and marginalized.

Throughout this essay, I have emphasized the need to cultivate ears to hear the counter-narratives offered by people who have been oppressed and marginalized under systems of colonialism, racism, sexism, heterosexism, and clericalism. While I believe in the power of witnessing and responding to cries of suffering of injustice, it is clear that this call to listen emanates from a Western context where free speech is valued, and where even if limited, avenues for such discourse do exist. In *Hope Abundant: Third World and Indigenous Women’s Theology*, Kwok Pui-lan assiduously documents the extreme conditions under which women around the world produce theologies that reflect their experiences of oppression. It is all well and good for me to call members of dominant cultures to listen to these stories. But this call rings very hollow if we do not simultaneously recognize the political, social,

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65 Carter Heyward, *Saving Jesus from Those Who Are Right: Rethinking What It Means to be Christian* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1999), 61.
and economic structures that severely limit such counter-narratives and work for justice in whatever ways we can. The gift of the essays that Kwok collects is their expressions of deep faith and hope despite structural oppression.66

In Conclusion

What does all this talk about listening to the stories and voices of the oppressed, throughout history and in our world, mean in our lives at both the personal and broader institutional levels? Because if we have a subscription to the Anglican Theological Review, no matter what adversities we have faced in our lives, we have at least been able to gain access to education or church institutions whereby we learned of the existence of this journal. How can we internalize the critiques of the postcolonial, lay, and feminist theologians that this essay explores and carry their insights into our lives? Episcopal priest and pastoral psychotherapist Michael Dwinell quotes from personal communication with the Reverend William Dols to remind us that every interaction we have with another person is a chance for transformation, or a missed opportunity: “At the church door or at a table, in a discussion group or vestry meeting or in an office, the priest is deciding, always choosing to keep the world the way it is or serve the holy process of transformation. Every human being is likewise making the same choice. The uniqueness of the priest is a mantle of numinous power requiring finally to be sacrificed.”67 The counter-narratives presented in this essay challenge every person in a dominant cultural position to consider how we maintain or sacrifice our power when faced with opportunities to share it.

For ultimately the question of whether to sacrifice power comes down to an expression of what is most valuable to us, where our loyalties lie. In committing to the gospel of Jesus Christ as a wider loyalty, we accept his call to proclaim good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight for the blind, and freedom for the oppressed (Luke 4:18). Learning to see people who are invisible in our midst, listening to their stories, and cultivating the ears to hear what they say are not just feel-good liberal responses to white guilt. To summarize the

67 William Dols, quoted in Michael Dwinell, Being Priest to One Another (Liguori, Mo.: Triumph Books, 1993), 92.
thesis of her excellent book *Compelling Knowledge*, Mary Solberg reminds us that by cultivating an epistemology of the cross, we know differently because we see with Christ’s eyes and hear with Christ’s ears, and this is the key to more complete participation in the kingdom of God.68 We cannot act upon that which we cannot see and hear.

In this way, then, by expanding our ability to hear narratives of oppression, postcolonial, lay, and feminist theologians help to expand our vision of our lives in Christ. Every aspect of Christian ethics is influenced by the narratives that we choose to hear. For example, in the exemplary tradition, the narratives we learn in our communities form our virtues, intentions, habits, and acts. If we do not hear narratives of suffering, we may understand justice solely as the right ordering of society—as interpreted as what is right for the dominant culture—and not as a call to liberation. Therefore if we are faced with a flagrant instance of oppression, our sense of justice may not be developed in a way to trigger the motivation to act. Or if we have heard some stories of oppression, we may recognize an injustice and as a casuist trying to respond we will draw on other narratives to help determine what we do. If our trove of stories is thin, we will not have rich enough resources to guide our actions in complex situations of injustice, like institutional racism. Also, so much of our moral decision-making depends on the formation of conscience through hearing narratives that express a particular vision of how we are to relate to each other, our communities, and God.

If a dominant culture has not cultivated the ears to hear stories of oppression, the evangelical tradition urges a return to the gospel of Jesus Christ to locate those narratives that will remind us of our wider loyalties. In his *ATR* essay on Anglican Evangelicals and ethics,69 Jeff Greenman reminds us that it is the narratives in Holy Scripture make us Christians, and communities tell stories to interpret these biblical narratives, thus making them relevant in forming both private and public witness. For example, a community’s understanding of Paul’s exhortion that women should keep silent in church (1 Cor. 14:34–35) will shape their practices, habits, and ultimately the intentions of the community. Postcolonial, lay, and feminist theologians help to ensure

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68 Solberg, *Compelling Knowledge*, summary from the introduction, 1–21.

that the telling of these narratives includes biblical interpretation that is alert to power, race, and gender dynamics.

As Timothy Sedgwick attests, “a central task of Christian ethics is to remember and give voice to one’s experience of God.”70 If a dominant culture’s narratives only include one “side” of the story, then we may develop a distorted vision of the moral life. Creating space for people to narrate from the “other” side of history has the possibility of correcting these distortions through the process of narrative repair. The postcolonial, lay, and feminist theologians in this essay have given us narratives of oppression and resistance to oppression, experiences of marginalization and connectedness, and ultimately a celebration of catholicity and deep particularity grounded in our common narratives as beloved children of God. If narratives of oppression have the space to be told and some authority in the telling, then true narrative repair can begin and all of God’s people can give voice to their experience of God. Our identity as Christians, rooted in the Incarnation, reveals itself in this moral optimism. This positive anthropology in no way diminishes our human tendency to individual and corporate sin, but gives us hope that as Christ dwells in us, we dwell in Christ and can truly be the hands and heart of Christ in this world. Around the table, we share in the Body and Blood of Christ, and from this place our stories can be told and heard.

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