

**The Ramsden Sermon**  
**Preached before the University of Oxford**  
**At the University Church of St Mary the Virgin**  
**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2003**  
**by the Revd Dr Carrie Pemberton**

***The Abolition of Slavery – from Clarkson to Today.***

The subject matter for which the Ramsden Sermon was endowed in 1847 has a strange tone for our contemporary ears. To pay attention to the ‘extension of the Church within the British Commonwealth’ calls forth images of men in pith helmets and women in long cotton dresses with stout shoes – as Mary Kingsley described her favoured form of attire when on Safari in some particularly hot part of regions beyond the Commonwealth<sup>1</sup>. For those who wish to explore further the images and the contradictions of nineteenth century mission I can do no more than encourage them to explore the books published through the programme run by the other location of the Ramsden Sermon – where a programme called the North Atlantic Missionary Project flourished for a while under the aegis of the Faculty of Divinity<sup>2</sup>. This project unearthed the treasures of missionary tracts and histories, and in-country evangelists and church planters stories for us to hear within them the remarkable negotiations of church inculturation within the texture of Empire and commercial exploitation. Some might say that nothing much has changed today in the attention which first Claire Short, then Tony Blair, and latterly Gordon Brown have lavished on the subject of Africa – our greatest representative base of the Commonwealth today.

Africa was the singular point of attention of another advocate of trade not aid, of good governance and responsible commerce. Although separated from us by one hundred and fifty years of history, this passionate priest and political activist traversed the United Kingdom on horseback bringing to the attention of congregations, tavern clienteles and the parliamentarians of his day the cause of the African Slave. Along with his coterie of political lobbyists and Quaker colleagues – he brought to the attention of parliament, the law courts and popular press, the fruit of Africa whose dignity and common humanity were effaced by the process of capture, trade, shipping, sale and enslavement in the sugar plantations of the West Indies. The priest in question was Thomas Clarkson of Wisbech, born in 1760, the son of a clergyman, and the winner of the essay competition set by the vice-chancellor of Cambridge University, Dr Peter Peckard, on the subject of the legality of making slaves of others against their will.

The outcome of the train of research, emotional and ethical commitment, which writing the competition essay unleashed in young Thomas Clarkson, the bright Gower Exhibitioner to St John’s from Winchester, is truly inspirational. Dr Peckard had been

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<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www>.

struck by the reports from the Slave Ship *Zong* whose captain, in order to collect insurance had cast all his cargo of slaves overboard rather than bring his sickly captives to a potentially loss-making sale. An attempt to bring the captain to book by prosecuting him through the English courts for murder had come to no avail. Dr Peckard's response – to set in motion the intellectual energies of the 1784 graduates – was arguably more lethal to the international trade in African humanity than the successful prosecution might have accomplished. It should give those of us with the power of unleashing the contemporary graduate mind to grapple with great issues of our day, pause for thought.

You may have come across similar reports only recently on the coast off Morocco over 20 young Somali and Ethiopians were drowned and a further 80 missing when their crew turned on them, six miles from the coast of Yemen. The refugees were from Somalia and Ethiopia, escaping violence and civil disturbance at home. Most of the ships illicit cargo of men, women and children was feared drowned in the Gulf of Aden in mid-September following an unprovoked attack from their smuggler crew, who forced them off a boat at gunpoint, beating those who were reluctant to be pitched into the sea. Most of the victims are thought to have been women and children too weak to swim ashore.<sup>3</sup> This is our contemporary *Zong* – emerging on the news wires as yet another by line on the transportation of human beings, whether smuggled or trafficked across borders in search of food, work, peace, an alternative place to call home. It is estimated that over 125 million people now live and work in countries other than their place of birth. Of these, 25 million persons according to the UNHCR, are refugees and many of these with no formal visas or papers, risk the high stake journeys of traffickers, replete with false passports, surrendered into the unaccountable hands of contemporary sea dogs and long distance truckers.

Three years ago a special branch operation was set in train with the discovery of 55 young Chinese travellers dead in the base of a container at Dover docks. There was of course no legal way for these migrants to come into Britain to work in the fields of Norfolk, the restaurants of Soho, or the packing lines of our processed food industry serving our supermarkets with competitively priced food of our 'pile it high – sell it cheap' food retail culture. The ecology of our agricultural practices and secondary food processing effects more than our land use – it begs major questions of who toils in the fields and at what cost. At the time legislation was not in place to charge the traffickers with the particular offence of trafficking – although the means were found to bring charges against the driver of the ill-fated stow-ways. Now we have legislation against trafficking as an offence - and a section of the Metropolitan police force specifically working to build profiles on traffickers, and locate those they have trafficked. For too many of these their hope-filled journey to Britain ends when they find their way into some form of bonded labour – a modern form of slavery – a contemporary bodily usury.

Thomas Clarkson during his research on the conditions of slavery which was to realise itself in the seminal prize-winning work *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African* ( first published in June 1786 – with

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<sup>3</sup> The Guardian; September 17, 2003

simultaneous publication in the United States) began to eat, drink and sleep the realities of his subject matter.<sup>4</sup> He wrote in his history 'I sometimes closed my eyelids for grief. It became now not so much a trial for academical (*sic*) reputation, as for the production of a work, which might be useful to injured Africa'. I wish I could say as an ordained member of the Church of England that the Established church into which Thomas was ordained uniformly backed his ideas and supported his energies expended in the matter. Unfortunately this was not to be the case. Many clergy – particularly those with spare income to invest or wealthy brothers in land or trade were nervous about Clarkson's reforming zeal. The slave trade was commercially legitimised in the great ports of Liverpool and Bristol with 12% of Bristol's commercial shipping interest directly based on slavery – including a vast range of slave trade spin-offs - the manufactured goods of glass, cotton weaves and small arms (seen in startling detail in the bills and adverts assembled Bristol's new Commonwealth museum). Slave trade interests were on all west coast merchants' lips, close to the heart of landed politicians and in the prayers of many clerics.

The Bishop of Bangor cautioned Clarkson that if he continued along the road of investigation and active lobbying against the trade – he would endanger his prospects of advancement in the church. It was a caution which Clarkson took to heart – as the years of his lobbying, research and 35,000 miles of travel often on horseback and alone wore on, Clarkson steadily lost his habit of wearing his clerical dress, stating that if he did not receive a stipend then he should not bear the odium of the office. Clarkson undeterred, was assiduous and detailed in his research. In his first sortie to Bristol and Liverpool he cajoled those who were literate to keep journals and diaries; so that first-hand accounts could be brought to the law courts and not simply hear-say. He recorded over 20,000 names of seamen involved in the trade, building a case on the brutality and inefficiency of the trade for the seamen who serviced it. He prepared a report of his own travels – which included meetings in Gloucester, Liverpool, Manchester and Bath, lobbied local mayors and disputed with merchants in every place he stayed, and built on the pre-existing network of the Society of Friends who had been active in this arena several years before Clarkson undertook his prize winning essay of 1784. The original Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade – formed in May 1787 – was robustly packed with Quakers - with a modest third of the executive provided by Anglicans.

From Clarkson's researches and perseverance in field-work, come the pictures we all remember from our school day research on the slave trade – the picture of the Liverpool slave ship the *Brookes*, packed with 482 slaves manacled to one another and to the floor for the long six to eight week journey from West Africa to the West Indies.<sup>5</sup> The cost in life, for both English Sailors and West African slaves was appalling. Overcrowded and unsanitary conditions led to deaths above and below decks- frequently removing one quarter to one third of the live cargo and seamen during the journey. It took the tenacity of Clarkson's research to bring in the first range of reports against sea Captains for brutality meted out on both slaves and seamen – beatings, floggings, rape and exposure to the elements. At his own expense he brought seamen who were prepared to testify to abuses undertaken in offshore locations off the Nigerian coast from Liverpool to be heard in London – at the Old

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<sup>5</sup> The *Brookes* of Liverpool – Plan and Section of a Slave Ship 1789

Bailey – in much the same way as foreign tourists seeking paedophile sex in Thailand, Cambodia, and Romania, are now able to be brought to book in the courts of the UK. Thousands of prints of the Brookes were distributed, a mass propaganda image for the anti-slavery movement – a provocation for discussion at many a dinner table or during the evening of games and leisure. In France in the midst of revolutionary fervour the powerful image of this brutalised transport was mocked up in a wooden section for the sideboard of the Comte de Mirabeau – whilst the Archbishop of Aix was rendered nearly speechless by the brutality and horror of the trade described in detail in Clarkson's *Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade* – published in 1788.<sup>6</sup>

Clarkson and the Society for the Abolition of the Slave trade, with its membership of network of 50,000 and network of over 150 correspondents, was arguably the first mass movement in general politics. The informal but disciplined organisation worked outside of, as well as inside parliament, to alter the political culture and transform the calm acceptance of slavery. There was an opinion abroad that the African slave was a scion of his people being established in regular work, with housing and proximity to white culture, rather than forced into the degradation which marked the slave trade and for Clarkson the abuse of hierarchy in the relationship, and the commercial relationship established in the trading of slaves undermined the sacred doctrines of brotherly love and future accountability to the Divinity. Christianity rather than permitting the hierarchical order of races that sustained the notion of slavery 'strikes at the root of slavery' – 'Slavery' Clarkson determined was incompatible with Christianity, and should be outlawed by all right thinking Christians and Churchmen.<sup>7</sup>

Enlightenment ideas of freedom jostle with Christian understandings of free-will and accountability in the range of arguments which Clarkson brought to the task of advocacy and culture change. 'It is necessary' he argued in terms which our contemporary ears find less than satisfying 'that (the slave) should be free if men are to give an account of their actions at the end.' Divine judgement would be thwarted and human freedom and accountability irreparably undermined by slave owning. In an age without the paradigms of secularised human rights, this argument from the requirements of Divine judgement vesting in humanity accountability and dignity were the contemporary tools for shifting attitudes in sitting rooms, vestries, taverns and courts.

Running at an estimated 80,000 traded lives per annum to the West Indian sugar plantations alone – Clarkson stumbled across mass petitioning, research, publication and mass pamphletting to engage the popular mind on the requirements of reason and divine justice. The equivalent of our ubiquitous lapel pin the Josiah Wedgwood miniature of a kneeling slave, with chained hands stretched upwards in supplication was worn by thousands of women as a brooch or necklace – and sported by men on cigarette cases, snuff boxes whilst also decorating vases and mantelpieces up and down the land. At one point in the campaign a petition of 1/5th of the voting population of Manchester was presented to the Houses of Parliament – alongside petitions from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge.<sup>8</sup> The movement even had its own point of boycott – 300,000 shoppers shifted from habitual West Indian sugar

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users, to honey, maple syrup, East Indian sugar production (where only freemen were involved in its farming) or complete abstinence.

Clarkson was never to set foot in Africa – but he did meet freed African slaves in the course of his enquiries. The holding of slaves in Britain had been outlawed in a landmark decision only 12 years earlier by Lord Mansfield in 1772 – who had declared the institution as alien to the law of the land and African slaves held in households across Britain as free men. The James Somerset decision as it became known - shifted the terms of debate between the merchant classes with their affiliates with shares in West Indian and shipping stocks, and the legal, clerical and educational professions who were beginning to move into fully fledged resistance to both the trade and the condition. Clarkson met freed slaves in London, Bristol and Liverpool as well as in France where members of the Paris National Guard urged him to move immediately on the abolition of slavery as a whole and not to adopt the pragmatic, gradualist position held by many politicians to simply legislate on the trade. This was the strategy worked on in the House of Commons by Wilberforce – as the interim step towards working on the final abolition of the state as well as the trade in human life.

Clarkson's temperament was not well attuned to gradualism. He felt as he reflected on his journey in later life, that he had been 'forced into this great work – all the tragical scenes passed (in the construction of his initial essay) as a horrible review before me – my compassion for their suffering was so intense, so overwhelming, as to have overpowered me and compelled me to form the resolution which I dared not resist, of attempting their deliverance'.<sup>9</sup> It was a conversion – a personal transformation with political and social impact, which he believed with typical Anglican hesitation – tinged with the humility of his long association with the Society of Friends - 'might' have come from God. The system of slavery was 'one barbarous system from beginning to end' 'a hydra –headed monster nursed by the commercial interests of men with the 'merchant – the planter-the mortgagee- the manufacturer- the politician – the cabinet minister' all implicated and active in its maintenance.<sup>10</sup> But for Clarkson the Scriptures from Genesis and Exodus in the Old Testament through to Philemon in the New informed his perspective of slaves as brothers and bearers of the image of God in a common humanity – required to give an account of their lives before God, which slavery perversely invalidated. The edict not to oppress a stranger – 'seeing as you were strangers in the land of Egypt' was also a part of his arsenal of theological and ethical arguments ranged against the trade and its allies. With the conversion of Wilberforce to evangelical faith in 1786 Clarkson found the parliamentary ally to drive through the research and popular advocacy into policy and legislative change- but the battle was to be a long one with the Abolition Act – what Clarkson referred to in his history 'the Magna Carta for Africa in Britain' – finally achieved over 30 years later in 1807.<sup>11</sup>

The history of the abolition of slavery in British waters and trading territories was eventually secured after millions of signatures, years of lobbying, writing and research, making the argument for a better way, had other voices in the story other than the pro-active, diligent, heroic and impoverished Clarkson. But he was singularly important in his ability to construct alternative ways of reading culture,

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commercial sense and socio-religious settlements. One of these alternative places was a place for alternative futures for those caught within slavery; and in his mind and the mind of a cluster of businessmen who gathered around him, Africa was itself the focus of the great new adventure. The business plan was pitched as a heaven on earth, a location of tropical effulgence where wealth would cascade for liberated slaves, and for British investors alike. This was one of the first philanthropic and commercial ventures undertaken in the heart of slaving territory in the name of the freed African slave – this was the adventure of Sierra Leone. The Sierra Leone Company believed as all designers of new business plans do in the efficaciousness and deliverability of their products. For Clarkson the formation of a trading company in Africa would be ‘one of the greatest wounds that the slave trade ever received’.<sup>12</sup> Clarkson had read in Benezet’s recently published *An Historical Account of Guinea* - how Africa affords ‘an easy living to its inhabitants, with but little toil’. In Clarkson’s business plan bodies were replaced by the appropriate cargo of cotton, gums, spices and woods, gold and ivory. New skills in carpentry, whaling and viticulture would make Sierra Leone a text book example of Providence repaying right decisions. In much the same tone as Livingstone inspired the Universities Mission to Central Africa with the strap line - ‘commerce and Christianity’ – Clarkson dreamt of the emancipation of both people and land through liberated labour and free trade. Profits of 100 - 300% were projected – The stage was set for the establishment of the British Commonwealth in Africa – Sierra Leone became the first British Colony on the continent – established with European finance and delivered through African bodies.

So far we have been reading the history of slavery and its abolition, and the first faltering steps of the new British Colony of Sierra Leone, through the eyes of a remarkable, persistent, passionate, Anglican with an ecumenical heart. His drive, his networking and lobbying skills, the robustness of his research, were indispensable for the creation of a political consciousness amongst substantial numbers of voting freeholders as well as numerous disenfranchised men and women –in an age where mass movements struck terror into the establishment – and could provoke resistance as much as invoke change.

But here we must pause. Because as in every story there are other voices that we might miss in the dominant narrative of the crusading white male saviour figure with his trusty band of fellow male disciples. When we decentre the story of the Church’s extension into the British Commonwealth and ask with the Gambian Church Historian Lamin Sanneh, ‘whose church, and which extension’, we find ourselves, as would have Clarkson, in strange terrain indeed.<sup>13</sup> Instead of a history which starts at the Christianisation of Africa through the arrival of Christian ex-slaves – civilised through their passage into European culture via the slave fields of the West Indies and Americas, returning to establish the grand experiment of Free Town and Sierra Leone based on European commercial principles, agricultural technology and Christian virtues – we have an alternative historical scheme presented to us.

From a West African perspective, Christian history on the continent takes the form of a number of phases. First there is the *period of incubation* – when Christianity is centred on North Africa and Egypt. This is the period of Clement of Alexandria, of

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<sup>12</sup> Clarkson to Lafayette 17<sup>th</sup> June 1791, in Parliamentary Reform Cannon p126

<sup>13</sup>

early monasticism, and of the vigorous Latin Christianity exemplified in Cyprian and Augustine. From incubation we move – in the West African narrative - to the *era of frustration* as Christianity begins to flourish in a missionary incursion into Europe, but in this movement adopts the powerful clothes of Roman power and becomes what we know as Christendom. Finally in 1787 – with the formation of the Sierra Leone Company - begins what Sanneh calls *the era of Promise* – which lasts till the present day. It is a period where Sanneh believes the agency of African Christians embeds Christianity into the soil of Africa through African mediation – working with the motifs of liberation, emancipation and freedom embodied in the lives of liberated slaves. The recognition of the *African Factor* with the ‘African Christian agent’ claiming his right on pre-emptive mission strikes deep into the hinterland of Africa, with internal adaptation of external mission and commercial agendas is of critical importance. For it brings us an understanding of the dynamic interplay which occurs in the theological nature of mission – which concerns the capture of the divine imagination in the hearts and minds of men and women previously divided by race, class, and gender – to undertake the task of radical liberation based on equality and identity emanating from God in Christ – with no other source of differentiation permitted. In the late twentieth century politically liberated colonies of Independent Africa seemed to lead the way in shedding the thrall of western domination, and alongside this Christianity was called into question as a western tool of dominion. Sanneh argues that this would be too simple a reading of the complex history of world Christianity let alone the history of Christianity within Africa itself. There was a rich Christian past with African agency on the continent long before ever the Western missionary movement began or Britain received her first missionaries.

When we pay attention to the beginnings of the Sierra Leone Colony, we see then the summoning of an exiled African diaspora – gathered from as far as contemporary Kenya, Zambia, Tanzania, D.R.Congo, Benin, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria, Ghana, Cote D’Ivoire, many still with their mother tongues, many converted through their encounter with Christianity in the New Colonies of America, and the Western dispensation, ready to be deployed in evangelism, teaching, translation, community development, commercial start-ups and church building, in the motherland of Africa. One such, a Fanti from Ghana, Ottobah Cugoano wrote about his experiences as a British Slave. These reminiscences, published in 1787, called on the British government to send a fleet to west Africa to suppress slavery. Another, Olaudah Equiano, an Igbo from Nigeria, living in Britain at the same time as Cugoano, developed arguments for commerce similar to the Sierra Leone Company. Legitimate trade would be more beneficial for Europe and for Africa than the wastage of life and the devastation of the core of the continent through the arms proliferation, territorial wars and rape of Africa’s young men and women from the continent. Demographic historians would concord with this view eloquently published in 1789 – the long term costs of the disruption of slavery in Africa’s demography, let alone the skewed political map of the continent as it conformed to European political display and aspirations – was to take generations to heal. Many would argue the impact can still be felt today. Both Equiano and Cugoano were convinced Christians, and as part of Church desired the reintroduction of Christianity and through it the gift of modernity into the continent through the great experiment of Sierra Leone.

Resettlement of former slaves was organised at first in London through the committee of the ‘black poor’, a designation by white philanthropists- not the name adopted by

the resettlers themselves amongst whom were Equaino and Cugoano – both men of letters, and others who had learnt trades in both ships and gentrified households of England. The first attempts to launch the re-christianisation of Africa through the Black Poor was blighted by disease, fever and death – before the party had even set sail from English Dock. A further party came unstuck in the channel where a storm disabled two of the ships further reducing the number of those who had initially set their face towards the verdant continent – By March 1788 nearly a year after the first group of just under a thousand had gathered – only 39 were ready to set sail – of whom were 2 English Doctors. Similar difficulties beset those who reached Granville Town (after the English abolitionist) and settled in the former home of the Temne people – one of whose number King Jimmy harried the early resettlers – this was contested terrain – as any resettlement programme will be. Many died of fever, or were unable to manage the harsh environment where malaria, sleeping sickness, and other diseases to undermine health were rampant. For all the dreams, aspirations and prayers that accompanied these first steps towards freedom – these were difficult portents, which would have had preachers aware of the traumas, placing their read on what had happened to divine blessing on this small band of black pilgrims. However in 1792 over 1200 freed slaves from Nova Scotia came to swell their number – paid for by the British Government a princely price of £9,600 pounds. The colony at last had a sustainable number of motivated and equipped immigrants to begin in earnest.

‘Their pastors led them ashore singing a hymn of praise – Like the Children of Israel who were coming out of the captivity they had endured they rejoiced before the Lord – who had brought them out of bondage into the land of their forefathers – when all had arrived the whole colony assembled to worship’<sup>14</sup>.

Maroons – freed slaves from the Spanish colony in Jamaica who had run to the mountains on the arrival of Oliver Cromwell’s troops in Jamaica in 1655- and had survived English enslavement policies through a mixture of brinkmanship and intransigence started to arrive - 550 in 1800 and settled first in Granville Town and then in Freetown. Sierra Leone became a melting pot of aspirations and exiled peoples of Africa who had travelled by different paths since the first slaving canoes had come in the sixteenth century to transport them to the plantations of the West Indies and the Americas.

The history of church extension in the British commonwealth – on the anvil of slavery and its abolition – hammers out different notes from the metal of Africa and Europe. This is the tangled history of Church extension into the British commonwealth – the shocking story of Africa’s enforced extension into the European world – as bodies enclosed in factory ships – transported as body-power for exploitation by wealthy land owners. Emancipation and liberation did not happen easily – nor did they emerge in a vacuum. They were dependent on the passionate over-drive of some extraordinary agents of change – driven by the revulsion of a practice and a powerful – religiously charged – desire for change.

Nothing else would have enable the shift of the endemic economic and cultural orientation of Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The economic argument to cultivate the in-country slave population and abandon the trade

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<sup>14</sup> Fyfe History of Sierra Leone 1962 pp 36-37

was made and championed through parliament in 1807 was followed in the fullness of time with the Zanzibar treaty with Sultan Barghash in June 1873 ending of slavery in the British colonies, by way of two more treaties – the Moresby treaty of 1822 and the Hamerton treaty in 1845.

Economic shifts by themselves would not have realised the change. It took human compassion, imagination, the construction of alternative worlds, the envisioning of others into this alternate landscape, resistance, abstinence, self-sacrifice, adventure, movement, tragedy, risk taking inspired by hope for a better world to shift this practice. And it took the energies of both black and white, men and women, legal professionals, politicians, church, commerce, media and publishers, a great combination of voices, lives, over half a million published pamphlets, histories, books, petitions, white papers, parliamentary committee enquiries, dedicated books of prayers and commentaries, reports and articles to papers to achieve it. That is what change costs- it does not come cheap and it does not come easy.

It is ideally a dialogue – a multiple conversation – bringing in many partners inspired by the vision of the good – For Clarkson and for Cugoana – the Old Testament injunction on slavery was an inspiration – for others Wilberforce, and the Clapham sect (the influential group of Anglicans who gathered at Thornton’s house and included Shaftesbury and other evangelically minded politicians and businessmen) other biblical motifs became the inspiration for change. It took energy, it took perseverance, it took lives and it took time.

Change was written in the most part by African lives, previously enslaved lives, who took their story of encounter with Western culture and modernity, western Christianity and brought it to the land of their forebears. Never mind that this was not home – it was Africa – and they were black Diaspora Africans.

The extension of church in this third phase – this age of promise as Sanneh calls it – is still in process. It may in the language of White South African Missiologist David Bosch be moving into a fourth phase – a phase when African Christianity – African Church, extends back into the Metropole of the British Commonwealth – into Lambeth and Westminster – in European terms into the Vatican, Berlin and Brussels. The Anglican communion has already felt the impact of this emergent fourth phase – and many in the United Kingdom – in the land of post-modernity are not clear what to make of this voice from what appears as another era speaking the words of the Bible back to us. Hence the confusion felt particularly in the United States but also here in Britain where rumours of the demise of the Anglican Communion have flourished in the broadsheets. But the conversation must go on – and white supremacy in this, as in the early days of the African mission – in the era of Promise – must resist the impulse of effortless superiority, ‘leading strings’ for the rest of the communion. The Sierra Leone ‘native’ experiment produced within a generation the first black Bishop of the Anglican communion Samuel Adaji Crowther. This promise of black leadership and agency was the stuff of Henry Venn – (the Secretary of CMS ) who articulated the three self principles for Church development – self-governing, self-propagating and self financing. Unfortunately for the African church as Kevin Ward reminds us in the opening chapter of Anglicanism a Global communion – in the climate of the high

Imperial era Venn's theories and the early Sierra Leonian experiment 'were reinterpreted in a tortuously gradualist and restrictive way, or forgotten altogether'<sup>15</sup>.

The story of how the Anglican church resolves the issue of diversity and inculturation is an ongoing one – and we are in the centre of a particular undulation in its development. How this current issue over sexuality, the ethics of what kinds of sex and with whom, authority, independence, and the nature of communion itself will be resolved is in process of articulation and redefinition. These are other domains than the issues at stake in the liberation of slaves, and however uncomfortable to the Western church African hands must make of the church and Christianity in the continent what they will. But exactly the same process and principles apply to the ECUSA. Perhaps one lesson for church extension to continue is that dialogue and diversity must continue maybe the resolution of difficulties on one part of the world cannot be as rapid as we might wish. That is the cost of an enculturation that resists imperial answers from wherever they may arise.

We have journeyed together over the course of the last twenty minutes as to how the received acceptability of West Indian Slave trade dominated by the ports of Bristol and Liverpool, Calabar and Kingston – and the livelihoods of thousands of middle brokers in England, Ireland, Barbados, Nigeria and Ghana was overhauled by the commitment to report – to discover the truth, to revolt at the treatment and to lobby and work for change – by those who as members of church, black and white refused the paradigm of enslavement for labour. By 1889 all former slaves were declared free men and women and the status of slave was abolished in 1907 in British East Africa.

Today however we have enslavement occurring across the British commonwealth which is not so open; it is illegal, it is covert, it is dominated by the trade in young women and children and it carries with it the ill treatment of victims, the denial of their basic human rights and dignities, and the surreptitious activities of those who do not want their activities brought into the light of either religious or public discourse. It is an area in which the charity I work with and direct has been formed to see abolished – it is the trafficking of humans for sex within the illegal internationally managed sex trade. Trafficking for sex is estimated to blight the lives of over 500,000 women, boys and girls a year. It revenues third to the illicit trade in drugs and light armaments on the international trade indices of criminality. Until last year much of Europe had no legislation with which to prosecute those involved in the trade, nor those involved in procurement as clients, or brokers.

We are at the beginning of another journey of change – where a great deal of energy, parliamentary lobbying, passionate speech making, meetings in church halls and local government chambers, sermons in less well attended churches, interviews on Newsnight, questions in Question time and painstaking research in sites of its realisation (in Britian Newcastle, London, Glasgow and in the skirting boards of many of our main cities). It will deand the principled energy of those who hear the voices of liberation again in the Biblical text and speak them with and for the victims of this new slavery. It will encounter the power of the mobile phone, in-country poverty,

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<sup>15</sup> Ward, Kevin, *The Development of Anglicanism as a global communion*, in, Wingate, Andrew et al., Anglicanism, a Global Communion, London, Mowbray, 1998, p18.

intimidation, sex on the internet, beatings, terror, loss of self worth, growing demand in the West, the commodification of desire and laundered money.

Here, then, is the latest area of Church extension, ripe for effecting emancipation within the British Commonwealth – as West African women, boys and girls are moved across borders – enticed onto the slave planes, trains, lorries and boats with their parents assured of a better future for their offspring. It will take the combined will power of countries of origin and destination, of countries of transit and people like Clarkson ‘agonised that this trade should last another day’, to develop the intelligence, shift the cultural perception, create the laws, and outlaw the demand for trafficked sex – the latest dangerous, abuse-ridden manifestation of the ‘oldest profession’, which needs to be named as the inhuman, abusive leisure activity that it is.

Slaves were bought and sold – Captains of slave ships defended their trade claiming their cargo had never been so happy as when dancing in their chains on the deck of their slave ships, and fashionable ladies in drawing rooms in Liverpool, London, Manchester, Bristol and Bath would toast many happy and prosperous years to the slave trade. Such is the power of false consciousness until penetrated by the laser of empathetic truth – as encapsulated in the unforgettable phrase around Josiah Wedgwood’s kneeling slave figure, ‘am I not a slave and a brother?’. So my prayer and my appeal to you today is that we might work together across the Commonwealth – the world in which we are common citizens for its welfare - in the midst of obfuscation, denial, resistance, intimidation and risk, for an extension, not of church only, but of humanity, as, in the face of these new forms of slavery, we risk retelling and applying the grand narrative of empathy, compassion and emancipation, which is embedded in the story of Exodus and the solidarity of the Divine with humanity in Jesus Christ.

And now to that same God, Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, be ascribed, as is most justly due, Majesty, Dominion and Power henceforth and forever more. Amen.

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