Podcast transcript
The Leader's Way
Episode 27: Colonialism and Christianity with Kwok Pui Lan

Kwok Pui Lan:We always think if we believe in certain things, there is only one way of true believing which I think sometimes will collude with the powerful way. We think everybody should believe like that. Why? Because we have power. We have the power to coerce. We have the power to discipline.

B: Hi. I'm Brandon Nappi.

H: Hi. I'm Hannah Black.

B: And we're your hosts on The Leaders Way, an audio pilgrimage from Berkeley Divinity School, The Episcopal Seminary at Yale University.

H: On this journey, we reflect on what matters most in life as we talk about all things spirituality, innovation, leadership, and transformation.

H: Hey, Brandon.

B: Hey, Hannah. Happy summer!

H: Happy summer. I think this is our first episode post-The Leader's Way, as in the certificate program that we run. And I'm wondering if you have any favorite moments or memories to share with our listeners from our week together with fellows at Yale?

B: Thank you for that question. I am still surfing the waves of excitement and connection and fellowship. Yeah. So just to contextualize, right; We've invited around forty leaders from around the world, Episcopal leaders, leaders, clergy and lay leaders from many, many different denominations all came here to Yale for the week. And we lived in Benjamin Franklin College, Yale's newest residential college, and we bunked up together. And we heard some great lectures and had some really powerful conversations.

For me, I think two things come to mind. One is daily worship together. So we began the day in in Marquand Chapel, our chapel here at the center of Yale Divinity School. And the vibrant prayer and singing ... our music ministry was just amazing this year, led by our own graduate Reverend Doctor Andy Barnett and Theodicy Jazz Collective. So music was rich and diverse, but really drew from the jazz and gospel tradition this year. So the singing was really powerful, and I had many sort of teary moments, many joyful moments, of worship, and Bishop Mary Glasspool let us as our chaplain for the week. So just having her presence and the presence of so many ... just radiant souls earnestly taking time to pray and to be renewed was really powerful.

But ... so there's that and--not but, but *and* breaking bread together in the Yale dining halls. You know, just catching up and hearing about people's ministries, the joys of their ministries, the hardships of their ministries, the confusion, the losses, the surprises, the graces that people bring to this program from around the planet. We had a beautiful contingent from New Zealand. Hello, our New Zealand friends! We miss you already. We know you're listening from South Africa and ... from where else, Hannah?

H: Kenya, Tanzania, Puerto Rico ...

B: Oh my gosh.

H: Canada. Yeah.

B: It was a party. It was ... it was... it was the best of seminary learning. It was intense and challenging. It was a party. We had pizza. We prayed. We sang. There was some very responsible imbibing happening. It was everything.

H: We're advertising it as, like ... "pilgrimage, pizza, prayer!"

B: I love it. I love it. That's ... that's my memory of the week. I could go on for much longer, but what about you? You were, you know, leading the whole week and being asked to do so many different things. What's coming to mind for you?

H: Really wonderful. It sortof tapped into ... when I was a kid and went to church camp, I always felt like there was a transcendence that was hard to feel in other places. And I felt that. And I think what it was, was a bunch of church leaders being able to not be in charge for a week, which is big. And then being able to focus exclusively on their life of prayer, on the things that they were discerning, and that sort of single-mindedness just created a really beautiful community. And I felt like even in hearing people's struggles in ministry, I was really inspired and full of hope just because these people are so incredible.

So that was a highlight for me, the community and the sort of sense of God being there. I I feel like I've never heard so many people talking about the Holy Spirit in one week. And, you know, this wasn't like a theme that you and I were trying to draw out. It's just ... it was a week of listening for people, And that was certainly helped by the amazing preaching we heard. Some of Bishop Mary Glasspool's lines from her sermons have still been, like, on repeat in my mind in a really helpful way.

So, yeah, I I felt like I got a lot out of it, which was obviously not the goal. The goal was to run the week.

B: It was just really so powerful. I I think you've given us yet another tagline: "The Leader's Way: you don't need to be in charge for the week."

H: I thought you were gonna say, like, "The Holy Spirit is here."

B: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

H: Well ... well and the other highlight, which I forgot to say at first, was touching a Gutenberg Bible. What?

B: What?

H: What? Like, it's usually on display at Yale, so you can go look at it and be in awe. But, oh my goodness, they took it out for us. We had three mini-collections of some of the treasures of the Yale manuscript and Rare Book Library. And, oh my gosh, they're just touching a Gutenberg. That's not real.

B: We got our Gutenberg on in a big way.

H: So that's one: “Get your Gutenberg on.”

B: So this was a new dimension of Leader’s Way this year, to go to the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Sorry if I'm butchering the exact name, but like this truly treasure-trove of a place. Yeah. And what our amazing librarians, Scott, Suzanne, I mean, dug out-- they were almost thirty incredibly old, really historic documents. Any one of which you could almost have said, like, “If this document hadn't existed, we wouldn't be in the room.” I don't know.

H: Well, it was it was wild. Like, it was everything from a Coptic fragment of the Gospel of John to *Lift Every Voice and Sing*. Like, we saw all of church’s --not every single document of church history, but stuff from all of church history. It was just wild. And I think inspiring to be like, “Okay. These were the leaders who came before me. I'm gonna do that too.”

B: And, of course, there was me drooling in the corner with twenty of Thomas Merton's letters right there. And, of course, the astounding piece of all this is that, aside from washing our hands, right, there were no gloves. Like, we were we were touching history, literally.

H: And it was it was fun to have a front row seat to watch our fellows dig into various pieces of history and really resonate with the tradition. So it was fun. And then I went and saw history happen with the election of our new PB-elect, our presiding bishop elect, the Right Reverend Sean Rowe. So it was exciting to be at General Convention. But, yeah, a fair number of us actually went straight from the Leaders Way to General Convention, especially the international fellows, and it was a new experience for me. It was very cool. I was a little distracted by the amazing swag in the exhibit hall. So it ... you know, the experience ran the gamut from swag to a Berkeley Divinity School hymn sing to the election of a new presiding bishop.

B: Well, let me just say that Episcopalians know how to do swag. One of the great contributions to the Christian family, I think, is the swag game that the Episcopal church is bringing right now.

H: Oh my gosh. Well, I'll give you my 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place prizes from the exhibit hall.

B: Excellent. Because, of course, I was not there. I was getting a lot of just moment to moment texts from Hannah. I was in my living room. I was cleaning up after my cats. But the real ... yes. I was very connected.

H: “Are you alive?” Okay. This isn't everybody's first place. This is Hannah Black's first, 2nd, and 3rd place prizes. And I'm excluding Berkeley's swag because I make the Berkeley swag. It just wouldn't be fair.

B: You are recusing yourself. Mhmm. Something that's not very popular these days in the Supreme Court, for example. Oh, sorry. I went there.

H: Okay. 1st place goes to the National Cathedral for a portable, collapsible dog bowl that you can take hiking. I know. I was like, did you make this specifically for me? Be honest. Wow. Next level. So I have one of those at home now. 2nd place, I would say this was the most popular item on the exhibit hall floor. And if you were at General Convention, you can probably guess what it was. Episcopal Divinity School had these tote bags that were like ... I know, Brandon, you're an appreciator of a solid tote. It was a solid tote, a big tote, and it said “50 years of Women Priests” with, like, this nice picture on it. So these were so popular that they had to start limiting their giveaways to fifty totes per day.

B: Wow.

H: So I went with our New Zealand Leaders Way fellows, and we were like, “Please, please, please, we'll do anything. Give us give us totes, please.” They had they tried several days in a row to get ... we all left with totes. That's 2nd place. And then 3rd place, Virginia Theological Seminary had these flamingo pens.

B: Wow.

H: Now the coffee shop at VTS is called the Flamingo, so that's where the Flamingo comes from.

B: Oh, if you know, you know.

H: And I'm not gonna lie to you, Brandon. This is it doesn't look like it would be the most high quality pen because it is a cartoon flamingo on the whole entire top of the pen, But I've been editing my book with this and it's a pretty solid gel pen, I think.

B: Oh, I like a good gel pen.

H: Yeah.

B: Right? If you're gonna give me a pen, it must write exquisitely well. And I wish folks could see it, but, I feel like you could almost do a little puppet show with it.

H: I just didn't expect it to write well. I mean, it's clearly here for the vibes, so I thought it was gonna be like a vibe-forward pen rather than a penmanship forward pen, but here we are.

B: Well, there you have it. Mhmm. Our, swag correspondent, Dr.l Hannah Black, bringing you the hard news stories that you need most in the church.

H: Oh, oh, here's the pivot, Brandon. Also at the EDS table, Kwok Pui Lan did a book signing of her new book.

B: Well, this was a fantastic conversation. I'm really thankful that we were able to have it with a theologian whose learning is just so wide and deep. You know, sometimes in podcasts, there could be a risk of just inviting folks who just sort of reaffirm your own worldview. And I think what I really appreciated about this conversation is I was stretched in ways by Kwak Pui Lan that I didn't expect. There were moments where I thought, “Hmmmm am I agreeing? Am I disagreeing? Am I somewhere in between?” Wow. I think I carry a certain amount of kind of American center of the world imperialism into my theology. And I assume that the way kind of North American white Episcopalians think about God and the world is the way the whole world should be thinking about God and the world.

H: It's the should. It's the should.

B: Yeah. And what happens when, you know, something that you consider a fundamental human right is something that someone else, really thoughtful, brilliant believer from another part of the world actually *doesn't* think is a fundamental human right. Gosh. This gets really, really complicated and hard. And I'm I'm thankful to be led into those spaces where our American kind of colonial mindset can be challenged, destabilized, and you can kind of confront it in your own self. Now I'm still sort of wrestling with some of the questions that were raised, which is to say, this was a real live conversation and real live learning for us, not, you know, just someone we brought on because we love every single thing that they say and we agree with them. I mean, this is a, like, a profound thinker and leader in our world, and I'm glad to have sort of wrestled with that.

H: Yeah. Yeah. I'm really looking forward to hearing, everyone's feedback too, because I know a lot of our seminarians read her as part of their curriculum, and they've been really

excited about this episode. So send in your thoughts. Send in questions. All of it. Yeah. We're excited to grapple with big questions with you.

B: Okay. Well so let's get into it. Dr. Kwok Pui Lan rejoined the Candler School of Theology faculty as Dean's Professor of Systematic Theology in 2020. She was named faculty person of the year by the student body two times. She's the former William Cole Professor of Christian Theology and Spirituality at Episcopal Divinity School. She's also taught at the Chinese University in Hong Kong, at Auburn Theological Seminary at Union, and here at Yale Divinity School.

Her research focuses on Asian feminist theology and post-colonial theology. She's the author of many, many books; 23 books in English and in Chinese. Most recently, two volumes, one entitled *Postcolonial Politics and Theology*, and *The Hong Kong Protests and Political Theology*. What an honor it was to have this conversation. Yeah. I hope you enjoy.

H: Welcome, professor, to the Leaders Way podcast. We're so excited that you're here, and I've had a lot of fun, if fun is the right word, looking over your new book, *The Anglican Tradition from a Post-Colonial Perspective*. And I'm really excited to talk about it with you today. So I'm wondering if, to start us off, you can tell our listeners who might be less familiar, what do you mean when you talk about a post colonial perspective?

What does that entail?

K: A post-colonial perspective means to look back at our tradition, the Anglican tradition, from the point of view of the global south and especially from those who have experienced colonialism of different kinds. Some of us, like myself, who was born in Hong Kong, experienced external colonialism, whereas some of the indigenous people, for example the Maori in New Zealand and the Native Americans in the United States, they experienced settler colonialism. So my book is trying to raise our own issues and our perspectives, and looking at Anglican history and tradition.

B: I know in your work, storytelling is really critically important and even a kind of text to examine in your theological investigation. And I wonder if you could honor us and bless us by telling your own story as a woman, as a theologian; how did you get curious and interested in post-colonial theology? We'd love to hear your story.

K: Thank you very much. So I was born after the Second World War in the former British colony of Hong Kong. My parents were farmers from southern part of China, so they practiced what we will call folk religion. Both of them were not Christians. I became an Anglican because when I was a teenager, a neighbor of ours brought my elder sister and me to the Holy Trinity Church. So my neighbor happened to be one of the descendants of an early Chinese clergy in Hong Kong, and so it was a pure historical accident that I became Anglicans. And as you can imagine, when I was doing post-colonial criticism and interpretation of the Bible, I almost have to defend why I belong to the Church of England or

the Anglican Church. That I am not a Methodist. I am not a Presbyterian, but I am a member of the Anglican church.

And that is why close to the time of 1997 when, the British returned the former colony, Hong Kong, to China, I began to think more seriously, about this transition both in my personal life and in my professional journey. I began reading about post-colonial theory, criticism, and tried to borrow insights from this body of knowledge to scrutinize and look back at the Anglican tradition.

H: There's a version of understanding the history of the Anglican Communion that sort of starts with King Henry the 8th and includes a lot white men in power and not a lot of other voices. What do we miss when we tell the story of the Anglican Communion in that way?

K: I think it is important to recognize, although our history, that is, as an Anglican Church, can be traced back to the Church of England. But the roots would be much earlier because, obviously, the English tradition date a path to the earlier time of early Christianity. Not only that, my book argues we cannot understand the Anglican tradition without knowing its collusion, support, or contestation of the British empire because we know that the British Empire was the biggest empire on earth, with so many people having been colonized one way or the other or influenced by British politics and expansion for such a long period of time.

Therefore, to look at the Anglican tradition not from the so called Metropolitan Center that is the Church of England, but to look at the global expression of being Anglican, would be something that many people are interested in because as we know that, we have Anglicans in more than 160 countries of the world with almost 90,000,000 members. This is the third largest Christian community after the Catholics and the Orthodox ,so then to look at such kind of plurality and diversity of our tradition will help us to understand Anglican identity anew and also to envision what kind of mission or contribution we can make to our global human community as well as to the future of our planet.

H: And I love that you used the word mission because as we think of our history of being caught up in an empire and then evangelism being very colonial as a practice historically, it's hard to know how to move forward in a responsible way. And I think there's also the concern about throwing a baby out with the bathwater. How do we evangelize? How do we engage in mission? Do we do those things? We're maybe more aware of pluralism. What words do you have for our listeners about how to grapple with our past sins and move forward in terms of mission?

K: Yes. To look back at history means we are going to learn from the past. And without me interpreting the past from many vantage points, we may not know the fullest extent of the Anglican past, and that is why I think, we did not need to just confess our sins. I think all the traditions if they have been colluding with the empire needed to do this. But the most important thing is: having learned from our past, what are we doing in the present? And

what is the hope for our future as members of the Anglican family? And today, we certainly do not think mission is just to convert the so-called heathens.

H: Exactly.

K: Mission is to carry out God's work in our present world and to proclaim good news to the poor and the marginalized, to bring hope to the hopeless, and to bring justice to those who are downtrodden. I think Jesus said so. Jesus did not say “Come to become Christian and worship in our very beautiful church and enjoy the company of middle class folks who live ...

H: And the nice company.

K: And then to polish the beautiful silver and then bring out the coffee and tea. So I think that this is really at the heart of our identity and why we should exist and continue to serve. This is really at the heart of the issue. What is the good news today, given two wars and many different kinds of conflicts? What can the Anglican message contribute to bringing hope to the hopeless?

B: It is one of the great ironies—tragedies-- of human history that empire and the gospel become so entangled. And it seems to me that at the center of the project of post-colonial theology is beginning to make visible, or shining a spot light on, all of the things that have been overlooked by the dominant culture. And so I wonder in your work, as you're shining a spotlight on all the textures and all the various experiences that are beautiful and powerful but might have been overlooked because the dominant culture was looking elsewhere, I wonder what you're shining a spotlight on and uncovering and wanting to celebrate as you do your work.

K: I think you are very right, Brandon. That is, ever since Constantine made Christianity a state religion, and the Christianity had a heavy investment in the empire. But let's not forget throughout history, there has been, always, Christian voices that are counter-imperial; that offer new insights about what Christianity is really about.

Let us talk about the monastic movement. Remember the desert fathers and mothers, they left dwellings and then they moved to the desert to pursue a different ways of Christian life. And then in the medieval period, we have the mystics. I love the ... Julian of Norwich and, of course, Hildegard van Bingham. Then they offer new insights of what Christianity can be for them, and how we can have a new relationship with God. And just, in our own, time, we have many prophets and many important theologians who rose up to counter empire. We certainly need to cite the example of Karl Barth, the example of Paul Tillich that is in former generation, and of course Archbishop Desmond Tutu of blessed memory. And so those are icons I always look at to find new insights and new possibilities for the Christian community, including those of us who belongs to the Anglican family of Christianity.

H: That's really helpful, and it strikes me as really important, actually, in 2024 leading up to a presidential election, when a lot of Christians have taken to thinking that empire and Christianity should be more intertwined than I think they should be. And I'm thinking, of course, of Christian nationalists using Christian messaging in their politics. But it's true ever since Constantine, we've seen examples of that. And mostly we've seen examples of that going wrong.

K: Yes. I think that you are absolutely right, Hannah. Because this ... white nationalists, they have proposed a kind of Christianity that would be in line with the status quo, in line with those who wield power. And as you can see, they are very powerful in American politics. Much more so than, for example, in Europe, where the people are more secular. So I say that. And, so we need to look at why that is the case for the United States, and why some of these white nationalist evangelicals have been building power in the last several decades. And today, as you may know that, some people are just saying "Christianity is so corrupt. Look at those white nationalist voices!" because they dominate the mass media and think that Christianity is what these people said it is.

And that is why to lift up alternative voices, prophetic voices that challenge that kind of white nationalism, will be very important in 2024 and in the near future.

H: Yes and amen.

B: I wonder if we could ... if we could turn our gaze to the ecological crisis, because I know that's been a big part of your work and your writing. And so much of this collusion between the church and empire over the centuries has resulted in an ecological devastation. And I know that you've talked about your view of God as an organic view of God. And I wonder if you could share a little bit about what that means and how you're thinking about the changing relationship between the gospel, the earth, and all of creation.

K: Yes. Colonialism is not just domination of peoples. It is, of course, the extraction of resources from the colonies to the metropolitan center. And in some cases, it is even remapping the whole geography. Let us talk about Syrahn Tea. Okay? The tea plantations in those former colonies. Today, this kind of extraction continues, although may not be in the old form of colonialism, but in this new form, that is called neocolonialism or the neoliberal economy. As we look at the world today, wow, climate crisis. We live in the United States, have not experienced that kind of summer, you know, as several years in the world now.

And then how do we as, human species face this challenge of ecological disaster? It's not even crisis. It's really climate emergency. There's some parts of the United States and some islands in the Pacific as well as the lowland in other countries will be totally submerged in water, and we, still some of us in America, do not even believe in science, think that that is not correct, that is a hoax or a political agenda. So unless we have a collective metanoia, that is, conversion, of our consciousness and our behavior, we possibly will not save ourselves from this climate disaster. For some, it may be already too

late, as we have heard from some scientists who said so. But when there is still time, we need to do whatever we can to help ourselves and help all the planet.

And especially there is a justice issue. Justice for those who are marginalized among human beings. Justice to other species. We share the planet Earth with many species. Justice for the other species, and how to make the Earth inhabitable not only for ourselves but for generations to come. And in this, I can see Anglican tradition has something special to offer. Because one important dimension of Anglican theology is incarnation, that is, we emphasize the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Through this emphasis, we talk about embodiment in a very, important way: that we are not just souls or disembodied spirits. We occupy a certain space. We actually are embodied human beings and relate to each other in this physical embodied ways, and that is why I think if we look at our tradition of theology, we will have something to offer.

Not only that, we need to hear what theologians and church leaders from the Global South are saying. How they are organizing. We need to hear the call of many of our church leaders, for example, in the Pacific and in those places deeply affected by the ecological disaster. We belong to our communion. That means we need to learn from each other and express solidarity with each other.

B: Professor, you hit on something that's so near and dear to my heart. And I'm wondering if you could say a word or 2 about this metanoia that you described, this conversion, this change of mind, or this transformation. One of the things, as I get older and older, in my third decade of studying theology formally, I've become so touched by Augustine's observation that that the human heart doesn't change easily. And I know my heart doesn't change easily, and I sort of resist change in almost every aspect of my life. And so if what is needed right now is a transformation and a change, help us understand how human beings can in fact change. What is it that we need to do to begin to make this shift? And maybe this is an unfair question, because I'm asking you a question so fundamental about our human nature, but that won't stop me from asking it. You know, why are we so slow to change, and what is it that we can be doing to begin to soften these, hard hearts of ours?

K: I'm glad you asked, Brandon, because in addition to teaching theology, I teach spirituality for almost three decades. I said, if theology is the reflection of Christian faith, spirituality is the practice of it. So when I teach courses in spirituality, I also draw insights from our Anglican tradition and also the ecumenical traditions to help my students to understand how to practice Christian faith. And when you talk about change of the mind and consciousness, we are also talking about changing the habits of the heart and also changing our religious practices. So it is not just abstract. As we know, that just having the knowledge will not change our behavior. All of us know we need to have a good diet, go to sleep to have enough rest, and then exercise, and then try to not to have so much stress in our life. That's it. That is what a holistic healthy life, shall I say spiritual life, will look like. You see, this is very important. We know, but we do not do it. And then that is where spirituality needs to come in. Why? Spirituality is grounding ourselves in something that is bigger than us.

I like fast food, eat Mcdonald, but when I ... eating too much Mcdonald, then I will get sick because not enough fiber, not enough nutrition. And then, if the whole population will just go to have fast food, collectively, we become sick. So I think the most important thing is we need to ground ourselves in something that is bigger. Why do we need to change? It's not just changing for ourselves. The narrative is not sufficient. And as an Anglican, we change because of our deepened understanding of the heart of God. And without having that encounter deepen our relationship with God, it is very difficult to change.

So I think metanoia is a new relation with God and with those people around us. You recall that in the Bible, we have the tax collector who came to encounter Jesus, and he decided to change. We had many people who came and then who met Jesus, and then they changed. The Syrophoenician woman had a new awareness. The Samaritan woman had a new relationship with her community. So I think this encountering God anew, knowing what the gospel is about, to commit to that kind of calling. We are being called out from ourselves to respond to a larger calling that God placed in us. And I think it is out of that prayer, discernment, new relationship with God and others, that we might have a better chance to change and to convert to a greater truth that we might not have seen.

This takes a very slow process, and it is the particular thing the Anglican tradition has taught me. Because the evangelicals may say you convert to Jesus by saying that "Jesus is my Lord. That's it. I am saved." The ancient way is something much more profound. It is not just you once raise up your hand and you now became a follower of Jesus. Conversion is slowly living out your daily life according to your new relationship with God. It is a slow process, and unless we have that kind of faith or understanding, it is really hard to change.

Not only that, shall I say, we also have investment in the old ways, and because of that investment, even though we may not go along with more maybe very conservative patterns of belief or practice, but we as middle-class Christians, we have certain investment in upholding certain aspects of the society. To ask us to give up something that we are invested in will be very difficult.

H: In this mode of spirituality, I wonder if I can ask you a question about discernment. As I was teaching this last semester, many of my students who are seminarians in the Episcopal church were wondering, in thinking about the inheritance of colonialism, if they were to be putting together a liturgy or doing anything that church leadership might involve, how do they discern which pieces of Anglican tradition are good and helpful tradition, something that we really love? And how do you know which pieces of our inheritance are actually colonial in nature?

K: Sometimes it's difficult, but I was very fortunate because for twenty-five years, I was a professor at a denominational school, the Episcopal Divinity School located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. And therefore we had ample opportunities of trying out different kinds of Anglican worship. Of course we tried the New Zealand prayer book. We were also aware, that is, our especially international students, would share with us their

liturgy in South Africa, their liturgy in Ghana or in the Caribbean, that greatly stretched our ideas of what an Anglican liturgy can be. And that is why I think if we just stick to the Common Prayer Book, our own version, that is 1979-- quite outdated as you can see. And then we may miss the richness of what the Anglican tradition has to offer. And that is why I included a chapter on liturgy in my book because I think this is important.

I want to tell a story that is something like this: After the second World War, as many of former colonies regained their political independence, there began a critical awareness of developing liturgy that matched the needs of the people. So whether it's in Africa or in India and other parts of Asia, people began to talk about it. And it is because of that prompting that the Lambeth conference during that time picked up this as an important issue to be discussed. How can we be part of the Anglican Communion and inheriting the Common Prayer Book but use it not as something set in stone, but as a living testament to our relationship with God, and allow that kind of freedom to explore liturgy that is living. Liturgy, this is *for the people*, and, therefore, I introduced the Brazilian prayer book, the prayer book from the Maori church in Autorua, New Zealand, so that we can see that in our fellowship, there are really people thinking about it seriously, and what can we as Americans think about our prayer book and what kind of songs and new prayers that can be incorporated. If we see the Common Prayer book not as something a tablet that is set in stone but as a living testimony to the faith that we have inherited, then I think there would be room for creativity and innovation.

H: I really like that vision of holding the prayer book lightly like that and giving different peoples and different people the ability to worship in ways that make sense.

B: I just wanted to celebrate this idea that Anglicanism doesn't mean English. That the ideal is to do it the English way from a particular moment in history. But the ... it sounds like from what you're saying is that to be Anglican means to be engaged in fellowship with the lived experiences of ... of believers across the world, celebrating the reality and the power of their experience, their culture, their context. And that we need all of us fully in the beautiful mosaic of the Anglican Communion. No one voice, system, style, experience is lifted up over others. And, gosh, I mean, that's just such an beautiful approach and really, I think, the Anglican gift to the rest of the Christian family.

K: Yes. Exactly. Because, as I said, there are so many conflicts, war and strife in the world. Live as a family of churches. Okay? And then we can find a way to live together, to really understand each other's positions, to share others' perspectives, to promote peacekeeping, and we can do a great service to humankind. That is, we somehow can offer hope to a very fragmented and broken humanity.

B: So I wonder how the decolonization of Christian theology affects how we think about gender and sexuality. We're recording this during Pride month. Happy Pride, everyone. And it seems to me that you're describing a far more expansive approach to I mean, I mean, to almost everything, but especially to gender and sexuality. I know you've thought about this and written about this. And I wonder if you could just speak to issues of

gender and sexuality and how this de-colonization might be really liberating when we start to think about gender and sexuality.

K: Thank you very much. This is indeed a very important issue for the Anglican Church. I think it is important to recognize gender and sexuality are embedded in a larger political and social matrix. It is not just about who goes to bed with whom. It is how we understand basic relationship and hierarchy of a society. For many traditional societies, if you will, the family is the metaphor for the society, and that is why we need to uphold a certain weight of a family pattern in order to have law and order in society. That is the imagination.

And today, although in our western world we may not use family as the metaphor, but lo and behold, we have social scientists who will say we still would be using gender language to talk about our society. Now, imagine we talk about the former president Donald Trump. There will be a certain masculinity associated with the former president. And then we ask whether that strong personality, projected or real, will be something his followers will be attracted. So we still use this, idea of gender or family to talk about our political leaders and their behaviors, And then when Christianity, including the Anglican Church, lost so much ground in affecting other arenas of our society, we thought we can at least state what is acceptable and not acceptable in terms of gender and sexuality.

I, for one, will hope the Anglicans will be divided on whether we support social justice for the poor. We do not hear that kind of controversy, isn't it? But why is gay and lesbians and transgender bisexual people present such a kind of threat, if you will, to some of the Anglican members, if not members of other denomination as well. And I have long argued gender and sexuality is really shaping the boundary--who is in and who is out. And this is not just as small, as small as a family, but as large as group or even nations. So then we always use gender and sexuality, and then, of course, it's based-intersects with race, class, colonialism. So without knowing, gender and sexuality may be the tip of iceberg of many conflicts, different perspective, that we just single that out we may not be able to see fully. And our sexuality is a very important and intimate thing. Can you see that? It is intimate. It is private. But it is public. And so it then defines certain kind of values and boundaries. So we are arguing it endlessly. It's because in the 19th century, as I argued in the book, polygamy was the issue. Separating “western,” in quotation mark, advanced civilization from the so called heathens or inferior civilizations. Can you see that? It's polygamy. And of course, it's education and then health care that also differentiate different cultures. But that was an issue we as Anglicans argued for a hundred years. I hope that we are not going to argue for LGBTQ issue for another hundred years, but I am just using this as an example to highlight why sexuality has been an issue. It is symptomatic of whether you are advanced or whether you are backward. Today, unfortunately, even in some sectors in American society, we'll be thinking about people of darker skins in Africa or Asia who are not for LGBT people; that they are bad word. I hope that we do not see it that way. I hope we see that Western missionaries have something, to answer, that why we have other brothers and sisters in the communion who look at nuclear family as the Christian norm. While as before the missionaries arrived in their society, they may even entertain the thought of a wider variety of sexual practices. So today, I think I look at gender and sexuality and help my students to understand we cannot assume a

patronizing attitude that we in America, who are liberal, are right. Other people are incorrect. But we need to look at this from a very painful colonial history of our own tradition to help each other to unbind past wounds. And without that, it is very difficult to then enter into a dialogue of mutual respect and solidarity. So this is very complicated, isn't it?

H: Very complicated. It's really helpful to hear you talking about the way that these issues fit together. Because I wondered for a long time growing up why it was always the same churches who would ordain women and support the LGBTQIA plus community, and then the same churches or the other churches would not support women in leadership or LGBTQIA plus people. And I was like, why do they go together? It didn't make sense to me for a long time, but it's helpful to think of these things as paradigmatic culturally. And when we start to poke holes in these ideas that we use as metaphors for our whole societies, It just ... I think it maybe it feels to the powers to be, like, everything will crumble. So it sounds like a lot of our ideas of Christian morality in the Anglican communion throughout history have maybe been ideas of British morality. Does that seem right to you? Is that something that you're wanting to say?

K: I think that we need to have a multicultural understanding of what ancillary morality is, and it should not be defined just by those of us who are located in the North Atlantic. Opened our ears and our eyes to understand the diverse cultural and political and social experiences of humankind that we may come to understand how our values have been shaped by our own upbringing, our own understanding of what the world should be, and to enter into a deep dialogue of what really is God's calling for the church today, and how should we respond to that calling.

H: Something that I'm really appreciating about this is that you're championing disagreement and being in conflict well with other Christians, which I think feels a little bit foreign to a lot of us who are taught to really staunchly believe what we believe and maybe not talk to people who believe differently. But throughout your book, the different stories you tell about the histories of different things in the Anglican Communion really brings to light that ... their histories of disagreeing and figuring things out together. So that kind of humility that you're bringing to light is really refreshing, and also it sounds difficult.

K: Yes. It's very difficult because, why? Because we always think if we believe in a certain thing, there is only one way of true believing. Which I think sometimes will collude with the powerful way. We think everybody should believe like that. Why? Because we have power. We have the power to enforce. We have the power to coerce. We have the power to discipline. And I think it is just through a small story I want to share.

H: Yeah, please.

K: How did I learn? It's because when my daughter was in kindergarten, one day the class needed to sing a song, okay, for the parents, because we were there. So my daughter

on that day did not want to sing and I was so embarrassed, but the teacher was so kind. She told my daughter, “You do not need to sing, but you need to stand with your class when they were singing.” So Xu held her hand, so Xu stood with the class. I did not know, did not remember what was the circumstances, whether she was sick or whatever. But I remember, I said, “My, my daughter was so small, but the teacher respected that day she did not want to sing.”

And then it changed my teaching practice. I asked myself how much room I respect my students so that they have the freedom to explore and not just follow what I said. And it is this allowing the other to be fully themselves that can be truly liberating. And I think Jesus did that many times in his own teaching as a rabbi. Always a sense of new encounter, new possibilities, even for himself that sometimes-- in the Syrophoenician woman's case, Jesus changed his mind. And I think this is a great lesson. We do not have all the truth. The truth is more biological. Truth, as Brandon said earlier, is really a mosaic. That God's gospel is so big. We need everybody to understand what this great inclusive love that God has for creation. If we allow ourselves to be humble, we will be deeply enriched by the others we encountered in our pilgrimage on Earth.

H: Thank you so much, professor. This has been wonderful, really enlightening, and I can't wait to share it with our listeners.

K: Very kind of you, and thank you very much for interviewing me.

B: Oh, we're so thankful. Thank you for listening to The Leaders Way. We hope you were encouraged and inspired. To learn more about this episode, visit our website at berkeleydivinity.yale.edu\podcast.

H: Rate and review us, and follow the podcast to make sure you never miss an episode. Follow Berkeley@Yale on Instagram for quotes from the podcast and more.

B: Until next time.

H: The Lord be with you.