

*The*  
HERITAGE  
*of*  
*Anglican*  
THEOLOGY



*J. I. Packer*

“J. I. Packer has done it again! He has brought together in a systematic way the core of Anglican belief about God within the various historical movements of Anglicanism. His summary of Anglican thought is a gift not only to modern Anglicans but to the whole Christian church.”

**Foley Beach**, Archbishop and Primate, Anglican Church in North America

“Anglicanism long ago became global. No history of Anglicanism can ignore the towering figure of J. I. Packer, who has had a significant influence on Anglicans in both the Global North and the Global South. This giant’s presentation of Anglican theology will help us all understand how large numbers of this growing church think about the triune God and his ways with his people and his world. It will also inspire and edify.”

**Gerald R. McDermott**, Former Anglican Chair of Divinity, Beeson Divinity School

“The subject matter of this book is vast, and only someone with particular gifts of theology, Christian commitment, and skillful communication could attempt to cover it. Packer succeeds with consummate mastery, lucidly guiding the reader through what he refers to as ‘a jungle of lush growth of all sorts.’ The result is a compelling, informative, and instructive read that should have its place in the lives of all Anglicans, theologians and laity alike. I recommend it most highly.”

**Benjamin Kwashi**, Archbishop, Diocese of Jos, Nigeria; General Secretary, Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON)

“All who found wisdom in the writings of J. I. Packer, especially those of us who knew and loved him, will delight in this masterful overview of Anglican theology. At once Puritan and catholic, both evangelical and ecumenical, here is one of the church’s greatest teachers at his best.”

**Timothy George**, Distinguished Professor of Divinity, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University

“This book is, in a sense, J. I. Packer’s last will and testament to the church he served for so many years. Reflecting on both the history and the theology of Anglicanism, he offers Anglicans and others a vision of the historic riches of the Anglican tradition and a vision for how the past can be used to address the present and the future. Distinctively Protestant yet catholic in spirit and tone, these pages reflect the thought, churchmanship, and piety of the man. I will always regard Packer as the great Presbyterian theologian we never had. But our loss was Anglicanism’s gain, as this book so admirably demonstrates.”

**Carl R. Trueman**, Professor of Biblical and Religious Studies, Grove City College



*The Heritage of Anglican Theology*

## **Other Crossway Books by J. I. Packer**

*Affirming the Apostles' Creed*

*Concise Theology*

*Faithfulness and Holiness: The Witness of J. C. Ryle*

*Finishing Our Course with Joy: Guidance from God for Engaging with Our Aging*

*God's Plans for You*

*A Grief Sanctified: Through Sorrow to Eternal Hope*

*Growing in Christ*

*In My Place Condemned He Stood: Celebrating the Glory of the Atonement*  
(with Mark Dever)

*Keeping the Ten Commandments*

*A Passion for Faithfulness: Wisdom from the Book of Nehemiah*

*Praying the Lord's Prayer*

*A Quest for Godliness: The Puritan Vision of the Christian Life*

*Taking God Seriously: Vital Things We Need to Know*

*Weakness Is the Way: Life with Christ Our Strength*

# The Heritage of Anglican Theology

*J. I. Packer*

 **CROSSWAY**<sup>®</sup>  
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

*The Heritage of Anglican Theology*

Copyright © 2021 by James I. Packer

Published by Crossway

1300 Crescent Street  
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law. Crossway® is a registered trademark in the United States of America.

Cover design: Jordan Singer

First printing 2021

Printed in the United States of America

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-4335-6011-8

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-6014-9

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-6012-5

Mobipocket ISBN: 978-1-4335-6013-2

---

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Packer, J. I. (James Innell), author.

Title: The heritage of Anglican theology / J.I. Packer.

Description: Wheaton, Illinois : Crossway, [2021] | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020038983 (print) | LCCN 2020038984 (ebook) | ISBN 9781433560118 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781433560125 (pdf) | ISBN 9781433560132 (mobi) | ISBN 9781433560149 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Anglican Communion—Doctrines.

Classification: LCC BX5005 .P29 2021 (print) | LCC BX5005 (ebook) | DDC 230/.3—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020038983>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020038984>

---

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

VP	32	31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21		
15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

*To Kit*





# Contents

Foreword *II*

Preface *15*

- 1 Taking the Measure of the Anglican Mainstream *17*
- 2 The English Reformation *46*
- 3 Puritan Theology *71*
- 4 Richard Hooker *110*
- 5 The Caroline Divines *145*
- 6 Rational Divinity *182*
- 7 Revival Theology *214*
- 8 The Oxford Movement and Anglo-Catholicism *253*
- 9 Nineteenth-Century Broad Church Theology *287*
- 10 Anglican Modernism *309*
- 11 Early Twentieth-Century Anglican Theology *323*
- 12 Concluding Thoughts on Anglican Theology *335*

Afterword: Further Thoughts on the Anglican Concept  
of Doctrine *347*

Recommended Reading *353*

Index *357*



## Foreword

THE ORIGINS OF THIS BOOK are to be found in a course on Anglican history and theology that J. I. Packer taught at Regent College in Vancouver over a number of years. The lectures were meant as a basic introduction for students who often had little knowledge of Anglicanism (and even less of British history). The lectures were supplemented with wide reading in assigned texts that dealt with the background in depth. These lectures thus provide a personal introduction to a field in which Dr. Packer was very knowledgeable, having directed innumerable graduate theses at the master's and doctoral levels for many decades, especially theses by those interested in exploring the theology of the English Puritans. Students who took the course can testify that Packer shone brightest when he drew on his many years of experience in responding to questions about disputed points in Anglican theology.

For some, the language of this book may seem quaint and remind them of English as it was spoken half a century ago, but for those who know and love J. I. Packer's writings, this will be part of the charm of the work. Some will be disappointed that this book does not deal with theological developments in the latter part of the twentieth century, but the aim is to discuss the heritage of the tradition and not its contemporary expressions and challenges; nor is its purpose to explore Anglicanism's shift to the Global South, where it is most active and influential today.

The book is most helpful when Packer discusses the theological significance of the history he surveys and offers his personal theological insights and assessments. "Packer by name, packer by nature" is

a quip that he used of himself—and in this book he packs in a good deal of material and offers guidance on how Anglicans (and would-be Anglicans) might helpfully reflect on the Anglican tradition.

So if one imagines listening in on an informal conversation or a “fireside chat” with a wise and thoughtful theologian as he reflects on a tradition that has long nurtured him, one will benefit from Packer’s vast knowledge and be sharpened by his advocacy of a broad, inclusive, and irenic approach to the Anglican heritage. This modest book is not intended as a cutting-edge work of theological exploration or a comprehensive history but rather is offered to help readers explore a tradition and history that might remain unfamiliar and confusing were it not for the unique perspective, reflections, and guidance of this senior Anglican theologian, churchman, and enthusiast.

A word on how this project came about. As a friend and faculty colleague of J. I. Packer for almost four decades, I suggested to him that his lectures should be made available in print, knowing that many (especially non-Anglicans) would appreciate having his unique take on the Anglican tradition. Crossway’s Justin Taylor expressed enthusiasm for the project and offered encouragement, and the two sets of recordings of Packer’s lectures (the first delivered in 1996 and the second in 2010) were transcribed. Then the process of merging the two was undertaken by Thomas Womack, a careful and gifted editor. The transcript was then reviewed by an external reader, whose criticisms and observations were considered. I was the first to edit the complete document and make a few emendations and additions while seeking to address some of the questions that had been raised. Dr. Packer then read through the whole manuscript and made some adjustments. The whole manuscript was then read aloud to him by his wife, Kit, who has a deep love for the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, and more adjustments were made by Dr. Packer.

It was his hope that this book would communicate some of his enthusiasm for the great tradition of Anglicanism and convince many

that the evangelical Anglican tradition is a proper and valued expression of Anglicanism with its roots in the Anglican formularies and its Prayer Book. If *The Heritage of Anglican Theology* achieves this, it will have fulfilled the author's most devout wishes.

Donald M. Lewis  
Professor of Church History  
Regent College



## Preface

IT IS SAID that on one occasion W. E. Gladstone, England's Liberal party leader in the late nineteenth century, while being driven somewhere, broke a long silence by bursting out, "What *is* the Church of England?" Whereupon the cabby, keen to be helpful, replied, "It's that big building over there with the spire." Gladstone's response is not recorded, but clearly he was not asking about a building; what he wanted was an analysis in terms of doctrine, worship, institutions, vocation, and personnel. The cabby's answer flagged the fact that such an answer would be hard to get, and it is still so. That, however, is the high aim of this book.

*Anglicanism* is a twentieth-century word, but it refers to something that has been a going, growing concern since the sixteenth century, first in England and then following the imperial flag globally, and today makes the claim in some quarters that it embodies the Christian church's best shape for the foreseeable future.

All of its key features grew, or at least began to grow, in the English church under sixteenth-century monarchs: Henry VIII, who declared independence of the papal system and, in its place, his own headship of the church; Edward VI, in whose reign the first version of the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Book of Common Prayer were produced; and Elizabeth I, who insisted that church discipline must be handled at times by bishops. Anglicanism has become a global family and ethos, and the latter-day Anglicanism that we shall be examining fully embraces these developments.





# Taking the Measure of the Anglican Mainstream

## Defining Anglican Theology

Our purpose in this book is to study and appreciate Anglican theology—to take the measure of it, that is, as theology, not as anything else.

The word *theology* in that phrase signifies what, in its criteria, theology always does: it explores what can and should be affirmed about God. This is something that can be done effectively only in fellowship, a two-sided alternating activity that, on the one hand, is God-centered, Christ-centered, church-centered in its very nature and, on the other, is life-centered in all its implications and applications.

By prefixing the word *Anglican* to *theology*, we immediately raise long-standing questions. Within Anglican circles it is often stated—even officially—that there is really no such thing as *Anglican* theology; what goes by that name is just catholic, biblical, churchly, Christian theology of a mainstream sort, a theology seeking to be as God-honoring and practical as can be. And, when you have said that, so it is declared, you have said everything. That is the ideal, of course, not just for Anglican theology but for everybody's theology. Roman Catholic theology, Presbyterian theology, Baptist theology, and every sort of theology with a distinctive denominational label attached to it are aspiring not to be distinctive from all the others but simply to be accurate mainstream

Christian theology, according to God's own mind, embodying that which all Christians eventually, in glory, will identify with and come to appreciate.

Although this is the official line for Anglicans as well, Anglican theology is actually a jungle of lush growths of all sorts with a number of tangled cross-purposes, like ivy strands encircling a massive tree trunk. The only way to study it is by trying painstakingly to extract and relate those strands, taking apart the component elements and energies that make them up.

That is what we are going to do in this book.

### **Holding to the Mainstream**

But do not get the idea that Anglican theology, to anybody who engages in it, embraces the idea of an ultimate theological pluralism. All who attempt to practice Anglican theology see themselves—and ask others to see them—as seeking to hold to the mainstream of pure truth. The problem, however, is that different people have different ideas as to what constitutes the mainstream of pure truth. There are, in fact, three quite distinct types of perception.

1. There are those who think that the Anglican mainstream—the truly Christian mainstream—flows clearly within the world of Protestant and Reformed evangelical thought. (I am one who inclines to think so.) The constant and controlling reference point of Anglican thought is thus: the true gospel as set forth in the Bible.

2. Others view the mainstream as centered in the kingdom of Christ, embodied in the church of Christ as an ongoing network of spiritual life; they see church-centeredness as the mainstream's characteristic feature. These Anglicans often describe themselves as High Church or Anglo-Catholic.

3. And then there are those who have been described as Broad Church or liberal in the past, and who usually today call themselves radical or modern churchmen. They believe Christianity's mainstream is always

a dialectical stream, that is, one in which opposed operations of mind, intellectual tensions, and debate are ongoing. They say that every generation, having inherited their forefathers' way of understanding the faith, is placed in a particular cultural frame in the world where the church does its work, and that within this cultural situation are found true insights that must interact with the inherited tradition of the faith. These insights are certain, one way or another, to require and bring about some adjusting of certain elements in that tradition, so that the outward shape of confessional faith is always changing. They will say, in effect: "In the twenty-first century, when confessing our faith, we will not talk the language of the fathers in the church's early centuries, or of the medievals in the age of Thomas Aquinas, or of the Reformers in the sixteenth century, or of the venerable Platonistic Victorian church leaders a hundred to a hundred and fifty years ago. No, the outward form of our verbalized faith must change in order to interact with the culture, and it must do this in order to stay substantially the same."

As I said, people who take that line have been called Broad Church, but they now often call themselves progressives. Those outside their circle regularly call them liberals, as they will from time to time call themselves.

There we have the three types of understanding of the mainstream. The three cannot easily live under the same roof. There will always be tension between them. Such indeed has been the Anglican story ever since the Reformation, especially since the post-Reformation century—the seventeenth century—when these three ways of understanding Anglican theology clearly separated out, each essentially distinct from then on.

As representatives of these three points of view converse and interact, that inevitably creates a jungle of alternative options at point after point in the spelling out of the faith and the disciplining of the faithful. Which means that Christians in the pew are taught different things by different people. How are we to deal with this?

First, we are to recognize that this situation is inescapable. If you identify wholeheartedly (as, again, I do) with one of those three traditions, you cannot hermetically seal yourself off against the other two so that you do not have to take notice of them. They are there in the Anglican fellowship, and one has to take account of them, interact with them, and distinguish one's own position from the other two.

We have to appreciate the whole sweep of Anglican history, and, without in any way weakening our own convictions, we need to know what is going on around us and where people who differ from us are coming from. Otherwise we shall not be of much use in the church of God, let alone in the bonding of Anglican fellowship. Why not? Because we shall generate confusion.

Second, we must recognize something that is shared in all three sorts of Anglican theology. Anglicanism works with a shared liturgy that specifies how God shall be worshiped. The 1662 Book of Common Prayer gives a set of statutory services and forms for worship that has found a place at some point virtually everywhere in the Anglican world. In recent years, Anglicans have worked with alternative service books alongside it, but in every part of the Anglican Communion there is *an* authorized Prayer Book as a shared standard of worship, with whatever variant forms may be allowed in various places.

Because it contains declarations and prayers that embody doctrine, this authorized Prayer Book, passed along from generation to generation, inevitably becomes a doctrinal standard in all branches of Anglican theology. And the continued use of the same services prescribed in the authorized Prayer Book generates a certain attitude: *this is what we do, and it is right that we do it*. That is the conservative mindset which such a liturgy always produces; and there need not be anything wrong with that.

Nevertheless, there is always a counter-tension. You may be familiar with a Latin motto dating from the Reformation era *Ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda*, which can be translated, "The church that has been

reformed needs always to be reformed.” Why? Because the church is never perfect. This is basic Christian doctrine—that nothing in this life is ever quite perfect. And as the church moves into culturally new situations, as understanding of the Scriptures deepens, as liturgical wisdom increases—yes, things need to be improved, which means changed. So there are always debates going on within all three schools of thought, as well as across the borders between them, debates that range, and sometimes rage, between two attitudes: we are concerned to preserve the true wisdom of our heritage yet also concerned to be up-to-date and fully in touch with our times in order to bring the word of God effectively to bear on them.

These crosscurrents operate in Anglicanism all the time. It is a great deal more complicated than the theological process occurring in, shall I say, the Southern Baptist world or the Plymouth Brethren world or the Salvation Army. Those worlds simply do not have this array of theological crosscurrents constantly flowing.

Whenever we have Anglicans from various places meeting together, we shall gain by having all these different views making their presence felt, and the discussion will be the less significant if we do not. There should also be a constant endeavor on the part of leaders to achieve consensus statements that address all the concerns of all the parties in the discussions. The interaction of all parties involved in Anglican discussions is often near to unique among Christian churches today.

### **Evangelical Catholicity, Catholic Evangelicalism**

In this world of ongoing and sometimes confusing debate—which is not likely ever to be less confusing than it is at the moment—what should Anglicans be aiming at?

My answer is that our aim should be something that hardly exists at the moment because so few people seek after it. This goal can be captured in two comprehensive phrases that belong together: *evangelical catholicity* and *catholic evangelicalism*. What do I mean by this pairing?

One of the good things that has happened in these last fifty years is that the words *evangelical* and *catholic* have both been reviewed and redefined in a relatively authoritative way. What is an evangelical? The British historian David W. Bebbington has produced a four-point descriptive account of what evangelicalism is, a definition that has rung a bell among both historians and theologians, with his analysis being accepted as accurate by just about all of them. The essence of evangelicalism, Bebbington affirms, is reflected in these four terms:

1. *Bible-based*
2. *Cross-centered*
3. *Conversion-oriented*
4. *Mission-attuned*<sup>1</sup>

To elaborate on Bebbington's points 3 and 4: It is the way of evangelicals to insist that since we are all sinners, everyone needs to be converted. This does not require the same conversion experience for everybody, but it does mean that everybody must show the signs of conversion or regeneration. Evangelicals likewise will always insist that we are redeemed and made Christians not only to glorify God and to have the worship of him become ever more central in our lives, but also to share the gospel and take it to the ends of the earth as we disciple others—loving our neighbors by sharing with them the good thing we have received.

If you call yourself an evangelical, do you recognize your evangelicalism in that fourfold description? I accept it with just one major addition, which I think many others would also accept if it were put to them. The descriptive term I would add is this:

5. *Church-focused*

1 David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), chap. 1.

Evangelicals know and never forget that Christ loved the church and gave himself for it that he might sanctify and cleanse it and present to himself a glorious church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Eph. 5:25–27).

It is true that in evangelical history, Anglican and otherwise, we meet sad stories of leakage after leakage whereby individuals felt bound, for the sake of evangelical faithfulness as they understood it, to abandon their church body, however professedly evangelical it might have been. To stay faithful, they have split—gone separate ways. That sad fact reflects the sensitivity of their evangelical consciences to what they have believed to be taught in the written word of God. They have found a kind of a virtue in being faithful enough to it to be willing to leave a church in order to stay with their conviction (even if, by general consent, what they have thought to find in Scripture prompting that action was not in fact there—but that, of course, is a different issue.)

There has been so much of that in evangelical history that we often fail to fully recognize the characteristic church-centeredness of evangelicals—of men such as Luther and Calvin and John Wesley, and of Anglicans over the centuries such as Thomas Cranmer, Charles Simeon, J. C. Ryle, and John Stott. All of them were in fact church-focused, community-centered, and fellowship building in purpose in their preaching, teaching, thinking, praying, worshiping, organizing, and celebrating. Granted, some evangelists have stood apart from the churches in the belief that thus they can be of more use to God, but by authentic evangelical standards they are eccentrics, as by ordinary human standards they are egoists.

Yes, we evangelicals must not be misunderstood here. We are pietists in what is surely the good sense of that word. We do believe that one's relationship with God is the most important thing in any person's life and ought always to have priority. And so we are against any version of church life that puts loyalty to the church before the quest for the fullness of personal knowledge of God through Jesus Christ. Thus, the



forms of fellowship with God that ordinarily we most value are those in which we draw closest to each other as we approach him—free utterance in Bible study and free speech in prayer meetings. We even have rude names for misguided loyalty to the church; we speak of “nominal Christianity” and “churchianity.” At the same time, evangelicals who prioritize true piety are as centered and focused on the church as they are on anything—because we know that the church is Christ’s focus. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. We seek to serve the Lord of the church in the church, through the church, for the church. We yield to no one in our enthusiasm and zeal for the glory of God in the church.

### **The Monarch’s Role in Anglicanism**

From the time of Henry VIII (d. 1547) down to that of James II (r. 1685–1688) inclusive, the monarch believed that it was his or her business to call the shots in the religious matters of England.

That is not to say that the monarch as such believed himself or herself called to be a theologian, although one or two of them did. Henry VIII wrote theology. James I wrote theology. But they believed it was their business to impose on England a religious settlement that matched their own convictions and in which their people—the English people whom they ruled—would be united. So you have Henry VIII abandoning the papal jurisdiction and seeking to unite the English in what has often been characterized as “Catholicism without the pope,” although Henry’s personal faith was more of a hybrid than this phrase would suggest. And then you have Edward VI, the young Protestant king (r. 1547–1553), encouraging those who sought to unite English people on a Protestant platform.

Next you have Queen Mary, who thought of herself as called by God to restore England to Roman Catholic obedience during her brief reign from 1553 to 1558. She burned alive almost three hundred men and women to make her point, and she had the Roman Catholic cardinal

Reginald Pole come to England in order ceremonially to receive England back into the papal communion, which he did. But the effect of Mary's actions, including the burning of these Reformation martyrs, was exactly the opposite of what she had hoped for. She created in the minds of the English people a deep-seated impression of the Roman Catholic Church as a church that has burned honest English people for their honest convictions. Dislike of the Roman Catholic Church became a cultural prejudice in England going back to Mary. She did more to create it than anybody else.

Elizabeth I, who reigned from 1558 to 1603, was the last Tudor monarch. She wanted to be absolute ruler in her kingdom, but as a woman, indirectly, using state councillors as her ears, eyes, and brains; bishops as her church managers; and Parliament as a restrictive agency. Being a patriotic pragmatist, she started from the other end as regards the church, essentially saying: "What is the form of religion that will unite all the English? That is for me."

It turned out that a modest and modified Protestantism was what the country wanted, so that was what the country got. Elizabeth's Prayer Book—which was made the rule of worship throughout England by her Act of Uniformity of 1559—was Archbishop Thomas Cranmer's second Prayer Book with just three verbal alterations. So England became a Protestant country, and Elizabeth as queen was concerned to make sure that those on the religious extremes never got into the saddle to control what the Church of England would be and do.

What were the extremes?

First, some Roman Catholics would not accept the Elizabethan Religious Settlement. They lived in quietness. They did not parade their views, because, after all, it was illegal to be a Roman Catholic in England under Elizabeth. But there were considerable numbers of Roman Catholics in England, and they quietly were very happy when Pope Pius V declared Elizabeth a heretic in 1570, released her subjects from allegiance to her, and threatened excommunication of those who

obeyed her. From a political standpoint, this turned all Roman Catholic priests in England into traitors in the eyes of the English government. As a result of the pope's action, quite a number of these priests were hanged, drawn, and quartered. That was the uncouth way in which England's government dealt with those regarded as traitors in those days.

Elizabeth steadily maintained the Religious Settlement she had made in the face of Roman Catholic opposition to her rule.

The other extremists were Puritans, a grouping that began to emerge in the Church of England in the 1550s. They believed that Elizabeth's Anglican Church was only partly reformed, and they called on Elizabeth to bring about a more complete reformation in a Calvinist direction. Viewing them as extremists, Elizabeth took a number of steps to ensure they would never gain any sort of control in her kingdom.

James I—the James VI of Scotland who came to be king of England in 1603—and his son Charles I, who was king from 1625 until he was executed for treason in 1649, were royal absolutists like Elizabeth. They believed that the business of monarchs is to be complete and final master in their own dominions. That had been the idea of the Tudor monarchs and was continued by the Stuarts. James and Charles thought of themselves as maintaining Elizabeth's version of Protestantism as the religion of England.

Charles I got himself into hot water politically, and before he did so, he got himself very much disliked by the growing Puritan constituency in the Church of England—he had made William Laud his archbishop of Canterbury. Laud, a domineering man, acted in a high-handed, arbitrary, and even cruel manner against his opponents in the church. Working from the outside in, Laud imposed precise observances of external rituals of different kinds on all Anglicans in the belief that if you got the outside right—the externals, the rituals, with everybody behaving in exact uniformity according to the Prayer Book standards—then inner spiritual religion would grow within that frame, and you would have a fully spiritual church.

This from-the-outside-in perspective has constantly marked High Church and Anglo-Catholic Anglicans, who have consequently stressed the importance of ritual. That perspective has always seemed wrong to evangelicals, who believe that God's way of working is from the inside out—that is, God renews the heart; God brings people to faith in the true truth and living Savior of the gospel; God brings people into authentic discipleship to Christ and to Scripture; and then the ways they behave in the church and in society will reflect their inner, actual convictions, so pleasing God. This is another of the ongoing tensions within Anglicanism.

Laud openly persecuted the Puritans, seeking to crush them, and he did this with the open backing of Charles I. So Charles, along with Laud, was very unpopular religiously. The Anglican Church, which Laud led and reshaped, therefore became very much disliked.

In the English Civil War of 1642–1646, which Charles generated, the Church of England was outlawed. The use of the Prayer Book in England was forbidden; established Congregationalism or independency became—under Oliver Cromwell during the 1650s—the pattern of religion in England: every church worshiping in its own way, establishing its own version of the faith, and calling and controlling its own minister, with no ecclesiastical body having any sort of control over any other. That led to confusion spiritually, just as after the death of Oliver Cromwell in 1658 there was confusion all through England politically.

The monarchy was restored in 1660 under Charles II, and the Church of England came back with him. Charles was not actually interested in Anglican religion. He was a crypto Roman Catholic, his lifestyle that of a hedonist and libertine. His wife was a Catholic princess, and in 1670 he secretly negotiated the Treaty of Dover with Catholic France, in which he pledged to bring England back into the Catholic fold. When he died, he was succeeded by his brother, James II, who was also a Catholic—not crypto, either, but explicit. James II conceived his calling—as Bloody Mary before him had conceived hers—as that

of taking the Anglican Church back into the Roman communion with whatever changes that would require.

This brought about revolution, and James II was bounced off the throne. William of Orange and his consort Mary (James II's daughter) were brought over from Holland in 1689 to be England's royalty. But they came over on the clear understanding that they would not meddle at all in religion. James II was therefore the last expression of the supposition that it is the English monarch's business somehow to regulate the national church.

Parliament determined never again to have a monarch who is not a Protestant. (And that still is part of the English constitution, incidentally.) William and his succession, the Hanoverians, all took the line that, yes, the church regulates itself through Parliament, but no particular Christian as such has anything to do with that. This was quite a watershed in English history—the monarch ceasing to see himself or herself as having any responsibility before God in shaping English religion, although many British monarchs have taken seriously their personal role as the supreme head of the Church of England. A new era had opened.

### **Anglicanism's Theological Mix**

As I turn now to the theological topics, convictions, themes, and attitudes that make up the Anglican mix, I do so from my own standpoint as both a Christian and an Anglican. I wish to single out particular ingredients in the Anglicanism that I embrace. They are all integral, I believe, to the authentic Anglican mainstream of thought, conviction, and action in the church as it has been for the last five hundred years, since the Reformation.

When I use that image of the mainstream, what do I mean? Think of a large river. Pretty much in the river's center, the mainstream flows. That is where you have the regular, steady, central flow of water. As you get nearer the banks on either side of the stream, the water is moving,

but you come across all sorts of phenomena that represent something other than the mainstream—such as eddies, backwaters, beds of reeds, confluences from tributaries, and mudbanks.

In the church of God and in the Anglican Church, that image seems fitting because it mirrors so much in the church's story. There is a mainstream flowing all the time, and the mainstream has life and energy and self-sustaining power from one generation to another. Once you see it, you wonder how you could ever miss it.

There are also, however, any number of eddies, reedbeds, inlets, bayous—call them what you like—where well-meaning Anglicans appear to other Anglicans to have gone adrift or run aground or got stuck in the mud. In examining a particular theological or historical matter, my mind is always asking, *What is the mainstream here? And where and why is it that people get stuck near the banks—away from the mainstream, where they are unfruitful?* No new life or wisdom comes out of the position they have taken up. One way or another, they are out of the main flow. In Anglican history we meet many well-meaning groups who have been stuck in that way. It has happened, and it will no doubt happen again.

So to my mind, what constitutes mainstream Anglicanism? I think of a sevenfold emphasis, and here are seven adjectives that express it.

### *Biblical*

Authentic Anglicanism, first of all, seeks always to present itself as biblical Christianity.

Of course, to say that is not self-explanatory. You have to begin with a belief that everything taught in Scripture is to be trusted as truth from God, and you have to add further the thought that for the interpreting of Scripture you have to be careful and ensure that your principles of interpretation come from within Scripture and are validated by Scripture, not imposed on Scripture by external, arbitrary means.

Otherwise either you can go adrift in the liberal way—not taking seriously everything that is taught in Scripture but making your own private

selection. Or else you could end up with Roman Catholicism, which says that of course all Bible teaching is truth, but you need the church to interpret it. And you need to know some specific things the church has defined which, granted, Protestants do not find in their Bible but which you need in your mind in order to interpret Scripture properly.

The evangelical stands apart here from both liberals and Roman Catholics. And a person has to make that clear straightaway in order that others may know what that person means when he or she talks about being biblical. The Bible—interpreted from within, by itself, and interpreted as a whole—must always have the last word. That has been an ingredient of the Anglican mainstream ever since the Reformation.

### *Liturgical*

Second, Anglicanism is liturgical. Anglicanism, as it inherited liturgical forms, has always had a Prayer Book setting the standard for worship. Every large geographical section of Anglicanism has had its own Prayer Book standard. And that is because Anglicans—both evangelicals and others—believe that the worship of God is central to the Christian calling in this world, and that the worship of God is best done when we do it together as the church has in fact been doing ever since the second century.

Liturgies emerged naturally in the Christian church at a very early stage on the same basis on which hymnology emerged. The emergence is spontaneous, because you do not have to argue that the best way to honor God is do it together—so let us have a liturgy—and to sing his praise together—so let us have a hymnbook.

You may find this thought rather hard to digest if you come from a Christian tradition that thinks of itself as nonliturgical. But chew it over. Suck the substance out of it, and you will see it makes sense.

None of us would deny that one of the best ways to praise God is to sing his praise; so let us have music, hymns, choruses. That has happened spontaneously. It did so in the sixteenth century, as in much

earlier centuries. Christians were producing hymns since at least the third century. And it seems that they were singing psalms right from the apostolic era onward. Perhaps they were writing hymns that early also. A popular hypothesis in New Testament scholarship is that some of the sentences in the New Testament Epistles are quotations from hymns. It is very likely true.

There is no argument of principle about the emergence of these songs. We sing God's praise, it is a good thing to do, so let us have songs and hymns.

And I am saying it really makes just as much sense—and it has been just as much a natural development—for Christians to say, “Let us have a form of words, as best we can come up with, so that we worship God together.” And so you get liturgies, and in due course you get a Prayer Book.

That is what Anglicans have always thought. Liturgical worship is so natural that it really does not need any justification. Some people fear that in getting into liturgy, they will find it a boring formality, something deadening to the spirit rather than enlivening to their souls. But those concerns shouldn't occupy us for long. When people get into liturgical worship, they find that it is not like that in the least.

C. S. Lewis is very good on that point. In 1963 he wrote about the alternative services that were constantly being produced at the time, and he allowed himself to deplore the fact that so many clergy had what he called “the liturgical fidgets.”<sup>2</sup> He expressed most poignantly his wish that the clergy would simply avail themselves of the Prayer Book they had and give worshipers the chance to get properly into it so that it becomes part of them in the way that favorite hymns become part of people—natural expressions of their devotion to the Lord, expressions that pop up in their mind as the perfect way of saying what they want to express just at the moment.

2 C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1964), 14.



Good hymns do that; liturgy does that as well. Some of us have already discovered this and are enthusiasts for the Prayer Book as a result. You, perhaps, haven't yet discovered it; but let me assure you it is there to be discovered. Anglicans as a body are a community of those who claim to have discovered it, so we employ liturgy in our public worship.

Some of the modern liturgies are quite bad, but that is a different issue. Some modern hymns are very bad too. But we are talking in terms of ideals, and the Anglican ideal is good liturgy; and some of us believe we have superb liturgy in the Prayer Book.

### *Evangelical*

On to the third quality that is integral to the Anglican mental makeup. The Anglican Church is evangelical. That means that our worship and our thinking about Christian life, testimony, and influence center always on the gospel, a full-orbed gospel, which includes the incarnation, atonement, bodily resurrection, present reign, and forthcoming return of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ fills the mental horizon of mainstream Anglican believers; the claim and the purpose is that in all we do, we are seeking Christ's glory and furthering his kingdom. If you are not doing that, you are a bad Anglican; everybody will agree on that. And in your devotion, you do not get away from Christ and his cross any more than you get away from Christ and his glory and lordship, or Christ as the coming King, to whose return we look forward.

We know this, of course, from Anglican public worship. It is what real Anglicans are meant to be. And we are not very Anglican if, in fact, Christ is not central in our personal devotion in this way.

This evangelical mindset leads us in all our worship, our personal devotion, our discipleship, our theological thinking, and our attempts to exercise an influence in this world. Real Anglicans are evangelical.

The evangelicalism is defined, as a matter of fact, very effectively in the Thirty-Nine Articles, which were adopted by the Convocation (a

gathering of bishops and clergy summoned by Elizabeth I) in 1563 as a confession of faith. They were an edited version of Cranmer's Forty-Two Articles (1553) and received their final form with very minor revisions in 1571. I am an enthusiast for the Articles. They are in the Prayer Book, and they focus that evangelical perspective and are Christ-centered in the way I have described—which is the driving force, the heartbeat of Anglican believers in all they do.

We do not get away from Christ and his cross. On the contrary, real Anglicans have always made much of the Lord's Supper. There are some evangelicals in this world, to be sure, who do not make much of the Lord's Supper, but that has never been the typical Anglican evangelical way. We make much of the Supper not only because it is there in the Prayer Book, where we are encouraged to participate in it regularly, but also because it is there, incidentally, in a marvelous liturgical frame that projects the thoughts of our sin, God's grace, and our faith, in a most telling fashion—actually, as by three turns of a screw.

Archbishop Thomas Cranmer was brilliant in the way he built his Communion service. It is a wonderful projection of the gospel, and it both illuminates and celebrates what we do at the Lord's Table in receiving the bread and the wine in a way that is, to my mind, unmatched by any alternative liturgy that Christendom has produced, including all current forms of alternative Anglican liturgy.

### *Pastoral*

Everybody acknowledges that, fourth, Anglicanism is a pastoral form of Christianity. It took shape in a pastoral situation where England was already divided into something like ten thousand parishes, as they were and are called—local geographical areas, each with its own church and priest. That arrangement was in place before the Reformation began. And the Reformers were thinking of ministry in the parishes at every stage in their reforming work. They wanted to change the way Anglicans

worshiped and the way in which Anglicans grew in their faith, but they wanted to do this in a way that would ring bells in the parishes, through the ministry of the parish clergy to the parish worshippers. Anglicanism everywhere in the world is still like that—very congregation-oriented, thinking everything out in terms of discipling folk in Christ.

In England, the original form of the evangelistic ministry of Anglicanism for Anglican parishes—the form it took in the sixteenth century when the Prayer Book was put together, and the form it was still taking in the seventeenth century—was catechetical. The vision was to promote the parishioners' learning through an understanding of the substance of the children's catechism (contained in the Prayer Book), and through taking part regularly in the worship of Morning and Evening Prayer and the Communion service. In all these, the themes of sin, grace, and responsive faith are embodied, embedded, and expressed; all of it would ideally have been properly explained by one's clergyman. Thus parishioners would grow into a living faith in Christ.

That hasn't always happened, however. And after the eighteenth century, people came to think of evangelistic ministry the way they still think of it today—as going out and reaching out and having special messages given at meetings or services specially designed to bring people to a firm, personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Already when George Whitefield and John Wesley were preaching by the end of the 1730s, they were making applications at the end of their services that we would call appeals, and the pattern of evangelism in the minds of evangelical people has been the same from that day to this.

That is bad because in our minds—both in the Anglican world and in other branches of the evangelical world—this image of evangelistic ministry has driven out the older thought of evangelism being conducted institutionally through a discipleship process that begins with catechism, that is, teaching young folk the faith. We do not do that now in Sunday school. Usually we just teach a Bible story. Catechizing

is largely gone. But the older pattern was that you teach young people the faith in church, and you explain to them the reality of faith and worship. Thus you draw them into the worshipping fellowship so that they grow into personal faith.

Even today, as in fact has always been the case, the majority of people who come to faith do so gradually through involvement in some form of Christian worship, rather than by standing up in a meeting, signing a decision card, or going into the counseling room. The latter sort of conversion, of course, is always talked about from the pulpit and platforms as if it were the most important. Statistically, however, it is not.

Ask in any evangelical congregation: Have most people here come to faith basically through an institutional discipling process? Or was their conversion something like the apostle Paul's, with the Lord confronting them in crisis form prior to their involvement in Christian activity, so that they came in from outside? You will find that the majority came in the first way, despite the prevailing mental image of people coming the second way.

Anglicanism has always been pastoral, always concerned with making Christians, primarily in the manner described, and then shepherding them. That concern is there in the ordinal of the Prayer Book. The minister is ordained, first and foremost, to find Christ's sheep and then to walk with them as a shepherd, leading and guiding them from the beginning of their spiritual lives right through to the end.

In other sections of the evangelical world, the primary emphasis has often been on the pastor as preacher or controversialist, and the emphasis on his ministry as a shepherd of the Lord's individual sheep has been secondary, sometimes quite minimal. Some pastors have only ever seen themselves as preachers, persons called to hold forth—and for the rest, well, let the congregation pastor itself. But that is not the Anglican way; it never has been and never will be. Anglicanism is pastorally oriented, and the Prayer Book guarantees that.

*Episcopal*

Fifth, Anglicanism is an episcopal form of Christianity. The Anglican ideal for a bishop, expressed in the service that consecrates or ordains bishops (both those verbs are used these days, though in different Anglican circles) is that the bishop is ordained to be a spiritual leader.

That means a number of things. First, he must preach and teach the gospel in a standard form, setting a standard for all the congregations, clergy, and people that he leads.

Second, he must be the chief disciplinary officer in his diocese. Discipline is viewed by Anglicans as an aspect of pastoral ministry. Anglicans are not concerned with legal procedures that, for their own sake, throw people out of the congregation simply to keep it pure. That, as you know, is how some periods of history and some forms of evangelical Christianity have understood the discipline of people who are out of line theologically or ethically. But it has never been like that among Anglicans.

Anglicans have always preferred the discipline of patient debate to the discipline of the big stick. And so in Anglican circles, movement in a disciplinary direction has always been exceedingly slow. However, the person in charge of discipline has always been the bishop of the diocese. And that remains the case.

The positive significance of retaining the order of bishops, as Anglicans understood it in the sixteenth century and as the Prayer Book encourages us still to understand it, is first and foremost that the bishop is to set doctrinal standards from the Bible. The bishop's commitment is defined that way in the ordinal, which is the section of the Prayer Book that outlines the rites for ordaining bishops, priests, and deacons.

Third, the bishop is there to maintain continuity with historic Christianity as it has been since at least the early years of the second century, and in some places probably the first century. In some way, episcopal ministry—that is, having one person as the standard-setter for the diocese—emerged right at the end of the apostolic age. There does not

seem to have been a gap there. When there was no apostle to minister, the early church chose a bishop, so it seems, although detailed evidence is lacking.

It has, of course, been argued among evangelicals that episcopacy is such a tainted institution that the church is better off now without it. Some churches made that argument in the sixteenth century; some have argued it since. But Anglicans did not argue that way, did not think that way, and haven't gone that way. No, the bishop is a happy token of continuity with the historic Christian church. The bishop is the standard of an authentic Christian faith, the chief disciplinary officer of the diocese, and the first counseling resource for the clergy of the diocese.

The bishop is called, in other words, to be a wise leader who looks after the clergy spiritually.

The Anglican way of thinking about episcopacy has always been in terms of the ideal rather than the actual. While nonepiscopal evangelicals criticize the actual, Anglicans will try to reform the institution and so ensure that the ideal will be achieved.

The fourth and final thing to say on this is that Anglicans will continue, however regrettable their bishops actually are, to pray for good bishops and to value the leadership of good bishops. The thinking is that we are episcopalians; an episcopally ordered church, other things being equal and the bishop being up to the job, will be a spiritually and theologically richer church, a wiser church than any other sort. You can argue with that, but that is what Anglicans think. And so they pray for such a state of affairs, with bishops who are up to scratch.

### *National*

Sixth, Anglicanism is a national form of Christianity. That means that, as in England, so everywhere it goes, Anglican Christianity seeks (among its other pastoral tasks) to Christianize the culture every way it can.

Some forms of evangelicalism emphasize separation from the world, having nothing to do with it, keeping clear of politics, avoiding this, avoiding that. Anglicans do not apologize for being community-oriented and seeking to Christianize everything—education, the arts, social life, community life in all its forms. Anglicans have always tried to do this, stressing the importance of maintaining Christian standards in the community, and I think this is as it should be. It is partly why I am an Anglican.

But not all evangelicals go along with this emphasis.

### *Ecumenical*

Seventh, Anglicanism has always had an ecumenical mindset. Anglican theology has never claimed to be self-sufficient. Anglicanism has believed itself to be simply the Christian mainstream, neither more nor less. So Anglicanism does not want to be a form of Christianity standing against all other forms.

We do not like to think we have distinctives. We like to think we are mainstream. We do not deny that others are to some extent (some to a large extent) in the mainstream with us. We are glad they are. The fact that some Christian communities in some respects have run aground—got into backwaters and so on—does not mean they never had or do not at the moment have any wisdom on key Christian matters. No, we trust that in the goodness of God they have some wisdom, and (this is the ecumenical point) we are concerned to get the benefit of any wisdom others have.

Part of the Anglican ethos, which has always marked Anglicans out in Christendom, is willingness to learn from other sorts of Christians. Anglicans do not sell their souls to other sorts of Christians, but they open the window, so to speak, to see out and discover what other Christians have to offer. Then they go and say: “We would like to learn this and that from you. Please explain it. Let us share it. If it is a matter of theological insight, please instruct us. If it is a matter of

pastoral insight, please show us how it is done. We want to learn. We want to get the benefit.”

I always illustrate this from the idea of a person with a credit card going through a large department store and seeing things in the various departments that take his or her fancy, then saying, “I want that; charge it to the card.” The good Lord, in effect, gives us an unlimited charge card whereby we may receive from other Christians anything and everything they have that is worthwhile.

We are not the only Christians who sometimes behave that way. After Vatican II, for twenty years (and it is still happening in some places), the Roman Catholic Church through its leadership—its bishops, archbishops, and so on—was saying to evangelicals, in effect: “You folk are good at group Bible study. We have never done it. Will you please teach us how it is done?” In some Roman Catholic circles leaders are still saying this, though not as loudly and insistently as it was said in the 1970s and 1980s.

Anglicans have this ecumenical mindset and want to see all the good, all the wisdom there is, anywhere in the Christian world. Little wonder, then, that the original ecumenical movement had as an ideal the spread of the gospel, crystallized through the ecumenical process and in Christian unity throughout the world. Today’s ecumenical movement, Geneva-based, does not have that ideal anymore. So some of us have given up on that movement, frankly. But at the beginning—in the 1910s through the 1930s, when that ideology was being developed, and then in the 1930s and 1940s, when the World Council of Churches was formed and had a couple of thoroughly good theologians as its first secretaries—that was the goal, and Anglicans were right at the heart of the process.

We thought we were going to share our Anglicanism to enrich others. We thought we were going to learn from others things that would benefit us. That is how it once was. Now the ecumenical movement has run aground. But once it was much better than it is now.



## Theology's Scope

Theology—Anglican or otherwise—is the theologian's account of God, his will, his work, his ways, and his worship; of ourselves and mankind; and of the whole state of the world in terms of God and of true religion—creed, communion, and conduct. What is believed—that is the creed. How fellowship in worship is practiced—that is communion and includes fellowship informally. And conduct—that is ethics. All of this is theology.

When I teach theology courses, I always start by telling people that there are ten distinct disciplines in theology. The first is exegesis, which provides the building blocks of a full-scale account of God's will, work, and ways. A second discipline is biblical theology. Historical theology is a third. Systematic theology comes as number four, drawing on those resources. And then from the resource of systematics come the other six disciplines of ethics, apologetics, liturgy (that is, worship), then spirituality, communion with God, and pastoral theology.

So theology is a cat's cradle of distinct but intertwined disciplines, and you cannot really be good at any one of them unless you have at least a competent acquaintance with all of them. Real Christian leaders, as all believers at some level or other are called to be in due course, never stop learning.

That is theology according to Packer. Now you know what I mean when I talk of being a theologian—an Anglican evangelical theologian. As such, my aim in this book is to provide knowledge of Anglican traditions, insight into Anglican tensions, resources for Anglican tasks, and an overview of the Anglican story.

## The Anglican Theological Method

Somehow Scripture, tradition, and reason must be related. Why? (1) The Bible is the word of God; (2) tradition properly handled is the embodiment of all the wisdom that the church has achieved thus far in understanding and appropriating what is in the word of God;

and (3) reason is the organ of apprehending—that is, of grasping and understanding and arranging, and therefore clarifying to oneself—the truth of Scripture as expounded by tradition. Scripture, of course, has the last word as judge of tradition, but only after the wisdom of tradition has been assimilated. You use your reason, your God-given reason, to grasp that, and so you become a theologian.

That is the Anglican method of becoming a theologian. This is noncontroversial. The Anglican range is these three resources, each with its own emphasis.

Anglican theology gives attention to the problem of continuity and internal conflict. Anglicans have said over and over in public statements that for any rapprochement with any other form of Christianity, four items must be maintained: (1) the authority of the Bible; (2) the truth of the creed; (3) the necessity of the sacraments—necessity in the sense that it is part of Christ’s Christianity that the sacraments should be faithfully ministered; and (4) the episcopal ministry.

These four represent the four principles often referred to as the Lambeth Quadrilateral, which was adopted by the Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops in 1888.<sup>3</sup>

In summary, the sort of reality that Anglican theology has been historically, and continues to be, is a reality into which many factors have entered. You will recall that under the very broad rubric of the authority of Scripture, we have

- the evangelical Protestant stream of thought, from which flow pastoral care and church life;
- the High Church or Anglo-Catholic stream of thought, from which also flow pastoral care and church life; and
- the Broad Church, sometimes called the liberal perspective, which says in effect to the other two views: “You are extreme, and we

3 The full original resolution is available online: “The Lambeth Quadrilateral,” The Anglican Church of Canada (website), <https://www.anglican.ca/about/beliefs/lambeth-quadrilateral/>.

distance ourselves from you. We are the central churchmen, the centrists, and more than either of you, we are the inheritors and transmitters of the authentic Anglican heritage.”

### Subsidiarity and Biblical Authority

Archbishop Robert Runcie gave an address at the beginning of Anglicanism’s 1988 Lambeth Conference, and the burden of what Runcie was saying—in a rather roundabout and allusive way (Runcie was skilled at that)—was this: unity within our diversity is something to hold on to.<sup>4</sup>

There was a particularly tense controversy going through the Anglican Communion at that time, namely, the question of whether it was or was not proper to ordain women as presbyters. Some sections of the Anglican Communion had started to do so, and some had not, and there was great tension about the matter. In that environment, as Archbishop Runcie spoke, he at one point referred to a principle of *subsidiarity*. Anglicans and Roman Catholics had been discussing this idea since the mid-nineteenth century. The basic notion is that issues should be dealt with at the most immediate (or local) level that is consistent with their resolution.

Subsidiarity in the Anglican context is the idea that every issue involving the actual management—running, pastoral care, administration—of a particular section of the Anglican Communion that raises problems for other sections of the Anglican Communion should be settled as far as possible within the section of the communion directly affected by it. And others in other parts of the communion should be tolerant of what this particular part of our fellowship has felt moved to do.

All of this grew out of the question of ordaining women when a bishop in Hong Kong ordained a couple of senior Chinese Christian

<sup>4</sup> Robert A. K. Runcie, “The Nature of the Unity We Seek,” in *The Truth Shall Make you Free: The Lambeth Conference 1988* (London: Anglican Consultative Council, 1988), 11–24.

women as presbyters on the ground that the church in Hong Kong needed their ministry.

The principle of subsidiarity has never been legislated. But it is, as I have said, an Anglican attempt to ease the tensions that arise when one part of the communion does something that other parts cannot stomach and see no reason—biblical, pastoral, or otherwise—to approve.

Subsidiarity was an idea that Runcie, in his unique way, was commending in that speech.

The general sense that emerged from Lambeth 1988 was that, on the one hand, all Anglicans can agree that the Bible has definitive authority in some way for Anglican life. But, on the other hand, the church is to be thought of as a community of interpretation that seeks to achieve a consensus resulting from the interpretive process. In other words, authority is what the communion is able to agree on at the moment. That is how the conference construed the authority of Scripture.

According to this mindset, in the enterprise of biblical interpretation, tradition must be consulted, and reason—the organ of reflection, distinction, argument, and formulation—must be there and seen to be there, making a critical assessment; any doctrinal formulation that is not reasonable cannot stand. But authority rests finally in the outcome of the interpretive process in the church, rather than (as evangelicals would say) the teaching of Scripture understood in terms of the principle that God in Scripture tells us things, and it is through interpreting Scripture by Scripture that we discern what he tells us.

I hope you recognize the evangelical approach to Scripture in that formulation. It is a formulation I have been using to teach for years, and I think it is sound. Again, it is the principle that by letting Scripture interpret Scripture, we discern what God is telling us.

Reformational exegesis of Scripture started with people like John Colet, Erasmus, Luther, and Calvin. Colet was an English preacher of distinction who became dean of St Paul's School in the very early years of the sixteenth century. (His lectures on the epistle to the Romans

actually began in the year 1497.) Erasmus produced a text of the Greek New Testament. Luther and Calvin took in stride the idea that when you go *ad fontes* (that is, back to the “fountains,” or sources), you must go back to them within the frame of their own culture. Everybody back then took this idea for granted. It seemed so obviously true that nobody challenged it.

But it is partly because this dimension was applied to what Bible students were doing before that Reformation exegesis is so much better than anything in the fifteenth or earlier centuries, going right back to people like Augustine and Chrysostom, who themselves understood the principle that you must set at least the New Testament texts in their culture. The *ad fontes* principle was a milestone in the history of exegesis. It was rightly grasped in the sixteenth century. We need to grasp it in exactly the same terms.

I want to underline that in internal Anglican discussion of what constitutes Anglican faith, evangelicals are concerned to say something that the Broad Churchmen do not accept in the form in which evangelicals say it. If you say, for instance, that the Bible says such and such, the Broad Churchman’s answer will be, “Ah, but the Bible is pointing along a trajectory of thought on which we have to proceed, and sometimes proceeding along that trajectory of thought requires us to leave the Bible statements themselves behind.”

The liberal view today is that it was always a mistake to think of the books of the New Testament, particularly the directly didactic epistles, as logical units—as coherent bodies of analytical thought. They were much more (says the modern view) exercises of the imagination—the projection of symbols and images, and quasi-poetical declarations of how the symbols and images are to be perceived. And the symbols and images themselves are to be understood as expressions of the feelings and the aesthetic perceptions of the apostolic writers rather than as logical analysis proceeding from thinking minds, in the ordinary sense of the word *thinking*.

In other words, you should understand that the apostolic writers were much more like poets and artists, and much less like philosophers, than has been thought. And so (liberals say) we are not playing false to Scripture by reading it as symbolic and as a collection of images developed in terms of significant mythology and so forth.

When evangelicals, bewildered by this sort of talk, ask, “What is the bottom line?” the folk who take this view and come clean will say that the bottom line is really this: that God the Creator is a God of love who affirms all humanity in all aspects of its being; and what is wrong with misbehavior (call it sin) is simply that it keeps people from using their minds to read Scripture aesthetically, symbolically, and mythologically in the way that we have just been affirming.

Which still leaves evangelicals bewildered. But I am developing the thought that there are acute crosscurrents in Anglicanism, and evangelicals need to know that they cannot insulate themselves from these things. But you are entitled to say, “Well, I think the position is wild and unreasonable and not coherent at all with the things that I find plainly taught in Scripture.” I will not dispute with you about that, because that is what I think too.

From the first homily in Anglicanism’s 1547 Book of Homilies, which deals with the importance of reading the Bible, you can see that the Bible was not here being regarded in the way that the modern Anglican liberals regard it.<sup>5</sup>

5 The homily, titled “A Fruitful Exhortation to the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scripture,” is available at <http://www.anglicanlibrary.org/homilies/bk1hom01.htm>.