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## **Anglican Theology**

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# Anglican Theology

*Stephen Spencer and Joseph Galgalo*

This article provides an account of Anglican theology as it emerged as a distinct tradition and ecclesial movement from within Western Catholicism, in the context of the theological and political shifts of sixteenth-century Europe. The pragmatic needs of a succession of English monarchs, along with the theological convictions of the leaders of their national church, led to the evolution of the Church of England and its self-identification as 'Anglican', with a corresponding theology, from the late sixteenth century. This development led to three main varieties of Anglican theology from the eighteenth century: high church (later becoming 'Anglo-Catholic'), evangelical (later including charismatic evangelicalism), and broad (later including social and ecumenical theology).

With the expansion of Anglican churches around the world – a process that gained pace in the eighteenth century and accelerated in the nineteenth century – what is now called the Anglican Communion developed, constituted of over forty autonomous churches who govern their own doctrine and practice and come together for the purposes of consultation more than governance. Anglican theology has also diversified in significant ways, most recently in response to disagreement on some key issues and in response to postcolonial realities. In recent decades, there has been significant development of cross-disciplinary engagement, not least with science (see Science-Engaged Theology). Anglican theology, then, is presented not as a single doctrinal system but as tenets of a movement which now encompass a range of churches, networks, and perspectives from around the world.

**Keywords:** Christian theology, Anglicanism, Anglican Communion, Doctrine, Scripture, Reformation, Ecclesiology, Protestantism, Christian mission, Liturgy, Church of England, Ecumenism

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# **1 An autonomous *Ecclesia Anglicana***

## **1.1 Introduction**

Anglican theology as a distinct tradition within Western Catholicism emerged out of the shifting theology and politics of sixteenth-century Europe and especially out of the movement that came to be known as the Reformation. But it was not launched with an agreed confession like the Augsburg Confession of Lutheranism or the Westminster Confession of Presbyterianism, so was not bequeathed a definite methodology or structure to govern its development. The political needs and ambitions of a succession of monarchs – beginning with Henry VIII and including Edward VI, Elizabeth I, and the Parliament of Charles II – and the evolving theological convictions of the leaders of their national church – not least those of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, Bishop John Jewel, and Richard Hooker, among others – shaped the way in which the church in England came to see itself as the Church of England and, from that, the way in which from the late sixteenth century it acquired self-awareness as ‘Anglican’, with a corresponding theology. Since then, different varieties of Anglican theology began to evolve in the eighteenth century, a process accelerated by the rapid expansion of Anglican churches around the world, each in different contexts imposing their own theological demands. Therefore, there is no system of doctrine that can be presented through a set of abstract descriptions but, rather, there is an evolving set of tenets that must be distilled from the historical development of an increasingly complex movement.

This overview therefore needs to use a diachronic rather than a synchronic approach to the subject, giving an account of the way these different tenets were established. In other words, it needs to tell the story of how definitive theological themes in Anglican ecclesial life were established by key church leaders, theologians, meetings such as convocations and synods, the Lambeth Conference, the Anglican Consultative Council, and other bodies in its five-hundred-year history. This means the focus is on the theology of Anglican ecclesial life as a whole, more than on the work of individual Anglican theologians. Furthermore, because of its evolving nature, Anglican theology remains ‘work in progress’, so this article will be open-ended rather than have a tidy conclusion (see Chapman 2012 and Avis 2014 for more detailed historically-based presentations of Anglican theology).

## **1.2 Recovering scripture, anticipating reform**

The English Reformation built on earlier calls for reform as well as the teaching of Martin Luther and John Calvin and others. Seeds of Protestantism took root long before the beginning of the continental Protestant reforms. The Lollard movement, for example, taught and practiced many aspects of Protestant doctrines from as early as the mid-fourteenth century. John Wycliffe (c.1328–1384) and his followers, known as Lollards, rejected doctrines such as transubstantiation, emphasizing instead the memorial aspect

of the Mass, and taught the supremacy of scripture in all matters of doctrine and practice. The influence of early translations of the Bible (especially the one attributed to Wycliffe) was profound. Concerted political and religious interests lent impetus to more sustained reforms from the early sixteenth century onwards.

William Tyndale's work of translating scripture into a vernacular English was central to all that followed. Tyndale (c.1494–1536), a scholar of Magdalen Hall, Oxford, started to translate the New Testament in 1523. He based his translation on Luther's German translation (he probably met Luther at Wittenberg in 1524) and on Erasmus' 1516 scholarly edition of the Greek text, a major resource that embodied the aspiration of Renaissance scholarship to get back to the original version of ancient texts. It was in Germany, in Worms in 1526, that he was able to publish his first edition of the complete New Testament. This was a key moment in the English Reformation, when access to the word of God in the common tongue became possible for the English-speaking people. Afterwards, Tyndale settled in Antwerp where he learnt Hebrew and worked on the Pentateuch, also using the Latin Vulgate version as well as Luther's German translation, and this was published in 1530. He then translated the book of Jonah, and in 1534 a revised version of the New Testament. He included many marginal notes in his translation which expressed his strongly Protestant theological views.

By now he was acquiring many enemies who understood the reforming implications of his work. The Catholic authorities in the Netherlands arrested him in 1535 and he was executed in 1536. Tyndale, however, had left behind a draft translation of the books of Joshua to 2 Chronicles, and these as well as his published books contributed to the first complete edition of the Bible printed in English, the one prepared by Miles Coverdale and printed in the same year that he died, 1536. Less than a year after Tyndale's death, under pressure from his Lutheran political allies in Germany, Henry gave approval to this Bible, now called the 'Matthew Bible', and the Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer and the king's chief minister Thomas Cromwell arranged for a copy to be placed in every church in the land, which became known as *The Great Bible* of 1539. The frontispiece is an arresting image of the king handing out copies of this Bible, described as 'Verbum Dei' (the Word of God), to Cranmer and the clergy on one side and to Cromwell, the aristocracy, and people of England on the other. The impact of Tyndale's translation cannot be overestimated.

All of this formed the basis for Anglicanism's elevation of scripture above all other authorities in the Christian life. This was formulated as a tenet by the Articles of Religion, a set of propositions published by Cranmer as the Forty-Two Articles in 1553 and then republished by Queen Elizabeth as the Thirty-Nine Articles in 1557. One of the most significant articles was Article VI:

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. (Article VI; [www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/articles-religion](http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/articles-religion))

### 1.3 From the church in England to the Church of England

King Henry VIII also initiated a process to end papal control over the church in England. Through a series of acts of Parliament, the separation of the English church from Rome was more or less complete by the year 1534. In that year, following an enactment of the Law of Supremacy, which made the monarch supreme head of the church, an autonomous *Ecclesia Anglicana* (English Church) was born. King Henry's legal reforms gave a foothold to what became slow but sure doctrinal reform. Through calculated manoeuvres, he achieved not only the control of the church but also the annulment of his marriage that he had been denied by the pope. Through legislation he managed to divorce his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, and married Anne Boleyn, who initially came to the royal court as Catherine's maid of honour.

The Law of Supremacy put in place, then, another of Anglicanism's key tenets, that national or provincial churches are autonomous and not under the judicial authority of any wider international body such as a patriarchate or curia. For the Church of England this meant being under the authority of the monarch, as Article XXXVII came to express it:

The King's Majesty hath the chief power in this Realm of *England*, and other his Dominions, unto whom the chief Government of all Estates of this Realm, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Civil, in all causes doth appertain, and is not, nor ought to be, subject to any foreign Jurisdiction. (Article XXXVII; original emphasis)

The crown, then, took over authority for appointing bishops and managing the temporal affairs of the church. However, as the Article goes on to state, 'we give not to our Princes the ministering either of God's Word, or of the Sacraments'. Spiritual authority was not to rest with the monarch, thus ruling out a kind of theocracy. The ministry of Word and Sacrament was to rest with the clergy.

The traditions of the church, however, could be reformed. Thomas Cromwell, the king's chief minister – with help from Archbishop Thomas Cranmer and others like Bishop Edward Foxe and the queen, Anne Boleyn – often pushed for radical and controversial reforms, such as closure of monasteries and a sustained purge of many aspects of the old Catholic religion, such as devotion to statues, images, and shrines. This was a dramatic expression of what has become another of Anglicanism's key theological tenets, expressed by Article XXXIV:

It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, and utterly like; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men's manners. (Article XXXIV)

A key principle behind this is 'that nothing be ordained against God's Word'. This supremacy of scripture over tradition has been mostly upheld down the centuries. However, reforming those traditions 'which be not repugnant to the Word of God, and be ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly'. So the 'common order of the Church' is to be maintained unless there is good reason to reform it. However, '[e]very particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish, ceremonies or rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying' (Article XXXIV). As Anglicanism has spread around the world this changing of ceremonies and rites has become increasingly common.

#### **1.4 *Lex orandi, lex credendi***

Henry VIII's son, Edward VI, succeeded him at the tender age of nine. Protestant-leaning Edward Seymour, an uncle to King Edward VI, became the Lord Protector, effectively directing the affairs of state. Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, with the support of Seymour, decisively took charge to steer the cause of religious reforms from this time onwards. Notable steps included the introduction of the Book of Homilies and the issuing of The Royal Injunctions of 1547. The Injunctions marked a significant trajectory towards advancing Protestant doctrines and suppressing traditional practices seen as unbiblical and superstitious (see Duffy 2005). Cranmer led the introduction of significant liturgical reforms. In 1549, the first Book of Common Prayer (BCP) was published and authorized for use in all churches. This had a legal backing in a new law, the Act of Uniformity (1549). This first BCP drew on various sources but retained the order and form of the old Mass, while at the same time sensitively incorporating reform doctrines including a great deal of biblical content (see, for example, Mézerac-Zanetti 2017 and Spinks 1993).

The year 1552 saw a further liturgical reform. A revised BCP was introduced, with a set of liturgies influenced by the Swiss Reformed tradition more than the Lutheranism of North Germany. It made extensive use of scriptural references and prayers infused with Protestant doctrinal ideas. The promoters of the BCP were also keen to remove any temptation towards the worship of idols; outward forms of worship practices which were likely to do this – including the raising of the host by the priest in the consecration prayer, the veneration of statues and shrines, and use of clerical vestments – were either cut to a bare minimum or abolished. The compact book was designed to shape the theology and belief of the churchgoer through structured liturgical worship, giving expression to the belief *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* (an expression going back to the fifth century meaning 'let the law for prayer determine the law of faith'). In time, this theological



principle was widely accepted and promoted within Anglicanism through use of the simple phrase *lex orandi, lex credendi* (the way of worship is the way of belief). This expressed how Anglican theology does not look back to an Augsburg Confession (as in Lutheran theology) or a Westminster Confession (as in Presbyterian theology), but recognizes that its understanding of doctrine is formed by its manner of worship.

King Edward died young, in 1553, and he was succeeded by his half-sister Mary, the daughter of Henry's first wife, Catherine of Aragon. She was a devout Catholic and was keen to stop the progress of Protestantism in England and to restore the Church of England to Roman Catholicism, under the authority of the pope. Through a series of acts of Parliament, she oversaw the nullification of previous legislation, paving way for reunion with Rome. A carefully crafted Catholic Counter-Reformation was initiated, slowly removing Protestant influences and restoring pre-Reformation spirituality and doctrines. In 1553, Thomas Cranmer was removed as the Archbishop of Canterbury and he, along with many other leading reformers, were put to death (Cranmer on 21 March 1556). A notable number of prominent reformers fled, seeking refuge elsewhere and remaining in exile until after the death of Queen Mary in 1558. The Protestant movement adopted a survival mode, largely going underground in anticipation of a brighter future. The setback was significant but not fatal to its cause.

## **2 The Elizabethan settlement**

### **2.1 Toleration within limits**

Queen Mary's death signalled the end of the Counter-Reformation in England. She was succeeded by her half-sister Elizabeth, a Protestant who was keen to restore the reforms but in a cautious way in order to heal internal divisions and stem the tide of the opposition. The cautious approach prepared the ground for the Elizabethan settlement, which intentionally cultivated a conciliatory tone with the hope of softening hard positions in support of unity. Two significant legislative changes set the trajectory of the reforms from the beginning of Elizabeth's ascension to the throne: the Act of Supremacy of 1558 restored the independence of the Church of England from Rome and, in 1559, the Act of Uniformity was passed, reintroducing a revised version of the 1552 Book of Common Prayer. In 1557, the Thirty-Nine Articles were adopted and the Book of Homilies reintroduced. These changes promoted Protestant doctrines although some of the rubrics allowed some of the liturgical practices inherited from the older forms of religion, such as use of vestments, to continue. As a whole, the Elizabethan settlement turned the principle of adiaphora, inherited from Lutheranism and previously promoted in England by the martyr John Frith (1503–1533), into a key tenet. This encompasses the idea that the unity of the Church should be based on agreement about the doctrine of the gospel (especially the doctrine of justification by grace through faith) and the administration of the sacraments, while allowing that human traditions, such as rites or ceremonies not

required by scripture and which are not the same across all congregations, are *adiaphora* (indifferent) to salvation.

The Elizabethan settlement created a degree of religious toleration. Conservative Catholicism largely went underground for self-preservation. In the beginning such 'recusancy' was punished, but with time Catholicism largely declined among the common citizenry of the land, not least due to a shortage of Catholic priests. There was general reluctance from Elizabeth to introduce further legislative controls, which also encouraged tolerance. This situation provided a fertile ground for the rise of theological diversities.

## **2.2 Early Anglican theology**

Several church leaders helped to form the emerging theology of the Elizabethan church. These figures began to build on the foundations laid by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. Among these was John Jewel (1522–1571), a scholar of Oxford University and a Protestant who had to flee to the continent during Mary's reign. While in Europe he opposed John Knox and other Calvinist reformers from Geneva. When Elizabeth came to the throne, he was consecrated Bishop of Salisbury and became a strong supporter of the reformed Church of England, opposing both Catholic recusants and nonconformist Puritans. In 1562 he published his famous *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* which provided a strong theological foundation for the Church of England, showing its rootedness in the teaching of the New Testament and its continuity with the life and doctrine of the early church. In this it followed Article XXI of the Lutheran Augsburg Confession of 1530: 'Our churches dissent in no article of the faith from the Church Catholic, but only omit some abuses which are new, and which have been erroneously accepted by the corruption of the times' ([www.ekd.de/en/The-Confession-of-Faith-301.htm](http://www.ekd.de/en/The-Confession-of-Faith-301.htm)). In line with this, the *Apologia* begins its statement of doctrine with an exposition of the Nicene Creed, which it affirms, showing Jewel's orthodoxy. He makes clear that salvation comes by faith in Christ: 'It is our faith which applies the death and cross of Christ to us' (Jewel 1888: II.20). He defines a true, saving faith as a 'living faith' (1888: II.27). When Jewel discusses the sacraments, he emphasizes that it is not the sacraments themselves that bring about salvation but the faith of the individual which does so. On this point he appeals to several church fathers:

'The faith of the sacraments,' saith St. Augustine, 'justifies, and not the sacrament.' And Origen saith, 'He (Christ) is the priest and the propitiation, and the sacrifice; and that propitiation comes to every one by way of faith.' And, therefore, agreeably hereunto, we say that the sacraments of Christ do not profit the living without faith' (1888: II.20).

Similarly, as Jewel argues, 'For although we do not touch Christ with our teeth and lips, yet we hold and press him by faith, mind, and spirit' (1888: II.18). This leads to doing

good works: 'Christ himself dwelleth in our hearts by faith', and Christians are called to sanctification (1888: II.28).

Two archbishops of Canterbury need to be mentioned, not because they were theological innovators but because they were instrumental in establishing Anglicanism as neither Presbyterian nor Roman Catholic. Matthew Parker (1504–1575), a scholar of Cambridge and moderate Protestant was the first, chosen by Queen Elizabeth to be her first Archbishop of Canterbury. He helped to republish the Articles of Religion, this time as the Thirty-Nine articles, and supported John Jewel's *Apologia*. He also gathered together and wrote about a set of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts that show the historical validity for claims that the English Church was independent of the See of Rome. He also opposed Puritan attempts to ban the wearing of vestments and other more extreme reforms. John Whitgift (c.1530/1531–1604) was a Cambridge scholar and professor, and opponent of the Presbyterian preacher Walter Travers (see below). He was nominated by Elizabeth to be archbishop in 1583. While he upheld Luther's emphasis on justification by faith alone, and Calvin's emphasis on predestination, the latter showing he was a Reformed Protestant, he was a determined advocate of episcopacy and ritual uniformity, using his legal powers to enforce this against the Presbyterians.

## **2.3 Richard Hooker**

Richard Hooker (1554–1600) was neither a bishop nor particularly famous during his life but over the centuries has come to be recognized as the preeminent theologian of Anglicanism. He was from Exeter and admitted to Oxford University through the influence of Jewel. His theology emerged out of his controversy with the Puritans, especially with his colleague Walter Travers at the Temple law courts in London, with whom he argued when he preached. Travers claimed that there was only one authority which should govern the Christian life, that of scripture; any aspect of church life that was not validated by scripture, such as the wearing of vestments, should therefore be abolished. Hooker's approach, on the other hand, was based on the idea of there being various kinds of law given by God outside of scripture, not least natural law and the law of reason. These have authority in our lives alongside human law and the divine law revealed by God. In the eight books of his *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (hereafter *Laws*), drawing on Plato, Aristotle, and Thomas Aquinas, as well as Calvin, he defended the Church of England's position on a range of theological and moral issues. He argues from philosophical foundations and from scripture to justify the Church of England as the Elizabethan settlement had left it (Miller 2013). He argued that there was a natural law or pattern of characteristic behaviour directing things to their perfection, which were set down by God and which could be uncovered and defined by human reason. These laws are 'investigable by reason, without the help of revelation' (*Laws* I.ii.6, viii.9; Hooker 1977). He then used this notion of natural law to defeat the Puritans' claim that scripture is the only authority within the Christian life. For

Hooker it is one authority among others, although as a Reformed Protestant he gave it the 'first place both of credit and obedience'. But reason (with its access to natural law) comes next, and after that comes 'the voice of the Church' (what is often called 'tradition'):

Be it in matter of the one kinde or of the other, what scripture doth plainelie deliver, to that the first place both of credit and obedience is due; the next whereunto is whatsoever anie man can necessarelie conclude by force of reason; after these the voice of the Church succeedeth. That which the Church by her ecclesiasticall authoritie shall probablie thinke and define to be true or good, must in congruitie of reason overrule all other inferior judgments whatsoever. (*Laws V.8.2*; Hooker 1977)

Therefore, when scripture is not clear about a certain issue or question it is reason that takes charge and, through returning to the principles of natural law, provides an answer. But when natural law has no view on the issue or question, then the tradition of the church comes into play and determines what should happen. This approach has subsequently been recognized by many as definitive of Anglicanism (MacCulloch 2016).

On this foundation Hooker constructed an extensive defence of the order, ministry, and sacraments of the Church of England, though he did not exclude change and development. He presented the Church as an organic institution which sometimes changed the way it governed itself in response to changing circumstances. However, he also upheld continuity between the Church of England and the medieval church and, behind that, with the early church. In his doctrine of participation, rooted in the doctrine of the Trinity and finding expression in the sacraments, he provided a rich example of this (Dominiak 2019).

## **3 Historic formularies**

### **3.1 The Book of Common Prayer**

Cranmer's first and second editions of the BCP had borrowed from several sources including the Roman Missal, pre-Reformation regional Roman liturgies such as the Sarum rite, many ancient Latin collects translated into English by Cranmer, and different prayers of Protestant groups and Reformers. Now, under Elizabeth, the 1552 edition was republished in 1559 with only minor amendments, upholding its Reformed theological position. In the Holy Communion service, for example, the words 'take, eat in remembrance' were introduced, emphasizing the memorial aspect of the Communion as opposed to it being a re-enactment of the sacrifice of Christ. While the 1559 BCP never gained unanimous acceptance it remained in use, at least in some of churches, until it was banned by Parliament in 1645 during the English Civil War. Even then, the covert use of this book persisted, not least because of the poor reception of the *Directory of Public*

*Worship*, an alternative Presbyterian prayer guide which failed adequately to meet all liturgical needs.

The 1559 BCP received a rebirth when, after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, it was published in 1662 in a slightly revised version and authorized for use. This new version, although opposed by Presbyterian and Puritan-minded clergy in the Church of England, incorporated a few alterations that were appealing to High Anglicans. Some of these were theologically weighty, such as in the Prayer for the Church Militant (in the Lord's Supper), through a reference to those who had 'departed this life in thy faith and fear', opening the door to praying for the departed. The offertory was reinstated and the word 'oblation' was added, opening a different door to Catholic interpretation of the rite. Having made some concessions it then, comparatively speaking, established itself as the official prayer book of the Church of England and emerging sister churches of the Anglican Communion for the next three centuries. However, the 1662 BCP ostensibly marked the end of a common liturgical era because soon after it was published Parliament ejected from their livings around 2000 Puritan-minded clergy who could not accept it. These joined others who had already left to form Congregational and Presbyterian congregations, becoming 'Nonconformists'.

The enduring influence of the 1662 BCP cannot, however, be denied. During the growth and spread of the British Empire, the 1662 BCP gained a near universal presence, adopted in its entirety or in some form or another, by Anglicans across the globe (see Hefling and Shattuck 2006). Its most enduring legacy is perhaps a moderated Reformed and Catholic theology that is intensely rooted in the Bible. Its influence runs deep and wide. Attempts at revising it have been numerous but none have become established over time. Instead, Anglicans around the world have developed liturgical resources of their own for use alongside or as alternative to the BCP. These alternative prayer books do not necessarily follow the pattern or adopt the content of the BCP, which largely, has always remained an authoritative reference text. Its doctrinal influence is enormous, inculcated not only through the wording of prayers and the litanies but also by actions prescribed in the rubrics.

### **3.2 The Articles of Religion**

Another important source of Anglican theology is the Articles of Religion, usually called the Thirty-Nine Articles. As already mentioned, they took their current shape in 1563 under the leadership of Archbishop Matthew Parker. Earlier, a number of different sets of Articles of faith were issued at different times, such the Ten Articles of 1536 which upheld traditional Catholic and Reforming positions, as did the Bishops' Book of 1537, while the Six Articles of 1539 attempted to turn the clock back to purely traditionalist positions. The King's Book of 1543 was slightly less traditionalist, while Cranmer's Forty-Two Articles of 1553 were

thoroughly Reforming. These were quickly suppressed, however, when Mary came to the throne and it was only under Elizabeth I that they were reintroduced as the Thirty-Nine Articles. They reiterate adherence to the creeds and scriptures of the ancient Catholic Church while defining Anglican doctrinal positions in relation to the controversies of the time. They are the most definitive doctrinal statement of the Church of England with a distinct ecclesiology in relation to the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran and Reformed churches and to the Radical Protestantism of the Anabaptists. They were finalized in 1571 and incorporated into the 1662 BCP. They were intended to appeal to a wide spectrum of theological and doctrinal positions. It was also intended that they contextualize Catholicity (as seen in Article XXXIV), maintain Apostolic faith, and do justice to valid Protestant concerns.

Articles I to XVIII establish Christian doctrine on the nature of God; the authority and supremacy of the canonical scripture; the three historic creeds (Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian) as summative expressions of faith; and on what should be believed concerning doctrines of soteriology and hamartiology. The rest of the articles are on the nature and practice of the church: the church's authority and the exercise of it (Articles IXX to XXI); the church and false teachings or practices (Articles XXII to XXIV); the sacraments and church discipline (Articles XXV to XXXVI); and church and society (Articles XXXVII to XXXIX).

The visible church lives under the authority of the scripture, which guides the exercise of faith and order. The place and role of civil authority is recognized, but where the authority of the state conflicts with the teachings of the scripture, the word of God must take precedence. The church should not require mandatory observance or belief in matters not explicitly taught or required by the Bible (Article VI; Article XX; and Article XXI), such as acts of supererogation, belief in purgatory, salvific merit of good works, indulgencies, devotion to relics or adoration of saints. The pithiest statement of ecclesiology is given in Article XIX:

The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same. As the Church of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch, have erred, so also the Church of Rome hath erred, not only in their living and manner of Ceremonies, but also in matters of Faith. (Article XIX)

The nature of the church is here summarized in three principles: The church is given life and validity through the preaching of pure gospel, the proper celebration of sacraments (especially if Article XIX is read together with Article XXIII), and faithful exercise of discipline (see, for example, Hardy 2001: 32–33). There is allusion here to the Reformed interpretation of the doctrine of apostolicity, that apostolic succession is in faithful

preaching of the gospel. In this light, the *Ecclesia Anglicana* is the local or national expression of a contextualized Catholic and Apostolic church.

### 3.3 Orders

Anglicanism retains the three-fold order of ministry of bishops, priests (presbyters), and deacons, in which the bishop is mandated to exercise authority, preserve, and propagate the faith of the church. The Ordinal of the BCP makes this very clear. The preface of the 1549, 1552, 1559, and 1662 editions of the ordination services state:

It is evident unto all men, diligently reading holy scripture, and ancient authors, that from the Apostles time, there has been these orders of Ministers in Christ's church, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, which Offices were evermore had in such reverent estimation, that no man by his own private authority, might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, examined, and known, to have such qualities, as were requisite for the same. (BCP 1662; [www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/form-and-manner-making-ordaining](http://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/form-and-manner-making-ordaining))

Article XX states, '[t]he Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies and Authority in Controversies of Faith'. The term 'Church' references the focal point of authority, intimating that authority to correct heresy and defend biblical teaching rests with the church. This principle may have been viable for a church under the authority of the state but has been tested and found wanting in a context where member churches of the Communion are autonomous. Largely, ecclesiology is understood and practiced in specific contexts and in the absence of defined doctrinal positions it is often the context that shapes theological orientation. In this regard, shared historical provenance and formularies provide guidance or a referential model within which global Anglicanism continues to contextualize in varied ways.

Doctrine is not specifically defined but expressed and propagated through worship. As stated above, *Lex orandi lex credendi* (the way of worship is the way of belief). This explains why liturgical innovations or reformulations may have serious repercussions for the unity of the church, depending on the kind of changes introduced. Yet the flexibility to adapt and freely contextualize is itself codified in the Articles. Article XXXIV states that:

It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one or utterly alike; for at all times, they have been diverse, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word [...] Every particular or national Church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish ceremonies, or rites of the Church ordained only by man's authority, so that all things be done to edifying. (Article XXXIV)

Although the reference here is generally to the church, in practice, bishops exercise authority through their respective synods, providing a focal point of unity. But the exercise

of autonomy at the local level, although celebrated as a distinctive mark of Anglicanism, has not always worked well for the unity of the wider Communion (see below).

## **4 Varieties of Anglican theology**

### **4.1 High church and Anglo-Catholic**

When in 1662 the BCP was re-introduced into the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity, with some changes, many Puritan-minded clergy could not accept this and were deprived of their livings by Parliament (around a quarter of the clergy, 2000 in all, known as the 'Great Ejection'). They become known as 'Nonconformists'. The word 'Anglican' came into common use to describe those who remained in the Church of England and who adhered to episcopacy, the BCP, and a high view of the sacraments. The word did not therefore describe the religion of the English people as a whole, but just a specific form of Christian faith and life alongside other forms. This form, promoted by those known as the high church party, was supported by the writings of the Caroline Divines, a group of bishops and theologians holding influence under Charles I (1625–1649) and Charles II (1660–1685), beginning with Lancelot Andrewes (1555–1626) and including John Cosin (1594–1672), who exercised considerable influence on the 1662 edition of the BCP, and Jeremy Taylor (1613–1667), who built on the work of Hooker to develop a sophisticated Anglican moral theology within a broad range of writings (Sedgwick 2019).

This form of Anglicanism began to be exported around the world, a movement gathered pace in the eighteenth century through the work of the missionary societies Society for the Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG). Both of these societies were founded by Thomas Bray (c.1656–1730) and were boosted by the Oxford Movement (also known as Tractarianism) from 1833. This movement was led by the priests and writers John Keble (1792–1866), John Henry Newman (1801–1890; before he became a Roman Catholic in 1845), and Edward Pusey (1800–1882). It emphasized the doctrine of the incarnation and the presence of Christ in the Church. This presence was handed down through the laying on of hands in episcopal consecrations, a doctrine known as apostolic succession, finding expression in the sacraments, and allowing the church to stand against the civil authorities when required to do so. The Anglo-Catholic movement of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries took this theology and practice across the world, especially through SPG and the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA; see further Brown, Nockles and Pereiro 2017).

### **4.2 Evangelical and charismatic**

A second form of Anglicanism grew during the eighteenth century, known as the Evangelical Revival. This began with the conversion of a number of key individuals, starting in Wales with a young Anglican schoolmaster from Brecon, Howel Harris, and



an Anglican curate from Carmarthenshire, Daniel Rowland. They both had intense experiences of forgiveness and in 1735 began to travel around south Wales gathering large audiences and preaching ‘the arresting message that salvation could be known now’ (Bebbington 1989: 20). England followed two years later when George Whitefield, who had been converted in 1735, began preaching to large audiences in Bristol and London ‘exhorting his hearers to seek the new birth’ (1989: 20). Then in 1738 John Wesley experienced an ‘awakening’ at a meeting at Aldersgate Street, London, followed by the start of his evangelistic work among the urban and rural poor of Britain. When churches were closed to him, he began preaching in fields and marketplaces. He is alleged to have travelled over 200,000 miles during his life and preached 40,000 times. He regarded the whole world as his parish and had a close rapport with the poor, setting up a system of class meetings and local preachers which, after his death, became the Methodist Church.

Wesley’s example also inspired revival in the Church of England, including among figures such as William Wilberforce who campaigned for an end to the slave trade and then to slavery itself. The Church Missionary Society was founded in 1799 to spread the movement around the world. Within it, subgroups developed over time, one of the most influential being the charismatic movement. The charismatic movement was founded within worldwide Anglicanism in the 1960s by Michael Harper, a curate at the leading Evangelical church of All Souls (Langham Place, London), under the influential vicar and writer John Stott (who did not support the movement). One commentator writes that it

has brought a deepening of faith to many and a greater expectancy in Bible study and prayer. New forms of music and a fuller participation in worship, including gesture, dance, drama and the gift of prophecy have been introduced to many congregations. In particular it has helped to break down denominational and theological barriers, for though it began in Evangelical circles it has influenced all sections of the Church and is particularly strong in Roman Catholicism [...] It may come to be seen as the most significant movement in British Christianity in the second half of the [twentieth] century. (Worrall 2004: 294)

Evangelicalism as a whole has sought and still seeks to recover the Protestant emphasis on the doctrine of justification by faith, based on the word of scripture, as being the heart of the Christian life. However, there has been disagreement over the doctrine of predestination, beginning with George Whitefield who emphasized it while Wesley and the Methodist movement preferred to emphasize the offer of God’s grace to all people (Noll 2003).

### **4.3 Broad, ecumenical, and social**

A third expression of Anglicanism looks to Frederick Denison Maurice (1805–1872) for its inspiration. With a Quaker father and evangelical mother and sisters, Maurice became acutely aware of the varieties of ways in which Christians express their faith, recognizing

that each way had its own special insights. He built on insights of the Oxford Movement, though criticized the partisanship of Tractarians and evangelicals and called for an abandonment of parties. He wrote in a dense style, but presented key insights which have been influential in the recent development of an ecumenically-minded Anglicanism: 'God, Maurice was saying, continued to be present with and in his Church in all its desperate divisions. And so Maurice's providential reading of the Church's history directed him towards a theological rehabilitation of the idea of Christian unity' (Morris 2007: 10). As an expression of this Christian unity Maurice identified six 'signs' of Catholicity which he believed every trinitarian denomination already possessed. These were baptism, the Eucharist, scripture, the creeds, the apostolic ministry, and liturgical tradition. Maurice believed each could be traced back to the gospel itself. Crucially, they could be recognized by each denomination in each other and so help the search for greater unity (Morris 2005). This 'Broad Church' Anglicanism became the seed bed of Anglican commitment to ecumenism in the twentieth century, expressed above all in the 'Appeal to All Christian People' of the Lambeth Conference of 1920, an appeal for Christian unity. From that has come the growth of dialogues with other traditions (see 5.4).

Maurice and his associates also propagated a social theology, one which underpinned a movement to establish adult education and cooperatives of industrial workers. It was born in 1848, the year of European revolutions, and was convinced that the new socialism sweeping across Europe must be Christianized. There was fresh theological insight in this: Christianity was being presented as not only concerned with personal salvation (as with evangelicals at this time), or not only concerned with being connected with historic Catholicism (as with followers of the Oxford Movement), but also as fundamentally concerned with the condition of society as a whole, inclusive of non-Christians as well as Christians. This new social theology believed that the needs of the working population, who made up the vast majority of people, was of paramount importance, and the churches should do all they could through practical measures to transform society. While Maurice and his associates did not make a significant impact at the time, their social theology was developed by later figures such as Brooke Foss Westcott, Charles Gore, and Henry Scott Holland, and found significant influence in the twentieth century, through the writings and ministry of William Temple (1881–1944), who as Archbishop of Canterbury is widely regarded as one of the architects of the post-Second World War welfare state. The transformation of the structures of society has also, more recently, been recognized as one of the Five Marks of Mission (see 6.3; see further Spencer 2017; 2022).

## **5 From church to communion**

### **5.1 A global communion**

The theological notion of the Anglican Communion grew out of the missionary movement. By the early nineteenth century, the idea that there were a number of 'Anglican churches',

not just one Church of England spread over a number of places, was well founded. Then with the 1841 Bishops of Foreign Countries Act passed by the British Parliament, legal permission was granted for the Church of England to create missionary bishoprics outside of Britain, leading to thirty-three overseas bishops being established by 1860. This raised the possibility of Anglicanism having a global reach:

Finally, by the mid-nineteenth century, the actual phrase 'Anglican Communion' emerged from a very specific missionary context: the Jubilee Anniversary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), which had been a leader, despite all its foibles, in the Anglican spread of the Gospel. There is a communion of Anglican churches, observers noted, precisely as it is the embodied expression of the missionary thrust of Anglicans to plant the Gospel in all places. (Radner 2017: 133, original emphasis)

Since then, the provinces of the Anglican Communion have grown and spread. A clarifying definition of the Communion was produced by the Lambeth Conference of 1930. In Resolution 49 it is defined as

a fellowship, within the one holy catholic and apostolic church, of those duly constituted dioceses, provinces or regional churches in communion with the see of Canterbury. (Anglican Communion 1930)

This established that the Communion is only part of the church of God and therefore never complete within itself, which shows the necessity of ecumenism. The definition also established that for a church to belong to the Communion it must be in communion with the see of Canterbury, that is to be able to share Holy Communion with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the people of his diocese, which provides a boundary. The 1930 definition went on to describe how the member churches are 'bound together not by a central legislative and executive authority, but by mutual loyalty sustained through the common counsel of the Bishops in conference' (Resolution 41; Anglican Communion 1930).

Defined in this way the Anglican Communion is a family of some forty churches found in over 165 countries of the world with an estimated membership of around 85 million people. They include four United Churches from the Indian subcontinent.

## **5.2 Consultation rather than regulation**

With the spread of the Church of England outside of the British Isles, a pressing ecclesiological question became how authority may be exercised across jurisdictions. Initially, the Bishop of London provided some form of episcopal oversight but with the establishing of bishoprics for overseas territories the question of international structure and enforcement of common discipline arose. The need to coordinate missionary work as well as address disagreement led Archbishop Charles Longley to call the first Lambeth Conference in 1867. It met at the archbishop's main residence, Lambeth Palace in

London, which gave it its name, with seventy-six bishops attending. In some respects, it was a response to division within the Communion, in particular disagreement over the rise of biblical criticism and its advocacy by Bishop Colenso of Natal. It was also boycotted by the Archbishop of York, supported by the bishops of Durham, Carlisle, and Ripon, who refused to attend because they feared the conference would weaken the link between church and state in Britain (Jacob 1997: 163). But Longley's invitation letter indicates a much more positive purpose, with its statement that the conference was to be for 'the maintenance of greater union in our missionary work and to increased intercommunion among ourselves' (Avis and Guyer 2017: 298). The building of relationships for mission, then, was to be its primary purpose: to be a consultative and fraternal meeting rather than for issuing directives and regulations, supporting the bishops and their dioceses in extending Christian mission. Since 1876 the Lambeth Conference has met fifteen times, most recently in 2022.

Significant theological moments have included the conference of 1888 which adopted the Chicago Quadrilateral (see 5.3). The conference of 1908 was notable for affirming aspects of social Christianity. The conference of 1920 issued the great appeal for the unity of all Christians (see above). The conference of 1930 was important for its definition of the Anglican Communion (see above), and for recognizing that artificial contraception may sometimes be right, this being extended in 1958 to viewing family planning as 'a positive choice before God' (see Sedgwick 2020). One of the reports for the conference of 1948 produced a finely nuanced description of how authority in Anglicanism is dispersed yet unified (Report IV, Anglican Communion 1948). The conference of 1968 recommended the creation of a permanent diaconate open to both women and men, allowing women to preach, baptize, and lead worship (see Methuen 2020). The conference of 1988 launched a 'Decade of Evangelism' for the Communion in the 1990s. It also recognized that polygamists who come to faith should be allowed to be baptized, showing a growing recognition of the importance of indigenous culture in the lives of Anglicans (see Methuen 2020). The 1998 conference greatly encouraged the forming of companionship links across the dioceses of the Communion. It also, famously, passed Resolution 1.10, which among other clauses rejected homosexual practice 'as incompatible with Scripture' and advised against 'the legitimizing or blessing of same sex unions nor ordaining those involved in same gender unions'. This was passed in the face of strong opposition from a minority of bishops and is an atypical resolution for Lambeth conferences in that it 'did not seem designed to seek the greatest possible degree of consensus and unity' (Zink 2017).

### **5.3 A common core**

As churches have grown and spread from continent to continent, and become more diverse in the ways they understood and expressed their faith, a theological question has become more and more pressing: what do they hold in common? One answer has

been a shared and agreed core of texts and practices, like a watermark that runs through every member church. William Reed Huntington (1838–1909), an American Episcopal priest from Massachusetts, suggested this in his description of their being four signs or elements common to Protestant churches. These were the ‘Holy Scriptures, as the Word of God’; ‘the Primitive Creeds as the Rule of Faith’; ‘the two Sacraments ordained by Christ himself’; and ‘the Episcopate as the keystone of governmental unity’ (Huntington quoted by Avis and Guyer 2017: 91). Huntington believed these four common elements are found in the mainline denominations and could form the basis of ‘Home Reunion’ with them. The House of Bishops of the General Convention of the Episcopal Church adopted Huntington’s four points at its meeting in Chicago in 1886 and the bishops at the third Lambeth Conference in 1888 resolved to adopt this ‘quadrilateral’ (later known as the Chicago Quadrilateral) on behalf of the Anglican Communion as a whole. In Resolution 11 the Lambeth bishops resolved that

in the opinion of this Conference, the following Articles supply a basis on which approach may be by God’s blessing made towards Home Reunion:

- (a) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as ‘containing all things necessary to salvation’ [Article VI], and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
- (b) The Apostles’ Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
- (c) The two Sacraments ordained by Christ Himself – Baptism and the Supper of the Lord – ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of Institution, and of the elements ordained by Him.
- (d) The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the Unity of His Church. (Anglican Communion 1888)

A foundation was therefore laid for all mainline churches to recognize and affirm these four points within their own life, thus establishing common ground for moving towards unity. This Quadrilateral gained increasing currency in the twentieth century, as defining a common core of Anglican theology and practices while member churches of the Anglican Communion grew increasingly diverse in the way they understood and practiced their faith.

## **5.4 An ecumenical calling**

The ecumenical seeds planted by Maurice would bear corporate fruit in 1920 at the meeting of Anglican bishops at the Lambeth Conference. This was after the traumas and devastation of the First World War, when there was a widespread desire to bring reconciliation to the world. It is the moment when the ecumenical calling of Anglicanism

received its definitive expression, launching the involvement of the Anglican Communion in the ecumenical movement of the twentieth century.

This took place in the conference's groundbreaking and influential 'Appeal to All Christian People', a call for Christian unity which offered a 'new outlook' for 'a new age'. It is not only a defining moment for Anglican ecumenism but for the theological identity of Anglicanism itself. The appeal appeared in Resolution 9 on the 'Reunion of Christendom'. It was by far the longest of the resolutions. The opening paragraph makes some resounding affirmations:

We, Archbishops, Bishops Metropolitan, and other Bishops of the Holy Catholic Church in full communion with the Church of England [...] acknowledge all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and have been baptized into the name of the Holy Trinity, as sharing with us membership in the universal Church of Christ which is his Body. We believe that the Holy Spirit has called us in a very solemn and special manner to associate ourselves in penitence and prayer with all those who deplore the divisions of Christian people, and are inspired by the vision and hope of a visible unity of the whole Church. (Anglican Communion 1920)

After the mutual suspicion and competitiveness of churches in previous centuries, these are broad and generous affirmations. The first section then sets out the groundwork to this, providing an inclusive definition of the nature of the catholic church, one which importantly sees it not as an institution existing for its own sake but for 'the world-wide service of the Kingdom of God' (Anglican Communion 1920: section 1), a missionary purpose. It then laments the divisions between the historic churches of East and West, and of the Protestant denominations, 'each one keeping to itself gifts that rightly belong to the whole fellowship' (Anglican Communion 1920: section 2). This echoes Maurice's view of how different traditions embody different insights within the one truth of Christ. But now the bishops acknowledge that this condition of broken fellowship is contrary to God's will: 'The time has come, we believe, for all the separated groups of Christians to agree in forgetting the things which are behind and reaching out towards the goal of a reunited Catholic Church' (Anglican Communion 1920: section 4).

The appeal, however, is not for the church to become uniform. Churches 'would retain much that has long been distinctive in their methods of worship and service. It is through a rich diversity of life and devotion that the unity of the whole fellowship will be fulfilled' (1920: section 4). So what will unite them? The bishops recognize the existence of a core of faith and practice across traditions, like Maurice's signs. They quote the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888 which defines this core as being the scriptures, the creeds, the sacraments, and the ministry received from Christ.

The Appeal also re-orientates Anglican theology from thinking of itself as Protestant to thinking of itself as Catholic, albeit a form of Catholicism that includes not just Roman

Catholics and Orthodox but any 'who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and have been baptized into the name of the Holy Trinity' (Chapman 2020).

The twentieth century provides examples of the ecumenical agenda of Lambeth 1920 becoming a reality in some parts of the world, not least among the Protestant churches of the Indian sub-continent, with the creation of the Church of South India in 1947 which united Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, Methodist, as well as Anglican churches, to become the second largest church in India after the Roman Catholic Church. This was followed in 1970 by the creation of the Church of North India, and the Church of Pakistan which also includes Lutherans, and in 1974 by the Church of Bangladesh.

This engagement with other churches has been symbolized by meetings of Archbishops of Canterbury with church leaders around the world, including the first meeting of an Archbishop with the Pope (Archbishop Geoffrey Fisher and Pope John XXIII in 1960). Archbishop Michael Ramsey met with the Orthodox patriarchs of Constantinople and Moscow and served as president of the World Council of Churches (WCC) between 1961 and 1968, and Archbishop Robert Runcie welcomed Pope John Paul II to Canterbury Cathedral in 1982 where on pilgrimage together at St Thomas Becket's tomb they prayed and renewed their commitment to 'a common witness to the Gospel' (IARCCUM 2006: 4), a powerful reminder of the theological context and purpose of ecumenism.

Arising out of this, member churches of the Communion have entered into a range of rich and productive dialogues with other churches (Anglican Communion 2019). This has resulted in the production of statements that have sometimes contributed significantly to Anglican theology within itself. Noteworthy are,

- Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (WCC 1982), the Lima Statement, laying down a basis for mutual recognition of each other's sacraments and ministry. The Anglican theologian Mary Tanner, then working for the World Council of Churches, was a significant contributor to this.
- Final Report (ARCIC I 1981), of the first Anglican and Roman Catholic International Commission. This concise report showed the two Communion looking past the divisions of the Reformation era, finding common theological ground and new ways to describe it. The Anglican theologian Henry Chadwick was a key contributor to this influential landmark of serious ecumenical research.
- Church as Communion (ARCIC II 1990) of the second Anglican and Roman Catholic International Commission, which showed both Communion embracing the ecumenical consensus about *koinonia* as a defining concept of the Church in the New Testament. This has had major ecumenical implications, leading to widespread recognition of the diocese as the basic unit of the Church. It demonstrated remarkable convergence of the thinking of J. M. R. Tillard on the Roman Catholic side and Oliver O'Donovan and Henry Chadwick on the Anglican side.

- The Virginia Report (ACC 1997), written largely as a reception of the work of ARCIC I and II, it was also offered to help guide the Anglican Communion through its difficult discernments about authority, order, structure, and decision-making, with an eye to the wider Christian ecumene.
- The Anglican Covenant of 2009 (Anglican Communion 2009) received the foregoing (including the Quadrilateral and 1920 Appeal) and was striking for its presentation of ecumenism as the particular charism and vocation of Anglicanism; thus the Covenant was also written with an eye to other churches and communions joining the Covenant as well. The Covenant did not receive enough assent from member churches to become an ongoing part of Anglican Communion life, but it remains as the most recent Anglican-ecumenical statement of Anglican theology.

## 6 Diversities and difficulties

### 6.1 Instruments of communion

By the nineteenth century, Anglican churches in many ways represented a *via media* between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Anglicanism, compared to Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Protestantism, afforded a middle ground for those who did not fit within the more strictly defined traditions of these other churches. The principle of middle ground or *via media* also accommodates internal differences, encouraging a culture of tolerance. As a result, a distinctive Anglican spirit of congeniality, often called Anglican comprehensiveness, was born, initially applied to the identity of the Church of England in relation to other denominations and then applied more generally (see Sykes 1988).

But what may be edifying in one national church may prove unacceptable in another. The Articles make it clear that scripture is the standard against which validity of any innovation is judged, in that ‘nothing be ordained against God’s word’. However, as the Church of England grew beyond its original national or local context, Anglican loyalties to the scriptures and the formularies were adapted and contextualized, the former through varieties of interpretation and the latter through revision to their form, content or both, as the local context saw fit. This meant that Anglicanism has sometimes been challenged to develop a mechanism for the enforcement of a common theology across the different jurisdictions. The lack of such mechanisms has sometimes exposed a serious theological deficit, which in the absence of definitions of what is essential to Anglican faith compared to what is *adiaphora* (indifferent), has left the principle of comprehensiveness as insufficient to hold Anglicans together (see Chapman 2012).

Local diversities and the formation of national churches saw the growth of provinces, Archdioceses, and Metropolitan jurisdictions to meet emerging organizational needs (Ross 2020). Over time, provincial or national churches have continued to participate



in the life of the global communion embracing the need for interdependence but without relinquishing autonomy and the exercise of dispersed authority or jurisdictional independence. Local autonomy, which has become the hallmark of Anglican ecclesiology, has sometimes become a real bane for the church. In the absence of mechanisms for a central intervention due to canonical impediments and a lack of safeguards in the exercise of subsidiarity, it has sometimes been impossible to resolve matters of conflict that affect the whole church.

In response to this the member churches during the later decades of the twentieth century have recognized a role for certain 'instruments of communion':

- *The Archbishop of Canterbury*: The churches and provinces are all in communion with the See of Canterbury in the Church of England, and thus the Archbishop of Canterbury in his person and ministry as *primus inter pares* is the unique focus of Anglican unity. The Archbishop of Canterbury convenes the Lambeth Conference and Primates' Meeting, and is President of the Anglican Consultative Council. The 105th Archbishop of Canterbury in succession to St Augustine, The Most Revd and Rt Hon Justin Welby, was enthroned in March 2013.
- *The Lambeth Conference*: Every ten years or so, the Archbishop of Canterbury invites the bishops of the Anglican Communion to join him in prayer, study, and discernment. Hence this is a conference rather than a decision-making synod. In recent decades this has been at Canterbury Cathedral and the campus of the University of Kent. Around 650 bishops were welcomed to the most recent Lambeth Conference in July 2022.
- *The Anglican Consultative Council*: In 1968 the bishops of the Lambeth Conference requested the establishment of a body representative of all sections of the churches (bishops, clergy, and laity) to coordinate international Anglican ecumenical and mission work. With the consent of the legislative bodies of all the provinces, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) first met in 1971 and has met regularly since. It includes laity and clergy as well as bishops from each member church and is therefore the most representative of the instruments and ensures that the laity have a voice in the work of the instruments. The eighteenth meeting of the ACC took place in Ghana in 2023.
- *The Primates' Meeting*: Since 1979 the Archbishop of Canterbury has invited the primates (i.e. the presiding bishop, archbishop, or moderator) of the member Churches of the Anglican Communion (currently 42) to join in regular meetings for 'leisurely thought, prayer and deep consultation' (see further ACC 2016).

These bodies have been likened to musical instruments, each having its own distinctive voice, but their role is to work with each other to contribute to the harmony of the whole. Furthermore, 'in recent years Anglicans have interpreted this movement outwards in terms of the Five Marks of Mission [see 6.3]. The Instruments of Communion are intended

to serve these marks. The Marks of Mission are the proper horizon towards which the Instruments are directed' (ACC 2016).

## **6.2 Innovation and division**

In the recent past, the issues of women's ordination, human sexuality, and women in the episcopacy have been contentious across the Communion. When, in 1944, Florence Li Tim-Oi from Hong Kong became the first woman to be ordained as a priest, her own province saw the move as irregular and a controversial innovation (see Carpenter 1991: 134–138; Paton 1985: 132). The province eventually authorized ordination of women in 1971, and this was soon followed by the Episcopal Church ordaining women of its own in the United States in 1974, although this was regularized only in 1976 following authorization by the General Convention. By the beginning of the third millennium, another ten or so provinces had authorized the ordination of women. Those who were opposed saw the practice as contrary to Anglican biblical teaching and ecclesiology, as well as lacking in cultural and pastoral sensibilities. The general trend around the Communion, however, shows that women's ordination is increasingly gaining ground and many Anglo-Catholics and evangelicals who initially opposed it are now supportive of it.

The 1978 Lambeth Conference discussed the matter and passed a resolution, which affords an important insight into Anglican ecclesiology. The Conference recognized, 'the autonomy of each of [the Communion's] member Churches, acknowledging the legal right of each Church to make its own decision about the appropriateness of admitting [...] women to Holy Orders' (Anglican Communion 1978: Resolution 21). The Conference also observed that unilateral action 'has consequences of the utmost significance for the Anglican Communion as a whole' and affirmed the Communion's 'commitment to the preservation of unity within and between all member Churches of the Anglican Communion' (Anglican Communion 1978: Resolution 21, para. 3). These decisions show that ecclesial authority is vested within the member church and, as such, matters can only be properly resolved at that level, though sensitivity to the views of other member churches is also needed.

The question of admitting women into the episcopacy has proved to be divisive. At the 1978 conference it was recommended 'that no decision to consecrate be taken without consultation with the episcopate through the Primates and overwhelming support in any member church and in the diocese concerned, lest the bishop's office should become a cause for disunity instead of a focus of unity' (1978: Resolution 22). The reference 'through the Primate' hints at the importance of interdependence and the desire to seek the mind of the whole church. But it is also clear that theological, doctrinal, or pastoral reasons for or against women's episcopacy are left to the local church so long as episcopal authority guides such decisions. It makes sense to assume that most churches, having already

authorized women's ordinations, have already overcome possible hurdles of a theological nature. The matter remains contentious to date but recognized as not fatal to unity.

The same cannot be said for the issue of same-sex unions. In 2002, the Diocese of New Westminster, in the Anglican Church of Canada, unilaterally authorized a liturgy for blessing of same-sex unions. This was an innovation with potentially serious consequence for the unity of the church, not least because liturgy is a vessel of doctrinal expression for Anglicans (as seen in 1.4). A year later, the diocese of New Hampshire in The Episcopal Church of USA elected and consecrated Gene Robinson, a priest in an active same-sex union. These developments caused further divisions. In the 2008, over 300 bishops, mainly from Global South provinces declined to attend the Lambeth Conference. A number of evangelically-aligned Episcopalian parishes have since broken away from The Episcopal Church, forming the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA). The Primates' Meeting has been unable to heal this division and the Lambeth Conference of 2018 was postponed to avoid a repeat of the divisions of 2008. The divisions continue at various levels, most recently revived over proposals from the Church of England's General Synod to authorize prayers for those in same-sex civil partnerships.

In 2008, around 300 active and retired bishops and 1200 others attended the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON) in Jerusalem. It issued a 'Jerusalem Declaration', a fourteen-point statement which explained its theological stance (GAFCON 2008). The statement presented a view of Anglican ecclesiology and ecclesial identity based on the historic formularies understood as propositions of orthodox doctrine. Article IV, for example, 'upholds the Thirty-nine Articles as containing the true doctrine of the church'. Article VII upheld the Anglican ordinal and affirmed the three-fold ministry 'in historic succession'. Articles XI and XIII were particularly emphatic that unity must be subservient to orthodoxy. It was noteworthy that the drafters singled out for recognition only 'those Anglicans who uphold orthodox faith and practice' (Article XI). Further, Article XIII stated, 'We reject the authority of those churches and leaders who have denied the orthodox faith in word or deed'. This gave the sense that Anglican ecclesiology sees episcopal authority as derivative and that primary fidelity should be to the scriptures and historic formularies understood in a particular way, a way which other Anglicans also claiming orthodoxy would not recognize.

### **6.3 A common definition of mission**

A different theological development has been a growing convergence around a definition of mission in the life of the church. This has been through the development and adoption of 'The Five Marks of Mission', originating through meetings of the Anglican Consultative Council and now widely embedded across churches of the Anglican Communion (Zink 2017). As the Anglican Communion website states,

The Five Marks of Mission are an important statement on mission. They express the Anglican Communion's common commitment to, and understanding of, God's holistic and integral mission [...]

The mission of the Church is the mission of Christ

- (1) To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- (2) To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- (3) To respond to human need by loving service
- (4) To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
- (5) To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth. (Anglican Communion 2020)

Important clarification of the definition occurred through the MISSIO report of 2000. It showed that the first mark of mission, identified at ACC-6 in 1984 with personal evangelism, is now recognized as

a summary of what *all* mission is about, because it is based on Jesus' own summary of his mission (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:14–15; Luke 4:18; Luke 7:22; cf. John 3:14–17). Instead of being just one (albeit the first) of five distinct activities, this should be the key statement about *everything* we do in mission. (MISSIO 2000: 19, original emphasis)

This insight adjusted the meaning of the Five Marks as a whole. They were no longer seen as just describing different church activities but as descriptions of ways God's people participate in the coming of Christ's kingdom. The christological foundation of the Marks, made clear by the introductory sentence, is now supplemented with an indication of their eschatological goal. In other words, they are marks of an integral mission that comes from God in Christ and leads to his eschatological kingdom, in which Anglicans participate in a variety of ways. This includes environmental concern and action as well as responding to the needs of individual people and societies.

This perspective also incorporates worship within mission, because worship also proclaims the gospel: 'An important feature of Anglicanism is our belief that worship is central to our common life. But worship is not just something we do alongside our witness to the good news: worship is itself a witness to the world' (MISSIO 2000: 19). The proclamation of the kingdom, which summaries all the Marks, therefore happens through worship as much as in other activities:

each time we celebrate the eucharist, we proclaim Christ's death until he comes (1 Cor. 11.26). Our liturgical life is a vital dimension of our mission calling; and although it is not [explicitly] included in the Five Marks, it undergirds the forms of public witness listed there. (MISSIO 2000: 19)

From 2010 onwards, the Five Marks of Mission became ubiquitous across the Anglican Communion and beyond. They have given Anglicanism a practicable theological definition of mission that is used at many different levels and in different ways.

Since ACC-16 this focus on mission has found particular expression in the Season of Intentional Discipleship, an initiative planned to run from ACC-16 to ACC-19 in 2026, described as a growing movement across the whole communion ‘to encourage *every* Anglican and *every* Anglican Church to live, love and be like Jesus – in *every* part of life – for the sake of the whole creation and to the glory of God’ (Anglican Communion 2016: original emphasis). This was re-affirmed at ACC-17 in 2019. It expresses a growing missiological unity in Anglican ecclesial life that counteracts division over human sexuality.

## **6.4 Contemporary Anglican theologians**

In recent decades, Anglican theology has developed not only through corporate ecclesial life but through the work of notable Anglican theologians who have advanced understanding of the place of ecclesial life in theological method and authority. While these theologians have not generally set out to construct a confessional Anglican theology, their work has contributed to Anglican theological understanding of its ecclesial life in many provinces and so needs to be included here.

It is important first to recognize that, as in previous centuries, Anglican theologians have contributed to many other areas of theological enquiry, from biblical to historical, sociological and philosophical studies, work which falls beyond the purview of this article. Similarly there have been notable contributions to African, Asian, and Latin American theological perspectives from theologians who are Anglicans, building on the ground breaking work of figures like John Mbiti of Kenya, John S. Pobee of Ghana, and Jesse Mugambi of Kenya. Once again, however, this work falls beyond the purview of this article.

Those who have advanced theological understanding of Anglican ecclesial life have generally combined conservative and radical themes. From the conservative end of the spectrum, representing a form of evangelicalism present in the Global South as well as the North, often reading scripture in a literal way and upholding traditional morals, not least in sexual ethics, figures such as John Stott and John I. Packer should be mentioned, the latter seeing the historic formularies and especially the Thirty-Nine Articles as defining Anglican doctrine in relation to other church traditions (Packer 1984). More recent theologians who have some ties with this conservative school but have developed it in creative ways would include Ephraim Radner who has written on ecclesiology and much else (see, for example, Radner and Turner 2006). In the field of ethics and political ethics, Oliver O’Donovan is recognized as having made an exceptional and abiding contribution (see, for example, O’Donovan 2005).

Others seek to respond to the insight of postmodernism that truth cannot be established just by reasoned argument. Sarah Coakley, for example, looks to a renewal of mystical theology, especially through grounding theology in prayer and worship, and in feminist perspectives, as the place in which theological understanding can be brought to life (Coakley 2002). Radical orthodoxy, beginning with John Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory* (second edition 2006), and developed through the work of Graham Ward and Catherine Pickstock, among others, critiques the narrative of modernity describing it as just one narrative among many. Instead, it argues that the church should recover a sense of self-confidence in its own narrative and develop its own theology rooted in the practices and rituals of the believing Christian community. Radical orthodoxy is theologically conservative but progressive on issues of sexuality.

Other theologians agree that theology must be based on God's revelation through the Christian community but, unlike in radical orthodoxy, they engage in sustained dialogue across disciplines. Kathryn Tanner has emphasized the complex relationship between theology, culture, and political expression and, from this, has developed a Christocentric systematic theology (Tanner 2001). Katherine Sonderegger is currently writing a systematic theology drawing on Karl Barth and, behind him, Aquinas, and engaging in creative exegesis of scripture, while also being in dialogue with contemporary ethics (e.g. Sonderegger 2015).

Dialogue with science has also been a rich seam for Anglican theology, pioneered by three Anglican scientists turned theologians, Ian Barbour, Arthur Peacocke, and John Polkinghorne. Two theologians have constructed from this dialogue multi-volume systematic theologies. Keith Ward, initially drawing on the concepts of idealist philosophy (e.g. Ward 1994) has, more recently, integrated insights from science and theology (e.g. Ward 2008). Alister McGrath, another scientist turned theologian, has also developed an extensive systematic theology in dialogue with science, responding to challenges from Darwinism (see Theology and Evolution) and other areas of research (e.g. McGrath 2001). Many others could be mentioned.

It is important also to recognize ways in which postcolonial theology have contributed to Anglican theology. One of the most significant is Kwok Pui-Lan, born in Hong Kong and currently based in the US. Recipient of an award from the Archbishop of Canterbury in 2021 for an outstanding contribution to Asian feminist and postcolonial theology rooted in Anglican ecclesiology, she argues against the inadequacies of traditional feminist theology which has not recognized the experience of non-white women or the effects of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and slavery (Pui-Lan 2005). She has worked with others to develop postcolonial perspectives in Anglican ecclesial life (Douglas and Pui-Lan 2001).

Finally, ‘in a camp all of his own’ (Markham 2011: 210), Rowan Williams is a theologian who has also held senior roles of leadership in the Anglican Communion including that of Archbishop of Canterbury (2003–2013). His work is difficult to encapsulate in a few words but he clearly emphasizes the importance for theology of learning the language of faith, of being part of the Christian community with its prayer and sacraments, of the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity, and of a literal reading of scripture. He learns from conservative theologians the importance of authority and limits to pluralism. His work recognizes as foundational the conviction that God is revealed in Christ and discovered in scripture. He acknowledges that God is always bigger than the ways we describe him. He is keen to engage with other disciplines and learn from them while insisting on a strong sense of Christian identity within the Church, based on Christ himself. He might here be offering a distinctively Anglican approach to theology. (Markham 2011: 217; see, for example, Williams 2018; see also McMichael 2014).

From these various schools and from earlier work one recent commentator, Scott MacDougall, has characterized Anglican theology as ‘faith seeking wisdom’, a revision of Anselm’s classical definition of theology as ‘faith seeking understanding’. MacDougall has helpfully distilled a set of common features of Anglican theological work,

Anglican theology is a wisdom theology in eight dimensions: its use of scripture, its engagement with the early church, its avoidance of confessionalism, its critical spirit, its emphasis on the pastoral and practical, its rooting in prayer and worship, its incarnationalism, and its typically occasional rather than systematic mode. (MacDougall 2022: 9)

## **Attributions**

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