

The Rev'd Canon Dr. Timothy Connor and The Rev'd Dr. George Sumner
“Toward an Anglican Theology in the Spirit of Windsor”

Abstract

The paper will consider the logical and theological implications of dispersed authority, conciliarism, and the turn to practices for the Anglican polity.

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Toward an Anglican Theology in the Spirit of Windsor

The Revd Canon Dr. Timothy Connor & the Revd Canon Dr. George Sumner

We have all been at clergy breakfasts or diocesan meetings- a phrase like “the nature of Anglicanism” or “Anglican identity” is mentioned and provokes a roll of the eyes or a knowing wink, as if to say “we know how dubious that is.” Along the same lines, consider the popular introduction to the faith called “loving the questions,” as if answers were too constricting, or those who say that they joined the Anglican Church seeking doctrine lite. At that unspoken level of assumptions which say the most about how we see things, they, and we, presume that Anglicanism cannot give a normative and prescriptive account of itself. To be sure, individual Anglicans may have their own answers, thinking what is right in their own eyes, and synods and bishops have legally definable powers, but the question whence the authority for such a normative account is left hanging in mid-air. While there are many reasons for the crisis in which we find

ourselves, this underlying skepticism in our very sense of ourselves is no small factor. So what if the daring act of intellectual challenge, of unmasking hegemony, is actually to ask if it is really so of Anglicanism? To ask if this is really an odd tick we have picked up in modernity?

And as my opening examples exhibited, we take a certain odd pride or enjoyment in this self-doubt. In the last generation of the 20th century, the watershed work in Anglican theology was surely Stephen Sykes' *The Integrity of Anglicanism*.¹ According to Sykes, our self-satisfied skepticism is tied up with a series of trusty slogans- we are the "middle way" church, we are a non-confessional, non-systematic church, we are a comprehensive church, we are the Church of English style and common-sense, we are the *lex orandi* church, and so on. Sykes lets the air out of each of those tires, showing how each feature is not so unique to us, how each lets us off the hard work of thinking and articulating our position, how each led us down a slippery slope toward vacuity. Sykes' work was brilliant, though mainly negative, leaving the Anglican anti-doctrinal monarch in the buff, but not yet re clothed.

To be sure, each of the slogans I mentioned above had, in its origin, some value. But what occurred in Anglicanism from the 17th through the 19th century was a dramatic reversal. For in its original use each slogan was an expression of confidence, namely in the capacity of its theological tradition to know and apply its first principles to its acting and praying (what Aristotle called *phronesis*), to articulate the one faith in a variety of faithful ways, to discern the consequences of central doctrines in matters which are per se incidental, to listen to the past judiciously and gratefully. In other words, those slogans expressed confidence that Anglicanism could give a prescriptive account of itself. But in

¹ Stephen W. Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (London and Oxford: A. R. Mowbray, 1978).

the wake of the great sea-change that modernity brought, in both its rationalism and its romanticism, these slogans came to convey the very opposite. Consider one of the most telling examples of this, the Righter trial decision a few years ago in the Episcopal Church. The verdict was ostensibly an affirmation of the universal and binding nature of “core doctrine,” but, according to the verdict, this core find ever-changing expression in all doctrinal statements, so that even the creeds serve as a kind of receding horizon before which application and prescription become virtually impossible. The examples could be multiplied. This loss of doctrinal nerve has at least two features: first a sense that this is somehow determined in Anglicanism’s very DNA (hence the slogans), and secondly a sense that in our age of historical consciousness-come-of-age, one context cannot dictate to another. All these phenomena share a moral and intellectual relativism. They all share that historicism which supposes that all claims are just confections of their context on one long, grey day. In the empty foreground so defined there is only process, shared activity (what someone like John Booty called “orthopraxy”), and, of course, power.

If you are thinking that I am exaggerating the extent of skepticism and relativism in our relation to doctrine, consider for a moment what many consider to be the next doctrinal wave liable to hit our shore, religious pluralism. Are we prepared formally to reject Hickian assertions that all major religions are comparable roads up the mountain? To present bishops and clergy who espouse it? My guess is that this too is seen by many as an open question. And yet we claim that, in contrast to the present crisis, only in cases of “core doctrine” can we enforce discipline, we who imagine ourselves “the religion of the incarnation.” But the incarnation is the prime core doctrine, and it is precisely what is denied in the Hickian case. Our doctrinal protestations turn out to be posturing.

It would of course be a mistake to suppose that our Church leaders stride the earth like latter-day *uebermenschen*, beyond good and evil. Though we may indulge this aura of skepticism, to our credit we fail to live it out. We believe in prescriptive doctrines in Anglicanism more than we suppose, though we may not recognize it. When the issue is apartheid in South Africa or genocide in Rwanda, no one claims that our moral frameworks don't reach that far. We still have ordinands make vows about obedience to our "doctrine and discipline," assuming of course that we have both, and need both, the implication being that if we didn't we would indeed be down to either congregational anarchy or a Nietzschean vision of power. In other words, while we are skeptical about doctrines, we still rely on them as the condition for the possibility of a coherent communal life, though we are reluctant to come clean on that reliance. And the third example I would cite is the practice of the diocesan or national synod, in which many would invest all legitimate authority over against the claims of the wider Church. But if we stop to think about it, we would realize that doubts about Anglican doctrine *per se*, and doubts about the right of one context to assert itself over another, can be turned against a diocese as well. Skepticism, relativism, historicism, and the valorization of autonomy are corrosives that easily get out of hand.

So, as a thought-experiment, could one articulate a prescriptive account of Anglicanism that is generous in spirit, widely appealing, and more solidly grounded than personal whim? We are not claiming that a more positive attitude to doctrine will magically eliminate conflict. But we are claiming that such an articulation could help to assure that the scrum is taking place on the same rugby field. We must be clear that such an account of what we normatively believe as Anglicans should not be in the service of a

view of authority which is imposed from above or concentrated in a single locus of magisterial power. We too are working from an assumption, shared by post-Erastian Anglicanism and articulated since the Lambeth Conference of 1948 (and reinforced by the Virginia Report), that our authority must be “dispersed.” We would do a service if we do nothing else than underline the fact that the Windsor share just such a non-imposed, non-monarchical vision.

Tim will commence with our programmatic outline of prescriptive Anglican doctrine. I want first to prepare the way by making three points. First of all, we need to start with what has in recent years been called “turning the lens.” We are accustomed to an hermeneutic of suspicion applied to traditional doctrinal claims by liberation theologians. What we need is an hermeneutic of suspicion turned on modernist Anglicanism. “Question authority” reads the bumpersticker, the clue to the real genealogy of our allergy. It is no coincidence that our adamant insistence on autonomy in the present debate echoes the key theme in modernist Western culture. I am not saying that authority ought never to be critiqued, nor that autocephalous churches are not a part of our polity. Still, “know thyself” remains sage advice even in the modern era.

Second of all, let us agree on a general description of our tradition, albeit at the most general and formal level. We Anglicans have understood ourselves as “catholic and reformed,” though what that means remains a contested concept. As to our being catholic, which is to say universal, it means at least that we cannot be content simply to be a Protestant sect, a conventicle, local Congregationalists pure and simple. This also means (and here the challenge is to revisionist and evangelical alike) that the visible church and its structures cannot be demoted to matters of function or convenience alone.

We need, in short, to have a doctrine of the Church. As to our reformed nature, our ecclesiology must include a sense that our Church is “*creatura Verbi*,” a creature of the Word and hence under its critique first and last. Following from this Reformation principle is a preference for as minimalist a structure of authority preservative of unity and integrity in the Gospel.

Thirdly, we need to pause for a moment at the outset and ask what “dispersed authority” really amounts to. On the one hand there are substantive sources of authority (the Bible, creeds, bishops, etc.) These sources are not atomized as separate realities that could be added up numerically, but stand in a certain relationship one to another. They must be seen whole. The scripture is read in the Eucharistic and baptismal fellowship gathered by the bishop, the guardian of the creedal faith. That bishop in turn ministers collegially in relation to his or her peers throughout the oikoumene. This was the patristic vision which we would claim as well. The authorities hang together as a Gestalt, creed and sacrament for the right hearing of the Word, in the matrix of fellowship across space and time. Finally our structures of ecclesial deliberation have borrowed first of all from the democratic tradition of “balance of power” and limits on power, so that different bodies must converge in assent to doctrinal innovation. “Dispersed authority” in sum best refers to a rich, variegated, ordered economy with both coherence and counter-weight. Only as we take all of this into account can we speak adequately of authority in the communion of the Gospel.

It may be useful at this stage to give an example of the sort of account of Anglicanism upon which we would like to ‘turn the lens’, as George has put it. To cite but one highly influential example among many, in its Committee Report on the Anglican

Communion, the Lambeth Conference 1948² said this of its member churches: “These Churches, while preserving Apostolic doctrine and order, are independent in their self-government as integral parts of the Church Universal.” (83) This claim conditions the more centralizing assertion of the Lambeth Conference 1930, cited earlier therein, that the Anglican Communion is “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.” (82) The stark juxtaposition of interdependence and autonomy around which the report is structured is never moved towards resolution, although an awareness of this need is sounded in the Report’s cautionary note that the churches of the Communion “are not independent in any divisive sense, but are interlocked by ties that bind them one to the other in a single faith and order, in a common loyalty to our Lord and Master, and in an agreed purpose in world evangelization.” (86-87) Upon this oscillating emphasis on independence and communion an account of authority-in-communion is constructed. It describes Catholic Christianity (of which Anglicanism is taken to be a subset, albeit with due recognition of its reformed character) by analogy with “scientific method” as “an organic process of life and thought in which religious experience has been, and is, described, intellectually ordered, mediated and verified.” (85) The Report then moves away somewhat abruptly to furnish a historical sketch of the growth and organization of the Communion and sketches the outline of a policy for its institutional and missional life.

² See *The Lambeth Conference 1948: The Encyclical Letter from the Bishops; together with Resolutions and Report* (London: S.P.C.K., 1948), 81-94.

Several features of this account call for comment. While there is a strong current of historicism funding its description of Anglicanism there seems also to be a kind of counter-stream which ascribes a measure of necessity to developments which are strictly contingent. Is it the case that Anglican Churches must embody the patterns of governance that obtain in the post-colonial history of the British Commonwealth or is this an accident of the devolution of empire, and one which imperils the *koinonia* of the church?³ Second, the historicist stream imposes its own constraints on the way and extent to which properly theological concerns can be introduced. Why is it not apparent to the Lambeth Fathers that as an *ecclesiological* concept ‘autonomy’ itself fairly cries out for a critique grounded in Scripture and Tradition? Third, from the vantage point of the crisis which has led to the work of the Lambeth Commission on Communion and its *Windsor Report* this kind of description of Anglicanism looks simply like a conceptual restatement of its problematic identity and authority in historical and juridical terms. What here could possibly fund the ecclesiological imperative ‘*semper reformanda*’, or in the register of Vatican II, ‘*semper purificanda*’? Finally, and by way of anticipation, it must be noted that another voice speaks in Lambeth 48’s Committee Reports, surprisingly perhaps, in its work on “The Church and the Modern World.”⁴ Here, in an overtly missional context in which the church turns from its self-preoccupation towards the “broken, chaotic and disheartened world” (26) to which it is sent, a more substantial theological articulation of the Church begins to take shape. Here we have at least a

³ The date of this conference and its resolutions and reports is fraught with ecclesiological significance in relation to such themes as the post World War II context, the ecumenical movement, and the end of Empire.

⁴ See especially Part VI, *The Lambeth Conference 1948*, 26-28.

glimpse of a doctrine of the church which on theological grounds might be more adequately critical and constructive in force.

Taking our cue from the reorientation which such a missional approach affords, we now outline a set of theological convictions in which our construal of Anglican self-understanding is grounded. We have time enough to outline these convictions in thesis form with only the briefest elucidations. We will then proceed in the sections which follow to signal their implications and applications.

Thesis One: The ecclesial character of Anglican self-understanding, ministry and mission must be clearly established by means of sustained, informed theological enquiry.

In the last half-century a great deal of energy has been poured into the attempt to establish a coherent account of Anglicanism, primarily in terms of a theory of comprehensiveness. That is, a series of attempts has been made to locate highly diverse, competing and even contradictory self-descriptions of Anglicanism within the same church under the hegemonic banner of a liberal or broad church inclusiveness. We propose that the direction of these accounts be reversed and that each of these ‘Anglicanisms’ be challenged to set forth a coherent rationale for their claim to be the church, i.e., to lay bare the grounds of the repeated Anglican assertion that the churches of its communion embody the unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church of Jesus Christ. In other words, we propose that the task before us is not so much to establish *what* makes us Anglican as to furnish reasons *why* Anglicans may rightly lay claim to being the church. Put another way, the issue is not *the fact* that Anglicans of

very diverse understandings and practice of the Christian faith find themselves in the same church but *on what grounds* they may rightly claim to do so. To address this challenge Anglicans will have to recognize that historical accounts of the growth and development of the Communion and appeals to such features of its institutional life as the constitutions and canons of its member churches are insufficient to the task. Attention simply must be given to ecclesiology, even of a decidedly systematic and theological kind, however much it currently languishes in disarray.

Thesis Two: The church as communion is pneumatologically, hence Christologically and Trinitarianly, determined.

In this statement we propose if not a second reversal at least a clarification. The Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission's *Virginia Report* (1996) centres its ecclesiological project on 'the Trinitarian faith' in such a way as to construe the unity and koinonia of the church by analogy with the unity and koinonia of the triune life of God:

"It believes that the unity of the Anglican Communion derives from the unity given in the triune God, whose inner personal and relational nature is communion. This is our centre. This mystery of God's life calls us to communion in visible form. This is why the Church is called again and again to review and reform the structures of its life together, so that they nurture and enable the life of communion in God and serve God's mission in the world." (TVR, 1.11, 233)

This approach to the koinonia of the church courts two kinds of danger. The first is that it may supplant the mystery of salvation in which the church has its origin and *telos* with a metaphysics of communion in which that which is proper to the being of the triune God is predicated *tout court* of the church, thus blurring the distinction between Creator and creature. In its enthusiasm to root the church's communion in the inner life of God it

seems to forget that analogy wraps a similarity between two entities within an even greater dissimilarity. The second is that the church may be tempted to view koinonia as a divine endowment entrusted into its possession once and for all and hence subject to its powers of deployment. Such misunderstandings, as Philip Turner (*The Fate of Communion*) has pointed out, render inexplicable the ruptures of communion which have assailed the church from its origins to the present day.⁵

By contrast, taking our cue from the apostolic greeting under which our eucharistic assemblies are convened, we propose that our theology of ecclesial communion be articulated first of all in terms of the agency of the Holy Spirit. Indeed *The Virginia Report* itself underscores the work of the Holy Spirit in creating, empowering, unifying and sending forth the church in mission (TVR, 2.11; 2.17). As Nicholas Healy recently put it, “the Spirit’s working is the church’s *conditio sine qua non*.”⁶ The very being, activity and communion of the church are impossible apart from the working of the Holy Spirit. Yet by this work it is as the body of Christ that the Holy Spirit constitutes the church. It is by the working of the Holy Spirit that Christians confess that Jesus is Lord, are incorporated into the dying and rising of Christ in baptism, united with Christ in the eucharist and seated with Christ in the heavenly places as an anticipation of the final consummation of the age to come. By the working of the Holy Spirit the several members are united to Christ, the head of the body, given gifts for ministry in his service and sanctified in that radical holiness which is the life of Christ in us. The Holy Spirit

⁵ Philip Turner, “The Virginia Report: How Firm a Foundation?,” 165-97 in Ephraim Radner and Philip Turner (eds.), *The Fate of Communion: The Agony of Anglicanism and the Future of a Global Church* (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2006).

⁶ Nicholas M. Healy, “‘By the Working of the Holy Spirit’: The Crisis of Authority in the Christian Churches,” *Anglican Theological Review* 88, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 6.

governs or rules the church by leading it into the truth which is Christ himself. In Christ, the Son with whom the Father is well pleased, the church is elect, the object of the Father's love. As Archbishop Rowan Williams' writes, "We are given by the Holy Spirit the authority and the privilege to say 'our Father' because of the one God who is next to the Father's heart in whom is the one way to fellowship with the Father and participation in the life of God."⁷ And so it is through the mystery of salvation in Christ in the power of the Spirit that the church participates in the life of the triune God and in the mission of the Son sent into the world. To this we must add that it is by the working of the Holy Spirit that the church is also convicted of sin, of disobedience, of refusal of the word.⁸

On this more dynamic account grounded in and expressive of the activity of the triune God in the economy, the church's unity-in-communion can be more adequately conceived as both divine gift and ecclesial task. The construction of a theological ecclesiology along these lines is a task still to be taken up by competent authority within the Anglican Communion. Such a doctrine of the church, we might add, will be shaped by the working of the Holy Spirit in the direction of Christ, looking to him in whom we participate in God's life. We can only note here that significant resources for this work can be found in our Anglican tradition in the writings of Michael Ramsey, Donald MacKinnon and Rowan Williams, among others.

To sum up, to this point we are proceeding in the spirit of *The Windsor Report* in claiming that the church as communion, as that life which we have in common, which we

⁷ Rowan Williams, "One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church: the Archbishop's Address to the 3rd Global South of South Encounter" 28th October, 2005, available at http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/sermons_speeches/2005/051028.htm

⁸ In this light critical attention is demanded by the concluding pages of Bishop John Howe's *Highways & Hedges: Anglicanism and the Universal Church* (London: CIO Publishing, 1985), 214-16.

share and in which we participate, is the gift of the triune God and the task or vocation of all its members. The church's communion thus precedes conditions and constrains the autonomy of its constituent parts. Or to put it the other way round, the autonomy of the churches is ordered to and bounded by its nature and mission as communion.

Paragraphs 49 and 50 of *The Windsor Report* give expression to the crisis which our theology of communion must now address. Communion, it says, is mutual relationship resting upon and built up by a set of shared beliefs, practices and dispositions. Communion “subsists in visible unity, common confession of the apostolic faith, common belief in scripture and the creeds, common baptism and shared eucharist, and a mutually recognized common ministry.” (WR, §49) This insistence on visible unity and a common life collides with the stark recognition of the new fact of Anglican life, namely ‘impaired’, ‘fractured’, or ‘restricted’ communion both within and among its churches, expressed in the sad recognition, “Communion is now ‘less full than it was’.” (WR, §50). This latest evidence of the humiliation of the church must in turn be set within the accelerating fragmentation of the Western Church and the perduring schism between East and West.

How might this fissiparous direction be reversed in favour of restored and renewed communion? By way of response our first thesis calls attention in the spirit of Windsor (§53) to the ecumenical theological invitation of the Lambeth Quadrilateral (1988).

Thesis One: The Lambeth Quadrilateral identifies four interrelated elements of ecclesial communion on which sustained, informed theological reflection must take place: Scripture, Creeds, Sacraments and Orders.

With Windsor we understand these four items to be essential bonds of ecclesial communion and urge sustained theological scrutiny of the ways in which, in concert with the working of the Holy Spirit, they foster communion among the whole people of God. In keeping with the notion of distributed or dispersed authority urged by Lambeth 1948 we agree that the vocation to communion is vested in the shared reading of Scripture in the baptismal and eucharistic fellowship gathered by the bishop, the guardian of creedal faith, as George signalled earlier. Our point at this stage is purely formal and underscores the need for renewed commitment to this work as an *ecclesial* task.

Thesis Two: Scripture stands in a relation of asymmetry to Creeds, Sacraments and Orders; it is supreme and sufficient in matters of Christian doctrine and practice.

Here with the Lambeth Quadrilateral and with Windsor (§53) we want to qualify the highly influential claim of the Lambeth Report of 1948 in which Scripture is portrayed as but one among many elements “which combine, interact with, and check each other; these elements together contributing by a process of mutual support, mutual checking, and redressing of errors or exaggerations to the many-sided fullness of the authority which Christ has committed to His Church” (85) by moving in the direction of its clearer recognition that Scripture “remains the ultimate standard of faith” which “should be continually interpreted in the context of the Church’s life” (85). That this latter imperative has indeed been heeded, albeit, certainly, in very diverse ways, down the centuries of Anglican history, has been amply demonstrated by Rowan Greer in his recent *Anglican Approaches to Scripture*.⁹ As a bond or instrument of communion scripture can never be simply taken as read or relegated to the sidelines in any dispute or interpreted in such a way as to render it, or treat it as, inert. It is basic to ecclesial life such that

⁹ Rowan A. Greer, *Anglican Approaches to Scripture: From the Reformation to the Present* (New York: Crossroad Publishing (Herder & Herder, 2006).

attentive and obedient hearing of the Word is enjoined on all the faithful always and everywhere.

Thesis Three: Scripture and Sacraments, insofar as they render the death-resurrection of Jesus Christ apprehensible to faith, stand together inextricably.

While Scripture is basic, sufficient and supreme, it does not stand alone. It is inalienably related to the dominical sacraments of baptism and eucharist in which the saving mystery of Christ's death and resurrection are made present to faith. Indeed, apart from the empowering Word sacraments are inert and ineffective. Yet Scripture lacks embodiment where hearers of the Word are not made regenerate by water and the Spirit and incorporated into the Church, the body of Christ and assembled round the table of the Word and the table of his body and blood. We want to underline together with the reformed Catholic tradition of our church that by the working of the Holy Spirit Christ is ordinarily present in his Church in and as Word and Sacrament.

Thesis Four: The Creeds as distillations of the Church's understanding of the gospel form the interpretative matrix of Scripture in communion.

This statement identifies Holy Scripture as the generative matrix from within which creedal affirmations have been articulated. Across time and place, and therefore the diversity of cultures, by the working of the Holy Spirit the church has come to a common mind about Jesus Christ, hence about God and the Spirit and the multifarious acts of God in the creation and redemption of the world. At the same time it indicates the usefulness of the creeds in guiding our interpretation of the canonical writings as attested by longstanding Anglican insistence of the placement of these confessions in its liturgical texts in relation to, and as an integral part of, the proclamation of the Word. It also must be said that in a church where the gospel itself is a contested concept, the creeds anchor

our understanding of what it means to proclaim that ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself’. However, in keeping with our second thesis, creedal confession can never be allowed to supplant the reading and hearing of Scripture nor obviate the need for more profound understanding of God’s Word. It bears repeating – the church can never simply take Scripture as read, to act as if the hearing of the Bible were already behind it.

Thesis Five: The ministry of bishops, presbyters and deacons serves the gospel in communion in the right ordering of Christian doctrine and practice.

It may well nauseate, if not anger you, that we do not mention here the majority order of Christian ministers, namely the baptized, the *laos*. Suffice it to say that our understanding of orders is at root Augustinian; *with* the baptized, bishops, presbyters and deacons are simply Christians, equal members of the church of the brothers and sisters gathered by the working of the Holy Spirit in one Lord Jesus Christ. *For* them, however, for the baptized these three orders in their distinct ways are meant to serve the gospel for the sake of the whole church and the world for which it exists. In their respective ways all three orders are called and charged to preside at the table of the Word, at the table of the Lord and at the table of the world. In keeping with our second and third theses, the renewal of the episcopate and presbyterate is one of the most pressing tasks in the recovery of ‘communion competence’. It is only capitulation to very weak notions of ‘historical necessity’ in the evolution of the tasks of office that keep bishops and presbyters from becoming truly ‘ecclesial persons’, living icons of word and sacrament.

It is evident that this highly programmatic, even schematic, set of commitments is only the skeletal structure of what we mean by communion – that ‘epicletic’ *ekklesia*

which in worship, mission and ministry comes into being and is sustained in being by the invocation and gift of the Holy Spirit. George will now offer a set of comments designed to set these bare bones in the context of ecclesial practice.

I hope you noticed that Tim has given a normative theological account of what a Christian Church is- addressing matters like Trinity, Christ, Spirit, Scripture, and so on. For what we aim to be is a community of Christians. And yet his mode of setting out this universal reality is an Anglican one; consider in particular his construal of the Lambeth Quadrilateral and the role give to the threefold office. Sound discussions of identity are like that, namely accounts of what we are for, what we are about, along the road to which our own calling and distinctive features come clear. I once heard Adrian Hastings, the church historian, say that discussions of identity reminded him of adolescents in front of a mirror. Tim's account was not like that, but rather told what being Church means, and told it in an Anglican way.

Another way of saying this is that any account of normative Anglican doctrine must locate itself in relation to what is beyond itself. That is how we who as relational beings go about defining ourselves. The trouble with much modern Anglican theology, like modern theology in general, is that the surroundings it reached for were simply the beliefs and prejudices of modern culture.

We now turn to the application of our ideas to the practical live of the church: beliefs such as we have presented lead to what kind of church, and what kind of church in turn conduces to them? Each of my answers will involve placing the church in the very

midst of some much wider and more comprehensive, more “catholic”, setting than just Anglicanism per se. The first application is clear, for we are all accustomed to growing Biblical illiteracy of our churches. If you read Richard Hooker, you will find that one distinctive feature of Anglicanism for him is what we might call “Scriptural immersion.” He, and Anglicanism in general, understood the offices, Morning and Evening Prayer, redesigned to be available to and formative of lay people, to be an opportunity simply to hear the whole of the Scripture over the course of a year. While the whole village gathering at the ringing of the bell for Evensong may not be realistic, some means to this immersion can take place is essential. Where this immersion is absent, where we do not live devotionally with the Scriptures, our primary relationship becomes one of critique and distance, and this necessarily distorts what the Scriptures are for the Church.

The ground of which a theologically renewed Anglicanism can grow also involves a more vigorous process of catechesis. The doctrinally-thin, normative-allergic Anglicanism we know is not some unique identity of ours, but to a significant extent the result of our failure to convey the faith. Unlike Catholics, Jews, or evangelicals in our culture, we do not have the powerful formational tool of schools. Confirmation class, youth group, and inquirers’ sessions are uneven in their effectiveness, and we are reticent to teach. Summer camp and IV prayer fellowship are powerful sources of formation in devotion. But we still need more intensely and persistently to teach the content of the faith once delivered.

But how are we to understand ourselves as teachers of the faith, we who are to be the rabbis, the exegetes, the chief catechists of our parishes? The answer is as disciples of Christ, and as apprentices of His Church. Here we come to the second encompassing

matrix in which we must think and act. One of the deepest prejudices of modernity is its hostility to tradition, to the inherited. All must be doubted, all secured by our own efforts. But we must understand ourselves as apprentices to the great tradition of Christian teaching. To be sure, that tradition has often been an on-going argument, but at least the disputants shared a common field in which to contend. In the last century evangelicals and catholics fought over baptismal regeneration, but in their struggle they shared assumptions about Christ and the Spirit and grace and heaven. This assumption, this “preferential option”, for the tradition, is native to traditional Anglicanism too, not only in doctrine but in practice as well. If in doubt, says Hooker, where there is no consensus but rather controversy, our inclination must be for the long-standing practice, for the accumulated prudential wisdom of the tradition: let those with ears hear! All of this means that we too must work out our theology in our own day with the same spirit of apprenticeship, to be sure not without critical engagement, with our own Anglican theological forebears, with the moderate Augustinianism of Cranmer’s Prayer Book, with the evangelical sacramentalism of Wesley, with the “post-modern” catholic ruminations of Newman.

It was part of Newman’s strategy, like other Anglican authors, to appeal back to an era of ecumenical consensus, in particular a consensus to be found in the patristic period. This appeal provides precisely the agreement that can bound and undergird disagreements in theology. In a similar vein, in our time, I would counsel that we look to the surprising doctrinal convergences which may be found ecumenically. Lutherans and Roman Catholics find a common mind on justification, one of the incendiary issues of the Reformation. The greatest energy and creativity in recent years has been found in

retrieval of the traditional doctrine of the Trinity. Scholars of many denominations make headway as they think through theological questions in a way which does not deny or sidestep historical criticism, but which still thinks *with* the grain of creed and Scriptural canon. This post-critical Nicene consensus, represented by publications like *Pro Ecclesia*, forms the most promising matrix for theology, within which Scripture is taken seriously and given authority in a manner at which cannot be leveled any charge of fundamentalism or luddism.

Let us return once more to Newman. But in his final despair about the coherence of Anglican authority he, from his mid-19th century perspective, could not see one possible feature of Anglican authority: the councils of the church. This “catholic” dimension of emergent Anglicanism forms the third wider circle in which we must live and think as Anglicans of the future. Ephraim Radner, in his recent and brilliant *The Fate of Communion*, has spoken of a “conciliar economy” in which love is expressed in good Pauline fashion by the constraint of the claim of our brother or sister church.¹⁰ Finally we can think about authority in a fuller sense, Scripture and the other elements of the Quadrilateral lived out in a real communion of churches with a mutual claim one on another. This is the real heart of the vision of the *Windsor Report*, a real summons back to a catholic vision of ecclesial life from the truncation of modernist autonomy. We have third of all to think of ourselves as catholic, conciliar Christians, the true expression of the globalism our age pines for.

¹⁰ Ephraim Radner, “Conciliarity and the American Evasion of Communion” in Ephraim Radner and Philip Turner, *The Fate of Communion*, 220-40.

