

Question 1: What is that makes an approach to biblical authority and biblical interpretation distinctively Anglican?

Contributors

Gordon Jeannes

I am a parish priest in Wandsworth, London, having kept a close link between the parish and academic work throughout my ministry. As well as parish work in London I taught Liturgy in Durham University while a chaplain there, and Church History, Liturgy and New Testament Greek in the University of Wales, Cardiff where I was vice principal of St Michael's College, Llandaff. Most of my writing has been in liturgical studies, usually in historical liturgy including *The Day has Come: Baptism and Easter in Zeno of Verona* and *Signs of God's Promise: Thomas Cranmer's Sacramental Theology and the Book of Common Prayer*. These studies have immersed me in patristic and Reformation studies, and in the context of the latter I remember meeting Ashley in Cambridge and am delighted now to be back in touch! As well as my own writing (when the parish permits) I am secretary of the Alcuin Club which is a liturgical publishing society.

Ashley Null

I am Canon Theologian for the Diocese of Western Kansas, although I am resident full-time in Berlin at Humboldt University where I have a research position funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft to edit Cranmer's personal papers for Oxford University Press.

Being resident in the Europe, I have assisted Bishop Whalon as the academic advisor for the European Institute for Christian Studies of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches, although I am currently on sabbatical from that commitment to finish a book for the Cranmer project. I am also scheduled to be made a canon of All Saints Cathedral, Cairo, for, appropriately, their Thomas Cranmer stall. In that capacity, I will be assisting with seminars at the Fifth Global South Encounter in 2015. I have also spoken at the two GAFCON conferences.

My research focus is Thomas Cranmer, having completed a PhD at Cambridge under Diarmaid MacCulloch. In addition to the grant from the DFG, my work has been awarded fellowships by the Fulbright Association, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Episcopal Church Foundation and the Conant Fund as well as the Scaife-Anderson Fund of the Episcopal Church.

I'm also a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and the Royal Historical Society.

Although never having served as a full-time lecturer, I teach in various adjunct capacities in Anglican seminaries around the Communion, including Trinity and Virginia Theological (Trotter Visiting Professor) in the USA; Wycliffe College, Toronto; St. John's College, Durham, and St. Mellitus in the UK; Moore, Ridley and St. Mark's in Australia; the Center for Pastoral Studies, Santiago, Chile; and the Alexandria School of Theology, Uganda Christian University and George Whitefield College, Cape Town, in Africa.

Finally, for pastoral activity, I am a veteran chaplain at the Olympic Games, including most recently 2012 in London.

Chuck Robertson

I am Canon to the Presiding Bishop & Primate of The Episcopal Church, having previously served as Canon to the Ordinary in the Diocese of Arizona. I also am Distinguished Visiting Professor at the General Theological Seminary, where I teach one class each semester, having previously taught years ago as a part-time professor of communications, religion and ethics at Georgia College & State University. I serve on the boards of the Anglican Theological Review, the Day 1 radio & online program, the Center for Biblical Study, as well as being an active member of the Society for Biblical Literature and the Anglican Association of Biblical Scholars. I earned a Ph.D. from Durham University under James D. G. Dunn, and have written or edited over a dozen books (including the upcoming "Barnabas vs. Paul: To Encourage or Confront?" through Abingdon Press), and also serve as General Editor of the "Studies in Episcopal & Anglican Theology" series.

Round 1

Gordon Jeannes

There is no space here to cover the ways in which the Anglican tradition shares a view of the Bible with other Christian traditions. But at a basic level Anglicans have not generally followed fundamentalist approaches, but they have seen the Bible as bringing us to Jesus Christ who is the true Word of God. A few thoughts follow:

A liturgical foundation to reading the Bible

Liturgical worship has occupied the centre of the reformed Church in England from the beginning. It might have been simply insufficient numbers of reform-minded preachers that led Cranmer to spearhead his reforms with a revised liturgy, but the effect is with us today.

The Bible took a central role in this revised liturgy. For the Eucharist Cranmer was content to use the Missal's readings with minimal changes, but Morning and Evening Prayer had at their core the recital of the psalms over each month and the reading of the Bible chapter by chapter so that the Old Testament was covered once and the New Testament three times each year. Of course some passages were omitted, but the coverage was broad, and that has continued to the present day. Even if current Anglican versions of Daily Prayer have shortened the readings and these services are attended by very few, the clergy and theologians of the Anglican Communion are formed by extensive reading of scripture. The lectionary leads them to cover the congenial and the difficult, and commits them repeatedly to re-learn and revise what they thought they had previously understood and inhabited.

Probably it is largely for this reason that Anglicans resist the tendency to create a 'canon within the canon' such as can happen in other Churches of the Reformation, with an emphasis on the Pauline epistles and a distrust of the Pastorals which accept a more 'Catholic' ordering of the Church. But for Anglicans in an episcopally ordered Church this feels comfortably familiar!

An emphasis on tradition rather than confessional documents or teaching authority

One of the distinctive elements of the Bible in the Anglican tradition is best described by a negative: compared with other traditions there is a low profile played by authoritative doctrinal statements or by a teaching authority. In other Churches these sit next to scripture and define the Church. In Anglicanism the Thirty Nine Articles are very general and there is no institution like the Papacy, while the changes through the first generations of the reformed Church of England prevented the establishment of a single teaching tradition. This has grown into the breadth that marks the Anglican Communion today, and a common identity, at least until recently, tied up with the use of a family of Prayer Books. Colin Podmore observes that in the Church of England Declaration of Assent a newly ordained or instituted cleric promises to use liturgies which are

authorised or allowed by canon, whereas in continental Protestant churches the promise is to preach in accordance with the confessional documents.¹

The absence of a high profile confessional document in the sixteenth century and the moderate reforms of that period led Anglican apologists to emphasise its continuity, not with the Middle Ages which were associated with various corruptions, but with the ancient Church of the Fathers. A classic example is the saying of Lancelot Andrewes: 'One canon reduced to writing by God himself, two testaments, three creeds, four general councils, five centuries, and the series of Fathers in that period ... determine the boundary of our faith'. This emphasis has likewise survived to the present day, and undergirds an acceptance of the role of the Church in framing scripture and formulating the creeds. We might compare the positive approach of the 1976 ARCIC statement on authority (para.16) with the Lutheran-Reformed conversations in the CPCE document *Scripture-Confession-Church* which emphasise a distance between scripture and creeds on one side and Church 'tradition' on the other (para 6, pp.10-11). John Barton points out that the early Church spoke more about the 'canon of truth' than the canon of Scripture: a framework in which scripture and church teaching are understood.² And so Anglicans are more likely to see a continuity through Church, tradition, scripture to the revelation of God in Christ. But also it holds within it a doctrinal reserve: dogmas should not be defined unnecessarily.

An emphasis on 'reason'

While there is little emphasis on authority besides the Bible itself, there is a high emphasis in Anglicanism on 'reason' or 'sound learning'. It is largely associated with Richard Hooker with his aversion to claiming scriptural authority for every facet of Church life. Hensley Henson wrote: 'The principle of the English Reformation was not so much sound learning as such – for every Christian apologist claimed for his own church the support of sound learning – but a frank acceptance of sound learning as competent to revise the current tradition, both in interpreting afresh the sacred text, and by certifying through independent research the true verdict of Christian antiquity.'³ The last part is often forgotten: while Anglicans have not always been in the forefront of historical research or theological exploration, there has traditionally been a confidence that the historical record will bear scrutiny and that good thinking will win over bad without censorship or control. As for 'interpreting afresh the sacred text', there are many instances of ideas or ethical standpoints which were formerly novel or suspect but now are taken for granted as valid expressions of a Bible-based Christianity, from the Reformation debates over justification or eucharistic theology to the banning of slavery and redefinition of usury.

There is no shortcut process of discernment, and Rowan Williams describes Michael Ramsey's approach to any clash between the Christian tradition and contemporary culture: 'For a theologian to try to test the integrity of his or her world of religious discourse requires a fundamental commitment to that world as deserving of attention ...

¹ *Aspects of Anglican Identity*, Church House Publishing 2005, p.57.

² *People of the Book? The authority of the Bible in Christianity*, 3rd edn SPCK 2011, pp.31-32.

³ *The Church of England*, CUP 1939, p.59; quoted by Paul Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church*, T&T Clark 2nd edn 2002, p.336.

just as much as it demands an attention to the forms of social construction and the cultural voices that currently prevail.⁴ This is not mere cultural relativism; Ramsey places the Catholic Church ‘before the Church door at Wittenburg to read the truth by which she is created and by which also she is judged’.

A rich approach to scripture

A reserve about dogmatic definition and a methodology based on the Fathers makes Anglicanism hospitable to a particularly rich approach to the Bible. Lancelot Andrewes is one example of whom TS Eliot famously said, ‘Andrewes takes a word and derives the world from it; squeezing and squeezing the word until it yields a full juice of meaning’. Williams sees BF Westcott as another who ascribed to scripture a quasi-sacramental role in which there is ever more to be discovered. Henry Chadwick said he ‘loved each word as an individual’.⁵ It is about opening scripture up to the richness of its meaning, not closing it down with definitions. Scripture becomes a space to inhabit and explore; this approach is not a great help in controversy but most of our reading of the Bible is not about controversy.

I wish I had more space to develop all this. As it is these thoughts must suffice.

Ashley Noll

I am always deeply suspicious of any attempt to define “the” distinctively Anglican way of reading Scripture. It seems to me that Christian honesty and historical accuracy requires the Communion to admit that there can never be just one “Anglican way” of interacting with the Bible. Despite a Reformation commitment to Scripture, tradition and reason, for centuries the Church of England shifted emphases amongst these three key theological authorities to adapt the Gospel’s proclamation to its changing national cultural context. Because of this heterogeneous heritage, competing groups within Anglicanism often absolutize their own tradition as “the authentic Anglican way” of reading Scripture in order to marginalize the influence of others.

In the era of sixteenth-century Protestant Humanism, the church of Cranmer and Hooker prioritized Scripture as the clear, self-interpreting definitive witness to the essentials of salvation in matters of faith and morals, as summarized in the *Articles of Religion*. However, as good humanists, they also believed that the saving message of Scripture had to be fittingly proclaimed to its Tudor audience. Only a Gospel proclamation that was at once faithful to the Bible’s theology of grace and gratitude as well as culturally relevant to early modern English society would be able to move the people to love and serve God and their neighbour. The scriptural way of salvation had to be inculturated through relevant church structures, liturgies, sermons and aids to personal devotion. Since they believed that such was the mission of every national church in each generation, they looked to Christian tradition to see how others had prayerful proclaimed the Gospel in past contexts for helpful insights to guide their decisions for Tudor England. Naturally, the English Reformers recognized that this twin task of determining the meaning of

⁴ *Anglican Identities*, DLT 2004, p.101

⁵ Williams, *Anglican Identities*, pp.75-86.

Scripture and then effectively applying it to their own context required the use of grace-aided reason.

No strangers to the great diversity of voices within the biblical witness, they taught that the true meaning of Scripture could only be determined by collating its passages with one another to find an inner unity which did not contradict any of the individual passages. Moreover, since Cranmer and Hooker realized that sixteenth-century Christians were no more immune from human frailty which can lead to error than their predecessors, they insisted that once a biblical teaching had been derived through scriptural comparisons, the resultant doctrine still had to be tested against the teachings of the ancient church. No Reformation teaching could be considered valid, if it was completely novel in the tradition.

Collation of scriptural passages determined the English Reformation's understanding of biblical doctrine. Collation of the Reformers' biblical doctrine to that of the ancient church confirmed its validity. One further collation was still needed—analyzing the needs and aspirations of their own culture in the light of both the biblical witness and Christian tradition. The Bible only established the content of the church's saving message, but did not provide a detailed blueprint for its implementation in any given culture, despite such claims by the Puritans. The institutional church through the ages filled the inculturation gap, but its decisions in such matters were not binding on subsequent generations and, in fact, significantly erred, despite the claims of the Roman church to contrary. Neither the Bible nor Christian tradition could determine the most effective means of proclaiming the never-changing Gospel to ever-evolving human societies. As a result, church leaders throughout the ages bore the responsibility to prayerfully, soberly and thoughtfully rethink afresh their structures and strategies of proclamation based on this thorough process of collation. Since the church's mission was to be a herald for its saving message, all of its institutional practices had to be constantly realigned to ensure its effective witness to contemporary society.

Naturally, Cranmer and Hooker realized that all decision-making involved in contemporary Gospel inculturation required human reason. Yet, as Augustinian-influenced sixteenth-century theologians, it would have never occurred to them that natural reason was a reliable, independent source of divine truth on par with Scripture, let alone with sufficient authority to contradict a clear biblical precept. Hooker was quite insistent about this point, despite the ubiquitous, but nonetheless erroneous, depiction of him teaching a 'three-legged stool' of parity between Scripture, tradition and reason. He specifically clarified that when he spoke of reason, he meant 'theological reason', that is, reason formed by being steeped in scriptural collation and whose conclusions remained faithful to biblical teaching. This understanding of Scripture, tradition and reason both lies behind and was expressed in Anglicanism's founding formularies of the *Book of Homilies*, *Book of Common Prayer* and the *Articles of Religion*.

However, in the face of significant cultural and political changes over the course of the next two centuries, the leaders of the Church of England shifted priorities amongst its three theological authorities. In the seventeenth century, the Caroline Divines sought to reshape Anglicanism as a repristination of the beliefs and practices of the undivided

church, free from both medieval Roman and early modern Protestant 'innovations'. Consequently, they derived the interpretation of Scripture from the consensus of the Fathers and theological reasoning had to be in accordance with it as well. In the eighteenth century, the church's leadership increasingly found its inspiration in the prevailing intellectual principles of the Enlightenment. Searching for simplicity in doctrine, such leading thinkers as Archbishop John Tillotson and John Locke appealed to natural reason as the most important theological authority which needed to sift Scripture and tradition to find support for a common morality. Finally, in the nineteenth century, the Church of England was faced with three distinct parties, each looking back to a previous century as justification for its understanding of Anglicanism: low church evangelicals (Sixteenth), high church Anglo-Catholics (Seventeenth) and broad church intellectual progressives (Eighteenth). As a pragmatic compromise in keeping with its establishment and Victorian culture, the Church of England eventually agreed to an uneasy co-existence of the three parties, since the theological streams were ultimately united by their support for a common understanding of biblical morality. When in the twenty-first century the descendents of the nineteenth-century parties came to disagree about fundamental issues of morality, 'the fabric of our Communion' was '[torn] at its deepest level' (Anglican Primates' Meeting 2003).

Since morality is in fact derived from theology, the first step in mending the fabric of the Communion must be to agree to normative ways of reading Scripture that are recognizably Christian by the diverse historic streams within Anglicanism. I believe I have been asked to take part in this dialogue as a representative of Reformation Anglicanism. As such, I would argue that historic Anglicanism's common understanding of the Gospel, as articulated in its classic formularies of the Thirty-Nine Articles, 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* and the two books of Homilies, provide the parameters for authentic Anglican ways of reading Scripture. Whatever method of bible reading an Anglican may use, whether it be *lectio divina*, Reformation collation, patristic consensus, or biblical criticism, its conclusions needs to be in accord with the Christian faith as historically received by this church. Then, in accordance with Article 34, the task of individual provinces remains to incarnate this common Gospel message in their own context. However, since Anglicanism, as a church of the Reformation, has always understood that the institutional church on earth can err, provincial understandings of Gospel inculturation need to be confirmed by the remaining provinces in the Communion to ensure that one province's sincere attempts at cultural accommodation for the sake of mission do not in fact result in a cultural capitulation that impedes every province's witness and work.

Chuck Robertson

When people are asked to define Anglicanism, they usually respond with two images. One is the *via media*, the Middle Way. Put simply, the *via media* refers to a way between two extremes. For example, the sixteenth-century English Reformation intentionally steered a course between the Roman Catholic Church of its time and radical Protestantism on the other. For example, Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Cranmer retained the order of bishops and priests, but allowed them the legal right to marry and have children. He kept the liturgy of the Mass or Holy Eucharist, but changed its language from Latin to English, so as to be understood by the people. He preserved a hierarchical

structure for the Church, but shifted ultimate authority from the pope to the monarch. Far from being easy or indecisive, the Middle Way requires courage, as it is difficult to stand in a place where one is “neither fish nor fowl,” and therefore opposed by intransigents on both sides, certain of their own positions and incapable of hearing any other.

In regards to Holy Scripture, the Anglican *via media* has usually meant avoiding the equally seductive extremes of, on the one hand, an overly literal approach to reading and interpreting biblical texts and, on the other hand, an overly liberal approach to the same. In speaking of literalism, it means reading the text with little consideration of its internal or surrounding context. Questions abound as to how to interpret texts, particularly difficult ones. If not a pope or magisterium, then who shall proclaim with authority what a given passage means: a pastor, congregational elders, each individual believer? What if someone comes up with a different meaning? Wars have been fought and injustices supported by inflexible interpretations of given texts without consideration given to their context. And regarding an overly liberal approach, this refers to positions of incredulity towards the divine inspiration of Scripture, so that biblical texts become simply ancient literature, nice stories, or even dangerous myths.

Besides the *via media*, the other image often used to describe Anglicanism is the so-called three legged stool. Unlike the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, or “scripture alone,” which took hold on the European continent during the Reformation, in England Scripture was viewed as one of three foundational supports, balanced and understood by Tradition and Reason. The late-sixteenth-century theologian Richard Hooker, in his efforts to counter the Puritan movement within the Church of England of this time, spoke at length of how God-given reason is “a necessary instrument without which we could not reap...that fruit and benefit” from Holy Scripture. Along with the inherited wisdom of the past, which is our tradition, reason aids us in understanding what we hear and read in the biblical text.

So, with both the Middle Way between extreme dogmatisms and the importance of reason and tradition as foundational supports, we can begin to outline several key aspects of a distinctively Anglican approach to biblical authority and interpretation.

- 1) An Anglican approach takes Scripture seriously, as God’s Word for us. Far more than just another old book, it is divinely inspired, or as 2 Timothy 3:16 says, “God-breathed.” Thomas Cranmer asserted that the Bible “containeth all things necessary to salvation,” and in the ordination rites of The Episcopal Church found in the *Book of Common Prayer*, those called to be bishops, priests, and deacons affirm that they believe “the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation.” While there is much that we may not know or understand in this earthly life, what we do need to know for our spiritual health and for the redemption of the world is to be found within the pages of Scripture.
- 2) An Anglican approach takes Scripture seriously, as something worth wrestling with and struggling over. One of Cranmer’s collects, or collective prayers, speaks of all the scriptures as being written “for our learning.” The prayer goes on to ask that we may “hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them.” Scripture is not cotton

candy, to be easily swallowed whole, but something to be chewed on and digested. It is far too easy either to take a verse out of context in order to support our own opinions or to react to such overly simplistic readings by dismissing the texts altogether as irrelevant. No, we are called to be scriptural detectives and apply our time and energy to the texts before us.

- 3) An Anglican approach takes Scripture seriously, as a foundation of our worship. Our services are full of the Bible. The first half of the Eucharistic service, the “Liturgy of the Word,” contains readings from the Old Testament, the Psalms, the Epistles, and the Gospels, as well as a sermon based on all or some of the passages read. Beyond this, biblical language and imagery are interwoven throughout the remainder of the liturgy, as well as in our hymns.
- 4) An Anglican approach takes Scripture seriously, as a foundation for faith and conduct. In his preface to the Great Bible of 1540, Cranmer wrote that all types of people “may in this book learn all things that they ought to believe, that they ought to do, and that they should not do.” And so the world’s perennial bestseller is still worth our attention and study. In The Episcopal Church, small group studies, especially in seasons like Lent, continue to thrive in many of our congregations, and laypersons wanting a more ambitious and comprehensive study of the scriptures and the theology that grows out of them can enroll in a four-year Education for Ministry (EFM) class, or utilize resources such as “Bible Challenge,” a program by which individuals and congregations can read through the entire Bible in a systematic way, or Forward Movement’s *Day by Day* devotional, or even the Daily Office and accompanying Lectionary in the *Book of Common Prayer*. *Living the Good News*, *Lectio Divina*, the “Conversations with Scripture Series,” the Day 1 radio sermon program, and many other tools and resources are used by Episcopalians to engage Holy Scripture.
- 5) Finally an Anglican approach takes Scripture seriously, welcoming conversation with others of different opinions while not necessarily agreeing with them. Some Christians from other traditions (and even at times within our own) will refuse even to listen to opposing interpretations of biblical passages, as exemplified in recent years in debates on issues of human sexuality. But listening processes like Continuing Indaba and the Bible in the Life of the Church project are intentional calls to hear and see God in the other, especially when that other differs strongly from us. It does not mean that we will change our minds on a given issue or interpretation—far from it—but rather that in daring to let go of our own infallibility even for a moment, we can experience Holy Scripture in a fresh way through another contextual lens, join in common prayer with one whom we might be tempted to dismiss, and thereby find deeper meaning in Cranmer’s assertion, “To the reading of scripture none can be enemy.”

Round 2

Ashley Null

Dear Reverend Doctors,

I am most grateful for your thoughtful remarks which I have now only read after having already written my statement for you. Let me begin by thanking Stephen, for according to my understanding of the historical development of Anglicanism which I have given you, he has indeed assembled representatives of three classical theological streams in Anglicanism, grounded in the sixteenth (me), seventeenth (Gordon) and eighteenth centuries (Chuck), respectively. Therefore, there is much I recognize as Anglican in both statements, yet there remains elements concerning which I would ask you to give further reflection.

Let me begin with those common themes. Anglicanism has always framed its present self-understanding as the best way of being faithful to its past. Not surprisingly, then, we three have all focused our attention on historical precedent and hermeneutical contextualization as the means for discerning a distinctively Anglican way of reading Scriptures. Most importantly, we have noted the centrality of the lectionary in our inherited pattern of worship. As Anglicans, we are called to sit under the transforming power of Scripture in our daily devotions, that by hearing the old, old story once again of God's love for us, we might be allured afresh into loving God and one another. We agree that this transformation is possible because the Holy Spirit goes forth with God's Word, enabling us to inhabit God's presence, enabling God's presence to inhabit our hearts and minds, enabling us to lead lives increasingly formed in the image of Jesus. We all agree that the devotional power of Scripture to deepen our union with Christ lies at the heart of Anglican bible reading.

Now let me tackle the more awkward, but vitally necessary, discussion of our disagreements. We live in a time of impaired communion across our global fellowship. With charity and honesty, we must not only identify our common aspirations but also our divergences, if only to seek to come to a common understanding of our differences as the first step in resolving them or, at least, living with them. Let me begin with Chuck's essay.

To Chuck Robertson

I am so grateful for Chuck's helpful summary of the metanarrative shaping the theological thinking of the current leadership of the Episcopal church. By boiling down the overarching story through which they interpret Anglicanism to two key phrases, '*via media*' and 'three-legged stool', Chuck has given us a succinct, concrete account which permits direct and vigorous interaction. The key question to ask in the light of his essay is not whether Cranmer was a moderate for his era. He was undoubtedly so. The crucial point is whether he pursued moderation for its own sake or rather was his moderation the product of a principled understanding of how to read the Bible which can still guide Anglicans today.

Unfortunately, in proposing that Cranmer sought a moderate *via media* for its own sake, Chuck has been significantly misled by the Oxford Movement's construal of the Reformation settlement which has now been roundly discredited by contemporary scholarship. The oft told tale of sixteenth-century Anglicanism as a compromise between Roman Catholicism on one end and Puritanism on the other is simply no longer viable. In the memorable words of Dewey Wallace's "*Via Media—A Paradigm Shift?*", a seminal but much overlooked essay published in the Episcopal Church's historical journal, the *via media* in sixteenth-century Anglicanism was 'a Reformed church with hankerings after Lutheranism' and all because of Cranmer's understanding of the Bible in the life of the church.

In reality, Cranmer did not endorse the Aristotelian golden mean as his guiding theological principle. Rather, he was committed to letting the Bible interpret itself on the key issues of saving doctrine but insisted on flexibility in non-essentials like church government and liturgy. As a result, in the eyes of his traditionalist opponents, Cranmer was the epitome of a religious extremist. He denied the power of human efforts to contribute to salvation, rejected the church's role as an infallible source of extra-biblical revelation, and transformed the sacrifice of the mass into a communal meal of remembrance. On the other hand, Cranmer's flexibility in non-essentials also provoked a profound disagreement with the 'hotter' sort of Protestants. Although these opponents agreed with Cranmer on the scriptural way of salvation, they also demanded a biblical injunction as the basis for everything in the life of the church and society as well. Cranmer believed that such a requirement exceeded Scripture's remit. In short, Cranmer's approach was not a haphazard, 'neither fish nor fowl' eclecticism rooted in some kind of proleptic eighteenth-century notion of comprehensiveness, but rather a consistent, principled methodology drawn from his understanding of the Bible's unchanging role in the life of the church.

Therefore, the Elizabethan Anglicans have a clear answer for Chuck's question: 'if not a pope or magisterium, then who shall proclaim with authority what a given passage means: a pastor, congregational elders, each individual believer?' According to Article 20 of the Thirty-Nine Articles, 'The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: And yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and keeper of holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree anything against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for the necessity of Salvation.' In other words, the church's leadership needs to make judgments on divisive issues by listening to and remaining respectively of Scripture self-interpreting, harmonious witness. Of course, the *Articles of Religion* themselves, like the creeds before them, were just such an exercise of the church's leadership in giving an authoritative interpretation of the Scriptures for Anglicans on the disputed points of Christian faith and practice. Moreover, that is exactly what the leadership of the Anglican Communion at the 1998 Lambeth Conference thought it was doing when it passed Resolution 1:10, namely, listening to the consistent voice of the entire Scriptural witness to give an authoritative judgment for Anglicans worldwide on the contested area of human

sexuality. Although because of provincial autonomy, the resolution is only morally, rather than legally, binding.

Yet, as I have outlined in my previous essay, the church's acting as a 'keeper' of Scripture's self-interpretation on particular issues does not happen in a vacuum. It is only common sense that collation of biblical passages with one another requires the use of reason. Hooker made this point exceedingly clear, but he was equally clear that he did not mean that such collation proceeded by unaided, natural reason, but 'theological reasoning', reason as faithful to and transformed by the harmonious witness of Scripture that such collation should seek to find. Consequently, Hooker did not propose a 'three-legged stool' where Scripture, reason and tradition normed one another on an equal basis, but rather a hierarchical 'ladder' of theological authorities, with Scripture's self-interpretation through collation as the top rung.

As a result, it is historically unsound to replace Cranmer and Hooker's very carefully considered understanding of *sola scriptura* in the context of human and ecclesial history with the wax-nose pronouncement of the golden mean as Reformation Anglicanism's guiding principle. Rather, it would seem that TEC's search for a *via media* within current culture as evidence of the Spirit's working in the world would have much more in common with the comprehensiveness of eighteenth-century Latitudinarianism and the emphasis on subjective experience in nineteenth-century Romanticism, rather than our sixteenth-century Reformation formularies. I'm so grateful for Chuck's refusal to read any text 'with little consideration of its internal or surrounding context'. In the light of the totality of both Cranmer's and Hooker's writings, Chuck would do such a great service to both TEC and the Anglican Communion if he could help TEC understand its current theological ethos as being rooted in the Enlightenment and its aftermath rather than the English Reformation.

To Gordon Jeanes

Whereas Chuck has sought to highlight the continuity between the Reformation and TEC's current bible reading, Gordon has taken the opposite tack. While he would never consider himself a practicing Anglo-Catholic, his description of the gradual development of Anglicanism from the Reformation formularies towards 'the breadth that marks the Anglican Communion today' still follows the broad narrative first proposed by the Caroline divines and then adapted by the Oxford movement. This very influential construal of our ecclesial history locates the heart of Anglican doctrine not in the Articles and Homilies with their clear reliance on *sola Scriptura* but rather in our liturgical traditions and their continuity with the ancient church. Hence, Gordon's first contribution downplayed the importance of the *Articles of Religion* in the sixteenth century (while passing over the Homilies entirely) in favour of a primary focus on the prayer book tradition. Such was indeed the approach of Lancelot Andrewes, although his views became mainstream in the Church of England only in the Seventeenth Century with the Caroline Divines. Relying on this later reworking of the Reformation settlement, Gordon writes that present day Anglicans accept 'the role of the Church in framing scripture and formulating the creeds' so that he can speak of a 'canon of truth' where 'scripture and church teaching' form of a single 'framework'. While undoubtedly countless

contemporary Anglicans would very much agree with Gordon, it does bear repeating that such conclusions were decisively rejected by the English Reformers, and countless other Anglicans still seek to follow their Reformation principles today.

It is true that Cranmer sought to return to the beliefs and practices of the early church. However, what he meant by that is very different from the understanding of Andrewes and the Caroline Divines. The latter wanted the Bible to be understood in the light of a consensus of the church Fathers. Cranmer thought such an approach was profoundly unfaithful to the Fathers, since they themselves insisted that Scripture should be interpreted by Scripture. In my first essay, I have discussed at length how Cranmer understood the role of tradition in the careful process of biblical interpretation and application. Suffice it to say here that Cranmer always distinguished the role of the church and its traditions as secondary to the clear witness of Scripture's self-interpreting authority.

That's why Article 8 specifically states that the Creeds are to be believed, not because of any new revelation of God to the church, but simply because their summaries are faithful exposition of Scripture. That's also why the Thirty-Nine Articles show such restraint. Since so much of the scriptural way of salvation is beyond dispute, there is no need to codify every point of doctrine in a comprehensive statement of faith. The Articles confine themselves to contentious points of theology in the light of Scripture. Yet, this essentialist approach should not be construed as a sign that they had a 'low profile' in early Anglicanism. The Canons of 1604 specifically required all clergy to assent to its propositions 'from the heart' and even Charles I in 1628 affirmed their normative status for Anglican doctrine, 'prohibiting the least difference from the said Articles'. Rather, the very briefness of the Articles points once again to the paramount authority of Scripture's self-interpreting witness in the life of the Anglican Church.

Of course, the English Reformers themselves overturned centuries of established teaching on salvation because of their re-reading of Scripture, since they came to conclusions which differed from their patristic and medieval predecessors. In any contemporary clash between how the church has understood the Bible and current culture, the very richness of Scripture does indeed continue to provide opportunities for 'interpreting afresh the sacred text', as Gordon has suggested. Cranmer was insistent that the church must always seek to apply the unchanging Gospel to the every changing needs and conditions of human society. A gospel response to a current issue in society might very well cause the church to see an aspect of biblical truth it had long overlooked. After all, the Nicene Creed, the Chalcedonian Definition and the Thirty-Nine Articles all were drawn from Scripture in such circumstances. Yet, having seen the centuries-long consequences of allowing something other than Scripture itself to determine its meaning, the English Reformers laid down in Article 20 the principle that such new insights must be based on a holistic reading of the whole canon, seeking Scripture's inner harmony, rather than highlighting one part of Scripture, while ignoring another.

Conclusion

Drawing on the legacies of the Enlightenment and Romantic movements, Chuck has elucidated a post-modern understanding of the role of the Scriptures in the life of the Anglican Communion. Gordon has given us an equally dynamic view rooted in the seventeenth century's reworking of the Reformation Settlement. Both have emphasized, in their different ways, the authority of the church to reject established teachings in the light of contemporary culture. As a representative of Reformation Anglicanism, I would agree that the church should always be seeking to reform itself through on-going, direct engagement with Scripture in the light of current society. However, I still think the best way to do so is through the careful collation of Scripture, tradition and reason, as articulated by the writings of Cranmer and Hooker, not their twentieth-century interpreters. Principled moderation and faithful innovation are still possible today when Anglican leaders sit under the self-interpreting authority of Scripture in its historic ecclesial and contemporary cultural contexts.

Chuck Robertson to Ashley Null

Ashley, I appreciate your opening suggestion that there “can never be just one ‘Anglican way’ of interacting with the Bible.” It is sadly true that some persons and groups throughout the centuries, and certainly in our own time, have indeed tried to “absolutize their own tradition as ‘the authentic Anglican way’ of reading Scripture in order to marginalize the influence of others.” Further, I appreciate your helpful reminders of Reformation Anglicanism of which you later affirm yourself to be a representative. Now, I humbly offer my own response to your paper.

First, I have long appreciated Cranmer's preface to the Great Bible of 1540, where he states, “Here all manner of persons...of whatever status or condition they be, may in this book learn all things that they ought to believe, that they ought to do, and that they should not do.” It is little wonder that his Prayer Book was (and subsequent versions of the BCP are) so full of Holy Scripture from beginning to end! Likewise, I love Hooker's assertion that “we do not add reason as a supplement of any maim or defect in Scripture, but as a necessary instrument, without which we could not reap by the Scripture's perfection that fruit and benefit which it yields.” Wherever I go, I urge people to become “scriptural detectives,” using intentional observation and reason to “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” the written Word of God. I applaud, then, your recognition of Cranmer and Hooker's foundational principles.

I am, however, intrigued by some points you raise toward the latter part of the paper. First, in the section in which you discuss the three primary and competing approaches of subgroups within the Church of England, you conclude with a bold quotation from the Anglican Primates' Meeting about the “fabric of our Communion [being torn] at its deepest level.” That appeared to be a jump to me, and one that might have benefitted from a bridge discussion of the development of the Communion itself, as part of, and apart from, the tradition of the English Reformation. I am reminded of the words of William White in his “Case for the Episcopal Churches in the United States Considered,” in which he asserts, “A church government that will contain the constituent principles of

the Church of England, and yet be independent of foreign jurisdiction or influence would remove the anxiety which at present hangs heavy on the minds of many a sincere person.” Continuity *and* change both are something of a hallmark of Anglican Christianity, and not simply in The Episcopal Church, but in other parts of the Anglican Communion. In many ways, I believe our Anglican heritage goes back well before the Reformation and in many ways can be found in Pope Gregory I (the Great)’s words in the *Libellus Responsionum* to the monk-missionary Augustine that he takes the best of what he brought with him and the best of what he found in his new home. The honoring of local context has been in our Anglican DNA from the start.

Furthermore, in the earliest of the Lambeth Conferences, it is possible to hear that sense of respect of different contexts, as in Archbishop Thomas Longley’s words (in a letter dated 24 September 1867) where he declared, “It has never been contemplated that we should assume the functions of a general synod of all the Churches in full communion with the Church of England, and take upon ourselves to enact canons that should be binding upon those here represented.” Similarly, his successor, Archbishop Tait wrote (on 16 April 1875), “There is no intention whatever on the part of anybody to gather together the Bishops of the Anglican Church for the sake of defining any matter of doctrine. Our doctrines are contained in our formularies, and our formularies are interpreted by the proper judicial authorities, and there is no intention whatever at any such gathering that questions of doctrine should be submitted for interpretation in any future Lambeth Conference any more than they were at the previous Lambeth Conference.” He went on to challenge his fellow worldwide bishops: “I think it would be a work of love in which we should be engaged—the extension of Christ’s kingdom—and that we may be able by friendly intercourse to strengthen each other’s hands.” I believe that the Indaba process at Lambeth 2008 was a worthy extension of these principles, even if the Primates of some Provinces chose not to attend.

It is all too true that “the institutional Church on earth can err,” but it is interesting to me that the answer to this dilemma which is often suggested is to make sure that one Province’s interpretation of Scripture and tradition in relation to their particular context must “be confirmed by the remaining Provinces.” And while it is always important to be cautious lest “cultural accommodation for the sake of mission...result in a cultural capitulation that impedes every province’s witness and work.” Instead, at our best, we Anglican Christians have dared to find a way to let go of our own infallibilities, to put aside for a moment our certainties, in order to listen and learn from sisters and brothers in Christ with whom we debate and perhaps even vehemently disagree. If communion is based solely on agreement, of what good to the world is that? As the Lambeth Conference of 1920 put it in its encyclical statement, “To a world that craves for fellowship we present our message... It is only by showing the value and power of fellowship in itself that [the Church] can win the world to fellowship.” That same statement goes on to speak quite bluntly: “It is not by reducing the different groups of Christians to uniformity, but by rightly using their diversity, that the Church can become all things to all [people].”

Yes, when one part of the Communion makes a decision borne out of that Church’s interpretation of Scripture in light of their cultural context that will be anathema in other

parts of the Communion, then it is incumbent upon that group to inform the others with sensitivity and humility, and be prepared to hear harsh disagreement. It is equally important, however, for those other parts to admit that, although they may not then (or ever) agree with that Church's decision, yet they too do not necessarily possess the mind of Christ in its entirety on the subject and are not necessarily more faithful to God in this than the seemingly offending Church.

Looking to the New Testament, I am often struck by the fact that the group consensus found in Acts 15 of the Jerusalem Council's decision about admitting Gentiles into the Church as long as they obeyed certain conditions, a consensus that appears there to be smooth and comfortable, is countered in Galatians 2 by the reality that some among the Church's leadership refused to accept that their own biases, wrapped up in hypocrisy and self-righteousness, was not necessarily the most authentic way of bearing witness to the remarkable love of God in Christ Jesus. Yes, there truly is not just one "Anglican way" of interpreting Scripture, and isn't that wonderful! It means that maybe, just maybe, I can learn something new from someone with whom I disagree, coming out of their different context, trying like me to faithfully wrestle with the written Word of God.

Chuck Robertson to Gordon Jeanes

Gordon, I appreciate your opening assertion that "at a basic level Anglicans have not generally followed fundamentalist approaches, but have seen the Bible as bringing us to Jesus Christ who is the true Word of God." I further appreciate how you develop this thought by focusing on our liturgical foundation, the emphasis on tradition instead of confessional documents, and our emphasis on reason, all of which leads to the rich heritage that we have in approaching Scripture. Thank you for this reflective piece. I would now like to examine the piece in greater detail.

In the first major section, you speak about the significance of Cranmer's emphasis on the Daily Office, and the core role of Scripture in those services. But then you add one seemingly throwaway line about the fact that "current Anglican versions of Daily Prayer have shortened the readings and these services are attended by very few." Despite your immediate disclaimer that at least our clergy and theologians continue to honor the monastic tradition of the Office (an assumption that I might challenge), the reality is that for a large number of Anglicans in places that have come to emphasize Eucharist-centric worship, something has indeed been lost. While the Liturgy of the Word in the Eucharist still allows congregations to hear readings from the Old and New Testaments, there is something important about reading through the canon of Holy Scripture in its entirety. I applaud the efforts of projects like The Bible Challenge to reintroduce such systematic reading of the Bible over a year. As I mentioned in my own piece, there are other tools as well from which to draw. But I would suggest that even as the apostle Paul once urged the Christians in Corinth to move from the milk of the gospel to scriptural meat that must be chewed, the responsibility is on our clergy and parish leadership to challenge all the members to engage in the discipline of Scripture study. While we may avoid the tendency toward a "canon within the canon" into which other Protestant groups can at times fall, I believe that we will continue a downward spiral of biblical illiteracy if we do not begin to

speaking regularly of the need to engage with Scripture outside of the weekly Eucharist. I have little doubt that you agree.

In the second section, I was grateful for your use of Lancelot Andrewes' great statement about "one canon, two testaments, three creeds, four general councils, five centuries." I concur with most of what you describe here, but again—with apologies for sounding like a broken record—I want to suggest that these fundamentals are of little use if our churches' members are literate in them. In many ways, we are at a similar place as those Christians at the time of the Reformation, who needed to be reminded that the Bible was for them, not just for priests and theologians. As I often say when I am preaching or teaching, "Don't take my word for it; look up the passage yourself and see what it says to you." This is why I speak of the urgent need for those who are leaders to train a new generation of "scriptural detectives." It is not enough for Anglicans to speak with pride about not being fundamentalists; we must know the Scriptures as well as any literalistic readers. No, we must know the Scriptures even better, in context. Heaven help us from succumbing to the twin dangers of a pride in our own sophistication and a glaring, growing biblical illiteracy.

This leads me to your third section, where you rightly point to the important place reason has had in our spirituality and our approach to Scripture. I applaud your use of Henley Henson's words about "interpreting afresh the sacred text" and your own comment later there being "no shortcut process of discernment." This goes back to the important Collect that speaks of the need to "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" the Scriptures. To do this, I would suggest that we utilize our reason to call on relevant biblical passages—always recognizing their context—to current debates. This brings me back to the underlying need for training of all our congregants. In other Christian traditions, church members are expected to bring their personal Bibles to worship and they follow along as the preacher reads and then speaks about specific passages. While I do not see this happening, I remain concerned that more and more of our congregations don't even have Bibles in the pews, and a growing number are not even using Prayer Books, but instead relying on pre-printed worship booklets or screen projections in order to be more "newcomer-friendly." But the effect is that we are not training worshippers to see how our books—the Bible and the Prayer Book—are crucial tools for us. What if every first-time visitor/family was instead given a small Prayer Book as a gift, and what if during inquirer's classes or confirmation classes, each participant was given a Bible. Reason is a spiritual muscle that needs to be exercised, and that means drawing on an ever increasing knowledge of Scripture as well as the riches of the treasure chest that we call the Book of Common Prayer.

Your final section says it beautifully in speaking of Scripture as "a space to inhabit and explore." As is now evident in my responses to your well-thought paper, I believe that what is still needed is a practical call to help our people learn how to inhabit and explore the sacred texts, and not simply rely on our Anglican tradition as if it is something absorbed through osmosis. I thank you for your thoughtful piece, and for the opportunity to discuss the important points you raised.

Gordon Jeannes

It is fascinating to have three quite dissimilar initial submissions on this subject, and I look forward to reading your responses to my first attempt.

First, in response to Chuck:

The *via media* tradition in Anglicanism commands our affection, though what the two extremes are has varied over the centuries. More recently it has been posited between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism; Diarmaid McCulloch suggested (if I remember rightly) that originally it was between Wittenberg and Geneva. The 1662 BCP placed the mean between extremes in allowing or prohibiting variation in the Liturgy. How far is this a principle within Anglicanism, or is it one of those historical accidents which got preserved within the DNA? Does it mean that 'Anglicanism' is defined by what it is not rather than what it is? Perhaps a more positive side for Anglicanism is the spread of churchmanship within it and the comparative tolerance for different standpoints; that we feel at home among the broad spread of the magisterial Reformation and even some Roman Catholic and Orthodox strands. It would be a grave loss if Anglicanism ever became monochrome.

With regard to the relations between scripture, tradition and reason, I agree with Ashley that the 'three-legged stool' cannot imply parity between them (nor did Chuck suggest there is). But nor is it a matter of a simple cascade from scripture to tradition to the present situation. The tradition is not simple repetition, and while the revelation of God in Christ is never surpassed its meaning is never exhausted. The interaction of the three elements is about a process of engagement with scripture from every context which reveals new insights and enriches Christian insight and experience.

Here I feel a reserve about Ashley's description of collation which certainly happened, but is not the whole story. I would like to look at two historical examples:

The first concerns a disputed moral issue: that of usury which was gradually accepted in Reformation England through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There had been a solid consensus against lending money for interest in the Bible (the Old Testament instances crowned by Jesus' unqualified command in Luke 6.34-35: 'Lend and expect nothing in return') and the early and medieval Church. Aquinas condemned it as sinful and (following Aristotle) unnatural, and there were many among the Anglican Fathers who took his position. So what enabled a seismic shift? Norman Jones in *God and the Moneylenders* identified two factors: first a new recognition that lending for interest was not always an oppressive abuse of the unwilling needy borrower but could enable economic growth and fulfil a public as well as private good; and secondly an increased emphasis on the individual intention rather than the action itself seen as objectively good or bad. Together they led to the specific rules in scripture being qualified or overruled by the Golden Rule as enunciated by Christ. (This only concerned business lending: with regard to the needy Christ's command still stood, in theory.) The debate over usury ranged across Europe and never became a confessional issue, but Jones concluded that in England the Protestant Reformation and the principle of salvation by faith alone led to a

stronger emphasis, particularly among the 'Puritans', on 'the primacy of the individual's conscience, guided by God'.

So it was a new understanding of the contemporary world and an increased emphasis on individual intention and conscience which led to scripture being re-interrogated and the solid consensus of the Bible and the first centuries being set aside. No new texts were discovered: the Golden Rule would earlier have been used to reinforce the ban on usury, because it had formerly been inconceivable that anyone would willingly have borrowed money at interest. Today we might wish to revisit some points in the debate, in particular that the needy should not be oppressed by interest or even by a requirement to repay the principal; and in the Middle Ages there were useful ideas about the lender sharing the risk with the borrower. But the new insights have radically transformed Christianity's attitude to the Bible and the tradition on this matter, and this instance demonstrates that Anglicanism has always been open to reinterpretation of scripture in the light of new contemporary understanding. Christians have always faced the question: was what was described in the Bible the same as what we are considering now?

In my second example, Thomas Cranmer went to extraordinary lengths to collect and collate everything in the Bible and the Fathers on the theology of the Eucharist, but the very attempt to create a harmony produced a novel reading of scripture which was faithful to none of the Fathers, not even Tertullian and certainly not Cranmer's hero Augustine. This was because Cranmer ignored or disagreed with both their philosophical basis and their wider theological concerns. Cranmer's Eucharistic theology was also controversial even among his colleagues, and both the Articles and Prayer Book were later emended. But it was classic that the sixteenth century reformers in reading scripture responded in a sixteenth century manner, anachronistically reshaping ancient thought to a different paradigm, and reacting against the late medieval developments which had also grown from a reading of the Bible and the ancient writers. Similarly our thought is inevitably shaped by contemporary concerns, and no doubt future generations will identify our blind spots!

I cite this instance as an example of the limitations of collation: in trying to say what former generations said we can end up saying something very different. Also it makes one wonder how far collation or consensus was determinative in practice. The Reformation was a period of discontinuities and agreement was very rare.

I have taken both these examples from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries because of the importance of that period in Anglican history. To pause briefly with a later example, the condemnation of slavery again was not because of a new discovery of references from the Bible or the Fathers, but because of a new sensibility from the context of the time, much of it coming from outside the Church; and I sincerely hope that the Church will never return to the idea in the Bible and the early Church that slavery is permissible. Sometimes one may see evidence that the Spirit is leading us into a fuller knowledge of the truth.

Consensus is more result than method; it is something we all dearly wish for and the Indaba and BILC ventures give us some hope, but Anglicanism has no distinguished

What is that makes an approach to biblical authority and biblical interpretation distinctively Anglican?

history in that regard. Developments of thought about the Eucharist, usury and slavery came only through lengthy bitter dispute. There is no reason to imagine that contemporary issues can be resolved more easily. In the Reformation Church of England *consensus* was never achieved and unity, of a sorts, was managed by legally enforced *conformity* (with dissenters sacked or imprisoned, if not worse) until legal nonconformity was permitted in the late seventeenth century. In the meantime many non-conforming Christians had moved to the colonies and their spirit has leavened North American religion to this day. Have we learned to do things any better today? Perhaps for a more authentically Christian tradition we need to revisit the Rule of St Benedict, often regarded as a kindred spirit for Anglicans, who said that the person of least account should be listened to first.

Round 3

Chuck Robertson

It has been a fascinating exercise, and a helpful one, to participate in this conversation about what makes an approach to biblical authority and biblical interpretation distinctively Anglican. In fact, I believe our back and forth discussion is itself a very Anglican approach to Holy Scripture! Now, having read my colleagues' responses to my first round comments, I wish to add a few thoughts and respond to some things that my colleagues said.

As Gordon rightly noted, I certainly am not trying to place tradition or reason on par with Scripture. But I continue to assert that a distinctive hallmark of Anglicanism has been the intentional use of both these resources in interpreting biblical texts. Gordon's excellent example of changes in how usury is understood illustrates how changes in interpretation did not come simply by throwing out tradition, but by grappling with the texts in light of "a new understanding of the contemporary world and an increased emphasis on individual intention and conscience."

I likewise appreciate the care and concern Ashley displays in approaching Scripture through "the careful collation of Scripture, tradition and reason, as articulated by the writings of Cranmer and Hooker, not their twentieth-century interpreters." I would love to ask what he thinks of the words of some recent interpreters, such as Diarmaid MacCulloch, who noted in his book, *The Reformation* (New York: Penguin, 2003, p. 506): "In such matters which did not affect salvation, Hooker's criteria for making decisions became as much the weight of collective past experience and the exercise of God-given reason as the commands of Scripture itself." Or Philip B. Secor's comments in his biography, *Richard Hooker: Prophet of Anglicanism* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1999, p. 110): "Hooker thought it sad that everything needed to be so black and white for the Calvinist extremists. In heaven we might hope for such clarity, but here on earth we must learn to live with ambiguity, tolerating one another's differences of opinion." In any case, I appreciate Ashley's desire to be faithful "representative of Reformation Anglicanism."

However, I admit feeling...uncomfortable with the fairly tight categories into which Ashley places not only himself (which is perfectly fine), but me as well. Even seemingly innocent descriptors—such as referring to me as a representative of "eighteenth century Enlightenment and Romantic movements"—can reduce complex, three-dimensional students/lovers of Holy Scripture to mere labels. I also found it interesting, albeit a little frustrating, that more than once he raised the issue of TEC, when my goal was not to offer a "summary of the metanarrative of theological thinking of the current leadership of the Episcopal Church," but rather to offer my own thoughts on how an Anglicans approach takes Scripture seriously as God's Word for us, as something worth wrestling with, as a foundation of our worship, as a foundation for faith and conduct, and by welcoming conversation with others of different opinions while not necessarily agreeing with them.

Allow me to take a moment to share something of a personal testimony. I myself was not born into the Anglican heritage. Rather, I am the son of a Roman Catholic father and a Southern Baptist mother. From each of them respectively I inherited a deep love of the Church and Holy Scripture. In my adolescence, I came to know Christ in a personal and profound way, first through the Catholic renewal movement and then through Young Life, an evangelistic youth ministry. Scripture was foundational in my journey. Unlike many who initially encounter Christ through the Gospels or Paul's letters, for me it was the Psalms where I first heard God speak to me...through those remarkable songs of praise and trust and frustration and brutal honesty. Soon I was diving into every part of the Bible, memorizing passages, reading commentaries, joining small group studies, and while in college seeking churches that were grounded in *sola scriptura*. In at least two cases, I soon discovered that their leaders and many of their members were also certain in their interpretations. And when they found that their interpretations differed one from another, then their respective sense of certainty led to mutual accusations, and ugly division. While in many ways Christians are more civilized than those eras of religious wars in which persons with certainty burned or beheaded or otherwise killed those whom they found to be in error, the fact is that I witnessed numerous instances of character assassination at worst and condescending arrogance at best among "Bible-believing Christians."

When I eventually found my way, virtually by accident, into The Episcopal Church, I discovered not only the Sacraments and the Book of Common Prayer, but also what I still consider to be an Anglican approach to Scripture, grounded not so much in certainty, but in awe and wonder. As an Anglican Christian, as an Episcopalian, I open both my own time with Scripture and any group Bible study I am facilitating in prayer, always using Proper 28 from the American 1979 BCP. This is the one that includes that marvelous line that asks God to grant that we might not only hear the scriptures (as in our worship services), but also "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them." I usually tell the groups I am working with that an Anglican approach to Scripture is a prayerful, serious approach. It means becoming something of a *scriptural detective*, not only reading, but carefully observing in the context of the larger biblical witness, and in our own context in which God is at work in and around us. To hear God's Word to us in our own context usually requires humility and a willingness to let go of some of our own infallibility of opinion. In recent decades I have seen many around me in my beloved Church and Communion, some who call themselves orthodox and others who call themselves progressive, react more with certainty than humility to the complex realities that confront us all, making assumptions that prevent any real and substantive engagement with one another from taking place.

Although I was an observer for a few days at Lambeth 1998, it was my time at Lambeth 2008 that impressed me far more. For in the intentional decision to avoid making resolutions and instead emphasize times of prayer and Scripture study, I was reminded of the words of Archbishop Tait, who convened the second Lambeth Conference in the late nineteenth century: "There is no intention whatever at any such gathering that questions of doctrine should be submitted for interpretation in any future Lambeth Conference any more than they were at the previous Lambeth Conference." The goal instead, he went on to say, was "a work of love in which we should be engaged—the extension of Christ's

kingdom—and that we may be able by friendly intercourse to strengthen each other's hands" (in a letter 16 April 1875).

It is for this reason that I welcome the Bible in the Life of the Church project, recognizing that it is indeed in engaging one another on deeper levels in our prayerful approaches to Holy Scripture that we can all learn and grow. I remain grateful for this opportunity to participate in this brief conversation about what an Anglican approach to Scripture study and interpretation looks like. My sincere hope is that others who read my words and those of my colleagues might find themselves drawn into a deeper engagement with the biblical text in its own context and in the context of their own life and times, thereby becoming scriptural detectives, not simply hearing and reading, but in a spirit of humility "marking, learning, and inwardly digesting" sacred Scripture. In this way, may they hear afresh the Word of God and go forth in the power of the Spirit as faithful witnesses of Christ.

Gordon Jeanes

Dear Chuck,

Indeed, how little the Bible is read, and (in England at least) it is read even less in popular less formal services than in the Sunday Eucharist! And people are not equipped to lean on scripture for their personal lives: that requires both a familiarity with the Bible, and knowledge and confidence in engaging with it. In England there is a common assumption that Christianity will be taught in school which is simply not the case. The churches need to have a proper education programme just as synagogues and mosques provide. 'Scriptural detectives' is a fascinating term: hopefully it stirs people's curiosity and encourages an enquiring spirit. Submission to scripture does not entail abandoning one's brains! Thoughtful reading of scripture is probably best modelled by thoughtful preaching and teaching. I apologise for a brief response, but most of my limited space must be devoted to Ashley's combative piece.

Dear Ashley,

You began your first contribution by stating that 'there can never be just one "Anglican way" of interacting with the Bible' and warning against any one group trying to marginalise the others. But in your second piece you respond to Chuck and me by saying 'there is much I recognize as Anglican in both statements, yet there remain elements concerning which I would ask you to give further reflection'. Does this mean that you believe we are 'un-Anglican' in our ideas? For myself I think we have shared a useful spread of Anglican approaches which do not overlap entirely but do have much in common.

I did not try to argue a particular narrow standpoint, but to identify broad strands of thought across Anglicanism, hence my quotations of official and ecumenical documents, which were not taken up. But the point of my whole piece was surely to emphasise *sola scriptura*, not to downplay it. *Sola scriptura* in the Reformation excluded non-Biblical material from the essentials of faith. But it does not set scripture as separate from the Church. Were not the apostles and evangelists members of the Church, and those who identified the Canon? Did the English Reformers claim otherwise? Or is this not simply a

question which has evolved since the sixteenth century and cannot be reduced to Reformation era categories?

Your piece reads to me as though you are trying to place our contributions within certain pigeon holes in your mind, but I do not think we fit. (I am 20-21st century myself.) Indeed I wondered if you were trying to identify difference where there really is none. I am not convinced that our three approaches can be attributed to three different centuries in Anglican development, nor are those centuries water tight from each other. But the Church of England as presently constituted dates back to Restoration England, and TEC to the late eighteenth century, so learning from those centuries would not be a failing; indeed contemporary writers would place the whole period within the 'long Reformation'.

Have you not exaggerated the difference between the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries' attitude to the Fathers? For both, the Fathers were authoritative interpreters of scripture, otherwise why would Cranmer waste hundreds of pages arguing what Justin and Augustine and Chrysostom and Theophylact and Epiphanius and Cyril and Fulgentius and so on thought the Bible meant? And John Jewel (1522-71) famously challenged his Roman Catholic opponents to defend their practices by 'the scriptures, the old doctors and councils', making it very clear that he took the principle that (as I said in my first piece) Anglicans saw themselves in continuity with the ancient Church of the Fathers. Jewel's challenge was less elegant than my quotation of Andrewes, but the point was substantially the same, and I am not persuaded the Carolines placed the Fathers before scripture. But the last 150 years have seen a revolution in our historical and scientific understanding. We read the Bible in a way different from that of our ancestors, and we are still learning a new way of reading the world and humanity, and how that may impact on our understanding of the Bible. This has caused difficulty for all churches but, significantly, has very rarely divided Christians. Since differing approaches to the Bible have not formerly been a cause of division, is the present debate really about the Bible, or about conflicting traditions in a de-centralised Communion? Ways of reading are in contention but no one has reneged on the traditional orthodox view of the authority of the Bible.

My comment about the breadth of the Anglican Communion was based (as I stated) on the lack of a single teaching tradition, not (as you read) on the Caroline tradition. Indeed the Caroline tradition and the Oxford Movement's reinterpretations were possible only because of the weak teaching tradition. Whether we welcome or regret the broadening, it is integral to Anglicanism today and cannot be undone.

A deliberate policy of broadening the doctrinal base of the Church of England was pursued under Elizabeth I in order to include a wider Protestant consensus, including those with Lutheran sympathies but excluding the extremes, for example of Zwinglianism and Anabaptism on the one hand and hard line Catholicism on the other. (Conforming Catholics were quietly tolerated rather than explicitly included.) As you have observed, the Articles did not allow the Calvinist Puritan view on ecclesial practice. With the barring of so many 'extreme' positions it is easy to see how a *via media* idea took root! But there is no simple identity of the Church of Edward VI with that of Elizabeth, let alone that of 1662 or 1789. As academics we lionise our subjects and I sympathise with your frequent appeals to Cranmer, but he is not the benchmark of Anglican theology. He did not get the

last word even on his liturgy which has been substantially changed in all Anglican traditions. A 'return to the sources' cannot ignore later official settlements.

On the Articles I am not sure that we differ, though we seem to draw different inferences from the same affirmations. To take your comments:

- 'The Articles confine themselves to contentious points of theology in the light of Scripture.' True - and that is their problem. The questions of our age cannot be defined by sixteenth century controversy. To take one obvious example, the poverty of the Articles in the doctrine of creation both perpetuates a weakness within Western Christianity (as often pointed out by Eastern Orthodox) and is woefully inadequate in responding to contemporary abuse of our planet. The Homilies are even worse in this regard, speaking fulsomely of the 'misery of man' and of salvation, but not of creation. (By the way, as an American, how do you read that Homily against rebellion, and do you allow the same approach in other situations? Just a Brit wondering ...) At what point does strict allegiance to the Articles and Homilies become a preoccupation which inhibits our reading of *sola scriptura*? Or might we find ourselves like soldiers dug deep into trenches, unaware that the battle was over long ago and everyone has moved on somewhere else?
- Article 20: 'the principle that ... new insights must be based on a holistic reading of the whole canon, seeking Scripture's inner harmony, rather than highlighting one part of Scripture while ignoring another'. True again. And every serious approach to the Bible has attempted a holistic reading, from the old allegorical methods to the modern historical method and now various post-modern approaches. Each one has looked for a paradigm in which to make sense of the whole. Even those who have emphasised diversity within scripture have done so by observing that scripture is diverse in authorship and context, and seeing truth as found in that diversity. Here I want to pick up Chuck's comment, that we 'call on relevant biblical passages'. I would like to ask, slightly tongue in cheek, which passages are not relevant to any issue? Scripture is above all a portrait of the living God who so loved the world that he gave his only Son; and that is central for consideration of every topic.
- I agree totally with your affirmation, following Article 8, that the Creeds are 'not because of any new revelation' but are 'faithful exposition of scripture'. That is not the same as 'proved by certain warrants' but modern Anglicans cannot follow the sixteenth century in their presumption that the apostles could have written the creeds of Nicaea and Chalcedon. We follow the sixteenth century Articles for twenty-first century reasons.

I want to finish with the ending of Ashley's first offering: that 'the institutional church on earth can err'. Absolutely, and as Chuck points out in his reply, we all have to embrace our real and possible fallibilities. We must not be fearful or judgemental, but have confidence in God's love and Christ's promise never to abandon us.

Ashley Null

The Holy Bible consists of sixty-six different books, numerous different genres, and two different testaments, not to mention being brought to its final form only after many historical epochs. Yet there remains a central, clear, consistent witness throughout, a red thread of redemption: Jesus Christ, died and risen, as Israel's promised saviour of the

whole world. This simple message has the power to grab the heart of an individual reader directly, inspiring personal saving faith and a life of loving service. Still not all the truths of Scripture are as easy to ascertain. Prayerful, patient collation of its many parts, the more clear passages being used to shed light on the more obscure, is needed to uncover the deep riches within for Christian discipleship and social transformation.

Sadly, from the beginning of the Christian community, the clarity of the Gospel in the midst of the Bible's diversity has been challenged by some, and its spiritual profundities misconstrued by others. Consequently, many commentators suggest that biblical interpretation is ultimately determined by the eye of the beholder, rather than the text itself. The ancient church's answer was to search the Scriptures afresh as a community until that biblical clarity emerged again through collation. When a conflict arose between Paul and his theological opponents, the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) was called to discern how the mission to the Gentiles was to be understood in the light of Old Testament law and prophecy. When battling Gnostic claims of a secret oral tradition that held the key to unlocking the hidden meaning of Scripture, Irenaeus (c. 180) appealed to the creedal statements passed down from bishop to bishop. As biblical summaries, they represented the true rule for scriptural interpretation. When the Arian dispute arose about Jesus' relationship to the Father, the Council of Nicaea (323 AD) was gathered to assess the biblical evidence for a decision. Likewise, the Council of Chalcedon (451) clarified through careful collation how Catholic Christians were to understand Scripture's witness with regards to Jesus' humanity and divinity. When disputes arose even as to which texts were authentic written bearers of the apostolic witness, once again church councils at the end of the fourth-century were called to decide the issue based on a pattern of ancient usage.

The Anglican Reformers never disputed that the institutional church had authority to decide controversies of the faith which arose from competing interpretations of Scripture within their midst (Article 20). They accepted these decisions of the ancient church and, indeed, chose to follow its example. According to the Edwardian preamble, the whole purpose of the Anglican *Articles of Religion* was "for the avoiding of controversy in opinions and the establishment of a godly concord." The Anglican Reformers intended their decisions on the nature of justification and the sacraments to settle these matters for all those who wrote and prayed Anglican liturgies, just as the creeds and the Chalcedonian Definition were definitive for all who would call themselves Catholic Christians. The question for the Anglican Reformers focused on how such decisions were to be made.

Gordon has rightly pointed out that the Anglican reformers overturned centuries of established biblical interpretation. They did so, not because they felt they had more authority than their medieval predecessors, but rather because they had less. The medieval church came to believe that the pope and his bishops were successors to the apostles, not only in office but also with the same supernatural power and authority. Consequently, just as the Holy Spirit guided the apostles in revealing God's truth without error in Scripture, the church's leadership through the ages was so equally inspired that it could never make any doctrinal error. They could use extra-biblical aids like Aristotelian scholasticism to establish the doctrine of transubstantiation or impose a

church custom like confession to a priest as necessary for the forgiveness of sins. Cranmer thought bishops should be more humble. He denied that 'the special gift' of the apostles was itself passed down, rather only its results. Apostolic succession consisted of passing on their written witness to what Jesus Christ had divinely revealed about salvation. Therefore, to guard against human self-deception, the Articles insisted that all saving doctrine had to be derived exclusively from the faithful collation of scriptural revelation according to the principle of non-contradiction.

Yet, Cranmer did not think that biblical collation stopped with intratextuality. The church still needed to relate its understanding of Scripture to both tradition and its own contemporary culture. With regard to the latter, the church's priority was discerning how best to apply its interpretation of Scripture to the needs and failings of current society. However, in practice biblical-cultural collation is never a one-way street. Developments in society can raise new questions which require the church to return to biblical intratextuality to find answers, some of which may revise previously accepted practices. After all, the university-based humanist movement played a key role in the Anglican Reformers' decision to reject the philosophical reasonings of scholasticism and return to the Bible as the supreme authority for faith and morals. Since Cranmer admitted that he came to perceive biblical truth only little by little, it probably would not have surprised him that new cultural developments prompted later generations of Anglicans to find, through fresh biblical collation, further insights into how best to live as faithful Christians.

Gordon has pointed to two excellent examples—usury and slavery. The former shows just how important biblical collation is when confronted with new cultural developments, for how to interpret Christ's radical teachings in the Sermon on the Plain for everyday Christian living has always provoked much discussion amongst his followers. Gradually, Christians came to see that just as it was right for the state to ask thieves to offer restitution to their victims (cf. Luke 6:30), socially helpful institutions could be set up to loan money at responsible rates (cf. Luke 6:34-5), as the Parable of the Talents itself envisioned (Mt. 25:27). As for slavery, the New Testament neither explicitly condemns nor ever commends the practice itself. Yet, careful collation shows that Paul consistently taught that in Christian society there should be no such division as slave and free. Unfortunately, it took the church centuries to appreciate the need to apply this truth to general society. Clearly, the independent Church of England's founding commitment to biblical interpretation by intra-textual collation does not mean that all the light of Scripture fully broke forth at that time, especially in matters of how people should best live with one another. Yet, while cultural developments may raise new questions for the church, its answer must always be governed by a holistic reading of Scripture according to the principle of non-contradiction under the Lordship of Christ.

Of course, this process of biblical intratextuality and cultural collation is a far easier task when only one nation is involved. For this reason, Article 34 specifically states that the essentials of salvation as outlined in the Anglican formularies are a sufficient basis for fellowship between different national churches. How these different churches incarnate the agreed-upon saving truths in their institutional life and gospel proclamation will naturally differ from culture to culture and even from generation to generation within the

same culture. What is not directly addressed in the Articles, or indeed, as Chuck rightful points out, even in the various documents of the modern global Anglican family of national and/or provincial churches, is the crucial question facing the Anglican Communion at this moment. How can we preserve unity when the culture of some national churches causes them to accept a revision of the biblical understanding of sin and salvation previously held to by all the national churches? Shouldn't cultural collation happen at the provincial, rather than the global, level, lest the old Anglican reliance on imperialism be resurrected in a twenty-first century form? Shouldn't Cranmerian humility prompt those holding the older scriptural understanding to refrain from judging someone's else contextual faithfulness, at least until there is sufficient time to test the fruit, as Gamaliel suggested concerning the apostles' testimony (Acts 5:34-9)?

While such arguments certainly have a strong appeal to a thoughtful Christian conscience, they presuppose that in Anglicanism truth itself is an expression of human culture, rather than divinely given guidance to heal fallen human culture. In reality, the human condition is universal, crossing all centuries and societies. Its expression in sin and injustice is not relative. Since sin, both personal and institutional, is a spiritual sickness which eats away at a human being's well-being, the church has a pastoral obligation to speak with universal biblical clarity as to what threatens our souls and societies as well as how God's redeeming, transforming love is the only answer.

Hence, I applaud Chuck and Gordon's call for all Anglicans to immerse themselves more and more in the text of the Scriptures. Cranmer wanted daily monastic rumination on readings from the Bible to be the spiritual inheritance of every Anglican, for he believed only regular encounters with the transforming power of God's Word would birth in us a love for God stronger than our own self-centredness. What is the most common Anglican way of reading Scripture across the centuries? Sitting under the full canonical witness, in study and devotions, both public and private, asking God to write its truths on our hearts so that we might love and serve God and our neighbour with all our strength. In the final analysis, the power of a global fellowship such as the Anglican Communion, like the ancient church councils, is that by reading the Bible together on a universal level, we can go forward in humble, interdependent unity, helping one another to transcend our own cultures so that together we can transform them all.

Epilogues

Gordon Jeanes

I was asked to take part in a conversation on the authority of the Bible in the Anglican tradition. I have come to the conclusion, as I say in my final piece, that the dispute is not about the authority of the Bible but about differences in reading the Bible. Anglicans and other Christians have taken unprecedented positions contrary to the letter of Biblical injunctions before, and as then so now the authority of the Bible has remained intact. Nor has its status been lessened by historical and scientific advances. We read the same Bible with the same devotion even when we read it differently.

It has been fascinating corresponding with people of a different background, and something of an eye opener to find that one's own truisms can appear untrue to others, and vice versa. The written format does militate towards a strict taking of positions more than a face to face conversation might, as Ashley and I discovered when we met up at one point.

There is something about gender and sexuality that raises enormous emotion, but even then I am left puzzling not over the concern it raises for individuals but how and why it has become a test case for unity and orthodoxy. Over the years we have read the Bible in so many different ways, and we are only starting to learn to read it in the light of modern science. What is a Christian anthropology in the light of Darwinian evolution, of psychology and genetics? I myself find the questions deep and troubling, and I really do not want to be pushed into premature conclusions by a stampede to orthodoxy any more than to be corralled by secular fashion. But over this single issue of sexuality the tectonic plates are crashing up against one another, and human individuals are caught between them and crushed.

This disproportion (as it appears to me) leads me to suspect that the homosexuality question would not have been sufficient ground for division if there were not other pre-existing stresses. I have heard of differences within the Church of England described as 'culture wars', i.e. something much wider than a single issue. I have no real experience of worldwide Anglicanism but would not be surprised if it were the same elsewhere.

If this is indeed the case there will never be reconciliation unless the real reasons are acknowledged. But it is not about the Bible. It is about us.

Ashley Null

Many Americans like to display their favourite slogans on the back bumper of their cars. My favourite bumper sticker reads, 'Don't believe everything you think!' It's an important warning, because, as Thomas Cranmer first wrote in the Anglican prayer book over four hundred and fifty years ago, too often we follow 'too much the devices and desires of our own hearts' with the result that 'there is no health in us'.

That's why the human condition is one of brokenness. Our hearts are filled with great aspirations for linking our lives closely to others so as to make our world better, yet these godly intentions are all too often intertwined with petty selfishness and persistent insecurities that hobble our effectiveness, hurt those around us and diminish our own personal wholeness. Consequently, our inner woundedness can come from circumstances beyond our control, from the misdeeds of others, or from our own flawed decisions, but usually from some combination of all three.

Throughout the ages, the human tendency has been to lean on our own understanding to devise a rescue plan from our woundedness, even though the desires and decisions of our hearts have all too often only deeply contributed to our diminished humanity. After all, what choice would we seem to have but to trust our own inner sense of who we are and how we can truly express ourselves? Anything else would feel like submitting our brokenness to the control of other fundamentally flawed human beings, no matter how high-minded their intentions. Surely, we tell ourselves, the only thing worse than struggling to listen to our hearts to free ourselves from its enslaving insecurities is finding ourselves enslaved to someone else's insecurities in the false name of finding freedom. As a result, we conclude no human being has the insight, let alone the right, to tell another human being how to heal. Each person must find her or his own way.

Against this prevailing Western sense of individualism and inner isolation, the Christian faith has offered a starkly different answer. From the very beginning, its unique claim to the truth has simply been that in Jesus Christ, God himself has walked amongst us. The Christian faith teaches the way to wholeness because God the Son has told us, through the apostles who faithfully recorded his teachings, everything we need to know about ourselves and about God so that we can receive his free gift of salvation. The One who made us came down in person to rescue us. By leaning on him, Christians experience deliverance from our self-destructive ways now and God's coming cleansing of his world from human violence and vice in the future. The Scripture's clear proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ has the power to make humanity truly free.

Sixteenth-century Anglicanism found in the Bible the key to encountering the living Lord Jesus Christ. Hearing and reading his Word, they received the gift of faith in his promises, experienced grateful love for his pardon, and found power for a new life in accordance with Christ's own character. Their recovery of the biblical message of salvation as a free gift so changed their lives that they were willing to exchange their lives for it, many receiving in the end a martyr's crown like Cranmer.

I, too, have found my life changed by God speaking to me through Scripture. Its analysis of my sin, brokenness and powerlessness for self-rescue has proved all too accurate. However, Christ's biblical promise for immediate pardon and growing new life have also proved transformative. Consequently, I have learned firsthand that Gospel paradox at the heart of the Christian life—we must grow closer to God to understand how much unlike him we are. For only as we gradually understand the depth of his loving character do we even begin to grasp how thoroughly we remain riddled with selfish insecurities. Therefore, when I read the Bible, I begin by submitting myself under its guidance, seeking to let God instruct my heart and mind afresh in those saving truths that will help me die to the lies I

tell myself, for only then can I embrace a closer union with Christ and others. In short, I look to interpret my experiences of life through the Gospel lens of biblical revelation, not the other way around.

Is the same true for Chuck and Gordon? As Christians, they, too, seek to have their lives shaped and transformed by the God. But how do they understand their clear commitment to wrestle with Scripture? Do they let their own innermost thoughts have the upper hand in determining its meaning, or do they let the clarity of Scripture work to transform them? Is it even possible for them, or any human being, to know? For Chuck the answer would seem to be found in his personal journey—a journey away from certainty to mystery, from ‘condescending arrogance at best among “Bible-believing Christians”’ to becoming a humble ‘*scriptural detective*’ willing to let go of the ‘infallibility of opinion’. Such language would seem to have much in common with those who wish to let Scripture ‘cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit’. Yet that phrase ‘*scriptural detective*’ betrays the difference. A detective is only needed when the vital facts are not clear. However, the founding formulas of Anglicanism trust that Jesus, as Saviour, has left clarity—not merely ‘opinions’—about the nature of the Gospel. By reading the Bible Christians can know what they need to believe to be saved and how they should act accordingly.

For the Reformers, the clarity of Scripture was crucial for good pastoral care. They rejected the notion that only a spiritual professional—a scriptural Sherlock Holmes—could explain what the Bible taught about salvation. God had so designed Scripture that anyone could understand its central message, because God wanted to speak personally through its passages to woo individual hearts to love him. Hooker himself made this point very clear. Yes, in matters not pertaining to salvation, in matters of how to proclaim the unchanging Gospel to current human culture, Hooker did indeed give great weight to both tradition and contemporary reason, since the Bible did not directly address the question of how to present its eternal truths to changing human society. However, listen to Hooker on Scripture’s clarity about the essentials of salvation:

‘Let them with whom we have hitherto disputed consider well, how it can stand with reason to make the bare mandate of sacred Scripture the only rule of all good and evil in the actions of mortal men. The testimonies of God are true, the testimonies of God are perfect, the testimonies of God are all sufficient unto that end for which they were given. Therefore, accordingly we do receive them, we do not think that in them God hath omitted any thing needful unto his purpose, and left his intent to be accomplished by our devisings.’ (Laws, II.8.5)

Hooker did not think Anglicanism needs a ‘*scriptural detective*’ to know what constitutes Christian holiness. The ‘bare mandate of sacred Scripture’ is sufficient. To make oneself the detective for saving truth is, in the end, to rely on one’s own efforts to gain wisdom for salvation. When fallible humanity assumes that task, people cannot but humbly let go of certitude. Yet, the founding formularies of Anglicanism assert that Jesus came to provide a better way by preaching a Gospel of clarity.

How about Gordon? Does he see in Scripture a clear Gospel with authority to contradict human experience and the power to transform it? His very thoughtful final dissent from my reliance on Reformation Anglicanism would suggest otherwise. His rebuttal has a double aim: i) to blur the line between the Reformers' respect for patristic interpretation and their understanding of Scripture's still superior authority for self-interpretation; ii) to assert that Anglicanism has moved on from the principled moderate Protestantism of the Thirty-Nine Articles, and there is no turning back to the original sources. In so doing, Gordon seeks to demonstrate that a living, adapting, comprehensive community tradition of interpretation is—and has always been—the orthodox Anglican approach to reading Scripture. Refusing to accept this reality is simply not 'Anglicanism today'.

Let two brief comments serve to answer Gordon's academic concerns. Firstly, despite his life-long study of the fathers, Cranmer would not have written 'Chrysostom's error on free will' beside a passage in Chrysostom's commentary on Hebrews, if he did not think the fathers' interpretation of Scripture could be corrected by Scripture (Library of St. John's College, Cambridge, Pp.7.5, p. 1113). The Homilies, prayer books and Articles give final authority to biblical clarity. Secondly, of course cutting through recent tradition to go back to the sources to chart a way forward for Anglicanism was precisely what the English Reformers did in their day and what Anglican evangelicals have done ever since. Their vibrant witness continues to constitute a major portion of the Anglican Communion's contemporary membership. Since the Reformers' formularies rely on Scripture as the ultimate theological authority, they can still guide Anglicans today.

Yet, while Gordon is thoroughly able to engage in this conversation at a sophisticated academic level, his last word on the subject suggests that he does not really think that is the heart of the matter. His epilogue concludes by saying that disagreements about how to read Scripture in the church today are not grounded in theological principles, but in human hearts: 'It is not about the Bible. It is about us.' Such a statement suggests Gordon gives the upper hand in scriptural interpretation to personal experience for everyone, whether people recognize it or not.

The implications of Gordon's view are important. Although he is far too gracious to spell them out, his meaning is unmistakable. The current problem is simply that some people's life experience has made them more loving than others. Whether or not they can see it, contemporary Anglicans who argue for the clarity of Scripture have allowed 'the deceitful devices and desires' of their hearts to use the Bible to exclude social minorities, 'crushing' those so rejected in the process. Blinded by their own brokenness, those who marginalize others in the name of scriptural authority fail to embrace the true nature of the Gospel and, indeed, the true nature of Anglicanism. In short, Gordon ultimately finds himself forced not only to question the moral character of those who hold to the clarity of an unchanging Gospel but also to question their place in the modern communion—the very issue I raised in the opening paragraph of my first essay.

What then are the implications of this three-way conversation for my understanding of the future of Anglicanism? Despite all the current conversation about wanting to live with good disagreement, those who seek to promote a culturally progressive church face a conundrum when encountering people who argue for an Anglicanism rooted in the

What is that makes an approach to biblical authority and biblical interpretation distinctively Anglican?

unchanging revelation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Chuck's rather negative assessment of those who hold to the clarity of Scripture and Gordon's honest, heartfelt final summary statement both lay bare the problem. How do you have 'good disagreement' with those whom you do not feel are actually 'good'?