

After Kigali: The Future of Orthodox Anglicanism

Gerald McDermott¹

The Kigali Commitment dedication to the authority of Scripture should be cheered. But if left to itself, it is easily forgotten that Scripture’s birthplace and guardian are the Church and her tradition. As Paul wrote, “the Church of the living God is the pillar and foundation of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).² Without attention to that pillar and foundation, the edifice called Christian orthodoxy starts to weaken and will eventually collapse. The Church’s tradition in creeds and liturgies and patristic teaching is indispensable for interpreting Scripture rightly.

Key Words: Anglican, orthodox, progressives, gay marriage, Scripture, sola scriptura, tradition, Church, hermeneutics

After the Kigali Commitment of April 2023³ was announced, there was justified jubilation⁴ all over the orthodox Anglican world. Finally, orthodox Anglican churches, led by African Anglicans, were standing up publicly against Canterbury’s subversion of marriage, the most common biblical metaphor for God’s relationship to his people. Everything sexual follows from a Church’s view of marriage. Canterbury’s acceptance of same-sex couplings has given way to its embrace of assorted sexual perversions.⁵

¹ The Rev. Dr. Gerald McDermott is Distinguished Professor of Anglican Theology at Reformed Episcopal Seminary and Distinguished Professor of Theology at Jerusalem Seminary. He lives in Charlottesville, VA, and is available at mcdermott1952@gmail.com.

² All Scripture translations are the author’s own unless otherwise noted.

³ Global Anglican Future Conference, “GAFCON IV – The Kigali Commitment,” April 23, 2023, <https://gafcon23.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Kigali-Commitment-2023.pdf>.

⁴ David Virtue, “The Kigali Statement - 2023 - The Communion Is Broken,” Virtue Online, April 21, 2023, <https://virtueonline.org/kigali-statement-2023-communion-broken>.

⁵ See, for example, Francis Martin, “Drag queens find welcome at London church.” *Church Times*, March 9, 2023, <https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2023/10-march/news/uk/drag-queens-find-welcome-at-london-church>.

No wonder the orthodox of every Church around the world⁶ applauded the Anglican leaders at Kigali for resisting the Global North's siren calls to heresy. They were especially brave, many noted, because this would mean the loss of funds for some of the world's poorest Christians. But the Global Anglican Fellowship Conference (GAFCON) and the Global South Fellowship of Anglican Churches (GSFA) leaders refused "to bless sin." They rejected the Archbishop of Canterbury's exhortation to "walk together" in "good disagreement."⁷ The mostly-African Anglican leaders rightly saw that it is impossible to accept two contradictory positions, especially on matters that affect salvation.

Scripture in the Womb of the Church

This was an important battle, and it was won by the orthodox. But something in the nature of the battle spells long-term trouble for the ongoing war within Anglicanism between its progressives and orthodox. The Kigali Commitment proclaimed that "the Bible is the rule of our lives" and declared that Scripture holds "final authority in the church." These two statements are true enough and should be cheered. But if left to themselves, it is easily forgotten that Scripture's birthplace and guardian are the Church and her tradition. As Paul wrote, "the Church of the living God is the pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). Without attention to that pillar and foundation, the edifice called Christian orthodoxy starts to weaken and will eventually collapse. The Church's tradition in creeds and liturgies and patristic teaching are indispensable for interpreting Scripture rightly.

It has been the way of heretics from early on to isolate Scripture from the Truth's pillar and foundation. Athanasius appealed to the Church's liturgy against the heresy of Arianism, which argued from the Bible alone, divorced

⁶ Joe Carter, "The FAQs: Anglican Group Calls on Church of England's Leader to Repent," The Gospel Coalition, April 27, 2023, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/faqs-church-england-repent>.

⁷ GAFCON, "Kigali Commitment."

from liturgy and tradition.⁸ Athanasius recognized that the Bible will be interpreted rightly only if it is read with help from Church tradition, which is the accumulated wisdom of the Jesus community going back to the apostles and their predecessors in Israel. It was this tradition that had been asserting long before Athanasius that Jesus Messiah was fully God, and that the Holy Spirit was too, as Athanasius later argued. It took Athanasius and the Cappadocian fathers to work out the precise ways in which the divine Persons were three and one at the same time. But they were all working with previous theological and liturgical tradition that had been insisting since the first century AD that the divine Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

The Arians, like the Gnostics before them, refused to pay attention to tradition. They wanted to read the Bible in their own idiosyncratic ways, with an ear to elite cultural presumptions rather than the teaching of the historic Church. Athanasius recognized that permitting private interpretations of the Bible was the road to heresy if it did not listen to the historic teaching of the Church. Inevitably, he realized, private interpretation would be formed by the surrounding culture and would read those cultural biases back into its interpretation of Scripture.

The Anglican Hermeneutic

Isolating Scripture from its origins in the Church and its tradition is not the Anglican way. It was not the Anglican way in the first millennium of Anglicanism (the catholic church in England that often rejected the Roman way⁹), and it was not the Anglican way in the long century of the Anglican reformation. Bishop John Jewel published his *Apology of the Church of England* in 1562, arguing against Roman claims but insisting that the English reformation was “confirmed

⁸ Athanasius appealed to the fathers at Nicaea and their Council for his defense of *homoousios*, and to the baptismal liturgy for his understandings of the deity of both the Son and the Spirit. Athanasius, *De Decretis*, 31; *Letter 56* (to Jovian); *Ad Serapionem* 1.28. See Thomas G. Weinandy, *Athanasius: A Theological Introduction* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 68, 105, 117. As he wrote to Serapion, in his first letter on the Holy Spirit, he was calling on “the tradition, teaching, and faith of the Catholic Church which the Lord gave, the apostles preached, and the Fathers kept.” *The Letters of Athanasius Concerning the Holy Spirit*, trans. & ed., C.R.B. Shapland (London: Epworth, 1951), 1.28. In his “Letter to the Bishops of Africa,” he wrote of “the sound Faith which Christ gave us, the Apostles preached, and the Fathers, who met at Nicæa from all this world of ours, have handed down,” <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf204/npnf204.xxiv.ii.html>.

⁹ McDermott, “An Anglican Theologian: An Ancient-Future Anglicanism,” in *The Future of Orthodox Anglicanism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020), 197–205.

by the words of Christ, by the writings of the apostles, *by the testimonies of the Catholic fathers*, and by the examples of many ages.”¹⁰

It was not until 1571, fifteen years after the martyrdom of Thomas Cranmer, that the Thirty-Nine Articles were finalized by the Church. The bishops who approved the Articles declared in canon law that preachers were not to assert anything different from Scripture or “what the *Catholic fathers and ancient bishops* have collected from this selfsame doctrine.” They declared that the Articles “in all respects agree with” the Fathers and ancient bishops.¹¹ Scripture was their final authority, but to be sure they were reading Scripture aright, they consulted the Fathers.

The greatest theologian of the English reformation was Richard Hooker (1554–1600). His massive *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* demonstrated the Anglican theological method—to read the Bible at the feet of the Fathers. Hooker appealed to the Fathers 774 times in his *Laws*, as often to those in the West as to those in the East. He dismissed the Puritan regulative principle—that everything in worship must have an explicit New Testament warrant—with the observation that many things in worship are not addressed explicitly. He cited Augustine (whom he quoted 99 times in the *Laws*) on the importance of tradition: “The custom of the people of God and the decrees of our forefathers are to be kept, touching those things whereof the Scripture hath neither one way or other given us any charge.”¹²

Hooker contended against Roman Catholics on the right and Puritans on the left. His principal Puritan opponent Thomas Cartwright claimed to find only Puritan worship in the New Testament, but Hooker showed that Cartwright was cherry-picking the biblical text and advocating worship practices that could not be found there. In other words, Cartwright was using *Puritan* tradition, not Scripture alone, to draw Puritan conclusions about worship. Hooker’s point was that there is no use of the Bible outside of *some* tradition, whether the interpreter knows it or not. Hooker appealed to patristic, medieval, and Reformation traditions, but leaned mostly on the Fathers.

Bishop Francis White (1564–1638) was another important Anglican leader at the end of the long reformation century who used the Anglican method—

¹⁰ John Jewel, *Apology of the Church of England* (London: Cassell, 1888), 29, (emphasis added), eBook available at <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/17678/pg17678-images.html>.

¹¹ “Canon 6” in *Selection from the Canons of 1571*, eds. Henry Gee and William John Hardy, in *Documents Illustrative of English Church History* (New York: Macmillan, 1896), 476–77. Available online at <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/engref/er82.html>.

¹² Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* IV.5.1. This and the next paragraph are adapted from McDermott, “An Anglican Theologian,” 216.

reading Scripture while listening to the Fathers. White was bishop of Ely, a principal Anglican see. His statement of the Anglican method is instructive: “The Church of England in her public and authorized Doctrine and Religion” looks to Scripture as “her main and prime foundation,” but after that “relieth upon the consentieth testimony and authority of the *Bishops and Patrons of the true ancient Catholic Church*; and it prefereth the sentence thereof before all other curious and profane novelties.”¹³

We would not be the first to call the Anglican method *prima scriptura*. This means acknowledging the final authority of God’s written word in the Church but deferring to the authority of the creeds and great councils of the Church, especially the writings of the Fathers, to determine the proper ways to use and interpret Scripture. Luther and Calvin often wrote of *sola scriptura* but meant *prima scriptura*, for they regularly deferred to the great councils and creeds, and cited the Fathers like Augustine and Chrysostom for authority. The English reformers did the same.

Anglicans have noted, with the Fathers, that there is consistent support within the New Testament itself for the use of tradition to interpret and guide ongoing revelation in the apostolic period. In Matthew 15 Jesus criticized the Pharisees for making void the Word of God by teaching “traditions of men.” God had told his people to honor their parents, which included caring for them when they need it. But the Pharisees were teaching that their followers could make contributions to the Temple in a way that would exempt them from supporting their parents. Christians suspicious of tradition miss the fact that Jesus actually praised other traditions of the Pharisees when he told his disciples in Matthew 23:3 to “practice and protect whatever [the Pharisees] teach you.” Our Lord denounced the Pharisees’ hypocrisy but praised their traditions that helped interpret the Word of God rather than making it void.

Paul told the Corinthians he commended them for keeping to “the *traditions* which I have handed down (lit., *traditioned*) to you” (1 Cor. 11:2). He warned the Thessalonians to “stand firm and hold to the *traditions* that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter” (2 Thess. 2:15). He instructed Timothy to pass on the tradition he had taught Timothy before the NT was assembled: “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). He

¹³ Francis White, *A Treatise of the Sabbath Day, Containing a Defense of the Orthodoxall Doctrine of the Church of England against Sabbatarian Novelty* (London: Richard Badger, 1635; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership, 2011), 11–12, <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/B00873.0001.001/1:3.4?rgn=div2;view=fulltext>.

delivered to the Ephesian elders a Jesus saying from the oral tradition, never recorded in the gospels, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

The Danger of “Bible Alone” Illustrated

Apparently the GAFCON and GSFA leaders at Kigali were following more of a Bible-alone hermeneutic than *prima scriptura*. For they ignored the univocal voice of Anglican and Christian tradition over the vast majority of the last two millennia (broken only in the mid- and late-twentieth century) when they promised to “affirm and encourage . . . leadership roles of GAFCON women in family, church and society.” In this article I will focus on leadership in the church and specifically ordination to sacramental ministry.

The Kigali Commitment seems to affirm women’s ordination to sacramental ministry, and there are two reasons for my saying this. First, it affirms and encourages “leadership” in “the church” without qualifying that leadership in any way. Second, GAFCON provinces represented at Kigali have already consecrated female bishops (Sudan and Kenya), several GAFCON provinces ordain women to the priesthood, and nearly all have ordained female deacons. The Anglican Church in North America (ACNA), a member of GAFCON, permits the ordination of women to the diaconate in nearly all of their dioceses and to the priesthood in a number of them. The ordination of women to the three degrees of Holy Order has been going on for several years, and GAFCON leadership has issued no rebuke of its member provinces for doing so. The inescapable conclusion is that the Kigali statement includes the sacramental ordination of women as at least *part* of what it means by “affirming and encouraging . . . leadership roles of GAFCON women in . . . the church.”

While the plain sense of the Commitment suggests acceptance of women’s ordination, I must acknowledge that some on the writing team for this Commitment insist the statement was not meant to affirm women’s ordination. For example, the Archbishop of Nigeria signed the Commitment, and he is well-known for his opposition to women’s ordination. The problem, then, lies not with the intent of all who signed but with the plain sense of the document that will be used in the future to affirm what some of the signers apparently deny.

This is why the presumption that *sola scriptura* is enough to safeguard orthodoxy is naïve, and has been proven wrong time and again by the history of Bible-alone evangelicals becoming liberal Protestants. For example, the social gospel movement in late nineteenth-century America denounced tradition and focused on the Bible alone, and soon morphed into the beginnings of American

liberal Protestantism. Their leaders started as evangelicals and proclaimed Scripture as their sole final authority. Walter Rauschenbusch, for example, denigrated all previous theology and dogma for perpetuating “an esoteric stream of tradition.” He accused “theology” of being “the esoteric thought of the Church” disconnected from the “life and mind of Jesus” which could be found only in his ethical teachings in the synoptic gospels. The latter, he claimed, is opposed to the historic Church’s “tradition and dogma.”¹⁴

It was the rejection of tradition that enabled The Episcopal Church to ordain gays, using the same hermeneutic they used to ordain women—Scripture alone, ignoring the countervailing witness of tradition. Many Episcopal Bible scholars and theologians used Scripture to (supposedly) prove that monogamous same-sex couples could be faithful to Scripture. They convinced many, in part because they ignored or rejected tradition. There is also the witness of history: nearly every denomination that has ordained women has eventually gotten around to approving same-sex couples. Even Baptist and Pentecostal denominations that have ordained women but have not yet formally approved actively-gay pastors contain outspoken theologians and movements that are recommending their churches to do so.¹⁵

All of this is despite the universal testimony from the Christian tradition (and the Jewish before that) that God has limited Holy Order in three degrees (bishop, priest, deacon) to men. This polity became the universal church order as early as the second century. Ignatius wrote around AD 112, “Follow your bishop . . . as Jesus Christ followed the Father. Obey your presbyters too, as you would the apostles; give your deacons the same reverence that you would to a command from God.”¹⁶ The same threefold order can be found in Clement of Rome at the end of the first century and a century later in the writings of Tertullian.¹⁷ It became standard over the next two thousand years in both the West and East. The Thirty-Nine Articles adopt this order as its standard for the

¹⁴ Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1987), 12, 14–15, 133 (emphasis added).

¹⁵ On the Pentecostal side, for example, there are the Fellowship of Reconciling Pentecostals International (<https://rpifellowship.com/>) and freedom2b (<https://www.freedom2b.org>), which operated from 2004–2018. The Association of Welcoming & Affirming Baptists (<https://awab.org>) is a national organization advocating for the full inclusion of LGBTQ people within Baptist communities of faith.

¹⁶ Ignatius, *The Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* 8, in *Early Christian Writings*, ed. Andrew Louth (London: Penguin, 1987), 103.

¹⁷ *The First Epistle of Clement* XLII & XLIV, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2012 [orig. 1885]), 16–17; Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heretics* XXXII, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, 258.

clergy (Articles XXXII, XXXVI), and Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity* follows it (V.77.8).

Just as Jews ruled out women from their orders of Levites, priests, and chief priests (corresponding to Christian deacons, priests, and bishops), so the Christian Church in both East and West reserved Holy Order to men. They observed that while Jesus was a revolutionary in the ways he treated women, he restricted the apostolate to men. The Fathers took seriously Paul's restrictions on sacramental ministry to men, and noted that Paul appealed to the created order before the Fall: "Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Tim. 2:13); women were to "pray or prophesy with their heads covered because man was not made from woman but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman but woman for man" (1 Cor. 11:8-9).

For the Fathers reading Paul, then, male authority in the Church derives not from a fallen order but from the creation order. Male headship is not from *sinful* patriarchy but because of God's original order for humanity. In fact, the form of the Fall reinforces male headship. Eve took the initiative rather than Adam, and did not consult with Adam. As Eve's head, Adam should have protected her from Satan and reminded her of God's commands. Instead, he retreated to the shadows as a passive husband, which is why in Romans 5 Paul blames the Fall on Adam rather than Eve: "Just as sin came into the world *through one man . . .*" (Rom. 5:12).

Yet as we have seen, for Paul order in the Church and home is rooted in nature before the Fall. This creation order also points to the order of Christ over his Church. Therefore, men are appointed heads in the home and church not because of biological or spiritual superiority but because God has ordered his creation and Church after the relation between Christ and the Church: Christ as the God-man is the head of his Church which is the feminine Bride. Woman represents "the bridal response of faith and love made by the Church."¹⁸

The Fathers were unanimous on this. They were well aware of priestesses in pagan religions in the first three centuries of the Church, and there was not one Father in these centuries or after who said Christians were permitted to follow that example. All condemned female priests.¹⁹

¹⁸ Gerhard Müller, *Priesthood and Diaconate: The Recipient of the Sacrament of Holy Orders from the Perspective of Creation Theology and Christology*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 103.

¹⁹ The next paragraph is adapted from McDermott, "Anglican Hermeneutics," in *Re-formed Catholic Anglicanism*, ed. Bp Ray Sutton (Nashotah, WI: Nashotah Publishing, forthcoming).

An example of the early Fathers on this question can be seen in the *Apostolic Tradition* (c. 215), where only men were ordained to the offices of bishop, priest, and deacon, and the ordinations were conducted by the laying on of hands. All other ministries—widows, lectors, virgins, subdeacons, and those with healing gifts—were expressly forbidden to receive the laying on of hands because “ordination is for clerics destined for liturgical service.”²⁰ All liturgical offices were limited to men. Women in other ministries were set apart for service to the Church by the bishop with prayer only and were excluded from liturgical functions.

While women were excluded from *sacramental* ministry and ordination to any of the three degrees of Holy Order, they were not excluded from ministry. Not by a long shot. For more than a millennium, churches in the East set aside women to be deaconesses for ministry to women and families. Under the authority of the rector or bishop, they exercised a variety of ministries such as pastoral care, counseling, caring for the sick and poor, teaching, spiritual formation, prayer ministry, preparing candidates for baptism and confirmation, assisting at baptisms, leading Morning and Evening Prayer, and conducting other forms of social and educational work. This was critical ministry to people of all ages. But none of this was service at an altar for sacramental ministry.²¹

This does not mean that other women (who were not deaconesses) did not have ministry during the last two thousand years before liberal churches started to put collars on their necks. Quite the contrary. From the earliest days of the New Testament women exercised a wide variety of ministries using what has been called the “Marian charism.” They have prophesied, supported the apostles financially, served the sick and needy, evangelized inside and outside the Church, and instructed their husbands and children and younger women. They have demonstrated special spiritual openness exemplified by the Virgin Mary and Mary of Bethany, served as spiritual mothers, performed works of charity and mercy like those of Tabitha and Dorcas, used special gifts of faith

²⁰ No. 10, cited in Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses: An Historical Study*, trans. K.D. Whitehead (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986), 31; Geoffrey J. Cuming translates the expression as “Ordination is for the clergy on account of their liturgical duties,” in Hippolytus: *A Text for Students*, excerpted in Maxwell Johnson, ed., *Sacraments and Worship: The Sources of Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 322.

²¹ Martimort, *Deaconesses*, see chaps 1–7, especially “The Liturgy for the Ordination of Deaconesses.” This sums up his study: “However solemn may have been the ritual by which she was initiated into her ministry, however much it may have resembled the ritual for the ordination of a deacon, the conclusion nevertheless must be that a deaconess in the Byzantine rite was in no wise a female deacon” (156). Deaconesses had no strictly sacramental office and were not near the altar during a Eucharist when a priest was presiding.

and evangelism we see in Martha and Mary Magdalene, shown hospitality like that of Martha and Mary, and used special gifts of prayer like the women at the cross and in the upper room.

The Relation of Holy Order to Marriage

As I have written above, the Kigali leaders were courageous in their biblical refusal to go along with Canterbury's heresy on marriage. But we need to recognize—in a way that the Kigali leaders might not have yet seen—that in the Anglican future holding to Holy Order will be integral to continuing orthodoxy on marriage. For it was the rejection of Christian tradition on Holy Order that opened the way to heresy on marriage.

How so? Once Anglicans permitted themselves to depart from the plain sense of Scripture (which, we should remind ourselves, was a Reformation hermeneutical principle) on ministry, their brains were rewired to permit other violations of Scripture's plain sense. When they allowed themselves to reject the tradition on Holy Order, they had established for themselves a new hermeneutical principle—rejecting both the plain sense of the Bible and the unanimous teaching of Christian tradition in pursuit of a culturally-acceptable practice. Once this theological method had been accepted, and their brains had been rewired to follow it, it was easier for Anglicans to accept another practice that violates the plain sense of Scripture and unanimous teaching in Christian tradition.

Now, it is clear that the brave leaders at Kigali will never tolerate gay marriage. But their sons and daughters, who will follow their hermeneutic more consistently, might. For now that they have seen their fathers practicing what is condemned by Scripture and tradition, they will be open to doing the same in the future—especially when the world's condemnations grow louder and its financial coercions multiply against Christians who fail to approve what the world considers just and moral.

The Need to Recover the Patristic Vision of the Church²²

One thing that will help Anglican sons and daughters recover proper orthodox vision is to see the Church as Scripture and the Fathers portray it. For the biblical authors and patristic thinkers, the Church is not a voluntary association

²² This section is adapted from McDermott, "The Church," in *Re-formed Catholic Anglicanism*, ed. Bp Ray Sutton (Nashotah, WI: Nashotah Publishing, forthcoming).

of the like-minded but a divine society joined in being with the ascended Messiah. It is not an organization but an organism, an extension of the incarnation of the Son of God. It is made up of all the saints and angels in heaven (the Church Triumphant) as well as those pursuing holiness on earth (the Church Militant). So when we participate in the liturgy and sacraments of the Church, we see and touch and taste the life of the Son of God as man who has lived in his Body ever since his ascension to the right hand of the Father.

The Fathers spoke of the Church as God's plan for salvation. Clement of Alexandria wrote, "God's intention is the salvation of men and it is called the Church."²³ Irenaeus spoke of the Church as "the ladder of ascent to God."²⁴ Only in the Church can we find the true God by using its ladder to get up to heaven's realm. Irenaeus was telling his readers, in a day when there were plenty of Gnostic gatherings called churches of Jesus, that the true Jesus can be found only in the orthodox churches descended from the apostles. Only these churches confer salvation and true graces. One must distinguish between true and false churches and the consequence is eternal—between salvation and damnation.

Because the Church is God's plan for salvation, participation in it is not optional. It is necessary for salvation. The person who drops out of an orthodox Church is departing from Christ. It is that simple. The Church is the Body of the Messiah, so one who abstains from that Body abstains from the Messiah himself. One can speculate on the possibility of salvation outside the Church, but it is speculation nonetheless, lacking clear attestation in Scripture or tradition. The Church is the highway of grace, as Anglican Vernon Staley has called it, the sure road along which we travel to heaven and glory. For it is in the Church that the Lord Jesus carries on his work of saving men and fitting them for heaven.²⁵ The upshot is that the Church is no more optional for heavenly life than food and air are optional for earthly life.

The Fathers also wrote extensively of the *catholicity* of the Church. When we say every Sunday that the Church is catholic, we use the Latin word *catholicus* derived from the Greek *katholikos*, *kata* "according to" and *holos* "the whole." This is the faith of the whole world. We catholic Anglicans think particularly of the faith and worship of the whole world in the undivided church of the first

²³ Clement of Alexandria, *The Instructor* 1.6, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2012 [orig. 1885]); this translation is from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), 200.

²⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.24, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1.

²⁵ Vernon Staley, *The Catholic Religion* (Harrisburg: Morehouse, 1983 [orig. 1883]), 34.

millennium, when churches both East and West used the same liturgy and creeds and believed and worshiped and lived as catholic Christians in the same ways. We confessed the same creeds, participated in the same sacraments, and were served by bishops, priests, and deacons who could be traced in a succession going back to the apostles. The English church made sure to continue this faith through the Reformation and beyond, and many have kept it to this day.

Our Prayer Book professes this catholic faith. The collect for the feast day of Sts. Simon and Jude uses traditional catholic language for the Church: “God himself has built his Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets.” At the Reformation the Protestant communions abandoned bishops and priests, made of the sacraments something new, and rejected the apostolic succession. But our Prayer Book kept the old order of bishops and priests, and states on its title page that it administers the sacraments and rites and ceremonies of “the Church,” by which it meant the universal catholic Church with its sacraments that make effectual what they promise because they are administered by bishops and priests in the apostolic succession.

The Thirty-Nine Articles also teach the catholic faith. Article XIX begins, “The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men,” repudiating the Protestant view that the true Church is *invisible* with its members known only to God. (More on visible and invisible below.) Article XXXIV says that “private judgment” is not sufficient to “break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the Word of God.”

Why Rome is Not the Answer²⁶

For Anglicans, “catholic” does not mean *Roman Catholic*, though we happily say the Roman Church is among the great catholic churches of the world, along with the Eastern Orthodox churches. We also say there is historical reason for not submitting to the primacy of Rome. Peter was the leader, not lord of the twelve apostles. He was the first among equals. The power of the keys was given to *all* the apostles in Matthew 18:17 and to all except Thomas in John 20:21–24. The Fathers stressed the equality of the apostles. Cyprian, for example, wrote that “the rest of the apostles were . . . the same as was Peter, endowed with a like partnership both of honour [sic] and power.”²⁷ St Augustine, perhaps the

²⁶ This section is adapted from McDermott, “The Church,” in *Re-formed Catholic Anglicanism*, ed. Bp Ray Sutton (Nashotah, WI: Nashotah Publishing, forthcoming).

²⁷ Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church* 4, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5.

greatest of the Fathers, said at the end of his life that Peter was not the rock in Matthew 16 but Christ, and that he was wrong to hold earlier in his life that it was Peter. This suggests that Augustine did not think Petrine or Roman primacy was a significant doctrine. Gregory the Great (d 604) in a letter to the patriarch of Alexandria wrote that he shared the Petrine office with him and the patriarch of Antioch since Peter was the bishop of Antioch and sent Mark to found the church in Alexandria.²⁸ He chided the bishop of Alexandria for calling him “universal Pope,” told him to “do this no more” and insisted he did not have authority to “command” him because “in position you [and other patriarchs] are my brethren.”²⁹ The early councils gave first place to the bishop of Rome among five patriarchs, but it was a place of honor rather than lordship. Staley compares it to the foreman of a jury, first among equals.³⁰

Our own reformers made clear that they were not Roman but catholic nevertheless. As J.L.C. Dart has argued, in Elizabethan days “Protestant” meant “not papist,” not anti-catholic.³¹ For Jewell, Hooker, and Andrewes, it meant Catholicism without the pope.³² Later Anglicans have found more reason to be catholic but not Roman. Pusey argued that Rome brought changes to the catholic faith by its doctrine of transubstantiation and a juridical version of purgatory.³³ Anglicans have long venerated Mary but objected to Roman innovations about her immaculate conception and assumption. The Anglican Newman was disturbed by the emerging doctrine of papal infallibility. St. Peter, he wrote, was not infallible at Antioch when St. Paul disagreed with him, nor was Liberius, the bishop of Rome, when he excommunicated Athanasius.³⁴

²⁸ Gregory the Great, *Epistle XL*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12: 228–29.

²⁹ Gregory the Great, *Epistle XXX*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, second series, vol. 12:240–41.

³⁰ Staley, *The Catholic Religion*, 40.

³¹ J.L.C. Dart, *The Old Religion: An Examination into the Facts of the English Reformation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, no date [originally SPCK, 1956]), 12–13.

³² *Ibid*, 18.

³³ The Rev. Dr. Edward Pusey, *Anglican Doctrine: Notes and Questions on the Catholic Faith and Religion*, ed. Ben Jefferies (Nashotah: Nashotah Press, 2018), 144–49, 296–301.

³⁴ John Henry Newman, *Certain Difficulties felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching*, 2 vols., 256–58; cited in Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 689.

The Future Church: A Persecuted and Poor Remnant Full of the Joy of the Lord

What is the future of orthodox Anglicanism? To be orthodox, it must follow the Fathers who led the Church of the first millennium in worship and practice, common to both East and West. It will remain faithful to the practice of Holy Order in apostolic succession,³⁵ ordaining men to sacramental ministry but opening wide the doors to an assortment of ministries for women. It will stay true to the biblical and patristic vision of marriage, which will guide all its understandings of sexuality.

It will be a persecuted church. Jesus said, “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also . . . If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:20, 19). But the orthodox Anglican Church, knowing that it is in the will of God, will rejoice. It will remember Jesus’ teaching on persecution and joy: “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5:11–12).

Orthodox Anglicanism will be a remnant Church. Jesus told Peter at Caesarea Philippi that he came to earth to build what Matthew translates as *ekklesia*, the Greek term for the Hebrew *qahal* or assembly of God’s people. In the Septuagint and at Qumran the biblical and Essene writers often distinguished the holy remnant from the whole body of Israel.³⁶ This was the remnant which the Old Testament prophets spoke of, and the remnant that Paul referred to in Romans 11: “At the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace” (v. 5). Jesus referred to his followers as the “little flock” (Luke 12:32). The future of orthodox Anglicanism will be a little flock scorned by the world and sometimes misunderstood by other Christians. It will not believe it is the only way to follow Jesus, but will know it is a historic way of keeping the catholic—universal—faith of creeds, liturgy, and sacraments.

³⁵ On apostolic succession, see the section titled “Structured” in McDermott, “The Church,” in *Reformed Catholic Anglicanism*, ed. Bp Ray Sutton (Nashotah, WI: Nashotah Publishing, forthcoming).

³⁶ On *ekklesia* based on *qahal* and therefore referring to an assembly, and sometimes that of a remnant, rather than an elect number “called out of” the world, as traditionally rendered, see Philip Susiadi Chia, “The Word *Ekklesia* in Matthew and Its Implication for Social Justice,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin: Journal of Bible and Culture* 51, no. 1 (Jan 27, 2021): 24–32, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146107920980932>.

Finally, it will be a poor Church. Of course it will attract all economic classes. But just as in the early Church “not many were powerful or of noble birth” (1 Cor. 1:26), and a century later Celsus the philosopher accused the Church of containing “only worthless and contemptible people, idiots, slaves, poor women and children,”³⁷ the future of orthodox Anglicanism will probably remain where it is thickest now, in the global South. Here the Church is generally poor, both relatively and absolutely. Its members will recognize that by their Head’s poverty, however, they have become rich (2 Cor. 8:9). Although they lack so many things of this world, God has given them “sufficiency in all things at all times, so that [they] may abound in every good work” (2 Cor. 9:8).

³⁷ Celsus, quoted in Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.49, in *Origen against Celsus*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (1885–87; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 4:484.

