

**GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

**Christian Education: Religious Identity and Anglicanism**

Over the past weeks we have looked at our Anglican Christian identity in terms of how God reveals Himself and His will to us; what were the origins of the particular form of Christian identity which we call Anglican; and what we believe about the sacraments and about salvation. In this final session of this course, we will focus more of who we are. How is the Anglican Communion organized? What makes a Christian church to be Anglican in self-identification? What about when we disagree?

1. Anglican praxis:
  - a. What are *The Articles of Religion* (The Thirty-Nine Articles)?
    - i. Are they normative?
  - b. What is *The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral*?
  - c. What are the “Instruments of Communion” of the Anglican Communion?
    - i. What is the role of the Archbishop of Canterbury?
    - ii. What is the role of the Primates’ Council?
    - iii. What is the role of the Lambeth Conference?
    - iv. What is the role of the Anglican Consultative Council and its standing committee?
    - v. How does this relate to *The Book of Common Prayer*?
  - d. What dispute resolution mechanisms exist?

*The Articles of Religion and the Prayer Book*: Following material doctrinal shifts between 1549 and the seventeenth century, *The Book of Common Prayer* assumed one form in 1662. The 1662 prayer book remains the book mandated by Act of Parliament in The Church of England, although alternative prayer books are in fact often used. The 1662 prayer book formed the basis (*via* the Scottish prayer book) for the first Episcopalian prayer book of 1789.

In parallel with the evolution of the prayer book, disputes in The Church of England were addressed in the development of doctrinal statements which came to be known as *The Articles of Religion*, known most commonly as the “Thirty-nine Articles”. The Thirty-Nine Articles are found in our own prayer book on pp. 867–876, in the section of “Historical Documents of the Church”. The articles were adopted in the Episcopal Church in 1801 (after the American prayer book), but were relegated to historical status with the adoption of the 1979 prayer book (our current prayer book). The Articles were relegated to historical status for a number of reasons: (1) They reflect, in part, a 17<sup>th</sup> century Reformed hostility to piety and doctrine which is more Catholic, and thus do not reflect the reality that The Episcopal Church is both Reformed and Catholic. (2) The 1979 prayer book is itself more Catholic in returning to piety and doctrine which is both pre-Reformation and pre-Medieval (*i.e.*, to the piety and doctrine of the early, unified Church).

In The Episcopal Church, The Thirty-Nine Articles are historic, but not necessarily thereby irrelevant. For example, at vows made at the ordination of a deacon or priest, and at the consecration of a bishop, all include direct quotations from Article VI, “Of the Sufficiency of Holy Scriptures for Salvation”.<sup>1</sup> This is not the case in most other provinces of The Anglican Communion, where they are considered normative. The Articles may be, in fact, tolerated in the more “Catholic” provinces (*e.g.*, Central Africa), but they do remain normative. An important result of this status for The Articles is that other provinces may view doctrine and practices which are common in The Episcopal Church as specifically un-Anglican. For example, as The Episcopal Church examines whether and how to bless same-sex unions church leaders in other provinces are pointing to Article XX, “Of the Authority of the Church,” to argue that this may not even be discussed, let alone undertaken. Article XXVIII, “Of the Lord’s Supper,” explicitly rejects the eucharistic doctrine of transubstantiation, belief in which is central to the faith and piety of many Anglicans, but within and without The Episcopal Church.

It is not well understood in other provinces that The Articles are not normative in The Episcopal Church. This has led to an increase in mistrust within The Anglican Communion. Current recourse to The Articles is symptomatic of the struggle which has always been at the core of Anglicanism, between piety which is more Word-focused (an Evangelical piety) and one which is more focused upon the grace imparted in the Sacraments (a Catholic piety). The Articles enshrined in The Church of England a more Word-focused piety, following a literal civil war in the land.

*The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral:* In the nineteenth century the Evangelical/Catholic identity struggle in Anglicanism resurfaced in the Oxford Movement,<sup>2</sup> which emphasized, for example, the real presence of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Grace Episcopal Church is very much an heir (*via* Nashotah House) of this nineteenth century reawakening of Catholic piety. Attendant on this reawakening, the tensions inherent in The Anglican Communion also resurfaced, and this led a number of churchmen to consider how to best identify what is at the core of being the Church. At the same time, immigration affected the religious character of America, and some Episcopalians promoted The Episcopal Church as a body having wide enough tolerance of difference to be a unifying force.<sup>3</sup>

This spirit of seeking common ground was advanced by The Rev. William Reed Huntington (d. 1909; *feast* 27 July). In his book *The Church Idea* (1870), he attempted to articulate the essentials of Christian unity. The grounds he proposed were accepted by the House of Bishops in Chicago in 1886, and were adopted, with some modification, by the Lambeth Conference in 1888. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral (CLQ) became, therefore, a historic landmark in Anglican identity.

The CLQ may be found in the prayer book at pp. 876-7. It articulates a will to unity as founded on our Lord’s expressed will (*cf.* Jn. 17.20), with the following bases defined for Christian unity:

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<sup>1</sup> “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary for salvation ...” *Cf.* BCP 513, 526, 538.

<sup>2</sup> Also called the Ritualist Movement.

<sup>3</sup> This is why the Episcopal cathedral in Washington, D.C. is known as “The National Cathedral”.

- The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the revealed Word of God.
- The Nicene Creed as a sufficient statement of the Christian Faith.
- The two Sacraments—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord—ministered with unfailing use of Christ’s words of institution and of the elements ordained by Him.
- The Historic Episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of His Church.

*Anglican Polity and the “Instruments of Communion”*: In the post-2003 environment, in which disputes over doctrine have become prominent in The Anglican Communion, it is necessary to pay more attention to polity—to how the communion is organized and governed. The need to have a dispute resolution mechanism has led to a focus on the so-called “Instruments of Communion”.

The Archbishop of Canterbury is the *primus inter pares* (first among equals) of all of the provincial heads in the communion. As such, communion with the See of Canterbury is considered a mark of Anglican identity, although the archbishop has made clear that this communion is between bishop and bishop at a diocesan level, and not just at a provincial level.

Each province is headed by a primate, generally an archbishop. The Episcopal Church does not have an archbishop, but a Presiding Bishop who is *primus inter pares* in the House of Bishops, and has additional executive powers granted by General Convention. The Presiding Bishop is accorded the status of primate in the communion,

The Primates’ Council meets periodically (in general, every three years) to consider Communion-wide issues. Its role is, however, advisory. It cannot issue Communion-wide directives.

The Lambeth Conference meets every ten years. It began in 1888, following an initiative from The Episcopal Church to promote greater unity between the Anglican churches around the world. The conference is summoned by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and includes all bishops of the Communion. It considers issues broadly, and issues policy statements, but these do not have legislative effect.

The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) functions in a quasi-executive role as a council of advice to the Archbishop of Canterbury, with members appointed by him and by the primates. It can decide policy statements for the Communion, but these have no effect absent adoption at a provincial level.

*The Anglican Communion Covenant*: What is immediately obvious from the brief discussion of Anglican polity is that it is founded on consent. There is no actual legislative or executive power. The Communion does not have a pope or *curia*. This allows for wide divergence in doctrine and practice, with the result that dispute resolution is ill-defined and not effective. This absence of an effective dispute resolution mechanism has become troublesome within the past twelve years, attendant on what many provinces consider to be doctrinal innovations in The Church of England, The Episcopal Church, and The Province of New Westminster (Canada).

Two attempts to define a Communion-wide governance mechanism have been attempted; one official and one unofficial. The latter is GAFCON (Global Anglican Fellowship Conference), a triennial meeting in Jerusalem attended by as many as

eighteen of the thirty-eight provinces, which has issued policy statements which the attending provinces have assented to. The official Communion proposal was the “Anglican Covenant”. This document attempted to specify what it means to be an Anglican church, and how such a church relates to the “Instruments of Communion”. The Covenant had four broad sections. There was little dispute over the first three (which discuss the nature of the Church and the faith). Disputes arose over the fourth section, which is the “disciplinary” section, under which a province or diocese can be deemed out-of-compliance with the marks of Anglican identity.

The Covenant was officially adopted by more than half of the provinces of the Communion, and individual dioceses (including a few in The Episcopal Church) declared their accession to the Covenant. The Episcopal Church never adopted the Covenant.

In January 2016 a meeting of Anglican primates is planned, as called by the Archbishop of Canterbury. At this meeting an attempt will be made to agree how the provinces will continue to relate to each other. It is not clear if all provinces will send representatives to this meeting.

2. General review and question-an-answer session.