

Anglican Tradition, Clergy Formation, & Relationship to the Bishop

For the Church.

O GRACIOUS Father, we humbly beseech thee for thy holy Catholic Church; that thou wouldst be pleased to fill it with all truth, in all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in anything it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, establish it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of him who died and rose again, and ever liveth to make intercession for us, Jesus Christ, thy Son, our Lord. *Amen.*

My assignment this morning is to discuss in one hour

Anglican Tradition

Clergy Formation

Priestly Relationship to the Bishop

For the sake of getting right to the point

not to mention stirring the pot

I hope to address these topics rather bluntly

so we might get all our issues facing on the table

and in doing so hoping to challenge some thinking...

Obedience is the issue that ties together everything I will say

So first: Anglican Tradition:

Anglicanism is not a confession to be made

nor is it a simple formula to be repeated

Anglicanism is a life to be lived...

And that life involves an ontological change in the believer

that can come about in a variety of authentic ways

but all having at their foundation in & through

obedience to the doctrine, discipline & worship of the church

which as clergy we are under orders to uphold,

in its durable historic form & reliable biblical substance

Anglicanism is advanced Christianity

in which the believer will be transformed

There's a change in ownership that comes with following Jesus.

You will no longer be your own...you will fully belong to God,"

and then live to please Him/organize your life around Him

This transformation happens

within an historically proven & approved spiritual discipline

in the liturgical practice of the Book of Common Prayer

so that as we worship, so we believe, and so we live

If you tinker with that

you are tinkering with the souls & destiny of men

well above our clergy pay grades,

and why we are ordained, living under orders,
to uphold a very specific worldview & life practice

**The Book of Common Prayer, the Thirty-nine articles, The Homilies,
and Ordinal**

establish the boundaries and the framework for
Anglican doctrine, discipline, and worship
within which we teach, preach, pastor, & lead worship
that is our Anglican tradition...

And under the Bishop's authority to do only that

Free lancer protestants take note...

Importantly is that we are not a confessional church

like the Calvinists in our church might want us to be

Rather our formularies purposefully avoid

the second order details and prescriptions

that mark the confessional Protestant churches

instead setting the boundaries in which we operate

**Originally these boundaries were understood to be a pathway
between**

the reformed churches on the one hand

and the Roman Catholic Church on the other.

Two celebrated theologians of those formative days of Anglicanism are John Jewel and Richard Hooker:

John Jewel's Apology of the Church of England

was a vigorous condemnation of the excesses of the Roman Catholic Church

by appealing to Scripture and the practices of the primitive church.

Richard Hooker's Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity

refuted the Puritan appeal to scripture only and upheld traditional orders, sacrament, & practice

as established in church but not contrary to scripture.

Thomas Ken described the Anglican Church as:

"...the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic faith, professed by the whole Church before disunion of East and West, as its stands distinguished from all Papal and Puritan Innovations, and as it adheres to the doctrine of the cross.

In the spirit of Ashley Null's new book, Reformational Anglicanism

we can apply the principles established in those days

to any period, parish, or practice

as the Anglican way of being Christian

My point being that Anglican Via Media is so much more

than a compromise between Protestant and Catholic

It is a via, a way of being

between **rigidity** and **license**

between

retreating from the world

and **collapsing** into the world.

between

knowledge & experience

theology & devotion,

Hooker defined this via media as being about moderation

giving balance to scripture, reason, and tradition

not simply sola scriptoria

as the primary sources for worship, belief, and morals

Thus this statement defining Anglicanism is this:

"Appealing to Scripture as containing all things
necessary to salvation,

"to antiquity as a guide to the understanding of
Scripture,

"and to reason as the God-given faculty for receiving
divine revelation."

So a pathway:

between Protestantism and Catholicism for sure,

but more importantly so

a pathway woven among scripture, tradition, and reason

a path between authority and liberty,

a pathway that avoids excess

My professor Fitz Allison says it is a pathway between

preaching & practice,

theology & devotion,

doctrine and ethics vs puritan rigid moralism

The choices have real life consequences, the wrong balance leads to

spiritual elitism, rigidity, almost an anger;

radical individualism, either liberal or conservative

Liberals are certain about nothing

Conservatives are certain about everything

both appealing to a certain level of insecurity and incuriosity

or: the right choice, a life of

generosity & graciousness grounded

in those historic events of scripture,
interpreted by the church,

empowered by the Holy Spirit

leading to life rightly ordered & historically formed

Strife within the ranks usually takes the form of an incomplete theology and ecclesiology, usually showing itself in this way:

Evangelicals...who want the King without the kingdom

Liberals...who want the kingdom without the King

Catholics...who believe the kingdom equals the church

The correct answer is the Anglican synthesis...

...in which the King leads us to the kingdom through the church

So what are the established Anglican boundaries

Living and operating within we accomplish this

I once put on a conference entitled Reclaiming our Anglican Identity

the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey was our keynote speaker

He began by saying...

An individual who is constantly preoccupied with his or her own identity is likely to be in a very bad way.

The vast majority of us know who we are, and we do not, on waking up in the morning, have to reach for our passports or our family albums to discover our identity.

Similarly, a healthy church does not need to keep on examining her identity.

Rather, beginning from a sufficient level of confidence and security,

she can leave those questions in the background and get on with her real vocation, the service of Almighty God.

The Archbishop went on to make points to be made:

First: Anglican identity finds its focus in a coherent doctrinal integrity.

we are, in fact, a communion which takes doctrine seriously

we are part of the one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”

we profess the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and sets forth in the Catholic creeds

**we are led by the Holy Spirit, to bear witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies,
which themselves are based on those events that shape the Christian faith**

**the incarnation,
the crucifixion,
the resurrection of Christ
his glorious ascension
his sending of the Spirit.**

Second: that Anglican identity is focused in the sharing of mission in a world-wide conciliar communion

as the Nigerian Church in America we get this

Thirdly: Anglicanism is generously diverse...a roomy church.

within the perimeters of its doctrinal integrity

with room for a great variety of traditions,

for the traditionalists,
for the evangelicals,
for the Anglo-Catholics,
for the liberals,
for the charismatics.

to be an Anglican is to be influenced and shaped by each of these traditions

what is not Anglican is when one tradition becomes all important to our ecclesiastical identity in conflict with another

the church is by its very nature Catholic and evangelical, and liberal, and traditional and charismatic,

Anglicanism is a pathway amongst exactly these attributes

Peter Moore describes our Anglican Church as being all of these

"evangelical in experience"

(cherishing the Gospel and its transforming power)

"catholic in spirit"

(maintaining the creeds and form of ancient order)

"reformed in doctrine"

(cherishing the insights of the Reformation, especially Justification by faith alone),

"charismatic in ministry"

(being open to the Holy Spirit's gifts through every member of the body of Christ),

"liberal in ethos"

(giving place to reasoned discourse and caring for the social dimensions of the Gospel)

"global in scope"

(having a missionary heart, and reaching out to include all believers whether Anglican or not).

This is the true Anglican synthesis,

It is this dialectic, this conversation among the parties

that is true Anglicanism

and in that resulting tension

we gain insight that leads to a

generosity and graciousness,

conviction and confidence

that is the antidote to the world, the flesh & the devil

Anything other than this is not historic Anglicanism

Formation of clergy, congregants, & churches:

I am proud to say that in forty years of ordained ministry I have never conducted a vestry retreat to develop a mission statement

Act 2:42...they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers

Every mission statement I have ever read

Obsesses over some singular theological agenda

And is thus lacking Anglican balance,

and thereby misses the whole...

**The Washington Post last week had an article entitled
If it doesn't stem its decline, mainline Protestantism**

has just 23 Easters left

But it is no wonder the church is in decline:

if the medical profession

weakened its requirements to be a doctor

like the church has done for becoming a priest

we would stop going to the hospital

just like people have stopped coming to church

After 40 years as a priest,

having been the rector of the 13th largest Episcopal

there is nothing more perplexing to me than

than clergy floundering around in their insecurity

grasping at every new canned course & fad

ending up in conflict with their bishop & vestries

all wrought of their shallow formation, discipline, & training

The underlying reason is disobedience from the get go...starting with excuses why one is able to properly prepare for ordination

Ordination is about being under orders,

your life literally under the authority of your Bishop

and if your ministry starts off with excuses

about why you can't go to seminary

full time for three years

don't attempt getting ordained

Certainly no other profession will allow backdoor certification

This may offend you

but it is actually the heart of Anglican formation

which is not about intellectual assent

but ontological change at the hand of God

that happens only in a disciplined PB worshipping community

it is about inspiration not just information

Jesus suggests an a very particular approach

"...the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him."

And what is that truth to which the Word speaks

the Book of Common Prayer makes it clear that:

that we are in fact sinners,

miserable offenders,

and there is no health in us

Jesus did not die on the cross, rise from dead, and ascend into heaven to

to get our mortgage approved

to get us accepted into the right school

to get us to the airport on time when we leave late

Jesus died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins

and when we understand that truth about ourselves

that we are hopeless sinners in need of redemption

and by belief in Jesus we are reckoned as righteous

then we beginning our transformation & formation

coming under the authority of Christ through his church

Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple, once wrote that

"the only thing we have to contribute to our salvation

are the sins that we bring with us."

The London Times once asked leading English citizens the question:

"What is wrong with the world?"

G.K. Chesterton replied: "What is wrong with the world? **I am**"

and the only cure for that correct diagnosis is as St Paul wrote

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin,

so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"

and it is when we believe that, the deal is made

he takes upon himself our sins

and transfers to us his righteousness

This is the absolute center of Anglicanism, and if the clergy

are not rigorously formed to know this about themselves

and are not confident enough to convict their members of the same
they have nothing to offer

but a massage...**instead of a message**

entertainment...**instead of worship**

Peter Moore,

whose ideas on this subject have shaped my thinking for the last 40 years,

Makes the point that our sacraments highlight the fact that salvation is only through Christ.

What is baptism but a powerful symbolic way
of dying with Christ
and rising again with him to new life?

What is Holy Communion
but a partaking by faith
of the broken body and outpoured blood of Jesus,
that his life might dwell in us?"

Nothing is more distinctive of Anglicanism than this...

**that the very opposite of sin is not goodness
the opposite of sin is worship
in which by faith we become reckoned as good**

In other words,

for the church not to be in decline,
not to be dead in 23 Easters
**we must bring people to that place
where God can take them as his task
in the apostles teaching & fellowship
The breaking of bread and the prayers**

The problem with priestly formation that is not Anglican
not transformational by daily worship & fellowship
not obedient to our tradition and practice and ethos
in that its lacks the tools and blessings historically
proven present within Anglican doctrine, discipline, & worship

This is perhaps best illustrated in the recent divisions occurring
based various Protestant party affiliation
lacking a full bodied, fully formed, authoritative
Anglican balance and comprehensiveness
Clergy who fail to understand that
fail to be an proper Anglican priests

Finally let me speak about obedience & bishops

Episcopal authority is an essential Anglican feature...Mike Williams
says:

what we bring is not ourselves

but we are stewards

of a sacred ancient trust and truth

Talk about each of these...

Means of Grace

the holy mysteries...not our skills, but the church's sacrament

that mystic sweet communion...not built around us/vestments

inspiration vs information...

existential vs intellectual ascendancy...

We as clergy have authority because we are under under authority

A worship team doesn't create this
It is our inheritance and sacred trust

Effective through the ages...

and we are under Episcopal authority by ordination...

The Bishop. WILL you then give your faithful diligence always so to minister the Doctrine and Sacraments, and the Discipline of Christ, as the Lord hath commanded, and as this Church hath received the same, according to the Commandments of God; so that you may teach the people committed to your Cure and Charge with all diligence to keep and observe the same?

Answer. I will so do, by the help of the Lord.

The Bishop. WILL you be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away from the Church all erroneous and strange doctrines contrary to God's Word; and to use both public and private monitions and exhortations, as well to the sick as to the whole, within your Cures, as need shall require, and occasion shall be given?

Answer. I will, the Lord being my helper.

The Bishop. WILL you be diligent to frame and fashion your own selves, and your families, according to the Doctrine of Christ; and to make both yourselves and them, as much as in you lieth, wholesome examples and patterns to the ock of Christ?

Answer. I will apply myself thereto, the Lord being my helper.

The Bishop. WILL you reverently obey your Ordinary, and other chief Ministers, unto whom is committed the charge and government over you; following with a glad mind and will their godly admonitions, and submitting yourselves to their godly judgments?

Answer. I will so do, the Lord being my helper.

Jesus had authority because he was under the authority of God the Father

we have authority because are under the bishop's authority

The bishop is one who actually calls us and allows us to function

The Bishop is the one who can withdraw our authority

ordination means to be under orders

I sit in the bishop's chair as a reminder to myself and the congregation whose authority I bear and ministry I fulfill

...that of the successor of the apostles

this is at the heart of being in holy orders as an Anglican priest

...otherwise we are simply protestants

This is what obedience looks like:

In the Spring of 1970

I was working as a helicopter pilot in Cambodia

On a particular day our team was rescuing the crew of a helicopter

that had been shot down in a rubber plantation

the crew was encircled by dozens of NVA closing in

I was flying the helicopter that was to extract this crew

and I was covered by two cobra gunships

The mission commander flying one of the cobras instructed me

to fly into the landing zone that was under fire

at 60 knots forward airspeed

at 500 feet per minute rate of descent

which is classic a get killed zone approach

I did not question the orders, I simply was under orders

I was an experienced combat pilot

I was actually the unit instructor pilot

But I did exactly what I was told

Flying right behind, one slight above and another slightly below

were two cobra gunships

who fired under me to cover my approach to the landing zone

and over me to cover my exit from the landing zone

if I had decided to do ignore the orders and do it my way

my crew and I would have been victims of friendly rockets

those were pretty tight boundaries to fly

with rockets going over and under me

But that is the job of both pilot and priest...