

The Search for Anglican Identity

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Introduction

The word *Anglicanism* may seem surprisingly difficult to define. The task might even seem impossible. Almost two millennia ago one could speak of the church *in* England, and in time it became clear there was a church *of* England. But even at the Reformation there was nothing called “Anglicanism.” No one at the time would have thought of Anglicanism as a different expression of the Christian faith, as if the town of Wittenberg might have needed an “Anglican” church down the street from a “Lutheran” one.

By the time there is a clear idea of Anglicanism as a distinct *ism*, we are certainly past the Restoration, and we might even be into the nineteenth

century. Today we are in what could be called the long nineteenth century, with no end to the Anglican definitional wars, because there is no definition that can comprehend the vast diversity of what travels under that name. It would be like trying to come up with a definition for *Catholicism* if there were no pope, no mass, and so on. Yet we must say something about Anglican identity, at least if we want to give an account to ourselves and to others of what we are.

The search for Anglican identity is at the heart of a recent debate. After I wrote [“Why Is Anglicanism a Gateway for Catholicism?”](#), there were critical responses by Candice Gage,¹ Gerald McDermott,² Paul Owen,³ and Paul Shakeshaft.⁴ Each response has gone deeper than the presenting question of my essay, and each author has seen the real issue as Anglican identity. Together, our five essays offer the reader a wide range of answers to that fundamental question.

Each of the critics, I think, captures things that are true about Anglicanism at its best. Indeed, they said many things that I wish I had said in the original essay. Yet along with our agreements, there are cross-cutting disagreements between the five of us about the nature of catholicity and the Reformation, about the course of Anglicanism in the past and about its allure in the present. I will discuss each response in

¹ Candice Gage, [“Why Do Anglicans Become Roman Catholic: A Response by an Evangelical Expat.”](#) *The North American Anglican* (May 11, 2020).

² Gerald McDermott, [“The Via Media—Between What and What?”](#), *The North American Anglican* (May 17, 2020).

³ Paul Owen, [“Is Anglicanism a Gateway to Catholicism?: A Defense of Anglo-Catholicism.”](#) *Mere Orthodoxy* (May 1, 2020).

⁴ Paul Shakeshaft, [“The Via Media of George Herbert.”](#) *Mere Orthodoxy* (May 11, 2020).

turn, and will then consider what lessons might be drawn from the debate, no matter which of these five perspectives you find most persuasive.

As will become clear, even though an aura of controversy surrounds Anglican identity, I think it is not the great mysterious thing it often seems to be. Anglican identity is grounded in the Anglican formularies. These are, especially, the Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer (1662), and the Ordinal; and derivatively the Two Books of Homilies and the Canons of 1604. The formularies are the classic markers of Anglican identity. And they are the ground of Anglican identity that is embraced by the Global South⁵—which includes the great majority of the world’s Anglicans.

I should be clear about how I am using two important terms. I will use *Reformed* in two senses. First, broadly, it means affirming the central tenets of the magisterial Reformation, especially justification by faith alone (*sola fide*) and Scripture as the only supreme authority (*sola Scriptura*—not *nuda Scriptura*), and rejecting the contrary doctrines of the Council of Trent. Second, more narrowly (and the way I will usually use it), the word refers to the non-Lutheran churches that hold to these tenets, including the Reformed churches of the British Isles and the Continent in all their variety, from Armagh to Zurich, from Poland to Portsmouth.

⁵ Two illustrations are the Jerusalem Declaration (2008) and the proposed Cairo Covenant (2019).

I will also use *catholic* in two senses. First, it means holding to the catholic faith that is recognized in the creeds. Second, it refers to the Church of Rome.

It would be very nice if every word meant one thing and would stay where you put it. But I will try to be clear about how I am using each word, in order to avoid confusion.

The Anglican Disposition?

[Paul Shakeshaft](#) celebrates an Anglicanism that is “reformed in doctrine and ceremonial in worship,” which he finds in the Caroline Divines. So far, so good. He then describes Richard Hooker, Lancelot Andrewes, William Laud, and Jeremy Taylor as thinkers who “straddled the Reformed and Anglo-Catholic poles.” The image is inelegant, but also imprecise.

Hooker was squarely within the Reformed orthodoxy of his day. This has been demonstrated repeatedly.⁶

⁶ W. J. Torrance Kirby, “Richard Hooker as an Apologist of the Magisterial Reformation in England,” in *Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community*, ed. Arthur Stephen McGrade (Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997), pp. 219-233; Bryan D. Spinks, *Two Faces of Elizabethan Anglican Theology: Sacraments and Salvation in the Thought of William Perkins and Richard Hooker* (Scarecrow Press, 1999); W. J. Torrance Kirby, *Richard Hooker, Reformer and Platonist* (Ashgate, 2005); Ranall Ingalls, “Sin and Grace,” in *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby (Brill, 2008), pp. 151-183; W. David Neelands, “Christology and the Sacraments,” in *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, pp. 369-401; W. B. Patterson, “Elizabethan Theological Polemics,” in *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, pp. 113-115; W. Bradford Littlejohn and Scott N. Kindred-Barnes, eds., *Richard Hooker and Reformed Orthodoxy* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH, 2017).

Andrewes, Laud, and Taylor would differ from Hooker at various points,⁷ but none was remotely “Anglo-Catholic.” All subscribed and enforced subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles without the evasions that would be invented two centuries later; all of them used, and required use of, the Book of Common Prayer (1559) in public worship. Taylor taught a real spiritual presence in the Communion for those who rightly receive, and he emphasized that the Church of England’s teaching on this matter was that “generally of the protestants.”⁸ Laud denied the invocation of saints.⁹ Andrewes identified the pope as the antichrist.¹⁰

⁷ For example, Hooker defended the chaste ceremonial of the Elizabethan church against the attacks of the godly and did not argue for innovations; by contrast, Andrewes in his private chapel had usages, such as lighted candles for a Communion service, that were practically unheard of in public worship and would be for another two hundred years. Hooker defended episcopacy on prudential grounds, and for that very reason Laudian censors would not license the publication of part of Hooker’s *Laws*. The point is that these men, all of whom except Laud were creative and original thinkers, did not have precisely the same views.

⁸ Jeremy Taylor, *The Real Presence and Spiritual of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament Proved Against the Doctrine of Transubstantiation: A Dissuasive from Popery*, reprinted in *The Whole Works of the Right Rev. Jeremy Taylor*, vol. 6 (Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1852), at pp. 13-14: “The doctrine of the church of England and generally of the protestants in this article, is, that after the minister of the holy mysteries hath ritely (sic) prayed, and blessed or consecrated the bread and the wine, the symbols become changed into the body and blood of Christ, after a SACRAMENTAL, that is, in a SPIRITUAL, REAL manner; so that all that worthily communicate do by faith receive Christ really, effectually, to all the purposes of his passion: the wicked receive not Christ, but the bare symbols only; but yet to their hurt, because the offer of Christ is rejected, and they pollute the blood of the covenant by using it as an unholy thing.” Taylor adds: “That’s our sense of the real presence; and Calvin affirms as much.” *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁹ “Laud himself avoided using the term ‘idolatry,’ but strongly opposed the invocation of saints. He was not prepared to accept Rome’s claims that she only made the saints ‘mediators of intercession,’ noting that the present Roman Missal included prayers that God should act ‘by the merits’ of saints. This, wrote Laud, gave ‘great scandal to Christ and Christianity.’” Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 206.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

No eucharistic adoration, no Purgatory, no hesitation about the Church of England's Protestant identity.¹¹

These men were all part of the Reformed Church of England.¹² That they were not Genevans is obvious, but the historical mistake that Shakeshaft is making is to treat "Reformed" as a narrow category, as if it meant "Presbyterian" or "Puritan" or "iconoclast" or "no beautiful things for you."¹³

But Shakeshaft's main point lies elsewhere. He presents as a singular characteristic of Anglicanism something that is "less of an ideology and more of a disposition," a disposition "largely absent in Cranmer" but present in spades in George Herbert. It is, he says, "a disposition best exemplified in a poet."

¹¹ For example, "Laud had prompted his godson Chillingworth's abandonment of Roman Catholicism in 1632, and influenced Chillingworth in his writing *The Religion of Protestants, a Safe Way to Salvation* (1637)." Peter B. Nockles, "Anglicanism 'Represented' or 'Misrepresented'? The Oxford Movement, Evangelicalism, and History: The Controversial Use of the Caroline Divines in the Victorian Church of England," in *Victorian Churches and Churchmen: Essays Presented to Vincent Alan McClelland*, ed. Sheridan Gilley (Boydell Press, 2005), p. 331.

¹² That is why John Henry Newman and other Tractarians eventually despaired of finding the mirror image of their theology in the Caroline Divines. *Ibid.*, pp. 308-369. Cf. John Gordon's remark that the Tractarian idea of Anglicanism "as a *theory*, as a complete set of doctrines viewed in one, as a faith or creed, is *absolutely a novelty*." James Pereiro, "Did the Oxford Movement Die in 1851?", in *The Oxford Handbook of the Oxford Movement*, p. 563.

¹³ Stephen Hampton, "Confessional Identity," in *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume I: Reformation and Identity, c. 1520–1662*, ed. Anthony Milton (Oxford, 2017), pp. 218-219; Diarmaid MacCulloch, "The Church of England and International Protestantism, 1530–1570," in *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume I*, p. 326; Jay T. Collier, *Debating Perseverance: The Augustinian Heritage in Post-Reformation England* (Oxford, 2018). "It is now widely recognized that the theology and polity of Geneva cannot be taken as the normative expression of Reformed identity. The Reformed tradition flourished in a wide range of places, and under the influence of many different theologians." Hampton, "Confessional Identity," p. 219.

Shakeshaft is not the first to locate Anglican identity in a mood, temperament, or sensibility.¹⁴ Yet there are dangers in this identification. One is how closely it fits the consumer-choice approach to ecclesial traditions. It is not surprising that it is a relatively new idea to think of Anglicanism in terms of a disposition. It is the sort of thing one thinks in a culture where you expect to choose your own church. In his parish, the Rev. George Herbert might have been the only person who was possessed of a poetic temperament. Surely he was not the one true Anglican.

Second, it is striking that Shakeshaft would choose Herbert as his exemplar. As Bryan Spinks has put it, “With a firm orthodox Reformed theology, Herbert used his poetic skills to plumb the depth of the soul as it seeks rest in the assurance of the divine.”¹⁵ More than perhaps any other English poet, Herbert epitomizes the Anglicanism I described in my first essay. He was a priest in the Church of England. He was not one of the non-conformist “godly,” but even so, “it is always worth remembering that Herbert was not a Laudian.”¹⁶ His approach to ceremonial was the archetypally Anglican one of modesty and reserve, always pointed to edification. In his poetry and his prose, in *The Temple*

¹⁴ Urban T. Holmes, III, *What Is Anglicanism?*, 5th ed. (Morehouse, 1982), p. 5. For critical discussion of this approach to Anglican identity, see Charles Erlandson, *Orthodox Anglican Identity: The Quest for Unity in a Diverse Religious Tradition* (Pickwick, 2020), chapter 2; and Paul F. M. Zahl, *The Protestant Face of Anglicanism* (Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 3-4, 40.

¹⁵ Bryan D. Spinks, Review, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, vol. 60, issue 1 (Feb. 2007), p. 107.

¹⁶ Rowan Williams, “George Herbert (1593–1633): Inside Herbert’s *Afflictions*,” in *Anglican Identities* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), p. 60. See Elizabeth Clarke, “The Character of a Non-Laudian Country Parson,” *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, vol. 54, no. 216 (September 2003), pp. 479-496.

and *The Country Parson*, Herbert offers the reader a vision of the life of the church and the life of the Christian that never despises the good ceremonial of the Reformed Church of England—days of feasting and fasting, saints and surplices, chancels and church bells—and indeed embraces it. But Herbert always aims to draw the reader further up and further in, moving past the external to the heart and marrow, to the life-giving Word of God.¹⁷

Third, and most important, when Anglicanism is identified with a poetic disposition, there is a danger of confusing truth with taste. In *The Screwtape Letters*, the young tempter is encouraged to make his subject look around, when he is at church, and see his neighbors who “sing out of tune, or have boots that squeak, or double chins, or odd clothes,” and find himself disappointed.¹⁸ Lewis is trying to puncture a certain kind of arrogance. We must also beware of another kind: going to church and looking at the poets and philosophers and people of great intellectual attainments who surround us, and then, for that reason, rather than because we see the Spirit of God at work in the holiness of their lives, finding ourselves pleased.

I do not mean to be too critical. Shakeshaft does identify something rich and good that can be found in Anglicanism—a balanced appreciation that is willing to plunder the Babylonians, a chastened longing that is

¹⁷ Two works exploring these themes are John Bienz, “Images and Ceremonial in *The Temple*: Herbert’s Solution to a Reformation Controversy,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, vol. 26, no. 1 (Winter 1986), pp. 73-95; and Christopher Hodgkins, “The Church Legible: George Herbert and the Externals of Worship,” *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 71 (April 1991), pp. 217-241. A still-valuable review of the literature on Herbert’s theology appears in the introduction to Elizabeth Clarke, *Theory and Theology in George Herbert’s Poetry: “Divinitie, and Poesie, Met”* (Oxford, 1997).

¹⁸ C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (HarperOne, 2001), p. 6.

trained to biblical obedience. And I almost agree when he says of Anglicanism: “Its compass is Scripture as read with the Fathers but its direction is not a dry scripturalism recoiling from excessive medieval devotion.” I would add only that *all* of the magisterial Reformers read the Scriptures with the Fathers, and that “excessive medieval devotion” is exactly what Herbert did shy away from.¹⁹ But I think the charitable reading of Shakeshaft’s point is that Anglicanism does not throw overboard everything from the medieval Church. If that is the point he is making, he is surely right—indeed, this is the position laid out in “Of Ceremonies.”²⁰

In short, Shakeshaft recognizes that what he praises is consistent “with the Anglicanism of Richard Hooker, John Jewel, and Hugh Latimer.” That is all I mean to defend. Still, if we are to find a stable ground for Anglican identity, we must go deeper than a disposition.

The Anglican Branch?

[Paul Owen](#) offers a rather different theory of Anglican identity: “Anglicanism is simply historic English Catholicism.” This is a fairly conventional Anglo-Catholic account (or at least it was conventional about a century ago), and Owen offers it with learning and generosity.

What I find attractive in Owen’s account is the lack of evasion and ambiguity. To say that Anglicanism (note, not the Church of England)

¹⁹ Richard Strier, “History, Criticism, and Herbert: A Polemical Note,” *Papers on Language & Literature*, vol. 17 (1981), pp. 347-352.

²⁰ “Of Ceremonies” is discussed in my original essay.

“simply is the Catholic church in its English tributary” means that we can draw on any doctrines and practices that can be found in the pre-Reformation church, from “the sacred altar” to “the intercession of saints and angels.” Of course, given the stress on universality—on Anglicanism having every “facet of the life of [the] one, holy, catholic and apostolic church”—Owen also needs some reason to distinguish Canterbury from Rome and Constantinople, but he has that, too: it is the one holy, catholic, and apostolic church *in England*.

With respect to Owen’s historical arguments, some are right, some are wrong, and some are beside the point. We agree, for example, about the historic Anglican practice: as Owen concedes, the stole and chasuble were “not in ‘mainstream’ Anglican use prior to the twentieth century, ‘because of their strong associations with Roman sacrificial understandings of the Eucharist.’” We both happily include Lancelot Andrewes in the capacious room of Anglicanism. And on other points we disagree: I think three centuries of essentially unbroken practice shows the best interpretation of the Ornaments Rubric.

But I fear I must have been unclear, for Owen thinks my argument narrower than it is. I never said anything against what Owen calls the “liturgical renovations” of Archbishop Laud; I quite like them. Nor did I extol the 1552 prayer book. In fact, neither of the first two prayer books has much bearing on my argument. My claim is that the official teaching and public worship of the Church of England—and to be precise, we could say for roughly three centuries, about 1560 to 1860—(1) were decidedly Protestant, not some kind of “mere Christianity”; and (2) used a ceremonial that was marked by modesty and reserve, *not* the austerity of the Continental and Scottish Reformed churches but also

not the Lutheran churches' greater retention of medieval ceremonial. That middle path on ceremony between Geneva and Wittenberg was not an eschewing of ceremony, but a well-considered "ceremonial minimalism" that preserved a few ceremonies while recognizing and increasing their power.²¹

Very few of the historical questions that Owen raises actually have bearing on those two claims. There is a reason for this failure to clash. At several points, Owen quotes or paraphrases Puritan or "godly" critics of the Church of England, notes their horror at some "superstition," and then finds a resemblance with critics of the Oxford Movement. The

²¹ The phrase "ceremonial minimalism" is from Gordon Jeanes, "Liturgy and Ceremonial," in *Liturgy in Dialogue*, ed. Paul Bradshaw and Bryan Spinks (S.P.C.K., 1993), p. 21. Jeanes notes that in the prayer book Cranmer put the "Of Ceremonies" theory into practice, as he "both reduced the number of ceremonies and made their meaning clear." *Ibid.*, p. 20. He then says about the baptismal rite (and what he says applies to the later prayer books, too):

"By the 1552 revision, only the sign of the cross is left as a ceremonial action in addition to the baptismal immersion itself, and whereas in the medieval rite the sign of the cross was associated with the imparting of God's grace, in 1552 it is simply a token that the child will not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ and to follow him. The baptismal immersion now stands out with almost solitary splendour. As far as the reformers were concerned, the minimalism by no means detracted from the solemnity of the rite: rather it enhanced its power and meaning. Ceremonial minimalism is not an attempt to eschew ceremony but a style of ceremony in its own right. When left alone in the middle of the stage, the simple action, even a small one, assumes great significance. . . . Another feature of ceremonial minimalism is that as less significance is paid to the visible action, so the participant is enjoined to seek its significance beyond the visible. And the smaller the action is which is accorded significance, the more it is seen to point beyond itself."

Ibid., p. 20-21. In a similar vein, the most widely read High Church commentator on the prayer book in the eighteenth century could praise it because "its doctrine is pure and primitive" and "its ceremonies so few and innocent, that most of the christian world agree in them." Charles Wheatly, *A Rational Illustration of the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England*, 4th ed. (1722), p. 35.

conclusion, implied but not quite drawn, is continuity between the historic Anglican practice and Ritualism.²²

But what Owen's argument-by-ricochet (bouncing off the critics) leaves out is a central theological fact about Anglicanism: it rejects what in later parlance would be called the regulative principle. This is absolutely clear in "Of Ceremonies," in Archbishop Cranmer's insistence that Bishop Hooper wear episcopal vestments, in Article XX, in the Book of Common Prayer, the Homilies, the Canons, the Elizabethan Injunctions, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*.²³ There is a very straightforward answer to why traditional Anglican worship (pre-Ritualist) could be moderate and reserved in its ceremonial and yet still spark those kinds of complaints: it was because the Church of England (rightly) embraced and made use of ceremonies, especially ancient ones, that are not commanded in Scripture.

The rejection of what is now called the regulative principle did not, however, mean, the embrace of an unregulated principle. Ceremonies were still regulated, but instead of having to be tortured out of the silence of the Scriptures, they could be plainly determined by ecclesial authority (Article XXXIV). And determined they were. Although now

²² I use this term advisedly, because Newman, Pusey, and other leaders of the Oxford Movement were wary of the dangers of ceremonial innovation, obsession with architecture, and even the wearing of eucharistic vestments. George Herring, "Devotional and Liturgical Renewal: Ritualism and Protestant Reaction," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Oxford Movement*, pp. 398-409. As Pusey would say in 1860, "I am in this strange position that my name is made a byword for that with which I never had any sympathy [ritualism], that which the writers of the Tracts . . . always deprecated." Pereiro, "Did the Oxford Movement Die in 1851?", pp. 201-202.

²³ A brief summary is found in Ashley Null, "Thomas Cranmer and the Anglican Way of Reading Scripture," *Anglican and Episcopal History*, vol. 75, no. 4 (December 2006), pp. 516-523, especially pp. 521-523.

some think “do what you want” and “pick and choose” is the essence of Anglican ceremonial, that, too, is new. Before the Ritualists, a distinguishing virtue in Anglican ceremonial was uniformity. (That is why before the mid-nineteenth century “high church” and “low church” were markers of ecclesiology, not of liturgy or vestments.²⁴)

This uniformity meant that vestments were not a matter of individual autonomy and signaling. For roughly three centuries, essentially every priest wore a surplice (with copes in cathedrals); it was not seen as a characteristic, much less a virtue, of Anglicanism that a priest could wear anything from a chasuble to chinos. The sameness may seem bland, but it worked like a school uniform does for children: when you take away the effort of choice and effect of differentiation, it allows everyone to get on with the real business at hand. Owen can embrace or reject the traditional Anglican practice with respect to ceremonies and vestments; I am only trying to state clearly what it is that he is embracing or rejecting.

And this brings us to the real issue. What separates Owen and me is not history but theology.

Owen embraces the branch theory as an explanation for the distinctive identity of Anglicanism. That is, he defines it as simply being the English branch of the catholic church. Although Owen does not say this, in one standard account the implication is that the “visible Church

²⁴ Cf. Andrew Starkie, “The Legacy of the ‘Caroline Divines,’ Restoration, and the Emergence of the High Church Tradition,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Oxford Movement*, ed. Stewart J. Brown, Peter B. Nockles, and James Pereiro (Oxford, 2017), p. 12.

[is] considered at present to exist in three main branches, or rather in a triple presence, the Latin, the Greek, and the Anglican, these three being one and the same Church, distinguishable from each other, only by secondary, fortuitous, and local, though important characteristics.”²⁵ According to this view, when a Christian is in Rome she should be Catholic; in Athens, Orthodox; and in London, Anglican—to do anything else would be schism.²⁶

But the branch theory has gone out of favor, and it is not hard to see why. When the world’s great powers were the British Empire, the Russian Empire, and the Catholic countries of Europe, one could see a world map that matched this ecclesiology. But now the empires are gone, and so are the robust religious establishments of the West. The most powerful countries in the world are the United States and China—neither one is Catholic, Orthodox, or Anglican. The Anglo-Catholic version of branch-theory ecclesiology was developed in the nineteenth century, and perhaps that is its proper home.

It is hard to square the branch theory with foreign missions: why should the English branch of the catholic church send missionaries to countries within the sphere of the Roman or Greek branches of the catholic church? It is also hard to fit the Oriental Orthodox churches in this scheme, since it would be news to the Copts and Ethiopians that they are part of the “Greek” branch. And it invariably leads to thinking that

²⁵ Geoffrey Rowell, “The Ecclesiology of the Oxford Movement,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Oxford Movement*, p. 222. Rowell is quoting John Henry Newman’s preface to William Palmer’s *Notes of a Visit to the Russian Church in the Years 1840, 1841*.

²⁶ Victoria C. Miller, “Ecclesiology, Scripture, and Tradition in the ‘Dublin Agreed Statement,’” *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 86, no. 1 (January 1993), p. 112.

our fellow churches of the Reformation, including the Lutherans, are not really “catholic.” It also seems self-refuting, since the Roman pope and the Orthodox patriarchs do not regard the Church of England as the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church in England.²⁷

Nor can the branch theory handle religious diversity. Today in England more people attend Roman Catholic services than Church of England ones,²⁸ making it hard to sustain the fiction that the latter is simply the English Catholic Church. And whatever lingering merits that idea might have in England, where there is an established church, it is of no help at all for ecclesiological thinking in North America. To state the matter plainly, the Church of England cannot, by any leap of imagination, be considered in a singular sense the one, holy, apostolic, and catholic church *in the United States*.

But the real problem with the branch theory is its view of catholicity. As a diagnostic test, ask yourself what was the relationship between the Reformation and catholicity. Did the Reformation (1) reduce the catholicity of the English church, (2) neither reduce nor increase the catholicity of the English church, or (3) increase the catholicity of the English church?

The position of the English Reformers was (3). Indeed, this is the central question addressed by Bishop Jewel’s *Apology of the Church of England*, and it argues that the catholic church is the church of Christ,

²⁷ For Orthodox rejection of the branch theory, see *ibid.*, pp. 114-116.

²⁸ This finding was first reported for the United Kingdom in 2007. Jimmy Burns, “More UK Catholics than Anglicans Go to Church,” *Financial Times* (December 23, 2007).

the apostles, and the holy fathers.²⁹ By returning to their teachings, and especially the teaching of the Word of God,³⁰ the English church had become, in effect, more catholic.³¹

What, then, does Owen make of the Reformation? He does grant that the English church “in the sixteenth century revived a robust Augustinian theology of grace via the movement of evangelical reform.” I agree. But this does not seem to affect, in his view, the catholicity of the church. Owen makes an important contrast between two views of catholicity, neither of which I endorse:

“The Puritans wanted a Catholicity which joined them to Geneva and Zurich, whereas the Church of England was adopting a path of Catholicity which tied them to the English church of the pre-Reformation period. This is precisely what the Oxford Movement attempted to recover.”

²⁹ “*An Apology or Answer in Defence of The Church Of England*”: Lady Anne Bacon’s Translation of Bishop John Jewel’s “*Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae*”, ed. Patricia Demers (Modern Humanities Research Association, 2016), p. 110.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 175: “Whatsoever it be, the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ dependeth not upon Councils, nor as St Paul saith, upon mortal creatures’ judgments.”

³¹ Ibid., p. 55: “if we do show it plain that God’s holy Gospel, the ancient Bishops, and the primitive Church do make on our side, and that we have not without just cause left these men, and rather have returned to the Apostles and old catholic Fathers.” See C. FitzSimons Allison, “Toward an Historical Hermeneutic for Understanding PECUSA,” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, vol. 48, no. 1 (March 1979), p. 13 (“The Reformation was seen by Anglicans, not as the beginning of a new church, but as the cleansing and reforming of the old, thus making ‘more Catholic’ the same church that had been in England even before the rise of papal claims and influence.”); Christopher Wordsworth, *Concerning the Church and the Anglican Branch of It*, 4th ed. (Rivington, 1846), p. 197 (“the Church of *England became Protestant* at the Reformation, in order that she might be more truly and purely *Catholic*; and if Rome will *become* truly *Catholic*, then, but not *till then*, the Church of England will *cease* to be *Protestant*”).

Here, I think, is the critical place where Owen goes wrong. What is missing is the whole appeal of the magisterial Reformers to the Scriptures and the early fathers as the measure of catholicity, and their claim that they were, if I can put it tartly, more catholic than the pope.

The catholicity of the Church of England did not lie in being like Geneva and Zurich, nor did it lie in emphasizing continuity with the pre-Reformation English Church. Instead it lay in conformity to the teaching of the Scriptures and the Fathers,³² with the Scriptures being the only supreme authority (Articles XVIII, XIX, and XXI). This was the measure of what the Athanasian Creed calls “the catholic faith.”

Thus Owen offers an account of Anglicanism that is ultimately differentiated from other churches by a happenstance of geography—we could say that it is an ecclesiology that depends on the existence of the English Channel. But once the geographic distinction collapses, as it has, there must be something else. Most Anglicans today are in the Global South. Anglican identity needs to rest on something broader than the sceptered isle.

³² Wyndham Mason Southgate, *John Jewel and the Problem of Doctrinal Authority* (Harvard, 1962), p. 196. Cf. The Canons of 1571 (no. 6), *The Anglican Canons 1529–1947*, ed. Gerald Bray (Boydell, 1998), pp. 196-199. “The Thirty-nine Articles exhibit not only the same doctrine as other Reformation confessions do, but also the same concern to identify the faith they confess with the faith of the Fathers and the New Testament, and the same conviction that the road which they fence is, in fact, the highroad of catholicity, from which Romans and Anabaptists alike had gone astray.” J. I. Packer and R. T. Beckwith, *The Thirty-Nine Articles: Their Place and Use Today* (Latimer Trust, 2006), pp. 63-64.

The Anglican *Via Media*?

[Gerald McDermott](#) takes issue with my argument that Anglicanism before the Oxford Movement was Protestant, and that its *via media* ran between Wittenberg and Geneva. Instead, he posits a distinction between “Calvinist Anglicans” and “reformed catholic Anglicans.” He reads Anglican history since the Reformation as a constant tension between these two sides. On the basis of this dichotomous history, he concludes that Anglicanism is partly but not essentially “Reformed,” its history is partly not essentially “Protestant,” and its ceremonial is largely “Catholic.” But it is a big tent, and McDermott makes room in that tent for “Calvinist Anglicans” and “reformed catholics,” though not, I should add, for everyone.

McDermott twice quotes my essay as representing the “Calvinist Anglican” position, but the term is not mine. It is reductionistic and does not capture the breadth of even Elizabethan Anglicanism.³³ *Reformed* is more widely used for the historic position of the Church of England.³⁴ McDermott seems to gloss my position as “the *via media* runs between Wittenberg and Geneva but finally ends in Geneva.” I said nothing at all to support “finally ends in Geneva.” I was describing classic Anglicanism, not Genevan Presbyterianism.

³³ MacCulloch, “The Church of England and International Protestantism, 1530–1570,” pp. 327–328.

³⁴ E.g., Hampton, “Confessional Identity”; Peter D. Robinson, “Is Anglicanism Reformed?”, *The North American Anglican* (February 14, 2020); Rowan Williams, “Introduction,” in *Anglican Identities*, p. 2.

But what I find most baffling and surprising in McDermott's piece is that a thick terminological fog descends on everything. Sometimes it is hard to discern who or what is under discussion.

Start with *Reformed*. What does McDermott mean by this word? It is central to his argument; he uses the word 27 times. We are told quite a lot about "the Reformed," and especially about how much they disliked the Book of Common Prayer. We are told "the Reformed bitterly renounced" the surplice and kneeling at Communion. We are told that the Ornaments Rubric was "most offensive to Reformed sensibilities." We are told that the Thirty-Nine Articles are "Reformed" on Scripture and transubstantiation, but not on "sacraments and ecclesiology." We are told that "the Reformed" opposed using the word *priest* in several places in the prayer book instead of *minister*. We are told that to use the word *church* instead of *congregation* would "violate Reformed understandings." We are told that "the Reformed" do not prefer to speak of a visible church. Who are "the Reformed"?

I will admit that almost every word one uses about early modern English religious history can be criticized. *Anglican* is imprecise and anachronistic; *Puritans* could be moderate or immoderate; *conformists* could be *avant garde* or otherwise; some see "evangelicals" and "gospelers" and "disciplinarians" and "separatists" and "the godly" and on it goes. So I do not want to be too hard on McDermott for using a term in a way that does not fully match the contours of a religious, social, and cultural phenomenon.

Even so, McDermott's usage is idiosyncratic. As far as I can tell, he uses *Reformed* to mean nonconformist Puritans and

Presbyterians—the intransigent opponents of Hooker and, later, the Presbyterian party at the Savoy Conference. There are fissures and debates in early modern English religious historiography, but as far as I can tell McDermott’s usage lacks any basis in contemporary historical scholarship.

This is not quibbling about words. McDermott’s confusion about “the Reformed” reduces the entire debate to incoherence. If McDermott begins by characterizing as “the Reformed” those who reject the doctrines, liturgy, and ceremonial of the Church of England, is it any wonder he winds up concluding that they do not represent it? I am appealing to the work of (and most especially to the formularies subscribed to by) Cranmer and Ridley; Jewel and Hooker; Andrewes and Perkins; Laud and Davenant; Ussher and Taylor; Hall and Beveridge; Wilson and Waterland; and so on all the way to the Oxford Movement. I wish Professor McDermott good hunting as he searches over the hills and through the dales for the ghost of Martin Marprelate.

And what does *catholic* mean in McDermott’s essay? We are told that Archbishop Cranmer “adopted . . . catholic ceremonial.”³⁵ We are told the Thirty-Nine Articles “teach more catholic notions of the sacraments and ecclesiology.”³⁶ We are told that certain words of administration in the Communion service that were brought back in the 1559 prayer book are “more catholic.”³⁷ As best I can tell, McDermott uses *catholic* to

³⁵ See note 21 above.

³⁶ Contrast Hampton, “Confessional Identity,” pp. 215-217, 220-223.

³⁷ Contrast MacCulloch, “The Church of England and International Protestantism, 1530–1570,” p. 326. The words of administration in the 1559 prayer book were not controversial. “By the time of the exiles’ return in 1559, the doctrine of the *Consensus [Tigurinus]* represented the leading position of all the major Swiss churches, and the

mean something like “objectionable to the Reformed.” So it circles back to the confusion of the other term.

Part of the problem seems to be that McDermott treats “Reformed” and “catholic” as if they are in tension, with Anglicanism splitting the difference. But as I discussed above, the argument of the magisterial Reformers, and in particular of Bishop Jewel, was that the Reformation was a return to greater catholicity. When McDermott looks at the Thirty-Nine Articles, he sees something part-Reformed, part-catholic, but not fully either. The better interpretation, and the more traditionally Anglican, is to see them as *fully catholic* (in Jewel’s sense) and *fully Reformed* (in the sense of being within the broad parameters of Reformed orthodoxy, i.e., the confessions of the non-Lutheran Protestants).³⁸

That is why Elizabeth I, who knew very well that she was a catholic Christian (in the sense in which I just used the word), could say of the non-Lutheran Reformed churches of Germany that they “embrace the same confession as we.”³⁹ That is why the Thirty-Nine Articles were

Eucharistic statement created for the Elizabethan Prayer Book by the linking of the two earlier formulations essentially encapsulates this development.” Andrew Pettegree, *Marian Protestantism: Six Studies* (Scolar Press, 1996), pp. 135-136. Gordon Jeanes similarly notes that the change in the words of administration “was not included among the many controversial items in the debates” and finds the explanation in the “widespread acceptance of the language of consecration not just among conforming Anglicans but also among other Reformed theologians.” Gordon Jeanes, “The Tudor Prayer Books: That ‘the whole realme shall have but one use,’” in *Comfortable Words: Polity, Piety and the Book of Common Prayer*, ed. Stephen Platten and Christopher Woods (SCM, 2012), p. 32.

³⁸ Hampton, “Confessional Identity.” On the Eucharist, see pp. 215-217; on predestination, pp. 217-219; on episcopacy and ceremonies, pp. 220-223.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 210. “Such an explicit identification of the Church of England with the Reformed Churches of mainland Europe might come as a surprise to those who prefer to muddy the waters of her confessional identity, whether by suggesting that

included in an important sixteenth-century collection of Reformed confessions, the *Harmonia Confessionum Fidei*. That is why Bryan Spinks, after exploring the wide diversity of sacramental views in Scotland and England in the early seventeenth century, could reach this conclusion: “Stuart divines north and south of Hadrian’s Wall did their sacramental theology—as indeed, all their theology—within the broad parameters of ‘International Calvinism’; they almost all explicitly rejected both the Roman Catholic *and* the Lutheran sacramental views.”

40

Thus McDermott’s idea of an Anglican *via media* between Rome and Geneva, whatever it might owe to subsequent Anglo-Catholic historiography, is a mythical reconstruction of historic Anglicanism. As Oliver O’Donovan writes, “The popular account of Anglican moderation, that it consisted in steering a steady middle path between the exaggerated positions of Rome on the one hand and Geneva on the other, simply will not bear examination.”⁴¹

The terminological confusion deepens when we get to *Protestant*. McDermott makes this incredible assertion:

the Elizabethan Church was a kind of Protestant *tertium quid*, neither Reformed nor Lutheran, but something in between; or by suggesting that the Elizabethan Church of England was not even straightforwardly Protestant.” Ibid., pp. 210-211.

⁴⁰ Bryan D. Spinks, *Sacraments, Ceremonies and the Stuart Divines: Sacramental Theology and Liturgy in England and Scotland 1603–1662* (Ashgate, 2002), p. 171.

⁴¹ Oliver O’Donovan, *On the Thirty-Nine Articles: A Conversation with Tudor Christianity*, 2nd ed. (S.C.M., 2011), p. 8; see Anthony Milton, “Attitudes towards the Protestant and Catholic Churches,” in *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume I*, p. 332. For the same point about Hooker, see Kirby, *Richard Hooker, Reformer and Platonist*, pp. 11-12.

“Protestantism is often defined by its theological method of *sola scriptura*, which privileges Scripture over tradition and often rejects the notion that tradition ought to have any role in Christian faith and practice. Richard Hooker, arguably the premier theologian of the English Reformation, clearly rejected this Protestant notion. His method was to read the Bible at the feet of the Fathers, listening carefully to patristic judgments and taking seriously traditional Church practice.”

How many ways is this confused? It is true that *sola Scriptura* is one of the hallmarks of Protestantism. But for none of the magisterial Reformers—Lutheran or Reformed—did it mean *nuda Scriptura*, bare Scripture read by itself, just “me and Jesus in my quiet time.” Yes, Scripture is “privileged,” to use McDermott’s term (Articles VI, VIII, XX, and XXI). But “*sola Scriptura* was never meant as a denial of the usefulness of the Christian tradition as a subordinate norm of theology.”

⁴² That is a caricature.

When McDermott describes the method of Hooker, reading “the Bible at the feet of the fathers,” he is correct—about Hooker but also about Bullinger, Bucer, Calvin, Chemnitz, Cranmer, Jewel, Luther, Melancthon, Oecolampadius, Vermigli, Zanchi, and so on.⁴³ Like the

⁴² Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Baker 1985), p. 284. On tradition in Hooker, see W. David Neelands, “Hooker on Scripture, Reason, and ‘Tradition,’” in *Richard Hooker and the Construction of Christian Community*, pp. 89-94.

⁴³ E.g., Bruce Gordon, *Calvin* (Yale, 2011), pp. 106-108; J.A.O. Preus, “The Use of the Church Fathers in the Formula of Concord,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* (April–July 1984), pp. 97-112. Kirby, “Richard Hooker as an Apologist of the Magisterial Reformation in England,” p. 224: “Hooker is unmistakably allied with his fellow magisterial reformers on the continent in holding the fathers, especially

other great theological writers of the magisterial Reformation, Hooker held steadfastly to *sola Scriptura*⁴⁴—and cited the Fathers to prove it. That learned scholar was right who criticized those who would “distance Hooker from Calvin and the Reformed tradition by trying to drive a wedge between the two theologians on election, reason, and Scripture.”

45

Now there are various points on which I could say more. In my view McDermott misunderstands the Ornaments Rubric (though he is not alone in this). And whatever it meant in 1559 he is clearly wrong about the intention of the bishops who revised it in 1662, as evidenced by their own visitation articles.⁴⁶

Surprisingly for a historian, McDermott trots out the myth of an “English Celtic Church.” It is true that pre-Tridentine Western Christianity had ample diversity, and that the British Isles were relatively insular. But it is

Augustine, in the highest regard, especially with respect to the fundamental tenets of Trinitarian and Christological doctrine.”

⁴⁴ See Ranall Ingalls, “Richard Hooker as Interpreter of the Reformed Doctrine of *Sola Scriptura*,” *Anglican and Episcopal History*, vol. 77, no. 4 (December 2008), pp. 351-378; W. J. Torrance Kirby, “The Context of Reformation Thought: The Influence of the Magisterial Reformers on Richard Hooker’s Discourse on Natural Law,” in *The Theology of Richard Hooker in the Context of the Magisterial Reformation* (Princeton Theological Seminary, 2000), pp. 1-22. “Hooker shared with the mainstream of the Church of England, including the Puritans, the central Reformation affirmation of the *sola scriptura*.” Egil Grislis, “Scriptural Hermeneutics,” in *A Companion to Richard Hooker*, p. 274.

⁴⁵ Gerald R. McDermott, Review, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2002), p. 828.

⁴⁶ J. T. Tomlinson, *The Prayer Book, Articles and Homilies: Some Forgotten Facts in Their History Which May Decide Their Interpretation* (Church Association, 1897), pp. 154-166.

the stuff of romance and legend, not history, to speak of an “English way of being Christian.”⁴⁷

And he says the prayer book “does not rule out a real sacramental presence of Christ’s Body and Blood,” and also includes this as one of the “many catholic elements that the Reformed lobbied against.”⁴⁸

Again the confusion strikes—are there no high sacramental theologies among the Reformed? Surely McDermott is aware of the sacramental theologies of Martin Bucer, John Calvin, and Richard Hooker.

I would go further and say that the prayer book and Articles don’t merely “not rule out” this understanding, but they affirmatively teach it. They take strong positions on the *reality* of Christ’s sacramental presence in the Lord’s Supper (yes! as the Catechism puts it, “verily and indeed”) and also on the *mode and means* in which the body and blood of Christ are taken and eaten (“after an heavenly and spiritual manner” and “by faith” according to Article XXVIII). That is why the Articles reject memorialism, on the one hand; and on the other, the *manducatio impiorum* (and thus Lutheran and advanced Anglo-Catholic views that localize the presence within the consecrated bread and wine without respect to faithful reception).

But let’s put aside these quibbles about Celts, ornaments, and the need for a little stronger sacramental language to catch up to the Anglican

⁴⁷ Donald E. Meek, *The Quest for Celtic Christianity* (Hansel, 2000). On the sizable gap between historians and popular mythmakers about “Celtic Christianity,” see J. R. Davies’s review of *Celts and Christians: New Approaches to the Religious Traditions of Britain and Ireland* in *English Historical Review*, vol. 119, no. 483 (2004), pp. 1024-1025.

⁴⁸ See note 37 above.

formularies. Once we get past these points, and move beyond the fog of terminological confusion, it is striking that there is so little we disagree about.

At the start of his essay, McDermott gives two paragraphs defining what he calls the “two camps.” One paragraph describes the “Calvinist Anglicans”; the next one describes the contrasting views of “reformed catholic Anglicans.” But aside from some exaggerations about the “Calvinist Anglicans”—overstatements about the *via media* ending in Geneva, about Calvin offering “the best expression of the Christian faith purged of papist ceremonial,” and about a church that “eschewed” sights and smells⁴⁹—there is zero tension between the two paragraphs.

Everything else he says in these definitional paragraphs about the “Calvinist Anglicans” and the “reformed catholic Anglicans” are correct descriptions of Anglicanism from Queen Elizabeth until the Oxford Movement. In fact, many of the points in his “reformed catholic” paragraph were also made in my original essay, including the sign of

⁴⁹ McDermott’s *eschewed* is too strong. My point was the conventional one that that the English Reformation shifted the sensory emphasis to hearing, speaking, and singing. These I said, not “sights and smells,” were “the regular staples of devout religion.” Like the piety of the pre-Reformation English church, early Protestant piety was deeply affective, not merely intellectual, but *how* it was affective developed in new ways after the Reformation. Reams of proof could be given for differences in this regard between the pre-Reformation English church and the English church from Elizabeth I through the Oxford Movement, not only liturgical (e.g., use of vernacular Scriptures, rubrics stressing audibility, prohibitions on elevating the host, elimination of sacramentals, increasing importance of the sermon) but also architectural (e.g., destruction of rood screens, proliferation of Decalogue and Creed textual panels, Christopher Wren’s auditory churches). But it should be clear that just as England did not follow the image-friendly Lutheran model, it also did not follow the austerity of the Genevan model, in part due to its maintenance of cathedrals. Moreover, with respect to *taste*, the Reformed Church of England brought renewed emphasis: it gave the laity access to Communion in both kinds (Article XXX) and the possibility of more frequent Communion.

the cross in Baptism, kneeling at Communion, and the balanced position in “Of Ceremonies.” Others I did not mention but gladly embrace. One is baptismal regeneration as taught in the prayer book and Articles.⁵⁰ Another is the patristic elements in worship that McDermott notes are found from the “earliest reformers and continuing through the Elizabethan and Restoration eras.”

The polarity, the contrast, the tension between these two key paragraphs is made up. Shorn of some exaggerations in the “Calvinist” paragraph, these two paragraphs together represent the central ground of Anglicanism as presented in the Book of Common Prayer, Ordinal, Articles, Homilies, and Canons—but only these two paragraphs together.

In short, I find McDermott’s response somewhat baffling. He is helpful in repeatedly pointing us to the language of the Anglican formularies, for there is “a qualitative difference between the theological authority of the Articles and the opinions of private writers, no matter how distinguished.”⁵¹ But when we look to the formularies, the foundational texts of the Anglican tradition, what should we expect to find? We should look for solid consistency and unity in these central sources of Anglican identity, rather than seeing them as a running battle between two armies of straw men.

⁵⁰ Martin Davie, *Our Inheritance of Faith: A Commentary on the Thirty-Nine Articles* (Gilead, 2013), pp. 492–494.

⁵¹ Hampton, “Confessional Identity,” p. 215 (noting that this point was recognized by the Stuart Divines).

The Anglican Attraction?

[Candice Gage](#), writing as a “former evangelical,” describes the appeal of both Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism. Each has been her home in recent years, and though she is now in an Anglican church, the essay ends on a poignant note of uncertainty about where she will be in the future.

I think Gage’s essay, more than those by the other four of us, catches the attraction that Anglicanism holds for many. There is much that I agree with her about. She is weary of “continually updated modes of Christianity.” She finds wisdom and stability in, among other things, the church calendar and the daily offices. She finds in Anglicanism an appealing breadth and non-sectarian spirit. She desires orthodoxy and unity. And she recognizes with dismay that in many places it is impossible to find a traditional Anglican church. On all these points I whole-heartedly agree.

Before noting some points of difference, or at least of qualification, I want to mention a historical irony in Gage’s sense that she has left behind “sectarian” evangelicalism for Anglicanism. In the nineteenth century, there were huge debates that eventually tore apart the Episcopal Church; in these it was the evangelicals who often found the Episcopal Church to be sectarian and wanted greater cooperation

across denominational lines.⁵² The same theme could be traced across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the Anglican Communion, from the British and Foreign Bible Society controversy to the Kikuyu controversy. Anglican evangelicals, whatever their other blindspots, have tended to lead the way on ecumenical involvement with other Protestants.

Gage raises the practical question of where she should go to church when she cannot find a viable Anglican option. There was a custom in this respect before the Oxford Movement: those from the Church of England who were abroad would join with other Protestants of the magisterial Reformation, whether Huguenots in France or Lutherans in Denmark.⁵³ Today, in many places the closest thing to what Gage describes would be one of the traditionalist congregations in the Lutheran Church Missouri-Synod. But each Christian must make these decisions in God's sight and in good conscience; they are Gage's to make, not mine, and I understand her dilemma.

Instead of focusing on that personal choice, I want to consider three more general points: (1) Gage's rose-colored view of Rome, (2) the absence of *sola fidei* and *sola Scriptura*, and (3) a reason for Anglicanism's appealing breadth.

First, there is reason to question the contrast between "sectarian Protestants" and united Catholics and Orthodox and Anglicans—"global

⁵² This is the origin of the Reformed Episcopal Church. Allen C. Guelzo, *For the Union of Evangelical Christendom: The Irony of the Reformed Episcopalians* (Pennsylvania State, 2005).

⁵³ On Cosin's time with the Huguenots in Paris, see Milton, "Attitudes towards the Protestant and Catholic Churches," p. 342.

communions” that Gage says “look more obedient to Christ’s call for unity.” These communions all have factions and bitter divides. In the Roman Catholic Church, there is massive variation between and within regions, including on fundamental points of theology and practice (compare the recent plans for a German Synod). Most Roman Catholics in the United States do not even accept in principle part of the church’s moral teaching. The majority might not understand the rudiments of the church’s teaching on the sacraments.⁵⁴ There is a non-trivial chance of a schism in the Roman Catholic Church in our lifetimes.⁵⁵ And of course the Roman Catholic Church does not recognize as valid the ordination or sacraments of an Anglican priest. Among the Orthodox, there is presently no eucharistic communion between the Patriarchs of Rome and Constantinople. And the divisions of the Anglican Communion are self-evident.

In part this is simply because Christians everywhere are fallible people, and our own self-interest and lack of *caritas* lead us to deeper and deeper division. But another cause is less straightforwardly a matter of specific sins and more a matter of limits on human capacity and perspective. Those who want the Roman Catholic Church to change, and those who insist that it cannot or should not, are each convinced that an important matter of truth is at stake. The warring Orthodox Patriarchs think the same. And the same is true of the disagreements roiling the Anglican Communion.

⁵⁴ Gregory A. Smith, “Just One-Third of U.S. Catholics Agree with Their Church that Eucharist Is Body, Blood of Christ,” Pew Research Center (August 5, 2019).

⁵⁵ Ross A. Douthat, “The Slow Road to Catholic Schism,” *New York Times* (September 14, 2019).

Gage is right to praise orthodoxy and unity. And she is right that we should seek ever more of both here below. But it is only when we know as we are known that we will achieve them in their proper measure, without a sense of brokenness and a constant contemplation of tradeoffs.

Second, in Gage's essay the Reformation is an absent presence. What holds her back from Rome is having "to assent to Roman peculiarities," of which she identifies three: "Papal infallibility, the immaculate conception, and the granting of indulgences." The first two of these did not become Roman Catholic dogma until the first Vatican Council, and on the third the Roman Catholic Church has reformed the abuses of Johann Tetzel.

What is missing are the central points on which the Reformers (including the English Reformers) and the Church of Rome were strongly opposed, especially the nature of justification (*sola fidei*) and the nature of authority (*sola Scriptura*). These differences persist in the official teaching of these churches to this day. For Anglicans, both doctrines are decisively affirmed in the Thirty-Nine Articles. For Roman Catholics, both are decisively rejected by the Council of Trent, and all who affirm them are anathematized.

These differences can be finessed only so much.⁵⁶ If the Reformation position about justification and authority in the church is true, one should be a Protestant. If the Roman position is true, one should be a

⁵⁶ *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (1999); Anglican–Roman Catholic Dialogue, *Walking Together on the Way: Learning to be the Church – Local, Regional, Universal* (2018).

Roman Catholic. If one thinks it does not greatly matter, or that neither position is really right or really wrong, then one can let other factors predominate in the choice of a parish, from the strength of the community life to the profitableness of the preaching, from the beauty of the church to the ministry to the poor. But indifferentism, I am afraid to say, would be a significant step away from the Anglican identity laid out in the formularies.

Finally, I endorse Gage's sense that Anglicanism has an appealing breadth, and I want to offer a partial explanation. The Church of England is an established church, and through its history it has taken seriously its role as the church of the nation. Its structures fostered a concern with the well-being of the parish, which was not simply those who came to church on Sunday, but all who lived within the parish's boundaries. That broader concern for the common good is a latent strength of Anglicanism.

I do not want to exaggerate this trait. Surely a Catholic recusant or a Bedford tinker might have something to say about Anglicanism's generosity. But the principle is there. In the United States—where as long as there has been a nation, Anglicanism has been simply one denomination among many—that principle can still be put to use.

Thus I agree with Gage that there is a breadth and generous vision in Anglicanism, at its best. But Anglicanism is not a formless blob. It is not mere Christianity. It has a theological and liturgical identity founded on the Anglican formularies. For most of the history of the Church of England since the Reformation, no one would have thought that the

broad and generous space of Anglicanism lay anywhere except within Protestantism.

Why Does There Need to Be a Search for Anglican Identity?

In my original essay, I considered and found wanting two claims. The first is that Anglicanism is “mere Christianity,” the hallway in Lewis’s famous metaphor; the other was that heightened ceremonial is the Anglican distinctive.

The authors of the responses have mostly agreed that Anglicanism is not the hallway. Anglicanism is a room, and the question is about what kind of room it is.

Most have disagreed with, or perhaps misunderstood, my argument about ceremonial. One author sees an argument for restoring the Church of England as it existed in a brief moment before Bloody Mary, including the use of the 1552 prayer book. Another author thinks that what I am describing is really Presbyterianism, for the road “ends in Geneva.”

But my essay described the official teaching and routine practice of the Church of England for roughly three centuries, from about 1560 to 1860. There was always diversity of opinion in the church, and of course there was the Interregnum. But to a degree that is unimaginable to Anglicans today, there would have been strong continuities between a parish service at the beginning and end of that time span. The words

spoken, the ceremonies done, the vestments worn—these might well have been substantially the same.

There is nothing really new in my argument. Scholars of English religious history recognize that there was a Reformation and that the English church was part of it; they recognize that the confessional identity of the Church of England was Reformed; they recognize that it is a myth that the Church of England was then (as opposed to later) a middle way between Protestantism and Catholicism.

Indeed, my points about the Reformed identity of Anglicanism have already been made by an Archbishop of Canterbury, so the point has not exactly been hidden under a bushel:

“The word ‘Anglican’ begs a question at once. I have simply taken it as referring to the sort of Reformed Christian thinking that was done by those (in Britain at first, then far more widely) who were content to settle with a church order grounded in the historic ministry of bishops, priests and deacons, and with the classical early Christian formulations of doctrine about God and Jesus Christ—the Nicene Creed and the Definition of Chalcedon. It is certainly *Reformed* thinking, and we should not let the deep and pervasive echoes of the Middle Ages mislead us: it assumes the governing authority of the Bible, made available in the vernacular, and repudiates the necessity of a central executive authority in the Church’s hierarchy. It is committed to a radical criticism of any theology that sanctions the hope that human activity can contribute to the winning of God’s favour, and so is suspicious of any organised asceticism (as opposed to the free

expression of devotion to God which may indeed be profoundly ascetic in form) and of a theology of the sacraments which appears to bind God too closely to material transactions (as opposed to seeing the free activity of God sustaining and transforming certain human actions done in Christ's name)."⁵⁷

On ceremonial, too, the claims I am making are unoriginal and consistent with contemporary historical scholarship. It is not a matter of controversy what the ceremonial of Anglicanism was before the Oxford Movement. It is not a matter of controversy that many of the things we associate with Anglican ceremonial today were illegal until the twentieth century and were practically unheard of until the nineteenth. It is not even a matter of controversy that the Oxford Movement did not emphasize innovations in ritual or liturgy, and indeed was largely hostile to them until the Ritualists.

My point is that contemporary Anglicanism differs sharply from Anglicanism before the Oxford Movement. Maybe that is why some readers found this historic Anglicanism to be unrecognizable.

In those three centuries of Anglicanism there was of course massive variation. There were enormous changes in culture and human knowledge in this time. Parish-level or diocesan-level studies show widespread change and discontinuity. But I am emphasizing what did not change, or at least did not change very much. That was the public teachings of the Church of England, the prescribed forms for her

⁵⁷ Williams, "Introduction," in *Anglican Identities*, pp. 2-3.

worship, and the ceremonies routinely used in her churches. Those are what are sometimes called “classical Anglicanism.”

If this is right, then why is Anglican identity something that needs to be sought? Why did five thoughtful essays produce such a wide divergence of opinion?

The answer, I think, is found in the Oxford Movement. I am not coming to praise the Oxford Movement, and I do not have the power to bury it, but I do think we need to understand how it is at the root of the definitional struggles in Anglicanism. That is why I referred to our still being in the long nineteenth century.

The Oxford Movement tried to revive and reform the Church of England by appealing to the past. At first, the Oxford Movement seemed to share a number of positions with the High Church party, including a high ecclesiology and an emphasis on apostolic succession through the episcopate.

But the trajectory of the Oxford Movement soon took it away from the Anglican formularies, and this can especially be seen with respect to *sola fidei* and *sola Scriptura*.⁵⁸ Leaders of the Oxford Movement

⁵⁸ Frank M. Turner, *John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion* (Yale, 2002), p. 201: “The assertion that historic mainline continental Protestantism, especially as it taught the doctrine of *sola scriptura*, held within itself inherent tendencies first toward ultra-Protestantism and then toward an almost necessary Socinianism provided an ongoing theme for the tracts and other Tractarian publications.” On justification, see Peter C. Erb, “Justification and Sanctification in the Oxford Movement,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Oxford Movement*, pp. 244-254. Cf. Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Theology of the English Reformers* (Eerdmans, 1966), pp. 45-75.

recognized that the Reformers were the central obstacle.⁵⁹ And it soon became clear that a line had been crossed. The traditional High

⁵⁹ For illustrative quotations, see Nockles, “Anglicanism ‘Represented’ or ‘Misrepresented’?”, pp. 315-318, from Froude’s statement that Bishop Jewel’s “*Defence of the Apology* disgusted me more than any work I have read” to Keble’s that “anything which separates the present church from the Reformers, I should hail as a great good.” Keble said of Christian antiquity and the Reformation that it was “absolutely impossible for the same mind to sympathize with both,” [and] he directly commanded his readers, ‘You must choose between the two lines: they are not only diverging, but contrary.’” Turner, *John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion*, p. 339 (quoting Keble’s introduction to the second volume of Froude’s *Remains*). *Ibid.*, p. 198: “The Tractarian path to the unfettered reappropriation of the faith and practices of antiquity stood blocked by the historical realities of the English Reformation, including both the events and personalities of that era and the legal and religious documents they had generated. Tractarian criticism of the Reformation and the Tractarian interpretation of Reformation era documents, the 39 Articles being the most important, stirred more broad public resistance and criticism than their pronouncements on any other single subject. Unlike Tractarian comments on apostolical succession, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical polity, their interpretation of the Reformation elicited opposition throughout the *entire* Church of England, including once-sympathetic high churchmen.”

This rejection of the Reformers was not a subsequent development associated with Ritualism; it was in the Tracts from the beginning. “The early tracts would have led readers to draw several general conclusions about the Reformation. First, the theology of the continental Reformers held within itself the seeds of later heresies, such as Socinianism, and intellectual outlooks, such as rationalism, that denied the true Catholic faith or contributed to its degradation. Second, these continental theologies and their advocates had tainted the events and results of the English Reformation itself. Those foreigners had infected English religion with the tendencies toward puritanism that had led to seventeenth-century political revolution and eighteenth-century Socinianism. Third, most early-nineteenth-century English evangelical religion, whether inside or outside the Church of England, descended from that earlier puritanism and partook potentially or actually of those Zwinglian and Calvinist errors.” *Ibid.*, p. 203.

Hence the assessment of Bishop Moule: “With all readiness I admit that this epoch and its results brought contributions of good to English Christianity. An exaggeration is sometimes used to correct its opposite, and the extreme prominence given by the Tractarians to the sacraments, and to the corporate idea, and to the greatness of worship, had a work to do in that way and did it. But this cannot overcome in me the conviction that the root principles of the Oxford Movement were widely other than those of the Reformation, and out of scale with the authentic theology of the Scriptures. I do not wonder that from nearly the first the new teaching was regarded with suspicion and that earnest efforts were made to counteract it.” Peter Toon, “Anglicanism in Popish Dress,” in *Tradition Renewed: The Oxford Movement Conference Papers*, ed. Geoffrey Rowell (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1986), p. 183.

Churchmen had been “moored to the Protestantism of the Thirty-Nine Articles,” and for them “the authority of antiquity was measured against what was considered the scriptural standard recovered by the English Reformation.”⁶⁰ Newman, by contrast, could hear only “the stammering lips of ambiguous formularies.”⁶¹

For Newman, the impetus of these doctrines led him to Rome. Pusey remained a brilliant and influential son of the Church of England, though he thought there should be a reunification between Rome and Canterbury with the doctrinal basis being the decrees of the Council of Trent.⁶² This is a very different Anglicanism than that reflected in the formularies. In time it led to a new eucharistic theology that was in

⁶⁰ Robert M. Andrews, “High Church Anglicanism in the Nineteenth Century,” in *The Oxford History of Anglicanism, Volume III: Partisan Anglicanism and its Global Expansion, 1829–c.1914*, ed. Rowan Strong (Oxford, 2017), p. 141; see Peter B. Nockles, “A Disputed Legacy: Anglican Historiographies of the Reformation from the Era of the Caroline Divines to that of the Oxford Movement,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 83, no. 1 (Spring 2001), p. 137.

By contrast, Pusey said that he looked “to the ancient Church, instead of the Reformers, as the ultimate expounder of the meaning of our Church,” and Chadwick observes that it is “the *instead of* which divided the high churchmen of the Oxford Movement from the high churchmen of the seventeenth century.” Owen Chadwick, “The Mind of the Oxford Movement,” in *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement: Tractarian Essays* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 42, 44. Thus “the Oxford Movement men did what their High Church predecessors generally had *not* done: they declared that in possessing the apostolic ministry of bishops to guarantee the sacramental and spiritual life, the Church of England was Catholic and not Protestant. The Anglican via media was not the ‘old High Anglican Protestant middle way between popery and radical Protestantism.’ Rather, Anglicanism, properly understood, was a via media between popery and Protestantism itself.” Aidan Nichols, “Anglican Uniatism: A Personal View,” *New Blackfriars*, vol. 87, no. 1010 (July 2006), p. 344.

⁶¹ The quotation is from the first edition of Tract 90. As Peter Nockles has noted, “The whole Tractarian project . . . entailed a conscious marginalisation of the Reformation and most of the Elizabethan epoch from its vision of the foundations, identity and integrity of Anglicanism.” Nockles, “A Disputed Legacy,” p. 122.

⁶² Mark D. Chapman, *The Fantasy of Reunion: Anglicans, Catholics, and Ecumenism, 1833–1882* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 80-81.

tension with the formularies,⁶³ and later still to a new ceremonial that accorded with that new eucharistic theology.⁶⁴

Nor was it simply that there was a fundamental divide between the Oxford Movement and the preceding Anglican tradition, including the High Church tradition (though divide there was).⁶⁵ It was also the particular method by which Newman, in Tract 90, went about trying to tunnel under and then explode the Articles. His techniques were several,⁶⁶ but the effect was singular: you could make the Articles say anything you wanted them to. Most dazzling perhaps was his treatment of Article XXI's teaching that because councils are composed of fallible human beings, they may err, and have erred, and are ultimately

⁶³ The theological shift from the 1830s to 1850s was transformative: "In the 1830s the Tractarians had used the term 'spiritual' to describe the presence of Christ in the eucharist. The turning point came in 1853 when Robert Isaac Wilberforce published his *Holy Eucharist*. He used the expression 'real objective presence' and located it precisely in the consecrated bread and wine on the altar. In the 1860s Littledale wrote a series of pamphlets which consciously adopted Wilberforce's terminology and rejected the earlier 'spiritual' concept. Another transformation initiated by Wilberforce was a belief in the eucharistic sacrifice. 'What Newman in 1830 thought to be the only acceptable sacrifice to God, namely, the self-offering of obedient worshippers, Wilberforce, two decades later, taught to be acceptable only as assumed in the body of Christ, sacramentally present, and offered up to the Father through His priests.'" Herring, "Devotional and Liturgical Renewal: Ritualism and Protestant Reaction," p. 402 (quoting Alf Härdelin, *The Tractarian Understanding of the Eucharist*).

⁶⁴ Herring, "Devotional and Liturgical Renewal: Ritualism and Protestant Reaction," pp. 401-407.

⁶⁵ See notes 59 and 60 above.

⁶⁶ "Newman's subsequent argumentative strategies [in Tract 90] included interpreting the Articles through his own recent theology, drawing distinctions between popular Roman Catholic devotion and Tridentine doctrine, reading from the silences of the Articles, self-serving logic-chopping and word-splitting, appeals to phrases without context in the Homilies, and rejecting the intentions of their authors as a basis for understanding the Articles. Through these tactics he championed the existence of a Catholic truth lying behind the Articles, obfuscated by the conditions of their composition and concealed throughout most later interpretation." Turner, *John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion*, p. 359.

constrained by Scripture. In Newman's hands the assertion that "they may err" becomes "they may err, unless they meet in Jesus' name," and since all Christian councils do so, he very nearly turns "they may err" into "they may not err."

Tract 90 was not so much a new line taken by Newman as a consolidation of themes in writings by him and the other Tractarians.⁶⁷ But its effect was immediate. The reaction within the Church of England was fierce. The Bishop of London marveled: "It is really hardly possible to believe that the writer of such a Tract can be of the Reformed Church."⁶⁸ Newman left. But in the wake of Tract 90, "compulsory subscription was increasingly ineffective and the Tractarians had successfully dealt the Thirty-Nine Articles a fatal blow as the doctrinal standard of the Church of England."⁶⁹

Ever since, the critical question for Anglican identity has been how to reconcile the Anglican formularies with the Oxford Movement. There are three possible strategies.

The first is to say that the Anglican formularies are right. They define what Anglicanism is. Anglicanism is not a steppe, but a room; it is a broad and capacious room but like every room it has walls.

⁶⁷ Cf. Chadwick, "The Mind of the Oxford Movement," p. 43 ("The idea behind Tract 90 was integral to the theology of the Movement.").

⁶⁸ Andrew Atherstone, "Protestant Reactions: Oxford, 1838–1846," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Oxford Movement*, p. 170.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

The second strategy is to say that the Oxford Movement was right. It was right that the Anglican formularies are too narrow, too rigid, too Protestant, insufficiently catholic. These are claims about doctrinal truth. They are right or wrong, and we could conclude they are right.

The third strategy is some kind of combination of the Anglican formularies and the Oxford Movement. One method is to construct an intermediate position: the truth lies between the doctrines of the Anglican formularies and those of the Oxford Movement. But that will not work for the doctrines in question. It cannot be half true that justification is by faith alone (Article XI); it cannot be partly true that the Scriptures are the only supreme authority by which all creeds, councils, and churches are judged (Articles VIII, XIX, and XXI); to say that the wicked “eat not the body of Christ in the use of the Lord’s Supper” (Article XXIX) does not leave much room to say that they kind of do.

Another instance of the combination strategy would be an eclectic blend. What if we take the soteriology of the Anglican formularies, but we take the sacramental theology of the Oxford Movement as developed in Anglo-Catholicism? What if we took our ecclesiology from one and our pneumatology from another? But this is a recipe for incoherence.⁷⁰ We should not sever our theology of salvation from our theology of the sacraments, or our understanding of the Holy Spirit from our understanding of Mother Church.

⁷⁰ Eric Mascall said: “It is quite ridiculous to envisage the Church as a tricorporate society, each of whose parts is committed to holding one third of the truth.” Sheridan Gilley, “The Ecclesiology of the Oxford Movement: A Reconsideration,” in *From Oxford to the People: Reconsidering Newman and the Oxford Movement*, ed. Paul Vaiss (Gracewing, 1996), p. 70.

Or what if we take our theology from the Anglican formularies, but our worship and ceremonial are drawn from the descendants of the Oxford Movement? This can be done, and in fact it is often tried. But it is open to charges of incoherence or inconsistency. When the Articles reject the elevation of the consecrated bread (Article XXVIII), it is because they have a rich and glorious theology of sacramental participation in which elevation makes no sense. And our ritual and ceremonial are supposed to express our theology; many people will be more formed by that ritual and ceremonial than they will be by what the Articles say.

This proposed solution also trivializes the Oxford Movement, as if it were fundamentally about externals or ceremonial or beauty or church renovation. That was more true of what could be called the Cambridge Movement, but the Oxford Movement was squarely about what was true.⁷¹

Another method of combining the Anglican formularies and the Oxford Movement is simply to say that Anglicanism is big enough that it can contain fundamentally incompatible theologies of salvation and authority in the church.⁷² One can even make this the basis for celebration—the great thing about Anglicanism is that you can believe anything.⁷³

⁷¹ Sheridan Gilley, “Keble, Froude, Newman, and Pusey,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Oxford Movement*, p. 103: “Despite all this cultural activity, the Oxonians had comparatively little interest in the architectural and artistic aspects of the Gothic Revival pioneered by John Mason Neale at the University of Cambridge, or in Neale’s creation, the Cambridge Camden Society founded in 1839, or in the introduction into the Church of England of Catholic symbolic ritual, an issue which would polarize the Church after 1850.”

⁷² Zahl, *The Protestant Face of Anglicanism*, pp. 3-4.

⁷³ One perceptive Catholic reader of Anglicanism has recognized that by the late nineteenth century having within the Church of England “theological colleges teaching

Now as a matter of description in the present, this is uncomfortably close to being true.⁷⁴ But what about the future? We could settle for an Anglican identity that is based on “believe what you want” and “do what you want.”

Or we could take seriously the reforming movement that was the Oxford Movement, embracing its ecclesiology, soteriology, sacramentology, and so on, carrying it forward in new contexts and with new challenges.

Or we could take seriously the identity of Anglicanism as found in its formularies and the routine practice of nearly three centuries. Again there will be new contexts and challenges, and time will not stand still.

We are not locked into the present. The young Anglicans of the Oxford Movement were not; they could reclaim continuity with the pre-Reformation English Church. But to recognize that freedom simply returns us to the fundamental question.

The Anglican formularies offer the best grounding for Anglican identity. We could with imprecision call them Cranmer’s liturgies, Parker’s articles, and Cosin’s ordinal, along with Jewel’s homilies and Bancroft’s

diametrically opposed Catholic and Protestant theologies could in the long term benefit . . . ‘only theological liberalism, for it made the defining character of Anglicanism neither Protestantism nor Catholicism but a liberal comprehensiveness including them both and claiming to be broader, more inclusive, than either.’” Nichols, “Anglican Uniatism,” at p. 345 (quoting Gilley, “Ecclesiology of the Oxford Movement”). Nichols adds that this “appeal to comprehensiveness dilutes both Catholic and Protestant dogma, so that ‘in the end neither Protestants nor Catholics but the theological liberals have proved the victors in the war for the soul of the Church of England.’” Ibid (quoting Gilley, “Ecclesiology of the Oxford Movement”).

⁷⁴ See Erlandson, *Orthodox Anglican Identity*.

canons. But they are the work of many hands. They are public documents. They are the connective tissue of Anglicanism.

The formularies do not represent some kind of special idiosyncratic Anglicanism, high or low, “Reformation Anglican” or “Catholic Anglican.” The formularies are the floor plan for the Anglican room. They are the markers of classical Anglicanism—more precisely, they are the markers of Anglicanism without an adjective. And it is the formularies that are the recognized basis of Anglican identity in the ascendant Global South.

Within this Anglican room there is a depth and richness that many have not encountered. It does not scorn beauty; it has plenty of it. It does not denigrate the sacraments. It is not some kind of frightful alternative history in which John Knox was an Archbishop of Canterbury. But it does embrace the Reformation identity, the Protestantism, of the Anglican Way.

Conclusion

As human beings, we have to live in the present, not in the past. But we construct that present. We do that, in part, by constructing and deconstructing the past, so some traces of mythmaking may always be with us. Cranmer was certainly in the mythmaking business, with his *ecclesia Anglicana* and appeals to King Arthur.

Yet we do not have entire freedom in how we recast our history. Facts are stubborn things. Like other ancient boundary stones, doctrinal landmarks can be moved, but not without risk.

John Henry Newman deserves to be a Roman Catholic saint and not an Anglican one, but there is an ample measure of wisdom in the path that he and other Tractarians charted. They did not think that the version of Anglicanism they had received was what it could be—in fact, they thought it rather pitiful. They found wells in what they thought a desert;⁷⁵ they drank deeply; and reinvigorated they marched off to bring to others the truth. Not just the truth about Anglicanism, but the truth about God and the world.

Truth is ultimately the test. Agree or disagree, the Anglican formularies offer a set of positions and practices with a sufficiently defined shape that you could affirm or reject them. This Anglican identity was not constructed on the basis of aesthetic appreciation, and it was not a golden mean between the fluctuating forces of Protestantism and Catholicism. Those conceptions, and incoherent ones like “three-streams Anglicanism,” offer no stable foundation for Anglican identity.

⁷⁵ Their assessment of their predecessors was dubious, as shown by Peter B. Nockles, *The Oxford Movement in Context: Anglican High Churchmanship, 1760–1857* (Cambridge, 1994). As one recent assessment notes, “Three decades later, Nockles’s views have not been significantly challenged, and they remain the starting point for High Church studies of this era.” Nigel Aston, “High Church Presence and Persistence in the Reign of George III (1760–1811),” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Oxford Movement*, p. 52. The Tractarian assessment also neglected the vitality of Anglican Evangelism. For preliminary discussion, see Gareth Atkins, “Reformation, Revival, and Rebirth in Anglican Evangelical Thought, c.1780–c.1830,” *Studies in Church History*, vol. 44 (2008), pp. 164–174.

To be an Anglican is to talk about what it means to be an Anglican. The contested identity of the Church of England was the subject of Jewel's *Apology*, Hooker's *Laws*, and Newman's *Via Media*. This conversation will continue until the great final day when there is no more Anglicanism, and our little clod is part of the main. And it is surely more important to be a Christian than to be an Anglican. The gospel of Jesus Christ is more important than its denominational vessel. Yet it is still the case, as the author of *Mere Christianity* reminds us, that "it is in the rooms, not in the hall, that there are fires and chairs and meals."⁷⁶

What the Anglican room is like is the central issue presented by my original essay and the essays of the critics. I think the other authors have identified many wonderful things about Anglicanism, including its breadth and poetry. But each of those is a poor thing to substitute for a definition. Each is inadequate as a basis for identity.

When Anglican identity is grounded in the Anglican formularies, the virtues the other authors identify can be generated. But when we try to make those virtues themselves the ground of our description, when we try to locate the central characteristic of Anglicanism in its breadth or aesthetics, we go astray. We make those very good things do work they are not designed to do, and in the end we may risk losing the virtues themselves. Sometimes a person sets out in life with the aim of being happy, but she finds that happiness, when pursued directly, is elusive. In some matters, the indirect approach is best.

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⁷⁶ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (HarperCollins, 2001), p. xv.