

What the Anglican Communion has said about the Bible 1

Extracts

from official and semi-official
Anglican Communion documents



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- [6] **A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics** (WCC Faith & Order Paper 188, 1988)

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Prologue: Scriptures' witness to itself

4 "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. 6 These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. 8 You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. 9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

[Deuteronomy 6:4-9]

25 And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

28 And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. 29 But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them. 30 When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. 32 They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?"

[Luke 24:25-32]

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

[2 Timothy 3:14-17]

Section 1 – Anglican Foundational Documents

[1] Extracts from Articles from the 39 Articles of Religion of the Church of England in the 1662 Book of Common Prayer

VI *Of the Sufficiency of the holy Scriptures for Salvation*

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the holy Scripture we do understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.

And the other Books [The Apocrypha] the Church doth read for example of life and instruction of manners; but yet doth it not apply them to establish any doctrine.

All the Books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive, and account them Canonical.

VII *Of the Old Testament*

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New: for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to Mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and Man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and Rites, do not bind Christian men, nor the Civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral.

XX. *Of the Authority of the Church.*

The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: And yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation.

XXI. *Of the Authority of General Councils.*

General Councils may not be gathered together without the commandment and will of Princes. And when they be gathered together, (forasmuch as they be an assembly of men, whereof all be not governed with the Spirit and Word of God,) they may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture.

[2] Questions from the Ordinal – this version from APBA (1995) but very close to 1662 BCP

Deacons

Do you wholeheartedly accept the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as given by the Spirit to convey in many and varied ways the revelation of God which is fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ?

I do accept them.

Will you take your part in reading the holy Scriptures in the church, in teaching the doctrine of Christ, and in assisting the priest to teach the doctrine of Christ and administer the sacraments?

I will, by God's grace.

Will you be diligent in prayer, and in the study of the holy Scriptures? Will you undertake such other studies as will help you in your ministry?

I will, by God's grace.

Priests:

Are you convinced that the holy Scriptures contain all doctrine necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and are you determined to instruct from these Scriptures the people committed to your care, teaching nothing as essential to salvation which cannot be demonstrated from the Scriptures?

I am convinced, and will to do so by God's grace.

Will you be diligent in prayer, and in the study of the holy Scriptures?

I will, by God's grace.

Bishops:

Are you convinced that the holy Scriptures contain all doctrine necessary for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? Will you instruct from them the people committed to your care, teaching nothing as essential to salvation which cannot be demonstrated from the Scriptures?

I am convinced, and will do so, with God's help.

Will you then be faithful in prayer, and diligent in the study of the holy Scriptures, so that you may be equipped to teach and encourage with sound doctrine?

I will, seeking to discern the mind of Christ by the Spirit of God

[3] The Church of England Declaration of Assent

The Declaration of Assent is made by deacons, priests and bishops of the Church of England when they are ordained and on each occasion when they take up a new appointment (Canon C 15). Readers and Lay Workers make the declaration, without the words 'and administration of the sacraments', when they are admitted and when they are licensed (Canons E 5, E 6 and E 8).

Preface

The Church of England is part of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It professes the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation. Led by the Holy Spirit, it has borne witness to Christian truth in its historic formularies, the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer and the Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons. In the declaration you are about to make, will you affirm your loyalty to this inheritance of faith as your inspiration and guidance under God in bringing the grace and truth of Christ to this generation and making Him known to those in your care?

Declaration of Assent

I, A B, do so affirm, and accordingly declare my belief in the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness; and in public prayer and administration of the sacraments, I will use only the forms of service which are authorized or allowed by Canon.]

[4] The Preface to the 1552 Book of Common Prayer.

Concerning the Service of the Church

THERE was never any thing by the wit of man so well devised, or so sure established, which in continuance of time hath not been corrupted: As, among other things, it may plainly appear by the Common Prayers in the Church, commonly called *Divine Service*. The first original and ground whereof if a man would search out by the ancient Fathers, he shall find, that the same was not ordained but of a good purpose, and for a great advancement of godliness. For they so ordered the matter, that all the whole Bible (or the greatest part thereof) should be read over every year; intending thereby, that the Clergy, and especially such as were Ministers in the congregation, should (by often reading, and meditation in God's word) be stirred up to godliness themselves and be more able to exhort others by wholesome Doctrine, and to confute them that were adversaries to the Truth; and further, that the people (by daily hearing of holy Scripture read in the Church) might continually profit more and more in the knowledge of God, and be the more inflamed with the love of his true Religion.

But these many years passed, this godly and decent order of the ancient Fathers hath been so altered, broken, and neglected, by planting in uncertain Stories, and Legends, with multitude of Responds, Verses, vain Repetitions, Commemorations, and Synodals; that commonly when any Book of the Bible was begun, after three or four Chapters were read out, all the rest were unread. And in this sort the Book of *Isaiah* was begun in *Advent*, and the Book of *Genesis* in *Septuagesima*; but they were only begun, and never read through: after like sort were other Books of holy Scripture used. And moreover, whereas St. *Paul* would have such language spoken to the people in the Church, as they might understand, and have profit by hearing the same; the service in this Church of *England* these many years hath been read in Latin to the people, which they understand not; so that they have heard with their ears only, and their heart, spirit and mind, have not been edified thereby. And furthermore, notwithstanding that the ancient Fathers have divided the *Psalms* into seven portions, whereof every one was called a *Nocturn*: now of late time a few of them have been daily said, and the rest utterly omitted. Moreover, the number and hardness of the Rules called the *Pie*, and the manifold changings of the service, was the cause, that to turn the book only was so hard and intricate a matter, that many times there was more business to find out what should be read, than to read it when it was found out.

These inconveniences therefore considered, here is set forth such an order, whereby the same shall be redressed. And for a readiness in this matter, here is drawn out a Calendar for that purpose, which is plain and easy to be understood; wherein (so much as may be) the reading of holy Scripture is so set forth, that all things shall be done in order, without breaking one piece from another. For this cause be cut off Anthems, Responds, Invitatories, and such like things as did break the continual course of the reading of the Scripture.

Yet, because there is no remedy, but that of necessity there must be some Rules; therefore certain Rules are here set forth; which, as they are few in number, so they are plain and easy to be understood. So that here you have an Order for Prayer, and for the reading of the holy Scripture, much agreeable to the mind and purpose of the old Fathers, and a great deal more profitable and commodious, than that which of late was used. It is more profitable, many things, whereof some are untrue, because here are left out some uncertain, some vain and superstitious; and nothing is ordained to be read, but the very pure Word of God, the holy Scriptures, or that which is agreeable to the same; and that in such a language and order as is most easy and plain for the understanding both of the readers and hearers. It is also more commodious, both for the shortness thereof, and for the plainness of the order, and for that the rules be few and easy.

And whereas heretofore there hath been great diversity in saying and singing in Churches within this Realm; some following *Salisbury Use*, some *Hereford Use*, and some the Use of *Bangor*, some of *York*, some of *Lincoln*; now from henceforth all the whole Realm shall have but one Use.

And forasmuch as nothing can be so plainly set forth, but doubts may arise in the use and practice of the same; to appease all such diversity (if any arise) and for the resolution of all doubts, concerning the manner how to understand, do, and execute, the things contained in this Book; the parties that so doubt, or diversity take any thing, shall alway resort to the Bishop of the Diocese, who by his discretion shall take order for the quieting and appeasing of the same; so that the same order be not contrary to any thing contained in this Book. And if the Bishop of the Diocese be in doubt, then he may send for the resolution thereof to the Archbishop.

Though it be appointed, that all things shall be read and sung in the Church in the *English* Tongue, to the end that the congregation may be thereby edified; yet it is not meant, but that when men say Morning and Evening Prayer privately, they may say the same in any language that they themselves do understand.

And all Priests and Deacons are to say daily the Morning and Evening Prayer either privately or openly, not being let by sickness, or some other urgent cause.

And the Curate that ministereth in every Parish-church or Chapel, being at home, and not being otherwise reasonably hindered, shall say the same in the Parish-church or Chapel where he ministereth, and shall cause a bell to be tolled thereunto a convenient time before he begin, that the people may come to hear God's Word, and to pray with him.

Also: Richard Hooker, *Laws*, Book II, sections I-IV, VIII

While this does not fall in the same category as other documents in this section it is seen as THE key text which presents the 'catholic-and-reformed' perspective which shaped Anglican discussion. It may not be all that easy to read but we think it belongs among these extracts.

[Full text in a final appendix to this document]

Section 2 - Lambeth Conference Resolutions on The Bible

1888

Resolution 11

*[The **Lambeth Quadrilateral**: four points that constitute the basis for union discussions of the **Anglican Communion** with other Christian groups: acceptance of Holy Scripture as the rule of faith; the Apostles' and the Nicene creeds; the sacraments of **Baptism** and the Lord's Supper; and the historic episcopate. Declared by the General Convention of the **Protestant Episcopal Church in Chicago** in 1886, they were amended and adopted by the Anglican Communion's **Lambeth Conference** of 1888.*

Extract from Encyclopedia Britannica]

That, in the opinion of this Conference, the following articles supply a basis on which approach may be by God's blessing made towards home reunion:

- The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, as "containing all things necessary to salvation," and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith.
- The Apostles' Creed, as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.
- The two sacraments ordained by Christ himself - Baptism and the Supper of the Lord - ministered with unfailing use of Christ's words of institution, and of the elements ordained by him.
- The historic episcopate, locally adapted in the methods of its administration to the varying needs of the nations and peoples called of God into the unity of his Church.

1958

Resolution 1 - The Conference affirms its belief that the Bible discloses the truths about the relation of God and man which are the key to the world's predicament and is therefore deeply relevant to the modern world.

Resolution 2 - The Conference affirms that our Lord Jesus Christ is God's final Word to man, and that in his light all Holy Scripture must be seen and interpreted, the Old Testament in terms of promise and the New Testament in terms of fulfilment.

Resolution 3 - The Conference affirms that Jesus Christ lives in his Church through the Holy Spirit according to his promise, and that the Church is therefore both guardian and interpreter of Holy Scripture; nevertheless the Church may teach nothing as "necessary for eternal salvation but what may be concluded and proved by the Scripture."

Resolution 4 - The Conference gratefully acknowledges our debt to the host of devoted scholars who, worshipping the God of Truth, have enriched and deepened our understanding of the Bible, not least by facing with intellectual integrity the questions raised by modern knowledge and modern criticism. It also acknowledges the Church's debt to the men and women in our universities, colleges, and schools who by their teaching and example inspire new generations to love the Scriptures.

Resolution 5 - The Conference welcomes every sign of the revival of Bible study within the common life of the Church. It calls on all Church people to re-establish the habit of Bible reading at home, and commends the growing practice of group Bible study.

Resolution 6 - The Conference recognises with gratitude the dominant place which the Anglican Communion has always given to the Holy Scriptures in all its public worship. It welcomes in the contemporary liturgical revival the growing realisation of the close relation of word and sacrament.

Resolution 7 - The Conference affirms the importance of preaching, both evangelistic and expository, ministered as a means of grace, by men who have experienced the power of the Gospel in their own lives.

Resolution 8 - The Conference acknowledges gratefully the work of scientists in increasing man's knowledge of the universe, wherein is seen the majesty of God in his creative activity. It therefore calls upon Christian people both to learn reverently from every new disclosure of truth, and at the same time to bear witness to the biblical message of a God and Saviour apart from whom no gift can be rightly used.

Resolution 9 - In view of the lack of understanding which can develop in consequence of the different thought and language of the Bible and the modern world, the Conference urges Christian scholars and leaders to co-operate with men of science and other kinds of modern learning in the study of their respective modes of thought and speech.

Resolution 10 - The Conference believes that the presentation of the message of the Bible to the world requires great sensitiveness to the outlook of the people of today, and urges that imaginative use be made of all the resources of literature, art, music, and drama, and of new techniques appealing to eye as well as to ear.

Resolution 11 - The Conference welcomes the new translations of the Scriptures in many languages, and would encourage our people to give all possible support to those societies whose concern is the distribution of the Scriptures to all lands. Much still remains to be done in this field and the need is urgent.

Resolution 12 - In light of the previous eleven Resolutions the Conference invites the Churches of the Anglican Communion to engage in a special effort during the next ten years to extend the scope and deepen the quality of personal and corporate study of the Bible.

1998

Resolution III.1 - This Conference, recognising the need in our Communion for fuller agreement on how to interpret and apply the message of the Bible in a world of rapid change and widespread cultural interaction,

- a. reaffirms the primary authority of the Scriptures, according to their testimony and supported by our own historic formularies;
- b. urges that the Biblical text should be handled respectfully, coherently, and consistently, building upon our best traditions and scholarship believing that the Scriptural revelation must continue to illuminate, challenge and transform cultures, structures, and ways of thinking, especially those that predominate today;
- c. invites our provinces, as we open ourselves afresh to a vision of a Church full of the Word and full of the Spirit, to promote at every level biblical study programmes which can inform and nourish the life of dioceses, congregations, seminaries, communities, and members of all ages.

Section 3 – The Anglican Communion Covenant [Extracts from the final text]

The full text can be found at:

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/commission/covenant/final/text.cfm>

Preamble

We, as Churches of the Anglican Communion, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, solemnly covenant together in these following affirmations and commitments. As people of God, drawn from “every nation, tribe, people and language” (Rev 7.9), we do this in order to proclaim more effectively in our different contexts the grace of God revealed in the gospel, to offer God’s love in responding to the needs of the world, to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and together with all God’s people to attain the full stature of Christ (Eph 4.3,13).

Section One: Our Inheritance of Faith

1.1 Each Church affirms:

(1.1.2) the catholic and apostolic faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds, which faith the Church is called upon to proclaim afresh in each generation[2]. The historic formularies of the Church of England[3], forged in the context of the European Reformation and acknowledged and appropriated in various ways in the Anglican Communion, bear authentic witness to this faith.

(1.1.3) the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as containing all things necessary for salvation and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith[4].

1.2 In living out this inheritance of faith together in varying contexts, each Church, reliant on the Holy Spirit, commits itself:

(1.2.1) to teach and act in continuity and consonance with Scripture and the catholic and apostolic faith, order and tradition, as received by the Churches of the Anglican Communion, mindful of the common councils of the Communion and our ecumenical agreements.

(1.2.2) to uphold and proclaim a pattern of Christian theological and moral reasoning and discipline that is rooted in and answerable to the teaching of Holy Scripture and the catholic tradition.

(1.2.4) to hear, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Scriptures in our different contexts, informed by the attentive and communal reading of - and costly witness to - the Scriptures by all the faithful, by the teaching of bishops and synods, and by the results of rigorous study by lay and ordained scholars.

(1.2.5) to ensure that biblical texts are received, read and interpreted faithfully, respectfully, comprehensively and coherently, with the expectation that Scripture continues to illuminate and transform the Church and its members, and through them, individuals, cultures and societies.

Section Three: Our Unity and Common Life

3.2 Acknowledging our interdependent life, each Church, reliant on the Holy Spirit, commits itself:

(3.2.3) to spend time with openness and patience in matters of theological debate and reflection, to listen, pray and study with one another in order to discern the will of God. Such prayer, study and debate is an essential feature of the life of the Church as it seeks to be led by the Spirit into all truth and to proclaim the gospel afresh in each generation. Some issues, which are perceived as controversial or new when they arise, may well evoke a deeper understanding of the implications of God’s revelation to us; others may prove to be distractions or even obstacles to the faith. All such matters therefore need to be tested by shared discernment in the life of the Church.

(3.2.4) to seek a shared mind with other Churches, through the Communion's councils, about matters of common concern, in a way consistent with the Scriptures, the common standards of faith, and the canon laws of our churches. Each Church will undertake wide consultation with the other Churches of the Anglican Communion and with the Instruments and Commissions of the Communion.

Section 4 – Official Reports of the Communion that were widely ‘received’

[1] Extracts from the 2004 Windsor Report – Report of The Lambeth Commission on Communion [Section B paragraphs 53-62 pp.27-30]

The full text can be found at: <http://www.anglicancommunion.org/windsor2004/index.cfm>

Background: The Windsor Report’s intention is to wrestle with “what we believe is the will of God for the Anglican Communion” (p.4), specifically in relation to “controversies over issues of human sexuality” (ibid) which it believes have created much deeper divisions than was the case with controversies over women’s ordination. Its mandate was not to attempt any resolution of the controversy over human sexuality but rather to seek ways “in which communion and understanding could be enhanced where serious differences threatened the life of a diverse worldwide church” (p.5).

The Authority of Scripture (Sections 53-54)

The Report’s concern is with the central role scripture plays in “enabling the Church to fulfil its gospel mission in and for the world” and in “draw[ing] us together and hold[ing] us in fellowship” (p.27).

After noting that scripture has historically occupied an absolutely central place in Anglicanism (section 53), the Report’s main concern is to clarify just what the phrase “authority of scripture” should and should not mean (sections 54-55). Its argument is basically twofold: that scripture is “the vehicle for God’s authority” (S.57) rather than its replacement and, second, that scripture should not be treated as a rule-book but rather as the heart of a living faith. Sections 58-62 set out principles and practices to ensure the Report’s understanding of how scripture’s authority should be correctly and creatively used. The Report notes the centrality of interpretation to the proper use of scripture in the life of the church (S. 59).

In regard to the question of the authority of scripture the Report concludes that “The current crisis...constitutes a call to the whole Anglican Communion to re-evaluate the ways in which we have read, heard, studied and digested scripture” (S.61). It notes that the increased range of interpretative strategies available today further complicates the church’s use of scripture in its traditional role (S. 62).

Scripture and Interpretation

57 This means that for scripture to ‘work’ as the vehicle of God’s authority it is vital that it be read at the heart of worship in a way which (through appropriate lectionaries, and the use of scripture in canticles etc.) allows it to be heard, understood and reflected upon. Not as a pleasing and religious background noise, but as God’s living and active word. The message of scripture, as a whole and in its several parts, must be preached and taught in all possible and appropriate ways. It is the responsibility of the whole Church to engage with the Bible together; within that, each individual Christian, to the fullest extent of which they are capable, must study it and learn from it, thoughtfully and prayerfully. Within this context, the Church’s accredited leaders have a responsibility through constant teaching and preaching, to enable the Church to grow to maturity, so that when difficult judgements are required they may be made in full knowledge of the texts.

58 The place of Christian leaders – chiefly within the Anglican tradition, of bishops – as teachers of scripture can hardly be overemphasised. The ‘authority’ of bishops cannot reside solely or primarily in legal structures, but, as in Acts 6.4, in their ministry of “prayer and the word of God”. If this is ignored, the model of ‘the authority of scripture’ which scripture itself offers is failing to function as it should. The authoritative teaching of scripture cannot be left to academic researchers, vital though they are. The accredited leaders of the Church – within the diocese, the bishop(s); within the Communion, the primates – must be people through whose prayerful teaching ministry the authority of God vested in scripture is brought to bear – in mission within the world and in wise teaching to build up the Church.

59 As this task proceeds, questions of interpretation are rightly raised, not as an attempt to avoid or relativise scripture and its authority, but as a way of ensuring that it really is scripture that is being heard, not simply the echo of our own voices (though our own responsive hearing is necessary) or the memory of earlier Christian interpretations (though we must always take them into account: 'tradition' consists primarily of the recollection of what the scripture-reading Church has said). Historical interpretation, from ongoing lexicographical work (to make sure the nuances of ancient words are properly and precisely heard) to large-scale historical reconstruction (to ensure we are not making anachronistic assumptions), remains vital. It can be deeply challenging to entrenched views of what scripture is thought to be saying, not least where it has been read within an unchallenged philosophical or cultural matrix.

60 This applies equally, in our own day and setting, to the assumptions and entrenched views of the Enlightenment (which have often resulted in unwarranted negative judgements on much biblical material), as well as to the assumptions and entrenched views of a pre- or anti-critical conservatism. Biblical scholarship needs simultaneously to be free to explore different meanings and to be constrained by loyalty to the community of the Church across time and space. It cannot pretend to a detached 'neutrality'. Such pretence (as in phrases like "the objective results of scholarship") is often, and rightly, seen as either a grab for power or a mere protest against alternative interpretations. Where a fresh wave of scholarship generates ideas which are perceived as a threat to something the Church has always held dear, it is up to the scholars concerned, on the one hand, to explain how what is now proposed not only accords with but actually enhances the central core of the Church's faith. And it is up to the Church, on the other hand, not to reject new proposals out of hand, but to listen carefully, to test everything, and to be prepared to change its mind if and when a convincing case is made.

61 The current crisis thus constitutes a call to the whole Anglican Communion to re-evaluate the ways in which we have read, heard, studied and digested scripture. We can no longer be content to drop random texts into arguments, imagining that the point is thereby proved, or indeed to sweep away sections of the New Testament as irrelevant to today's world, imagining that problems are thereby solved. We need mature study, wise and prayerful discussion, and a joint commitment to hearing and obeying God as he speaks in scripture, to discovering more of the Jesus Christ to whom all authority is committed, and to being open to the fresh wind of the Spirit who inspired scripture in the first place. If our present difficulties force us to read and learn together from scripture in new ways, they will not have been without profit.

62 As mention of scripture today can sometimes seem actually divisive, so aware are we of the bewildering range of available interpretative strategies and results. This is tragic, since, as with the Spirit who inspired scripture, we should expect that the Bible would be a means of unity, not division.

[2] Extracts from 2008 Communion, Conflict and Hope - The Kuala Lumpur Report of the third Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission [Part III *Sustaining Communion*. Sections 62-73]

The full text can be found at:

http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/theological/iatdc/docs/communion_conflict_&_hope.pdf

Background: The task of this Commission was, in the words of its Chair Bishop Stephen Sykes, to "enquire into what it is that nurtures or inhibits the common life of the Anglican Communion". He notes that England's historical dominance in the life of the Communion has inhibited the diversity that has always been present (p.5). The Commission's intention is to offer "a framework within which...[Anglicans] can confront their differences" (p.5). It notes that "constant change and renewal" (p.6) are not merely a challenge to the church but a condition of its existence. The Preface to the report (p.7) argues that its context of turmoil throws into relief the significance of the church's "vocation towards unity" (p.7). The Commission's task, given diversities and controversies of many kinds, was to explore what a

communion which could help Anglicans to live out their "vocation towards unity" might look like.

The Commission presents 'communion' as the necessary context within which to grapple with scripture's own dialectic of unity and diversity (S. 66) and affirms much of what was said about the authority of scripture by the Windsor Report (SS. 63-65). The Commission notes that while it is easy to affirm the historical role of scripture as the centre of the development of Anglicanism it is by no means clear how the Bible can be used to deal with controversies around specific issues (S. 67). This lack of clarity is exacerbated by the rapid and profound social changes of the past century which have brought to the fore the reality that "Christians in the same church now find they are living in different cultural worlds, and the ways in which Scripture is utilised in each of them appears to be different as well" (S.67). The Commission wrestles with whether it is possible for the Bible to help preserve 'communion' (understood contextually) and, effectively, reiterates its earlier position that 'communion' provides the "corporate willingness" and "the patient pursuit of truth and holiness" that will enable "a habitual response to the message of the Bible" (S. 69).

So, rather than the Bible's being what helps hold communion together (Windsor Report) Communion is the tool that enables a communal reading of the Bible which will enable the Bible to play its traditional role of focus of unity. Yet, as both Communion and Canon provide a framework for diversity and conflict the Commission highlights the Bible's role in transforming lives rather than in providing information. Thus it rightly sets up its understanding of the authority of scripture as a preparation for its discussion of ethics which follows.

Consultative Communion: A Theology of Engagement

The Gospel and Scripture: The Centrality of the Bible in the Anglican Tradition

- STATEMENT1: The koinonia of the Anglican Communion is both greatly enriched, and at times challenged and confused, by the variety of ways of encountering Scripture. We bring our whole lives, in our different cultural and personal contexts, to Scripture, and from those places open ourselves to 'being read by' Scripture.

63. The debate invited by the first of the six statements drew attention to the way in which the authority of the Bible is seen by some to be confused by varieties of interpretive methods.

64. The Commission commented while introducing that discussion: "As particular members of the Anglican Communion, we bring our contextual, cultural, and personal situations to bear upon the task of 'reading in communion' with others across space and time. Private reading and study of Scripture takes place, by implication, within the larger framework of the church's praise of God and proclamation of the Word in common prayer and eucharist".

65. "The Anglican tradition of reading the Bible carries an historic deep respect for biblical scholarship, taking seriously the integrity of the canon, historical contextuality and original languages of the Bible. 'Historical' studies are well complemented by 'theological' interpretations and 'literary' readings. In addition, theologians in many parts of the world have called attention to issues of power and privilege in biblical interpretation and the need for Christians to listen to one another across cultural differences and economic divisions."

66. The Commission went on to conclude: "The rich variety of material within the canon resists all human attempts to reduce it to a flat or uniform agenda. At the same time, the biblical writings are consistent witnesses to the trustworthiness of the triune God and, for all their differences of style, content, and opinion, they are clearly part of one conversation that intends to be open to hear the Word of that one God. A Ghanaian parable of individuals and community within the family helps us here: from a distance one sees the people of the family like a forest; only in closer proximity does one see the particular features of each tree. So the art of reading and living under a Scripture which is both unified and diverse is an organic part of the vocation to live together within our single yet richly variegated Communion. It is within this context that our ongoing and vital debates about the 'authority' of Scripture must take

place.”

67. The conversation which has developed around those assertions reinforces both the possibilities and the complications of the issue. The determinative role of Scripture in the reasoned development of Anglican tradition is generally acknowledged, but how the Bible is used in determining the outcome of specific controversies is unclear. Through the twentieth century, processes of rapid social change from pre- to post- modernity have meant that Christians in the same church now find they are living in different cultural worlds, and the ways in which Scripture is utilised in each of them appears to be different as well.

68. Yet during the last decade a renewed emphasis on the unity as well as the diversity of Scripture means that listening to the Bible together can be a restorative as well as disturbing experience for the Christian community. Reading ‘in communion’ includes but goes beyond sharing a common lectionary. It was suggested to us that Thomas Cranmer recognised that the public reading of Scripture in the context of ordered worship permits (and indeed creates) an acceptable degree of diversity in the church. This is something that needs to be rediscovered at this time, since it is recognised that no contemporary ‘Act of Uniformity’ could achieve that end. Corporate reception of Scripture is actually the way in which communion will be nurtured and sustained in the church, as well as described or defined as a theological concept.

69. In the third round of discussion, the question of how the Bible could be read ‘together’ by the whole church was highlighted. Major differences emerged between those who thought that in principle the clarity (‘perspicuity’) of Scripture meant that a common mind could be reached about the meaning and implications of a passage, and others who felt that cultural differences between readers - as well as between readers and the text - meant that any such unanimity would be impossible to achieve. Current hermeneutical studies suggest that such pessimism is unwarranted and that the ideal of a church whose thoughts and actions are moulded by a habitual response to the message of the Bible is worth pursuing. However any expectation that interpretations of Scripture will ever be totally uncontested is discounted by the experience of history, if not the very character of the Bible itself. Knowledge of God’s purposes in Scripture will always be partial in the church, yet it will be sufficient for the patient pursuit of truth and holiness, if there is a corporate willingness to respond to what is understood in particular circumstances. For this reason methods of cross-cultural and trans-generational reading of the Bible are to be encouraged.

70. Such a pursuit places emphasis on a humble and receptive reading of the text of Scripture. Statement 1 invited reflection on the way Scripture speaks to the whole personality of the reader; the habits of the heart and a culture’s heart. Scripture reads us as much as, perhaps even more than, our reading of it, however closely we attempt to understand and interpret its message.

71. A central passage in this discussion was Luke 24.13-35. In that well known story on the road to Emmaus, two disciples were carrying their own confusions and dashed hopes about Jesus. A stranger joined them and revealed the secret of the Scriptures and sparked their faith and hope. After Jesus revealed himself to them in the breaking of the bread they were able to say “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”(v32). They returned to Jerusalem to join a gathering company of witnesses to the resurrection. Their lives were altered forever in the light of the living Word of God.

72. Even the most rigorous scrutiny of the text of Scripture must lead towards those moments of transfiguration as Christian disciples realise they are standing and living in the light of God’s presence. Engagement with Scripture must be a key component in times of controversy. However the ultimate role of Scripture during disputes within the life of the church is measured not by how far it shows who is ‘right’, but by the way in which it invites all parties of the controversy to be ‘changed’.

Section 5 - Other Anglican Communion Reports and Documents

[1] Extracts from the 1996 For the Sake of the Kingdom - The Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission

The full text can be found at:

http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/theological/iatdc/docs/for_the_sake_of_the_kingdom_1986.pdf

Background: The Commission was instructed to examine the problem of "the relation between the church and the Kingdom of God in the light of the doctrines of creation and redemption" (p.6). This led the Commission to explore "the complex relations between the Gospel and social or cultural forms in the light of the central assertion of the Gospel itself..." (p.3) in the "conviction that the concrete experience of particular Christians in particular localities does indeed...possess theological significance..." (p.4). In brief, the Report sought to engage with "theological variety" through which it hoped to discover "a common language of faith, hope, and love" (p.4). Like the other reports so far considered, this Report avoids to attempt a resolution of particular controversies, but for a different reason, namely that any such resolutions must necessarily happen at the local, particular level.

Working from the ambivalence of Anglicanism's colonial history the Commission highlights the necessary tension with which the church lives: "A church belongs and yet does not belong to the social and political system under which it operates" (p.9). It sees its task as being the opening up of this tension to ask "why and how it is that Christians...belong and do not belong, and what this tension means - or ought to mean - in day-today [sic] practice of faith" (p.9).

In dealing with the Bible, the Commission argues that the proper contexts for its interpretation are tradition and reason. By the former is meant the church's tradition, focused in the liturgy which "carries the common mind of the community", which "'mind', with its characteristic questions, interests, and assumptions...receives, and in receiving interprets, the Bible..." (SS. 59-60). By the latter (reason) is meant, today, in distinction from the seventeenth century understanding of it as a universal norm, "the way of seeing things and asking about them which determines, for a given group of people in a given time and place, what makes sense" (SS. 61-63).; the Commission notes that our inherited way of privileging Scripture by setting it 'above' specific ecclesial and social cultures as an independent, universal authority, is no longer sustainable (SS. 64-65). Thus interpretation of the Bible must be necessarily contextual (SS. 66-68), which requires facing the "distortions" involved in interpreting scripture - including one's own "distortions" - and thus accommodating differences or "pluralism" (SS. 68-79). The tool to engage with the pluralism of our Communion is repentance (SS. 80-84) which it defines as "the change of mind which is evoked by the manifestation of God's reign in the crucified and risen Christ (S. 80). This in turn preserves the central role of "the institutions - Scriptures, creeds, and sacraments - through which such faith is evoked and enlivened" (S. 80). The Commission also points to theologies of liberation as exemplary signs of God's Kingdom (SS. 85-92).

The extracts in this section offer reflections on 'diverse and changing cultural contexts' as a background for how they influence the way we engage with and interpret Scripture.

18 We start, then, with the fact of the Anglican Communion, which represents one stream of tradition in the life of the universal people of God. Throughout the world, individual dioceses are united within themselves through the ministry of their bishops and pastors. They are joined to one another regionally in organized provinces and national churches. They share the heritage of post-Reformation English Christianity - a heritage which encompasses the tradition of the ancient and medieval churches but also includes its own theological style and agenda as well as its own ways of worship and pastoral administration.

19 If these churches belong to one another, however, and to a particular tradition within the church universal, they also belong to the places where their life is conducted and their work carried out. Each is set in a particular cultural world, which, although it is not static and

continues to grow and be modified by its encounter with other cultures and experiences, has an identifiable style or idiom of its own. These cultural worlds differ - in the traditions and values they live by, in the habits of thought and behaviour they encourage. They differ not only from one another, but also from the world of Christian experience and tradition which is carried by Anglicanism.

Later on in the report:

24 Whether one thinks in cultural or in social-political terms, therefore, Christian churches - and so Anglican churches - live in a situation of tension. They belong and they do not belong; they are at once natives of their places and foreigners in it, at once lovers and affirmers of its life and critics of its ways.

In the section on 'The Church and the Mystery of God's Kingdom' the report says,

94 Both the common experience and the shared reflection of this Commission have served to bring this truth strongly home to us. If the church, because it lives 'in Christ' by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, is a sign and agent of God's Kingdom in and for the world, it is so - always and necessarily- in a radically 'located' fashion. The church exists in particular places and at particular times, and the truth which its life and action carry is conveyed only to the extent that it too is 'located'. This means, as we have seen, that Christians in a given place and time both will and must share the cultural idiom of their geographical and social locale. It also means that their life and witness both will and must address the issues, moral and political, with which historical circumstance confronts them in that locale. The church belongs to all its many places and times, and it is in this fact that its legitimate pluriformity is, in the end, rooted.

[2] extracts from the 1997 Virginia Report - The Report of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission [Extracts from Chapter 3 'Bonds of Interdependence: What Binds Anglicans Together']

The full text can be found at: <http://www.lambethconference.org/1998/documents/report-1.pdf>

Background: The Report's purpose was to explore "the meaning and nature of communion with particular reference to the doctrine of the Trinity, the unity and order of the Church, and the unity and community of humanity" (p.5). The Commission's work was occasioned by the issue of the ordination of women. Its Report notes social changes which problematize unity (S.1.3) and acknowledges that faithful response to the Gospel must happen contextually (S. 1.5) with an attitude of "tolerance for deeply held differences of conviction and practice" (S.1-9). The Report describes such tolerance as integral to "the Anglican way" (S. 3.4).

With regard to the Bible, the Report, like the report, "For the Sake of the Kingdom", argues that scripture is authoritative through the application of tradition and reason in a constant process of interpretation (S. 3.5-11). The Report effectively re-iterates what "For the Sake of the Kingdom" said: "If tradition is the mind that Christians share as believers and members of the Church, reason is the mind they share as participants in a particular culture" (S. 3.9). This means that "the mind of God has constantly to be discerned afresh, not only in every age, but in each and every context" (S. 3.11).

The Anglican Way: Scripture, Tradition and Reason

3.5 Anglicans are held together by the characteristic way in which they use Scripture, tradition and reason in discerning afresh the mind of Christ for the Church in each generation. This was well described in the Report of the Pastoral and Dogmatic Concerns section of Lambeth 1988.

3.6 Anglicans affirm the sovereign authority of the Holy Scriptures as the medium through which God by the Spirit communicates his word in the Church and thus enables people to respond with understanding and faith. The Scriptures are "uniquely inspired witness to divine

revelation", and "the primary norm for Christian faith and life".

3.7 The Scriptures, however, must be translated, read, and understood, and their meaning grasped through a continuing process of interpretation. Since the seventeenth century Anglicans have held that Scripture is to be understood and read in the light afforded by the contexts of "tradition" and "reason".

3.8 In one sense tradition denotes the Scriptures themselves, in that they embody "the tradition", "the message", "the faith once delivered to the saints". Tradition refers to the ongoing Spirit-guided life of the Church which receives, and in receiving interprets afresh God's abiding message. The living tradition embraces the ecumenical creeds, the classical eucharistic prayers, which belong with the Scriptures as forming their essential message. Tradition is not to be understood as an accumulation of formulae and texts but the living mind, the nerve centre of the Church. Anglican appeal to tradition is the appeal to this mind of the Church carried by the worship, teaching and the Spirit-filled life of the Church.

3.9 Properly speaking "reason" means simply the human being's capacity to symbolise, and so to order, share and communicate experience. It is the divine gift in virtue of which human persons respond and act with awareness in relation to their world and to God, and are opened up to that which is true for every time and every place. Reason cannot be divorced either from Scripture or tradition, since neither is conceivable apart from the working of reason. In another perspective, reason means not so much the capacity to make sense of things as it does "that which makes sense", or "that which is reasonable". The appeal to reason then becomes what people - and that means people in a given time and place - take as good sense or "common" sense. It refers to what can be called "the mind of a particular culture", with its characteristic ways of seeing things, asking about them, and explaining them. If tradition is the mind that Christians share as believers and members of the Church, reason is the mind they share as participants in a particular culture.

3.10 Anglicanism sees reason in the sense of the "mind" of the culture in which the Church lives and the Gospel is proclaimed, as a legitimate and necessary instrument for the interpretation of God's message in the Scriptures. Sometimes Scriptures affirm the new insights of a particular age or culture, sometimes they challenge or contradict those insights. The Word of God is addressed to the Church as it is part of the world. The Gospel borne by the Scriptures must be heard and interpreted in the language that bears the "mind" and distils the experience of the world. Tradition and reason are therefore in the Anglican way two distinct contexts in which Scriptures speak and out of which they are interpreted.

3.11 The characteristic Anglican way of living with a constant dynamic interplay of Scripture, tradition and reason means that the mind of God has constantly to be discerned afresh, not only in every age, but in each and every context. Moreover, the experience of the Church as it is lived in different places has something to contribute to the discernment of the mind of Christ for the Church. No one culture, no one period of history has a monopoly of insight into the truth of the Gospel. It is essential for the fullest apprehension of truth that context is in dialogue with context. Sometimes the lived experience of a particular community enables Christian truth to be perceived afresh for the whole community. At other times a desire for change or restatement of the faith in one place provokes a crisis within the whole Church. In order to keep the Anglican Communion living as a dynamic community of faith, exploring and making relevant the understanding of the faith, structures for taking counsel and deciding are an essential part of the life of the Communion

[3] The Anglican Way: Signposts on a Common Journey [2007]

The full text can be found at:

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/theological/signposts/english.cfm>

Background: This booklet uses very traditional language to say that we are "Formed by Scripture". It has emerged as part of a four-year process in which church leaders, theologians

and educators have come together from around the world to discuss the teaching of Anglican identity, life and practice.

The Anglican Way is a particular expression of the Christian Way of being the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ. It is formed by and rooted in Scripture, shaped by its worship of the living God, ordered for communion, and directed in faithfulness to God's mission in the world. In diverse global situations Anglican life and ministry witnesses to the incarnate, crucified and risen Lord, and is empowered by the Holy Spirit. Together with all Christians, Anglicans hope, pray and work for the coming of the reign of God.

Formed by Scripture

- As Anglicans we discern the voice of the living God in the Holy Scriptures, mediated by tradition and reason. We read the Bible together, corporately and individually, with a grateful and critical sense of the past, a vigorous engagement with the present, and with patient hope for God's future.
- We cherish the whole of Scripture for every aspect of our lives, and we value the many ways in which it teaches us to follow Christ faithfully in a variety of contexts. We pray and sing the Scriptures through liturgy and hymnody. Lectionaries connect us with the breadth of the Bible, and through preaching we interpret and apply the fullness of Scripture to our shared life in the world.
- Accepting their authority, we listen to the Scriptures with open hearts and attentive minds. They have shaped our rich inheritance: for example, the ecumenical creeds of the early Church, the Book of Common Prayer, and Anglican formularies such as the Articles of Religion, catechisms and the Lambeth Quadrilateral.

In our proclamation and witness to the Word Incarnate we value the tradition of scholarly engagement with the Scriptures from earliest centuries to the present day. We desire to be a true learning community as we live out our faith, looking to one another for wisdom, strength and hope on our journey. We constantly discover that new situations call for fresh expressions of a scripturally informed faith and spiritual life.

[4] From *Generous Love* [2008]

The full text can be found at:

http://nifcon.anglicancommunion.org/resources/documents/generous_love.cfm

Background: The treatise is the culmination of work that NIFCON was engaged with over the four years from 2004. It seeks to provide the discernment of a distinctively Anglican theology of inter faith relations which can be a part of the drawing together of the rich reflection which has gone on over the last forty years but with renewed impetus more recently.

This booklet traces social and political changes and concludes that "...we face the challenge of discerning the loving purposes of God within the religious plurality of humankind" ("Our Contemporary Context...", para 2). In a world characterized by plurality of diverse kinds, the Report believes that Anglicanism's history of dealing with plurality in a post-Reformation context has helped it to formulate a Trinitarian approach to religious diversity today.

The booklet notes how deeply struggles with other faiths feature in both testaments. Importantly, the Report notes how central to its major concern is a right understanding of Christianity's relationship with Judaism. It argues for the practice of "Scriptural Reasoning" (S.14) whereby scripture is read in conversation with the sacred texts of the other great faiths (SS.14-17) in order to avoid "distorted views" of these faiths and to use the Bible to "motivate and challenge us for engagement with people of different faiths" (S.17).

This section of the Report concludes with a lengthy discussion of the central role of tradition and reason in Anglicanism but with particular reference to Anglican commitment to inter-faith dialogue. Thus it stresses the impact of inter-faith contacts in encounters with scripture (S.19), in work for the transformation of society (SS.19, 22), as well as in the benefits of

interfaith dialogue itself (S.22). The Report stresses the "marked pluriformity of Anglican theological approaches to inter faith issues" (S.19) necessitated by the wide variety of contexts in which the Anglican church is involved.

Shaping Anglican insights: reading the Scriptures

The Bible has primacy in Anglican theological method, in that we seek to be a community living in obedience to Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God who is revealed through the words of Holy Scripture. In identifying the message of the Bible for the present, the Anglican method brings the insights of tradition and reason to the interpretation of the text in the light of experience. Our presence in, and engagement with, multi-religious contexts lead us to read the Scriptures in new ways. We come to recognise that the people of God have already known and grappled with the challenges and opportunities of living amid religious plurality, and that those experiences have shaped the formative texts of Scripture. Thus, Israel worshipped the one Lord their God amongst the nations of the Ancient Near East, each following their own god; the first followers of the Way confessed the name of Jesus amidst the many philosophies and cults of the Roman Empire, and within the kingdoms to the east of that Empire. As the people of God today, we can find the biblical text coming to life in a new way as we engage in our discipleship with issues which raise questions similar to those they faced. For many in our Communion, the Bible speaks with immediacy and clarity into their contemporary situations of inter-religious encounter.

Many passages of the New Testament testify to the passion and persistence with which the first Christians struggled to understand their place within God's purposes for his people Israel. Whether Jews or Gentiles, they all believed that God had decisively and finally revealed himself in the person and work of the Jewish Jesus of Nazareth, and it was that conviction which gave such intensity to their efforts to understand the theological significance of Jewish law and religion and the Jewish people. Out of the rich and complex texts which record those efforts there have grown different ways of understanding Christian-Jewish relations in the history of the Church. 'A right understanding of the relationship with Judaism is fundamental to Christianity's own self-understanding'; as we seek guidance in this important area today, we need to recognise the continuing vitality of Jewish life and religion over the last two millennia. We must 'reject any view of Judaism which sees it as a living fossil, simply superseded by Christianity'.

Our Scriptures speak to us in new ways when they are brought alongside the sacred texts of other religions in the practice known as 'Scriptural Reasoning'. For example, believing ourselves to be in a dialogue with God enabled through the words of the Bible, it can be a profoundly humbling and creative experience for us to read the Bible alongside Muslims who likewise believe themselves to be addressed by the one God through the text of the Qur'ān. Hearing the stark divine imperative that 'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour', and recognising the spiritual profundity of parts of the Hindu scriptures, we can ponder how often we collude with a distorted view of the other if we dismiss Hinduism as merely polytheistic idolatry. Treasuring the 'read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest' which our own Anglican spirituality commends in relation to the Scriptures, we can be challenged by the prolonged and intense attention which Buddhist tradition teaches as necessary for the sutras to become an interior reality. Set alongside the scriptures of other religions too, and the orally transmitted texts of other traditions, reading the Bible in these fresh contexts can both motivate and challenge us for engagement with people of different faiths.

Also: Extracts from The Jerusalem Declaration

The full text can be found at: fca.net/resources/the_jerusalem_declaration/

Background: The Jerusalem Declaration was written and affirmed at the Global Anglican Future Conference held in Jerusalem in June 2008. It describes itself as a 'contemporary statement of the faith of Anglicans around the world'. Like many of the documents in this extracts collection it echoes earlier Anglican foundational documents.

1. We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God written and to contain all things necessary for salvation. The Bible is to be translated, read, preached, taught and obeyed in its plain and canonical sense, respectful of the church's historic and consensual reading.
2. We uphold the Thirty-nine Articles as containing the true doctrine of the Church agreeing with God's Word and as authoritative for Anglicans today.

Section 6 – Ecumenical Documents that have entered into the life of the Communion in many ways

[1] From First Anglican-Lutheran agreement (Pullach, 1972).

The full text can be found at:

http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/lutheran/docs/pdf/the_pullach_report.pdf

Background: This Report, concerned to develop Anglican-Lutheran relations articulates its commitment to the authority of scripture in traditional, rather abstract language – eg., "nothing should be preached, taught or ordered in the church which contradicts the word of God as it is proclaimed in Holy Scripture" (S.19). The Report goes on to stress the need for ongoing interpretation "in different times and changing circumstances" (S.21).

Sources of Authority – Scripture

The Anglican and the Lutheran Churches hold that it is Jesus Christ, God and Man, born, crucified, risen and ascended for the salvation of mankind, in whom all Scriptures find their focus and fulfillment. They are at one in accepting the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the sufficient, inspired, and authoritative record and witness, prophetic and apostolic, to God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

Both Churches hold that through the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, based on the same Scriptures and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Christ is speaking to us and is active amongst us today, calling us to live and serve in his name.

Both Churches hold that nothing should be preached, taught or ordered in the church which contradicts the word of God as it is proclaimed in Holy Scripture.

Within both Churches different attitudes exist concerning the nature of inspiration and the ways and means of interpreting the Scriptures, and these attitudes run across the denominational boundaries.

Both Churches agree in stressing the need and responsibility for a continuing interpretation of the biblical texts in order to communicate the gospel of salvation to all men in different times and changing circumstances.

They teach that the whole church, and especially the ministry of the church, has received the responsibility for guarding all proclamation and interpretation from error by guiding, admonishing and judging and by formulating doctrinal statements, the biblical witness always being the final authority and court of appeal.

[2] The Moscow agreed statement of the Anglican-Orthodox dialogue (1976)

The full text can be found at:

http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/orthodox/docs/pdf/the_moscow_statement.pdf

Background: Anglican - Orthodox dialogue began in 1973, when the Anglican-Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Discussions (A/OJDD) held its first meeting in Oxford. The first phase of the dialogue was concluded by the publication of The Moscow Agreed Statement in 1976.

Scripture and Tradition are spoken of in the Moscow Report with a strong emphasis on what is "unchanging" in divine revelation and in the needs of "mankind", though "The liturgical and canonical expressions of Tradition can differ, in that they are concerned with varying situations of the people of God in different historical periods and in different places" (S.10.iii).

The Inspiration and Authority of Holy Scripture

The Scriptures constitute a coherent whole. They are at once divinely inspired and humanly expressed. They bear authoritative witness to God's revelation of himself in creation, in the Incarnation of the Word and in the whole history of salvation, and as such express the Word of God in human language.

We know, receive, and interpret Scripture through the Church and in the Church. Our approach to the Bible is one of obedience so that we may hear the revelation of himself that God gives through it.

The books of Scripture contained in the Canon, are authoritative because they truly convey the authentic revelation of God, which the Church recognizes in them. Their authority is not determined by any particular theories concerning the authorship of these books or the historical circumstances in which they were written. The Church gives attention to the results of scholarly research concerning the Bible from whatever quarter they come, but it tests them in the light of its experience and understanding of the faith as a whole.

The Church believes in the apostolic origin of the New Testament, as containing the witness of those who had seen the Lord.

Both the Orthodox and the Anglican Churches make a distinction between the canonical books of the Old Testament and the deuterocanonical books (otherwise called the Anagino-skomena) although the Orthodox Churches have not pronounced officially on the nature of the distinction, as is done in the Anglican Articles. Both Communion are agreed in regarding the deuterocanonical books as edifying and both, and in particular the Orthodox Church, make liturgical use of them.

Scripture and Tradition

Any disjunction between Scripture and Tradition such as would treat them as two separate 'sources of revelation' must be rejected. The two are correlative. We affirm (i) that Scripture is the main criterion whereby the Church tests traditions to determine whether they are truly part of Holy Tradition or not; (ii) that Holy Tradition completes Holy Scripture in the sense that it safeguards the integrity of the biblical message.

By the term Holy Tradition we understand the entire life of the Church in the Holy Spirit. This tradition expresses itself in dogmatic teaching, in liturgical worship, in canonical discipline, and in spiritual life. These elements together manifest the single and indivisible life of the Church. (ii) Of supreme importance is the dogmatic tradition, which in substance is unchangeable. In seeking to communicate the saving truth to mankind, the Church in every generation makes use of contemporary language and therefore of contemporary modes of thought; but this usage must always be tested by the standard of Scripture and of the dogmatic definitions of the Ecumenical Councils. The mind (phronema) of the Fathers, their theological method, their terminology and modes of expression have a lasting importance in both the Orthodox and the Anglican Churches. (iii) The liturgical and canonical expressions of Tradition can differ, in that they are concerned with varying situations of the people of God in different historical periods and in different places. The liturgical and canonical traditions remain unchangeable to the extent that they embody the unchangeable truth of divine revelation and respond to the unchanging needs of mankind.

The Church cannot define dogmas which are not grounded both in Holy Scripture and in Holy Tradition, but has the power, particularly in Ecumenical Councils, to formulate the truths of the faith more exactly and precisely when the needs of the Church require it.

[3] Anglican/Roman Catholic Joint Preparatory Commission in the Elucidation of 1981 to the agreed statement on Authority, ARCIC briefly addressed the question of the place of Scripture (ARCIC I Final Report). Section 2.

The full text can be found at:

http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/catholic/arcic/docs/pdf/final_report_arcic_1.pdf

Background: ARCIC responds to the criticism that it has under-valued scripture by stressing Christ as the final and full revelation of "the whole of God's self disclosure" so that "The Church's essential task...is to unfold the full extent and implications of the mystery of Christ..." (the christological emphasis here is very marked). This has to be done by "resorting to current language and thought" so that the church's expression of the mystery of Christ will be different from scripture's, though not "alien to its meaning". "Tradition" is thus understood as a "combination of permanence in the revealed truth...[combined with] continuous exploration of its meaning".

The statement explores various aspects of the adherence to scripture. One, for example, is to seek "undiscovered riches and truths" which "illuminate the faith according to the needs of each generation" but never go "beyond the bounds of scripture". A second approach to tradition starts with "human experience and thought" which it brings into conversation with the content of revelation. As neither approach is immune to error "reception by the whole Church" will be the test of both approaches.

The Place of Scripture

Our documents have been criticized for failing to give an adequate account of the primary authority of Scripture in the Church, thereby making it possible for us to treat certain developments as possessing an authority comparable to that of Scripture itself. Our description of the inspired documents ... as a normative record of the authentic foundation of the faith' (para. 2) has been felt to be an inadequate statement of the truth.

The basis of our approach to Scripture is 'the affirmation that Christ is God's final word to man 'his eternal Word made flesh. He is the culmination of the diverse ways in which God has spoken since the beginning (Heb 1:1-3). In him God's saving and revealing purpose is fully and definitively realized.

The patriarchs and the prophets received and spoke the word of God in the Spirit. By the power of the same Spirit the Word of God became flesh and accomplished his ministry. At Pentecost the same Spirit was given to the disciples to enable them to recall and interpret what Jesus did and taught, and so to proclaim the Gospel in truth and power. The person and work of Jesus Christ, preached by the apostles and set forth and interpreted in the New Testament writings, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are the primary norm for Christian faith and life. Jesus, as the Word of God, sums up in himself the whole of God's self disclosure. The Church's essential task, therefore, in the exercise of its teaching office, is to unfold the full extent and implications of the mystery of Christ, under the guidance of the Spirit of the risen Lord.

No endeavor of the Church to express the truth can add to the revelation already given. Moreover, since the Scriptures are the uniquely inspired witness to divine revelation, the Church's expression of that revelation must be tested by its consonance with Scripture. This does not mean simply repeating the words of Scripture, but also both delving into their deeper significance and unraveling their implications for Christian belief and practice. It is impossible to do this without resorting to current language and thought. Consequently the teaching of the Church will often be expressed in words that are different from the original text of Scripture without being alien to its meaning. For instance, at the First Ecumenical Council the Church felt constrained to speak of the Son of God as 'of one substance with the Father' in order to expound the mystery of Christ. What was understood by the term 'of one substance' at this time was believed to express the content of Christian faith concerning Christ, even though the actual term is never used in the apostolic writings. This combination of permanence in the revealed truth and continuous exploration of its meaning is what is meant by Christian tradition. Some of the results of this reflection, which bear upon essential matters of faith, have come to be recognized as the authentic expression of Christian doctrine and therefore part of the 'deposit of faith'.

Tradition has been viewed in different ways. One approach is primarily concerned never to go beyond the bounds of Scripture. Under the guidance of the Spirit undiscovered riches and

truths are sought in the Scriptures in order to illuminate the faith according to the needs of each generation. This is not slavery to the text of Scripture. It is an unfolding of the riches of the original revelation. Another approach, while different, does not necessarily contradict the former. In the conviction that the Holy Spirit is seeking to guide the Church into the fullness of truth, it draws upon everything in human experience and thought which will give to the content of the revelation its fullest expression and widest application. It is primarily concerned with the growth of the seed of God's word from age to age. This does not imply any denial of the uniqueness of the revelation. Because these two attitudes contain differing emphases, conflict may arise, even though in both cases the Church is seeking the fullness of revelation. The seal upon the truthfulness of the conclusions that result from this search will be the reception by the whole Church, since neither approach is immune from the possibility of error.

[4] From ARCIC, *The Gift of Authority* (Authority III, 1998)

The full text can be found at:

http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/catholic/arcic/docs/gift_of_authority.cfm

Background: This statement's consideration of tradition has a strong emphasis on the continuity of scripture with the apostolic leadership of the church as the foundation of authority in the church: Tradition expressed "the apostolicity of the Church" (S.17).

Scripture is the norm against which the teaching and life of the church is to be judged (S.19), with scripture itself being illustrative of how contemporary experience interprets tradition (SS.20, 21). Indeed, the very formation of the canon of scripture bears witness to this process of constant interpretation. The Church has the responsibility to preserve the whole apostolic tradition, whatever the present difficulties in so doing (S.24-25) and whatever re-formulations are needed.

The following paragraphs need to be read in the context of the motif of God's 'Yes' and its responsive 'Amen', and the discussion of T/tradition(s) in the light of this.

The Holy Scriptures: The "Yes" of God and the "Amen" of God's People

19. Within Tradition the Scriptures occupy a unique and normative place and belong to what has been given once for all. As the written witness to God's "Yes" they require the Church constantly to measure its teaching, preaching and action against them. "Since the Scriptures are the uniquely inspired witness to divine revelation, the Church's expression of that revelation must be tested by its consonance with Scripture" (*Authority in the Church: Elucidation*, 2). Through the Scriptures God's revelation is made present and transmitted in the life of the Church. The "Yes" of God is recognised in and through the "Amen" of the Church which receives the authentic revelation of God. By receiving certain texts as true witnesses to divine revelation, the Church identified its Holy Scriptures. It regards this corpus alone as the inspired Word of God written and, as such, uniquely authoritative.
20. The Scriptures bring together diverse streams of Jewish and Christian traditions. These traditions reveal the way God's Word has been received, interpreted and passed on in specific contexts according to the needs, the culture, and the circumstances of the people of God. They contain God's revelation of his salvific design, which was realised in Jesus Christ and experienced in the earliest Christian communities. In these communities God's "Yes" was received in a new way. Within the New Testament we can see how the Scriptures of the First Testament were both received as revelation of the one true God and also reinterpreted and re-received as revelation of his final Word in Christ.
21. All the writers of the New Testament were influenced by the experience of their own local communities. What they transmitted, with their own skill and theological insights, records those elements of the Gospel which the churches of their time and in their various situations kept in their memory. Paul's teaching about the Body of Christ, for instance, owes much to the problems and divisions of the local church in Corinth.

When Paul speaks about "our authority which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you" (2 Cor 10.8), he does so in the context of his turbulent relationship with the church of Corinth. Even in the central affirmations of our faith there is often a clear echo of the concrete and sometimes dramatic situation of a local church or of a group of local churches, to which we are indebted for the faithful transmission of apostolic Tradition. The emphasis in the Johannine literature on the presence of the Lord in the flesh of a human body that could be seen and touched both before and after the resurrection (cf. Jn 20.27; 1 Jn 4.2) is linked to the conflict in the Johannine communities on this issue. It is through the struggle of particular communities at particular times to discern God's Word for them that we have in Scripture an authoritative record of the apostolic Tradition which is to be passed from one generation to another and from one church to another, and to which the faithful say "Amen".

22. The formation of the canon of the Scriptures was an integral part of the process of tradition. The Church's recognition of these Scriptures as canonical, after a long period of critical discernment, was at the same time an act of obedience and of authority. It was an act of *obedience* in that the Church discerned and received God's life-giving "Yes" through the Scriptures, accepting them as the norm of faith. It was an act of *authority* in that the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, received and handed on these texts, declaring that they were inspired and that others were not to be included in the canon.
23. The meaning of the revealed Gospel of God is fully understood only within the Church. God's revelation has been entrusted to a community. The Church cannot properly be described as an aggregate of individual believers, nor can its faith be considered the sum of the beliefs held by individuals. Believers are together the people of faith because they are incorporated by baptism into a community which receives the canonical Scriptures as the authentic Word of God; they receive faith within this community. The faith of the community precedes the faith of the individual. So, though one person's journey of faith may begin with individual reading of Scripture, it cannot remain there. Individualistic interpretation of the Scriptures is not attuned to the reading of the text within the life of the Church and is incompatible with the nature of the authority of the revealed Word of God (cf. 2 Pet 1.20-21). Word of God and Church of God cannot be put asunder.

[5] The Church of the Triune God, the Cyprus Statement agreed by the International Commission for Anglican – Orthodox Theological Dialogue 2006. Section III, paragraph 27

Background: The preface by the Co-Chairmen of the Commission stated that, "The results of the Commission's deliberations are made available here in the hope that Anglicans and Orthodox will come to appreciate the things they have in common and to understand the nature of their disagreements. Membership of the Commission has been an enriching experience both personally and theologically. As one Commission member put it, "Now it is a conversation of delight and illumination. Like all true conversations, it has had its moments of surprise and strangeness...But then it is good to be drawn into a conversation which engages in profound and sustained reflection on what it is that makes the Church the Church and to affirm the hidden life of the Trinity at the heart of our communities"

When we recognise that the Scriptures and historic doctrinal formulations may speak with authority across cultural boundaries, we testify to our faith in the Holy Spirit. In and through the communion of the Holy Spirit, Christians in diverse contexts in time and space are brought into relation with the same divine Lord. That enables them to make their own the language of the first believers, the writers of the New Testament and the Fathers and Councils of the early Church. This is what Orthodox theologians mean by speaking of Holy Tradition in the Church as itself the work of the Holy Spirit, the 'charismatic memory' of the Church. The Spirit brings to life for us the words of the Christian past that shaped the Church's historic understanding of God in Christ. On this basis Christians engage confidently with their diverse cultural environments, trusting that the Spirit works through the Church's constant endeavour to live and proclaim the historic faith in new, unfamiliar, and even hostile, contexts, in order to convert and transform them.

The full text can be found at:

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/ecumenical/dialogues/orthodox/docs/pdf/The%20Church%20of%20the%20Triune%20God.pdf>

[6] A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: An Instrument for an Ecumenical Reflection on Hermeneutics

Background: This text, from the multilateral Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC), explores the complex, potentially conflictual but often creative field of hermeneutics, focused specifically on the hermeneutical task entailed in the ecumenical search for visible church unity.

The full text can be found at:

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/iv-interpretation-the-meaning-of-our-words-and-symbols/a-treasure-in-earthen-vessels-an-instrument-for-an-ecumenical-reflection-on-hermeneutics.html>

[7] The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church. A document from the Pontifical Biblical Commission

Background: While this is a Roman Catholic document the preface to a response edited by Professor J L Houlden describes it as "perhaps the most remarkable and encouraging document to come from authorities within the Roman Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council, or indeed ever."

The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church
Edited by J L Houlden (SCM Press Ltd. 1995)

Its content page outlines the issues covered in the document:

- I. METHODS AND APPROACHES FOR INTERPRETATION
 - A. Historical-Critical Method
 - B. New Methods for Literary Analysis
 - C. Approaches Based on Tradition
 - D. Approaches That Use Human Sciences
 - E. Contextual Approaches
 - F. Fundamentalist Approach
- II. HERMENEUTICAL QUESTIONS
 - A. Philosophical Hermeneutics
 - B. The Meaning of Inspired Scripture
- III. CHARACTERISTICS OF CATHOLIC INTERPRETATION
 - A. Interpretation In the Biblical Tradition
 - B. Interpretation in the Tradition of the Church
 - C. The Task of the Exegete
 - D. Relationship With Other Theological Disciplines
- IV. INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH
 - A. Actualization
 - B. Inculturation
 - C. Use of the Bible

The full text can be found at:

http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp.htm

Appendix

Extracts from: **Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie [Laws]**

By Richard Hooker

Book II sections I-IV and VIII

AS that which in the title hath been proposed for the matter whereof we treat, is only the ecclesiastical law whereby we are governed; so neither is it my purpose to maintain any other thing than that which therein truth and reason shall approve. For concerning the dealings of men who administer government, and unto whom the execution of that law belongeth; they have their Judge who sitteth in heaven, and before whose tribunal-seat they are accountable for whatsoever abuse or corruption, which (being worthily misliked in this church) the want either of care or of conscience in them hath bred. We are no patrons of those things therefore, the best defence whereof is speedy redress and amendment. That which is of God we defend, to the uttermost of that ability which he hath given; that which is otherwise, let it wither even in the root from whence it hath sprung. Wherefore all these abuses being severed and set apart, which rise from the corruption of men and not from the laws themselves come we to those things which in the very whole entire form of our church polity have been (as we persuade ourselves) injuriously blamed by them, who endeavour to overthrow the same, and instead thereof to establish a much worse; only through a strong misconceit they have, that the same is grounded on divine authority.

Now whether it be that through an earnest longing desire to see things brought to a peaceable end, I do but imagine the matters whereof we contend to be fewer than indeed they are; or else for that in truth they are fewer when they come to be discussed by reason, than otherwise they seem when by heat of contention they are divided into many slips, and of every branch an heap is made: surely, as now we have drawn them together, choosing out those things which are requisite to be severally all discussed, and omitting such mean specialties as are likely (without any great labour) to fall afterwards of themselves; I know no cause why either the number or the length of these controversies should diminish our hope of seeing them end with concord and love on all sides; which of his infinite love and goodness the Father of all peace and unity grant.

[2] Unto which scope that our endeavour may the more directly tend, it seemeth fittest that first those things be examined, which are as seeds from whence the rest that ensue have grown. And of such the most general is that wherewith we are here to make our entrance: a question not moved (I think) any where in other churches, and therefore in ours the more likely to be soon (I trust) determined. The rather, for that it hath grown from no other root, than only a desire to enlarge the necessary use of the Word of God; which desire hath begotten an error enlarging it further than (as we are persuaded) soundness of truth will bear. For whereas God hath left sundry kinds of laws unto men, and by all those laws the actions of men are in some sort directed; they hold that one only law, the Scripture, must be the rule to direct in all things, even so far as to the "taking up of a rush or straw ." About which point there should not need any question to grow, and that which is grown might presently end, if they did yield but to these two restraints; the first is, not to extend the actions whereof they speak so low as that instance doth import of taking up a straw, but rather keep themselves at the least within the compass of moral actions, actions which have in them vice or virtue: the second, not to exact at our hands for every action the knowledge of some place of Scripture out of which we stand bound to deduce it, as by divers testimonies they seek to enforce; but rather as the truth is, so to acknowledge, that it sufficeth if such actions be framed according to the law of Reason; the general axioms, rules, and principles of which law being so frequent in Holy Scripture, there is no let but in that regard even out of Scripture such duties may be deduced by some kind of consequence, (as by long circuit of deduction it may be that even all truth out of any truth may be concluded ,) howbeit no man bound in such sort to deduce all his actions out of Scripture, as if either the place be to him unknown whereon they may be concluded, or the reference unto that place not presently considered of, the action shall in that respect be condemned as unlawful. In this we dissent, and this we are presently to examine.

The first pretended proof of the first position out of Scripture, Prov. ii. 9. [3] In all parts of knowledge rightly so termed things most general are most strong. Thus it must be, inasmuch as the certainty of our persuasion touching particulars dependeth altogether upon the credit of those generalities out of which they grow. Albeit therefore every cause admit not such infallible evidence of proof, as leaveth no possibility of doubt or scruple behind it; yet they who claim the general assent of the whole world unto that which they teach, and do not fear to give very hard and heavy sentence upon as many as refuse to embrace the same, must have special regard that their first foundations and grounds be more than slender probabilities. This whole question which hath been moved about the kind of church regiment, we could not but for our own resolution's sake endeavour to unrip and sift; following therein as near as we might the conduct of that judicial method which serveth best for invention of truth. By means whereof, having found this the head theorem of all their discourses, who plead for the change of ecclesiastical government in England, namely, "That the Scripture of God is in such sort the rule of human actions, that simply whatsoever we do and are not by it directed thereunto, the same is sin;" we hold it necessary that the proofs hereof be weighed. Be they of weight sufficient or otherwise, it is not ours to judge and determine; only what difficulties there are which as yet withhold our assent, till we be further and better satisfied, I hope no indifferent amongst them will scorn or refuse to hear.

[4] First therefore whereas they allege, "That Wisdom" doth teach men "every good way;" and have thereupon inferred that no way is good in any kind of action unless wisdom do by Scripture lead unto it; see they not plainly how they restrain the manifold ways which wisdom hath to teach men by, unto one only way of teaching, which is by Scripture? The bounds of wisdom are large, and within them much is contained. Wisdom was Adam's instructor in Paradise; wisdom endued the fathers who lived before the law with the knowledge of holy things; by the wisdom of the law of God David attained to excel others in understanding; and Salomon likewise to excel David by the selfsame wisdom of God teaching him many things besides the law. The ways of well-doing are in number even as many as are the kinds of voluntary actions; so that whatsoever we do in this world and may do it ill, we shew ourselves therein by well-doing to be wise. Now if wisdom did teach men by Scripture not only all the ways that are right and good in some certain kind, according to that of St. Paul concerning the use of Scripture, but did simply without any manner of exception, restraint, or distinction, teach every way of doing well; there is no art, but Scripture should teach it, because every art doth teach the way how to do something or other well. To teach men therefore wisdom professeth, and to teach them every good way; but not every good way by one way of teaching. Whatsoever either men on earth or the Angels of heaven do know, it is as a drop of that unemptiable fountain of wisdom; which wisdom hath diversely imparted her treasures unto the world. As her ways are of sundry kinds, so her manner of teaching is not merely one and the same. Some things she openeth by the sacred books of Scripture; some things by the glorious works of Nature: with some things she inspireth them from above by spiritual influence; in some things she leadeth and traineth them only by worldly experience and practice. We may not so in any one special kind admire her, that we disgrace her in any other; but let all her ways be according unto their place and degree adored.

The second proof out of Scripture. 1 Cor. x. 31. II. That "all things be done to the glory of God," the blessed Apostle (it is true) exhorteth. The glory of God is the admirable excellency of that virtue divine, which being made manifest, causeth men and Angels to extol his greatness, and in regard thereof to fear him. By "being glorified" it is not meant that he doth receive any augmentation of glory at our hands, but his name we glorify when we testify our acknowledgment of his glory. Which albeit we most effectually do by the virtue of obedience; nevertheless it may be perhaps a question, whether St. Paul did mean that we sin as oft as ever we go about any thing, without an express intent and purpose to obey God therein. He saith of himself, "I do in all things please all men, seeking not mine own commodity but" rather the good "of many, that they may be saved." Shall it hereupon be thought that St. Paul did not move either hand or foot, but with express intent even thereby to further the common salvation of men? We move, we sleep, we take the cup at the hand of our friend, a number of things we oftentimes do, only to satisfy some natural desire, without present, express, and actual reference unto any commandment of God. Unto his glory even these things are done

which we naturally perform, and not only that which morally and spiritually we do. For by every effect proceeding from the most concealed instincts of nature His power is made manifest. But it doth not therefore follow that of necessity we shall sin, unless we expressly intend this in every such particular.

[2] But be it a thing which requireth no more than only our general presupposed willingness to please God in all things, or be it a matter wherein we cannot so glorify the name of God as we should without an actual intent to do him in that particular some special obedience; yet for any thing there is in this sentence alleged to the contrary, God may be glorified by obedience, and obeyed by performance of his will, and his will be performed with an actual intelligent desire to fulfil that law which maketh known what his will is, although no special clause or sentence of Scripture be in every such action set before men's eyes to warrant it. For Scripture is not the only law whereby God hath opened his will touching all things that may be done, but there are other kinds of laws which notify the will of God, as in the former book hath been proved at large: nor is there any law of God, whereunto he doth not account our obedience his glory. "Do therefore all things unto the glory of God (saith the Apostle), be inoffensive both to Jews and Grecians and the Church of God even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own commodity, but many's, that they may be saved." In the least thing done disobediently towards God, or offensively against the good of men, whose benefit we ought to seek for as for our own, we plainly shew that we do not acknowledge God to be such as indeed he is, and consequently that we glorify him not. This the blessed Apostle teacheth; but doth any Apostle teach, that we cannot glorify God otherwise, than only in doing what we find that God in Scripture commandeth us to do?

[3] The churches dispersed amongst the heathen in the east part of the world are by the Apostle St. Peter exhorted to have their "conversation honest amongst the Gentiles, that they which spake evil of them as of evil-doers might by the good works which they should see glorify God in the day of visitation." As long as that which Christians did was good, and no way subject unto just reproof, their virtuous conversation was a mean to work the heathen's conversion unto Christ. Seeing therefore this had been a thing altogether impossible, but that infidels themselves did discern, in matters of life and conversation, when believers did well and when otherwise, when they glorified their heavenly Father and when not; it followeth that some things wherein God is glorified may be some other way known than only by the sacred Scripture; of which Scripture the Gentiles being utterly ignorant did notwithstanding judge rightly of the quality of Christian men's actions. Most certain it is that nothing but only sin doth dishonour God. So that to glorify him in all things is to do nothing whereby the name of God may be blasphemed; nothing whereby the salvation of Jew or Grecian or any in the Church of Christ may be let or hindered; nothing whereby his law is transgressed. But the question is, whether only Scripture do shew whatsoever God is glorified in?

The third Scripture proof, 1 Tim. iv. 5.III. And though meats and drinks be said to be sanctified by the word of God and by prayer, yet neither is this a reason sufficient to prove, that by Scripture we must of necessity be directed in every light and common thing which is incident into any part of man's life. Only it sheweth that unto us the word, that is to say the Gospel of Christ, having not delivered any such difference of things clean and unclean, as the Law of Moses did unto the Jews, there is no cause but that we may use indifferently all things, as long as we do not (like swine) take the benefit of them without a thankful acknowledgment of His liberality and goodness by whose providence they are enjoyed. And therefore the Apostle gave warning beforehand to take heed of such as should enjoin to "abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving by them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving, because it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer." The Gospel, by not making many things unclean, as the Law did, hath sanctified those things generally to all, which particularly each man unto himself must sanctify by a reverend and holy use. Which will hardly be drawn so far as to serve their purpose, who have imagined the Word in such sort to sanctify all things, that neither food can be tasted, nor raiment put on, nor in the world any thing done, but this deed must needs be sin in them which do not first know it appointed unto

them by Scripture before they do it.

The fourth Scripture proof, Rom. xiv. 23. But to come unto that which of all other things in Scripture is most stood upon; that place of St. Paul they say is "of all other most clear, where speaking of those things which are called indifferent, in the end he concludeth, That 'whatsoever is not of faith is sin.' But faith is not but in respect of the Word of God. Therefore whatsoever is not done by the Word of God is sin." Whereunto we answer, that albeit the name of Faith being properly and strictly taken, it must needs have reference unto some uttered word as the object of belief: nevertheless sith the ground of credit is the credibility of things credited; and things are made credible, either by the known condition and quality of the utterer, or by the manifest likelihood of truth which they have in themselves; BOOK II. Ch. iv. 2. hereupon it riseth that whatsoever we are persuaded of, the same we are generally said to believe. In which generality the object of faith may not so narrowly be restrained, as if the same did extend no further than to the only Scriptures of God. "Though," saith our Saviour, "ye believe not me, believe my works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in him." "The other disciples said unto Thomas, We have seen the Lord;" but his answer unto them was, "Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into them, I will not believe." Can there be any thing more plain than that which by these two sentences appeareth, namely, that there may be a certain belief grounded upon other assurance than Scripture: any thing more clear, than that we are said not only to believe the things which we know by another's relation, but even whatsoever we are certainly persuaded of, whether it be by reason or by sense?

[2] Forasmuch therefore as it is granted that St. Paul doth mean nothing else by Faith, but only "a full persuasion that that which we do is well done;" against which kind of faith or persuasion as St. Paul doth count it sin to enterprise any thing, so likewise "some of the very heathen have taught, as Tully, 'That nothing ought to be done whereof thou doubtst whether it be right or wrong;' whereby it appeareth that even those which had no knowledge of the word of God did see much of the equity of this which the Apostle requireth of a Christian man. I hope we shall not seem altogether unnecessarily to doubt of the soundness of their opinion, who think simply that nothing but only the word of God can give us assurance in any thing we are to do, and resolve us that we do well. For might not the Jews have been fully persuaded that they did well to think (if they had so thought) that in Christ God the Father was, although the only ground of this their faith had been the wonderful works they saw him do? Might not, yea, did not Thomas fully in the end persuade himself, that he did well to think that body which now was raised to be the same which had been crucified? That which gave Thomas this assurance was his sense; "Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou believest," saith our Saviour. What Scripture had Tully for this assurance? Yet I nothing doubt but that they who allege him think he did well to set down in writing a thing so consonant unto truth. Finally, we all believe that the Scriptures of God are sacred, and that they have proceeded from God; ourselves we assure that we do right well in so believing. We have for this point a demonstration sound and infallible. But it is not the word of God which doth or possibly can assure us, that we do well to think it his word. For if any one book of Scripture did give testimony to all, yet still that Scripture which giveth credit to the rest would require another Scripture to give credit unto it, neither could we ever come unto any pause whereon to rest our assurance this way; so that unless beside Scripture there were something which might assure us that we do well, we could not think we do well, no not in being assured that Scripture is a sacred and holy rule of well-doing.

[3] On which determination we might be contented to stay ourselves without further proceeding herein, but that we are drawn on into larger speech by reason of their so great earnestness, who beat more and more upon these last alleged words, as being of all other most pregnant.

Whereas therefore they still argue, "That wheresoever faith is wanting, there is sin;" and, "in every action not commanded faith is wanting;" *ergo*, "in every action not commanded, there is sin. I would demand of them first, forasmuch as the nature of things indifferent is neither to

be commanded nor forbidden, but left free and arbitrary; how there can be any thing indifferent, if for want of faith sin be committed when any thing not commanded is done. So that of necessity they must add somewhat, and at leastwise thus set it down: in every action not commanded of God or permitted with approbation, faith is wanting, and for want of faith there is sin.

[4] The next thing we are to inquire is, What those things be which God permitteth with approbation, and how we may know them to be so permitted. When there are unto one end sundry means; as for example, for the sustenance of our bodies many kinds of food, many sorts of raiment to clothe our nakedness, and so in other things of like condition: here the end itself being necessary, but not so any one mean thereunto; necessary that our bodies should be both fed and clothed, howbeit no one kind of food or raiment necessary; therefore we hold these things free in their own nature and indifferent. The choice is left to our own discretion, except a principal bond of some higher duty remove the indifferency that such things have in themselves. Their indifferency is removed, if either we take away our own liberty, as Ananias did, for whom to have sold or held his possessions it was indifferent, till his solemn vow and promise unto God had strictly bound him one only way; or if God himself have precisely abridged the same, by restraining us unto or by barring us from some one or more things of many, which otherwise were in themselves altogether indifferent. Many fashions of priestly attire there were, whereof Aaron and his sons might have had their free choice without sin, but that God expressly tied them unto one. All meats indifferent unto the Jew, were it not that God by name excepted some, as swine's flesh. Impossible therefore it is we should otherwise think, than that what things God doth neither command nor forbid, the same he permitteth with approbation either to be done or left undone. "All things are lawful unto me," saith the Apostle, speaking as it seemeth in the person of the Christian Gentile for maintenance of liberty in things indifferent whereunto his answer is, that nevertheless "all things are not expedient;" in things indifferent there is a choice, they are not always equally expedient.

[5] Now in things although not commanded of God yet lawful because they are permitted, the question is, what light shall shew us the conveniency which one hath above another. For answer, their final determination is, that "Whereas the Heathen did send men for the difference of good and evil to the light of Reason, in such things the Apostle sendeth us to the school of Christ in his word, which only is able through faith to give us assurance and resolution in our doings." Which word *only*, is utterly without possibility of ever being proved. For what if it were true concerning things indifferent, that unless the word of the Lord had determined of the free use of them, there could have been no lawful use of them at all: which notwithstanding is untrue; because it is not the Scripture's setting down such things as indifferent, but their not setting down as necessary, that doth make them to be indifferent: yet this to our present purpose serveth nothing at all. We inquire not now, whether any thing be free to be used which Scripture hath not set down as free: but concerning things known and acknowledged to be indifferent, whether particularly in choosing any one of them before another we sin, if any thing but Scripture direct us in this our choice. When many meats are set before me, all are indifferent, none unlawful, I take one as most convenient. If Scripture require me so to do, then is not the thing indifferent, because I must do what Scripture requireth. They are all indifferent, I might take any, Scripture doth not require of me to make any special choice of one: I do notwithstanding make choice of one, my discretion teaching me so to do. A hard case, that hereupon I should be justly condemned of sin. Nor let any man think that following the judgment of natural discretion in such cases we can have no assurance that we please God. For to the Author and God of our nature, how shall any operation proceeding in natural sort be in that respect unacceptable? The nature which himself hath given to work by he cannot but be delighted with, when we exercise the same any way without commandment of his to the contrary.

[6] My desire is to make this cause so manifest, that if it were possible, no doubt or scruple concerning the same might remain in any man's cogitation. Some truths there are, the verity whereof time doth alter: as it is now true that Christ is risen from the dead; which thing was not true at such time as Christ was living on earth, and had not suffered. It would be known

therefore, whether this which they teach concerning the sinful stain of all actions not commanded of God, be a truth that doth now appertain unto us only, or a perpetual truth, in such sort that from the first beginning of the world unto the last consummation thereof, it neither hath been nor can be otherwise. I see not how they can restrain this unto any particular time, how they can think it true now and not always true, that in every action not commanded there is for want of faith sin. Then let them cast back their eyes unto former generations of men, and mark what was done in the prime of the world. Seth, Enoch, Noah, Sem, Abraham, Job, and the rest that lived before any syllable of the law of God was written, did they not sin as much as we do in every action not commanded? That which God is unto us by his sacred word, the same he was unto them by such like means as Eliphaz in Job describeth. If therefore we sin in every action which the Scripture commandeth us not, it followeth that they did the like in all such actions as were not by revelation from Heaven exacted at their hands. Unless God from heaven did by vision still shew them what to do, they might do nothing, not eat, not drink, not sleep, not move.

[7] Yea, but even as in darkness candlelight may serve to guide men's steps, which to use in the day were madness; so when God had once delivered his law in writing, it may be they are of opinion that then it must needs be sin for men to do any thing which was not there commanded them to do, whatsoever they might do before. Let this be granted, and it shall hereupon plainly ensue, either that the light of Scripture once shining in the world, all other light of Nature is therewith in such sort drowned, that now we need it not, neither may we longer use it; or if it stand us in any stead, yet as Aristotle speaketh of men whom Nature hath framed for the state of servitude, saying, "They have reason so far forth as to conceive when others direct them, but little or none in directing themselves by themselves;" so likewise our natural capacity and judgment must serve us only for the right understanding of that which the sacred Scripture teacheth. Had the Prophets who succeeded Moses, or the blessed Apostles which followed them, been settled in this persuasion, never would they have taken so great pains in gathering together natural arguments, thereby to teach the faithful their duties. To use unto them any other motive than *Scriptum est*, "Thus it is written," had been to teach them other grounds of their actions than Scripture; which I grant they allege commonly, but not only. Only Scripture they should have alleged, had they been thus persuaded, that so far forth we do sin as we do any thing otherwise directed than by Scripture. St. Augustine was resolute in points of Christianity to credit none, how godly and learned soever he were, unless he confirmed his sentence by the Scriptures, *or by some reason not contrary to them*. Let them therefore with St. Augustine reject and condemn that which is not grounded either on the Scripture, or on some reason not contrary to Scripture, and we are ready to give them our hands in token of friendly consent with them.

A declaration what the truth is in this matter. But to the end it may more plainly appear what we are to judge of their sentences, and of the cause itself wherein they are alleged: first it may not well be denied, that all actions of men endued with the use of reason are generally either good or evil. For although it be granted that no action is properly termed good or evil unless it be voluntary; yet this can be no let to our former assertion, That all actions of men endued with the use of reason are generally either good or evil; because even those things are done voluntarily by us which other creatures do naturally, inasmuch as we might stay our doing of them if we would. Beasts naturally do take their food and rest when it offereth itself unto them. If men did so too, and could not do otherwise of themselves, there were no place for any such reproof as that of our Saviour Christ unto his disciples, "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" That which is voluntarily performed in things tending to the end, if it be well done, must needs be done with deliberate consideration of some reasonable cause wherefore we rather should do it than not. Whereupon it seemeth, that in such actions only those are said to be good or evil which are capable of deliberation: so that many things being hourly done by men, wherein they need not use with themselves any manner of consultation at all, it may perhaps hereby seem that well or ill-doing belongeth only to our weightier affairs, and to those deeds which are of so great importance that they require advice. But thus to determine were perilous, and peradventure unsound also. I do rather incline to think, that seeing all the unforced actions of men are voluntary, and all voluntary actions tending to the end have choice, and all choice presupposeth the knowledge of some cause wherefore we make it:

where the reasonable cause of such actions so readily offereth itself that it needeth not to be sought for; in those things though we do not deliberate, yet they are of their nature apt to be deliberated on, in regard of the will, which may incline either way, and would not any one way bend itself, if there were not some apparent motive to lead it. Deliberation actual we use, when there is doubt what we should incline our wills unto. Where no doubt is, deliberation is not excluded as impertinent unto the thing, but as needless in regard of the agent, which seeth already what to resolve upon. It hath no apparent absurdity therefore in it to think, that all actions of men endued with the use of reason are generally either good or evil.

[2] Whatsoever is good, the same is also approved of God: and according unto the sundry degrees of goodness, the kinds of divine approbation are in like sort multiplied. Some things are good, yet in so mean a degree of goodness, that men are only not disproved nor disallowed of God for them. "No man hateth his own flesh." "If ye do good unto them that do so to you, the very publicans themselves do as much." "They are worse than infidels that have no care to provide for their own." In actions of this sort, the very light of Nature alone may discover that which is so far forth in the sight of God allowable.

[3.]Some things in such sort are allowed, that they be also required as necessary unto salvation, by way of direct immediate and proper necessity final; so that without performance of them we cannot by ordinary course be saved, nor by any means be excluded from life observing them. In actions of this kind our chiefest direction is from Scripture, for Nature is no sufficient teacher what we should do that we may attain unto life everlasting. The unsufficiency of the light of Nature is by the light of Scripture so fully and so perfectly herein supplied, that further light than this hath added there doth not need unto that end.

[4] Finally some things, although not so required of necessity that to leave them undone excludeth from salvation, are notwithstanding of so great dignity and acceptation with God, that most ample reward in heaven is laid up for them. Hereof we have no commandment either in Nature or Scripture which doth exact them at our hands; yet those motives there are in both which draw most effectually our minds unto them. In this kind there is not the least action but it doth somewhat make to the accessory augmentation of our bliss. For which cause our Saviour doth plainly witness, that there shall not be as much as a cup of cold water bestowed for his sake without reward. Hereupon dependeth whatsoever difference there is between the states of saints in glory; hither we refer whatsoever belongeth unto the highest perfection of man by way of service towards God; hereunto that fervour and first love of Christians did bend itself, causing them to sell their possessions, and lay down the price at the blessed Apostles' feet. Hereat St. Paul undoubtedly did aim in so far abridging his own liberty, and exceeding that which the bond of necessary and enjoined duty tied him unto.

[5] Wherefore seeing that in all these several kinds of actions there can be nothing possibly evil which God approveth; and that he approveth much more than he doth command; and that his very commandments in some kind, as namely his precepts comprehended in the law of nature, may be otherwise known than only by Scripture and that to do them, howsoever we know them, must needs be acceptable in his sight: let them with whom we have hitherto disputed consider well, how it can stand with reason to make the bare mandate of sacred Scripture the only rule of all good and evil in the actions of mortal men. The testimonies of God are true, the testimonies of God are perfect, the testimonies of God are all sufficient unto that end for which they were given. Therefore accordingly we do receive them, we do not think that in them God hath omitted any thing needful unto his purpose, and left his intent to be accomplished by our devisings. What the Scripture purposeth, the same in all points it doth perform.

Howbeit that here we swerve not in judgment, one thing especially we must observe, namely that the absolute perfection of Scripture is seen by relation unto that end whereto it tendeth. And even hereby it cometh to pass, that first such as imagine the general and main drift of the body of sacred Scripture not to be so large as it is, nor that God did thereby intend to deliver,

as in truth he doth, a full instruction in all things unto salvation necessary, the knowledge whereof man by nature could not otherwise in this life attain unto they are by this very mean induced either still to look for new revelations from heaven, or else dangerously to add to the word of God uncertain tradition, that so the doctrine of man's salvation may be complete; which doctrine, we constantly hold in all respects without any such thing added to be so complete, that we utterly refuse as much as once to acquaint ourselves with any thing further. Whatsoever to make up the doctrine of man's salvation is added, as in supply of the Scripture's unsufficiency, we reject it. Scripture purposing this, hath perfectly and fully done it.

Again the scope and purpose of God in delivering the Holy Scripture such as do take more largely than behoveth, they on the contrary side, racking and stretching it further than by him was meant, are drawn into sundry as great inconveniences. These pretending the Scripture's perfection infer thereupon, that in Scripture all things lawful to be done must needs be contained. We count those things perfect which want nothing requisite for the end whereto they were instituted. As therefore God created every part and particle of man exactly perfect, that is to say in all points sufficient unto that use for which he appointed it; so the Scripture, yea, every sentence thereof, is perfect, and wanteth nothing requisite unto that purpose for which God delivered the same. So that if hereupon we conclude, that because the Scripture is perfect, therefore all things lawful to be done are comprehended in the Scripture; we may even as well conclude so of every sentence, as of the whole sum and body thereof, unless we first of all prove that it was the drift, scope, and purpose of Almighty God in Holy Scripture to comprise all things which man may practise.

[6] But admit this, and mark, I beseech you, what would follow. God in delivering Scripture to his Church should clean have abrogated amongst them the law of nature; which is an infallible knowledge imprinted in the minds of all the children of men, whereby both general principles for directing of human actions are comprehended, and conclusions derived from them; upon which conclusions groweth in particularity the choice of good and evil in the daily affairs of this life. Admit this, and what shall the Scripture be but a snare and a torment to weak consciences, filling them with infinite perplexities, scrupulosities, doubts insoluble, and extreme despairs? Not that the Scripture itself doth cause any such thing, (for it tendeth to the clean contrary, and the fruit thereof is resolute assurance and certainty in that it teacheth,) but the necessities of this life urging men to do that which the light of nature, common discretion and judgment of itself directeth them unto; on the other side, this doctrine teaching them that so to do were to sin against their own souls, and that they put forth their hands to iniquity whatsoever they go about and have not first the sacred Scripture of God for direction; how can it choose but bring the simple a thousand times to their wits' end? how can it choose but vex and amaze them? For in every action of common life to find out some sentence clearly and infallibly setting before our eyes what we ought to do, (seem we in Scripture never so expert,) would trouble us more than we are aware. In weak and tender minds we little know what misery this strict opinion would breed, besides the stops it would make in the whole course of all men's lives and actions. Make all things sin which we do by direction of nature's light, and by the rule of common discretion, without thinking at all upon Scripture; admit this position, and parents shall cause their children to sin, as oft as they cause them to do any thing, before they come to years of capacity and be ripe for knowledge in the Scripture: admit this, and it shall not be with masters as it was with him in the Gospel, but servants being commanded to go shall stand still, till they have their errand warranted unto them by Scripture. Which as it standeth with Christian duty in some cases, so in common affairs to require it were most unfit.

[7] Two opinions therefore there are concerning sufficiency of Holy Scripture, each extremely opposite unto the other, and both repugnant unto truth. The schools of Rome teach Scripture to be so insufficient, as if, except traditions were added, it did not contain all revealed and supernatural truth, which absolutely is necessary for the children of men in this life to know that they may in the next be saved. Others justly condemning this opinion grow likewise unto a dangerous extremity, as if Scripture did not only contain all things in that kind necessary, but all things simply, and in such sort that to do any thing according to any other law were not

only unnecessary but even opposite unto salvation, unlawful and sinful. Whatsoever is spoken of God or things appertaining to God otherwise than as the truth is, though it seem an honour it is an injury. And as incredible praises given unto men do often abate and impair the credit of their deserved commendation; so we must likewise take great heed, lest in attributing unto Scripture more than it can have, the incredibility of that do cause even those things which indeed it hath most abundantly to be less reverently esteemed. I therefore leave it to themselves to consider, whether they have in this first point or not overshot themselves; which God doth know is quickly done, even when our meaning is most sincere, as I am verily persuaded theirs in this case was.