

Victorian Anglicans Together

Four Foundations of Gospel Inclusivity

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Article I

'All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work' (2 Tim.3: 16-17).

WE AFFIRM the necessary and central place of the Holy Scriptures of both Old and New Testaments as the authoritative ground, source, and norm for all doctrine. In accord with *The Thirty Nine Articles of Religion* (art.6) of 1562, we accept all 66 books of both Testaments 'as commonly received' as having canonical authority, and as containing 'all things necessary for salvation.'

We reject as false the two opposite but related dangers of: a) presuming that doctrine can be grounded in sources of authority that are apart from, outside of, or inconsistent with, the revelation of Jesus Christ as he is attested in the Scriptures, including historical developments, contemporary events, and political movements; and b) presuming that the truth of the Scriptures is self-evident in character, propositional in form, and susceptible to only singular interpretation, without need of scholarly interpretation.

Article II

'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' (Gal.3:28); 'All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us' (2 Cor.5: 19-20).

WE AFFIRM that through a common baptism into the body of Christ, differences that formerly placed divisions between people – including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, socio-economic and political status, gender, and sexuality – are not extinguished, but are radically relativized. It is this new, common humanity, under the sole lordship of Christ Jesus, that *is* the Church into which we have been called – that is, the earthly embodiment of the gospel of God – and of which we have been commissioned as ambassadors.

We reject as false the two opposite but related dangers of: a) arrogating to ourselves the right to supersede the reconciling work of Christ by re-imposing differences between people that serve not only to keep them apart from one another, but also to deem some to be more acceptable to God than others; and b) the belief that the gospel's generosity permits all behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes, or that it does not presuppose and require a life of holy discipleship, in conformity to Christ and under the authority of the Word of God.

Article III

'For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them' (Matt.18: 20); 'For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit (1 Cor.12: 12-13).

WE AFFIRM the basic communal character of the Body of Christ, and rejoice in the visible expression of that *koinonia* in the diversity of the Anglican Communion. Recognising that the ‘visible Church of Christ’ as a whole, and the Anglican Communion as a particular part of it, ‘is a congregation of faithful men [and women]’ (*Thirty Nine Articles*, art.19), we understand also the consequences of that recognition: a) that all who come to the Church do so in their own particular circumstances, and not as an undifferentiated mass; and b) that insofar as they come as ‘men and women’, who are ‘very far gone from original righteousness’ (*Thirty Nine Articles*, art.9), they enter and remain members of the Church as people still susceptible to the challenges of sin and evil. Thus, we accept not only the necessary differences within and across the one and whole Body of Christ, but also the consequence that such differences can, when wrought by sin, be turned into an excuse for division, factionalism, and disunity.

We reject as false the two opposite but related dangers of: a) denying both the reality and necessity of difference within the Church, in the name of naïve, idealistic, and in fact anti-Christian homogeneity; and b) presuming that schism and mutual anathematizing is a legitimate response to difference and disagreement, and not, in fact, an action that desecrates, dishonours, and denies the Body of Christ.

Article IV

‘And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age”’ (Matt.28: 18-20); ‘Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, “Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power’ (Acts 2: 5-10).

WE AFFIRM the global relevance of the gospel, and rejoice in the fact that the God who is worshipped by the Church is neither tribal, nor limited in sovereignty to a particular place, but is on the contrary the Creator and Lord of the heavens and all the earth. We acknowledge with thanks that, as it has spread from one end of the earth to the other, the gospel has found expression in all languages and cultures, neither extinguishing cultural differences, nor being extinguished by them. We give thanks, too, that, recognising this cultural diversity, the Anglican Communion – despite its origins within the very particular circumstances of 16th Century England – has, from its very inception through to the present day, made allowance for contextual liturgy, deeming it ‘not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, and utterly like...and may be changed according to the diversities of countries, times, and men’s [*sic*] manners...’ (*Thirty Nine Articles*, art.34).

We reject as false the two opposite but related dangers of: a) believing that particular cultural practices, sensibilities, traditions and beliefs ought be prioritised over the gospel, such that the message of God’s grace in Jesus Christ is diluted, changed, or misrepresented by its accommodation to culture; and b) presuming that either the gospel in general, or the Anglican tradition in particular, is best or most properly expressed in a specific cultural form, regardless of the consonance of that form with the context in which it is being expressed.