In Search of Anglican Comprehensiveness:
A Study in the Theologies of
Hooker, Maurice, and Gore

By

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Abstract

This thesis undertakes a study of the concept and development of Anglican comprehensiveness in light of recent criticism suggesting that the appeal to it is outdated, theologically unjustified, and ecclesiastically unsustainable, as well as advocacy of the comprehensive ethos by contemporary theologians concerned that it has been misrepresented in recent attempts to limit Anglican theological expression and practice. The thesis responds, also, to efforts at narrowing or defining doctrinal boundaries around acceptable Anglican belief and practice in such proposals as the Anglican Communion Covenant.

The development of the concept of comprehensiveness is studied through consideration of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, Lambeth Conference Resolutions, and in statements of
Anglican doctrinal commissions over the past century. Beyond these official and semi-official statements, the theological core of the thesis is an in-depth study of the thought and context of three foundational and pre-eminent theologians credited with promoting the comprehensive view in critical eras of the tradition’s development: Richard Hooker in the sixteenth century, F. D. Maurice in the mid-nineteenth century, and Charles Gore in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The thesis does not attempt to evaluate the adequacy of the thought of Hooker, Maurice, and Gore by contemporary standards; rather, it uncovers the theological rationale presented in their thought in support of latitude in belief and practice common within Anglicanism. The thesis argues that for each the emphasis on comprehensiveness is not arbitrary or merely conflict avoiding, but arises from his theology of Incarnation and belief in the ecclesial community as the Body of Christ.

The thesis concludes, affirming insights of Hooker, Maurice, and Gore, that Anglican comprehensiveness is both theologically justifiable and ecclesiastically imperative in a mature church community that understands itself as an extension of the Incarnation.
Acknowledgments

In the Episcopal Divinity School’s St. John’s Memorial Chapel in Cambridge, Massachusetts one finds a stained glass window shared by two contrasting nineteenth century Anglican visionaries: the Tractarian leader John Keble and the enigmatic Christian Socialist Frederick Denison Maurice. That window, across from which I sat, prayed, sang, and contemplated while a divinity student, exhibits to me the nature of Anglican comprehensiveness. While not theological allies in life, in their respective and unique ways Keble and Maurice each brought new insights to the church and continue to shape it. We are much the richer for their contributions. Despite their differences, Keble and Maurice were each devoted to Christ and found his deepest being in Christ. In spite of, and perhaps through, our diverse beliefs and practices we discover the reality of God and our comprehensive unity. This unity is not of our making, Anglicans have argued; it is wholly God’s, through the Incarnation.

While the impetus for the present work was inspired by light shining through the Keble and Maurice window in Cambridge, several faculty members at the Episcopal Divinity School also deserve thanks and gratitude. First, I am thankful to the Rev. Dr. Carter Heyward, Howard Chandler Robbins Professor of Theology. Having read her works in feminist liberation theology as an undergraduate, I was drawn to study at EDS in large measure to learn from her in person. I had no idea then that she would set me on a course that led back to the Victorian era and beyond. But she did just that when, after reading an essay I wrote for her Christology course, she
suggested I acquaint myself with the works of F. D. Maurice and especially his controversial *Theological Essays*. Ever since, Maurice has been my theological companion and inspiration.

Two other EDS faculty members also nurtured my interest in classical Anglican theology. Dr. Fredrica Harris Thompsett, Mary Wolfe Professor of Historical Theology, introduced me to Richard Hooker and successive Anglican luminaries in several courses. When she appointed me her research and teaching assistant for her new course in nineteenth and twentieth century Anglican theology I deepened my appreciation and understanding of Maurice and I met Charles Gore and the *Lux Mundi* school for the first time. I do not think I appreciated the latter fully enough then, but that has been remedied by the present study. Gore’s eloquent incarnational theology and ecclesiology is nothing less than inspiring.

I also remember with immense gratitude and affection the late Rev. Dr. Lloyd G. Patterson, William Reed Huntington Professor of Historical Theology. During a directed reading course I was able to engage deeply with Richard Hooker and especially Book V of *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*. In other courses we explored the theology and history of the *Book of Common Prayer*, the Trinity, the church in the patristic age and in the modern world. I will always cherish my time with Professor Patterson: in the classroom, his office, St. John’s Memorial Chapel, the refectory, and Wednesday mornings at the Bethany convent of the Order of St. Anne in Arlington. I am only sorry that our lives overlapped so briefly. He now, more than I, lives in the bright and encompassing light of the Incarnation.
Earlier in life I was set upon the path of theological studies by my undergraduate advisor at Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota, the Rev. Dr. Clair E. Johnson. Although a Swedish Lutheran, he was steadfast in encouraging my studies and always interested in my work in Anglican theology, especially F. D. Maurice. Talking with him while I was a student and over subsequent years was always an inspiration and delight. I am sorry that he, too, was taken into the fuller life of the Communion of Saints before this thesis was finished.

More recently, this project would not be possible were it not for the support of my dissertation supervisory committee, especially Professor Michael Bourgeois of Emmanuel College. I appreciate his insights in helping the present work come to completion and his support throughout my doctoral studies. The additional thesis examiners, Professors Donald Wiebe of Trinity College, Michael Attridge of the University of St. Michael’s College, and Mark D. Chapman of Ripon College Cuddesdon and the University of Oxford, provided useful insights and challenge in their published works and during the defence that will help to refine and carry the questions inherent in this work further.

Most especially and profoundly, I am grateful to my supervisor and thesis director, the Rev. Canon Dr. W. David Neelands, Dean of Divinity and Margaret E. Fleck Professor of Anglican Studies at the University of Trinity College in the University of Toronto. I was attracted to Trinity College and the Toronto School of Theology in order than I might study F. D. Maurice with Dr. Neelands. As readers of the thesis will discover, in addition to interpreting Maurice, Dr. Neelands’ expertise in the area of Hooker studies has been extraordinarily influential. His support and enthusiasm for this thesis project, and his help in defining it, has been steadfast and
through an exceptionally long program. I have learned tremendously from him and am beyond grateful for his teaching, mentoring, and friendship.

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For the past several years I have been fortunate to serve God among the people of Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Wakefield, Massachusetts as their rector. Although the acceptance of this call delayed the completion of the present work, it nonetheless has been a true blessing. I appreciate the parish’s willingness to endure countless sermons and adult education sessions about Anglican theologians. In a real and incarnate way, the Emmanuel congregation exhibits the meaning of Anglican comprehensiveness in its life together.
Finally, I thank friends, colleagues in the Toronto School of Theology doctoral program, and my family for their support and willingness to listen and engage in what must have seemed like endless conversations about comprehensiveness and the Incarnation. In particular, Jeffrey Seamans (himself a “good Anglican”) has endured over five years of books, piles of papers, and rambling soliloquies about long dead theologians with patience and grace. He, as much as I, is pleased that the present work has come to its successful completion.

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Chapter One:
Introducing Comprehensiveness

The Anglican Churches have received and hold the faith of Catholic Christendom, but they have exhibited a rich variety in methods both of approach and of interpretation. They are heirs of the Reformation as well as of Catholic tradition; and they hold together in a single fellowship of worship and witness those whose chief attainment is to each of these, and also those whose attitude to the distinctively Christian tradition is most deeply affected by the tradition of a free and liberal culture which is historically the bequest of the Greek spirit and was recovered for Western Europe at the Renaissance. The removal or diminution of differences within the Church of England can only be rightly effected by the discovery of the synthesis which does justice to all of these…

1 Introduction

Since the Reformation era, what is now called Anglicanism has struggled at self-understanding: both from within the tradition, with diverse understandings of what might be deemed its essential features, and in contrast to other Christian traditions—Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox. While this challenge of self-identity has marked the tradition since its separation from the Roman Church during the English Reformation, the issue has been particularly acute over the past two centuries. Diarmaid MacCulloch, historian of the English church, describes this unique and confusing situation:

Let us not be under any illusion: there was an English Reformation, and within a century of Henry VIII’s break with Rome in 1533, it made England a strongly Protestant country. Yet the outcome of this Protestant revolution in English life was a good deal less tidy

than in many other European countries. It ended up producing a distinctive strand of Western Christianity which has never been quite sure whether to label itself Catholic or Protestant, and which in the end has decided that uncertainty is a virtue in Christian life, not a vice. The name given to this mood is Anglicanism…²

Throughout its history Anglicanism has embraced (or at least contained) elements that are Evangelical, Catholic, and liberal, such that some view the tradition, both internally and externally, as Protestant while others, primarily from within the tradition itself, believe it is one of three strands of global Catholicism (with Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy the other expressions). Further perspectives argue that Anglicanism is simultaneously Protestant and Catholic—a faith tradition formed in the crucible of the Protestant Reformation while maintaining (and later re-establishing further) several thoroughly Catholic elements of theology and church structure.

The challenge of self-identity is compounded by the global diversity characteristic of today’s Anglican Communion. British colonialism and a history of international missionary activity have given rise to a community of autonomous national and international churches—rather than a single, unified church structure—that are forced to grapple with significant global diversity, including its accompanying racial, economic, and cultural manifestations. Simultaneously, these autonomous churches have sought to affirm, to greater and lesser degrees, some of the distinctiveness of a unique English expression of Christianity, as inherited through the traditional Book of Common Prayer, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, and a polity that insists on the importance of the historic episcopate. Many churches in the Communion now also give governing authority to clergy and laity, alongside the traditional powers accorded to bishops.

The term most often used to describe this state of being and self-identification is “comprehensiveness.” By comprehensiveness is meant the ability or propensity to embrace or “comprehend”–with necessary degrees of tension–differing and even sometimes seemingly contradictory beliefs and practices, without an institutional or universal claim that one belief or practice is inherently more honest, right, truthful, or authentic than another.\(^3\) Examples of such differences include preferences in liturgical ceremonial; relatively Protestant and relatively Catholic understandings of ordained ministries; differing doctrinal beliefs, including varying interpretations and articulations of Incarnation/Christology, sin, atonement, and sacraments; disagreements over the appropriateness of women’s ordination; language used in prayer; and recently, the ethics of sexuality. Such diversity of opinion and practice is found within national churches, dioceses, and even individual parishes, as well as between the autonomous churches themselves.\(^4\) While some effort has been made to curtail or limit this diversity, in large measure it has been allowed to flourish, even as the theological and ecclesiological underpinning for comprehensiveness in Anglicanism often has been less well understood or articulated.

\(^3\) This is not to deny that there are those within the Anglican churches who would argue that a particular belief or practice is better or more orthodox. For example, those opposed to the ordination of women believe their position is right in light of scripture and tradition. However, institutionally a degree of neutrality on this matter and others is maintained. Thus, while churches may enact policies and practices, no individual (whether clergy or laity) is compelled to believe or behave in a particular way.

\(^4\) The name given to an autonomous church of the Anglican Communion is “province,” which in some cases refers to a church with national boundaries, such as the Anglican Church of Canada. In others, a province might be international, such as The Episcopal Church, which is largely identified with the United States, but not exclusively, as it has parishes throughout Europe, as well as dioceses in Haiti, Central America and Asia. Other provinces cover areas smaller than national boundaries. Within the United Kingdom, there are four autonomous Anglican Communion provinces: England, Wales, Scotland, and Ireland.
While a comprehensive ecclesiology has characterized the church since the first century, a careful study of several Anglican theologians in critical periods of theological and ecclesiastical development reveals that rather than a syncretistic amalgamation of irreconcilable truth claims, Anglican comprehensiveness consistently, although not exclusively, finds its foundation in a common belief and emphasis in the Incarnation. This incarnational foundation has been the ground for Anglican theology since the Reformation era and especially since the nineteenth century. Of this foundation Fredrica Harris Thompsett writes:

In Anglican theology one doctrine, the Incarnation, has been the guiding principle for belief and practice. This central Anglican tenet is built upon the New Testament witness that the potential goodness of humanity is dependent upon the God who came to live among us as God and human. This fully embodied doctrine...offers powerful assurance that God is for us and not against us.

In particular, Anglican theologians have asserted that the Incarnation is central to the church’s identity as the Body of Christ. For these theologians the church’s deepest and most significant unity, when best expressed and experienced, is derived neither from theological propositional agreement nor shared practice—both of which may be tentative, provisional, or changing—but in a common humanity drawn together by God in and through Jesus Christ.

Thus, it is argued that the church’s true unity is God’s gift to a humanity created and restored in Christ, gathered through baptism and nourished in the eucharist for worship, service, and mission, rather than as a result of narrowly-defined beliefs or practices. While not necessarily unique unto Anglicanism, this view is articulated particularly clearly in the thought of three

5 For example, consider St. Paul’s injunction to the Church in Rome: “Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarrelling over opinions.” Romans 14:1 (New Revised Standard Version).

foundational Anglican theologians in formative periods of the church’s history: Richard Hooker, Frederick Denison Maurice, and Charles Gore.

Richard Hooker (1553/4 to 1600) wrote on behalf of the sixteenth century Elizabethan Church of England, defending its beliefs and practices against both Puritan and Roman Catholic detractors. F. D. Maurice (1805 to 1872) wrote in the mid-nineteenth century, during the rise of the Oxford and Evangelical Movements, when party strife was increasing within the Church of England and other religious traditions were gaining greater degrees of acceptance. Charles Gore (1853 to 1932), a later nineteenth and early twentieth century theologian and bishop, contended with the party strife of the previous generation, while also struggling with the theological and ecclesiastical questions posed by the Modernist movement.

In their unique contexts Hooker, Maurice, and Gore offer an embrace of comprehensiveness resulting from their firm belief in the centrality of the Incarnation as the establishing principle of the church. Each believes that through God’s Incarnation in Jesus Christ, which is extended into the church community as the Body of Christ, the church is freed from narrow sectarian impulses and allowed to include a diversity of beliefs and practices. They are confident that what unites the church is not strictly defined doctrinal assent but rather a deeper unity in Christ. While they apply their thought to the Church of England in particular, their work has clear implications for a broader understanding of comprehensiveness within global Anglicanism as well.

The primary aim of this thesis, therefore, is to explore the issue of Anglican comprehensiveness, particularly with regard to its theological foundations. I begin with a definition of comprehensiveness, followed in the second chapter by consideration of contemporary
evaluations of comprehensiveness by theologians who appreciate it, as well as those who have been more critical. In the third chapter I undertake a study of comprehensiveness as articulated in various official and semi-official bodies and documents of the Anglican Communion, from the time of the Reformation through the first decade of the twenty-first century.

The theological core of the thesis is a study in how the influential theologians Richard Hooker, Frederick Denison Maurice, and Charles Gore argue in favour of ecclesiastical comprehensiveness (i.e., comprehensiveness as applied primarily to the church community, rather than to its group of confessional standards), with a source in their respective theologies of the Incarnation. A chapter is devoted to each theologian and his context. These figures are not exhaustive of Anglican incarnational theology and their views do not preclude alternative positions on the origins of comprehensiveness, nor other theological justifications for it. However, the fact that they, coming from different periods and intellectual perspectives, find compelling theological rationales buttresses significantly the argument that the embrace of comprehensiveness within Anglicanism is theologically justifiable and formative for the tradition as it has developed in the successive centuries since the Reformation era. For these theologians and the broader Anglican tradition, which both influenced them and was in turn influenced by them, the embrace of comprehensiveness is not simply one possible approach to the Christian community’s shared life in Christ, but in fact is inevitable and intrinsic to being Anglican.

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7 Several other theologians could have been included who likewise argue in favour of Anglican comprehensiveness through their incarnational theologies, including Brooke Foss Westcott, William Temple, and Michael Ramsey, and in contemporary theology Norman Pittenger and Carter Heyward. However, the significance of Hooker, Maurice, and Gore in their own age, the volume of their respective work, and as voices who have shaped Anglican theology give them positions of authority and pre-eminence.
In the concluding chapter I offer a final evaluation of Anglican comprehensiveness as a historical and contemporary aspect of the theological tradition, as well as a perspective on how the embrace of comprehensiveness can guide Anglican churches through their challenges. With Richard Hooker, F. D. Maurice, and Charles Gore, I conclude that comprehensiveness is not only theologically justifiable, but dependent on and consistent with belief in the Incarnation as the foundation of the church as the Body of Christ.

2 Defining Comprehensiveness

Among the challenges in coming to the clearest possible understanding of comprehensiveness is the lack of an adequate or standard definition of the term and its scope. Nonetheless, it is understood by many as a foundational principle of Anglicanism, with roots stretching as deep into the church’s soil as the Reformation era, subsequent Elizabethan Settlement, and the development and adoption of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. Certainly, the ability and desire to hold in creative tension multiple beliefs and practices has been a hallmark of the Anglican theological tradition from its earliest days, even if the actual term “comprehensiveness” had not yet been applied.

Although the concept of comprehensiveness may elude easy definition, the principle has been at work over the past two centuries in the Lambeth Conferences’ adoption of resolutions related to such diverse matters as ecumenism, liturgical change, and the ordination of women. It, likewise, has been articulated by the three Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commissions in their respective reports, and by the more recent Windsor Report, albeit less explicitly and with greater
reservation. Over several decades the commitment to comprehensiveness also has been expressed and debated by Anglican theologians, some concerned to maintain it as essential to the tradition and others interested in establishing limitations.

I define comprehensiveness as the response to a desire among Anglicans to maintain unity within a context of practices and beliefs that are different and perhaps even seemingly contradictory. An example of this is the variety of eucharistic theologies found among Anglicans, both historically and contemporarily, ranging from an embrace of transubstantiation on the Anglo-Catholic end of the ecclesiological spectrum to memorialism among those who are more firmly Protestant. While some of the divergent views held appear to be irreconcilable—in this case that the eucharistic elements are the literal, physical body and blood of Christ or that they remain simply bread and wine—there is a sense that each in its own way presents an authentic expression of the Anglican theological and liturgical tradition. The same is true regarding women’s ordination: some view it as being incompatible with scripture and/or the tradition of the church, while others believe it a direct result of the work of God and the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Comprehensiveness suggests that whether both are or can be correct is less relevant, or knowable given the limits of human knowledge of the divine will, than the intention to stay in communion, trusting that the relationships shared transcend these and other differences. This unity in diversity is possible because these relationships find their establishment in the life of God, rather than human agreement, since any agreement would be necessarily in a state of flux and evolution. Those

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holding such a comprehensive view believe that humans and human institutions can and do make mistakes and that theological truth is necessarily fragmentary, but that the church will be led to a correct understanding in the fullness of God’s time, and must recognise that its decisions are in that sense always provisional.

While comprehensiveness has been a regular feature of the Anglican theological tradition, historically there have been certain limits to this embrace of diversity. Interestingly, these limits often are found in the same documents that also lay the foundation for the comprehensive ethos, specifically the Prayer Book and the Articles of Religion. Similar commitments to a somewhat limited comprehensive unity are located in several more recent documents such as the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, the Virginia Report, and even aspects of the draft Anglican Communion Covenant. Within the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, for example, the articulated limits include a commitment to the Christian faith as expressed in the Christian scriptures, belief and assent to the Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds, particularly vis-à-vis the doctrine of the Incarnation, maintenance of the Catholic three-fold order of ministry, and faithful administration of the dominical sacraments.

Less well defined but also significant in contributing to the ethos of comprehension is a dedication to the historic Anglican liturgical tradition expressed in the Book of Common Prayer as received and adopted in its various cultural contexts, as well as a commitment to living in interdependent unity with other Anglican Christians throughout the world. This means that

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Anglicans are charged with the responsibility of not only maintaining and defending their own uniqueness, but also at times subduing local preference in favour of a greater unity. The discernment of when this is necessary cannot be made in isolation, but always in the context of the broader faith community, and in reference to scripture, creeds, the tradition of the church, as well as local context.

As a result of this dynamic, the boundaries of Anglican comprehensiveness are constantly shifting. Beliefs and actions that were unheard of or extremely rare in one age, such as the appropriateness of the ordination of women, may become common in another, even as there may never be complete uniformity of opinion. One day the same may be true regarding issues of same-sex marriage or lay presidency at the eucharist, to name two issues of contemporary debate. My contention is that in the midst of these shifting boundaries is found the central truth in Anglican theology. Differences of opinion and practice, even in matters of deep significance, are acceptable as the result of a deeper truth and firmer foundation that lies at the heart of the Christian tradition: belief in the church as the Body of Christ—the perpetual earthly extension of the Incarnation—with the on-going ability and propensity of God to effect transformation and reconciliation among the body’s various members to make it a more complete and perfect whole.

Thus comprehensiveness is Anglicanism’s answer, however tentative, flawed and incomplete, to the Christian call to embrace the “other” and establish a church and society, grounded and sustained in the reality of the Incarnation, that aims to set reconciliation and communion with God and humanity at its centre, rather than firm intellectual agreement or uniformity of practice, whether liturgical, moral, or political. In profound ways this approach to ecclesial life has shaped Anglicanism’s theological development and self-understanding.
Even so, without an international leader with doctrinal and ecclesial authority, such as a figure with status equivalent to the Pope in the Roman Catholic Church, or “definitive” documents establishing clear boundaries for belief and practice as the Augsburg and Westminster Confessions do for many Lutheran and Reformed Christians, Anglicanism has struggled to maintain unity in its context of differing beliefs, practices, and cultures. This has been the challenge of comprehensiveness, or at the least has exemplified its occasional weakness when there is not a common appreciation of it. Stephen Bayne, first Executive Officer of the Anglican Communion, expressed this lack of uniform authority in 1964:

We have no particular theological statement of our own to fence us off from other Churches. We have no international power structure which forces our younger Churches to conform to some alien pattern of life. We have no central executive power. We have no uniform Prayer Book. We have no common language. We have no laws which limit the freedom of any Church to decide its life as it will. We have no ecclesiastical colonies. We have no ‘Anglican’ religion. We have no test of membership save that of Baptism itself. We have nothing to hold us together except the one essential unity given us in our full communion. And even that is not limited to Anglican Churches, for we share in the table of other Churches as well, in increasing number.

Yet despite the lack of formal structures empowered to ensure unity of belief and practice there has been a desire among Anglicans, even in disagreement, to preserve a sense of communion and fellowship. The persistent and unanswered question has been by what means.

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10 Some engaged in current struggles assert “definitive” status for some documents within the Anglican tradition, such as the Articles of Religion. This approach is suggested particularly in the early Anglican Covenant drafts. However, the varying interpretations of their authority by the provinces of the Communion point to the fact that the acceptance of the Articles as authoritative for the Anglican tradition has not been universal. Simultaneously, those churches having more authoritative doctrinal documents, such as some Reformed and Lutheran, are not themselves free of disagreement over the proper interpretation of their respective confessions and their applicability in contemporary governance. Two examples in the Reformed tradition that argue for the historical, but not currently binding, authority of the Westminster Confessions are the United Church of Canada and the United Church of Christ in the United States.

In the next chapter I consider several contemporary assessments of Anglican comprehensiveness in both its positive and negative aspects. As we shall see, even among those critical of the comprehensive ethos as it has been expressed there is no outright rejection, but concern that the unifying principles of Anglicanism be articulated, and in some cases that limits be placed on the breadth and scope of freedom of thought and practice. At the same time, those who are appreciative of the comprehensive tradition likewise argue that there must be defining principles, limiting those principles to a few authoritative documents with wide latitude for interpretation.
Chapter Two: Evaluating Comprehensiveness

1 Introduction

In an effort to confront the many painful theological, practical, and policy divisions emerging in the late twentieth century, the 1968 Lambeth Conference recognised comprehensiveness as an authentic expression of Anglicanism and attempted to articulate what it should mean and how it can function practically within the Communion. The bishops wrote:

Comprehensiveness demands agreement on fundamentals, while tolerating disagreement on matters in which Christians may differ without feeling the necessity of breaking communion. In the mind of an Anglican, comprehensiveness is not compromise. Nor is it to bargain one truth for another. It is not a sophisticated word for syncretism. Rather, it implies that the apprehension of truth is a growing thing: we only gradually succeed in “knowing the truth.”

The bishops at that Lambeth Conference stressed the need for humility in asserting theological propositions, as well as the provisional nature of theology and action, beyond the undefined “fundamentals.” We see as evidence of that provisional nature the church’s evolving practice with regard to such matters as marriage and divorce, ordination of women, practices around Holy Communion and confirmation, and more.

Even so, the above Lambeth statement, while helpful, has not limited debate on the scope of Anglicanism’s allowance of diverse belief and practice. Thus, although comprehensiveness has

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been expressed as an important Anglican value by theologians and scholars, as well as through
resolutions of the Lambeth Conferences and theological and doctrinal commissions of the
various provinces, some have argued that heretofore there has been insufficient theological
articulation or rationale for this embrace of diversity. As a result, the degree to which
comprehensiveness is understood to be definitive is shifting.

In particular, the cumulative history of the comprehensive embrace or toleration of diversity—
liturgical, theological, social—especially over the past two centuries occasionally has led to
schism, or threats thereof, by those who would argue that a definable degree of orthodoxy (or
orthopraxy) is necessary to retain ecclesiastical unity. The recent establishment of the Anglican
Church in North America, in opposition to The Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church of
Canada, is but one example. While current issues of division coalesce around sexuality and
biblical interpretation, in particular regarding ordination policy and an evolving understanding of
marriage, they are symptomatic of the larger and more complex issues of comprehensiveness
with which Anglicanism has contended since the Reformation era.

Frustrated by the lack of a discernable coherence, those expressing theological concerns about
comprehensiveness, such as Stephen Sykes, George Sumner, and Christopher Seitz, have argued
the inconsistency in a church standing for certain doctrinal truth claims, such as the uniqueness
of God’s revelation and Incarnation in Jesus Christ, while placing comprehension or tolerance of
seemingly contradictory beliefs and practices with regard to that belief as a central organizational
and philosophical principle. Thus, in addition to the establishment of new provincial bodies,
there have been recent proposals for boundaries to be placed around the definition of authentic
“Anglicanism,” setting limits to theological diversity and acceptable practice, while establishing
the means for settling international disputes. We see this impulse toward definition of the limits of acceptable belief and practice in the work being undertaken toward the adoption of the global Anglican Communion Covenant, to be considered in the next chapter.

For others, however, comprehensiveness is believed to be among Anglicanism’s strengths and essentially characteristic of the tradition. Among those who embrace comprehensiveness, such as Robert Hughes, Flora Keshgegian, and William Wolf, it is understood to be both a necessary mark of the generosity of life within a Christian community that tolerates diverse practices (established by the early church in the apostolic era, as exhibited especially in the Acts of the Apostles), as well as a theological commitment to discern truth within the context of a broad expression of diverse beliefs and practices.

Voices both in favour of maintaining the comprehensive view and those concerned to draw boundaries around acceptable belief and practice have grown forceful in arguing their respective positions. While neither the voices for nor those against can make claims to being exclusively authoritative for Anglican theology, they all contribute to the emerging understanding of the issue. In the sections that follow, I consider representative views of those who are critical of comprehensiveness as well as those who are more appreciative.
2 Stephen Sykes and Criticisms of Comprehensiveness

A primary source for considering the development and role of comprehensiveness is Stephen Sykes’ *The Integrity of Anglicanism*.² It was written in advance of the 1978 Lambeth Conference by a Church of England theologian (now a retired bishop) concerned with what he perceived to be growing theological incoherence in Anglicanism, and especially in the Church of England. While Sykes’ concerns are broadly based and cover the general trajectory of Anglican thought and practice, several recent works, in particular, gave rise to his concern. Most significant among them is *Christian Believing: The Nature of the Christian Faith and its Expression in Holy Scripture and Creeds: a Report by the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England*. Sykes’ substantial concern is that the report, coming from the church’s doctrine commission, allows a greater degree of doctrinal latitude than he believes reasonable.³

Sykes places much of the blame for this doctrinal latitude and what he perceives as Anglicanism’s weak theological tradition⁴ on an embrace of the concept comprehensiveness, particularly over the previous two centuries. Sykes regards the appeal to comprehensiveness as a

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⁴ Among his concerns is the lack of significant systematic theologies produced by Anglicans, excepting John Macquarrie’s *Principles of Christian Theology*, 2nd Ed. (New York: Charles Scribners’ Sons, 1977). Yet even in that substantial work, Sykes finds no Anglican method, citing Macquarrie’s indebtedness to existentialism. Sykes’s book is, in part, offered as encouragement to those who would attempt to define the essential features of theology and belief. Sykes, *Integrity*, 73, ff.
poor justification for heterodox theology and practice in the vain pursuit of conflict avoidance.

He argues that this ultimately is unsustainable, writing:

Toleration of diversity itself needs to be justified theologically if it is to be able to claim any kind of integrity. There is a point at which a natural desire to avoid a fuss shades off into an unwillingness to seek for any clarity; and another point at which a serious, but corrigible state of muddle shades off into a loss of integrity. It may be that the antidote to such a decline is to be resolutely aware from the first of the moral responsibility inherent in the very nature of Christian belief, even at the cost of conflict and the temptation to dramatize what is in any way a matter for the striking of poses.  

Sykes believes, rather, that any church (including Anglican churches) must stand for theological truth deeper and firmer than simply a willingness to tolerate diversity. Further, he argues that the emphasis placed on comprehensiveness in Anglican theology is, in fact, a contemporary innovation, at least in its current expression, and not nearly as intrinsic to historic Anglicanism as some believe.

In contrast to the perceived shortcomings of Anglican comprehensiveness, Sykes’ book issues a call for a return to a reinvigorated and orthodox Anglican theological expression, casting aside what he believes are misguided liberal notions of theological plurality. He likewise argues that if comprehensiveness is to continue in some way as an Anglican value, even if limited, a

5 Sykes, Integrity, 6-7.

6 Sykes is most critical of F. D. Maurice for claiming that comprehensiveness is an essential attribute of the Church of England. He writes: “Coined at a time when internal party strife was at its most acute, it apparently offered a non-partisan refuge for that large body of central Anglicans who properly speaking belonged to no party, neither evangelical, nor high church, nor yet in any committed sense to the more radical of the liberals. Theologically speaking, however, the effect of the proposal has been disastrous. It must be said bluntly that it has served as an open invitation to intellectual laziness and self-deception. Maurice’s opposition to system-building has proved a marvellous excuse to those who believe they can afford to be condescending about the outstanding theological contribution of theologians from other communions and smugly tolerant of second-rate theological competence in our own; and the failure to be frank about the issues between parties in the Church of England has led to an ultimately illusory self-projection as a Church without a specific doctrinal or confessional position.” Sykes, Integrity, 19.
theological rationale for it must be articulated. He writes: “A Christian church, which is aware of a wide variety of diverse theological positions and which deliberately decides not to adopt one or other of them, but rather to tolerate diversity, has still to offer a definite reason for doing so and to justify that reason in the face of objection.”\(^7\)

To begin, Sykes offers his own definition of comprehensiveness:

Comprehensiveness in the context of the understanding of a church means simply that that church contains many elements regarded as mutually exclusive in other communions. All churches are comprehensive in certain other respects, for example in their inclusion of members of both sexes and all ages. But one would speak only of the “comprehensiveness of the Anglican communion” if one had in mind some implicit contrast between the Anglican communion and other bodies. So comprehensiveness is most often and naturally associated with the inclusion of protestant and catholic elements (and sometimes… of other elements as well) in the one fellowship.\(^8\)

He follows this definition by raising the concern that within Anglicanism exactly what is to be comprehended has been unclear, since it cannot simply mean that Anglicanism is all embracing of any and every possible theology or practice. Were that the case, Anglicanism would stand for nothing but comprehensiveness. Thus, in addition to arguing that a theological rationale for comprehensiveness is needed, he also pushes for a stronger definition of what is properly to be included and excluded.\(^9\)

In making his argument, Sykes traces the general the history of Anglican thought, paying special attention to the concept of the *via media* (i.e., a middle way between Protestant and Catholic

\(^7\) Sykes, *Integrity*, 6.

\(^8\) Sykes, *Integrity*, 8.

extremes), although not uncritically. He questions: “Could it be that the Via Media is but an unhappy compromise, born of practical or even political motivation? Are there good, indeed are there any, theological grounds for this position, or is it the result of a poverty of thought and of a sheer reluctance to attempt to come to grips with intractably difficult theological material?”

He argues that while classical Anglicanism did indeed forge something of a middle path between Roman Catholicism and radical Protestantism, as evidenced in liturgical, sacramental and ecclesiastical developments, it never questioned orthodox Christian doctrine as established by the councils of the early church, defined by Sykes and others as the “Nicene faith.” Indeed, Anglicanism has regularly appealed to historic Christianity, particularly of the patristic era, as the foundation for its theology and ecclesial life, arguing that it holds nothing theologically unique unto itself, but rather that it confesses the faith of the early church.

Sykes argues, however, that since the nineteenth century in particular the Nicene foundations of Anglicanism have come under question and even attack by liberal theologians who would seek to dilute the church’s orthodoxy, sometimes with the church’s tacit, if not overt, approval in its

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10 Sykes, Integrity, 14-15. Sykes credits John Henry Newman with the first cogent articulation of the via media, but he questions its theological justifiability.

11 Sykes cites H. E. Root as his source for the concept of the “Nicene faith” that he believes must be paradigmatic for any church or theology claiming to be Christian. Sykes writes, “If it is not the case that the propositions of the creed of the Council of Nicaea are the fixed and unalterable truths of Christianity nonetheless it is the case, according to this way of thinking, that the faith which came to expression in what was said by the orthodox fathers at Nicaea constitutes the fundamentals of any form of Christianity with a claim to be Christian. Thus it follows that the propositional form of the ‘Nicene faith’ is, in this more indirect sense, paradigmatic.” Sykes, Integrity, 13. H. E. Root’s letter regarding the “Nicene faith” is published as an appendix to Integrity, 110-111.

12 Sykes, Integrity, 11.
codification of the idea of comprehensiveness. This, he suggests, is a result of the church’s perhaps erroneous adoption of the via media ideal.\textsuperscript{13}

Sykes cites the 1968 Lambeth Conference statement studied above as key to understanding what comprehensiveness must properly mean, emphasizing “agreement on fundamentals.” He writes: “This qualification establishes the fact that excluded from the comprehensiveness of Anglicanism are views which contradict the fundamentals and views which assert as fundamental matters which Anglicans hold to be non-fundamental.”\textsuperscript{14} Sykes argues that recent trends questioning orthodox Christian doctrine while appealing to the comprehensive ethos of Anglicanism, therefore, are not only heterodox, but foreign to the broad sweep of the Anglican theological tradition in their rejection of the fundamentals of agreement.

In making the argument against comprehensiveness, Sykes is most concerned with recent interpretations of the Incarnation.\textsuperscript{15} He believes that too many contemporary Anglican theologians appealing to the ethos of comprehensiveness, influenced by nineteenth and twentieth century biblical criticism, have become flagrantly unconcerned with adherence to the church’s doctrinal positions and have wandered far from classical orthodoxy. Making the situation worse

\textsuperscript{13} Sykes, \textit{Integrity}, 16.

\textsuperscript{14} Sykes, \textit{Integrity}, 10.

is his belief that a misunderstanding of comprehensiveness has seemed to allow any and every theological innovation, while disregarding the necessary agreement on “fundamentals.”

Sykes criticizes several of the major figures in the development of Anglican theology for the current state of affairs, including Richard Hooker, the eighteenth century Latitudinarians, William Temple, and Michael Ramsey. He is particularly concerned, however, with the influence of F. D. Maurice. Sykes argues that Maurice’s emphasis on the need to hold in tension differing and even opposing views was misguided, both theologically and historically, and has led to the church standing for nothing but comprehensiveness.16

As described by Sykes, Maurice’s understanding of comprehensiveness is not so much an attempt to reconcile differing points of view in the pursuit of unity and truth, but rather the belief that radically opposing views can all be simultaneously true. Sykes believes this is both nonsense and different from the Elizabethan position of embracing Protestant and Catholic elements in pursuit of a greater truth.17 He writes:

> It is specifically with respect to the principle of the complementarity of apparently opposed truths that Maurice’s position is most questionable. Lots of contradictory things may be said to be complementary by those with a vested interest in refusing to think straight. What complementarity requires, if it is so to be used in a rational manner, is the demonstration that both of the alleged truths are true and necessary and proper to the depiction of the reality being studied. And there is a great difference between saying that a body like a church has found it practically possible to contain people who hold opposed and contradictory views, and saying that church believes that all of the contradictory views are true and in some hitherto undiscovered way reconcilable. Those who, for

16 Sykes has been criticized for offering a serious misunderstanding of Maurice. See Paul Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church: Theological Resources in Historical Perspective*, rev. ed. (New York: T & T Clark, 2002), 322.

whatever reason, have decided that the latter view is a more respectable version of the comprehensiveness of the Church of England have regretfully followed Maurice in covert redefinition of the terms “catholic” and “protestant.” It is, of course, the easiest thing in the world to “hold together” views labeled respectively “catholic,” “protestant,” (and even “liberal”) by a suitable process of emasculation of controversial content. And it is greatly to be feared that generations of Anglicans, learning their theories from Maurice and his disciples, have substituted for the form of catholicism or protestantism which any convinced believer of these respective forms of Christian discipleship would recognise a tame and Anglicised tertium quid.18

Sykes likewise criticizes Maurice for establishing or legitimizing a theretofore unheard of third “liberal” party in Anglicanism, alongside the traditional Catholic and Protestant elements. He argues that the introduction of the liberal party is merely a forced parallel to the nineteenth century British political system, with the Tory, Whig, and Radical parties.19 He suggests that this ecclesiastical liberal party is a distinctly Maurician innovation, but which subsequently has become commonly held as historical fact.

The unfortunate result of this legitimization of liberalism, Sykes believes, has been a new and corrosive tolerance of it within Anglicanism, giving rise to movements like the Modern Churchmen’s Union and the proliferation of recent heterodox theology that Sykes finds objectionable.20 He does not deny that there have long been liberals within Anglicanism, reaching as far back as the seventeenth century. However, he argues that they must be liberals in

18 Sykes, Integrity, 19-20.

19 Sykes, Integrity, 17.

reference to either the Catholic or Protestant parties. He cites Bishop Charles Gore as an example of a proper Liberal Catholic.\textsuperscript{21}

In contrast to what he believes to be Maurice’s muddled thinking and the creation of an impossible comprehensive ideal, Sykes finds in Gore a theologian who properly understood the scope and limits of Anglican comprehensiveness. As one influenced by the new biblical criticism of the nineteenth century, Gore allowed for a limited degree of latitude in thought on matters that were not deemed “fundamental,” while firmly adhering to limits posed by the Nicene faith.

Sykes writes:

\begin{quote}
Belief in the central creeds of Christendom, general acceptance of and willingness to use the formularies and services of the Church of England, and a promise to teach out of the Scriptures are the three bases for doctrinal unity and the source of the church’s comprehensiveness, its capacity to embrace different schools of thought. At the same time Gore expressed himself fully satisfied that biblical criticism left unaffected any of the articles of the creed. The faith of the creeds, he believed, was, in fact, supported by free inquiry into historical facts, and he explained the negative results of certain critics arising from their non-historical presuppositions, such as disbelief in the possibilities of miracles.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

Sykes laments, however, that those who followed Gore did not adhere to his modest embrace of liberalism and comprehensiveness. Thus even after Gore’s attempts to limit its scope and influence, theological liberalism has been allowed to flourish unhindered in Anglicanism, questioning the Nicene faith and giving rise to theological chaos, as evidenced in \textit{Christian Believing} and contemporary works such as \textit{The Myth of God Incarnate}. In light of this situation, Sykes argues that a more rigorous systematic theology is necessary, influenced by the \textit{via media}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[21] Sykes, \textit{Integrity}, 20.
\item[22] Sykes, \textit{Integrity}, 20-21.
\end{footnotes}
between Protestant and Catholic perspectives, but firmly grounded in scripture and the orthodox Christian tradition, as well as the historic Anglican formularies: the Book of Common Prayer, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, and Ordinal. Sykes argues that together these foundational documents provide the proper foundation for Anglican theological thought as well as its necessary boundaries and limits. Finally, Sykes believes that if the church is to maintain any dedication to comprehensiveness, it must be defended by sound orthodox theological principles and the appeal to these historic sources of authority.

In The Integrity of Anglicanism Sykes is largely concerned with comprehensiveness vis-à-vis Anglican christological positions. While christological debates are less prevalent in the first decades of the twenty-first century, Sykes’ views are echoed in the more recent work of theologians concerned with the state of the Anglican Communion following developments regarding human sexuality, as well as on-going issues of theological diversity that go unresolved. With Sykes, these theologians question the foundations of comprehensiveness and argue in various ways that the Anglican tradition has to stand for more than simply the ability to embrace diverse or contradictory beliefs and practices.

George Sumner offers one such perspective, arguing that comprehensiveness as established in England following the Reformation era is radically different from the attempts to situate North American Anglicanism, in particular, within a classical understanding of the concept. With Sykes, Sumner emphasises the significant theological agreement shared between the various

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diverse interests in the Church of England at the time of the Elizabethan Settlement. Sumner highlights agreement regarding the “classical doctrines of God,” as well as Augustinian perspectives on grace and salvation shared by those of Protestant and Catholic inclinations. Sumner argues that this essential state of agreement resulted in “a common liturgical practice, if only at the time by coercive fiat, in the Book of Common Prayer. And there was a clear sense that it would serve to form a Christian nation. To be sure, options at the edges, Romanism and Puritanism, were rejected. But within these bounds were to be found the preponderance of the nation.”

In contrast to the situation in England (either historically or today) as a national church embracing a certain breadth of practice under the banner of the Prayer Book, comprehensiveness as presented in North America is deemed by Sumner to lack any sense of doctrinal coherence, and therefore falls outside the historical definition of the term. Unlike Elizabethan England which found basic agreement on major doctrines, Sumner argues that today there is no assurance that any of the following will find essential agreement in North American Anglicanism: “sin, wrath, judgment, the cross, heaven and hell, the uniqueness of Christ, the bodily resurrection, the relevance of the law, the canon, the literal sense, the sinlessness of Christ, the sovereignty of God, the prevenience of grace, the doctrine of revelation, and most recently the status of heresy.” While seventeenth century English Protestants and Catholics alike shared a

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26 Sumner, “After Comprehensiveness,” 642.
“biblically-shaped world,” Sumner finds in North America (and in the United States particularly) “a nation that is highly diverse and post-Christian.” Thus the concept of comprehensiveness as adhered to by Anglicans historically does not apply to the contemporary situation, which he deems simply liberal liturgical Protestantism.

Sumner’s view is shared by Christopher Seitz, who likewise emphasises the need for agreement in fundamentals, present at the time of the Elizabethan Settlement but lacking in contemporary theological expression. He writes: “An agreement to tolerate difference and accommodate it is not ‘comprehensiveness’ and never has been. Comprehensiveness is a declaration of where fundamentals lie, and where adiaphora are just that—inessentials—and are not in conflict with these fundamentals.” Seitz argues that in the contemporary context true comprehensiveness is likely not found within Anglicanism itself (at least in its North American expression) but in the flourishing ecumenical agreements and ministries that transcend matters indifferent, such as liturgy and polity, while sharing substantial agreement on scriptural interpretation and doctrine.

Sykes, Sumner, and Seitz by no means are exhaustive of contemporary theologians who find the appeal to Anglican comprehensiveness problematic, especially by theological liberals who are looking for justification for their position. But their work is representative of the arguments made

28 Sumner, “After Comprehensiveness,” 642.
by those who would prefer a more substantial agreement in fundamental theological matters (such as Christology, sin, grace, etc.), as well as a higher degree of uniformity in practice regarding issues of ordination, marriage, and liturgical license. For the most part they do not reject the concept of comprehensiveness outright, but they believe that it must be properly understood and situated historically and theologically. In particular, it requires definition and limitation, and most importantly, it needs a proper theological justification.

3 Appreciations of Comprehensiveness

The above represent critical perspectives on comprehensiveness in contemporary theology; however, there are likewise efforts to offer more positive articulations. These range in their embrace from rather broad to more limited, but in general are appreciative of what comprehensiveness has meant for Anglicanism and what it can continue to mean in the future, especially in light of current challenges. Like the criticisms offered, those articulating a more positive view of comprehensiveness emphasise the importance of agreement in fundamentals, while tending to have a limited perspective on what those fundamentals might be.

3.1 Robert Hughes

With Sykes et al., Robert Hughes argues that comprehensiveness is appropriate if there is to be found agreement in fundamentals. For him, however, the necessary fundamentals are very narrowly drawn to include only the two “dogmas” (or core doctrines) of the church: “the Holy Triadic Unity as the proper doctrine of God and the doctrine of the two natures in one hypostasis
of our Lord Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{31} With agreement in these matters as a foundation, significant freedom of thought and practice can and should be allowed.

Hughes’ argument draws directly on the language of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral. It states that the Nicene Creed is “the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.”\textsuperscript{32} Anything falling outside the scope of the creed can be open to a diversity of interpretation and practice. For example, questions regarding the exact means of atonement, the nature and purpose of the sacraments, ordination of women, and the place and gay and lesbian people in the life of the church are all matters open to a variety of perspectives and practices within a comprehensive Anglicanism as they are not addressed directly by the creed.

The above does not mean for Hughes that all possible positions are correct. But it does mean that a faithful debate of them is acceptable and even expected, with the assurance that the most important matters—those he defines as dogmas—are secure. Offering his understanding of Anglican comprehensiveness Hughes writes, “within the space defined by the great dogmas, we can discuss anything else, however important, in the sure and certain knowledge that this is a family quarrel and no one’s salvation is at issue. We can even enjoy the tremendous freedom of admitting that we might be wrong.”\textsuperscript{33} As I will demonstrate in the following chapters, Hughes’s argument, grounded in the dogma expressed in the Nicene Creed and especially in the


\textsuperscript{32} Hughes, “Dogma and Freedom,” 588.

\textsuperscript{33} Hughes, “Dogma and Freedom,” 589.
Incarnation, is consistent with those of earlier generations of Anglican theologians who have given articulation to the comprehensive ethos.

3.2 Flora Keshgegian

Flora Keshgegian likewise affirms the comprehensive ethos. Reflecting the views articulated in the *Virginia Report* and *Communion, Conflict, and Hope* (which I will study in the next chapter), she grounds her embrace of comprehensiveness in the Anglican emphasis on the Incarnation and in the concept of communion. Keshgegian draws on feminist thought and the struggles of oppressed peoples for liberation to suggest a move away from the dualistic categorizations of wrong and right that have characterized recent debates in favour of seeing such debates in the context of greater complexities of life. She writes:

> True and false, good and bad are not absolute judgments describing a world made up of neat and distinct categories. There is a fluidity and complexity in the world of the marginalized and their deployment of multiple strategies for making life possible. The goal here is not redemption understood as being saved from condemnation or rescued from the false and the bad, but rather redemption as life, ongoing, sustained, and approximating abundance.  

Keshgegian suggests two ways for understanding communion. The first is characterized by conformity to a set of principles, commitments, and beliefs. Those adopting this approach may be either liberal or conservative, but the unifying factor is shared belief. This is the view advocated by Sykes, Sumner, and Seitz. The alternate approach, preferred by Keshgegian, is

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through the maintenance of relationship, even in disagreement. She suggests that this implies the recognition and perhaps even the necessity of significant diversity.\textsuperscript{35}

Keshgegian writes that relationship “cannot be assumed or prescribed or firmly secured, but must be practiced and enacted on an ongoing basis.”\textsuperscript{36} This approach, she argues, is the proper way to understand Anglicanism. She writes:

Anglicans are in communion if they act in communion, if they are able to gather together at worship, at the table, and participate. Such communion assumes distinction, not uniformity, and unity that includes diversity and pluralism. It requires relationship, not conformity. Inasmuch as Anglicans claim their roots in the Elizabethan Settlement, just as being held together, with acknowledged differences, has characterized Anglicanism from its establishment. The boundaries encompassing what are held together and the character of what is contained within those boundaries have changed over time. Thus there is a fluidity to the communion, but the principle of relationship as fundamental is given. In other words, what holds the Anglican Communion together is being in relationship…. The practice of relationship embraces pluralism: the recognition and acceptance of difference that does not threaten, but enriches, the life of the church.\textsuperscript{37}

Building on her emphasis on relationship and its underlying diversity, Keshgegian argues that the central focus of Anglicanism, and Christianity more broadly, must be the Incarnation. She suggests that the very principle of the Incarnation implies the necessity of diversity, since “to be human means to be embodied, concretely particular, and reflecting diversity.”\textsuperscript{38} The affirmation of the Incarnation requires an acceptance of the complexities, diversities, and contradictions of life that are always reflected in humanity and the church community.

\textsuperscript{35} Keshgegian, “Coming to Terms,” 600.

\textsuperscript{36} Keshgegian, “Coming to Terms,” 600.

\textsuperscript{37} Keshgegian, “Coming to Terms,” 600-601.

\textsuperscript{38} Keshgegian, “Coming to Terms,” 602.
Summarizing her views and affirming the comprehensive ethos Keshgegian writes, “Anglican comprehensiveness, reconstructed in today’s context, would require multiple expressions, refrain from making ideological judgments, avoid dualism, privilege practice, and give priority to communion over uniformity.”39 As the Body of Christ and the on-going incarnate presence of Christ in the world, the church must contain, embrace, and reflect the diversity of its members. For Keshgegian, this is the meaning of comprehensiveness and the church’s vocation. As I shall demonstrate in subsequent chapters, Keshgegian’s emphasis on the Incarnation, as a source for comprehension, is shared by Hooker, Maurice, and Gore.

3.3 William Wolf

Writing in part in response to The Integrity of Anglicanism, William Wolf offers a third perspective on Anglican comprehensiveness that synthesises views similar to those presented by Hughes and Keshgegian, emphasizing both essential agreement in dogma and the maintenance of relationship grounded in the Incarnation.40 Drawing on the insights of Richard Hooker, F. D. Maurice, and William Reed Huntington, Wolf argues that it is the vocation of Anglicanism to “represent in pastorally and liturgically-oriented dialogue the four partners—catholics, evangelicals, and liberal advocates of reason and of experience.”41 To do so, it must become a

39 Keshgegian, “Coming to Terms,” 602.


reconciling church: simultaneously within itself, among Christian denominations, and for humanity at large. Wolf describes this impulse and call “a spirit of comprehensiveness.”

Although Wolf embraces the comprehensive spirit of Anglicanism, he is not uncritical of it. In particular, like Sykes he is concerned that some liberal theologians may have traveled too far from core affirmations of the church’s historic faith, particularly with regard to the Incarnation. However, Wolf is not interested in squelching debate or conversation about critical issues, but rather would wish to continue in on-going dialogue and discourse trusting that ultimately the truth will prevail. Therefore, conversations regarding the concept of “myth” and culturally conditioned understandings of the Incarnation all have their place, so long as they are not supposed to be definitive or detract from the church’s belief in Christ’s central mission.

For Wolf that central mission of Christ in the Incarnation is the reconciliation of humanity—both with God and among itself. This mission necessarily leads to an openness to die to self in favour of a new more whole state of being. In pursuing ecumenical reconciliation the church embraces the deepest truths of what comprehensiveness can mean in the Body of Christ. It is this spirit of reconciliation that led to the adoption of the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral and later animated the vision for Christian unity articulated by the Lambeth Conference of 1948. Wolf writes:

Anglicanism, in committing itself to follow the way of comprehensiveness, has dared to face up to the need to die to what is specifically Anglican in order to be raised up by the power of God in an ecumenically resurrected church comprehensively Christian and

The Anglican vision is not to be Anglican catholics in a denominational way, but ‘mere’ catholics in a future church, both catholic and evangelical....

This death to self implies not only a willingness to surrender denominational structures for the sake of greater unity, but also in the case of Anglicanism its Englishness in favour of greater global diversity. For Wolf, a truly comprehensive church is one that embraces indigenisation, reflecting the culture and experience of diverse peoples as incorporate members of the Body of Christ. He suggests that one day even the term “Anglican” may have to be abandoned as “an embarrassment” in favour of a new and more comprehensive reality less defined by English ecclesiological and theological history.

Wolf’s view brings together the perspectives of those who are critical of the comprehensive ethos as it has been expressed in recent decades as well as those who embrace it more fully. In so doing, he comes close to apprehending both what comprehensiveness has meant historically and what it can continue to mean in the future. Ironically, however, the current struggles in Anglicanism may be in part a result of the expansiveness that Wolf promotes, in particular his emphasis on allowing substantive debate on theological (and moral) issues that are central to the church’s life, as well as the desire to bring to the fore the voices of those who previously have been excluded or silenced, be they women, sexual minorities, or voices from the global south.

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Wolf is confident, however, that despite debate and conflict, Anglicanism can survive into the future, so long as it places its trust where it belongs:

When it is most alive to its mission and its insights the Anglican spirit is aware that the only unchanging reality is “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever”... and that fidelity to the act of God in Christ to which its favorite doctrine of the Incarnation points is what provides the ultimate orientation of spirit and the strength for pressing on in adventurous pilgrimage toward new spiritual discovery and toward combat with the forces of evil and oppression. Knowing that the center is firm in Christ and his liberating power, the Communion will courageously face change understanding that its time-honored sanctities are carried in earthen vessels.... The spirit of Anglicanism combines a tentativeness of statement about itself with finality of commitment to Christ.47

The above arguments in favour of the ethos of comprehensiveness, as well as those more critical, establish, at the very least, the significance of the issue in contemporary Anglican thought. In the strength of their respective positions for and against comprehensiveness, as they understand and experience it, the theologians considered here demonstrate the need for engagement with the issue in Anglican ecclesiology and practice, both historically and theologically, including the theological rationale that supports the comprehensive ethos, as well as any limits that need to be placed on theological expression and practice, whether liturgical or spiritual, in the church’s life. I will undertake such a study in the following chapters, turning now to a consideration of the Anglican Communion and the various attempts it and its constituent provinces have made to define comprehensiveness, both promoting and attempting to set limits to it in terms of doctrine, liturgy, and morality.

Chapter Three:
Ecclesiastical Considerations of Comprehensiveness

1 Articles of Religion

The concept of comprehensiveness is not an “official” mark or characteristic of Anglicanism, even as it is a common feature of Anglican theologies as they have developed over the past five centuries. Thus, the foundational sources for comprehensiveness must be discerned through careful reading of the official and less official statements of Anglicans throughout the tradition’s 550-year history. While there are those who argue that the comprehensive ethos is inauthentic at worst or overstated at best, as evidenced in the previous consideration of Sykes’ work, I am convinced that a study of the primary documents of the tradition will support the place that the comprehensive outlook has attained in the Anglican tradition, albeit with some limitations.

Among the earliest sources in support of comprehensiveness are the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, adopted by the Church of England in the Reformation era, and approved in various degrees by the global Anglican churches in subsequent centuries. The Articles of Religion, crafted by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer as the Forty-Two Articles in 1553 and revised by Archbishop Matthew Parker during the reign of Elizabeth I, drawing upon the Lutheran
Augsburg Confession of 1530 and Württemburg Confession of 1552, were adopted in their final form after several minor alterations in 1571.¹

The Articles set out to define standards of belief and practice for the sixteenth century Church of England, covering a broad swath of issues including doctrinal matters, church practices and discipline, and the relation of church and state. Some topics included are considered matters of primary or doctrinal concern, while others are secondary. The Articles are largely Protestant in ethos, substantially rejecting traditional Roman Catholic belief and practice, including the doctrine of transubstantiation, purgatory, works of supererogation, the Latin Mass, prescribed priestly celibacy, and the authority of the bishop of Rome.² Yet the Articles also reject more extreme expressions of Protestantism, especially as found among Anabaptists, for example endorsing infant baptism; maintaining the three-fold order of bishops, priests, and deacons; and allowing traditional customs of the church, subject to local adaptation.³ Thus they represent an attempt to articulate a uniquely English approach to Christianity for the sixteenth century, traditionally Catholic in outward expression, but deeply influenced by the earlier Lutheran and more moderate forms of the Protestant Reformation.⁴

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⁴ Toon, “Articles,” 146.
One of the signal characteristics of the Articles is their minimalist approach to defining matters of doctrine, both those that have been deemed “core” doctrine or dogma and those that have been understood to be less significant or of secondary importance. An example of this minimalist approach is found in Article VI: “Of the Sufficiency of Scripture.” It states: “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 Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.” Although the article insists on the sufficiency of scripture for those beliefs that are considered necessary for salvation, it is not explicit about which beliefs those might be. Article VIII: “Of the Three Creeds” identifies the Nicene, Apostles’, and Athanasian creeds as statements of faith that “ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture.” Yet, the Articles do not provide an authoritative interpretation of the creeds, leaving such to the conscience and faith of the individual believer.

This approach contrasts with other Reformation era statements, such as the Augsburg Confession (1530), definitive for Lutheran belief and practice, and the Westminster Confession (1647), which defined and shaped belief in the Reformed tradition. In the case of both the Augsburg and ______________________


6 The identification of the “sufficiency of scripture” with the church’s core doctrine or dogma, as compared to less essential theological teaching, is not unique to Anglicanism. It is emphasised by Thomas Aquinas who wrote: “nothing necessary to faith is contained under the spiritual sense which is not elsewhere put forward by the Scripture in its literal sense.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Complete American Ed. in Three Volumes, trans. Fathers of the English Dominical Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1948), 1:7 (I.1.10.1).

7 Article VIII: “Of the Three Creeds.,” 869.
Westminster Confessions the doctrinal positions required of adherents generally are set out with a precision not found in the Articles of Religion. The result is a form of reformed Catholic theology that is open to nuance and interpretation, while maintaining an essentially orthodox Protestant view.

The above can be seen in comparing the Augsburg Confession, from which some of the language of the Articles was drawn, and the subsequent English Articles of Religion on the nature of God.

_Augsburg Confession: Article I: “Concerning God”_

The churches among us teach with complete unanimity that the decree of the Council of Nicaea concerning the unity of the divine essence and concerning the three persons is true and is to be believed without any doubt. That is to say, there is one divine essence which is called God and is God: eternal, incorporeal, indivisible, of immeasurable power, wisdom, and goodness, the creator and preserver of all things, visible and invisible. Yet, there are also three persons, coeternal and of the same essence and power: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And the term “person” is used for that meaning which the church’s authors used in this case: to signify not a part or a quality in another but that which subsists in itself.

They condemn all heresies that have arisen against this article, such as that of the Manicheans, who posited two principles, one good and the other evil; likewise, those of the Valentinians, Arians, Eunomians, Mohammedans, and all others like them. They also condemn the Samosatenians, old and new, who contend that there is only one person and cleverly and impiously argue that the Word and Holy Spirit are not distinct persons but that “Word” signifies a spoken word and “Spirit” a created movement in things.

_Articles of Religion: Article I: “Of Faith in the Holy Trinity.”_

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8 This largely is the purpose of the various “rejection” Articles.


There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker and Preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.\(^\text{11}\)

This comparison of the respective Lutheran and Anglican Articles, typical of the different approaches to doctrinal definition between the major Protestant confessions and the Articles of Religion, demonstrates how the Articles in their brevity give rise to the comprehensive ethos. Rather than seeking to offer complete and elaborate explanation of doctrinal matters, the authors of the Articles instead chose brief definitions, allowing for a generous degree of diversity and flexibility in opinion and interpretation.

The reasons for the Articles’ liberal approach to doctrinal precision are suggested by Peter Toon:

“The Articles only laid down, within the mid-sixteenth century situation, as much as was necessary to secure Catholic faith and ordered life in the Church of England; and they do not seek to go past the minimum. On the central issues of the gospel they are full and exact. Yet they are as broad and comprehensive as was deemed to be consistent with theological safety.”\(^\text{12}\) In the context of their issuance, the Articles intended to allow a degree of latitude in defining belief and practice in order to maintain unity within the Elizabethan church. For the most part, in their brevity they have succeeded in securing that latitude, not only in the Reformation era, but through the subsequent centuries, as well.

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\(^{11}\) Article I: “Of Faith in the Holy Trinity,” 867.

\(^{12}\) Toon, “Articles and Homilies,” 147.
Just as important as the Articles’ brevity is the fact that they do not hold the same authoritative place in Anglican belief and practice that the Augsburg and Westminster Confessions do for their respective Protestant communions. This fact, in turn, reinforces my contention that a comprehensive approach to doctrine has been characteristic of the Anglican theological tradition from the time of its earliest articulation. Oliver O’Donovan argues as much as well:

But although the Anglican church is indeed a church of the Reformation, it does not relate to its Reformation origins in quite the same way as other churches do, and its Articles are not exactly comparable, in their conception or in the way they have been used, to the Augsburg or Westminster Confessions or to the Heidelberg Catechism. It is not simply that they are supposed to be read in conjunction with the Book of Common Prayer. There is a more important difference, which is that the Anglican doctrinal tradition, born of an attempt (neither wholly successful nor wholly unsuccessful) to achieve comprehensiveness within the limits of a Christianity both catholic and reformed, is not susceptible to the kind of textual definition which the Confessions (on the Protestant side) and the conciliar decrees (on the Catholic) afford. One might almost say that Anglicans have taken the authority of the Scriptures and the Catholic creeds too seriously to be comfortable with another single doctrinal norm.  

Finally, it should be noted that the role of the Articles in defining Anglican doctrine and practice has evolved from the time of their adoption in the sixteenth century. While into the nineteenth century clergy and would-be university graduates, as well as officers of the court and the army, were required to subscribe to them (in England and elsewhere), as we shall see in the case of F. D. Maurice who was unable to receive a law degree while a Unitarian, recent decisions have led Anglican churches away from that practice.

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2 Lambeth Conference Resolutions

As Anglicanism spread through emigration, colonisation, and missionary activity, the desire for a centralized meeting of Anglican bishops also spread, both to provide a venue for bishops to confer on controversial matters facing the churches in their respective contexts and as a means to strengthen ties between disparate jurisdictions. While some desired a strong central authority, others believed that the only authority appropriate to an international body was advisory. The latter view was adopted and the first Lambeth Conference of Anglican bishops held in 1867. Interestingly, several senior bishops refused to attend, fearing that the conference would attempt to claim too much authority for itself.14 While the first Conference may not have done so, and despite a history of efforts at reiterating the Lambeth Conference’s advisory role in making statements and decisions for the Anglican Communion, there has been a tendency on occasion, and particularly in recent years, to strengthen the powers of the Lambeth Conference and view its resolutions as being morally binding on the Communion’s churches, if not strictly legally so.15

Lambeth Conference resolutions rarely deal directly with the issue of comprehensiveness as described here (with the exception of the 1968 resolution cited in the first chapter and studied

14 Two such protesters were the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Durham. See Owen Chadwick’s Introduction in Resolutions of the Twelve Lambeth Conferences, v-vi.

15 Chadwick writes, “We have seen that the Lambeth Conference was allowed to be founded only if it had no authority. But meetings start to gather authority if they exist and are seen not to be a cloud of hot air and rhetoric. It was impossible that the leaders of the Anglican Communion should meet every ten years and not start to gather respect; and to gather respect slowly is to gather influence, and influence is on the road to authority. It continued to have that absence of legal authority which some of its founders wanted and which of necessity was denied to them. But in most Churches some of the most important parts of authority are not based upon law.” Chadwick, Resolutions, x.
further below); however, many of the conferences’ resolutions and statements over the last 140 years point toward a doctrinal and liturgical climate that assumes and supports a broad and inclusive approach leading to an ever increasing comprehensive ethos. Such resolutions are found with regard to doctrine, Anglican ecumenical relations, liturgical revision, artificial contraception, and dramatic changes in the church’s life with the introduction of the ordination of women to Holy Orders. I will consider each of these issues and its implications for comprehensiveness successively.

2.1 Doctrine

Among the vexing issues for assessing the scope or limits of Anglican comprehensiveness is determining what constitutes the “core doctrine” or the dogma of the church. As we have seen in the above consideration of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, Anglicanism historically avoided the precise dogmatic articulation common in other expressions of Protestantism as well as Roman Catholic thought. While this fact has allowed elasticity in doctrinal interpretation, it has also meant that new theological insights can pose challenges as Anglicans struggle to understand if and how these insights are consistent with Anglican teaching. Although the successive Lambeth Conferences have not often focused on such doctrinal issues, they have from time to time addressed the challenges that have arisen throughout the past century and a half. In fact, the initial 1867 Lambeth Conference was called, in part, to address issues of the church’s
teaching after Bishop John Colenso of Natal in South Africa expressed doubts about the
historicity of the Old Testament record.  

From the start, the Lambeth Conferences have appealed to the teaching of the *Book of Common Prayer* as providing the foundation for Anglican doctrine. The first Lambeth Conference did not elaborate on what might be deemed dogma or core doctrine but did state that teaching and practice throughout the Anglican Communion should be consistent with that of the 1662 Prayer Book and the practice of the Church of England:

> That, in order to the binding of the Churches of our colonial empire and the missionary Churches beyond them in the closest union with the Mother-Church, it is necessary that they receive and maintain without alteration the standards of faith and doctrine as now in use in that Church. That, nevertheless, each province should have the right to make such adaptations and additions to the services of the Church as its peculiar circumstances may require. Provided, that no change or addition be made inconsistent with the spirit and principles of the Book of Common Prayer, and that all such changes be liable to revision by any synod of the Anglican Communion in which the said province shall be represented.  

As strongly worded and definitive as the above may sound, by appealing to the Prayer Book and the position of the Church of England generally, rather than defining Anglican doctrine in more explicit and specific terms, the resolution leaves considerable room for interpretation. In fact, one could argue that in the case of at least one province—the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States—the church had altered aspects of the Church of England’s doctrine prior to first Lambeth Conference in eliminating the Athanasian Creed from its liturgical rites and agreed

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16 For a further description of the charges against Colenso and the impetus to establish the Lambeth Conferences see Chadwick’s introduction in *Resolutions*, iv-viii.

upon statements of faith. Although the Episcopal Church did “adopt” or “set forth” the Articles of Religion in 1801, they too were altered to exclude the Athanasian Creed and references to the British crown. Further, subscription to the Articles was never prescribed for ordination or other office in the Episcopal Church, thus allowing considerable latitude in belief among that church’s leaders.

The 1888 Lambeth Conference affirmed the special place of the 1662 Prayer Book in the life of the church and urged that no province alter it without consultation across the Communion. The

18 Marion Hatchett relates the history of the Athanasian Creed’s rejection, recording that English bishops, upon reviewing the 1786 proposed American Prayer Book, wrote back stating that they hoped it could be included, “even though the use of [it] should be left discreetional.” Marion J. Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 585. Likewise, the rejection of the creed was not universally appreciated at home, as Samuel Seabury attests: “With regard to the propriety of reading the Athanasian Creed in Church, I was never fully convinced. With regard to the impropriety of banishing it out of the Prayer-book I am clear…. And I do hope, though possibly I hope in vain, that Christian charity and love of union will one day bring that Creed into this book, were it only to stand as articles of faith stand; and to show that we do not renounce the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity as held in the Western Church.” Cited in Hatchett, *Commentary*, 585. The Athanasian Creed was finally included among the historical documents in the 1979 American Prayer Book.

19 *Common Prayer*, 869. The 1908 Lambeth Conference recognised the difficulty in incorporating and interpreting the Athanasian Creed in the Communion’s churches, calling for a new translation (Resolution 29), as well as latitude in its use or exclusion from liturgical life and teaching: “The Conference, having had under consideration the liturgical use of the Quicunque Vult, expresses its opinion that, in as much as the use or disuse of this hymn is not a term of communion, the several Churches of the Anglican Communion may rightly decide for themselves what in their varying circumstances is desirable; but the Conference urges that, if any change of rule or usage is made, full regard should be had to the maintenance of the Catholic faith in its integrity, to the commendation of that faith to the minds of men, and to the relief of disquieted consciences.” Resolution 11, 1908, *Resolutions*, 33.

20 Attempts were made at early conventions of the American Episcopal Church to adopt the Articles. In 1785 the church approved a revised and abridged version (reduced in number to twenty) for inclusion in the proposed 1786 book. That Prayer Book was not adopted. The proposed American *Book of Common Prayer* of 1786 is not readily available in print. However, it is online: [http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1786/BCP_1786.htm](http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/1786/BCP_1786.htm) (accessed 2/21/2013). Subsequent conventions in 1792 and 1795 unsuccessfully considered the Articles for adoption. Finally, in 1801, a modestly revised version was “set forth” in the next Prayer Book. However, their authoritative status in determining the church’s doctrine remained unclear and an 1804 attempt at requiring subscription was defeated. See Hatchett, *Commentary*, 585.

21 Resolution 10, 1888, *Resolutions*, 13. Later Conferences took a position with greater nuance, arguing for care in the revision of the Prayer Book and urging “forms of public worship more intelligible to uneducated
same Conference identified the Nicene Creed “as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith,”\(^{22}\) establishing the basis for core doctrine or dogma within Anglicanism, even as the resolution in question was directed toward ecumenical relationships, as we shall see in the section that follows. This emphasis on the Nicene faith has shaped Anglican doctrine in a profound way, allowing considerable latitude for theological expression beyond the Trinitarian articulation of the creed.

Despite the comprehensive attitude inherent in the above emphasis on the Nicene Creed as the doctrinal standard for the Communion, concern that too much latitude was being given in the theological interpretation of the creed, and particularly rejection of the historical miracles and events described therein, led the Conference of 1908 to issue the following resolution: “The Conference, in view of tendencies widely shown in the writings of the present day, hereby places on record its conviction that the historical facts stated in the Creeds are an essential part of the faith of the Church.”\(^{23}\) This concern for maintaining the veracity of the historical events described in the creeds was shared, especially, by Bishop Charles Gore, whom I will study in greater depth in chapter six. Yet even with the limits proposed by Gore and the 1908 Conference a considerable degree of latitude for theological exploration is implied, even if not stated. Over time the resulting diversity in theological expression would lead to a desire for further studies of


Anglican doctrine, undertaken by theological commissions of the various provinces and across the Communion.

2.2 Ecumenical Affairs

Since the nineteenth century Anglicans have heard a call to participate in the healing of divisions across the Christian household. We have seen that in the Articles of Religion efforts were made to define doctrine and practices insisted on by Protestants, while maintaining several important unreformed features of Catholic Christianity (or perhaps appealing to the more Catholic-leaning Lutherans). Thus, Anglicanism has seen itself as being uniquely able to offer reconciliation between separated Christian traditions. Swedish Lutheran theologian and bishop Gustaf Aulén attests to the same when he writes: “No other communion has made itself the spokesman for the ecumenical endeavour as energetically as the Anglicans…. The action of the Anglican church has been supported by the conviction that it has special opportunities to mediate and build bridges between the ‘old’ churches and the reformed communions, between ‘Catholic’ and ‘Protestant.’”

24 This Anglican approach to greater unity has been characterized by a desire for mutual recognition of ministry and faithful teaching. It has not called for a complete elimination of difference, whether theological, liturgical, or ministerial. Rather, it has approached the issue with a broad sense of openness to difference, in the conviction that agreement in the barest of essentials is sufficient.

Most significant in guiding ecumenical conversation between Anglicans and other Christian churches has been the “Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral,” adopted by the House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church, USA in 1886, and revised slightly and adopted by the 1888 Lambeth Conference. In adopting the Quadrilateral the bishops of the Episcopal Church stated:

1. Our earnest desire that the Savior’s prayer, “That we all may be one,” may, in its deepest and truest sense, be speedily fulfilled;

2. That we believe that all who have been duly baptized with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, are members of the Holy Catholic Church.

3. That in all things of human ordering or human choice, relating to modes of worship and discipline, or to traditional customs, this Church is ready in the spirit of love and humility to forego all preferences of her own;

4. That this Church does not seek to absorb other Communions, but rather, co-operating with them on the basis of a common Faith and Order, to discountenance schism, to heal the wounds of the Body of Christ, and to promote the charity which is the chief of Christian graces and the visible manifestation of Christ to the world.25

These points provide the foundation for an inclusive approach to Christian unity, allowing a broad diversity of practice and belief while recognizing the fundamental relatedness of all Christians in their shared baptism. Furthermore, they suggest that in the interests of unity the Episcopal Church would be willing to change and adapt, should that be deemed advantageous.

The impetus for the Quadrilateral was a desire by American Episcopalians, led by such figures as the Evangelicals William Augustus Muhlenberg (1796 to 1877) and Alonzo Potter (1800 to 1865), and the later Broad Church leader William Reed Huntington (1838 to 1909), for

comprehensive unity, both within the Episcopal Church itself and among the various Christian
denominations, emphasising the common work of the church toward the needs of American
society, especially following the Civil War and in line with the Social Gospel movement.\textsuperscript{26}
Michael Bourgeois writes, “the Broad Church movement was characterized by its emphasis on
the practical work of the church, tolerance of diverse theological beliefs and liturgical practices,
and vigorous pursuit of religious truth. As a result, it helped shift the Episcopal Church’s
attention away from partisan disputes among those within to addressing the manifold needs of
those without.”\textsuperscript{27}

With regard to comprehensive ecclesial unity, the Broad Church Episcopalians, like their
progressive Evangelical forebears in William Augustus Muhlenberg and Alonzo Potter,
envisioned a reconciled American church under a common episcopate and administration of the
sacraments of baptism and eucharist and maintaining the faith expressed in the Nicene Creed, but
without preference for any particular liturgical form. They believed that the Episcopal Church
was uniquely suited to leadership in that task, having maintained the essential features of historic
Christianity, while incorporating also the insights and teachings of the Reformation. In 1870 in

\textsuperscript{26} In addition to Huntington, leading Broad Church Episcopalians of this era included: Alexander Viets
Griswold Allen (1841 to 1908), Phillips Brooks (1835 to 1893), Thomas March Clark (1812 to 1903), Henry C.
Potter (1835 to 1908), W. S. Rainsford (1850 to 1933), Edward A. Washburn (1819 to 1881), and Henry B. Whipple
(1822 to 1901). The Philadelphia Divinity School, founded by Alonzo Potter in 1857, and the Episcopal Theological
School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, established in 1869 were Evangelical in their founding, but adopted Broad
Church theological and social positions early on. They merged as merged as Episcopal Divinity School in 1974. See
Matthew Peter Cadwell, \textit{A History of the Episcopal Divinity School: In Celebration of its Twenty-fifth Anniversary}

\textsuperscript{27} Michael Bourgeois, \textit{All Things Human: Henry Codman Potter and the Social Gospel in the Episcopal
Church} (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 2004), 32.
his *The Church-Idea: An Essay Towards Unity*, from which the Quadrilateral arises, William Reed Huntington wrote:

> If our whole ambition as Anglicans in America be to continue a small, but eminently respectable body of Christians, and to offer a refuge to people of refinement and sensibility, who are shocked by the irreverences they are apt to encounter elsewhere; in a word, if we care to be only a countercheck and not a force in society, then let us say as much in plain terms, and frankly renounce any and all claim to Catholicity. We have only, in such a case, to wrap the robe of our dignity about us, and walk quietly about in a seclusion no one will take much trouble to disturb. Thus may we be a Church in name and a sect in deed.

> But if we aim at something nobler than this, if we would have our Communion become national in very truth—in other words, if we would bring the Church of Christ into the closest possible sympathy with the throbbing, sorrowing, sinning, repenting, aspiring heart of this great people—then let us press our reasonable claims to be the reconciler of a divided household, not in a spirit of arrogance (which ill befits those whose best possessions have come to them by inheritance) but with affectionate earnestness and an intelligent zeal. We have not, as a communion, such a monopoly of either piety or learning in this land that we can afford to be contemptuous, even if that temper were ever permissible in the Christian Church. But we have, through the blessing of God, the title deeds of the old homestead in our hands; we sit by the hearthstone of the English-speaking race; and ought we to be blamed for thinking that if the family can be gathered anywhere in peace it must be here? Nay, when our fellow Christians tell us that this or that feature of our system is a bar to unity, may we not ask them charitably to consider whether, along with our disadvantages, there be not advantages not to be found elsewhere, and whether, when the right time comes, it be not possible that we may have something to contribute towards, as well as something to sacrifice for, the Church of the Reconciliation?²⁸

The wisdom of the movement toward Christian unity, emphasised by Huntington and the Broad Church Episcopalians and embraced in principle by the Episcopal Church in 1886 for its own ecumenical endeavours, was shared by the bishops of the Anglican Communion in their adoption of the Quadrilateral in 1888, making some minor changes to the earlier American version. As adopted it reads:

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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:

(a) 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.

(b) The Apostles’ Creed, as the Baptismal Symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith.

(c) 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.

(d) 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.

The principle underlying the Quadrilateral, as expressed by Huntington and affirmed by the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion, is the belief that these four aspects of the church’s life, doctrine, and practice are essential, while other aspects, and even the interpretation of what these four tenets might mean and how they are adopted and practiced, are appropriately open to diversity of thought, local custom, and need.

In the Lambeth Conference of 1920 the principles of the Quadrilateral were reaffirmed and a vision of a reunited Christianity was articulated within which Anglicanism had the potential to play a significant role. This vision does not include an elimination of distinctive theological, liturgical, or ministerial practice among traditions that had been separated. Rather, it sees in the resultant diversity the full richness of the Body of Christ. In an appeal to all Christian people the bishops of the Anglican Communion agreed to the following:

29 Resolution 11, Lambeth Conference 1888, Resolutions, 13.
The vision which rises before us is that of a Church, genuinely Catholic, loyal to all truth, and gathering into its fellowship all “who profess and call themselves Christians”, within whose visible unity all the treasures of faith and order, bequeathed as a heritage by the past to the present, shall be possessed in common, and made serviceable to the whole Body of Christ. Within this unity Christian Communions now separated from one another would retain much that has long been distinctive in their methods of worship and service. It is through a rich diversity of life and devotion that the unity of the whole fellowship will be fulfilled.\(^\text{30}\)

This vision has guided Anglican churches in their work toward greater Christian unity with a broad spectrum of denominational traditions, including among others Old Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Eastern Orthodox, and Roman Catholic. It sees value in diversity of thought and practice and it does not believe that any single person or group has a complete or sufficient grasp of Christian truth. While not every attempt at union and/or full-communion has been successful, some have been, including agreements reached with Old Catholic churches, Lutheran churches in North America and Scandinavia, Moravian churches, as well as the creation of united churches in India, of which Anglicans have been integral partners. In each case, allowance for diverse beliefs and practices are affirmed within the principles set forth by the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral. Thus, in practical ways, the Anglican tradition has worked for the union of divided Christian peoples while upholding the value of diversity as central to the churches’ reality in the larger Body of Christ.

\(^{30}\) Resolutions, 46-47.
2.3 Liturgical Revision

Alongside attention given to ecumenical relations, Lambeth Conferences have devoted energy to issues of liturgical revision and the place of the Book of Common Prayer in the various Anglican churches. More than any other single document, the Prayer Book has been interpreted as the central and perhaps even essential unifying bond, both liturgically and doctrinally, for Anglicans the world over.31 From the start, the Conferences recognised the appropriateness of autonomous provinces adapting the Book of Common Prayer as required by local context. Yet, as we saw in the above consideration of doctrine, they have urged provinces to maintain the core of traditional Anglican liturgical practice and doctrinal belief as set forth in the historical Prayer Books.

The Conferences have called for both wide consultation and restraint in effecting liturgical revision, arguing that the Prayer Book belongs to all Anglicans, not one province alone. For example, the 1888 Conference argued that since the Prayer Book “is not the possession of one diocese or province, but of all, and that a revision in one portion of the Anglican Communion must therefore be extensively felt, this Conference is of opinion that no particular portion of the Church should undertake revision without seriously considering the possible effect of such action on other branches of the Church.”32 Over time, however, they gradually embraced efforts to craft

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31 Resolution 78a, 1948, Resolutions,112.

32 Resolution 10, 1888, Resolutions,12.
liturgical rites that express the increasing diversity of global Anglicanism. This position, allowing for diverse liturgical expressions, had been likewise expressed by William Reed Huntington, who was the leading reviser of the American Prayer Book in 1892 and wrote: “the Anglican system, in requiring conformity to one, and only one liturgy, is manifestly at variance with the Anglican principle, which appeals to primitive catholic usage for terms of unity…”

Given the above license, since the late twentieth century some provinces have undertaken a thorough revision of the Prayer Book itself, such as in the Episcopal Church, USA (*Book of Common Prayer*, 1979). In other cases, such as in the Anglican Church of Canada (*Book of Alternative Services* 1985) and the Church of England (*Alternative Service Book*, 1980; *Common Worship*, 2000), alternatives have been adopted while preserving more historic forms of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Liturgical rites in a variety of languages have also flourished throughout the Communion, including some that are simply translations of the traditional Prayer Book, while in other provinces efforts have been made to craft liturgies that are products of the cultural experiences and world-views of worshipers, *A New Zealand Prayer Book* (1997) being a prime example. Thus, over time the concept of Common Prayer has evolved, from an early conformity to a single language and form of prayer, rooted in the 1662 Prayer Book, to a newer understanding that recognises the validity of multiple forms, expressions, and languages, united in intent and history, if not actual text.

33 In 1897 the bishops adopted the following: “That this Conference ... recognises in each bishop within his jurisdiction the exclusive right of adapting the services in the Book of Common Prayer to local circumstances, and also of directing or sanctioning the use of additional prayers, subject to such limitations as may be imposed by provincial or other lawful authority, provided also that any such adaptation shall not affect the doctrinal teaching or value of the service or passage thus adapted.” Resolution 46, 1897, *Resolutions*, 24.

34 Huntington, *Church-Idea*, 148-149.
Significant, also, in the considerations of liturgical revision is the place and role of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion in or bound with the provinces’ Prayer Books. Recognizing that the Articles as received were accorded different degrees of authority across the Anglican provinces, the 1968 Lambeth Conference called for each province to consider how the Articles are to be used and suggests that they be interpreted liberally. With some dissent, the Conference adopted the following resolution:

The Conference accepts the main conclusion of the Report of the Archbishops’ Commission on Christian Doctrine entitled Subscription and Assent to the Thirty-nine Articles (1968) and in furtherance of its recommendation:

a) suggests that each Church of our Communion consider whether the Articles need to be bound up with its Prayer Book;

b) suggests to the Churches of the Anglican Communion that assent to the Thirty-nine Articles be no longer required of ordinands;

c) suggests that, when subscription is required to the Articles or other elements in the Anglican tradition, it should be required, and given, only in the context of a statement which gives the full range of our inheritance of faith and sets the Articles in their historical context.  

The result of these considerations of revision has been that some provinces have maintained a Prayer Book and liturgical tradition closely resembling the English Prayer Book of 1662 and a general adherence to the Articles of Religion. Others have adopted more thorough revisions, both in terms of the liturgical rites themselves, as well as the place of the Articles. These different approaches to liturgical rites, and also to the doctrinal content of the liturgy, highlight the variances in worship and teaching within the Anglican tradition, expressing in a concrete way the breadth and scope of Anglican comprehensiveness.

Resolution 43, 1968, Resolutions, 165.
2.4 Contraception

An area of significant evolution in Anglican thought addressed by successive Lambeth Conferences is the matter of artificial contraception and family planning. Early Conferences were condemnatory of the practice, arguing that contraception interfered with God’s intention for marriage relationships and led to undue selfishness and sensuality. However, over time the Conferences allowed greater latitude and individual discernment. Most notably, following the *Humanae vitae* encyclical issued by Pope Paul VI 1968, the Lambeth Conference offered its contrary position, affirming a couple’s appropriate discernment in the use of contraception.\(^{36}\) A brief consideration of the successive resolutions will demonstrate the Communion’s evolving mind on this issue.

The matter of contraception was first addressed by the 1908 Lambeth Conference and condemned it in strong and unequivocal terms. The bishops passed the following resolution: “The Conference regards with alarm the growing practice of artificial restriction of the family, and earnestly calls upon all Christian people to dissemble the use of all artificial means of restriction as demoralising to character and hostile to national welfare.”\(^ {37}\)


\(^ {37}\) Resolution 41, 1908, *Resolutions*, 35.
The 1920 Conference undertook a wider consideration of marriage, sexual morality, and family life. Despite expressing concern over the increase in sexually contracted diseases, it offered an unwavering condemnation of contraception and prophylactics. It argued that the "unchangeable Christian standard" of chastity before and after marriage required "universal obligation." Specifically with regard to contraception the Conference passed a more thorough and strongly worded resolution than in 1908. It read:

The Conference, while declining to lay down rules which will meet the needs of every abnormal case, regards with grave concern the spread in modern society of theories and practices hostile to the family. We utter an emphatic warning against the use of unnatural means for the avoidance of conception, together with the grave dangers—physical, moral, and religious—thereby incurred, and against the evils with which the extension of such use threatens the race. In opposition to the teachings which, under the name of science and religion, encourages married people in the deliberate cultivation of sexual union as an end in itself, we steadfastly uphold what must always be regarded as the governing considerations of Christian marriage. One is the primary purpose for which marriage exists, namely the continuation of the race through the gift and heritage of children; the other is the paramount importance in married life of deliberate and thoughtful self-control.

By the 1930 Lambeth Conference, however, the bishops’ position on contraception had softened. While the Conference argued that sexual activity outside marriage constitutes a "grievous sin" unmitigated by contraception, expressed its "abhorrance" over abortion, and insisted that the primary purpose of marriage is procreation, it also held that "the sexual instinct is a holy thing implanted by God in human nature." Thus, it allowed for the use of contraception provided appropriate Christian discernment were employed by the married couple. While not unanimously

38 Resolution 66, 1920, Resolutions, 64.
39 Resolution 68, 1920, Resolutions, 65.
40 Resolution 13, 1930, Resolutions, 72. See also Resolutions 16-18, 1930, Resolutions, 73.
adopted, the resolution received a substantial majority of 74% voting in the affirmative: 193 in favour, 67 against. The resolution adopted read:

Where there is a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, the method must be decided upon Christian principles. The primary and obvious method is complete abstinence from intercourse (as far as may be necessary) in a life of discipline and self-control lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless in those cases where there is such a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, and where there is a morally sound reason for avoiding complete abstinence, the Conference agrees that other methods may be used, provided that this is done in the light of the same Christian principles. The Conference records its strong condemnation of the use of any method of conception control from motives of selfishness, luxury, and mere convenience.\(^{41}\)

The subsequent 1948 Lambeth Conference, held after the conclusion of World War II, did not consider issues of contraception, instead focusing on divorce, remarriage, and interdenominational marriages.\(^{42}\) However, the 1958 Conference again took up the issue, focusing on “the family in contemporary society.” The Conference emphasised, as had previous conferences, that the appropriate context for sexual relations is marriage. Further, it stressed that “sexual love is not an end in itself nor a means to self-gratification, and that self-discipline and restraint are essential considerations of the responsible freedom of marriage and family planning.”\(^{43}\) With regard to contraception within marriage, however, there was a significant relaxing of language, with no reference to abstinence and stressing that responsibility for determining family planning lies with the Christian couple, including consideration of family resources in the ability to support children, as well as population concerns.\(^{44}\) Thus, in the space

\(^{41}\) Resolution 15, 1930, *Resolutions*, 72.


\(^{43}\) Resolution 113, 1959, *Resolutions*, 147.

\(^{44}\) Resolution 115, 1958, *Resolutions*, 147.
of just fifty years the mind of the Communion had shifted dramatically from one of outright condemnation to the support of individual choice and personal discernment.

The 1958 resolution affirming the use of contraception when deemed appropriate by the married couple was reiterated a decade later in response to *Humanae vitae*. The bishops agreed that:

> The responsibility for deciding upon the number and frequency of children has been laid by God upon the consciences of parents everywhere: that this planning, in such ways as are mutually acceptable to husband and wife in Christian conscience, is a right and important factor in Christian family life and should be the result of positive choice before God. Such responsible parenthood, built on obedience to all the duties of marriage, requires a wise stewardship of the resources and abilities of the family as well as a thoughtful consideration of the varying population needs and problems of society and the claims of future generations.45

Although the above resolutions do not deal directly with the issue of comprehensiveness, the evolving perspective on a matter of Christian morality points to a recognition among Anglicans that church teaching can change and that over time a diversity of perspectives will be adopted. Nothing in the more lenient resolutions of the later decades requires couples to use contraception, but they affirm implicitly that an increasing plurality of lifestyles and circumstances require a flexible approach within the broadest understanding of Christian (and Anglican) teaching.

2.5 Ordination of Women

A fifth issue commanding our attention is the Anglican approach to the issue of the ordination of women to Holy Orders. The earliest reference to a unique order of ministry for women was by the Lambeth Conference of 1897, which commended the ministry of deaconesses, as well as those of religious orders, to the wider church.\textsuperscript{46} By 1920 the Lambeth Conference had moved to explicitly exclude women from the traditional orders of bishop, priest, and deacon, while continuing the recommendation that they be ordained as deaconesses: “The order of deaconess is the one and only order of the ministry which has the stamp of apostolic approval, and is for women the only order of ministry which we can recommend that our branch of the Catholic Church should recognise and use.”\textsuperscript{47} This statement was reaffirmed a decade later by the 1930 Conference,\textsuperscript{48} which also provided greater direction as to the form of a deaconess’s ordination, including “prayer by the bishop and the laying on of hands, the delivery of the New Testament to the candidate, and a formula giving authority to execute the office of deaconess in the Church of God.”\textsuperscript{49}

Like all Lambeth Conference resolutions, the above were non-binding and the first Anglican woman was ordained to the priesthood in 1944 in Hong Kong, resulting in serious debate of this

\textsuperscript{46} Resolution 11, 1897, \textit{Resolutions}, 18.

\textsuperscript{47} Resolution 48, 1920, \textit{Resolutions}, 60.

\textsuperscript{48} Resolution 67, 1930, \textit{Resolutions}, 89.

\textsuperscript{49} Resolution 68, 1930, \textit{Resolutions}, 89.
issue in 1948 and continuing into the twenty-first century. In response to a request from the Church in China that deaconesses be ordained as priests for an experimental period of 20 years, the Lambeth Conference of 1948 argued “in its opinion such an experiment would be against ... tradition and order and would gravely affect the internal and external relations of the Anglican Communion.” Later Conferences, however, have expressed greater ambiguity on the issue, particularly since 1978, after which women were being ordained in ever increasing numbers throughout the Communion.

Throughout the debates, the Conferences have attempted to hold in some tension diverse and even conflicting perspectives, arguing that in a climate of mutuality and respect differences of belief and practice can be accommodated. While the Lambeth Conferences have not had the authority to speak definitively on the subject either for the Communion or for individual Anglican churches, the voice of the bishops has contributed to the debate in a substantial way.

Over time, the office of deaconess came to be viewed by many as insufficient in fulfilling women’s calls to ministry with efforts made to open the three traditional orders to women as well. By the Lambeth Conference of 1968 the bishops agreed that the “theological arguments at

50 Florence Li Tim Oi (1907 to 1992) was ordained to the priesthood on January 25, 1944 in the Diocese of Victoria, Hong Kong by Bishop Ronald Hall when Japanese occupation prevented other clergy from reaching the Macau Hall region. Following a request for restraint by Anglican Communion partners the practice of ordaining women ceased and Li Tim Oi served much of her ministry as a deacon. Women were again ordained to the priesthood in Hong Kong in 1971 and Li Tim Oi recognised as an Anglican presbyter, serving in China and Canada.

51 Resolution 113, 1948, Resolutions, 119.
present presented for and against the ordination of women to the priesthood are inconclusive.”52

The language used here suggested that the issue was not closed and that further discussion and discernment was needed. The Conference called for each national church to study the issue of the ordination of women, taking into consideration the practices and experiences of non-Anglican churches which at that time ordained women, and to present its findings to the Anglican Consultative Council.

Prior to proceeding with any definitive decisions or actions on ordaining women the bishops also called for provinces to seek and consider the advice of the Consultative Council.53 In addition, the 1968 conference passed a resolution recommending that the diaconate be open to both men and women; that “those made deaconesses by laying-on of hands with appropriate prayers be declared to be within the diaconate;” and “that appropriate canonical legislation be enacted by provinces and regional Churches to provide for those already ordained deaconesses.”54 Thus, the Lambeth Conference acknowledged that views and practices within the Communion had evolved over time, exhibiting both the ability and need for the church to change and adapt its understanding when new circumstances and insights required it to do so.

By the next Lambeth Conference in 1978 the ordination of women to the three traditional orders of bishop, priest, and deacon had been authorized in several provinces, with women regularly

52 Resolution 34, 1968, Resolutions, 163.
53 Resolutions 35, 36, 37, 1968, Resolutions, 163-164.
54 This resolution, while passed, reflected a closely divided body with 221 voting in favour, 183 against. Resolution 32, 1968, Resolutions, 162-163.
being ordained to the diaconate and priesthood,\textsuperscript{55} thus generating the need for yet another response by the Lambeth Conference. The Conference enacted resolutions that presented a dramatic shift in Anglican thinking on the topic, while upholding the legitimacy of diverse practices and points of view. Consistent with its 1968 resolution, the bishops called for women to be ordained as deacons rather than as deaconesses.\textsuperscript{56}

With regard to the practice of ordaining women to the priesthood the Conference called for parties with differing views to maintain generosity in their disagreement—both within individual provinces and between them—while acknowledging the rights of individual provinces to make their own decisions on such matters. I would argue that in so doing, the Conference articulated the essence of Anglican comprehensiveness, allowing space for disagreement while urging unity in Christ at a deeper level. “Resolution 21: Women in the priesthood” expresses the general mind of the Conference on this issue. In part it states:

2. The Conference acknowledges that both the debate about the ordination of women as well as the ordinations themselves have, in some Churches, caused distress and pain to many on both sides. To heal these and to maintain and strengthen fellowship is a primary pastoral responsibility of all, and especially of the bishops.

3. The Conference also recognises (a) the autonomy of each of its member Churches, acknowledging the legal right of each Church to make its own decisions about the appropriateness of admitting women to Holy Orders; (b) that such provincial action in this matter has consequences of the utmost significance for the Anglican Communion as a whole.

4. The Conference affirms its commitment to the preservation of unity within and between all member Churches of the Anglican Communion.

\textsuperscript{55} Provinces ordaining women at this point included the Diocese of Hong Kong, the Anglican Church of Canada, the Episcopal Church, USA, and the Church of the Province of New Zealand. Resolutions, 186.

\textsuperscript{56} Resolution 20, 1978, Resolutions, 185.
5. The Conference therefore (a) encourages all member Churches of the Anglican Communion to continue in communion with one another, notwithstanding the admission of women (whether at present or in the future) to the ordained ministry of some member Churches; (b) in circumstances in which the issue of the ordination of women has caused, or may cause, problems of conscience, urges that every action possible be taken to ensure that all baptized members of the Church continue to be in communion with their bishop and that every opportunity be given for all members to work together in the mission of the Church irrespective of their convictions regarding this issue....

7. We recognise that our accepting this variety of doctrine and practice in the Anglican Communion may disappoint the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Old Catholic Churches, but we wish to make it clear (a) that the holding together of diversity within a unity of faith and worship is part of the Anglican heritage; (b) that those who have taken part in these ordinations of women to the priesthood believe that these ordinations have been into the historic ministry of the Church as the Anglican Communion has received it; and (c) that we hope the dialogue between these other Churches and the member Churches of our Communion will continue because we believe that we still have understanding of the truth of God and his will to learn from them as together we all move towards a fuller catholicity and a deeper fellowship in the Holy Spirit....

Despite the contentiousness of the issue, the above resolution was passed by a significant margin (316 for, 37 against, 17 abstain), highlighting Anglicanism’s ability to hold in tension a “variety of doctrine and practice.” By 1988 the issue of contention had moved from the ordination of women to the priesthood to the consecration of women to the episcopate. While no province had yet consecrated, elected, or appointed a woman to the episcopate, it was expected soon.

Therefore, the Lambeth Conference called each province to “respect the decision and attitudes of

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58 The General Convention of the Episcopal Church, USA, had approved the ordination of women to the episcopate in 1976 when it authorized the ordination of women to the priesthood. By 1988 the Anglican Church of Canada and the church in New Zealand had also approved the principle of ordination of women to the episcopate. Autumn of 1988 three women were on ballots for election in the Episcopal Church, USA: Barbara C. Harris and Denise Haines, nominees for bishop suffragan in Massachusetts and Margo Maris, nominee for bishop suffragan in Minnesota. Harris was elected in Massachusetts on September 24, 1988 and consecrated the first woman bishop in the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion on February 11, 1989. Penelope Jamieson was elected bishop of Dunedin in New Zealand in December 1990. Harris’ election, in particular, led to the establishment of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Commission on Communion and Women in the Episcopate (the “Eames Commission”) that sought to study how the Communion could maintain unity in light of disagreement on the ordination of women and other significant matters.
other provinces in the ordination or consecration of women to the episcopate, without such respect necessarily indicating acceptance of the principles involved, maintaining the highest possible degree of communion with the provinces which differ.”

2.6 Defining Comprehensiveness

In addition to resolutions passed by the various Lambeth Conferences, reports prepared to guide discussion have also addressed the issue of comprehensiveness, both directly and indirectly. Of particular importance is the report “Renewal in Unity,” focusing on ecumenism, prepared for the 1968 Lambeth Conference. Included in it is an attempt to articulate what comprehensiveness has meant for the Anglican tradition.

Comprehensiveness is an attitude of mind which Anglicans have learned from the thought-provoking controversies of their history... Comprehensiveness demands agreement on fundamentals, while tolerating disagreement on matters in which Christians may differ without feeling the necessity of breaking communion. In the mind of an Anglican, comprehensiveness is not compromise. Nor is it to bargain one truth for another. It is not a sophisticated word for syncretism. Rather it implies that the apprehension of truth is a growing thing: we only gradually succeed in “knowing the truth.” It has been the tradition of Anglicanism to contain within one body both Protestant and Catholic elements. But there is a continuing search for the whole truth in which these elements will find complete reconciliation. Comprehensiveness implies a willingness to allow liberty of interpretation, with a certain slowness in arresting or restraining exploratory thinking....

While the above is not an authoritative definition of Anglican comprehensiveness, it highlights several of the operative values and serves as a useful guide for further exploration of what this

59 Resolution 1: The ordination or consecration of women to the episcopate, 1988, Resolutions, 193.

60 “Renewal in Unity,” 140-141.
concept has meant and may mean into the future. In particular, it suggests that Anglicanism understands that it does not have definitive theological answers for every potential issue, and therefore is open to new possibilities and new sources of knowledge. While the result may be less than certain, the process is open and honest.

From the initial meeting in 1867, the Lambeth Conferences have sought to help the Anglican Communion resolve tensions that have arisen both within and across provinces. While the resolutions passed are not binding on member churches, they have a moral weight that calls for them to be received with the greatest seriousness. As we have seen, the Lambeth Conference has historically embraced a comprehensive approach in its dealings with significant disagreements and differences in practice. The Conferences acknowledge that it is fully consistent with the character of the church for diverse practices and different belief systems to operate, even within the same faith tradition. Rather than calling for uniformity or conformity, the Conferences have urged the highest degree of open communication, trust, and cooperation.

3 Church of England Doctrine Commissions

Among the richest areas for Anglican theological exploration have been the Church of England’s successive Doctrine Commissions, drawing upon the wisdom, insight, and scholarship of many of Anglicanism’s brightest theological minds, including William Temple, Walter Moberly, J. K. Mozley, Oscar Quick, Edward Gordon Selwyn, Ian Ramsey, A. M. Allchin, John Macquarrie, Geoffrey Lampe, Hugh Montefiore, Dennis Nineham, J. I. Packer, Maurice Wiles, Paul Avis, Sarah Coakley, Stephen Sykes, Peter Selby, Rowan Williams, N. T. Wright, and Geoffrey
Rowell, among others. The Church of England has no authority to legislate or even propose doctrine for the wider Anglican Communion, yet its theological and ecclesiological studies and reports are taken seriously by Anglicans across the Communion as a result of the strength and scope of the Commissions’ respective reports. Although the more recent Doctrine Commission reports have attempted to offer a unified perspective on matters under consideration, the reports of the early Commissions were marked particularly by recognition of the breadth of Anglican belief and practice.

3.1 1938 Report: Doctrine in the Church of England

The Church of England’s first Doctrine Commission was formed in 1922, initially under the chairmanship of Hubert Burge, bishop of Oxford, and subsequently William Temple, then bishop of Manchester. Most commission members were on the faculties of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. While there was a conscious attempt to represent the diverse views within the church, Evangelical voices were limited. The stated purpose of the Commission was to address the theological tensions across the Church of England’s different schools of thought that “were imperiling its unity.” 61 Issues of contention included divergent liturgical practices between Anglo-Catholics, Evangelicals, and liberal theological interpretations on matters such as the virgin birth tradition, resurrection, and the Incarnation. The Doctrine Commission’s report was issued in 1938, by which time Temple was archbishop of York.

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61 *Doctrine in the Church*, 4.
The 1938 report considered a variety of topics with regard to Christian doctrine, including scripture and its interpretation, Articles of Religion, the person and work of Christ, sin, the sacraments, the virgin birth tradition, the resurrection, and the historic episcopate. The commission discovered over its sixteen years of deliberation that rather than being able to articulate a unified Anglican belief on the matters under study, the multiple perspectives on many of these doctrinal issues required instead a looser description of the breadth of Anglican belief. Indeed, the report included a description of Anglican comprehensiveness and urged caution against any attempt to force Anglican belief into an overly narrow articulation of doctrine. Yet, the report does recognise limits to what might be considered the appropriate interpretation of doctrine. It stated (cited also at the outset of this work):

> The Anglican Churches have received and hold the faith of Catholic Christendom, but they have exhibited a rich variety in methods both of approach and of interpretation. They are heirs of the Reformation as well as of Catholic tradition; and they hold together in a single fellowship of worship and witness those whose chief attainment is to each of these, and also those whose attitude to the distinctively Christian tradition is most deeply affected by the tradition of a free and liberal culture which is historically the bequest of the Greek spirit and was recovered for Western Europe at the Renaissance. The removal or diminution of differences within the Church of England can only be rightly effected by the discovery of the synthesis which does justice to all of these…

In his introduction William Temple writes: “At some points we have expressed our conviction that various types of doctrine are permissible; and at others we have indicted a clear line beyond which any doctrine or interpretation would seem to us not permissible.” Even so, the purpose of the report was not to set the limits of Anglican belief or to enforce theological orthodoxy, but

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62 *Doctrine in the Church*, 25.

63 *Doctrine in the Church*, 3.
“to examine the differences of interpretation current in the Church of England and to elucidate the relations of these one to another.”\textsuperscript{64} The report’s findings on several matters point to the commission’s acceptance of the comprehensive nature of Anglican belief and practice:

interpretation of the Anglican formularies (particularly the creeds and the Articles of Religion), belief in the virgin birth and resurrection, and interpretation of the sacraments.

On the matter of assent to the traditional Anglican formularies, the report states:

\begin{quote}
General acceptance, implicit if not explicit, of the authoritative formularies, doctrinal and liturgical, by which the meaning of the Gospel has been defined, safeguarded, or expressed, may reasonably be expected from members of the Church…

Assent to the formularies and the use of liturgical language in public worship should be understood as signifying such general acceptance without implying detailed assent to every phrase or proposition thus employed…

Subject to the above, a member of the Church should not be held to be involved in dishonesty merely on the ground that, in spite of some divergence from the tradition of the Church, he has assented to formularies or makes use of the Church’s liturgical language in public worship…

If any authorised teacher puts forward personal opinions which diverge (within the limits indicated above) from the traditional teaching of the Church, he should be careful to distinguish between such opinions and the normal teaching which he gives in the Church’s name; and so far as possible such divergences should be so put forward as to avoid offending consciences…

In respect to the exercise of discipline within such limits as the above resolutions recognise, great regard should be paid to the need for securing a free consensus, as distinct from an enforced uniformity.\textsuperscript{65}
\end{quote}

Having these principles, the Commission addressed several areas of doctrinal disagreement, including the virgin birth tradition and Jesus’ resurrection. While the report restates the “traditional” beliefs, it does not argue that they are the only acceptable understandings of these

\textsuperscript{64} \textit{Doctrine in the Church}, 7.

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Doctrine in the Church}, 38-39. The report notes that some Commission members believed that the resolution allowing a teacher to express a personal belief apart from the faith of the church offered too wide latitude for divergence, 39.
doctrines. For example, with regard to the virgin birth tradition it offers the following perspective: “Many of us hold...that belief in the Word made flesh is integrally bound up with belief in the Virgin Birth... There are, however, some among us who hold that a full belief in the historical Incarnation is more consistent with the supposition that our Lord’s birth took place under the normal circumstances of human generation. In their minds the notion of a Virgin Birth tends to mar the completeness of the belief that in the Incarnation God revealed Himself at every point in and through human nature.” The report goes on to emphasise, significantly, that regardless of their divergent views members are unanimous in their affirmation of the Incarnation as a central truth of the Christian faith, and one to which each subscribes.

The report employs nuance in presenting the variety of interpretations of the biblical and creedal accounts of Jesus’ resurrection, citing the range of scriptural testimony about it. The Commission concludes its report on the resurrection writing:

> Even if we had before us the fullest conceivable statements written down by everyone of the eye-witnesses themselves, the difference of opinion mentioned, so far as it refers to the Resurrection appearances, would not necessarily be diminished, and might even be intensified. For no visual experience is devoid of all element of subjective interpretation. And, even if the full and undisputed elements could be studied, there would still be room for difference of judgment, (a) as to how much was seen with the bodily eye, and how much with spiritual vision; (b) how much was objectively given, and how much was the contribution of subjective interpretation; (c) how much was of what is admitted to be subjective interpretation may nevertheless be considered true.

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66 *Doctrine in the Church*, 82.

67 *Doctrine in the Church*, 83.

68 *Doctrine in the Church*, 88.
Finally for the purposes of the present study, mention of the report’s consideration of different beliefs with regard to the eucharist is merited. The Commission was established in part in response to early twentieth century tensions between Anglicans as a result of eucharistic theologies and divergent practices, especially among some the reservation, adoration, and veneration of the sacrament. The report suggests that the two dominant schools of thought within Anglicanism are “Real Presence” and “Receptionism.” It does not choose between the two, but suggests the following as an Anglican approach to eucharistic belief:

It remains to be said that perhaps the strongest and most characteristic tradition of Anglicanism is to affirm such a real presence of Christ in the Eucharist as enables the faithful communicant both to receive His life as a spiritual gift and to acknowledge Him as the giver, while at the same time the affirmation is combined with a determination to avoid as far as possible all precise, scholastic definitions as to the manner of giving. It seems unfair to force into an artificial classification as though they were adherents of a particular “middle” theory those who are thus reluctant to commit themselves to definition. Many Anglicans would point to the fact that their Church does not require them to hold any particular theory as to the manner of Eucharistic Presence, and would say that for their part they find it quite unnecessary to do so.  

Thus, the report articulates the essence of Anglican comprehensiveness, allowing room for a wide diversity of belief, even regarding something as central to the church’s life as its sacraments. Rather than forcing believers to adopt one view or another, it is comfortable in allowing difference in the understanding that whatever one believes of the sacrament, Christ’s life is communicated to the recipient.

The findings of the 1938 report were not greeted with universal acclaim. While many were pleased with the attempt to articulate the breadth of Anglican belief, traditionalists argued that it

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69 *Doctrine in the Church*, 170-171.

70 *Doctrine in the Church*, liii.
enshrined beliefs perceived as unorthodox within the church’s official teaching. Concerns were so strong in some quarters that petitions were signed by over 8,000 clergy calling for the report’s condemnation and rejection. Among those calling for repudiation were the Oxford Evangelical Conference, the National Church League, the Executive Committee of the Central Evangelical Council, the Federation of Catholic Priests, and the Superior General of the Society of St. John the Evangelist. Despite these calls for an explicit rejection, no action was taken against the report by any church-wide body and it stood as a representation of the open mind and attitude toward comprehensiveness of the Church of England in its age. However, the year the report was issued Germany began its advances in Europe and a year later Great Britain was at war. Thus, the report’s impact was limited.

3.2 1976 Report: Christian Believing

A subsequent Doctrine Commission was called into being in 1967 under the leadership of Ian Ramsey, bishop of Durham. Following his death in 1972 the chairmanship passed to Maurice Wiles, with membership represented by the various schools of thought within Anglicanism, including more Evangelical voices. While some of the points of contention identified in the early decades of the twentieth century had receded in significance, such as eucharistic devotion, the breadth of theological expression had not diminished and, in fact, may have increased. Thus, the Doctrine Commission was assigned the task of exploring “the Nature of the Christian Faith and

\[71\] *Doctrine in the Church*, liv-lv.
its Expression in the Holy Scriptures and Creeds.” The result was a smaller and more modest report than in 1938.

Rather than offering an interpretation of Anglican belief on all topics covered in the creeds, the report offered a more general appraisal of the ways that Anglicans in the 1970s interacted with scripture and received the creeds, both appreciatively and critically. *Christian Believing: The Nature of the Christian Faith and its Expression in Holy Scripture and Creeds* was published in 1976. The report was agreed to unanimously, but such agreement was not easily achieved. In addition to the main report, several members of the Commission added their own essays reflecting their approach to the matters under consideration.

Even more than the 1938 Report, *Christian Believing* highlighted the diversity of views among Anglicans and the multiple approaches to scripture and Christian doctrine. The report did not endorse or urge any particular view, suggesting that diversity of belief has been inherent within the church community since the first century. What is shared is a commitment to the Christian faith as lived within the community of the church. The report states:

> The tension must be endured. What is important is that everything should be done (and suffered) to make it a creative tension—that is, not a state of non-communication between mutually embattled groups but one of constant dialogue with consequent cross-fertilization of ideas and insights. The quality of this dialogue is determined by three separable factors. First, it takes place within the community of faith. It is not simply an intellectual debate but an unceasing effort of brothers in Christ, by every resource of prayer, thought, and common service, to come to the fuller comprehension of the truth apprehended by faith. Secondly, this dialogue takes place not only between contemporary attitudes but always in relation to classical tradition of which the scriptures are the foundation and the creeds are part; and in so far as it is thus related, it feeds on an

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72 *Doctrine in the Church*, lviii-lx.
element which is given. Thirdly, wherever this is genuine dialogue, it is marked by an openness to truth from whatever quarter it may come, whether from other churches, from other religions, or from any authentic human discipline. Thus the Christian pursuit of truth has this dynamic character, that it looks to that which is given, and yet at the same time is ever open to new possibilities of understanding...

Attitudes that are or appear incompatible easily become isolated and polarized, and drift into confrontation and conflict. When groups of Christians have found it necessary to stand alone in defense of the truth they see, the long perspective of history shows that they have also tended, just because of their separation from correctives, to become hardened in error. In a dialogue of faith they can learn from one another’s strengths. Moreover, insights and approaches which are opaque in one age become illuminating in another. Even within a single lifetime arguments which at first appeared lacking in cogency may become more compelling. From many points of view, therefore, it is wise to listen, so far as is possible, to the whole range of Christian theological tradition, lest injustice be done to the fullness and balance of Christian truth.\(^\text{73}\)

As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the 1976 report garnered the sharp response of critics like Stephen Sykes. While there could be no denial that the report reflected the diversity of views within the Church of England at time, there was concern about the report’s unwillingness to reassert a single orthodox Christian position, instead embracing the diversity of views (many deemed heterodox) in late twentieth century Anglicanism under the cover of comprehensiveness. Geoffrey Lampe, who served on the Commission and wrote one of the accompanying essays, writes that the report “demonstrates the ‘choice of doctrines’ now offered by the Church of England to its adherents. It suggests that unity in the future will be a unity (within the brotherhood of a common basic belief in God, centred on Jesus) in asking questions rather than in agreeing to answers.”\(^\text{74}\) Lampe goes on to note that the report was never officially considered

\(^\text{73}\) *Christian Believing*, 38-39.

\(^\text{74}\) *Doctrine in the Church*, lx.
by the Church of England’s General Synod or commended to the wider church. Rather, it was “quietly and rapidly buried.”

The Church of England continued to engage the Doctrine Commission and subsequent reports were written and presented. In 1982 a follow-up *Believing in the Church: the Corporate Nature of Faith* attempted to move in a more unified direction; although, a diversity of opinion was still present. Several reports published subsequently into the twenty-first century and focused less on the nature of belief and more on specific doctrines attempted a new, but more traditionally orthodox, presentation, on belief in God, the Holy Spirit, and salvation. The commissions were still diverse in terms of membership, but offered a united presentation. Notably, they were published with the imprimatur of England’s House of Bishops, in contrast to the previous reports.

Whatever the limitations of the early reports, they honestly reflected the state of the church at the time they were written, including the challenge and the opportunity inherent in theological diversity. Significantly, the reports articulate both the fact of diverse belief and the need for an appreciation of comprehensiveness if Anglicans are to maintain communion. Less successful is the discernment of an ongoing unifying principle or centre in the midst of significant diversity.

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75 *Doctrine in the Church*, lx.


4 Reports of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commissions

Especially helpful avenues for reflection on comprehensiveness in the last two decades have been the reports issued by the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commissions. Authorized by the Anglican Communion, through the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lambeth Conference, and the Anglican Consultative Council, the IATDCs are assigned the task of providing theological reflection on important issues of debate within the Communion. They are not authoritative decision-making bodies; however, by design they have broad representation of the Communion constituencies and represent some of the best possibilities for establishing consensus among diverse perspectives. There have been three IATDC reports, spanning three decades, each issued in preparation for Lambeth Conferences: For the Sake of the Kingdom of God (1986), The Virginia Report (1997), and Communion, Conflict and Hope (2008). Each is uniquely useful in interpreting the challenges facing Anglicanism, attempting to provide theological foundations for unity in diversity.

4.1 For the Sake of God’s Kingdom

The first Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission was established following a call by the Anglican Consultative Council in 1976, and endorsed by the 1978 Lambeth Conference, for a study of the various complex issues of church life and doctrine, the work to be reviewed by
the primates, the ACC, and the Lambeth Conferences. Its purpose was to study the intersection between the Gospel, society, and culture, in its various manifestations. The report presupposes the idea that “the Kingdom of God is at hand,” and that “what God wills to effect through the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus is a new realization of his rule in the hearts and lives of human beings.” While the report’s focus is not on Anglican identity per se, it upholds the idea of an Anglican embrace of a communion constantly shaping and being shaped by a diverse world. In particular, *For the Sake of the Kingdom* considers how pluralism affects the church, both positively and negatively. For a church that is becoming increasingly global both in outlook and in make up, as Anglicanism is, these are vital issues.

*For the Sake of the Kingdom* argues that because the church finds itself in multiple contexts and cultures, ministering to people of many backgrounds, there is no single culture or expression that is suitable for all, or even for some. Rather, in the midst of plurality the church lives “only in and from that transcendent ‘horizon’ of human life which is the Kingdom of God as realised in the risen Christ, and it exists to be a sign of that Kingdom in and for the many social cultures and ‘places’ in which it lives.” This reality in Christ is for Anglicans (and for all Christians) the source of their unity in the midst of great diversity, reflected in the emphasis on scripture, creeds, sacraments, and three-fold ministry, as well as through the practice of sharing and living


79 *Sake of the Kingdom*, 5.

80 *Sake of the Kingdom*, 5.

81 *Sake of the Kingdom*, 59.
The Kingdom of God, as manifest in the Incarnation and in church as the Body of Christ, is the tie that binds Anglicans together.

The report calls Anglicans away from the avoidance of dialogue and debate on difficult or controversial issues in favour of a willingness to hear and learn from the perspectives of others. Thus we find an affirmation of pluralism, not as an end in itself, but as the context in which the gospel of Christ is constantly experienced and shared. Although not specifically named, *For the Sake of the Kingdom* embraces the concept of comprehensiveness as a means of allowing the voices of all the subjects of God’s kingdom to be heard. The report concludes:

> It is not pluralism, but the risen Christ as the bearer of God’s reign, who is the ground of Christian repentance as well as Christian faith, because he is the one in whom the unity of humankind is established and promised. Pluralism is to be affirmed not as it divides people, and not as a recipe for indifferentism, but as the context in which the heirs of God’s Kingdom may engage with one another more richly and variously than hitherto and may thus be enabled the better to know and to follow Christ—the Second Adam, the new humanity—who embodies the mystery of God’s Kingdom, and into whom all are called to “grow up.”

*For the Sake of the Kingdom* is briefer and less detail-oriented than its successors. Its goal is to provide some theological reflection on how the church interacts with the world and finds unity and coherence in the midst of pluralism and diversity. The later reports of the IATDC consider the state of the Anglicanism in terms of comprehensiveness more fully, and provide concrete suggestions for maintaining unity.

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82 *Sake of the Kingdom*, 59.

83 *Sake of the Kingdom*, 60-61.
4.2 The Virginia Report

The second IATDC had as its mandate an articulation of “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,” as requested by the 1988 Lambeth Conference. The result is a document that explores how the life of the Trinity as a community of persons in unity is reflective of, and the foundation for, the Christian community in the church. It was presented to the 1998 Lambeth Conference as a guide to deliberation on the future of the Anglican Communion, with particular interest in maintaining unity in the midst of significant diversity and disagreement, especially over such vexing issues as the ordination of women. The Commission writes:

The Commission has centred its study on the understanding of trinitarian faith. It believes that the unity of the Anglican Communion derives from the unity given in the triune God, whose inner personal and relational nature is communal. This is our centre. This mystery of God’s life calls us to communion in visible form. This is why the Church is called again and again to review and to reform the structures of its life together so that they nurture and enable the life of communion in God and serve God’s mission in the world.\footnote{Virginia Report, 5.}

In essence, the report posits that the unity in diversity being sought is not something that can be attained, but rather is the foundation for the church’s life from the beginning as established by

\footnote{Virginia Report, 2.}

\footnote{Virginia Report, 5.}
Christ as his on-going Body in the world.\textsuperscript{86} The church’s sacraments and ministry work to maintain the Christian community’s unity with God and one another.\textsuperscript{87}

In terms of Anglicanism, in particular, the document argues that comprehensiveness is an essential feature of the Anglican ethos as it has developed since the Reformation era, supported by its appeal to scripture, reason, and tradition. Just as there is no single authority for Anglicanism, neither is there a single authoritative point of view. Instead, Anglicanism follows a “middle way,” embracing diverse perspectives, while avoiding extremes. The report argues that this is one of Anglicanism’s key strengths, even as the tradition often struggles as it lives into this state of being:

At best the Anglican way is characterised by generosity and tolerance to those of different views. It also entails a willingness to contain difference and live in tension, even conflict, as the Church seeks a common mind on controversial issues. The comprehensiveness that marks the Anglican Communion is not a sign of weakness or uncertainty about the central truths of the faith. Neither does it mean that Anglicans accept that there are no limits to diversity.\textsuperscript{88}

Without a single central authoritative figure, Anglicanism relies on a multi-tiered structure that provides unity and interdependence in the midst of its geographic, theological, liturgical, and social diversity. Components of this structure include the ministry of bishops in the historic episcopate serving the church at diocesan, national, and international levels; international bodies of laity, clergy, and bishops, such as the Anglican Consultative Council; regular meetings of the Primates of the individual provinces; and the Archbishop of Canterbury acting as the spiritual

\textsuperscript{86} Virginia Report, 6-11.
\textsuperscript{87} Virginia Report, 11-13.
\textsuperscript{88} Virginia Report, 14-15.
(although not authoritative) and organizational head of the Communion. The Virginia Report sees in this dispersed authority structure authentic expression of the comprehensive ethos that is reflective of the church’s trinitarian life.\(^{89}\)

While The Virginia Report recognises the authority of individual Anglican provinces to make decisions in their respective jurisdictions, it is concerned that some decisions may strain relationships, testing the limits of unity and comprehensiveness. The issue the report considers in this regard is the decision of some provinces to ordain women to the priesthood and episcopate, a practice not finding universal acceptance and revealing differing polities, theologies of ministry, and appeals to the scripture, reason, tradition triad.\(^{90}\) The church is thus faced with the task of discerning the essence of the church universal and that which is open to differing responses at the local level. While the principle of subsidiarity\(^{91}\) holds for Anglicanism, it cannot go unchecked. The report states:

> No local embodiment of the Church is simply autonomous and it is plain from the history of the Church that local churches can make mistakes. A care for reconciliation and unity is implicit in the catholicity of Jesus’ unique, atoning work. The apostolicity of a particular church is measured by its consonance with the living elements of apostolic succession and unity: baptism and eucharist, the Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds, the ordered ministry and the canon of Scripture. These living elements of apostolic succession serve the authentic succession of the gospel and keep the various levels of the Church in a communion of truth and life.\(^{92}\)

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\(^{89}\) *Virginia Report*, 26-27.

\(^{90}\) *Virginia Report*, 31.

\(^{91}\) Citing the Oxford English Dictionary, The Virginia Report defines the principle of subsidiarity as meaning that “a central authority should have a subsidiary function, performing only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level.” *Virginia Report*, 29.

\(^{92}\) *Virginia Report*, 35.
The Virginia Report concludes with reflection on how the “Instruments of Unity” in Anglicanism can grow into a deeper and clearer reflection of the unity in diversity that is the essence of the Trinity and paradigmatic for the church, particularly in the twenty-first century. It suggests that in addition to the established instruments, an Anglican Congress may be held once a decade, bringing together people of diverse backgrounds for learning, worship, and deepening of the relationships that bind diverse peoples together.93

4.3 Communion, Conflict, and Hope

While the presenting issue facing Anglicanism during the period leading up to the publication of The Virginia Report in 1997 was the ordination of women, over the subsequent decade the communion-straining issues related more closely to the place of gay and lesbian people. Communion, Conflict, and Hope represents the efforts of the third Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission to articulate how Anglicans can embrace a comprehensive ethos in the face of serious and sometimes divisive conflict. This document builds on the work of The Virginia Report, exploring issues of unity and diversity in light of historical, pneumatological, and eschatological approaches.

93 Virginia Report, 57-58.
Consistent with the comprehensive outlook, *Communion, Conflict, and Hope* argues that the unity that Christ desires for the church “involves more than simply an alliance of like-minded believers.”\(^{94}\) Rather, it asserts that “‘Communion’ transcends and can therefore transform differences.... Living in a Communion which justly embraces and celebrates people of differing cultures and world-views makes a fresh apprehension of Christian truth possible.”\(^{95}\) The report argues that Anglicanism should not be understood as a tradition or association of the like-minded, but rather as a family with a common faith heritage and strong sacramental bonds.\(^{96}\)

*Communion, Conflict, and Hope* presupposes a constantly changing, evolving Anglican tradition, embracing its own history, while also looking ahead toward the new realities of a church engaged with its culture and context. The challenge of the comprehensive ethos is the extent to which Anglicanism is able to balance dedication to its historical inheritance and the needs of the contemporary context. Thus the IATDC writes, “while Anglicanism has never been defined by a fixed doctrinal formula against which new situations and challenges must be tested, it is comprised of a living, dynamic tradition which is capable of rediscovering its calling through the way it responds to the message of Christ in challenging situations.”\(^{97}\) The IATDC hopes the Anglican tradition will be able to establish the necessary balance, exploring how this has been true historically and suggesting some ways to maintain it today.

\(^{94}\) *Communion, Conflict, Hope*, 8.

\(^{95}\) *Communion, Conflict, Hope*, 8.

\(^{96}\) *Communion, Conflict, Hope*, 10.

\(^{97}\) *Communion, Conflict, Hope*, 9.
Citing the New Testament narrative, *Communion, Conflict, and Hope* highlights the Pentecost story and the work of the Holy Spirit as central to the task of maintaining unity in diversity. In the Pentecost moment, the Holy Spirit spoke to people of various languages and cultures in ways that each could understand and appreciate, in the process transcending and transforming difference. It argues that while the early church, like today’s, was rife with division and conflict, God was able to break in and transform dissonance into harmony.  

The report suggests that the problems experienced in the first century are not dissimilar from today’s church, and from the church in every age. They are “part and parcel of the experience of the church as a fragile and fallible community ... seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit in its worship and life.” The only resolution to such problems and conflicts, the report suggests, will come from an openness to listening to as many voices as possible in careful consultation, with special attentiveness to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The report calls this “consultative theology.” With respect to the Anglican tradition it proposes the following:

Anglicans claim that their tradition seeks to embody a distinctive way through theological and social conflicts, and to encapsulate in their comprehensiveness a distinct way of maintaining unity in diversity. Sustaining communion through the conflicts and challenges of our times requires trust and commitment to an ongoing process of consultation. In this process the key elements are listening, responding, and being attentive to the leading of the Spirit. This is always costly and transformative because it is the way of Jesus Christ.

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98 *Communion, Conflict, Hope*, 20-21.

99 *Communion, Conflict, Hope*, 23.

100 *Communion, Conflict, Hope*, 31.

101 *Communion, Conflict, Hope*, 32.
Communion, Conflict, and Hope suggests a new way of understanding communion shared among Christians, and especially Anglicans. It is a state of being that is not attained or lost, but must be lived into through conversation and mutuality. Communion embraces the notion of comprehensiveness in the sense that it calls for diverse voices, perspectives, and practices to be shared and discussed in the search for the truth of the Gospel. Communion and comprehensiveness in this sense are not without their necessary limits, which may be always open to new evaluation. Historically these limits have been defined variously by the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, Book of Common Prayer, Ordinal, as well as the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral. None of these in isolation is sufficient; however, together they offer a composite of beliefs and practices deemed important historically and which continue to influence the tradition today.

The three reports of the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commissions present a commitment to deep and on-going engagement with the challenges facing the Anglican churches, working to find common ground among diverse perspectives and giving theological articulation to justify the embrace of comprehensiveness. While their findings and suggestions are not binding, they are helpful for understanding both the present struggles and potential theological and ecclesiastical resources for repairing and strengthening strained relationships, emphasizing that ecclesial unity and relationship are established by God in the life of the Trinity.

102 Communion, Conflict, Hope, 47.
103 Communion, Conflict, Hope, 43.
and not through narrow doctrinal agreement, shared liturgical practice, or uniform polity. In that, they express the essence of the comprehensive ethos.

5 Windsor Report & Anglican Covenant Drafts

Decisions by the Episcopal Church, USA, and the Anglican Church of Canada to embrace liberalizing attitudes with regard to homosexuality, and most especially to consecrate a gay man as bishop of New Hampshire and approve liturgical blessings of same-sex unions, have tested the Anglican embrace of comprehensiveness within these provinces and internationally. Although not the only issues of contention in Anglicanism in the early twenty-first century, they are perhaps the most serious. In response to concerns expressed throughout the Anglican Communion, Rowan Williams, then archbishop of Canterbury, drew together leaders from across the Communion to craft a response to the actions of the North American churches, as well as counter actions by other dismayed provinces. The result was The Windsor Report, \footnote{The Lambeth Commission on Communion: The Windsor Report (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2004).} which proposed a variety of suggestions for maintaining international Anglican cohesion, including significantly the Anglican Covenant, and offered reflections on the themes of communion, unity, and diversity.
5.1 Windsor Report

Reflecting the arguments of the earlier Virginia Report, The Windsor Report likewise locates its understanding of communion and unity in the trinitarian life of God.\textsuperscript{105} It is this divine life that sustains communion and leads the church’s mission in the world. Likewise, communion is a result of shared history, identity, and commitments, often described by Anglicans as “the bonds of affection.” The Windsor Report suggests that Anglicans have embraced a relationship of “covenantal affection,” in which the terms of communion are “not subject to whim and mood, but involves us in a covenant relation of binding mutual promises, with God in Christ and with one another.... This communion is primarily a relationship with God, who is himself a communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and it binds every member of Christ into the whole body.”\textsuperscript{106}

The Windsor Report asserts that communion implies and assumes mutual relationships of trust.\textsuperscript{107} These relationships are “expressed by community, equality, common life, sharing, interdependence, and mutual affection and respect.”\textsuperscript{108} Communion makes space for diversity, especially as a result of cultural differences,\textsuperscript{109} and in the case of Anglicanism allows for a

\textsuperscript{105} Windsor Report, 11.

\textsuperscript{106} Windsor Report, 24.

\textsuperscript{107} Windsor Report, 22.

\textsuperscript{108} Windsor Report, 25.

\textsuperscript{109} Windsor Report, 34.
degree of autonomy from one province to another. However, the report argues, autonomy should not be understood as complete independence. It states:

The word autonomous in this sense actually implies not an isolated individualism, but the idea of being free to determine one’s own life within a wider obligation to others. The key idea is autonomy-in-communion, that is, freedom held within interdependence. The autonomy of each Anglican province therefore implies that the church lives in relation to, and exercises its autonomy most fully in the context of, global Communion.  

Thus, according to The Windsor Report authentic Anglicanism is able to sustain a degree of autonomy for provinces and dioceses within a larger framework of mutuality and shared faith. Matters not requiring complete agreement are considered “adiaphora” while others are deemed essential. For The Windsor Report, comprehensiveness of difference is, therefore, limited to those things that are indifferent to the greater shared faith within the Anglican tradition. However, the responsibility for deciding things that are adiaphora versus matters essential historically has been unclear. The Windsor Report aims at resolving this by suggesting roles for the “Instruments of Unity” and the creation of an Anglican Communion Covenant.

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110 Windsor Report, 35.

111 The Windsor Report grounds its understanding of adiaphora in Paul’s letters (Romans 14:1-15:3 and 1 Corinthians 8-10) and the work of the English Reformers, for example with regard to eucharistic theology. Windsor Report, 38.

112 The Instruments of Unity are defined as: the Archbishop of Canterbury; the Lambeth Conference; the Anglican Consultative Council; and the Primates’ Meeting. Windsor Report, 41. These had been identified and described as four “Instruments of Communion” in The Virginia Report (named “Instruments of Unity” by Lambeth Resolution 1998:III.8).
5.2 Anglican Communion Covenant

*The Windsor Report* suggests that the current divisions in Anglicanism necessitate the call for the adoption of an Anglican Covenant (or Anglican Communion Covenant), which would serve as a bond holding Anglicans together across the Communion. As conceived, the Covenant would be mutually crafted and adopted, serving as an essential defining document for the Anglican Communion. Those parties finding themselves unable to agree to the Covenant, be they provinces or dioceses, would remove themselves from the closest fellowship of the Anglican Communion in the strictest sense, while maintaining their own degrees of Anglican heritage, liturgy, theology, polity, etc.

While the creation and adoption of a Communion-wide covenant is an innovation, *The Windsor Report* notes that individual Anglican provinces have participated in the adoption of similar covenants in entering into ecumenical agreements toward relationships of full communion.113 And, in fact, a similar idea had been proposed at the 1867 Lambeth Conference for the creation “a voluntary spiritual Tribunal” with representation from each member church “to secure unity in matters of Faith and uniformity in matters of discipline.”114 That proposal was never adopted, the early Conferences instead preferring to emphasise the advisory role of international bodies. However, such an early proposal reflects a persistent desire in some quarters, though by no

113 *Windsor Report*, 49.

means universal, within the Communion for a deeper degree of unity, especially in times of disagreement.

While the establishment of the Covenant is new, its purpose, as conceived, is not to change the character of Anglicanism, but to give clearer articulation to already existing beliefs and structures. What is new to the Anglican tradition is the effort to draw clearer boundaries for theological reflection and practice, setting specific limits to the scope of comprehensiveness, beyond those set by the creeds, Prayer Book, Articles of Religion, and the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral. Several drafts for an Anglican Covenant have been crafted and proposed for discussion: the first located in an appendix to The Windsor Report (2004); a second proposed by the Covenant Design Group called the “Nassau Draft” (April 2007); a third known as the “St. Andrew’s Draft,” also issued by the Covenant Design Group (February 2008); the “Ridley-Cambridge Draft” (April 2009) incorporated suggestions from around the Communion. A final version, simply known as “The Anglican Communion Covenant” was approved in 2009 by the Standing Committee of the Anglican Communion and sent to the Communion provinces for consideration and adoption.

The Covenant reflects the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral in affirming: Holy Scripture “as containing all things necessary for salvation and as being the rule and ultimate standard of faith;”

115 The Covenant Design Team writes, “To covenant together is not intended to change the character of this Anglican expression of Christian faith. Rather, we recognise the importance of renewing our commitment to one another, and our common understanding of the faith as we have received it in a solemn way, so that the ‘bonds of affection’ which hold us together may be affirmed. We do this in order to reflect in our relations with one another God’s own faithfulness in his promises towards us in Christ.” “An Introduction to the St. Andrew’s Text for an Anglican Covenant,” in Report of the Second Meeting of the Covenant Design Group (London: Anglican Communion Office, 2008), para. 5.
“the Apostles’ Creed, as the baptismal symbol; and the Nicene Creed, as the sufficient statement of the Christian faith;” a common administration of the sacraments of baptism and eucharist; and maintenance of the three fold orders of ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons. Building upon central aspects of the tradition, the Covenant underscores the foundational place of the historic formularies in establishing Anglican identity and articulates in one place the various roles and responsibilities of the Instruments of Unity in holding the Communion together.

While the Covenant proposal is built upon the principles for Christian reunion as established in the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, it goes beyond the Quadrilateral’s limited scope in establishing methods for resolving Communion-wide conflicts, such as those debated regarding human sexuality and the integrity of diocesan and provincial boundaries and decision-making processes. The Covenant does not have as its purpose articulation of an official Anglican position in any particular issue of debate or controversy over time; rather, it seeks to provide mutually agreed upon means for confronting conflicts as they arise. In adopting the Covenant, member churches would agree in principle to these conflict resolution approaches; although, the decisions made would not become binding on member provinces.

The Covenant builds on The Windsor Report’s understanding of the concepts of autonomy and interdependence. These, in particular, impact directly on the understanding of Anglican

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116 Anglican Covenant, 1.1.3-1.1.6

117 Anglican Covenant, 3.1.4
comprehensiveness.¹¹⁸ The Covenant recognises that there is no central legislative authority binding Anglicans globally. Rather, they are held together by “mutual affection, commitment, and service.”¹¹⁹ Likewise it recognises that there will arise matters of significant theological, liturgical, and ethical debate. The Covenant urges each church of the Anglican Communion:

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 therefore need to be tested by shared discernment in the life of the Church.¹²⁰

At the same time, the Covenant calls the churches to exercise restraint in adopting any actions or policies that “may provoke controversy, which by its intensity, substance or extent could threaten the unity of the Communion and the effectiveness or credibility of its mission.”¹²¹ Thus, limits are placed on acceptable practices and theological positions, the boundaries of which would only be determined by a Communion-wide process of study, discernment and evaluation.

¹¹⁸ The Windsor Report’s covenant draft provides some definition to the idea of comprehensiveness, including limits in the context of Anglican interdependence: “Article 4: Common Understanding. (1) Each member church belongs to each other in mutual reciprocity and forbearance in the Body of Christ. (2) Communion does not require acceptance by every church of all theological opinion, sacramental devotion, or liturgical practice that is characteristic of the other. (3) Every member church has the intention to listen, speak, act and strive to obey the gospel. (4) Every church has the same concern for a conscientious interpretation of scripture in light of tradition and reason, to be in dialogue with those who dissent from that interpretation, and to heal divisions.” “Appendix Two: Proposal for the Anglican Covenant” in the Windsor Report, 66. The Windsor Report’s draft is considerably longer than the subsequent covenant drafts, including the 2009 final text, and statements such as the preceding have been eliminated.

¹¹⁹ Anglican Covenant, 3.1.2.

¹²⁰ Anglican Covenant, 3.2.3.

¹²¹ Anglican Covenant, 3.2.5.
The implications in the possible adoption of the Covenant for the ethos of comprehensiveness are unclear.\textsuperscript{122} Yet the concept of the Covenant and the various drafts themselves suggest a desire to draw clearer boundaries around Anglicanism, both with regard to practice and also potentially to articulation of contentious theological positions. As a result, Anglicanism faces the potential of becoming considerably less comprehensive and inclusive than it has been historically.

6 Summary

As we have seen in the above study of official and semi-official documents and resolutions, the concept of comprehensiveness plays an important role in determining how the Anglican churches define themselves and in their approach to tackling difficult issues. This embrace of comprehensiveness dates to the issuance of the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, through the resolutions of the various Lambeth Conferences, and into the theological statements of the Church of England’s Doctrine Commissions and the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commissions. Of course, none of this means that there is a unified understanding or appreciation of how broad Anglican comprehensiveness should be.

As we have seen in our study of the proposed Anglican Communion Covenant, there is growing movement in the direction of limiting the breadth of Anglican belief and practice. Yet in that

\textsuperscript{122} As of this writing several provinces of the Communion have adopted the Covenant, but others have explicitly rejected it or opted to take no action, citing concerns over the methods proposed for resolving disputes. In the Church of England a majority of diocesan synods had rejected it by 2012, preventing that province from adoption until it can be presented again at a later date. With the “Mother Church” of the Anglican Communion not participating, it remains unclear how the Covenant process will proceed or have the force or influence intended.
proposal there is still an inherent acknowledgment of the central role that the comprehensive tradition must play for Anglicanism if it is to remain true to its historical, theological, and ecclesial identity. Thus, even in calls for limitation and justification comprehensiveness has maintained its force as a unifying, and possibly defining, principle. I then argue that to fail to appreciate the fact of Anglican comprehensiveness, not only historically but also today, would serve only to create further division and hostility, drawing the tradition and its adherents away from their theological and ecclesial centre in the Body of Christ and toward a narrower conception of shared belief and practice that would be more exclusive and limiting by definition than Anglicanism has been.

In the chapters that follow I offer a deeper theological articulation and justification for Anglican comprehensiveness through the lens of one of the tradition’s primary doctrinal emphases: the Incarnation. In the case of the theologians studied here—Richard Hooker, F. D. Maurice, and Charles Gore—I will argue that their embrace and articulation of comprehensiveness, both theologically and ecclesiastically, arise directly from the incarnational centre of their theologies, finding meaning, context, and support therein.
Chapter Four:

Richard Hooker and the Foundations of Comprehensiveness

1 Historical Context

If the Anglican theological tradition has any seminal figure in its development, that person must be Richard Hooker. Hooker has even been named the “Prophet of Anglicanism.”¹ His importance arises in large measure from his efforts to articulate a coherent defence of the organizational principles, and to propose convincing theological underpinnings, of the Protestant Church of England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558 to 1603).² Hooker was born into a country and church divided within itself, struggling to forge a lasting identity following the dramatic changes of the early Reformation era and the return to Roman Catholicism during the reign of Mary Tudor (1553 to 1558).

With Elizabeth’s accession came the cessation of the persecutions of Protestants and the return of the Marian exiles from continental Europe. The exiles brought with them a new wave of some of

¹ See Philip B. Secor, Richard Hooker: Prophet of Anglicanism (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1999).

² Peter Lake suggests the argument that Hooker defended the principles and practices of the Church of England is less accurate than that he offered a vision of what the church could and should be, writing: “Hooker’s, then, was not a vision or defense of the Church of England as it was but rather of what that church should and could be like, if ever its defenders and members came to a full realization of what their church’s central characteristics and claims, its foundation documents and history, really meant.” Peter Lake, “The ‘Anglican Moment’?: Richard Hooker and the Ideological Watershed of the 1590s,” in Anglicanism and Western Tradition, 116.
the more advanced or radical beliefs and practices of the European Reformed churches, even as there were many in England who preferred the Catholic tradition. In order to ensure the church’s unity Queen Elizabeth sought to appease a good number of the nation’s Protestants, both Lutheran and Reformed in their leanings, by promoting theologies and ecclesiastical policies for a church that she believed should be broad enough to include a wider spectrum of beliefs and practices than previously known. As a result, the 1559 Elizabethan Settlement shied away from dogmatic definition, as measured by the standards of its age, as evidenced in its not containing a specific faith statement.\(^3\) However, all were required to conform to the Church of England’s liturgy as expressed in a slightly revised Elizabethan edition of *The Book of Common Prayer*, published in 1559.

Diarmaid MacCulloch refutes the argument that the Elizabethan Settlement was aimed at reconciling Protestant and Catholic tendencies, arguing instead that the so-called “Catholic” elements in the Elizabethan Settlement (chiefly traditional non-eucharistic vestments and a possible belief in the real presence in the eucharist) were really directed at appeasing those with Lutheran sympathies, who would have preferred a more conservative English Reformation.

It is nevertheless absurd to suppose that these concessions were intended to mollify Catholic-minded clergy and laity, whom the Settlement simultaneously deprived of the Latin Mass, monasteries, chantries, shrines, guilds and a compulsorily celibate priesthood. The alterations were probably aimed at conciliating Lutheran Protestants either at home or abroad. Elizabeth had no way of knowing the theological temperature of her Protestant subjects in 1559, and the Lutheran princes of northern Europe were watching anxiously to see whether the new English regime would be as offensively Reformed as had been the government of Edward VI. It was worthwhile for Elizabeth’s government to throw the Lutherans a few theological scraps.\(^4\)

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The new Prayer Book attempted to reconcile the conservative Lutheran beliefs with the radical Reformed Protestant concerns of the Marian exiles, allowing a fair degree of flexibility both in terms of theology and liturgical expression. Among the notable examples of this attempt at liturgical and theological comprehensiveness in the 1559 Prayer Book is the phraseology prescribed for use at the distribution of Holy Communion, combining the more Catholic (or Lutheran)-leaning form of 1549, which suggested a belief in Christ’s physical presence in elements, with that of 1552, suggesting a memorialist stance. The 1559 form offers a unique reconciliation passed on through subsequent prayer books in the English church and throughout the Anglican Communion: “The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving.”

Susan Doran illustrates the diversity of liturgical practices within the Elizabethan church:

Partly as a result of the ambiguities in the 1559 Settlement, the liturgy of the Elizabethan Church allowed for a great deal of local variation. Some parishes as well as most of the cathedrals emphasized the ceremonial aspects of the 1559 Prayer Book. In these churches, the services would be sung with “modest and distinct song”; an elaborate hymn sometimes accompanied by an organ would end morning or evening prayer; and to take communion the congregation would walk from the nave through to the chancel, where they would kneel to receive a wafer and a sip of wine from a chalice offered by a minister in full vestments. At the same time, in other parishes of England the liturgy of the Elizabethan Church came to be performed in the austere manner favoured by the Reformed Church. In these churches, ministers wore no vestments, portable communion tables were brought down to the nave of the church for the communion service, the wine was drunk from a cup, and, like the bread, was received sitting or standing, and there was no music at all, except for organ voluntaries and the congregational singing of the psalms.
in metre. Almost everywhere, however, even in the cathedrals, the sermon, not communion, was at the center of the Sunday service, as communion came to be celebrated only monthly and lengthy sermons were delivered more than once a week.  

Although the Elizabethan principle of unity amid diversity, both theological and liturgical, may have given rise to a very limited ethos of Anglican comprehensiveness, this comprehensive ethos was not universally popular or promoted. Indeed, the official policy of the church was to move in a sharply Reformed direction, such that clergy were encouraged to: “take away, utterly extinct and destroy all shrines, covering of shrines, all tables and candlesticks…. pictures, paintings, and all other monuments of feigned miracles, pilgrimages, idolatry, and superstition, so that there remain no memory of the same in walls, glasses, windows or elsewhere in their churches or houses.”  

And yet, as thorough as the foregoing policy would seem, there were many who were unsatisfied with these policies, and would have preferred an even more purely Reformed church, liturgically, theologically, and in terms of church governance, giving rise to a growing Puritan movement. 

Simultaneously, there was an underground desire among others to retain or regain their Catholic faith and practices. For example, the romanticized Rites of Durham, published anonymously in 1593, recalled the beauty of the Catholic liturgy and the pious humility of the church’s monks, while presenting as villains those who had sought to strip England of its altars and smash its

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5 Doran, Elizabeth, 17.

stained glass windows. This latent Catholic spirituality only heightened widespread fear among Protestants that England would be invaded and a Roman Catholic, such as Mary Queen of Scots, Elizabeth’s cousin, would make a claim to the English throne and return the country to papal jurisdiction and forms.

Thus it was that the Elizabethan Church of England found itself in a precarious situation, attempting to affirm its Reformed identity in the face of both latent Catholic spiritualities and, among some, a desire for an even more purely Protestant order:

The English reformers intended to establish a Reformed church which would be part of a Protestant international, emphatic in disowning its medieval inheritance and rejecting the religion of Catholic Europe. Its formularies, preaching and styles of worship were all designed to signal and embody that rejection. But by the same token, it seems equally plain that Anglican self-identity was never simply or unequivocally Protestant. Whatever the formularies and ideologues might say, the concrete reality of the Elizabethan church was always ambivalent about the Catholic past, its religious identity always troubled. Embedded like flies in amber in its liturgy, in its buildings, its ministerial orders, were vestiges of that past which were to prove astonishingly potent in reshaping the Church of England’s future.

It would be left to the Church of England’s theologians to provide a coherent theological rationale for the delicate balance of its liturgical tradition and Protestant theological conviction. Among the strongest and most lasting of these theological voices was Richard Hooker.

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2 Biography

Richard Hooker was born in 1553/4 in Heavitree near Exeter in Devon. His father’s family was relatively prominent in the Exeter area. Richard Hooker’s great-grandfather John Vowell had been mayor of Exeter (1490 to 1491) and a Member of Parliament. Richard Hooker’s uncle John Hooker was wealthy, educated at Oxford, and had even assisted Miles Coverdale in his translation of the Bible into English.  

Richard Hooker’s life began during the reign of the Roman Catholic Queen Mary I. However, by the time he was five Mary had died and Elizabeth acceded to the throne. Thus, he grew to maturity in the Protestant Church of England, attending the parish of St. Michael and All Angels, Heavitree in his youth. Little is known with certainty about his family life during his earliest years, the details of which are sketchy at best. His father, Roger Hooker, was often absent and his mother, likely of a more humble background, does not appear in the usual church registers or family histories. She probably died around 1560, after which time the young Richard went to live with his prominent uncle in Exeter. Roger Hooker died in 1582 at the age of 46.

9 Secor, Hooker, 3.
10 Secor, Hooker, 1-20.
11 Secor, Hooker, 6-10.
12 Secor, Hooker, 7.
13 Secor, Hooker, 17.
Richard Hooker’s biography becomes clearer while under the care of his uncle. Through John Hooker’s associations with significant ecclesiastical and political figures Richard Hooker gained several advantages, including improved educational opportunities at which he excelled. One such advantage was the acquaintance of Salisbury’s bishop John Jewel (d. 1571), then among the most influential churchmen in England. Hooker studied at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, favoured among those with Calvinist leanings. He began his studies at age 15 and, despite serious illness during his time as a student, earned a bachelor’s degree in 1573/4 and a master’s degree three years later.

While at Corpus Christi, Hooker came under the influence of John Rainolds, his tutor and long-time friend. Rainolds was a convinced Calvinist and urged Hooker to follow suit. For a time while still a student Hooker served as a tutor to Edwin Sandys, son of the bishop of London (later archbishop of York) also named Edwin Sandys, forging a close relationship with the bishop’s son and securing the bishop’s favour. He likewise served as a tutor to George Cranmer, great-nephew to Thomas Cranmer. Hooker began his professional career in earnest in 1577, teaching logic and Hebrew as a don at Oxford. Although he continued his own studies with

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15 Secor writes, “What the eye and the mind should most importantly fill themselves with, according to Hooker’s tutor, were the ideas of John Calvin and his followers. Rainolds advised Hooker that whenever he had any difficulty resolving a theological or moral issue, he should follow the judgment of John Calvin. Peter Martyr was also recommended as a good guide to follow.” Secor, Hooker, 79.

16 Secor, Hooker, 81-82.

the intention of completing a doctorate in divinity, after eight years of attempting to balance teaching and studying, financial pressures finally prevented him from completing the degree.\textsuperscript{18}

Richard Hooker was ordained in the Church of England in 1581 and began full-time ministry after leaving the university.\textsuperscript{19} His first cure was as rector of St. Mary’s parish in Drayton Beauchamp, a rural community twenty-five miles northeast of Oxford, to which he was appointed in 1584. However, it is not clear that he ever took up residence there.\textsuperscript{20} That year he also preached at Paul’s Cross outside St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. Although no copies of Hooker’s sermon survive, it is believed that he urged moderation in the church and a rejection of the more extreme forms of Calvinism, particularly regarding predestination\textsuperscript{21} and the widespread belief in the damnation of Roman Catholics, favoured by growing numbers of English Puritans.\textsuperscript{22}

Less than a year following the Paul’s Cross sermon, Hooker rose to a position of increased prominence when appointed Master of the Temple Church in 1585.\textsuperscript{23} Many in the Temple congregation preferred Walter Travers; however, his Presbyterian views made him an unlikely

\textsuperscript{18} Secor, \textit{Hooker}, 88.
\textsuperscript{19} Gibbs, “Richard Hooker,” 10.
\textsuperscript{22} Secor, \textit{Hooker}, 117-121.
\textsuperscript{23} Gibbs, “Richard Hooker,” 11.
selection. Others supported Nicholas Bond, the Queen’s elderly chaplain. Others supported Nicholas Bond, the Queen’s elderly chaplain. Hooker, the compromise candidate, was selected by Queen Elizabeth and the archbishop of Canterbury, by virtue of his moderate views and support of the established church, deemed a necessary remedy to the Presbyterian views favoured by the Temple’s congregation. His duelling sermons with Travers (coincidentally Hooker’s cousin by marriage), in which he defended the Church of England’s practices, drew substantial crowds to the Temple. Hooker preached in the mornings and Travers responded in the afternoons with sermons refuting Hooker’s positions.

Richard Hooker came under attack for appearing to fail to meet the test of his era’s Protestant orthodoxy regarding predestination, the use of reason in determining the assurance of salvation, and especially for articulating the commonalities of Roman Catholicism with Protestant Christianity in essential doctrines such as the Incarnation. Travers offered forceful refutations of Hooker’s leniency toward Roman Catholicism and particularly the pope, but ultimately was silenced by the archbishop of Canterbury in 1586 for publicly challenging the theological views of his superior after Hooker forbade Travers to do so. Less overtly theological was Travers’ continental Protestant ordination, rather than at the hands of a Church of England bishop.

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28 Secor, Hooker, 190-196.
Richard Hooker left the Temple in 1591 in order to focus on his written work in defence of the Church of England, the most significant of which is his *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*, published between 1593 and 1597 (Books I through V). He was appointed sub-dean of Salisbury cathedral, prebendary at Netheravon, and rector of St. Andrew’s parish at Boscombe, north of Salisbury.  

He did not often leave his home in London, however, instead engaging a curate to manage parish affairs while he devoted himself to his writing.

In *Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie*, Hooker sought to aid in the articulation of the essential beliefs and practices of the Church of England in response to its Puritan critics. The resultant work is a major study in sixteenth century philosophy, a defence of the Elizabethan Settlement, and a theological exposition of *The Book of Common Prayer*. It has been the basis for much of the subsequent exposition of Anglican theology and is often the standard by which newer innovations in Anglican thought are measured. In it one finds that Hooker has evolved in theological perspective, from the stricter Calvinism of his early tutor to the moderate views he espoused later in life that have proved particularly lasting and influential for Anglicanism.

Publication of the *Lawes* was financed by Hooker’s former student Edwin Sandys, who with George Cranmer, aided in editing the work.  

To give the opportunity to devote his time to his written work, rather than pastoral and administrative responsibilities, is believed to have been the archbishop of Canterbury’s intention in making the appointment to Salisbury. Hooker is thought

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to have rarely visited Salisbury and the parish; although, he did make a belated subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion at the time of his installation at the cathedral and he worked in the cathedral library.

In 1595 Hooker returned to active pastoral ministry when appointed rector of St. Mary’s parish in Bishopsbourne near Canterbury. While in Bishopsbourne, he refined his most well known work, Book V of the *Lawes*. It is devoted to the pastoral and sacramental practices of the Church of England and to a defence of the Elizabethan Prayer Book. The remaining three books of the *Lawes* may also have been written in Bishopsbourne; however, they were not published during Hooker’s lifetime. Richard Hooker died in 1600 at the age of 47.

In the following study of Hooker’s theology and ecclesiology I touch on several aspects of his thought as they pertain to the larger issue of comprehensiveness in Anglican theology. Most importantly, I will consider Hooker’s understanding of the Incarnation, a critical emphasis for him, especially in Book V of the *Lawes*. Central to this study of Hooker’s theology, I argue that it is this emphasis on Incarnation, in particular, that provides the justification for his comprehensive sensibility.

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34 Books VI and VIII were published in 1648 and Book VII not until 1662, following the Restoration. Gibbs, “Richard Hooker,” 17.
3 Centrality of the Incarnation

Hooker’s theology generally, and with regard to the church’s life in particular, is rooted in his belief in the Incarnation of God in human life in Jesus Christ. It is this emphasis on the Incarnation that gives rise to his embrace of comprehensive ethos. For Hooker the meaning of the Incarnation lies in his belief that the incarnate Christ is the mediator or bridge between the divine and human. He develops his incarnational theology throughout the Lawes, but especially in Book V, as a prelude to an extensive study of the role of the sacraments in the Christian life. For example, he writes: “And forasmuch as there is no union of God with man without that mean between both which is both, it seemeth requisite that we first consider how God is in Christ, then how Christ is in us, and how the Sacraments do serve to make us partakers of Christ.”

Hooker’s incarnational theology is not particularly innovative. He offers a traditionally orthodox understanding of Chalcedonian Christology, concerned to simultaneously uphold the full divinity and humanity of Christ. With orthodox Christology generally, Hooker aims to avoid several heresies: Arianism, Nestorianism, Monophysitism, etc. He maintains this delicate balance by utilising the classical language of substance and personhood in Christ, drawing upon Aristotelian and Thomistic thought.

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37 Hooker uses the patristic writers in support of his arguments throughout the *Lawes*, see especially his discussion of the Athanasian Creed, *Works*, 2:231, ff. (V.42.6).
3.1 Divine and Human Natures

In Hooker’s exposition of the Incarnation, the two substances—divine and human—coexist side by side in one person. The incarnate Christ is not two persons, as a Nestorian might argue, nor do the natures mix into a new quasi-divine, quasi-human nature. Rather, there are distinct properties found in Christ’s divine nature and distinct properties in his human nature. One could even assert that Christ has separate divine and human consciousnesses. Christ’s human nature, although without sin, is limited by the particular constraints of being human. For example, he is born; he dies; he cannot be ubiquitous, even following his resurrection and glorification.

This issue of ubiquity, in particular, distinguishes Hooker from his Lutheran contemporaries. For example, he rejects the idea of consubstantiation on the grounds that it relies on the concept of the ubiquity of Christ in bodily form post-Easter. For Hooker, this is a logical impossibility:

> The substance of the body of Christ hath no presence, neither can have, but only local. It was not therefore every where seen, nor did it every where suffer death, every where could it not be entombed, it is not every where now being exalted in heaven. There is no proof in the world strong enough to enforce that Christ had a true body but by the true and natural properties of his body. Amongst which properties, definite or local presence is chief.\(^{38}\)

In his divine nature, however, Christ is omniscient and omnipotent. Rather than competing, the two natures work together cooperatively in Christ’s being and work of redemption.

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\(^{38}\) Hooker, *Works*, 2:308 (V.55.6).
Hooker describes his view of the mutual operation and effectiveness of Christ’s divine and human natures as follows. Interestingly, he argues that in Christ’s incarnate life there is no mutual participation of the human and divine. Even so, as we shall see later in this study Hooker will emphasise the mutual participation of the human and divine through the church’s sacramental life. He writes:

These two natures are as causes and original grounds of all things which Christ hath done. Wherefore some things he doth as God because his Deity alone is the wellspring from which they flow; some things as man, because they issue from his mere human nature; some thing jointly as both God and man, because both natures concur as principles thereunto. For albeit the properties of each nature do cleave only to that nature whereof they are properties, and therefore Christ cannot naturally be as God the same which he naturally is as man; yet both natures may very well concur unto one effect, and Christ in that respect be truly said to work both as God and as man one and the selfsame thing. Let us therefore set it down for a rule or principle so necessary as nothing more to the plain deciding of all doubts and questions about the union of natures there is a co-operation often, an association always, but never any mutual participation, whereby the properties of one are infused into the other. 39

The maintenance of the distinction of the human and divine natures in Christ, as described in the above example, does not mean that they have no relation to each other. But consistent with Protestant theology of the sixteenth century, Hooker is concerned to protect the divine nature against any sort of influence on it or dilution of it by the human nature. God, by virtue of his divine nature, continues always to be impassable. Hooker argues:

This admirable union of God with man can enforce in that higher nature no alteration, because unto God there is nothing more natural than not to be subject to any change. Neither is it a thing impossible that the Word being made flesh should be that which it was not before as touching the manner of subsistence, and yet continue in all the qualities or properties of nature the same it was, because the incarnation of the Son of God consisteth merely in the union of natures, which union doth add perfection to the weaker, to the nobler no alteration at all. 40

39 Hooker, Works, 2:293-294, (V.53.3).

40 Hooker, Works, 2:298-299 (V.54.4).
Christ’s human nature, however, while maintaining its own integrity is affected by its conjunction with the divine in Christ’s person, being purified and sanctified. In effect, it is raised to a new and improved state of being. This association affects not only the person Jesus, but all who share humanity with him. In other words, the new and improved state being communicated to Jesus Christ in the Incarnation is passed on to others as well. He writes: “God from us can receive nothing, we by him have obtained much. For albeit the natural properties of Deity be not communicable to man’s nature, the supernatural gifts, graces and effects thereof are.”

Hooker goes to pains in describing how Christ’s divine nature impacts both his human nature, as well as humanity more broadly. He emphasises the grace God offers humanity in Christ, as well as the distinctions between the effect of that grace on Christ and on the rest of humanity. He is especially eloquent on this point:

The honour which our flesh hath by being the flesh of the Son of God is in many respects great. If we respect but that which is common unto us with him, the glory provided for him and his in the kingdom of heaven, his right and title thereunto even in that he is man differeth from other men’s, because he is that man of whom God is himself a part. We have right to the same inheritance with Christ, but not the same right which he hath, his being such as we cannot reach, and our such as he cannot stoop unto.

Furthermore, to be the Way, the Truth, the Life; to be the Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, Resurrection; to be the Peace of the whole world, the hope of the righteous, the Heir of all things; to be that supreme head whereunto all power both in heaven and in earth is given: these are not honours common unto Christ with other men, they are titles above the dignity and worth of any which were but a mere man, yet true of Christ even in that he is man, but man with whom Deity is personally joined, and unto whom it hath added those excellencies which make him more than worthy thereof.

Finally, sith God hath deified our nature, though not by turning it into himself, yet by making it his own inseparable habitation, we cannot now conceive how God should

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41 Hooker, Works, 2:300 (V.54.5).
without man either exercise divine power, or receive the glory of divine praise. For man is in both an associate of Deity.\

Hooker goes on to explain that association with God does not remove from Christ the effects of his human life. For example, even in glorification Christ’s body exhibited the scars of crucifixion. In this respect, Deity is substantially, but not entirely, unmoved in God’s association with humanity in the Incarnation. As a result of the Incarnation, “the only gain [God] thereby purchased for himself was to be capable of loss and detriment for the good of others.”\

With this introduction to Hooker’s incarnational theology established, I will consider how it gives rise to the fulfillment of humanity’s chief desire: participation in God, and through that participation a comprehensive embrace of diverse beliefs and practices.

### 3.2 Participation

The mutual participation of God in the life of humanity through Jesus Christ and the participation of humanity in God through the sacraments define Hooker’s thought, particularly with regard to his view of the Incarnation. I agree with John Booty who argues that “participation” is the key to understanding Hooker’s thought, setting the stage for his emphasis on sacramental theology and the comprehensive nature of the church as the Body of Christ.\

In the fifth chapter of Book I of the Lawes Hooker writes “sith there can be no goodness desired

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42 Hooker, *Works*, 2:300-301 (V.54.5).


which proceedeth not from God himself, as from the supreme cause of all things; and every
effect doth after a sort contain, at leastwise resemble, the cause from which it proceedeth: all
things in the world are said in some sort to covet more or less the participation of God himself.
Yet this doth no where so much appear as it does in man… In Book V he elaborates further:
“Participation is that mutual inward hold which Christ hath of us and we of him, in such sort that
each possesseth the other by way of special interest, property, and inherent copulation.” The
result, I argue, is an outlook that is inclusive and grace-filled, simultaneously informed by
patristic Christianity, Thomas Aquinas, and the Protestant reformers.

Hooker believes that intrinsic within humanity is a natural desire, an urge even, to be united with
God. He writes: “Then are we happy therefore when fully we enjoy God, as an object wherein
the powers of our souls are satisfied even with everlasting delight; so that although we be men,
yet by being unto God united we live as it were the life of God.” However, due to humanity’s
fall into sin the desired union with God is not possible, excepting some action on God’s part.
Because of its marred state humanity cannot reach God on its own. John S. Marshall describes
Hooker’s view of sin and the limitations it places on humanity:

With the fall, man could do little to deserve felicity. He was not totally corrupt, but his
goodness was of little worth. That meant that, if man was to reach felicity at all, the
generosity of God must find a means of restoring man. Man must be what Hooker calls
rewardable. Thus, in his kindness and generosity, God must find a means to restore man.
These means are beyond man, and are supernatural because they are beyond that natural
way which Adam used before the fall, when he received felicity as a reward for his good

45 Hooker, Works, 1:215 (I.5.2).
46 Hooker, Works, 2:314 (V.54.1).
works. God became man and restored man to his birthright, and united man again to himself through the mediatorship of the Incarnate Lord.\footnote{48}

In other words, Hooker does not believe that humanity’s original state of goodness, as conferred in its creation, is absolutely lost in the fall into sin or is so far lost that it is irredeemable. Humanity’s goodness is distorted, but not obliterated. This is so because by the rule of creation goodness always accompanies God, and God is to be found in all things that he created. For Hooker, sin does not have the power to alter that essential and foundational fact of creation. In Book I of the \textit{Lawes} he writes:

\begin{quote}
God alone excepted, who actually and everlastingly is whatsoever he may be, and which cannot hereafter be that which is now he is not; all things besides are somewhat in possibility, which as yet they are not in act. And for this cause there is in all things an appetite or desire, whereby they incline to something which they may be; and when they are it, they shall be perfecter now than they are. All which perfections are contained under the general name Goodness. And because there is not in the world any thing whereby another may not some way be made the perfecter, therefore all things that are, are good.\footnote{49}
\end{quote}

Thus Hooker believes that because all things in creation have the possibility to be something better than they are, they naturally lean toward that potential goodness intrinsic in them as conveyed by God in the act of creation. The bridge between God and humanity that allows humanity to fulfill its inclination towards participation in God was broken by the fall into sin, a consequence of free will. However, that bridge was restored in the Incarnation.\footnote{50}


\footnote{49} Hooker, \textit{Works}, 1:215 (I.5.1).

\footnote{50} Hooker, \textit{Works}, 2:298-299 (V.54.4).
3.3 Soteriology

Despite salvation’s importance in Hooker’s theological system, in the *Lawes* he does not dwell on “how” questions of soteriology (a trait shared with subsequent Anglican theologians, as we shall see). Instead, he is concerned with the effect of soteriology for Christians. Hooker describes Christ’s soteriological work as one of opening the Kingdom of Heaven, writing: “Now whatsoever he did or suffered, the end thereof was to open the doors of the kingdom of heaven which our iniquities had ‘shut up.’ Because by ascending after that the sharpness of death was overcome…. it appeareth that when Christ did ascend he then most literally opened the kingdom of heaven, to the end that with him and by him all believers might reign.”

This soteriology, focusing more on the effect than the means, is typical of Hooker’s method and contributes to his comprehensive approach to belief and practice.

Hooker’s relatively vague view with regard to what Christ actually did in his earthly life and death is countered by a stronger articulation of the meaning of Christ’s work and life—a life and work in which humanity has the opportunity to share through faith and membership in the church. As the Body of Christ, the church is eternally tied to God’s heart and united to Christ in his saving acts. Hooker explains:

> From hence it is that they which belong to the mystical body of our Saviour Christ, and be in number as the stars of heaven, divided successively by reason of their mortal condition into many generations, are not withstanding coupled every one to Christ their Head, and are all unto every particular person amongst themselves, inasmuch as the same Spirit, which anointed the blessed soul of our Saviour Christ, doth so formalise, unite and

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actuate his whole race, as if both he and they were so many limbs compacted into one body, by being quickened by the same soul.\textsuperscript{52}

For Hooker it is in and through this mystical body, members numbering as many as the stars of heaven, that Christ’s work of salvation and restoration is affected.

One of the issues of controversy during Hooker’s tenure as master of the Temple Church was his understanding of predestination, having adopted a more moderate view than Travers and others attracted to the more extreme forms of Calvinism. Consistent with the theologies of the less radical English reformers and the Church of England’s Articles of Religion, Hooker’s writings place a stronger emphasis on the elect than on the lost.

Rather than dwelling on those who might not come within the embrace of God’s grace, Hooker’s theology of predestination arises from his reading of scripture and the Prayer Book, giving assurance of everlasting life for all who come to Christ. Summarizing Hooker’s approach to predestination, David Neelands writes:

> God wills that all be saved, and offers undeserved grace to all; according to the will of God, Christ died for all. God gives grace sufficient for salvation for all, even to the obdurant, and all may resist that grace. God deals graciously, and providentially, with all and forces none. Yet not all are elect, and those that are elect are absolutely dependent on God’s grace for their salvation.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{52} Hooker, \textit{Works}, 2:324-325 (V.56.11).

Thus, Hooker is convinced that Christ’s saving work cannot be limited to only a few. In fact, he seems to assume that he and most, if not all, of his readers are among the elect, giving rise to his broad comprehensive ecclesiology that includes many Christians of diverse beliefs and practices, not just a few. For Hooker, the result of divine election is renewed communion and participation in God through the Church. He argues:

We are therefore in God through Christ eternally according to that intent and purpose whereby we were chosen to be made his in this present world before the world itself was made, we are in God through knowledge which is had of us, and the love which is borne towards us from everlasting. But in God we actually are no longer than only from the time of our actual adoption into the body of his true Church, into the fellowship of his children. For his Church he knoweth and loveth, so that they which are in the Church are thereby known to be in him. Our being in Christ by eternal foreknowledge saveth us not without our actual and real adoption into the fellowship of his saints in this present world. For in him we actually are by our incorporation into that society which hath him for the Head, and doth make together with him one Body, (he and they in that respect having one name) for which cause, by virtue of this mystical conjunction, we are of him and in him even as though our very flesh and bones should be made continu ate with his. We are in Christ because he knoweth and love us even as parts of himself.

For Hooker, the means of humanity’s union with God in the church comes principally through the grace offered in the sacraments. Having considered how Christ’s incarnation established a restored relationship between God and humanity allowing for renewed mutual participation, I now turn to that media whereby participation is chiefly accomplished in human life.

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55 Hooker, Works, 2:318-319 (V.56.7).
4 The Sacraments

Hooker further develops his theology of incarnation and humanity’s participation in the divine life as he considers the sacraments of baptism and eucharist. In Hooker’s view it is primarily through reception of the sacraments that the Christian is brought into close contact with the divine and participates in the life of God. David Neelands describes the sacramental role in God’s plan for humanity: “The means whereby we are actually brought to enjoy what God has foreseen and decreed for the elect, involves the very participation, by growth and degrees, in the humanity of Christ, which the sacraments confer.”

Hooker defends the Church of England’s use of the sacraments against those who would argue that they are too Catholic or that the life of faith can be nurtured and sustained by preaching alone. However, his treatment of the sacraments is not merely defensive. Instead, he develops an incarnational and sacramental theology remarkable for its depth and, especially for the purpose of this study, its embrace of the comprehensive approach to matters of faith and practice that would become definitive for Anglicanism. He offers the following perspective on the necessity of the sacraments for Christian living:

This is therefore the necessity of the sacraments. That saving grace which Christ originally is or hath for the general good of his whole Church, by sacraments he severally deriveth into every member thereof. Sacraments serve as the instruments of God to that end and purpose, moral instruments, the use whereof is in our hands, the effect is his; for the use we have his express commandment, for the effect his conditional promise: so that without our obedience to the one, there is of the other no apparent assurance, as contrariwise where the signs and sacraments of his grace are not either through contempt unreceived, or received with contempt, we are not to doubt but that they really give what

they promise, and are what they signify. For we take not baptism nor the eucharist for bare resemblances or memorials of things absent, neither for naked signs and testimonies assuring us of grace received before, but (as they are indeed and in verity) for means effectual whereby God when we take the sacraments delivereth into our hands that grace available unto eternal life, which grace the sacraments represent or signify.57

In his study of the sacraments, Hooker attempts to defuse divisive theological disagreement characteristic of the sixteenth century English church by arguing that what happens in the outward signs and symbols of the sacramental acts (such as the consecration of bread and wine) is less important than their effect on the recipient of them. We find here an approach similar to his soteriological argument. The “how” questions that can be so divisive are de-emphasised in favour of a focus on the purpose the sacraments and their effect on humanity. It is in this argument, in particular, that Hooker’s embrace of comprehensiveness is especially strong and clear.58

Hooker is concerned to uphold his perception of the biblical basis of the sacraments. As a result, he employs a rather literal reading of scripture. For example, in reading the words of institution for the eucharist, Hooker places great emphasis on the order of Jesus’ words. Because the scriptural author reported that Jesus said, “take and eat” before he said, “this is my body,” Hooker believes that Christ’s presence in the eucharist is only manifest after the bread has been consumed. This, of course, gives rise to suspicions of a naïve receptionism and may seem to the modern reader overly literalistic. And yet despite his reliance on this particularly literal reading

57 Hooker, Works, 2:330 (V.57.5).

58 This emphasis on the comprehensive nature, goal, and purpose of the sacraments leads Peter Lake to write: “For Hooker it was essential that as many people as possible be exposed to the healing effects of the sacraments and thus he depreciated all attempts to limit the reception thereof to a godly minority.” Lake, “Anglican Moment,” 103.
of the sacraments and the biblical narrative, Hooker is not interested in abolishing practices not specifically mentioned in scripture, provided they are not prohibited by biblical injunction.\(^{59}\)

### 4.1 Baptism

Hooker begins his study of the sacraments with baptism. He describes it as a three-part action, simultaneously moral, ecclesiastical, and mystical: “moral, as being a duty which men perform towards God; ecclesiastical, in that it belongeth unto God’s Church as a public duty; finally mystical, if we respect what God doth thereby intend to work.”\(^{60}\) He uses considerable ink to argue in favour of the Church of England’s practices against those who view them too Catholic. In particular, Hooker defends the baptism of infants, emergency situations requiring women to baptize potentially fatally ill infants and children, signing with the cross, and the practice of confirming those who had been baptized as infants or young children. Running through these various defences is a consistent theme: that baptism is primarily God’s gracious gift to humanity, offering individuals new life in the place of their formerly sinful and dead selves.

Hooker’s belief in predestination plays an interesting role \emph{vis-à-vis} baptism. He believes that to be among the family of the elect, one must be grafted into the life of Christ in the sacrament of baptism. While the act of salvation is always God’s, the Christian person is also required to play a part, as an outward and visible sign of faith:

\(^{59}\) Hooker, \textit{Works}, 2:405-406 (V.65.1).

\(^{60}\) Hooker, \textit{Works}, 2:376 (V.62.15).
Predestination bringeth not to life without the grace of external vocation, wherein our baptism is implied. For as we are not naturally men without birth, so neither are we Christian men in the eye of the Church of God but by new birth, nor according to the manifest ordinary course of divine dispensation new-born, but by baptism which both declareth and maketh us Christians. In which respect we justly hold it to be the door of our actual entrance into God’s house, the first apparent beginning of life, a seal perhaps to the grace of Election, before received, but to our sanctification here a step that hath not any before it.  

In contrast with some of his Puritan-leaning contemporaries, Hooker is a firm believer in the baptism of infants and children. He holds that baptism must be open to all who would be included in the family of Christ—either by personal choice as an adult or through the promise of parents and godparents. In that way baptism is similar to the Jewish ritual of circumcision in its declaration that a child (albeit always male) is a member of the family of the Covenant. Hooker understands the necessity of faith for the gift of salvation; however, he also believes that the role of the sacraments in conferring and confirming faith should not be underestimated. Neelands describes Hooker’s position:

There is, of course, no salvation, that is justification, without faith. But both faith and sacramental administration are necessary. Moreover, it would be foolish to expect actual faith in children, who inevitably receive the grace of baptism, since they cannot raise any barrier or resist God willfully. Baptism must be considered as necessary for rebirth: Hooker takes the allusion to water and the Spirit in John 3.5 literally and as referring to baptism. But this, he believes, is the ancient and unvaried use of Christ and his Church. 

Yet, although Hooker argues for the necessity of baptism for salvation, he avoids undue rigor with regard to children who may die before having the opportunity to receive the sacraments (undoubtedly an all too common situation in sixteenth century England). Hooker does not want to tie God’s hands in damning children who were unable to be baptized, instead arguing that God

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61 Hooker, Works, 2:341 (V.60.3).

can show mercy toward whomever God chooses. However, to avoid any uncertainty he stresses the need for the church to offer baptism to children as soon as possible.\(^\text{63}\) Hooker’s resultant position is moderate and balanced. In it he seeks to find meaning in scripture and in the long tradition of the church, even as he appeals to reason and common sense.

In his exploration of the history and theology of baptism, Hooker considers as well the various controversies over who may baptize and whether re-baptism is ever necessary or desirable. Hooker comes down on the side of Catholic Christianity, arguing that the worthiness or faithfulness of the minister of the sacrament does not affect its efficacy and that scripture is clear in maintaining that an individual can only be baptized once—a sharp contrast with those who would require “believer’s baptism.”\(^\text{64}\) Hooker trusts that once an individual has received baptism, if she or he is among the elect, God has planted a seed in that person that will continue to live and grow in him or her, bringing new life and ultimately salvation. He recognises that people will fall into sin again, but he is confident that God is steadfast in his promises and always redeems and saves his children.

While Hooker considers baptism to be an indelible mark that cannot be repeated, the Christian life is strengthened and supported by the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood, which he argues should be received on a regular basis. For Hooker, baptism is the sign of one’s regeneration and redemption from sin; the eucharist is the means of one’s on-going sanctification and participation

\(^{63}\) Hooker, *Works*, 2:348-350 (V.60.7).

in the life of God. In the following study of Hooker’s eucharistic theology I will demonstrate his emphasis on the essentially comprehensive nature of the sacrament.

4.2 Eucharist

It is in his explorations of the eucharist that Hooker’s emphasis on humanity’s participation in God emerges with particular force and clarity. Even so, there have been some, especially since the nineteenth century, who have found themselves disappointed by Hooker’s determined embrace of Protestantism in his eucharistic theology. Neelands addresses this disappointment: ‘This account has often disappointed those who came after, who expected a doctrinal position more in line with the sacramental views made common in the Stuart period. To these persons, Hooker has appeared unduly ‘Protestant,’ and as giving a somewhat thin account of the sacraments, particularly of the eucharist.’65 While it is the case that Hooker’s eucharistic theology is thoroughly Protestant (just one answer to the questions of his day among a significant variety of Protestant perspectives), his view should not be discounted. The theology he offers is uniquely dynamic and, in particular, supports his embrace of comprehensiveness in a powerful way.

Hooker predicates reception of the eucharist with baptism: “The grace we have by the holy Eucharist doth not begin but continue life. No man therefore receiveth this sacrament before Baptism, because no dead thing is capable of nourishment. That which groweth must of necessity

first live.” He believes that once the new life offered in baptism is conferred, it becomes vital that the faithful Christian sustain that life through participation in the bread and wine of the eucharist, in which the recipient both learns and experiences to the full the grace and love offered by God. This is the same grace and love that led Christ to the cross and now brings the faithful recipient into communion with the divine.

Of course, the sixteenth century church was tested by furious debates over the meaning of the eucharist. In England it was the subject of significant Reformation era struggles, sometimes infamously leading to death if the eucharistic belief one held was not shared by the ruling civil and ecclesiastical authorities. This, in part, is what caused Archbishop Thomas Cranmer to be burned at the stake for denying transubstantiation during the reign of Queen Mary I. Richard Hooker was well aware of this history. With those who took a hard line on the various sides of eucharistic debate Hooker agreed that the sacrament is of the utmost importance. However, he did not share in the conclusion that the differing views of the eucharist that caused such fierce disagreement should be so divisive (and even deadly). In Book V Hooker considers three main views of the eucharist and offers a unique and comprehensive attempt at reconciliation.

Transubstantiation, developed during the period of scholastic theology and articulated with particular clarity by Thomas Aquinas, was, of course, the view maintained by Roman Catholics.

66 Hooker, Works, 2:444 (V.67.1).

67 A.G. Dickens writes: “The madness of a system which would burn a virtuous human being for his inability to accept a metaphysical theory of the eucharist must stagger even a generation well accustomed to institutional and doctrinal crimes… Yet the Marian reaction did at least reveal a wealth of human fortitude, of ‘civil courage’, of adherence to mere principle which the English have seldom in their history found a comparable chance to display. For both good and ill it became an integral part of the memory of a people…” A. G. Dickens, The English Reformation (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 271.
It argues that in the eucharistic consecration the substance of the bread and wine is changed, i.e., transubstantiated, into the physical body and blood of Christ. The accidents (the outward appearances in taste, texture, colour, and smell) retain their previous physical properties. Thus the elements become the body and blood of Christ and cease to be bread and wine; although, they still appear as they did prior to their consecration. For the recipient of the eucharist, participation in the sacrament means that one is sharing in the sacrifice of the cross.

Consubstantiation is commonly attributed to Lutheranism, although, it was not so named by Luther himself. It argues that in the consecration the elements take on the new characteristics of being the body and blood of the glorified Christ, while yet maintaining the original substances of bread and wine. The two substances (pre-and post-consecration) coexist side by side, in much the same way that the divine and human natures coexist in Christ in the Incarnation. For the recipient the result is a participation in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Hooker offers critical arguments against both transubstantiation and consubstantiation with concerns that are theological and philosophical. For example, he argues that consubstantiation is unscriptural in that it holds that the glorified body and blood of Christ are physically present in the consecrated elements. This implies that the Christ’s presence—both human and divine—must be ubiquitous. For Hooker this is a theological impossibility, since scripture maintains that Christ’s physical body ascended into heaven. Christ cannot, Hooker believes, be physically present in heaven and in the elements of the eucharist simultaneously. He further supports his argument against consubstantiation by invoking the church Fathers who, he states, were never concerned with the physical presence of Christ in the elements, but instead with Christ’s spiritual
and mystical presence. The same emphasis on Christ’s spiritual and mystical presence, he
believes, should be the focus of the sixteenth century church.  

With the English Reformers and the Articles of Religion, Hooker prefers the view of the
“Sacramentaries” that argue for a mystical and spiritual presence. In a view shared by John
Calvin and many of the earlier Reformed theologians, Hooker compares the eucharist to baptism.
No one would argue that God is physically present in the waters of baptism, Hooker maintains.
Yet, that does not mean that in the act of baptism one is not incorporated into the life of God
through the sacrament. The same is true of the eucharist. The bread and wine are signs or
symbols of God’s presence, a presence that is really effected in the act of the blessing, breaking,
sharing, and eating. Thus, Christ’s true presence is to be found in the heart of the recipient: “The
real presence of Christ’s most blessed body and blood is not therefore to be sought in the
sacrament, but in the worthy receiver of the sacrament.”  

However, although this is Hooker’s personal view, he is concerned in the Lawes to demonstrate the commonalities of all three views.
These commonalities, he argues, are far more significant and important than the differences.

What do the three views have in common? Hooker argues that each, in its own way, stresses the
true meaning of the sacrament, which has far less to do with what happens to the elements and
far more with the effect on the recipient. Hooker emphasises that their underlying purpose, after
all, is participation in Christ. Everything else is extra.

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68 Hooker, Works, 2:481-483 (V.68.11).

69 Hooker, Works, 2:450 (V.67.6).
Take therefore that wherein all agree, and then consider by itself what cause why the rest in question should not rather be left as superfluous rather than urged as necessary. It is on all sides plainly confessed, first that this sacrament is a true and a real participation in Christ, who thereby imparteth himself even his whole entire person as a mystical Head unto every soul that receiveth him, and that every such receiver doth thereby incorporate or unite himself unto Christ as a mystical member of him, yea of them also whom he acknowledgeth to be his own; secondly, that to whom the person of Christ is thus communicated, to them he giveth by the same sacrament his Holy Spirit to sanctify them as it sanctifieth him which is their head; thirdly that what merit, force, or virtue soever there is in his sacrificed body and blood, we freely fully and wholly have it by this sacrament; fourthly that the effect thereof in us is a real transmutation of our souls and bodies from sin to righteousness, from death and corruption to immortality and life; fifthly that because the sacrament being of itself but a corruptible and earthly creature must needs be thought an unlikely instrument to work so admirable effects in man, we are therefore to rest ourselves altogether upon the strength of his glorious power who is able and will bring to pass that the bread and cup which he giveth us shall be truly the thing he promiseth.

Emphasizing the commonalities in the major eucharistic theologies, Hooker suggests a civil end to arguments among well-meaning Christians. Rather than debate, he urges comfort in the knowledge that God will fulfill God’s promises and bring to communicants participation in the divine life and the salvation such participation makes possible. In this Hooker expresses that which would become the classical Anglican understanding of the eucharist: a faith not especially concerned with “how” Christ is present, using complex philosophical and scriptural proofs, but confident simply that Christ is.

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70 Hooker, Works, 2:452-453 (V.67.7). While Hooker’s eucharistic theology shares much with Calvin’s, there are also striking similarities with the Swedish Lutheran reformer and liturgist, Olaus Petri (1493 to 1552), particularly in his emphasis on the effect of the sacrament on the recipient, rather than the elements. In an Easter sermon Petri preached: “Thus: when I consume this sacrament, it consumes me; outwardly I consume the sacrament, but inwardly and spiritually I receive Christ and all that is his. When I consume a material piece of bread, my body is strengthened thereby; on the contrary, when I receive the sacrament, then Christ receives me, and consumes me and my sins, and I become partaker of his righteousness, and his faithfulness, and goodness swallow up me and my sins, so that I have naught but righteousness.” Cited in Yngve Brilioth, Eucharistic Faith and Practice: Evangelical and Catholic, trans. A. G. Hebert (London: S.P.C.K., 1961), 234.

71 Here, too, Hooker shares Calvin’s outlook, rejecting Luther’s belief in the glorified Christ’s ubiquity, urging attention away from the manner or details of Christ’s presence, and instead focusing on the sacramental promise of union with God. For example, Calvin wrote: “Now, if anyone asks me how this takes place, I shall not be
For Hooker and those who follow him in the Anglican tradition, the purpose of the eucharist is the offering of a unique and special grace for all those who receive and participate in the life of God in Christ. Moreover, it is the essence of the Anglican comprehensive ethos.

Richard Hooker writes:

Let it therefore be sufficient for me presenting myself at my Lord’s table to know what there I receive from him, without searching or inquiring of the manner how Christ performeth his promise; let disputes and questions, enemies to piety, abatements of true devotion, and hitherto in this cause but overly patiently heard, let them take their rest…. what these elements are in themselves it skilleth not, it is enough that to me which take them they are the body and blood of Christ, his promise in witness hereof sufficeth, his word knoweth which way to accomplish; why should any congregation possess the mind of a faithful communicant but this, O my God thou art true, O my soul, thou art happy!\(^{72}\)

5 Ecclesiastical Authority

As I have demonstrated in the above study of the eucharist, Hooker understands that within the body of the church there will be diverse beliefs, perspectives, and practices. The inherent unity in this diverse body is established through shared baptism in Christ, rather than strict uniformity of doctrine or practice. He draws this inclusive view, remarkable in his time, from the writings of the Pauline epistles and presents them with particular clarity in Book III of the Lawes:

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\(^{72}\)Hooker, Works, 2:458 (V.67.12).
And therefore as the Apostle affirmeth plainly of all men Christian, that they be Jews or Gentiles, bond or free, they are all incorporated into one company, they all make but one body. The unity of which visible body and Church of Christ consisteth in that uniformity which all several persons unto belonging have, by reason of that one Lord whose servants they all profess themselves, that one Faith which they all acknowledge, that one Baptism wherewith they are all initiated.  

Remarkably for a sixteenth century Protestant, Hooker even argues that the Church of Rome, despite its “gross and grievous abominations,” must be understood to fall within the broad and inclusive embrace of “the family of Jesus Christ,” a position consistent with his earlier sermons at the Temple. Those determined to be heretics, too, are still, in Hooker’s view, to be included in the membership of the visible church and their children, or the children of less than ideal family circumstances (for example of unmarried parents) may be properly baptized and initiated into the full membership of the Body of Christ.

73 Hooker, Works, 1:339 (III.1.3).
74 Hooker, Works, 1:347 (III.1.10).
75 Hooker, Works, 1:347 (III.1.10).
76 See especially “A Learned Discourse of Justification, Works, and how the Foundation of Faith is Overthrown.” In it, Hooker argues polemically against the Roman Church; however, he admits salvation is open even to those in error, given the fact that they have not lost the foundation of the church in Christ. Hooker, Works, 3:500 (Sermon II.18).
77 Hooker, Works, 1:347 (III.1.10).
78 Hooker, Works, 1:348-349 (III.1.12).
5.1 Visible Church

With other Reformation era Protestant theologians, Hooker acknowledges that there is a necessary distinction between the society of the visible church, which includes the faithful and unfaithful, and the mystical body (i.e., the church triumphant) that is truly known only to God. As a result, the lines of exclusion cannot be drawn too narrowly. Rather, Hooker believes that all who claim to profess the Christian faith should be recognised as members of the society of the church. Furthermore, he understands that the church and its practices will necessarily be contextual, even as it is universal. H. E. Woodhouse describes Hooker’s comprehensive view:

To secure the universality of the Church, time, place, and the inclusion of all sorts of men is needful, since this is not found in any Church limited in time or place, the catholic Church includes all Christians. Nevertheless, within the universal Church there are local or particular Churches, and these are true parts sharing all the privileges of the catholic body. By way of illustration Hooker spoke of the sea being one, yet having different names in different places, and so the catholic Church is divided into a number of distinct societies possessing certain powers.

In this way, Hooker anticipates the ecumenical movement by several centuries and underlines a key aspect of Anglicanism as it has developed into a diverse and global communion: an ecclesial communion always learning how to express the inherited Christian faith in diverse and changing times and contexts.

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79 Hooker, Works, 1:347-348 (III.1.11).
Similar to his position on the contextual nature of the church, Hooker argues that the laws of the church—the “laws of ecclesiastical polity”—are in many cases changeable depending on circumstance. This is certainly true of laws or polity of human origin, but he even posits that divinely established laws may be changed or abolished if the circumstances leading to their enactment no longer exist: “Whether God be the author of laws by authorizing that power of men whereby they are made, or by delivering them made immediately from himself, by word only, or in writing also, or howsoever; notwithstanding the authority of their Maker, the mutability of that end for which they are made doth also make them changeable.”

Hooker distinguishes between laws of dogmatic belief, which must be constantly believed, however, and laws of a moral or political nature:

Touching upon points of doctrine, as for example the Unity of the God, the Trinity of Persons, salvation by Christ, the resurrection of the body, life everlasting, the judgment to come, and such like, they have been since the first hour that there was a Church in the world, and till the last they must be believed. But as for matters of regiment, they are for the most part of another nature. To make new articles of faith and doctrine no man thinketh it lawful; new laws of government what commonwealth or church is there which maketh not either at one time or another? … There is no reason in the world wherefore we should esteem it as necessary to do, as always to believe, the same things; seeing every man knoweth that the matter of faith is constant, the matter of contrariwise action daily changeable, especially the matter of action belonging to church polity. Neither can I find that men of soundest judgment have any otherwise taught, than that articles of belief, and things which all men must of necessity do to the end that they may be saved, are either expressly set down in Scripture or else plainly thereby to be gathered. But touching things which belong to discipline and outward polity, the Church hath authority to make canons, laws, and decrees, even as we read in the Apostles’ time it did.

Hooker’s belief in the mutability of ecclesiastical laws, apart from matters of core doctrine and “things which all men must of necessity to do,” undergirds his articulation of a comprehensive

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church polity. The church can and must change and adapt over time and in its various contexts, even sometimes setting aside practices that were once held to be of great importance if the circumstances that led to the enactment of those laws—whether of human or divine origin—no longer are beneficial or applicable to the church’s life.

5.2 Scripture, Reason, and Tradition

A final topic in considering the influence of Richard Hooker on the development of the comprehensive ethos relates to authority in the church, and especially the role of reason in discerning how the church is to govern itself, what individuals are to believe, and how the church may evolve over time. Hooker is often credited with establishing the “three-legged stool” of Anglicanism, comprised of three sources of authority: scripture, reason, and tradition. In the typical popular view, these three elements stand equally in strength and length, as would the legs of a well-balanced stool. While such has been offered as definitive for classical Anglicanism, it is not the precise argument presented by Hooker. In fact, Hooker’s argument might be interpreted as more radical than commonly believed, especially by those concerned or distressed with supposed recent liberalising tendencies in some quarters of Anglicanism.

That Hooker maintained a high view of scripture is to be expected. He accepted, with the Articles of Religion, that “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation.” And, he

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notes that many of the church’s beliefs, such as the Trinity, including the co-eternity of the Son and the Father, the double procession of the Spirit, and the church’s duty to baptize infants are “notwithstanding in Scripture nowhere to be found by express literal mention, only deduced they are out of Scripture by collection.” He goes on to write: “This kind of comprehension in Scripture being therefore received, still there is doubt how far we are to proceed by collection, before the full and complete measure of things necessary be made up.”

In other words, Hooker believes that scripture must be subject and open to interpretation. There are times when its meaning is not clear and even when scripture’s dictates cannot be reconciled with life in the contemporary world. When cases such as these arise, one has two resources to aid in interpretation: reason and the teaching of the church. For Hooker, they are not equal. Reason, which Hooker believes to be a God-given gift, is to be employed first. Following that, the teachings of the church, about which Hooker employs both scepticism and respect, should be utilised. In a particularly well-known passage Hooker explains:

Be it a matter of one kind or of the other, what scripture doth plainly deliver, to that the first place of credit and obedience is due; the next whereunto is whatsoever any man can necessarily conclude by force of reason; after these the voice of the Church succeedeth. That which the Church by her ecclesiastical authority shall probably think and define to be good or true, must in congruity of reason overrule all other inferior judgments whatsoever.

In light of the above, I would argue, therefore, that Hooker does not in fact present a three-legged stool (or at least not one that would be very stable). Instead, he offers a system in which scripture

86 Hooker, Works, 1:269 (I.14.2).
87 Hooker, Works, 1:269 (I.14.2).
88 Hooker, Works, 2:43 (V.8.2).
and reason are being constantly employed together, interpreting each other in order that we might achieve a deeper understanding of its meaning and application. In fact, Hooker believes that scripture presupposes the constant use of reason as its interpreter.

Throughout the body of his work, Hooker maintains a relatively positive opinion of humanity. As we saw in the presentation of his views of the Incarnation, he does not deny the reality of sin in human life. However, he also holds fast to the belief that humanity’s original nature prior to the fall into sin was good and created and endowed by God with great gifts. Chief among these gifts is the ability to think and reason. Even after the fall into sin, humans have maintained the ability to reason and understand; although, these abilities no longer are employed perfectly.

In fact, rather than asserting that the fall into sin mars the human gift of reason, Hooker believes that it is especially after the fall that reason must be employed to understand scripture. It is only through the use of reason that humans can understand scripture’s true meaning and the depth of God’s revelation. Hooker explains: “We have endeavoured to make it appear how in the nature of reason itself there is no impediment, but that the selfsame spirit, which revealed the things that God had set down in his law, may also be thought of to aid and direct men in finding out by the light of reason what laws are expedient to be made for the guiding of the Church, over and beside them that are in Scripture.”89

Hooker argues that if reason is not employed when interpreting scripture, not only may the true meaning of a particular passage be misunderstood, but worse, the reader may in fact fall into

89 Hooker, Works, 1:380-381 (III.8.18).
greater sin. Hooker believed that many Puritans had done just that. David Neelands offers a helpful interpretation of Hooker’s view of the interrelationship of scripture and reason:

Reason and Scripture are not precisely co-equal, as the formula of Scripture, reason, and tradition might suggest. Rather, reason and Scripture are related precisely as nature and grace, not co-equal, but consonant, both having validity and neither being in conflict with the other. Hooker can claim reason as an authority alongside Scripture and compatible with it because he adopts a view like the Thomistic view, that there are not “two truths”: God is the source both of reason and of revelation, and therefore they do not contradict each other. Scripture contains general laws that reason can discover, for good cause. And in this it simply perfects nature without negating it. But reason can criticize Scripture, both to give it initial credibility and to determine the meaning of obscure or difficult passages. Thus, Scripture is above reason, in the sense that it delivers saving knowledge that reason is not competent to consider, but this priority does not mean that Scripture is opposed to or immune from human reason.

Through the interrelationship between scripture and reason, Hooker comes to the belief that the necessary doctrinal requirements for salvation are “few, simple, and easy to understand.”

Of course, Hooker does not deny the importance of tradition for the church. But as a sixteenth century Protestant, living in the shadow of the Reformation, he is often sceptical of excessive or undue reliance on tradition as the reforming church and Christians seek to govern themselves.

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90 Marshall offers this perspective: “Hooker’s contention is that the misuse of Scripture produces rather than cures sin. The English Puritans had become more extremely biblical than Calvin whom they followed. In the Bible they sought every detail of moral law and worship. The result was a harsh morality—since they used the Pentateuch to fill out the details of their moral code. That troubled men of good will who wished natural equity and kindness. With the Puritans there was no conception of development of morality and no insight into natural rights and duties. Hence Hooker recognized that the mere Scriptures are not sufficient. We need the authority of the Church to induce us to consider them favorably. And we need to prove to us that the Scriptures are a true revelation. Reason teaches us those natural obligations not given us in divine revelation, and finally provides us with sound methods of exegesis.” Marshall, Anglican Tradition, 52.


Thus Neelands argues that for Hooker “‘tradition’ is a word with negative connotation, usually associated with what is taken to be the Roman Catholic attempt to erect something ‘merely human’ as an authority independent of and alongside Scripture and reason.”\textsuperscript{93} Yet, as I demonstrated in his consideration of the sacraments, Hooker does not go as far as the more radical Puritans, defending many of the church’s traditional practices against those who would argue that they are unscriptural and therefore heretical or heterodox. Furthermore, he argues that where scripture is silent the church should have the latitude to establish its own practices.

An example of Hooker’s defence of traditional practices comes in his consideration of baptism. In it he defends the practice of signing the newly baptized with the cross as the long tradition of the church, despite there being no scriptural warrant. He believes that tradition may be properly employed as a factor in decision making when the question at hand is a matter of adiaphora, especially if it is a Christian practice dating to the earliest days of the church. With specific regard to the cross in baptism he argues:

\begin{quote}
Lest therefore the name of tradition should be offensive to any, considering how far by some it hath been and is abused, we mean by traditions, ordinances made in the prime of Christian religion, established with that authority which Christ hath left to his Church for matters indifferent, and in that consideration requisite to be observed, till like authority see just and reasonable cause to alter them. So that traditions ecclesiastical are not rudely and in gross to be shaken off, because the inventors of them were men.\textsuperscript{94}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{93} Neelands, “Scripture, Reason, and Tradition,” 89.

\textsuperscript{94} Hooker, \textit{Works}, 2:407 (V.65.2). Compare to Article XXXIV: “Of the Traditions of the Church”: “It is not necessary that Traditions and Ceremonies be in all places one, or utterly like; for at all times they have been divers, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men’s manners, so that nothing be ordained against God’s Word.”, 874.
I argue, therefore, that Hooker’s view of authority in the church and in Christian life is far more complicated than the caricature of the Anglican three-legged stool. He places primary authority on the Christian scriptures as binding for the Christian life and belief, even as the scriptures themselves are always open to interpretation, evaluation, and even criticism by human reason and experience. In fact, Hooker calls for constant and rigorous consideration of the Christian life in light of God’s revelation to humanity through multiple sources of authority.

Hooker’s is not a view that would appeal to those who would seek to narrowly follow scripture, as some extreme Protestants might; nor, would it appeal to those who would exalt tradition above the other sources of authority. Rather, he forges a moderate approach that can be inclusive or comprehensive of more than one point of view and which may evolve over time and in different contexts. As such, his approach becomes prophetic and even foundational for subsequent Anglican thought and practice.

6 Hooker’s Comprehensive Church: An Appraisal

As the “prophet of Anglicanism,” Hooker’s insightful and innovative approach to questions of theology and ecclesiology cannot be stressed strongly enough. Not only did he “defend” (or perhaps even provide theological application to) the principles and practices of the Elizabethan Church of England, he also challenged the church to be its best possible self, moving away from narrow interests and factionalism toward a more comprehensive self-understanding. The church of Hooker’s vision is simultaneously scriptural, reasonable, and respectful of Christian tradition. Its embrace of the English people is as wide as possible, accessible to all who would willingly
participate in its life and respect its institutions, sacraments, and heritage given its Reformation era context and foundation.

As a result of this wide view, throughout its history various schools of thought within Anglicanism have attempted to claim Hooker as their own, in many cases truthfully and successfully, given the volume and breadth of Hooker’s work. Peter Lake writes that, in fact, “it would scarcely be an exaggeration to claim that the history of intra-Anglican theological and historical dispute, since the Restoration, could be traced in and through different attempts to appropriate Hooker for one ideological faction or another.”

I would argue that those who favour the comprehensive approach certainly can and should do likewise. In fact, as I have demonstrated, Hooker succeeded not only in defending the relatively comprehensive practices of the Elizabethan Church of England, but he likewise provided a solid theological foundation for it, upon which Anglicanism still relies.

In the preceding study of Richard Hooker’s contributions to theology and ecclesiology, we have seen that he sought a sound rationale for an English ecclesiastical ethos that is both rooted in a theology of the Incarnation and characterized by a wide degree of comprehension. We see this devotion to a comprehensive approach to Christianity especially in Hooker’s emphasis on humanity’s participation in God through the Incarnation and the sacraments (regardless of the particularities of one’s individual belief system), and in the significance he places on the role of reason in establishing authority in the church and Christian life in different times and contexts.

I concur with David Neelands that Hooker’s sacramental approach, established as it is in the Incarnation, leads to an inclusive and comprehensive ecclesiology. Neelands writes:

   This minimalism, or apparent tolerance of opposing views, has often been treated as a significant mark of Anglicanism. And indeed, some have seen this, and not his theory of real participation, as Hooker’s ‘positive view of the presence of Christ’ in the eucharist, that is the view that one is to refrain from making a judgment—to enjoy the presence of Christ in oneself as receiver and not argue about it.\(^\text{96}\)

As true and significant as that statement is regarding Hooker’s sacramental minimalism, neither would I discount Hooker’s emphasis on participation, since it, too, emphasises the inclusive nature of the Incarnation and God’s action in drawing humanity into the divine life.

Despite Hooker’s tendency to shy away from overly precise definitions that would serve to narrow and limit humanity’s understanding of God, it is not the case that Hooker did not seek to provide definitive and even doctrinal positions for himself and the Church of England. For example, he was concerned that there be a certain degree of doctrinal agreement among candidates for baptism.\(^\text{97}\) Yet, Hooker understood with particular clarity that any arguments humans make about who God is, how God is related to humanity, and what humanity’s access to God might be, are limited and, in fact, secondary to the more significant truth of the purpose of theology: to help us better understand our relationship \textit{with} God, rather than philosophically define our ideas \textit{about} God. This focus has subsequently shaped the Anglican approach to theological questions in different times and places, giving rise to theological pluralism and also the appeal to comprehensiveness.

\(^{96}\) Neelands, “Christology and Sacraments,” 399-400.

\(^{97}\) Hooker, \textit{Works}, 2:389-391 (V.63.1).
Guided by his sense of the human desire for participation in the life of God and his faith in God’s reconciling work and presence for humanity in Christ through the Incarnation, Hooker articulates a method and ethos that seek common ground among multiple points of view, appealing to scripture, reason, and the tradition of the church, thus, opening a middle way and offering a possible approach to reconciliation of differences. In the process, he provides a lasting and even profound theological articulation, justification, and vision for the emerging ethos of comprehension that would become important for Anglicanism in successive centuries.
Chapter Five:

Frederick Denison Maurice
and the Comprehensive Church

1 Historical Context

If Richard Hooker is pre-eminent in laying the foundations for what would become known as the Anglican ethos, Frederick Denison Maurice gave that ethos new life and vibrancy in the nineteenth century with an influence still felt in the twenty-first. Of course, there were significant theological and ecclesiastical developments in the two centuries between Hooker’s death and Maurice’s birth. In the following I highlight several important touchstones: the Restoration of the Monarchy and the Act of Uniformity following Cromwell’s Commonwealth; the influence of the Cambridge Platonists and Latitudinarianism; and the rise of the Oxford Movement and Evangelicalism. My emphasis will be on the impact that each has had on Anglicanism and, in particular, on the ethos of comprehensiveness as received and interpreted by F. D. Maurice.

1.1 Restoration and Uniformity

Despite attempts, theological and political, in the sixteenth century to secure a relatively peaceful and comprehensive Church of England, both church and nation were plunged into division and civil war just four decades after the deaths of Hooker in 1600 and Queen Elizabeth I in 1603. Prior to the Civil War and the Commonwealth period under Oliver Cromwell, and following
restoration in 1661, the Church of England was subject to difficult divisions. In an attempt to promote (or enforce) unity at the time of the Restoration, King Charles II (1630 to 1685) and the English Parliament authorized the revised 1662 Book of Common Prayer (following the previous Prayer Book’s banishment during the Commonwealth), and insisted on adherence to its liturgical rites and to the historic three-fold order of ministry, re-established and enforced in the new Act of Uniformity.¹

Such a forced ecclesial uniformity was deemed necessary to lay a proper foundation for the church and its ministry after an extraordinarily challenging period of uncertainty, and was followed by even further efforts to extinguish religious and civil dissention. For example, through the Five Mile Act of 1666 nonconformist ministers who had risen to prominence during the Commonwealth were barred from living within five miles of any previous place of employment, let alone serving in any ecclesiastical capacity.² Going further, the 1673 Test Act required reception of Holy Communion according to the re-established Prayer Book by all civil and military officers.³

The direct and intended result of the Act of Uniformity and subsequent acts was the Church of England becoming considerably less comprehensive than it had been prior to the Civil War, with substantial numbers of nonconformists leaving the established church and forming a dissenting


³ Moorman, Church in England, 253.
minority. An additional consequence was the historic episcopate taking on greater significance than it had prior to the Civil War and Commonwealth period, including a newly explicit requirement that only those ordained by a bishop in the historic episcopate could officiate at the services of the established church. In fact, the episcopate came to be understood as definitive for the Church of England. David Edwards writes of the Act of Uniformity:

> The nature of the Restoration settlement was clear to all: it was a crushing defeat for those who advocated the ‘comprehension’ of Puritans by allowing ministers much freedom…or at least by making optional the ceremonies such as signing with the cross at Baptism to which there had been objections since Elizabethan times. The critics of the new book were referred to in its preface as “men of factious, peevish and perverse spirits” unlikely to be “satisfied with any thing that can be done in this kind by any other than themselves.” More than four hundred of the ministers who objected to the Restoration settlement had been ordained by bishops, but all understood the intention behind the new book’s insistence that only episcopally ordained priests should celebrate Holy Communion…In all, some 1,760 ministers were expelled from their parishes for their Puritan convictions in 1660-62.

By contrast, in the previous century Richard Hooker had argued that while the episcopate was historical, beneficial, and regular for the church, it was not in every respect the only valid basis for ministry, writing in Book VII of the Lawes: “we are not simply without exception to urge a lineal descent of power from the Apostles by continued succession of bishops in every effectual ordination.” And in practice, Hooker had apparently accepted the non-episcopal ordination of his rival Travers, even as he disagreed with him theologically. That earlier conciliatory position,

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4 The principle had been in effect previously, but not always successfully enforced. At this point, however, it was enshrined and printed in the Book of Common Prayer. The Act of Uniformity not only stipulated the requirements for the ordination of clergy, it also required that schoolteachers be licensed by a bishop and that university lecturers conform to the Church of England. It also required one be confirmed by a bishop prior to admission to Holy Communion. Edwards, Christian England, 428-429.


however, was no longer tenable in the now decidedly monarchical nation concerned to stamp out less hierarchical forms of governance, whether civil or ecclesiastical.

1.2 Reason, Cambridge Platonists, and Latitudinarianism

As the Church of England was re-establishing itself with Prayer Book and episcopate at its centre, Europe more broadly was struggling to integrate or reconcile the insights of the Age of Reason with the historic Christian faith. English Christianity was not spared this challenge. Especially notable for their attempts to integrate faith and reason during this time were the Cambridge Platonists, theologian philosophers centred at the University of Cambridge.\(^7\)

Although formed in the Puritan tradition, particularly at Emmanuel College in Cambridge (the university’s Puritan nexus), the Cambridge Platonists had disagreed with the more extreme forms of the doctrine of election enshrined in the Westminster Confession and evident during the Puritan ascendancy under Oliver Cromwell, and they were dismayed by the religious and political controversies that had marked and marred sixteenth and seventeenth century England. They hoped to reform the church such that it would be broad enough to embrace a greater diversity of theological opinion, including the insights of new scientific advances and contemporary philosophy.\(^8\) In particular, they followed the insights of Richard Hooker in

\(^7\) J. H. R. Moorman notes that originally the Cambridge Platonists were known as “Latitude-men” or “Latitudinarians” but this moniker was later used in reference to the rationalists who succeeded them. Moorman, *Church in England*, 255.

\(^8\) Moorman, *Church in England*, 254.
emphasizing the necessity of reason in the development of religious faith as a divine endowment in human life. Derwyn Owen writes of them: “Like Hooker before them, the Cambridge Platonists remained aloof from…fanatical quarrels, continuing his advocacy of the via media. They adopted this position not from a love of compromise but on deliberate, self-conscious, philosophical grounds—the appeal to reason.”

Among the influential Cambridge Platonists were Benjamin Whichcote (1609 to 1683), the father of the movement; Peter Steery (1613 to 1672); Henry More (1614 to 1687); Ralph Cudworth (1617 to 1689), John Smith (1618 to 1652); John Worthington (1618 to 1671); and Nathaniel Culverwell (1619 to 1651). Whichcote, who had served as dean of King’s College, Cambridge during the Commonwealth era, and subsequently in pastoral ministry, is noted for the following statement, which came to be regarded as the “motto” of the Cambridge Platonists: Divine Truth “flows from God in the Instant or Moment of God’s creation; and then it is the Light of the Candle which God set up in Man to light him; and that which by this Light he may discover, are all Instances of Morality; of good Affection; and Submission towards God…”

And anticipating F. D. Maurice who followed two centuries later, Whichcote said: “universal charity is a final thing in religion.”

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The Cambridge Platonists understood the Christian scriptures to be the record of God’s revelation to humanity and they maintained a deep understanding of Christian mysticism, while emphasizing the divine gift of human reason. G. R. Cragg describes their theological approach:

Faith in revelation was not incompatible with confidence in reason. Man’s faculties have been impaired by the Fall, and unless God disclosed himself certain truths would always elude us. Moreover, in the Cambridge Platonists there was a strain of mysticism which preserved them from the narrow rationalism to which the succeeding generation succumbed. Sanity was the mark of this mysticism. The Cambridge Platonists rose to an apprehension of God in and through nature, not beyond it. In the words of John Smith, “God made the universe and all the creatures contained therein as so many glasses wherein he might reflect his own glory. He hath copied forth himself in the creation; and in this outward world we may read the lovely characters of Divine goodness, power, and wisdom.”

Like Hooker before and F. D. Maurice after, the Cambridge Platonists also eschewed church parties (low church characterized by Calvinism or high church devoted to Archbishop Laud). Their belief in the need to employ reason meant that for them dogmatic certainty would be impossible. In fact, they were convinced that “it was devotion to dogmatic systems that led to bloodshed.” And with Hooker they believed that one only needed the combined forces of scripture and reason to attain salvation.

While less well remembered today, the influence of the Cambridge Platonists was significant. For example, the seventeenth century archbishop of Canterbury, John Tillotson (1630 to 1694), among the earliest Latitudinarian bishops, emphasised the importance of Christian godly living.

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rather than doctrinal debate or precision. Likewise, the English philosopher John Locke (1632 to 1704), a contemporary of the Cambridge Platonists, was concerned with the bloody religious and political disagreements that brought on the Commonwealth period, and with the Platonists looked to integrate faith and reason for the benefit of society. He wrote: “The horrid cruelties that in all ages, and of late in our view, have been committed under the name, and on the account of religion, give so just an offence and abhorrence to all who have any remains, not only of religion, but humanity left, that the world is ashamed to own it.”\(^\text{15}\) Also inspired by Richard Hooker,\(^\text{16}\) Locke sought a belief system grounded in ethics and reason that could appeal to the vast majority of Christians in England without having to compel them to believe.\(^\text{17}\)

This renewed emphasis on faith, reason, and ethics was presented, as well, in the thought of the later eighteenth century Latitudinarians, some of whom went further than the Cambridge Platonists in expressing a growing concern that many of the central tenants of orthodox Christianity were incompatible with the insights of contemporary science and philosophy. Indeed, some were drawn toward Deism and ultimately denied the doctrine of the Trinity, with concerns strong enough to suggest that the Prayer Book be altered to omit the Athanasian and Nicene creeds.\(^\text{18}\) By contrast, the earlier Cambridge Platonists were moderate in their doctrinal positions, even as they desired an open and comprehensive church.


\(^{16}\) Owen, “Anglican Theology,” 5-6.


The more radical Latitudinarians did not succeed in stripping the Church of England of its orthodoxy; however, their considerable influence was felt throughout the church and in its offspring, especially the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. For example, influenced by the un-adopted 1689 “Liturgy of Comprehension” proffered by the Latitudinarians and King William III (1650 to 1702) in an abortive attempt to reconcile diverse parties in the Church of England, the first “Proposed” Book of Common Prayer (1786) of the U.S. Episcopal Church, largely the work of William White (1748 to 1836) of Pennsylvania (later the church’s second bishop) and Dr. William Smith (1727 to 1803) of Maryland, sought to include a wider than usual spectrum of beliefs and omitted the Nicene and Athanasian creeds, while also including the Catholic-leaning liturgical advances from the Scottish Episcopal Church.¹⁹

The proposed American book’s indebtedness to the 1689 “Liturgy of Comprehension” is acknowledged in its preface: “By comparing the following book, as now offered to the Church, with this preface and the notes annexed; it will appear that most of the amendments or alterations which had the sanction of the great Divines of 1689, have been adopted, with such others as are thought reasonable and expedient.”²⁰ Like the earlier English Latitudinarian proposal of 1689, the initial American Prayer Book proposal with its seemingly radical suggestions and omissions

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¹⁹ Although the Nicene Creed was to be omitted, the proposed Prayer Book 1786 assumed that the Apostles’ Creed would have been said at Morning Prayer prior to the eucharistic celebration. The wording of the Apostles’ Creed was altered, however, removing the phrase “he descended into hell.” Opposition to the Nicene Creed’s inclusion related especially to concern over “unscriptural phrases.” See Hatchett, Commentary, 335.

was not adopted as presented. In its place the Episcopal Church’s General Convention approved a more modest revision of the 1662 Prayer Book in 1789, influenced also by the Scottish Episcopal Church’s Communion Office. Notably, the adopted Prayer Book reinstated the Nicene Creed to the eucharistic liturgy.\textsuperscript{21} However, neither the Athanasian Creed nor the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion were included.\textsuperscript{22}

Although not entirely successful in their proposed liturgical reforms, the Latitudinarians in Britain and North America did succeed in opening the church to significant insights of seventeenth and eighteenth century science and philosophy, with an influence felt well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the emerging liberal Catholic and Modernist movements. Yet, for all of their attempts to liberalise the Church of England in its theology, liturgy, and practice, the Latitudinarians also left it dry and intellectual, often seemingly far removed from the lives and concerns of lay members. A result was several revival movements, two of which I consider below to further set the stage and context for the thought of F. D. Maurice.

\textsuperscript{21} Although the adopted 1789 Prayer Book was less radical and latitudinarian than the 1786 proposal, there were still strong similarities, with many of the earlier book’s changes from 1662 adopted. William Sydnor writes: “While the Proposed Book of 1786 was immensely unpopular and while the last Convention of the ‘southern states’ disavowed any allegiance to it, it is not true, as some scholars suggest, that it did not play a part in the work of the 1789 Convention. A close analysis of the 1789 Book reveals that the Preface, Lectionary, Prayers and Thanksgivings, and the revision of almost every one of the Occasional Offices is the version of the Proposed Book.” William Sydnor, \textit{The Prayer Book Through the Ages} (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1997), 69.

\textsuperscript{22} The Athanasian Creed was not included in the Prayer Book of the American Episcopal Church until 1979. The Articles of Religion were revised and finally “set forth” in 1801; however, their canonical status was unclear. An 1804 proposal that would have required subscription was defeated. See Hatchett, \textit{Commentary}, 586-588.
1.3 Oxford Movement

By the nineteenth century new ecclesiastical concerns and movements arose. Conflicting opinions about the proper role of the state in setting church policy, efforts to adjust the church’s theological assumptions as a result of new biblical scholarship, renewed evangelical zeal, and a growing awareness of the plight of the poor and working classes all contributed to yet another period of conflict and unease. These and other concerns throughout the nineteenth century exposed the strengths and weaknesses of the comprehensive character of Anglicanism as it struggled to embrace divergent and sometimes overlapping perspectives.

Of the various movements that came to the fore in the nineteenth century, the insights of several scholars and priests at the University of Oxford have been among the most significant. Included among them were John Keble (1792 to 1866), John Henry Newman (1801 to 1890), Edward Pusey (1800 to 1882), and Robert Isaac Wilberforce (1802 to 1857). Concerned that the government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland was not respecting the institutions of religion, especially in the dissolution of an Irish bishopric, they issued a series of tracts—*The Tracts for the Times* (leading the authors to be known as Tractarians)—calling for the church to reassert itself and its sacred inheritance. Eugene Fairweather explains:

> The Tractarians saw the Church as a more or less willing slave, not only of the increasingly secular state, but of the whole “liberal” culture the state represented. As responsible citizens, they had no desire to hasten the secularization of the state, because they believed that “apostasy” was a national calamity. But their deepest concern was for the welfare of the Church, hampered and corrupted in its bondage, and they were ready to break with the state for the sake of the Church’s integrity and mission…. The symbolic inauguration of the Oxford Movement was an attack on the government’s Irish Church
policy—construed less as a threat to prestige and purse than an illegitimate interference with the Church’s pastoral office.\textsuperscript{23}

The Tractarians appealed to the teachings of the patristic era, arguing for a strong episcopate within a church society separate from civil authority; a reassertion of the Anglican tradition as a branch of Catholic Christianity; and a renewed emphasis on personal holiness. In the process, Oxford Movement leaders attempted also a reinterpretation of the Church of England’s history, minimising the memory of the Reformation and Protestantism’s influence.\textsuperscript{24}

Some leading Tractarians, ultimately concluding that they could not in good conscience continue in the Church of England with its reformed heritage and subservience to the British state, converted to Roman Catholicism: the most well known was Newman, but Wilberforce and others left as well. Those who stayed in the Church of England, however, slowly gained influence and saw the English church, and even more enthusiastically the Episcopal Church in the United States, adopt many of their proposals within a generation. Ultimately, the Tractarians who remained and the later Anglo-Catholics who followed had a profound impact, enlarging the tradition theologically and liturgically. Reflecting on the Oxford Movement’s significance in broadening Anglicanism’s comprehensiveness, David Holmes writes:

\begin{quote}
The Oxford Movement and Anglo-Catholicism challenged the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century belief that Anglicanism was simply another form of Protestantism. Positively (as some broad church and liberal evangelical Anglicans came to realize), the movement reversed the centuries-old process by which Anglicanism had been casting out its non-conformists; unlike the Puritans and Methodists, the Anglo-Catholics remained within the church to witness to its heritage. Henceforth Anglicanism not only would be a
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{24} Fairweather, \textit{Oxford Movement}, 9.
more comprehensive church than it had since the Elizabethan period but would also become the most comprehensive church in Christendom.\textsuperscript{25}

While the claim that Anglicanism is the most comprehensive church in Christendom would be difficult to substantiate, there can be no doubt that since the nineteenth century Anglican theology and practice have widened into an especially broad and diverse spectrum, Anglo-Catholicism being an important expression and contributor to that expansion.

1.4 Evangelicalism

As the Tractarians in Oxford were rediscovering and promoting the Church of England’s Catholic heritage, a parallel movement was building in the nineteenth century among Evangelicals. The Evangelical Anglicans differed with the Tractarians in their understanding of the Church of England’s history and preferred to emphasise its Reformation heritage, subservience to a benevolent civil order, and the need for personal salvation. However, they shared the Oxford Movement’s emphasis on holy living, as had the earlier Methodists in the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{26}

In many ways, the nineteenth century Evangelical movement was anticipated by the Methodist revival, led by the preacher and evangelist John Wesley (1703 to 1791) and his brother Charles


\textsuperscript{26} For a thorough study of both the Evangelical and Oxford Movements, see Yngve Brilioth, Three Lectures on Evangelicalism and the Oxford Movement: Together with a Lecture on the Theological Aspect of the Oxford Movement, and a Sermon Preached in Fairford Church on 11 July 1933 (London: Oxford University, 1934).
(1707 to 1788). Their movement was characterized by a desire to convert souls to Christ through compelling and relevant preaching that never failed to draw crowds desiring spiritual zeal. In response to the Wesleys’ ministries, Methodist societies were established across England as “a company of men having the form and seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together, to receive the word of exhortation, and to watch over one another in love, that they may help each other to work out their salvation.” Methodist meetings were not intended to rival Church of England parishes or services; however, over time the vibrancy of the preaching and ministry led many to abandon the established church, despite the Wesleys’ wishes to the contrary. 

John Wesley’s ministry and influence can be summarised as follows: “when the sermons in the parish churches were often cold and dull, Wesley was preaching with intense conviction to crowds which sometimes numbered as many as 20,000 people; and at a time when the Church as a whole seemed indifferent to the fate of the masses, Wesley was bringing them hope and confidence… He brought them the love of God.”

Ultimately, the Wesleys’ quest for holiness and personal salvation strained a church struggling to maintain unity in an era of new philosophy, science, and colonial expansion. In particular, the desire for ordination among Methodist lay preachers in Britain and a refusal by the Church of England to respond to the desperate need for ministers in North America following the American

30 Moorman *Church in England*, 302.
Revolution led John Wesley to appoint “superintendents” (similar to bishops in their authority) in America and others as elders to administer the sacraments. Although not authorized by the established church to do so, and against the counsel of his brother Charles, in 1785 John Wesley ordained men for ministry in England and Scotland, thereby setting the stage for a greater schism. John Wesley had remained a priest in Church of England through the course of his life. However Anglicanism’s comprehensiveness was not as resilient, leading to the birth of a distinct new denomination that in several countries grew to dwarf Anglicanism in membership.

Despite significant losses from the Church of England with the establishment of Methodism as a separate denomination in Britain and North America, and much like the Anglo-Catholic movement, the Evangelical leaders who stayed formed an influential party within the established church. Moorman writes of them:

The Evangelicals were…puritanical in their dislike of such things as theatres, cards, dancing, and certain types of literature. They were not particularly interested in scholarship, which they mostly regarded with some suspicion as endangering true religion. They were fundamentalists in their attitude towards the Bible, using…individual verses torn from their contexts to support their beliefs. In theology they were divided, some being Calvinists, who believed in the predestination of the elect, while others believed equally firmly in free will and salvation open to all who accepted Christ. Above all, the Evangelicals were earnest and single-minded.

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31 Moorman, *Church in England*, 301.


Leaders of the movement included figures such as Charles Simeon (1759 to 1836), William Wilberforce (1759 to 1833), Henry Thornton (1760 to 1815), and others known as the Clapham Sect (so-called because they owned houses near the Clapham Common in the south London suburbs). Gradually Evangelical clergy were appointed to town parishes, professorships at Oxford and Cambridge, and in 1815 to the episcopate. The first Evangelical bishop of this era was Henry Ryder (1777 to 1836), bishop of Gloucester (consecrated in 1815) and later bishop of Lichfield and Coventry. In 1848 John Bird Sumner (1780 to 1862) became the first Evangelical appointed archbishop of Canterbury.

The nineteenth century Evangelicals succeeded not only in creating a strong party or wing in the Church of England, but also in outlawing slavery in the British Empire and in alleviating the plight of the working poor following industrialization. The movement was also particularly concerned with the salvation of the many peoples who found themselves under British rule as a result of colonialism. In response to that concern, missionary work was pursued throughout the growing British Empire, with several voluntary missionary societies working in Africa and Asia, laying the foundations for today’s diverse and global Anglican Communion.

Like the Anglo-Catholics, the Evangelical movement had a strong influence on spirituality in North America, as well, working against slavery in the United States and urging Christian unity.


35 We should note that although the voluntary Church Missionary Society was the most successful, it was by no means the only missionary effort by nineteenth century Anglicans. The earlier and official Society for the Propagation of the Gospel remained very active, and others of a Tractarian in spirit and practice, such as the Universities’ Mission to Central Africa, were also significant and influential.
William Augustus Muhlenberg and Alonzo Potter are but two examples of Evangelical leaders in the Episcopal Church whose ministries focused on education, social justice, and Christian unity. With regard to the comprehensive spirit of Anglicanism, Potter, who served as bishop of Pennsylvania, wrote in 1857:

The theory of our Church recognizes the cardinal fact that large diversities of opinion are compatible with loyalty to a common Saviour. It calls us to consider Christianity as a life, not as a mere collection of dogmas; it asks men how to live, soberly or sensually, rightly or unrighteously, godly or ungodly, rather than what in all the particulars, speculative as well as practical, they may happen to think. She does not underrate the faith once delivered to the saints, but she would secure it by moral rather than intellectual means, by proper culture and training in the duties of life, and in the hopes and services of religion, rather than through theological controversies.\(^{36}\)

While some nineteenth century Evangelicals held conservative theological and social perspectives, others, like Potter and Muhlenberg, over time were drawn into more progressive directions, emphasizing the social gospel and contributing to what would be known as the Broad Church movement—a movement that was influenced, especially, by the theological and social insights of Frederick Dension Maurice.

Among the most prolific of the nineteenth century Anglican theologians (with estimates of over 16,300 published pages and as many as 5,000,000 words\(^ {37}\)), F. D. Maurice published extended series of sermons on the Bible and Prayer Book, and offered interpretations of systematic theology and church history. While he had been particularly sympathetic to some of the early


insights of the Oxford Movement theologians, he ultimately was drawn in a different direction and treated their works with hostility.

2 Biography

Following two centuries of Latitudinarianism there continued a strong liberal constituency in the nineteenth century Church of England and in the various Anglican churches throughout the world, alongside constituencies allied with the Oxford Movement and Evangelicalism. Those attracted to this liberal expression of Christianity increasingly questioned the formulation of several of the central doctrines of the church, including the Incarnation, redemption, doctrines of original sin, and more. In addition, “higher criticism” of the Bible was coming to the fore in Germany and slowly reaching the British Isles.

By the nineteenth century England also was becoming a more religiously diverse nation: Roman Catholics were now tolerated, as were Quakers, Methodists, Unitarians, and Jews. Industrialization, too, brought dramatic changes to the lives of the average English subject. There was greater access to wealth by some, while others suffered under extreme poverty and cruel working conditions. Urbanisation, in particular, led to England’s cities becoming crowded and unhealthy places to live.

It could no longer be assumed that people would be cradle to grave members of the established church or that they would accept their place in the social order. As a result of these realities, as well as its internal theological debates, the Church of England was less certain of itself and its role in society, even as its ministries were needed as much or more than ever. It was in the
context of this pluralistic and changing world that John Frederick Denison Maurice was born, educated, and grew to maturity.

F. D. Maurice was personally well acquainted with the religious and social division that marked nineteenth century Britain. Born in 1805, his father Michael Maurice was a Unitarian minister of a moderate sort. 38 His mother, however, converted to Baptist Calvinism when F. D. Maurice was a youth. She believed strongly in predestination, but was not convinced that she was among the elect. Maurice had a brother who did not survive childhood and several sisters who did. Some of his sisters also joined Baptist fellowships and another the Church of England. Maurice wrote of his parents: “My father’s Unitarianism was not of a fiercely dogmatic kind. But it made him intolerant of what he considered intolerance in Churchmen or Dissenters…. My mother had a far clearer intellect than my father, a much more lively imagination, capacity for interests in a number of subjects, and an intense individual sympathy.” 39 Maurice’s father would not permit the family to debate religious matters verbally; instead, they turned to writing letters. Maurice grew to be pained by his family’s religious divisions that in turn gave rise to his own concern for Christian unity.

38 Jeremy Morris describes the Unitarianism of the era and the Maurice household: “‘Unitarian’ is something of a catch-all term that covered a wide range of belief in this period. Many Unitarians denied the doctrine of Christ’s divinity, and so also denied the doctrine of the Trinity. Others, such as Maurice’s father, were much more conventional in their beliefs, and tended to be agnostic about Christ’s divinity, but were happy to use Trinitarian formulae. Unitarianism was generally a progressive, liberal form of belief, suspicious of establishment Anglicanism.” Jeremy Morris, ed. To Build Christ’s Kingdom: F. D. Maurice and His Writings (Norwich: Canterbury, 2007), 5.

Maurice studied law at the University of Cambridge. However, he was not awarded a degree because, as a Unitarian, he would not subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, as was then required. While at Cambridge, Maurice came under the influence of Julius Hare (1795 to 1855), a controversial Anglican priest known for his early acceptance of German biblical criticism. Through Hare, Maurice became acquainted with the thought of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772 to 1834), who emphasised the complexity of truth and the validity of multiple points of view. In 1831 Maurice discerned that he should receive Christian baptism in the Church of England. In letters to his father at the time of his baptism he wrote of his joy at his discovery of God in the Trinity. In 1834, following further study in theology at Exeter College in Oxford, Maurice was ordained into the Church of England’s ministry.

Maurice began his ordained ministry with a curacy at Bubbenhall in Warwickshire. While there, he wrote *Subscription No Bondage* under the pseudonym “Rusticus.” Ironically, given his own history, it was a defence of the requirement that would-be graduates of Cambridge and Oxford subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion. This text led to temporary admiration of Maurice by leading Tractarians; however, they later parted company over disagreement

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regarding the theology of baptism. In 1836 Maurice took up a new ministry as chaplain at Guy’s Hospital in the slums of London. There his pastoral gifts shone, as he also drew admiration from medical students for his lectures.

Maurice married Anna Barton in 1837. They had two sons, Frederick and Edmund. At approximately the same time as his marriage, Maurice began work on his series of letters, ostensibly to a Quaker, addressing such issues as baptism, eucharist, the Bible, liturgy, and church unity. The letter on baptism was simultaneously directed toward the Tractarian leader Edward Pusey, offering Maurice’s strongly worded objection to Pusey’s account of baptismal grace. The letters were initially published separately in 1837, but in 1838 bound and published as the first edition of The Kingdom of Christ: or Hints on the Principles, Ordinances, and Constitution of the Catholic Church in Letters to a Member of the Society of Friends. A considerably revised second edition was published in 1842. Much like Hooker’s thorough Of the Lawes of Ecclesiastical Politie, The Kingdom of Christ is considered Maurice’s greatest and most significant work—for the depth of his theological insight into the various Christian

46 Michael Ramsey writes that such was the division that Pusey would later remark that “he and Maurice worshipped different Gods.” Ramsey suggests that the difference was one of method: “Both the Tractarians and Maurice believed in a divine society with divinely ordered marks of its Catholic and Apostolic character. The Tractarians dwelt upon it as a supernatural system standing over against heretical forms of Christianity and contemporary movements without. Maurice was at pains to show how it is related to half-truths and broken lights of both, and offers the reality of which they were parodies and distorted witnesses.” Arthur Michael Ramsey, F. D. Maurice and the Conflicts of Modern Theology (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Sock, 2011), 26-27.


48 Morris, Build Christ’s Kingdom, 10.

denominations, for his defence of the Church of England’s practices, and for his articulation of what would become known as Anglicanism’s ethos of comprehensiveness.

In 1840 Maurice was appointed professor of English literature and history at King’s College in London. Later, in 1846, he was appointed professor of divinity in King’s new theological faculty. The same year he secured a position as Chaplain of Lincoln’s Inn, where he ministered to law students. His first wife died of tuberculosis in 1845. He was remarried in 1848 to Georgina Hare, half-sister of Julius Hare (who himself had married Maurice’s sister).

While Maurice had a somewhat conservative reputation heretofore, as evidenced in the admiration of the Oxford Movement’s leadership, that perception changed in 1848 when he began his work for Christian Socialism in association with J. M. Ludlow (1821 to 1911) and Charles Kingsley (1819 to 1875). Concerned with the state of life in England, especially for the urban poor, Maurice and Ludlow published *Tracts on Christian Socialism*. Not a Marxist, Maurice’s stated goal was to “Christianise the socialists and socialise the Christians” through the promotion of cooperative societies that would help the poor improve their own lives. This work led Maurice also to establish Queen’s College in London in 1848, providing higher education for

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women, and the Workingmen’s College in 1855, providing university-level education for working-class men. Maurice served as principal of Queen’s College from 1848 to 1854.

In 1852 Maurice published his most controversial work: his *Theological Essays*.\(^5^3\) In the Essays, he rejected the penal substitutionary theory of atonement and argued that eternal life and eternal punishment cannot be related to time, but rather must be understood as states of relationship with God in the present age as much as after death. These assertions, combined with his advocacy of Christian Socialism, led to suspicions about Maurice’s theological orthodoxy. He ultimately was dismissed from his teaching position at King’s College for assertions “of dangerous tendency, and calculated to unsettle the minds of the theological students.”\(^5^4\) The resolution passed by the Council of King’s College on October 27, 1853 stated that they felt it “to be their painful duty to declare that the continuance of Professor Maurice’s connection with the College as one of its Professors would be seriously detrimental to its usefulness.”\(^5^5\)

Never shying from controversy, Maurice began a public debate with Henry Mansel (1820 to 1871), then professor of philosophy at Magdalen College, Oxford and later Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral, following the latter’s Bampton Lecture in 1859—*The Limits of Religious Thought* and *What is Revelation?* Influenced by the thought of Immanuel Kant, Mansel argued that there was


no philosophically certain way to know God.\textsuperscript{56} The Bible, therefore, was arbitrary in its authority; although, it should be accepted as “divinely given.”\textsuperscript{57} Maurice’s contrary response was to assert that, in fact, the Bible offered a guide for deep relationship with God.\textsuperscript{58}

Maurice took up parochial ministry when he was appointed to St. Paul’s Church, Vere Street, London in 1860. Six years later he returned to university lecturing when appointed Knightsbridge Professor of Casuistry, Moral Theology and Moral Philosophy in the University of Cambridge.\textsuperscript{59} In Cambridge he also served St. Edward’s Church. F. D. Maurice’s health started deteriorating in 1871 and he died in 1872 at the age of 66.

Frederick Denison Maurice is considered the architect of contemporary comprehensive Anglicanism, both by those who see hope and truth in his thought as well as by those who would blame him for the current state of the Anglican Communion, with Stephen Sykes but one example of the latter. Among his contemporaries Maurice was genuinely admired for his kindness and gentleness of spirit, even by those who disagreed with him.\textsuperscript{60}

As I did in my treatment of Richard Hooker, in the following study I will demonstrate that Maurice’s ethos of unity and comprehension of diverse beliefs is firmly rooted in and arises from

\textsuperscript{56} Morris, \textit{Build Christ’s Kingdom}, 18.  

\textsuperscript{57} Wolf, “Maurice,” 68.  

\textsuperscript{58} Morris, \textit{Build Christ’s Kingdom}, 18.  

\textsuperscript{59} Morris, \textit{Build Christ’s Kingdom}, 7.  

\textsuperscript{60} Wolf, “Maurice,” 70.
his belief in the reality of the Incarnation and in the church’s sacramental life and common prayer. For Maurice comprehensiveness is not arbitrary or muddled, but a deeply held theological conviction.

3 Christ the Head: Maurice’s Incarnational Theology

As we have seen, F. D. Maurice is credited with articulating Anglicanism’s appeal to comprehensiveness in a way that has shaped the church since the nineteenth century, credit given both by those who appreciate his approach and others who are more critical. Those most critical of comprehensiveness, such as Stephen Sykes, have argued that it has a shaky theological foundation at best. In the preceding study of Richard Hooker’s thought I argued that for Hooker the comprehensive ethos arises out of his incarnational theology. In particular, I argued that Hooker believes that it is Christ himself who draws the church together, not the doctrinal assertions that any individual member of the church might make. Hooker’s example of the various eucharistic theologies prevalent in the sixteenth century offers a useful case in point.

Similarly, Maurice’s appeal to comprehensiveness is founded upon his belief in the Incarnation. Like Hooker, Maurice focuses more on God’s action in drawing people together in Christ than on the arguments they may make about God or the church. Therefore, to understand Maurice’s arguments in favour of comprehensiveness, it will be necessary first to study his understanding of the Incarnation and its implications for the church, as well as his related consideration of atonement and eternal life that were so controversial in his lifetime.
Maurice is concerned that too often Christian theology, whether Catholic or Protestant, begins with a consideration of the fall into sin, rather than the more foundational belief that all things are created in and through the divine. He is particularly frustrated and adamant in the realisation that if the theological focus is primarily on sin, one can never know who and what she or he is created to be, and will forget the call to be a child of God. He writes:

Romish and Protestant divines, differing in the upshot of their schemes, have yet agreed on the construction of them. The Fall of Man is commonly regarded by both as the foundation of Theology—the Incarnation and Death of our Lord as provisions against the effect of it. Now St. Paul speaks of the mystery of Christ as the ground of all things in Heaven and on Earth, the History as the gradual discovery of this ground.  

Maurice argues it is both possible and necessary to do better, writing that he prefers to “ground all theology upon the name of God, Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost, not to begin from ourselves and our sins; not to measure the straight line by the crooked one.”

In beginning his theological explorations with his belief in the God who creates, initiates, and grounds all things in himself, Maurice finds inspiration and coherence in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, once a stumbling block but later a foundation for his faith and spirituality. Just as the Articles had provided strength and purpose for earlier generations of Anglican theologians, Maurice became increasingly inspired by the decidedly minimalist and, in his view, hopeful

61 F. D. Maurice, The Prayer-Book considered especially in reference to the Romish System, Nineteen Sermons preached in the Chapel of Lincoln’s Inn; and the Lord’s Prayer, Nine Sermons preached in the Chapel of Lincoln’s Inn in the Months of February, March, and April 1848, 3rd ed. (London: J. W. Parker, 1880), 118.

Articles. In particular, he believed that they, along with the creeds and Prayer Book, provided necessary spiritual protection against the church’s parties, bishops, and external influences:

I look upon them (the Articles) as an invaluable character, protecting us against a system which once enslaved us and might enslave us again; protecting us also against the systems of the day—against ‘Records’ and ‘Times’ newspapers, and Bishops of Exeter and Heads of Houses. Without the Articles we should be at the mercy of one or other of these, or be trampled upon by them all in succession.

Influenced especially by the Pauline epistles and Johannine Logos theology, the incarnate Christ is the centre of F. D. Maurice’s thought. In particular, Maurice affirms that Christ was “in the beginning with God” and “was God,” and that all things are created by God through Christ and that therefore the darkness (i.e., sin and death) shall not overcome them. He discerns the creative presence of the Logos in the voice of the patriarchs and prophets, in the psalms and the law, as well as throughout Christian history. In his discourses on the Gospel of St. John, delivered in 1856 at Lincoln’s Inn, Maurice said:

The Prophet, living amidst the signs of decay and ruin in his own polity, amidst the earthquakes which were shaking all nations, under the overwhelming power of empires that sought to put out the life of nations, began to attach another and deeper sense to the word of God, not incompatible with the older use, but involved in it; not a metaphor or allegory deduced from it, but a higher truth lying behind it. The Word of God came to him, spoke to him in the very depths of his heart. He spoke to it, sympathised with it. But dared he say it any longer? No; in some wonderful manner this Word must be a Friend, a Person; One who could work with him, reprove him, illuminate him. This Word must one day prove Himself to be the Lord of the whole earth…. It must be that all those various

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63 Avis explains Maurice’s appreciation and use of the Articles: “For Maurice…the Articles of Religion are not a function of self-justificatory Anglican apologetics. They are the paradigm of the method of Christian theology. They take their starting point, not from humanity and its sinful state, but from the eternal truth of God’s being. Only having laid this foundation do they go on to incorporate the anthropology and soteriology of the Reformation. Maurice’s discovery of the witness of the Articles came with the force of revelation: ‘Words which I have always known, but which had not the same traditional hold on me as on my countrymen, presented themselves to me with a power I had never dreamed was in them’.” Avis, Anglicanism, 294.

64 Maurice, Life, 1:399.

65 Wolf, “Maurice,” 74.
objects in nature which men were worshipping, that all the living order of nature in which those things were comprehended, proceed from this living Word. It must be that all the races of men, all their polities, were under His guidance and government. It must be that all the light that had entered into any man’s heart had come from Him. It must be that the darkness which was in any man’s heart had come from rebellion against Him.  

Belief in humanity’s intrinsic connectedness to God infuses Maurice’s theological, anthropological, and sociological worldview, leading him to advocate Christian Socialism, establish educational institutions for women and workingmen, and ultimately to the conclusion that salvation may be open to all because, he argues, Christ defeated not only the effects of sin, but sin itself. William Wolf addresses the incarnational centre of Maurice’s theology:

The basic principle of Maurice’s theology is that God has created and redeemed the whole race in Christ. The heart of the Gospel, as he understood it, is that Christ, the Eternal Son, is ‘the Head and King of our entire race.’ He believed this to be the witness of the creeds and behind them of the biblical revelation. He interpreted every Christian doctrine, and the human situation as well, in the light of the doctrines of the Incarnation and Atonement, placed in a Trinitarian setting. The cosmic Christ of Ephesians, Colossians, and Hebrews and the Logos Christ of the Fourth Gospel became for Maurice the key to understanding both the scriptural revelation and the human situation. Maurice made this insight into his fundamental ontology…. Specifically, this meant for Maurice a closing of the gap between creation and redemption, a definition of the human person through Christ and not through Adam, and priority for the Incarnation over the fall.

3.1 Divine Charity

In his Theological Essays Maurice considers at length the person and work of Christ and humanity’s creation and redemption through Christ, grounding his thought with “charity,” which he understands as the principle at the centre of the universe, and thus also central to the Christian


67 Wolf, “Maurice,” 74.
conception of both God and humanity. For Maurice, charity is the divine love inherent in a Trinitarian God who is always outwardly focused, drawing all things back into the divine self in which they have their source. Inspired by this reality, Maurice believes that if true charity were restored in the church and in human lives, coming from God as the foundation of human existence, painful divisions in religion and society necessarily would cease.

Like Richard Hooker before him, with his insistence on the importance of participation, Maurice is less concerned with theories about God than he is with contemporary real-life human experiences of God. These experiences, Maurice believes, are always examples of divine grace and love. Explaining his view of charity as the foundation of theology and the source of comprehensiveness he writes:

It seems to me that, if we start from the belief—“Charity is the ground and centre of the Universe, God is Charity”—we restore that distinctness which our Theology is said to have lost, we reconcile it with the comprehension which we are all in search of. So long as we are busy with our theories, notions, feelings about God—so long as these constitute our divinity—we must be vague, we must be exclusive. One deduces his conclusions of the Bible; one from the decrees of the Church; one from his individual consciousness. But the reader of the Bible confesses that it appeals to experience, and must in some way be tested by it; the greatest worshipper of the Church asks for a Bible to support its authority; the greatest believer in his own consciousness perceives that there must be some means of connecting it with the general conscience of mankind. Each denounces the other’s method, none is satisfied with his own. If Theology is regarded not as a collection of our theories about God, but as a declaration of His will and His acts towards us, will it not conform more to what we find in the Bible—will it not more meet all the experiences of individuals, all experiences of our race? And to come directly to the point of the objection I am considering, will it not better expound all the special articles which our own Church, and the Christian Church generally confesses? This at least is my belief.  

Therewith Maurice sets the stage for his theological task, and especially his understanding of the person and work of Christ, the human and divine embodiment of love and charity. The depth and

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68 Maurice, *Theological Essays*, 24-25.
truth of the Incarnation cannot be captured by human words, thoughts, or concepts, but instead only in relationship to God in and through that Incarnation.

Because charity and love are the centre of the universe, sin is defeated before it has begun. Furthermore, because all things have been created in the image of the divine Logos, access to true life has always been open to humanity: “He made them know that in their inmost being they were not born of earthly or human seed, but had their life from above, from Him who liveth and abideth for ever.”  

God’s incarnation in Jesus Christ is the unique and divine method concretizing this charity in order that humanity might know and experience divine love in the fullest way, making it possible to leave behind the shackles of sin and death. Thus, for Maurice, the incarnate Christ is the head of the human race—the head of “every man,” the eternal king, the great reconciler, and the embodiment of love and sacrifice. Simply put, the incarnate Christ is the revelation of true God and true humanity.

The mechanics of “how” the Incarnation happens are not, for Maurice, of particular concern. Even so, in The Kingdom of Christ Maurice does offer a consideration of the historic formulations of Christology in the Nicene Creed. He understands that Christians of different backgrounds may have trouble with certain aspects of the creed. For example, some variously have concerns about the possibility of a virginal conception, about reconciling the distinct divine and human natures, and how the resurrection of the body is possible. Maurice urges restraint

69 Maurice, Gospel of John, 24.

70 Reflecting on his father’s faith, Frederick Maurice writes: “the central principle on which my father’s faith was based—that Christ was the head of every man, not only those who believed in Him.” Maurice, Life, 2:304.
from a line-by-line parsing of the creed and suggests instead focus on the deeper truth conveyed in it: the call to relationship with the God who is Trinity—the God who created humanity, came among us in Christ, and calls us into ever-deeper relationship with the divine self. Explaining this approach to belief as expressed in the Nicene Creed Maurice writes:

He will find, I think, that it differs from all the digests of doctrine, whether religious or philosophical, which he has ever seen. A man is speaking in it. The form of it is, I believe. That which is believed is not a certain scheme of divinity, but a name—a Father, who has made the heaven and the earth; his Son, our Lord, who has been conceived, born, died, and been buried, and gone down into hell, who has ascended, and is at the right hand of God, who will come again to judge the world: a Holy Spirit who has established a holy universal Church, who makes men a communion of saints, who is the witness and power whereby they receive forgiveness of sins, who shall quicken their mortal bodies, who enables them to receive everlasting life. The creed is evidently an act of allegiance or affiliation….71

Thus, Maurice urges a move away from debates about christological formulas and about whom God accepts or not, and instead toward reflection on the reality of God’s work in the world, which he finds most fully in his own experience as a person in Christ.

3.2 Reality of Sin

Maurice is convinced of the reality and pervasiveness of sin, but he does not believe that sin is definitive for humanity (either collectively or for the individual person). In fact, Maurice argues that an undue focus on humanity’s sinful nature is itself a cause of sin, drawing one yet further away from his or her life in Christ:

Men are told that they are made in the image of God: how could it be that they knew not. Here is His express image, not shown in the heavens above, nor in the earth beneath, but

71 Maurice, Kingdom of Christ, 1:20.
in a man. In Him creation has subsisted, in spite of all the elements of confusion and discord within it…. In Him we find how humanity has been a holy thing, though each man felt himself to be unholy…. In Him it is proved how humanity is meant to have a dwelling with God.\textsuperscript{72}

Maurice believes that human life, when lived faithfully, is profoundly relational, grounded in divine love and charity. Sin, however, is the breaking of that relationality—with God and others—denying that foundation of human being. He describes sin as “the sense of solitude, isolation, distinct responsibility.”\textsuperscript{73} It is most evident when we live as if we were not made in Christ’s image, while failing to recognise Christ’s image in others as well. Thus, one knows sin most fully when he realises “how he has broken the silken chords that bind us to our fellows; how he has made himself alone, by not confessing that he was a brother, a son, a citizen.”\textsuperscript{74}

Because humanity has failed to recognise its true being in Christ, sin has become pervasive, infecting human hearts and leading people to believe they are not who God created them to be. The incarnate Christ, however, is humanity’s redeemer from this sin and death, opening the way to true life and teaching humanity how to live, truly and fully human as beloved sons and daughters of God.

\textsuperscript{72} F. D. Maurice, \textit{The Epistle to the Hebrews; being the substance of three lectures delivered in the Chapel of the Honourable Society of Lincoln’s Inn, on the foundation of Bishop Warburton} (London: John W. Parker, 1846), 29-20.

\textsuperscript{73} Maurice, \textit{Theological Essays}, 37.

\textsuperscript{74} Maurice, \textit{Theological Essays}, 37.
3.3 Sacrifice and Redemption

Integral to his incarnational theology, Maurice adopts a unique view of atonement. Michael Ramsey writes: “No where did his contemporaries misjudge him more than in his doctrine of the Cross; and no where, in my own belief, was his achievement as a theologian higher. He saw beyond the ruts into which the treatment of the doctrine had fallen, and anticipated a synthesis which has only in very recent years come into sight.” In particular, Maurice strongly rejects the penal substitutionary theory: “If we speak of Christ as taking upon himself the sins of men by some artificial substitution, we deny that He is their actual Representative.” He continues, “How, then, can we tolerate for even an instant that notion of God which would represent Him as satisfied by the punishment of sin, not by the purity and graciousness of the Son?”

The failure of the penal substitutionary theory for Maurice is that it does not present a God who is love and charity, always seeking reconciliation, but instead one who requires the death of a sinless victim—seeking the death of the Son rather than the death of sin. Appalled, Maurice is attracted instead to what has become known as the “classic” or “Christus Victor” atonement model. Although not the theory most popular among nineteenth century theologians, Maurice believes that it is consistent with scripture and believed by people of faith who have received and

75 Ramsey, Conflicts, 58.
76 Maurice, Theological Essays, 112.
77 Maurice, Theological Essays, 113.
experienced God’s grace and love in their lives. Describing his own belief regarding the Incarnation and atonement, he writes forcefully:

Here are the reasons assigned for the Incarnation and the death of Christ. He shared the sufferings of those whose head He is. He overcame death, their common enemy, by submitting to it. He delivered them from the power of the Devil. All orthodox schools, in formal language—tens of thousands of suffering people, in ordinary language—have confessed the force of the words. Instead of seeking to put Christ at a distance from themselves, by tasking their fancy to conceive of sufferings which, at the same moment, are pronounced inconceivable, they have claimed Him as entering into their actual miseries, as bearing their grieves. They have believed that He endured death, because it was theirs, and rose to set them free from it, because it was an evil accident of their condition, an effect of disorder, not of God’s original order. They have believed that He rescued them out of the power of an enemy, by yielding to his power, not that He rescued them out of the hand of God by paying penalty to Him. Any notion whatever which interferes with this faith; any explanation of Christ’s sufferings which is put in the place of the Apostle’s explanation, or does not strictly harmonize with it; far more any that contradicts it, and leaves us open to the awful danger of confounding the Evil Spirit with God—we have a right to repudiate as unorthodox, unscriptural, and audacious.

Maurice came under considerable criticism for his denial of the penal substitutionary theory, which to that point had enjoyed predominant status in certain expressions of medieval and Reformed theology. Concerned that he was misunderstood, Maurice preached a series of sermons on the atonement published as The Doctrine of Sacrifice. Focused on particular examples of sacrifice in various biblical texts, an important theme in Maurice’s theological worldview is revealed.

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78 In his introduction to Gustaf Aulén’s influential Christus Victor, A. G. Hebert suggests that Maurice may have been alone among nineteenth century Anglicans in appreciating and presenting the “classical” theory, which Aulén presents as the predominant view in the patristic age and is closest to Luther’s, as well. Gustaf Aulén, Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement, trans. A. G. Hebert (London: S.P.C.K., 1950), vii. This may explain both the misunderstanding of Maurice’s thought by his contemporaries, as well as his affinity with Luther in other respects as well.

79 Maurice, Theological Essays, 112.

80 Ramsey, Conflicts, 61-62.
Maurice believes that sacrifice, characterized especially by self-giving love, is central to Christ’s being. Closely related to his earlier idea of divine charity, the principle of sacrifice infuses the universe. Through Christ’s act of total self-giving, sin—arising as it does from selfishness—is necessarily overcome. Maurice argues that this sacrifice is “implied in the very original of the universe…. it is involved in the very nature and being of God… it was expressed in the divine obedience of the Son before the worlds were…. the manifestation of it in latter days was to take away Sin, because Sin and Sacrifice are opposites.”

Christians, recognizing Christ as their head and redeemer, are called always to participate and share in Christ’s sacrificial life. In fact, this is the only possible response to the profound love and reconciliation brought by God in Christ. Elaborating on the interdependence of sacrifice and redemption, Maurice writes:

> But if we believe that God has taken away the sins of the world, we are led to a deeper and safer foundation upon which our hopes may rest. For then we see beneath all evil, beneath the universe itself, that eternal and original union of Father with the Son which this day tells us of; that union which was never fully manifested until the Only-begotten by the Eternal Spirit offered Himself to God. The revelation of that primal unity is the revelation of the ground on which all things stand, both things in heaven and things in earth. It is the revelation of an order which sustains all the intercourse of society and man. It is the revelation of that which sin has been ever seeking to destroy, and which at last has overcome sin. It is the revelation of that perfect harmony to which we look forward when all things are gathered up in Christ; when there will be no more sin, because there shall be no more selfishness; when the law of sacrifice shall be the acknowledged law of all creation.…

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Thus, Maurice presents a unique and dynamic view of redemption, infused in God’s boundlessly eternal and self-giving love. In particular, it is not Christ’s death alone that is redemptive, rather Christ’s whole being. Humanity, at its most authentic, participates in that redemptive life. Through God’s charity, love, and sacrifice—incarnate in Christ—sin and death necessarily are overcome and defeated, replaced by the reality of eternal life in union with God.

3.4 Eternal Life and Eternal Death

F. D. Maurice believes that ultimately all things will be reconciled and restored to the cosmic unity they already share in Jesus Christ. In particular, humans (and Christians especially) will recognise the unity that already exists in Christ, embrace it, and live into it. This, for Maurice, is the purpose of the Incarnation of God in Christ: to create, exhibit, and restore charity, unity, and love. For Maurice, this unity in Christ is eternal life. Eternal death, by contrast, is the refusal of that unity in love: a profound separation from God, human neighbours, and ultimately the true self that God intends for each person.

Notably, for Maurice eternal life and eternal death have little to do with chronological time or the state after physical death. For example, he writes: “Our Lord has been training us by His beautiful, blessed teaching to see eternity as something altogether out of time, to it with Him who is, and was, and is to come. He has been teaching me that I have a spirit which cannot rest in time, which must strive after the living, the permanent, the eternal, after God Himself.”\(^\text{83}\) In

\(^{83}\) Maurice, \textit{Life}, 2:17.
much the way that John’s gospel presents the concept of abundant life that is experienced in the present through faith and fellowship in Christ, for Maurice eternal life and eternal death are present realities as much as they are to be anticipated for the future. In what is arguably his most controversial, but also profound, work he argues:

> If you take away from me the belief that God is always righteous, always maintaining a fight with evil, always seeking to bring His creatures out of it, you take everything from me, all hope now, all hope in the world to come. Atonement, Redemption, Satisfaction, Regeneration, become mere words to which there is no counterpart in reality.

> I ask no one to pronounce, for I dare not pronounce myself, what are the possibilities of resistance in a human will to the loving will of God. There are times when they seem to me—thinking more of myself than others—almost infinite. But I know that there is always something which must be infinite. I am obliged to believe in an abyss of love which is greater than the abyss of death. I dare not lose faith in that love. I sink into death, eternal death, if I do. I must feel that this love is compassing the universe. More about it I cannot know. But God knows. I leave myself and all to Him.\(^8^4\)

Maurice’s position on eternal life and eternal death led to charges of universalism and heresy, including dismissal from his teaching position at King’s College. However, Maurice denied accusations of his supposed universalism, instead stating that he believed in the scriptural promise that all things would find their true life, meaning, and reconciliation in Christ their Head. He writes:

> Do I fall back on the theory of Universal Restitution, which in my early days I found so unsatisfactory? No; I find it cold and unsatisfactory still… I know that we may struggle with the Light, that we may choose death. But I know that Love overcomes this rebellion. I know that I am bound to believe that its power is greater than every other. I am sure that Christ’s death proves that death, hell, hatred are not so strong as their opposites. How can I reconcile these contradictory discoveries? I cannot reconcile them. But I can trust in Him who has reconciled the world to Himself. I can leave all in His hands. I dare not fix any limits to the power of His love. I cannot tell what are the limits to the power of a rebel will. I know that no man can be blessed, except his will is in accordance with God’s will. I know that it must be by an action on the will that love triumphs. Though I have no

\(^8^4\) Maurice, *Theological Essays*, 323.
faith in man’s theory of Universal Restitution, I am taught to expect a “restitution of all things, which God who cannot lie has promised since the world began.”

In his conception of eternal life Maurice establishes in a powerful way the basis for his embrace of comprehensiveness. He is steadfastly unwilling to limit in any way God’s love and acceptance, not because he knows for a fact that all will be saved, but because he trusts God’s promise that in the incarnate Christ division, sin, and death is always transcended, overcome, and reconciled. Therefore, the true community in Christ, the head and source of all, can never be limited or exclusive.

4 Signs of Unity in Christ

Like many converts, F. D. Maurice was fervently committed to the life, doctrine, and worship of his adopted church and believed that God had endowed the Church of England with special gifts. While acknowledging its imperfections, Maurice was convinced that the English church showed particular signs of a spiritual society: scriptural foundations; assent to the historic creeds; maintenance of an ordained ministry founded in the historic episcopate; faithful and dignified worship; and administration of the primary sacraments of baptism and eucharist. While he believes that each of these signs draws the church and its members deeper into the life of God, the sacraments hold a special place as instruments of unity amid diversity (and thus comprehensiveness, as they did for Hooker), as well as being means of God’s grace and extensions of the incarnate presence of Christ.

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85 Maurice, Life, 2:18-19.
Like Hooker, Maurice is convinced that the sacraments draw the recipient into participation in God. Further, they prevent one from a narrow focus on his or her individual beliefs or ideas about God in place of experiencing God’s grace and love in the fullest way possible. He writes:

“For if sacraments express the purpose, and the relation of God to man, dogmas cannot express it. To dogmatise about sacraments is to destroy their nature. To dogmatise about God is to assume that man does not receive the knowledge of God from Him, but imputes the forms of his own intellect to Him. Sacraments are, as I think, the necessary form of a revelation, precisely because they discover the Divine nature in its union with the human, and do not make the human the standard measure of the Divine.”

4.1 Baptism

For Maurice, the first and most significant sign of a spiritual society is baptism, which he describes as a sign of a “spiritual and universal kingdom.” Baptist does not confer a change on the individual so much as it reveals that individual’s identity as a son or daughter of God. In other words, those who receive baptism acknowledge who they really are and whose they really are. The baptized confesses Christ as both the Son of God and as his or her personal, familial, and societal head. In participating in the sacrament, one sets aside self and is united with Christ and the universe in the divine life of sacrifice and charity. Maurice expresses his understanding of baptism and the unity that it reveals:

Baptism asserts for each man that he is taken into union with a divine Person, and by virtue of that union is emancipated from his evil nature. But this assertion rests upon another, that there is a society for mankind which is constituted and held together in that Person, and that he who enters his society is emancipated from the world—the society

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86 Maurice, Life, 2:495.

87 Maurice, Kingdom of Christ, 1:262.
which is bound together in the acknowledgement of, and subjection to, the evil selfish tendencies of each man’s nature. But, further, it affirms that this unity among men rests upon a yet more awful and perfect unity, upon that which is expressed in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Lose sight of this last and deepest principle, and both others perish; for to believe there is a truth, a unity, a love, existing under certain forms, and not to believe there is an absolute Truth, Unity, Love, from which these forms have derived their excellence and their existence, is impossible and has always been felt to be impossible.  

Maurice saw images of God’s Kingdom reflected in the principal human societies: state, church, and household. In their own ways, Maurice argues, they are all families that must care for their members, just as God cares for God’s children. This care implies and requires the inclusion and love demonstrated in baptism. Maurice, thus, affirms the practice of baptizing infants and children, believing it imperative that children be aware of their natural birthright as citizens of the Kingdom of God. Explaining Maurice’s belief in infant baptism, Mark Chapman writes: “Baptism—and that includes the baptism of infants—is a witness or a pledge that we are accepted by God, that we are children of Christ. It is first and foremost a granting of an identity that depends upon a name which moves us beyond reliance on our own finite resources. And that in turn forces on us a certain humility.”

Because, in Maurice’s view, Christ is already the head of every person from the moment of creation, he does not believe it necessary for one to intellectually understand (or personally acknowledge) that headship for it to be true. Certainly, God does not depend on such individual

88 Maurice, Kingdom of Christ, 1:279.
89 Maurice, Kingdom of Christ, 1:265-269.
and personal affirmation to recognise its truth and claim that person as God’s own. The above, however, does not discount the importance of baptism and the work of the Holy Spirit in it. Although Maurice does not believe that God’s work is accomplished through the washing away of sins or through temporary baptismal regeneration (a point of his contention with the Tractarians), believing these spiritual acts are already accomplished in the Incarnation, he argues that it is God’s action that draws the baptized into the divine life:

A man does not, therefore, by baptism, by faith, or by any other process, acquire a new nature, if by nature you mean anything else than that he is created anew in Christ Jesus, that he is grafted into him, that he becomes the inheritor of his life and not of his own. That, being so grafted, he receives the Spirit of Christ, I of course believe. But I contend that the operation of this Spirit upon him is to draw him continually out of himself, to teach him to disclaim all independent virtue, and to bring him into the knowledge and image of the Father and the Son.92

4.2 Eucharist

Maurice may be unusual among Anglican theologians in that he spends less time considering the eucharist than he does baptism. But like Hooker, Maurice understands the eucharist to be the regular fulfillment of the grace first exhibited and experienced in baptism. It is for Maurice, as for Hooker, the Christian’s medium for regular participation in God and the vehicle for God’s continual presence. Thus it, too, is essential in a spiritual society.

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91 Addressing his trouble with the Tractarians on baptism after reading Pusey’s tract, Maurice writes: “Instead of affording me the least warrant for the kind of teaching which appeared to me alone the Scriptural and practical, it made such teaching utterly impossible. The baptised child was holy for a moment after its baptism, in committing sin it lost its purity. That could only be recovered by acts of repentance and a system of ascetical discipline. I remember to this day the misery which this tract caused me as I read it in a walk to one of the London suburbs; I saw that I must be hopelessly and for ever estranged from this doctrine and from those who taught it, unless I abandoned all my hopes for myself and for the world.” Maurice, Life, 1:237.

92 Maurice, Kingdom of Christ, 1:283-284.
Maurice believes in the “real presence” of Christ in the eucharistic act. However, that presence is not located in or limited to the elements of bread and wine themselves. Rather, they serve as a vehicle for bringing the communicant into deeper relation with Christ. Here Maurice’s view has consonance with John Calvin’s inspiration in the *Sursum corda*\(^93\) and the ascent of the faithful, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to encounter and be united with Christ in heaven at the eucharistic banquet.\(^94\) Vidler explains:

> Maurice would not think of a descent of Christ into the eucharistic elements, but he thought of them as being taken up into, and identified with, the glorified body of Christ, so that the worshippers are taken within the veil and enabled to claim their privilege of union with the ascended Lord. The real presence means that there is an actual communion between the Living Head and His members. Faith does not create the presence, but apprehends what is actually there.\(^95\)

Thus the sacrifice at the centre of Christ’s life is re-presented in the celebration of the eucharist and grafted into the life of the sacrament’s recipients.


\(94\) This dynamic receptionism is found in Calvin’s *The Form of Church Prayers and Hymns with the Manner of Administering the Sacraments and Consecrating Marriage According to the Custom of the Ancient Church*, set forth for use in Geneva in 1542 and Strasbourg in 1545. In the exhortation the minister said: “Let us lift our spirits and hearts on high where Jesus Christ is in the glory of His Father, whence we expect Him at our redemption. Let us not be fascinated by these earthly and corruptible elements which we see with our eyes and touch with our hands, seeking Him there as though He were enclosed in the bread and wine. Then only shall our souls be disposed to be nourished and vivified by His substance when they are lifted up above all earthly things, attaining even to heaven, and entering the Kingdom of God where He dwells. Therefore, let us be content to have the bread and wine as signs and witnesses, seeking the truth spiritually where the Word of God promises that we shall find it.” Bard Thompson, *Liturgies of the Western Church* (New York: New American Library, 1961), 207. This paragraph may well have originated in the liturgy of Calvin’s Geneva contemporary, Guillaume Farel (1489 to 1565): *La Maniere et fasson*. Thompson, *Liturgies*, 210 n.11.

\(95\) Vidler, *Witness to the Light*, 131.
In sharing in the eucharist, the Christian community participates in the life of Christ and is united in Christ’s life, death, and resurrection as God’s people across time and space. Sounding much like Richard Hooker in his emphasis on participation, Maurice explains:

We shall tell them that a living and perpetual communion has been established between God and man; between earth and heaven; between all spiritual creatures: that the bond of this communion is that body and blood which the Son of God and the Son of Man offered up to His Father, in fulfillment of His Will, in manifestation of His love; that God is careful to nourish their spirits as their bodies; that as He provides bread and wine for the strength and life of one, so in this body and blood of His Son is the strength of the other; the Sacrament of His continual presence with His universal family; the witness to each man of his own place in that family, and of his share in all its blessings; the pledge and spring of a renewed life; the assurance that this life is his own eternal life.  

Maurice, like Hooker three centuries before him, was pained by divisions among Christians over differing interpretations of the meaning of the eucharist. He found it the saddest of ironies that the sacrament intended as a unifying force in human life had become a source and expression of division. And with Richard Hooker, Maurice believes that divisions in interpretation of the meaning of the eucharist will be overcome when it is realised what the sacrament is intended to accomplish—the union and communion of God and humanity in Christ.

Thus, Maurice argues that if focus is placed on Christ embodied in the eucharist, rather than human beliefs about the sacrament, divisions will be transcended and the unity already established and present in humanity through Christ will be experienced more fully. Maurice’s own words are helpful:

I believe in no way so effectually as by the simple putting forth of this sacrament, not clothed with a number of fantastic rites and emblems, but in its own dreadful grandeur, as the bond of a communion between heaven and earth—as a witness that man is not a creature of this world, but has his home, his citizenship in another—as a witness that his

96 Maurice, Prayer Book, 230-231.
spirit is not the function or creature of his body, and has not therefore need to make out its enjoyments from the things which the eye sees, and the ear hears; but that his body is the attendant and minister of his spirit, is to be exalted by it, is to bring all visible things under it—as a witness that the Son of man is set down at the right hand of the throne of God, and that those who believe in him and suffer with him, are meant to live and reign with him there. The forms of nature, the forms of understanding, have striven to reduce this sacrament to their own level; it remains as a mighty power in God’s hands, to raise man above these forms, into communion with himself.  

4.3 Episcopate and Ministry

In addition to the dominical sacraments, included in the signs of a spiritual society that Maurice discerns in scripture is the historic episcopate, as well as the ordered ministry contained within it. Maurice locates the roots of this ministry in the priesthood of ancient Israel, sharing in a sacrifice that was in Israel’s case anticipatory and in the Christian church commemorative. In the offices of the church the ministries performed by Christ are continued and presented to God’s people, each derived from Christ as head of the church, through the ministry of the apostles and shared through time in the historic episcopate.

While Maurice acknowledges that the episcopate can be perverted through “proud and tyrannical” bishops, he believes that in the main it has served as a vital bond of unity amidst the diversity of the church across the world and through time. For example, Ramsey writes that Maurice: “sees in the episcopate not an archaism or a party cry, but the sign of the existence on

97 Maurice, Kingdom of Christ, 2:90-91.
98 Maurice, Kingdom of Christ, 2:99.
99 Ramsey, Conflicts, 31.
earth of a Catholic Church greater than schools of thought or theological systems or sectional
types of Christian experience.” 100 Furthermore, the episcopate has endured resiliently throughout
the tumultuous history of the East and West, including Protestant nations such as Sweden,
Denmark, and England, with expressions of it also in countries that in the main abolished it at the
Reformation. 101 Maurice notes that even in North America the episcopate has taken root, despite
influence of Puritans and Quakers, and in fact has grown after the influence of England ceased,
“making itself an instrument for diffusing the Gospel from those colonies to many parts of the
world.” 102

Maurice sees in the episcopate the nature of the church as the body of Christ, reaching out to the
people of the world as Christ had done in his earthly life. Thus, he argues that the episcopate is
the “main constituent” 103 of the church’s polity, reflecting the ministry and headship of Christ.
Other ministries are derived from the episcopate as necessary developments in meeting the
church’s needs in different times and circumstances. Notably, Maurice is unconcerned about
when these ministries developed or were differentiated; therefore, arguments about whether the
historic episcopate can be traced back to the apostles in an unbroken succession are
unimportant. 104 He is content in the knowledge that the church’s ministries, including the

100 Ramsey, Conflicts, 31.
101 Maurice, Kingdom of Christ, 2:100.
102 Maurice, Kingdom of Christ, 2:101.
103 Vidler, Witness to the Light, 140.
104 Maurice, Kingdom of Christ, 2:103-104.
episcopate, are derived from the apostles commissioned by Christ and ordained by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.\(^\text{105}\)

Thus, for Maurice, the ministers of the church are the chosen representatives of the incarnate Christ and have as their purpose the continuation of his ministry and the establishment of Christ’s universal kingdom under the Fatherhood of God. Of the role and vocation of the ordained minister he writes: “His whole object is to present Christ to men and men to Christ really and practically…. The incarnation means very little, the kingdom of God is a mere delusion, if there be not a voice speaking from heaven as well as one crying from earth…”\(^\text{106}\)

Maurice’s emphasis on the historic episcopate does imply that he believes those who have not maintained it are outside the embrace of Christ. But he does believe that their apprehensions of the universality of the church are limited, and he suggests that their ministries would be enhanced if a way could be found for the historic episcopate and its derivative ministries to be adopted. In fact, he believes that once the members of these churches realise what they are missing in the episcopate they will seek to adopt it:

I should say… to a Presbyterian. Start from your own ground, do not give up anything you hold now; get as much more to strengthen it with as you can. Having adopted this precaution, I have no fear of his not finding that episcopacy is necessary to the idea of a Church. I have no doubt of his perceiving that without the third order, the grand truth of Christ’s episcopacy is lost sight of and become a mere dream; that comprehension and universality cease to be constituents of the Church; and that, as a consequence, Christianity becomes a notion or doctrine, instead of a kingdom. With these internal reasons for episcopacy, the external facts and authority in support of it will assume new

\(^{105}\) Maurice, *Kingdom of Christ*, 2:122.

weight and character, and this faith too will become that of his being as well as his creed.\textsuperscript{107}

History and circumstance would suggest that Maurice may have overestimated the universal appeal of the episcopate. Even so, the point he makes regarding its role is significant. Rather than limiting the church through an exclusive system, he believes that at its essence the episcopate is ecumenical, and in spirit and reality has the power to enlarge the church across time and space, ensuring its comprehensive spirit and character.

Having established the incarnational foundation for Maurice’s thought and its expression in the sacraments and ministry of the church, I now consider his understanding of the comprehensive nature of the church, the truths and limitations exhibited by other Christian traditions, and in particular Anglicanism’s unique calling as a church containing the signs of a spiritual society.

5 A Comprehensive Church

I have argued F. D. Maurice believed that Christian unity found its true source not in shared belief of particular doctrinal tenants or ecclesiastical practices, but instead in the confession of Christ as the centre of life and, especially, through participation in the sacraments established by God in the church. Thus, Maurice was grieved by division—in Christianity as a whole and in particular in the Church of England that was his ecclesiastical home. Despite these divisions, however, Maurice argues that the Church of England possesses necessary elements for it to be a truly comprehensive church, if it can turn away from sectarian party divisions. Ramsey explains:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{107} Maurice, \textit{Life}, 1:247-248.
\end{quote}
Maurice was, like the Tractarians, contending for the dogma of the Holy Catholic Church; but his methods and his emphasis were different from theirs. They viewed the Church as the home of the redeemed, full of grace and truth, in contrast with a sinful age where grace was repudiated and truth denied. [Maurice] viewed the Church not only as the home of the redeemed, but as the sign that God had redeemed the whole human race and that the whole human race was potentially in Christ. This led him to combine an insistence upon the definite character of the signs of the Church’s constitution with an unwillingness to define the Church’s present boundaries. \(^{108}\)

In *The Kingdom of Christ* Maurice undertakes consideration of the practices and beliefs of various religious denominations. In particular, he studies these traditions’ positive contributions to Christian theology, as well as the ways in which they fail to grasp essential aspects of Christianity, as he understands and interprets them. Maurice argues that in making positive assertions the denominations under consideration contribute to a deepening understanding of Christian truth. However, in making negative assertions about other denominations and developing exclusive belief systems they fall into unnecessary and limiting sectarianism. \(^{109}\)

Maurice studies a range of denominational traditions, including Reformed, Lutheran, Quaker, Unitarian, and Roman Catholic. In each case, he considers a defining theological characteristic, for example “election” for Calvinists, \(^{110}\) “justification by faith” for Lutherans, \(^{111}\) a belief in an “inner light” for Quakers. \(^{112}\) He finds that in essence each is correct and contributes to a deeper and more accurate understanding of Christianity. However, in establishing exclusive belief

\(^{108}\) Ramsey, *Conflicts*, 34.

\(^{109}\) Maurice defined a sect as any society that was organized around its own opinions. Vidler, *Witness*, 75.


systems around their defining theological themes denominations tend to become caricatures of themselves. Maurice, instead, would prefer a church that is able to affirm the theological truths advocated by the various denominations, but not defined exclusively by them.

A helpful example is Maurice’s study of Lutheranism. Of the several traditions and founding theologians he considers, Maurice is particularly attracted to Lutheranism and Martin Luther.\textsuperscript{113} In Luther, Maurice finds a kindred spirit in his belief that the great reformer sought to draw the church to its true centre in Christ, as expressed and experienced in scripture, creeds, and sacraments. This, Maurice understands, is the purpose of the doctrine of justification:

\begin{quote}
The truth seems to be this—Luther believed at first, and believed to the end of his life, that the creed and the sacraments were the great witnesses for justification—if it was not proper to call them acts of justification. They were such partly because they were acts of affiance in a person; partly because they, the sacraments at least, were, as he believed, not merely human acts, but acts on the part of God, recognizing and adopting those who would receive them.\textsuperscript{114}
\end{quote}

However, in contrast with his appreciation for Luther’s insights, Maurice finds in those who followed Luther a systematizing impulse that led toward doctrinal affirmation of “justification by faith” through various tests of faith, rather than an on-going emphasis in a living faith in Christ the justifier. In fact, Maurice is so bold as to argue that those who established Lutheranism robbed Luther of his reforming power in his affirmation of faith in Christ:

\begin{quote}
It seemed to us, then, judging from these facts, that we do not merely strip Luther of his dress, but that we destroy the man himself when we make him the witness for a principle
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{113} Maurice is commended by both Ramsey and Avis as one of a very few Anglican theologians who understands Luther. Ramsey writes: “Maurice’s criticisms of Lutheranism are penetrating, but I have more than once heard tributes to Maurice from Lutheran theologians abroad who regard him as the Anglican who understood what Luther meant.” Ramsey, \textit{Conflicts}, 28. For an extended consideration of Luther’s influence on Maurice, and Maurice’s appreciation of Luther see Avis, \textit{Anglicanism}, 290-293.

\textsuperscript{114} Maurice, \textit{Kingdom of Christ}, 1:105.
and not for a fact, that we do not preserve that quality in him which enabled him to be a reformer, and deprive him of that which belonged to him in common with those whom he reformed, but that we take from him that wherein his reforming power consisted, and leave ourselves to the certain peril, if all history be not a delusion, of falling under those sensible tyrannies from which he was permitted to emancipate us. And if I be asked in this case, what then is my objection to the Lutheran system, I answer this and no other—that it does not bear witness for the all-importance of that fact which Luther asserted to be all-important; that it teaches us to believe in justification by faith instead of to believe in a justifier; that it substitutes for Christ a certain notion or scheme of Christianity.¹¹⁵

Maurice believes that Lutheranism’s emphasis on the doctrine of justification (as opposed to the confession of faith in Christ who justifies) leads to division in the church, rather than the unity free from doctrinal error and excess that Luther sought. This division is not unique to Lutheranism, but found in any denomination or system that asserts adherence to a particular belief system as necessary for membership, true also of Calvinism’s emphasis on election or Unitarianism’s moralism. Maurice, instead, prefers to assert the already existent unity in Christ that is not dependent on doctrinal affirmation or shared practice, but established in creation.

Maurice finds hints or reflections of that unity in Christ, although often obscured, in the Church of England. Throughout its history, Maurice believes, the Church of England has stressed this communion in Christ over strict or thorough doctrinal agreement, a tendency exhibited in the emphasis placed on the liturgical foundations of the church in the Book of Common Prayer, as opposed to the confessional documents of Protestant bodies or the well-defined positions of the Roman Catholic Church. Influenced by his reading of the Elizabethan Settlement and the work of Richard Hooker, Maurice believes that Anglicanism’s ability to embrace those with Catholic

¹¹⁵ Maurice, Kingdom of Christ, 1:215.
and Protestant sensibilities under a common confession of Christ is the tradition’s true genius and prevents it from becoming narrowly sectarian.

Yet, one should not conclude that Maurice embraces or is impressed by compromise. In fact, he believes that compromise weakens and dilutes the truth. Rather, he sees in the Elizabethan Settlement and in the thought of Hooker a real and true union in a single person. Booty explains: “Maurice believed that the success of the Elizabethan Settlement rested upon the Queen’s ability as the ruler of the nation to unite ‘in herself’ the Calvinistic and the Catholic elements’ abroad and in the land.”116 That union in the Queen is an imperfect reflection of the union that all humanity share in Christ, whether Catholics, Evangelicals, Liberals, or even non-Christians.

Even so, Maurice was not blind to the fact that the nineteenth century Church of England was being pulled in multiple directions by various ecclesiastical parties: Evangelical, Catholic, and Liberal.117 The fact of these divisions pained him considerably. As he had with the various Christian denominations, Maurice found truth in the views of each party—a link with the past and the sacramental foundations of the church in the Catholic party; an emphasis on scripture and the preaching of the word of God in the Evangelical; and a concern for reasonableness, an ability to adapt to new insights and speak to the modern world in the Liberal. Unfortunately, in


117 Maurice, Kingdom of Christ, 2:320ff. These three groups or parties within the nineteenth century Church are analogous in a loose way to the classical Anglican “triad”: scripture, tradition, and reason. The previous consideration of Richard Hooker’s theology demonstrated that these three sources of authority are not equal in his view; however, Hooker certainly did consider the three as the primary contributors toward the Church of England’s authority. The Church could not exist without all three. Maurice believes much the same regarding the insights of the three parties.
forming parties and in condemning the positions of others each lost sight of the deeper truths underlying its position—breaking the “silken cords” that bind them in Christ. When torn by these types of divisions the church becomes no better than a sect.\textsuperscript{118}

In order to avoid the potential sectarianism brought by division, it is necessary that the parties comprising the Church of England express the truth they know and experience in God, while appreciating the truths expressed by others, incarnating the comprehensive spirit that is both necessary and foundational to the church’s authentic life. The true church, Maurice believes, will be established around a vigorous comprehension of diverse views, rather than weak compromise that serves only to dilute theological positions or rigid doctrinarism that excludes those who express different beliefs. The only way to grasp this comprehensiveness is through mutual acknowledgement of Christ as the church’s centre and head. Rather than doctrinal agreement or uniform practice, the unity shared is rooted in the very being of God.

In a letter to his fellow Christian Socialist Charles Kingsley, Maurice writes of his faith in a God that is equally available to all and boundlessly inclusive in love and charity:

> The Name into which we were baptized, the Name which was to bind together all nations, comes but to me more and more as that which must at last break these fetters. I can find none of my liberal friends to whom that language does not sound utterly wild and incomprehensible, while the orthodox would give me for the eternal Name the dry dogma of the Trinity—an opinion which I may brag of as mine, given me by I know not what councils of noisy doctors and to be retained in spite of the reason, which it is said to contradict—lest I should be cast into hell for rejecting it. I am sure that this Name is the infinite all-embracing charity which I may proclaim to publicans and harlots as that which they are living and moving and having their being, in which they may believe, and

\textsuperscript{118} Maurice, \textit{Kingdom of Christ}, 2:327ff.
by which they may be raised up to freedom and righteousness and fellowship for which they were created.\textsuperscript{119}

6 Maurice’s Comprehensive Church: An Appraisal

A caricature of F. D. Maurice, as in the one offered by Sykes in \textit{The Integrity of Anglicanism}, suggests that he was a muddled thinker who argued in favour of comprehensiveness for the sake of comprehensiveness, perhaps out of a desire for conflict avoidance. I do not share this view, and the evidence presented here does not support it. While it is true that Maurice was determined to seek reconciliation between divided parties, this desire for reconciliation has deep theological roots. In particular, as I have demonstrated, Maurice’s theology and ecclesiology are profoundly shaped by his belief in the charity, love, and sacrifice that constitute the centre of the universe in the Trinity and the Incarnation. These principles lay the foundations for his comprehensiveness, imperative for the church community drawn together in Christ its source and head.

It is true that Maurice is not especially concerned with the “how” questions of theology: how the Incarnation and resurrection are possible or how Christ is present in the bread and wine of the eucharist. This reticence at theological definition could give rise to accusations of muddled thinking, as could the infamous opaqueness and elusiveness of his writing. However, Maurice believes, rightly I would argue, that ultimately the answers to these questions can only be speculative. Therefore, he shies away from such speculation in favour of what he is able to believe with greater certainty: that humanity was created in the image of Christ and is united in

\textsuperscript{119} Maurice, \textit{Life}, 2:494.
Christ through the Incarnation. For Maurice, this certainty is confirmed in the testimony of scripture, apostolic witness, and human experience of nearly 2,000 years.

Like Richard Hooker before him, Maurice focuses his theological explorations on the grace and love that are experienced when humanity lives in deep and profound relation with God and one’s neighbour. He does not use the “participation” language so characteristic of Hooker’s work, but his point is much the same. Human purpose and destiny is to share in the life of God the Trinity—expressed by Maurice as “eternal life.”

Maurice, of course, was a man of his era. While considerably ahead of his time in several respects, he also shared Victorian prejudices and sensibilities, some difficult to reconcile with the world of the twenty-first century. For example, his belief that Christ is the head of every human person, while visionary and inclusive 150 years ago, rings a note of Christian triumphalism in a more diverse western society, especially as diverse faith traditions are struggling to live side by side. Likewise, his contention that those communions that presently do not enjoy the historic episcopate would accept it if they truly understood its meaning more fully seems both naïve and overly confident in the perceived value of the episcopate. In a related way Maurice idealizes royal supremacy and uniformity in particular, and hierarchy generally, in a way that seems overly romantic a century and a half later.

And yet, despite Maurice’s limitations, within the Anglican household his conclusions are extraordinarily helpful in the struggle to live peaceably together. He reminds us that those with whom we may disagree, even strongly, are not enemies or opponents but none other than our fellows and family in Christ, with whom we are united, not by choice or assent, but in the
foundation of life and being in God. This is a deeply scriptural affirmation, ironically often lost in contemporary debates over right and wrong.

When asked about the proper limits of the church as he envisions it, Maurice responds: “I cannot answer the question; I believe only One can answer it; I am content to leave it with Him.”¹²⁰ In this, of course, Maurice reflects his view of the limits of eternal life, as well. It is not for us to decide. Rather, we are called to trust in God to sort it out in God’s own unique, charitable, and eternally loving way. There is a profound freedom and liberation in Maurice’s answer. He reminds us that God is God and we, although created in God’s image, are not. What is more, we should not presume that our beliefs and doctrines, however fervently held, have the power to limit God’s grace or the embrace of God’s love, which for Maurice is and necessarily must be infinite, greater even than the depths of the universe.

As much as some of Maurice’s ideas may seem dated in the twenty-first century, today’s world also presents changes and challenges that he could not have imagined. Among them: secularization, globalization, a history of two world wars, and the threat of mass destruction. Would he have shrunk from his belief in humanity’s essential goodness and relatedness to God, as some had following World War II, embracing either a more neo-orthodox view as one possibility, or the “death of God” theology as another? Or would he have clung to his beliefs ever more fervently as the only hope for a world and church torn apart by division and uncertainty? While the answers to these questions are impossible to know, Maurice seems to have anticipated the present situation when he wrote:

The pursuit of unity being the end which God has set before me from my cradle upwards…. I do perceive that if I have any work in the world it is to bear witness of this Name, not as expressing certain relations, however profound, in the Divine nature, but as the underground of all fellowship among men and angels, as that which will at last bind all into one, satisfying all the craving of reason as of the heart, meeting desires and intuitions that are scattered through the religions of the world.\textsuperscript{121}

Thus, F. D. Maurice offers a comprehensive view of the church: profound, both in terms of the unity and comprehension possible and more significantly in what God has established as the purpose and foundation of the church and human community, created and united in Christ. Perspectives similar to Maurice’s will be offered as well by Charles Gore, who is in many respects Maurice’s theological and social successor in expressing the comprehensive calling of Anglicanism.

\textsuperscript{121} Maurice, \textit{Life}, 2:388.
Chapter Six:

Charles Gore and Liberal Catholic Comprehensiveness

1 Historical Context

Charles Gore, prolific theologian and successively bishop in Worcester, Birmingham, and Oxford, is in some sense both a bridge figure and a model for Anglican comprehensiveness, albeit limited, as it came to be understood in the twentieth century. In his adult life Gore spanned two centuries and witnessed, and contributed to, significant changes in the church and the theological enterprise. Although he had been thought to be on the forefront of theological change early in his professional life as the editor of the *Lux Mundi* essays, by his later years he was perceived to be far more conservative. Today, he is uniquely well-regarded by both liberals and conservatives—especially those with Anglo-Catholic sensibilities—as one whose theological approach and work for consensus can be a model for Anglican theology and ecclesiology.

Significant with regard to the present study, Charles Gore is upheld by Stephen Sykes in *The Integrity of Anglicanism* as one who understood and embraced the necessary limits of Anglican comprehensiveness. And yet, with Hooker and Maurice, as well as the Cambridge Platonists, Gore is committed to an understanding of Anglicanism that allows for considerable liberality of thought. I argue in the following study that Gore, like Hooker and Maurice before him, believes

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that the source of Anglican comprehensiveness is the centrality of the Incarnation as the church’s unifying force.

To understand and appreciate Gore and his theology it will be helpful to consider some of the developments in the nineteenth and early twentieth century theology, especially the earlier Tractarian theology upon which Gore builds and the advent of historical criticism of the Bible and the Modernist movement that had considerable influence on Gore’s thought, both positively and negatively. This study of theological influences is, of necessity, brief, but through it I attempt to provide the context for my fuller consideration of Gore and his contribution to the issue of Anglican comprehensiveness.

1.1 Tractarian Incarnational Theology

Much is made of the nineteenth century Tractarian revival of incarnational theology in studies of recent Anglican thought. In particular, it is argued that it was this Tractarian focus on the Incarnation that has led to its emphasis in contemporary Anglican theology. \(^2\) Later theologians who also would focus on incarnation include B. F. Westcott, later generations of Anglo-Catholics, led by Charles Gore, and in the twentieth century William Temple, Michael Ramsey, Eric Mascall, Norman Pittenger, and more, all of whom share a degree of Anglo-Catholic sympathy.

\(^2\) Bernard Reardon writes that the “incarnationalist motif in Tractarian thought was to reveal its broader implications the work of a subsequent generation of church men.” Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Victorian Age: A Survey from Coleridge to Gore* (London: Longman, 1980), 110.
The Tractarians’ renewed focus on incarnational theology is found particularly in their emphasis on the sacramental life of the church. Fairweather writes:

The supreme expression of what we might (with a certain Tractarian indifference to contemporary fashion) call the “objective supernaturalism” of the Oxford Movement was of course its incarnational theology on the Church and the sacraments. The Tractarians saw the Incarnation, the Church, and the sacraments as contiguous and inseparable elements in God’s redemptive economy. For the Tractarians, as for all orthodox Christians, the heart of Christianity was the story of God’s own saving and self-revealing action, which culminated in the hypostatic union of humanity with deity in the person of the Mediator. But they did not stop here. To their minds it was no less clearly a part of the Christian message that the saving person and work of the Mediator were effectually “re-presented” in the Church by means of certain sacramental “extensions of the Incarnation.”

However, despite this emphasis, there is no consistent theology of the Incarnation among the Tractarians, perhaps because as a school of thought their mode of theological expression was unsystematic and, much like F. D. Maurice, focused primarily in tracts and sermons on controversial issues arising out of their context and not as much on clear and careful attempts to define core doctrinal issues such as the Incarnation, Trinity, soteriology, sin, etc. afresh for the nineteenth century church.

Of the first generation of Tractarians, Robert Isaac Wilberforce was among the more prolific in terms of theological output. Although arguably less well known today than his contemporaries, perhaps because of his conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1854 and death at a relatively young age before he could make a name for himself as a Roman Catholic theologian, Wilberforce’s influence on the Tractarian movement was significant, offering it a strong and coherent

systematic theology. In particular, Wilberforce wrote extensively on the Incarnation in his 1848 volume *The Doctrine of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ in Its Relation to Mankind and to the Church*, recognised as one of the most significant works of nineteenth century Anglican theology and an important synthesis of Tractarian thought. Of it Fairweather writes:

*The Doctrine of the Incarnation*, published in 1848, is both Wilberforce’s finest theological work and one of the most distinguished pieces of nineteenth-century Anglican divinity. Indeed, with the exception of Frederick Denison Maurice’s *Kingdom of Christ*, published ten years earlier, it is hard to find another English theological production from the first half of the nineteenth century that shows a comparable grasp of the basic pattern of Christian doctrine. Even Newman’s systematic works, for all of their moments of brilliance, seem rather casual beside Wilberforce’s *magnum opus*.  

Central to Wilberforce’s argument is his belief that in the Incarnation God draws humanity to himself. Wilberforce emphasises that the Incarnation was not the “conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but the taking of the manhood into God.” He begins his thought by arguing that all people share a common nature, transmitted through Adam as the father of humanity. This common nature is embraced by Christ in the Incarnation and, as a result, is brought into renewed relationship with God. He writes: “With Adam all men are actually connected, for they are born his children; and all men who will, may by the new birth of regeneration be united to Christ. ‘For the first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit’.”

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6 Wilberforce, *Incarnation*, 55.

Wilberforce argues that Christ did not become a man, but rather *the man*, the common man of a common humanity, albeit without sin. Thus, he describes Christ as “the Pattern man,” not as an example for human life, as in Abelard’s atonement theory, but through taking humanity into divinity. He argues:

> There are two ways in which Christ might be set forth as that Pattern Man, in whom our nature attained its perfection. Either He might be the happy example in whom its native qualities found their perfect expression, in whom all that belongs to mere humanity obtained the utmost development of which it was susceptible; or the perfection of His manhood might be due to the influence of that Divine nature, with which it was personally united. The first of these is the system of Rationalism — the second, the system of the Church.\(^8\)

Wilberforce argues that through Christ humanity is brought into the life of God and presented as worthy of divine love, forgiveness, and grace. He believes that this is only possible because of an already existing commonality: that humanity was created in God’s image.\(^9\) As Richard Hooker had argued in the sixteenth century, Wilberforce attests that God’s image is marred by sin, but not completely lost.\(^10\) In Christ that image is restored. He explains:

> In Adam was humanity, and the presence of the Word superadded as a guiding light. In Christ, was God the Word by personal presence, who for our sakes had added to Himself human flesh. Thus is attained that perfection of man’s nature, which, in the case of our first parent was only transiently set forth. For that perfection lay in the intercourse with God, which Adam so soon renounced. But in Christ is this intercourse restored permanently and in its completeness.\(^11\)

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\(^8\) Wilberforce, *Incarnation*, 12.


Humanity’s restoration in Christ is not accomplished by our intellect or work but rather, Wilberforce argues, by virtue of God’s action and gift, freely given. In this, Wilberforce echoes both Hooker and Maurice, writing:

To search after God by the exertion of understanding — to realise Him by the powers of abstract meditation — to satisfy ourselves that we are secure of His favour, because we have on our side the witness of our private will, instead of seeking for union with that Pattern Man, whom He has set forth as the way, the truth, and the life — what is this but a more subtle idolatry than that of old?...\(^{12}\)

Wilberforce argues that although Christ shares with us a common humanity, he does not share in each of the particular sufferings of humanity, nor in the particular failings of each human person. Rather, all human suffering and limitation is experienced and summed up in an inclusive way in the crucifixion:

He sustained them all, not only by inward sympathy with His brethren, but in the actual death, wherein He summed up all the pains and evils which afflict humanity at large. Unless this fact be discerned, we form but an imperfect estimate of the sufferings of Him, who truly sustained the weight of afflicted humanity. He bore the collective load, which none but the God-man could undergo, and in His single burthen supported all the woes of His fellows.\(^{13}\)

In this death, the pattern man, Christ the representative of humanity, is able to offer to God the perfect sacrifice for humanity’s redemption. In a fashion similar to F. D. Maurice, Wilberforce argues that Christ’s sacrifice is the true sacrifice that all previous sacrifices had introduced and anticipated, rather than Christ completing earlier sacrifices. He writes:

This offering of Himself on behalf of man was the true sacrifice, which all the sacrifices of the Ancient Law served to introduce. Not that Our Lord’s offering was built upon them; that it pleased God merely to give His sanction to an ancient usage, and to hallow it

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\(^{12}\) Wilberforce, *Incarnation*, 84.

\(^{13}\) Wilberforce, *Incarnation*, 91.
by the sacrifice of Christ. What happened was exactly the reverse; the offerings of the Law were built upon the offering of Christ; they were the type of a future reality, which cast its shadow beforehand on the Jewish nation.\textsuperscript{14}

This emphasis on sacrifice leads Wilberforce to argue that Christ is the mediator between God and humanity and, thus, the one true priest. However, his priesthood does not result from Christ making an offering on humanity’s behalf, but rather through his personal union with God, binding humanity to God and consecrating us for service.\textsuperscript{15} Christ is the abiding intercessor of humanity to God, pleading before God his own perfect sacrifice: “He who is personally God and man, acts through His manhood as the perpetual High Priest for His brethren, and for ever pleads that perfect sacrifice of Himself, which He shared our nature to offer.”\textsuperscript{16}

Through the consecration of Christ’s human nature, grace flows to Christ’s brethren and is conveyed by the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{17} Wilberforce argues that the recipients of this grace are thus able to join the manhood that has been consecrated through union with the divine. He writes: “The office of the Holy Ghost is that men may become the sons of God by grace–by their union with that Man who is the Son of God by nature.”\textsuperscript{18} Through the Holy Spirit, the power and effect of the Incarnation is communicated to humanity.

\textsuperscript{14} Wilberforce, \textit{Incarnation}, 230.

\textsuperscript{15} Wilberforce, \textit{Incarnation}, 235.

\textsuperscript{16} Wilberforce, \textit{Incarnation}, 252-253.

\textsuperscript{17} Wilberforce, \textit{Incarnation}, 289.

\textsuperscript{18} Wilberforce, \textit{Incarnation}, 290.
In Christ humanity is “given back that perfect image of God, wherein man was originally made.” For Wilberforce, and the Tractarians generally, the means of transmission for the union of God and humanity is through the church and especially the sacraments, held to be extensions of the Incarnation. Wilberforce writes: “The importance of Sacraments rests on the Incarnation of Christ, and on their being the means through which His man’s nature is communicated to His brethren.” In other words, through the sacraments humanity is united to Christ’s human nature, continually being offered to God as a sacrifice of perfect obedience. “But it is through that union of His man’s nature with ours, which is compacted through the Sacraments of His grace, that the Head of the body is identified with its members. Thus it is that the whole body is ‘fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth’.” Apart from the sacramental life of the church, however, humanity’s union with God is incomplete.

As we can see, while the particularities of the incarnational theologies of Hooker, Maurice, and Wilberforce differ in certain respects and emphases, the result is largely the same—a focus on the union of God and humanity, not only in the person of Jesus Christ, but also in the much broader and inherently diverse community of the church. This comprehensive unity amidst diversity is always God’s action and not the result of human agreement or narrowly defined shared practice. Thus, even among the Tractarians, who are less inclined to emphasise comprehensiveness, we find impulses toward it.

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20 Wilberforce, *Incarnation*, 413.

Writing at the end of the nineteenth century, Charles Gore, in particular, displays a strong sympathy with Tractarian concerns, especially in the focus on the Incarnation and its on-going presence as the source and unifying force in the church and human life today. Gore offers considerable coherence with Wilberforce’s thought. However, writing as many as forty years (and more) after Wilberforce, he does not simply restate earlier Tractarian positions, but builds on their thought and in some cases moves in new directions. In particular, Gore utilises then-recent biblical criticism to advance his own unique view of the Incarnation. Before considering Gore’s thought in full, I next turn to some of the significant arguments of nineteenth century biblical criticism, to which Gore also responds throughout his work, and particularly in regard to his understanding of the Incarnation and Anglican comprehensiveness.

1.2 Biblical Criticism

While the earliest works in biblical criticism and historical analysis were undertaken on the European continent, especially in Germany, the concerns raised there eventually reached the English-speaking world in Great Britain and North America, having a profound impact on Anglicanism as a result. Among the earliest attempts to integrate the insights of biblical criticism and contemporary science with Christian theology, albeit in a modest way by later standards, was the volume *Essays and Reviews*, first published in 1860, just months after Charles Darwin published his revolutionary *On the Origin of Species*. *Essays and Reviews* consisted of seven

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22 *Essays and Reviews*, 2nd ed. (London: John W. Parker and Son, 1860).
independently written essays by several English scholars and churchmen, including the future Archbishop of Canterbury Frederick Temple and the liberal theologian Benjamin Jowett.

The subjects covered included the historicity of the Old Testament texts, the scientific veracity of biblical miracles, and the need to apply the use of science and reason when considering doctrines and propositions of faith. In an essay on education, Frederick Temple defended the use of science, reason, and historical criticism, writing: “He is guilty of high treason against the faith, who fears the result of any investigation, whether philosophical, or scientific, or historical. And therefore nothing should be more welcome than the extension of knowledge of any and every kind—for every increase in our accumulation of knowledge throws fresh light upon these the real problems of our day.”23 A generation later the arguments would seem commonplace, but in 1860 they were new and even revolutionary.

The publication of Essays and Reviews unleashed a firestorm of reaction, much of it condemnatory. Among the chief opponents was the Oxford bishop Samuel Wilberforce (1805 to 1873), brother of the former Tractarian Robert Isaac Wilberforce.24 Bishop Wilberforce was so appalled that he proposed a resolution to the Church of England’s 1864 Convocation condemning the book. It read: “That this Synod, having appointed Committees of the Upper and Lower House to examine and report upon the volume entitled Essays and Reviews … doth hereby synodically condemn the said volume as containing teaching contrary to the doctrine

23 Frederick Temple, “The Education of the World,” Essays and Reviews, 47.

24 Both Robert Isaac and Samuel Wilberforce were sons of the abolitionist and English parliamentarian William Wilberforce (1759 to 1833), known for his deep evangelical convictions.
received by the United Church of England and Ireland, in common with the whole Catholic Church of Christ."  

The resolution passed easily. However, once the emerging ideas were expressed in *Essays and Reviews*, they could not be contained. F. D. Maurice, too, responded to *Essays and Reviews*, not so much out of appreciation for the ideas presented, but deeply troubled by the efforts of Bishop Wilberforce to squash the presentation of ideas.  

Within a decade, though, biblical “higher criticism” was being employed at British universities, and most especially at Cambridge under the leadership of New Testament scholars James Barber Lightfoot (1829 to 1889), Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828 to 1892), and Brooke Foss Westcott (1825 to 1901). Lightfoot, who was consecrated bishop of Durham in 1879, had published commentaries on Galatians, Philippians, and Colossians focusing on textual and historical criticism. His most significant work, though, is his five-volume patristic study *The Apostolic Fathers*. Hort’s life’s work was his edition of the Greek New Testament, painstakingly undertaken in conjunction with Westcott, as well as his work on the committee that published the Revised Version of the Bible. Hort had been invited to make a contribution to *Essays and Reviews*, but declined, concerned about the reaction it might provoke among the uneducated:

> At present very many orthodox but rational men are being unawares acted upon by influences which will assuredly bear fruit in due time, if the process is allowed to go quietly; but I cannot help feeling that a premature crisis would frighten many back into the merest traditionalism. And as a mere matter of prudence, it seems to me questionable

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to set up a broad and conspicuous target for the Philistines to shoot at, unless there is some very decided advantage to be gained.  

Nonetheless, he expressed his personal support for the project and the views therein expressed.

For the present study, B. F. Westcott is the most significant of the three Cambridge scholars. In addition to his work on the Hort-Wescott New Testament, he authored commentaries on John, the Johannine epistles, Hebrews, and Ephesians. Beyond strictly biblical studies, Westcott published a series of sermons delivered at Westminster Abbey entitled *Christus Consummator: Some Aspects of the Work and Person of Christ in Relation to Modern Thought* and a systematic theology entitled *The Gospel of Life*. Westcott was impressed by the thought of the Cambridge Platonist Whitchote, as well as F. D. Maurice; although, he claimed not to have read much of Maurice first-hand, believing that their thought was already too similar. Like the Tractarians, Maurice, and later Gore, Westcott wrote widely on the topic of the Incarnation and saw it as the rationale for Christian socialism and a comprehensive church. He writes:

> But while the Incarnation “brings all heaven before our eyes” it guards us from a dreamy mysticism. It hallows labour and our scene of labour. It claims the fullest offering of personal service. It embraces all men in the range of its greatest hope, and not only those who have reached a particular stage of culture. It enables us to reverence with a sublime faith, which experience has amply justified, men as men; for we believe that *Christ is the Saviour of the world* (St John iv. 42): that it is the will of God that *all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth* (1 Tim. ii. 4): that it was *His good pleasure to*

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Early in his career Westcott had been master of Harrow School in the northwest of London, where he came to influence Charles Gore. In 1890, following the death of his friend Bishop Lightfoot, Westcott was appointed to succeed him as bishop of Durham. Just prior he had been elected the founding president of the Christian Social Union, an organization influenced by the writings of Maurice and the wider Social Gospel movement, with a goal of alleviating poverty and effecting social change. With Maurice, Westcott was also concerned with education and established the Cambridge Clergy Training School while he was Regius Professor at the University. It was renamed Wescott House upon his death in 1901.

As we shall see below, Westcott had a strong personal influence on a young Charles Gore, an acquaintance that would be renewed later, and in their thought one finds more than a coincidental consonance. I now turn to a closer examination of Gore’s life and theological work.

2 Biography

Charles Gore was born to an aristocratic English family in 1853, living on the Wimbledon Common. Both of his grandfathers had been earls. In terms of religion, Gore’s family was decidedly Low Church. However, at ten Gore was given a book about a Roman Catholic priest who had converted to Protestantism. Intended to reinforce Protestant sensibilities in its readers, for Gore the book had the undesired opposite effect. He found himself fascinated by the

description of Catholic ritualism: incense, confession and absolution, and belief in eucharistic Real Presence. He later said: “I love, as I hardly love anything in the world physically, except the beauties of nature, that type and kind of ceremonial worship, which is called ritualistic by many people and Catholic by its maintainers. It appears to me personally to be the one kind of ceremonial worship which really expresses my feelings, and in which I feel really at home.”

Gore excelled as a student, first attending Harrow School, where he came under the life-long influence of then-master Brooke Foss Westcott. Following his time at Harrow, Gore attended the University of Oxford at Balliol College. At the conclusion of his undergraduate studies he earned a fellowship at Trinity College and taught there from 1875 to 1880. He was ordained deacon in 1876 at the age of twenty-six, and to the priesthood in 1878. He was appointed vice principal of Cuddesdon Theological College 1880.

The year 1882 brought the death of Edward Bouverie Pusey, the surviving original leader of the Tractarian movement. As a memorial in honour of his life and ministry a new institution for study and ecclesiastical renewal was established at Oxford by his disciples, incorporating Pusey’s extensive library and devoted to his Anglo-Catholic principles. Charles Gore, who by then was esteemed as a young leader of the next generation of Anglo-Catholics, was appointed

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34 Carpenter, Liberal Catholic, 33.
the first principal of Pusey House when it opened in 1884. It turned out to be a not
uncontroversial appointment.\textsuperscript{35}

While Gore had deep Tractarian sympathies from the time of his youth, he was a broad thinker
and did not limit his interests to ritualism and theological and ecclesiastical renewal. Like F. D.
Maurice and B. F. Westcott before him, he was increasingly concerned with societal inequality
and the extreme working conditions for many in industrialised England. In fact, James Carpenter
notes that Gore’s concern for the social order led him to embrace an even more modern view of
society than Maurice. He writes that Gore and his similarly minded colleagues:

\begin{quote}
dared to assert that the Word of God was at work in the whole of man’s natural
development; at work not only in the evolutionary process, but in political and social
movements as well. In this they went beyond Maurice himself, for they welcomed
democracy as a manifestation of the divine movement in history, whereas Maurice had
grade misgivings about democracy to the last, holding monarchical and aristocratic
government as infinitely preferable.\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}

Gore invited noted Christian Socialists, whom many of the more conservative Tractarians did not
support, to speak at Pusey House. They so impressed Gore that he participated in the
establishment of the Christian Social Union. B. F. Westcott, soon to be bishop of Durham, was
the first president. In establishing the C.S.U. Gore became a leader in the movement to integrate
Anglo-Catholic spirituality with social transformation, despite the reservations of older
Tractarians.\textsuperscript{37}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[35] Carpenter, \textit{Liberal Catholic}, 33.
\item[36] Carpenter, \textit{Liberal Catholic}, 246.
\item[37] For details of Gore’s work with the Christian Social Union see James P. Tudesco, “The Christian
Intellectual and Social Reform: Charles Gore and the Founding of the Christian Social Union,” \textit{Journal of Church
and State} 18:2 (Spring 1976), 273-288. Also: Markwell, \textit{Anglican Left}, 71-75.
\end{footnotes}
Related to his social concern, Gore edited the influential collection of essays on the Incarnation published as *Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation* in 1889. The essays were a first attempt among eleven young Anglo-Catholic scholars to adopt a deep social consciousness and integrate the insights of scientific inquiry, including the theory of evolution and biblical criticism that had been introduced by *Essays and Reviews*. At the same time, *Lux Mundi* built on the Tractarians’ Catholic emphasis on the church and sacraments, eloquently arguing that they are best understood as extensions of the Incarnation.

In his own *Lux Mundi* essay on the Holy Spirit and inspiration Gore proposed the concept of “kenosis” as a way of making sense of the Incarnation in light of contemporary concerns about the limitations of the perfections of Christ’s humanity, arguing that God had emptied himself of some of his divine properties in order to become human, including especially his omnipotence.

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39 Avis writes: “Gore was the first leading high churchman to embrace the historical method, and so bring the catholic movement into the modern thought-world, releasing new energies.” P. D. L. Avis, “Gore and Theological Synthesis,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28 (1978), 471.

40 In addition to Gore, the *Lux Mundi* authors include: Henry Scott Holland (1847 to 1918), Canon of St. Paul’s Cathedral and leader of the Christian Social Union; Aubrey Moore (1848 to 1890), tutor of Magdalen and Keble Colleges, Oxford; John Richardson Illingworth (1848 to 1915), rector of Longworth; Edward S. Talbot (1844 to 1934), first warden of Keble College and later bishop of Rochester, Southwark, and Winchester; Robert Campbell Moberly (1845 to 1903), vicar of Great Budworth, later Regius Professor of pastoral theology in Oxford; Arthur Lytleton (1852 to 1903), first master of Selwyn College, Cambridge, later vicar of Eccles and bishop of Southampton; Walter Lock (1846 to 1933), warden of Keble College and later Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity, Oxford; Francis Paget (1851 to 1911), Regius Professor of Pastoral Theology at Oxford, later bishop of Oxford; W. J. H. Campion (d. 1892), Tutor of Keble College, Oxford; Robert Lawrence Otley (1856 to 1933), dean of Magdalen College, principal of Pusey House, and Regius Professor of Theology at Oxford.
and omniscience. These ideas were further developed in Gore’s Bampton Lectures of 1891, published as *The Incarnation of the Son of God*, generally believed to be Gore’s best work.42

*Lux Mundi* provoked immediate response, both from those who found its ideas liberating, as well as others, especially more traditional Anglo-Catholics, who believed that Gore was headed down a path leading to heresy.43 In the years that followed, what had been seen as groundbreaking theological insights were ridiculed by later modernists as woefully inadequate for dealing with the challenges of rationally accepting the Incarnation of God in human life.

The furor over the ideas presented in *Lux Mundi*, and accompanying personal attacks, had a profound effect on Gore, and perhaps help explain his later conservatism and doctrinal rigidity. While Gore never retreated from the ideas presented in *Lux Mundi*, neither did he move much beyond them. Gore biographer Gordon Crosse writes: “The agony that Gore suffered at this time cannot be exaggerated. It was the supreme tragedy of his life. He was perplexed at the

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42 His *Dissertations on Subjects Connected with the Incarnation* of 1895 considers the Incarnation even further, covering issues such as the virgin birth tradition, Jesus’ human consciousness, and transubstantiation. Charles Gore, *Dissertations on Subjects Connected with the Incarnation*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1907).

43 Of these critics, Avis writes: “The men of the Oxford Movement…cannot be described, by any stretch of imagination, as belonging to the modern world. They were politically, socially and theologically reactionary. They were profoundly unsympathetic to the Enlightenment with its challenge to all traditional and unassailable claims… The Tractarians had no sympathy for the methods of biblical criticism, then in its infancy, or for the new geological theories that paved the way for Darwin.” Avis, *Anglicanism*, 302.
implications that had been found in his work. More painful still, he felt himself sullied by the imputation of treachery to the Church, to the Bible, above all to his Divine Master.”

In 1891 Gore and five priests at Pusey House established a new religious community for men, the Community of the Resurrection, with Gore its first superior. Like the recently established Society of St. John the Evangelist in Cowley, members of the Community of the Resurrection lived communally and took vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. However, they were not strictly monastic: they did not wear habits and sought to be deeply engaged in the transformation of society. Mark Chapman writes that Gore’s “idea was that the Community should become a means whereby the ideal vision of Christian discipleship might be made real in the conditions of modern industrial England.”

After a somewhat tumultuous tenure at Pusey House over his theological views, apparent advocacy of socialism, and his role in founding the Community of the Resurrection, Gore resigned as principal in 1893 and took a parochial cure in the village of Radley, five miles from Oxford. Some members of the Community of the Resurrection lived with him in the vicarage, others nearby. A year later he assumed a canonry at Westminster Abbey. This was the period of Gore’s most substantial literary output. In 1901, during his time at Westminster, Gore wrote the


influential *The Body of Christ*: a thorough study of the development of eucharistic theology from the biblical texts, through the early church and medieval period, and into the Reformation and contemporary eras.

Gore resigned as superior and was freed from his obligations to the Community of the Resurrection when he was appointed to the episcopate in Worcester; although, he maintained a life-long interest in its ministry and development. He was consecrated bishop in 1902, and when the Worcester diocese divided he became bishop of the new diocese of Birmingham in 1905. Finally, Gore was translated to Oxford as its bishop in 1911.

Despite his prominence (or perhaps because of it), Gore experienced considerable frustration as a bishop, even once heard shouting, “I hate the Church of England.” Yet, he was one of the church’s staunchest defenders and notable personalities. Carpenter writes:

> By founding [the Community of the Resurrection] and the See of Birmingham, by rescuing the Oxford Movement from stagnation and ritual excessiveness, by making Pusey House a viable institution, by his creative work with Westcott in the beginnings of the Christian Social Union…, and by his own personal gifts as a preacher and lecturer, Gore had no equal in influence. All others, even the Archbishop of Canterbury were lesser lights in comparison with him.\(^4\)


\(^{47}\) Carpenter, *Liberal Catholic*, 37.

\(^{48}\) Avis, “Theological Synthesis,” 462.

During his tenure as a diocesan bishop Gore continued to write and maintained his early acceptance of biblical criticism, but simultaneously emphasised a determined fidelity to the church’s historic creeds, both in his own belief and writing, and in the faith of the church that he was determined to preserve. He became especially concerned with a rising theological modernism that was increasingly comfortable questioning long-held doctrinal certainties. For example, he was known to have required clergy in his dioceses to maintain a literal belief in creedal statements that refer to apparently historical events, such as Jesus’ conception and the resurrection, seeking to protect the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds in their position as the church’s unifying dogmatic statements. Non-historical events, such as Christ sitting at the right hand of the Father, could be open to interpretation. While Gore understood himself as a liberal Catholic devoted to the comprehensive nature of Anglicanism, others were frustrated by his conservative theological rigidity as related to the contentious issues of the day.

Following his retirement from Oxford in 1919 at the age of sixty-six, Gore continued to write on the topics of belief, biblical studies, and morality. He preached often and undertook a mission to India. He died in 1932, five days shy of his seventy-ninth birthday. He was buried at the permanent home of the Community of the Resurrection in Mirfield in the north of England.

Since his death Charles Gore has been regarded as the most significant Anglican theologian of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and as one who integrated Anglo-Catholicism
with biblical criticism and social concern.\textsuperscript{50} Addressing his influence on Anglican theology and his on-going significance, Paul Avis writes that when Gore died he was regarded:

as “the greatest theologian of our time.” During the last half-century century, Gore has continued to be a dominant, though sometimes unrecognized, influence in Anglican theology. William Temple confessed that he was more indebted to Gore than to any other living thinker and, for Michael Ramsey, Gore has remained a masterful influence. Many of the issues with which Gore grappled in his controversial life...are still with us—the authority and interpretation of the creeds, the role of the radical critic, the relation of the historic faith to changing thought-forms, the nature of moral or judicial constraints, if any, that the Church can impose.\textsuperscript{51}

In the sections that follow I will consider several of the issues Avis identifies, especially as they relate to the broader issue of Anglican comprehensiveness, by studying Gore’s understanding of the Incarnation and its relation to the church.

3 Gore’s Incarnational Theology

Within Anglicanism, Charles Gore is perhaps best known for his thorough and careful articulation of his incarnational theology and his embrace of a “liberal Catholic” identity for the Church of England. So strong was Gore’s emphasis on the Incarnation that he was accused by some of subsuming the atonement under the Incarnation so that it ceased to be distinctive. This criticism may be an exaggeration, even if it does recognise the fact that the Incarnation is

\textsuperscript{50} Even given his theological prominence and significance for Anglican thought, there have been suggestions that he could have been greater. Carpenter writes: “It has been remarked that had Gore never become a bishop and had he been able to concentrate his energies on theology, he might have well become a theologian of far greater stature than he proved to be, comparable at least to F. D. Maurice, and perhaps well beyond him.” Carpenter, “After Fifty Years,” 72.

primary in Gore’s thought. Gore’s articulation of a particular atonement theory is hesitant, and as I will demonstrate, he argues that Christ’s work of redemption is not limited to the crucifixion, but is coterminous with his incarnate life.


### 3.1 Incarnational Foundations

Like F. D. Maurice’s thought, Gore’s theology of the Incarnation is grounded in the Logos theology of John’s gospel. He believes that all things are created through God’s Word and as a result share an intrinsic worth and imprint of the divine, even after the advent of sin. He does not believe that nature (whether human or other created nature) and grace or the supernatural are antithetical. Rather, together they are part of a larger whole in a universe infused with God’s

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grace. Therefore, it is not inconsistent with the created order that within the incarnate Christ both humanity and divinity should co-exist.

Christ, Gore believes, stands in the centre of all things earthly and heavenly, simultaneously God and human. Christ is the culmination and consummator of the natural order who brings all things to their universal perfection. Gore writes:

We believe that when the slow-working forces of the Incarnation have borne their perfect fruit, it is not Christ the Head alone who will be seen to crown and justify the whole development of the universe, but Christ as centre of the redeemed humanity, the Head with the Body, the Bridegroom with the bride; and things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth shall acknowledge in that triumphant society the consummation of the whole world’s destiny.  

Through the unity and consummation of all things in the Incarnation the divine and the natural radiate out from Christ, the whole universe being blessed by God’s grace and love.

For Gore, the work of Christ does not begin or end with the human life of Jesus. Rather, he believes that Jesus Christ was and is the eternal mediator in creation. Christ supplied the Jewish people their needs in the wilderness and spoke through the prophets to proclaim justice, peace, and the Word of God. Following his resurrection and ascension, Christ continues his presence with humanity, forever living as our representative with God and with us and in us on earth in the life of the church. Thus, the principle of the Incarnation as the union of the divine and human never ceases, even after the physical person of Jesus is no longer present on earth.

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3.2 Kenosis: God’s Self-Emptying

Gore’s thought shares much with that of the Tractarian Robert Isaac Wilberforce, including an emphasis on Christ’s example, sacrifice, and the new life offered to humanity through him. As we have seen, Wilberforce began his incarnational theology arguing that humanity was brought into the life of God in the Incarnation because, he believes, the reverse would be impossible. Gore, however, takes the opposite view in his focus on kenosis, God’s self-emptying in Christ’s incarnation. In fact, with Wilberforce Gore believes quite strongly that the human is brought into the divine life, but he argues first that Christ’s divine nature must deprive itself of its power and knowledge in order to be truly and fully human.\(^5^7\)

As a source for his kenotic theory, Gore appeals to St. Paul who wrote: “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:5-9). While others had grappled with Paul’s statement from Philippians, notably Luther, Gore was among the first Anglican theologians to do so. Related, he also is concerned to grapple with the testimony about Jesus’ life as presented in the gospels and in particular passages that emphasise Jesus’ human limitations.

\(^{57}\) Marilyn McCord Adams offers a helpful study of Gore’s kenotic theory, placing it in the context of continental Protestant theology and turn of the century Anglicanism in her chapter “Psychologizing the Person: Christ as God-man, psychologically construed” in her *Christ and Horrors: The Coherence of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006).
Gore’s kenotic theory was first expressed in *Lux Mundi* and later expanded upon in the Bampton Lectures. In his *Lux Mundi* essay he writes:

> It is contrary to His whole method to reveal His Godhead by any anticipations of natural knowledge. The Incarnation was a self-emptying of God to reveal Himself under conditions of human nature and from the human point of view. We are able to draw a distinction between what He revealed and what He used. He revealed God, His mind, His character, His claim, within certain limits His Three-fold Being: He revealed man, his sinfulness, his need, his capacity: He revealed His purpose of redemption, and founded His Church as a home in which man was to be through all the ages reconciled to God in knowledge and love. All this He revealed, but through, and under conditions of, a true human nature. Thus he used human nature, its relation to God, its conditions of experience, its growth in knowledge, its limitation of knowledge.\(^{58}\)

Elaborating on his kenotic view he later writes: “His incarnation was a voluntary act of self-beggary, an act by which the divine Son for our sakes ‘became poor,’ depriving himself of the riches of His previous state, in order for our redemption to become true man, in the reality of our nature ‘according to the flesh’.”\(^{59}\) Gore’s shift in emphasis was denounced by some inheritors of the Tractarian mantle as a betrayal of their “High Church” perspective on the Incarnation, even as others embraced this fresh new line of thought that seemed to take seriously concerns of biblical criticism that Christ be truly and fully human, with the consequent human limitations.\(^{60}\)

Of particular concern was Gore’s argument that in the Incarnation Jesus’ knowledge of both human and divine matters was limited. In a clarifying note Gore connects his kenotic theory with Christ’s sacrifice of himself, understanding that sacrifice as continuous in the Incarnation:


\(^{60}\) Avis, “Theological Synthesis,” 472.
Of course He gave prophetic indications of the coming judgment, but on the analogy of inspired prophecy. He did not reveal “times and seasons” and declared that it was not within the scope of His mission to do so…He exhibits supernatural insight into men’s characters and lives. But He never exhibits the omniscience of bare Godhead in the realm of natural knowledge; such as would be required to anticipate the results of modern science or criticism. This “self-emptying” of God in the Incarnation is, we must always remember, no failure of power, but a continuous act of Self-sacrifice…Indeed God “declares His almighty power most chiefly” in this condescension, whereby He “beggared Himself” of Divine prerogatives, to put Himself in our place.61

Gore argues that, despite this profound self-emptying, Christ’s human nature is not entirely like ours in that Christ is both without sin and perfectly free. Thus, Christ did not take on humanity as it has become subsequent to the fall into sin, but rather as it is and was intended to be in its perfected state. He writes that Christ “did not sin, because none of His faculties were disordered, there was no loose or ungoverned movement in His nature, no movement save under the control of His will. He could not sin, because sin being what it is, rebellion against God, and He being what He was, the Father’s Son in manhood, the human will which was His instrument of moral action, could not choose to sin.”62 Gore argues that because Christ did not sin, and because he was fully human, sin cannot be intrinsic in humanity. Rather, “in Him first we see man completely in the image of God, realising all that was in the divine idea for man.”63 In other words, Christ embraced, inhabited, and presented humanity in its true nature.

Thus, for Gore, the state of sin is an aberration. It is neither God’s intention nor our destiny.

While Gore discounts the historical veracity of the Book of Genesis’ description of sin’s origin


62 Gore, Incarnation, 166-167.

63 Gore, Incarnation, 168.
in the Adam and Eve narrative, he finds that the actual cause of sin, whenever it began, is much the same: the result of wilful human rebellion against God. Addressing the Genesis narrative and its spiritual authenticity and purpose in his *Lux Mundi* essay, he writes:

> We observe that it has for its motive and impulse not the satisfaction of a fantastic curiosity, nor the later interest of scientific discovery, but to reveal certain fundamental religious principles: that everything as we see it was made by God: that it has no being in itself but at God’s will: on the other hand, that everything is in its essence good, as the product of the good God: that man, besides sharing the physical nature of all creation, has a special relation to God, as made in God’s image, to be God’s vice-regent: that sin, and all that sin brings with it of misery and death, came not of man’s nature but of his disobedience to God and rejection of the limitations under which He put him: that in spite of all that sin brought about, God has not left man to himself, that there is a hope and a promise. These are the fundamental principles of true religion and progressive morality, and in these lies the supernatural inspiration of the Bible account of creation.  

Gore rejects the suggestion that humanity is growing out of, or evolving away from, its propensity to sin. Indeed, although he affirms the then-new and still controversial theory of evolution, he will not equate it with human progress. The biological or evolutionary theory of survival of the fittest in no sense has a corollary in human spiritual growth or perfection. For Gore, in the case of sin and rebellion from God there is no evolution. The only remedy and perfection for humanity comes through union with Christ in his Incarnation: “And living, risen and glorified through death and beyond it, it is still as our representative, the second Adam, the head of a redeemed race, that He builds up a new humanity, a temple on a secure basis, a city that hath foundations, in which the real divine purpose for man is to be realised, even into an everlasting fulfillment.”

Seeing the universal significance in the Incarnation, Gore describes Christ as the “Catholic man.” By this he means that Christ as the incarnate person reconciles and unites all humanity, and transcends the narrow limitations that too often define and mar human life. He writes, “But in a unique sense, the manhood of Jesus is catholic; because it is exempt, not from the limitations which belong to manhood, but from the limitations which make our manhood narrow and isolated, merely local or national. Born a man, and a Jew, in a carpenter’s family, He can be equally claimed by both sexes, by all classes, by all men of all nations.”

Thus, in the incarnate Christ we find the aspiration and culmination of human being. For Gore, the comprehensiveness of the church and human society is rooted in the life of Christ himself.

Gore notes, however, that too often we have been either too slow or unable to recognise the unity we share in Christ. Instead, we have divided ourselves along national, racial, gender, economic, or other distinctions. In so doing, we deprive ourselves of the meaning and intent of human life. Gore argues: “Only altogether, all ages, all races, both sexes, can we grow up in one body, ‘into the perfect man’; only a really catholic society can be ‘the fulness of him that filleth all in all’.”

In particular, it is through the incarnate Christ’s self offering throughout his life, and in a concentrated and focused way on the cross, that we are given the ultimate example and ideal for truly Catholic and universal human living.

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67 Gore, Incarnation, 168.

68 Gore, Incarnation, 170.

69 Gore, Incarnation, 171.
3.3 Christ’s Saving Work

While Gore was criticized for subsuming his theology of the atonement under the Incarnation, in fact, he believed strongly in the importance of the work of Christ and argued that the benefits of Christ’s incarnation could only come through the union of humanity with God in a life of sacrifice, writing: “the genius of the Christian religion is sacrifice.”

Like Maurice who argues that sacrifice is the principle of the universe, Gore believes that the sacrifice that characterized Christ’s life infused the whole of his being, from the moment of his self-emptying. In living this way, Christ could be our representative from beginning to end, earning God’s favour through Christ’s obedience and resulting in a new and redeemed humanity.

Gore stresses that Christ’s obedience and desire to honour God’s holiness leads to his death on the cross and the presentation of a sinless and obedient humanity to God. With Maurice, Gore argues that Christ is not a substitute for humanity but, as fully human, is our true representative. This presentation continues perpetually as Christ takes on his role as great high priest and continually offers his life to God as humanity’s eternal representative.

Gore is, however, hesitant to articulate a preferred atonement theory. He takes comfort in the fact that while the church universal has established a carefully defined doctrine of the Incarnation, there is no accompanying authoritative teaching for the atonement, beyond the statement that in

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70 Gore, New Theology, 231.
the life, death, and resurrection of Christ God has forgiven human sin and reconciled the world to 
God’s self, expressed in the Nicene Creed’s statement: “who for us and for our salvation came 
down from heaven,” etc. In fact, Gore suggests that among the reasons for an increasing 
scepticism about Christian theology and practice is an undue emphasis placed on atonement 
theories that are found increasingly inadequate in light of contemporary sensibilities.

While he finds fault in the Catholic traditions, Gore believes that this problem is particularly 
acute in Protestantism. He writes: “The peril under Protestantism has been for people to dwell 
complacently upon ‘the danger of being saved by works,’ and to take Christ’s ‘finished work’ as 
a substitute for their own effort. And the idea of vicarious punishment—Christ punished that we 
might be ‘let off’—has, more than anything else, tended to alienate the best moral conscience of 
mankind from Christian teaching.” Gore instead prefers to offer an approach to Christ’s saving 
work that is located within the full scope of the incarnate life.

Thus, rather than focusing on a particular atonement theory, Gore instead reiterates the scriptural 
testimony. As a result, he rejects the idea that the Father punishes the Son in the place of 
humanity to bring redemption, or that God caused the death of Christ. Citing the gospels’ 
unanimous testimony, he writes: “the crucifixion of Christ is man’s act, which God foresees, 
bears and works through to His own ends.”

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Although the crucifixion is humanity’s act, Christ’s suffering is also a direct consequence of his life-long obedience to God, kenotic self-emptying, and willingness to assume the human lot:

“There is, so far as we can see, no other ‘punishment’ laid on Him by the Father than that bearing of the consequences of other men’s sins, which fell on Him inevitably when He came as man into a sinful world, and which falls upon every man or woman, in measure, who enters into the lot of humanity.” In other words, Christ suffered in the way that all humans suffer when tainted by sin. However, because of Christ’s perfection, the offering of himself (throughout the incarnate life and not limited to the crucifixion) is accepted by God and then ratified and glorified in the resurrection.

Christ’s atoning work opens the door for human redemption and the forgiveness of sin, through union with us in the Incarnation; however, we must participate in that work and being to receive its fullest benefits. This view contrasts with the Protestant emphasis on justification by faith, typical of most Anglican theology theretofore, including the thought of Hooker and Maurice. While Gore doesn’t expressly deny the concept of justification, it must be “only preliminary, a necessary anticipation of personal righteousness through the indwelling grace of God.”

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73 Gore, *New Theology*, 139-140.


75 Avis, “Theological Synthesis,” 469. A similar argument is presented by John Henry Newman prior to his conversion to Roman Catholicism in his “Lectures on Justification.” Newman argues: “We have seen that, whereas justification is the application of Christ’s merits to the individual, that application is the imparting of an inward gift; in other words, justification is a real and actual communication to the soul of the atonement through the ministration of the Spirit... Now in truth a privilege is most explicitly promised us in Scripture which accurately answers to this description, as being at once the special fruit of Christ’s sacrifice and also an inward gift possessed and residing within us; I mean the habitation in us of God the Father and the Word Incarnate through the Holy Ghost. If this be so, we have found what we sought: This is to be justified, to receive the divine presence within us and be made a
writes: “All the work of Christ in setting us the perfect example, and in providing for us the opportunity of a fresh start, by the forgiveness of our sins, is only the prelude to that which is in the deepest sense the work of Christ in us, the renewing by His Spirit of heart and life and character into the divine image.”76

Having established the means of human redemption in the Incarnation and Christ’s atoning work, the uniquely Catholic and comprehensive character of Gore’s thought is expressed in his description of our participation and incorporation into that Incarnation in the life of the church. As I shall demonstrate below, for Gore it is through the church’s sacramental action that the fullest benefits of Christ’s atoning work are actualised.

4 Incarnation and the Catholic Church

Gore argues that Christianity is not primarily a religion of dogmas and teachings, but rather a life of essential and on-going relationship with the eternal person of Christ. To be Christian, for Gore, is to live in relationship with that Christ. In particular, it is through union with Christ that the human person fulfils his or her potential to live fully in the image of God. He writes: “Now


76 Gore, New Theology, 142-143.
man is made in God’s image: he is in his fundamental capacity a son of God, and he becomes so in fact fully through union with Christ.”

The means for that union is the church, which Gore describes as the extension of the Incarnation: “The church is the body of Christ. It is the extension and perpetuation of the Incarnation in the world.” Even more explicitly he continues, “The Incarnation did not end in Christ our head: it passed on to the incorporation of us His members.” The church exists as the eternal perpetuation of the union of divine and human in the “Word made flesh.”

Gore emphasises that as an extension of the Incarnation the church is necessarily a spiritual society, communal and Catholic in nature. He writes: “It is, then, in correspondence with a fundamental law of nature that the religion of the Son of Man should not deal with us first as individuals; that it should present itself as a society incorporating individuals and developing the individual life by first absorbing it. It is because man is social that ‘the perfect man’ is to be realised, not by a single Christian, but by the whole Church.” The church is likewise an apostolic fellowship that reaches back in time to the first century community of disciples, across space to embrace diverse peoples and nations, and beyond the confines of life on earth to include Christ who is all in all.

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Gore places primary emphasis on several aspects of the church’s life and constitution: the sacraments as the means of conveying the grace of God; the physical link with the community of the early church in apostolic succession conveyed through the historic episcopate; and the church’s faith in the Incarnation preserved in the creeds. Gore believes that together these ensure the authenticity of the church’s mission and ministry, allowing it to be both faithful and comprehensive. I will consider each in turn.

4.1 Incarnation and Sacraments

As Catholic Anglicans, Charles Gore and the Lux Mundi theologians believe that the union of the spiritual and divine with the material and human is the primary principle and purpose of the Incarnation, powerfully made real for us today sacramentally. Indeed, Gore believes that the sacraments are the most assured means for our receiving God’s divine grace, love, and redemption offered in Christ’s incarnate life.

Gore focuses less on the significance of baptism than either Hooker, Maurice, or his Anglo-Catholic predecessors. However, in his consideration he does present baptism as the initial means of one’s incorporation into the life of the church and the Incarnation through the gift of the Holy Spirit. As such, Gore believes that baptism is a first step that subsequently opens the door to one’s deeper participation in the life of Christ and the spiritual society that is the
church. He writes: “The beginning of the new life, which Christianity perpetuates from Christ, lies in that regenerating act of God upon the soul, in which by the Holy Spirit’s action it is united to Christ and admitted into the fellowship of His holy body.”

The regenerating act begun in baptism is strengthened in confirmation through the laying on of hands by a bishop and completed in the sacrament of the eucharist. Gore believes that the sacramental life is a process that leads ever deeper to redemption and communion with God. He explains that sacramental process of spiritual indwelling and growth:

Thus baptism is our regeneration, or our incorporation into the new manhood by the Spirit, and involves that deep breach with the past which is expressed by the forgiveness of sins: confirmation is the bestowal of the unction of the Holy Spirit of Christ for the full equipment of the personal life, both for individual strength and social service: the eucharist is the full and repeated communion in His all-powerful manhood—eating flesh and drinking His blood—and through His manhood, the perfect communion with God. Throughout it is the same gift, ministered by the same Spirit: but it is the same gift in different stages of completeness: and it is the completest degree of participation in Christ’s manhood which, in the language of the New Testament, is identified with Holy Communion.

In this, Gore offers Anglicanism a renewed understanding of the meaning of the eucharist: “the instrument for extending the incarnate life.” Through participation in the sacrament humanity is offered union with Christ and shares in his glorified body. Grounding it in biblical accounts of

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the earliest Christian practices he writes, “the idea of communion with God through Christ, the partaking of His life, the living in His life, is the central idea of the New Testament.”

Gore expresses his broad and comprehensive approach in exploring the means of Christ’s presence in the eucharist. He rejects several popular theories of Christ’s eucharistic presence, for example any that suggest it is the crucified and pre-glorified Christ present in the sacrament, as was popular among Anglican theologians at the time and had been known in earlier Anglican accounts, as well as the theory of transubstantiation and Catholic practices such as benediction, reservation, and infrequent reception. He argues that each of these views and practices emphasise too strongly the localized presence of Christ in the elements and not in the living Body of Christ, the church. Eric Mascall explains: “For Gore, transubstantiation, infrequent communion, Benediction, and an individualistic and mechanical view of religion were all simply

86 Gore, Body of Christ, 17.
88 Gore does not question the reservation of the sacrament for the communion of the sick, but for other forms of devotion, writing “the wholly legitimate reservation of the consecrated elements, that the absent sick folk might be communicated from one altar and one loaf, became—what was quite unknown to the ancients, and remains alien to the customs of the orthodox East—a reservation of the sacramental body in order that, inasmuch as with His body Christ is present in His whole person, the church might have a permanent external presence of Christ in the midst of her in a particular spot in the church.” Gore, Body of Christ, 137.
89 Further, Gore argues that because the eucharistic elements are corruptible, transubstantiation implies that Christ’s presence in them must be temporary, perhaps even involving a reverse transubstantiation at a later time. Gore, Body of Christ, 122-123.
different manifestations of one and the same divagation from primitive Christianity—the loss of the great conception of the Church as the Body of Christ.”

Somewhat disappointingly, Gore limits presentation of his own eucharistic theology to a defence of a spiritual “Real Presence.” He argues that a spiritual presence is no less real; in fact it is more so, he argues, because it means that presence is subjugated to spirit and not physical matter. He writes “in claiming spirituality for Christ’s presence we claim for it that, though He condescends to use material means, the sacramental elements, yet He is never subject to them. As in the risen and glorified body in itself, so in the sacramental application to our necessities, spiritual purpose dominates everything with an absolute freedom.” Beyond that explanation, however, Gore refrains from definition, appealing to similar approaches by the patristic theologians, Richard Hooker, and John Henry Newman. Assessing Gore’s eucharistic theology, Swedish archbishop Yngve Brilioth writes:

The central principle of Gore’s thought is that the eucharist is of a piece with the Incarnation…. Definitely rejecting transubstantiation, and any false localising of the presence, he teaches that ‘the gift of the eucharist is precisely that gift of the flesh, or body and blood of Christ, the spiritual principle and life of Christ’s manhood, inseparable from his whole living self’… His doctrine of eucharistic sacrifice scarcely goes beyond the standards of seventeenth-century Anglicanism; but a new emphasis is laid on the unity of the church’s act with the great High-priest in heaven; and the consummation of worship is the church’s self-oblation to God.

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90 Mascall, Corpus Christi, 150.
91 Gore, Body of Christ, 127.
92 Gore, Body of Christ, 131.
93 Gore, Body of Christ, 153-156.
94 Brilioth, Eucharistic Faith, 216.
As Brilioth argues, instead of focusing on the means or nature of Christ’s localized presence in the elements, Gore emphasizes the role of the eucharist in uniting us to Christ and in perfecting his redeeming work in the life of the church and the individual believer. Gore writes: “The sacrament of the Breaking of Bread in particular is the continual representation of the atoning sacrifice, one, full, perfect, sufficient—but in the most intimate and inseparable connexion with communication to us of the once-sacrificed life, the body and blood of the living Christ, to be our spiritual food.”

Reception of the sacrament is our assurance that God’s promises offered in the Incarnation are received and given occasion to work in us.

Gore acknowledges, however, that there will be those who do not avail themselves of the incarnate grace and life conveyed in the eucharist. While he does not claim to know God’s will for them, neither does he limit the possibility of God using other means to convey the grace and life that is offered to the church in the sacraments.

In that open mindedness, Gore reinforces his comprehensive view, acknowledging that God’s desires may be greater than we know.

Summarizing his understanding of the power and purpose of the sacraments, Gore writes:

This is what we claim for sacraments: not that they are exclusive channels of grace, so that God cannot give except through them the gifts of His love; but that through them only, as elements in His unique covenant, are definite graces pledged and guaranteed by the Divine fidelity; so that the faithful Christian transcends the conditions of anxious enquiry and passes into the region where he faithfully welcomes the assured gift, and fearlessly uses it as indeed given.

95 Gore, New Theology, 144-145.

96 Gore, Incarnation, 276 n.61.

4.2 Incarnation and the Apostolic Ministry

In Gore’s view, the church is a “catholic society.” By this, he means that it transcends time and space to be inclusive of diverse categories of people and human society united in the Incarnation. As the Body of Christ, it is God’s continual spiritual and visible presence in the world, just as in the Incarnation Christ was God’s presence some 2,000 years ago. But, because it is so broad and diverse throughout time and space the church requires some visible manifestation of its continuity. Gore finds that continuity in apostolic succession:

For the Church is a catholic society, that is, a society belonging to all nations and ages. As a catholic society it lacks the bonds of the life of a city or a nation—local contiguity, common language, common customs. We cannot, then, very well conceive how its corporate continuity could have been maintained otherwise than through some succession of persons such as, bearing the apostolic commission for ministry, should be in each generation the necessary centres of the Church’s life. Granted this apostolic succession, there is guaranteed in the Church as a whole, and in each local church, a perpetual stewardship of the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, a perpetual stewardship which, at the same time, acts as the link of continuity, binding the churches of all ages and of all nations into visible unity with the apostolic college.  

Gore sees in the earliest church traditions, recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, the beginnings of the episcopate established by Christ. He writes of the organization of the church in Acts, “In that book being a Christian means nothing else than membership in the visible body, the Church.

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98 Gore, Mission of the Church, 10-11.

99 Gore undertakes a thorough study of the apostolic foundations of the church and its ministry in his early work The Church and the Ministry originally published in 1888, prior to Lux Mundi. In it he argues, through substantive historical evidence, that the Catholic three-fold order of ministry dates to at least AD 150 and that the office of bishop extends back to the apostolic age and was established by Jesus Christ himself. However, Gore does not suggest that in the earliest age there was in every case an unbroken succession. See Charles Gore, The Church and the Ministry, new edition revised by C. H. Turner (London: SPCK, 1949), 298-310.
The Church advances from place to place, but the local bodies, ‘the churches,’ are the expansions of ‘the Church’—based upon the ‘apostles’ doctrine,’ and governed by the common apostolic authority. The same truth appears in St. Paul’s epistles…”

Gore believes that the apostolic authority conveyed in the historic episcopate comes through the commissioning of Christ himself. This commissioning is Christ’s means of extending the Incarnation in the community of his disciples through time and space. In particular, he argues that the apostles were commissioned by Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to serve as “the primary witnesses of Christ’s resurrection, stewards of the divine mysteries, ambassadors and ministers of the effected reconciliation of man to God.” Through the apostolic episcopate bishops are “the links of unity between the different congregations in all nations and the maintainers of the continuous life of the whole church down through the generations.” Led by its bishops the church is, therefore, the agent and home of salvation through which we are offered entry into the kingdom of God.

Gore believes that in preserving the historic episcopate and the church’s sacramental life, while allowing for some freedom of thought, Anglicanism has maintained a proper understanding of what it means to be Catholic. In contrast, he argues that the Church of Rome has distorted Catholicism by claiming to be whole, when, in fact, it is merely a part of the church. Further, it has crushed intellectual inquiry in favour of a parental-like authority, claimed for itself

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101 Gore, *Church and Ministry*, 237.

infallibility, and added doctrines that are neither required by scripture nor deemed essential by the early church.\textsuperscript{103} Of those new doctrines, Gore cites in particular the Immaculate Conception and indulgences.\textsuperscript{104} The Eastern Orthodox churches do better, but he believes that they fail in their apparent lack of intellectual engagement with the experience of the modern world. Thus, in the principles underlying the Anglicanism Gore sees the essence of Catholic unity:

Anglicanism represents a combination which, if Christianity is to do its work, must exist and be amongst the most beneficent forces of catholicity in the world. It is the glory of the Anglican Church that at the Reformation she repudiated neither the ancient structure of Catholicism, nor the new and freer movement. Upon the ancient structure—the creeds, the canon, the hierarchy, the sacraments—she retained her hold while opening her arms to new learning, the new appeal to Scripture, the freedom of historical criticism and the duty of private judgment. No doubt she has made mistakes. But in the main she approved herself a wise steward, bringing forth out of her treasury things new and old.\textsuperscript{105}

In defining Anglican Catholicism, Gore affirms an understanding of the church—“the creeds, the canon, the hierarchy, and the sacraments”—remarkably similar to the one F. D. Maurice had identified in his signs of a spiritual society. In essence the same is also found in the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral, which likewise names scripture, the Nicene Creed, baptism and eucharist, and the historic episcopate as the bases for unity among divided churches and, really,

\textsuperscript{103} Perhaps as a result of his own Anglo-Catholic sensibilities Gore was especially critical of Roman Catholic claims of infallibility and exclusivity. Avis writes: “[Gore] vigorously—and even virulently—repudiated the exclusive claims of Rome… He believed that the Anglican church could offer a catholicism which was scriptural, historical, and reasonable, whereas the church of Rome represented a one-sided development which was actually schismatical in that it had so emphasized the aspect of authority as to become ‘imperialist and hierarchical’.” Avis, “Theological Synthesis,” 468.

\textsuperscript{104} Gore, \textit{Mission of the Church}, 35-36.

\textsuperscript{105} Gore, \textit{Mission of the Church}, 36-37.
as the means for understanding what it means to be Anglican. Gore’s view of Anglicanism may be idealized and rosy, especially given that he sometimes found himself extraordinarily frustrated as it is lived in reality; however, he emphasises here those aspects of the tradition that even in their faults and limitations have led to the essence of the comprehensive ethos.

4.3 Incarnation, Canon, and Creed

In addition to his incarnational theology, Gore is known for his early adoption of historical and critical methods in the study and interpretation of scripture, as well as his strict interpretation and enforcement of the “literal” meaning of the church’s creeds. These dual commitments may seem contradictory today (and were thought so in Gore’s time as well), but Gore did not understand them that way. He believed that throughout his life he maintained a strong degree of continuity and integrity, whatever contradiction others may perceive. And, he argues, it is these very commitments that allow him and Anglicanism, as an expression of liberal Catholicism, to embrace a wide degree of intellectual comprehensiveness. Whether his arguments in this respect are successful is subject to interpretation.

By no means Gore is a biblical literalist or fundamentalist. He is committed to the deeper knowledge of the Bible that can be gained through critical scholarship. However, he believes firmly that the scriptural canon was written through divine inspiration and contains the living

106 With regard to the Quadrilateral Gore states that he can support it, provided the clause referring to baptism includes its “complement in the laying on of hands,” i.e., confirmation by a bishop. Charles Gore, The Basis of Anglican Fellowship in Faith and Organization: An Open Letter to the Clergy of the Diocese of Oxford (Oxford: A. R. Mowbray, 1914), 35.
word of God. Scripture is the means through which the church “might be kept constantly in
touch with the original revelation, on the maintenance of which its healthy life depended.”

In his *Lux Mundi* essay “The Holy Spirit and Inspiration” Gore argues that in both Testaments the reader encounters God’s people in their hopes, dreams, and prayers, as well as the answer to
those hopes, dreams, and prayers—the incarnate Jesus Christ.

Gore argues that the Hebrew Scriptures contain varying degrees of historical accuracy, telling a sacred story with universal themes and aspirations. He does not question that they are the history of a nation—Israel—but he is convinced through biblical scholarship that the various texts were composed over long periods of time recalling the nation’s historical memory, not always infallibly. He writes:

Thus there is built up for us in the literature of a nation, marked by an unparalleled unity of purpose and character, a spiritual fabric, which in its result we cannot but recognise as the action of the Divine Spirit. A knowledge of God and of the spiritual life gradually appears, not as the product of human ingenuity, but as the result of Divine communication: and the outcome of this communication is to produce an organic whole which postulates a climax not yet reached, a redemption not yet given, a hope not yet satisfied.

He believes that climax, redemption, and hope is satisfied finally in God’s incarnation in Christ.

In his consideration of the New Testament, and especially the gospels, Gore takes a different approach. He acknowledges that editing was involved in the crafting of the texts. For example,

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he accepts that Mark is the earliest gospel and that Matthew and Luke utilised the source known as “Q” (*Quelle*). But, he also believes that in general the gospels present genuine portraits of Jesus’ life, even if the events described may have been adapted and restructured in attempts to make compelling presentations to communities in different contexts. However, the history and testimony to which the gospels point are, he believes, authentic.

Gore claims, perhaps unconvincingly, that one does not need to rely on divine inspiration to authenticate the veracity of the gospels, but rather on the facts of history. In particular, he trusts and emphasises the apostolic witness of the earliest Christian communities in sharing their first-hand experiences of the life and ministry of Jesus. To his reading of the gospels Gore brings several assumptions about particular historical events that are not universally taken from the narratives. Among them is a belief in the possibility, and perhaps even probability, of supernatural miracles: interruptions in the natural order of cause and effect, such as Christ’s ability to heal illnesses, to still stormy seas and walk on water, and most especially to experience physical and bodily resurrection and even a virginal conception. Gore argues that those who cannot believe in the reality of such miracles likewise do not believe in the Christian God, at least as he understands God:

> It is natural, therefore, to believe further that, the birth of the eternal Son in manhood should differ in circumstances and conditions from the production of a new human personality. In fact, the agreement of the church’s belief about Christ’s person with acceptance of the miracle of His birth is so intimate that in history the two have been inseparable. There have been no believers in the doctrine of the creeds who have not been believers in the virgin birth, and in recent years it has become increasingly evident that those who disbelieve in the virgin birth are in other respects also adherents of the New Theology: they give to the incarnation a different sense from that in which the Creed

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proclaims it. I think the tendencies of the present moment strongly confirm the position that the acceptance of Christ’s virgin birth is vital in connexion with the whole of Christian belief.\textsuperscript{111}

Because Gore is convinced so firmly in the truth of the Incarnation, the miracles of Jesus’ life—both those he enacted and those he experienced—are seen not as proofs of his divinity, but rather, he argues, are believable because of an \textit{a priori} belief in Christ’s divine nature. Thus, they are not subject to the scepticism one might employ if they had been attributed to others:

We are not, as human beings, rationally justified in excluding \textit{a priori} from our minds the evidence of the miraculous and the supernatural: and that, supposing manifestations are rationally conceivable in any position in history, they are so in the case of Jesus Christ, if it appears that he occupies the central position in a divine purpose of redemption for mankind. The miracles in the picture of Christ are not, as in the case of thaumaturgic characters generally, detachable from the main history. They are inextricably woven into the character and the personality, as it is presented to us—so much so that, if we reject the miraculous element, we have hardly anything certain remaining.\textsuperscript{112}

Thus, for Gore, scripture, and especially the New Testament, presents the authentic record of God’s actions throughout history. It is not in every respect historically accurate on the basis of critical scholarship; however, at its essence, and particularly with regard to the apostolic testimony of God’s self-revelation in the Incarnation, it is the church’s treasure and standard for doctrine and practice. Scripture offers “the highest expression of the mind of Christ.”\textsuperscript{113}

In his \textit{Lux Mundi} essay, “Incarnation as the Basis of Dogma,” Gore’s contemporary Robert Campbell Moberly writes that in spite of the various questions of scholarship, historical

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\textsuperscript{111} Gore, \textit{New Theology}, 129-130. \\
\textsuperscript{112} Gore, \textit{Jesus}, 203-204. \\
\textsuperscript{113} Gore, “Holy Spirit and Inspiration,” 238.
\end{flushright}
investigation, and divine inspiration, the essence of the Christian faith as revealed in scripture and the apostolic witness can be summarised in a profoundly simple way: “It is the self-realizing of the consciousness of the Christian community in respect of the answer to be given to that one great question, fundamental and inevitable, with which all in all times who would approach Christ must be met,—Whom say ye that I am?”  

With the essay’s author, Gore believes that question is answered succinctly and sufficiently in the church’s historic creeds. As a result of that affirmation Gore places those creeds in a position nearly equivalent to scripture as the expression of the church’s teaching and belief, presenting its most significant doctrines: the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the resurrection. Gore does make a distinction between scripture and creed, however, in the manner of permissible interpretation. He holds that while scripture is vast and may be interpreted in a variety of ways, the creed’s meaning is plain and clear, and thus carries greater weight in its clear articulation and simplicity.

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114 R. C. Moberly, “Incarnation as the Basis of Dogma,” in *Lux Mundi*, 179.


116 Gore, “Holy Spirit and Inspiration,” 249. Here Gore reflects Thomas Aquinas: “Whether it is suitable for the articles of faith to be embodied in a symbol?” *Objection I*. It would seem that it is unsuitable for the articles of faith to be embodied in a symbol. Because Holy Writ is the rule of faith, to which no addition or subtraction can lawfully be made, since it is written (Deuteronomy iv.2): *You shall not add to the word that I speak to you, neither shall you take away from it*. Therefore it was unlawful to make a symbol as a rule of faith, after the Holy Writ had once been published. … *I answer that*, As the Apostle says (Heb. xi.6), *he that cometh to God, must believe that He is*. Now a man cannot believe, unless the truth be proposed to him that he may believe it. Hence the need for the truth of faith to be collected together, so that it might the more easily be proposed to all, lest anyone might stray from the truth through ignorance of the faith. It is from its being a collection of maxims of faith that the symbol takes its name. *Reply to Objection I*. The truth of faith is contained in Holy Writ, diffusely, under various modes of expression, and sometimes obscurely, so that, in order to gather the truth of faith from Holy Writ, one needs long study and practice, which are unattainable by all those who require to know the truth of faith, many of whom have no time for study, being busy with other affairs. And so it was necessary to gather together a clear summary from the sayings of Holy Writ, to be proposed to the belief of all. This indeed was no addition to Holy Writ, but something taken from it.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1177 (II-II I.9).
As I have demonstrated, Gore maintains that the vocation of the Church of England, in particular, and Anglicanism generally, is to provide a liberal Catholicism that is comprehensive or inclusive of significant diversity in terms of belief and practice. However, he believes that this broad comprehensiveness is only possible if the faith expressed in the creeds is maintained. Without this unity in essentials “it is not a comprehensive body at all, but a mere consensus of jarring atoms…”\textsuperscript{117} In particular, Gore emphasises that one must be able to personally confess belief in what he understands to be the “literal meaning” of the virgin birth and Christ’s resurrection in order to hold an ordained office in the church. \textsuperscript{118} In exceptionally plain language he writes: “The minister is required to profess his belief that our Lord was born of a virgin, as also that He was raised the third day from the dead, every time he says the public service.”\textsuperscript{119}

Gore makes a distinction, however, between the description of creedal miracles that he argues are verifiable and those that are not. The virgin birth and the physical resurrection are historically verifiable in that they could be seen and reported, he believes, while the statement that Christ “descended into hell” or sits “at the right hand of the Father” cannot be verified and thus employ the language of faith and metaphor.\textsuperscript{120} Of those creedal statements, Gore believes with St. Paul

\textsuperscript{117} Gore, \textit{Anglican Fellowship}, 5.

\textsuperscript{118} To bolster this argument Gore stresses that in the Church of England the creeds are presented in the first person singular: “I believe.” He notes that this is in contrast with the Orthodox East that employs the plural “we” language (except in the baptismal office) in which the priest may be held to express the mind of the church, rather than a literal personal assent. Of course, in many of today’s Anglican churches the Nicene Creed is presented in the plural in accordance with its original form. Gore, \textit{Anglican Fellowship}, 12.

\textsuperscript{119} Gore, \textit{Anglican Fellowship}, 14.

\textsuperscript{120} As we have seen in the previous consideration of Lambeth Conference resolutions on the Nicene Creed and doctrine within the Anglican Communion, Gore’s concern that the historical events described in the creed be believed was shared by the bishops at the 1908 Conference. Resolution 2, 1908, \textit{Resolutions}, 28.
that we can only see through a glass darkly: “I confess to the use of metaphor in a historical statement, because the historical statement carries me outside the world of present experience, and symbolical language is the only language that I can use.”

The above dogmatic requirement does not preclude one from engaging in a thorough course of study and investigation. For example, Gore believes that students should be given wide latitude in coming to their own beliefs on the basis of historical evidence, just as he had done. However, Gore expects that at the conclusion of such investigation one who intends to hold a position of authority in the church will be able to affirm the creed’s literal language and intent.

The reasons for Gore’s strict interpretation of the miracles witnessed to in the creeds are several. First, he believes that Christianity is an historical and incarnate religion. By this he means that the revelation and redemptive acts attested to actually happened in history, including especially the events that distinguish the Incarnation. This is a defining characteristic for Christianity.

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121 Gore, Anglican Fellowship, 20. Again, here, Gore reflects Thomas Aquinas who argued with regard to scripture that several types of expression and understanding are utilised: historical or literal, spiritual, allegorical, moral, analogical, etc. Thomas writes: “The multiplicity of these senses does not produce equivocation or any other kind of multiplicity, seeing that these senses are not multiplied because one word signifies several things; but because the things signified by the words can be themselves types of other things. Thus in Holy Writ no confusion results, for all the senses are founded on one—the literal—from which alone can any argument be drawn, and not from those intended in allegory, as Augustine says (Epist. xlviii). Nevertheless, nothing in Holy Scripture perishes on account of this, since nothing necessary to faith is contained under the spiritual sense which is not elsewhere put forward by the Scripture in its literal sense.” Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, 7 (1.1.10.1).

122 Gore, Anglican Fellowship, 15.


124 The same point is made also by Westcott when he writes: “For Christianity is not a speculation or a theory. It is historical in its preparation, in its essence, in its realization: the record and interpretation of man’s experience. The revelation which it brings is in life and of life.” Westcott, Incarnation and Common Life, 44.
Second, as I have argued, Gore maintains that the miracles attested to in the creeds are fully consistent with the character of God’s presence in the world and in particular of Christ’s Incarnation, and thus can be verified through the criteria of history in the witness of the apostles. Finally, as the creeds have been doctrinally binding on the church since the time of the ecumenical councils, the church’s officers must be able to attest to them if one is to hold that office with any degree of integrity. The laity is not, however, to be held to the same rigorous standard. On this point he writes: “The liberty of an officer in any society cannot be the same as the liberty of a citizen or a scholar. The officer of a society who finds himself unhappily brought to a conclusion the opposite of some fundamental principle of his society is bound to resign his office. This is common conscientiousness, not a violation of liberty.”

Gore’s position on the creeds and miracles unleashed a deluge of criticism from Anglican Modernists, including such figures as Hastings Rashdall, W. R. Inge, James Franklin

125 With regard to the virgin birth tradition Gore acknowledges that there was no apostolic witness. However, he suggests that it can be believed on the grounds that the gospels of Matthew and Luke embed the first-hand witness and testimony of Mary and Joseph. Gore, New Theology, 218-219.

126 Gore, Anglican Fellowship, 16.

127 Rashdall, (1858 to 1924), Dean of Carlisle, sought to liberate Christianity from aspects that prevented its acceptance by contemporary intellectuals, particularly archaic dogma, belief in miracles, and literalistic interpretations of the creeds and Thirty-Nine Articles. He writes: “It is of the highest importance that we should understand and make the most of the rich inheritance of Christian thought which the Church has handed down to us. At the same time, it is equally important that we should recognize that some things have been believed by Christians—possibly the whole Church of some particular period—which are no longer believable by us.” Hastings Rashdall, Doctrine and Development: University Sermons (London: Methuen, 1889), viii.

128 While he was not in every respect a modernist, Inge (1860 to 1954), Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, believed that the essence of Christian religion was separable from the traditional scheme of dogma and institution. Yet, he believed strongly in the importance of the Incarnation, but was critical of doctrinal tests for clergy, particularly regarding the virgin birth. See William Ralph Inge, Outspoken Essays (First Series) (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1923).
Bethune-Baker, and Francis Crawford Burkitt. Gore was criticized for an apparent retreat from his earlier liberal views regarding biblical criticism, for failing to understand that his dogmatic requirements ultimately would hurt the church, as intelligent people were less and less able to believe in supernatural miracles, and for placing the creeds in a position of superiority to scripture. He was even derogatorily castigated as the “Anglican Pope” by the Modern Churchmen in 1914. However, the strongest rebuke came from William Sanday, Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at the University of Oxford. Sanday wrote a pamphlet titled Bishop Gore’s Challenge to Criticism in which he argues that Gore had been inconsistent in allowing a vigorous criticism of the Old Testament while demurring from the same for the New Testament. Further, Sanday suggested that Gore’s discernment of what he deemed historical, as opposed to symbolical, was arbitrary.

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129 Bethune-Baker (1861 to 1951), Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, follows the lead of continental liberal Protestants in emphasizing Jesus’ humanity, arguing that we start by knowing Jesus as human and only then know him as God. God and humanity are indissolubly interrelated—neither God nor humanity is complete without the other. Through the Incarnation God is being actualized and fulfilled in humanity. He writes, “In getting to know Jesus we get to know God… but only by knowing Him always as Man… It is not from anything that I know beforehand about God that I infer Jesus as God Incarnate. My concept of God is formed by my conception of Jesus.” J. F. Bethune-Baker, The Way of Modernism (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1927), 111.

130 Burkitt (1864 to 1935), Norris Professor of Divinity at the University of Cambridge, was a biblical and early Christianity scholar who served as chairman of the Cambridge New Testament Seminar. He was interested in the contemporary church and argued for a restatement of the Christian faith in order to be understood and appreciated in the twentieth century. He also suggested that the brilliance of the Anglican tradition is its ability to incorporate the newer insights from science, historical investigation, and the contemporary world. See F. C. Burkitt, “Theological Liberalism,” Anglican Liberalism by Twelve Churchmen (London: Williams & Norgate, 1908).


133 Ramsey, Era in Anglican Theology, 80.
In regard to the Birth of our Lord I would say that I believe most emphatically in His supernatural Birth; but I cannot so easily bring myself to think that His Birth was (as I should regard it) unnatural. This is just a case where I think the Gospels use symbolical language. I can endorse entirely the substantial meaning of that verse of St. Luke (1:35): “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy and the Son of God.” This is deeply metaphorical and symbolical, and carries us into regions where thought is baffled. I do not doubt that the Birth of our Lord was sanctified in every physical respect in the most perfect manner conceivable. The coming of the Only-begotten in the world could not but be attended by every circumstance of holiness. Whatever the Virgin Birth can spiritually mean for us is guaranteed by the fact that the Holy Babe was divine. Is it not enough to affirm this with all our heart and soul, and be silent as to anything beyond?  

In North America, members of the faculty of the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts responded to Gore, as well as to local efforts in the American Episcopal Church to ensure a stronger degree of doctrinal conformity, with the publication *Creeds and Loyalty*. In his essay “Honesty and the Creeds,” Norman Burdett Nash (1888 to 1963), professor of New Testament and later bishop of Massachusetts, counters that more important than creedal assent is faithful discipleship to Jesus Christ. He writes:

> The primary question, on which depends the real honesty of every member of this church, is this: Are you a sincere believer, that is, are you striving to follow Jesus Christ? And the words with which most of us will answer are “Lord, I believe. Help thou my unbelief.” This incontestable principle, that primarily creeds must be taken as professions of personal loyalty, of ideals rather than ideas, allots them their proper place in the life of our branch of the Church of Christ, whose doctrine, discipline, and worship are all designed to express and cultivate Christian discipleship. If she is determined to keep her loyalty to her Lord in the foreground, the Church will be advised to retire her special doctrines and tests to a subordinate position… She will ask her members not readiness to give a rigid adherence to a strict construction of a few clauses selected from her formularies round which controversy is then raging, but rather: Taking into consideration the historical tradition of this Church, her spirit of fellowship, the voice of her worship

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and the methods of her work, is she now, or do you believe she will prove to be, the mother of your faith, the school of your discipleship?\textsuperscript{136}

Nash is further concerned that attempts to stifle theological inquiry and innovation will have a long-term detrimental effect on the church in robbing it of its brightest lights, including figures like Gore himself. He continues:

our Anglican communion of today would have lost the contributions made by, e.g., Archbishop Temple, Maurice, and Bishop Gore, not to mention the entire Oxford Movement, sympathy for the distress of the conservative of yesterday is mingled with wonder that a liberal of yesterday like Bishop Gore has joined the company of those who play the part of Canute today and cry: this far and no farther.\textsuperscript{137}

Gore’s response to such criticism is that he had not changed his position or approach, but rather that he has been consistent throughout his long career as a theologian, priest, and bishop. He believes one should be free to study and investigate, but in the end is firmly convinced that the historical evidence is credible enough to provide the assurance one needs.\textsuperscript{138}

While Gore’s requirement for a literal creedal affirmation may seem strict from the perspective of an early twentieth century Modernist or, certainly, a twenty-first century Anglican, Gore steadfastly maintains that, in fact, it is a liberating position for the church which, as a result, is able to allow a considerably wide diversity of opinion and practice in non-essential matters. Gore even suggests that this arrangement is ideal for a liberal and truly Catholic Christianity that embraces the broadest possible expression of humanity united through Christ in the Incarnation:

\textsuperscript{136} Norman Burdett Nash, “Honesty and the Creeds,” Creeds and Loyalty, 127-128.

\textsuperscript{137} Nash, “Honesty and Creeds,” 131.

\textsuperscript{138} Gore, Anglican Fellowship, 16.
I have always claimed that we in the Church of England represent a liberal Catholicism—that our basis of fact and dogma, as it is represented in the creeds and conciliar decrees, must remain firm and unimpaired: but that we should minimize and not maximize dogma; and on the basis of the central faith should leave men’s minds the largest possible room to move and assimilate the teachings of criticism and science.¹³⁹

5  Gore’s Liberal Catholic Comprehensiveness: An Appraisal

As we have seen in the present study, Charles Gore is a complex figure. To some, he is a hero for his ability to combine the insights of biblical criticism and social awareness with an Anglo-Catholic spirituality. To others, he is a gifted and eloquent theologian who had a deep and profound insight into the unique person of Jesus Christ and Christ’s on-going presence in the life of the church—“an extension of the Incarnation.” To still others he is a “hammer of heretics,” lauded for his efforts to enforce a degree dogmatic certainty in a church increasingly adrift with theological modernism. And, of course, he is frustrating to those who would hold positions different from his or who may try to reconcile his seeming contradictions.

Through these conflicting assessments, Charles Gore looms large among Anglican theologians of distinction, if not equivalent to Richard Hooker and F. D. Maurice, then certainly very close. In particular, Gore’s incarnational theology is profound and, in contrast to Maurice, his writing is clear. His advocacy of the kenotic view allows belief in the eternal pre-existence of the Son while also acknowledging necessary limits that accompany a human life. Even more significant is the powerful way he unites the broader human experience to Christ in the Incarnation through

¹³⁹  Gore, Anglican Fellowship, 23.
the church and its sacramental life. As a Catholic he is ever concerned that the embrace of God’s love and the promise of redemption be as wide and as inclusive as possible, even to the point of acknowledging that God has the means, and possibly the desire, to reach those who are not members of the church or do not express faith in Christ.

Gore studiously avoids overly precise definition in most significant areas of Christian doctrine, including atonement and the details of Christ’s presence in the eucharist. He prefers, instead, to state what he finds in the rich and diverse scriptural testimony and through the experiences of human life. Theological modesty here is necessary since, he believes, it is not within the human scope of knowledge to understand all of the inner workings of the divine life, beyond the promises offered by Christ and his apostles. I would assert that in this approach we find particular evidence of Gore’s articulation of a comprehensive and inclusive church.

As an Anglo-Catholic firmly convinced that God is manifest in history and the material stuff of life, Gore believed that apostolic succession, as received through the historic episcopate, is essential for the church’s life as its physical link across time and space with Christ and the apostles. While in the ecumenical age of the twenty-first century we may find his view limited and exclusive, Gore believed that the episcopate and, specifically, the laying on of hands, provide the assurance of the church’s continuity and extension throughout the world. In this case what might be perceived as exclusive, is, for Gore, a sign of Christ’s ever-expansive reach, with arms outstretched throughout time and space to touch, bless, heal, and restore. I believe that a re-articulation of this view by the contemporary church could help Anglicanism better understand its own principles and see how its comprehensive nature is consistent with its history and, in fact, inherent in the church since the time of its founding by Christ and the apostles.
In response to accusations that he became more conservative over the course of his life, Gore maintained that his position had been consistent. From the start, Gore argued that the church needs some doctrinal standards if it is to maintain theological coherence. Yet, it would seem that even if Gore stayed put, the world and the church around him evolved. Thus, he became and remains enigmatic, at once a modernist and a traditionalist, a liberal and conservative, much like the other foundational Anglican theologians I have studied here—Hooker and Maurice, as well as Wilberforce and Gore’s mentor Westcott.

There can be no doubt that Gore’s firm conviction that the church’s clergy assent to the “plain meaning” of the creeds drew sharp criticism in his age and, as we have seen in the previous study of *The Integrity of Anglicanism*, he has been offered in ours as an example of one who drew a boundary around Anglican comprehensiveness. It is undeniably true that he did so. By contemporary standards Gore’s historical evidence in support of these limits seem somewhat arbitrary and even unconvincing. Yet, as he repeatedly stated, the limits he saw as necessary were minimal. While those limits, if strictly enforced (if that were possible), might exclude some from the church’s leadership, they do not address many of the issues with which Anglicanism struggles today. Thus, the example of Bishop Gore should not, and probably cannot, be used to bolster an argument for a curtailed comprehensiveness with any degree of legitimacy, except in a very limited and dogmatic sense. In fact, the controversy in Gore’s time points to the fact that Anglicanism long has been engaged in critical discernment over the nature of belief and practice, sometimes emphasising limits and at others times emphasising openness, but usually coming down on the side of comprehension, striving to be as broad and inclusive as possible.
In reality, despite the controversy over a few lines of the creeds, the overall tenor of Gore’s thought points to a broad and inclusive Anglicanism: liberal, scriptural and Catholic in tone, building on the work and sensibilities of his Tractarian predecessors but also, like F. D. Maurice, deeply engaged in the issues and concerns of his own day. His thought is infused with devotion to an inclusive and reconciling Christ and the belief that in the Incarnation God continually draws all people to the divine. Assessing Gore’s vision of a comprehensive Anglicanism James Carpenter writes that Gore:

Maintained that the terms Catholic and Protestant were not incompatible: “Catholic and Evangelical ideas are both necessary in the Scriptural idea of the Body of Christ.” This was not compromise; it represented an attempt, he claimed, to be true to what must be regarded as a manifest historical fact, a “great deal of what really belongs to Catholicism became incorporated into Protestantism” at the Reformation. On this account he was not slow to recognize the validity of the three great traditions that had arisen in Anglicanism—Evangelicalism, Tractarianism, and Maurician socialism. He always upheld the legitimacy of different schools of thought and practice within the Church of England, “provided that the Catholic principles were maintained.” His insistence upon these Catholic principles involved him in a number of controversies, but this never dimmed his belief in the comprehensiveness of the Anglican Communion, though he did come to speak of comprehensiveness as “at once its glory and also its perpetual embarrassment.”

While in his more conservative moments Gore may have been embarrassed by Anglicanism’s comprehensiveness, he need not have been so. As I have demonstrated and argued, this comprehensiveness arises not so much as a result of the intractable disagreement or lack of coherence that some have suggested, but instead through the tradition’s emphasis on the Incarnation and the conviction, passed on through successive generations—from the sixteenth century Reformation era, into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of latitudinarianism and the Age of Reason, and in the various movements of the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century.
centuries—that what seemingly divides is not as strong as the unity Christ offers in the church, the real and true extension of the Incarnation in human life.

This incarnational emphasis, stressed by Hooker, Maurice, and Gore, among others, suggests that comprehensiveness is both necessary and inherent in a church community that is drawn together in Christ and exists as his on-going presence in the world, through time and across space. I believe that in his incarnational theology Gore contributed to that understanding, perhaps more than he or his contemporaries were even aware.
Chapter Seven:

Constructing Anglican Comprehensiveness

1 Comprehensiveness Reconsidered

In the preceding chapters I examined the issue of Anglican comprehensiveness through the arguments of its advocates and detractors—in official and semi-official statements, study documents, and decisions of the Anglican Communion and some of its constituent churches. I also studied the contexts and respective theologies of Richard Hooker, Frederick Denison Maurice, and Charles Gore, with particular attention to their theologies of the Incarnation. Throughout the course of this study it has become clear that although the concept of comprehensiveness has been historically and is today variously accepted and appreciated, it has become, nonetheless, a defining characteristic of the Anglican tradition as it has developed over the past five centuries, and as a result has been treated as such, both implicitly and explicitly, by several of Anglicanism’s foundational and constructive theological voices.

Even many of those who would seek to draw limits around comprehensiveness, nonetheless, have had to grapple with its central place in Anglicanism’s corporate life. As the tradition, in its local and global contexts, looks to its life in the twenty-first century, therefore, the vital question


is not if there is a place for comprehensiveness, but rather what the character and strength of that comprehensiveness will be.

As I have argued, the reasons for the rise of the comprehensive ethos are many. Among them are the political circumstances in England during the sixteenth century, leading to the Elizabethan Settlement, as well as a desire for the church to inhabit an agreeable and reasonable space between Roman Catholicism (or conservative Lutheranism) on one side and the more advanced (or even extreme) forms of Reformed Calvinism and Puritanism on the other. However, as we have seen, history suggests that the underlying reasons for Anglican comprehensiveness are in fact stronger, longer lasting, and more inherently theological than only a careful political solution to tricky domestic and international situations in a given time.

The above becomes clear especially when the firm Reformed convictions of the Elizabethan church and restrictive hierarchical policies of Restoration England’s Act of Uniformity are considered. In particular, I would contend that if the resultant comprehensiveness were merely a time-limited political arrangement, it would not have endured in the unique and persistent way it has over five centuries and across an increasingly global communion. Although, through the lens of history we also can see the wisdom in that comprehensive political solution, inspiring successive generations of Anglicans to likewise find ways to live side by side, despite differences in opinion and practice, drawing upon the tradition’s theological emphasis on the Incarnation and the ecclesial unity inherent in it. Thus, in a real way, for Anglicans the political is theological and the theological is political.
Even so, it is to caricature sixteenth and seventeenth century England to suggest this was a time during which diverse Catholic and Protestant elements were encouraged to live together peaceably while allowing their respective spiritualities to flourish under the welcoming and inclusive banner of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Rather, the Elizabethan Church of England was a Reformed, even Calvinist, body that due to circumstance had maintained a measure of Catholic ceremonial and order, often despite the best efforts of ecclesiastical and civil authorities to put these practices to an end. Furthermore, compelling contemporary scholarship suggests that much of the perceived “Catholic” theology and practices were, in fact, preserved to appeal to sixteenth century continental Lutherans.\(^1\) In its time the seventeenth century Restoration church was equally firm in stomping out perceived Roman Catholic and Puritan dissent and practices, in order to secure the status and position of the established and hierarchical Church of England in the midst of increasing religious diversity.

Yet, despite these obstacles, throughout the history of the Anglican tradition attempts to force conformity, whether by government or ecclesiastical hierarchy, would never prove successful. Instead, a natural, even innate, desire and willingness to move in multiple directions, theologically, liturgically, and spiritually, seems to have characterized the people whom we have come to consider Anglican, albeit often not without significant disagreement and opposition.

\(^1\) See, for example, MacCulloch, “Church of England,” 29.
2 Comprehensiveness and the Nature of Belief

The tendency toward multiple expressions of faith and spirituality is by no means unique unto Anglicanism. All religious traditions include diverse beliefs and practices, whatever their doctrinal requirements or explicit acknowledgment of this diversity. I have argued, however, that Anglicanism is distinctive among Christian denominations in having come to affirm this tendency and, in the case of influential theologians and ecclesiastics, in having suggested that this comprehensiveness is intrinsic to Anglican corporate life and being. What is more, they have located the source of this comprehensiveness theologically in their understanding of the church’s foundation in the Incarnation.

In his essay “Comprehensiveness: The Future of Anglican Theology,” Donald Wiebe has argued that the complexity inherent in religious knowledge requires the acceptance of diverse beliefs within a religious community, whether Anglican or another. Further, he suggests that a religious community’s “comprehensiveness,” the acceptance of the diverse beliefs and practices in its midst, is a sign and outgrowth of that community’s intellectual sophistication and maturity in self-understanding—being able to distinguish between matters that can be deemed essential by virtue of “evidence” and those that are not, or for which knowledge is too limited to set strict parameters for belief.² He writes:

It is obvious that the “subject matter” of theology is more complex by far than that treated by other disciplines. Consequently, one might well expect that conclusions drawn in theological argument would be more hesitant than in other disciplines and that, given the relative paucity of evidence in such matters, alternative interpretations of theological questions would exist; that is, pluriformity of belief in such a context would quite naturally be expected. “Comprehensiveness,” therefore… is an appropriate response to

² Donald Wiebe, “Comprehensiveness: The Integrity of Anglican Theology,” in Future of Anglican Theology, 48.
the recognition of the “intractable” character of the issues involved; a recognition that prevents drawing firm conclusions that are not warranted, or at least not exclusively warranted, by the “evidence.” To “force” agreement here on anything other than epistemic grounds is simply not acceptable. Ambiguity of evidence in the face of intractably complex issues makes anything other than “epistemic discretion” unacceptable. (Epistemic discretion, it must be pointed out, means simply that where conclusions are not fully determined by the evidence, one may either choose to believe a conclusion not at odds with the available evidence or remain agnostic about the matter under discussion.)

Consistent with his central argument, Wiebe does not offer a theological rationale for comprehensiveness, as he believes it is not a so much a question of theological verification or justification but rather epistemology or the nature of religious knowledge.

Of course, many theologians and religious traditions (beyond Anglicanism) would assert that a substantial portion of religious doctrine is certain, verified (sometimes infallibly) through a belief in the authority of scripture and revelation. On most matters, however, Anglicanism has been inspired by the theological method of the loosely defined Articles of Religion and the foundational thought of Richard Hooker, as well as the practical tradition of the Book of Common Prayer, variously revised and adapted over 450 years. As a result, it has tended to take the somewhat cautious approach that Wiebe describes, differentiating between matters deemed essential and indifferent. And, in fact, within Anglicanism even the limited matters of core doctrine or dogma that have been enshrined in the Nicene Creed have no truly authoritative teaching or description and, thus, are open to degrees of interpretation.

As we have seen in the previous study of Charles Gore, this hesitancy with regard to doctrinal definition has not been universally or consistently applied. Yet, I would argue that the evidence

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suggests that even at his most doctrinaire Gore might well have agreed with Wiebe’s general principle. He simply held that certain aspects of religious knowledge are, in fact, historically verifiable and thus certain. In his case, he believed it a matter of fact that the God of Christianity is manifest through supernatural acts, including particularly the virgin birth of Jesus and his bodily resurrection, which for Gore are necessary correlatives of the Incarnation. The issue for Gore, his contemporaries, and Christians today is where to draw the line between certainty and hesitancy, or to use Wiebe’s concepts, between knowledge and agnosticism. Gore includes the virgin birth and physical resurrection within his boundary; others do not.

In support of his argument for the acceptance of Anglican comprehensiveness, Wiebe cites none other than Stephen Sykes in his *Christian Theology Today*, an earlier work than *The Integrity of Anglicanism*. In it Sykes acknowledges that diversity of belief is necessarily intrinsic in all religious traditions, whether embraced or not, and suggests that this diversity would be exceedingly difficult to eliminate, even through forced conformity.\(^4\) Sykes writes:

> Even when all say that they believe the same thing by assenting to the identical form of words, it remains questionable whether all understand the same thing by that form of words. For example, in the creed we may say, “I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.” Whether all understand the same thing by this form is open to question, and indeed is only determinable, if at all, by intense and laborious investigation. The formidable Bishop Marsh (1757-1839) of Peterborough devised a set of eighty-seven questions for intending clergy in his diocese by which he might detect whether their understanding of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England was open to an objectionable (Calvinistic) interpretation. The wretched clergy were being quizzed as to the meaning of their assent to the Articles; mere assent itself had not established, to the Bishop’s satisfaction, a sufficient degree of uniformity of belief.\(^5\)

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In the above Sykes, with Wiebe, identifies some of the challenges with regard to comprehensiveness: the fact that religious knowledge and interpretation is potentially as varied as the number of adherents in any religious community. The accompanying issue for Sykes and others critical of comprehensiveness is whether these differences should be celebrated or encouraged, especially among a church’s teachers and leadership. Wiebe agrees with Sykes in *The Integrity of Anglicanism* that comprehensiveness should be subject to justification on theological, ecclesial, or philosophical grounds, not political expediency, but suggests that such justification should be applied acknowledging the proper understanding of the necessarily “hypothetical” (or provisional) nature of religious knowledge.

Taking an approach similar to Wiebe’s, Jesuit theologian Roger Haight suggests that pluralism within Christian theology is a necessary result of the nature of knowledge and revelation in history. While Haight does not address the issue of comprehensiveness directly (being more of an Anglican concept than Roman Catholic), his consideration of the reasons for theological pluralism, particularly with regard to Christology, is helpful. He writes:

Pluralism is a consequence of the historicity of all human knowledge including the interpretation of reality resulting from divine revelation. Because the human spirit is tied to matter, and a particular world of space and time, all appreciation of reality is historically mediated and thus shares a measure of particularity. It is this particularity, as determined by historical specificity, that accounts for pluralism. The sociology of knowledge, critical theory, and language philosophy have analyzed the social determinants that bestow particular accents and biases on all human appreciations of

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7 Wiebe, “Comprehensiveness,” 55.
reality. Theology, in its methods and resultant interpretations of Jesus Christ, cannot be and demonstrably is not exempt from these social determinants.\(^8\)

In other words, Haight argues that all knowledge, and especially religious knowledge, is mediated by history, social context, and human particularity. To fail to recognise this, or to enforce conformity, is to attempt to make religion what it cannot reasonably be:\(^9\)

Recognition of the historical necessity of pluralism in all human understanding has been gradually undermining an extrinsicist understanding of authority and replacing it with a more intrinsic and dialogical conception. The unity of faith does not depend exclusively upon a this-worldly external and historical authority. Even the most common bond of all Christians, its scripture, does not unite Christians by being interpreted in a monolithic way. Although external bonds are absolutely necessary, Christians are ultimately bound together by their common faith that in every case is appropriated by the human spirit freely as from the grace of God. God as Spirit unites Christians of every age and across the ages with those who first formed the scriptures. Within the context of this growing conviction of religious freedom, institutional churches cannot give the impression that the unity of Christians, and Christianity as such, can be reduced to the adherence to external ritual, discipline, or doctrinal formula.\(^10\)

I would contend that the theologians I have studied here take similar approaches to the issue of comprehensiveness as those proposed by Wiebe and Haight. For example, in the case of Richard Hooker we saw that reason needs always to be employed in discerning the laws of the church and belief. That reason is itself the gift of God. The following merits repetition: “We have endeavoured to make it appear how in the nature of reason itself there is no impediment, but that the selfsame spirit, which revealed the things that God had set down in his law, may also be


\(^9\) Haight’s own struggles with Vatican authority over the content of *Jesus Symbol of God*, resulting in his being barred from teaching Catholic theology by then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in 2004 highlights the precarious place of theological diversity in Christian communions beyond Anglicanism, as well as the concerns of those who would seek to protect the comprehensive ethos as an important Anglican inheritance. See “Notification of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the book *Jesus Symbol of God*” in Haight, *Jesus*, 507-514.

\(^10\) Haight, *Jesus*, 427.
thought of to aid and direct men in finding out by the light of reason what laws are expedient to be made for the guiding of the Church, over and beside them that are in Scripture.”¹¹

Thus, there is among Anglican theologians, and particularly in Hooker, Maurice, and Gore, a hesitancy to restrict or confine God (or the church’s understanding of God and God’s interactions with the world) to their own perspectives, given the provisional nature of religious knowledge and the diversity inherent in the early Christian witness. This is not to suggest that they are somehow less committed to their faith or understanding of who God is. Rather, it is because each is secure in his belief in God that he can acknowledge that his own perspectives at times may be limited. As a result, each is led to the position that, with the exception of those matters that are deemed certain, there must be a broad and comprehensive allowance.

3 Conclusion: Comprehensiveness and Anglicanism Today

For many, including especially the theologians I have studied here, a theological consensus has emerged suggesting that Anglicanism’s comprehensive ethos is not the result of an enforced political decision nor, necessarily, a desire to avoid debate; rather, this comprehensiveness finds its source in a profound and compelling belief in Jesus Christ as the head of the church, nation, household, and person. For those who have come to this view, Christ was not simply a God-man who lived in the first century; he was not a substitute for humanity in our relationships with God; nor is he removed from human life in the heavens. Rather, Christ is humanity’s representative

¹¹ Hooker, Works, 1:380-381 (III.8.18).
who, in the Incarnation, has taken humanity upon himself and redeemed it through a life of love, obedience, and sacrifice. That same Christ was and is present in the on-going life of the church. In fact, in the case of these theologians it is accurate to say that the church, which Gore describes as an extension of the Incarnation, is constituent in the on-going life of Christ.

The implications in this Christology and ecclesiology are profound. Through participation in the life of the church humanity is offered participation in the life of God. For Hooker, Maurice, and Gore, human redemption and that participation in the divine life through the Incarnation are not limited by a properly articulated belief about God, but rather characterized by trust in God. This emphasis frees the church community to be truly Catholic in the broadest and most inclusive possible way. It allows recognition that diverse beliefs about God do not alter who God is, nor does it change the nature of God’s relationship to humanity. Instead, this comprehensiveness aids in the discernment of God’s word, action, and purpose in each age and context.

The remaining issue for consideration here is how the comprehensive ethos can guide Anglicanism as it struggles to maintain unity in light of increasing global, ecclesiastical, theological, and liturgical diversities. Appropriate to the spirit of comprehensiveness, there is no single or easy answer to these challenges. Yet, there are some principles that can guide the Anglican tradition to a more stable and harmonious reality.

As we have seen, a recent approach to managing the perceived crisis of diversity within Anglicanism has been suggested in the proposed Anglican Communion Covenant. While many provinces of the Communion have been ready and enthusiastic to adopt such an agreement, others have been hesitant or unwilling, limiting the Covenant’s applicability and force as a
unifying agreement or framework for conflict resolution. The Covenant’s future, therefore, remains uncertain. Even so, the first three sections have found considerable acceptance as an adequate and useful means of articulating the Anglican faith in the broadest sense, as presented in the creeds, historic formularies, and sacramental life, and additionally in establishing several ecclesiological principles regarding the international structure of the Anglican Communion.

Thus, the Covenant movement may yet have a role to play in setting some boundaries for Anglican thought and practice, less in terms of solving disputes through an agreed process, and instead in a less formal but more deeply theological way in setting before Anglicanism its agreed historical, theological, and ecclesiological commitments. In the long term this approach could support and under-gird Anglican comprehensiveness positively in reminding the tradition of its various theological emphases and commitments, while not explicitly prohibiting new or different insights or practices. At the very least, if the theological and historical commitments of the Covenant finding general agreement today stand the test of time, they could provide a counterbalance to theological innovations and interpretations that may be proposed over time.

More significant, however, for Anglicanism’s renewal and potential conflict resolution than the adoption of the Covenant is a deeper appreciation of the incarnational centre of the church’s life. To the extent that the church understands itself as a gathering of like-minded or like-practicing Christians, it will suffer from disagreements and divisions. Such divisions are unnecessary if the church’s members learn to search for the deeper unity that is shared by Christians in their life in Christ, as opposed to through narrow doctrinal, liturgical, or moral assent. It was belief in this unity in Christ, for example, that led F. D. Maurice to argue that we sin when we break the “silken cords” or relationality that we share with God and each other.
This inherent unity in Christ does not mean that human and ecclesial disagreements can be at all times reconciled (or even should be in the sense of an unhappy compromise), but they can be transcended in the knowledge that lying at the centre of divergent beliefs and practices is a shared faith and trust in God. As I have demonstrated, Richard Hooker argued in favour of this approach to overcoming eucharistic disagreements in the sixteenth century, disagreements which had cost many their lives throughout the course of the English Reformation. While Hooker had a preferred sacramental view, his deeper commitment was to trust that God would work the divine will and purpose through the sacrament, regardless of human belief, practice, and argument. If such an approach was successful in that time, surely it could be utilised today regarding our theologically and politically charged disagreements.

Charles Gore, too, can be of assistance in both the appreciation of Anglican comprehensiveness today and in providing a sound framework for theological inquiry. In particular, his emphasis on the creedal foundations for Anglican doctrine provides a useful context and boundary for theological exploration. This does not mean that theological inquiry today must result in the same conclusions reached by Gore a century ago. Rather, Gore’s emphasis on the creeds and the incarnational centre of the Christian faith serve as critical reminders that the issues he believed to be of deepest significance still require the most careful theological exploration and articulation, especially when conclusions reached would seem to differ from more conventional positions.

Having established both the historical and theological foundations for the concept of comprehensiveness, I conclude that when it is at its most authentic, Anglicanism embraces an inclusive and comprehensive approach to Christian theology and practice. In deep conversation
with scripture and its theological past, and open to new insights in knowledge, understanding, and human experience, Anglicanism has the potential to present a vibrant faith and spirituality centred in the Incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, and simultaneously rooted in the local and diverse contexts of its various churches and communities. The comprehensive Anglicanism that I argue for here understands that no single practice or proposition can apprehend the deepest truth that lies at the heart of God, and thus allows for significant theological and ecclesiastical generosity in confidence that God’s truth will be revealed and even the most intractable differences may be reconciled in the age to come. In the interim, we see through a glass darkly.

 Appropriately, the final word on comprehensiveness goes to F. D. Maurice, who inspired this study through the example of his life and the compelling force of his thought. Maurice’s vision of a diverse church and society, reconciled in Christ, is as relevant and hopeful today as it was in his time. In his chapter “On the Trinity and Unity” in Theological Essays he writes:

There is a popular way of thinking about the Son of God, which is hurrying us into idolatry; and parents are startled at seeing their children fall over a precipice, to the edge of which they have walked under their guidance. Nor do I see how either evil can be averted if we do not more earnestly consider what is involved in the faith of little children; whether the name of the Son into which we are baptized is not our redemption from all vagueness, and from all partial, separate, self-seeking worship, a witness that we are adopted into Him as members of His body, and must therefore seek the things that are above, where He sitteth at the right hand of God. This faith is not notional, but practical; not for this and that man, but for mankind. If we were forced to form conceptions about a Son of God, or Son of Man, there would be a perpetual strife of intellects; there could be no consent; each man must think differently from his neighbour, must try to establish his own thought against his neighbour’s. If He is revealed to us as the ground of our intellects—the Creative Word of God from whom they derive their light: as the centre of our fellowship, the only-begotten Son of God, in whom we are made sons of God; the weary effort is over; our thoughts may travel to the ends of the earth, but here is their home; apart from Him men have infinite disagreements; in Him they have peace.\[12\]

\[12\] Maurice, Theological Essays, 289-290.
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