



SOLEMN DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES OF THE ANGLICAN MISSION IN THE AMERICAS

Preface

We, the members of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church in the Anglican Mission in America, trusting in the guidance of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, do hereby set forth and solemnly declare the following as the unalterable doctrinal norms and formularies under which the Anglican Mission in America is to be governed and to which any Constitution and Canons must conform:

Article I. The Supreme Authority of Holy Scripture and Its Proper Interpretation

Section 1- The Supreme Authority of Holy Scripture

In solidarity with the Anglican Communion, with historic Anglican doctrine, and with the Bishops gathered at Lambeth 1998, we believe that Holy Scripture is the supreme authority in the Church, that it is the Word of God written and contains all things necessary to Salvation. The Church is neither to add anything to it nor to remove anything from it. It is proper for the Church to set forth rites and order its life in the light of Scripture; it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's Word written.

Section 2- Proper Interpretation of Holy Scripture

With regard to the interpretation of Holy Scripture, we affirm the clarity of its plain sense so that it may and can be understood by ordinary readers. We hold to the importance of the scholarly interpretation of Scripture by a faithful use of responsible historical and grammatical scholarship. We affirm that the original meaning of the text is to be given its due primacy. Further we believe in the unity and harmony of its various books and two Testaments so that one place of Scripture may not be expounded so as to be repugnant to another. Also, it is only by referring to the whole Canon of Scripture that Scripture will be allowed to interpret Scripture. We hold to the sufficiency and trustworthiness of Scripture in bringing unbelievers to Christ and nurturing and sustaining believers unto eternal life. By following these principles of interpretation the Church will interpret Scripture in accord with its nature as the Word of God written.

Article II. The Book of Common Prayer and Worship

Section 1 - The Book of Common Prayer

The official Book of Common Prayer has doctrinal authority in this Church. It shall be used in this Church at such times, and with such liberty as the Canon on this subject shall prescribe; but no Canon shall ever make its use imperative on all occasions, or forbid the use of extempore or other prayer at suitable times.

For Anglicans, this tradition of common prayer, which has been an integral part of our identity since the first Prayer Book of 1549, is most cogently summed up in the Book of Common Prayer issued in the Church of England in 1662. All subsequent editions of the Prayer Book derive from this Book and should be understood and interpreted in a manner consistent with it.

Section 2- Freedom in usage

However, strong as is our dedication to ordered and orthodox worship, nothing in our understanding of it necessarily excludes approaches to corporate worship which are freer and more accessible to those just making their first acquaintance with the Body of Christ at prayer. The Ordinary, therefore, may authorize alternative rites and uses "so long as the Faith be kept entire" in accord with the doctrinal norms, formularies and guidelines of this Church.

Section 3- The Holy Spirit and Charisms in corporate Worship and Teaching

The Holy Spirit operates today as He has done throughout history. Therefore the gifts (*charismata*), and the manifestations of the Holy Spirit are still present in the Church.

While St. Paul makes it clear that we should not forbid speaking in tongues (1 Cor. 14:30), he also makes it clear that worship should be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14: 40). Both his enthusiastic endorsement of the "Word" gifts (1Cor. 14:5,18) and his tight prescriptions on their use in corporate worship (1Cor. 14:13-33) must be taken seriously. The exercise of pastoral authority will both glorify God and protect the conscience of Christian brothers and sisters (Romans 14: 1-8; 1Cor. 14:26). Further, obedience to the Word demands that pastoral authorities test the "spirits" using Scripture as the guide to determine whether it is the Holy Spirit Who is acting or a demonic spirit or only a manifestation of a psychological force. (1 John 4:1)

Section 4- Alterations or additions to the Book of Common Prayer

Once adopted, no alterations or additions shall be made in the Book of Common Prayer of this Church unless the same shall be approved by a two-thirds vote and finally ratified by a three-fourths vote of the next succeeding meeting.

Article III. Further Doctrinal Norms and Formularies

Section 1- The Undivided Church

With the ancient Church we affirm the three Ecumenical Creeds: the Nicene Creed, the Apostles Creed and Athanasius' Creed, and the dogmatic definitions of the first seven general councils (the last three being seen as the workings-out of the first four).

Section 2- The Formularies of the Church of England

a. The 1662 Book of Common Prayer and Ordinal

The theology set forth in the 1662 edition of the Book of Common Prayer and Ordinal shall be the theology to which alternative liturgical texts and forms will conform.

b. The 39 Articles of the Church of England

This Church subscribes to the teaching of the 39 Articles of Religion of the Church of England. These are to be interpreted, as ordered in the Declaration which prefaces them in the English Book of Common Prayer, "in the full and plain meaning thereof" and "in the literal and grammatical sense." Further, it is understood that there are places in the Articles (i.e. Art. 37) that assume past and present political structures in England which do not directly apply to this Church located as it is in North America.

Section 3- The Lambeth Quadrilateral

In consort with the Anglican Communion we affirm the 1886/1888 Quadrilateral as giving guidance for ecumenical dialogue, discussion and cooperation. The Quadrilateral is not in and of itself a sufficient statement of the teaching of this Church.

Article IV. Subscription

All candidates for Holy Orders and all clergy shall annually subscribe to the theological norms, formularies and guidelines of this Church. In addition, the same shall be required of all leadership bodies while they are serving in those ministries. They shall subscribe using the following words:

"I do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God and to contain all things necessary to salvation. I further affirm the catholic creeds, the dogmatic definitions of the General Councils of the undivided Church, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal, 1662, the 39 Articles of Religion of the Church of England in their literal and grammatical sense, and the Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1888, since the same are conformable to the Scriptures, and I consequently hold myself bound to teach nothing contrary thereto, therefore I do solemnly engage to conform to the Doctrines, Discipline and Worship of the Anglican Mission in America."

Article V. Unalterable Nature of the Solemn Declaration

The teaching of this Church is defined by adherence to the doctrinal norms and formularies found in the Solemn Declaration; consequently we make no provision for their alteration by addition or subtraction. Should this Solemn Declaration be altered by any means, this Church would thereby cease to exist. Any money or property owned by the Anglican Mission in America per se would be returned to the donors or their heirs and where that was not possible it would be sold and given to an orthodox Christian missionary society as soon as possible.