

5 Reasons Anglicanism Is Relevant

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The church is meant to be a beacon, marking out the safe path to true wholeness and hope. Sadly, however, the church today often capitulates to the world's narrative without ever being aware of it. Our preaching can easily reinforce that we *are* what we *do*, telling people they must focus on doing things pleasing to God so he will continue to accept them. Yet true Christianity bases all its hope on what God has promised to do in, through, and for us because of his love - not on what we must try to do to earn it.

Here is the core message of historic, orthodox, biblical, confessional Anglicanism which is faithful to its 16th century Reformation roots. Forged in a time when the Western church had lost its way, its five characteristics illumine the authentic gospel once again for the 21st century.

1. Reformation Anglicanism is apostolic.

In an age of uncertainty, when the search for truth has been replaced with a never-ending search for one's "true self," Reformation Anglicanism is founded on the solid rock of the eyewitnesses to Jesus.

In the midst of the medieval period's doctrinal confusion, Protestants made a simple, but significant, distinction. The Bible, as the witness of the apostles, had a unique authority for the faith. The writings of later church leaders could be helpful guides to the Christian life, but Scripture is its own ultimate interpreter concerning God and our relationship with him.

Thomas Cranmer, the chief English Reformer, pointed out that important early theologians like John Chrysostom and Augustine taught these same principles. Thus, to make sure that the newly self-governing Church of England was truly apostolic, the English Reformers adopted the principle of *sola Scriptura*.

2. Reformation Anglicanism is catholic.

We should always remember that the Reformers never saw themselves as anything other than good catholics. They confessed what all catholic Christians had always held to be true everywhere in the early church. Just like their Roman counterparts, the Protestant Reformers championed the ancient creeds and believed in the nature of the Trinity and of Christ as taught by the first four general councils.

At a time when so many Christian denominations are questioning the fundamentals of the faith, only the timeless divine wisdom of catholic apostolic Christianity—which is embraced by Reformation Anglicanism—can effectively counter the false hope offered by the deceitful devices and desires of the post-modern heart.

3. Reformation Anglicanism is mission-focused.

The English Reformers believed Christ came to proclaim a message that has the power to gather a community. Naturally, then, Thomas Cranmer's first major liturgical change was introducing Reformation preaching through the *Book of Homilies*. He wanted to stir up saving faith in hearts and minds by having them hear the gospel message presented clearly during Sunday worship.

Then, two years later, Cranmer reinforced Reformation teaching by introducing a new prayer book. He replaced the Latin liturgy with a

service in English that emphasised the gospel's power, through Word and sacrament, to move their hearts to love God and one another.

Though Cranmer's primary mission focus was English people, he didn't neglect evangelising non-Christians outside his country. A Collect for Good Friday asked God to deliver all "Jews, Turks, Infidels, and heretics" from "contempt of thy Word" in order to bring them home to the one flock of Jesus Christ. Later Anglicans built mighty overseas mission societies on this slender Reformation foundation.

4. Reformation Anglicanism is liturgical.

The Reformers realised their plans for the conversion of England would only succeed if the people regularly sat under the transforming power of Scripture. Consequently, Cranmer devised a systematic pattern of Bible reading for local parishes during his new daily services of morning and evening prayer. Consequently, most of the Bible was read through in a year.

Cranmer also saw the sacraments as a way to make God's biblical promises tangible. Since humans learn with their senses—by what they see, hear, smell, taste, and touch—Cranmer believed that when God's Word is joined to creaturely things like water, bread, and wine, the truth of his promises more deeply affect people. When the minister recites the biblical narrative of the Last Supper, the Spirit of God goes forth into the hearts of believers, strengthening their faith and deepening their love.

Here's the heart of Cranmer's liturgical vision: Divine gracious love, constantly communicated by the Holy Spirit in the regular repetition of Scripture's promises through Word and sacrament, inspires

grateful human love, drawing believers toward God, their fellow human beings, and the lifelong pursuit of godliness.

5. Reformation Anglicanism is transformative.

Outward transformation begins with inner renewal of our desires, brought about by the apostolic gospel. Here's the key to human flourishing. Grace engenders gratitude. Gratitude births love. Love brings about repentance. Repentance produces good works. Good works contribute to a better society. Given its emphasis on the Pauline doctrine of salvation, Reformation Anglicanism is perhaps the best answer for those searching for a means of authentic transformation from the inside out.

Relevant for Today

- For those in the 21st century searching for meaning and purpose in life, Reformation Anglicanism's commitment to the timeless wisdom of apostolic teaching gives them a solid rock on which to stand.
- For those searching for a sense of historical continuity, Reformation Anglicanism offers a community close ties to the ancient church as expressed in its faithfulness to Scripture, the Creeds, and the first four Councils.
- For those who make the needs of others a top priority, Reformation Anglicanism's focus on mission encourages what God has already put on their hearts.
- For those looking to be sustained by inspiring, systematic, Scripture-shaped worship, Reformation Anglicanism's liturgical heritage offers perhaps the best model for proclaiming the gospel of grace and gratitude with ancient beauty and contemporary sensitivity.

- For those looking for real change in themselves and in society, Reformation Anglicanism's insight into the renewal of human affections provides the most authentic means to experience human flourishing.

We need Reformation Anglicanism in the 21st century, because its principles uniquely address the contemporary needs of our global society.