

**The New Testament: What's in it for Today's Anglicans?**  
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I hope you will not mind if I begin with a personal note of thanks, first to the late Canon Hellins, the donor of the Hellins Lecture, who has made this evening possible and secondly to the Right Reverend Gregory Cameron, Bishop of St. Asaph, for his gracious invitation to me to give the Hellins Lecture this year and to suggest that I talk about the importance of the New Testament for the Anglican Church today, a subject dear to my heart. I am deeply grateful to Bishop Gregory and to his able assistant, Michael Balkwill, for their many kindnesses in making the arrangements and setting up travel plans, etc. I am deeply honored to be asked to give the 2023 Hellins Lecture here tonight in this beautiful cathedral, which I have been hoping to visit for a long time now.

My title is: "The New Testament: What's in it for Today's Anglicans?" I checked with Michael before we went to print and he assured me that the expression "What's in it for me?" has some of the same meaning on this side of the pond as it does in the United States. In my experience, you can't be too careful about language that you assume will be heard one way; because we all speak English, but we sometimes speak it differently: that is, we use the same words but they mean different things. You know what I mean: if you come to Virginia and ask where the lift is for the first floor, even if they know that a lift and an elevator are the same thing, they might look at you strangely: you're already on the first floor! And I will never forget the time I asked someone if it was OK in England for a woman to wear pants to church and the person beside me turned bright pink, her body became rigid, and she looked horrified. I thought to myself that trousers shouldn't be that controversial, but I learned later that she would have been horrified at the thought that anyone would ever show up to Church in their underwear. It's wise to check in advance.

In the United States, and apparently here as well, the expression "What's in it for me?" means something like "What am I going to get out of this?" or "Why should I care?" I thought it could be a useful pun to summarize the two things I plan to talk about tonight: first of all, "What *is* actually *in* the New Testament" (What does it contain? What are its contents?) and secondly, "So what? What's in it for us?" Why should anybody care about what's in the New Testament?" and to make that question more specific: "What's in it for the Churches of the Anglican Communion today? What's in it for the *members* of the Churches of the Anglican Communion today? Why is the New Testament important for you and me?"

So Part One: What's actually in the New Testament?

We might begin by asking a preliminary question: what *is* the New Testament? Leander Keck, who has been teaching New Testament brilliantly for decades, answers that question by saying "Actually nobody knows: it turns out to be a very difficult question." But there are a few things we can say. Traditionally, Anglicans have used the formula "One Bible, Two Testaments" to describe our sacred scriptures. The word "Bible" ("Biblia" in Greek) means books (plural). That's useful because while we think of the Bible as a book on our bookshelf, it's really a library (a collection of books, written by multiple authors in different places over many centuries).

We use the word “testaments” to refer to the 39 books of the Old Testament (written mostly in Hebrew with some sections of books also in Aramaic) and to the 27 books of the New Testament (written entirely in Greek with a few phrases also in Aramaic). Aramaic is the language that Jesus spoke, very much like Hebrew. Twenty-seven books, or maybe we should say 27 short pamphlets of several different *lengths* (some of them less than a page long, others quite a bit more substantive) and of several different *kinds* (some of them letters, four of them Gospels (we’ll come back to those later), one sermon and probably a piece of a sermon in one of the letters, an apocalyptic vision, a history (or better a historical novel written in the popular style), and consisting of many different *genres* (stories, proverbs, parables, quotations from earlier scriptures, exhortations, ethical teachings, discourses on various topics, poetry or song, commandments, visions, historical references, jokes, slogans, liturgical fragments of hymns or antiphons, history or “history-like” stories, blessings and curses, and more.)

We might also note that the books of the New Testament are written in many different *styles*, reflecting either the sophistication of their authors or the communities for which they were written or the purposes for which they were written. Some of them, like Romans and Hebrews are rhetorically powerful and theologically brilliant. The author of Luke’s Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles wrote in exquisitely beautiful Greek (he’s our Milton, he’s our Shakespeare) while the letter attributed to James is much simpler. (I actually think it might have been written by the brother of the Lord, although that’s a minority view.) At any rate, it is one of the few books of the New Testament that is so clear you hardly need a commentary to help you understand it. Some people think it’s too clear: most of us have a hard time hearing James.

Twenty-seven little pamphlets but some of you might be surprised at how many other books and articles, not to mention sermons, poems, and musical compositions that these 27 little pamphlets have generated. They may be the most commented-on books in the world. The books and articles written about them take up many shelves in theological libraries and they have been translated into most if not all of the known languages of the world. Some people have even decided to order their lives by them — but that may be anticipating part two of this lecture....

So now let’s get down to specifics: What’s actually *in* the New Testament?

Here’s my one sentence answer: What’s in the New Testament is a *carefully chosen* and *carefully ordered sequence* of 27 short writings designed by the *framers of the canon* to mimic the structure of the First Testament, the Jewish TaNaK and the Christian Old Testament.

OK, that’s a lot to take in, so let’s break it up into small bites. *Framers of the Canon*? Spelling is critical here: we’re not talking about military weapons, the big guns of the artillery, c-a-n-n-o-n-s, but about c-a-n-o-n-s, as in rules or laws, such as a constitution and canons. The word “canon” in our context comes to us through Old English from Latin and earlier Greek κανὼν measuring rod, related to kanna, reed, like sugar *cane*. A canon in this sense is a ruler, a standard, a criterion, that measures things and rules them in or out.

The sentence “There are 37 plays in the Shakespearean canon,” refers to the works of the author that have been accepted as authentic (meaning written by Shakespeare) by experts. Do experts completely agree? No. Some would include “The Two Noble Kinsmen” and “Edward III,” some

would not, but their disagreement actually clarifies the idea of canon as a *list*. If someone speaks of “the Western literary canon,” it’s going to be someone’s list of the great books, the ones that are important to read, if you are going to be a well-educated person. You will immediately recognize that such a list is controversial: some of the greatest works ever written were in fact banned or burned when they were first published. Think of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

That brings us to the process of the formation of the Christian canon, which could easily be a lecture in itself if we had time, but we don’t, so I’m just going to repeat the words “a carefully chosen set of Christian writings.” From the beginning, bishops were key in this process, both diocesan bishops recommending Christian writings to be read, studied, and proclaimed in churches, and bishops in synod (early church councils like Nicea, Ephesus, Constantinople and Chalcedon), deciding what counted as authentic Christian doctrine. Obviously the New Testament was going to be important for those discussions so clarity about the canon grew. Athanasius’s Easter Letter of 367, written for his clergy but also widely circulated because of the important role he had played in the first council of Nicea, combines the two. It contains the first known list of the books of the New Testament that corresponds exactly to the list that appears in your Bible’s New Testament.

The reason I am stressing that this list was “*carefully chosen*” is because it is not unusual to walk into a bookstore and, if you can find a religion section at all, it probably won’t contain the latest brilliant theology books by Rowan Williams. Instead, you will see titles like “The Hidden Books of the Bible” or “The Gospels the Church doesn’t want you to See.” The titles imply that the Church suppressed many ancient documents that *you* would have liked, texts that these authors are bravely rescuing for you, that —DaVinci Code style— have been unavailable until now. The cover may also refer to “newly discovered” books from exotic places in the Middle East with names like Qumran in Israel/Palestine and Nag Hammadi in Egypt. Don’t waste your money! The Dead Sea scrolls from Qumran are in fact very interesting, especially to Jewish Tanakh and Christian Old Testament scholars, but they are not new, they were found between 1946 and 1956. And yes, they were hidden, hidden from the Romans who destroyed the military monastery at Qumran in the year 68, during the Jewish War against Rome.

The Nag Hammadi texts, some of which are actually named “gospels,” were found about the same time, in 1945, so they are also not “newly discovered” and they were available to the church leaders who collected and assembled the books of the New Testament. They weren’t good enough to get in; they didn’t make the cut; they were “also rans,” not chosen, which of course is not the same thing as being suppressed. But — would you *want* to buy a collection of books that were not good enough to make it into the New Testament? Probably not. So they are marketed with conspiracy theory language. Of the many available writings labeled “gospels” in antiquity, only four made it into the Christian New Testament.

The other phrase I want to highlight is that these 27 writings are in a *carefully ordered sequence* that is deliberately designed to mimic, and thereby complement, the sequence of the books of the Old Testament. Now if you and I were asked to put a group of writings in order, there are several ways we might think to do it. I think many of us would be inclined to order them chronologically, historically, earliest to latest. Or we might order them alphabetically by author, or perhaps by location (country of origin) or maybe by subject matter, topic, or style. But, as L.P. Hartley, in his

1953 novel *The Go-Between*, said, “The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.” The ordering of the two testaments of the Christian Bible illustrates that perfectly.

The Jewish TaNaK (short for *Torah* or teaching material, especially the five books of Moses, *Neviim*, the prophetic literature, and *Ketuvim*, the writings, sometimes called the Wisdom literature) is also carefully structured, both in its overall plan and within the individual books. For example, the book of Psalms is actually five books, with the divisions clearly marked out. The most important writings are put first: the five books of Moses, (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), the Pentateuch (pente is five in Greek, cf. pentangle or pentagon). The five books of the Psalms are probably already imitating the five books of Moses.

Once you see that structure, you can appreciate the way that the books of the New Testament are placed in a carefully ordered sequence in dialogue with the Jewish TaNaK or the Christian Old Testament. Parallel to the *Five Books of Moses* are the *Four Gospels*, clearly the most important books in the New Testament. That there are exactly *four* Gospels goes back at least as far as Irenaeus, writing his book *Against Heresies* in about 185. Irenaeus insisted that four was the correct number of the Christian Gospels. He criticized both those who treated all the multiple gospels available as if they were all equally authoritative and also those who only read one of the four Christian Gospels.

The arguments which Irenaeus used might or might not persuade you: he said the four gospels were the four pillars of the Church structure. It wouldn't work with two or with fifteen. He used the analogy of the four corners of the earth and the four winds. He cited Ezekiel's description of God's throne, borne by four creatures with four faces (the faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle). These are probably familiar to you as symbols of the four evangelists still in use today.

After the four Gospels, comes the Acts of the Apostles, clearly written by the same author as the Gospel of Luke, but notice that they were not kept together: the canonical order is Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and then Acts. It would have been easy to insert Acts after Luke or to switch Luke and John, so that the two books evidently by the same author could be read together. That's not what they did. Some scholars think that just as the historical book of Joshua is sometimes joined to the five books of Moses to make a hexateuch, so the decision to put Acts right after the four gospels is once again an imitation of the Old Testament canon. That's quite possible.

We might just notice that within the list of four, some decisions about value or importance have also been made. The Gospel of Matthew is first for a reason: it is the most frequently commented on gospel in antiquity, especially chapters 5-7 (which Saint Augustine called the Sermon on the Mount and the name has stuck). Mark was hardly appreciated at all until the 19th century (and then for the wrong reasons). Now Mark is treasured, especially in literary circles, but for most of its history, it was the ugly duckling that finally became a swan. Irenaeus argued that each gospel should be read in light of the others, but he also privileged John's Gospel as the lens through which to read the other three. That was certainly the pattern during the conciliar period: the most important doctrinal decisions were based on some part of the Gospel of John, especially decisions about christology. And through the centuries, theologians have been attracted to John like moths to a flame. Most recently, David Ford of Cambridge has added to that huge pile of books by theologians reading the Gospel of John. I should add that I'm glad he did.

After the Gospels and Acts come the letters attributed to the apostle Paul. Again, while we might try to put these in chronological order, in the New Testament they are ordered by --- length: the longest are first. So Romans heads the list, then the Corinthian correspondence and so on until tiny Philemon at the end, only 25 verses. Then come the non-Pauline letters and we can be sure that the framers of the canon knew that Paul did not write Hebrews because it is the longest of these other letters, assuming it's a letter at all (well, it ends like a letter). Then at the very end of the list is the Apocalypse, the Revelation to John, clearly seen as being a category of its own, because it is also quite long. It is a fitting and quite open-ended ending to the New Testament canon and many Christians would say to the Bible as a whole.

Well, that's what is in the New Testament: A carefully chosen and carefully ordered sequence of 27 short writings designed by the framers of the canon to mimic the structure of the Jewish TaNaK or the Christian Old Testament. And while we are noticing what is *in* it, we might take a moment to notice what is *not* in it: unlike the Dead Sea scrolls found at Qumran, there are no commentaries on whole books of the Bible. There is no New Testament equivalent of the Peshar text of Habbakuk, that tells us how to read each verse to explain events in the world of the first century. Saint Paul and whoever wrote Hebrews certainly knew how to do that, we get a few tiny fragments of peshar style commentary ("that text then means this today"), but that is mostly not what the New Testament writings are about. I'll come back to this later in Part Two.

So, Part Two: The New Testament: What's in it for Today's Anglicans?

I'd like to return to Bishop Athanasius and his Easter Letter of 367 listing the books of the New Testament, to tell you what he *said* about them. Along with the books of the Old Testament, (remember "One Bible, Two Testaments"), Athanasius declared these books to be the "fountains of salvation," that those who thirst may be satisfied with the words of life which are found within them. And moving from the sublime to the ridiculous, I'd like to quote a line stereotypically found in Westerns in Hollywood: the old miner rides into town on his mule and when they ask him why he's been away so long, he says, "Thar's gold in them thar hills." (I'm sure Welsh miners are more articulate, but I'm also sure you get my point: there's a lot of valuable stuff in the New Testament for today's Anglicans!)

We might begin by noticing how strangely we behave when we consider our reading habits about books in general compared to the way we read the Bible. Suppose you are reading a murder mystery — a characteristically Anglican activity, by the way, look at the number of authors of this genre who were or are Anglican. Some Freudian could tell us whether we are sublimating our desires to *kill* our enemies instead of *loving* them into the harmless form of reading about the death of someone that at least seven people had a strong motive to kill— Anyway, whether you're reading Agatha Christie or P.D. James or Dorothy Sayers or G.K. Chesterton, after you've finished the book and you know who-dun-it, there's no reason to re-read it any time soon. The best thing to do is to put the book in a box in the attic and forget about it until some rainy day five or ten years from now, when you find it again and think "Oh, that would be a fun way to spend the day" and you might read it again.

But ever since Thomas Cranmer's "Introduction" to the 1549 Book of Common Prayer caught on, Anglicans have ordered our liturgical year by reading biblical books "in course" especially in

daily morning and evening prayer, but also to some extent in the Eucharist. This pattern is interrupted by Saints' days and other feasts and fasts when particular lessons appropriate to the occasion are read, but generally our readings are organized around the two great centers of the calendar year: Christmas and Easter, feasts of the person and work of Jesus Christ. We begin the year in Advent by anticipating his Incarnation; we focus our energies like a laser beam at his Nativity, followed by his Name and Baptism, then a season of Epiphany, when his person and work were made manifest in a variety of signs and wonders, ending with his Transfiguration. Next we begin another season of anticipation in Lent, reminding ourselves of our captivity to Sin and Death and how much we needed and still need his saving power.

This comes to a climax in Holy Week, especially Maundy Thursday and Good Friday (God's Friday), the Christian Day of Atonement, then either a focus on the harrowing of hell or the keeping of the sabbath rest (depending on the parish) and the Great Vigil and day of Easter. We follow Judaism in marking fifty days until Pentecost (for them the giving of the Torah, for us the giving of the Spirit). Within that time, the forty days of Lent are matched by the forty days until the Ascension (we follow Luke's chronology instead of John's), then Trinitytide with somewhat different versions among us of that long green season which ends with Christ the King, the Sunday next before Advent.

In other words, even though we know the end of the story, and all the parts of the story, we deliberately re-read it constantly; we consciously re-live the pattern of the career of Jesus the Christ, mapping the stories of our lives onto the great story of his life, death, and resurrection. It is primarily the Gospels we turn to in order to this. That's where we find the stories about Jesus. But if we are wise, we do not read *only* the Gospels: in addition to the scriptures *about* Jesus, we want to read the scriptures that *Jesus* read; we want to read what *Jesus* read over and over again. As a first century Jewish male, he would have known many of them by heart.

Ideally every Sunday a parish hears four lessons from the scriptures, two from the scriptures of Israel, the scriptures we *share* with Jesus, and two from the early Christian writings *about* Jesus. When we do that, guided by the writers of the New Testament, we find "types and shadows" or complex patterns within the scriptures, where biblical texts start talking to each other in a vast web of meaning. The writers of the New Testament saw Jesus everywhere. Now typology can be tricky, as when the lessons are set up to contrast something problematic in the Old Testament with something wonderful in the New Testament; or when a question is raised in the older part of the Bible and it is answered in the newer part of the Bible. When that kind of interpretation is used exclusively, it creates a distortion implying that Judaism is incomplete or even mistaken, that it needs to be finished or corrected by Christianity. But when typology is done well, there is great beauty and power in connecting, for example Israel's deliverance at the Red Sea with our deliverance from Sin and Death; or connecting the manna in the wilderness with the Bread that comes down from heaven. Some of our most wonderful Easter hymns are filled with typological correlations.

So what's in the New Testament helps us to worship God in ways that reflect "the beauty of holiness": the more we take time to discover how the two testaments point to each other, the deeper our understanding of the mysteries of God can be. Karl Barth used to say that the Bible is a strange new world and that in order to understand the ways of God, we need not to explain

away that strangeness — as if we could — or to try to reduce it to something we *can* understand, but instead we need to immerse ourselves in it, to learn the Bible's ways of thinking about God. In a striking metaphor, he once compared the biblical writers who had experienced God, to spies (intelligence agents) who had information for us about what to expect when we encountered this enemy. The biblical texts can be compared to a briefing they give us, warning us to take God seriously; this is a clever and dangerous opponent.

Soren Kierkegaard took the opposite approach: suppose you are deeply in love with someone: wouldn't you want to study them closely, to find out what pleases them and what repels them? Instead of worrying about what might be required of you as a partner, a lover, wouldn't you constantly be seeking ways to give gifts to your beloved, to offer your services to your beloved, and to do that, wouldn't you need to find out as much as you could, reading whatever letters your beloved had written to you?

Both of these authors, each in a very different way, capture something about the way that studying the New Testament (and the whole Bible) brings us into a deeper relationship with God. Lectio Divina as an avenue into prayer is popular today (and that's a good thing) because studying the New Testament doesn't necessarily mean taking a course in it; it's more like studying a painting where instead of rushing through the rooms of the art gallery to see as much of it as possible in the hour you've allowed yourself — *the top ten things to see at the Louvre* — you stop, you park in front of some painting that seems to be calling you to pay attention to it and you do and you are rewarded by the kind of intense scrutiny, where you go right up to it, and also the sense of it from across the room; you notice its colors; you think about where the focus is, you look at how the paint is thicker one place than in all the others and you wonder about why that is or what the painter wanted to do with that. It's like falling in love with a painting (if you are following Kierkegaard) or (if you are following Barth) it's like being compelled, in some strange way forced, but with a gentleness that doesn't do violence to you, it's like the force of a magnet that draws you to itself as if you were an iron filing, very difficult to resist.

Sometimes particular scriptures work that way for God and I will just use New Testament examples, since that's our focus today. Saint Francis of Assisi heard the words of Jesus addressed to the "rich young ruler" who wanted to follow him: "Sell what you have and give the money to the poor and come follow me!" How many thousands of people have heard that text, but Francis really heard it. I suspect it was another word of Jesus about Peter "And on this rock I will build my church" that gave Francis the idea that he was supposed to build a church. at first, he thought it meant repairing the ruins of a church near him which had fallen down, but after he did that and he still kept hearing the text, he built up God's Church by founding a religious order. Something similar happened to Dorothy Day, her life was turned around completely and she became a force to be reckoned with, an advocate for the poor, for workers, and for peace.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer had fled the power of Hitler during the second world war, knowing that he was targeted for his work in the underground seminary at Finkenwalde and various other strategies for resisting the Nazi agenda. He had taken refuge at Union Theological Seminary in New York when Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr were teaching there, but he began to be increasingly worried about how effective he would be as a pastor in the Church, if he had not been there with his congregation during the difficult war experience. His friends at Union tried to

reassure him: people would certainly understand that he had had to leave because his life was in danger, But Bonhoeffer became obsessed by two verses in the fourth chapter (towards the end) of 2 Timothy, two verses most people would not notice, two verses that would look quite innocuous to most of us, but for Bonhoeffer they were compelling: “Do your best to come to me soon” and “Do your best to come before winter.” So he left Union and returned to Germany. Shortly after that, very predictably, he was captured and put in a concentration camp. One of the very last things Hitler did, when he knew that he had lost, was to make sure Bonhoeffer was hanged.

So what’s in the New Testament sometimes concentrates our relationship with God in a way that other writings usually do not. These few stories could be multiplied by thousands of others. I would be willing to bet that at least a few people in this room have experienced the power of a New Testament text, making some kind of claim upon them, or perhaps setting them free from the wrong kind of claim made by some other power. To experience some part of the New Testament that way is to hear the voice of God in the very human voices of the New Testament writers. Of course, some discernment is required, best done with a spiritual director or a trusted and seasoned advisor, to determine if it sounds like God’s voice, but this *does* happen.

Sometimes an entire community can find its life together changed by the power of a Bible study or a sermon or a hymn based on passages from the New Testament. I remember Archbishop Desmond Tutu in the middle of the struggle for freedom against apartheid in South Africa. He was quoted as saying, “I read to the end of the book, it says we win!” And in the United States, Martin Luther King’s “I have a dream” sermon (probably his most famous sermon, but find the collection of his sermons on Luke called *A Knock at Midnight*, they’re incredible) — Anyway his “I have a dream “ sermon relies not so much on a specific biblical text (although Joel 2 quoted by Acts 2, the Pentecost story might be an important source, “Your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams”) as it relies on the whole long biblical tradition in both testaments about dreamers and visionaries who can see the reign of God coming and cry out “Babylon is fallen! Babylon is fallen!” when Babylon never looked better or more powerful. It is fitting that at the Lorraine Motel memorial to King, right below the balcony where he was shot, has a plaque with the words in Genesis 37 of Joseph’s brothers conspiring to kill him, “Here comes this dreamer. Come let us kill him... and we will see what will become of his dreams.”

Just about this point in the lecture, you may be making a mental note never to read the New Testament and thinking it should come with a label warning about its dangerous contents....

Oh, and did I mention that the New Testament is full of incredibly beautiful and comfortable words that never seem to grow old in time of trouble or confusion? I Corinthians 13 wasn’t written as a wedding sermon, but it remains one of the best descriptions of the kind of love that will make a marriage last through thick and thin: “Love is patient and kind; not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful.”

There’s a reason why the end of Romans 8 is often read at burial services: it is just what we need to hear, Paul’s conviction that God is faithful and loving; “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, not depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Words that you know and love to hear when we make Eucharist,"that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed, took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way after supper, he took the cup..." I don't need to keep reading, because you know these words, you can say them yourself, silently, internally along with the presider. When you hear them, you know you're home, you're back in Jerusalem with Jesus and the other disciples; at the same time, you're also in every church where you have ever worshipped; you're with friends and family members whom you haven't seen in years, some of them are living, some of them are dead, it doesn't matter, they're all at the table with you. You look at the little children holding out their hands for the bread and you see the future of the Church. Time stands still or there is no time but God's time. There's nothing like it. Where do the words come from? 1 Corinthians 11, but they're even older than that. Paul is quoting Jesus tradition that existed before the 50s when he is writing, a tradition passed down from generation to generation.

From Ephesians 4 we get the words used in the Baptismal rite: "There is one body and one Spirit, ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all."

The Lord's Prayer, the command to love one another, the prodigal son, the good Samaritan, the raising of Lazarus, Mary Magdalene thinking Jesus is the gardener, Jesus washing the feet of Peter, we could be here all night while we tell each other our favorite stories or our favorite verses or our favorite characters.

But there is one more thing that should be said at a time like this: loving the New Testament, believing that the Word of God speaks in it and through it, does not require us to make the same mistakes the Church made in the past. The writers of the New Testament assumed slavery and, with one or two powerful exceptions, they did not critique it. We have a story about Jesus healing a centurion's slave and it might as well have been the centurion's horse, he is healed and can go back to work now. There is apparently no thought to say anything else. There are attitudes about women, about children, about marriage, about divorce, about sexuality, about eternal torment, about rewards, about faith required for healing, about "the Jews", about lots of other things that, when we read them, sometimes we think we hear a voice saying, "But that's wrong, that can't be the Word of God" and we should listen to that voice — that *also* may be the voice of the Holy Spirit saying "Think!" "Think about what you are reading!" "Test the spirits" is the biblical way of saying that. Not every spirit is the Holy Spirit. And sometimes a good thing that is pushed to an extreme becomes a bad thing. That's how we get crusades and colonialism.

You can thank God that you are part of a tradition within the Church that encourages thinking, that does not set faith and reason in opposition, that values scientific thinking and also critiques it, that values psychological insights and also reserves the right to a healthy skepticism about some of the findings of the social sciences. You belong to a tradition within the Church that assesses opinions and weighs ideas. You honor the New Testament when you take it seriously enough to think about what you are reading in it and hearing about it.

So: the New Testament: What's in it for Today's Anglicans? "All things necessary for salvation" as Article VI of the XXXIX Articles says, and perhaps a few things not necessary for salvation.