

Agenda 9/23: History of the Anglican Church

Welcome & new intros

Brief History of Christianity in England

- Celtic Christianity: came with the Romans in the 1st and 2nd centuries, and survived in Ireland, Scotland and Wales after the Germanic settlement (Roman armies left England for good in 410); begins to diverge from Christianity on the continent specifically in the areas of the date of Easter and an emphasis on monasteries rather than bishoprics
- 595: Pope Gregory the Great sends Augustine of Canterbury as a missionary to England; England becomes increasingly Christianized and harmony on things like the dating of Easter was eventually reached between the Roman and Celtic churches (i.e., at the Synod of Whitby in 664)
- Legacy of Celtic Christianity: the church in England was always relatively independent of Rome, partly due to isolation and partly due to an underlying tradition that differed from Roman Christianity. Additionally, the strength of monasteries in England and the relative weakness of bishops, when combined with the early consolidation of power by the English monarchy, meant that England rarely saw the political strife between bishops, great lords and kings that periodically erupted throughout the rest of Europe.

The English Reformation:

- John Wycliffe (c. 1320 – 1384): an early reformer. His two big divergences from Rome were his questioning of the involvement of church power in secular affairs (that is, he argued against papal authority in secular government) and his interest in a widely-circulated English Bible (an idea that would come to fruition in the 16th century, but was a bit ahead of its time in the 14th century).
- The Reformation on the continent:
 - Luther: His defiance of papal power/authority was seized upon by secular rulers to assert their own authority independent of the papacy.
 - Calvin: truly systematized the theology of the Reformation in Europe – not that every reformer was a Calvinist, but his formation of Protestant theology was influential throughout Europe and in England
- Formation of the Church of England:

- Henry VIII: married to Catherine of Aragon (in modern-day Spain), who was the youngest child of Ferdinand and Isabella (of Columbus fame); she had been married to Henry's older brother, Arthur, but when Arthur died at the age of 15, Henry (age 10) was betrothed to Catherine. She did not produce any male heirs for Henry (just Mary), and he wanted to divorce her in order to have a chance at producing a legitimate male heir. Because of uncertainties about the timing of events, historians are still uncertain of whether or how much his desire for a divorce was influenced by his desire to marry Anne Boleyn. In 1527 he began to attempt to have his marriage annulled; he claimed that his marriage to Catherine violated consanguinity laws (since she had been married to his brother, and their marriage needed special approval from an earlier pope, Julius II), but the pope (Clement VII) refused to grant an annulment – he was probably under pressure from the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, who was Catherine's nephew and who was periodically at war with the pope. Matters escalated between Rome and England, with Parliament legislating that all papal decrees had to be approved by the king and the pope in return excommunicating Henry and Thomas Cranmer (then archbishop of Canterbury). Diplomatic relations continued to deteriorate. In 1534, Parliament declared Henry “the only Supreme Head in Earth of the Church of England” and ruled that no monies needed to be paid to Rome (tithes, etc.).
 - Important to note: while Henry's desire for a divorce prompted the events that led up to the establishment of the Church of England, his conflict with the pope at its core was about power – did the pope have the power to tell Henry who he could marry and divorce, or did the king have that power?

- Thomas Cranmer: became the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1534. He was key in the formation of the Church of England, but especially important as the architect of the Book of Common Prayer, which was first published in 1549. Cranmer was strongly influenced by the Reformation on the Continent, which shows in the BCP: significantly, it is entirely in English and has no prayers for souls in Purgatory. However, while some protested that it was too different from RC liturgy (particularly since it wasn't in Latin), others protested that it was too similar, particularly in the continued use of vestments. He continued his work under Edward VI (r. 1547-53), but upon the ascension of Mary (1553) he was arrested for treason. His trial was conducted under the authority of the Roman Catholic church and, in 1555, he was handed over to the secular government for execution. He was burned at the stake on March 21, 1556; although he had prepared a final sermon that was approved by the authorities, he deviated from his text. He renounced the recantations he had made during his trial and declared the pope the antichrist; he was dragged from the pulpit and burned.

Turmoil in England:

- Henry VIII died in 1547 and was succeeded by his young son, Edward VI, who ruled under a regency government (which included Cranmer) from 1547-1553. In 1553, Edward VI died and Mary succeeded to the throne. She had been raised Catholic and she returned England to the Church of Rome, executing and exiling many reformers to consolidate her power. She also, in political terms, remained Catholic because the CoE had invalidated her mother's marriage to Henry VIII, making her an illegitimate child; the RC church, on the other hand, recognized her as the true heir. Ironically, by forcing many leaders of the reform into exile, she created stronger connections between English and continental reformers, thus creating a group of reformers who would return under Elizabeth who were less interested in the via media.
- In 1558, Mary died childless and was succeeded by her sister Elizabeth, who had been raised Protestant and who returned England to the Church of England. Like Mary, she had political reasons for remaining Protestant – she was viewed as illegitimate by the Catholic church – but even when the current pope indicated that he would declare her the legitimate heir she remained committed to the Church of England. She was the architect of the via media, an idea that sought to create a unified national church in which all but the most extreme Protestants could happily worship. Elizabeth's vision was for a church that was both Catholic – affirming the creeds and apostolic succession – and Reformed.
- Elizabeth's success: it was under Elizabeth I that the Protestant Church of England took shape. Its success was due in part to the Act of Unity and the idea of the via media, but also in large part to the sheer length of Elizabeth's reign – she had 45 years to enforce her vision of the English church.

Spread of Anglicanism in North America

- Two brief notes: first, there's a lot more history of Anglicanism in England, but the key thing to take away from its origin is the desire to have broad borders, and to chart a middle way between Catholicism and Protestantism. Second, as the British Empire grew, Anglicanism spread with it, and become established in countries around the world. There is a lot we can learn from our Anglican sisters and brothers in other nations, but for the rest of today we're going to focus on the Anglican – or Episcopalian – Church in North America.
- The Puritans: They objected to what they perceived as the popish and overly ostentatious aspects of liturgical worship – such as vestments and ornamentation in the church, as well as the episcopal structure of the Roman Catholic church and the Church of England – and

they sought to purify the church and return it to its New Testament state. They tended to emphasize the importance of hearing the Word of God, while moderates saw the usefulness of images and pageantry – visual aspects – within worship. Puritans also tended towards moralism – they attacked drunkenness and acting, among other things. Puritans were not by any means a unified group, however; while many stayed in England (and enjoyed a period of power after the English Civil War and under Cromwell), some gave up on the CoE and came to America. While early settlers came from a variety of churches in Europe, Puritanism was a dominant force in early American society. And while colonies (and later states) did have established churches, the religious pluralism that characterized America from the very beginning of its settlement meant that there was no one dominant denomination.

- Anglicans in America, pre-1776: Virginia Dare was the first child of English parents to be baptized in America under the liturgy in the Book of Common Prayer (1587), but the Roanoke colony was lost; with the exception of Virginia Colony, Anglicanism didn't have much of a presence in America before about 1700.
- New England had very few Anglicans; there were more in the Middle Colonies (like NY and PA), but it was in the southern colonies that Anglican churches found the most success, primarily in VA and SC. These churches were run by vestries (groups of lay men); this tended to give the Anglican church in these areas an aristocratic feel. However, throughout the colonies, the CoE did not do a great job of attracting members of the lower or even middle classes; Baptists and Methodists in particular appealed more directly to the interests and concerns of the working (as opposed to land-owning) classes.
- Even before the events of the Revolutionary War, Anglicanism's lack of appeal to the working class combined with the movement in the upper class towards Deism weakened the presence of the Anglican church in America. Additionally, the CoE in America did not support the first Great Awakening, viewing its emotionalism with skepticism; this also contributed to the loss of many of its working-class members. Despite these factors, however, by the Revolutionary War, however, because it was so wide-spread the CoE was the second-largest denomination in America (behind Congregationalism) with 400 congregations and 300 clergy.
- Also important to note: two key Anglican societies were founded in 1698 (Society for the Preservation of Christian Knowledge [SPCK]) and 1701 (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts [SPG]). The first wanted to educate members of the CoE in America and to that end sent entire libraries worth of material to American parishes; the second was a missionary society – sometimes referred to as “Anglican Jesuits” – that established Anglican churches in the colonies. Perhaps the best-known of these SPG

missionaries was John Wesley, who spent a year in GA before returning to England and founding Methodism.

Anglicans in America, post-Revolutionary War:

- 1780: began consistently referring to themselves as “Protestant Episcopalians” – Protestant to distinguish themselves from Catholics, who also have an episcopal church structure, and Episcopalian to distinguish themselves from Congregationalist churches.
- The problems facing the post-war church:
 - 1) no American bishops;
 - 2) the parishes, particularly in the South, that had been governed by lay vestries were not thrilled about bishops, while parishes in the North were less than thrilled about lay leadership;
 - 3) each colony’s churches had communicated with the CoE, so there were few connections between Anglican churches in America.
- Solutions: American bishops – initially, bishops in England did not believe that they could ordain American bishops, since Americans could not take the oath of loyalty to the English monarch required of English bishops. The first American to seek ordination as a bishop, Samuel Seabury, was rejected by English bishops but ordained by Scottish bishops. He returned to America in 1785 and began consecrating priests; however, this was not a permanent solution. By 1790, the CoE had decided to consecrate bishops without requiring the oath of allegiance; they consecrated James Madison (cousin of President James Madison) as the Bishop of Virginia; two years later, there were 4 American bishops in toto who then could consecrate bishops themselves (they had agreed to have 3 CoE- consecrated bishops, so Seabury couldn’t count).
- Solutions: leadership – in 1789, a General Assembly was held in Philadelphia. This assembly approved a revised BCP for American churches, but most importantly it established a governmental structure for the Episcopal church: since an episcopal church without bishops is a contradiction in terms, a church governed by bishops was established. However, the governmental structure has two houses: the House of Bishops, to which all bishops belong, and the House of Deputies, which consists of both priests and lay people (today a 50-50 split). Either house could originate proposals, which must be passed by both houses. Obviously enough, this structure was heavily influenced by the US Constitution, which was being written in the same year.

The Episcopalian Church:

- Skipping over 150 years: in the 1950s and 60s, the Episcopalian church became increasingly involved in social issues, including the Equal Rights movement, which led to some backlash and division; they also became more liberal on certain social issues such as divorce and remarriage. However, in recent decades the three major issues of contention have been “the ordination of women, the rights of homosexuals, and the revision of the Book of Common Prayer” (Holmes 167).
- Women were allowed to be ordained as priests in 1976 and the first female bishop (Barbara Harris) was ordained in 1989. Although a conscience clause allows bishops to refuse to ordain women priests, all diocese now ordain women.
- Homosexuality: has been an issue since the late 1970s, when the first openly gay priest was ordained – although this led to a resolution in the General Convention in the early 1980s to disallow the ordination of practicing homosexuals (and also of those engaged in extra-marital heterosexual behavior). However, in 2009 the General Convention both voted to allow ordination of practicing homosexuals and formed a committee tasked with developing a rite for gay marriage; a provisional rite was formally approved in 2012.
- New BCP: inspired by Vatican II, the General Convention began a process of revising the BCP in the 1960s that culminated in the publication of the 1979 prayer book (the 3rd revision of the 1789 BCP; the others were in 1892 and 1928). Its use of gender-inclusive language and prayers for social issues created controversy.
- Due to these controversies, many broke away from the Episcopal Church and established churches that worship in the Anglican tradition but do not accept at least some of the theological positions of the Episcopal Church. Churches that broke away in this earlier period are often called the “Continuing Anglican movement”; some of these have died away, some remain independent (and outside of the Anglican Communion as a whole), but others have become a part of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA).

The Anglican Church in North America:

- The Anglican Mission in America: in 1997, more conservative Episcopalian clergy were upset at the course of the General Convention, which continued to affirm non-Biblical positions and support bishops who openly questioned or denied the authority of Scripture. Convened by Chuck Murphy in Pawley’s Island, SC, a group of Episcopalian clergy composed the First Promise, which called the Episcopalian leadership to repentance; this

statement was supported by bishops from the global South (primarily Asia and Africa), who had already issued similar calls to repentance to the Episcopalian church.

- In 2000, Moses Tay (Archbishop of South East Asia) and Emmanuel Kolini (Archbishop of Rwanda) ordained Chuck Murphy and John Rogers as bishops, on the rationale that the Episcopal Church had lost its authority and witness, and North America could be treated as an area in need of missionaries sent from elsewhere. Over the next several years, a couple of different networks of Anglican churches formed.
- The ACNA: Discussions for forming the Anglican Church in North America began in late 2008; many different Anglican groups participated in these discussions and in 2009 the province was formed. It is a “province in formation;” that is, it is not yet fully a part of the Anglican Communion, but in the process of becoming a province within the Communion.
- It is incredibly unusual in the world of Anglicanism to have two provinces in the same geographical area; this has caused considerable tension within the broader Anglican Communion about how to treat the ACNA.

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