

CHAPTER THREE: THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN ENGLAND

WHAT DOES HISTORY MATTER TO THE CHURCH?

We have already shown that the authority of the Anglican tradition comes from scripture, tradition, and reason. The tradition leg of that “three-legged stool” is not only the body of wisdom handed down from the Apostles, but also the accumulated history of our church. But even the scripture part includes history, because the way the scripture has been understood in the past weighs upon the way we read it today. And the interpretation of both (through reason) includes the way they have been interpreted through the ages. Some people would like to think we should, and could, start fresh in every generation to rid ourselves of ideas they don’t like from the past. The truth is that, though the church is constantly changing and reforming itself in one way or another, we are always in a direct line of continuity with those who have come before us. At any given time, there is not one generation on the earth, but at least three. That means that the understanding of the church is evolving gradually as the cycle of life unfolds. In this day of human pride over our recent progress in scientific and medical knowledge, it is important to keep in mind that, even so, we are not the first intelligent, knowledgeable, or wise people who have ever lived! Our faith is not a new thing, just recently discovered; rather, it is an ancient thing being constantly renewed and rejuvenated.

We Episcopalians are a branch of the Anglican Communion, which means that we are derived from the Church of England. We have no pre-eminent theologian, like Martin Luther or John Calvin, or preacher, like John Wesley, who has placed a set of ideas over us to guide the way our identity unfolds. Instead, we have a history together. How we have come to be a communion, the way our peculiar identity has been established, continues to influence strongly who we are and who we are becoming. More than any other Christian communion, the history of our church matters to Episcopalians.

There is a story of a seminarian who once asked his professor why he needed to know about the heresies of the early Church. His professor answered, “Because, Sir, they are all alive and well in the Church today.” This can be said of most theological ideas, Biblical interpretations, Church practices, saintliness, and sin: there is truly not much new under the sun.

THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY IN BRITAIN

At first, we use the name Britain, because there was as yet no England. Britain is that largest island of the British Isles. To its west is Eire, or Ireland, and there are a number of small islands surrounding it. In prehistoric times, there were people living on these islands, probably a large number of people, but we know very little of them, because they left no written history. We do not even know what the earliest peoples called themselves. Our first historical knowledge of the Britons is from the time of Julius

Caesar, in the middle of the century before Jesus' birth. Caesar was busy subjugating a people called the Gauls in what is now France (then called Gaul). He learned that these Gauls had relatives on the British Isles. The British tribes were called Celts, and they were not the original inhabitants of Britain, but they had conquered that land and replaced its original inhabitants several centuries earlier. Perhaps elements of the earlier British peoples were absorbed within the Celts. They shared with the Gauls a common language, called Gaelic, and a common religion also, which we call Druidism, because its priests were called "druids." We do not know what the Celts themselves called their religion, or very much else, for that matter. We know the oak and mistletoe were sacred to the druids, but their beliefs and rites were secret. (Incidentally, the druid Celts did not build Stonehenge or any of the other ancient monuments on Britain; it was the earlier peoples who did that, no one knows how or why. The people who claim to practice Druidism today are making up a new pagan religion, because they do not really know what the original religion was like. And any book or television special which claims to tell you the story of the building of Stonehenge or the stone circles is categorically an utter speculation.) At any rate, Caesar decided to give these Celts a scare, so he launched an invasion of Britain, landing an army (with much difficulty) on their southeastern shore. By pre-arrangement, the Celts pretended to submit to him, and he quickly left, pretending a great victory; but his point was made. The year was 55 B. C.

A century later, the Roman Emperor Claudius needed a conquest to boost his image at home, so he also launched an invasion of Britain in 67 A. D. This time, the Romans stayed. But they never occupied the whole island of Britain, and they never got to Ireland. The Romans were not there to colonize, and relatively few came to stay. Their purpose was to enrich Rome through taxation, the slave market, and other commerce, and to protect their other provinces nearby from any Celtic disturbances. The Romans occupied roughly the parts of Britain that are today called England, leaving Wales and Scotland, which were too mountainous to occupy easily and too poor to make them worth any trouble, to the native peoples. Scotland was called Caledonia then, and it was occupied by two peoples who were in conflict, but mixing together—the Picts, about whom we know next to nothing, and the Scots, who had come over from Ireland to settle in southwestern Caledonia. The Scots eventually dominated and gave their name to the whole country. The Picts and Scots were inclined to be cattle rustlers and marauders. Consequently, the Roman Governor Hadrian (who became the Emperor Hadrian), tired of their raids into northern Roman Britain, had a wall built all the way across the north, called Hadrian's Wall. Remnants of it, and also of the Roman roads and some of their fortifications, baths, and villas, remain today. Any English town that has "chester" in its name is on the site of a Roman fortification. The city of Bath was known for its Roman baths.

The Roman Empire became officially Christian in the early 300's. But Christian missionaries were active long before that. There is evidence that there were Christians in Britain almost from the beginning, at least by the second century. There is a story of a Briton named Alban who gave shelter to a Christian priest during one of the persecutions of Christians, probably in the second century. He was arrested in place of the priest and executed, and he became the first Christian martyr of Britain. As St. Alban, he is the

namesake of many Episcopal Churches today. In the late Roman period, Christianity became the normal religion of both Romans and Romanized Celts.

In 410, however, the Huns sacked the city of Rome itself, terrifying the Romans and causing them to withdraw from their outlying provinces. That meant that Britain, the farthest province away, and one of the poorer ones, was first to be abandoned. So the Celts, having lost their freedom to the Romans and having been given a new religion, officially at least were left to their own devices after several centuries of dependency on Rome's protection. They were probably sitting ducks for some invading force or other. The invaders who came to them were German barbarians representing several tribes, mainly Angles and Saxons, maybe also some Jutes. The Celts tried to defend themselves, but were overwhelmed. Incidentally, if there ever was a historical King Arthur (he may just be a legend, or a composite of several figures), this was the period when he lived, trying to forge an independent kingdom out of these Celts. At any rate, the land we now call England was occupied by these Teutonic (German) tribes of non-Christians, and the Celts were pushed back, surviving only in Wales, Cornwall, western and highland Scotland, and Ireland. "Angle-Land" became England. The language of these newcomers was an old Germanic language we call Anglo-Saxon, or "Old English." It sounds a lot like German, Danish, or Dutch. The religion of these people was the Norse religion. They had many gods, principally Thor, the thunder-god, (similar to Jupiter of the Romans); and Wodin, a warrior god; and Tiuw, the underworld god, and Frigga or Frey, a goddess of the hearth. Can you guess which day of the week in English is derived from these old Norse god's names? Add the Sun, and the Moon, and Saturn, a Roman god, and you have a full week of pagan deity names.

The Anglo-Saxons settled down into a number of different kingdoms and took up farming and fighting among themselves. Now they were ripe for invasion in their turn, and the invasions took two different forms over 500 years. The first one was a religious one.

The Christianization of Ireland had been accomplished by the efforts of St. Patrick, a Celt from Roman Britain. As a young man, Patrick was kidnapped from western Britain into slavery in Ireland. He rather miraculously escaped, became a Christian priest, and returned to his old masters to teach them about Jesus. He was incredibly successful, and Ireland became a great haven for Christians and for learning during the dark ages that followed the fall of Rome. The bedrock of Irish Christianity was its monastic houses.

One of Patrick's disciples, a monk named (St.) Columba, exiled because of his role in an Irish internal conflict, set up a monastery on the little island of Iona off the coast of Scotland, where the Irish Scots had located. From there, his followers went all over Scotland, preaching Christianity and converting the Scots and Picts. Soon they needed a branch off the east coast, and they chose an island off of northern England called Lindisfarne, led by St. Aidan. St. Cuthbert also lived at Lindisfarne. The monks began working their way south into England with their missions.

The Irish monks experienced setbacks. For example, the pagan kings of Mercia were highly resistant to Christianity, and they were very powerful during that period. They exterminated many Christians. Also, the pagan Danes began to invade the coasts of England and Ireland around that time, making it very dangerous to live on an island or port area. Lindisfarne itself was sacked, but the monks had sent their precious illustrated Gospels for safekeeping back to Ireland, and the Book of Kells remains in Dublin today, a testimony to the faith and creativity of these men.

So-called Celtic Christianity has become fashionable recently in the Anglican world, especially among women. Its attractive characteristics are: its focus on the glories of Creation, with many hymns and prayers beautifully celebrating God's creative gifts; its closeness to nature and ecological sensitivity; its non-hierarchical organization, based on monasteries rather than dioceses; its supposed greater acceptance of women, with numerous women saints and strong, independent abbesses. These are all interesting traits worthy of our emulation, but it should be remembered that these were also extremely strict, ascetic people who actually rejoiced in suffering, much of which was self-inflicted. They refused to wear shoes or coats in winter. They were exceedingly opposed to sex. They were attracted to isolation and deprivation of all kinds. Cuthbert reportedly once stood all night up to his chest in the North Sea (have you ever stuck a toe into the North Sea even in summer?) Irish monks sometimes got into little boats without sails or oars and set themselves adrift, to see where God would take them. None were ever heard from again. Celtic Christians had their own prejudices and blind spots: they were people of their time, as we are with ours. As with the modern fascination with "Druidism," it is largely a sanitized and reconstructed form of the original that is being promoted. But the Celtic Christians were nothing if not zealous for the Lord.

Meanwhile, however, Christianity arrived from the south as well. The Roman Pope Gregory the Great, having seen Anglo-Saxon slaves in the Roman market, and having heard that the queen of Kent in southeastern England was a Christian woman from France (Gaul had been conquered by its own Germanic tribe, the Franks), sent his own monk, named Augustine, to Kent. Augustine and his company landed at Canterbury, where they went to work converting the Kentish king and all his people. So Roman Christianity worked its way up from its seat in Canterbury, while Celtic Christianity struggled against the Danes in the north. For his efforts, (St.) Augustine became the first Archbishop of Canterbury, and Canterbury remains the seat of the English church to this day.

The two forms of Christianity were different in details. The Irish were organized around monastery life; and abbots, heads of monasteries, were their most important leaders, though they did have bishops as well. The Roman Christians were organized into geographic dioceses, with bishops as their leaders, though they did have powerful abbots and abbesses themselves. The Romans had revised the calendar, resulting in a different way of figuring the date of Easter. Their monks shaved their heads (the tonsure) differently. We would not make much of these differences today, but at the time they seemed major. People then could not imagine the idea of freedom or diversity in religion. One people must have one religion, or they could not remain united. In order to

be an effective vehicle of salvation, the leaders must possess all—else everything would be made suspect. So the powerful abbess Hilda of Whitby invited leaders of the two groups to a debate, called the Synod of Whitby, in 664, to decide which style of Christianity to follow. She favored the Celts, but even the Welsh remembered the Romans with admiration, and the argument of the Romans, especially their claim that St. Peter, the first bishop of Rome, held the keys to heaven, was impossible for the Celts to refute. Therefore, the English church adopted the Roman practices and became allied with the Pope in Rome at that time, some four centuries after its introduction to Britain. For over a thousand years, the English church would be part of the Roman Catholic body. Yet the fact that English Christians remembered that there had been a time when they were not under the Roman pontiff would be important later, when they would decide to break away again.

The second major invasion was a military one. Actually, there were several of these, because large numbers of Danish farmers arrived and occupied a great swath of northern England during the sixth century. These were the Vikings. We think of them as warriors and looters a la Hagar the Horrible, but actually they were most interested in fresh farming lands, which they found in northern England, eastern Scotland, and around Dublin, Ireland. They merged into the Anglo-Saxon population, though, and adopted Christianity, for their language and culture were similar to those of the Anglo-Saxons. Their presence does account for a number of dialectical differences in the north to this day, however. Still, notice the ethnic mix combining to produce an English people: original Britons, plus Celts, plus some Roman stock, plus Germans, plus Danes. In Scotland, the Norwegians ruled most of the country during much of this period. Finally come the Normans, from the province of Normandy across the English Channel in France. The English are not a single ethnic stock, but a mixture of almost every European people.

The Normans were actually of Viking stock, too, but they had been in France long enough to become very French. Their leader, William of Normandy, claimed the throne of England, though his claim was ludicrous; even his claim on Normandy was tenuous, because of his illegitimacy. Somehow, he finagled the Pope to support his cause. He raised an army and invaded England in 1066 (a watershed year). At the Battle of Hastings, he defeated the English King Harold, whose army was exhausted from rushing back from the north to face an untimely Scottish challenge (a recurring English historical theme), and the victorious Norman became William I, the Conqueror, with a whole kingdom to parcel out among his own nobles. He established a long line of Norman French kings over England, and an almost-entirely Norman nobility. Now, the common people spoke English, but the nobility spoke French. As a result, over a 300 year period, hundreds of French words, with their Latin roots, got absorbed into English, and the Old English language of the Anglo-Saxons disappeared, replaced by what we call Middle English, a mixture of Old English and French. The Normans made England more a part of Europe than ever, and more tied to the Roman church. They brought the European style of feudalism, with serfs and lords, knights and squires and yeomen, into English society, and the former Anglo-Saxon thanes and thralls disappeared.

Even so, the roots of the Protestant Reformation go back to England of the 1300's, to an English priest and Bible scholar named John Wycliffe. He was a radical. He wanted the Bible translated into English, so that his people could read it in their own tongue (it was only in Latin at the time, the universal language of the church across Europe). He wanted the church to give up its wealth. And he wanted to end some of the medieval teachings of the church, including the supremacy of the Pope and the doctrine of Transubstantiation—the idea that the bread and wine of communion are literally transformed into the body and blood of Christ at the altar.

Wycliffe had some friends in high places (men who would be delighted to relieve the church of some of its wealth, such as John of Gaunt, the richest man in England, and a son of Edward III), and the church authorities never succeeded in bringing him to trial for heresy. He died of natural causes after translating much, but not all, of the Bible into English (or perhaps his disciples did that work). His followers, called “Lollards,” traveled around England, sleeping in hedges and preaching his ideas for years afterwards, suffering abuse from church leaders, but winning many common English people to their views through their humility and poverty. Wycliffe's ideas spread abroad also, and they took root elsewhere. In Bohemia (now Poland), Jan Hus took up the same reformist doctrine as Wycliffe, but he was not so fortunate. He was tricked by church authorities, arrested, convicted of heresy, and burned at the stake. But not before the reformist thinking spread even further, into Germany and the Low Countries.

Later, in the early 1500's, a German Augustinian monk and Bible professor named Martin Luther took up the same platform. He translated the Bible into German and tangled with representatives of the Vatican. His particular grievance was the sale of indulgences (like free passes to avoid punishments for sins) to raise money for the building of St. Peter's Basilica and other edifices in Rome. Like Wycliffe, Luther had some powerful supporters, and he was spirited away to safety. His open defiance of the Pope's authority, and his getting away with it, caused the split in the European church we call the Protestant Reformation. The Lutheran movement began in northern Germany and spread into Scandinavia. Very soon, even more revisionist theologians were breaking with Rome: John Calvin started the Reformed churches in Switzerland and the Netherlands. His disciple John Knox established Presbyterianism in Scotland. There were other movements as well. Note that each of these Protestant denominations began with a forceful, persuasive theologian, and they were organized around his ideas. They all became doctrinal churches, identified by specific teachings they insisted on, setting themselves apart from the doctrines of Rome or the other Protestant groups. That is not the way it happened in England.

The English Reformation is inescapably tied in the popular mind to Henry VIII and his marital troubles, but in fact, Henry had very little influence on the development of the Church of England. It was his unwanted second daughter Elizabeth who would be the true forger of fledgling Anglicanism. What Henry provided was the *idea* of separation from Rome, along with the experience of almost two decades in that state while little actual change took place in the Church. (Appendix One deals specifically with Henry VIII and the saga of his break with Rome.)

But before considering how that came about, it may be helpful to consider some of the cultural realities that made the English Reformation possible. First, there is the medieval notion of the “Great Chain of Being,” a theory that all of creation proceeds in orderly formation from the very throne of God, with each station of beings, including angels and lesser earthly creatures, occupying a hierarchical niche that was established by God. One born a serf should not aspire to freedom, since God himself had ordained serfdom for that person, through the destiny of birth. Those of the nobility were a breed apart, and those born to that status were chosen for it by God. One must not question that status quo.

In actual fact, there was some, but only a small amount, of social mobility. Very talented men, and even a few women, did manage to rise above their station, sometimes dramatically so. The best place to rise above one’s station was the Church, for there, under the requirement of clerical celibacy, there were no offspring to inherit property and come into competition with the nobility. But the system and the prejudices of the time made that transition very difficult, and for most people, impossible.

A corollary to the Great Chain of Being is the doctrine of Divine Right of Kings. If one was anointed king, it was by divine appointment, and it was not to be questioned. By this view, if a kingdom’s crown prince were a madman (as actually happened in several cases), then God wanted and required that people to be ruled by a madman, probably as punishment for some sin. Yet again, in actual practice, many kings were overthrown by their cousins, amid much bloodshed, sometimes due to the incumbent’s incompetency, sometimes due to the power and ambition of a competitor; but in each case, apologists for the usurper had to go into overdrive to explain how the events were really within the will of the Almighty, and the new ruler was the truly anointed one. It always helped to have accomplished the overthrow, which in itself indicated the divine sanction, since it could not have happened if it were contrary to God’s will.

Medieval England undertook to limit a king’s authority at least a smidgen, during the bad old days of King John’s incompetent rule, when the nobility forced the king to accept the Magna Carta (1215). That document has had lasting, or at any rate, recurring effects tending toward reduction of royal powers. However, under the Tudors, England entered the Renaissance, the age of Machiavelli. During that period, kings throughout Europe claimed, and many accumulated the power to wield, absolute authority under the principle of Divine Right. It would take the process of the Protestant Reformation, itself a product of the Renaissance, along with the economic and cultural evolutions it encouraged, to begin to chip away at that concentrated power. Additionally, the importance of invention of the printing press must not be overlooked in examining all these developments. Meanwhile, all five of the Tudor monarchs ruled with iron hand. It was not a time for free and easy differences of opinions on weighty matters, and punishments were incredibly harsh.

Henry VIII was God’s anointed king, and it helped his cause that there was no viable hereditary competitor to him, since they had all been killed off in the previous

couple of generations in the Wars of the Roses (his older brother Arthur had died before being crowned king, and his surviving siblings were female).

Modern Americans have little to no sympathy with Henry VIII, and rightly so. He was a tyrant and a philanderer, and it seems hard to believe that he was in any way religious. We must try to bear in mind that he was a man of his time, and he was a king. Nobody of the time expected anything else of their rulers. By comparison with France and Italy, England's royal court was downright straight-laced and respectable, and there is evidence that his religious convictions were, if self-serving, nevertheless devout.

Unattractive as it may be today, this is how the English Church first broke away from Rome (it was the second time that mattered more, and lasted)—not over a set of beliefs, but over politics. Consequently, when some people opposed Henry over his break, as his chancellor and friend Thomas More and others did, he charged them with treason, not heresy, so they were beheaded, not burned at the stake. A small point, perhaps, but significant. Henry did not allow any Protestant reforms to take place in the Church, even though Archbishop Cranmer by this time was leaning toward more of a Lutheran style of church. Clergy were still not allowed to marry, though Cranmer and some others secretly did so. No one else besides the king was allowed to have a divorce (which was, technically, an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, not a divorce). The mass continued to be only in Latin. People woke up one morning Catholic, and they went to bed that night Protestant, and no one could really tell any difference. They attended the same parish church, had the same priest and the same bishop, and received the same sacraments. They simply couldn't appeal to Rome anymore (very few had ever had occasion to do so), and there came to be an English Bible (mostly Wycliffe's work) placed in every church. Persons who preached Protestant ideas continued to be subject to arrest, torture, and martyrdom, often by burning, as was the case in the Catholic realms. The only part of the Book of Common Prayer translated during Henry's lifetime was the Great Litany (page 148).

When Henry VIII died (in 1546, after going through three more wives [another annulment, another beheading, and a widow], who are not relevant to the religious developments), his nine-year-old son Edward VI succeeded him. Like his uncle Arthur, Edward was a sickly boy, and he only lived six more years. By this time, the English noblemen who had most influence at court were Protestant-minded, however; and under their tutelage, the teenaged king began to allow some Continental-style reforms in the Church. In 1549, Cranmer introduced his first *Book of Common Prayer*, so that people could understand the mass and even hold a copy in their own hands. It was followed by a more Protestant-sounding one in 1552, near the time of the young king's death. Clergy began to marry. Ordinary people read the Bible in English. England considered itself a Protestant nation indeed. By this time, one king's need for a male heir was only temporarily a side issue, for after Edward, the only possible claimants to the throne were all female: the lasting question continued to be whether a Pope, who was a foreign prince, whose independence and objectivity were in doubt but who was reliably more interested in continental politics than in England's, should hold a trump card over England's own rightful King, Parliament, and Archbishop. With the prestige of the

Papacy at a low ebb in England, that question was easy for a great many Englishmen to answer.

When Edward died unmarried and childless, the old questions arose in earnest. His older sister Mary Tudor was next in line by primogeniture as well as by their father's will, and she was Catherine of Aragon's Catholic daughter. Though England had never accepted a woman ruler before, the only alternatives available were also females: younger sister Elizabeth was the little-seen daughter of the unpopular home-wrecker Anne Boleyn; cousin Mary Queen of Scots was a Catholic and a foreigner and allied with enemy France; cousin Lady Jane Grey was Protestant, but the puppet of her young husband's English family. Following the law proved the easiest thing to do, after all. After a triumphant entry into London, the heir by primogeniture, Mary Tudor, pushed Lady Jane aside and was crowned despite the religious question, amid a display of affection for her late mother, who had had the sympathy of many. But Mary hated her father for what he had done to her and her mother, and she hated the English people for going along with it. She particularly hated his English Church, which she considered utterly heretical. She considered herself to be Spanish, and she married a Spanish cousin, King Philip II of Spain. She immediately re-instituted the Roman church, with the Latin mass, undid all of her brother Edward's reforms, and arrested all clergy who balked, including Thomas Cranmer and several other bishops. With patience and tact, Mary might have brought off her plan. However, her means of dealing with Protestants was to burn them at the stake—by the hundreds—and there were many more of them to burn than there had been during her father's rule.

Bishops Cranmer, Latimer, and Ridley met their fiery ends in a street in Oxford now known as Martyrs Square. Latimer is said to have died telling Ridley, "Now Ridley, play the man, for we light this day a fire which, by the grace of God, will never burn out in England!" Cranmer, executed separately, had at one point signed a recantation of his views on the promise of being spared. When it became clear he was to be burned anyway, however, he publicly reaffirmed his Protestant faith; when his pyre was lit, he held the hand that had signed the recantation into the flames so that it would be first to bear the punishment.

This is how Mary Tudor earned the nickname "Bloody Mary," and how she horrified and Protestantized her people, having exactly the opposite effect she intended. Like her younger brother, she ruled for only five years. When she died in 1557, childless, likely of ovarian cancer, her people considered her death a deliverance from God. She hadn't helped make the idea of a woman ruler more palatable, since England's one experience had not gone well. But Mary had eliminated her cousin Jane already. Barring another militant Catholic and a woman to boot, Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots, the only one left to take the throne was the young and unknown Elizabeth, next by primogeniture and by Henry VIII's will. What kind of queen could the daughter of the unpopular hussy and convicted adulteress, Anne Boleyn, be? She began her rule tenuously, with enemies on every side waiting impatiently for her first miss-step.

Elizabeth turned out to be England's greatest ruler, (or at least the beneficiary of its greatest period of growth), reigning for forty-five years and leading her country into unprecedented prosperity, security, and a golden age of literature. She is the true founder of Anglicanism, not her father, because it was she who made the crucial decisions which would set the course for the English church for centuries. It would be neither Protestant nor Catholic, yet both. She restored Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer*—more lasting in its effects than any of Henry VIII's acts-- with some slight revisions, including some ideas of her own, in 1562. She made the "Elizabethan Compromise," a decision not to hunt down and persecute dissenters for nonconformist thoughts, but only for actions in rebellion against her authority. In the latter case, she was her father's daughter! She even had her cousin Mary Stuart, the Catholic Scottish queen, now exiled by the Presbyterian Scottish lairds, executed for plotting against her own life and throne. There were other executions as well, largely for actual acts or plots of treason. On the whole, though, there was religious peace in England, while the rest of Europe was fighting horrendous and bloody wars between Catholics and Protestants, with torture and carnage on both sides.

Since Elizabeth never married, she was the last of the Tudor dynasty. She was succeeded by Mary Stuart's son James, the King of Scotland, uniting the two kingdoms forever after. He had been brought up Presbyterian after being taken from his Catholic mother, and many people thought he would try to establish Presbyterianism in England (some wanted that to happen). But he became a stalwart Anglican, and supported the Elizabethan church with its prayer book and its bishops. He did, however, sponsor a new translation of the Bible, which drew from earlier work by Wycliffe and others. It came to be called the King James Bible in his honor, and it was the standard English Bible for centuries. The influence it has had on the English language and literature can scarcely be over-stated.

James I, (James VI in Scotland), England's first Stuart ruler, also sought to continue his Tudor cousins' heavy-handed rule by Divine Right. He and his son Charles were just as stubborn in defense of royal prerogatives as any Tudor had been. However, times were changing, and the Parliament was daring to assert itself over the king's majesty. Even during Elizabeth's reign, the Calvinistic form of Protestantism had been growing in popularity in England. These more radical Protestants were called Puritans, because they wanted to take over and "purify" the Church of any surviving Papist influences. A related group, the Separatists, gave up on purifying such a "corrupt" body, and simply wanted to get away from it; they were the ones who established the Massachusetts Bay colony during James' reign.

After James' death, the Puritans became ever more powerful back home in England, and finally, in the 1640's, they seized control of Parliament, and launched a civil war which would result in the execution of yet another Archbishop of Canterbury (Laud), and even, in 1649, of James I's son, King Charles I, himself. In place of monarchy, the general of the Parliamentary forces, Oliver Cromwell, ruled as a dictator (he was not of the nobility). For a period of more than a decade, England was a

Protestant state in the Presbyterian model. The bishops who would not cooperate were imprisoned, and *The Book of Common Prayer* was banned.

But the English people, by and large, came to dislike the Puritan government, even though most did have strongly Protestant sentiments. Some, of course, would still have preferred Catholicism. But the Puritans were a serious and strict lot. They were basically against anything that was beautiful (“vanity”) or entertaining to people (“sinful levity”). They went into the English cathedrals and parish churches and smashed all of the medieval stained glass windows and destroyed a thousand years’ worth of statues (“idolatry”). They disapproved of everything colorful, fashionable, or festive, and anything that smacked to them of “Popery” in any way. They harassed theatre-goers and banned all dramatic entertainments. They closed the bear-baiting rings in London, not because they didn’t want the bears to be harmed, but because they didn’t want the humans to have fun watching. All in all, they represented too extreme a change for the English, who for the most part have always been a pretty moderate people, despite these recurring flare-ups of civil violence (which have been even worse on the Continent). After Cromwell died in 1658, Parliament began negotiating with the next Stuart heir, son of the executed Charles I, in exile in Catholic France, who became Charles II in 1660. He not only restored the monarchy, but also restored the Church to its Elizabethan settlement. The bishops and the prayer book were back in their places by 1662; the prayer book of that year is still the officially sanctioned one in England today.

There was still much anti-Catholic sentiment in England, however. Charles II would have preferred to be Catholic himself, but he did not make an issue of it, and he did not produce a legitimate heir to his throne. Therefore, upon his death, his brother, James II, became king. This James had, in a previous marriage, had two daughters, Mary and Anne, both married to Protestant men. He was a Catholic, however, and when his second wife gave birth to a son, he had the boy baptized by a Catholic priest. This act was received as a declaration of religious war by Parliament, who interpreted it as the King’s proclamation that the next ruler would be openly allied with Rome. Therefore, James II was overthrown in 1688 in the “Glorious Revolution” (glorious because it was essentially bloodless; James was allowed to escape to France.) His male descendants continued to claim the thrones of Scotland and England for decades to come as the “Jacobites.” Two serious attempts were made in the first half of the eighteenth century to restore their line, particularly in Scotland. But the throne was passed by Parliament to James’ two Protestant daughters. First, Mary ruled with her husband, William of Orange, a cousin and a prince of the Netherlands. They were followed by her sister Anne, whose husband was not of the peerage and not made a prince. Neither had children, so Parliament ignored the Jacobites entirely, and turned to more distant Protestant German cousins, the Hanover line. Why is this important? First, it underscores the determination of England’s leadership to retain its Protestant Church of England. Second, it reveals a by-product of that religious goal: the constitutional monarchy. Rulers would no longer be acceptable solely by primogeniture; they could be by-passed if they did not meet the religious test of acceptance of the Church of England.

Steadied on its moderate course after tips toward both extreme Protestantism and Catholicism, the Church of England now sailed placidly into the eighteenth century. While it had left behind the time of revolution and bloodshed over religion, the Church was not to escape controversy. Extremes within the Church itself continued to vie for supremacy. That very placidity was perhaps the greatest danger to the church: it had no passion, and the level of religious commitment was shallow.

The first crisis was a serious threat to the faith of the Church rather than to its peace, a philosophical outlook more than a religion, known as Deism (more on this movement in the chapter following). A reaction against the destructive religious passions of the previous centuries and a response to the hope for prosperity and knowledge that was being offered by the rise of Science, Deism is a rationalistic set of beliefs that was popular particularly among the better educated, more prosperous, upper class people, and particularly the men of the period. It was not a church, just an attitude that tended to keep those who held its views from being faithful participants in church. Basically, the Deists believed in God, but not in miracles or anything supernatural. They were very scientific in their thinking (this was the early phase of the influence of science on Western culture). Their image of God was as a watchmaker, who creates the watch, winds it up, and then goes off and lets it run without constantly monitoring each tick, or resetting. Therefore, they did not believe in the activity of the Holy Spirit, or the divinity of Jesus, or the inspiration of the Bible, or any miracles, or any effectiveness of prayer. These beliefs had a negative effect not only on the Anglican Church, but on others as well, both in England and in America. Difficult as it is to see how any Deist could consider himself to be a Christian, many professors at the leading universities and even a number of bishops and other clergy fell prey to its rationalistic appeal, at least to some degree. It was a complacent, lackadaisical period for the English Church.

If lack of zeal or emotion was a failing of the established Church, the antidote, in the form of Revivalism, sought to fill that void. Deism afflicted the upper classes: revivalism infected the lower ones. There were several prominent revivalists active in England, but George Whitfield, a Calvinist, and John Wesley, an Anglican priest, were the most successful and renowned. Wesley led a reforming movement within the Church of England called Methodism, which changed the whole Church and led to the establishment of yet another separate denomination.

THE RISE OF METHODISM

John and Charles Wesley came from a devout clergy family. The brothers became Anglican priests, and they served together in the American colony of Georgia for a brief time. A parish John established on St. Simon's Island is still an active Episcopal congregation today. In their travels, however, the men came under the influence of Moravian Christians, a derivative of Lutheranism in Germany, who were beginning to settle in America, principally North Carolina. The Wesleys were impressed by the Moravians' strength of faith, their impassioned hymnody, and evangelical preaching.

Upon their return to London, both John and Charles, separately, had experiences of deep spiritual awakening that made it seem as if, in comparison, their previous state was not religious at all. Before long, John was making a name for himself as an Evangelical preacher, and Charles was turning out numerous revivalist hymns, many of which became popular stand-bys of the Evangelical tradition.

Population growth and movement had outstripped the English parochial system's ability to respond. Rural churches lay almost desolate, while urban churches were overwhelmed by the swelling throngs looking for work in the cities. A complacent Church hierarchy had little interest in ministry among the working poor. The Evangelical revival meetings addressed the spiritual needs of these people. Barred from preaching in the church pulpits, the Wesleys turned to outdoor rallies, where ironically, they were able to reach out to much larger crowds of people. Methodism as a movement within the Church of England was born. It had an even larger impact on the American colonies and the United States than in England.

Methodism was objectionable to the Church establishment for several weak reasons and at least one good one:

- ❖ Class bigotry: those attracted to Methodism were largely lower-class.
- ❖ Anti-emotionalism: Methodist hymnody and preaching were highly emotionally charged, and this was the Age of Reason. Methodists were called "enthusiasts," and it was not a compliment.
- ❖ Theology: the Methodists claimed that adult conversion was necessary for salvation, discounting the efficacy of baptism and even of life-long, faithful adherence to the church. Methodists also came to accept presbyteral ordination, which is not practiced in the more-catholic Anglican tradition.

In the end, the Methodists helped bring about lasting change in the Church of England in the first two areas. Classism and anti-emotionality have waned. As for the third, while Anglicans have no aversion to religious conversion, they have steadfastly refused to budge on the idea that it is the source of an individual's salvation, or to move away from Episcopacy and ordination by bishops only. These obstacles continue to stymie reunion between the two to this day.

Nevertheless, both John and Charles Wesley remained Anglican priests in good standing all of their long lives. Toward the end, when the American colonies were asserting their independence, representatives of American Methodism came to John Wesley, asking him to ordain some of them so that they could become a separate denomination in America. Since Wesley was a priest, not a bishop, this act would involve his repudiating the principle of Episcopal ordination and embracing the idea of presbyteral, or priestly, ordination, as the German Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists had done. After deliberation, he agreed. Sadly, that decision caused a rift between him and his brother Charles that was never healed in their lifetime. Later, the English Methodists also broke away from the national Church.

THE CATHOLIC REVIVAL

By the 1830's, the Church was almost ready for the pendulum to swing another way. It began to occur to a small group of Oxford scholars that the Church did not originate in the 1530's, but in fact traced its origins to Christ himself. That meant that the Tradition of the Church includes all that came prior to the separation from Rome as well as that which came after it. These were important and radical points, because they opened up the possibility of reclaiming Catholic practices and theology alongside Protestant ones. The Movement met with ridicule and setbacks. A few of the leaders were even led to abandon Anglicanism and "swim the Tiber" to Roman Catholicism, such as John Newman, who was later made a Roman Catholic Cardinal). But over the decades to come, the movement was to have remarkable effects in both England and abroad. Probably the tendency of Anglo-Catholics to work in the slums among the poor became their greatest strength. The most important lasting effects are in the rediscovery of a more catholic identity and a more sacramental attitude in the Church. A parallel Ritualist Movement soon followed, and it produced more visible results over a period of decades.

Some of these are:

- ❖ Use of candlesticks on altars
- ❖ Use of vestments
- ❖ Vested choirs
- ❖ The principle of Eucharist being celebrated every Sunday, initially at the universal 8:00 service
- ❖ Re-establishment of monastic houses for men and women
- ❖ Re-discovery of such practices as private confession, use of incense, holy water, and sanctuary bells

If it seems as if these last movements led the Church in opposite directions which continue to affect us, that is correct. During the Twentieth Century in Britain, there were two competing strains of Anglican Churchmanship which, for the most part, had an uneasy truce between them. The Evangelical party stress individual conversion, a pious lifestyle, and a stricter Biblical interpretation. Their clergy are more oriented toward preaching. The Anglo-catholic party stress the communal life of the Church as Ark of Salvation, acts of charity and sacrifice, and a greater emphasis on the traditions of the Church. Anglo-catholic priests have been more focused on liturgy and the sacraments than on preaching.

In between, the peacemakers have been the moderates, often referred to as Broad-churchmen. These people, though often derided as luke-warm by both extremes, express the naturally moderate bent of the Anglican main stream. What they have given us is the ability to choose the best of Protestantism and Catholicism and make use of either for what it has to offer us, without making anything marginalizing into the lynch-pin of salvation. The dawn of the Twenty-first Century would seem to have the Broad Church

in triumph over most of these historic disputes. Today, we have many parishes in which strong, evangelical preaching and Bible study are combined with careful liturgy and emphasis on the sacraments, especially Eucharist. We often find charismatic worshipers and incense users in the same congregation!

AN AGE OF CONFLICT

After all of these serious disputes, it would be nice to discover that all conflicts have been settled, but of course, that is not the case. In the mid-nineteenth century, the argument over the morality of racial human slavery picked up steam. In general, slavery is at least accepted throughout Scripture, outside of a very tactful and restrained criticism in the *Letter to Philemon*. Just as the American Civil War began, with slavery as a central issue, Charles Darwin, son of an English clergyman, published his landmark *Origin of Species* setting off an explosion of controversy which has not completely settled yet! These two issues may seem worlds apart, but they share a factor common to almost every controversy, extending throughout the twentieth century: they throw into question the primacy of Scripture, particularly as an inerrant source of revealed truth. This question sums up the battle between traditionalism and modernism. Again and again, the same conflict arises. Science or modern revisionists are beginning to look at a topic in a new way. Scripture says it is a sin. Is it really that simple?

We've seen figurative, and sometimes literal, blood shed over a series of sociological questions, such as:

- ❖ The nature and origins of mental illness
- ❖ The nature and treatment of physical illness
- ❖ Racism, slavery, and human rights
- ❖ Alcoholism and other forms of addiction
- ❖ The proper treatment of criminals
- ❖ Voting rights and other democratic ideals
- ❖ Divorce
- ❖ The role of Christianity in economics
- ❖ War and pacifism
- ❖ Capital punishment
- ❖ Artificial birth control
- ❖ Equal rights for women
- ❖ Clinical abortion
- ❖ Human sexuality and the role of homosexual persons

At this point, the controversies become international, not British ones seeping over into the American church. We will deal with the more current ones in our next segment, on the development of the Anglican tradition in the United States.