



WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ANGLICAN

Week 3: The Anglican Church is Historic (The Anglican Church in America)



Anglican Identity: History

- What is an Anglican?
- The irony of this lack of knowledge regarding who we are.



Anglican Identity: History

Our History

- In our first installment, we dealt with the critique which is frequently lodged in certain circles that the Anglican Church is Henry's Church (16th c., tied to Henry).



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- In the 2nd installment, we considered what happened to the Anglican Church at the time of the Reformation in the 16th-17th centuries.
- The “Long Reformation.”



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Summary:

- The Anglican Church is an ancient church bearing the marks of catholicity.
- The Anglican Church participated in and was renewed at the time of the Reformation (16th-17th c's.)

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- In our third talk regarding Anglican history, we are going to see how the Anglican Church grew into a worldwide Communion and especially focus on how it came to the United States.

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- Simply stated, wherever the British Empire went, Anglican missionaries were sent to evangelize.
- This shows us how the Anglican Church has grown to be the third largest Christian body in the world. (focus on the American Colonies)

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- The first attempt at an English colony in North America was on Roanoke Island in 1585-1587.
- The colony was named “Virginia” in honor of Queen Elizabeth.
- This effort was unsuccessful.

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- But in 1607, a second attempt at a colony was made north of the first one and was called “Jamestown” in honor of King James.
- Some settlers were interested in financial pursuits; others were interested in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth.

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- As soon as the settlers arrived, they celebrated Holy Communion on the 3rd Sunday after Trinity according to the BCP.
- The Rev. Robert Hunt was the priest at this service—he spent the rest of his life caring for the souls entrusted to him.

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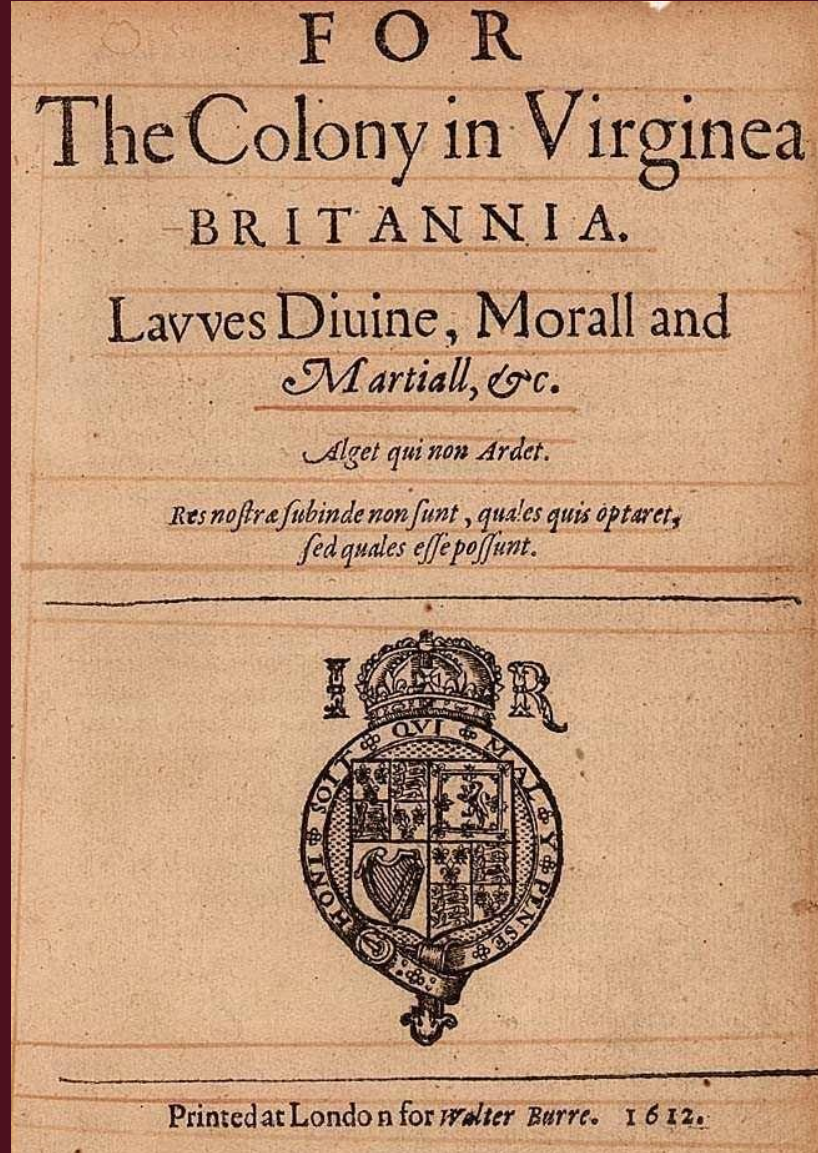
- The early years were difficult—in fact, in 1609-10, the colony faced near starvation.
- Only a remnant remained when a new governor arrived in 1610.

Anglican Identity: History



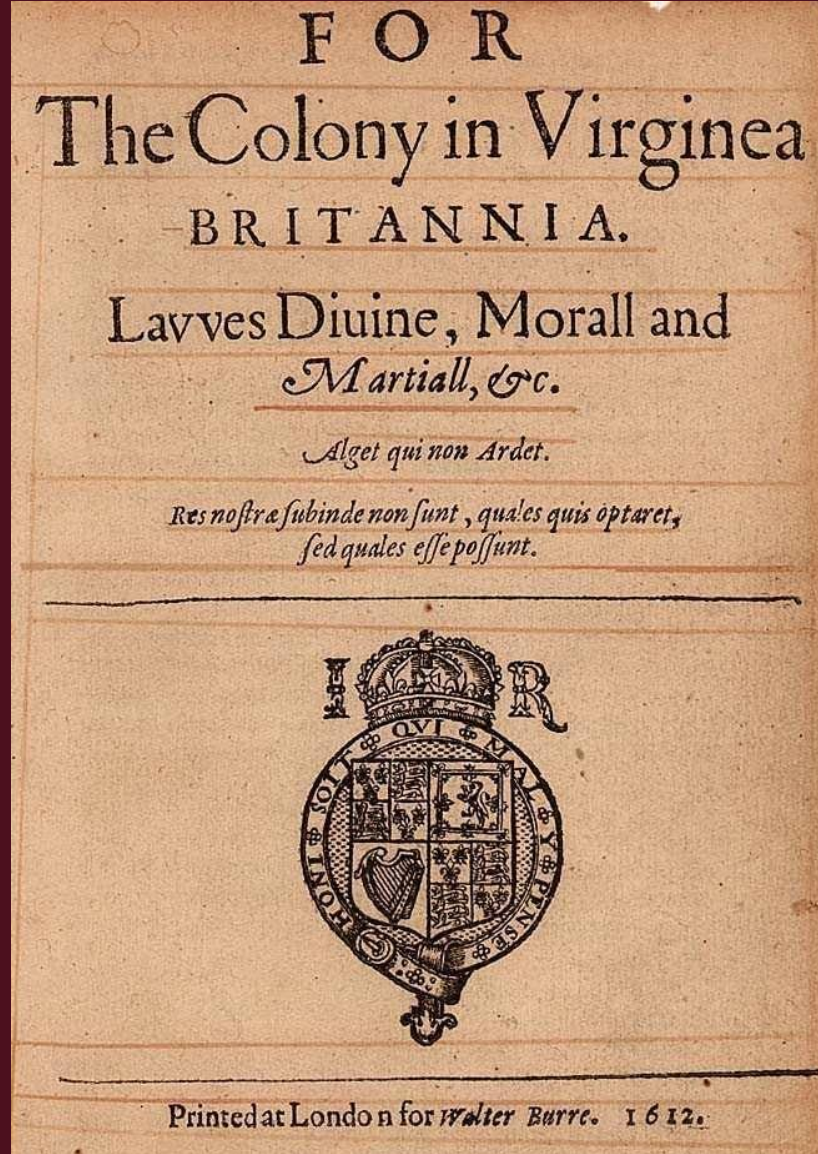
- The colony received a boost in 1611 with the arrival of new settlers.
- Among this group was Sir Thomas Dale and another priest named Alexander Whitaker.

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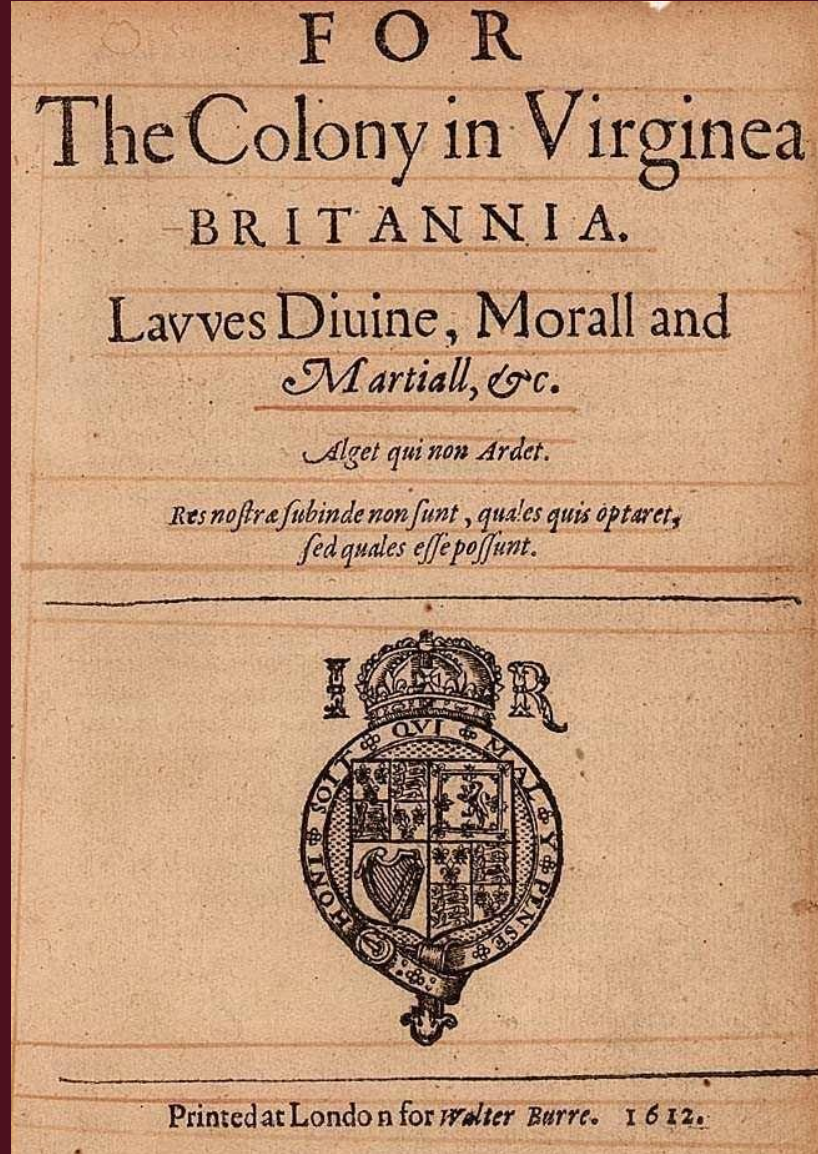
- One of Dale's first acts was to issue a work called *The Lawes Divine, Morall, and Martiall*.
- Ahlstrom says that this was essentially an outline for a Holy Commonwealth, with the "divine" law for civil conduct and the "martiall" law for the church.

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- For instance, It ordered that “everie man and woman duly twice a day, upon the first towling of the Bell, shall upon the working daies repaire unto the Church to hear divine service,” and that the Lord’s day be given over even more to public and private religious exercises.

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- By 1612, the author of *The New Life in Virginia* could say that the prospects in the Jamestown colony were “good.”
- Rev. Whitaker, who eventually became known as “The Apostle to Virginia,” had the gift of missionary expansion.

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- Whitaker was especially driven to evangelize the Native Americans.
- In his famous sermon, *Good Newes from Virginia* (1613), he said that the natives were “servants of sin and the devil.”

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- But he also acknowledged that they were “sons of Adam” and were “a very understanding generation, quicke of apprehension, suddaine in their despatches, subtile in their dealings, exquisite in their inventions, and industrious in their labour.”

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- Whitaker's most famous convert was Pocahontas, who took the name "Rebecca" at her Baptism.
- She later married John Rolfe, an Anglican, at Henrico (a second colony established about 50 miles up the James River).

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- The Anglican Church slowly expanded throughout Virginia (and was the “established church”).
- By 1650, there were 20 parishes in VA; by 1700, there were about 40; by 1750, there were almost 100.

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- One of the prevailing problems for the Anglican church in the American colonies was the lack of a bishop.
- The Bishop of London was granted oversight of all English colonies.

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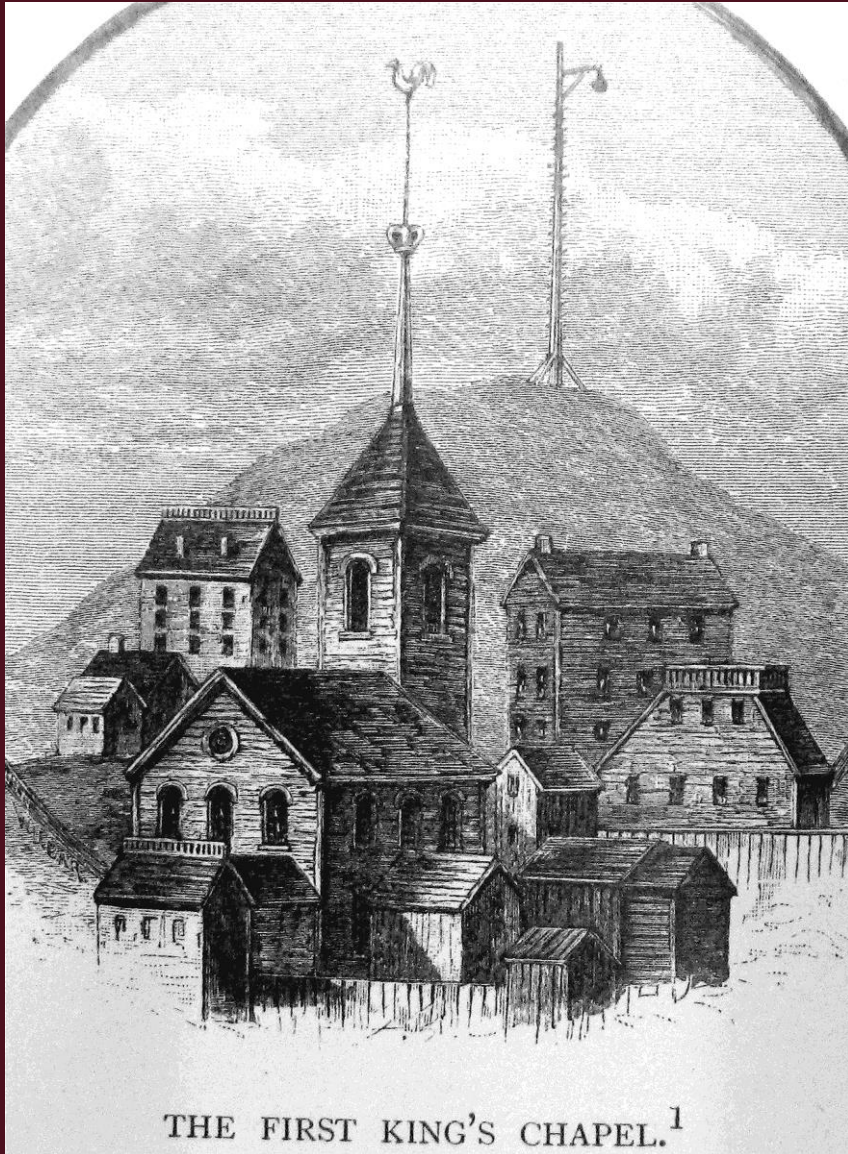
- Since only the bishop can ordain new deacons and priests, this meant that men who sensed a call into ministry would have to sail to England to be trained at one of the universities and to be ordained.
- Or it meant that a newly ordained priest from England would have to depart for one of the colonies to minister.

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- This led to a lack of ministers for the Anglican churches which hindered its growth.
- This also meant that the laity exercised a greater role in the parish than they had in England.

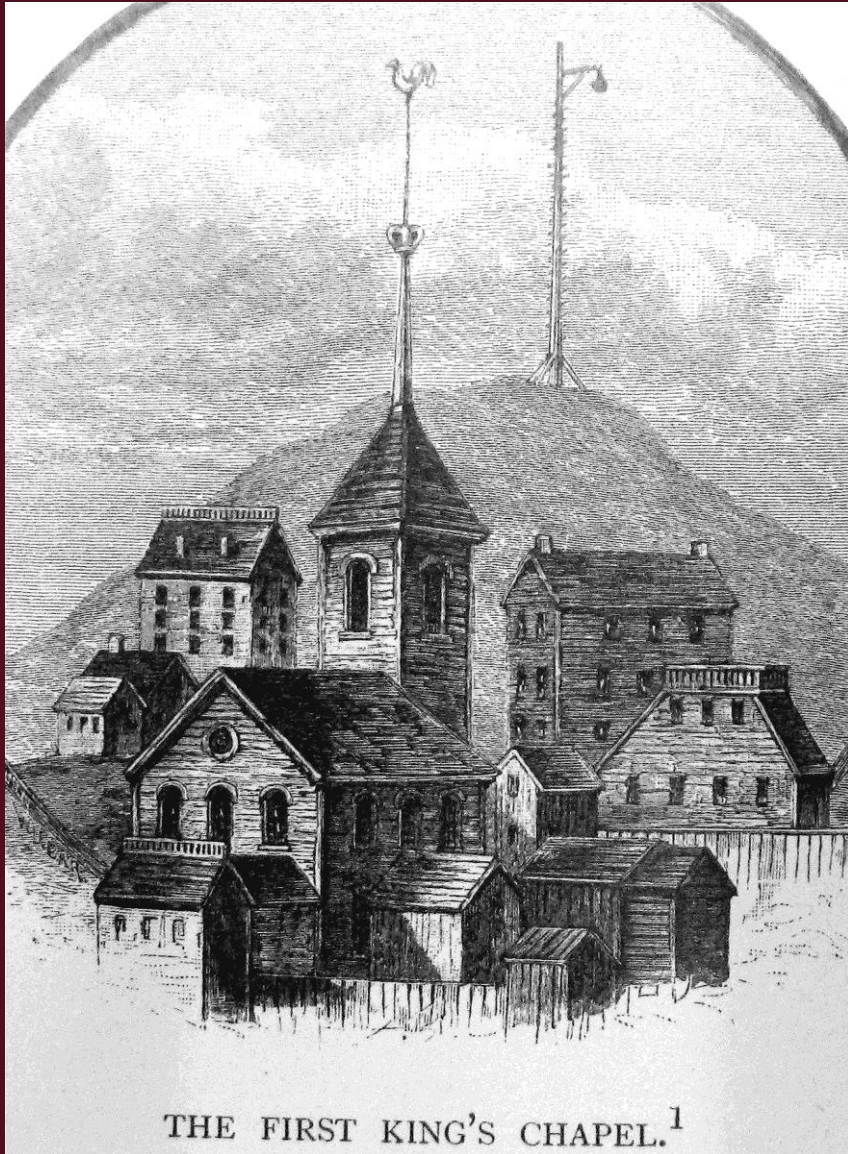
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- To the north, New England was largely dominated by Puritans who had left England, but there were also some Anglicans.
- In 1689 (the year of the English Act of Toleration), King's Chapel in MA served as the first Anglican church in New England (some 400 people attended the first service).

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- The Anglican Church experienced remarkable growth in the ensuing years.
- By 1750, there were 44 Anglican churches in New England.



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- In 1663, a charter was granted by King Charles II to establish a new colony to the south of Virginia in Carolina (which originally encompassed both North and South).
- In 1670, the first settlement appeared on the Ashley River and known as Charles-Town (Charleston).

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- Like Virginia, the Anglican Church was essentially the “established church” in the colony.
- The Anglican church was also planted nearby in Georgia, where an English colony was established in Savannah in the early 18th c.

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- The Anglican Church was doing quite well at the dawn of the American Revolution.
- Anglicans were second in numbers only to the Puritans (Congregationalists) among Christian churches in the colonies.

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- However, Anglicans were hindered by their lack of a bishop and the shortage of clergy.
- This coincided with the formation of the Methodist churches (which were largely comprised, at first, of Anglicans).

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- John Wesley, even though he was a lifelong Anglican, had set in motion the ordination of clergy without a bishop.
- This issue, combined with his zealous preaching efforts, led to an explosion of Methodism in the colonies.

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- As you might imagine, the American Revolution had a significant impact on the Anglican church in America.
- When the Revolution began, it is estimated that the Anglican clergy were divided between Loyalists (55%) and Patriots (45%).

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- Surely a significant factor in this large number of loyalists was the fact that these men had all been trained in England and at their ordination, had taken a vow to the king.
- This exacerbated the clergy shortage in the colonies.

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- But at the same time, it is worth remembering that 34 of the 56 delegates at the Continental Congress were Anglican, including James Madison and James Monroe.
- And there was an Anglican clergyman present to lead them in prayer.

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- At the end of the Revolutionary War, Anglicans faced some serious questions:
- What would they call themselves?
- Where could they obtain bishops?
- How would they adapt the BCP to fit their new situation?

Lack of Organization

Another problem that the early Anglicans faced was a lack of organization. Clara Loveland writes:

“The break from England by the Colonies meant the breakdown of their ecclesiastical system to the Anglican churches in America. Left without contact with their superiors and without any diocesan organization of their own, the parishes were forced to act independently in a way that was foreign to the Anglican conception of church government. Of necessity, in the United States the parish replaced the diocese as the basic unit of the Church.” (*The Critical Years*, 6.)

The eventually happened, of course, but the formation of dioceses took some time.

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- Furthermore, there were “parties” that had developed within the Anglican church in England which transferred to the colonies:
 - High Church
 - Evangelical
 - Latitudinarian

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- This made agreement on much needed reforms more difficult.
- A plan came forth from The Rev. William White, who had been Washington's chaplain in the war, to organize the Anglican church in the US.

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- He called for independence from the English church and quoted the Articles of Religion to this end:
- “Every particular or national church hath authority to ordain, change, and abolish, ceremonies and rites of the church ordained only by man’s authority, so that all things be done to edifying.” (Article 34)

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- A new name was adopted: “The Protestant Episcopal Church of the US.”
- He also called for a revision of the BCP.
- But he was unsure how the “episcopal succession” could be obtained for the church.

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- Traditionally, you needed 3 bishops to lay hands on another priest to consecrate him as a bishop.
- White proposed that three priests could lay hands on another priest and make him a bishop (a rather radical notion at the time which was quite close to what Wesley had done).

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- This third proposal moved the clergy of Connecticut to seek a more traditional alternative.
- They elected The Rev. Samuel Seabury to become their bishop and sent him to England to be consecrated.

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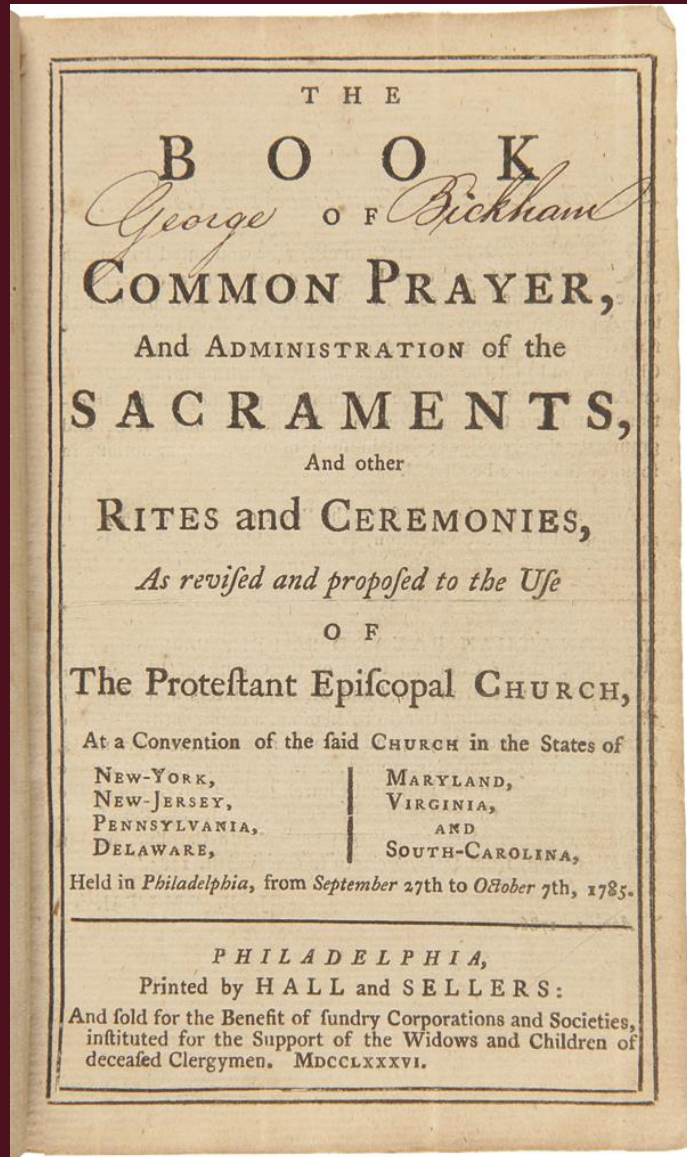


- Due to the complicated political realities, the English bishops did not think that could consecrate Seabury.
- But there were English bishops in Scotland, called the Non-Jurors, who did agree to consecrate Seabury.

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- So Samuel Seabury became the first American bishop.
- By 1787, the situation with England had eased enough that the PECUS was able to negotiate having two bishops consecrated in England: William White and Samuel Provoost.



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- In 1789, a General Convention of the church was held in Philadelphia.
- The 1662 BCP was adapted for use in the US and shortly after this, the Thirty-Nine Articles and the Ordinal were also adopted.

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- For many years, the Episcopal church flourished and expanded across the US.
- In the 19th c., it survived the Civil War—dividing for a short period but quickly reuniting.

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- But in the late 19th c. the Episcopal church was trending towards becoming more exclusivist.
- This coincided with a rise among evangelicals in the Episcopal church who were ecumenically minded and wanted to see greater unity with other Christian bodies.

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- This trend toward exclusivism was led by the rise of the Anglo-Catholic party within the Episcopal church.
- This moved a group of evangelicals to depart and form the Reformed Episcopal Church in 1873.

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- Despite this, the Episcopal church grew and probably reached the height of its size and influence in the mid-twentieth century.
- But in the 1960s, cracks began to form.

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- In the 1960s, a bishop named James Pike began to embrace and teach heretical ideas.
- While many bishops favored censuring him, the Episcopal church failed to do so, resulting in another exodus of traditionally-minded Christians who formed The American Episcopal Church.

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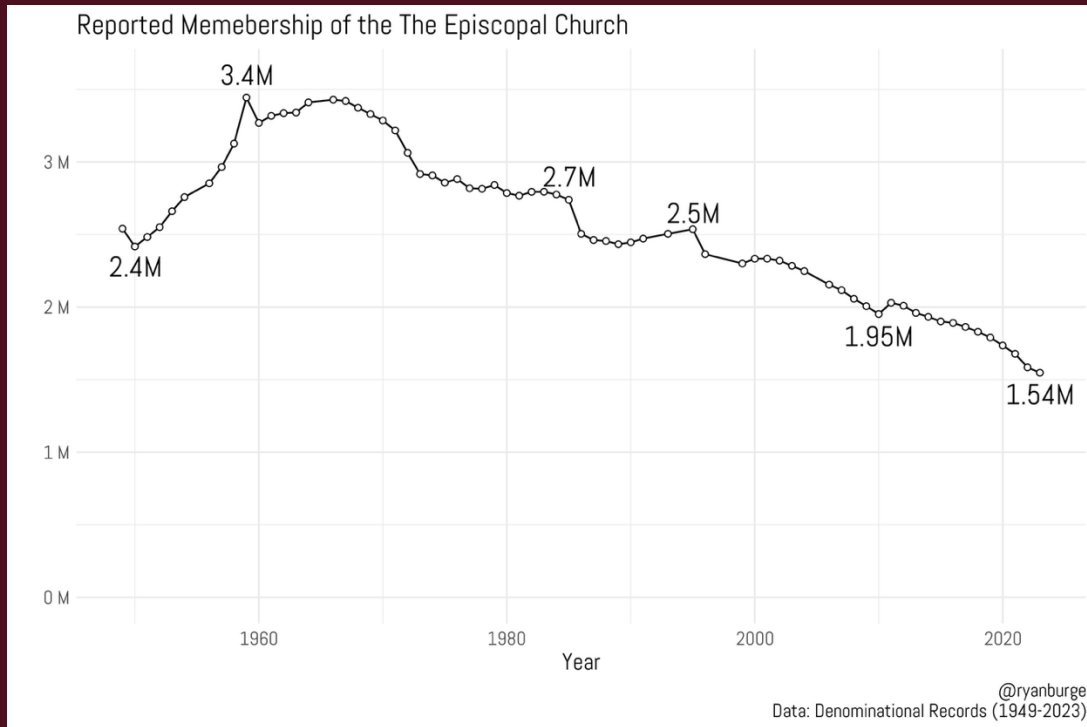
- In the 1970s, the Episcopal church went further off the rails by revising the Prayer Book in a radical direction (1979) and by beginning to ordain females into the ministry.
- This led to a mass exodus and the formation of several Anglican groups which are commonly called “The Continuing Church.”

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- In 2003, the Episcopal church consecrated V. Gene Robinson, a practicing homosexual, as a bishop—resulting in more departures.
- By embracing the spirit of the age, the numbers in the Episcopal church have steadily declined.

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- In the late 1950s, the church had grown to some 3.4 million members.
- The most recent data suggests a number less than half of that today.

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- In 2009, many traditional Anglicans who had remained in the Episcopal church joined with several of the disparate groups of Anglicans who had departed from the Episcopal church over the years to form The Anglican Church in North America.



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Assessment:

- As we have seen, there have been various points in the history of our country when the Anglican church has had a significant impact.



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Assessment:

- But we have also seen that the church has made some significant blunders in the last century.



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Assessment:

- It should be noted that in the same time period, the Anglican church has exploded in other parts of the world.
- Can that happen here?



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Conclusion:

- Many Anglicans today in the United States are trying to recover the distinctives of the Anglican Way which have proved so effective all over the world for the last 500 years.



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- This includes a commitment to Holy Scripture as the final authority in all matters of the faith.



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- This recovery also includes embracing the Book of Common Prayer as a rule of life.
- The PB has proven to be a tried-and-true means of forming many faithful Christians throughout the centuries.



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- Finally, this recovery includes a commitment to evangelism and church planting.
- If Anglicans in North America remain committed to these ideals, we can expect to see God's hand of blessing and faithful churches all over this land.



THE Anglican Bible Study Podcast