

## Lecture 1: What is Anglican Theology?

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Problem: Does Anglicanism have an identity? Is there such a thing as Anglican theology?

Or: Why is it so difficult to succinctly explain “the Anglican” view of any given theological issue?

- Elizabethan “golden mediocrity” (Abp. Matthew Parker) or “via media” (Newman)
- “We have no doctrine of our own” (Abp. Geoffrey Fisher) or the “Vincentian Canon” (Vincent of Lerins)
  - Oliver O’Donovan: “It would be truer to say that it was not then [in the Tudor church], and has never been to this day, the genius of the Church of England to grow its own theological nourishment, but only to prepare what was provided from elsewhere and to set it decently upon the table.”<sup>1</sup>
  - S. Sykes: incoherent—and lazy<sup>2</sup>
- Anglican comprehensiveness
  - J.I. Packer: principled or unprincipled comprehensiveness?
  - Augustine: “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.”
- Anglican identity as a “myth”
  - M. Chapman: Anglicanism as a series of conflicts<sup>3</sup>
  - Christopher Haigh on Anglicanism as an accident of history: “[Religious movements in Tudor England] came (and went again) as the accidents of everyday politics and the consequences of power struggles...It was politics which made the difference, politics which provided the dynamic of change, politics which made English Reformations [plural] instead of the Reformation in England.”<sup>4</sup>

What do we make of the English Reformation? Does it yield a discrete “Anglicanism?”

- Stephen Neill: Five Views of the English Reformation<sup>5</sup>
  - The Reformation was a thoroughly bad thing (Pre-Vatican II Roman Catholics)
  - The Reformation was mostly bad but had a few redeeming features, such as the Bible and the liturgy in the vernacular (Anglo-Catholics)
  - The Reformation was on the whole a good thing, but marred by unnecessary violence and that it rejected some traditional good things that it might have retained (Neill’s own position)

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<sup>1</sup> Oliver O’Donovan, *On the Thirty-Nine Articles* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1986), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen W. Sykes, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (New York: Seabury, 1978).

<sup>3</sup> Mark Chapman, *Anglican Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 13-20.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Neill, *Anglicanism*, rev. edn. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), 31-32.

- The English Reformation was the greatest thing, for the Church of England struck the perfect balance between the “meretricious gaudiness of the Church of Rome and the squalid sluttiness of a fanatical conventicle” (Most Anglicans between 1633 and 1833, and most Anglican Evangelicals)
- The Reformation was good as far as it went, but should have gone further in its reforms (Puritans, non-Anglican Protestants, and some Anglican evangelicals)
- What do scholars have to say about the Reformation? (Or: why does reading many books on the English Reformation leave me less—not more—able to identify Anglicanism?)
  - A.G. Dickens: the English Reformation was the obvious triumph in an age of growing literacy of intelligent, gospel, literate Protestantism over churchly, sometimes superstitious, sometimes scholastic Catholicism
    - “In England as elsewhere, the Protestant Reformation sought first and foremost to establish a gospel-Christianity, to maintain the authority of the New Testament over mere church traditions and human inventions masquerading as universally approved truths and unwritten verities... [The Reformers sought] to cleanse the Church’s teachings from those unwarranted additions—made through centuries—to the recorded gospel of Christ.”<sup>6</sup>
  - Eamon Duffy: Late medieval Catholicism was actually vibrant and popular. The Reformation in England was more an act of state than riding of a wave a popular support for reform.
    - “[L]ate medieval Catholicism exerted an enormously strong, diverse, and vigorous hold over the imagination and loyalty of the people up to the very moment of Reformation. Traditional religion had about it no particular marks of exhaustion or decay, and indeed in a whole host of ways, from the multiplication of vernacular religious books to adaptations within the national and religious cult of the saints, was showing itself well able to meet new needs and new conditions... [W]hen all is said and done, the Reformation was a violent disruption.”<sup>7</sup>
  - Christopher Haigh: Reform in England was blundering, incoherent, and piecemeal—largely an accident of political machinations. Yes, reformers converted many through preaching, but reform in England was never complete nor completely coherent.
    - “In England it was different [from continental reform]: change was piecemeal, and it took twenty years to get from the first real attack on Church jurisdiction in 1532 to the first Protestant church service in 1552; and then it was all almost undone by Queen Mary. Only in 1559 did an

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<sup>6</sup> A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (University Park: Penn State Press, 1989), 13.

<sup>7</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale, 1993), 4.

English regime opt for a full Reformation, and still there were theological, liturgical and legal loose ends to be tied up.”<sup>8</sup>

### Anglicanism as Reformed Catholicism or Catholic Evangelicalism

- Evangelicalism
  - The primacy, clarity and sufficiency of Scripture (*sola scriptura*)
  - Justification by grace alone through faith alone (*sola gratia; sola fide*)
  - Scripture and Justification are reciprocally determining
- Catholic
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Century Catholicism
    - Canon
    - Rule of Faith
    - Apostolic Succession
    - Worship in Word and Sacraments
  - 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Century Catholicism
    - Trinitarian doctrine (Nicea, Constantinople)
    - One Person, two natures Christology (Chalcedon)
    - Participatory Soteriology
  - Lancelot Andrewes: “One canon reduced to writing by God himself, two testaments, three creeds, four general councils, five centuries, and the series of Fathers in that period – the centuries that is, before Constantine, and two after, determine the boundary of our faith.”

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<sup>8</sup> Haigh, 13.