

Who are we as
Anglicans?

A Definition

Anglicanism. This word properly applies to the system of doctrine and practice upheld by those Christians who are in religious communion with the see of Canterbury. But it is especially used, in a somewhat more restricted sense, of that system in so far as it emphasizes its claim to possess a religious outlook distinguishable from that of other Christian communions both Catholic and Protestant.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church

Anglicanism is catholic, but accepting that there were good reasons for the Protestant Reformation.

- † The Anglican Church is historic.
- † It is Sacramental.
- † It is guided by Scripture.
- † Is a world-wide communion.
- † It is evolutionary, but not revolutionary.
- † It has been defined over time by a series of great thinkers, guided by the Holy Spirit.

The Anglican Church is Historic –
It finds its roots in the undivided Church



Some believe that St. Paul or Joseph of Arimathea brought Christianity to the British Isles in the first Century





While it is more likely that it arrived with Christian Roman soldiers, it is documented that by the second and third centuries, Christianity was to be found in Britain

- ✝ According to St. Bede, King Lucius, a British king, asked Pope Eleutherus to be made a Christian during the reign of Marcus Antonius Verus, around 156 A.D.
- ✝ Tertullian mentions Britain in his tract against the Jews written about 200.
- ✝ Origen counts Britain among places where Christians are to be found around 240

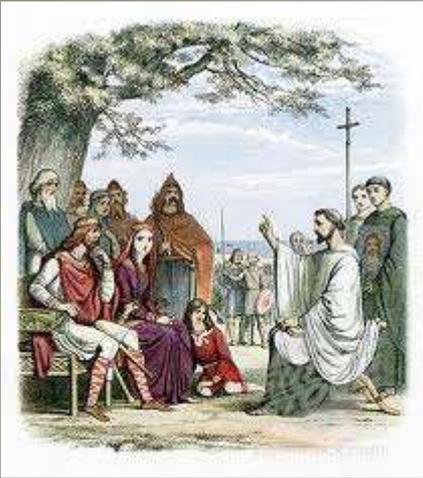


- ✝ Also, according to Bede, Alban was the first English Martyr during Diocletian's persecution around 290.
- ✝ There were British bishops at the Council of Arles in 314.

While the Angles, Saxons and Jutes invaded England from the continent, setting the growth of Christianity back, St. Patrick was instrumental in the development of an indigenous church in Ireland with a focus on evangelism.



St. Columba brought this Celtic Christianity to England in 563, establishing a monastery at Iona, an island off of the coast of Scotland



- ✝ In 596, Pope Gregory sent Augustine to evangelize England.
- ✝ When Augustine and his group arrived, they found a king, Ethelbert with a Christian wife, Bertha.
- ✝ Rather than being martyred, Augustine and his band were greeted warmly and found early success, Baptizing many.
- ✝ At the Synod of Whitby in 663, Roman tradition won out over its Celtic cousin.

The Anglican Church is Sacramental

We hold to the Seven Sacraments of the undivided Church:

Holy Baptism

The Eucharist

Confirmation

Matrimony

Reconciliation

Unction

Holy Orders

The Book of Common Prayer

The first Book of Common Prayer was assembled by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury in 1549.

He drew from many sources, especially the rites used in the Benedictine monasteries of England.

It was radical in two ways:

First, It put the worship of the Church into the vernacular, allowing the people of England to understand the prayers which had been available only in Latin.

Second, it put all of the services of the Church in one book that could be placed in the hands of the people

The 1662 version remains one of the “Instruments of Unity” for the Worldwide Anglican Communion.





The Book of Common Prayer sets the Eucharist as the primary worship service. Putting it into the vernacular, and returning Communion in both kinds to the people.

It also includes a simplified Benedictine routine of Daily Prayer by including Morning and Evening Prayer services.

So, is the Anglican Church Protestant,
or Catholic?

The answer is “Yes”.
This is where Henry
VIII enters the story
Let me explain

In the 1520's, Henry VIII, who had earlier been given the title "Defender of the Faith" by the Pope sought a divorce from Catherine of Aragon because she could not give him a son.

Catherine was Charles V's aunt

Pope Clement VII did not want to upset the Holy Roman Emperor

After many tries, Henry separated the English church from Rome through a series of acts of Parliament.

Named Thomas Cranmer as Archbishop of Canterbury, who granted his divorce, allowing him to marry Anne Bolyn, of course she was only the second of six wives.

Clement VII excommunicated Henry, and all of England in 1533





In the end, Henry fathered one son by his third wife, Jane Seymore. He became King Edward VI at the age of 9 upon Henry's death in 1537 and reigned only until his death at the age of 15.

During his reign, the Church of England took a turn toward continental Protestantism under the leadership of Archbishop Cranmer.



After Edward's death, his half-sister, Mary – Henry's daughter with Catherine of Aragon – ascended to the throne after some significant wrangling.

Mary sought to return the Church of England to Roman control.

She killed many protestant church leaders, including Thomas Cranmer, earning her the title "Bloody Mary".



Elizabeth I, Henry VIII's daughter with Anne Boleyn, ascended to the throne upon Mary's death in 1558.

During her 40-year reign, in what has become known as the "Elizabethan Settlement", the English Church became the "via media", or middle way, between the extremes of Rome and the Continental Reformation.

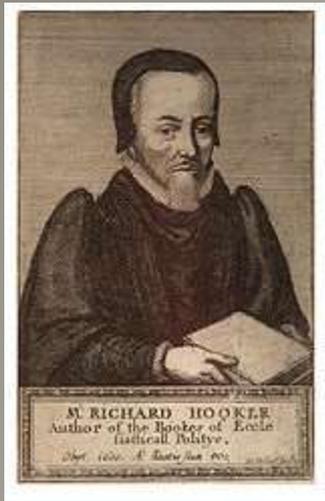
John Jewel defined the “Via Media”

In his *Apology of the Church of England*, John Jewel explained that the English Church was catholic, while explaining the need to be separated from the Roman Church.

He put the *Elizabethan Settlement* in writing, defining the English Church as the “via media”, or middle way between Roman Catholicism and continental Protestantism.

It is the tension between these two extremes that has defined Anglicanism ever since





So who is Richard Hooker, and what is meant by his “three-legged stool”

Richard Hooker lived in the 16th century and is notable for his work *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* in which he offers an understanding of the Anglican Church, particularly its differences with many of the Protestants of his day.

He is attributed with creating the “three-legged stool” of Anglicanism, that Anglican polity and practice depend on the three legs of Scripture, tradition and reason.

While Hooker would disagree that Scripture, tradition and reason form three legs of equal length, his insights remain valuable in defining Anglicanism in relationship to other Protestant denominations that came out of the Reformation.

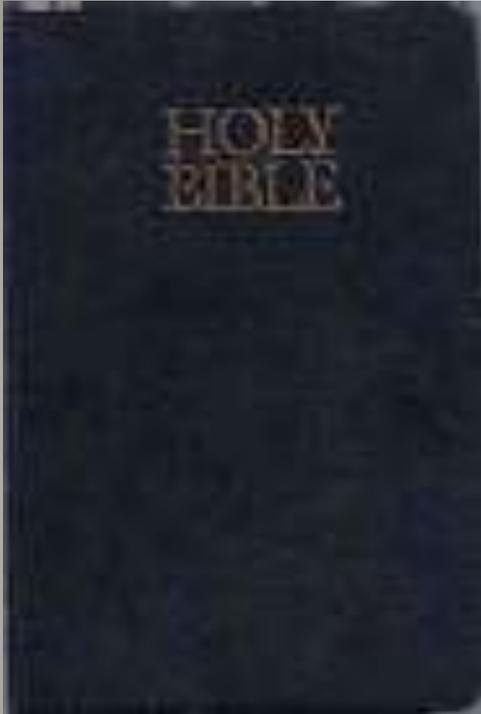


“...what Scripture doth plainly deliver, to that the first place both of credit and obedience is due; the next whereunto is whatsoever any man can necessarily conclude by force of reason; after these the voice of the Church succeedeth.”

Hooker's Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity
Book V p. 34



Richard Hooker's "three-legged stool" has long been used to define Anglicanism. The three legs being Scripture, tradition and reason.

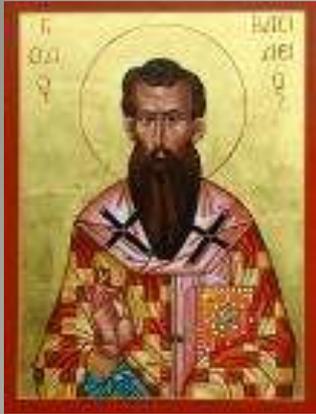


Scripture is the Bible as contained in
the Old and New Testaments

Regarding reason,

Hooker used the word “reason” to refer to natural order.

Since Hooker “reason” has been more associated with human reason.



Tradition refers to the Anglican appeal to antiquity, through the writings of the ancient fathers of the Church



In order for a three-legged stool to be of any use, it must have three legs of the same length.



This analogy does not hold-up, as Hooker did not consider the “three legs” to be of equal value, but rather placed Scripture as the driving force with tradition and reason filling in where Scripture is ambiguous.

With this in mind, a better analogy is the Big Wheel.



Scripture is the big front wheel.

It drives the vehicle – the pedals are attached

It directs the vehicle – the handle bars

If it is out of balance, the trike doesn't run very smoothly



“The Anglican Church has always regarded and still regards Holy Scripture as the supreme authority for the doctrine of the Christian Church.”

Archbishop Michael Ramsey
The Anglican Spirit p. 13

Tradition and Reason are the smaller, rear wheels.

While they are needed to make the trike roll smoothly, they do not drive it



Anglican theology has been further refined through the ages.

- ✚ The Caroline Divines refined it in the 17th century
 - ✚ Offered “via media” as a positive position, rather than a compromise
 - ✚ Increased reference to the Apostolic Fathers for authority in Church affairs.

- ✚ The Oxford Movement sought to bring the Church back toward its catholic roots in the 19th century.



Today, the Anglican Communion is truly a worldwide church, with member-provinces and dioceses on every continent. Under the name “Anglican” can be found a variety of styles of churchmanship and even varied understandings of Sacramental Theology.