

**English Church History in 4 Acts**  
**Hughes Lectures 2023**  
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Act I: The Church in the British Isles before Rome  
Act II: The Church in England in Communion with Rome  
III: The Church in England under the Papal Revolution  
Act IV: Henry VIII's Revolution

*“Anglicanism is the Catholic Church that was planted in England in the first few centuries after Christ; reshaped decisively by the English Reformation and its formularies that reformed the received catholic traditions and also by the Evangelical and Catholic Revivals and other historical movements of the Spirit; and that has now been inculturated into independent, global churches.*

**Introduction**

**Act I: The Church in the British Isles before Rome**

**I. Introduction**

- A. When did Anglicanism begin?
- B. Historical Continuity

**II. Evidence for an early British Church**

- A. Catholic but not Roman Catholic
- B. The Testimony of the Church Fathers
  - 1. Tertullian, Origen, Chrysostom
  - 2. Jerome (347-420)
- C. The Testimony of Church historians
  - 1. Bede - 731 - *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*
  - 3. Gildas (500-540) - *On The Ruin of Britain*
- D. Other Evidence for an early British Church
  - 1. three British bishops attended the Council of Arles in 314.
- E. St. Patrick (388-460?)
  - 1. Palladius
  - 2. historical Patrick - more fascinating & substantial than the legendary Patrick
  - 3. heart to evangelize
  - 4. Patrick and his mission were thoroughly British
    - a. Patrick's Latin
    - b. Patrick wrote with the British Church in mind; was sent by the British Church; quotes a British Rule of faith
  - 5. British missionaries to Ireland
- F. Archeological Evidence
  - 1. Paternoster (“Sator”) word square at Cirencester
  - 2. mosaics found at Frampton and Hinton St. Mary
  - 3. Water Newton Treasure (c. 360)

- 4. The physical evidence also includes ancient church structures.
- 5. The Christian population in the early British Church
- G. The Distinctiveness of the British/Celtic churches
  - 1. monastic in organization
  - 2. method of calculating Easter and manner of wearing the tonsure, differences in baptismal and ordination rites, Mass
- H. Monasticism
  - 1. St. Columba (521-597)
  - 2. St. Columbanus (540-615)
  - 3. St. Aidan - Lindisfarne (c. 634)

## **ACT II: The Church in England in Communion with Rome**

### **I. Augustine of Canterbury's Mission**

- A. Why was Augustine of Canterbury sent?
- B. The Extent of Augustine's Mission
  - 1. a mission to convert a portion of the Saxons
  - 2. Aethelberht's wife, Bertha, was already a Frankish Christian
  - 3. Augustine requested a meeting with the British church leaders
    - a. method of calculating Easter and tonsures
    - b. British representatives wouldn't depart from their ancient customs
  - 4. Second meeting failed
  - 5. In Kent, local British Christians were still worshipping at the shrine of St. Sixtus.

### **II. After Augustine: to Whitby and Beyond**

- A. from Augustine to Whitby
- B. The Synod of Whitby (664)
  - 1. convened not by a council of bishops and other church leaders but by King Oswy of Northumbria
  - 2. Wilfrid vs Colman
- C. Theodore of Canterbury
  - 1. responsible for bringing the English churches more under Roman influence.
  - 2. 672 Council of Hereford,
  - 3. the later claims and powers of the pope did not exist in these centuries.

### **III. 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries**

- A. Boniface
  - 1. helped forge a marriage between the papacy and the Frankish kings.
    - a. relationship with Charles Martel
    - b. Frankish kingdom that began to unify the churches in Europe
  - 2. Boniface's reform of the Frankish church paved the way for the Carolingian Renaissance and brought the Frankish kings and kingdoms into closer relations with the papacy.
  - 3. chopping down of the Donar Oak
- Saint Peter from its wood at the site.
- B. The Northumbrian Renaissance
  - 1. amazing transformation

2. The Northumbrian Renaissance
3. Benedict Biscop
4. Bede
5. Alcuin (735-804) - born in Northumbria, spent the first half of his life at York.
  - a. tutored Charlemagne and his sons
  - b. Carolingian miniscule
- C. Alfred the Great and the English Church in the 9<sup>th</sup> Century
  1. England consisted for a number of smaller kingdoms.
  2. Mercian Ascendancy 626 to 825
  3. Alfred the Great (reigned 871-899)- only English monarch to be given the name “the Great,” and Alfred merits this honor.
  4. defense against the Vikings
  5. His law code
  6. divine origin of royal rule
  7. appropriated Church lands and funds
    - a. Alfred, like English kings before and after him, thought of himself as the head of the English church and of the bishops and abbots as his thegns.
    - b. Alfred’s attitude toward the church was shared by almost everyone at the time: no king or bishop in the eighth or ninth centuries would have believed that ecclesiastical interests were matters for churchmen alone.

### **Act III: The Church in England under the Papal Revolution**

#### **I. The Papal Revolution**

- A. The Papal Revolution is one of the most significant and transformative events in history.
  1. Its consequences extend far beyond a papal grab of power from kings and princes.
  2. Kings had acted as heads of the Church.
  3. The Papal Revolution of the eleventh century is the fulcrum on which not only English Church history but all of Western history for the past millennium turns.
  4. revolution in law
  5. sacred/secular distinction
- B. Origins of the Papal Revolution
  1. Cluniacs - “the first trans-local corporation”
  2. Leo IX (1049-1054) helped set things in motion
    - reformed the papal administrative machinery
  3. The power elites will always follow incentives and disincentives.
  4. The papacy created a single coherent system
- C. The Revolutionary Claims of the Papal Revolution
  1. transfer of allegiance from emperors and kings to the pope
  2. The transformation of clergy from secular clergy to Lords Spiritual
  3. Gregory VII (Hildebrand) – 1075 *Dictatus Papae* .
    - a. the Roman bishop alone is universal

- b. the Roman bishop alone may depose and reinstate bishop
- c. papal legates, even though in an inferior office, took precedence over all local bishops
- d. the Roman bishop alone is permitted to make new laws
- e. no synod should be convened with the pope's order
- f. no chapter or book is canonical without the pope's authority
- g. every pope is sanctified by the merits of St. Peter
- i. no judgement of the pope's may be revised, but he may revise the judgment of all.

#### D. Consequences of the Papal Revolution

1. Dynamism
2. Sacred/Secular split
3. Pope started calling Councils.
4. Popes called for Crusades.
5. Popes now oversaw education and monastic orders.
6. Bishops now directly under the pope.
7. Canon law revolutionized
8. Pope takes the place of the emperor and kings

## II. William the Conqueror and Henry II

### A. William the Conqueror

1. importance of the Norman Conquest
2. governance of the English Church.
3. loyal to pope
4. but acted as head of Church
5. Archbishop of Canterbury, Lanfranc.

### B. Henry II

1. Henry desired to restore the royal authority
2. "criminous clerks"
3. 1164 of the Constitutions of Clarendon
4. "Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?"
5. 1172 – symbolic year – Henry II capitulates to Papal Revolution

## III. Anglican History From King John to the 15<sup>th</sup> century

### A. The English Church in the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Centuries

1. Innocent III placed England under interdiction in 1208
2. In 1209, Innocent excommunicated John
3. John agreed to become a vassal of the pope.
4. Innocent then required that English nobles obey the king.
5. England produced her fair share of theologians: Anselm, William of Ockham, Thomas Bradwardine, and Alexander of Hales.
6. England also produced her a number of mystics, such as Walter Hilton, Richard Rolle, Julian of Norwich, and Margery Kempe (all lived between 14th and early 15th centuries).
7. Anti-papal feeling increasingly grew in England, although it had never been entirely absent.

8. Over time, the English Church began to assert herself against the authority Rome had increasingly given herself.

**B. John Wyclif (1328-1384)**

1. often called “The Morning Star of the Reformation”
2. Wyclif - radical
  - a. criticized the office of the pope.
  - b. distinction between clergy and laity should be abolished.
  - c. rejected transubstantiation
3. desired that the laity be better educated
  - a. Wyclif’s English translation of the Bible
4. church property should be confiscated and redistributed.
5. true church was invisible church
6. spread of Wyclif’s ideas - Lollards

**C. On the Eve of the Reformation**

1. eve of the Reformation – stable and generally accepted church
2. yet serious and systemic weakness and corruptions
3. Mass
4. Word of God
5. Ignorance of clergy
6. late medieval popes were almost entirely worldly and corrupt.
7. indulgences

**D. Summary of the English Church before Henry VIII**

1. more faithful to the historical facts
2. for most of the history of the British/English Church - not under Rome
3. continuity of English church life

## **Act IV: Henry VIII’s Revolution**

### **I. The English Reformation**

**A. Reformations (plural)**

**B. The Uniqueness of the English Reformation**

1. an entire national church was reformed
2. the Church of England retained a greater degree of catholicity
  - a. retained the apostolic and catholic traditions
  - b. more ecumenical in her life.
  - c. Anglicanism is both catholic and ecumenical in spirit.
3. the Church of England had a different pre-Roman Catholic history

**C. The Pre-Conditions of Henry’s Reformation**

### **II. Henry VIII (1491-1547)**

**A. Henry VIII enacted a theological reformation but a legal and political revolution.**

**B. The King’s Great Matter**

1. Henry actually had several reasons for wanting to divorce Catherine.
2. Catherine’s nephew was Charles V, the Holy Roman emperor
3. Henry asked the English Church leaders to judge the matter.
4. Anne’s Boleyn’s significance for the English Reformation .

**C. Henry’s Continuity and Discontinuity**

1. Continuity
2. The Discontinuity that showed Continuity
3. Discontinuity

#### D. Henry's Legal Revolution

1. Praemunire 1530-1531
2. 1531 Act in Restraint of Annates
3. 1532 – The Submission of the Clergy
4. 1533 Restraint of Appeals
5. 1534 The Supremacy Act
6. 1536 – 1st Suppression of the Monasteries

#### E. Henry's Theological Reformation

1. While Henry's political reformation can be considered revolutionary, his theological reformation cannot.
2. his theological thought throughout the 1530s and 1540s
3. He did not like the monasteries, relics, or too much emphasis on the saints or purgatory.
4. 1539 Great Bible.
5. The Litany 1544
6. Catherine Parr

### **Conclusion**