

CH506: American Church History Lecture 1

PART 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN CHURCH HISTORY

I. Basic Definitions: History and Historiography

A. Definition and Importance of History

History is “*the branch of knowledge that records and analyzes past events.*” However, while history certainly involves a study of past events, it is ultimately a story of *humanity* across time. History is about real people like you and me. The study of history helps us to *discover* where we came from and to *examine* where we are going. We can learn from the past and build upon its lessons.

B. Historiography

Writing about history is known as historiography.

II. Basic Definitions: Church History and Historical Theology

A. Church History

“Church” in the NT is generally used to translate the Greek *ekklesia* (“called out ones”), which originally referred to a gathering, assembly, or local congregation. The word developed in meaning to refer to all who profess faith in Christ (1 Cor. 1:9-10). Church History, then, is the study of the history of Christianity.

B. Historical Theology

The related discipline of historical theology helps us to understand and describe how Christian doctrines originate and develop over time.

III. Why is the Study of Church History Important?

A. The Christian faith is historical by its very nature.

B. The study of church history can help us to see how God has guided, protected, sustained, and empowered his people from the time of Christ to the present.

C. The study of church history reminds us of our common humanity and connection to the larger body of believers. The study of church history can help ground our own personal thinking and theological speculation in what the church has traditionally believed and taught throughout the centuries.

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PART 2: THE MEANING OF PURITANISM IN OLD AND NEW ENGLAND

I. The Tudor Dynasty: 1485-1603 (The Sixteenth Century)

Henry VII, 1485-1509 (Establishes dynasty and political order)

Henry VIII, 1509-1547 (Break from Rome, 1529-1536, but still Catholic)

Edward VI, 1547-1553 (Protestant Reformation reaches furthest extent)

Mary, 1553-1558 (Catholic Reaction and persecution of Protestants)

Elizabeth I, 1558-1603 (Anglicanism, a *via media*, established)

Henry VII (r.1485-1509)

Henry established a dynasty that would last 118 eventful years (1485-1603). During the period, England became a great colonial power. It was a time of tremendous literary accomplishment and culture (e.g., Shakespeare).

Henry VIII (r.1509-1547) and the Beginnings of the English Reformation

In order to divorce his first wife, Catherine of Aragon (1485-1536) and marry Anne Boleyn (c.1501-1536), Henry officially broke away from the authority of the pope with the Act of Supremacy (1534) and established the independent Church of England (or Anglican Church) with himself as its head. Two major agents of reform under Henry were the Protestant Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), appointed the archbishop of Canterbury in 1533, and the political hatchet man Thomas Cromwell (c.1485-1540).

Edward VI (r.1547-1553)

Thomas Cromwell later fell out of favor with Henry and was beheaded for treason in 1540. The king would pass away in 1547. Thomas Cranmer would become very influential in the religious training of the next monarch. At the age of nine, Edward Tudor ascended to the throne of England. Greatly influenced by Cranmer, the boy king actively promoted the reformation of the English church. Edward's reign saw the production of the Book of Common Prayer and a creed for the church later called the Thirty-Nine Articles under Elizabeth I.

Mary Tudor (r.1553-1558)

Mary Tudor attempted to violently reestablish Catholicism. Many Protestants were martyred or exiled during her reign. Most notably, Thomas Cranmer lost his life in 1556. Many of those who fled the Marian persecutions ended up in places like Geneva, where they were influenced by John Calvin (1509-64) and others and experienced Reformation ideas firsthand.

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II. The Elizabethan Settlement

At the time of Mary Tudor's death, England was badly divided as you can imagine. Ascending to the throne in 1558 Elizabeth moved to secure her rule and to negotiate a religious compromise known as the *via media*, or the Elizabethan Settlement, which borrowed elements from both Protestant and Catholic traditions. To foster unity, Elizabeth chose to walk a middle course, borrowing liturgy, church music, clerical vestments and other aspects of worship from the Roman tradition and melding them with Protestant doctrine to produce a new Anglican church.

A. The Supremacy Act (1559)

In April 1559, Elizabeth restored the Act of Supremacy. In it, Elizabeth was called the "Supreme Governor" (rather than Supreme Head) of the Church of England.

B. The Act of Uniformity (1559)

Parliament also passed an Act of Uniformity in 1559, requiring the usage of the Book of Common Prayer. A key player in the promotion of the Elizabethan brand of Anglicanism was Matthew Parker, who served as Archbishop of Canterbury under Elizabeth (1559-75).

C. The Thirty-nine Articles (1563)

The so-called Thirty-nine Articles were issued in 1563. The Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563 were trimmed down from an original list of forty-two articles formulated by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer ten years earlier under the reign of Edward VI. They defined the doctrine of the Church of England in the form of short summary statements.

➤ Puritanism: An Extremely Important Concept

Under the Elizabethan Settlement, the Church of England retained a number of liturgical aspects that some Protestants opposed: (e.g., clerical vestments; kneeling during communion, etc.). These Protestants wanted to purify the Church of England of "popish remnants." Mark Noll (in your textbook, pp. 32-35) has a nice summary of the main convictions of English Puritanism that were eventually carried to America. You should be able to discuss the rise and development of Puritanism both in "old" and "new" England.

D. Parker's Advertisements

The Puritans were often repressed under Elizabeth. In 1566, Matthew Parker issued the Advertisements requiring conformity in clerical dress. These required the use of the surplice in the Eucharist and kneeling in reception of Communion.

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E. The Act Against Puritans (1593)

Many Puritans despaired of getting any of the changes they favored implemented in the Church. They decided to leave the Church of England and form churches of their own. These people were called Separatists. Robert Browne and Henry Barrowe were notable Separatists.

In 1583, John Whitgift became Archbishop of Canterbury and introduced a document known as the “Three Articles.” These were basically designed to entrap the Puritans. Several years later, under pressure from Elizabeth and Whitgift, Parliament passed the Act Against Puritans (1593), which made it illegal for separatists to hold their own services.

III. Puritans and Polity

A. Presbyterianism

During the Marian exiles, some leaders of the Puritan movement had resided in Geneva, where they had been impressed by Calvinist church polity. The movement they represented was called Presbyterianism, which would replace the power of bishops by governing bodies consisting of pastors and elders. Prominent among the exponents of Presbyterian Puritanism under Elizabeth was Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603). Cartwright was vehemently opposed by John Whitgift (c.1530-1604), vice-chancellor of Cambridge and the influential Anglican theologian, Richard Hooker (1554-1600), who was the leading apologist for the Elizabethan Settlement in England.

B. Congregationalism

Some Puritans were more radical than the Presbyterians and wanted to usher in reform without depending on the state or the hierarchy. They wanted the church to be governed by the people themselves. This democratic ideal for the church—which is usually called Congregationalism—was outlined by Robert Browne (c.1550-1633), who fled to Holland in 1582 in order to escape persecution (but later rejoined the state church), and by Henry Barrowe (c.1550-1593), who suffered martyrdom in 1593 because of his Congregational convictions.

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IV. The Stuart Dynasty: 1603-1689 (The Seventeenth Century)

James I, 1603-1625 (James of “The King James Version:” Opposes Puritans)

Charles I, 1625-1649 (Catholic Tendencies: Beheaded, 1649)

Puritan Revolution	1640-1660
Westminster Assembly	1643-1649
Interregnum	1649-1660
Oliver Cromwell, “Protector”	1653-1658

Charles II, 1660-1685 (Anglicanism Restored)

James II, 1685-1689 (Exiled as a Catholic)

The Reign of William and Mary, 1689-1702

Bill of Rights, 1689	The Act of Settlement, 1701
Toleration Act, 1689	

V. James I

James I (r. 1603-1625)

With the death of Elizabeth (1603), the crown passed to James, the son of Mary Stuart, and great grandson of Margaret, daughter of Henry VII. James was reared a Presbyterian, but he favored episcopacy and the notion of “the divine right of kings.”

A. The Millenary Petition

On his arrival in England, James was presented with the Millenary Petition (1603), a plea for the accommodation of Puritans within the Established Church.

B. The Hampton Court Conference

At the Hampton Court Conference (1604), called to consider the Millenary Petition, James gave his decision for the existing doctrine and demanded conformity to the Church of England.

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C. The Canons of 1604

Following the Hampton Court Conference (1604), the Church issued The *Book of Canons*, which documented and codified some 144 Church dating from King Henry VIII to Elizabeth I. Cries of protest came from many in the Protestant community including Puritans.

D. The Atmosphere of the Reign for Catholics, Puritans, Separatists, and Independents

Under King James I, Catholics enjoyed a period of relative leniency. Puritans repeatedly clashed with James, on political issues, on the royal encouragement of sports on Sundays (1618), and over forms of worship. Separatists and independents remained a small minority. The Baptists grew out of Congregationalism. The first English Baptist Church arose in Amsterdam (1609). Its leader was John Smyth. It was the spiritual ancestor of the General Baptists in Great Britain. A few years later in the next reign, what were known as Particular Baptists arose.

VI. Charles I and the Puritan Revolution

The climax of the English Reformation came in the seventeenth century. Charles I (r.1625-1648) was the grandson of the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots and desired to move the Church of England back to a place that was less Calvinistic and more tolerant of Catholics. Charles appointed William Laud (1573-1645) archbishop of Canterbury (1633) to curb the growth of Puritan influence and to root out this influence from the Anglican Church.

During the reign of Charles I, many Puritans, despairing of achieving the desired reforms at home, emigrated to the American colonies, especially to New England. We will discuss the Great Migration from England during our next lecture. Puritan leaders in England continued to resist the programs of Charles and Laud. In 1629 Charles dismissed Parliament and decided to rule alone for the next eleven years. Parliament eventually regained control of the government. William Laud was impeached in 1641, and later executed. Continuing tensions between Charles I and Parliament led to the English Civil Wars. Charles I himself was executed in 1649. There was a short-lived republic from 1649-60.

The Restoration of the Crown under Charles II (1660) witnessed the passing of another Act of Uniformity (1662), forcing many objectors into free or nonconformist churches. Harsh restrictions followed for the next several decades. With the "Glorious" Revolution (1688) William and Mary of Orange ascended the throne as joint monarchs and defenders of Protestantism. Subsequently, the Bill of Rights (1689) declared that the monarch must be Protestant and the Act of Settlement (1701) required that he or she be a member of the Church of England. The Toleration Act (1689) allowed Protestant Dissenters such as Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, and Quakers to hold services without fines and legal persecution. The end of the Stuart line ended with the death of Queen Anne (r.1702-14).