

Lecture 14 – “The British Church”: The Anglicans

“A people without history is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern of timeless moments. So, while the light fails on a winter’s afternoon, in a secluded chapel history is now and England.”

“Little Gidding,” T. S. Eliot

“Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” Psalm 29:2

Background Reading

Gonzalez, ch. 17, pp. 149-56

Prayer

From Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), author of *Holy Living and Holy Dying*

One of Jeremy Taylor’s prayers was a favorite of Amy Carmichael, 20th-century missionary to India—

“Lord, do thou turn me all into love, and all my love into obedience, and let my obedience be without interruption. Grant, O Lord, that in your wounds I may find my safety, in your stripes my cure, in your pain my peace, in your cross my victory, in your resurrection my triumph, and a crown of righteousness in the glories of your eternal kingdom. Amen.”

“The British Church”: The Anglicans

I. The Elizabethan Church

A. The Queen (1533-1603; became Queen of England in 1558)

1. “The Faerie Queene” by Edmund Spenser (1552-1599)
2. “While historians formerly exaggerated Elizabeth’s personal contribution to England’s development, it remains true that she was a shrewd, calculating, and worldly ruler who used Parliament to advantage and served as a symbol for the will, hope, and aspirations of her energetic people” (Spitz, *The Protestant Reformation*, 277).
3. Elizabeth’s faith—Elizabeth’s 1574 prayer:

“I render unto thee O merciful and heavenly Father, most humble and hearty thanks for thy manifold mercies so abundantly bestowed upon me, as well as for my creation, preservation, regeneration, and all thy other benefits and great mercies exhibited in Christ Jesus.” [She prays that God will defend her from all adversity and adds] “but especially, O Lord, keep me in the soundness of thy faith, fear and love, that I may never fall away from thee, but continue in thy service all the days of my life.” [She prays that, having received the government of the church and kingdom, she may, by God’s grace,] “render up and present the same again unto thee a peaceable, quiet, and well-ordered estate and kingdom and also a perfect reformed church to the furtherance of thy glory.”

B. The Church

1. The *Via Media*

“The British Church” by George Herbert

I joy, dear Mother, when I view
Thy perfect linaments, and hue—Both sweet and bright.

Beauty in thee takes up her place,
And dates her letters from thy face—When she doth write.

A fine aspect in fit array,
Neither too mean, nor yet too gay—Shows who is best.

Outlandish looks may not compare:
For all they either painted are—Or else undrest....

But dearest Mother (what those miss)
The mean thy praise and glory is—And long may be.

Blessed be God, whose love it was
To double-moat thee with his grace—And none but thee.”

J. I. Packer: “The *via media* was never, as is sometimes suggested, a tight-rope walk between Rome and the Reformation, nor between Romanism and Anabaptistry, but a pastorally-minded balancing of the claims of traditional faith and practice against the need to change for edification.”

2. “Puritan” concerns

- a. John Knox (1513-72)
- b. Thomas Cartwright (1535-1603)

II. Anglican Distinctives

A. Theology—Thirty-Nine Articles

B. Church Order—Richard Hooker, *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*

C. Public Worship—Book of Common Prayer

Preface to the 1662 Prayer Book: “It hath been the wisdom of the Church of England, ever since the first compiling of her public liturgy, to keep the mean between two extremes of too much stiffness in refusing and of too much easiness in admitting any variation from it.”

J. I. Packer: “Long before the age of fish and chips the Book of Common Prayer was the Great British Invention, nurturing all sorts and conditions of Englishmen and holding the Church together with remarkable effectiveness.”

D. Spirituality

1. Lancelot Andrewes (1555-1626), *The Private Devotions*

2. John Donne (1572-1631)

Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions and Several Steps in My Sickness

“O most mighty and merciful God, who, though thou hast taken me off of my feet, hast not taken me off of my foundation, which is thyself.

“As then we need sleep to live out our three score and ten years, so we need death to live that life which we cannot outlive.

“Thy son Christ Jesus is the ‘first begotten of the dead’; he rises first, the eldest brother, and he is my master in this science of death; but yet, for me, I am a younger brother too, to this man who died now, and to every man whom I see or hear to die before me, and all they are ushers to me in this school of death.”

Death’s Duel, or, a Consolation to the Soul Against the Dying Life and Living Death of the Body (Psalm 68:20)

Izaak Walton on John Donne the preacher: “...preaching the Word so, as showed his own heart was possessed with those very thoughts and joys that he labored to distil into others: a preacher in earnest; weeping sometimes for his auditory, sometimes with them; always preaching to himself like an angel from a cloud, but in none; carrying some, as St. Paul was, to heaven in holy raptures, and enticing others by a sacred art and courtship to amend their lives: here picturing a vice so as to make it ugly to those that practised it; and a virtue so as to make it beloved, even by those that loved it not.”

3. George Herbert (1593-1633)

The Country Parson

Prose treatise on the conduct of a rural Anglican ministry

The Temple

Collection of religious poetry: “The Church Porch,” “The Church,” and “The Church Militant”

4. Izaak Walton (1593-1683)

Lives (Donne, Hooker, and Herbert)*Compleat Angler*

Fisherman: “Indeed my good scholar, we may say of angling, as Brother Boteler said of strawberries, doubtless God could have made a better berry, but doubtless God never did: and so (if I might be judge) God never did make a more calm, quiet, innocent recreation than angling.”

III. The Anglican Mind and Soul

- A. Comprehensiveness
- B. Love of beauty in worship
- C. Grace
- D. Moralism

1. Jeremy Taylor’s *Holy Living and Holy Dying* (A life “for” God rather than “from God.”)
2. See *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* by C. F. Allison.

Questions from Class

Is there freedom of worship within the Church of England?

How important is the Book of Common Prayer to Episcopalians?

What is the average English church-goer thinking?

For Further Study

A.. Read the poems from George Herbert’s “The Temple” in the syllabus. George Herbert (1593-1633) was a member of a prominent family that held extensive lands in eastern England near the Welsh border. His father died when he was four; his mother, a woman of piety and culture, wanted George to become a minister. He took an MA degree at Trinity College in Cambridge and became the University Orator. He felt the pull of public acclaim and entered civil service, but circumstances forced him to reconsider and he was ordained. In 1629 he married Jane Danvers, and the following year he was installed as pastor of a small rural parish in the village of Bemerton, Wiltshire. There he was a faithful and effective pastor, writing for himself and others a handbook called *The County Parson*, so that he would have, as he put it, “a mark to aim at.” He also wrote numerous profound and often unusual poems, many of which he collected as *The Temple*. After only three years in his parish, he died at the age of forty.

*Note the shape of “The Altar.”

*Note the unusual diagonal text in “Colossians 3:3.”

*Observe Herbert’s spiritual dedication in “The Quip.”

*Note the play on the spelling of Jesus in “Jesu.”

*What is the purpose of the elaborate word play in “Paradise”?

* “The Pulley” is a commentary on Augustine’s words in his *Confessions*: “You have made us for Yourself, and we are restless till we find our rest in You.”

*What is the meaning of “The Elixir”?

B. Read from John Donne: *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (Michigan, 1959), 107-109. Perhaps the most famous of John Donne’s (1573-1631) eloquent and moving meditations—which he wrote when he was stricken with serious illness—is number 17. The words “therefore never send to know for whom the bell

tolls; it tolls for thee” inspired the title of Ernest Hemingway’s novel of the Spanish Civil War. Note also the well-known line “No man is an island.” What does Donne mean by the words “tribulation is treasure”? What is the significance of his final application?

C. Read from *The Compleat Angler* by Isaac Walton (Oxford, 1982), 34-39, 48-49, 62-63, 218-23.

Let’s go fishing! *The Compleat Angler* is the most famous book on fishing ever written. In great detail it tells the reader how to catch different kinds of fish with appropriate flies, at which time of the day, and which month of the year, and in which streams and rivers. It also tells us a great deal about Isaac Walton. Walton was a gentle man with a reverence for political and ecclesiastical order in a period of increasing turmoil. He treasured Christian friends, good conversation, good food and drink, and the God-given occupation of fishing. He is appealing in his simplicity, his faith, and his learning.

We pick up the account (p. 34) with Walton’s dietary, historical, and scriptural justification for fishing! Mr. Piscator is the fisherman. His conversation partners are two gentlemen he has met as he is on his way to his favorite fishing stream. They are Mr. Auceps who is into the sport of hawking and Mr. Venator, a hunter. The former leaves the little party on page 36 and the fisherman and the hunter go on their way, talking as they go. How is angling like poetry? Notice the requirements to be a good angler—“an inquiring, searching, observing wit” and “a large measure of hope and patience.” Not a bad profile for “fishers of men”! What is the reward of fishing? Is it catching fish? How does Walton use our Lord’s words to Martha in Luke 10: 41, 42 to justify fishing? Walton later (p. 48) picks up the same theme. Which are his favorite disciples? Why?

After their unhappy experience with a man whose talk did not please him, Walton discourses (p. 62) on what makes a man a good host (“one that feasts the company with wit and mirth and leaves out sin”). But he refuses to talk more about the unfortunate man (“I love civility” and “hate severe censures”) and sets out to catch a chub for dinner. His companion had hoped for a trout, because he says “a chub is the worst fish that swims.” Walton replies that it is too late in the day to catch a trout and assures his friend that properly cooked a chub will be just fine. I bought a chub at Schnuck’s Supermarket and prepared it Walton’s way. I ate it for breakfast with grits (a delicacy that Walton did not know). Mighty fine!

Much later (p. 218), after telling his companion (by now an enthusiastic convert to fishing) how to paint his fishing rod, Walton discourses on the good and happy life. What is the lesson of the silk-worm? What was David’s chief characteristic? What is the lesson of the blind man and the sun? What are Walton’s three blessings?

Soon (p. 229) the book ends with the now thoroughly enchanted Venator confessing that he had only begun to live since he “turned angler, and not before.” He sets forth his purpose in life: “Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. And let the blessing of St. Peter’s Master be with mine.” Piscator replies: “And upon all that are lovers of Vertue; and dare trust in his providence, and be quiet, and go a Angling.” There is then the fisherman’s favorite text, 1 Thessalonians 4:11—“Study to be quiet”— and Finis.