

# The History of the Sydney Diocese

## THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

The Anglican Church of Australia is part of a loosely-organised world-wide body whose history can be traced right back to the coming of Christianity to Britain not long after its founder, Jesus Christ, lived on earth. Offshoots of the original Church of England, the churches of the Anglican Communion exist under various names in every continent. For example, within Britain, besides the English Church, there are the autonomous Anglican Churches of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales; there is the Protestant Episcopal Church of the United States of America, the Churches of the Anglican Provinces of New Zealand, South Africa, West Africa, Uganda and Japan. There are about seventy-five million Anglicans world-wide.

## HISTORY

It is impossible to understand the basic facts about the Anglican Church without some knowledge of its history.

One version would have it that the Church of England owes its existence to the wish of an adulterous king, Henry VIII, to get rid of his elderly, unwanted and sonless wife, the Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon, so that he could marry Anne Boleyn. It is true that in 1529 when the Pope would not grant Henry the desired annulment of his marriage to his brother's widow, the king, wishing to be master in his own realm, declared himself Supreme Head of the English church in place of Pope Clement VII of Rome. But this was only possible because the great religious upheaval and renewal known as the Protestant Reformation was already well under way.

## The Pre-Reformation English Church

In AD 43, only about ten years after Jesus' crucifixion, the Romans first occupied Britain. During the next few centuries,

before the conversion in 313 of the Roman Emperor Constantine made Christianity respectable, the faith filtered into Britain. The last of the Roman legions withdrew in 407, and in the succeeding centuries came pagan Norse invaders such as the Saxons and Jutes, and the Angles from which the names England and Anglican are derived. Most traces of Christianity were wiped out, but in 597 the monk Augustine came from Rome with the message of the gospel once again. King Ethelbert of Kent became a believer and gave the monks land for a church and monastery at Canterbury, where Augustine became the first archbishop. That marks a clearly identifiable beginning of the Church of England.

Pagan customs, feasts and dates were overlaid by Christian ones - mid-winter Yule revelries became Christmas celebrations, and the spring feast of the goddess Eostre with her Easter eggs became the Festival of the Resurrection. Missionaries from Italy and the Continent, and Irish missionaries like Columba and Aidan evangelized the English kingdoms until by about 660 all were nominally Christian. A national synod (a sort of council or parliament) was held in 673 long before there was a single secular parliament or even an English nation.

Monasticism dominated the centuries that followed. This was the system, based on tradition rather than the Bible, which held that for both men and women a truly holy life, pleasing to God, demanded a withdrawal from ordinary life, marriage and family, into a religious community, under vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. From the 6th century Benedictine monasteries, abbeys and nunneries flourished, observing the severe Rule of St Benedict, and many other orders were founded later. Their ideals were high; for many their practice was noble also - especially in the care of the poor, sick and helpless. One notable English monk, the Venerable Bede, in the eighth century translated the Gospels and Psalms into early English. But abuses were endemic. Reforms such as those under St Francis of Assisi spread from Italy but soon reverted to failure. The various monks and nuns, and later the Franciscan friars, too often lived corrupt, immoral and greedy lives, preying upon the very people they were supposed to be serving.

In the 8th and 9th centuries, the pagan Vikings sacked many monasteries. At first they merely raided, and then they stayed as settlers and often became Christians. The weakened monastic system revived in the 10th century. Central to their wealth and power was the belief in the power of relics, reputedly the bones etc. of Christ or Mary or various saints, to work miracles on behalf of pilgrims. Every monastery had its store of precious relics, and people paid for the privilege of venerating them. When the Normans invaded in 1066, they found a thoroughly corrupt English church. On the whole they made it more so.

Mighty builders, the Normans built thousands of sturdy churches, and returned Britain to the authority of Rome and the Pope. Struggles ensued between the power of the Church and the State represented by the king, notably in the conflict between Archbishop Thomas a Becket of Canterbury and Henry II, culminating in 1170 in Becket's murder in his own cathedral by order of the king. "The deed was not only a crime; it was a blunder.... Becket on earth had been a formidable opponent - Becket in heaven was irresistible." (Balleine) Instantly he was regarded as a saint and a martyr. Miracles galore were attributed to him, and for the next three centuries the worship of Becket, not Jesus, was one of the most prominent features of English religion. Canterbury became a famous place of pilgrimage, and Chaucer's 14th century Canterbury Tales gives us a striking glimpse of the corrupt and idolatrous state of the medieval English church and character of its adherents at that time.

Church-State conflict continued. For six years from 1208, when King John defied Pope Innocent III, the whole English church was excommunicated. John eventually surrendered to the Pope, yielding then to Rome all secular as well as spiritual power. The document of Magna Carta (1215) stated that the Church of England was free, not of papal power but of interference from the king.

The most important English fore-runner of the Reformation was the 14th century Oxford scholar John Wyclif. He translated the Latin Vulgate Bible into English, and first spelt out the crucial principle that "Holy Writ is the only true standard of life and

doctrine, the supreme and decisive authority by which all Church law and tradition must be tested." As they became familiar with the Bible in English - then a forbidden book - in 1395 his followers the Lollards expressed many drastic criticisms of medieval church customs such as the worship of images and relics and the sale of indulgences and pardons. As a result hundreds were burnt at the stake as heretics. This was more than a century before Luther began in 1517 to publicize similar Bible discoveries and criticisms of the state of the church, setting alight that vast religious, political and social revolution we call the Reformation.

In the ferment of the sixteenth century the present Anglican church was born. From within its own ranks, through the courageous witness of Englishmen like Bilney, Tyndale, Cranmer, Hooper, Jewel, Grindal, Latimer and Ridley, and from Europe through the writings of Luther, Calvin and others, spread by the new invention of printing, the English church woke up more fully to the long suppressed, magnificently liberating truths of the Bible. But it was at fearful cost. Many of the English reformers died as martyrs for their faith. Greed and rapacity played their part too; Henry VIII ordered the dissolution and destruction of the monasteries throughout Britain, confiscating their wealth for himself.

## The Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-Nine Articles

So the Church of England as it took shape at this time, though retaining some continuity with its past structures, was a thoroughly Protestant body, a product of the Reformation. The Book of Common Prayer of 1662, which for most Anglicans remains the standard text of doctrine and liturgy, expresses that origin. At the back of the Prayer Book (and the 1978 Australian Prayer Book) are the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, which set out the historic statement of Anglican Faith. They are recognized in the constitution of most national Anglican churches.

These Articles naturally reflect the era in which they were written in language, doctrine and in the abuses they were intended to

combat. Many present-day Anglicans therefore are uncomfortable with their content and emphasis. Yet the principles they enshrine remain vital. The touchstone is the place of the Bible, set out in Article VI: "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation."

Article XI - Of the Justification of Man, expresses the central Reformation insight that people are accounted righteous in the sight of God only through Christ's merit, by faith, and not "by our own works or deservings." It is followed (XII) by the parallel truth that good works are the fruits of faith, and not the means by which we attain forgiveness of sins.

Article No.XXII rejects the doctrine of Purgatory, with pardons, worship of images and relics, and invocation of saints, as a "fond (ie foolish) thing vainly invented, grounded upon no warranty of Holy Scripture". Thus the reformed Church of England rejected prayers for the dead, along with pardons and indulgences and all the associated corruption, whereby priests were paid supposedly to speed the passage of departed loved ones through purgatory to heaven.

Other articles, numbers XXV to XXX, deal with the sacraments, and help define the break between the Church of England and the continuing Roman Catholic Church. Only two, not seven, Baptism (including that of infants) and the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion, are accepted as having been ordained by Christ in the Scriptures, and in the latter the bread and wine are seen as tokens representing the body and blood of Christ, received by faith. The doctrine of Transubstantiation (that their substance is changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, which the priest sacrifices anew) is rejected as "repugnant to the plain words of Holy Scripture" (Article XXVII).

## Post Reformation History

Thomas Cranmer, Henry VIII's Archbishop of Canterbury, ordered

that a Bible in English be placed in every church, and in the short reign of the boy king Edward VI, introduced the first English Prayer Book, revised and made more Reformed in 1552. The term Holy Communion replaced the sacrifice of the Mass; "one decent table" replaced the altar in both furniture and terminology, and plain white surplices were to replace elaborate vestments. Ordinary bread was to be used in Communion and lay people as well as priests to partake of the wine. Priests could now marry.

All this was reversed in the reign (1553-8) of the ardently Roman Catholic Queen Mary, daughter of Catherine of Aragon, who had good reason to hate the Reformation. It was a cruel age. All who refused to recant, women as well as men, lay folk and clergy, suffered death by fire, including Archbishop Cranmer. Under torture, he had signed a paper recanting his Protestant faith. But at the last he rejected that betrayal, and thrust first into the fire the hand that had signed the recantation. Mary's onslaughts however could not turn back the tide of reform, and as has usually happened throughout history, biblical Christianity grew under persecution.

In the long reign of Elizabeth I, daughter of Anne Boleyn, the Church was re-established as Protestant, though not always to her pleasure. At times then it was the turn of the Roman Catholics, including Mary Queen of Scots, to be executed for their faith, or for conspiring with Philip of Spain to invade England. But Elizabeth also particularly opposed the Puritans, or Presbyterians, the followers of John Calvin of Geneva. Their doctrines had influenced the Thirty-nine Articles but they rejected the use of a Prayer Book, the wearing of the surplice and the order of church government by bishops, priests and deacons. Intolerance on both sides drove a wedge between these more drastic reformers and a Church of England which kept some continuity with its past. Eventually the Puritan Parliamentarians fought the Civil War and attained power under Oliver Cromwell, executing King Charles I, who had invited disaster by insisting on his "Divine Right" as king, and rejecting the authority of Parliament. Archbishop Laud of Canterbury too angered many, most of all the Puritans, by re-introducing to the Church of England many practices seen as

"popish".

But the Puritan rule also was unpopular and short-lived. With the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy under Charles II in 1660 Roman Catholic ascendancy again seemed likely, except that the Church of England was protected now by Parliament. Still there was little trace of religious tolerance. The Act of Uniformity, favouring the Church of England, discriminated severely against the dissenting Presbyterians and Puritans as well as the Catholics. Throughout its post-Reformation history the Anglican Church has existed amid a pull from both Roman Catholic doctrines and practices on the one hand and Calvinistic Presbyterianism on the other. The former requires ignoring or setting aside Reformation insights and the historic biblical standards of the Prayer Book and Thirty-nine Articles, while the latter relates more to church discipline and government, which could or should be seen as matters of liberty.

Religious turmoil continued under the Stuarts until not only the Presbyterian Covenanters in Scotland but English bishops were in revolt against their tyranny. In 1688 James II fled and in a bloodless "Glorious Revolution" the thoroughly Protestant William of Orange and his wife Mary, James' daughter, were invited to occupy the throne. At this point the Church of England was approved as the established church, and remains so in that country, while the Act of Succession decreed that the English monarch henceforth must be, and must marry, a Protestant. In Scotland Presbyterianism had triumphed after bitter persecution.

Three parties became apparent within the Anglican Church - High (tending more to sacramental ritual and Catholicism), Evangelical (emphasizing in doctrine and practice the Reformation rediscovery of the Bible) and Broad or Latitudinarian (emphasizing human reason and worldly tolerance). Each strand has since had heydays with enduring effect, such as the Evangelical Revival of the 18th century led by Whitefield and the Wesley brothers; the 19th century Oxford Tractarian movement during which Anglo-Catholicism developed strongly under the leadership of men like J H Newman (later a Roman Catholic cardinal); and the impact of Darwin's Theory of Evolution, Higher

Criticism and Liberal, rationalistic theology.

Out of the Evangelical Revival came a new zeal for the world missions, and this, together with British colonization, was a major factor in the worldwide spread of the Anglican Church. It is a little-known fact that there are now more black African Anglicans than members in England, America or Australia.

## STRUCTURE AND GOVERNMENT

There is now a worldwide Anglican Communion, a group of thirty-one member churches (called Provinces). The Anglican Consultative Council, with bishops, priests and lay representatives of these provinces meets every three years, and at ten year intervals the Lambeth Conference brings bishops together. Neither group, however, has power to legislate. Each province is independent and governs its own life by Synods, parliaments of elected laity, men and women, and clergy representing parishes. No decision by one province has authority over any other. For historical reasons the Archbishop of Canterbury holds a position of special respect but he is in no way equivalent to the Roman Pope.

Anglicans recognize three orders of ordained ministry, that of bishops, priests and deacons. Since the Reformation all holders of these offices are fully at liberty to marry, and until very recently were invariably male.

## Deacons (the Diaconate)

Traditionally, the office of deacon has been linked to the biblical account in the book of Acts chapter 7 about Stephen and others who were appointed to a ministry in support of the apostles. Generally in the past the office of deacon has been a temporary one held for a year or so, like an apprentice or assistant priest, before being ordained to the fuller responsibilities of priesthood. This is at present changing, as some men and many women are ordained to what can be a permanent diaconate. Usually they are licensed to assist the priest in services and in pastoral care, to teach, preach and baptize but not to preside over the Holy



Communion, nor to be in full charge of a parish.

Deaconesses belong to a separate, associate order of women. Many deaconesses are now being ordained as deacons, and in dioceses where this is legal, as priests.

## Priests

Priests are ordained essentially "to the cure of souls", ie to the leadership and pastoral care of the people of a parish, with one or more church centres. At ordination to the priesthood by promise "faithfully [to] administer the doctrine and sacraments, and the discipline of Christ, as the Lord has commanded and as this Church has received them, according to the commandments of God"; they undertake to "drive away all false and strange doctrines that are contrary to God's word," publicly and privately warning and encouraging all within their care. They therefore promise also to be diligent in their study of the Bible, and to strive to live according to Christ's teaching. Both deacons and priests, male or female, are formally addressed as "the Reverend": ie the Reverend John Priest, Deaconesses are addressed as Deaconess Mary Deacon.

## Bishops (the Episcopate)

A bishop is essentially an administrator with the pastoral oversight of a See or diocese, consisting of a number of parishes. He is responsible for ordaining priests, confirming people in their baptismal vows, and presiding over synods. Some are designated assistant or coadjutor bishops. An Archbishop or Metropolitan presides over an Archdiocese - usually a major city and its environs with a considerable Anglican population, such as Sydney and Melbourne. In parts of the world with smaller Anglican populations, an archbishop or bishop may be responsible for a diocese embracing a whole country, or even several countries.

The formal address for a bishop is The Right Reverend .....; and an Archbishop The Most Reverend .....

Other Anglican offices and titles are that of Archdeacon (The

Venerable), usually with administrative responsibilities delegated by the bishop; a Dean (The Very Reverend), who is often the senior priest in a cathedral and a Canon who is also associated with a cathedral, and may be clerical or lay. Rural or Area Deans link clergy together locally.

## Becoming an Anglican (as an adult)

Any person who has come to trust in Jesus Christ as Saviour, Lord and God is a Christian, and as such would normally be welcome to join an Anglican Church. The sacrament of Baptism is the accepted sign of initiation into the Christian Church as a whole. If not baptised (christened) as a child, the believer would need to approach his or her local minister to seek baptism (in Anglican churches it is most often administered by sprinkling of water, not full immersion, though the latter is permissible). For those already baptised whether in an Anglican or any other church, Confirmation is the formal way of becoming a fully-fledged Anglican, and in particular of being eligible to partake of the sacrament of Holy Communion (also known as the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist). For young people as they become old enough to understand, or adults of any age, this usually involves some instruction in the faith followed by a service in which candidates declare their own faith and a bishop confirms them in the promises made on their behalf when they were baptised as infants.

Note: Seekers not yet sure of the truth of Christianity are always welcome to attend any church.

## THE AUSTRALIAN CHURCH

Until 1981, the Anglican Church of Australia was known as the Church of England in Australia.

It consists of twenty-three dioceses. In one sense, big is small - the largest in territory, North-West Australia, sparsely populated, has the smallest number of adherents and parishes. The major cities, especially the Dioceses of Sydney and Melbourne have, as to be expected, the highest number of Anglicans. Each diocese is

governed by an annual synod, with clerical and lay representatives from each parish. Many country dioceses however are very small, with a single bishop and fewer than forty clergy. In these centres the bishop's authority in administration and doctrine is usually far more complete than in a metropolitan diocese with hundreds of parishes and clergy serving thousands of churchgoers, where power is more democratically shared via synod among bishops, clergy and laity.

The dioceses are grouped in State Provinces, which also hold occasional synods.

Archbishop Peter Carnley of Perth was elected Primate of the Anglican Church of Australia on February 3, 2000. The ACA is governed by a Constitution which was agreed in 1962. The Primate presides over the General Synod which meets at four year intervals. Major decisions, such as whether to ordain women, must be approved in this national synod in order to become constitutionally legal in the Australian Church, but must also be agreed to in the local synod to take effect in a given diocese. A legal body, the Appellate Tribunal, with bishops and judges as members, deliberates on thorny issues.

According to its Fundamental Declarations, the Australian Church: 1) "Holds the Christian Faith as professed by the Church of Christ from primitive times... as set forth in the Nicene and Apostles' Creeds." 2) Receives the canonical Old and New Testament Scriptures as "the ultimate rule and standard of faith given by inspiration of God and containing all things necessary for salvation," and 3) "...will ever obey the commands of Christ, teach His doctrine, administer His sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, follow and uphold His discipline and preserve the three orders of bishops, priests and deacons in the sacred ministry."

The ruling Principles of the constitution acknowledge the Australian Church's derivation from the Church of England, and state that the Book of Common Prayer, together with the Thirty-nine Articles, remains the authorised standard of worship and doctrine. There is authority to make changes, provided they do

not violate these fundamental declarations and principles. The old Prayer Book is still preferred by some Anglicans for regular use in worship. An Australian Prayer Book, approved by General Synod in 1977 and published in 1978 is widely used. It contains both conservative and somewhat more innovative revisions of the Book of Common Prayer. A new revision is in preparation, and is due to come before the 1995 General Synod.

Australian Anglicans show the same range of emphases as can be found throughout the Anglican Communion. The charismatic movement of the latter half of this century, emphasizing the Holy Spirit's transforming and healing work, has greatly influenced some parishes, in both Evangelical and Anglo-Catholic traditions, especially in the use of a modern style of music and more expressive, informal worship. Where they are respected and adhered to - which can by no means be guaranteed! - the Thirty-nine Articles and the agreed liturgy of Prayer Book services help to distinguish and unify Anglicans.

Extensive and effective social service ministries such as the Brotherhood of St Laurence (Melbourne) and Careforce (Sydney) are maintained by Australian dioceses.

## THE DIOCESE OF SYDNEY

Sydney is in some ways unique within the worldwide Anglican Communion. To an overwhelming extent, it is evangelical in character. This is partly due to historical factors; the first chaplains to the newly-formed convict settlement from 1788 onwards were men such as Richard Johnson and Samuel Marsden, products of the Evangelical Revival of the later eighteenth century, who came to the colony fired with missionary zeal. It was the Yorkshire MP William Wilberforce, famous for his heroic fight to abolish the slave trade, who recruited Johnson as chaplain to the convicts and soldiers of the original Botany Bay penal settlement. Wilberforce led the 'Clapham Sect', Evangelicals who remained within the Church of England, unlike the Wesleys who eventually broke away to form the Methodist Church.

Despite, or perhaps because of the fact that they held a monopoly of religious activities, being until about 1836 required to conduct all 'rites of passage' and compulsory church services, the early colonial churchmen had a difficult role which met with indifferent spiritual, ecclesiastical and social success. They contended with obstruction from governors and resistance from much of the population. Marsden was the ablest and most energetic of the early clergy, but his passion for law and order and role as a tough magistrate at times seemed incompatible with his spiritual leadership. He longed to evangelize the aborigines but found little response from them. On the other hand he achieved considerable success as a missionary to the Maoris in New Zealand. Nonconformist (Congregational) missionaries who came to Sydney when unable to work in the South Sea Islands were welcomed by the evangelical Marsden as helpful fellow workers.

Thus, perhaps, began a still-evident Sydney tradition of co-operation between Christians of a Bible-based, evangelical persuasion, whatever their denominational adherence. Accompanying that tradition has been one of considerable suspicion of Roman or Anglo-Catholics and a lack of tolerance of High or Liberal churchmanship even when the rest of the present-day Anglican Communion tends to pride itself on a comprehensive, inclusive breadth of membership. Some of the same suspicion is reciprocated in the attitude of non-Evangelicals within and outside the diocese to Sydney's dominant character and leadership.

In the years that followed some strong bishops such as Frederic Barker (1855-1882) and in the twentieth century Archbishops Wright (1909-1933) and Mowll (1934-1958) helped establish and consolidate the conservative Protestant Evangelical character of the Diocese of Sydney. At times the leadership could have taken the diocese in a different direction, but lay and clerical resistance maintained the predominant trend. Sydney Diocese has always had strong links with the evangelical Church Missionary Society, with its worldwide outreach, such as to the Diocese of Central Tanzania, and Aboriginal missions in North Australia, and with the Bush Church Aid Society which ministers in many remote

parts of Australia too sparsely populated to sustain and staff their own parishes.

The theological training provided by Moore Theological College has, especially since Archdeacon T C Hammond was appointed Principal in 1935, and under each of his successors, strengthened Sydney's tradition of strong evangelical conviction and scholarship amongst the majority of its clergy. The past three Archbishops of Sydney, Sir Marcus Loane, Donald Robinson and Harry Goodhew, have all been Moore College men. Moore is the largest theological college in Australia, in 1994 with a full-time student body of about 170, of which 120 are resident. Hundreds more are external students, including enrolments from 31 overseas countries. The college's training is not only for Anglican ministry - in residence at present, for instance, there are 15 Presbyterians and 10 Baptists. About 24 (14%) of the students are women, and another 28 are studying for a Diploma of Theology at Deaconess House. Clear career paths are not available to many of them, however, because the Synod of Sydney Diocese on the whole has consistently opposed the ordination of women as priests. Unlike many other Australian and overseas dioceses and other denominations, there is no shortage of men as candidates for ordination.

Women in Sydney have been ordained as deacons, however, since 1989 and in 1994, Archbishop Goodhew appointed the Reverend Dianne Nicolios as an Archdeacon in charge of women's ministries, the first such appointment in Australia.

## THE FUTURE OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

The Anglican Church as it exists as a worldwide denomination, organized in dioceses and in thousands of local congregations, is a vast, mixed body with a rich but equally mixed heritage. In ecumenical organizations such as the World Council of Churches it generally co-operates warmly with other churches. Though tensions and struggles occur between denominations; often there are still more within a denomination such as Anglicanism. A key current one, obviously, centres on the role of women. Women are now being ordained as priests in many dioceses in Australia and

elsewhere, and within the Anglican Communion there are now 11 female bishops. For some Anglicans these developments cause grief and are seen as a departure from the Scriptures. In the US, the Episcopal Church has splintered, and many priests there and in the Church of England have moved to join the Roman Catholic Church. If they are married, as many are, their application is raising problems with that Church's policy of a celibate priesthood. Others welcome the ordination of women as a sign of a Church moving with the times and removing discrimination. The worship, work and witness of all churches shares in human fallenness, sin and fallibility, and the Lord no doubt grieves over some aspects but rejoices in others.

In Bible perspective, the Anglican Church like any other body of Christians, exists not as an end in itself, but only as a means of serving the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel - that message of salvation by which we are forgiven and reconciled to God, made new through the Spirit of Christ, and brought together in love, fellowship and united witness. All history is moving towards the return of Christ. When that happens all human organizations will come to an end. If the Anglican Church disappears before then, it will be of no consequence so long as through some other means pleasing to him, a vital and true witness to the risen Christ continues.

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