

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

It is stated in the preface of the *Book of Common Prayer* of the Protestant Episcopal Church (now known generally as the Episcopal Church) that "this Church is far from intending to depart from the Church of England in any essential point of doctrine, discipline, or worship." Therein lies the hint of its origin: The Protestant Episcopal Church constitutes the "self-governing American branch of the Anglican Communion." For a century and a half in this country it bore the name of the Church of England.

Its history runs back to the first missionaries who went to the British Isles from Gaul prior to the Council of Arles in A.D. 314. It is traced down through the days when Henry VIII threw off the supremacy of the pope (Henry, according to Anglican scholars, did not found the Church of England; it was a church that had always been more British than Roman); through the reign of Edward VI, when the *Book of Common Prayer* and 42 Articles of Religion were written; through the period of Catholic restoration under Bloody Mary and through her successor Elizabeth, who put the united church and state under the Protestant banner and sent Sir Francis Drake sailing to build an empire.

Drake came ashore in what is now Virginia in 1578. His Church of England chaplain, Francis Fletcher, planted a cross and read a prayer while Drake claimed the new land for the Virgin Queen. Martin Frobisher had reached Labrador in 1576, also with a chaplain. After them came colonists to Virginia under Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Walter Raleigh; Raleigh's chaplain baptized an Indian named Manteo and a white baby named Virginia Dare before the settlement vanished. With Captain John Smith came Chaplain Robert Hunt, who stretched a sail between 2 trees for a shelter and read the service from the *Book of Common Prayer*.

In the South the transplanted Church of England quickly became the established church. It was at heart a tolerant and catholic church, but the control of the crown brought an almost ruthless authority that made the church suspect in the eyes of those colonists who had come here seeking freedom from all such authority. The Virginia House of Burgesses set the salary of the Virginia clergyman at "1,500 pounds of tobacco and 16 barrels of corn." It was a British clergy supported by public tax and assessment and by contributions from the church in England through the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. And it was technically under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of London. In that fact lay one of its almost fatal weaknesses; colonial ministers had to journey to England for ordination, and few could afford it. This, coupled with the rising tide of the American Revolution, placed the colonial Church of England in an unenviable position.

Yet the church did well. Membership grew rapidly. William and Mary College was established in 1693, and the Church of England became the predominant church in the South. King's Chapel in Boston, the first Episcopal church in New England, was opened in 1689; in 1698 a church was established at Newport, Rhode Island, and another, called Trinity Church,

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in New York City. In 1702 a delegation from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel came from England to survey the colonial church and found about 50 clergymen at work from the Carolinas to Maine. The visitors sensed the need for American bishops to ordain American clergymen; they also sensed the increasing opposition of the American patriot to a British-governed church.

The Revolution almost destroyed the colonial Church of England. Under special oath of allegiance to the king, the clergy either fled to England or Canada or remained as Loyalists in the colonies in the face of overwhelming persecution. That many of them were loyal to the American cause meant little; the Rev. William White was chaplain of the Continental Congress, the Rev. Charles Thurston was a continental colonel, and in the pews of the Episcopal Church sat Washington, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, John Jay, Robert Morris, John Marshall, Charles and "Light-Horse Harry" Lee, and John Randolph. But their presence could not stem the tide. The Anglican house was divided, and it fell. At the war's end there was no episcopacy, no association of the churches, not even the semblance of an establishment. Few thought of any future for this church, which suffered between Lexington and Yorktown more than any other in the colonies.

There was, however, a future—and a great one. In 1782 there appeared a pamphlet entitled *The Case of the Episcopal Churches in the United States Considered*, written by William White. It was a plea for unity and reorganization, and it proposed that the ministry be continued temporarily without the episcopal succession since the latter "cannot at present be obtained." In 1783 a conference of the Episcopal churches met at Annapolis, Maryland, and formally adopted the name Protestant Episcopal Church—"Protestant" to distinguish it from the Roman Catholic Church, "Episcopal" to distinguish it from the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists. In 1967 the general convention adopted the Episcopal Church as an alternate name for the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.

Also in 1783 the clergy in Connecticut elected Samuel Seabury as their prospective bishop; he went to England and waited a year for consecration at the hands of English bishops. This was denied, and he then went to Scotland to be consecrated bishop in 1784. Ultimately Parliament and the Church of England cleared the way, and 2 other bishops-elect from New York and Pennsylvania were consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1787. In 1789 the constitution of the Protestant Episcopal Church was adopted in Philadelphia, the *Book of Common Prayer* was revised for American use, and the Protestant Episcopal Church became an independent, self-governing body.

There were complete harmony and expansion for the next half century. There were established new churches and church institutions: Sunday schools, Bible, prayer book, and tract societies, theological seminaries, colleges, boarding schools, guilds for men and women, and a domestic and foreign missionary society. Diocesan organizations replaced state organizations; new bishops moved into the new West. Bishop J. H. Hobart in New York, A. V. Griswold in New England, Richard Channing Moore in Virginia,

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and Philander Chase in Ohio worked miracles in overcoming the revolutionary prejudices against the church. W. A. Muhlenberg, one of the great Episcopal builders, "organized the first free church of any importance in New York, introduced the male choir, sisterhoods, and the fresh air movement, while his church infirmary suggested to his mind the organization of St. Luke's Hospital [in New York], the first church hospital of any Christian communion in the country."

Muhlenberg was a man of wide vision; he inspired a "memorial" calling for a wider catholicity in the Protestant Episcopal Church, which resulted in the famous Lambeth Quadrilateral on Church Unity in 1888 and the movement that produced the further revision of the *American Book of Common Prayer* in 1892.

With the outbreak of the Civil War disruption again threatened the Protestant Episcopal Church, but it did not come. Among the major Protestant churches this one alone suffered no division. New England churchmen may have been abolitionists, and a Louisiana bishop, Leonidas Polk, may have been a general under Lee, but Polk prayed for Bishop Charles Pettit McIlvaine of Ohio in public, and the Ohioan prayed for Polk, and they were still in one church. A temporary Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States was organized to carry on the work in the South, but the names of the southern bishops were called in the general convention in New York in 1862; and once the war was over, the Episcopal house was in 1865 quickly reunited.

The years following Appomattox were years of new growth. A dispute over churchmanship, rising out of the Oxford Movement in England, resulted in the separation of a group into the Reformed Episcopal Church in 1873, but otherwise Episcopal unity held fast. New theological seminaries were established and old ones were reorganized and strengthened. This period saw the organization of a church congress, the Brotherhood of St. Andrew, and numerous other church agencies. The expansion continued into the next century; 2 world wars failed to halt it. In 1830 the Protestant Episcopal Church had 12 bishops, 20 dioceses, 600 clergymen, and 30,000 communicants; in 1930 it had 152 bishops, 105 dioceses, 6,000 clergymen, and 1,250,000 communicants.

The Episcopal form of government closely parallels that of the federal government. It is a federal union, now consisting of 114 dioceses (originally coterminous with the states of the Union), each of which is autonomous in its own sphere, associated originally for the maintenance of a common doctrine, discipline, and worship, to which objectives have been added the unification, development, and prosecution of missionary, educational, and social programs on a national scale.

Of the 114 dioceses, 21 are overseas missionary dioceses. Most of the overseas jurisdictions will become either independent Anglican churches or parts of existing Anglican churches in their areas.

Each diocese functions through a bishop (elected locally, with the approval of the whole episcopate and of representatives of the clergy and laity of the whole church), who is the spiritual and administrative head. There is a

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diocesan legislative body (convention, council, or synod) made up of the clergy of the diocese and representatives of the local congregations, meeting annually; a standing committee of clergymen and laymen who are advisers and assessors to the bishop; and, usually, a program board.

The normal pattern for the local congregation is the parish, which elects its own minister (called a rector) who is vested with pastoral oversight of the congregation and who, with the warden and vestrymen (comprising the vestry), administers also the temporal affairs and the property of the parish.

Each parish and parochial district (mission or chapel) is represented in the annual diocesan convention by its clergy and by elected lay delegates of the congregations (usually in proportion to their constituency); each diocese and missionary diocese is represented in the triennial general convention of the church by its bishop or bishops and clerical and lay deputies elected in equal numbers (at present 4 of each). The general convention is a bicameral legislature, and the 2 houses of the convention, bishops and deputies, meet and deliberate separately. Either house may initiate, but the concurrence of both is required to enact legislation.

Between sessions of the general convention, the work of the church is carried on by the presiding bishop (elected for a 12-year term by the house of bishops with the concurrence of the house of deputies) and an elective executive council of 41 members—30 elected by the general convention, 9 elected by the provinces (regional groups of dioceses and missionary districts), and 2 *ex officio* (the presiding bishop and the president of the house of deputies).

Established in 1919 to unify the work of 3 previously independent boards, the council in 1968 took the further step of abolishing a more or less rigid departmental structure in favor of a collaborative working relationship among the program areas of national and world mission, education for ministry, church in society, communication, administration, finance, and stewardship-development.

The Episcopalian accepts 2 creeds—the Apostles' and the Nicene. The articles of the Church of England, with the exception of the twenty-first and with modification of the eighth, thirty-fifth, and thirty-sixth, are accepted as a general statement of doctrine, but adherence to them as a creed is not required. The clergy make the following declaration:

I do believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and to contain all things necessary to salvation, and I do solemnly engage to conform to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the [Protestant] Episcopal Church [in the United States of America].

The church expects of all its members "loyalty to the doctrine, discipline and worship of the one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, in all the essentials, but allows great liberty in nonessentials." It allows for variation, individuality, independent thinking, and religious liberty. Liberals and conservatives, modernists and fundamentalists, find cordial and common

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ground for worship in the prayer book, which next to the Bible has probably influenced more people than any other book in the English language.

There are 2 sacraments, baptism and the Eucharist, recognized as "certain sure witnesses and effectual agencies of God's love and grace." Baptism by pouring or immersion is necessary for either children or adults; baptism by any church in the name of the Trinity is recognized as valid baptism; baptized children are confirmed as members of the church by the bishop, and those not baptized in infancy or childhood must accept the rite before confirmation. Without stating or defining the holy mystery, the Episcopal Church believes in the real presence of Christ in the elements of the Eucharist. The church also recognizes the sacramental character of confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and unction.

Some Episcopalians are high churchmen with elaborate ritual and ceremony; others are described as low churchmen with a ritual less involved and with more of an evangelistic emphasis. All, however, high or low, have a loyalty to their church that is deep and lasting. In more than 300 years this church has known only 1 minor division; today it stands fifth among all denominations: it has 3,070,349 members in 7,494 churches in the United States.

Stanley I. Stuber has called this the "church of beauty," and it is an apt description. Its prayer book is eloquent in the literature of religious worship, containing the heart of the New Testament and Old Testament devotions. Members have built stately cathedrals in this country, among them the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, which is the third largest cathedral in the world, and the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul (national cathedral) at Washington, sometimes called the American Westminster Abbey. Stained-glass windows, gleaming altars, vested choirs, and a glorious ritual give the worshiper not only beauty but a deep sense of the continuity of the Christian spirit and tradition. Next to their stress on episcopacy their liturgical worship is a distinguishing feature; varying in degree according to high or low church inclinations, it has its roots in the liturgy of the Church of England and includes the reading, recitation, or intonation by priest, people, and choir of the historic general confession, general thanksgiving, collects, psalter, and prayers.

National Church financial support is given to 13 U.S. dioceses, to the Navajoland Episcopal Church (an area mission in the Southwest), and to a coalition of dioceses on the East Coast that share a common ministry to the Appalachian mountain people. Special emphasis is placed upon urban ministries, ministry in college communities, and ministry to Black, Hispanic, Indian/Eskimo, and Asian congregations. Overseas missions are located in all American territories—the Panama Canal Zone, Guam, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico—and in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, India, Japan, the Near East, Liberia, Mexico, Okinawa, Taiwan, Central America, and the Philippines. The church sponsors 10 accredited seminaries in the United States plus 2 overseas, 9 colleges, 1 university, about 800 nursery through high schools for boys and girls, 108 homes for the aged, 91 institutions and

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agencies for child and youth care, 69 hospitals, homes, and convalescent clinics, and work for seamen in 8 dioceses in the United States. The church is unique in Protestantism for its orders of monks and nuns; there are 11 orders for men and 16 for women employed in schools, hospitals, and various forms of missionary work.

Two major developments in the Episcopal Church in the past few years have been subjects of debate: prayer book revision and the ordination of women to the priesthood. The general convention of 1976 gave first approval to a Proposed Book of Common Prayer; this represents the first revision of the American Prayer Book since 1928, and the first revision to use contemporary language. Much of the Tudor idiom, however, has been retained. The Holy Eucharist, Morning and Evening Prayer, the Burial of the Dead, and all the Collects for the Church Year appear in contemporary and traditional language, and Archbishop Cranmer's Great Litany has been somewhat revised, but it appears in its traditional form only. All other services—such as Baptism, Matrimony, Confirmation, Ordination, and the Psalter have been revised and/or rewritten in the contemporary idiom. The Proposed Book is also more comprehensive in such forms as private confession, complete rites for Ash Wednesday and Holy Week, and the addition of 3 more daily offices between Morning and Evening Prayer. The Eucharistic Lectionary has also been revised to include, for the first time, regular readings from the Old Testament at Mass. This Proposed Book was passed by an overwhelming majority at the 1979 convention in Denver.

The issue of women's ordination is extremely complex. Actually it goes back to the historical doctrine of the uninterrupted line of succession in the episcopacy from the apostles to the present—the Apostolic Succession, in which men only have been ordained in the threefold ministries of deacon, priest, and bishop. The controversy has centered basically in 2 opinion groups: those who believe that it is de facto impossible for women to be priests and those who believe that the general convention—even though it is the supreme legislative authority of the Episcopal Church—has no right to decide this question of women's ordination and that such a decision can be made only by Catholic consensus or in some kind of ecumenical council.

The general convention of 1970 authorized the ordination of women to the diaconate, but "priesting" was rejected at the convention and again at the 1973 convention. It passed in 1976 by a narrow margin. But even this did not settle the question. In February of 1978, 3 men were consecrated to the episcopate of a newly formed Anglican Church of North America. This body represents scattered groupings of Episcopalians who feel that they can no longer remain within the Episcopal Church because of the church's stand on women in the priesthood, liturgical revision, and divorce and remarriage. It is estimated, at the moment, that about 100 congregations or parts of congregations have joined ACNA. Some 30 to 40 priests have been defrocked by their bishop for having joined the new church. The great majority, however, though disliking the ordination of women, seem to have no intention of leaving the Episcopal Church. The Archbishop of Canterbury

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has said that the schismatic group is not to be in communion with the other sister churches of Anglicanism.

The Episcopal Church has an undeserved reputation for exclusiveness and noncooperation with other Protestant bodies; actually it has been most cooperative. The Lambeth Quadrilateral, already mentioned, was adopted by the house of bishops at the general convention of 1886 and accepted with modifications 2 years later. It had 4 points for world unity of the churches: the Scriptures as the Word of God, the Apostles' and the Nicene creeds as the rule of faith, the 2 sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the episcopate as the central principle of church government. In 1910 the general convention appointed a commission to arrange for a World Conference on Faith and Order; the first conference was held at Geneva in 1920, the second in 1927 at Lausanne, the third at Edinburgh in 1937. The church is active in the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A and in the World Council of Churches. An unusually effective intercommunion has been established among the Anglican and Old Catholic churches and abroad with the Church of Finland, Church of Sweden, Lusitanian Church of Portugal, the Mar Thomas Syrian Church of Malabar, United Church of North India, United Church of Pakistan, Church of South India, the Spanish Reformed Church and the Philippine Independent Churches—all of which may be a first step toward mergers among these bodies.

Reformed Episcopal Church

The Reformed Episcopal Church was organized in New York City in 1873 by 8 clergymen and 20 laymen who formerly had been priests and members of the Protestant Episcopal Church. A long debate over the ritualism and ecclesiasticism of the Protestant Episcopal Church lay behind the separation; the immediate cause of the division lay in the participation of Bishop George David Cummins of Kentucky in a Communion Service held in the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City. In the face of criticism and in the conviction that the catholic nature and mission of the Protestant Episcopal Church were being lost, Bishop Cummins withdrew to found the new denomination.

Doctrine and organization are similar to that of the parent church with several important exceptions. The Reformed Episcopal Church rejects the doctrine that the Lord's Table is an altar on which the body and blood of Christ are offered anew to the Father, that the presence of Christ in the Supper is a presence in the elements of bread and wine, and that regeneration is inseparably connected with baptism. It also denies that Christian ministers are priests in any other sense than that in which all other believers are a "royal priesthood." Clergymen ordained in other churches are not reordained on entering the ministry of the Reformed Episcopal Church, and members are admitted on letters of dismissal from other Protestant denominations.

Worship is liturgical; at the morning services on Sunday the use of the