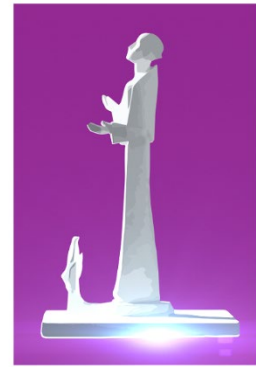


## Episode 1                      Anglicans Before Henry VIII? Archbishop Phillip

### *The original text*

Another dimension of this issue of confidence and trust in Anglican Christianity concerns how well we know our own Anglican heritage and identity and our own confidence that it has something valuable and worthwhile to offer the wider community.



**SFC**  
SHORT COURSES

People sometimes joke about Anglicans being lukewarm, and a bit wishy-washy; that you can believe anything you like and still be an Anglican. In an infamous episode of 'Yes Prime Minister' the Prime Minister has to appoint a new bishop in the Church of England. Sir Humphrey Appleby explains to the Prime Minister that Anglicanism is a device for allowing agnostics to remain in the Church!

We're easy targets for cheap shots, but I wonder how aware we are of the richness and strength and value of our Anglican identity and heritage. Appreciating that will increase our confidence and, in a proper sense, our pride in being Anglican and about what we Anglicans have to offer in our society today.

So what marks our identity and character as Anglicans.

One of my Roman Catholic friends at university, when he was in the mood for an argument, used to say, 'I belong to the church Jesus started. Which one do you belong to?' To get the argument going he'd insist that, because the pope wouldn't permit him to divorce and remarry, Henry VIII decided to start his own, Anglican, Church.

Well, there's a grain of truth in my friend's view, but not much more.

Nearly 1,000 years before Henry, in 596, Pope Gregory the Great sent some 30 monks from Rome to evangelise Anglo-Saxon England. Gregory appointed Augustine, the prior of the monastery, as the leader.

In the years that followed, as Augustine's monks moved north and west from Canterbury, they ran into British communities of Celtic Christianity, some of which had been there for nearly 200 years before Augustine's mission. Patrick was wandering around the British Isles from around 390-460.

That ancient Celtic Church had been pushed into Wales and Scotland by the invading Anglo-Saxons. It was isolated from the rest of the western church and so had developed its own system of organisation, based on monasteries, and had its own bishops.

Eventually the Celtic north and the expanding Roman south had to run into each other and when they did their differences caused difficulties.

Augustine called the Celtic leaders to meet with him and tried to persuade them to adopt the Roman practices of the rest of Western Christianity. He also wanted them to cooperate with him in evangelizing the Anglo-Saxons. The northerners wouldn't agree. They wanted to maintain their own heritage and they were bitter towards their conquerors.

Not to be deterred Augustine called a second conference, but blew it from the start. He failed to stand up when the British bishops arrived. So they saw him as lacking in humility and wouldn't listen or even acknowledge him as their archbishop. Augustine didn't help matters by saying that 'if they would not have peace with their brethren, they should have war with their enemies'.

So if you are ever tempted to think that today's tensions and conflicts in the Anglican Communion are a new thing, just read again the story of Augustine. The conflict between the Celtic north and the Roman south continued until the Synod of Whitby in 664 when they finally agreed on a common date for Easter and a uniform way to tonsure monks and I don't know what else.

So 1000 years before Henry VIII you have Augustine's mission; 200 years before that Patrick and Celtic Christianity were active; and 200 years earlier still the first British martyr, Alban, died in c.209. So Christianity in England dates back nearly to apostolic times and certainly to the time of the early Church fathers.

So Anglicanism does have its roots in England. But they go back a long way before the turmoil of the 16th century.

William Temple, is widely regarded as a quintessential Anglican. He became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1942 at the height of the second world war. He summed up Anglicanism when he wrote –

*Our special character and ... our peculiar contribution to the Universal Church, arises from the fact that, owing to historic circumstances, we have been enabled to combine in our one fellowship the traditional Faith and Order of the Catholic Church with that immediacy of approach to God through Christ to which the Evangelical Churches bear witness, and freedom of intellectual inquiry, whereby correlation of the Christian revelation and advancing knowledge is constantly effected (Temple, nd, 113-14).*

In that pithy paragraph Temple neatly sums up three main emphases in Anglicanism: the catholic, the protestant, reformed or evangelical, whichever term you prefer, and reason and experience (sometimes called the liberal emphasis, though wrongly I think). Let me look briefly at each of them.

### ***The Discussion Questions***

- a. This SFC Short Course explores some important ideas about the Anglican Church. What do you hope to learn from your time with this course?
- b. You're at a BBQ and it emerges in conversation that you're Anglican. You're asked what that means. How would you explain/define Anglicanism to someone?
- c. Imagine that you had to describe the Anglican Church in terms of a personality. What words would you use?
- d. What stands out /surprises you most about this Anglican pre-history?
- e. How does this information make a difference to your concept of Anglican identity?
- f. Describe a time when it was clear to you that the Anglican Church had its own identity/flavour. How did this realisation come about?
- g. What elements of Anglican Christianity do you value the most?
- h. Archbishop Phillip read a quote from a former Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple which describe Anglicanism as having three rich elements:

The faith and order of Catholicism

The immediacy of approach to God through Christ: evangelicals – reformed, protestant

Freedom of intellectual enquiry which constantly balances Christian revelation with advancing knowledge.

In what ways does this complexity add to your experience of Anglicanism/to what Anglicanism can offer the world?

i. These three rich elements often used to summarise Anglicanism are sometimes described as the three legs of a stool. What can this metaphor teach us about the Anglican Church?

### *Extra content – Some more to think about...*

A Scripture-formed Communion? Possibilities and Prospects after Lambeth, ACC, and General Convention

Nicholas Thomas Wright - Bishop of Durham, England

“The Lambeth Conference\* reminded us all twelve months ago — as if we needed it! — just how diverse the Anglican Communion is. Yet it also reminded almost all of us why it matters, that (the Anglican Communion) is indeed a communion, not a loose federation.

- It matters because of our mission: we are not a loose agglomeration of people engaged in quite different tasks, but a single body committed to working for God’s Kingdom and making it a reality in and through the rescued and transformed lives of communities and individuals.
- It matters because of those members who are in sorrow or pain and need help and support: the Melanesian martyrs were a clear and poignant sign of that.
- It matters because of our ecumenical commitment: we want to work more closely with our colleagues in other churches and it is important that we can do so as one body.
- And it matters, not least, because it reflects our commitment at quite a deep level to the scriptural...mandate to unity. ‘May they all be one’: Jesus’ great prayer is echoed by the passionate and theologically grounded appeals for unity in Paul’s letters, not least the regular awareness that for the church to be disunited is to hand some kind of victory to the principalities and powers. They, after all, think they run the world, and a church united across traditional barriers (race, class, gender) is the key sign that they do not, and that Jesus does instead.”

\*The Lambeth Conference is an assembly of bishops from the Anglican Communion, usually held every ten years (since 1867) at Lambeth Palace, London, and presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

[http://ntwrightpage.com/files/2016/05/Wright\\_JAS\\_Scripture\\_Communion.pdf](http://ntwrightpage.com/files/2016/05/Wright_JAS_Scripture_Communion.pdf)

## References – Original Text

Anglican Church in Southern Queensland

2015 Student Protection in Anglican Schools

Anglican Church of Australia

2014 The Constitution Canons and Rules of the Anglican Church of Australia. The Standing Committee of the Anglican Church of Australia

Raven, Charles

1926-7 The Creator Spirit: A Survey of Christian Doctrine in the light of Biology, Psychology and Mysticism. The Hulsean Lectures Cambridge, 1926-7, the Noble Lectures, Harvard, 1926, London, 1927, pp.108-14 cited in Rowell, G. Stevenson, K. and Williams, R. eds. Loves Redeeming Work. OUP. 2001 p.616

Temple, William

nd The Lambeth Conference 1930: Encyclical Letter from the Bishops with Resolutions and Reports. London: SPCK.

1940 Nature, Man and God. London: Macmillan.

Wolf, William J.

1979b 'Anglicanism and its Spirit'. Pp.137-187 in Wolf, William J. (Ed.), Booty, J.E., and Thomas, Owen, C. The Spirit of Anglicanism. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark Limited.