



The Basics of Anglicanism

THE RESTORATION PROJECT: The Basics

9:00 AM – 10:00 AM, Fireside Room

Dr. Mark McInroy

What is Anglicanism?

“O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever” (BCP, p. 540).

The Context: The Protestant Reformation in Continental Europe

Martin Luther (1483-1546) – Sparks the Protestant Reformation in 1517 (95 Theses)

Key ideas:

sola fidei (one is saved by faith, not works)

sola scriptura (only the Bible should be a source for Christian theology)

John Calvin (1509-64)

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531)

Radical Reformers

A Distinctive Break with Rome: The English Reformation

Henry VIII (reigns from 1509-1547) – From Papal Catholicism to Catholicism w/o the Pope

- Formally separates the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church through the Act of Supremacy (1534)
- Henry does this, first and foremost, not to get a divorce, nor because of a theological issue (e.g., the idea that we are saved by faith, not works)
- Instead, the English Reformation begins as an assertion of monarchical power
- “Top-down” reform, not driven by popular desire to reform the church

Edward VI (reigns from 1547-1553) – From Catholicism to Protestantism

Mary I (reigns from 1553-1558) – From Protestantism back to Papal Catholicism

Elizabeth I (reigns from 1558-1603) – From Papal Catholicism to Protestantism

- It is Elizabeth who stabilizes the religious and political situation in England.
- She finds compromise between Catholics and Protestants, achieves “The Elizabethan Settlement”
- Some say that she, not Henry VIII, actually founded the Church of England

Distinctive Features of Anglicanism

1. Anglicanism as a *via media* (middle way) between Catholicism and Protestantism

From Frederica Thompsett (Professor of Church History, Episcopal Divinity School):

“Anglicans have inherited from ... Elizabeth I a preference both for moderation and breadth in theology along with a reluctance to define the mysteries of salvation too closely. One way of describing this stance has been to refer to Anglican theology as a *via media*, or middle way, between Roman Catholic and Protestant theologies. ... We could interpret the Elizabethan Settlement and its struggle for religious identity and stability as a success story about living with controversy, and in many ways this is correct.”

II. Sources of Anglican Theology: Scripture, Tradition, and Reason

From Michael Ramsey (Archbishop of Canterbury from 1961-74):

“The method, use and direction characteristic of Anglican divinity first came into clear light in the writings of [Richard] Hooker. His theology claimed to do both far less and far more than the theologies of Calvin, of Luther and of Trent. It did less in that it eschewed any attempt to offer a complete scheme of Biblical doctrine, or an experiential assurance of justification or an infallibilist system of dogma. It did more in that it appealed to a larger field of authority and dealt with the whole man rather than with certain parts of him. For it appealed to Scripture, tradition and reason .. And it dealt with the whole man, both by its reverence for his reason and his conscience and by its refusal to draw a circle around the inward personal element in religion and to separate it from the world of external things.”