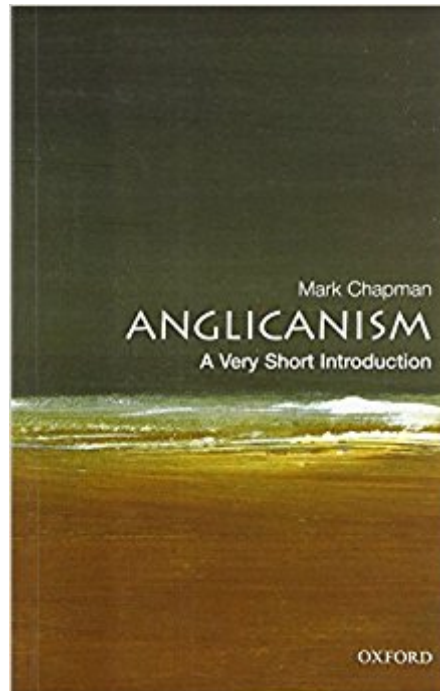




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Anglicanism: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

What is Anglicanism? How is it different from other forms of Christianity, and how did it come to have so many different versions throughout the world? Although originally united by location and a common belief, Anglicanism has gradually lost its pre-eminence as the English state church due to increasing pluralisation and secularization. While there are distinctive themes and emphases that emerge from its early history and theology, there is little sense of unity in Anglicanism today. Here, Mark Chapman explores the fascinating history, theology, and structures of Anglicanism, and highlights the diversity of the contemporary church by examining how traditions vary from England and America, from South Africa to Malaysia. Chapman looks at current developments and controversies, such as homosexuality and women priests, and offers thought-provoking suggestions for the future of Anglicanism. Putting the history and development of the religion into context, Chapman reveals what it is that holds Anglicanism together despite the recent crises that threaten to tear it apart.

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Customer Reviews

Mark Chapman, a historian and historical theologian, is Vice-Principal of Ripon College, Oxford.

Oxford's Very Short Introduction series is uneven. Given the large (and still growing) number of volumes in it, I suppose this is only to be expected. But there's nothing uneven about Mark Chapman's *Anglicanism*. It's a very good introduction. The theme that runs throughout the book is Chapman's claim that the defining characteristic of the Anglican communion is its sometimes fruitful,

sometimes stagnant debate over authority. Unlike the Roman church, there is no central magister in contemporary Anglicanism. Primates, councils, and indeed even the titular "head" of the communion, the Archbishop of Canterbury, have little more than moral authority. This is quite unlike the early days of Anglicanism, when real authority was vested in the English monarch-cum-Church leader. And, of course, Anglicanism was itself birthed out of a dispute between London and Rome over authority. Between then and now, the Anglican communion has wrangled over where authority lies. As Chapman chronicles, evangelical Anglicans, both yesterday's puritans and today's charismatics, put a high premium on individual conscience and scripture. "High" churchmen and Anglo-Catholics see authority residing in tradition, reason, and ecclesial hierarchy. National churches, in keeping with Reformation ideals, are vested with a great deal of autonomy, and in the US tradition, this autonomy extends in large measure even to dioceses and parishes. Recent controversies regarding ordination of women and gays, as well as same-sex blessings, are generated by this autonomy. I wish Chapman had reflected a bit on the peculiar tension between autonomy and authority that seems to be characteristic of the Anglican communion. This tension historically veers from one side to the other, but has thus far managed to endure. Perhaps it's a recipe not only for ecclesial authority, but political authority as well. At any rate, a well-written and readable book, primarily of interest to Anglicans but perhaps also to followers of recent Anglican debates.

I ordered the kindle version of this text and I gotta say, it was pretty tedious. Unless you are already familiar with the history of the Anglican Communion, it is difficult to follow. References are made just once and then abbreviations are used and unless you read that chapter just a few minutes ago, it's too hard to remember what they are talking about. Yes, the history is brief, but maybe a little too brief. If you want to read this one, I would recommend that you read either Michael Ramsey's *The Anglican Spirit* or Chapter 1 of *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church* by David Holmes first. Both cover the stuff that you need to know about the Church of England, presenting the information in a much more user-friendly manner.

There is a lot of information in the 168 pages of this book. A sweeping view of Anglican history, its development, the issues both in the past and today are all covered. A great book for those who are interested in finding out about Anglicanism and an excellent resource for those wanting to join an Anglican congregation. I plan to recommend it and probably use some of it for our New Members Class. Recommended.

Really great short introduction- thorough without being tedious. Mr Chapman's writing is easily understood and the content is fluid and helpful. If you want an overview of Anglicanism, this is a fantastic resource.

The book reads like a novel and is free of partisan bias. Evangelicals, Anglo-Catholics, the global communion and current crises are all discussed dispassionately. I highly recommend it if you are interested in acquainting yourself with Anglicanism.

Very concise and very descriptive book on the church and why it is anyway. Good for new members and old alike. Very good education.

This book suffers from a malady that infects many in this line of "Very Short" introductions: its topic is too broad and so is its scope. Chapman does a strong job of laying out the somewhat sordid history of the Anglican church and the Anglican-Episcopal communion, but a lot of the context for the history is not included in the work for what I assume is concern about space. This means one needs an extensive knowledge English and commonwealth history that would preclude most people who would need such an introductory text in the first place. That said, Chapman does not pick sides in many of these controversies and tries to remain purely in the realm of facts as much as possible. The strongest sections were on the history of evangelical and Anglo-Catholic developments as well as Anglican's churches on-again/off-again role in Protestant reformation as a whole. The sections on the world church were too brief, although this seems to be not so much a fault of Chapman's but the format itself. Chapman addresses important issues facing the church in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, such as female priesthood and homosexuality, and the split that has arisen from these disagreements, particularly between the American and the African parts of the communion. What this lacks, however, is a discussion of what Anglicans can agree on now. Anglican identity is covered historically, but not confessionally, leaving one to feel like all the Anglican Communion is the vapors of a national church. I suspect this is not case in most Anglican's own experience, but the format did not allow space to address this. Since this is an introduction to Anglicanism and not just the history of the Church of England, this does seem like a significant oversight.

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