



## INTRODUCTION

# Unit 1

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## Who Are The Anglicans?

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**W**ho are the Anglicans? How did their system of worship come to be established? How open are they to alternative ways of looking at religion? In particular, how can Seventh-day Adventists share their convictions with members of the Anglican community? These are some of the issues we will probe in this publication.

It is the author's wish that Seventh-day Adventists will appreciate more fully the solid contribution of Anglicans in past centuries to the upholding of biblical truth, sometimes in the face of antagonism and hostility. At the same time, let us recognize that they, like ourselves, are pilgrims on the pathway of truth, and that God's steadfast love is broad enough to encompass us all as we seek His guidance for our lives, along with a fuller knowledge of His will as revealed in Scripture.

## Contents of the unit

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In this unit we will study the history and origins of the Anglican church.

- ▶ The Celtic church
- ▶ Controversies with Roman Catholicism
- ▶ John Wycliffe and the beginnings of Protestantism
- ▶ The Protestant reformation in Britain
- ▶ The Puritans

## Objectives of the unit

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When you finish this unit, you should be able to:

- Outline the principal events in the history of the Anglican church.
- Relate the principal events of the controversies between Anglicans and the Roman Catholic Church.
- Understand the differences between a Roman Catholic, an Anglican, a Puritan, and a nonconformist.
- Be able to identify the following:
  - ◆ Patrick and Colombo
  - ◆ Augustine
  - ◆ The Quartodeciman controversy
  - ◆ John Wycliffe
  - ◆ King Henry VIII
  - ◆ Anglican Prayer Book

*Canterbury Cathedral  
Home of the Anglican Church*



# The Celtic Church

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## EARLY CHRISTIAN HISTORY IN BRITAIN

The early period of Christianity in Britain is shrouded in mystery. There are legends that speak of Jesus visiting Britain as a boy, and later of a group of the early disciples finding their way here and settling in the west of England in the Vale of Avalon. Even today, thousands of visitors flock each year to the ancient ruins of Glastonbury Abbey and are shown the holy thorn tree, said to be a descendant of the staff of Joseph of Arimathea, which he planted as a sign that his wanderings in Europe were over. Such legends, however, must be discounted for lack of evidence.

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### The first martyr

Christianity, nevertheless, established deep roots in Britain several hundred years after the time of Jesus. Earlier Christian writers such as Tertullian in the year A.D. 209 refer to the spread of the Christian gospel to Britain and the ruins of early churches have been unearthed by the archaeologist's spade. In A.D. 304, in what is now the city of St. Albans in England, the first Christian martyr in Britain, a soldier in the Roman Army of occupation by the name of Alban paid for his faith in our Lord with his life.

The early church in Britain, usually spoken of as the Celtic Church, closely mirrored the beliefs and practices of the church established by Jesus. Many researchers have attested the strong biblical foundation for the beliefs of this church.<sup>1</sup> Scriptural support was sought for all its teachings.

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### A faithful church

For the Celts, salvation came through faith in Jesus alone, with works as the fruitage of a changed life.<sup>1</sup> Believers looked to the return of our Lord in glory, and to the establishment of an eternal kingdom. From the records of the lives of Patrick of Ireland, Columba of Scotland, and Aidan of England, we discover that the Celts understood the scriptural observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, and the principles of tithing and healthful living.<sup>2</sup>

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1. For example, Leslie Hardinge in his book, *The Celtic Church*.

2. A. C. Flick, *The Rise of the Medieval Church*, p. 237, quoted in *Truth Triumphant* by B. G. Wilkinson, p. 95.

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**A missionary church**

Perhaps more important than its teachings, the Celtic Church was a church of great missionary endeavor. They looked for ways of actively spreading the gospel of Christ to those who had never heard it, not only among the heathen people in Britain but also in other parts of western Europe. Celtic missionaries fanned out through the British Isles and the Germanic tribes, bringing life and hope to those in darkness.



*The Celtic cross looks like a Latin cross with the addition of a circle surrounding the intersection.*

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**Roman Catholics become interested in Britain**

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It is said that one day in the year A.D. 585 Pope Gregory I was walking through the city slave market in Rome and saw a group of fair-skinned blue-eyed blond boys for sale. When he learned they were from Northumbria, in the northeast corner of England, he vowed to bring the Celts under Roman authority.

**A monk named Augustine**

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When the first missionaries from Rome arrived in Britain in the year A.D. 596 with the intent of planting the papal flag on new horizons, they found a brand of Christianity far closer to the primitive faith than their own. A Roman mission was established at Canterbury with the blessing of King Ethelbert, who subsequently was baptized just one week before the death of Columba. Augustine was consecrated at Arles soon afterward by Archbishop Vergilius as Archbishop

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**King Ethelbert's Conversation With Augustine**

King Ethelbert allowed Augustine, the monk from Rome, and his company to stay in Canterbury, and Ethelbert was baptised later that year.

"Your words are fair," Ethelbert told Augustine, "and your promises—but because they are new and doubtful, I cannot give my assent to them, and leave the customs which I have so long observed, with the whole Anglo-Saxon race. But because you have come hither as strangers from a long distance, and as I seem to myself to have seen clearly, that what you yourselves believed to be true and good, you wish to impart to us, we do not wish to molest you; nay, rather we are anxious to receive your hospitably, and to give you all that is needed for your support, nor do we hinder you from joining all whom you can to the faith of your religion."

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of the English Church. Some look to this event as the founding of Anglicanism. In a sense, the event would herald the beginning of an enduring clash that stretched over many centuries between differing strains of Christian belief; the Roman version of the faith, backed by papal authority, tradition, and decrees, and the Celtic brand of Christianity, later modified and diluted but still affirming the authority of Scripture over tradition.

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At the same time, the situation was compounded by the strong heathen traditions of the British people. Efforts were made to induce compromise by fusing together elements of Christianity and pagan culture to facilitate the spread of the Christian message.

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### Which Augustine Is Which?

*There are two saints named Augustine:*

*Saint Augustine for Hippo, a famous North African Christian theologian and writer who lived from A.D. 354-430.*

*The saint Augustine we are studying about was born in Rome around A.D. 604, (no one knows when he died) and is called Saint Augustine of Canterbury.*

### The conflict over the date of Easter

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An example of this was seen in the conflict over the dating of Easter. The original Celt Christians followed an ancient tradition placing its observance to coincide with the Jewish Passover, the actual time of Jesus crucifixion and

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## Ancient Heathen Religion in Britain

The ancient Celtic religions were based on the worship of nature and led by priests called Druids. The name "Druid" means something like "strong tree." Oak trees also serve as host to mistletoe, an air parasitic plant considered to make the oak tree especially sacred and as "sent from heaven." The Druids used groves of oak trees as sacred meeting places where they sacrificed white bulls and sometimes humans. They built sacred places out of stones and rocks, many of which still survive in various places in the United Kingdom. Some Druid customs were "baptized" by the Roman Catholic Church and reused as Christian rites, especially those that have to do with the celebration of Easter and Christmas. Few people today know much about these ancient practices, but the early Christians in Britain faced these Druid challenges every day.



There is renewed interest in the religion of the Druids today by New Age advocates who worship the forces of nature through meditation, prayer and the celebration of the Earth.