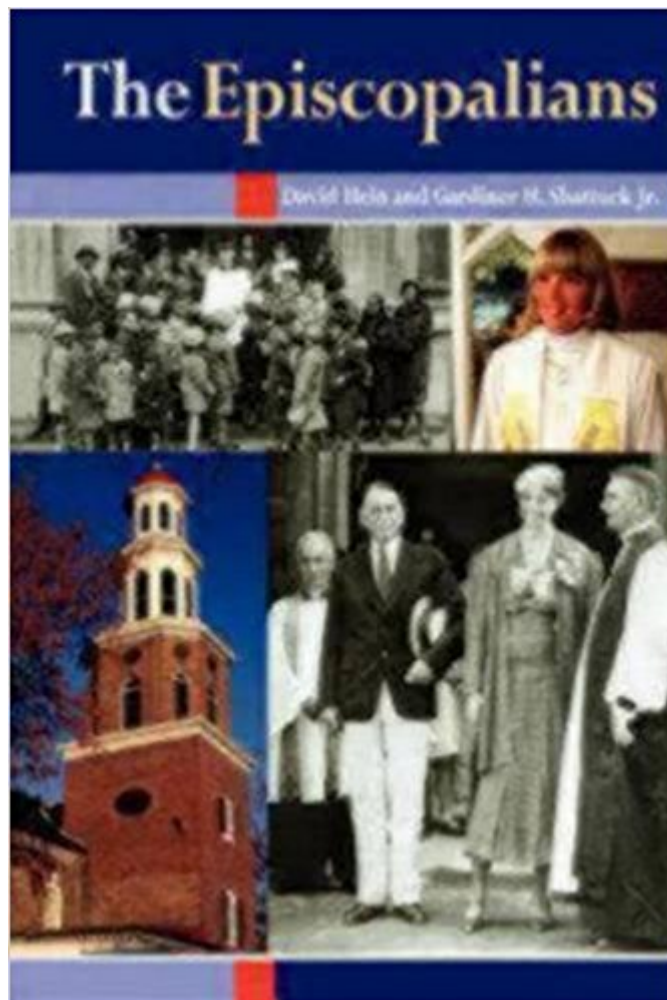


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The Episcopalians



Synopsis

The story of Episcopalians in America is the story of an influential denomination that has furnished a large share of the American political and cultural leadership. Beginning with the Episcopal Church's roots in sixteenth-century England, *The Episcopalians* offers a fresh account of its rise to prominence. Chronologically arranged, it traces the establishment of colonial Anglicanism in the New World through the birth of the Episcopal Church after the Revolution and its rise throughout the nineteenth century, ending with the complex array of forces that helped shape it in the 20th century and the consecration of Gene Robinson in 2003. The authors focus not only on the established leadership of the church but also to the experience of lay people, the form and function of sacred space, the evolution of church parties and theology, relations with other Christian communities, and the evolving ministries of women and minorities.

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Customer Reviews

"How do you characterize a denomination that is doctrinally indifferent, liturgically lush, culturally elite, politically conservative, socially liberal, and that Thomas Merton once described as little more than an "atmosphere"? Hein and Shattuck have risen to the challenge with this lively, well-balanced, and readable book....Highly recommended. General readers; lower-level undergraduates and above."-Choice

David Hein teaches in the religion and philosophy department at hood College. He is the author of

Noble Powell and the Episcopal Establishment in the Twentieth Century, and co-author of *Essays on Lincoln's Faith and Politics*. Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr. is an American religious historian, author of *Episcopalians and Race: From Civil War to Civil rights*, and co-author of *Encyclopedia of American Religious History*.

Very interesting!

As a recently confirmed member of the Episcopalian Communion, I was quite happy to find this new volume from The Greenwood Press series on denominational studies, an excellent successor to the American Church History Series (1893-1897). While there have been innumerable works on American religious denominations in the interim (including the constantly revised "Handbook of Denominations in the United States"), this series allows for a deeper and richer look into the history, evolution and specific theologies and practices of the major American denominations. "The Episcopalians" is divided into two parts, namely a history of American Anglicanism/Episcopalianism by chronology, and a biographical history of the major leaders and luminaries in the Church's North American odyssey. Beginning with the antecedent Church of England and its relationship with the expanding Colonial Church, the story progresses through the tribulations of the Anglican Communion during and following the American Revolution, when the inevitable "split" from the Mother Church nearly destroyed the well-established (but "Bishopless") American parishes. With the final post-Independence reorganization of the church into the present day Episcopal Church in America, there followed the trauma of the Civil War, with its attendant near-schism over the issue of slavery (which, in contradistinction to other major American denominations, actually never occurred). History does not paint a very flattering picture of the Southern Churches, many of which were strong opponents of Emancipation; however, the Church survived, albeit wounded and suffering, as was the Nation. Excellent chapters on the post-war social and intellectual/theological changes and conflicts follow, including the church's involvement in Missionary work, the Anglo-Catholic ("Oxford Movement") controversy, the exodus from city to suburbs following World War II, the Civil Rights Movement, ecumenism, and ending with an excellent conclusion that clearly illuminates the issues facing the American church today (women in the clergy, the Charismatic Movement begun in the 1970's, homosexual lay and clerical conflicts down to the present controversy over the ordination of a Gay Bishop in New Hampshire). There follow excellent biographical sketches of essentially all of the main players and luminaries who have influenced and guided the ever-evolving American Episcopalian Church within the broader worldwide Anglican

Communion. These were especially valuable to me, as many individuals who were pivotal in the life of the Church are today little known or forgotten, and deserve their rightful place in the story of the church that was, at least in America's Revolutionary beginnings, the closest thing to a "National Church" that our Country has ever had, and which clearly played a pivotal role in the lives of many of our Founding Fathers and their historic roles in creating the beginning of "The Great Experiment" of American Democracy. I highly recommend this book to any and all, Episcopalians or otherwise, as an excellent picture and example of the relationship between America's secular and religious histories, which are clearly deeply and irrevocably intertwined in our Country's past, present and future.

This was a well written and complete summary of the history of the Episcopal Church. It was a good refresher for me, especially the early history.

An interesting history of the Episcopal Church; a trifle light on the religious aspects. Useful and interesting mini-biographies fill in some of the personalities in the church.

This is only an average book. It really only spends a few pages on recent history. Half the book is about historical people associated with the church.

How do you characterize a denomination that is doctrinally indifferent, liturgically lush, culturally elite, politically conservative, socially liberal, and which Thomas Merton once described as little more than an "atmosphere"? Hein and Schattuck have risen to the challenge with this lively, well-balanced and readable book. Part One is a history, beginning with the denomination's Anglican origins in Henry VIII's divorce and tracing its American development up through its election of an openly gay bishop in 2003. It is never quite made clear whether this influential denomination, which has furnished a disproportionately large share of American political and cultural leadership, is actually leading or merely blowing with the wind. This question arises not only with the denomination's vanguard positions on contraception, civil rights, ordination of women and gays, but in its perennial reluctance to address the difficult issues attendant to its Anglican origins, such as William Cobbett addresses in his history of the Reformation in England. Part Two, the largest part of the book, offers a stunning list of biographical profiles, including Robert E. Lee, J.P. Morgan, George Whitefield, and many less-known churchmen, women leaders, and missionaries. Recommended for general readers. Despite one or two historical reservations, a darn good read.

This book is very much as advertised; it provides a thorough but not overly dry history of the Church in America. It moves along at the right pace- not too much in depth but certainly enough to give us the events which shaped the development of the denomination here. Those who want to explore more can refer to the many references in the extensive bibliography which is provided at the end of each chapter and at the end. It is all well organised. The writing is seamless between the two authors which also makes this a smooth read. The biographies of the prominent figures in the church are also brief enough to provide an overview of their respective contributions. My only criticism of the book is with the biography section- they are all "early" figures (17th, 18th, 19th century) and none of the recent notables that we today might be- or should be- familiar with. All in all, you will learn much from this book. R. Hager, New Jersey

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