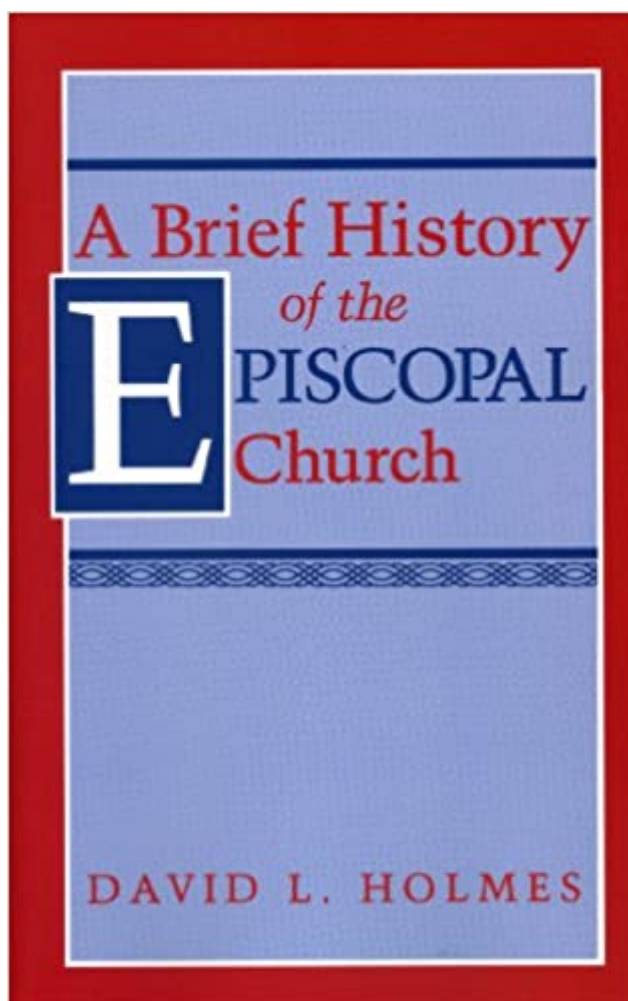




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# A Brief History Of The Episcopal Church



## Synopsis

Many denominations have faced serious identity crisis in recent years. Who are we? We do we exist? What is our mission given the radical political, social, and economic changes that have occurred in this century? What does it mean to be "church" in a pluralistic, postmodern world? In an effort to answer these and related questions, denominations have rediscovered their origins and redefined themselves and their mission in ways that are consistent with their history. Additional research into denominational histories and the rewriting of these histories has been of significant import in helping today's churches relate to their times. David L. Holmes has produced a relatively concise, highly literary 400-year history of the Episcopal Church, its successes and its failures. He has clearly tied this history to the Anglican Reformation that emerged from Henry VIII's break with Roman Catholicism (an appendix on the annulment of Henry VIII has been included for those who may be unfamiliar with what precipitated the crisis between Henry and the Roman Church). This book, then, provides a readable and accurate account of the beginnings of the Anglican Church in America at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, to the establishment of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America after the War of Independence, to the present day. "Although only sixth in terms of numbers in the United States," David Holmes concludes, "the denomination that first appeared in the colonies as the Church of England 400 years ago has become substantially Americanized. It may be second to none in the nation in terms of power and influence." All who are interested in American church history and in the influence of the Episcopal Church on American history will find David Holmes's account fascinating and helpful. David L. Holmes is Professor of American Religion and Church History at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"I would suggest that every bishop and every clerical and lay deputy to the General Convention read this book before arriving in Philadelphia in 1997. The size and price make this a book which belongs in every parish library and on the shelf of every Episcopalian interested in our story...highly recommended..."  
—•The Historiographer (Robert G. Carroon)"I would suggest that every bishop and every clerical and lay deputy to the General Convention read this book before arriving in Philadelphia in 1997. The size and price make this a book which belongs in every parish library and on the shelf of every Episcopalian interested in our story...highly recommended..."  
—•The Historiographer (Sanford Lakoff)

David L. Holmes is Professor of American Religion and Church History at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg, Virginia.

I'm about halfway through reading this book and I have to say that I love it! A historical account of the development of the Episcopal Church in the United States, it is well written, unbiased, and even a little humorous. Holmes is able to make a history book readable and enjoyable rather than tedious and boring. I also appreciate that those facts about the Episcopal Church that are not so pretty (like the positions of many clergy on slavery during that time period) are not glossed over or played down but presented in a matter-of-fact manner that is both fair and balanced. The book itself did arrive a little slowly--hence the four star rating instead of five. I had intended to read *The Anglican Spirit* by Michael Ramsey after this book, but this book took so long to arrive that I had time to completely read that one first! I would definitely order this book again, but I would make sure to order through Prime and get your books faster.

I ordered this book to supplement my readings on the Episcopal Church history. We joined the Episcopal denomination a little over a year ago. I found this book well written, thorough, and a fascinating read. Would highly recommend!

Anyone interested in this subject will find this book to be a readable source of all you want to know.

Prompt shipping, as promised A+

Hm, first thing from not to arrive. Am hoping it will show up one of these days. I know the item itself is a five star item and a very good history, but haven't had a chance to read the whole thing, just exerpts during a recent class.

This is a well presented and carefully researched history of the American church. The organization by topic rather than purely by chronology allows a more illuminating discussion of some of the trends and developments in the Episcopal Church that are sometimes obscured by a purely chronological treatment. Disagreements among the various "parties" are presented clearly and even-handedly and are neither sensationalized nor "swept under the rug." Several topics that are not typically covered (or are covered only superficially) in similar surveys are treated in this history. A valuable addition to literature and a pleasure to read.

Good history pairs accurate facts with clear analysis. Great history adds fresh ideas, compelling personal accounts, and a genuine passion for the subject matter. In this engaging book on the Episcopal church, David Holmes has written history of the best kind. As a professor at the College of William and Mary, Holmes commands knowledge of both church development and European and American history. Yet his simple, direct language makes complex topics clear to readers unfamiliar with church history or religious studies in general. His research also makes Episcopal history relevant to a wide range of audiences. In a chapter entitled "The Growth of the Episcopal Church," Holmes chronicles the church's post-Colonial development. The diversity in this section shines. With fascinating detail, the author describes Anglican attempts to evangelize Native Americans, touches on foreign missions, and writes about the effect of immigration on the church. Holmes also deals deftly with the role of African-Americans in the church, beginning with the baptism of an African-American family at Jamestown in 1623. He objectively describes the church's response to slavery and the Civil War, and explains the subsequent disaffection of many African-Americans from the denomination. Finally, Holmes brilliantly chronicles the little-known role of women in areas such as missionary work and the social gospel movement. The book tells the stories of several women affected by the national debate over women's ordination in the 1960's and 1970's. Even without the detailed and lively history that comprises its six main chapters, Holmes's book would be worth reading for its fascinating appendix, which chronicles Henry VIII's quest for an annulment from Catherine of Aragon. In an exceedingly well-researched account, Holmes balances historical detail

with human interest drama that will captivate readers of all levels. With lively prose and compelling analysis, this "brief history" will be a delight for scholars, laity, and history buffs alike.

David L. Holmes's *A Brief History of the Episcopal Church* is an outstanding tour through the history of the Episcopal church, from its earliest days to the present. In fewer than 200 pages Holmes covers a wide range of persons, groups, and subjects and does so with flair and wit. He writes in an inviting and approachable style that combines sound scholarship with the insights and intuitions of a seasoned and highly effective college professor. Holmes successfully incorporates discussions of liturgy, theology, polity, and architecture into the story, while giving attention to women and men representing a range of ethnic and social backgrounds. In so doing he relates the history of the Episcopal church to that of the larger society in a way that makes church history come alive. The author draws readers into the rich history of the Episcopal church and Anglican tradition through a narrative style that is insightful yet balanced, engaging yet informative. For example, his treatment of "Henry VIII's Quest for an Annulment" helpfully discusses this event and its effects within the context of its time. The book is accessible to a wide range of individuals, from general readers to students of Episcopal church history. Holmes's *Brief History* can be used successfully in both classrooms and churches. It will be welcomed by teachers, students, libraries, and others interested in Episcopal or American church history. Here is one example of a brief church history that is informative, fair, and a pleasure to read.

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