

Brief history of religion in Britain

Context to religion in the Romantic/Victorian periods

- Pre-1500: Britain a 'catholic' nation: part of western Christendom
- 1517: Martin Luther introduces Protestantism to Britain
- 1533: Henry VIII ignores Catholic Pope by annulling his first marriage; this leads to:
- 1534: 'The Act of Supremacy,' wherein Henry transfers papal supremacy in England to the crown (i.e. himself); this bit of religious history is called the English Reformation
- 1550: Edward VI establishes the English Church as officially Protestant
- 1553: Mary Queen of Scots re-establishes the English Church as Roman Catholic and burns loads of Protestants at the stake
- 1558: Elizabeth I succeeds Mary and re-re-establishes Protestantism, calls it the Anglican faith, ('Anglicanism' and 'The Church of England' are the same thing) and codifies it in the 'Thirty-Nine Articles' (1563, and based on the work of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury)
- 1642-1651: Civil War; Church of England becomes more High Church (because of the intervention of William Laud), thus alienating the Puritans (Protestants who thought 'High Church' Anglicanism was too close to Roman Catholicism)
- 1660: Puritans get chucked out of Church of England when Charles II comes to the throne
- 1690: Church of England decides to tolerate some kinds of dissent (Dissenters are Christians who refuse to conform to all or some of the 'Thirty-Nine Articles')

Religion in the Romantic/Victorian periods

- 1738: John Wesley undergoes a conversion experience after hearing a sermon by Luther, and creates 'Methodism': Methodism conforms to Church of England orthodoxy, but emphasizes feeling over reason in faith. (Methodism is also called 'the religion of the heart' and its conversion of thousands of believers is called 'the Evangelical Revival')
- 1829: 'Roman Catholic Relief Act' emancipates Roman Catholics in Britain
- 1833: some conservative Oxford clergy (who think Methodism is too populist and Roman Catholicism too extreme) decide to re-establish the Church of England back in a High Church framework; this is called 'The Oxford Movement' or 'Tractarianism' (after the 90 *Tracts for the Times* written by various authors to outline their beliefs)
- 1850s: 'Latitudinarianism' becomes popular: the belief that all Protestant belief systems should be united in a tolerant, moderate practical religion to stop everyone arguing about theology and doctrine
- 1851: Census of Religious Worship: reveals that only 14% of Britain recognize themselves as part of the Church of England (although not everyone took part in the census)
- 1867: 'The Murphy Riots': anti-Catholic riots led by William Murphy (supported by Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy*)
- 1919: Church separates from the State

NINETEENTH-CENTURY RELIGION

ROMAN CATHOLICISM	HIGH CHURCH ANGLICANISM (Church of England)	LOW CHURCH ANGLICANISM (Church of England)	DISSENTERS (Protestant but not part of the Church of England)	SPIRITUALISM & THEOSOPHY	JUDAISM
'Old Catholics'; 'New Converts'; Jesuits: based on the Bible and writings of the Church Fathers	High Anglicans; Tractarians; Anglo-Catholics: based on the Bible and writings of the Church Fathers	Evangelicals; Broad Church liberals: Bible-based	Methodists; Baptists; Quakers: Bible-based	Alternative to conventional religion: based on the belief that the dead can communicate with the living	Jews; based on the Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) and the Talmud
Only granted full civil rights in Britain in 1829, after being condemned after the Reformation	Seeks to re-establish the Church of England as 'catholic' by implementing 'catholic' doctrine and ritual	Stress centrality of inner life and faith - personal conviction more important than doctrine and ritual	Refuse to conform to tenets of restored Church of England in 1662	Rooted in Swedenborg's writing on the spirit world; and also Anton Mesmer's experiments with hypnotism	Granted right to vote in Britain in 1835; defended by Dissenters who campaigned for Jewish rights
Pope; belief in ceremonial ritual	No Pope; belief in ceremonial ritual	No Pope; no ritual - plain ceremonies valued	No hierarchy; stress on the idea of a 'gathered church' (i.e. shared, not individual, worship)	Popular in mid-Victorian Britain; replaced at the end of the century by 'Theosophy'	Authority invested in Rabbis (interpreters of Jewish sacred texts)
Associated with continental piety across class	Associated with upper and middle classes	Associated with lower middle and working classes	Associated with working classes and left-wing radicalism	Theosophy is a mix of Hinduism, Judaism and spiritualism: argues that all religions have something to offer the believer	Jewish population at 15,000 in 1800; and 180,000 in 1900; mainly in London
Historical tradition valued, e.g. each Pope is connected to St Peter	Intellectual tradition valued, e.g. faith is rooted in elite theological education	Tradition rejected: faith grounded in the heart (feeling) not books	Tradition rejected: faith grounded in involvement of laity and communal action	Theosophy is introduced by (Helena Petrova) 'Madame' Blavatsky, whose converts include Annie Besant and W. B. Yeats	Judaism sees itself as representative of the bond between it, the Children of Israel (and later, the Jewish nation) and God
Gerard Manley Hopkins	Christina Rossetti; Gerard Manley Hopkins (before he becomes a Jesuit)	Wordsworth and Coleridge's post-pantheist beliefs are close to this position	John Clare	Elizabeth Barrett Browning (spiritualism)	Amy Levy