47. The Anglican record: supremacy, establishment, slavery and abuse

This chapter sets out the record of the Anglican churches: the Church of England from the break with Rome under Henry VIII, the established Church of Ireland, and the Anglican provinces of Canada, Australia and the United States. It covers ten cases in four groups: the enforcement of the Reformation settlement by execution and confiscation; the penal laws that protected the established church against Catholics and Dissenters; the church's profits from slavery and its part in the schooling and removal of Indigenous children; and child sexual abuse and its handling. Each case sets out what happened, using figures accepted by historians and official inquiries; the criticism; the Anglican response, from the church's own statements and apologies; and whether and how it was corrected.

The criticism

- **"By their fruits ye shall know them"** (Matt 7:15–20). The church's independence was established by statute and enforced from the start by the treason law: Carthusian monks, Bishop John Fisher and Thomas More under Henry VIII, and Edmund Campion and some 183 other Catholics, as well as the Separatists Barrow, Greenwood and Penry, under Elizabeth I.
- **Privilege maintained by law.** For more than two centuries the established church was protected by penal laws and tests that kept Catholics and Dissenters out of office, the universities and, in Ireland, landownership, while the Catholic majority in Ireland paid tithes to a minority church.
- **Profit from slavery and empire.** The church's own missionary society held enslaved people on the Codrington estates in Barbados for more than a century, a church fund invested in the slave-trading South Sea Company, and Anglican schools and missions served policies that separated Indigenous children from their families.
- **Reputation before children.** The national inquiry of 2020 found that the Church of England had put its reputation ahead of children's well-being, and the Makin Review (2024) found that the church's responses to John Smyth's abuse amounted to a cover-up.
- **Slow reform.** In 2025 the General Synod declined to make safeguarding fully independent at once, and the Charity Commission found "insufficient urgency and pace" in the church's response to past reviews.

How Anglicans answer

- **No claim to be free of error.** The Articles of Religion teach that even general councils "may err, and sometimes have erred, even in things pertaining unto God" (Article XXI), so the church

does not need to defend its past to defend its faith.

- **State acts, now repented.** The Tudor executions and the penal laws were the work of Crown and Parliament, framed in their day as defenses against treason and foreign powers. The church now commemorates Fisher and More as Reformation martyrs (July 6) and keeps May 4 for the "English Saints and Martyrs of the Reformation Era"; in 2012 it held a service of reconciliation with the United Reformed Church on the 350th anniversary of the ejection of 1662.
- **Public apology.** The General Synod apologized for the church's part in the slave trade in 2006 (238 to 0); the Primate of Canada apologized for the residential schools in 1993 ("We failed you. We failed ourselves. We failed God.") and for spiritual harm in 2019; the Australian General Synod apologized to the Stolen Generations in 1998 and to abuse survivors in 2004 and 2017.
- **Accountability at the top.** The church commissioned the Gibb and Makin reviews itself; an Archbishop of Canterbury resigned in 2024, accepting "personal and institutional responsibility"; and the General Synod approved a redress scheme for survivors (2025) and a national safeguarding charity with a majority-independent board (2026).

Summary

1. Executions for refusing the royal supremacy

Period: 1535–1540

Status: ACKNOWLEDGED

Key correction: Fisher and More in the Church of England calendar (1980)

2. The dissolution of the monasteries

Period: 1536–1540

Status: DISPUTED

Key correction: Religious life revived (1845); lands never returned

3. Executions of Catholics and Separatists under Elizabeth I

Period: 1570s–1603

Status: ENDED

Key correction: Executions ended (about 1680); common commemoration on May 4

4. The Great Ejection and the persecution of Dissenters

Period: 1660–1689

Status: ENDED

Key correction: Toleration Act (1689); Test Acts repealed (1828); reconciliation service (2012)

5. The penal laws, the Test Acts and the Irish establishment

Period: 1560s–1871

Status: ENDED

Key correction: Catholic Relief Act (1829); Church of Ireland disestablished (1871)

6. The Codrington plantations and profits from slavery

Period: 1710–1838

Status: APOLOGIZED FOR

Key correction: Synod apology (2006); Church Commissioners' fund (2023); USPG pledge (2023)

7. Residential schools in Canada and the Stolen Generations in Australia

Period: 1820s–1969

Status: APOLOGIZED FOR

Key correction: Apologies in Canada (1993, 2019) and Australia (1998)

8. Child sexual abuse and its handling in the Church of England

Period: 1940s–2020

Status: PARTLY CORRECTED

Key correction: Redress scheme (2025); national safeguarding charity approved (2026)

9. John Smyth, the Makin Review and an archbishop's resignation

Period: 1970s–2025

Status: ONGOING

Key correction: Makin Review (2024); Welby resigned (2024); disciplinary cases (2025)

10. Child sexual abuse in the Anglican Church of Australia

Period: 1980–2017

Status: PARTLY CORRECTED

Key correction: Apology (2004, renewed 2017); compensation

Close all

A. Enforcing the Reformation 3

1. Executions for refusing the royal supremacy 1535–1540 ACKNOWLEDGED
2. The dissolution of the monasteries 1536–1540 DISPUTED
3. Executions of Catholics and Separatists under Elizabeth I 1570s–1603 ENDED

B. Establishment and dissent 2

4. The Great Ejection and the persecution of Dissenters 1660–1689 ENDED
5. The penal laws, the Test Acts and the Irish establishment 1560s–1871 ENDED

C. Slavery and colonial missions 2

6. The Codrington plantations and profits from slavery 1710–1838 APOLOGIZED FOR
7. Residential schools in Canada and the Stolen Generations in Australia 1820s–1969 APOLOGIZED FOR

D. Sexual abuse and its handling 3

8. Child sexual abuse and its handling in the Church of England 1940s–2020 PARTLY CORRECTED

9. John Smyth, the Makin Review and an archbishop's resignation 1970s–2025 ONGOING

10. Child sexual abuse in the Anglican Church of Australia 1980–2017 PARTLY CORRECTED

The other records: Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Reformed, Methodist, Baptist.

1. Executions for refusing the royal supremacy 1535–1540

ACKNOWLEDGED

WHAT HAPPENED

The Act of Supremacy of November 1534 made Henry VIII Supreme Head of the Church of England, and refusing the oath that went with the new settlement was treated as high treason. On May 4, 1535 three Carthusian priors, John Houghton of the London Charterhouse, Robert Lawrence of Beauvale and Augustine Webster of Axholme, were hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn. More Carthusians followed on June 19, and by August 4, 1540 eighteen monks of the order had died. John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, was imprisoned in the Tower on April 26, 1534; Paul III made him a cardinal in May 1535, and he was beheaded on Tower Hill on June 22, 1535, the king having commuted the sentence of hanging, drawing and quartering. Thomas More, the former Lord Chancellor, was asked to swear on April 13, 1534 and refused; he was tried on July 1, 1535 and beheaded on Tower Hill on July 6, saying that he died "the King's good servant, and God's first." Pius XI canonized Fisher and More together on May 19, 1935.

The criticism

The Catholic Church venerates these men as martyrs, and the London Charterhouse remembers its priors as the first martyrs of Henry's reign. Critics say they were killed not for any plot but for refusing to put loyalty to the king above loyalty to the pope, so that the national church's founding settlement was enforced from the start by the gallows and the block. A church that owes its independence to such acts, they argue, cannot treat them as the private sins of a king.

Anglican response

The deaths were sentences of the king's courts under the treason law, not judgments of any synod or of the church's doctrine. The Church of England's own answer has been to honor the dead: its calendar

keeps July 6 for "Thomas More, Scholar, and John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, Reformation Martyrs, 1535," added in 1980, and May 4, the anniversary of the Carthusians' deaths, as "English Saints and Martyrs of the Reformation Era." Its Articles hold that even general councils "may err, and sometimes have erred" (Article XXI), so it claims no exemption for its own past.

Was it corrected? Acknowledged. The executions under the supremacy ended with Henry's reign. Since 1980 the Church of England has commemorated Fisher and More as Reformation martyrs, and May 4 is a lesser festival for the saints and martyrs of the Reformation era.

Sources: The Charterhouse, The anniversary of the Carthusian monks' martyrdom; Wikipedia, John Fisher; Wikipedia, Thomas More; Wikipedia, Calendar of saints (Church of England); Church of England, Articles of Religion (Book of Common Prayer).

2. The dissolution of the monasteries 1536–1540 DISPUTED

WHAT HAPPENED

After Thomas Cromwell became vicar-general in January 1535, a royal commission visited the religious houses and the *Valor ecclesiasticus* recorded their wealth. On March 11, 1536 Parliament suppressed every house with an annual income under £200. The Pilgrimage of Grace in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire (October 1536), whose rebels at one point numbered about 40,000, showed considerable lay support for the monasteries; more than 200 people were executed afterward, among them Robert Aske and several monks. Nearly 250 larger houses then surrendered under pressure, the last on March 23, 1540, about 550 houses in all. Richard Whiting, the elderly last abbot of Glastonbury, the second wealthiest abbey in England, was hanged and quartered on Glastonbury Tor with two of his monks in 1539 after what the University of Reading's abbey project calls a mock trial. Monks received pensions; former nuns could not marry until the reign of Edward VI. The lands, worth about £140,000 a year to the Crown, passed through the Court of Augmentations mostly to the aristocracy and gentry, and buildings were stripped and many artistic treasures destroyed or dispersed.

The criticism

Historians and Catholic writers argue that the dissolution was a seizure of church property by the state, carried out under the new royal supremacy. The historian David Knowles (1959) granted that many houses were corrupt but judged greed to be the main motive. Critics point to the loss of prayer, hospitality, schooling and art, to the executions that followed the Pilgrimage of Grace, and to the trial and death of Abbot Whiting.

Anglican response

Defenders of the English Reformation point to the visitors' reports of decayed and corrupt houses, which even Knowles accepted in part, and note that the dissolution was an act of Crown and Parliament. Some of the wealth stayed with the church: fourteen of the suppressed houses became cathedral foundations. And the Church of England restored the religious life itself: on March 26, 1845 a sisterhood was founded at Park Village West in London under Edward Pusey's guidance, in his biographer's words "the first attempt to revive Sisterhood life in the English Church."

Was it corrected? Disputed; never reversed. Historians still differ over motive and over how far the houses had decayed. The lands were never returned: Mary I restored papal authority in 1553 but did not reclaim them, and Elizabeth I suppressed the few houses Mary had refounded (1559–1560). Anglican religious communities have existed again since the 1840s.

Sources: EBSCO Research Starters, Henry VIII Dissolves the Monasteries; Brian Golding, "Dissolution of the Monasteries," Oxford Companion to British History (Encyclopedia.com); University of Reading, Glastonbury Abbey archaeology: Dissolution; H. P. Liddon, Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey, vol. 3 (1894), ch. 1 (Project Canterbury).

3. Executions of Catholics and Separatists under Elizabeth I

1570s–1603 ENDED

WHAT HAPPENED

The Act of Supremacy of 1559 made Elizabeth I supreme governor of the church, and refusing the oath of 1563 rejecting papal authority was treasonable. After Pius V excommunicated the queen in February 1570, the laws were turned against the missionary priests trained abroad. From 1581 it was treason to convert someone to the old faith, and the acts of 1584–1585 made it treason for a priest ordained after the queen's accession merely to be in England, and a capital crime to help one. The Jesuit Edmund Campion travelled in England from the summer of 1580, was captured in July 1581, racked several times to make him name those who had sheltered him, convicted of treason with Ralph Sherwin and Alexander Briant, and hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn on December 1, 1581. Some 183 Catholics were executed under the anti-Catholic laws during the reign, and many more were imprisoned or exiled. Protestant Separatists also died: Henry Barrow, arrested in 1587 and brought before Archbishop John Whitgift, was hanged with John Greenwood on April 6, 1593 for "devising and circulating seditious books," and John Penry was hanged on May 29, 1593 on a warrant drawn up and signed by Whitgift, the Lord Keeper and the Lord Chief Justice.

The criticism

Catholic writers from Cardinal William Allen onward have answered that these were deaths for religion dressed as treason. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* (1912) argued that many of the condemned were offered a free pardon if they would attend the Protestant church, which would make no sense if the crime were

political. The Separatists' case is plainer still: they were hanged for books against the bishops, and the Archbishop of Canterbury signed Penry's death warrant.

Anglican response

The Elizabethan government's own defense, Lord Burghley's *The Execution of Justice in England* (December 17, 1583), held that the executed were condemned as traitors and not punished "upon questions of religion": after the papal excommunication of 1570, and amid plots against the queen's life, a priest sent from abroad was treated as an agent of a hostile power. Even the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* observes that there were no Catholic martyrs in the first twelve years of the reign. Today the Church of England keeps May 4 as a single commemoration of the "English Saints and Martyrs of the Reformation Era."

Was it corrected? Ended. Capital prosecutions of priests continued under the Stuarts until about 1680; the penal laws themselves were repealed in stages (see the next section). The Catholic Church canonized the Forty Martyrs of England and Wales on October 25, 1970, and the Church of England's calendar now commemorates the Reformation era's martyrs together.

Sources: Tudor Times, Elizabeth I: The Catholic Mission; Jesuits in Britain Collections, Edmund Campion; "Penal Laws," Oxford Companion to British History (Encyclopedia.com); Catholic Encyclopedia (1912), Accusations of Treason (New Advent); Wikipedia, Henry Barrowe; Tudor Society, 29 May: John Penry and his scandalous writings; Wikipedia, List of Catholic martyrs of the English Reformation; Wikipedia, Calendar of saints (Church of England).

4. The Great Ejection and the persecution of Dissenters 1660–1689 ENDED

WHAT HAPPENED

After the Restoration of Charles II, Parliament passed the laws later called the Clarendon Code. The Corporation Act (1661) required town officers to renounce the Solemn League and Covenant and receive communion in the Church of England. The Act of Uniformity (May 1662) required ministers to be ordained by bishops and to assent to the whole Book of Common Prayer by St Bartholomew's Day, August 24, 1662; some 2,000 clergy in England and Wales, most of them Presbyterians, left their livings rather than conform (the contemporary Oliver Heywood put it at about 2,500). The Conventicle Act (1664) punished attendance at any religious meeting of five or more adults outside the household not held according to the Prayer Book, with exile for a third offense, and the Five Mile Act (1665) barred ministers who would not take the oaths from coming within five miles of a town or of their former parishes. John Bunyan was arrested at a meeting at Lower Samsell, Bedfordshire, on November 12, 1660, charged with upholding unlawful meetings and conventicles, and held in Bedford's county jail almost

continuously until 1672. Fines and imprisonments of Dissenters recurred, with a pause in 1672–1675, until 1687.

The criticism

Dissenters called August 24, 1662 "Black Bartholomew's Day," and Edmund Calamy's accounts of the ejected ministers kept their memory. Critics say the national church used Parliament to drive out godly ministers over forms of ordination and liturgy, then to jail lay people for praying together, and that the code's effects shaped English society for centuries, keeping Dissenters out of public life and the universities long after the persecution ceased.

Anglican response

Defenders of the Restoration settlement answered that the Church of England's own clergy had been deprived and sequestered in their thousands during the civil wars and the Commonwealth; John Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy* (1714) listed 3,334 names against Calamy's 2,465, arguing that 1662 was a reprisal for that ejection. The modern church has sought reconciliation: on February 7, 2012, the 350th anniversary, the Church of England and the United Reformed Church held a service of reconciliation at Westminster Abbey at which the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, preached.

Was it corrected? Ended. The Toleration Act (May 24, 1689) let Protestant Dissenters who took the oaths worship in licensed meeting houses, though it excluded Catholics and those who denied the Trinity. The Test and Corporation Acts, which still kept Dissenters from office, were repealed on May 9, 1828. The 2012 service, titled a Service of Reconciliation, Healing of Memories and Mutual Commitment, also marked the fortieth anniversary of the United Reformed Church's inauguration.

Sources: EBSCO Research Starters, Clarendon Code; Wakefield Historical Society, 350 Years Ago: The Act of Uniformity and some of its local repercussions; Wikipedia, Great Ejection; Bedfordshire Archives, John Bunyan; Wikipedia, John Walker (biographer); EBSCO Research Starters, Toleration Act; EBSCO Research Starters, Roman Catholic Emancipation.

5. The penal laws, the Test Acts and the Irish establishment

1560s–1871 **ENDED**

WHAT HAPPENED

In England, Catholics who attended their own services could be fined and imprisoned; under later laws they could not carry arms, buy or inherit property, send their children abroad to be educated or teach in schools, and a reward of £100 was offered for prosecuting a priest. Until 1829 Catholics could not hold political office, enter the universities or vote, and they paid tithes to the established church; the Test and Corporation Acts also kept Protestant Dissenters out of office. In Ireland, after the revolution of 1688, the

Parliament disarmed potential insurgents (1695), banished the Catholic bishops (1697) and, in the Popery Act of 1704, restricted Catholic landownership; Catholics were shut out of public office and the more desirable professions, and some laws also struck at Presbyterians. The Church of Ireland remained the established church although it held the loyalty of only a small minority, and it was supported by tithes paid by the Catholic majority. Resistance in the Tithe War of the 1830s turned violent at times: at Gortroe, County Cork, on December 18, 1834, twenty protesters were killed.

The criticism

Irish nationalist historians of the nineteenth century treated the penal laws as a central national grievance, and modern scholars such as C. D. A. Leighton argue that they shaped sectarian politics well into the 1800s. Critics say that a church which was the established religion of a minority, maintained by the tithes of the people it excluded, bore responsibility for the laws that protected it. Anglicans have said so too: in 1997 a former Church of Ireland Bishop of Connor, Samuel Poyntz, said, "we never raised a voice against the penal laws."

Anglican response

The laws were acts of Parliament, passed to secure an insecure Protestant state against a Stuart restoration and the political threat of Catholic Europe after 1570 and 1688, rather than canons of the church. Historians such as John Cannon note that enforcement in England was sporadic and that Catholics survived and even flourished. The Church of Ireland's historiographer, Kenneth Milne, writes that its members came to regard Gladstone, who disestablished it, as a benefactor. Church of Ireland and Canterbury leaders have since asked pardon for past wrongs, as the 1997 report of Bishop Poyntz's remarks noted.

Was it corrected? Ended. Relief acts began in 1778 and 1791; Irish Catholics could vote from 1793 but not hold office. The Test and Corporation Acts were repealed on May 9, 1828, and the Catholic Relief Act received royal assent on April 13, 1829, opening most public offices to Catholics. The Irish Church Act (royal assent July 26, 1869) disestablished the Church of Ireland from January 1, 1871 and ended the tithe paid to it.

Sources: C. D. A. Leighton, "Penal Laws," Encyclopedia of Irish History and Culture, and John Cannon, Oxford Companion to British History (Encyclopedia.com); EBSCO Research Starters, Roman Catholic Emancipation; EBSCO Research Starters, Toleration Act; Kenneth Milne, "Disestablishment: in the nick of time," History Ireland 27:6 (2019); Anglican Communion News Service, "All Irish churches should apologise, says bishop" (January 31, 1997, via Worldwide Faith News).

6. The Codrington plantations and profits from slavery 1710–1838 APOLOGIZED FOR

WHAT HAPPENED

In 1710 Sir Christopher Codrington left two plantations in Barbados to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG, now USPG), the Church of England's missionary society, and from 1710 to 1838 the society benefited from the labor of the people enslaved on the Codrington estates. In the General Synod debate of 2006 a member, Simon Bessant, said that the society had branded enslaved workers on the chest with the word "Society." Queen Anne's Bounty, the fund founded in 1704 to support poor clergy and a predecessor of today's Church Commissioners, invested significant sums in the South Sea Company, which traded in enslaved Africans, and received gifts likely to have come from people engaged in the slave trade and the plantation economy; the Commissioners disclosed this in June 2022. In the United States, many of the Episcopal Church's older parishes were funded in part by profits from the slave trade.

The criticism

Critics point out that the church's own mission society held people as property for more than a century, at the same time as it sent missionaries to preach the gospel. Barbadian reparations campaigners argue that repair must be negotiated with those harmed: the deputy chairman of Barbados's reparations task force, David Comissiong, said reparations "are not about them unilaterally determining what compensation" they will make. The Church Commissioners' own independent oversight group called a £100 million fund "not enough" for the scale of the endowment and of the wrong.

Anglican response

On February 8, 2006 the General Synod voted 238 to 0 to acknowledge the church's part in the slave trade, which it called "dehumanizing and shameful," and to apologize to the descendants of its victims; Archbishop Rowan Williams supported the motion. In January 2023 the Church Commissioners said they were "deeply sorry" and committed £100 million over nine years, and Archbishop Justin Welby spoke of addressing "our shameful past." USPG said in September 2023 that it is "deeply ashamed" of its links to slavery. The Episcopal Church's General Convention of 2006 acknowledged the "deep and lasting injury" of slavery, and in October 2008 Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori led a service of repentance at the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas in Philadelphia, founded by a former slave in 1792.

Was it corrected? Apologized for; repair under way and contested. On September 8, 2023 USPG pledged 18 million Barbadian dollars (about £7 million) over 10 to 15 years for community work, research, burial sites and family history with descendants on the Codrington estates; Barbados's reparations task force criticized the terms as not negotiated with it. In March 2024 the Commissioners accepted their oversight group's report, which set a target of more than £1 billion, to be reached partly

> by attracting third-party investment. In December 2025 a group of 27 parliamentarians questioned the plan's evidential basis, and in July 2026 the planned Fund for Healing, Repair and Justice still awaited registration with the Charity Commission, subject to a legal challenge; the Commissioners called the work a "moral imperative."

Sources: USPG, USPG announces £7m funding commitment to Codrington, Barbados (September 11, 2023); The Alabama Baptist, Church of England apologizes for role in slave trade (2006); Al Jazeera, Church of England admits "real shame for us" over slavery ties (January 11, 2023); Dawn (AFP), Church of England body apologises for links to slavery (January 2023); Civil Society, Christian charity criticised by government over terms of £7m reparations pledge (September 25, 2023); Christian Today, Report recommends £1bn fund (March 4, 2024); Civil Society, Church Commissioners agrees to £1bn target (March 5, 2024); Ghana News Agency (PA Media), Church of England stresses "moral imperative" to slavery reparations (July 2026); Christian Century, Episcopal Church to apologize for slavery (September 2008).

7. Residential schools in Canada and the Stolen Generations in Australia

1820s–1969 APOLOGIZED FOR

WHAT HAPPENED

From the 1820s until 1969, when the federal government had taken over the last of them, the Anglican Church of Canada administered about three dozen residential schools and hostels for Indigenous children, in partnership with the government. Survivors have described physical, sexual, emotional and cultural harm, with effects passed down through generations, and research continues into missing children and unmarked burials. Ralph Rowe, a former Anglican priest and Scout leader in remote First Nations communities of northern Ontario, pleaded guilty in 1994 to 39 counts of indecent assault involving 19 boys. Under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement of 2007 the church contributed about $15.7 million. In Australia, the national inquiry report *Bringing Them Home* (1997) found that churches "share some responsibility" for the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, because they ran the accommodation, schooling, training and work placements in which removed children were placed. The Anglican Church was among the churches involved, as its General Synod acknowledged in 1998.

The criticism

Survivors and Indigenous leaders say the church served a government policy of assimilation, separated children from their families, languages and spiritual traditions, and allowed abuse. In July 2019 Canada's minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations, Carolyn Bennett, said that Rowe's survivors were still waiting for an apology, and the Grand Chief of Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Alvin Fiddler, said that "a valid apology must come with reparations." *Bringing Them Home* found that in Western Australia 85 percent of the removed people interviewed by the Aboriginal Legal Service had spent at least part of their childhood in a mission.

Anglican response

On August 6, 1993 the Primate, Archbishop Michael Peers, apologized to Indigenous people for the church's part in the schools: "We failed you. We failed ourselves. We failed God." On July 11, 2019, at the General Synod in Vancouver, the Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, made an Apology for Spiritual Harm at the call of the Anglican Council of Indigenous Peoples: "I confess our sin in demonizing Indigenous spiritualities." The church has said it will apologize for Rowe's abuse when the affected communities are ready and invite it. In Australia the General Synod meeting in Adelaide in February 1998 apologized for the church's part in the removals, and the Primate, Archbishop Keith Rayner, washed the feet of two Indigenous bishops, Arthur Malcolm and Ted Mosby.

Was it corrected? Apologized for. The church's role in the Canadian schools ended in 1969, and it paid its share under the 2007 settlement. The 1993 apology was followed by the 2019 Apology for Spiritual Harm, which the Indigenous Elders of the General Synod said they humbly received. The Australian General Synod reaffirmed its 1998 apology to the Stolen Generations in 2001 (Resolution 09/01) and committed itself to the *Bringing Them Home* recommendations.

Sources: Anglican Church of Canada, The residential schools; Anglican Church of Canada, The Apology (1993); Anglican Church of Canada, "An Apology for Spiritual Harm" (July 11, 2019); General Synod 2019, A Statement by the Indigenous Elders; The Canadian Press (CFJC Today), Abuse survivors await apology from Anglican Church (July 19, 2019); Australian Human Rights Commission, Bringing Them Home (1997), ch. 19; Deseret News (AP), Anglicans apologize for taking kids of Aborigines (February 20, 1998); Anglican Church of Australia, General Synod Resolution 09/01, Stolen Generations (2001).

8. Child sexual abuse and its handling in the Church of England 1940s–2020 PARTLY CORRECTED

WHAT HAPPENED

The Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA), in its report on the Anglican Church of October 6, 2020, found that from the 1940s to 2018, 390 clergy or people in positions of trust associated with the church had been convicted of sexual offenses against children. It concluded that over many decades the Church of England had failed to protect children and young people, that alleged perpetrators were given more support than victims, and that the church had fostered a culture in which abusers could hide. Among those convicted was a bishop, Peter Ball, Bishop of Lewes and then of Gloucester, who resigned in 1993 after a police caution for gross indecency with a 19-year-old man; the then Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, allowed him to go on ministering. In October 2015 Ball was jailed for 32 months after admitting offenses against 18 teenagers and young men over a period of some twenty years. Dame Moira Gibb's review of the church's handling of the case, *An Abuse of Faith* (June 22, 2017),

found that the church had "colluded" with Ball rather than helping those he had harmed, and that Carey "set the tone" for that response.

The criticism

The inquiry found that in putting its own reputation ahead of the well-being of children, the Church of England was "in direct conflict with its own underlying moral purpose." The Gibb review found that Ball's case had been handled at the highest levels of the church, and that an archbishop had let a cautioned bishop go on ministering. Many survivors wanted safeguarding taken out of the church's hands entirely; in February 2025 the General Synod instead adopted a compromise, keeping safeguarding staff in church employment under independent oversight, and set aside the motion for full independence.

Anglican response

The church commissioned the Gibb review itself, after Ball's conviction. Archbishop Justin Welby said the church had "colluded and concealed" and offered an unreserved apology; Carey apologized to Ball's victims and stepped back from ministry at Welby's request, and Rowan Williams said of his own handling, "I am sincerely sorry for this." The Archbishops' Council has said that it "laments and repents of" its failure toward victims and survivors. Defenders of the 2025 decision said that it created fully independent oversight while keeping safeguarding staff close to parishes, and left the door open to further independence.

Was it corrected? Partly corrected. Gibb made eleven recommendations and IICSA eight, including funded lifelong support for victims and survivors. On July 14, 2025 the General Synod gave final approval, with no bishop or lay member voting against, to a redress scheme for survivors of church-related abuse, backed by a £150 million pledge from the Church Commissioners and awaiting approval by Parliament. On February 11, 2026 it voted 345 to 1 for a new national safeguarding charity separate from church leadership, with a majority-independent board. The Charity Commission had told the Archbishops' Council in November 2025 that its response to past reviews showed "insufficient urgency and pace."

Sources: IICSA, Inquiry report finds Anglican Church failed to protect children from sexual abuse (October 6, 2020); Christian Today, Church of England colluded in abuse by former bishop, says damning report (June 22, 2017); Civil Society, Synod votes for new Church of England charity to be created (July 2025); Anglican Ink, What did General Synod decide about safeguarding? (February 15, 2025); Anglican Ink, General Synod approves £150 million redress scheme (July 14, 2025); Anglican Ink, General Synod approves motion to strengthen safeguarding (February 12, 2026); Civil Society, Church of England charity told to speed up safeguarding reforms (November 14, 2025).

9. John Smyth, the Makin Review and an archbishop's resignation 1970s–2025 ONGOING

WHAT HAPPENED

John Smyth, a barrister active in evangelical Anglican circles, abused about 30 boys and young men in Britain and about 85 in Africa from the 1970s until his death in 2018. Church officials learned of the abuse in 1982 through a report by the Rev. Mark Ruston, but nothing was done to stop Smyth moving to Zimbabwe in 1984, where the abuse went on and a boy was found dead in a swimming pool at one of his camps; he later moved to South Africa. Archbishop Justin Welby was told of the allegations in August 2013. In August 2019 the Church of England's National Safeguarding Team appointed Keith Makin to review its handling of the case. His report, published on November 7, 2024, called Smyth "arguably, the most prolific serial abuser to be associated with the Church of England," found that those who received the 1982 report took part in an "active cover-up," and judged the church's responses of 2013 and later to have been ineffective and to have amounted to a cover-up. It concluded that Smyth could have been stopped sooner had he been reported to the authorities in 2013.

The criticism

The review itself found that senior figures in the church knew of the abuse and that it had been covered up by powerful evangelical clergy. The Bishop of Newcastle, Helen-Ann Hartley, called on Welby to resign on November 11, 2024, and a petition started by three Church of England clergy said the review showed that he bore responsibility for the church's failures. Critics noted that one of the clergy who knew in the 1980s, David Fletcher, had feared that exposure would do "immense damage" to God's work.

Anglican response

The church commissioned the review itself. On November 12, 2024 Justin Welby announced his resignation as Archbishop of Canterbury, saying he must take "personal and institutional responsibility" for the period from 2013 to 2024; he had earlier apologized for not ensuring that the allegations were investigated properly. Church leaders said they welcomed all of Makin's recommendations, including his call for safeguarding across church bodies that is "governed independently."

Was it corrected? Ongoing. In February 2025 the National Safeguarding Team announced disciplinary proceedings against ten named clergy, and an eleventh in October 2025; at least two of these ended without a tribunal. The Charity Commission opened a compliance case after the review and closed it in November 2025, finding no misconduct by the Archbishops' Council's trustees but requiring faster

safeguarding reform. The redress scheme approved in July 2025 was widened after the review to cover cases where church office-holders failed to act on allegations (see the previous section).

Sources: PBS NewsHour (AP), Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby resigns over sex abuse scandal handling (November 12, 2024); Christian Today, Church of England covered up "prolific and abhorrent" John Smyth abuse, independent review finds (November 2024); Wikipedia, Makin Review; Church of England, The Makin review: Clergy Discipline Measure outcomes; Civil Society, Church of England charity told to speed up safeguarding reforms (November 14, 2025); Anglican Ink, General Synod approves £150 million redress scheme (July 14, 2025).

10. Child sexual abuse in the Anglican Church of Australia

1980–2017 **PARTLY CORRECTED**

WHAT HAPPENED

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse reported in March 2017 that 1,115 complaints of child sexual abuse had been made between 1980 and 2015 to 22 of the church's 23 dioceses, by 1,082 complainants, against 569 named and 133 unnamed alleged abusers; of the named, 247 were clergy and 285 lay people. Eighty-four complaints had been referred to police. The church had paid about A$31 million in compensation; fewer than half of the complaints led to a payment, and the average was about A$67,000. The most prominent case of mishandling concerned Peter Hollingworth, who as Archbishop of Brisbane in 1993 let a priest continue as a parish rector despite evidence of pedophile behavior, which the Royal Commission called a "serious error of judgement." Hollingworth resigned as Governor-General of Australia in May 2003 after an independent report found that he had mishandled abuse complaints in Brisbane.

The criticism

The commission heard that many survivors faced barriers that deterred them from reporting abuse outside the church, and only four of the alleged abusers had been prosecuted. Some of the sharpest criticism came from inside: the Bishop of Newcastle, Greg Thompson, told the commission that friendships among senior clergy had shielded abusers. Some survivors have sought to have Hollingworth removed from holy orders; he is not accused of abusing anyone himself.

Anglican response

The Primate, Archbishop Philip Freier, said in March 2017, "We are deeply ashamed of the many ways in which we have let down survivors." Opening the General Synod on September 4, 2017, he repeated the apology first approved by the General Synod in 2004, which confesses "the shameful way we actively worked against and discouraged" those who reported abuse and admits that the church "only took

notice when the survivors of abuse became a threat to us." Hollingworth apologized for his 1993 decision.

Was it corrected? Partly corrected. The church apologized in 2004 and renewed the apology before its General Synod in 2017, after the Royal Commission's hearings; by then it had paid about A$31 million to survivors. The Diocese of Melbourne's professional standards board opened an inquiry into Hollingworth's fitness for ministry in February 2023, after a five-year delay.

Sources: Anglican Ink, Royal Commission details child sexual abuse within the Anglican Church of Australia (March 17, 2017); Christian Today, Anglican Church in Australia "deeply ashamed" about child abuse (March 17, 2017); Anglican Church of Australia, Anglican Primate renews apology over child sexual abuse (September 4, 2017); Church Times, Former Archbishop of Brisbane faces inquiry (February 10, 2023).