

# TWENTY CENTURIES

## A Survey of Church History



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**THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY  
THE ENGLISH REFORMATION**

# The English Reformation



- The Spread of Luther's Ideas
- Tyndale and His Bible
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- Edward VI's Reformation
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- Elizabeth I and the Via Media

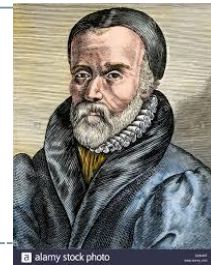
# The Spread of Luther's Ideas



## Lollard Revival and Embrace of Luther's ideas

- The Lollards were ready made to embrace and promote the Reformation ideas coming from Germany, the two movements essentially merging.
- Lollards had an extensive underground publishing capacity that they put to work spreading the writings of Luther, along with Tyndale's English Bible, in the 1520's.
- Scholars at Cambridge University were attracted to Luther, meeting at the White Horse Inn to discuss Luther's writings.
  - Out of this group would come the early Protestant leaders, including Thomas Bilney, Thomas Cranmer, John Frith, Hugh Latimer, and Edward Fox.

# Tyndale and His Bible



- An Oxford-trained priest, was influenced by Erasmus to give the Bible to the English people in their language.
  - “If God spare my life ‘ere many years, I will cause a boy that driveth the plough shall know more of the Scripture than thou doest.”
- Began his work in 1523 but soon sailed to Holland to work in exile. His English New Testament was published in 1525, with thousands of copies smuggled to England.
  - This masterpiece became the basis for all subsequent English Bibles.
  - Immediately condemned by the English bishops, who seized and burned them.
- The “Christian Brethren” formed to smuggle and circulate Tyndale’s Bible and Reformation books.

# Tyndale and His Bible



- Tyndale also wrote books condemning the corruption of the medieval Church.
- Became the object of intense hatred from the church establishment.
  - Thomas More called him “a hell-hound in the kennel of the devil,” and “an idolater and devil-worshipper,” for providing the Bible to the people.
- Was captured near Brussels in 1536, strangled and burned at the stake.
- Tyndale’s last words: “Lord, open the king of England’s eyes!”



# Henry VIII and the Break with Rome



- Inability to produce a son with his wife Catherine of Aragon.
  - The recently concluded War of the Roses showed the danger of any succession issue.
  - Henry thought God cursed his marriage, since Catherine had been married previously to his brother Arthur.
- Henry resolved to divorce and remarry, but Pope Clement VII would not agree.
  - Catherine's nephew was Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor.
- Henry concluded that he had no choice but to break with Rome and establish the English Church.
  - First, Henry tried diplomatic pressure; then had the English clergy appeal to the pope; finally from 1529-1534, Henry separated from Rome.
  - The Act of Supremacy was signed by Parliament, proclaiming Henry as the head of the English church and diverting clerical taxes to the English crown.
  - English clergy would who not accept the schism, such as Thomas More, were executed.

# Henry VIII and the Break with Rome



- **Thomas Cranmer**
  - A scholar who supported Henry's claims and advised him on strategy.
  - Was named Archbishop of Canterbury, where he dissolved Henry's marriage to Anne and legitimized the marriage to Anne Boleyn.
  - While Henry did not abandon any Roman Catholic doctrine, Cranmer used his position to advance Reformation ideas, embedding them in the Book of Common Prayer
- **Thomas Cromwell**
  - Henry's prime minister, with strong Protestant leanings.
  - Dismantled the monasteries, transferring their wealth to the crown and their land to the people.
  - Petitioned Henry for an official English translation of the Bible, sanctioning Mile's Coverdale's translation.
  - Partnered with Anne Boleyn in the smuggling and spread of Luther's writings.
  - As the people began reading the Bible, Reformation ideas spread dramatically.
  - Protected preachers, who spread the gospel to such an extent that by Henry's death in 1547, southern England was firmly Protestant.



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# Edward VI's Reformation



- **The Young Josiah**
  - Henry's third wife, Jane Seymour, gave him a son. Jane was a fervent Protestant, ensuring that Edward received a Protestant education.
  - Edward came to the throne as a fervently committed Reformation Christian.
- **Transformation of the English Church**
  - Cranmer and others seized the opportunity to form the Church of England as thoroughly Protestant.
  - Leading London churches were led by great preachers like Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, and John Hooper.
  - England received an influx of exiled European reformers like Martin Bucer, Peter Martyr Vermigli, and Jan Laski, uniting the English to the Continental churches and further reforming its liturgy and doctrine.
- **By 1553, the Book of Common Prayer and the 42 Articles were radically Protestant.**
- **A wave of government-sponsored iconoclasm ransacked Roman Catholic churches and abbeys.**
- **While there were Roman Catholic protests, not one Roman Catholic was put to death.**





# Bloody Mary's Counter-Reformation



- After reigning only 6 years, Edward VI died of tuberculosis. With no male heirs in the royal line, his older sister Mary Tudor came to the throne.
  - Panicked Protestants tried to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne, but Mary's legitimacy won out.
- Mary I was a fervent Roman Catholic, who resented the dismissal of her mother, Catherine, and the breach with Rome.
- At first, Mary did not threaten Protestants, but she immediately began dismantling the Reformation.
  - She restored the English Church to papal rule, reinstated Latin worship, and allied with Spain, marrying King Philip, the most virulent enemy of Protestantism in all of Europe.



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# Bloody Mary's Counter-Reformation



- The Marian Exiles: When Mary restored Roman Catholicism, many Protestant leaders fled for the Continent.
- In 1555, Mary began executing Protestant leaders. Over 300 died at the stake and another 100 died in prison. The greatest spasm of religious persecution in English history.
- These martyrdoms made a lasting impression on the English people.
  - Latimer: “Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; for we shall this day light such a candle, by God’s grace, in England, as I trust shall neve be put out.”
  - Cranmer’s “Recantation” and burning in Oxford.
- John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*
  - Collected in Europe from refugees, he published his book in England, increasing the peoples’ commitment to the gospel.

# Elizabeth I and the Via Media



- Reigning from 1553-1558, Mary died and was succeeded by her younger half-sister, the 25-year-old Elizabeth I, who reigned from 1558-1603.
- The daughter of Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth was a Protestant. She severed ties with Rome and restored the Marian exiles to positions of leadership in the Church of England.
- Not a fervent Christian, and weary of religious conflict, Elizabeth established the Church of England as a “via media,” that is a middle position between Roman Catholicism and the Reformation. In particular, a highly liturgical worship style existed alongside Reformed doctrines.
- While Elizabeth was not a highly motivated Christian, her chief clerical leaders were, and they advanced the spirituality of the nation through their preaching and writing.

# Elizabeth I and the Via Media



## The Elizabethan Settlement of Religion:

- Was *parliamentarian*: enacted through statutes of Parliament. This was in part because many of the existing bishops were Roman Catholic, so Mary placed the church under Parliament.
- Was *royal*: Elizabeth was head of the church, and she enforced conformity through persecution.
- Was a *compromise* settlement: Elizabeth wanted to be inclusive of as many people as possible. This compromise was worked out in the liturgy of the church, which was less than fully Catholic and less than fully biblical.\*
- The result was a clear Protestantism that was not fully Reformational. The Protestant church was established, but the Protestant divide would shape the century to come.

\*This summary is adapted from Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, 3:400-403.