

“Church History: Heroes, Heretics & Holy Wars”

Sunday School Notes

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CLASS 13: The Reformation in England & Scotland

ENGLAND

Review of Wycliffe and Tyndale (from class 10):

-John Wycliffe was the “morning star of the Reformation,” who had translated the Bible from Latin into English in the late 14th century, a good 150 years before Luther. He had been a priest and teacher at Oxford until his views got him silenced.

-William Tyndale was a contemporary of Luther’s who translated the Bible from its original Hebrew and Greek into English; much better translation than Wycliffe’s. Had to do it in Germany, away from the English authorities who wanted to kill him; they eventually caught him and burned him, though not before 16,000 copies of his NT had been smuggled into England.

Skeptical people would say that the German Reformation started because Luther wanted to get married, and the English Reformation happened because Henry VIII wanted to get divorced! Not really true for either of them, but more true in Henry’s case.

In 1521 **Henry VIII (reign 1509 – 1547)** attacked Luther’s view of the sacraments in a book and received the title “Defender of the Faith” from the Pope. But he really had little interest in spiritual matters. After his brother died, he married his sister-in-law, Catherine of Aragon. But she didn’t give him a son (only 1 child of 6 survived- named Mary), and he wanted to marry Anne Boleyn, so he asked the Pope to grant him a divorce. However, the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V, was Catherine’s nephew, and the Pope didn’t want to anger him, so he stalled.

So Henry installed Thomas Cranmer as the Archbishop of Canterbury, and Cranmer granted the annulment, though Cranmer had other motives- he wanted to get reform started. Rome excommunicated Henry for the annulment. He married Anne and they had Elizabeth. He later had Anne beheaded on trumped-up charges of treason, so he could marry Jane Seymour; she died giving birth, but gave him his longed-for heir, Edward.

In 1534, the English Parliament passed the **Act of Supremacy** declaring the king to be the supreme head of the Church of England. This wasn’t a new church yet, but a state church where the Pope had no authority. Henry shut down the monasteries, more out of greed to steal their land. But he kept confession, mass and clerical celibacy. But he had English Bibles put in the churches. Though the Church of England had broken from Rome, it did not move towards Reformation. Henry made it clear that he was not departing from Catholic doctrine, only refusing to acknowledge the pope’s authority.

But after Henry’s death, his 9 year old son, **Edward VI, became king (1547-1553)**, and Thomas Cranmer took the opportunity to move the church towards Lutheran and Calvinistic teaching and reform- no more images, confession booths; clergy were allowed to marry, bread and wine used. The scholar, Nicholas Ridley, and the preacher, Hugh Latimer, were instrumental in support.

In 1549, Thomas Cranmer produced the *Book of Common Prayer*. It was a compromise document that had to please both Catholics and Protestants. Parliament then passed the **Act of Uniformity**, which required churches to use it. Cranmer also produced the 42 Articles, a creed binding on all.

When James died, Lady Jane Grey almost became Queen, but Mary had her killed at age 16. Henry's oldest daughter, **Mary, became queen (reign from 1553-1558)** and attempted to return England to Catholicism. She saw it as her divine task to rid England of the Protestant heretics, but she also had reasons to hate Protestants- they had declared her parents' marriage invalid and essentially proclaimed her a bastard; plus she had been reared as a Catholic and married Philip II of Spain, a very Catholic country.

Foxe's Book of Martyrs is a record of hundreds of people killed under Mary's purge, over 300 total. Nicknamed "Bloody Mary," she burned Latimer and Ridley ("Be of good comfort, Mr. Ridley, and play the man. We shall this day light a candle by God's grace, in England, as I trust never shall be put out."), then Thomas Cranmer the next year. Cranmer had actually signed a recantation of his Protestant beliefs, but Mary burned him anyways as revenge for his shaming of her mother when he allowed the annulment. When he was on the stake, he renounced what he had signed and stuck the hand that had signed it into the fire first!

According to John Foxe (in *Foxe's Christian Martyrs*):

"No other king or queen of England spilled as much blood in a time of peace as Queen Mary did in four years through her hanging, beheading, burning, and imprisonment of good Christian Englishmen. When she first sought the crown and promised to retain the faith and religion of Edward... but after she broke her promises to God and man... and gave up her supremacy to the Pope, God left her. Nothing she did after that thrived... The crowning of Elizabeth was welcomed with joy by the Protestants... More than a century would pass before persecution entirely ceased and the passage of a Toleration Act finally established freedom of worship in England. But at least Elizabeth was not cruel; aversion to bloodshed was as marked a feature of her character as the reverse had been in that of Mary."

Elizabeth (reign 1558-1603), Henry's daughter with Anne of Boleyn, would return England to Protestantism. (Played by Cate Blanchett in two movies) She tried to keep both Protestants and Catholics happy, which annoyed the Puritans, but she didn't like them much anyways- passed the Act Against the Puritans in 1593 (we'll talk Puritans next week). But she also severed ties with the Pope in 1561, and was excommunicated by him in 1570. She did force people to church, though – if you missed church for 3 months, you would be deported, and if you returned after that you'd be executed. She ruled with a strong hand for 45 years but never married or had kids. Elizabethan England is the era when Shakespeare flourished (he lived 1564-1616).

King James Bible

James VI of Scotland took over the throne of England, becoming James I there (had already been king of Scotland for 36 years). Even though Elizabeth had executed his mother (Mary of Scots), she named him as her successor because she didn't have any heirs.

You made of heard of him because of a certain Bible translation, the King James Version. He wanted to rid England of the Geneva Bible, so he appointed 54 scholars to make a new translation starting in 1607, finished in 1611. He leaned much more towards Anglicanism than Presbyterianism, mostly because he liked the hierarchy and the ability to rule the church (which Presbyterianism wouldn't let him do).

SCOTLAND

Reformation had been successfully repressed in Scotland, in large part due to its ties to France. In 1525, the Scottish Parliament officially declared Luther's ideas heretical. Lutheran preacher **Patrick Hamilton** was burned at the stake in 1528 right in front of the University of St. Andrews, the first martyr of the Scottish Reformation. **George Wishart** followed in 1548. Wishart had a supporter named **John Knox 1514-1572**, who spent a year and a half as a galley slave. He went to England and worked for Thomas Cranmer until Bloody Mary came to the throne, and he fled to Geneva, becoming one of Calvin's prize disciples.

Knox returned to Scotland in 1559, which was about the time the Scots started destroying Catholic churches and monasteries, and turning towards Protestantism. Despite Mary, the Queen of the Scots being married to the French prince, the Scottish people feared the rule of the Catholic French and embraced Protestantism. In 1560 the Scottish parliament adopted a Calvinistic profession of faith drawn up by Knox and others, known as the *Scots Confession*. It declared that the Pope had no authority in Scotland and forbade the Mass, and was heavily Calvinistic in doctrine. Knox wrote the *Book of Discipline* and the *Book of Common Order*, and essentially established Presbyterianism as the national church of Scotland, he's really the founder of Presbyterianism. "Presbyteros" is the Greek word for elder, so it means elder rule; very tied to the structure and order.

Knox closed down all the monasteries and Scotland used the money to fund a huge literacy campaign; Scotland became a fully literate nation- the first time any nation in history that had achieved that! He preached at St. Giles in Edinburgh and would openly criticize Queen Mary of Scots (the daughter of Mary Stuart, neither of whom was "Bloody Mary" in case you're confused) both for her morally lax court and for her practicing Catholicism in her private chapel. Wrote a book called *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* that was directed at all the Queen Marys and Elizabeth.

Andrew Melville was his successor, defending Reformed Presbyterianism and leading the charge of separating the church and state, and Biblical Presbyterian church structure.

Essentially, in 1558 both England and Scotland were Catholic. But 1560, they were both Protestant and would stay that way – England happy with Anglicanism, Scotland with Presbyterianism. There were only a dozen or so Protestant pastors in Scotland in 1560; within 1574, because of Knox's influence, there were over 500!

Let's close with a prayer from the Anglican prayer book: "Keep us, O Lord, constant in faith and zealous in witness, after the examples of thy servants Hugh Latimer, Nicholas Ridley, and Thomas Cranmer; that we may live in thy fear, die in your favor, and rest in your peace."

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