

## Church History, Lesson 20

(This lesson is based on The Story of Christianity by Justo Gonzalez.)

### The Reformation in England

#### Henry VIII and the Reformation:

- Henry VIII supported a break with Rome primarily for personal and political reasons and not religious reasons.
- Initially, he only wanted an annulment of his marriage to Catherine (his brother's widow) because that marriage had not produced a male heir.
- He also wanted more power for the English crown and less papal interference.
- In 1534 the English parliament enacted laws that forbid payments to Rome, declared Henry's marriage to Catherine not a true marriage, and made the king the "supreme head of the Church of England". Parliament also declared that any who claimed that Henry VIII was a schismatic were guilty of treason.
- Again, Henry was not sympathetic to the reformation that was taking place on the continent. But with the lingering effects of Wycliffe's influence Lutheran ideas were gaining circulation in England. This break with Rome caused those who saw the need for a "protestant reformation" of the church in England to hope for more. For example, Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, supported the king's policies in hopes of deeper changes.
- For the rest of Henry VIII's life, official support for a true reformation in England varied according to Henry's political needs and the attitude of his current wife.
- But during this time of change reformation ideas were taking root in the hearts and minds of many people. And Thomas Cranmer ordered that the Bible be translated into English and secured a royal decree that an English Bible be placed in every church where all could read it.

#### Edward VI:

- Henry VIII only male heir was Edward VI. He only lived another 6 years after his father's death. Especially during the first 3 years of his brief reign several strides were made in the cause of reformation:
  - The cup of communion was restored to the laity.
  - Clergy were allowed to marry.
  - And images were removed from churches.
- A change that came later in his reign was the reformation of what the minister was supposed to say when serving communion:
  - Originally it has been – "the body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life."
  - Which was changed to the more "Zwinglian" – "Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving."

#### Mary Tudor:

- Mary Tudor was the daughter of Henry VIII and his first wife, Catherine. She pretty much hated the reformation not only because she was a Catholic but also because when Henry VIII had his marriage with her mother annulled with the support of the reformers, that one action made her a bastard and cut her off from her official royal rights.
- When Edward VI died, the crown went to her.
- Once she consolidated her power in England, she married her Catholic cousin – Philip of Spain.
- Once she was secure in her position as queen, she began repressive measures against Protestants.
- In 1554 England officially returned to obedience to the pope. All of the reforms under Henry VIII and Edward VI were now undone.
  - Churches had to honor the feast days of the saints.
  - Clergy who had married were ordered to set aside their wives.
  - Almost 300 Protestants were burned.
  - Many others were imprisoned or went into exile.

- Thomas Cranmer was condemned as a heretic and sentenced to be burned. But the queen wanted him to recant his reformist views. She forced him to watch as Bishops Latimer and Ridley were burned at the stake. Eventually he did sign a recantation. But he was to be burned anyway as a deterrent to any would be followers. But on the day of his execution (which happened after a church service at the Church of St. Mary) he was given an opportunity to express his recantation publicly. Instead he withdrew it!

Elizabeth:

- When Mary Tudor died in 1558 she was succeeded by her half-sister Elizabeth who was the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn.
- Elizabeth was more politically minded than Mary. And for political reasons once again broke with Rome. The reasoning went something like this:
  - If Henry's marriage to Catherine was valid...
  - then their child, Mary Tudor was legitimate.
  - But that also meant that his marriage to Anne Boleyn was invalid...
  - which would mean that Elizabeth was illegitimate.
- When she was crowned, she didn't even notify the pope and immediately withdrew the English ambassador to Rome.
- Elizabeth was a religious moderate who wanted a unified Church of England. She wanted a church form and liturgy that all could live with except for Roman Catholics and extreme Protestants.
- Eventually, toward the end of her life, Elizabeth began to indicate to Roman Catholics that she would distinguish between their obedience to the Catholic Church religiously and their loyalty to the English crown politically.

## Reformation in Scotland

- Traditionally, Scotland had sought alliance with France against England. This leant itself towards remaining Catholic. However, the teachings of the Lollards and the Hussites had found followers among the Scottish. The new Protestant teachings found fertile soil among them.
- In addition, many Scots studied in Germany and returned home with the ideas and writings of Martin Luther.
- The Scottish Parliament banned these books and itinerant preachers who spread the Gospel. But Protestantism spread especially among the nobility, who resented the growing power of the crown against their traditional powers, and among students who constantly read the banned books.
- In 1542 when James V died his heir was his infant daughter, Mary Stuart. This left a power vacuum and a power struggle between those who favored Protestantism and alliance with England and those who favored Catholicism and alliance with France.
- The Protestants took the cathedral of Saint Andrews and killed the Archbishop. This became the Protestant stronghold going forward. Eventually, France sent an army and the Protestants at Saint Andrews had to surrender. John Knox and others were sentenced to labor in galley ships. Knox was released through the intervention of King Edward VI and Knox became a pastor in England.
- When Mary Tudor became queen of England, Knox fled to Switzerland.
- Back in Scotland, the queen mother, Mary of Guise, ruled as regent. And her pro-Catholic policies forced the Protestants to unite. In 1557 they made a solemn covenant that included a promise to "serve the very blessed Word of God, and His congregation". Because of this language they were known as "Lords of the Congregation".
- In 1558 they organized themselves into a church. However, they had to defend themselves from the French armies and would not have lasted long without Queen Elizabeth's help from England.
- Eventually the Queen Mother died and the French and English both withdrew their armies.
- Eventually, when John Knox returned to Scotland, there was conflict between the "Lords of the Congregation". The Lords wanted the riches of the churches for themselves, Knox wanted the wealth of the churches to go towards public education.
- When Mary Stuart was crowned, Knox seemed to know that there would be inevitable conflict. She insisted on celebrating Mass in her private chapel. Knox preached fiery sermons against this idolatry.
- Even with the tension with the queen and with some of the "lords" Knox and his followers were able to organize the Reformed Church of Scotland with a church polity that was similar to later Presbyterianism.