

THE ENGLISH REFORMATION

1. What does the Reformation have to do with our story?
2. Problems with discussing the Reformation
 - a. We have done little with religion as such.
 - b. The bias of the historians, including those of the lecturer.
 - c. A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation*; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars*
3. What did ordinary people think of the Henrician Reformation? That's a hard question to answer. The Pilgrimage of Grace (1537); the Devon and Cornwall riots (1549).
4. The cast of larger-than-life characters.



- a. Desiderius Erasmus (c.1469–1536).



b. Thomas Cranmer (1489–1556).



c. Thomas Cromwell (c.1485–1540).



d. Thomas More (1478–1535).

5. The Reformation Parliament (1529–1536).

a. The Commons' Supplication Against the Ordinaries (1532).

b. The Ecclesiastical Appeals Act (1533) (*Mats.*, p. VIII–2)--its basis in Marsilius of Padua.

“An act that the appeals in such cases as have been used to be pursued to the see of Rome shall not be from henceforth had nor used but within this realm. Where, by divers sundry old authentic histories and chronicles, it is manifestly declared and expressed that this realm of England is an empire, and so hath been accepted in the world, governed by one supreme head and king having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial crown of the same, unto whom a body politic, compact of all sorts and degrees of people divided in terms and by names of spirituality and temporality be bounden and owe to bear next to God a natural and humble obedience (he being also institute and furnished by the goodness and sufferance of Almighty God with plenary, whole, and entire power, pre-eminence, authority, prerogative, and jurisdiction to render and yield justice and final determination to all manner of folk residents or subjects within this his realm, in all causes, matters, debates, and contentions happening to occur, insurge, or begin within the limits thereof, without restraint or provocation to any foreign princes or potentates of the world ...)--and whereas the king his most noble progenitors, and the nobility and commons of this said realm, at divers and sundry parliaments as well in the time of King Edward I, Edward III, Richard II, Henry IV, and other noble kings of this realm, made sundry ordinances, laws, statutes, and provisions for the entire and sure conservation of the prerogatives, liberties, and pre-eminences of the said imperial crown of

this realm, and of the jurisdictions spiritual and temporal of the same, to keep it from the annoyance as well of the see of Rome as from the authority of other foreign potentates attempting the diminution or violation thereof, as often and from time to time as any such annoyance or attempt might be known or espied; and [whereas,] notwithstanding the said good statutes and ordinances ... , divers and sundry inconveniences and dangers not provided for plainly by the said former acts ... have risen and sprung by reason of appeals sued out of this realm to the see of Rome, in causes testamentary, causes of matrimony and divorces, right of tithes, oblations, and obventions ... : in consideration whereof, the king's highness, his nobles, and commons, considering the great enormities, dangers, long delays, and hurts that as well to his highness as to his said nobles, subjects, commons, and residents of this his realm in the said causes ... do daily ensue, doth therefore by his royal assent, and by the assent of the lords spiritual and temporal and the commons in this present parliament assembled and by authority of the same, enact, establish, and ordain that all causes testamentary, causes of matrimony and divorces, rights of tithes, oblations, and obventions ..., whether they concern the king our sovereign lord, his heirs, or successors, or any other subjects or residents within the same of what degree soever they be, shall be from henceforth heard ... and definitively adjudged and determined within the king's jurisdiction and authority and not elsewhere. ..."

The medieval references here are to: (1) the Roman lawyers who backed up Philip the Fair against Boniface VIII at the end of the 13th century (the king is emperor in his own realm). (2) Marsilius of Padua. Thomas Cromwell commissioned a translation of Marsilius into English. (3) Previous English statutes: *Circumspecte Agatis*—in the time of Edward I, *Praemunire* and *Provisors*—in the time of Edward III and Richard II, *De heretico comburendo*—in the time of Henry IV.

- c. The Submission of the Clergy (1534) (*Mats.*, p. VIII–3).
 - d. Ecclesiastical Appointments (1534) (*Mats.*, p. VIII–4).
 - e. Peter's Pence (1534) (*Mats.*, p. VIII–5).
 - f. First Act of Succession (1534) (*Mats.*, p. VIII–6).
 - g. Supremacy (1534) (*Mats.*, p. VIII–7).
 - h. Dissolution of the Monasteries (various dates, most important, 1539) (*Mats.*, p. VIII–9).
 - i. The Statute of Six Articles (1539) (*Mats.*, p. VIII–10) (discussed below).
1. Schism and Erastianism (Thomas Erastus, 1524–1583). The nature of the Henrician schism was different from that of the schismatic churches of the east. While schism had always been associated with a greater degree of secular control over the church, it remained an essentially ecclesiological phenomenon. The bishops of the east did not recognize the authority of the bishop of Rome. What Thomas Cromwell and Henry VIII created, however, was an Erastian church, a church in which secular authority was necessary to the existence of the church. The Erastian nature of the Henrician settlement can be seen most clearly in the fact that Cromwell himself, a layman, was appointed the king's vicegerent in spiritualities, and under this authority he exercised the episcopal power of visitation of religious houses and religious establishments. It can also be seen in the fact that the statute of six articles was passed by parliament having been introduced by a layman, the duke of Norfolk, when the bishops were unable to agree among themselves on its contents.
 6. The Tudor revolution in government. The late Professor Sir Geoffrey Elton in a famous book published in 1953 made the claim that Thomas Cromwell, in addition to having engineered the

reformation, also created a revolution in ordinary governance. We have already adumbrated the basic theses: Cromwell according to Elton had a vision of government that was more public than medieval government had been. One the ways in Elton expressed his thesis was that Cromwell introduced a transition from household to bureaucratic government. This did not mean that government was necessarily accountable to anyone other than the king. Indeed, the whole notion is that government should be able to do the king's will. The vision, however, was one in which the control over finance and the control over writing would be united in a small group of ministers occupying a public position but totally dependent on the king's will. Such a group of ministers did emerge in the reign of Elizabeth; it may have emerged in the reign of Mary Tudor. We call it the privy council, and it has a continuous history from the reign of Elizabeth to today. The question is whether we can trace its history back through the turbulent years of Mary's reign into those of Edward VI and finally into the middle years of Henry VIII. In his later years Elton never maintained that Cromwell had actually achieved a privy council that united control over finance and writing. He did maintain until the day he died that this was where Cromwell was heading. The following items I think can be taken as demonstrated: as the king's secretary Cromwell had access to if not control over the signet. Thus, in medieval terms he was able to control the writing departments and he did this in accordance with the king's will and that of a relatively small group of councilors. Further, Cromwell made use of the techniques of chamber finance that had been used so successfully by Henry VII, and he proposed a reform of the Exchequer that he was never able to carry out but which was carried out by Sir William Paulet who was Cromwell's protégé after Cromwell's fall. Finally, and I've never been sure quite how this cuts, Cromwell created a body of courts independent of the Exchequer to supervise the collection and administration of extraordinary revenues. The most important of these were the court of Augmentations that dealt with lands acquired from the dissolved monasteries, the court of First Fruits and Tithes that dealt with ecclesiastical revenue, and the court of Wards and Liveries that dealt with revenues arising from the statute of uses. Paulet was to subordinate these courts to the Exchequer but to reform the Exchequer in the process. The key element in Elton's story that I'm not at all sure that we can see in Cromwell's time is the privy council. That really does seem to be a development of the second half of the century.

7. Henry VIII, the Reformation Parliament, and the Six Articles (1539) (*Mats.*, pp. VIII–10 thru VIII–11.)

a. transubstantiation, the doctrine that the eucharist is truly the body and blood of Christ

“in the most blessed sacrament of the altar, by the strength and efficacy of Christ's mighty word, it being spoken by the priest, is present really, under the form of bread and wine, the natural body and blood of our Saviour Jesu Christ, conceived of the Virgin Mary and that after the consecration there remaineth no substance of bread and wine, nor any other substance but the substance of Christ God and man”

b. the lack of necessity of reception of the eucharist in the form of both bread and wine

“it is to be believed and not doubted of but that in the flesh under form of bread is the very blood, and with the blood under form of wine is the very flesh, as well apart as though they were both together”

c. priests may not marry

“priests, after the order of priesthood received as afore, may not marry by the law of God”

d. vows of chastity should be observed

“vows of chastity or widowhood by man or woman made to God advisedly ought to be observed by the law of God, and that it exempteth them from other liberties of Christian people which without that they might enjoy”

e. private masses are agreeable to God’s law

“it is meet and necessary that private masses be continued and admitted in this the king’s English Church and Congregation, as whereby good Christian people ordering themselves accordingly do receive both godly and goodly consolations and benefits, and it is agreeable also to God’s law”

f. auricular confession is expedient and necessary

“auricular confession is expedient and necessary to be retained and continued, used, and frequented, in the Church of God”

8. Edward VI (1547–1553) – Somerset and Northumberland. During the reign of Edward VI, two unabashedly Protestant noblemen, first Somerset and then Northumberland, controlled the government in the name of the young king who himself was unabashedly Protestant. The most important religious statutes of the reign were the statute dissolving the chantries, a continuation of Cromwell’s policy with regard to the monasteries, and two acts of uniformity compelling adherence to two different versions of Cranmer’s book of common prayer. It is hard to say what would have happened had Edward lived. At his death there were already indications that Northumberland’s regime was not to last long. Indeed, Northumberland’s unpopularity accounts for the fact that many unabashed Protestants welcomed the accession of Mary, despite their fears about what she was going to do about religion.

9. Mary I (1553–1558) and Philip II of Spain.

- a. More people were executed for their religious views than were executed for similar reasons in the reigns of Edward VI and Elizabeth I combined.
- b. Mary fundamentally misunderstood the nationalism of the English when she married Philip II of Spain, and Philip was not a good husband to her.
- c. Mary’s reign was marked by an unprecedented series of bad harvests.
- d. Mary lived only five years after she became queen. As in the case of Edward VI it is hard to say, and perhaps futile to speculate, what would have happened had she lived longer, had she lived into a period of relative prosperity that graced her successor.

10. Elizabeth (1558–1603).

- a. John Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion* (1536)
- b. The ‘Marian exiles’ return to England
- c. The ‘Elizabethan settlement’

The Act of Supremacy (1559) gave full ecclesiastical authority to the monarch, as ‘Supreme Governor of the Church of England’ and abolished the authority of the Pope in England. It thus restored Henry VIII’s Supremacy Act of 1534, with a significant change in title (‘governor’ vs. ‘head’), and partially repealed that of Mary I of 1555.

The Act of Uniformity (1559)-introduced the English Book of Common Prayer, with the order of prayer changed to make the Protestant book more acceptable to traditional Catholic worshippers and clergy. It also established that all persons go to church once a week or suffer a fairly steep fine.

The Treason Act (1571) declared that directly saying, publishing, declaring, or holding the opinion that the Queen or her heirs are not the rightful queens or kings was treason. Anyone so accused would lose their land and property to the Crown before being imprisoned for the rest of their lives.

By the middle of 1560, almost all of the Marian bishops had been replaced by Protestants, virtually all of whom were Calvinists, though none of them had been associated with John Calvin's Geneva.

d. The 39 articles (1563, 1571)

Article XI. Of the Justification of Man. We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by Faith, and not for our own works or deservings.

Wherefore, that we are justified by Faith only, is a most wholesome Doctrine, and very full of comfort, as more largely expressed in the Homily of Justification.

Article XVII. Of Predestination and Election. Predestination to Life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour.

Wherefore, they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through Grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity. ...

XXVIII. Of the Lord's Supper.

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather it is a Sacrament of our Redemption by Christ's death: insomuch that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith, receive the same, the Bread which we break is a partaking of the Body of Christ; and likewise the Cup of Blessing is a partaking of the Blood of Christ.

Transubstantiation (or the change of the substance of Bread and Wine) in the Supper of the Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions.

The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper, is Faith.

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshipped.

- e. Our picture of the Elizabethan Puritan, middle-class, non-clerical, out of the mainstream of the established church, probably needs considerable revision.
- f. Elizabeth reigned for 46 years. Much happened religiously over the course of those years that we cannot cover in any detail here. The largely Catholic parish clergy died out and

were replaced by a more Protestant clergy. The penalties on lay people who were openly Catholic increased, so that by the end of Elizabeth's reign only those with substantial means could maintain their status as what were increasingly called recusants. The importation of Catholic priests trained in seminaries abroad became a crime for which a number were executed. Open dissent by Protestants from the fairly large range of doctrines that could be maintained under the 39 articles was not officially tolerated, but such dissent existed. Disputes over the details of the liturgy, e.g., crosses vs. crucifixes, surplices vs. copes, continued, despite somewhat conflicting attempts to secure uniformity. By the end of the reign, as some have described it, the Elizabethan church had a Calvinist theology, but an episcopal structure of governance, and a much more elaborate ritual than what was found in Calvinist churches on the Continent. Whether that was a recipe for an explosion when the monarch was less popular than was Elizabeth is hard to know. The fact is that France had religious wars in the second half of the sixteenth century; England did not have them until the first half of the seventeenth.