

## Chapter 3

### **The Henrican Reformation**

#### **Anglicanism**

The Reformation in England would be very different from the Reformation on the continent. Ultimately the English Reformation would be predicated upon political expedience and not religious discontent. However, the need for reform was not a new idea. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century the Lollards had stressed the relationship between God and the individual. Humanist William Tyndale had translated the New Testament (1525). Corruption and wealth of the clergy (i.e. Thomas Wolsey) stirred up resentment amongst almost all classes of society, and travelers returned to England with the works of Martin Luther.

Since Arthur Tudor had died, the next in line of succession was his younger brother Henry who received the throne at 18. As a young man Henry had been a staunch supporter of the papacy against the Lutherans, for which he was rewarded with the title “Defender of the Faith.”

With special dispensation (Deuteronomy) Henry was allowed to marry his brother’s widow Catherine of Aragon (since the marriage was never consummated, the marriage was null and void). Catherine gave Henry a daughter, Mary. They had sons, but all died in infancy. This, to Henry proved that the marriage was cursed and he never should have married his brother’s widow. (Religious proof of this can be found in Leviticus). Henry needed a son to avoid the possibility of the dynastic war that his father had won.

In 1527 Henry wanted a new wife Anne Boleyn, who could give him a son. Henry had a problem because the Catholic Church did not recognize divorces. Henry told chancellor Cardinal Thomas Wolsey to find a solution.

Pope Clement VII was unable to comply because he had greater problems:

1. The Holy Roman Emperor Charles V held Rome hostage
2. Charles V was the nephew of Catherine of Aragon
3. Support for Luther was spreading in the Holy Roman Empire
4. If he granted a divorce because Henry had married his brother’s widow then the earlier pope, Julius II would have been wrong in granting permission for Henry to marry.

The proceedings were scheduled to be heard in London in 1529, but Pope Clement VII transferred them to Rome, where Henry knew he had no chance. Henry blamed Wolsey for the failure and ordered the cardinal to be tried for treason. Wolsey died a broken man in 1530 on his way to the trial. Since the pope was unwilling or incapable of granting a divorce Henry decided to use parliament to find a political solution.

**Henry named Thomas More to be the new Lord Chancellor in 1529, confident that his friend would be able to find a solution. More was a dedicated Catholic and he refused to compromise his beliefs. In 1533, Henry secretly married Anne Boleyn.**

**Archbishop Cranmer, who had been named the new Archbishop of Canterbury, orchestrated the divorce by breaking with Rome and granting Henry his wishes in a series of legal acts. It was Cranmer who declared Henry's marriage void.**

**The Act in Restraint of Appeals (1533) forbade appeals to the pope and made the sovereign the highest legal authority.**

**The Act of Submission of the Clergy (1534) - clergymen must submit to the king.**

**The Act of Supremacy (1534) - made the king head of the Church of England. Thomas More refused to accept this law and was beheaded along with several other prominent religious figures.**

**In 1536 the Pilgrimage of Grace, multi-class protest in the north of England, showed support for Catholicism was still strong. The demonstrators were dispersed and their leaders executed.**

**Henry confiscated church land under influence of Thomas Cromwell, his chief minister. Dissolved the monasteries in England and distributed the land to Henry's followers and friends. Thus assuring the Tudor dynasty of the unfailing support of the upper class.**

**In 1539 Henry passed the Six Articles, which required among other things that everyone believe in transubstantiation, for the clergy to be celibate, and the need for confession. This legislation proved impossible to enforce.**

**Although Henry's reasons were political, theologically the new Church of England was basically the same as the Catholic except with the monarch as the head.**

**Henry's son and successor Edward VI (r. 1547-1553) was a nine year-old child when he became the monarch. During his reign, through the guidance of Protestant advisors the country became solidly Protestant. Archbishop Cranmer prepared the first *Book of Common Prayer* (1549) which was required for all Anglican services and thus made the country more Protestant.**

**After Edward's death his older sister Mary Tudor (Bloody Mary) became queen. The Catholic Mary was the daughter of Catherine of Aragon and granddaughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain and was determined to return the church to Catholicism. In 1554 she angered the English people when she married Philip II of Spain. Mary was responsible for the deaths of many leading Protestants before her death in 1558.**

**After Mary came Elizabeth, Henry VIII's youngest daughter. Elizabeth was Protestant and returned the country, once again to the Protestant religion. The country was split, many wanting Catholicism while others wanted Protestantism.**

Some Protestants, known as the Puritans, wanted to purify the church of all remnants of Catholicism. Elizabeth required Protestant conformity but cautiously steered a moderate path between the two extremes. She did not worry about “windows to men’s souls” because she did not want another Civil War.

Parliamentary legislation known as the Elizabethan Settlement required that people, at least in public, conform to the Church of England. Despite the fact that many Puritans left the country, the Church of England doctrine was flexible enough to accommodate almost everyone.

In 1559 the Act of Uniformity required the use of the Book of Common Prayer for all religious services.

In 1563 the Thirty-Nine Articles, the basic tenets of the Church of England were published, but some of the Catholic traditions still remained including governance by powerful bishops.

It is worth remembering that the Reformation in England was a very unusual case, being politically not religiously motivated. Henry VIII had been titled Defender of the Faith by the pope for his Defense of the Seven Sacraments. However, once the Catholic Church thwarted Henry’s personal desires, he felt he had no other course of action. He never considered himself a heretic.

### **Scotland**

The Reformation in Scotland was very different from the English model. True, in Scotland the Catholic Church was open to abuses and corruption, but political aspirations would lead to religious conflict. King James V, son of Henry VIII’s daughter Margaret and King James IV, was a strong supporter of the Catholic Church. His daughter, Mary, Queen of Scots was Catholic and closely allied to Catholic France. This alliance was clearly opposed to reform and supported by a large number of Scottish noble.

John Knox (1505?-1572) had studied with John Calvin and brought Calvinism to Scotland from Geneva. Knox persuaded those in the Scottish parliament who favored reform, to pass legislation approving reform. Then Knox established the Presbyterian Church of Scotland following Calvinistic guidelines.

### **Ireland**

The Irish had traditionally hated the English. The pressure to reform religious beliefs only served to fuel the fires of discontent. English monarchs thought little about the Irish and cared even less for Irish religious desires. In 1536 the Irish parliament approved the separation from Rome. The Irish parliament reflected the wishes of the English landowners and a small number of Irish people not the great masses of hated Irish peasants. The English ruling class became Protestant – the majority of Irish remained Catholic (start of religious troubles?).

### **Anabaptists**

**Believed in adult baptism, revelation, religious toleration; pacifism; separation of church and state. Anabaptism was very strong in Germany, but elements could be found in other countries. They espoused very radical Protestant beliefs, which led to bitter persecutions.**