

16th Century Church History — Part 5

The Reformation in Britain and Rome's Reply

I. Tyndale and the English Bible

- Oxford-trained scholar; convicted England needed Scripture in the vernacular
- Fled to Europe (1524); NT printed at Worms (1526), smuggled into England
- Translated much of the OT; 80%+ of KJV New Testament derives from his work
- Arrested 1535; executed October 1536
- Meanwhile at Cambridge — scholars meeting at the White Horse Inn ("Little Germany") read Luther; Thomas Cranmer emerged from this circle

II. Henry VIII and Thomas Cromwell

- Henry sought annulment from Catherine; pope refused → Act of Supremacy (1534)
- Henry was no Protestant: kept Latin mass, transubstantiation, clerical celibacy
- What changed was jurisdiction, not doctrine

Thomas Cromwell (chief minister, 1532–1540)

- Dissolved the monasteries (1536–40); transferred wealth to the crown
- Authorized English Bibles: Coverdale (1535), Matthew Bible (1537), Great Bible (1539)
- The Great Bible chained in every parish church — Tyndale's vision fulfilled
- Executed 1540; the English Bible he had set loose could not be retracted

III. Cranmer and the Edwardian Reformation

- Archbishop of Canterbury (1533); kept Protestant convictions private under Henry
- Under Edward VI (r. 1547–53): free at last to lead genuine Protestant reform
- Welcomed Reformed exiles from Europe: Bucer, Peter Martyr
- Book of Common Prayer (1549; revised 1552) — first vernacular liturgy
- Forty-Two Articles (1553) — Protestant doctrinal standard

IV. Bloody Mary and the Marian Martyrs

- Edward VI died 1553; named Protestant Lady Jane Grey as heir
- Mary Tudor seized throne; restored mass, papal jurisdiction, outlawed the prayer book
- ~300 Protestants burned at the stake — "Bloody Mary"

Death of Cranmer (March 1556)

- Worn down in prison; signed multiple recantations
- On execution day: renounced all recantations before the crowd
- Held his right hand — which had signed them — steadily in the flames until consumed

V. The Elizabethan Settlement

- Mary died childless (1558); Elizabeth I restored Protestantism — but as a moderate
- Act of Supremacy (1559): Supreme Governor (not Head) — deliberately softer title
- Act of Uniformity: restored modified 1552 Prayer Book
- Thirty-Nine Articles (1571): Reformed but conciliatory confession
- Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth (1570); settlement held firm

Church of England: Reformed in doctrine, episcopal in government, liturgical in worship — a blend marking Anglicanism ever since.

VI. John Knox and the Scottish Reformation

- Captured 1547; 19 months as a French galley slave; freed by English diplomacy
- Exile in England, then Geneva — sat under Calvin; convinced Geneva was the model
- Returned to Scotland 1559

Key Documents

- Scots Confession (1560) — outlawed the mass; abolished papal jurisdiction
- Book of Common Order / Knox's Liturgy (1562) — governed Scottish worship until 1645
- First Book of Discipline — presbyterian polity, schools in every parish, poor relief

Scottish nobles refused to fund it — but it became the spiritual foundation of Scottish Presbyterianism.

Knox vs. Mary Queen of Scots

- Mary (Catholic, raised in France) returned 1561 to rule a Protestant Scotland
- Knox confronted her in four famous interviews; tried for treason and acquitted
- Mary abdicated 1567; executed 1587 for plotting against Elizabeth
- Knox died November 1572

Scotland and England — old enemies — were drawn together by shared Protestant identity. In 1603, Mary's son James VI became James I of England.

VII. Gathering Swallows: Rome's Reply

- Catholic Evangelicals sought reform from within; 1541 colloquy reached agreement on justification
- Talks collapsed over the eucharist; both Luther and pope rejected the joint statement
- The window for reconciliation closed

Instrument 1: The Jesuits

- Ignatius Loyola — Spanish soldier, converted while recovering from a wound (1521)
- Wrote the Spiritual Exercises; Jesuits recognized by pope (1540)
- Organized like an army; special vow of obedience to the pope
- Founded 400 schools across Europe; turned back Protestant gains in Bavaria, Austria, Poland

Instrument 2: The Council of Trent (1545–1563)

- Scripture and tradition together as authoritative; Latin Vulgate as supreme text
- Justification defined as a transformative process — faith alone explicitly rejected
- Reaffirmed seven sacraments and transubstantiation
- Established seminaries for training priests

Trent remained the standard of Roman Catholic teaching until Vatican II (1962).