

The English Reformation

I. The White Horse Inn

- **Lutherans abroad**
- **The White Horse Inn**
 - In Cambridge.
 - It became known as “little Germany” because the Oxford dons—fellows and tutors of the school—met there to discuss the Lutheran theology that was coming out of Germany.
 - Nicholas Ridley, Hugh Latimer, Thomas Cranmer, and potentially William Tyndale were all actively a part of this group that brought the Reformation to England.¹

- **William Tyndale (1494-1536)**
 - “Let it not make thee despair, neither yet discourage thee, O reader, that it is forbidden thee in pain of life and goods, or that it is made breaking of the king’s peace, or treason unto his highness, to read the Word of thy soul’s health—for if God be on our side, what matter maketh it who be against us, be they bishops, cardinals, popes.”²
 - Tyndale was a scholar *par excellence*. He could speak seven languages and was proficient in ancient Hebrew and Greek. It was in his study of the Greek New Testament that he discovered the good news of justification by faith. So gripped by this glorious doctrine was he that he desired that his countrymen could read the Scripture in their own language.³
 - Tyndale studied at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge from 1510 and 1521 and became convinced that most of the clergy knew very little of the Bible, “he resolved to give the nation a Bible that even a ploughboy could understand.”⁴
 - In 1522, Tyndale proposed his idea of making an English Bible translation to Cuthbert Tunstall the bishop of London but was shot down. Tunstall replied, “We must root out printing or printing will root out us.”⁵
 - Tyndale took the matter into his own hands and moved to Germany in 1524. He was briefly a student in Wittenberg but eventually settled in Antwerp, Belgium where English merchants enjoyed special privileges. From there he completed his translations of the New Testament into English along with portions of the Old Testament.
 - These copies being made, he sent them clandestinely to England where they were sold on the black market.
 - “Bishop Tunstall was greatly alarmed and decided the best way to stem the flow was to purchase as many copies of the translation as possible,

¹S.M. Houghton, *Sketches from Church History: An Illustrated Account of 20 Centuries of Christ’s Power* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 112.

²Mark Galli and Ted Olsen, “Introduction,” in *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 348.

³Galli and Olsen, 348.

⁴Houghton, 120.

⁵John D. Woodbridge and Frank A. James III, *Church History Volume Two: From Pre-Reformation to the Present Day* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2013), 221.

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but this strategy was flawed, since Tunstall's money unwittingly financed Tyndale's second edition."⁶

- Tyndale lived and worked in secret in Antwerp for nine years until he was betrayed by a friend into the Emperor's authority in 1535. After a year-and-a-half in prison, he was condemned as a Lutheran and sentenced to be burned at the stake. His last words were, "Lord, open the King of England's eyes."

To this king we will now turn.

II. Moody Monarchs⁷

● Henry VIII (1491-1547)

- The second son of Henry VII and by eighteen he was the sole ruler of England and the richest man in the world. "He was intelligent, handsome, physically powerful, talented in music, and an avid hunter and sportsman."⁸
- He was also a lifelong bitter opponent of Protestantism.
 - "He heard mass five times a day unless he was hunting (then he could only hear three)."⁹
- In 1519 Henry had read Martin Luther's 95 theses and by 1521 Henry authored a treatise against Luther called "*Defense of the Seven Sacraments*" which argued for the medieval understanding of Roman Catholic Theology.
 - Rewarded the title of Defender of the Faith from Pope Leo X (*Defensor Fidei*) for his work.
- Married his brother's widow, Catherine of Aragon. However, they had no surviving male heirs and this made Henry very nervous. He was afraid that a war of succession—a continuation of the War of the Roses—would ensue if he did not have a clear heir.
 - The War of the Roses lasted for more than thirty years from 1455-1487.
- **Catherine of Aragon.** In 1526, Henry asked the Pope to declare his marriage with Catherine as contrary to the law of God—seeing as Catherine had been the husband of his brother—which would result in an annulment of their covenant.
 - However, the Pope did not give him a clear answer. He intentionally drug his feet because Catherine of Aragon was the Aunt of Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, and the Pope did not want to anger the emperor by disrespecting his relative.
 - By 1532, Henry became angry at the delays of the pope and decided to declare independence from the Roman church. **Anne Boleyn** (1507-1536), a young lady-in-waiting at the court, had also become pregnant by Henry. He needed to act quickly.

⁶Woodbridge and James, 221.

⁷Houghton, 112-116.

⁸Galli and Olsen, 330.

⁹Galli and Olsen, 330.

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- Henry passed several laws that made him the de-facto leader of the church in England and severed all ties from the Roman Catholic church. For this, he was stripped of his title of Defender of the Faith and was excommunicated by the Pope.
- Ultimately, this was a political power play for Henry. In dissolving his relationship with Rome, he also acquired all the monasteries in his country and forced out all the monks, which greatly increased his wealth.

The king was assisted in this break with Rome by Thomas Cranmer.

- **Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556)**
 - Thomas Cranmer was among the men who studied and taught at Cambridge and participated in the conversations about Lutheran theology at the White Horse Inn.
 - Cranmer's reform leanings remained merely academic until he was drawn into the politics of the day. In August 1529, King Henry VIII happened to be in a neighborhood Cranmer was visiting, and he ended up conversing with the king. Henry had been trying to figure out how to divorce his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, in order to marry his new love, Anne Boleyn. The king, impressed with Cranmer's reasoning, commanded Cranmer to write a treatise backing the king's right to divorce and then made Cranmer one of his European ambassadors.¹⁰
 - In 1532 while he was fulfilling his ambassadorial duties in Germany, he met reformer Andreas Osiander and even—despite his priestly orders of celibacy—secretly married Margaret, Osiander's niece.¹¹
 - It is clear that Cranmer had reformation leanings but was hiding them for political advantage and survival. He hid his wife for many years, though it was remarked by his friends that he kept her secret in a box.
 - Cranmer was given the responsibility of being the archbishop of Canterbury in 1532, having ascended to that appointment by the orders of King Henry VIII.
 - In his capacity, Cranmer declared the marriage of Henry to Catherine of Aragon to be invalid and void. Not many days later, the king publicly married Anne Boleyn (though he had already married her in private) and had her officially installed as the queen.
 - "Cranmer believed in royal absolutism, that his primary duty was to obey the king, God's chosen, to lead his nation and church. Time and again in Henry's rocky reign, Cranmer was ordered to support religious policies of which he personally disapproved, and he always obeyed the king."¹²
 - That said, Cranmer was bold in arguing against the king and often attempted to save people from public execution for their protestant sympathies. "For his part, Henry intervened for Cranmer when court politics threatened Cranmer's position and life."¹³

¹⁰Galli and Olsen, 373.

¹¹Galli and Olsen, 373.

¹²Galli and Olsen, 373.

¹³Galli and Olsen, 373.

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- After four years of being married to Anne Boleyn she had produced no male heir. Henry was also suspicious that she had committed adultery and, therefore, the marriage was invalidated. Anne was summarily executed on suspicion of her unfaithfulness.
- The very next day, the king married Jane Seymour. Jane had been another young lady-in-waiting at the court. The following year, 1537, Jane finally produced Henry the male heir that he had so long desired: Edward VI. However, Jane herself died a few weeks later as a result of complications from the birth.
- Having finally received his male heir, Henry did not suddenly become chaste or agreeable to protestantism. Rather, he married again in 1540 this time to Anne of Cleves, to whom he was not attracted and subsequently had her sent away.
- Later that year he married Catherine Howard who was shortly thereafter accused of sexual misconduct and beheaded in 1542.
- Last, he married Catherine Parr—his third Catherine—to whom he was married until his death in 1547.
- All his life, Henry, remained faithful to Roman Catholic doctrine. He brought about independence from the pope but, ultimately, he did not want to change the chief articles of doctrine that the roman church taught.
- To the end, he was persecuting protestants.

Read excerpt from Houghton, 116-120.

- **King Edward VI (1537-1553)**

- Edward was crowned as king at age nine in 1547.
- He was heavily influenced by Thomas Cranmer and as a result, the nation swung toward protestantism.
- It was in 1552 that Thomas Cranmer published the updated version of *The Book of Common Prayer* which was to be used as the guide to the meetings of the Church of England. This document codified the Church of England as part of the reformed movement by its clear adoption of doctrines such as justification by faith alone.
- Edward had a short life, however, and did not see his seventeenth birthday.

The advancement of the gospel in England faced a serious hurdle with the rise of Mary to the throne.

- **Mary I (1516-1558)**

- Mary became the sole ruler of England in 1553.
- Mary was a staunch Roman Catholic and reinstated papal control in England.
- She reverted much of the changes that Cranmer and other like-minded reformers had made in the county.
- The result was that many—though not all—protestants fled the country.

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Some of the protestants who didn't flee the country are a few of the fellows who, now so many years ago, had been the first to discuss the new Lutheran theology at the White Horse Inn: Nicholas Ridley, now bishop of London; Hugh Latimer, the former bishop of Worcester; and Thomas Cranmer, the archbishop of Canterbury.

III. Blood of the Martyrs

● Nicholas Ridley (1500-1555)

- Nicholas was a godly man who lived honestly, served his church faithfully, loved his family well, and was gracious to his neighbors.
 - When Bishop Ridley was at home in Fulham, he always had his next-door neighbor, Mrs. Bonner, and her sister over for supper and dinner, giving her the honored seat at the end of the table, even if someone else of importance was present. “By your lordship’s favor,” he would tell his guest, “this place is for my mother Bonner.” Mrs. Bonner was the mother of the man who would later become Bishop Bonner during Queen Mary’s time—the man responsible for the deaths of many Protestants, including Ridley.¹⁴

● Hugh Latimer (1487-1555)

- Latimer was formerly a hardcore Roman Catholic until he heard the profession of faith of Thomas Bilney and had the Scripture taught to him.
- He was a faithful servant of Christ—preaching the gospel to many and helping reform England.
- When Mary became queen he too was arrested.
- Foxe records that in when he was jailed:
 - Since God had appointed him a preacher, Latimer asked Him for the grace to stand to His doctrine until his death.
 - He asked God to restore His gospel to England once again.
 - He prayed for the accession of Elizabeth, asking God to make her a comfort to the comfortless realm of England.
 - In time, all three of Latimer’s prayers would be answered.¹⁵

Why? Matthew 10:26-33. The fear of God and the reproach of Christ.

Only one life,
Twill soon be past,
Only what’s done for Christ will last.

-CT Studd.

¹⁴John Foxe, *Foxe’s Christian Martyrs: The Powerful Classic, Abridged and Updated* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour Books, 2014).

¹⁵Foxe.

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- **Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556)**
 - Wavered—recanted and then dramatically recanted his recantation.
 - “And now I come to the great thing that troubles my conscience more than anything I ever did or said in my whole life, and that is the publishing of a writing contrary to the truth, which now here I renounce and refuse, as things written by my hand contrary to the truth I believed with my whole heart, written because I feared death. Since my hand offended, it will be punished: When I come to the fire, it first will be burned. As for the pope, I refuse him, as Christ’s enemy and antichrist, with all his false doctrine. And as for the sacrament, I believe as I have taught in my book....”

The congregation was amazed at Cranmer’s words, and the Catholic churchmen there raged, fretted, and fumed because they had nothing left to threaten him with. He could only die once, after all.¹⁶
 - Burned his hand first.
 - Cranmer was restored by his gracious Lord.

- **Elizabeth I (1533-1603)**
 - Began her reign in 1558 and reigned until her death in 1603.
 - Courted both protestant and Roman Catholic princes.
 - A return to protestantism?
 - A return to protestantism.

IV. Dawn in England

- Puritans
- Separatists
- Particular Baptists

Conclusion

Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, **and ever hold fast**, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Thomas Cranmer from *The Book of Common Prayer*

May it be even to death.

¹⁶Foxe.