

A History of Christianity in America

Part II: The English and Scottish Reformations

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The Protestant Reformations in England and Scotland were convoluted struggles that lasted more than 150 years – from Henry VIII in the 1530s to the Glorious Revolution of 1689. Throughout this long ordeal, Catholics, Anglicans, Puritans and Presbyterians competed for power and supremacy. For the most part, the fate of the Reformations depended on who occupied the throne. In England, the drive for Reformation was a significant factor in Europe’s last major “religious war,” the English Civil War, and in the end England wound up with a quasi-Catholic state church. In Scotland, Presbyterianism took root and eventually prevailed. Like the Continental Reformations, the Reformation in Scotland was a complex mix of political, ecclesiastical and theological factors, while the English Reformation was primarily political, secondarily ecclesiastical, and only tangentially theological.

The English Reformation, Phase I: From Henry VIII To the Elizabethan Settlement

A New-Style Monarch

With the ascension of Henry VIII (r. 1509-47) to the throne, English history – both secular and ecclesiastical – entered a new phase. Since 1213, when King John was excommunicated and consequently surrendered his kingdom to the pope, England had been essentially a papal fiefdom. For 300 years English kings had paid £1000 annually in feudal rent to the pope, but this relationship changed with Henry, who was considerably more powerful, assertive and independent than his predecessors. He was also absolutely ruthless and devoid of moral scruples.

Henry VIII was a new-style monarch and one of the most gifted men to ever rule over England. Physically imposing – at 6'2" he towered over most men of his day – he was a large-framed, hulking giant who rode into battle encased in 60 pounds of armor. He was a gifted athlete, a champion jousting, and an expert archer and hunter. But Henry was more than just a royal brute (although he was certainly that). A true Renaissance man, he was an accomplished

musician, a talented writer, and an adept debater who was conversant in several languages.

For the first 25 years of his reign, Henry was a devout Catholic and one of the pope’s most reliable allies. In 1513 he led a campaign against Pope Julius II’s rival, Louis XII of France, for which he was awarded the title, “**Most Christian King**.” A few years later, at the outset of the Lutheran Reformation, Henry positioned himself as an intellectual defender of Catholic tradition. In response to the pope’s bull ordering Luther’s writings to be destroyed, Henry commissioned book burnings at Oxford and Cambridge universities and at St. Paul’s Cathedral in London. Never lacking in self-confidence, Henry inserted himself into the theological disputes of the day. His *Assertion of the Seven Sacraments* (1520) was a robust attack against Luther’s book, *The Babylonian Captivity*, and it earned him the title, “**Defender of the Faith**,” from **Pope Clement VII** (r. 1523-34). Henry also vigorously enforced the Church’s ban on vernacular

translations of the Bible. For years his agents pursued **William Tyndale**, and in 1530 Henry ordered the execution of the first Protestant martyr in England for smuggling Tyndale's Bibles into the country. In a grisly display of intolerance, the offender was burned to death at the stake.

Defying Rome

In the late 1520s Henry's relations with Rome deteriorated when he wanted to divorce his wife, **Catherine of Aragon** (1485-1536). Henry had married Catherine, the widow of his brother, when he came to power in 1509. She was the daughter of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain, and her marriage to Henry was strictly a political arrangement intended to strengthen the ties between their two countries. The marriage required a papal dispensation since canon law (i.e, traditional Church law) condemned such marriages on the basis of Leviticus 8:16 – "Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife." But where there's a will there's a way, and the strong-willed Henry, not to be denied, obtained a dispensation by offering the pope, the notoriously corrupt Julius II, a generous bribe.

Henry was never satisfied with Catherine (whom he referred to in rather unendearing terms as his "Spanish cow"), and although she was pregnant eight times in nine years, she produced only one child – a daughter, **Mary Tudor**. Of course, Henry had other children by various mistresses, but none were legitimate. So since Catherine wasn't delivering the goods and Henry was bored with her, he decided the marriage had been a mistake from the outset. He might also have been troubled by the warning of Leviticus 20:21 – "If a man shall take his brother's wife it is an unclean thing.... They shall remain childless." Technically, of course, Henry and Catherine were not childless, but it served his interests to argue that his wife's failure to produce a male heir was a sign of divine displeasure.

In 1527 Henry instructed his Chancellor, **Thomas Woolsey**, to petition Pope Clement VII for an annulment. Under normal circumstances the pope would have obliged, but in this case political realities dictated otherwise. Catherine was the aunt of the Holy Roman Emperor, **Charles V** (r.1519-56), whose army was occupying Rome at time. The pope was a virtual prisoner of the Emperor, so when Catherine appealed to her nephew to spare her the humiliation of being deposed, the pope, who

could not afford to offend the emperor, had no alternative but to delay indefinitely Henry's request.

Henry was intent on dumping his wife because he had lately become infatuated with the young and comely **Anne Boleyn**, one of Queen Catherine's maids-of-honor. Although a commoner, Anne had an impressive pedigree. Her father, Thomas Boleyn, the Earl of Wiltshire, was one of the most respected aristocrats in England at the time. Anne had been educated in France and became a center of attention at court due to her charm, style, intelligence and sophistication. Reportedly, she was a gifted musician, and undeniably, she was an accomplished flirt. Once she caught Henry's eye, she became his obsession.

Although a staunch Catholic, King Henry was anything but a disciplined Christian. He was known for having a hyper-active libido, and his lust for Anne was overpowering. In fact, Anne's sister, Mary, had been one of the king's mistresses for a time, and it was rumored that he was the father of one or both of her children. Anne, however, resisted Henry's attempts to seduce her, insisting upon being his wife rather than just another castaway mistress. Henry arranged to marry her secretly, but he still needed an official divorce from the Church.

Anne became pregnant in 1533, which made it all the more imperative that the king get an annulment so their child would be legitimate. In fact, anticipating a stalemate with the Vatican, Henry had already laid the groundwork to assume control over the English church. Two years earlier he had proclaimed himself "protector and supreme head of the English Church and clergy," and the following year Parliament had passed a measure prohibiting the clergy from issuing canons without the king's consent. Then in 1533 Parliament took decisive action in passing the **Act in Restraint of Appeals**, which eliminated the pope's jurisdiction in England and declared the Archbishop of Canterbury to be the ultimate ecclesiastical court.

Thomas More, Lord Chancellor and a devout Catholic, opposed Henry's cavalier approach to such matters. Sometimes called "the last great Catholic in England," More was an Oxford-educated lawyer and a loyal servant of the Church. Contemptuous of Protestants, whom he regarded as radical ecclesiastical anarchists, More was committed to the ideal of "a perfect

uniformity of religion” under a proper Catholic monarch and hierarchy. Against Luther’s doctrine of *sola scriptura* he maintained that it was the Church that created the Scriptures, not vice-versa. Therefore, just as the Bible is the written Word of God, the Church functions as the institutional Word of God, and the teachings and practices of the Church are as infallible as the Bible itself.

At the top of More’s enemies list was William Tyndale, the brilliant and courageous Bible scholar who had fled to Germany to translate the New Testament into English, which was being smuggled into England via an underground network of committed reformers. More considered Tyndale an arch-heretic and an agent of Satan. Like most clerics, he argued that one could not understand the Bible without years of proper training, and therefore it was dangerous to allow simple laymen to read it. More waged a propaganda campaign against Tyndale’s New Testament, calling it “the Testament of the Antichrist” and “well worthy to be burned,” but he didn’t stop with just burning Bibles. He also wanted to burn reformers. He once swore that he would allow Muslims in England before he would permit Protestants to spread their venomous doctrines, and he declared that burning their bodies was actually an act of charity as it might lead them to repent and thereby save their souls.

More was a personal friend of Henry, but he opposed the King’s power grab and a proposed **Act of Succession** that would make the child of Henry and Anne the legitimate successor to the throne. More also refused to take an oath renouncing his allegiance to the pope, and even threatened to resign his position in protest. Henry was furious – he could not tolerate the public insult of having his top religious advisor challenge his authority – so he ordered his friend thrown into the Tower of London on trumped-up charges of disloyalty and treason. More refused to recant, and on July 6, 1535 he was beheaded.

Thomas More wasn’t the only public official to suffer Henry’s wrath. Several other notable clerics who opposed Henry’s religious coup d’état were likewise persecuted. But most Church officials conveniently accepted the “divine right of kings” argument that kings were ordained by God, and to oppose the king was a sin. Such thinking made life simpler, not to mention safer.

The Next Steps

Since the pope was stalling on granting an annulment, Henry insisted that **Thomas Cranmer** (1489-1556), the Archbishop of Canterbury, grant his request. Cranmer was a Catholic priest and an accomplished scholar, but ever since his student days at Cambridge he had developed sympathies for the Continental Reformation. As a compliant cleric and a dutiful servant, Cranmer supported Henry in the divorce controversy, and in May 1533 the ecclesiastical court at Canterbury declared Henry’s marriage to Catherine to be null-and-void. Shortly thereafter, on June 1, Anne Boleyn was crowned Queen of England. [Note: Earlier, Martin Luther had proposed a simpler solution to Henry’s dilemma. Rather than go through a messy and legally-questionable divorce, why not simply follow the example of some of the Old Testament patriarchs and kings and marry a second wife?]

In 1534 Parliament passed the **Act of Supremacy**, severing all official connections to the Roman Catholic Church and establishing an independent **Church of England** (or **Anglican Church**). In declaring the king “the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England,” the Act essentially made Henry VIII the English Pope. The law empowered the king to appoint the head of the church, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and warned that anyone who accused the king of being a schismatic or a heretic could be tried for treason.

Meanwhile in Rome, the new pope, **Paul III** (r. 1534-49), responded by excommunicating Henry. In retaliation, Henry began confiscating Church property. In 1536 and 1539 Parliament ordered the closing of all monasteries, with all the assets and revenue reverting to the Crown. Much of the land was sold cheap to the neighboring gentry, who now had a vested interest in the process of Protestantization. In addition, the seizure and sale of Church property was a bonanza for Henry’s treasury as it more than doubled the income of the English government. Initially, Henry promised to donate the increased revenue to charitable causes, but instead he used it to pay off creditors, finance various government operations, and fund his military forces.

In 1536, in another anti-Catholic initiative, Henry authorized the publication of an official English language Bible – the **Miles Coverdale** (or “**Matthews**”) **Bible**. Henry’s two main advisors, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer and vicar-general

Thomas Cromwell – both of whom hoped to convert England to the Reformed faith – convinced him that an English Bible would help “emancipate England from Romish domination.” So upon its completion, Henry ordered a copy to be placed in every parish church and accessible to all parishioners. This was, of course, quite ironic since Henry had just sanctioned the execution of William Tyndale for translating the Bible into English, and Coverdale had been one of Tyndale’s closest friends and collaborators. Furthermore, his authorized English version was 90% identical to Tyndale’s contraband version.

Roman Catholic officials had always warned that making the Bible available to the masses was tantamount to letting the proverbial genie out the bottle. Now, the country would be filled with ignorant and untrained Bible expositors sowing discord and spreading heresy. Within a few years of the publication of the Matthews Bible, Henry agreed, and in 1543, weary of all the Bible-battling and theological nit-picking going on, he proposed a law that would once again restrict the reading of the Bible to Church officials.

Despite his anti-Catholic measures, Henry remained a Catholic at heart. In fact, he had never actually objected to Catholic doctrines and practices – he just wanted to be in charge of the Church. As historian Brian Edwards has noted, “Henry lived and died believing Rome was right. His only quarrel was with the temporal power of the pope interfering in the internal affairs of England.”

In 1539 Henry VIII proposed the **Six Articles**, two of which mandated clerical celibacy and the doctrine of transubstantiation. The law ordered that anyone who denied transubstantiation should be executed and their property confiscated – even if they recanted!

Henry the Persecutor

To the end, Henry remained a cruel persecutor of religious dissidents. In 1536, about the same time that William Tyndale was being executed in Belgium, Henry committed fourteen Anabaptists to be burned at the stake in England. In 1540 he ordered six people publicly hanged, drawn and quartered – three for speaking out in favor of the pope, and three for expressing radical reformist views.

In fact, Henry’s 40-year reign was one of the bloodiest and most tyrannical in English history. An estimated 70,000 people were executed for

various offenses, including Anne Boleyn and another of his six wives. Certainly, the vast majority of his victims were criminals and political enemies, but thousands of recalcitrant Catholics, Protestants and religious nonconformists were harassed and persecuted in the process. Eventually, he even turned on his longtime ally and vicar-general, Thomas Cromwell, who was caught up court intrigues and became the scape-goat for Henry’s botched marriage to **Anne of Cleves**. But the king’s biggest sycophant, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer, skillfully managed to survive Henry’s tyrannical reign.

A Protestant Boy-King

Upon Henry’s death in 1547, his nine-year-old son by Jane Seymour, **Edward VI** (r. 1547-53), was declared his successor. Intelligent and sincere but young and frail, Edward sought to reign as a conscientious Protestant monarch. Educated by humanist scholars who were sympathetic to Protestantism, the boy read his Bible daily. At his coronation, Archbishop Cranmer exhorted Edward to imitate the boy-king Josiah (r. 640 – 609 BC), who had inaugurated a religious revival in his day by eliminating all vestiges of pagan worship in the Kingdom of Judah. Under the influence of Cranmer and his uncle and Lord Protector **Edward Seymour, the Duke of Somerset**, young Edward promoted a reform agenda and moved to eliminate the residual Catholic influences in England.

Under Henry VIII, Cranmer had been relegated to the status of a servile cleric who sanctioned the king’s dictates. Now, with Edward VI on the throne, Cranmer took the initiative in moving the Anglican church toward a more mainstream Protestant position. Cranmer had an ecumenical orientation, and he hoped to integrate the Anglican church into a broad Protestant coalition by cultivating relations with evangelical leaders on the Continent. Under his leadership the Six Articles, which had mandated clerical celibacy and the doctrine of transubstantiation, was repealed. Also, most of Henry VIII’s draconian heresy laws were repealed, and the persecution of dissidents virtually ceased. Cranmer’s *Book of Homilies* (1547) mandated that priests preach sermons based on Reformed theology, and in 1549 a new *Book of Common Prayer*, compiled and edited primarily by Cranmer, provided a comprehensive liturgy in

English. [Note: With some revisions, this remains the standard Anglican/Episcopalian *Book of Common Prayer* today.] In 1553 Cranmer authored the **Forty-two Articles**, a collection of doctrinal statements that reflected a decidedly Reformed position on issues such as justification by faith and *sola scriptura*, to which all Anglican clergy were required to adhere. Once liberated from the tyrannical yoke of Henry VIII, Cranmer proved himself to be an ardent reformer and a skilled moderate in terms of balancing traditional and Reformed rites and practices.

Unfortunately for the Reformation cause in England, Edward VI died at age fifteen in July 1553. In his brief seven-year reign, he had shown exceptional character, intelligence and potential. Truly, he could have been one of the great monarchs in history. As the young king prepared to die, he instructed his aides to offer the crown to fourteen-year-old **Lady Jane Grey**, a great-niece of Henry VIII and a committed Protestant.

In anticipation of her coronation, Lady Jane was hastily married off to Lord Guildford Dudley, the son of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland, one of the most powerful nobles in England at the time. But legally Lady Jane had only a tenuous claim to the throne, and Edward's succession declaration lacked the approval of Parliament. As a result her reign lasted only nine days before the Privy Council and other government insiders switched their allegiance to **Lady Mary Tudor**, a half-sister of Edward VI and the older of the two surviving daughters of Henry VIII.

Bloody Mary

Mary Tudor (r. 1553-58) was 37-years-old when she gained the throne. As the daughter of the disgraced Catherine of Aragon, she had had a turbulent and unhappy youth. Unwanted and largely ignored, she grew up to be an staunch Catholic and a bitter opponent of Protestantism. [Note: Mary had to be a Catholic -- otherwise, she would have to admit to being illegitimate.]

At the outset of her reign Mary assured her subjects that she intended no radical changes and was committed to religious toleration. She insisted that although her Catholic faith was set, she did not intend to "compel or constrain other men's consciences" – except to the extent that God would persuade them "through the opening of his Word unto them by godly, virtuous, and learned preachers" – i.e., Catholic preachers.

But in fact the duplicitous Mary had no intention of tolerating Protestantism. As a committed sacralist, she considered religious tolerance to be a vice, not a virtue. Heresy, like treason, was a crime against the state and had to be punished by death. But due to political considerations, Mary had to move cautiously. She preferred to return England to the Catholic fold by rescinding the Protestant laws of the previous twenty years and removing influential Protestant ministers rather than resort to force and coercion.

Throughout the first year-and-a-half of her reign Mary moved deftly to reverse the Reformation and restore the Catholic faith. In reality, despite the general popularity of Edward VI and the Cranmer reforms, Protestantism had only a tenuous hold on England. So first, the Queen prevailed upon Parliament to criminalize "unlicensed preaching" – a restriction that was popular with most clerics. Next, she managed to pressure Parliament into passing the **Act of Repeal** (1553), abrogating the Reformation laws passed under Edward VI. In the process Parliament also cancelled the annulment of Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon, thereby legitimizing Mary and strengthening her legal right to the throne. The following year, despite stiff opposition in Parliament, she prevailed in repealing the **Act of Supremacy** and, most ominously, restoring the **anti-heresy laws**.

In January of 1554 Mary negotiated a treaty to marry her cousin, **Prince Philip** of Spain (later **King Philip II**), the son of the Holy Roman Emperor **Charles V**. Her marriage to a Spanish Catholic prince was controversial, to say the least, as their heir would have undeniable legitimacy and would solidify the Catholic hold on England. Especially among the landed gentry, many of whom had benefitted from the confiscation of Church property under Henry VIII, the reascendance of Catholicism was cause for alarm. Others objected to the alliance because it potentially threatened England's political sovereignty. But in the end the marriage turned out to be a total failure. After trying for a year to produce an heir, Prince Philip grew bored with Mary and returned to Spain.

From the outset Mary knew she faced formidable challenges. In January 1554, only six months into her reign, she was nearly deposed by a rebellion led by a staunch Protestant, **Thomas Wyatt**, who led an armed band of some 3,000 men in a march on London, only to be cut down

outside the city gates by troops loyal to the Queen. In the aftermath of the rebellion, Mary ordered the executions of Lady Jane Grey and her husband, although they had nothing to do with the insurrection. According to the law, traitors could either be burned alive at the stake or publicly beheaded, but in an act of “mercy” Mary allowed Lady Jane to be decapitated in private. Then, since the rebels had announced their intention to install Mary’s half-sister, **Elizabeth**, as queen, Mary had Elizabeth interned in the Tower of London but did not execute her.

In July 1554 Mary and Prince Philip were married, and later that month **Cardinal Reginald Pole** arrived from Rome to restore papal authority over England. Shortly thereafter, Mary stripped Archbishop of Canterbury **Thomas Cranmer** of his position and appointed Pole as his successor. Then, beginning in February 1555, Mary’s reign turned exceedingly violent. Taking advantage of the newly re-instituted heresy laws, she targeted influential Protestant leaders. Acting in her capacity as head of the English church, she removed the bishops in ten key dioceses on various trumped-up charges and replaced them with Catholics. Some were simply removed from office, some were imprisoned in the Tower of London, and others were allowed to flee to the Continent. Although the Queen’s intention seems to have been to make converts rather than martyrs, her attempt to force conversions largely backfired as most of her victims faced death with defiant dignity.

One of Mary’s first victims was **John Hooper**, the former bishop of Gloucester who was later regarded as “England’s First Puritan.” Hooper was considered an extreme reformer at the time, which made him controversial and an easy target. Nonetheless, the courage he displayed when being burned at the stake impressed all who witnessed the spectacle. Mary also persecuted the influential Protestant minister and scholar, **John Rogers**, one of the editors of the Matthews Bible.

In October 1555 two of England’s most notable former bishops, **Nicholas Ridley** (1500-55) and **Hugh Latimer** (1485-1555), were tried and convicted for treason. Ridley had been a chaplain and advisor to Thomas Cranmer, and like the Archbishop he had supported Lady Jane Grey’s bid for the throne. Latimer was a bold and gifted preacher who had been persecuted under Henry VIII before becoming one of England’s most influential and respected clerics in the reign

of Edward VII.

Latimer and Ridley were executed on the same day in October 1555. As they were being chained to the stake, Ridley proclaimed, “So long as the breath is in my body, I will never deny my Lord Christ and his known truth. God’s will be done in me.” Turning to his friend, Latimer exclaimed, “Be of good comfort, Brother Ridley, and play the man, for we shall this day light such a candle, by God’s grace, in England as I trust shall never be extinguished.” Then, as the flames approached, Ridley cried out, “Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit: Lord, receive my spirit!” Latimer likewise prayed, “O Father of heaven, receive my soul!”

Mary also arranged to have Thomas Cranmer, the former archbishop of Canterbury, condemned to death for treason. He was imprisoned for two-and-a-half years and subjected to all kinds of deprivations including possibly torture. At first resolute, Cranmer later broke under pressure, only to recant his recantation on the eve of his execution – his last words being, “And as for the pope, I refuse him, as Christ’s enemy and antichrist, with all his false doctrines.” A well-intentioned but sycophantic cleric for much of his early career, Cranmer became in the end an inspiring example of moral courage in the face of despicable religious bigotry and gross inhumanity.

In all, nearly 300 Protestants were executed in the final three years of Mary’s reign, including some sixty women, and hundreds more were thrown into squalid prisons. In addition, an estimated 800 others fled to the Continent. These “**Marion Exiles**” included some of England’s most outstanding church leaders, students, merchants and artisans. Some of these refugees sought refuge in Germany, while others gravitated to Reformed cities such as Zurich, Frankfurt, Strasbourg, and Calvin’s Geneva. Under the leadership of **John Knox** and **Christopher Goodman**, the English exiles in Geneva organized the first English-speaking church governed by **presbyterian** principles. Mary’s persecution of the Protestants also inspired **John Foxe** to compile one of the most influential books in history, *Acts and Monuments* (a.k.a. *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*).

“Bloody Mary’s” reign of terror finally turned the masses against her, exacerbated by other factors such as natural disasters, crop failures, widespread famine, and a plague that killed off as much as 20% of the English population. Many

became convinced that God was cursing the nation because of the queen's fanatical Catholicism and bloody persecutions, and by the time she died she was despised throughout the realm. In the end, her persecution of Protestants only made Catholicism all the more unpopular in England

The Elizabethan Settlement

Upon the death of Queen Mary in November 1558, **Elizabeth** (r. 1558-1603), her 25-year-old half-sister and the only remaining child of Henry VIII, ascended unopposed to the throne. The fact that Elizabeth survived the reign of her half-sister was remarkable in itself. Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, had often advised Mary to have Elizabeth executed, but inexplicably she had never followed through.

Now, finally emerging from the shadows, Elizabeth quickly gained a reputation as a determined and independent-minded ruler. Like her father, she was vain, intelligent, strong-willed, and opinionated. Also like her father, she was a master manipulator with impressive political skills who manipulated Parliament through persuasion, flattery, patronage, bribery and, if necessary, threats. But unlike her despicable father and half-sister, she wasn't a mass murderer.

As the "virgin queen" who never married, Elizabeth devoted herself to England's national interest. In particular, she determined to avoid the political and religious chaos that engulfed much of Western Europe in the late 16th century. Diligent and conscientious, she earned the respect of most of her subjects and governed England with firmness, common sense, and (relatively-speaking) moderation.

Just as Queen Mary could only justify her legitimacy by declaring herself a Catholic, Elizabeth had no alternative but to identify with Protestantism. Otherwise, her mother, Anne Boleyn, was never legitimately married and Elizabeth was an illegitimate child. But Elizabeth was at most a nominal Protestant, and throughout her reign she kept her religious views to herself. Moderate and pragmatic, she favored making the state church as generic and inclusive as possible for the sake of national unity. While certainly was no papist, she had little patience for Protestant "enthusiasts" who took their theology too seriously.

Being a pragmatic moderate did not mean that Elizabeth was any less of a sacralist. Like virtually all Christians in the 16th century (other than the Anabaptists and some Spiritualists), she believed that religious tolerance undermined a nation's social harmony and political stability. Therefore, she moved immediately to replace the nation's Catholic bishops with moderate Protestants, some of whom had been among the "Marion Exiles." She appointed **Matthew Parker** as Archbishop of Canterbury and supported two Parliamentary acts that reestablished England as an officially Anglican nation. The **Act of Supremacy** recognized Elizabeth as the "Supreme Governor" of the Church of England and replaced the previous Act of Supremacy of 1534 that had declared the monarch to be the "Supreme Head" of the Church. (Many Protestant clerics considered it unbiblical and inappropriate to refer to anyone but Christ as the "Head" of the church.) The **Act of Uniformity** standardized the Anglican liturgy and mandated the *Book of Common Prayer* of 1552 that had been adopted under Edward VI. Regarding the doctrine of Communion, the liturgy contained ambiguous references to the body and blood of Christ that most Protestants could interpret according to their preference. Historians have referred to this arrangement as the Elizabethan Settlement.

Puritans

Following Elizabeth's coronation, hundreds of English exiles returned home, including many Calvinistic Protestants intent on reforming the Church of England. Once home, these "Puritans" agitated for more radical ecclesiastical and moral reforms. In essence, Puritanism was a holiness movement. As J. I. Packer has written, "Puritanism was at heart a movement to raise standards of Christian life in England, with the conversion of England as the final goal." [J. I. Packer, "Physicians of the Soul." *Christian History & Biography* (Vol. 89: Winter 2006), p. 12.] Many of the Puritan ministers were well-educated and committed men who hoped to see England converted into a Christian commonwealth similar to Calvin's Geneva. But Elizabeth had little tolerance for religious extremists or theological disputes, and in 1562 she issued the **Articles of Religion** (or the "**Thirty-Nine Articles**") prohibiting disputes over Church reforms, and imposed harsh penalties on nonconformists.

Despite Elizabeth's warnings the Puritan faction increased its influence over Church affairs, particularly during the two years when **Edmund Grindal** served as Archbishop of Canterbury (1575-77). Elizabeth disapproved of Grindal's tolerance of Puritans, and she soon replaced him with **John Whitgift**, who despised them as "enthusiasts" and contentious rebels.

In the 1580s the Puritan movement fragmented into three factions:

(1) The majority were moderates who worked for incremental reforms within the established structure of the Church of England.

(2) A smaller group, the Presbyterians, were strict Calvinists who agitated for serious reforms in the Church. Led by **Thomas Cartwright**, Presbyterians insisted that all Church doctrines and practices conform to the rule of Scripture. In particular, they objected to the Church's episcopal form of government, arguing that the New Testament infers a presbyterian (or representative) polity.

(3) A small minority of radical Puritans, known as "**Separatists**," had given up on reforming the Church of England. Believing that the established Church was apostate and utterly corrupt, Separatists broke off from the main body of Puritans and began organizing independent and unauthorized house churches. This was not only illegal but dangerous as English citizens were subject to being fined or even imprisoned for failing to attend an authorized church.

Led by **Robert Browne** and **Robert Harrison**, the first Separatist congregation formed in Norwich in 1581. Like the Continental Anabaptists, each Separatist church was autonomous and adopted either a congregational or a presbyterian style of church government. Elizabeth's regime, which hardly tolerated moderate Puritans, certainly had no patience for these radicals. In 1586 two Separatist leaders, **John Greenwood** and **Henry Barrow**, were arrested for organizing a church in London and sentenced to seven years in prison. During their internment neither man recanted, and in fact both continued to communicate with Separatist groups throughout England and direct underground church activities for which they were executed in 1593. Other persecutions followed, which resulted in several hundred Separatists leaving England and seeking sanctuary in Holland in the first decade of the 1600s.

What To Do About Mary

Puritans were not the only organized group that opposed the Elizabethan Settlement. Much of the resistance to Elizabeth's policies came from disenfranchised Catholics. Early in her reign, Elizabeth attempted to pacify English Catholics and maintain a cordial relationship with Rome, but her moderate policies were doomed from the outset as neither **Pope Pius V** nor **Philip II** of Spain were willing to let England return to the Protestant fold uncontested. Once it became apparent that Elizabeth would never support a Catholic state church in England, the pope excommunicated her as a heretic in 1570.

Elizabeth's situation was further complicated in 1568 when the recently-deposed **Mary Stuart (Mary, Queen of Scots)** arrived in England and sought Elizabeth's help in regaining the throne. Mary had been deposed when her brief marriage to Lord Darnley ended with his murder, whereupon she promptly married the Earl of Bothwell, who was the prime suspect in the case. Elizabeth had no intention of assisting her Catholic cousin, but she also resisted the calls of Puritans and other Protestant militants who wanted Mary executed. Instead, Elizabeth placed Mary under virtual house arrest. Mary was not a happy camper, and over the next eighteen years she schemed and plotted not only to return to Scotland but to depose Elizabeth. Finally in 1587, amid undeniable evidence that Mary had conspired to assassinate her and seize the throne, Elizabeth consented to her execution.

Initially, Elizabeth's policy toward English Catholics required only token conformity to her policies. Soon, however, she became more proactive when it came to Catholic leaders who continued to defy her authority and plot against her. During her reign some 200 Catholics were executed on charges of treason – most being hung, drawn and quartered, the standard punishment for traitors.

The Catholic Armada

In the months immediately following Elizabeth's ascension to the throne, both the Pope and Philip II thought they saw an opportunity to draw England into a closer alliance with Catholic Spain. Philip II was militantly anti-Protestant, and hoping to keep England within the Catholic fold, he proposed marriage to Elizabeth. Having no intention of marrying anyone – least of all the former estranged husband of her deceased sister –

Elizabeth resolutely refused to consider it. From that point on, relations between the two monarchs were cool at best.

In 1581 Elizabeth dispatched English troops to Holland to assist **William of Orange**, who was fighting to establish an independent Protestant Dutch Republic. Six years later, following the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, **Pope Sixtus V** offered Philip a million gold ducats to invade England and depose Elizabeth.

In preparation for a major invasion of England, Philip ordered the construction of an “**Invincible Armada**” of 130 warships and supply ships capable of transporting some 30,000 soldiers and sailors. The plan was to sail from Lisbon to Flanders, rendezvous with another 17,000 Catholic forces in the Spanish Netherlands, and then escort barges with Spanish and Flemish troops across the English Channel. Once the invasion commenced, Philip expected Catholics throughout England to rise up against the queen.

As the Armada set sail, the English braced for the largest force to invade their homeland since William the Conqueror landed in 1066. However, almost from the outset, the operation was a disaster. Storms, squalls, spoiled food and rank water plagued the fleet, and Spanish ships proved to be clumsy and hard to maneuver. A fleet of 150 English ships intercepted the Armada in the English Channel and wreaked havoc on the Spanish fleet. English ships were generally smaller, faster, more maneuverable, and had more fire power. As the Spanish fleet harbored at Calais, the English launched fireships that scattered the Armada and allowed the English to pick off isolated ships one at a time.

The following year the Spanish fleet avoided the English Channel, which was full of enemy warships, and attempted to return home by sailing north around the British Isles. The result was disastrous. Arctic storms (the English called it a “Protestant Wind”) battered the ships, many ran aground along the coast while others were lost at sea, and only about half of the fleet ever made it back to Spain. Throughout England, Thanksgiving celebrations hailed the destruction of the Spanish Armada. Many interpreted the events as a sign of divine protection and England’s status as a special nation uniquely blessed by God.

In actuality, the defeat of the Spanish Armada was not as catastrophic as is often portrayed. With gold and silver bullion pouring in from their

colonies in the Caribbean and South America, the Spanish rebuilt their fleet and remained a major world power for another century. The main consequence was that Spain failed to conquer England and restore it to the Catholic faith. Following the intrigues of Mary, Queen of Scots and the aborted invasion of the Spanish Armada, Catholicism was associated with England’s enemies. In addition, the loyalty and patriotism of English Catholics would be suspect for at least the next 200 years. From this point on, Anglican Protestantism was inextricably interwoven into the national fabric.

Mere Anglicanism

In the last years of the Elizabethan age, the theologian **Richard Hooker** (1554-1600) essentially defined mainstream Anglicanism in his *magnum opus*, *The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1593). Distressed by all the theological and ecclesiastical conflicts of the previous 75 years, Hooker preached a gospel of Christian ecumenism and tolerance. Distinguishing between major and minor issues, he held that Christians should concentrate on the essential core doctrines of the faith and what unites them rather than secondary issues that are inherently divisive. Accordingly, Hooker sought a theological middle-ground between Catholicism and Puritanism.

Hooker’s theology was based on three pillars: the Bible, church tradition, and reason. Since the Bible had only been available in the English language for a little over 50 years and biblical illiteracy was still prevalent among not only the vast majority of the laity but also much of the clergy, one of Hooker’s priorities was to accentuate the basic principles of biblical hermeneutics. In particular, he emphasized the concept that Scripture should be interpreted in terms of its context and literary genre.

A central theme in Hooker’s writings is that sound theology is an outgrowth of true spirituality which is rooted in fervent prayer and devotion. Much of his theological work was a response to what he considered to be the excesses of Calvinism. He took exception to the view that only that which is specifically sanctioned in Scripture is permissible, and argued that since biblical revelation does not address every theological or practical matter, Christians should learn to employ “redeemed reason” as their guide. Hooker also addressed other controversial

doctrines that were popular among the Puritans such as Limited Atonement. On the basis of John 3:16 and other passages, he argued that Jesus Christ died for the sins of the whole world and that God's grace is available to all who receive it.

Hooker regarded the controversies over church polity as secondary issues on which God was "indifferent." Therefore, he challenged the Presbyterian critique of episcopalianism and their claim that the Bible sanctions only one particular kind of church government. In this context and others, he reemphasized the point that what really matters is true faith, true devotion and true service.

In terms of soteriology (the doctrine of spiritual salvation), Hooker was an inclusivist. In a 1585 sermon entitled "**A Learned Discourse of Justification, Works, and How the Foundation of Faith Is Overthrown,**" he defended the biblical doctrine of Justification by faith but argued that even those who do not understand or accept this doctrine can be saved by God. As one who emphasized "the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church founded by Christ and the apostles," Hooker held that salvation even included sincere and devout Roman Catholics.

The Scottish Reformation

The Political and Religious Milieu

Like the Reformation in England, the Scottish Reformation was as much a political as a religious phenomenon and was the result of two major (and conflicting) influences. First, Scottish politics was expressly anti-English and therefore pro-Catholic. Although the Scottish royal family, the **Stuarts**, was related to the English **Tudors**, Scotland had strong connections with France due to centuries of conflict with their common enemy, England. During the reign of **Henry VIII** (r. 1509-47), he fought three wars against the Scots but was never able to totally subjugate them. The second major factor in the Scottish Reformation was the emergence and influence of extraordinarily gifted and courageous Protestant apostles such as Patrick Hamilton, George Wishart, John Knox and Andrew Melville.

At the outset of the Reformation era, the king of Scotland, **James V** (r. 1513-42), was a staunch Catholic and the husband of **Mary of Guise**, the daughter of one of France's most powerful families. Protestant influences first surfaced in Scotland in the 1520s through the distribution of books and tracts by Luther, Zwingli, and other early Reformers. James V and the Catholic establishment had no tolerance for Reformist ideas, and in 1525 the Scottish Parliament officially banned all Evangelical literature. These repressive measures certainly limited but did not totally eliminate Protestant influences, and thousands of copies of Tyndale's English translation of the New Testament circulated in Scotland in the late 1520s and '30s.

James V died shortly after a war with England in 1542, and the Scottish throne went to his newborn daughter, **Mary Stuart (Mary, Queen of Scots, 1542-87)**. For the first sixteen years of her life, Mary lived in France. She was devoutly Catholic, resolutely prejudiced against French Protestants (the Huguenots), and totally out of touch with Scottish affairs. In 1558, at the age of 16, she married Francis, the heir to the French throne, who became **King Francis II** (r. 1559-1560) the following year. The marriage was a purely political arrangement intended to strengthen the anti-English alliance between France and Scotland, but Francis died after only a

year. At that point Mary returned home to Scotland to assume the throne, and soon thereafter she married her first cousin, **Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley**.

Protestant Apostles

Patrick Hamilton (1504-28) did not introduce Protestantism in Scotland, but he was the first significant leader among the small cadre of early Scottish Reformers. Hamilton was born into one of the nation's most influential noble families and was related to the king. As a member of the privileged elite, he studied under some of Europe's finest humanist professors in Germany and France, and he graduated from the University of Paris about the time that Luther was launching the Reformation in Germany. Returning home to Scotland, the idealistic Hamilton was bursting with energy and reformist zeal, and while teaching at St. Andrews University he became a convinced Evangelical.

It wasn't long before Hamilton came to the attention of **David Beaton**, the Archbishop of St. Andrews. Although a powerful figure in the Scottish church, Beaton was anything but a spiritual leader. As an intolerant and vindictive papal stooge, he was a typical example of clerical hypocrisy, having fathered at least eight illegitimate children. Intent on pleasing the pope, he zeroed in on the young professor Hamilton whom he suspected of harboring "Lutheran" (i.e., heretical) views.

Feeling the pressure, Hamilton left Scotland and sought sanctuary in Germany for five years, but eventually returned home. In 1528 Archbishop Beaton summoned Hamilton to St. Andrews, ostensibly to debate, but in fact Beaton wanted to kill him before influential friends could intervene on his behalf. The unsuspecting Hamilton arrived, whereupon he was immediately imprisoned, tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. Within twelve hours of his arrival, he was burning at the stake.

Among those influenced by Hamilton was **George Wishart** (1513-46). Like Hamilton, Wishart was born into a prominent noble family, and he received a theological education at Aberdeen University. Holding Reformist views,

he spent most of his adult years on the Continent before returning to the British Isles in 1542 to teach at Cambridge. In 1544 he returned home to Scotland to preach the Reformation gospel.

Like his predecessor Hamilton, Wishart was a man of courage who preached his convictions despite ominous danger. Traveling from town to town, he was protected by a group of armed supporters, including young **John Knox**. By all accounts Wishart was a dynamic evangelist with a pastor's heart who on several occasions ministered to those who were sick and dying of the plague. Like the Continental Reformers, he preached a mainstream Evangelical message that emphasized the core tenets of the Reformation:

- The Bible, not popes and church councils, is the source of Christian authority;
- Salvation comes through personal faith in Jesus Christ, not a sacramental system;
- All true Christians are priests, not just an exclusive elite ordained by the Church; and
- The Roman Catholic mass is a form of idolatry.

Wishart also condemned practices such as clerical celibacy, compulsory confession, the worship of saints, and superstitions such as holy water and exorcism. As a result, like Hamilton, his career as a reformer was regrettably short-lived. In 1546, at the instigation of Cardinal Beaton, Wishart was arrested, thrown into the dungeon at St. Andrews, convicted of heresy, and burned at the stake.

As is often the case, the persecution of Hamilton and Wishart ultimately backfired. Far from extinguishing the Reformation flame in Scotland, Wishart's martyrdom added more fuel to it. As Harry Emerson Fosdick once put it, "The fire that burned Wishart... lit a blaze in John Knox which, in the end, destroyed the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland."

A footnote: Two months after Wishart's execution, a group of Scottish nobles killed Beaton in the his castle in St. Andrews. Reportedly, when Beaton saw the assassins approaching with drawn swords, he declared imperiously, "I am a priest. Ye will *not* slay me!" – to which one of them replied, "The blood of Wishart cries a vengeance upon thee, and we from God are set to avenge it." After stabbing the cardinal to death, they hung his carcass from a castle window.

John Knox (1515-72)

John Knox, a protégé of Wishart and John Calvin, eventually emerged as the primary catalyst and the coalescing force in the Scottish Reformation. Educated at St. Andrews University, Knox was ordained a bishop in the Catholic Church in 1536. A few years later, in 1544, he converted to the Evangelical faith under the influence of Wishart. In fact, Knox actually began his career as a Reformer as one of Wishart's body guards, standing by his mentor's side with a large "two-handed sword" as Wishart preached the Protestant message. According to Knox, the night before Wishart was arrested, he had a premonition that the end was near, whereupon he dismissed Knox and urged him to leave with the words, "One is sufficient for one sacrifice."

In the wake of Wishart's execution, Knox became embroiled in Scottish politics. Following the assassination of Cardinal Beaton, he joined the rebels who seized the fortified castle at St. Andrews. However, a few months later St. Andrews was besieged by French Catholic mercenaries, and Knox and his compatriots were forced to surrender and taken captive. Then, for the next year-and-a-half he served as a galley slave aboard French ships, a truly miserable and torturous experience, before finally being released in a prisoner exchange.

Unable to return to Scotland, Knox served as a pastor in England under the supervision of **Archbishop Cranmer** during the reign of **Edward VI** (r. 1547-53). Like his predecessors, Hamilton and Wishart, Knox was a bold prophet who spoke out fearlessly on the issues of the day, and as his reputation grew he became one of Edward VI's court chaplains. At one point he was even offered the position of bishop of Rochester but turned it down because he considered the Anglican Church to be too Catholic in its doctrines and liturgy.

When **Mary Tudor** assumed the throne in 1553, Knox saw the handwriting on the wall and joined several hundred other "**Marion exiles**" who fled to the Continent. "Bloody Mary" was a militant Catholic who burned Protestant "heretics" by the score, and the audacious Knox was high on her hit list.

Traveling in Europe, Knox interacted with **Calvin** in Geneva and **Bullinger** in Zurich before settling in Frankfurt for a time. While there, he became embroiled in a heated controversy with a

more moderate faction of English Protestants over liturgical issues, which prompted the city council to expel him. From Frankfurt, he returned to Geneva to pastor an English-speaking church that included many of his fellow expatriots. The church, which was governed by a council of elders according to their understanding of New Testament church polity, provided a model for Knox's evolving views on Presbyterian government. As in other Evangelical churches the sermon rather than the Eucharist was the center point of worship, and it was in this environment that Knox developed his trademark homiletic style. In many respects this was the most pleasant time of his life, and he later referred to Geneva as "the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in earth since the days of the Apostles."

In 1555 Knox returned briefly to Scotland and openly preached the Protestant faith. Nicknamed the "**Great Thunderer**," he stirred up considerable controversy until he was summoned to appear before a Church council on heresy charges. Returning to Geneva, he fulminated against "Bloody Mary" Tudor, the Queen of England, and **Mary of Guise**, who was ruling Scotland as the regent for her young daughter, Mary Stuart. Incensed by the cruel persecution of Reformers at the hands of these female rulers, Knox vented his wrath in a treatise entitled, "**The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regimen of Women**." Referring to women as inherently "frail... feeble and foolish," he argued that female sovereignty violated natural and divine law. According to Knox...

To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation or city is repugnant to nature, insolent toward God, a thing most contrarious to his revealed will and approved ordinance, and finally it is the subversion of good order, or all equity and justice.

As a result, when **Queen Elizabeth** assumed the English throne in 1558, she held a special grudge against Knox. In addition, he was becoming increasingly strident and confrontational regarding public officials, even advocating the overthrow of any monarch who opposed justice and the true (i.e., Reformed) faith. His advocacy of the right of revolution contradicted the submissive doctrine preached by most other Protestant theologians such as Luther and Calvin.

Meanwhile in Scotland, a group of influential Protestant nobles covenanted to disestablish the Catholic Church, and they soon invited the fiery Knox to join them. Returning early in 1559, Knox helped establish the Reformed faith as the official state church in Scotland. Papal authority was dissolved, the mass was abolished, and Reformed theology became the official doctrine of the Scottish church. Knox was also instrumental in formalizing a standardized liturgy for the church. Although it became apparent that Knox and the nobles had different priorities and agendas, they worked out a tenuous alliance. For their part, the nobles primarily wanted to confiscate Catholic wealth for their own benefit, while Knox and his cohorts were driven by theological imperatives. Although he supported the confiscation of Catholic property, he hoped to use the resources to establish a system of universal education and provide relief to the poor.

In the midst of this religious revolution, Scotland was also experiencing political chaos. Mary of Guise died in 1559, and in 1561 the nobles invited **Mary Stuart** to return from France and claim the throne she had inherited from her deceased father, James V. Reigning as **Mary, Queen of Scots**, she was a committed Catholic and totally out of synch with the recent developments in her homeland. Mary understood the realities of her situation well enough to know that she must tolerate Protestantism, but although she succeeded in pacifying most Protestant leaders, the uncompromising Knox was adversarial from the outset. Without restraint, he denounced her extravagant court, her French manners and her Catholic faith, and on several occasions he confronted her personally, challenging her to convert to the Reformed faith.

During one such exchange Mary inquired, "But ye interpret the Scriptures in one manner, and [Catholic scholars] interpret in another. Whom shall I believe, and who shall be judge?"

Knox answered, "Ye shall believe God, who speaketh plainly in His Word.... The Word of God is plain in itself; and if there appear any obscurity in one place, the Holy Spirit, which never contradicts Himself, explains the same more clearly in other places."

Unconvinced, Mary replied, "The Kirk [Church] of Rome is the one I will obey."

Concluding that the queen was indeed hopeless, Knox later accused her of being a rebel against God, a slave of Satan, and a "Jezebel."

Although her relations with Knox and other reformers were stormy, Mary lost her throne a few years later for reasons unrelated to religion or even politics. Essentially, she was done in by scandals in her personal life. In 1565 she married **Henry Stewart, Lord Darnley**, who was closely related to the Tudor royal family. Mary and Darnley were first cousins – both were grandchildren of Margaret Tudor, the daughter of Henry VII of England – but the marriage was a total failure. Only a year after they wed, Darnley conspired to murder Mary’s Italian secretary, whom he suspected of having an affair with the queen. Along with a group of trusted nobles, Darnley murdered the man in front of the pregnant Mary. Then, less than a year later, Darnley’s house blew up, and he was found dead in the garden, apparently strangled to death. Mary lost no time in marrying her lover, **James Hepburn, the Earl of Bothwell**, whom many considered the prime suspect in Darnley’s murder. A coalition of irate nobles formed against her, and Mary was deposed in favor of her one-year-old son, **James VI**.

Mary fought to regain her throne, but after a brief and unsuccessful civil war she sought sanctuary in England under her younger cousin, Elizabeth. While in exile, she was tried in *absentia* for conspiracy in the murder of her late husband, and Knox was among those calling for her return and execution. Eventually, after 18 years under virtual house arrest in England, she was executed when implicated in a plot to overthrow Queen Elizabeth and seize the English throne.

Knox continued to be a major force in Scottish religious life until his death in 1572. To the end, he considered himself to be a Protestant prophet who simply spoke the unvarnished truth. He contended that although he was unsparing in his condemnation of sin, he never hated the sinner: “God knows that my mind was always free from hatred to the persons of those against whom I denounced the heavy judgments of God.” Many revere Knox as a great and courageous hero of the Reformed faith, while others regard him as insufferably dogmatic, self-righteous, and a man who justified violence.

The Triumph of Scottish Presbyterianism

In the generation after Knox, **Andrew Melville** (1545-1622) emerged as the intellectual leader among Scottish Protestants. A gifted student who studied at the University of St.

Andrews and the University of Paris, Melville left Paris after 3 years due to tensions between Catholics and Protestants and relocated in Geneva, where he continued to study under Calvin’s successor, **Theodore Beza**.

In 1574 it was safe for Melville to return home to Scotland, and almost immediately he was appointed Principal of the University of Glasgow. Then in 1582, as Moderator of the Church of Scotland’s General Assembly, he worked to ratify the **Second Book of Discipline**, which advocated a **presbyterian** form of church government.

In essence, Presbyterianism is a representative and federal form of government much like the secular model later adopted for the United States of America. As a representative model of church government, in contrast to the more authoritarian episcopal system, presbyterianism replaced a clerical hierarchy with an egalitarian clergy in which all ministers were equal. The presbyterian system also eliminated the whole hierarchical structure of bishops and archbishops which traditionally had been primarily political appointments. Individual churches were governed by elders chosen by the congregation, and were linked together by a regional governing body, or **presbytery**. In turn, regional presbyteries elected representatives to a national synod that set policies for the church in general.

All along the way Melville and his associates met stiff opposition from **King James VI**, who opposed presbyterianism for two reasons: First, it neutralized most of his power and authority over the church by eliminating the episcopal hierarchy; and secondly, it tended to build a wall between church and state which further eroded the king’s influence in the church.

For over twenty years Melville courageously fought for the independence of the Scottish church, and in the process he clashed numerous times with James VI. On one occasion he bluntly informed the king that he was but “God’s silly vassal” and warned him to butt-out of church affairs:

There are two kings and two kingdoms in Scotland: there is King James, the head of the commonwealth; and there is Christ Jesus, the king of the Church, whose subject James VI is, and of whose kingdom he is not a king, not a lord, not a head, but [merely] a member.

In 1603 James VI assumed the English throne as **James I** (r. 1603-25), and disputes over presbyterianism and episcopalianism continued

throughout his reign. In both England and Scotland, Presbyterianism continued to be a divisive issue in the first half of the 1600s, and it was a contributing factor to the English Civil War. By the mid-17th century, however, it was firmly established in Scotland and enjoyed the widespread support of the majority of the Scottish people. For the next 250 years Presbyterianism would be a defining feature of Scottish culture in much the same way that Anglicanism was in England.

The English Reformation, Phase II: The Turbulent 17th Century

James I (r. 1603-25)

As mentioned in Part 1, **Queen Elizabeth** (r. 1558-1603) died without an heir, at which point Parliament offered the crown to James VI of Scotland. The son of the deposed **Mary, Queen of Scots**, James was a distant cousin of Elizabeth and the first in a line of four Stuart monarchs who ruled for most of the 17th century.

Reigning as King James I of England (r. 1603-25), he was a **royal absolutist** at heart whose most cherished principle was the transparently self-serving concept of the “**divine right of kings**.” Raised in a luxurious royal bubble, James was as imperious as he was unprincipled and corrupt. His philosophy of political science can be summarized in his declaration that kings should rule as “**little Gods on Earth**” – or as he proclaimed on one occasion, “**The king comes from God, and law comes from the king.**” Generally-speaking, his was not a placid reign as he constantly sparred with Parliament over taxes, the national budget, foreign policy, and religious issues. In his mind Parliament was an unwelcome and unnecessary obstruction in the path of his pretensions, and he resented having to share power with inferior lords and, even worse, uncouth commoners.

James had been raised among Scottish Presbyterians, but he was no devotee of Calvin and Knox. In reality, he was a very worldly man who took religion casually. Nonetheless, when he first ascended to the English throne Puritans had held out hope that he would be more sympathetic to their cause than his predecessor, Elizabeth. Therefore, at the outset influential Puritans presented him with the **Millenary Petition** calling for substantive reforms in the Church of England. Among other things the petition, which had been signed by a thousand Puritan clergymen, objected to clerical dress, urged strict enforcement of Sabbatical laws, and instructed ministers to preach primarily from the Bible.

James received the petition and agreed to call an ecclesiastical conference to meet at Hampton Court in 1604, but there was little doubt that his sympathies lay with the Anglican establishment. Presiding over the proceedings, he agreed to some minor reforms but rejected most of the Puritan agenda. However, in one significant concession,

he commissioned a committee of scholars to produce an official translation of the Bible for all Anglican churches. As one might suspect, his motives were not altogether spiritual. In fact, it was primarily a tactical and political move on his part as he hoped to counter the influence of Calvin’s popular **Geneva Bible** which promoted a strict Reformed theology and was highly regarded by Puritans reformers.

Seven years later the **Authorized (King James) Version** of the Bible was published in 1611. A bonafide literary masterpiece, it remained the standard English translation for most Protestants for 350 years, well into the 1970s.

In other respects, despite generally cordial relations with Puritan leaders early in his reign, James steadfastly supported the conservative Anglican establishment, and he appointed mostly non-Puritans to prestigious positions. Similar to his mother’s prejudice against Presbyterians, he tended to dislike Puritans personally and regarded them as too dogmatic, too rigid and too sanctimonious. He was also aware, of course, that Puritans opposed royal absolutism and the king’s luxurious lifestyle. Even worse, many Puritans seriously doubted that the king was even a true Christian. In addition, their preference for congregationalism undermined his view that the king had a divine right to control the churches through a formal hierarchy.

Over the years James developed a genuine loathing for Puritans, but he never managed to totally subjugate them due to the fact that there were tens of thousands of them, many of whom were socially and politically prominent. Other nonconformist groups, however, were more vulnerable to harassment and persecution, including a small group of radical Christians who were known as **Separatists**. Unlike the Puritans who endeavored to work within the Church of England to reform (or “purify”) it, Separatists believed that the Anglican Church, like the Roman Catholic Church, was irredeemably heretical and corrupt. Therefore, they believed that true Christians who were devoted to New Testament principles should separate from this worldly institution and form independent congregations of their own. In contrast to the

Puritans, Separatists were not numerous (there were probably no more than a few thousand in all of England at the time), they were not socially or politically prominent, and therefore they were at the mercy of governmental and Anglican officials who were often merciless.

In 1607 about 200 of these Separatists, led by their pastor **John Robinson** and elder **William Brewster**, left England and lived in exile as “pilgrims” in Holland. Twelve years later, concerned that their children were being corrupted by permissive Dutch culture and apprehensive following a peace treaty between Holland and Spain that threatened their religious freedom, the Separatists returned to England. But with few prospects for a peaceful and quiet life in their homeland and desperate to practice their faith unmolested, a small party of Separatists set out for America in the fall of 1620 and founded **Plymouth Colony** just north of Cape Code.

Charles I (r. 1625-49)

When King James I died in 1625, he was succeeded by his son, Charles I. Like his father, Charles I was a royal absolutist and a staunch believer in the “divine right of kings.” If anything, he was even more imperious, tactless and vulgar than his father, and under his regime relations between the monarchy and Parliament – and the English public in general – grew increasingly strained.

Charles I was a virtual Catholic who was married to a French Catholic princess, Henrietta-Marie de Bourbon. Although he found it difficult to tolerate the Anglican Church, he was openly contemptuous of Puritans. Therefore, he appointed mostly “high church” Anglicans to leadership positions in the church, including the sycophantic **William Laud** as **Archbishop of Canterbury**. Typically, high church Anglicans shared similar sensibilities with Catholics. They tended to emphasize the aesthetic aspects of Anglican worship, including the traditional pomp and ceremony and rituals, and they held a more sacramentarian view of baptism and communion. Like Catholics, they emphasized the Eucharist and formal liturgical prayers in public worship and de-emphasized preaching. They also advocated strict adherence to the **Book of Common Prayer**. As a result, Calvinistic Puritans often complained that many high church Anglican clerics were Arminian heretics.

Charles I infuriated Puritans by promoting

Sunday recreations such as archery, dancing, and maypoles, all of which Puritans found objectionable. As tensions and conflicts between the two parties grew more intense, the king began criticizing and harassing the Puritans to the fullest extent of his power. Church authorities fined Puritans for failing to attend Anglican church services, and in 1637 Archbishop Laud arrested three Puritans – John Bastwick, Henry Burton and William Prynne – and ordered their ears cut off for writing pamphlets critical of his reforms. Laud, of course, had the full support of King Charles, who had vowed, “I will make them conform themselves, or else I will harrie them out of the land, or do worse.”

As a result of Charles I and Laud’s policies, tens of thousands of Puritans left England in the 1630s and ‘40s and emigrated to America. Since most of them were solid, sober and industrious middle-class citizens, the Puritan exodus was more than just a religious drain. In fact, England lost many of its best people.

The English Civil War (1642-51)

Under Charles I, tensions between the monarchy and Parliament continued to degenerate. Notoriously hot-tempered, the king dismissed Parliament on several occasions, and for eleven years (1629-40) he ruled entirely without Parliament. When insurrections broke out in Scotland and Ireland and Parliament refused to authorize him to use the army to quell the revolts, Charles recruited a private army of mercenaries. Then in 1642 the king made the fateful mistake of attempting to arrest five Members of Parliament for treason, which prompted the House of Commons to raise an army in its own defense. When Charles fled to Oxford and called upon his loyal subjects to defend him, it sparked one of the longest and bloodiest wars in English history.

The English Civil War was primarily a contest between competing political ideologies: **royal absolutism versus constitutional government**. It was also, in a sense, a class war as it pitted the traditional aristocracy and their rural supporters against the more progressive rural gentry and urban burgesses. But as the last of Europe’s so-called “religious wars,” there was also a strong religious component to this conflict as the two sides were divided along denominational lines. Many of the king’s supporters were establishment Anglicans and

Catholics, while the Parliamentarian forces were largely Puritans, Presbyterians, and evangelical “Independent” Protestants. Even before the war began, Parliament had ordered the arrest of the tyrannical Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud. Imprisoned in the Tower of London, he was convicted of treason and beheaded in January 1645.

The English Civil War was a convoluted conflict that went through several phases involving shifting alliances. In the first phase of the war the king’s supporters, generically called “Royalists” or “Cavaliers,” fought “Roundheads” – so called because they shaved their hair to distinguish themselves from the long-haired, “worldly” Cavaliers. While the king drew support primarily from the ranks of the elite aristocracy and his supporters in the countryside, Parliament’s forces included many in the bourgeois gentry and burges classes along with those who believed in constitutional government in general. Early in the war the Roundhead coalition was comprised not only of Puritans and other religious dissenters but Scottish Presbyterian “Covenanters” who enthusiastically joined the effort to oust King Charles I.

As discussed in Part 1, the English Civil War produced one military genius, **Oliver Cromwell** (1599-1658), who along with his **New Model Army** of Protestant crusaders crushed the king’s forces. Cromwell’s troops were well-armed and well-disciplined, and they fought tenaciously in what they considered to be a righteous cause. Accompanied by a fife and drum corps, they marched into battle singing hymns as they encountered, and repeatedly defeated, a more experienced army led by professional officers. With each battlefield victory Cromwell became more convinced that he was God’s instrument to bring about a new social, political and religious order in England.

Following the king’s surrender in 1646, religious factionalism destroyed the unity in the Parliamentarian ranks. As Presbyterians gained control of Parliament they promptly moved to pass legislation that discriminated not only against Catholics and Anglicans but also Independents and other religious minorities. The result was a second brief civil war in which an odd alliance of Presbyterians, Royalists, Scots, and Welsh united against Cromwell’s Independents. Once again, Cromwell’s forces prevailed, and in December 1648 Parliament was

purged of its Presbyterian members. This left only a minority of MPs in office, the so-called “**Rump Parliament.**”

Charles I was captured in 1646 and put on trial for treason in 1648. A High Court of Justice found him guilty and sentenced him to death as a “tyrant, traitor, murderer and public enemy.” Cromwell, who considered regicide to be a grave matter, hesitated to sign the execution order, but he finally relented on the basis that the king had been a traitor and “a man of blood” whose death was “a cruel necessity.” Then, in a strange turn of events in the aftermath of the king’s execution, public opinion turned against the Cromwell and the Puritans. Overlooking how corrupt, devious and oppressive Charles I had been, many Englishmen began to blame Cromwell and his allies for most of the killing and devastation brought on by the war. Even some Puritans, such as the influential cleric, **Richard Baxter**, regarded the execution of the king as a grievous mistake.

Meanwhile in Ireland, militant nationalists used the chaos of the Civil War to foment another rebellion of their own. Early in the Civil War they had allied with King Charles I and the Royalists in return for certain concessions, and in 1641 Irish Catholics had slaughtered an estimated 40-50,000 English Protestants in Ulster in northern Ireland. For several years their independence movement seemed to succeed until Cromwell landed with a large invasion force in August of 1649 and began a systematic campaign to crush the rebellion. It was a bloody and brutal campaign as Cromwell’s troops were bent on revenge for the slaughter of the Ulster Protestants eight year earlier.

Following a prolonged siege of Drogheda, Cromwell ordered the execution of all the survivors who were capable of bearing arms. Charging that the Irish resistors were “barbarous wretches,” Cromwell justified their execution as “a righteous judgment of God” that would “prevent the effusion of blood for the future.” Nearly 3,500 people were killed, including 2,700 captured soldiers, 700 civilians, and a few Catholic priests whom Cromwell claimed were bearing arms. Later, hundreds more Irish resistors were massacred at Wexford.

Cromwell’s subjugation of the Irish rebellion resulted in some of the bloodiest massacres in the whole turbulent history of Anglo-Irish relations. For Cromwell’s English Protestants, Irish Catholic lives counted for little, and over a four-

year span hundreds of thousands of Irish died as a result of the insurrection, starvation and disease. Furthermore, when the war finally subsided Parliament confiscated much of the Catholic-owned land in northern Ireland and distributed it among Cromwell's soldiers and other Protestant English immigrants. Even to this day the Irish regard Oliver Cromwell as one of the great villains in history.

As Cromwell's forces were suppressing the Irish Rebellion, a similar insurrection broke out in Scotland. Presbyterian "Covenanters" had opposed the execution of Charles I for fear that Parliament would rescind Scottish independence and try to absorb the country into a new English Commonwealth. So in a bizarre turn of events, Scottish authorities offered the crown of Scotland to **Prince Charles**, the oldest son of Charles I who was in exile in France. Prince Charles landed in Scotland in June 1650 and took command of a combined force of Covenanters and Royalists, but within a month Cromwell arrived from Ireland, besieged Edinburgh, and pacified much of southern Scotland by the end of the year. However, it took more than another year before Parliamentary forces under **General George Monck** finally quelled the revolt.

The Westminster Assembly

In 1643, a year after the Civil War began, Parliament called for an ecclesiastical assembly to formulate a standard creed and polity for the English and Scottish churches. The Church of Scotland had recently eliminated **episcopalianism** in favor of **presbyterianism**, and many English Protestants were of a similar persuasion. The assembly included 121 of England's most influential ministers, twenty MP's from the House of Commons and ten members of the House of Lords.

Dominated by presbyterian Puritans, the assembly convened periodically for more than two years before finally issuing its summary statement, the **Westminster Confession of Faith** (1646). The document was a masterful systematization of the foundational tenets of traditional Calvinism, and included the distinctive tenets of Reformed theology including:

- The divine inspiration of the Bible;
- Divine sovereignty and human free will;
- Justification by grace through faith alone;
- The doctrine of double-predestination;

- A declaration that the Pope is the Antichrist;
- The assertion that the Roman Catholic mass is a form of idolatry; and
- Prohibitions on Christians marrying non-Christians.

In addition, the Westminster Assembly also drafted supplemental statements including a **Larger Catechism**, a **Shorter Catechism**, a **Directory of Worship**, and a **Form of Government** based on a presbyterian polity.

The Westminster clerics intended that the Confession would serve as the creedal standard for an English Presbyterian state church that would replace the Church of England. However, Cromwell was committed to religious freedom, so Presbyterianism was never established as the official state church of England. In Scotland, the Confession did become the "subordinate standard" of doctrine in the presbyterian state Church of Scotland.

[Note: In America, following the War of Independence, a revised Westminster Confession in 1789 promoted the principle of separatism (or "separation of church and state") and eliminated the reference to the pope as the Antichrist. This revised Confession served as foundational document for American Presbyterianism until 1903, when the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PCUSA) revised the Westminster Confession to soften the Church's stance on traditional Calvinistic theology. The conservative Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), which was founded in 1973, still holds to the original 1789 American version of the Westminster Confession.]

The Interregnum (1649-60)

From 1649-60 the Commonwealth of England passed from one experimental government to another. Throughout the period Cromwell governed as "**Lord Protector**" – in effect a virtual dictator. Although a believer in Parliamentary government, he became convinced that only a military dictatorship could save England from civil strife and transform the nation into a holy commonwealth. After several unsuccessful attempts to govern with Parliament, he suspended the legislature and put the nation under martial law.

Most historians regard Cromwell as a gifted military commander but an intolerant, self-righteous and deluded religious fanatic who

attempted to impose a Puritan dictatorship on England. Undoubtedly, there is some truth in this assessment, but it is also important to note that few leaders in world history have exercised as much power and abused it less than Cromwell. A genuinely sincere and devout Christian, he used his authority to promote social justice, religious tolerance, and moral reforms. Early on, when Parliament offered him the crown, he refused to accept it. In stark contrast to virtually all the great monarchs and dictators in world history (and not a few American presidents), he resisted the temptation to use his position to enrich himself and his family.

Surprisingly, Cromwell also sought to expand the parameters of religious tolerance as much as possible. He prohibited the persecution of Quakers and other nonconformist religious groups, and he offered sanctuary to European Jews seeking religious liberty. According to the Puritan minister Richard Baxter, there was never a time when the word of God brought so many people to faith as during the Cromwellian era, and in fact he was magnanimous in his treatment of all sects other than his most ardent opponents, the Catholics and High-Church Anglicans who, in his mind, resolutely refused to accept the truth.

Throughout these turbulent years Cromwell continued to believe that God had chosen him to be an instrument of righteousness for the salvation of England. But although his Protectorate accomplished much and he ruled with relative effectiveness, his popularity suffered the longer he held power. As a strict and no-nonsense Puritan, Cromwell was, like most Christians until modern times, a sacralist. His ideal society was one in which church and state cooperated to co-ruled society. As a result, he promoted laws forbidding public vices such as profanity, drinking, dancing, theater-going and card-playing. He even banned the traditional Catholic Holy Day of Christmas. In the minds of many of his countrymen, “Merry Ol’ England” had become overly serious, sober, sanctimonious and stultifying under Puritan rule.

When Cromwell died his son, **Richard Cromwell** (1626-1712), succeeded him as Lord Protector. Lacking both his father’s military credentials and political skills, he ruled for less than a year before losing the support of the army and key politicians. Almost unimaginably, public opinion actually favored restoring the Stuart monarchy.

The Restoration (1660-85)

Following the forced resignation of Richard Cromwell, the new Parliament invited **Prince Charles**, the eldest son of Charles I, to return from France and reclaim the throne. Although a believer in the “divine right of kings,” **Charles II** (r. 1660-85) was a realist. Reportedly, upon accepting the terms of the Restoration, Charles remarked dryly that he had no desire “to go on my travels again.”

Personality-wise, Charles II was witty, worldly and charismatic. He was also a natural-born hedonist and a man who enjoyed the good life, which many Englishmen apparently found appealing after nearly twenty years of civil war and strict Puritan rule. As a condition of his return, Parliament granted the king a fixed income from customs and excise taxes, and he agreed to live within these limits. However, Charles found this arrangement to be a bit too austere and confining. As a result, he had a hard time making ends meet, as did his queen and many mistresses who were accustomed to living in grand luxury.

Charles had shrewd political instincts, and he paid lip service to limiting his royal powers, summoning Parliament regularly, and ruling as a proper constitutional monarch. He also agreed to levy no new taxes nor interfere in religion without Parliament’s consent. Nonetheless, he skillfully plotted and schemed for twenty years to gradually accrue more power. Like his father and grandfather, he was highly skilled in the art of bribery and manipulation. He was also a master of “divide-and-conquer” politics in which he played-off one political faction against another, incrementally expanding the power of the monarchy.

Although he played the role of a Protestant monarch, Charles was in fact sympathetic to Catholicism. His model as a ruler was **Louis XIV**, the flamboyant “Sun King” of France whom he greatly admired. In private he longed to restore Catholicism in England and rule as an absolute monarch, but he was too much of a realist to openly attempt such a futile policy. As a closet Catholic, Charles supported the ideal of universal religious tolerance, but the new Parliament was determined to reestablish moderate Anglicanism as the official state church.

In the first several years of the Restoration Parliament passed a series of measures, collectively known as the **Clarendon Code**, specifically intended to marginalize not only Catholics but all dissenters. Targeting particularly the Puritans, Parliament nullified the 1648 statute that had ratified the Westminster Confession, then proceeded to systematically exclude Puritans from positions of power and influence both in the Church and government. No longer a privileged and protected minority, they were subjected to harassment, ostracism, discrimination and outright persecution. As a result of this “Great Ejection,” some 2,000 Puritan ministers (about 20% of the total number of Anglican clerics) were removed from their parishes, including nearly 700 who were expelled in 1660 alone.

The first Clarendon Code, the **Corporation Act** of 1661, required all public officials to take Anglican communion, and thereby barred all non-Anglicans from government service. The second statute, the **Act of Uniformity** (1662), made the Book of Common Prayer compulsory in all religious services and required all clergy to be ordained by authorized Anglican bishops. As a result, all Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Baptists would henceforth be known as “**Nonconformists**.” The **Conventical Act** of 1664 prohibited conventicles (unauthorized religious meetings of five people or more) and authorized the government to imprison or deport any dissenters who persisted in attending Nonconformist churches. Lastly, the **Five Mile Act** of 1665 prohibited Nonconformist ministers from coming within five miles of incorporated towns and banned them from teaching in schools. The cumulative affect, as historian John Coffey as noted, was that...

England now witnessed a persecution of Protestants by other Protestants without parallel in 17th century Europe. Thousands of Puritans were arrested, prosecuted, and imprisoned. Hundreds of meetings were violently broken up, and nonconformists were even attacked by organized gangs and angry mobs. The statistics for Quakers alone are startling: Around 15,000 suffered imprisonment or fines, 200 were banished, and 450 died in jail. [“The Cost of Pilgrimage.” *Christian History & Biography*, Vol. 89 (Winter 2006), p. 39.]

The purge of the Puritans included many of the Church’s most gifted ministers and left the Church of England spiritually impoverished and impotent. Among the many victims of the Great Ejection was **Richard Baxter**, one of the nation’s most respected pastors and scholars and a moderate Puritan who had opposed the execution of Charles I. **John Milton**, the renowned author of *Paradise Lost*, was arrested but spared imprisonment due to the intervention of influential friends. (Not long afterward, following the death of his wife, Milton was inspired to write *Paradise Regained*.) Thousands of others such as **John Bunyan** were not so fortunate. He was clapped in prison for twelve years, from 1660-72, before finally being released. A few years later Bunyan published his masterpiece, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678), which went on to become the second-biggest selling book in history behind the Bible.

Many interpreted the calamities that befell England in the mid-1660s as signs of God’s wrath being poured out upon such a dissolute nation. In 1665-66 a **Great (Bubonic) Plague** and a **Great Fire** ravaged London, killing thousands. Christians throughout England attributed these misfortunes to divine punishment for the sins of restoring the Stuart monarchy and persecuting the Puritans and other Nonconformists.

In 1670 Charles II stirred up another round of opposition when he attempted to negotiate a secret treaty with France. In the **Treaty of Dover**, Louis XIV agreed to pay Charles II £200,000 annually in return for England’s support of France in its war with Holland. In addition, Charles agreed to promote policies that restored social and economic privileges to Roman Catholics. But unfortunately for Charles, details of the treaty leaked out and a wave of anti-Catholic hysteria swept through the country. Undeterred, Charles moved to relegitimize Catholicism in 1672 by issuing a **Declaration of Indulgence for Dissenters and Catholics**. Of course the king was no friend to dissenters, and his intention was rather obvious: to grant tolerance to the Catholic Church as a first step toward eventually reestablishing it as England’s official state Church. But public reaction was vociferous, and fear spread of a sinister “popish plot.” In reaction, Parliament forced the king to withdraw the Declaration in 1673 and passed the **Test Act**, excluding all but Anglicans from civil and military office.

Fearing royal tyranny, the **Whig** faction in Parliament passed the **Habeas Corpus Act** in 1679, guaranteeing English citizens protection against arbitrary arrest and imprisonment without due process of law. Charles, weary of constant conflict with the Whig “loyal opposition,” dissolved Parliament in 1681, and along with his political cronies and supporters, the **Tories**, he sought to stifle free political speech. So when he finally died in 1685, Charles II had become as dominant as his predecessors had been.

In one last parting insult, Charles II proclaimed on his deathbed that in fact he had been a life-long Catholic.

James II (r.1685-88)

Although he had fathered several bastard children, Charles II died without a legitimate heir, so succession passed on to his younger brother James, the **Duke of York**.

Unlike his wily brother, James was an unabashed Catholic who had publicly converted in 1670. Nonetheless – and in direct violation of the Clarendon Code, the Test Act, and other recent legislation – Charles had flagrantly flaunted the law and involved him in the affairs of state. Therefore, many Whigs opposed his succession to the throne, as did the Puritans and various other Protestants.

James possessed many of the same character traits as his Stuart predecessors. He was spoiled, arrogant, temperamental, devious, dishonest and stubborn – and of course corrupt. Even worse, he lacked the superficial charm of his brother and his political savvy. It was obvious from the outset that his would be a contentious reign.

Unlike his brother, James had no intention of playing the Anglican monarch, nor did he attempt to conceal his Catholic sympathies. In direct violation of the Test Act he brought Catholics into government as top advisors and administrators, and granted them commissions in the army and navy. In this respect his timing was particularly poor. In France, **Louis XIV** had recently revoked the Edict of Nantes that had granted religious tolerance to the nation’s Huguenots for nearly a century, and French officials were harassing and persecuting Protestants so severely that tens of thousands were fleeing France every month. (Within a couple of years as many as 400,000 Huguenots escaped to other countries. Most sought sanctuary in Brandenburg-Prussia, but some emigrated to

England and several thousand eventually found their way to the Thirteen Colonies in North America.) After a slight relaxation of religious tensions following the last of the so-called “religious wars” – the Thirty Years’ War in Europe (1618-48) and the English Civil War (1642-52), Louis’ persecution of the Huguenots once again rekindled old animosities that had simmered for nearly forty years. So it was a particularly bad time for an insensitive clod like James II to brazenly defy English law and tradition by openly promoting Catholicism.

In an unprecedented display of hubris, James informed Parliament that he had the authority to veto its laws. Furthermore, he let it be known that he intended to repeal the Test Act and the Habeas Corpus Act, and in 1687 he unilaterally issued a **Declaration of Indulgence** that granted all of his subjects freedom of religion. Since the measure was obviously intended to favor Roman Catholics it failed to garner the support of either mainstream Anglicans or dissenters such as the Puritans – perhaps the first time in decades that those two groups had been in agreement on anything. But England’s constitutional crisis reached the boiling point when the king, once again defying law and tradition, ordered a standing army to camp a few miles outside London in an obvious attempt to intimidate his opponents in Parliament. But instead of forcing the Whigs to submit, the action merely galvanized their opposition and strengthened their resolve.

The Glorious Revolution (1688)

Ironically, given all his dastardly deeds, it was the birth of a son that ignited the revolution that deposed King James II. Apparently, many Englishmen were willing to endure James’ rule because he was already in his fifties and, it was assumed, he would be succeeded by his Protestant daughter **Mary**, the Queen of Holland and wife of **William of Orange**. The birth of his son in June of 1688, however, meant that England would probably be ruled by a Catholic monarch for at least another generation.

In reaction, political leaders from both the Whig and the Tory factions initiated secret negotiations with William and Mary, beseeching their help in deposing James. As part of the arrangement, Parliament offered to install Mary as the heir to the throne, but she insisted that her husband co-rule with her. For his part, William

was also adamant that he be accorded the full honors of kingship. The deal was struck, and in November 1688 William and Mary landed in England with a Dutch army of 20,000 troops. James II had twice as many men under arms, but when he tried to rally his forces and the English people, key officers deserted and he was left with only tepid support. Following a preliminary skirmish between the two sides James developed a nosebleed, which he interpreted as a bad omen, whereupon he ordered a tactical retreat. Evidently, no one was particularly enthused about fighting for the king anyway, and his army offered only token resistance before mostly melting away. James had no recourse but to capitulate, and William, who had no desire to imprison his father-in-law, allowed him to slip away to France.

A New Era

In the 85 years between James I and the Glorious Revolution, Parliament had struggled with each succeeding monarch for political supremacy. In 1688 Parliament finally delivered the *coup d' grace* to royal absolutism, and the following year it passed a far-reaching **Bill of Rights** guaranteeing the authority of Parliament and the basic civil liberties of English citizens. The following year an **Act of Toleration** (1689) allowed all religious groups except Roman Catholics and Unitarians to meet openly and freely, and in 1701 the **Act of Settlement** mandated that the sovereign must always be a communicant in the Church of England.

For the most part the Act of Toleration essentially ended the harassment and persecution of religious Nonconformists, although for more than another century non-Anglicans were disenfranchised and subjected to second-class citizenship. It wasn't until 1828 that the **Test and Corporations Act** was passed that rescinded the old Corporation Act of 1661 prohibiting non-Anglicans from holding hold public office, and the following year the **Catholic Emancipation Bill** (1829) finally permitted Roman Catholics to vote and sit in Parliament. But at least the official harassment and persecution of dissidents ended in 1689, which was a significant step in the long and winding road to full religious liberty for all English citizens.

The English Reformation: An Assessment

Long before and long after Henry VIII disestablished the Catholic Church and instituted the Anglican Church, English Christianity was thoroughly enmeshed in scandals, corruption, Machiavellian power politics, court intrigues, religious coercion, and the sadistic persecution of dissenters. To say the least, the Church often operated more in the spirit of the Antichrist than as a functional representation of the true Body of Christ on earth.

The climax of generations of religious bigotry and conflict was the English Civil War, one of the bloodiest and most destructive wars in all of English history. In the aftermath, Cromwell's authoritarian efforts to create a sacralistic Puritan commonwealth resulted in even more turmoil and division. Although a generally honorable man who valued religious tolerance and constitutional government, his efforts to impose Puritan Christianity on an entire nation only exacerbated bitter religious rivalries.

Generations of religious bigotry and bloodshed undermined the legitimacy of Christianity in England just as it did in Europe. As a result, throughout the 18th century there would be a gradual turning away from orthodox Christianity in conjunction with the emergence of Enlightenment rationalism and deism, a new worldview orientation that eventually engulfed England and the Continent in a tide of secularism unprecedented in world history. The sober truth is that England (and Europe in general) eventually adopted religious liberty not so much because of a new understanding of Christian social ethics as for two practical reasons: First, no single Christian faction could decisively eliminate its rivals; and second, secularism moderated religious beliefs and passions to the point that most people no longer *cared* about doctrinal and denominational issues as they had in the past.

This was the religious legacy that Christians in America inherited, and it accounts for much of the principled and resolute anti-sacralism of the Founding Fathers and their commitment to religious liberty. As **James Madison**, **Alexander Hamilton** and **John Jay** noted in *The Federalist Papers*, religion had often been a divisive and disruptive force in society, and Christian sacralism had left a long and bloody trail of bigotry, repression and violence.



