Part I
Historical and Cultural Contexts

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The Reformation, Lollardy, and Catholicism

Peter Marshall

English society underwent several transformations over the course of the Tudor century, but none of these was as profound and far-reaching as that of its religious culture. In 1485, English people were Catholic Christians, linked by a set of institutional and hierarchical structures to the pope in Rome, as well as by common customs and a common devotional mindset to fellow Catholics across western and central Europe. In 1603, a small minority continued to revere the pope, but many others now considered him their enemy, and, quite literally, the Antichrist. A few looked back to the late fifteenth century with nostalgia, but others shuddered at a vision of superstition and idolatry, and gave thanks for more enlightened times. In the space of barely three generations, a revolution in religious values had been instigated and completed – almost. For many were convinced there was work still to be done. Some of those born in the year that Henry VII, with papal approbation, seized the English crown from Richard III would live to see a pope denounce Henry's granddaughter as a heretic, and order her deposed from her throne. For many, these were bewildering times. But for others, new crystalline certainties emerged from the years of confusion, and made a permanent mark on the literature and culture of the nation.

Late Medieval Religion

There is a tendency to think of "pre-Reformation religion" as a fixed constant, the point of departure for historical change. Of course, it was not so – late medieval religious culture has its own history, and was in a continuous state of development. Economic change, after the demographic disasters and stagnation of the fourteenth century, meant more wealth could be invested in the fabric of churches and the elaboration of rituals. In the political sphere, Yorkist (Edward IV and Richard III) as well as early Tudor monarchs sought ways of exercising greater practical control over the Church in their territories. Technological change, in the form of the printing press,

brought new possibilities for the circulation, and personal internalization, of religious knowledge. Nonetheless, at the start of the sixteenth century there was little perception among contemporaries that their world was changing, nor expectation that it should. In religion, as in other walks of life, custom and tradition were the watchwords, and novelty was viewed with a suspicious eye. When advocates of Luther's ideas began to appear in England in the 1520s, their opponents disparaged their teaching by calling it "the new learning."

This is not to say that everyone was content with the status quo. Before anyone in England had heard of Martin Luther, there were regular demands for *reformatio*, in the sense of returning institutions and practices to an imagined pristine state. Humanist clergymen like John Colet castigated priests for their ignorance, and for their greed in collecting tithes and plural fee-paying offices. In the imagined *Utopia* of Colet's friend Thomas More, the priests were very holy, and therefore very few, a wry commentary on the English Church of his day. At the apex of that Church stood the bishops, a body of men nominally chosen by the pope, but in fact selected by the king. Like their predecessors, the first Tudor monarchs employed bishops as councillors and administrators (or rather, they rewarded their servants with bishoprics). Nonetheless, the "bench" of bishops inherited by Henry VIII from his father in 1509 was an impressive one, its members typically hard-working graduates from modest backgrounds, rather than the surplus sons of the nobility who dominated episcopal office in Germany at this time. One early Tudor bishop is often seen to epitomize the institutional failings of the Church. Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, Archbishop of York, was a political appointee, a notorious pluralist (holder of more than one church office simultaneously), and only theoretically celibate. Yet even Wolsey articulated the case for reform, dissolving almost thirty small monasteries to found a grammar school in Ipswich and a college in Oxford. Monasteries were often the target of humanist criticism, and the familiar stereotype of lazy, overfed monks was at least partly believed at the time: Robin Hood ballads, in which greedy Benedictine abbots frequently get their comeuppance, were popular. But the evidence of bishops' inspections suggests that lax observance and loose living was the exception rather than the norm in monastic communities. Moreover, some religious orders – the Bridgettines, Carthusians, and Observant Franciscans – were genuine beacons of holiness and learning.

Systematic hostility to the personnel of the Church – anticlericalism – was once thought to be both a precondition and an explanation for the success of the Reformation in England. But the evidence for it is insubstantial. Parish clergy provided occasional cause for discontent, but the regular visitations of the bishops reveal few scandals, or complaints of inadequate pastoral care. Common lawyers sometimes fulminated against the Church's system of courts. But they had a vested interest in doing so, as the church courts represented, in areas such as breach of contract, a cheaper and more efficient rival. Records suggest that tithe disputes were fairly rare, and though the courts passed sentence on a stream of "fornicators" and bastard-bearers in the early sixteenth century, respectable local opinion probably approved of their doing so. It is hard to believe that the English people were inveterately anticlerical, when so many

of them were anxious to become priests: Levels of ordination were at an all-time high in the first two decades of the sixteenth century.

In any case, without the help of priests, laypeople could not achieve salvation. Pre-reformation Catholicism was a *sacramental* religion. It taught that a share in the life-giving power of God – grace – was channeled through prescribed ritual actions. Seven sacraments were recognized by the Church. Five of these (baptism, confirmation, marriage, ordination, anointing of the dying) were one-off, "life-cycle" events. The other two – penance and the Eucharist – were regularly recurring rituals, closely associated with the power of the clergy. Only a priest, as God's representative, could guarantee forgiveness of sins when a layperson confessed them, usually once a year, as a prelude to the reception of communion at Easter. Although communion was an annual event, the Eucharist, known colloquially as the Mass, was the cornerstone of late medieval religion, and Christians were obliged by canon law to attend weekly. When a priest recited the words of the Latin Mass, he was opening a conduit between earth and heaven. Through repetition of Jesus' words at the Last Supper, the bread and wine blessed by the priest became the body and blood of Christ (a process that theologians called transubstantiation). When the priest held up the consecrated bread at the solemn moment known as the elevation, members of the congregation could, literally, see and adore their God. At the same time, each Mass was a sacrifice to God on behalf of the people, a re-enactment of the saving sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross.

The Mass was a means of spiritual benefit for the dead as well as the living. Despite tenuous scriptural foundations, the doctrine of purgatory had emerged strongly over the course of the Middle Ages to meet the common-sense perception that the majority of people were insufficiently saintly to expect immediate admission to heaven, and insufficiently wicked to deserve eternal damnation in hell. Instead the soul would be purged for a proportionate period in the fiery prison of purgatory, before, cleansed of its sins, proceeding to eternal bliss. Purgatory was a fearsome prospect, but made less so by the recognition that the prayers of the living eased and shortened the sufferings of the dead. The Mass was the most powerful means of intercession, and countless laypeople left money in their wills for a priest to "sing" for them. Wealthier individuals could endow a chantry, where a specially appointed priest would say masses in perpetuity or for a specified number of years. A common backup strategy was acquisition of an indulgence – a declaration of remission from a certain quantity of the penalties due in purgatory, and the initial trigger for Luther's protest against the Church.

Fear of the afterlife was not the driving impulse of pre-Reformation religion. Surviving wills suggest little sense of panic about the prospect of purgatory, and Catholicism's "cult of the dead" was complemented by a vibrant religious culture among the living. Not all religious practices were hierarchically prescribed. Laypeople picked and mixed their devotional preferences, especially when it came to the saints. Their favor was sought at places of pilgrimage where their relics were housed, and in front of the countless images that adorned England's 9,000 or so parish churches. Their deeds were immortalized in sermon collections, and in the saints' lives or

hagiographies issuing from England's newly established presses. The familiar view that printing was an inevitable solvent of the old religious world is contradicted by the sheer quantity of printed traditional devotional materials. Primers (cut-down versions of the monastic cycle of prayer) were particularly popular.

The vibrancy of late medieval religious culture was also sustained by the requirement for laypeople to raise funds to maintain the fabric of their parish church. Parishes hosted "church ales" and "wakes" on saints' days, arranged May Day and summer games, and Easter Hock-tide celebrations (when the parish's young men would symbolically kidnap and ransom the young women, and vice versa). The assimilation of popular merry-making to the norms and values of Catholicism was facilitated by the convergence between the Church's "ritual year" and the annual agricultural cycle. Ploughs were blessed in church on "Plough Monday," when farmers resumed work after the holiday season of Christmas. At the feast of Christ's Ascension, processions around the parish prayed for the protection of newly planted crops. Historians now almost universally reject the once-prevalent idea that late medieval religion was "corrupt," unpopular or oppressive; the "revisionism" of the 1970s and 1980s has become the established orthodoxy.

The Lollard Heresy

Yet there is a fly in the ointment, for some people disliked the sacramental religion and festive culture of their neighbors. They were known to contemporaries as "Lollards," an obscure term probably meaning "mumbler of prayers." Lollardy originated with the disciples of John Wyclif, a late fourteenth-century Oxford theologian, whose teachings took from the Church any claim to property or temporal power. In place of established hierarchical structures, he posited an invisible true Church of the elect, and placed all religious authority in the text of Scripture, which his followers duly translated into the vernacular. For good measure, he denounced transubstantiation, the cult of the saints, images and pilgrimage. As Wyclif's teachings spread outside Oxford at the turn of the fifteenth century, the authorities responded with vigorous persecution. In 1401 an Act of Parliament prescribed the death penalty for those adhering to teachings "contrary to the Catholic faith," and eight years later Archbishop Arundel issued a set of Constitutions banning discussion of Wyclif's works and prohibiting the translation of scripture without episcopal permission.

In the middle years of the fifteenth century the evidence for Lollard trials is thin, either because the problem had subsided or (more likely) because bishops took their eyes off the ball during the turbulent decades of the "Wars of the Roses." But under Henry VII, Lollards were again being apprehended in noticeable numbers. A concerted campaign to root them out culminated in a nationwide anti-Lollard drive in 1511–12. Unless the pattern of evidence of their survival is badly skewed, Lollards were to be found in geographical pockets. The main concentrations were in the Weald of Kent, London, Coventry, and in Buckinghamshire around the market towns of

Amersham and Chesham. There seem to have been few, if any, Lollards in the north. It was once assumed that "late Lollards" were almost invariably ignorant country folk, at the wrong end of an evolutionary development from Wyclif's sophisticated theology. But detailed research in tax and testamentary records, as well as court proceedings, has repositioned them on the social scale. In Amersham and Coventry, suspects were among the ruling elites of the town. Landed gentry were not represented in the ranks, perhaps because their social position shielded them: The survival of richly produced volumes among 250 surviving manuscripts of the Wycliffite Bible suggests some involvement on their part.

Lollards' beliefs, as represented in recantations drawn up for them to deliver at their trials, seem a largely negative, "rationalistic" protest against the sacramental teachings of the clergy. One might as well confess to a tree as to a priest. The image of Our Lady was no more holy than any block of wood. The priest could no more make God in the Mass than a house could make its carpenter. Trial evidence inevitably accentuates the negative, as prosecutors were interested in the denial of orthodox doctrines. But Lollard writings reveal a more creative and spiritual side. Saints' images were wicked because offerings to them diverted money from the poor, the real images of Christ.

There are difficulties in conceptualizing early Tudor Lollardy as a sect, a counter-Church, or even as a "movement." The boundaries between orthodoxy and heresy were often blurred and permeable. Some perfectly orthodox people, including Richard III and the nuns of Syon Abbey, used vernacular Wycliffite scriptures for devotional edification. Lollards themselves were not non-conformists, in the sense of opting out of the requirements of official religion. Accusations that they refused to go to confession or attend mass are very uncommon. Of course, they may have done so from a well-founded fear of persecution, but this would not explain why some served as churchwardens or holy water clerks in their parishes. Few Lollards were prepared to die for their beliefs: A heretic who recanted his erroneous opinions was put to public penance, and between 1485 and 1522 there were around 308 recantations and only 25 burnings (most of the latter were second-time offenders). Lollardy was in some ways an added spiritual dimension, an elitist tendency within the world of parochial Catholicism. Lollards met at each other's houses to read forbidden books. They did not proselytize openly, but drew adherents from established work and family networks. It has been memorably observed that "if Wyclifism was *what* you knew, Lollardy was *who* you knew" (Davies 1991: 212).

Later sixteenth-century Protestants hailed the Lollards as their direct spiritual ancestors. The Elizabethan martyrologist John Foxe called them a "secret multitude of true professors," Christians who termed themselves "known-men … as now they are called by the name of Protestants" (Dickens and Carr 1967: 27–8). Reformers had to defend themselves from the charge of "novelty": Where was your Church before Luther? But despite the apparent convergence on topics like saints, or the primacy of scripture, Lollards were not Protestants. In particular, Lollards had not pre-empted the key theological insight of Martin Luther: that humans are "justified" in the eyes

of God solely through their faith and not through their deeds. Lollardy shared an emphasis on good works with the late medieval Catholicism it disparaged.

Lollards and Evangelicals

This complicates the relationship between Lollardy and the new species of heresy appearing in England in the early 1520s. Luther's ideas appalled Henry VIII, who was dubbed "Defender of the Faith" by the pope for writing a book against them, but they proved seductively attractive to a small number of Oxford and (particularly) Cambridge scholars, and London guildsmen, who initially gained access to them via the resident German merchant community. These people were hardly "Protestants" either, for the term was not widely used in England before the 1550s, and implies a degree of denominational fixity and self-consciousness inappropriate to these years. Many historians think that "evangelical" best describes adherents of this ill-defined movement, for a transforming encounter with the Word of God was the core of their religious experience. For the Cambridge scholar, Thomas Bilney, exposure to the letters of St Paul in Erasmus's Greek edition of the New Testament led to the conviction that Christ's work of self-sacrifice was alone sufficient for salvation, and that works of human righteousness – fasting, vows, pilgrimages – were a delusive distraction from the true Christian path.

If knowledge of Greek were a prerequisite, the new movement had a bleak future ahead of it, but the efforts of a Gloucestershire priest, William Tyndale, soon raised the stakes considerably. Like Bilney, Tyndale was inspired by Erasmus's New Testament of 1516 (and by Luther's German translation of 1522). He aimed to produce an English version, and in 1523 approached the Bishop of London, Cuthbert Tunstall, for patronage and permission. The rebuff looks in retrospect like a decisive moment. Haunted by the specter of Lollardy, the bishops dared not allow space for the development of scriptural piety within the Church, and thus forced its redirection into unorthodox channels. Tyndale's New Testament was printed on the continent in 1525–6, and smuggled back into England. The translation itself was a provocative and political one. The Greek terms usually rendered into English as "do penance," "Church," and "priest," became "repent," "congregation," and "elder," with striking implications for the doctrines of penance and the priesthood.

Whether Lollardy provided a "seed-bed" for the early growth of evangelicalism is a moot point. There were certainly important contacts. A Lollard merchant, Humphrey Monmouth, stepped in to finance Tyndale's New Testament, and Lollards were among its first and most enthusiastic readers. There is an evident correlation between parts of the realm with a "Lollard problem" at the start of the sixteenth century (London, the Thames Valley, the South-East) and those with sizable Protestant minorities later. But the contribution should not be overstated. No important English reformer emerged from the ranks of the Lollards. Indeed the first evangelicals tended to come from the heart, not the margins, of the late medieval religious estab-

lishment: A striking number of them were friars. In so far as the English authorities were already attuned to the problem of religious dissent, and practiced in persecuting it, the Lollard antecedent may have made life harder for the nascent evangelical movement. The English bishops were certainly alert and vigilant. Wolsey arranged public burnings of Luther's books in 1521 and 1526, and commissioned theologians to emulate the king in writing against them. The authorities took a softer line with university-educated clergy than with rural Lollards, and some converts, like Thomas Bilney, were persuaded to recant. Yet evangelical ideas were spreading out from London and the universities: A Gloucestershire gentleman, William Tracy, became posthumously notorious in 1530 for composing a will denying the existence of purgatory. Official attitudes began to harden. The appointment of Thomas More to replace Wolsey as Lord Chancellor in October 1530 heralded a small spate of burnings, including Bilney, who had thought better of his earlier recantation. Still, there was no reason to think in the later 1520s that traditional Catholicism in England was facing any kind of threat to its existence. Even in London and the universities, evangelicals were a small minority, and large parts of the realm were effectively untouched by their influence. Crucially, they lacked any kind of credible political support.

Henry VIII's Reformation

That was soon to change. Henry VIII's failure to persuade Pope Clement VII to annul his marriage to Katherine of Aragon (and thus allow him to marry his *inamorata*, Anne Boleyn) transformed the prospects of the evangelical movement. Anne herself was a sympathizer with reform, and offered patronage and protection to evangelical clergy. It was a Boleyn chaplain, Thomas Cranmer, who found himself catapulted into the post of Archbishop of Canterbury when the aged incumbent died in August 1532. Cranmer and other intellectuals had been set the task of drumming up arguments against the Aragonese marriage, which Henry, self-servingly but genuinely, believed to be invalid on the grounds of Katherine's earlier marriage to his elder brother, Arthur. Their findings, in a dossier entitled the *Collectanea satis copiosa* (sufficiently large collection) indicated that English kings by right should exercise headship over the English Church, and that the divorce question could be settled at home without reference to the pope. With increasing clarity of purpose, Henry proceeded to act on their suggestions, establishing himself as Supreme Head, under God, of the Church of England. The "royal supremacy," an institution without precedent in the history of Christianity, was created between 1532 and 1536 by a succession of parliamentary measures orchestrated by Henry's new chief minister (and evangelical sympathizer) Thomas Cromwell. The key moment was the 1533 Act of Appeals, which trumpeted that "by divers sundry old authentic histories and chronicles it is manifestly declared and expressed that this realm of England is an empire" (Dickens and Carr 1967: 55). An "empire" recognized no external authority; the pope was merely "Bishop of Rome."

Henry's subjects responded variously to the new situation. The evangelicals, bolstered by Boleyn-backed appointments to the bench of bishops, embraced the royal supremacy and its potential for their purposes. The Catholic majority was divided in its reaction. A handful of heroic individuals, including Thomas More and the Bishop of Rochester, John Fisher, openly defied the king and paid with their lives. A few others, including the king's cousin Reginald Pole, denounced the royal supremacy from continental exile. Most, however, acquiesced. Some may have been persuaded by the increasing volume of anti-papal sermons the king was now requiring from all preachers, some doubtless thought it would all blow over, as quarrels between kings and popes had done in the past. Others, like the Bishop of Winchester, Stephen Gardiner, persuaded themselves that despite his new-found distaste for the institution of the papacy, Henry was still at heart an orthodox Catholic, would preserve the essentials of the faith and oppose heresy.

In this, events proved them half-right. Although he relied on evangelicals to support his anti-papal policies, and seems to have felt genuine affection for his evangelical archbishop, Cranmer, Henry was not one of them. He showed no sympathy or understanding for the core principle of justification by faith, and retained a visceral attachment to the Latin Mass, which evangelicals were increasingly coming to think of as an abomination. But Henry also saw himself as a religious reformer. If the royal supremacy started as a means of removing obstacles to marrying Anne Boleyn, it soon became something Henry valued for its own sake. (Anne herself was executed, on charges of adultery and witchcraft, in 1536). Henry began to entertain doubts about the doctrine of purgatory, reflected in official statements of doctrine, the Ten Articles of 1536, and the King's Book of 1543. He was enough of a humanist to look down on popular practices around pilgrimages, imagery and the cult of the saints, criticized in royal injunctions in 1536 and 1538. A rhetoric of hostility to "superstition" accompanied the most dramatic policy measure of the later 1530s, the dissolution of the monasteries. The monasteries' landed wealth may have been the real reason for their demise, but the process of expropriation was accompanied by public attention to the supposedly immoral life of monasteries, the fake relics they contained, and the pointlessness of the monastic life itself.

While old forms of religious authority were being disparaged, a new principle was emerging. The primacy of Scripture had been implicit in the Henrician Reformation from the outset – Henry based his divorce case on the argument that a prohibition in the Book of Leviticus trumped the dispensing power of the pope. But the injunctions of 1538 signaled a seismic shift in official religious policy by requiring parishes to acquire a copy of the Bible in English. This was a triumph for Cranmer and Cromwell. Henry himself seems to have believed that exposure to Scripture would make for a more disciplined and obedient society. A Holbein woodcut in the frontispiece to the official Great Bible of 1539 depicted the king, seated in majesty like God himself, dispensing copies of the Bible to grateful and deferential subjects.

Reformation under Henry VIII had its limits. A massive rebellion in the north in 1536 – the so-called Pilgrimage of Grace – brought home to the king the dangers of

straying too far from traditional orthodoxy. The rebels were protesting, not so much about the deposition of the pope, as against the closure of monasteries, and the threat to local religious identity posed by the rationalization of saints' days. A conservative faction, led by Bishop Gardiner and the Duke of Norfolk, played on the king's fears and prejudices. Cromwell went to the block in 1540, having saddled the king with an undesirable fourth wife, in the person of Anne of Cleves. In 1543, an Act of Parliament radically curtailed rights to read Scripture in English, a pragmatic admission that unrestricted access had fueled controversy, rather than inculcated obedience. Yet the Bible itself was not withdrawn, and other reforms were not reversed in the generally more conservative 1540s. Cromwell's place as lay patron of the evangelical movement was inherited by Edward Seymour, brother of Henry's third and favorite wife, Jane, and uncle to the long-awaited heir to the throne, Prince Edward.

Protestant Revolution

Edward became king, aged nine, upon his father's death in January 1547. The new monarch combined precocity with his father's imperious temperament, and had imbibed strong reforming principles along with his tutors' instruction. The timing of Henry's final illness was decisive. The evangelicals at court engineered quarrels between Henry and the conservative leaders Norfolk and Gardiner which led to their removal from the regency council to govern during Edward's minority. An evangelical majority of councilors proceeded to elect Seymour, now Duke of Somerset, as Lord Protector. Archbishop Cranmer, who had had to tread carefully while the old king lived, began to oversee a full-fledged program of (we can now use the word) Protestant reform. If Reformation under Henry had been sporadic and reversible, under Edward it was unremitting and unidirectional. With the Council of Trent rallying the forces of Catholicism on the continent, Cranmer and his allies envisaged England as a beacon of reform and champion of the Protestant world. An Act of 1547 denounced purgatory and confiscated the lands of the chantries. In 1548 confession was made optional, and the following year priests were allowed to marry. The Latin Mass was abolished in 1549, replaced by an English Book of Common Prayer. Though Somerset fell from power in the autumn, blamed for mishandling both a Catholic rebellion in the southwest, and agrarian disturbances in East Anglia, reform continued apace under the new leader of the Council, the Duke of Northumberland. While the 1549 communion service still looked in some respects like a Catholic mass, a revised 1552 Prayer Book supplied an emphatically Protestant version, approved by leading continental reformers like John Calvin and Heinrich Bullinger. Across the country, stone altars were removed, and replaced by wooden communion tables. Edwardian policy was iconoclastic in both general and specific meanings of the term. The Council ordered the removal and destruction of all religious imagery from churches; in their place limewashed walls and improving biblical texts. Processions, intercessions for the dead, and all that reeked of "superstition" was to be swept away. The chalices, and other parish

treasures associated with the old mass, were to be confiscated and melted down. The impact on the texture of local religious life was dramatic. Surviving churchwardens' accounts reveal the collapse of the fundraising regimes which had sustained traditional festive culture. Small wonder, perhaps, that one set of local officials dated the "time of schism when this realm was divided from the Catholic Church" not to Henry's break with Rome, but to the reign of Edward (Duffy 1993: 204).

By the early 1550s, England had experienced real Reformation, and the nation, seemingly, had accepted it. Why? Some, of course, welcomed the changes. But most recent research suggests that even in their strongholds – London, Essex and Kent, East Anglia, Bristol – convinced Protestants were still a fairly small minority. Of course, in a non-democratic society, the commands of the government, not the wishes of the governed, hold sway. Tudor England was, by most contemporary standards, a well-administered and centralized state. But this is hardly a sufficient explanation: The Tudor regime was far from all-powerful – it was very nearly derailed by the Pilgrimage of Grace, for example – and it relied heavily on the cooperation of unpaid local officials. True, unpopular change was imposed piecemeal. Even under Edward, each reforming measure, taken by itself, was just about palatable. But the process of reform may throw into relief some vulnerabilities of the old religious system. While the notion of distinct "elite" and "popular" religious mentalities is difficult to sustain, significant numbers of Henrician landowners and upper clergy shared with their king a distaste for the world of pilgrimages, relics, and holy images – bathwater, they thought, that could be drained off without losing the baby as well. Traditional Catholicism also rested heavily on social consensus and the authority of immemorial custom. Yet when the rules around potentially burdensome religious obligations – confession, fasting, prayer for the dead – were officially relaxed, many were tempted to abandon them, without necessarily subscribing to evangelical doctrine. The very fact of change could look like a persuasive argument. Monasteries were dissolved, chantries abolished, and saints' statutes mutilated, without a host of avenging angels pouring forth from heaven. Reformers understood this dynamic, and acts of iconoclasm were arranged as public, ritualized demonstrations, to suggest the powerlessness of the "holy" image. Furthermore, some people profited materially from Reformation processes. This is most obvious in the case of monastic lands, most of which, to alleviate the crown's financial problems, were rapidly sold to local landowners. But more humble people could turn the politics of religion to their benefit: accusing a neighbor of being a "papist" or "traitor," for example, was a sure-fire way to gain advantage in local disputes.

Mary's Counter-Reformation

Had Edward VI lived to adulthood, married and produced an heir, reform would have continued apace, and ever more traces of England's medieval past would have been obliterated. But he did not. When Edward died prematurely in July 1553, the ghost

of Katherine of Aragon seemed to have had the last laugh. For it was her daughter, the 37-year-old Princess Mary, who succeeded to the throne, sweeping aside a desperate attempt by Northumberland to set up the Protestant Lady Jane Grey as a puppet queen. Historians have dropped the once mainstream view that Mary's restoration of Roman Catholicism was an unachievable aspiration, a merely temporary diversion from England's path to Protestant greatness. Her accession was greeted with considerable popular enthusiasm, and widespread restoration of the Latin mass, even before required by law. Mary's bishops made large demands on parishes, in terms of furnishings and equipment they were required to purchase, but in most cases they seem to have risen to the challenge. An Elizabethan churchwarden of St Andrew Holborn in London, looking back over the parochial accounts, marveled that the parishioners were ready to spend so much "to erect and set up all manner of superstitious things again in the church … and in so short a space" (Griffith 1831: xviii). Elsewhere, the celerity with which images and stone altars were replaced suggests parishes had disobeyed the orders to destroy them, and were now bringing them out of hiding. Restoration was not complete. Few shrines and chantries were set up; it would take time for the cults of saints, and of the dead, to re-establish themselves. Nor was there much public enthusiasm for the return to papal obedience. Parliament dutifully voted to end the schism in November 1554, but only after guarantees had been given to purchasers of monastic lands, as a result of which only a handful of monasteries were refounded. But the Marian Church was not simply looking to the past. In Reginald Pole, Mary had a reforming archbishop in tune with the first stirrings of the continental Counter-Reformation. Assisted by an able body of bishops, Pole drew up plans for seminaries in every diocese, for a new catechism, and (at last) for an approved Catholic translation of Scripture.

There were problems; some, like an inherited financial crisis, and a virulent epidemic of influenza, not of the government's making. But Mary's 1554 marriage to Philip of Spain was unpopular, and drew the country into war with France, and into conflict (a bitter irony) with the fanatically anti-Spanish Pope Paul IV. There was also the question of what to do about heresy. Mary firmly believed that a handful of Protestant leaders had led others astray for political rather than spiritual motives. These could be made to recant, and the rest would fall into line. But the clerical leaders targeted in 1555 after the restoration of heresy laws mainly refused to abjure. Cranmer, and Bishops Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley, died heroically at the stake, establishing a template of martyrdom for lesser believers. Thereafter, persecution developed its own logic, and by the end of the reign nearly 300 Protestants had been burned. Not all English people were as horrified as we would like to think – this was a society in which capital punishment was commonplace, and in which virtually all thinking people, of whatever persuasion, supported the death penalty for persistent heresy. But in retrospect, the persecution was the most enduring legacy of the reign. In Basel, John Foxe, one of a thousand or so Protestants who had gone into exile, began collecting materials on the sufferings of his co-religionists, and on his return to England published *Acts and Monuments*, popularly known as the Book of Martyrs. It would

shape English attitudes to "Bloody Mary," and to Catholicism more generally, for centuries to come.

Elizabethan Protestantism

When Mary died childless in November 1558, it was the turn of a third of Henry VIII's children to ascend the throne. Anne Boleyn's daughter, Elizabeth, had kept a sensibly low profile throughout her sister's reign. But she now came out as a Protestant, and under the guidance of a former Edwardian minister, William Cecil, oversaw a parliamentary restoration of the supreme headship (rechristened supreme governorship) and of Protestant forms of worship. The Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity which constituted the "Elizabethan Settlement" of 1559 did not, as is sometimes supposed, represent a "middle-way" in religion, an innovative synthesis of Protestant and Catholic forms to be known henceforth as "Anglicanism." In nearly all significant respects the new Church restored the Edwardian Reformation at its most advanced stage. The bishops recognized this, and to a man (bar one) resigned. Their replacements came from the ranks of the Protestant clerical exiles. The *Thirty-Nine Articles* which enshrined the official teaching of the Church in 1563 were largely a reissue of an Edwardian set of 1553, and denounced purgatory and the mass as "repugnant to the Word of God."

　Yet from the outset, there was a misunderstanding at the heart of the Elizabethan Church. Most Protestants, including nearly all the bishops, understood Reformation as an ongoing process, with the legislation of 1559 a milestone along the way. Elizabeth herself, however, saw it as a final and definitive settlement. It was soon apparent that the queen was less unambiguously a Protestant champion than many had hoped. Her royal injunctions of 1559 clarified a loose end in the Uniformity Act by insisting that clergy wear vestments to celebrate services. She only reluctantly sanctioned the return of clerical marriage, and, to the horror of bishops and clergy, insisted on retaining a crucifix and candle-sticks on the communion table in the chapel royal. This was hardly the godly "Deborah" of Protestant encomiasts. The abrupt "freezing" of religious policy at the end of the 1550s produced a distinctly odd ecclesiastical polity. The Elizabethan Church had no doubts about its Protestant credentials, and its theology aligned itself with more advanced regimes on the continent (Calvinist, rather than Lutheran). But at the same time, it preserved nearly all the infrastructure of the medieval Catholic Church: Not only the parish system, but the network of church courts, magnificent cathedrals, and, crucially, the office of bishop. It is anachronistic to talk of "Anglicanism" in Elizabeth's reign, but the base materials for its later construction were in place, and towards the end of the reign, at least one innovative theologian, Richard Hooker, was starting to articulate a theology to match, emphasizing continuities with the medieval Church, rather than with pockets of Lollards.

　Protestants who found the retention of medieval forms unacceptably anomalous are known to posterity (and to hostile contemporaries) as Puritans – they termed

themselves "the godly." Puritans objected to clerical surplices as uncomfortably redolent of the Catholic mass, and detected other "idolatries" in the Book of Common Prayer, such as the giving of rings in marriage, or the use of the sign of the cross to baptize infants. A 1566 campaign by Archbishop of Canterbury Matthew Parker to enforce the wearing of vestments led to the suspension of dozens of ministers. Parker's successor Edmund Grindal was more sympathetic to Puritan concerns, but came spectacularly to grief in 1577 over the issue of "prophesyings." These were gatherings of clergy in market towns to assess each other's preaching – the key instrument of Protestant evangelization. Elizabeth saw a potential for subversion, and when Grindal courageously refused to suppress them, she suspended him from office. In the 1580s, Elizabeth's third archbishop, John Whitgift, was a more ardent proponent of "conformity." The decade witnessed calls, in Parliament and elsewhere, to replace the bishops with a system of church government, like that of Geneva, based on synods. But the Presbyterian movement was embarrassed by the appearance of the scurrilously anti-episcopal "Marprelate tracts" in 1588–9, and collapsed as a viable political force.

With few exceptions, however, Puritans were a group campaigning for change within the Church, rather than an oppositional party outside it. The trend of recent research has been to emphasize the common ground between Puritans and other Protestants, and to see Puritans as merely "the hotter sort of Protestants" (Collinson 1967: 27). Despite differences over ritual and ceremony, the majority of Elizabethan clergy shared basic doctrinal assumptions, particularly an adherence to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, though Puritans were more prone to intense self-scrutiny about their status as one of the heaven-bound "elect." Another point of connection was an intense anti-Catholicism, fueled by recent memories of Marian persecution, and by contemporary events such as the massacre of Protestants in Paris in 1572, and the attempt by Catholic Spain to invade England in 1588.

The Catholic Community

Meanwhile English Catholics were coming to terms with their catastrophic political defeat in 1558–9. Catholics, or at least religious conservatives, were almost certainly the majority at the start of Elizabeth's reign, but without effective leadership, most conformed outwardly to the Church of England, a compromise made easier by Queen Elizabeth's famous disinclination to "make windows into men's hearts." But around the end of the 1560s a number of circumstances conspired to present Catholics with starker choices. The flight into England of Mary Queen of Scots in 1568 supplied a figurehead, a Catholic alternative and potential successor to Elizabeth. A rebellion in the north of England in 1569 aimed to free Mary from captivity, and she remained the focus of Catholic plotting until Elizabeth finally agreed to have her executed in 1587. Also in 1568, Catholic clerical exiles established a seminary at Douai in the Spanish Netherlands to send missionaries secretly back into England, a task in which they were joined from 1580 by English Jesuits ordained in Rome. The consequence

in England was a new phenomenon: Recusancy, a principled refusal by Catholics to attend the services of the established Church. Recusancy was punished with fines, becoming progressively heavier over the course of the reign. But lay Catholics were usually not subjected to the kinds of pressures Protestants had endured under Mary. The priests, by contrast were treated harshly. Between 1577 and 1603, 124 seminarists and Jesuits (around one-quarter of all priests who went on the English mission) were hanged, drawn, and quartered for treason. Despite these heavy losses, their ministry ensured the survival of Catholicism in England, and undermined the Elizabethan ideal of uniform adherence to a national Church. But there was a price to be paid. The missionaries relied heavily on the Catholic gentry, whose manor houses and ingeniously constructed priest holes offered a modicum of protection. As a result, rural Catholic populations in outlying regions were neglected, and some priests ended up de facto domestic chaplains to Catholic landowners, who expected to call the shots. The outcome has been seen as an inward-looking "seigneurial Catholicism." In the latter part of Elizabeth's reign, the effectiveness of the mission was hampered by furious quarrels between Jesuits and secular priests over matters of Church organization, and over how much compromise to make with the regime.

By the end of the reign recorded recusants were a small minority of the population, only around 2 percent even in areas where Catholicism was relatively strong, such as Yorkshire. But Catholics were far from an irrelevance, and Catholicism – or popery – remained a burning political question. In part this was because of the continuing threat from hostile Catholic powers such as Spain; in part because of the failure of Reformation in Tudor Ireland; in part because of Catholicism's disproportionate representation among gentry and nobility. But it was also because no one was quite sure how many Catholics there were. Not just in the 1560s, but throughout the reign, there were many "church papists," those who combined outward conformity with inward allegiance to Rome, or at least a powerful hankering for the past. Popery was thus not merely an external force, but an insidious internal virus: Puritan clergy in particular were apt to detect its influence in all sorts of places, and were quick to shout "papist" at those of whose behavior or attitudes they disapproved.

A Protestant Nation?

Yet, for all the anxieties about residual, or resurgent, Catholicism under Elizabeth, the great majority of people did become Protestants, after a fashion. Most did so without spiritual epiphanies of the kind experienced by the evangelicals of the 1520s, but through steady exposure to sermons, catechisms, and the stately language of the Book of Common Prayer. The process was facilitated by generational handover among the clergy. From the 1580s, parish ministers who had been ordained as Catholic priests under Henry or Mary were dying out, and being replaced by resolute Protestants from the universities. A fundamental cultural shift involved the printed English Bible, a daring novelty in 1525, but ubiquitous three-quarters of a century later, with dozens

of editions entering churches and, increasingly, people's homes. We can also identify a distinctively Protestant popular religious culture starting to fill the vacuum left by the decimation of the old ritual year. Parishes feasted and rang their bells to celebrate the accession day of Elizabeth (17 November), and congregations welcomed the opportunity to engage in the one godly-approved form of musical activity, the singing of metrical psalms.

Elizabeth reigned for nearly four times as long as her brother and sister combined, and this fortuitous circumstance allowed the Reformation to put down roots and shape the cultural life of the nation. But the concomitants were hardly equilibrium and stability. Confessional identities hardened and clarified in the later Tudor decades, generally in oppositional relationship to each other; yet something that no one was in favor of – religious pluralism – became an ineradicable fact of life. The official Church itself was an unstable religious coalition, with a large and ill-digested medieval inheritance. And, at the local level, the perceived demands of religion regularly inflamed cultural division. Puritan ministers tried to ban maypoles, dancing and Sunday football. Opponents mocked their ambition to banish "cakes and ale." The ultimate meaning of Reformation was, in 1603, an as yet unresolved question.

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FURTHER READING

The literature on the English Reformation is copious and contentious. A guide to recent debates is Peter Marshall, *Reformation England, 1480–1642* (London: Edward Arnold, 1993), while good general surveys are Christopher Haigh, *English Reformations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), and Felicity Heal, *Reformation in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). The indispensable guide to pre-Reformation religion is Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992). R. N. Swanson, *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) has more on the institutional Church. On Lollards, compare contrasting approaches in Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) and Richard Rex, *The Lollards* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002). On early evangelicals, see the essays in Peter Marshall and Alec Ryrie (Eds.), *The Beginnings of English Protestantism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), as well as Ryrie's *The Gospel and Henry VIII* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). G. W. Bernard, *The King's Reformation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005) portrays Henry as the masterful author of his own Reformation. The story looks messier in

Richard Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation* (2nd edn, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006) and Peter Marshall, *Religious Identities in Henry VIII's England* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2006). The theory and practice of iconoclasm is masterfully surveyed in Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). Ethan Shagan, *Popular Politics and the English Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) reflects on why ordinary people accepted Reformation. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant* (London: Penguin Books, 1999) has remedied a dearth of decent work on Edwardian Protestantism. His *Thomas Cranmer: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996) is a compelling biography of a key individual. The best perspectives on Marian religion are contained in Eamon Duffy and David Loades (Eds.), *The Church of Mary Tudor* (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2006). On the Elizabethan Church and Puritanism, the work of Patrick Collinson remains essential. His *The Birthpangs of Protestant England* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1988) is the best starting point. John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community 1570–1850* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975) is the seminal account of its subject, though for Catholic interactions with Protestant society, see Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1993).