

Defending the Faith

Early Reformers

Donald E. Knebel

November 12, 2017

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1. This is the first of three presentations about the English Reformation.
2. Many people assume the English Reformation began when King Henry VIII rejected the authority of the pope and proclaimed himself head of the Church of England.
3. But, as William Placher, who taught at Wabash, wrote: **“Like much of what everyone knows about history, this is not particularly true.”** Placher, *A History of Christian Theology* at 227.
4. The period beginning in 1534, which we will look at next week, is certainly important.
5. But also important, and often overlooked in discussions about the Reformation, is what happened in England during the period 150 years **before** the time of Henry VIII.
6. As one author writes: **“Ominous warnings of an idea that had the force to fracture Western Christendom came first from England.”** Moynahan, *The Faith* at 295.
7. As we will see, people and events in England during that period actually helped create the foundation for the actions of Martin Luther in 1517 that are usually seen as the beginning of the Reformation.
8. Those people and events also made it easier for Henry VIII to break with Rome.
9. Today, we will look at those people and events and the responses to them, including the responses by Henry VIII himself, who earned the title Defender of the Faith for his efforts in preserving what he later repudiated.

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1. In 1309, Pope Clement V moved the headquarters of the Catholic Church from Rome to Avignon, on the Rhone River in what is now France.
2. Subsequent popes built this magnificent palace for themselves in Avignon.
3. Here is one description of Avignon: **“[A] great palace was built, fit for a Pope and his five hundred household staff, with masters of the kitchen, food, drink, and stables, and chapels, audience halls, libraries, a vaulted treasury whose cargo of precious metals and stones was cunningly concealed beneath the flagstones, and a banqueting hall supplied by a vast kitchen with an octagonal chimney piece.”** Moynahan, *The Faith* at 298-99.

4. Popes soon found a way to support this luxury.

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1. Thomas Aquinas had taught that when Jesus and the saints died, they had a merit surplus, which they donated to the Catholic Church, creating a treasury of merits.
2. In 1343, Pope Clement VI announced from Avignon that the Church could sell this treasury of merits to church members, effectively to guarantee their place in heaven, leading to the sale of indulgences.
3. Popes could spend the money from the sale of indulgences as they saw fit and much of the money went into paying the expenses of the papal palace in Avignon.
4. More than a century and a half later, the sale of indulgences would so offend Martin Luther that he published his Ninety-five Theses repudiating them, the traditional start of the Reformation that we are remembering this year.
5. But the intellectual foundation for Luther's actions began being laid in England in 1344, the year after Pope Clement's announcement.

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1. Thomas Bradwardine was born in England in about 1300 and was one of the great polymaths of the 14th century.
2. He was a fellow at Oxford at 21, where he obtained a doctor of divinity degree.
3. A member of the faculty of Oxford's Merton College, he was a skilled mathematician, innovative physicist, able theologian and insightful philosopher.
4. Bradwardine and his colleagues developed theories of falling bodies long before Galileo.
5. He also developed a number of mental techniques to improve memory recall and foster development of new ideas.
6. Because of his erudition in numerous areas, colleagues called Bradwardine *Doctor Profundus*, the Profound Doctor.
7. In about 1335, he moved to London and soon became dean of St. Paul's Cathedral and a royal chaplain in the court of King Edward III.

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1. In 1344, Bradwardine published an influential book called *De causa Dei*.
2. Bradwardine vigorously defended Augustine's view of the omniscience of God, which meant that God knows in advance who will be saved and who will not be.

3. Because God knows in advance who will be saved and who will be damned, salvation cannot result from acts of merit a person does or does not choose to do, but results entirely from God's freely given grace, bestowed on some but not on others.
4. Bradwardine's statements presage the much later views of John Calvin and other reformers about predestination and grace.
 - a. **"God gives his grace freely, in the strictest sense of the word, and without merit on the part of man. For if God did not bestow his grace in this perfectly gratuitous manner, but on account of some subordinate contingent uncertain cause, he could not possibly foresee how he should bestow his free gifts."**
 - b. **"The mischievous Pelagians maintain that this sort of grace is not given freely by God but is to be obtained by preceding merits. I myself was once so foolish and empty, when I first applied myself to the study of philosophy, as to be seduced by this error."**
5. One of Bradwardine's statements could as well have been made by Martin Luther: **"Faith alone can make us justified: works have no part to play in achieving that which comes from Him alone."**
6. As Bradwardine saw it, a person's confession is important to salvation only because once God has elected a person to be saved, that person is bound to confess.
7. Similarly, good works are the consequence of being saved, not the reason for it.
8. Bradwardine was greatly influenced, as was Luther, by Paul's letter to the Romans: **"For he says to Moses, 'I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.' It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy."** *Romans* 9:15-16.

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1. As did the teachings of Luther, Bradwardine's teachings about the irrelevance of merit in determining salvation undermined the entire basis of the system of indulgences.
2. But the power of the Church proved seductive, even for someone of the intellectual powers of Bradwardine, and he refused to condemn indulgences.
3. In 1349 Pope Clement rewarded his loyalty and appointed him Archbishop of Canterbury, confirmed in a ceremony at the papal palace in Avignon.
4. Bradwardine died of the plague on his way home and most people today have never heard of him.

5. Bradwardine's teachings influenced the views of John Wycliffe, the so-called "morning star of the Reformation."

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1. John Wycliffe was born in England sometime in the 1320s.
2. He was in Oxford in 1345, just after Bradwardine's publication of *De causa Dei*.
3. Wycliffe spent most of his life at Oxford, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1356, a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1369 and a Doctor of Divinity in 1372.
4. The plague, which came to England in 1348, repeatedly interrupted his education.
5. In the early part of his Oxford career, Wycliffe attended Merton College, where he learned about Bradwardine's views on the exclusive importance of God's grace in determining a person's salvation.
6. The author of a 1904 biography of Wycliffe states: "**We believe that we are not mistaken in maintaining that the principles which lay at the basis of Bradwardine's teachings were not without important influence upon Wycliffe.**" Lechler, *John Wycliffe and his English Precursors* at 65.
7. This triple-negative equivocation is strange.
8. Whether Wycliffe knew Bradwardine personally is not known, but he later referred to Bradwardine as his mentor and spiritual father and the inspiration for his views on predestination and the exclusive power of grace in determining salvation.
9. Because Wycliffe believed a person's works are irrelevant to his or her salvation, he believed, unlike Bradwardine, that indulgences were a fraud.
10. As he once wrote: "**Prelates deceive men by feigned indulgences or pardons, and rob them of their money. . . . Men be great fools to buy these bulls.**" Durant, *Heroes of History* at 248.

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1. By 1360, Wycliffe had become a well-known scholar and an outspoken critic of the pope's claim to have authority over non-spiritual matters.
2. Because of these views, he became involved in a dispute between the Church in Rome and the English government.
3. In 1213, King John, of Magna Carta fame, had signed an agreement with the pope, making England a fief of the Church, required to pay a large annual tribute.

4. During the fourteenth century, England lacked the money to pay the tribute and simply failed to pay it.
5. In 1365, Pope Urban V demanded that England resume its payments and come up with the unpaid amounts.
6. Wycliffe advised members of Parliament that England had no duty to pay the tribute because the pope had no legitimate power over it.
7. He also argued that the popes should be living a life of poverty as Jesus did.
8. In 1366, Parliament, relying on Wycliffe's arguments, voted unanimously not to pay the tribute, an early and often overlooked rejection of papal authority in England.
9. The English government later engaged Wycliffe to travel to Brussels to help resolve additional disputes between England and the Church.
10. Following his interactions with papal authorities, Wycliffe became even more outspoken against the wealth of the Church, writing: **“If Christ would not have so much as a little house in which to rest his head, . . . how should Christ’s vicar be so great a Lord in this world?”** Placher, *A History of Christian Theology* at 173.

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1. In 1378, the citizens of Rome rioted, demanding a Roman pope.
2. Under pressure, the cardinals chose a Roman pope, who sought to terminate French influence and returned the papacy to Rome.
3. Four months later, the same cardinals decided they had made a mistake and elected another pope, who returned to Avignon.
4. Each pope excommunicated the other and placed the other's country under interdict, resulting in the Great Schism.
5. Each pope claimed the loyalty of about half of Europe.
6. Wycliffe reacted to the Great Schism with sarcasm: **“I always knew the pope had cloven feet. Now he has a cloven head.”** Moynahan, *The Faith* at 301.
7. The Great Schism had a profoundly negative effect on Wycliffe's views of the Church and on the idea of papal authority.
8. Wycliffe began a series of writings **“rejecting the whole traditional structure of the medieval church.”** Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* at 379.

9. As one author writes: “[By 1378, Wycliffe] had become a manifest revolutionary and heresiarch.” Dickens, *The English Reformation* at 46.

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1. Because Wycliffe could find no Biblical basis for the doctrine of transubstantiation, which holds that the communion host literally becomes the body of Jesus when it is eaten, he rejected that important Church teaching as superstition.
2. Relying on the teachings of Bradwardine, Wycliffe taught that the true church consists only of the elect, those predestined to be saved.
3. According to Wycliffe, “[a] pope who grasps worldly power and is eager for riches is presumptively not of the elect and is therefore a veritable Antichrist.” Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* at 379.
4. This was the first time the pope was the Antichrist, a claim later made by Luther.
5. More than 140 years before Luther, Wycliffe “advocated clerical marriage, denounced monasticism and placed fanatical emphasis upon the need to disendow a rich and mundane clergy.” Dickens, *The English Reformation* at 46.
6. Like Luther, Wycliffe rejected, as without Biblical foundation, “other popular practices – pilgrimage, veneration of the saints, images and prayers for the dead.” Marshall, *Heretics and Believers* at 101.
7. “He accepted the Bible as the one sure basis of belief and demanded that it should be freely placed in lay hands.” *Id.*
8. His writings inspired the translation of the Bible into English so average people could read and understand it.

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1. Wycliffe’s teachings did not sit well with Church authorities.
2. The Church rejected the idea of translating the Bible into the vernacular.
3. As one Church official said: “By this translation, the Scriptures have become vulgar, and they are more available to lay, and even to women who can read, than they were to learned scholars, who have a high intelligence. So the pearl of the gospel is scattered and trodden underfoot by swine.”
4. Wycliffe responded: “Englishmen learn Christ's law best in English. Moses heard God's law in his own tongue; so did Christ's apostles.”

5. A council of Blackfriars convened in London on May 17, 1382, condemned as heresy 24 of Wycliffe's propositions, including one that **“the substance of the material bread and wine remains in the sacrament of the altar after consecration.”**
6. An earthquake during the council convinced Wycliffe that God was on his side.
7. Because Wycliffe had the support of important government officials, the council did not punish him for his views, but ordered him to stop teaching at Oxford.
8. Wycliffe retired to Lutterworth, where he had responsibilities as a priest, but continued speaking out against what he considered the abuses of the Church.
9. Wycliffe died of a stroke at Lutterworth on New Year's Eve, 1384.

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1. The death of Wycliffe did not kill his ideas.
2. As one author writes: **“Within a few years of his death these doctrines developed a widespread appeal among townsmen, merchants, gentry and even among some of the lower clergy.”** Dickens, *The English Reformation* at 47.
3. **“Sympathizers included some noblemen and gentry who liked the sound of doctrines which might lead to the Church surrendering its huge landed wealth.”** MacCulloch, *The Reformation* at 35.
4. The followers of Wycliffe became known as Lollards, probably based on a disparaging Dutch term meaning “mutterers” or speakers of nonsense.
5. In 1395, influential Lollards, including knights loyal to King Richard II, presented Parliament a manifesto known as the Twelve Conclusions.
6. More than 100 years before Luther, they nailed their manifesto to the doors of London's Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral.
7. These Twelve Conclusions collected the most important reform ideas of Wycliffe, rejecting transubstantiation, exorcisms, prayers for the dead, pilgrimages, wars in the name of God, and lavish expenditures of the papacy, all later also rejected by Luther.
8. The Ninth Conclusion specifically rejected the sale of indulgences, where **“for a bushel of wheat or twelve pence by year they will sell the bliss of heaven.”**
9. Two conclusions included a very frank discussion of the harms of celibacy.
 - a. The Third Conclusion reported, with expressed sorrow, that clerical celibacy had led to sodomy among priests who **“like not women.”**
 - b. The Eleventh Conclusion reported, with expressed shame, that the requirement that nuns be celibate had led to abortions and bestiality.

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1. Parliament did not act on the Twelve Conclusions before Richard II was deposed.
2. Richard's successor, King Henry IV, was opposed to Lollardy.
3. **“Anxious to placate the church, the new king was persuaded to secure the passage in 1401 of the anti-heresy statute, under which a number of Lollards were burned.”** Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* at 381.
4. Even before the statute became effective, William Sawtrey, a Catholic priest who had accepted the teachings of Wycliffe, was burned at the stake.
5. To escape the same fate, John Purvey, a friend of Wycliffe who had helped him translate the Bible into English, recanted his beliefs in Wycliffe's teachings.
6. In 1407, the Church forbade the use of all English language Bibles.
7. As one author writes: **“The Church had no desire to share the secrets of its trade.”** Moynahan, *The Faith* at 304.
8. In 1410, John Badby, a Lollard blacksmith, was burned in a barrel for rejecting the doctrine of transubstantiation.

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1. Henry V assumed the throne in 1413.
2. He enforced the statute against heretics **“ruthlessly,”** as shown in this old woodcut. Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* at 381.

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1. In 1413, Sir John Oldcastle, a knight and Lollard convert, was convicted of heresy and held for execution in the Tower of London.
2. He escaped and organized an elaborate plot to overthrow the king.
3. Forces under Henry V captured Oldcastle in 1417.
4. Because he was now guilty of both treason, punishable by hanging, and heresy, punishable by burning, he was suspended from a gallows over a fire, enabling him to be hanged and burned at the same time.

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1. John Huss of Bavaria was the most famous priest in Prague in the early 1400s.

2. After reading the writings of Wycliffe, “[h]e adopted at once the English reformer’s view of the church as an elect company, with Christ, not the pope, its true head.” Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* at 230.
3. Following the example of the Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards, Huss wrote a manifesto called Six Errors that he nailed to the door of Bethlehem Chapel in Prague.
4. Huss, whose statue in Prague is shown here, spoke out against “priests . . . who shamefully squander pay for requiem Masses in fornication, in adorning their concubines, priestesses, or prostitutes . . . from the tithes and offerings of the poor.” Placher, *A History of Christian Theology* at 174.
5. Luther later claimed Huss had influenced him, just as Huss claimed Wycliffe had influenced him, demonstrating the importance of Wycliffe to the German Reformation.

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1. “In June 1410, church authorities publicly burned seventeen of Wyclif’s writings in Prague, and . . . excommunicated Huss.” Ozment, *The Age of Reform: 1250-1550* at 167.
2. From 1412 to 1418, a council held in the German city of Constance succeeded in unifying the Church under one pope, Martin V.
3. The council also tried John Huss and condemned him as a heretic.
4. Huss was burned at the stake on July 6, 1415, the anniversary of which is a national holiday in the Czech Republic.

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1. The council at Constance also condemned John Wycliffe as a heretic.
2. Because the council could not burn the already dead Wycliffe at the stake, it ordered that his bones be dug up and burned and his ashes thrown into the river, as shown in this sixteenth century drawing.

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1. The burning of Oldcastle and the excommunication of Wycliffe greatly reduced political support for the Lollards in England.
2. As one author writes: “In the political struggles of early fifteenth century England, the gentry who sympathized with the Lollards backed the losing side.” MacCulloch, *The Reformation* at 36.
3. As a result, “the cause was obliged to move underground.” Dickens, *The English Reformation* at 49.

4. But Lollardy and Wycliffe's ideas continued to attract followers in England.
5. As one author writes: **“The authorities were managing to keep a lid on Lollardy, but did not succeed in scouring the pot.”** Marshall, *Heretics and Believers* at 103.
6. **“Whatever its other qualities, Lollardy was remarkably tenacious.”** *Id.* at 104.
7. The colored regions on this map show areas of Lollard support by the middle of the fifteenth century.
8. Years before Martin Luther published his Ninety-five Theses, thousands of people in England had already accepted many of his core beliefs, thanks to the teachings of Wycliffe and the Lollards.
9. The Lollards lacked the printing press and political support that Luther had later that were key to the wide adoption of his views.
10. But, as one author writes: **“[Lollardy] created an underground and there awaited the liberators.”** Dickens, *The English Reformation* at 59.
11. The liberators would eventually come in the form of followers of Martin Luther, but not without efforts to destroy them as well.
12. At the heart of the resistance was the towering figure of Henry VIII.

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1. Henry VIII became King of England in April 1509.
2. Henry has been described as **“a man of impressive intellectual abilities and executive force, well-read and always interested in Scholastic theology, sympathetic with humanism, popular with the mass of people, but egotistic, obstinate, and given to fitful acts of terror.”** Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* at 483.
3. But Charles Dickens once described him as **“a most intolerable ruffian and a blot of blood and grease on the history of England.”** *A Child's History of England*.
4. **“Henry was pious and orthodox, hearing Mass three times a day when he hunted, and five times a day when he did not.”** Moynahan, *The Faith* at 399.
5. He began his reign with an oath **“to keep and maintain the right and liberties of Holy Church of old time granted by the righteous Christian kings of England.”**

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1. Just before his coronation, Henry married Catherine of Aragon, the daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain.

2. Because Catherine had been married for six months to Henry's deceased older brother, the marriage required a special dispensation from Pope Julius II because of the prohibition in Leviticus of marrying a brother's widow. *Leviticus* 20:21.

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1. **"The early years of Henry's reign had witnessed a revival of Lollardy."** Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* at 481.
2. The Church, with the support of Henry VIII, set out to eradicate the Lollards.
3. In the next 10 years, hundreds of suspected Lollards were rounded up, resulting in numerous burnings of those who would not recant and return to accepted Church beliefs.
4. In 1519, seven Lollards were burned for teaching their children to say the Lord's Prayer in English.

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1. While the renewed attacks on the Lollards were still underway, the teachings of Martin Luther came to England.
2. They first arrived in 1518, when Thomas More, then a Member of Parliament, received a package of books from Erasmus, the great Dutch humanist.
3. Erasmus and More had long been friends, shown here together visiting the children of Henry VII.
4. While staying with More in England in 1511, Erasmus wrote a satirical book called *The Praise of Folly* that was very critical of the popes, whom he said had lost any claim to being heirs of the Apostles because of **"their riches, honors, dispensations, licenses, indulgences [and] tithes."** Durant, *Heroes of History* at 258.
5. Among the books that Erasmus sent to Thomas More was one including Luther's Ninety-five Theses, which were largely directed against the sale of indulgences and the authority of the pope.
6. Erasmus told Luther **"certain very great people in England were admiring his writings."** Dickens, *The English Reformation* at 91.
7. Who these people were is not known.

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1. What is known is that students and scholars began meeting in the White Horse Tavern in Cambridge to discuss Luther's ideas.
2. The meetings to discuss these new ideas became known as Little Germany.

3. **“The Lollards demonstrably provided reception areas for Lutheranism.”**

Dickens, *The English Reformation* at 59.

4. At least some of the Cambridge intellectuals studying Luther were Lollards, establishing a **“continuity from Lollardy to Lutheranism in these circles.”** *Id.* at 92.

5. One of those attending the meetings in the White Horse Tavern was Thomas Cranmer, who eventually wrote the *Book of Common Prayer*.

6. We will talk a lot more about Thomas Cranmer next week.

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1. Initially, the English Church did not consider Luther’s ideas much of a threat.

2. Indulgences had not been particularly important in England and the tone of the Ninety-five Theses was respectful of the pope.

3. This statement is typical: **“Christians should be taught that, if the Pope knew the exactions of the preachers of indulgences, he would rather have the basilica of St. Peter reduced to ashes than built upon the skin, flesh and bones of his sheep.”** MacCulloch, *The Reformation* at 123-24.

4. In these early days, the Church considered Luther’s views comparable to those of the Lollards.

5. As one bishop wrote: **“It is no question of pernicious novelty; it is only that new arms are being added to the great crowd of Wycliffie heresies.”** Dickens, *The English Reformation* at 59.

6. Because the Church had effectively managed Lollardy, it believed it could manage Luther’s new heresy with a few burnings from time to time.

7. Things changed with the circulation in England of Luther’s book *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, which he wrote soon after his debates with Johann Eck and which arrived in England in 1521.

8. Compared with the respectful tone of his Ninety-five Theses, this book used harsh language about the pope: **“Unless they will abolish their laws and traditions, and restore to Christ's churches their liberty and have it taught among them, they are guilty of all the souls that perish under this miserable captivity, and the papacy is truly the kingdom of Babylon, yes, the kingdom of the real Antichrist!”**

9. The message of this new book was to **“deny that there are seven sacraments, and hold for the present to but three – baptism, penance and the bread.”**

10. Rejecting the teachings of the Church, Luther claimed that confirmation, matrimony, ordination and extreme unction are not sacraments.

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1. Unlike the Ninety-five Theses, the ideas in *Babylonian Captivity* were a real threat to the Catholic Church in England.
2. John Fisher, an important English bishop and theologian, wrote that Luther's new book was a **"perilous article, able to subvert all the order of the Church."** Marshall, *Heretics and Believers* at 126.
3. Much of the Church's income came from the sacraments that Luther rejected.
4. On Sunday, May 12, 1521, Church officials, led by Bishop Fisher, burned copies of *Babylonian Captivity* at the cross outside St. Paul's Cathedral.
5. To send a message to anyone thinking of adopting Luther's views, in 1521, 350 people were investigated for being Lollards and four who did not recant were burned.

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1. The most vigorous response against Luther's book came from Henry VIII himself.
2. In July 1521 he published *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum (Defense of the Seven Sacraments)*, the first book ever published by an English king.
<https://archive.org/details/assertioseptem00henruoft>
3. Questions have long existed about who really wrote the book, the most likely candidates being Bishop Fisher and Thomas More, who acknowledged having been its editor.
4. Henry attacked the writings of Luther about the irrelevance of works.
5. He defended the authority of the pope and the existence of seven sacraments.
6. Henry dedicated his book to Pope Leo X.
7. In return, on October 17, 1521, Leo declared Henry *Fidei Defensor*, the Defender of the Faith, a title claimed by English monarchs ever since.
8. Henry's book became a best seller, going through 20 editions.

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1. Luther wrote a vitriolic response to Henry's book, which he published at Wittenberg in 1522. http://anglicanhistory.org/lutherania/against_henry.html
2. The response accused Henry of **"suffering from a lesion of the brain"** and called Henry all kinds of insulting names, including **"lying buffoon," "fool," "ass" and "swine."**

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1. At the request of Henry VIII, Thomas More responded to Luther in kind.
2. Using the pseudonym William Ross, More wrote *Responsio ad Lutherum* (*A Response to Luther*).
3. As one author writes: More “**conveyed low personal invective in elevated humanist Latin – a text disconcertingly full of sewage, shit, vomit, poison, pimps, asses and pigs.**” Marshall, *Heretics and Believers* at 127.
4. Thomas More, the humanist who had written *Utopia* in 1516 to promote religious tolerance, had now positioned himself as the foremost defender of Catholic orthodoxy in England, a role that would eventually cost him his life.
5. In the meantime, he did battle with William Tyndale, who also died for his far different beliefs.

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1. One author has described Tyndale as “[u]nquestionably the most remarkable figure among the first generation of English Protestants.” Dickens, *The English Reformation* at 93.
2. He was born in about 1485 in Gloucestershire, an area with a significant Lollard population.
3. Tyndale studied at Oxford and eventually became fluent in French, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Latin and Spanish.
4. He also attended the University of Cambridge, where he met with Luther’s sympathizers at the White Horse Tavern.
5. Because of his familiarity with Wycliffe’s English translations, which were not particularly good and in very short supply, Tyndale decided in 1522 to translate the New Testament into English using the Greek version that Erasmus had just completed.
6. When the bishop in London refused to support his project, Tyndale replied: “**If God spare my life, ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth a plow shall know more of the Scriptures than thou does.**” Moynahan, *The Faith* at 357.
7. To realize his dream, Tyndale traveled to Germany, where he met with Martin Luther and became more familiar with Luther’s ideas.
8. Some of Tyndale’s translations were influenced by Luther’s own use of Erasmus’ Greek version in translating the Bible into German.

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1. Tyndale published his English New Testament in Worms in 1526.
2. Within months, **“copies of his translation were streaming into England, where the authorities made futile efforts to suppress it.”** Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* at 482.
3. **“It found an especially cordial reception in London, both among the merchants and among the numerous cells of Lollards who likewise advocated a strict ‘Bible religion.’”** *Id.*
4. About 15,000 copies of Tyndale’s New Testament were smuggled into England by merchants, including one who had funded Tyndale’s work.
5. Some of Tyndale’s word choices outraged Thomas More.
6. For example, Tyndale used “love” instead of “charity,” which More thought denigrated the importance of works, an idea espoused by Luther.
7. He substituted “repent” for “do penance,” again suggesting that works are not important to salvation.
8. He substituted “elder” for “priest,” which More saw as an attack on the Church.
9. These and similar changes were based on the original Greek, which had not been used in prior translations of the New Testament into English.
10. But More believed that Tyndale was stacking the Biblical deck in favor of Luther’s ideas about salvation being based on grace and not on works.
11. More believed that Luther’s heresies were a threat to public order and accused Tyndale of fostering sedition, a crime punishable by death.

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1. Because Tyndale could have been tried for sedition in England, he never returned to his home country.
2. He penned other writings, which, like his Bible, were smuggled into England and gained a large following.
3. In *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*, published in May 1528, Tyndale called the pope the Antichrist and supported Luther’s views that good works are irrelevant for salvation.
4. In *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, published in October 1528, he supported the use of his English translation of the New Testament and accused the clergy of a

conspiracy to gain wealth and subvert governments, a theme he repeated in *The Practise of Prelates*, published in 1530.

5. Tyndale's writings constitute the first English works articulating what became Protestant doctrine.
6. On behalf of Henry VIII, Thomas More responded vigorously to each of Tyndale's writings, articulating what he believed to be the heresies inherent in them.

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1. English authorities experienced difficulties stopping the publication of anti-Catholic writings because, like Tyndale, authors simply went to the Continent and had their writings smuggled into England.
2. **"In the three years 1528-30, at least fifteen works by English exiles were published overseas, mainly in Antwerp."** Marshall, *Heretics and Believers* at 150.
3. One author has described Antwerp as **"a true birthplace of the English Reformation."** *Id.* at 150.
4. In 1530, Tyndale, living in Antwerp, released an English version of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament.

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1. The need to increase efforts to stop the importation and spread of anti-Catholic literature coincided with a personal crisis in the life of Henry VIII.
2. By 1527, Catherine had delivered six children but only one, Mary, survived.
3. Henry needed a male heir and it was unlikely that Catherine, then 42, would be able to give him that heir – he needed a younger wife.
4. He had in mind the intelligent and charming Anne Boleyn, but the Church forbade divorce.
5. Henry had a solution to that problem.
6. By 1527, he had developed **"an unshakeable conviction that Catherine was not his lawful wife."** Marshall, *Heretics and Believers* at 164.
7. He had married his brother's widow, something forbidden by the Bible, which he believed explained why God had not provided him a male heir.
8. As a result, Henry believed he was entitled to an annulment of his marriage to Catherine, allowing him to marry Anne Boleyn.

9. Never mind that he had received special dispensation from an earlier pope for precisely this reason – he believed the pope had made a mistake.
10. Never mind Leviticus says that the penalty for marrying a brother's widow is to be childless and Henry had children with Catherine, one of whom survived.
11. And never mind that Deuteronomy appears to mandate marrying a deceased brother's widow. *Deuteronomy 25:5*.

Slide 35

1. Henry sent Thomas Wolsey, his very capable Lord Chancellor and special envoy to the pope, to Rome to secure an annulment of his marriage to Catherine.
2. Wolsey, who had become a cardinal, failed in this mission largely because of political considerations – Holy Roman Emperor Charles V was Catherine's nephew.
3. As a result, Henry removed Wolsey as Lord Chancellor, accusing him of treason.
4. Wolsey died before coming to London to face those charges.

Slide 36

1. In October 1529, Henry appointed Thomas More his new Lord Chancellor, with the duty of carrying out the laws directed at heretics and book smugglers.
2. More, a lawyer who saw himself as the protector of public order, **“immediately launched a campaign of persecution against suspected heretics.”** Walker, *A History of the Christian Church* at 484.
3. By this time, the heretics included both the Lollards and those who were supporting the views of Martin Luther, some of whom were the same persons.
4. Consequently, a 1530 royal proclamation, which More drafted, **“stressed the King's detestation of ‘malicious and wicked sects of heretics and Lollards’ and urged state officials to ‘give their whole power and diligence’ to destroying them.”** Marshall, *Heretics and Believers* at 186.
5. The proclamation also expressly banned Tyndale's New and Old Testaments and his writings opposing papal authority, making anyone possessing these books subject to arrest and punishment.
6. As Lord Chancellor, More undertook the prosecution of heretics and smugglers with gusto, **“believ[ing] that heresy threatened the secular commonwealth, besides constituting a crime against God and the Church.”** Dickens, *The English Reformation* at 164.
7. More justified burning as a way to make sure many more did not burn in hell.

Slide 37

1. Following the 1530 proclamation demanding the destruction of heretics, More was personally involved in burning of at least nine prominent supporters of Luther.
2. **“As Lord Chancellor, he did not merely acquiesce in the procedures: he played an active personal role in the arrest, interrogation and imprisonment of several suspects.”** Dickens, *The English Reformation* at 164.
3. In 1530, Thomas Hilton was burned for assisting Tyndale in smuggling books into the country.
4. In 1531, Thomas Bilney and Richard Bayfield were burned for distributing materials supporting the teachings of Martin Luther.
5. Also in 1531, based on an interrogation by More following being stretched on the rack, John Tewkesbury, shown here carrying his own bundle of sticks, was burned for reading Tyndale’s writings after he had said he had abandoned heretical ideas.
6. In 1532, Thomas Dugate, also known as Thomas Bennet, was burned for having abandoned the priesthood and becoming sympathetic to Luther’s teachings, James Bainham was burned for denying the existence of purgatory and Thomas Harding, a former Lollard, was burned for reading Tyndale’s books.
7. John Frith and Andrew Hewet were burned in 1533 after having been arrested under warrants issued by More.

Slide 38

1. By 1532, **“More’s policies were securing results.”** Marshall, *Heretics and Believers* at 187.
2. But More’s aggressive actions against heretics came to an abrupt end because of Henry’s continued need for a divorce so he could marry Anne Boleyn.
3. Henry began putting pressure on England’s clergy to recognize him as the leader of the Church in England, rejecting the authority of the pope.
4. Some of the encouragement came from Anne Boleyn, who was sympathetic to the views of Luther as well as desirous of marrying a king.
5. On May 15, 1532, a Convocation of English bishops and clergy effectively gave King Henry control over all ecclesiastical laws, known as the Submission of the Clergy.
6. Correctly seeing this action as a repudiation of the pope’s authority, Thomas More resigned as Lord Chancellor in protest the next day.

Slide 39

1. In late 1532 or early 1533, Henry, then 41, married Anne Boleyn without permission from the pope and without a divorce, continuing to insist that his marriage to Catherine was invalid under the laws of God.
2. Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn, in direct opposition to the authority of the pope, set the stage for the traditional beginning of the English Reformation.
3. However, as we have seen, for more than 150 years many of the essential ideas of the Reformation had been gaining popularity in England, led by such reformers as John Wycliffe and William Tyndale and intellectuals meeting in the White Horse Tavern.
4. **"The tradition of reform begun by Wyclif in the fourteenth century had never died out entirely."** Placher, *A History of Christian Theology* at 227.
5. As a result, **"[f]or centuries the Church in England had been moving toward independence from Rome."** Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* at 265.
6. The Lollard tradition provided a population already conditioned to accept the anti-papal views of Luther and others coming from the Continent.
7. As one author writes: **"That Lollardy thus survived and contributed in some significant degree toward the Protestant Reformation is a fact based upon incontrovertible evidence."** Dickens, *The English Reformation* at 59.

Slide 40

1. We will continue the story of the English Reformation next week, with Henry formally breaking from the Catholic Church in 1534 and beginning a period of religious instability and killing in the name of religious truth that continued for decades.
2. As we will see, by the end of 1536, Anne Boleyn, Thomas More, John Fisher and William Tyndale had all been killed for their varied beliefs, along with many others.
3. More killings followed under Queen Mary I, the daughter of Henry VIII and Catherine, who became known as "Bloody Mary" as she tried to reestablish Catholicism.
4. We will end next week's presentation early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I, the daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, who sought to establish a stable middle ground between Protestant and Catholic extremes.
5. In the last presentation, we will look at the Puritans who attacked that middle ground and eventually came to the New World to implement their reform ideas.

Resources:

- Dickens, A. G., *The English Reformation* (Pennsylvania State University Press 1989)
- Durant, Will, *Heroes of History* (Simon & Schuster 2001)
- Lechler, Gotthard, *John Wycliffe and his English Precursors* (Religious Tract Society 1904)
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- Moynahan, Brian, *The Faith: A History of Christianity* (Doubleday 2002)
- Ozment, Steven, *The Age of Reform: 1250-1550* (Yale University Press 1980)
- Placher, William, *A History of Christian Theology* (Westminster Press 1983)
- Shelley, Bruce, *Church History in Plain Language* (Thomas Nelson 2008)
- Walker, Williston, *A History of the Christian Church* (Scribner 1985)