

# Lessons from Church History (Part 1)

## WEEK 10: Lessons from the Protestant Reformation

*Post Tenebras Lux – After Darkness, Light*

### William Tyndale (1494-1536)

- Tyndale was born in the small village of Stinchcombe. He received his B. A. from Oxford in 1512. Tyndale was a great scholar, fluent in 7 other languages: Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, Spanish, French, & Italian.
- Tyndale read Erasmus' NT just as Thomas Bilney had around 1519. Upon reading 1 Tim. 1:15, Bilney was converted.
- Bilney was arrested in 1527 for preaching. He recanted and was released. He repented of his recantation, and was arrested again, then burned at the stake in 1531.
- By 1522, Tyndale had in his mind to translate the Bible into English so the common man could understand it. He asked permission in 1523 and was refused.
- In 1408 a law stating any translation or reading of the Bible except the Latin Vulgate was punishable by death. In 1519, 7 Lollards in Coventry were burned at the stake for teaching their children the Lord's Prayer in English.
- In 1524 Tyndale began clandestine work in Germany on his NT translation. A drunk worker nearly caused the work to be undone.
- By 1526 copies were smuggled back to England in folds of cloth. Authorities tried to buy and burn as many copies as possible, but they could not keep up with the flow.
- In 1531 Thomas More burned many at the stake for reading Tyndale's NT. John Tewkesbury was converted by reading Tyndale's *Parable of the Wicked Mammon* that defended justification by faith alone. He was tortured in the Tower of London.
- Tyndale's translation changed:
  - “do penance” to “repent”
  - “church” to “congregation”
  - “priest” to “elder”
  - “charity” to “love”
  - “confess” to “acknowledge”
- Tyndale moved to Antwerp, Belgium in 1530 to work on OT. He was betrayed to the authorities by Henry Phillips in 1535 and imprisoned for 18 months. He was burned at the stake while crying out: “Lord open the king of England's eyes.”

### Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556)

- Born in Nottinghamshire, England to a family of modest wealth, his father died when he was 12 years old. At the age of 14, he was sent to the newly created Jesus College in Cambridge. Modest abilities as a student.
- He graduated with a Master of Arts degree in 1515 and was elected to a Fellowship chair of Jesus College. His first wife Joan died during childbirth.
- Cranmer began studying theology, was ordained in 1520 as a priest in the Catholic church and received his Doctorate in Divinity in 1526.
- Sometime in the early 1520's he comes under the influence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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## Thomas Cranmer (cont'd.)

- In 1532 he catches the eye of Henry VIII and is appointed Ambassador of England in Rome. He works closely with Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and travels with him throughout Europe, seeing the effects of the Reformation.
- In Nuremberg, he befriends reformer Andreas Osiander and eventually marries his niece, Margarete. Encounters Ulrich Zwingli and Martin Bucer.
- In late 1533, he was installed as Archbishop of Canterbury, the highest religious position in England (9000 churches). The timing was unfortunate - shortly after Henry VIII directed Cranmer to figure out a legal divorce from Catherine of Aragon.
- Cranmer and other scholars use a rare passage from Leviticus where cousins are not allowed to marry, which ultimately leads to an annulment and Henry marries Anne Boleyn. Pope Clement VII is furious.
- During this episode, the Church in England made its break from Rome and became established as the Anglican Church. Parliament passes the Act of Supremacy, making Henry VIII the head of the Church.

**John Rogers** - The FATHER of the Reformation in England

**Thomas Cranmer** - The ARCHITECT of the Reformation in England

**Hugh Latimer** – The PREACHER of the Reformation in England

**Nicholas Ridley** – The THEOLOGIAN of the Reformation in England

- In 1547 Henry VIII dies, with Cranmer holding his hand and quoting a reformed statement of faith instead of the last rites. Edward VI takes the throne at age 9. Now the Reformers were part of the Establishment.
- Cranmer was turning a battleship, not a rowboat.
- In 1548, as the use of English in worship services spread, the Book of Common Prayer was created. It became compulsory in 1549.
- Three major programs of reform: the revision of ecclesiastical law, revision to the prayer book, and formation of a doctrinal statement.
- In 1553 Edward VI became seriously ill, igniting a massive struggle for political & religious power. To shore up advances of the Reformation, leaders propelled Lady Jane Grey to the throne but were unsuccessful in keeping it (lasting only 9 days from July 10-19, 1553).
- Mary, daughter of Henry and Catherine of Aragon, and a staunch Catholic wrested support via the populus and was proclaimed queen. Lady Jane Grey would be executed in February 1554, reciting Psalm 51. Cranmer, Ridley, Latimer, and others would be imprisoned, tried, and convicted.
- Cranmer at first stood firm, even when forced to watch Latimer and Ridley be burned at the stake in October 1555. But months later, to the Catholic church's great satisfaction, he crumbled and recanted his faith.
- Cranmer was told to make a final recantation, from the pulpit of University Church before an audience of dignitaries. His sermon was carefully reviewed and approved. On March 21, 1556 he began, then abruptly deviated from the script, calling the Pope the Antichrist.
- He was pulled from the pulpit and taken to be burned at the stake. Just as he promised in his sermon, he extended his right hand – which had written his repudiation of the Gospel – into the flames and held it there to burn first.