Lecture 1: The Lollards: Prelude to Protestantism

The Lollards were a heretical group who arose in England late in the fourteenth century, espousing principles similar to those eventually implemented in the Reformation. Although their main force had been spent by the early fifteenth century, traces of their activity may be found for another century thereafter. Direct continuity between Lollardism and Puritanism is difficult to prove, but there may well have been such ongoing influences.

Bibliography—If you’d like to learn more about the material covered in this lecture, consult the following:

Christopher Hill, “From Lollards to Levellers,” in Maurice Cornforth, ed., Rebels and Their Causes: Essays in Honour of A. L. Morton (Atlanticm Highlands, New Jersey, 1978). This essay is more receptive than the next item on the bibliography to the idea of continuity between the Lollards and the Puritans.


Lecture 2: Fifteenth-Century Merchants

Two groups of English merchants are of interest to us: the clothiers of East Anglia and the fishermen and mariners of the West Country. During the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, many of the newly wealthy cloth merchants of England, especially those of East Anglia, applied some of their wealth to the architectural glorification of their parish churches. A number of these families would become prominent Puritans. The West Country merchants had been active in the North Atlantic fisheries in the fifteenth century, and this would eventually lead many of them to participate in the earliest colonial ventures in New England.

Bibliography—If you’d like to learn more about the material covered in this lecture, consult the following:


“Spring Family,” Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. (This source and the next differ somewhat in the details of the early Spring family pedigree.)


David Beers Quinn, England and The Discovery of America, 1481-1620 (New York 1974).

K. R. Andrews et al., The Westward Enterprise: English Activities in Ireland, the Atlantic and America, 1480-1650 (Detroit 1979), Chapter 5, “Bristol and America, 1480-1631.”


**Lecture 3: The Dissolution of the Monasteries (1527–1547)**

Although England had been creeping towards its Reformation for some years, the break with Rome came in 1534 with the Act of Supremacy, which declared Henry VIII Supreme Head of the English church. This was soon followed by the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the late 1530s. Many of the newly wealthy merchants, including some who would become important in the Puritan movement, took advantage of this great upheaval to acquire substantial landed estates.

**Timeline of events**

1517    Martin Luther posts 95 Theses at Wittenberg
1520    Luther publishes *De Captivitate Babylonica*
1521 Summer    Henry VIII publishes *Defence of the Seven Sacraments*, against Luther
1521 October 11    Pope Leo X bestows on Henry VIII title Fidei Defensor (Defender of the Faith)
1522    Huldreich Zwingli publishes *Sixty-Seven Articles*
1526    Beginning of Henry’s infatuation with Anne Boleyn
1527    Henry’s desire for divorce from Katherine first made public
1527 June    First meeting between Henry VIII and Thomas Cranmer
1528    Cranmer acts as courier of a letter from London to Ipswich, written by Thomas Cromwell as agent for Wolsey
1529 August 2  Cranmer meets with Stephen Gardiner and Edward Fox and suggests polling continental universities regarding the divorce
1529  Cranmer now under patronage of Thomas Boleyn, father of Anne
1529  Marburg Colloquy; unsuccessful attempt to resolve the dispute between Luther and Zwingli over the real presence in the eucharist
1529 October 25  Thomas More installed as Chancellor
1529 November  Cranmer meets with More regarding divorce
1530 November 29  Death of Cardinal Wolsey
1531 August 19  Thomas Bilney executed, accused of preaching Lutheran doctrines
1532 May 16  Thomas More resigned as Chancellor
1532 August 22  Death of Archbishop Warham
1532 November  Henry and Anne Boleyn married privately
1533 January 25  Henry and Anne Boleyn married publicly
1533 March 30  Thomas Cranmer installed as Archbishop of Canterbury
1533 April 7  Act in Restraint of Appeals (to the Vatican)
1533 May 23  Divorce of Henry and Catherine of Aragon declared final
1533 June 1  Coronation of Anne Boleyn
1533 September 7  Elizabeth born
1534 November  Act of Supremacy
1535  *Valor Ecclesiasticus* compiled
1535  Coverdale Bible published
1535 January  Cromwell named Vicar General
1535 May 25  Examination of London Anabaptists
1535 July 6  Thomas More executed
1536  Act dissolving lesser monasteries (those worth less than £200 per annum)
1536  Court of Augmentations established to oversee disposal of monastic properties
1536 January 7  Death of Catherine of Aragon
1536 May 19  Execution of Anne Boleyn
1536 May 30  Marriage of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour
1536 October 6    William Tyndale executed
1537 October 12   Birth of Edward
1537 October 24   Death of Jane Seymour
1539               Act dissolving greater monasteries
1539 June 10      Act of Six Articles
1540 January 6    Marriage of Henry VIII and Anne of Cleves
1540 July 9       Henry VIII divorces Anne of Cleves
1540 July 28      Marriage of Henry VIII and Catherine Howard
1540 July 28      Execution of Thomas Cromwell
1542 February 13  Catherine Howard executed
1543 May 5        King’s Book issued
1543 May 10       Act for the Advancement of True Religion
1543 July 12      Marriage of Henry VIII and Catherine Parr
1547 January 28   Death of Henry VIII

**Bibliography**—If you’d like to learn more about the material covered in this lecture, consult the following:

J. J. Scarisbrick, Henry VIII (Berkeley 1968). Standard biography, with heavy emphasis on the divorce from Catherine of Aragon.


Hilary Mantel, Wolf Hall (New York 2009). Brilliant fictional reconstruction of Thomas Cromwell’s activities during the struggle over the divorce.

Eamon Duffy, The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580 (New Haven 1992). Detailed portrayal of pre-Reformation religious practices in England and the iconoclastic activities until the early years of Elizabeth. (Chapters 11 and 12 relevant to this lecture. Later chapters describe iconoclasm under Edward, Mary and Elizabeth, and so will be pertinent to the next three lectures.)

David Daniel, William Tyndale: A Biography (New Haven 1994). William Tyndale went into continental exile in the early 1520s with the goal of creating an English translation of the Bible. Despite the changing religious climate in England, he was executed for heresy in 1536.