

Church History (22): The Locations of the Reformation (2)

Having considered the Reformation in Germany and Switzerland, we come now to France, Scotland, and England.

I. The Locations of the Reformation

1. *France*. "The story of the Reformation in France is marred by incredible violence and saturated with the blood of thousands of martyrs" (Lindberg).¹ Both Francis I, who ruled from 1515-1547, and his son Henry II, who ruled from 1547-1549, vigorously opposed the Reformation. Because of this opposition reform would largely come from without. "By 1567 Geneva had sent at least 120 pastors into France to organize congregations, which because of persecution usually led a covert existence" (Lindberg).² Protestants in France were called Huguenots. "The origin of the term Huguenot has long been debated. Many attribute it to early French Calvinist gathering near the Hugon Gate in the city of Tours" (Lindberg).³ In 1572, Charles IX, under the strong influence of his mother Catherine, led a massacre against the Huguenots wherein as many as 20,000 people were killed (called St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre). "The early church father Tertullian said that 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.' This was certainly the case in France. Thousands of God-fearing Huguenots were killed, but others took their place. Some remained in France, working in secret, others fled to the Netherlands and England, and ultimately to America. Wherever they went, God used them to instill fresh life and zeal in the church" (Beeke).⁴ Writing to the church in Paris, Calvin said in 1557: "If God sometimes allows the blood of His faithful to be spilled, He nevertheless carefully collects their precious tears."⁵ "The Reformed church in France was a church under the cross whose solace and encouragement to take shelter 'in the shadow of the wings of God' came from Calvin and the French Psalms he provided them. Persecuted by crown and commoner, the Huguenots took refuge in their conviction of election as a chosen people whom God protects as well as chastises" (Lindberg).⁶

2. *Scotland*. "Scotland, far from the center of European life in the sixteenth century, nevertheless received the Reformation almost as early as, and accepted it more thoroughly than, most other countries" (Lindsay).⁷ The reform came to Scotland via Bohemia and John Huss. "Bohemia and John Huss' doings there were well known in Scotland. As early as 1440, Henry Wardlaw, Bishop of St. Andrews, was convicted of heresy, for teaching the doctrine of John Huss and Wycliffe" (Lindsay).⁸ The next reformed influence on Scotland was Lutheranism. "The earliest evangelical ideas in Scotland came from Luther via scholars trained in Germany, such as Patrick Hamilton who was burned as a heretic in 1528, and from those acquainted with Paris, where Luther's ideas were current by 1519. Merchants also played a significant role in transmitting ideas; German and Scottish traders trafficked in Lutheran teachings and books as well as merchandise. But by the mid-1540s Swiss Reformed expressions of the gospel were taking the place of those from German Lutheranism" (Lindberg).⁹

Early on, the doctrines of the Lollards and the Hussites had found followers in the country, and it had been impossible to uproot them. Now Protestantism found fertile soil

¹ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 330

² Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 330

³ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 256

⁴ Joel Beeke, *The Reformation Heroes*, 156

⁵ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 275

⁶ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 275

⁷ T.M. Lindsay, *The Reformation*, 143

⁸ T.M. Lindsay, *The Reformation*, 145

⁹ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 330-331

among those who held to such doctrines. Many Scots who had studied in Germany returned to their homeland, taking with them the ideas and writings of Luther and other reformers. The Scottish Parliament issued laws against those writings, and against those who sought to spread Protestant teachings. The year 1528 saw the first martyrdom of one of these itinerant preachers, and after that time ever-increasing numbers were executed. But it was all in vain. In spite of persecution, the new doctrines continued gaining adherents. The spread of Protestantism was particularly noticeable among the nobility, who resented the growing power of the crown and the loss of many of their ancient privileges, and among university students, who constantly read and circulated the smuggled books of Protestant authors.¹⁰

John Knox (1514-1572) was born about 1514, at Gifford Gate, Haddington, Scotland. He soon moved to St. Andrews, to attend the University of St. Andrews. He eventually was ordained a priest in the Roman Catholic Church. Through his study of Scripture and early fathers such as Augustine, he became convinced of the errors of the Roman Catholic Church. After his conversion to the Reformation, Knox resigned his position as priest, and found employment tutoring the children of several Protestant families in St. Andrews. Knox befriended a man by the name of George Wishart (1513-1546), who had begun preaching against the doctrines of the Church. "John Knox accompanied Wishart on many of his travels throughout Scotland. The Holy Spirit used this time to nurture Knox in the faith and to help him form scriptural conclusions about the doctrines of God's Word" (Beeke).¹¹ Wishart was arrested on January 16, 1546, and on March 1, he was burned at the stake. This left Knox to assume the leadership of the reform in Scotland. A year later, in 1547, the French captured St. Andrews, taking captive Knox and other Scottish Protestant leaders. "For almost two years, Knox had to work as a galley slave. In February 1549, after nineteen months of imprisonment, Knox was released from the galleys, in large part through the influence of the young King Edward VI. After this, he went to England and continued his labors for the Reformation. When Edward VI died and Queen Mary came to the throne, Knox fled to Germany, where he pastored the English refugees in Frankfurt" (Beeke).¹² After that church divided, he went to Geneva.

(1) His time in Geneva. It was in Geneva that Knox came under the influence of John Calvin. Knox remained at Geneva from 1556 to 1559. "Though four years older than Calvin, Knox sat humbly at his feet and became more Calvinistic than Calvin. John Knox, the Scot of the Scots, as Luther was the German of the Germans, spent the five years of his exile (1554-1559), mostly at Geneva, and found there 'the most perfect school of Christ that ever was since the days of the Apostles'" (Schaff).¹³ In 1556, Knox married Margery Bowes, who gave him two sons (he would marry again in 1564, while in Scotland to Margaret Stewart, who would give him three daughters). "Knox became co-pastor of the English refugee congregation in Calvin's Geneva, alongside Christopher Goodman, who had been professor of divinity at Oxford University under Edward VI. Knox looked on his time as co-pastor of the English church in Geneva as the happiest period of his life. The fellowship had 186 members, and worshipped according to a Continental-style Reformed liturgy which had been drawn up by Knox and others" (Needham).¹⁴

In Geneva Knox became the fast friend of Calvin. During his short stay there he took part in the composition of that directly for public worship, which, under the various

¹⁰ Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 2:99

¹¹ Joel Beeke, *Reformation Heroes*, 93

¹² Joel Beeke, *Reformation Heroes*, 95-96

¹³ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 8:819

¹⁴ Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, 407

names of Book of Common Order, Book of Geneva, and Knox's Liturgy, guided the churches in Geneva, and would also guide the Reformed Church of Scotland. He also had a share in the translation of the most popular of the earlier English versions of Holy Scripture, the Geneva Bible.¹⁵

Knox published two important treatises while in Geneva. Both were written in 1558. The first was called, *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*. The treatise was aimed chiefly against Mary Tudor, "that horrible monster Jezebel of England," whose regime Protestants had good reason to consider monstrous. Knox began the treatise as follows: "To promote a woman to bear rule, superiority, dominion, or empire above any realm, nation, or city, is repugnant to nature; contempt to God, a thing most contrary to His revealed will and approved ordinance; and finally, it is the subversion of good order, of all equity and justice."¹⁶ "Unfortunately, soon after the book's publication, Mary Tudor died and was succeeded by a female Protestant sovereign, Elizabeth. Knox's book alienated Elizabeth badly, and made Protestant Anglo-Scottish relations more difficult than they should have been" (Needham).¹⁷ The second treatise published in 1558 was *The Appellation*. "In this work, Knox appealed to the Scottish nobility to enact reformation, and to the Scottish common people to put pressure on the government in favor of Protestantism. The nobility, Knox maintained, had the right to depose an idolatrous monarch; the common people had the right to establish their own Reformed Church if the government would not establish one" (Needham).¹⁸ He basically believed that "a monarch's authority was not absolute, but must be held in check by the lesser political authorities (such as parliaments) whose duty it was to call a wicked ruler to account for his or her misdeeds" (Needham).¹⁹

(2) His return to Scotland. Knox always felt a burden to return to Scotland. "Knox returned to Scotland May 1559 at the urgent request of its Protestant leaders" (Needham).²⁰ "Knox did much to help the Reformation in Scotland. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland met for the first time on December 20, 1560. They had already adopted a confession of faith, but they wanted to discuss the system of church government that would be best for the church in Scotland. The result was the establishment of the Presbyterian Church in Scotland, despite the opposition of the queen, the priests, and the pope" (Beeke).²¹ "In each church, elders were elected, as was a minister, although the latter could not be installed before being examined by the other ministers. The pillars of the new church were the *Book of Discipline*, the *Book of Common Order*, and the *Scots Confession*" (Gonzalez).²² The first two of these documents, *Book of Discipline* and *Book of Common Order*, came to define Presbyterian church polity, and remained the standard of liturgy in Scotland until the *Westminster Directory of Public Worship* (1644-1645).

3. *England*. "The Reformation in England had many peculiarities. For one, as in France and the Netherlands, there was in England no single, great outstanding leader. England had no Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, or Knox" (Kuiper).²³ "The reformation in England, perhaps to a greater extent than that of the Continent, was effected by the word of God. Men like Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, do not appear in England; but the holy Scripture is widely circulated. The only true reformation is that which emanates

¹⁵ T.M. Lindsay, *The Reformation*, 148

¹⁶ John Knox, *Works*, 4:373

¹⁷ Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, 408

¹⁸ Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, 408

¹⁹ Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, 409

²⁰ Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, 409

²¹ Joel Beeke, *Reformation Heroes*, 98-99

²² Justo Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity*, 2:103

²³ B.K. Kuiper, *The Church in History*, 279

from the word of God" (D'Aubigne).²⁴ The reform in England was continued under the reign of Henry VIII (1509-1547), and his children Edward IV (1547-1553), Mary I (1553-1558), and Elizabeth I (1558-1603). While Henry persecuted both Catholics and radical Protestants his occasional leniency toward the reform opened the doors to Protestantism in England. Mary, on the other hand, was a staunch Catholic and hater of the Reformation, and her sister Elizabeth, was a committed Protestant who aided the Reformation.

"Henry VIII applied to the pope for a divorce from his wife, Catherine. Eventually he decided to take things into his own hands. In 1534 he had Parliament pass a law which decreed that the king 'justly and rightfully is and ought to be the supreme head of the Church of England.' This law is called the *Act of Supremacy*" (Kuiper).²⁵ This was the beginning of the Church of England, or the Anglican Church, as it is also called. It was a church governed by bishops, under the king as supreme head. Under Henry VIII other changes were made that moved the Church of England further from Rome, and under Edward, the Church of England moved closer to the Reformation. "During the brief reign of Edward VI, the Reformation made considerable progress in England. This included changes in its doctrine and form of worship. Almost at once, in 1547, Parliament passed a law which provided that all communicants should be allowed to partake of the wine as well as of the bread. Early the next year it was decreed that images should be removed from the church, and a year later, celibacy of the clergy was done away with" (Kuiper).²⁶

Additional reform took place under the reign of Edward IV. The *Book of Common Prayer* was made mandatory in church services and a new creed was formulated by Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury, with the help of six other theologians (one of which was John Knox). This became known as the *Forty-two Articles* of the Church of England, and was largely Protestant. The Reformation in England seemed to win the day, until Edward died and his sister, Blood Mary took his place. Catholicism regained much of the ground it had lost. "Mary was strongly Catholic. She proceeded to set the clock of the Reformation in England back at least twenty-five years. The laws regarding the Church which Parliament had passed were repealed. Many leading Protestants fled to the continent, where they were warmly received by Calvin. More than seventy-five Protestants were burned to death in the year 1555 alone" (Kuiper).²⁷ Things changed for the better when Elizabeth succeeded Mary in 1558. Elizabeth was a Protestant and a wise and shrewd lady. "On April 29, 1559, Parliament passed a new *Supremacy Act*, to reject all authority of the pope over the Church of England. The *Book of Common Prayer* was revised and reinstated. In 1563 there was a slight change in the creed. The *Forty-two Articles* were reduced to thirty-nine. These now famous *Thirty-nine Articles* are the official creed of the Church of England" (Kuiper).²⁸

(1) William Tyndale (1494-1536). "The greatest of the early English Protestants was William Tyndale. Tyndale was a priest and university-trained linguist (educated at Oxford), whose religious views were at an advanced stage before 1522, under Erasmus's influence; it is not known when he passed over into avowed Protestantism. He early conceived it to be his mission to translate the Bible into English from the original Greek and Hebrew, and to give it to the common people as the surest way of overthrowing Roman error" (Needham).²⁹ Opposed, by the English Church authorities, in 1523, Tyndale sailed to the Continent and lived the rest of his life an exile in Germany and the Netherlands. "Tyndale went to

²⁴ Merle D'Aubigne, *The Reformation in England*, 1:129

²⁵ B.K. Kuiper, *The Church in History*, 279

²⁶ B.K. Kuiper, *The Church in History*, 282

²⁷ B.K. Kuiper, *The Church in History*, 282-283

²⁸ B.K. Kuiper, *The Church in History*, 285-286

²⁹ Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, 376-377

Hamburg and Wittenberg, and then to the Netherlands. In 1535 he was betrayed to the imperial authorities, arrested, strangled, and burned at the stake. Tyndale was a language genius who, it was said, could speak fluently in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, English, and French. From his time in Germany and his translations of Luther, it is obvious that he also knew German. Tyndale never returned to England" (Lindberg).³⁰

Tyndale began his translation of the NT in 1524, in Wittenberg, and completed it in 1525. He prefaced the translation with a prologue that eventually was published separately, with slight alteration, under the title, *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture*. Tyndale used this treatise to give an overview of Scripture, provide some basic principles of interpretation, and especially describe the nature of the law and gospel in relation to salvation. "In the gospel, when we believe the promises, we receive the Spirit of life; and are justified, in the blood of Christ, from all things whereof the law condemned us. And we receive love unto the law, and power to fulfil it, and grow therein daily" (Tyndale).³¹ This entire treatise is filled with clearly reformed and evangelical statements. "By faith are we saved only, in believing the promises. And though faith be never without love and good works, yet is our saving imputed neither to love nor unto good works, but unto faith only" (Tyndale).³² "Tyndale's translation was a masterpiece. Working from Erasmus's Greek text, the Latin Vulgate, and Luther's German version, Tyndale produced a fresh and original rendering of the NT, which formed the basis of virtually all English New Testaments that followed, including the Great Bible, the Bishops Bible, and the Authorized or King James Version. Tyndale managed to translate the Pentateuch, Jonah, and Joshua to 2 Chronicles into English too, before his death" (Needham).³³ "Miles Coverdale (1488-1568), worked with Tyndale on the translation of the OT, and was responsible for the first complete English translation of the Bible (1535)" (Lindberg).³⁴

Tyndale made an enormous contribution to the Reformation in England. Many would say that by translating the Bible into English and overseeing its publication that he made *the* contribution. Because of his powerful use of the English language in his Bible, this Reformer has been called 'the father of modern English' and 'a prophet of the English language.' His translation made him 'the true father of the English Bible.' In recognition of his enduring influence, he has been called 'the first of the Puritans, or, at least their grandfather.' John Foxe went so far as to call him 'the Apostle of England.' There is no doubt that by his monumental work, Tyndale changed the course of English history and Western civilization.³⁵

"Tyndale's theological writings are the most important of any produced by the English Reformation in Henry VIII's reign" (Needham).³⁶ While Tyndale wrote several theological treatises, three are of extreme importance. (a) *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon*. "The first of Tyndale's theological works, *The Parable of the Wicked Mammon* (1528), proved to be his best known. Written with a strong Augustinian emphasis, it was a passionate exposition and sound defense of the doctrine of justification by faith alone. In this work, Tyndale drew heavily on Luther, simply translating him in places" (Lawson).³⁷ (b) *The Obedience of a Christian Man* (1528) was the largest of Tyndale's theological works. This work answered the charge that Tyndale preached rebellion against secular rulers, specifically the king.

³⁰ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 314

³¹ William Tyndale, *Works*, 1:11

³² William Tyndale, *Works*, 1:15

³³ Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, 377-378

³⁴ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations*, 315

³⁵ Steven Lawson, *Pillars of Grace*, 384-385

³⁶ Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, 378

³⁷ Steven Lawson, *Pillars of Grace*, 397

He declared that civil authorities—whether kings, parents, husbands, masters, or landlords—should be obeyed by those under them, but everyone must give his ultimate loyalty to God" (Lawson).³⁸ (c) *The Practice of Prelates* (1530). "Here Tyndale outlined the corruption in the hierarchy of the established church. He gave a historical overview of the rise of the false system of church hierarchy and prelacy. In particular, he denounced Henry VIII's divorce from Catherine of Aragon on the grounds that it was unscriptural" (Lawson).³⁹

(2) Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556). Cranmer received his education at Cambridge, where he remained as a lecturer. "As he studied the Bible extensively, he began to see that the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church were in error, but he did not yet break away from the church" (Beeke).⁴⁰ He became chaplain to Henry VIII, and on March 30, 1553, he was officially ordained as archbishop of Canterbury (he then justified Henry's divorce and validated his new marriage). During this time, he often traveled to Germany and Switzerland, where he met such Reformers as Luther, Bucer, and Bullinger. "This led to a firmer embracing of the Reformed doctrines and teachings" (Beeke).⁴¹ In 1548, Cranmer argued many of these truths before Parliament, after Henry died in 1547. "He argued for the spiritual presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Lord's Supper and taught the Reformation doctrine of justification by faith alone" (Beeke).⁴² When Mary replaced Edward in 1553, Cranmer was condemned as a heretic and sentenced to death. Eventually, after three long years in prison, Cranmer recanted of his Protestant views in hopes of being liberated. Recanting didn't help Cranmer, however, since Queen Mary was still determined to have him killed. And yet, on the day of his death, he would make a bold stand for the truth.

I am come to the end of my life on earth, and am near to beginning the life to come. First, I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And I believe every article of the Christian faith, every word and sentence taught by our Savior, His apostles, and the prophets, in the New and Old Testament. And now I come to the great thing that troubles my conscience more than any other thing that I ever did in my life, and that is that I wrote things against the truth, because I was afraid, I would be killed. I now here renounce and refuse these things as things written with my hand contrary to the truth which I believed in my heart. All such things which I have written and signed with my own hand I now proclaim untrue. My hand has offended in writing contrary to my heart; therefore, my hand shall first be punished, for when I come into the fire, it shall be burned first. As for the pope, I refuse him as Christ's enemy and as antichrist, with all his false doctrines.⁴³

This filled Cranmer's enemies with astonishment and rage. They had expected to triumph over the Reformers by having such a well-known man as Cranmer publicly recant. They rushed Cranmer to the stake, the same place where Latimer and Ridley had died. Dressed in an ankle-length robe, he was chained to the stake. He presented a lamentable picture: an old man with a long white beard, a bald head, and bare feet. As the flames rose around him, he looked up toward heaven, and stretching forth his hand into the flame, he exclaimed, "This hand has offended; oh, this unworthy right hand!" Then, using the words of Stephen, the first martyr, he said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."⁴⁴

³⁸ Steven Lawson, *Pillars of Grace*, 397

³⁹ Steven Lawson, *Pillars of Grace*, 398

⁴⁰ Joel Beeke, *Reformation Heroes*, 75

⁴¹ Joel Beeke, *Reformation Heroes*, 76

⁴² Joel Beeke, *Reformation Heroes*, 77

⁴³ John Fox, *Fox's Book of Martyrs*, 248-249

⁴⁴ Joel Beeke, *Reformation Heroes*, 79