

## Key Stage 3

# Reform: How Does Religion Change?

### LESSONS 3-4: THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND

In the first of these two lessons students compare the decisions of the most powerful with the demands of ordinary people to explore different aspects of religious change. Henry VIII broke with Rome for his own reasons and pulled the country with him, but there was a grassroots demand for a Bible ordinary people could understand; one of the key aspects of the Reformation all over Europe.

In the second lesson students learn about groups who felt the Anglican Church was not radical enough and created new 'nonconforming' churches in England. Once the Pandora's box of change had been opened, it was hard for the most powerful to close it again.

These lessons move quickly through history to plot Christian movements which have shaped Britain since the Reformation. Students study the Reformation period in the History National Curriculum. To familiarise yourself with the period, these BBC Bitesize resources are helpful: [www.bbc.co.uk/education/topics/zynp34j](http://www.bbc.co.uk/education/topics/zynp34j) (Tudors and Stuarts, fifteenth–seventeenth centuries).

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

#### LESSON 3: THE BIBLE IN ENGLISH

This lesson looks at the translation of the Bible into English. This was a feature of the Reformation all over Europe. Students will find out about the great risks translators took in creating their own versions for ordinary people to read, and have the chance to debate this issue.

**By the end of this lesson students will:**

- **know** that a new Protestant Church was created in England, called the Anglican Church
- **understand** Wycliffe and Tyndale's reasons for translating the Bible into English
- **reflect on** how far change comes from the powerful, and how far it comes from ordinary people

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### 1: CHANGE AND CONFLICT

#### LESSON CONTENT

- Ask students to recollect their most recent Bonfire Night. Gather how much the class knows about the history of the occasion. Are they aware that a group of Catholics tried to destroy the House of Commons and kill the Protestant king in 1605? Teach that Bonfire Night is a direct commemoration of Reformation-era conflict.
- Show images of modern bonfire night celebrations in Lewes, where effigies of Pope Paul V and 17 crosses depicting 17 Protestants martyrs are burnt. Give the class time to generate questions about what is happening and why. Discuss answers as a class.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

- Catholics who suffered persecution under Protestant rulers Elizabeth I and James I wanted to kill James and destroy parliament.
- This commemoration can be understood as ripples of Reformation conflict still alive in Britain today.

### 2: HENRY VIII AND THE ANGLICAN CHURCH

#### LESSON CONTENT

- Watch this Horrible Histories song about Henry VIII and the Reformation: [horriblehistoriestv.wordpress.com/a-little-more-reformation-lyrics/](http://horriblehistoriestv.wordpress.com/a-little-more-reformation-lyrics/). Print out the lyrics on this webpage and play the song again. This time give students the lyrics. Ask students what Henry wants a 'lot less' of (monasteries, the Pope, nuns). What motive does the song give for Henry's actions? (Money, for war with France.)
- Put these words on the board, and ensure students' understanding: **Catholic, Protestant, Anglican Church, Henry VIII.**  
Teach that the church of state is the Anglican Church, also called the Church of England, although it exists all over the world. The English monarchy is both the head of state and head of the Church.
- Ask the class how far they think a new church was born because Henry wanted another wife and a war with France, as the Horrible Histories song suggests. How far do they imagine religious change comes from the powerful rulers, and how far does it stem from the beliefs and demands of the ordinary people? Discuss impressions briefly.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

- Monasteries, especially for women (nuns), and the Pope, were not part of the church Henry developed. They became symbols of the Catholic Church, rather than the new Anglican Church.
- In the reign of Henry VIII England detached from the Catholic Church. The new English Protestant Church was called the Anglican Church.
- This lesson will explore how the convictions and courage of ordinary people have shaped the Christian landscape as much as kings and popes.

### 3: THE ENGLISH BIBLE

#### LESSON CONTENT

- a. Ask students to remind you about Wycliffe from last lesson (you can find a picture of him online). Ask students to tell you what Wycliffe did and why he did it? Explain that students will learn about how the Bible was eventually translated ‘officially’ into English.
- b. Read information about the English Bible on p. 7. Ask students to highlight or underline all the dates in this text.
- c. Ask students to copy the ‘English Bible Diagram’ on p. 8 into their books, including the dates. Ask students to write a few words to summarise the event corresponding to each date.
- d. Ask the class what they think gave people like Tyndale the courage to pursue their convictions. Gather the reasons given by Wycliffe and Tyndale for making their dangerous translations. Do they explain their actions?

**Extension:** link to Luther’s reasons for his German translation.

- e. Give groups five minutes to discuss reasons why translations of the Bible from Latin into local languages were seen as dangerous to the Catholic Church. (Students will find ideas in the previous two lessons.) Share ideas. Create two columns on the board ‘for’ and ‘against’ local translations of the Bible. Complete as a class.
- f. To consolidate, ask groups to write the most persuasive argument for and against local translations in the inside area of the English Bible diagram.
- g. As a plenary, display modern graphic Bible versions using Amazon’s ‘Look Inside’ function.  
Ask students if the Bible MUST be constantly refreshed and updated to speak to new generations, or if this risks losing the original meaning.

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

- a. Wycliffe was a fifteenth-century English priest who translated the New Testament into English so ordinary people could understand the scriptures for themselves.
- d. Tyndale and other reformers felt God’s law, contained in the Bible, had more of a claim on them than the king or government’s law.
- e. Centuries of Church scholarship, much drawn from prayer and contemplation, lay behind all Church teachings and the priesthood. This was felt to be of direct service to ordinary, illiterate people.
- g. For example:  
The Action Bible  
[amzn.to/2gcGRY9](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B000000000)  
The Lion Comic Book Hero Bible  
[amzn.to/2gGKr1P](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B000000000)  
Manga Metamorphosis  
[amzn.to/2ggKopS](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B000000000)  
The Lion Graphic Bible  
[amzn.to/2jBgPzG](https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B000000000)

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### LESSON 4: NONCONFORMING IN ENGLAND

After the Protestant Reformation the Anglican Church became the established Church of the nation, with the monarch the head of the Church. However once the floodgates of challenge and questioning had been opened, it was hard to stop. In this lesson we look at the nonconforming churches of Britain and see how the legacy of the Reformation has shaped Britain today. We move fast, and trace two groups from the early days to form the Nonconformist churches.

**By the end of this lesson students will:**

- **know** the Anabaptists were a group who dissented from the Reformation
- **understand** why Baptists and Congregationalists in England continued to argue with the Anglican Church
- **reflect on** how change can't be stopped once it has started

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

### 1: ANABAPTISTS

#### LESSON CONTENT

- a. Start by asking the class what they think would be the most radical thing for a Christian group to do:
- Refuse to baptise babies.
  - Only baptise teenagers and adults who understand and desire it.
  - Refuse to join the armed forces.
  - Stick to their beliefs even when faced with torture and death.
  - Refuse to accept the rule of a monarch or government.
  - Refuse to pledge allegiance to a monarch or government.

Ask students to consider if any of these actions reject basic Christian beliefs.

Are any of these actions 'radical'?

Who or what do these actions reject?

- b. Read the Anabaptist section of the information sheet on p. 9: 'Anabaptists and the Radical Reformation'.
- c. Ask students to suggest why the Anabaptists were called the 'dissenters of the Reformation'. Explain that the Reformation was about dissent, but this group dissented from the dissent! To help students answer the question, consider why Anabaptists refused to baptise babies and either fight for or pledge allegiance to a nation state.
- d. As in the previous lesson, students copy the 'Anabaptists Diagram' on p. 10 and complete it in books. In the centre space students answer the question: 'Were the Anabaptists radical Christians?'

To assist students in answering this question revisit the earlier definition of 'radical'. Ask students if they think Anabaptists were radically reforming the Church, or fundamental Christian beliefs?

#### FURTHER INFORMATION

- a. 'Radical' refers to criticisms of the status quo and a call for a complete overhaul of the system which is unjust or simply wrong.
- b. Students will learn that Anabaptists made all these radical objections above.
- c. Dissenters refuse to accept ideas imposed upon them, insisting on the rightness of their own convictions.

## 2: DISSENTING CHURCHES IN ENGLAND

### LESSON CONTENT

- a. Hand out the ‘nonconforming’ information sheets on pp. 11–12 to pairs or groups. Ask students to highlight text in two colours to identify information about **Baptist and Congregationalist churches**.
- b. Draw two columns on the board, labelled ‘Baptist’ and ‘Congregationalist’. Above the columns write ‘Dissenting churches’. Ask the class to suggest how ‘Baptist and Congregationalist actions and beliefs challenged Church and state authority.’ Complete the columns as a class.

**Extension:** ask some students to identify what both churches share in terms of action or belief.

- c. Define ‘nonconforming’ as a class. Explain that churches such as these studied are known as the ‘nonconforming churches’, and they shaped much of British Christianity.
- d. Hang a washing line across the front of the classroom. At one end attach the word ‘radical’ on a piece of paper and at the other the word ‘traditional’.

Remind the class of their responses to the earlier question in activity 1d: were the Anabaptists radical Christians?

Ask groups to choose two or three examples from these two lessons (as well as the previous two lessons if they like), and discuss how far the dissenting people or argument are radical, and how far in line with tradition they are. Assist students by suggesting they focus on what the dissenters are rejecting, and what they are trying to change or put in place.

Once they have discussed, students write their examples on small pieces of paper and attach them to the washing line wherever they think they belong between ‘radical’ and ‘traditional’. Students explain their thoughts to the class.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

- b. **Baptists** refused infant baptism, instigated adult baptism and questioned the power of the monarchy.

**Congregationalists** gave each church autonomy to care for its people, were forced to preach and worship in wild and remote places.

**Both** support workers’ rights.

- c. ‘Nonconforming’ is a refusal to conform to authority.
- d. Anabaptists did not reject Christian belief, but aspects of Church hierarchy and the authority of the monarch over spiritual matters.

## The English Bible

John Wycliffe and others translated the New Testament into English between 1382 and 1395. This was forbidden without official Church approval. However Wycliffe and his team would not be put off, Wycliffe arguing: ‘Christ and his apostles taught the people in that tongue that was best known to them. Why should men not do so now?’

Wycliffe was declared a heretic and his followers were persecuted by the Church. In 1401 in England translating the Bible was declared to be punishable by burning. In 1408 English translations were banned. However Wycliffe’s Bible was extremely popular and could not be suppressed.

By the reign of Henry VIII most European countries were reading the Bible in their own tongue but the translation ban in English was still in place. In 1523 William Tyndale began a new English translation but had to do this in hiding because of the ban. Tyndale took this risk because he was convinced that the people of

England must read the Bible in words they understand in order to have a personal understanding of God. They needed this understanding because their hopes of salvation rested on their faith in God.

Despite writing in hiding, Tyndale’s Bible was popular. By 1525 16,000 copies had been smuggled into England (which then had a population of two million).

In 1534 Henry detached from the Roman Church and Tyndale began to live more openly. However, he had angered Henry in 1530 by speaking against his desire for a second wife. He was betrayed and arrested, and executed as a heretic in 1536. He was strangled and then burnt to death. At his execution he shouted, ‘Lord! Open the King of England’s eyes’.

In 1537 the king ordered that every parish should have an English Bible after all, and the version that was most widely disseminated was Tyndale’s translation.

Wycliffe quote from *On the Pastoral Office*, c. 1378.

Tyndale quote from *Acts and Monuments/Book of Martyrs*, c. 1570.

# English Bible Diagram

<p><b>1408</b></p>	<p><b>1523</b></p>	<p><b>1525</b></p>
<p><b>1401</b></p>	<p><b>The English Bible</b> All Christians should be free to translate the words of God because ...</p>	<p><b>1536</b></p>
<p><b>1382-1395</b></p>	<p>Church guidance is essential when translating God’s words because ...</p>	<p><b>1537</b></p>

## Anabaptists and the Radical Reformation

Many Christian groups in Europe didn't think Luther and Calvin went far enough in their reforms of the Church. These groups pushed for what is now called the 'Radical Reformation'. The Anabaptists were called the 'dissenters of the Reformation' (Payne 1944). They started in the early 1520s in Germany and began to form groups in 1525. The name means 'rebaptisers', because they rejected infant baptism because it was not in the Bible. They baptised adults who understood the commitment they were making to Christianity. The Anabaptists were persecuted by both Lutheran and Catholic churches.

They were seen as dangerous because they refused to recognise government and only accepted Christ's rule, based on the Bible. They wanted to live in a 'self-governing congregation, independent of state or episcopal control' (Walker 1928).

Biblical basis for their demands:

- **Refusing to use law-courts:** 'If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people?' (1 Corinthians 6:1.)
- **Refusing to join armed forces:** 'But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.' (Matthew 5:39.)
- **Refusing to recognise any government:** 'Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world".' (John 18:36.)

However, the churches and states could not stand to give them this level of freedom. From 1534–46 Anabaptists were persecuted in Europe and some came to England, where they were persecuted by Henry VIII. For example, 25 Anabaptists were executed in 1535. However the groups were active in an English form, despite persecution (three were executed in 1590), from 1550 under the reign of Elizabeth I.

Payne, E.A. (1944), *The Free Church Tradition in the Life of England* (London: SCM Press Ltd).

Walker, W. (1928), *A History of the Christian Church*.

Scripture quotations taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

# Anabaptists Diagram

1535	1590	Two Bible passages justifying their radical stance:
1534-46	<p><b>The Anabaptists</b></p> <p><i>Were the Anabaptists radical Christians?</i></p>	
1525		Why are they called 'Anabaptists'?

## Nonconforming in England

As well as the Anabaptists were many other groups in England reforming Christianity along their own lines. The ‘Separatists’ also refused infant baptism, like the Anabaptists, because it is not in the Bible. Refusing to take part in infant baptism, a mainstay of Church life, was shocking indeed.

In 1559 the Elizabethan Act of Uniformity imposed Anglicanism on everyone living in England. One official prayer book was to be used and anyone who did not attend church every Sunday would be fined 12p.

In rejection of this a church which would become known as ‘Congregationalist’ set up deliberately outside the Anglican establishment. The Congregationalist group allowed each of their individual churches to be autonomous, each seen as an independent ‘body of Christ’. They thought this as the purest form of organisation to bring people into direct contact with God. Their roots lie in Wycliffe; desire for a direct communion with God.

By 1590 many of these groups were threatened with expulsion from England if they did not join the Anglican Church, so they met in secret. In 1593 three Anabaptists were executed showing there would be no religious freedom given by the state.

In 1606 John Smythe, an Anglican minister, left the establishment for the Separatist Church. In 1609 he baptised himself, as an adult, making a public commitment to Christ. He also baptised his friend Thomas Helwys, and this is seen to mark the foundation of the first English Baptist Church, the first church building being established three years later. Thomas Helwys wrote a book in 1612 arguing that the monarch had no spiritual power over people and could not determine their choices in religion. This was a direct attack on the close connections of the Anglican Church to the English monarchy. In fact the monarch is both head of state and head of the Anglican Church today. Helwys argued in his book; ‘Our Lord the King is but an earthly King, and he hath no aucthority [authority] as a King but in earthly causes, and if the King’s people be obedient and true subjects, obeying all humane laws made by the King, our lord the King can require no more: for men’s religion to God is betwixt God and themselves’ (Helwys 1612). This book sent Helwys to Newgate prison in London.

By 1662 a further Act of Uniformity was passed, ordering that any priest who refused to accept Anglican doctrine would have to leave his church (and his home and job). 400 Congregationalist ministers were ejected from their livings as a result. By the 1660s Baptists were

a strong presence outside the established Anglican Church, meeting wherever they could, often in dangerous or remote places. With the 1662 Act of Uniformity both the Baptist and Congregationalist churches had to declare their rejection of the establishment. This was the beginning of Nonconformity in England.

In following centuries Baptist and Congregationalist missions spread these churches all over the world. In the Industrial Revolution they were both highly instrumental in fighting for workers' rights and collective action. Much English Christianity has been shaped by Nonconformity.

Anabaptism is not just historical but lives on today, largely in churches in Europe and North America. Baptist and Congregational churches also continue to this day.

Helwys, T. (1612), *The Mystery of Iniquity*.