

Hello, and welcome to the Renaissance English History Podcast. I'm your host, Heather Teysko. It's July 5th as I'm recording this, and I hope everyone in the US is having a fantastic Independence Day weekend. I am currently living in Spain for a year, and we spent yesterday going to Gibraltar, which is now an English territory, so I find it kind of ironic that on Independence Day I went to what is effectively an English colony in Spain. Anyway, this episode is in response to the listener who thought I was too lenient on Mary I and her burnings of Protestants. While I'm not sure that we would ever be friends, I have a lot of empathy and sympathy for Mary, which I explained in my podcast from last December that was about her. One listener thought I overlooked the burnings, and how she got her nickname of Bloody Mary. I still maintain that her reign was so short, and was so easily eclipsed by that of her half sister, who reigned so long and with such military successes (ie the Spanish Armada) and had the propaganda machine of George Fox and his Book of Martyrs. Mary's burnings of 280 Protestants were intense and publicized, but the tables were turned during Elizabeth's reign when oppression of Catholics lasted longer and, while it didn't involve the same level of public burnings, made the decisions that they made about whether to attend the parish church not just one of faith, but also loyalty to the state and Queen, which was enforced through the formation of the first modern spy network headed up by Francis Walsingham.

But before I get started, just a couple housekeeping reminders. First, I'm going to be partnering with a friend who runs a tour company and putting together some tours of the UK next year, focusing specifically on the history and music of the 16th century - ie, going to evensong services, various early music festivals, etc., depending on the timing. Nothing major, just a small group of like minded people who want to explore the music and history of the times we talk about on the podcast. If you'd be interested in coming with me on a trip like that, drop me a note on facebook - you can get to me at [facebook.com/englandcast](https://www.facebook.com/englandcast). Second, if you like this podcast, please rate it in whatever service you use to listen to it. Third, I have a fairly new website up at <http://www.englandcast.com>, with buttons to donate and links to the Patreon page if you are so inclined to support this podcast, either by giving a one time tip, or by making a regular subscription contribution. Both are appreciated.

So, let's get started.

Every Protestant church that is rooted in one of the early forms of Lutheranism has some unique features, due to the fact that for a few hundred years after Martin Luther first nailed his 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Catholics and Protestants thought it was the decent and holy thing to do to kill each other. This manifested itself in many different ways, some, like the Spanish Inquisition, more extreme than other. (I really want to insert a Monty Python quote about how "Nobody Expects the Spanish Inquisition" here, but...oh wait, it's too late, I already did. Seriously, if you don't know that skit, it's gold and you should youtube it immediately.)

Pretty much every European country saw some level of strife between Catholics and Protestants. In England, the zenith came in November 1605 when Guy Fawkes, a Catholic, was found in the basement of the Houses of Parliament with enough gunpowder to blow the whole

building sky high, which would have killed not only all the Members of Parliament themselves, but also King James, and his son and heir. Fawkes was caught, and it emerged that he was at the center of a web of plotters and conspirators. Had an anonymous note not been turned into the King the night before, history would have been very different indeed.

But back to Elizabeth. Though she started out her reign with the famous quote about not wanting to make windows into mens' souls, by a decade into her reign, simply being a Catholic was criminalized. For not attending Protestant services, Catholics faced crippling fines and imprisonment. If they gave shelter to outlawed priests, they risked death. Almost two hundred Catholics were executed during Elizabeth's reign. And torture, though technically illegal, was used more than any other time in England's history. An entire espionage network was built by Francis Walsingham to root out plots against Her Majesty, and as the threat of war with Spain grew, so did the perceived threat of Catholics, linked as they were to the Catholics of southern Europe.

Catholics who chose faith over compromise were called Recusants, which comes from the Latin *recusare*, or to refuse. They made up a small percentage of Catholics, as many chose to pretend - to cross their fingers during prayers, and then have a quick mass and confession at home. But for the ones who refused to compromise, the recusants, life was difficult indeed. Laws passed during her time outlawed even owning rosaries, crucifixes, and other Catholic imagery, deemed "popish trash" by the Protestant lawmakers. The Protestants greatly feared the Recusant branch, making them out to be a far larger number than they actually were. They were a small minority, but since it was feared that they were backed by hostile European powers, they were feared way more than they needed to be.

It hadn't started out that way. We've talked before about the changes in England's religion during the tumultuous reigns of Edward and Mary. For all of Henry VIII's reign, denial of the Real Presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine in Communion was a capital offense. But of course when his son, Edward, inherited the throne, he ushered in a decade of fervent Protestantism where beliefs had to radically change or again, face the death penalty. England did another switcharoo when Edward died young and his older sister Mary, firmly Catholic, moved England back to Catholicism. Who knows how the average farmer or sailor handled these changes, and how much it affected them on a day to day basis. They surely saw changes to their services, which they were required to attend, and people who held offices of state had to take oaths of obedience. For members of parliament and wealthy landowners, many sets of eyes would be watching them to see if they would take the required oaths of obedience to monarch before Pope.

When Elizabeth took the throne, she wanted to clean up the muddle that religion had become. In 1559 the first religious act of Parliament broke with Rome again after Mary had tried to become reconciled to Rome. The church that was created was a watered down version of Edward's church. The Mass was abolished, but the new Communion service was artfully crafted to allow some interpretation of a hint at Christ's real presence, if someone was looking

for it. The law was enforced strictly. Criticism of the prayer book or any other form of liturgy incurred a fine of 100 marks the first time, 400 on the second offense, and life imprisonment on the third. People were required to attend their parish church every Sunday and holy day or be fined 12 pence. The Royal Supremacy had to be declared through an oath by everyone holding an office under Church or Crown. If you defended the spiritual primacy of the pope over the monarch, you forfeited your goods, and if your goods were worth less than 20 pounds, you spent a year in prison. Serial offenders could be punished with a traitor's death.

For the first decade of her reign, this law was not rigorously enforced. If you were quiet about your religion, you were generally safe. During Mary's reign Elizabeth had to hide her own faith, and she was reluctant to go too deeply into the spiritual lives of her subjects. The Queen also didn't want to make waves in Europe. At the time, she was seen by much of Europe as the bastard child Henry, who himself declared his own marriage to Anne Boleyn null, though he would restore Elizabeth to the throne in his act of succession. In the 1560's, Spain and France signed a treaty ending their disputes, and Phillip of Spain and the Netherlands, who had been married to Mary I, took a special interest in restoring Catholicism to England; so Elizabeth was in an especially vulnerable position.

Elizabeth wasn't necessarily in favor of religious tolerance for Catholics. Instead, her theory instead was to starve the Catholics of their sacraments, and as all school masters had to take the Oath of Supremacy, young children would be brought up in Protestant learning. Eventually Catholicism would die off, she thought.

She neglected to figure into the equation the resourcefulness of the Catholics. William Allen, especially, an Oxford academic who set up a seminary for English priests in Flanders. Within six years of its founding in 1568 Allen was sending priests back to England to nurture the Catholic souls. In 1568 Mary Queen of Scots, great niece of Henry VIII, also sailed to England seeking protection from the Scottish Protestants who had forced her to abdicate. Elizabeth found herself in a tough position as Mary was her heir presumptive until she married and had children. Mary allowed herself to be a figurehead for Catholics who wanted to put her on the throne instead of Elizabeth, and got caught up in plots, both domestic and foreign, that would have killed the Queen and replaced her with a Scottish Catholic.

In 1569 there was an uprising in Northern England, and while the roots were as much political as religious, the earls of Northumberland and Westmorland rallied under a Catholic banner and heard mass in Durham cathedral. The plan was to free Mary Stuart from her house arrest in Tutbury Castle, and have some "reform in religion." The Duke of Norfolk, who was already in prison for conspiring to marry Mary, had been implicated, and it was clear that the conspirators had tried to get Spanish aid. The whole thing was ruthlessly crushed and over 450 rebels were executed.

The situation for Catholics wasn't helped by the St. Bartholemew's Day Massacre in France in 1572, when a mob of violence led by Catholics targeted and killed possibly as many as 30,000

people as it spread outwards into the countryside. Set off as a reaction to the marriage of the King's sister to a Protestant, many prominent French Huguenots had been in Paris for the marriage celebration, and a group of assassins targeted them, which then spread into mob violence throughout much of France. Francis Walsingham, himself a Protestant, was in Paris at the time, and barely escaped death. Many French protestants sought refuge in England, and brought with them stories of the brutal episode which frightened many English protestants, horrified to see that kind of violence from Catholics. They became convinced that all Catholics secretly wanted a St. Bartholomew's Day massacre, even in England.

So by the early 1570's, things were starting to change for the recusants in England. There were very real fears of an international Catholic conspiracy against Elizabeth. Conspiracies at home showed the authorities that, no matter how much Catholics might argue that they could be both good Elizabethan subjects and good Catholics, their loyalty seemed to always be to the Pope, over the Queen. And the Pope had just excommunicated Elizabeth, condemning her as a heretic, whose "monster like usurpation of the English throne had brought miserable ruin upon the kingdom." It officially deprived her of "the right which she pretends," and absolved all Catholics from any previous oaths of allegiance. Catholics in England were put in an impossible position. Either obey their Queen and have their souls sent to eternal damnation, or obey the Pope, and suffer a traitors death at home. This bull of excommunication did more to damage English Catholics than anything any Protestant did. It was originally sent at the request of the northern earls, but by the time it reached England, the rebellion had been crushed, and many Catholics resented the excommunication.

Suddenly, after the excommunication, the Protestants felt completely validated in all their previous suspicions of the Catholics. Papists were portrayed as the enemy within, though the official response was more measured. Another Parliament was called in order to flush out loyalties, and new treason legislation was passed which condemned anyone who questioned the Queen's religion or her right to rule. It also became treason for anyone to reconcile themselves to Rome, or harbor anyone who had been reconciled with Rome. The Act Against Fugitives Over The Seas demanded that anyone who left the realm since the Queen had inherited the throne without permission come home within six months, or forfeit their lands and goods. It also became treason to bring into the country any documents that were stamped by the pope. Finally it banned any Agnus Dei, cross, picture, bead, or "such like vain and superstitious things," blessed by the pope or a priest. Importing objects like a rosary, for example, would be punished by forfeiture of land and goods.

In the midst of this, the Catholic missionary priests started coming back to England. William Allen started his seminary in 1568, and by the mid 1570's, priests were coming back, a few at a time, and then up to 20 or 30 a year. These missionary priests, once Elizabeth's government heard about them, were largely seen as a force of agents of the pope, sent to overthrow the Queen. In 1577 the first of these priests, Cuthbert Mayne, was executed on five counts which included bringing in an Agnus Dei, and denying the Queen as the Supreme Head of the Church.

He was sentenced to a traitor's death, but by all accounts he was unconscious by the time they cut him down from his hanging.

Then there was the society of Jesuits, founded by Ignatius Loyola, a Spaniard and former soldier. In addition to being missionaries and ministers, they were also educators, and by 1580 there were 150 schools staffed by Jesuits throughout the world, and they went places like the Congo, India, Mexico and Brazil. In many respects they were seen as the face of the counter reformation, and so when they started coming to England, the authorities were incredibly suspicious. The timing of their arrival in England coincided with that of Nicholas Sander in Ireland. Sander was a prominent English Catholic who went to Ireland to help with the Spanish-assisted revolt against English rule. It looked to many as if the Jesuits were sent from the Spanish and the Pope in order to provoke revolt.

Another famous priest was Edmund Campion, who had actually risen in prominence at Oxford, and was a deacon of the Anglican church, before he felt remorse and left England in the late 1560's, studying at William Allen's seminary. He was one of the first missionary priests to come back to England, and just before he left on the trip, he and his fellow missionary Robert Persons, were expected. So they had to be even more clever than normal. Campion entered in 1580 pretending to be a jewel merchant, but word of who he really was quickly spread, and the authorities began a search to find him. He ignited a PR firestorm when he wrote "Ten Reasons", arguments against the Anglican church, which was printed secretly and 400 copies of it were found on the benches of St. Mary's Oxford at commencement in 1581. He was eventually captured by a spy where he was giving a secret mass, and was imprisoned in the Tower. He was tortured several times, and offered all sorts of offices in return for a retraction, but he refused. He had four public debates with Anglican opponents, and even though he had no time or books to prepare, and he was still recovering from his ordeal on the rack, he apparently made his case so eloquently that all of the spectators in court expected him to be acquitted. He was convicted of treason and in December 1581 he suffered a traitor's death of being hung, drawn and quartered.

By the 1580's, things got even hotter for Catholics when Elizabeth was persuaded that her more gentle way of dealing with the Catholics hadn't worked too well. The Act of Persuasions made it an act of high treason to try to persuade anyone to become a Catholic. It was also an act of treason to become reconciled to Rome. And finally, if you knew of anyone being reconciled to Rome, and you didn't report it within 20 days, that was also an act of high treason. If you were caught hearing Mass, in addition to a financial fine, you could go to jail for a year. If you refused to go to the local parish church, you were fined 20 pounds a month. If you didn't go for a year, you had to post a bond of 200 pounds for good behavior. Later legislation also made it illegal for a priest who was ordained abroad to be in England, and if any were found they were deemed a traitor.

It was clear that priests and missionaries needed information about where it was safe to enter the country, where they could stay, and who they could trust. And so, a network sprung up of

Catholic supporters who were an intermediary between the safe homes, and the priests, and provided a cover for both. These men and women risked their lives to provide safety for the priests. One such was Nicholas Owen, a master carpenter who traveled around the country building priest-hides in friendly homes. His hides were so well constructed that one wasn't discovered until the 19th century when children playing came across one that still had the Mass setup on the makeshift altar. Owen wound up captured and executed, and he never gave away his secret hides, even under torture.

The network of Catholics frightened the English authorities even more as war with Spain became inevitable. The English knew that the Spanish were planning to invade, and the great fear was that the Catholics would spring into action and attack from inside the country to support the invasion. And so, as the Armada approached with 130 ships and 19,000 troops, many prominent Catholics were put under house arrest, or placed with other nobles whose loyalty was unquestioned. Even harboring a priest was enough of a crime to be punishable by death, and even being a woman wasn't enough to save one's self from a death sentence. In 1586 a butcher's wife from York, Margaret Clitherow, was pressed to death on a toll bridge for her refusal to plead to the charge of harboring a priest.

There was a swirl of plots throughout the 1580s that made things more difficult for the Catholics. In the Netherlands, William of Orange, the Protestant resistance figurehead was assassinated. There were several plots to assassinate Queen Elizabeth; ranging from a solitary gunman who set off with a pistol and intent to kill, to the Babington Plot where noble and prominent Catholics decided to free Mary Stuart and put her on the throne, killing Elizabeth in the process. Sadly, Mary wasn't as politically astute as she may have thought she was - her letters to the conspirators were intercepted, and eventually all of the plotters, including Mary herself, were killed. Despite the decisive victory against the Spanish Armada in 1588, war with Spain continued for another 15 years, and with it, more plots. There was one where the royal physician, Rodrigo Lopez, a portuguese Jew who had converted to Christianity, had allegedly been paid by the king of Spain to poison the Queen. Every plot made things more difficult for the Catholics.

After Elizabeth died, and James came from Scotland, there were hints that things might be easier for the Catholics, as he made some early talks about wanting to be more tolerant. But things quickly took a different turn. At Easter 1603 James responded to the Catholics who didn't attend the official Easter service that "those who won't pray with me can't love me." Later that summer he refused to respond to an official petition of tolerance. So Catholics quickly became disillusioned with James, and the plot to blow up Parliament took hold. And that, my friends, will be a different story for a future episode.

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So that's it for this week. The book recommendation is God's Traitors: Terror and Faith in Elizabethan England, by Jessie Childs. I'll put a link up on the site and facebook page, which is [facebook.com/englandcast](https://www.facebook.com/englandcast), where you can again contact me, send me show ideas, or just say

nice things. The next episode will focus more on the official response to the perceived Catholic threat, focusing on the life of Elizabeth's spymaster Francis Walsingham, and how he built a modern espionage team.

Thanks so much for listening. Talk to you soon!