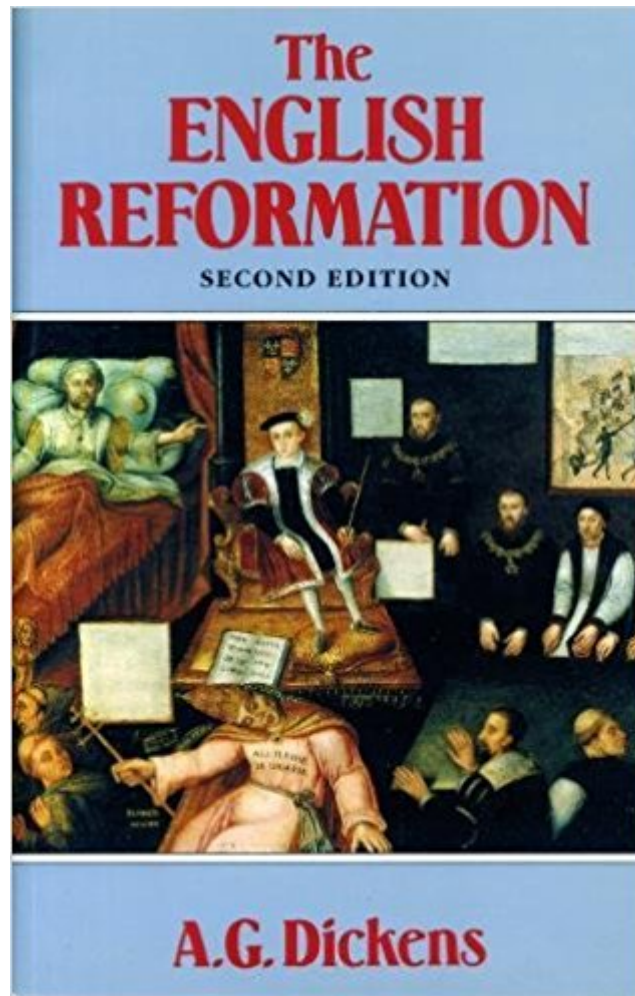




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# The English Reformation [2nd Edition]



## Synopsis

A new edition of the classic study of the religious changes that transformed England in the sixteenth century. Henry VIII officially brought the Protestant Reformation to England in the 1530s when he severed the English Church from the Papacy. But the seeds of the movement, according to A.G. Dickens, were planted much earlier. The English Reformation, first published in 1964, follows the movement from its late medieval origins through the settlement of Elizabeth I in 1559 and the rise of Puritanism.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

There is no alternative in sight which comes close to conveying the story of the English Reformation in narrative power and substantial information. --Heiko A. Oberman, University of Arizona  
I seized the first edition of *The English Reformation* as soon as it appeared, and it has been a dominating intellectual presence ever since. It was a wonderful book, elegant, incisive, and humane, it dealt fairly with politics and legislation, but above all it revealed the dynamic appeal of early Protestant ideas to academics and artisans, preachers and parishioners. It was by far the best survey of its subject, and it has not been overtaken since. . . . This second edition is a response to recent revisionist suggestions--that the old Church had vitality and appeal, that its rituals and beliefs were supportive and supported, that Protestants had a hard time making converts, and that political machinations, not protest movements, were the agent of change. . . . In a new introduction, (Dickens) insists that the English Reformation was no little local difficulty, explained by specific

political circumstances; it was part of the European Reformation, a wave of Christian renewal. . . . It is the old book--only more so! --Christopher Haigh, Times Higher Education SupplementI seized the first edition of *The English Reformation* as soon as it appeared, and it has been a dominating intellectual presence ever since. It was a wonderful book, elegant, incisive, and humane, it dealt fairly with politics and legislation, but above all it revealed the dynamic appeal of early Protestant ideas to academics and artisans, preachers and parishioners. It was by far the best survey of its subject, and it has not been overtaken since. . . . This second edition is a response to recent revisionist suggestions--that the old Church had vitality and appeal, that its rituals and beliefs were supportive and supported, that Protestants had a hard time making converts, and that political machinations, not protest movements, were the agent of change. . . . In a new introduction, (Dickens) insists that the English Reformation was no little local difficulty, explained by specific political circumstances; it was part of the European Reformation, a wave of Christian renewal. . . . It is the old book--only more so! --Christopher Haigh, Times Higher Education Supplement

A.G.. Dickens is Professor Emeritus of History at the University of London and co-author of *The Reformation in Historical Thought* (Harvard, 1985).

Although this was not one of my tutor's recommended "books to buy" I have bought it anyhow. Although Dickens' descriptions of *The English Reformation* are, at times, simplistic, this book is invaluable for gaining an overview of what was going on during the period. I recommend it to any college student, as a springboard to more weightier tomes.

Groundbreaking for its use of local evidence (wills, church records, etc), Dickens' thesis has since been convincingly overturned. His argument that "A multitude of nagging testamentary and tithe causes, lay resentment against the moral jurisdiction and the heavy probate fees of the church courts, the rise of lay education, humanist biblical criticism,... the declining reputation of the Roman Curia... and many more [influences] had created before the meeting of the Reformation Parliament an atmosphere little short of explosive.." (p. 326) fell at the hands of Revisionists like Eamon Duffy (see his *The Stripping of the Alters*, 1992, and *Fires of Faith*, 2009). Dickens work is too Protestant triumphalist to be taken seriously today. For example, on the martyrs of Mary Tudor's reign, he wrote that they had "a wealth of human fortitude, of 'civil courage', of adherence to mere principle which the English in their history have seldom found a comparable chance to display". (p. 271) Who needs that much artificial sweetener? If you want a balanced, well-written, up-to-date narrative of the

Reformation during the Tudor period utilizing the latest research, try Alec Ryrie's "The Age of Reformation." (2009)

Closer to 3.5 stars. To learn that the English Reformation had its own history rather than one piggybacking off of that of Germany and France is invaluable. The examination of characters such as Wycliffe, the Lollards, and other precursors to the Reformation was great. I understand that the type of research Dickens did concerning land ownership, wills, etc. is not exactly stimulating to read about, but I wish he would have written in a slightly more enjoyable manner.

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