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ANTIGOS E NOVOS PARADIGMAS

*II Colóquio Internacional
de Línguas Estrangeiras*

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“The Voice of God was English”. Language and Politics during the English Reformation

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The Reformation in England placed religion and faith at the centre of the English national feeling. The idea of a nation elected and blessed by God sustained the propagandistic discourse set in motion by Henry VIII and his closest allies, Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Thomas Cromwell, Henry’s vicegerent and chief minister, in an attempt to wipe papist influence in England. The printing press became paramount in the dissemination of this national discourse which introduced a set of measures, namely the dissolution and pillaging of monasteries and the imposition of a Bible in the native tongue in every church. Indeed, the translation of the Bible by Miles Coverdale, based on Tyndale’s original, represents one of the most noteworthy moments of the Reformation. The purpose of this paper is thus twofold. First, we intend to reflect on how cultural history was closely intertwined with religious history during Henry VIII’s reign, as both religion and politics contributed to the English national unity. Not only did the construction of the idea of a nation follow nationalist and erastian criteria, but it was also still largely dependent on the tenets of both Lutheran and Catholic beliefs, originating a clash of opinions and positions between the king, Cranmer and Cromwell. Therefore, we will analyse the Acts passed in 1534 and *The Bishops’ Book* (1537). Secondly, we will highlight the importance of the English language and Englishness through vernacular translations and how they helped to coin a language of devotion in English.

Keywords: Protestant Reformation, political language, propaganda, Englishness

Bionote

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