4

The Reformation in England to 1559

In Saxony the impetus to the Reformation was first religious and then political. In France and Holland and Scotland the Reformation began as a religious movement which was inevitably caught up into national politics. But this process was not universal. Some reformations began because the nation was developing, and religious change affected the development. In Denmark and in Sweden the Reformation was more a political revolution with religious consequences than a religious revolution with political consequences.

England was unique in its Reformation, unique in the Church established in consequence of the Reformation. The English Reformation was emphatically a political revolution, and its author King Henry VIII resisted, for a time ferociously, many of the religious consequences which accompanied the legal changes everywhere else in Europe.

In England the crown was not by tradition anti-papal. With a fifth to a third of the land in the hands of churchmen, and with the churchmen possessing special and independent rights in justice and in paying taxes, it was not possible for the king to rule effectively unless he used the theoretically supreme power of the Pope as a means of controlling his clergy.

Cardinal Wolsey is an interesting example of this royal power. Henry's chief minister from 1514, cardinal in 1515, and chancellor from 1515 until his fall in 1529, he seemed to wield all authority in the state. But he needed more than royal authority. To rule the state in 1520 he needed papal authority to dominate the bishops and religious orders. He became papal legate with powers which were renewed

from time to time and enlarged. These powers were granted on the plea that he needed them for the reformation of the Church. He talked publicly of the need for reform, but was too busy in high matters of state. He closed monasteries to found two colleges, and began to end the abuse of sanctuaries; and so far as he brought the feudal lords under control, he helped the discipline of the church. But he was not himself reformed. He drew the revenues, not only of his archbishopric of York, but of never less than one other see, and of the wealthy abbey of St Albans, though he never visited any of his dioceses until after his fall from power. He took large fees or bribes for private services of every kind, and flaunted his wealth to the world. He kept a concubine by whom he got at least one daughter and a son who was made Dean of Wells Cathedral while still at school.

From 1518 to 1529 Wolsey ruled England as the representative both of king and pope. His unpopular authority in the state, especially his exactions of money, enlarged the bitterness of educated laymen against clerical power and therefore against the Pope. Control by the Pope in this new form was resented because it was making present and effective what had rarely been effective from a remote distance. To be free from papal interference became a goal desired by more laymen and clergy than ever before in England. The Duke of Suffolk struck the table with a great oath, and cried that the old saw was true, that never legate nor cardinal did good in England.

But Wolsey was the king's servant, not the Pope's. Without the king's favour he could not stand for a moment. During the eleven years before 1529 the king already controlled Church as well as State in England, and that with the Pope's complaisance. If there were sufficient hostility to the Pope among his people he would be able to control Church as well as State without the Pope's complaisance. Wolsey fell because the king's desire to be rid of his wife Catherine of Aragon found the Pope in a predicament where complaisance was impossible.

THE 'HEADSHIP' OF THE CHURCH

Henry wished to marry Anne Boleyn. Catherine was ageing before her time, was too bleak to content the bounding energy of the king, and gave birth to a row of offspring of whom all but Mary were stillborn or died in infancy. He could have satisfied his physical desires with a mistress. But higher motives entered Henry's formidable mind and sublimated the issue for him. Catherine had been contracted to Henry's elder brother Arthur. She had therefore been ineligible as Henry's bride and had been permitted to marry him only after papal dispensation. It was possible that the sickly children and the absence of a male heir proved that God's blessing did not rest upon a marriage which was forbidden by God's law. And with the memory of the Wars of the Roses and the Tudor dynasty apparently so insecure, it was necessary for the unity and prosperity of England that a male and legitimate heir should be begotten by the king. Catherine, he now began to believe, had never been his wife. He turned to the Church to declare the fact and to sanctify his marriage with Anne Boleyn.

Pope Clement VII, a diligent and unsuccessful politician, was too weak or prudent to refuse outright. He kept postponing the decision. In favourable circumstances he might have been quick enough to declare what the king wanted. But Henry and Wolsey were asking of him a doctrinal and a practical impossibility. They were asking him to declare that the papal dispensation permitting Henry to marry Catherine had been invalid. A Pope could not declare that the act of a predecessor was invalid without thereby enfeebling his own authority. And among the vicissitudes of Italian politics, the armies of the Emperor Charles V, who was nephew to Catherine of Aragon, sacked Rome in 1527 and captured the Pope. Clement could not gratify Henry VIII by mortally offending Charles V.

In the summer of 1529 the king, in despair of persuading

the Pope to yield, dismissed Wolsey and the policy of persuasion and turned to a policy of menace. The princes of north Germany had successfully excluded the power of the Pope from their dominions. He talked of following this example. He summoned the Parliament of 1529, and allowed the lay and anti-clerical lawyers, released from Wolsey's domination, to draft a series of bills for reforming the ecclesiastical administration.

Since 1393 the chief restriction in law upon papal intervention in the English Church was the statute of Praemunire. In origin this had been intended to exclude from the realm papal decrees which interfered with rights of the English bishops. The courts slowly widened its application. Wolsey was accused under Praemunire, after his fall, on the absurdly unjust ground that he had acted as papal legate in England.

In January 1531 this vague and menacing weapon was turned by the lawyers against all the clergy of England. They were charged with an offence against Praemunire because they had administered Roman canon law in their courts. 'No one,' wrote the imperial ambassador, 'can fathom the mysteries of this law. Its interpretation lies solely in the king's head, who amplifies and declares it at his pleasure, and applies it to anyone he pleases.' The Convocations of the Church, after stiff protest and without verbally admitting guilt, bought their forgiveness for £118,000 (£100,000 for the Convocation of Canterbury, £18,000 for the Convocation of York) and were then forced by the king into recognizing the king as the head of the church – 'especial Protector, only and supreme Lord, and, as far as the law of Christ allows, even supreme Head'.

The formula meant little enough. This was not a repudiation of papal power. The phrase *as far as the law of Christ allows* could cover all manner of limitations. But the lords and lawyers of Parliament were agreed with the king in pressing forward against the Pope. Among the advisers one of Wolsey's lieutenants, Thomas Cromwell, now rose to

the top. Experienced in Wolsey's method of controlling Church and State as a unity, he aimed at a similarly unified control achieved by king and Parliament with the Pope excluded from the realm.

In 1532 Henry, petitioned by Parliament, exacted from the Convocations a 'Submission'; that is, an undertaking that, since the canon-making power of the Convocations might conflict with the law-making power of the crown and Parliament, they would enact no new ordinances without licence from the king, and would submit the existing canons to a committee, appointed by the king, for revision. In the same year an Act restrained the payment to Rome of the annates or first-fruits, which in 1534 were transferred to the crown, in 1533 an Act abolished appeals from England to Rome, and in 1534 all the other legal rights and duties of the Pope were transferred to the crown. In the same year the Act of Supremacy declared that the king was supreme head of the Church of England and omitted the saving clause inserted by the clergy in Convocation. The new Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, declared that Henry's marriage with Catherine was no marriage, and on Whitsunday 1533 Anne Boleyn was crowned Queen. In June and July 1535 Bishop Fisher of Rochester and the ex-Chancellor, Sir Thomas More, were beheaded because they refused to swear to the royal supremacy in derogation of the Pope's authority. In January 1535 Cromwell received a commission to visit churches and clergy throughout the realm.

What were the feelings in the breasts of churchmen when required to repudiate the Pope and accept the royal supremacy during those few years after 1534?

In the south of England, the open objectors were few. It was afterwards claimed by Catholic historians of the next generation that many kept silence with troubled consciences and out of fear; and whether or not the claim is true of many, it is certainly true of some. We have evidence of men speaking against the supremacy to private friends, and since the evidence is only of those who were afterwards

betrayed by those friends, muttering must have been far more common than we know. All changes in religion are disquieting. A priest at a church in St Albans said that he could not forsake the old fashions because he had been brought up in them. The changes unsettled minds, men knew not what to expect. Friar Brenchley preached a sermon railing at change, and said: 'Masters, take heed, we have nowadays many new laws. I trow we shall have a new God shortly.' At Gisburn in Yorkshire, when the priest was reading aloud the articles of supremacy, a man stepped forward from the congregation, snatched the book out of his hands, and ran from the church. There was fear of the way the government was moving, a fear of Lutheranism, a fear that the king would confiscate the lands of the church. John Smethson, saying mattins with another priest, said: 'I will not pray for the king, for he is about to beggar us.'

Most of the mutterers were simple men. At the top were a few like Fisher and More, who held on doctrinal grounds that no Parliament could abolish the Pope's power. Dr Reynolds, examined on 29 April 1535, said that 'all good men of the kingdom' held with him, and that 'I have in my favour all the General Councils, all the writers, the holy doctors of the Church for the last 1,500 years, especially St Ambrose, St Jerome, St Augustine, and St Gregory.' Catholic tradition, he believed, declared the power of the Pope to be part of Christian truth, and no Act of Parliament could abolish its hold upon the conscience. This stand must be taken by everyone in the circle of Queen Catherine of Aragon, for without the Pope's lawful power Catherine was not married to Henry. Everyone who thought the divorce an injustice to be denied in conscience must assert that the Pope had rightly allowed the marriage and must therefore assert that the Pope possessed a religious authority from God as well as an administrative authority from man.

But at the top, such men were few. The higher clergy made little difficulty about repudiating the Pope. They regarded the Papacy as a human institution which might

lawfully be removed for the sake of better arrangements. They were ready, surprisingly ready, to sign papers that the Bishop of Rome has no greater jurisdiction in England than any other foreign bishop. They believed with the bishops who declared in February 1535 that the papal power was of man and not of God. The bishops were not time-servers. Tunstall of Durham, humane and honest, had been preaching vigorously in favour of the royal supremacy before he was ordered so to preach. Roland Lee, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, was perturbed, not that he was ordered to preach against the Pope, but that he was ordered to preach at all, for he had never yet entered a pulpit. Northern Europe largely accepted the opinions of the Councils of Constance and Basle, a century before, that the Pope was the administrative servant of the Church.

The higher clergy often associated conservatism with 'mumpsimus' and obscurantism; and sometimes they were right. Friar Arthur of Canterbury preached at Herne before a great audience, and blamed the new books and preachers for misleading the people and discouraging fasts and prayers and pilgrimages; he called them Judases, and said that whoever offered one penny to the shrine of St Thomas gained more merit than if he gave a noble to the poor, for the one is spiritual and the other corporal. The simple were conservative, and the simple were ignorant. Cranmer was astonished to discover that a learned man like Dr Reynolds could pertinaciously maintain these opinions about the Pope. The Archbishop of York, Edward Lee, ordered all his curates to read the declaration against the Pope, but pointed out that the order would not be fully obeyed, since many of the curates could hardly read and he knew less than twelve secular priests in the diocese who were capable of preaching.

Though some consciences were troubled, the Marian writers of the next generation exaggerated the amount of inward distress. To abolish the Pope's power was not the most risky of Henry's laws. The country hardly noticed the

Pope's excommunication, and Henry declared that he would not care a straw if the Pope issued 10,000 excommunications.

The ease with which the Pope's power was abolished and the clergy subjected to the law of the land encouraged the king and Cromwell to further revolution. Every other country or city, to repudiate the Pope, suppressed the monasteries. The king and Cromwell turned their eyes upon the monastic lands of England, now helpless before the power of the Crown. Wolsey had already suppressed twenty-eight houses to found his new college at Oxford (later Christ Church) and a school at Ipswich.

THE SUPPRESSION OF THE MONASTERIES

The Protestant states varied in their attitudes to the monasteries. They were agreed that the monastic life was a mistaken form of Christian life, but whether or not it should therefore be suppressed was a matter of disagreement. All Protestant states repealed laws which exacted penalties from runaway monks and nuns. They encouraged monks and nuns to return to secular life. They tried to make it easy for monks to undertake secular work by providing them with pensions from the monastic endowment and by finding them pastoral care, and therefore a parochial stipend, if they were priests. They provided similar pensions, or dowries upon marriage, to nuns who were ceasing to be nuns. They sometimes subjected them to teaching designed to divert them from their erroneous conduct. The more revolutionary states, like the Swiss cities, simply suppressed the monasteries and confiscated their endowments, though providing the necessary pensions from them. Some Lutheran states followed this example. But other Lutheran states – Saxony for a time, Sweden and Denmark especially – permitted some houses to continue until they naturally expired. The lot of a nun thrown upon the world after her enclosure was likely to be harder than the lot of the

monk, and in Sweden several convents of nuns drifted quietly in decline for some years. A convent at Maribö in Denmark was not closed till 1621.

England was exceptional in this as in so much else. In the conservative England of Henry VIII there was a pretence of not compelling the monasteries to close.

In the summer of 1535, under the powers conferred as visitor, Cromwell arranged a visitation of the monasteries. Two commissioners, Richard Layton and Thomas Legh, visited the southern monasteries between July 1535 and February 1536. The visitors reported much foulness in monasteries. Not all their evidence has fully satisfied the impartial observer. The smaller monasteries (those with an annual value of less than £200) were suppressed by an Act of 1536. Even after that Act the King had no evident intention of dissolving all monasteries, and himself re-founded two houses during 1537. Even in May 1538 the nunnery at Kirklees received a patent of re-foundation.

But from November 1537 the bigger and wealthier houses began to 'surrender', that is, to dissolve themselves by agreement. Visitors again toured the country to persuade monks to be dissolved. Persuasion was seldom difficult, partly because everywhere it was rumoured that soon they would all be suppressed, partly because some houses already found difficulty in continuing. A not negligible number of monks and nuns were pleased to be thus given their freedom. In May 1539 Parliament passed an act vesting in the crown all monastic possessions surrendered after the Act of 1536. None of the abbots present in the House of Lords protested against it. The dissolution was a peaceable process, with the bloodshed only of the few who refused the royal supremacy. (It is not however certain that the charges would have been pressed against difficult abbots if they had been less difficult about surrender.) The last house, Waltham Abbey in Essex, surrendered to the King on 23 March 1540.

An Act of 1536 set up a Court of Augmentations to receive

and administer the surrendered property. At first it seems to have been intended to hold the property and keep the annual income. Soon the court granted leases, often to servants of the crown; and some lands it became sensible to sell, and thus parts of the property were offered to the public.

The dissolution of the monasteries was by far the most important social event in the revolution. The monasteries were not, and had not been for three hundred years, the moral and spiritual and intellectual power of the earlier Middle Ages. But they were a social fact reaching throughout the European countryside, their lands and their employment dominating so many villages. It is possible to find many houses which would have done credit to the religious orders in any century, but these are still a small group in the total number. Luther's own house at Erfurt, under the guidance of Staupitz, was evidently a place where men of religion tried truly and earnestly to live a religious life. The Benedictine house of Metten in southern Germany was respected by Protestants for its piety. The Carthusians in England were of a spirit which took them bravely to death under the Supremacy Act of King Henry VIII. It is also possible to find houses, more than the fervent, which could rightly be called disgraces. Among the German monasteries there were plenty of scandals over drinking and mistresses. King Henry VIII's commissioners looked for moral iniquity from reasons of state, and though they exaggerated a repellent collection of it, enough is confirmed by other and less partial evidence. But for the most part the monasteries were neither fervent nor disgraceful. They were pleasant, half-secularized clubs for common and comfortable living. Some of the smaller were little more than farms.

Though reliable evidence is difficult to find on such a point, zealous Catholics believed that many monks were indifferent to the dissolution of their houses, provided that they could divide the money among themselves or at least receive an adequate pension. Except upon this assumption,

we can hardly account for the ease whereby the greater monastic houses in England 'voluntarily' dissolved themselves between 1536 and 1540. Very few English monks or nuns fled beyond seas in 1539 or 1540 to practise in Catholic countries the familiar life denied to them in England. There are several examples known of an individual retiring to live with his superior; five of the nuns from Kirklees in Yorkshire lived with the prioress at Mirfield for many years; three or four monks of Monk Bretton continued to live with the prior nearby, taking with them some of their library and muniments; Elizabeth Throckmorton, the abbess of Denney in Cambridgeshire, retired to her home with two of the nuns and continued to keep the convent rule, and such unofficial continuity may have been more common than the evidence of it. But it was exceptional; and it is altogether an error to imagine the monasteries as a private army of the Pope. The abbots of Glastonbury, Reading, and Colchester were hanged in 1539, but in England the vast majority accepted without a murmur the royal supremacy and the abolition of papal authority, and examples of an equal complaisance may be found in Germany. The dissolution of the monasteries was not necessary to the destruction of papal authority. But by transferring land upon a vast scale, and creating manifold new rights and interests, it encouraged men who agreed with the Lutherans.

What happened to the money and the land of the dissolved monasteries?

First, it was used to provide pensions for the ex-monks and pensions or dowries for the ex-nuns. These were not large pensions for the ordinary religious, but over most of Protestant Europe they were regularly paid. Some of these pensioners lived a long time, for Fuller said that the last in England died only in 1607–8, and we know that a Cistercian from the house at Bittlesden died as rector of Dauntsey in 1601. Many ex-monks became parochial clergy and for a time enabled the church authorities to avoid large ordinations of new ministers. At Dunstable, out of twelve canons

known, at least ten are known to be incumbents in 1556. Other monks, whether laymen or priests, took lay work. The English abbots and priors received large pensions from the monastic revenues. From some of the wealthiest abbeys six new bishoprics were founded by Henry VIII (Westminster,* Bristol, Chester, Gloucester, Oxford, and Peterborough); all the new cathedrals had an ex-monk as their dean, and nearly all had an ex-monk as their bishop. At Peterborough the abbot's palace became the bishop's palace. Between twenty and thirty superiors became bishops within a few years of the dissolution, and some others became heads of colleges or hospitals. Where the old cathedrals had been monastic foundations (Canterbury, Durham, Winchester, Ely, Norwich, etc.), the monasteries were converted into chapters of canons, and many of the old monks continued as new canons – we know, for example, that more than twenty monks remained as prebendaries of Norwich Cathedral, that at Winchester all the monks except four remained, and at Durham twenty-six out of fifty-four.

These endowments of new sees were but a fragment of the monastic lands. In England a small proportion went to education. A few colleges at Oxford and Cambridge were founded or refounded; a small amount of money went into founding schools, especially when the local municipality acquired the site and determined to devote it to providing education, but these foundations could barely have compensated for the loss of monastic schools. In those of the German states where the dissolution was as orderly as in England, larger sums in proportion were diverted from suppressed monasteries into universities or schools. But all governments were in sore need of money, and a proportion of the lands went to help purposes of state, to reward servants of the state. The Crown of England gained an increased annual revenue of well over £100,000.

* Its diocese was the county of Middlesex. The see was suppressed in 1550.

Where the dissolution was disorderly, the fate of the religious might be less happy. In Scotland, where the central government was weaker than in England, the dissolution was piecemeal and sometimes crude. Where the central government was weak, the monasteries were treasure lying defenceless in the transfer of power.

Let us not exaggerate the loss. Everyone is agreed that in all countries of Europe the Church, as a collection of corporations, possessed too much wealth for the health of the state, that some diversion was necessary, and that material transfers of property are always painful and usually accompanied by injustice to individuals. To suppress many of the monasteries was not to harm Church life, but either to cleanse it, or to nationalize, with bare compensation to individuals, farms or country clubs. To anyone who respects the monastic ideal at its best, the loss lay in the groups of devoted communities which were consumed in the general holocaust; in schools, hospitals, and almshouses; in many of the song schools, throwing musicians out of work and making their lot the hardest of all except that of the ex-nuns who would not or could not marry. The gravamen is not that the Church suffered a crippling loss of endowment, but that Protestant sovereigns of Europe, in their need for money, missed a unique opportunity of converting these charitable resources to truly charitable ends like education, hospitals, or the relief of the poor. It would not be so severe a charge if it could be shown that the endowments were diverted to truly national ends. Some of the endowments were so diverted. In other cases, the effect of the dissolutions was to put money and land into the hands of lay lords. Such diversions enabled governments to survive, or to do more, at least for a time.

If the abbey building was in a town, it might be valuable property. If it was in the country, it had probably become useless, impossible either to sell or to use. The English government ordered them to be demolished, but this was often too costly to obey, and the stripped shells of the

houses decayed into ruins that were not yet romantic. At Lewes a team of workmen, under an Italian expert, used gunpowder to overturn the bigger columns; and the work was done rapidly because a relative of Thomas Cromwell wished to reside there. In Lincolnshire the local officer reckoned that to obey the order and demolish would cost more than £1,000, and therefore suggested that he should render the houses uninhabitable by destroying their roofs and stairs, and then allowing anyone who wanted stone to use the walls as a quarry. A few owners were careless in their use of the ruins. Sir Richard Grenville later turned the church of Buckland Abbey into a house, and the same fate befell the nave and transept of Denney in Cambridgeshire. The great gate of Lord Wriothesley's new house at Titchfield was sited in the middle of the abbey church. King Henry VIII used the chapel of the London Charterhouse to store his tents and 'garden gear'. At Malmesbury a wealthy clothier bought the monastery as a factory, filled every room with looms, and planned to build tenements for his weavers in the grounds. But others became parish churches, and towns sometimes bought the abbey church for this purpose. Tewkesbury Abbey, one of the glories of English medieval architecture, was at first recommended for demolition as useless and was saved in this way by the town.

The contents of the houses were not disposed of without waste. Except for monasteries in Germany and Scotland where the house had been looted by a mob, the plate and the jewels, and perhaps some books from the library, were usually surrendered to the treasury or state library. In England the contents were then auctioned, often at a sale held in the cloister or chapter-house, and in this way speculators or dealers or collectors or conservatives might pick up glass, vestments, missals, candlesticks, censers, ladders, organs, pulpits, bricks, and tiles. The woodwork was often valuable, and so were the lead roofs. There is a famous later (1591) description of the sale at Roche Abbey

where a monk was trying to sell the properties in his cell and the peasants were wrenching iron hooks out of the walls. A sympathetic conservative bought part of the timber from the church and the steeple. A generation later he was asked by his nephew how he could do it, and he replied: 'What should I do? Might I not as well as others have some profit of the spoil of the abbey? For I did see all would away; and therefore I did as others did.' Some of the contents passed into parish churches, especially in England and northern Germany. One hundred and forty-six tons of stone from Thorney Abbey were granted to build the new chapel of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. In the tower of Christ Church gateway at Oxford hangs the great bell that once belonged to Oseney Abbey, recast in 1678–9. At the parish church in Richmond, Yorkshire, may be seen the misericord seats acquired from the house at Easby at the dissolution. Such relics are now rare in English churches, for the waste in this auctioneering was great. At local auctions, often in the country, few people could know the real value of the goods. At the sale in Stafford of the Austin Friary, Mr Stamford bid seven shillings and secured an alabaster retable, a door, and a high altar.

Some libraries were poor and small. In the disposal of the better libraries there was loss, not so much by the destruction of texts of the medieval schools as by dispersal. These contents were dispersed into the public book trade, and might find their way into the possession of individuals who would understand little or nothing of their value. In Protestant countries antiquarians, or men of conservative sympathies, or ecclesiastics interested in history, went round the bookshops gathering what they could save and presenting their precious harvest to some institution which would ensure its preservation, as Archbishop Matthew Parker later offered most of his unique collection of manuscripts to his college, Corpus Christi in Cambridge, or Robert Hare gave the manuscripts which he had collected to Trinity Hall and to Caius College, evidently

because he thought these societies sufficiently conservative in ethos to value the gift. But the forced dispersal of thousands of manuscripts could not be accomplished without loss, the more because in a new age of printing few men were conscious how irreparable such losses might be. But the losses were casual, haphazard, unsystematic; if the manuscripts were burnt upon a fire, it was like a modern bookseller pulping a useless pile of Victorian novels – dusty old papers dropping into oblivion in attics and rubbish heaps because no one wanted them, not because they were consumed in a holocaust of fanatic zeal.

In parts of England the suppression of the monasteries roused anger and a resort to arms. When the commissioners were suppressing the priory of St Nicholas of Exeter, they left a labourer to dismantle the rood while they went to dinner. A crowd of women assembled, broke into the church, and chased and stoned the labourer until he took refuge in the tower and escaped by jumping out of a window at the cost of a broken rib and at the risk of a broken neck. In Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, and Cumberland popular feeling, gathering to itself more resentments than the dislike of the king's religious policy, issued in a rebellion sufficient to shake the throne – the Pilgrimage of Grace. The defeat of the rebellion hastened the piecemeal suppression or 'voluntary surrender' of the larger houses.

It was not possible to dissolve the monasteries without destroying other objects traditional in devotion but despised even by educated conservatives as superstitious or childish. In 1538 the king's agents pillaged or destroyed the leading shrines of the kingdom, above all the shrine of St Thomas Becket at Canterbury, the loot from which is said to have filled twenty-six waggons and to have included some of the clay from which God fashioned Adam, stones of the prison from which St Peter escaped, and a thorn from the crown of thorns. They brought to London an old statue called the Boxley Rood, of which the eyes and lips could be moved by a mechanism of wires within. The preacher at St Paul's

Cross demonstrated its working to his congregation and then flung the broken pieces among them. An image from north Wales called Darvell Gadarn was burnt at Smithfield, in company with a Franciscan who had been Queen Catherine's confessor and denied the royal supremacy. The statue of Our Lady at Walsingham was removed before the suppression of the priory. In 1545, two years before the king died, an Act of Parliament empowered the dissolution of the chantries – chapels endowed to provide private masses for the soul of their founder or for other objects. But it was not widely executed before the reign of Edward VI, when the Act was renewed and extended.

Though these revolutionary acts commanded the assent of many conservatives, they gave decisive encouragement to those who were not conservative.

ENGLISH PROTESTANTS UNDER HENRY VIII

Upon the site of the present Cavendish Laboratory in Cambridge stood the house of the Austin Friars. Its head in 1520 was Robert Barnes, Miles Coverdale was among its members. It was natural for the friars of Cambridge to be eager to follow the controversy roused by Luther, the distinguished theologian of their order at Wittenberg. With like-minded spirits among the colleges – Thomas Bilney from Trinity Hall, Hugh Latimer from Clare College – they met at the White Horse Inn nearby to discuss German theology, and the group became known to the university as 'Germany'.

The Cambridge group was broken up after 1525, but radicals quietly moved to Germany or Switzerland to study or pursue their plans for reform. Of the many English on the Continent during the reign of Henry VIII, there was Robert Barnes, formerly of the Austin Friars at Cambridge, who studied at Wittenberg, was received back into favour when Thomas Cromwell was friendly to the Protestants, was even used as a royal agent abroad, and was burnt as a heretic at Smithfield in 1540; William Tyndale who

succeeded in printing the first English version of the New Testament at Worms in 1525–6, and was strangled and burnt near Brussels in October 1536; Miles Coverdale, also of the Austin Friars at Cambridge, who printed a complete English translation of the Bible at Zurich in 1535, and whose delicate sense of rhythm is still familiar to everyone who uses the psalms in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

In the years 1535–9, while the monasteries were being dissolved, Thomas Cromwell gave a modest patronage to reformers, if they were not radical. Hugh Latimer was elevated to the see of Worcester, Philip Melanchthon was vainly invited to England. Cromwell engaged in diplomatic exchanges with the Lutheran princes of north Germany, and ordered an English Bible to be placed in every parish church. This Bible, printed at Paris and London in 1538–9, was based upon the versions of Tyndale and Coverdale. A reissue of 1540 was given a preface by Archbishop Cranmer of Canterbury.

THOMAS CRANMER (1489–1556)

Cranmer, a Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, was employed upon the affair of the king's divorce and made English ambassador to the Emperor Charles V. While in Nuremberg he married the niece of the Lutheran theologian Osiander, and soon afterwards (1532) was summoned to England to become Archbishop of Canterbury. Probably King Henry was not aware that his archbishop-designate was already reforming enough to have a wife, and it was sufficient for Henry that he was warmly recommended by Anne Boleyn. Cranmer was a reluctant prelate, moving slowly across Europe in the hope that the nomination would be withdrawn. Thenceforth he obeyed the king; protesting before his consecration that the oath of fidelity to the Pope should not bind him if it was against the laws of God or the realm; holding the court at Dunstable to determine the nullity of the marriage with Catherine of Aragon;

granting church lands to the king at favourable terms. He approved of the dissolution of the monasteries, though he wanted the lands for education and the relief of the poor. He was not a force in politics. As Archbishop, he continued to devote to study the same amount of time as at Cambridge, three quarters of the day; and part of the remainder was allotted to shooting, walking, chess, or riding, for he was a fine rider. Not even in the heyday of episcopal leisure in the eighteenth century could an archbishop govern the Church effectively in less than a quarter of the day. Cranmer was first and last a quiet scholar, and the Church was ruled more with his assent than at his direction.

He survived the vicissitudes of Henry's reign, partly because he was quiet, partly because he was a useful instrument, and partly because he believed in the royal supremacy and the king's policy, though he made private representation in favour of men condemned, whether for heresy or popery. The time of friendship for reform ended in 1539. The king's vicar-general Thomas Cromwell, advocate of moderate reform and friend of Cranmer, engaged in the ill-fated plan for the marriage between the king and Anne of Cleves, and lost his head in July 1540. In 1539 the repressive Act of Six Articles attempted to vindicate the Catholic faith of the king by decreeing savage penalties for denial of transubstantiation, private masses, private confession, or the need for clerical celibacy, and shocked Protestants hopeful about English progress. Bishops of reforming sympathies – Hugh Latimer of Worcester, Nicholas Shaxton of Salisbury – were forced out of their sees, and before the end of the reign Shaxton was condemned to death as a heretic and driven to recant. Cranmer's wife is said to have disappeared across the seas for four years, and Cranmer said that he wanted to escape abroad. In the streets of London people laid bets that Cranmer would follow Cromwell to the Tower, and on the Continent it was rumoured that he had been executed. But Cranmer sur-

vived. Yet in 1539 he had opposed the Act of Six Articles in the House of Lords, and thenceforth his 'heresy' was notorious among the orthodox. In 1543 the king received charges lodged against the archbishop by some prebendaries of Canterbury Cathedral. 'I know now', said Henry jestingly to Cranmer, on a barge by Lambeth Bridge, 'who is the greatest heretic in Kent.' The king frustrated every effort by the conservatives to ruin Cranmer, and left his name among the executors of his will. From servants to dukes, everyone liked Cranmer, and the king among them.

The survival was important in the growth of reforming ideas. The importance of Cranmer's survival to the future of the Church in England consists first in this, that he was an honest man. No rumour of political intrigue or sordid plunder clung to him. If he served the King, he served him on principle and neither from self-interest nor from cowardice. He believed in the doctrine of the godly prince, and believed it in an extreme form. Though he cannot have believed that 'the king', especially that king, 'can do no wrong', he believed acceptance of the king's commands to be a duty to God and man.

He appears to have attained decision in his Protestant convictions only during the last two years of Henry's reign. As late as 1543 he accepted the doctrine of transubstantiation at the royal behest. Almost his sole public contribution to the Protestant cause, before the king died, was to write a liberal preface to the official English Bible which Cromwell ordered to be placed in all parish churches, a Bible intended to educate the people in the Scriptures but also to prevent them from resorting to false and heretical translations, and which after 1543 was permitted to be read only by clerics, noblemen, gentry, and merchants. And yet Cranmer was suspected by conservatives, even conservatives who knew nothing of his wife. They were not misjudging him. By 1546 he believed the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and disbelieved the doctrine of transubstantiation; and Cranmer had an academic, hesitant, slow-moving mind,

reluctant to affirm and not liable to sudden conversions. The convictions of 1546 had not been attained without a long and troubled history of scruple and study. Unsatisfactory to Protestants though he might be, his uneasy occupation of the see of Canterbury afforded the moderates among them a quiet encouragement.

THE REIGN OF EDWARD VI (1547–53)

On 28 January 1547 the king died, and at last the gates were open to the reforming party.

The new king, Edward VI, was nine years old, and power was soon in the hands of Protector Somerset, a friend of Cranmer and a supporter of reform. The Act of Six Articles and the heresy laws, though nominally in force until their repeal in November, ceased at once to be effective. Protestant incumbents could freely teach Protestant doctrine, Protestant churchwardens could remove images or alter the appearance of their churches, Protestant printers could publish tracts against the mass. In July 1547 injunctions were issued requiring the destruction of abused images or pictures and the reading of the Gospels and Epistles in English. The difficulty of determining when an image had been 'abused' led to disputes, and the disputes to a further order that all images should be removed. Latimer was summoned to preach, an Act of Parliament decreed that the communion should henceforth be administered in both kinds; a further Act of February 1549 permitted the clergy to marry, and Cranmer's wife began to appear publicly at her husband's table.

THE PRAYER BOOK OF 1549

The reformers wanted first to abolish the Latin mass and to substitute a liturgy in the vernacular. In March 1548 an *Order of Communion* was issued, providing English prayers of preparation to be inserted within the Latin mass. In January

1549 an Act of Uniformity abolished the Latin mass and made a new Liturgy (the Prayer Book of 1549) the legal form of worship.

In name it was the work of a group of thirteen divines, who met at Chertsey and at Windsor and are therefore known as the Windsor Commission. In fact there is a single style running through the book, the style of Cranmer's liturgical genius. That three quarters of the day in his study was bearing its rich fruit. For a number of years he had been quietly engaged in liturgical projects; the only one which reached the public during the reign of Henry VIII was the English Litany, first used in 1544, and almost in its present form.

The 1549 Prayer Book was in part modelled upon the German Protestant church orders. Its principles for reform were the principles of Luther. The services must be understood by the people and made congregational, the people must be turned from spectators intent upon their private devotions into active participants. The laity must be well instructed, and teaching exhortations were inserted. In doctrine the idea of a repeated sacrifice in the eucharist was denied. The most important of the Protestant books which underlies the 1549 Prayer Book was a liturgy written by Martin Bucer for Cologne and known by the title of its 1547 and 1548 English translations as *A Simple and Religious Consultation*. Several German phrases (e.g. 'Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder') were taken from Lutheran books. The ritual was much simplified, but many old customs of ceremonial and the traditional vestments were nevertheless retained. The 1549 book followed the Lutheran notion that custom should only be altered where Scripture demanded, not the revolutionary Swiss doctrine that Scripture must give a warrant for every action. A travelling English merchant rightly described its communion service as being 'after the manner of the Nuremberg churches and some of those in Saxony'.

Lutheran services adapted the liturgies of the Middle

Ages. Cranmer likewise used the medieval liturgies of England, especially the use of Sarum. He made an office of Mattins, like certain Lutheran orders, which had already fused the old services of Mattins and Lauds in the medieval Breviary. He made an office of Evensong by working directly upon the old Breviary offices of Vespers and Compline. At the solemn moments of sacramental rites he often retained the words and outward signs of the medieval rite, above all in the consecration prayer of the eucharist, which was strongly reminiscent of the canon of the Roman mass. But the diverse elements upon which he worked, traditional or Protestant, were taken up by his careful scholarship and transmuted into a beauty, at once delicate and austere, of liturgical prose and poetry. Liturgies are not made, they grow in the devotion of centuries; but as far as a liturgy could ever be the work of a single mind, the Prayer Book flowed from a scholar with a sure instinct for a people's worship.

The future question of the English Reformation hung in great part upon Cranmer's Prayer Book, whether English Protestantism would follow this attempt to mould the best of the old with the best of the new, or whether the event would prove the mixture to be no essential unity, but a patchwork, so skilfully created by a master craftsman that only time and stress would show it to be a patchwork of incompatibles.

Even before the book was published, it was hardly able to content Cranmer himself. In the latter part of 1548 his mind moved towards the eucharistic doctrine taught by the Swiss Reformers, and the traditional formulas of the mass no longer pleased him. He was influenced by his friend Nicholas Ridley, now Bishop of London; and by eminent refugees from the Continent whom he invited to England – Martin Bucer from Strasbourg, who became Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge; the Italian Peter Martyr Vermigli, who became Regius Professor at Oxford; John à Lasco from Poland. While Bucer taught the moderating

doctrine later to be called after his pupil Calvin, Peter Martyr and à Lasco were both Zwinglians after the manner of Zurich. 'Praise God,' wrote a young English Zwinglian to Bullinger at Zurich, in September 1548. 'Latimer has come over to our doctrine of the eucharist, and so has the Archbishop of Canterbury and other bishops, who until now seemed to be Lutheran.' From the moment of publication, the 1549 book was disliked by both sides; by the conservative because it was too radical, by the reformer because it was too conservative.

Under the Duke of Northumberland as Protector, the English reforming party succeeded between 1550 and 1553 in doing all that a German or Swiss city had done. They produced a new and simplified liturgy in the vernacular, with a Swiss doctrine of the eucharist, published a new statement of doctrine conforming at least in outline to the pattern of Swiss theology (the Forty-Two Articles of 1553), stripped the churches of images and side altars, replaced the high altar with a holy table, forbade the use of ceremonies other than those expressly provided in the Prayer Book, and appropriated to secular use a proportion of church property. They weakened the authority of the bishops, by extending the policy of Henry VIII to replace it by a direct exercise of the royal supremacy. Where the bishops refused to accompany reform, they were removed from their sees – Bonner of London, Gardiner of Winchester, Tunstall of Durham, Day of Chichester, Heath of Worcester – and replaced. In appearance, the ancient system of church government was continued; in fact, the rulers of the Church were the council of State, as in Wittenberg or Nuremberg or Zurich. Two of the new bishops, Hooper of Gloucester and Coverdale of Exeter, had long been exiles on the Continent, were warm adherents of Zurich, and disapproved of ancient episcopacy while they were being consecrated bishops. Hooper was even lodged in the Fleet prison for a time, to force him to withdraw his objections to some of the external accompaniments of episcopal consecration.

THE PRAYER BOOK OF 1552

This book was still a liturgy, a modified version of the 1549 book, and not yet the simplified sermon and prayers and psalms of Zurich or Geneva. If Cranmer now believed that the Swiss were right in their idea of the eucharist, his mind was congenitally cautious, and was perhaps made the less revolutionary by a human reluctance to jettison most of his life's work in liturgical study. Martin Bucer wrote a scholarly book known as the *Censura* (1551) to prove what was wrong with the 1549 book, and his moderate critique influenced Cranmer. Bucer objected to kneeling, vestments, prayers for the dead, the clothing with a white garment or chrisom at baptism, the anointing with oil, the exorcism. Thus the ritual of the 1552 book was much simplified.

It had been claimed by conservatives like Bishop Stephen Gardiner that the 1549 book taught the Lutheran or Roman Catholic doctrine of the Real Presence in the elements, the doctrine which Cranmer had ceased to believe. The various passages which had been claimed by Gardiner were altered in the new book. The most important of these was the sentence at the receiving of holy communion.

The 1549 book: 'The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.'

The 1552 book: 'Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith, with thanksgiving.'

The 1552 sentence was thus a perfect vehicle for those Swiss doctrines which taught that the eucharist was primarily a memorial of a sacrifice and that the gift was a spiritual gift received by the heart and not the hand.

Cranmer consented to the removal of old ceremonial practices, and called the altar a table, but still called the minister a priest and retained kneeling to receive the sacrament. In October 1552 a Scottish chaplain, whose

name is not given by the source but who is commonly believed to have been John Knox, preached a bitter sermon against this kneeling. The council suspended the publication of the Prayer Book, and asked Cranmer to reconsider the question. Cranmer refused to give way, and a compromise was reached by inserting into the book the so-called Black Rubric, which declared that in requiring communicants to kneel 'it is not meant thereby that any adoration is done, or ought to be done . . . unto any real and essential presence there being of Christ's natural flesh and blood'.

This explanation never contented the reformers who accepted the Swiss principle of Scriptural warrant for everything in church. The traditional atmosphere which still hung unmistakably about the Prayer Book, the obvious inheritance from the medieval liturgies, the use of the sign of the cross in baptism or the ring in marriage, the formal and liturgical nature of the prayers, the requirement of kneeling – all were objectionable to the Calvinist and Zwinglian. In the reign of Queen Mary, it was rumoured among the English exiles on the Continent that Cranmer secretly agreed with them, and that he had composed a Prayer Book a hundred times more perfect than that of 1552, but had been prevented from publishing it by 'wicked clergy'.

In 1553 the English Reformation was still external to most of the people, still an affair of legislation. The parishes had been affected by the dissolution of the monasteries; they were more affected by the abolition of the Latin mass, the introduction of two vernacular liturgies in quick succession, the transformation in the appearance of the churches and of the clergy who officiated in them. Congregations are naturally conservative and resent change. There must have been many parishioners in the country who sympathized with the Cornish rebels of 1549 when they described the English liturgy as a 'Christmas game' and wanted the Latin mass and communion in one kind to be restored. The Reformation in England had captured the genuine allegi-

ance only of a few instructed theologians and some educated merchants and other members of the middle class, particularly in London, and was supported for less unmixed motives by noble potentates. In 1553 England was by no means a Protestant country. It was made more nearly Protestant by the reign of Queen Mary.

THE REIGN OF MARY (1553–8)

Half Spanish, the daughter and confidante of Catherine of Aragon, sometimes treated by her father as a bastard, Mary grew up with an attachment to Rome so fervent as to be fanatical. During the few years of Protestant change under Edward VI, she was subjected to indignities and persecutions over her desire to keep her mass. She came to the throne at the age of thirty-seven, already an embittered spinster. The marriage, arranged in 1554 with the son of the Emperor Charles V, Philip of Spain, was the most disastrous act of the reign. He was eleven years younger than she, and charming. In 1555 she convinced herself that a baby was coming, and on 30 April the bells of London were rung and a *Te Deum* was sung in thanksgiving for the birth of an illusory child. Her personal happiness, as well as her hope for a Catholic England, was dependent upon a child and heir, and from the frustration of these hopes she never recovered her balance.

Her object was to restore the Catholic faith; and from the nature of her own parenthood, this must mean the restoration, not of the non-Roman Catholicism of her father, but of the authority of the See of Rome. The five deprived bishops were restored to their sees, and Gardiner became Lord Chancellor and her chief adviser. Ridley, Latimer, Coverdale, and Hooper were imprisoned; and so was Cranmer, for a protest against the Latin mass, though an Act of Parliament restored its legality only after he had been imprisoned. Some 2,000 clergy were ejected because they had married, though some crept back into livings

where they were less well-known. Peter Martyr and other refugees were freely allowed to leave England, and Englishmen who felt it prudent to depart found easy ways to leave the country. At her coronation on 1 October 1553, Mary promised to maintain the rights of the Holy See as well as the liberties of the realm. An Act of Parliament repealed all the legislation of the reign of Edward VI concerning the prayer books, uniformity, and the marriage of the clergy. The Convocation of Canterbury declared the doctrine of transubstantiation to be true.

This was not equal to reinstating papal authority. The queen found it easier to restore the Catholic Church of 1546 than the Catholic Church of 1528. The English Parliament had no desire that papal authority in England should be restored. It preferred her to marry an Englishman and not a Spaniard, and gave offence by a petition in that sense.

Nor was it easy to restore the churches to their appearance before 1547. Bishop Bonner demanded that the pyx should be hung again over the altar, that there be a stone altar, a crucifix, a rood loft, censers, vestments, and a sanctus bell; and since many incumbents or churchwardens or mobs had destroyed or sold these articles, compliance with the bishop's orders was at first impossible. The Londoners showed such fierce hostility that the imperial ambassador Simon Renard was momentarily afraid of revolution. The churchwardens' accounts of the age show that the renewed roods were more makeshift than the old demolished roods.

The laity suspected that if they received Reginald Pole, the papal legate, as their new Archbishop of Canterbury, they would be putting into jeopardy their possession of the old monastic lands. By canon law, church property was inalienable. The Commons feared that legally the restoration of the Pope must mean the expropriation of many of the leading landowners in the country. Their fears were increased when Pole refused to commit himself to an absolute assurance about former church lands. On 7 November 1554 Pope Julius III at last gave a sufficient assurance.

Later in the month Pole was allowed to land at Dover, and was received in London amid loud popular enthusiasm. On 30 November, 500 members of Parliament knelt to receive his absolution for the disobedient and schismatic acts of the kingdom of England, and descended to the chapel to sing a *Te Deum*. Six days later Convocation submitted to the legate, and likewise received absolution. But the Act of Parliament which repealed the Acts of Henry VIII against the Pope also established the laity in continued possession of the former church lands. Mary started to give back her own lands, but the process soon languished.

The queen re-established a few monastic houses, Westminster Abbey being the most important. Since the old monastic lands were not available by law, every monastery must be newly endowed, and lack of money limited the number of houses which could be founded. An attempt to re-found the monastery of Glastonbury failed because the endowment was not sufficient. The monasteries were peopled, for the most part, with monks and nuns from the dissolved houses.

The Burnings

In December 1554 three old statutes against heresy were re-established. On 4 February 1555, the first of the Protestants, John Rogers, was burnt at Smithfield.

In the course of the next three years and a half, nearly three hundred people, high and low, rich and poor, were burnt as Protestant heretics. They included five former bishops: Ferrar of St David's, Hooper, Ridley, Latimer, and Cranmer. Ridley and Latimer were burnt together at Oxford on 16 October 1555. Two Spanish friars were sent to Oxford to argue with Cranmer and persuaded that moderate and hesitant mind to admit more evidence in the Fathers for the papal supremacy than he expected. At the end of February 1556 he submitted to the Catholic Church and to the Pope as its supreme head, declared that

he believed all the articles of the Catholic faith, and denounced the heresies of Luther and Zwingli. On 18 March he signed a document of penitence that he had abused his archbishopric and had declared the divorce of King Henry VIII. On the day appointed for his burning, it was raining, and he was placed upon a platform in St Mary's Church while Dr Cole preached at him. At the end of the sermon Cranmer prayed, in deep penitence; and then, to the astonishment of the congregation and dismay of the authorities, he revoked all his recantations. He said that he had not believed them, but had signed them in the hope of saving his life. At the stake he held his right hand in the rising flame.

Thus the government, acting on what it thought to be principle, forced into the depths of humiliation the man who had been Archbishop of Canterbury for more than twenty years. Cranmer was not an unscrupulous time-server. He had been no worldly ecclesiastic sharing the spoils of a rich Church with an absolute sovereign. He was a scholar and a man of conscience, a genuine believer in the royal supremacy, who had been brought at the last to an intolerable dilemma when the crown ordered him to repudiate the royal supremacy. His humble mind saw that the questions were not at all simple. But he was a man of religion; and a man who was so ready to see both sides of an argument that he might have been persuaded to some genuine half-recantation, if the government had been less fanatical. No one believed in toleration. Protestants like Cranmer or John Philpot approved of the burning of the extreme heretics as strongly as did Queen Mary. But these men, who had held leading offices in the church under Henry VIII or Edward VI, were not of the same sort as the old-fashioned heretics. What they had taught, they had taught under the favour and authority of the government of England. It was impossible to expect men of learning and integrity to alter their opinions because England had now a different government.

Against some of the accused the authorities could claim their heresy to be so grave that not even Protestants would deny the penalty. Others they could charge with blasphemy in church. The English government burnt fewer Protestants than the French kings or the Spanish governors in the Netherlands. But those included not only the radicals of a tiny minority, but eminent representatives of opinions widely held among influential clergy and laymen. Mary was not executing a few unpopular fanatics, but some of the chief leaders of a party in opposition. No one in the country, under the age of thirty-five, knew what a papal England was like, and the Pope was wanted only by conservative ecclesiastics, who now believed that Catholic orthodoxy could not be preserved without a recognition of papal authority. England received back the Pope at Mary's behest, not because the English wanted him.

Most of the people wanted Protestantism as little. But in parts of the country hostility to the old order ran surprisingly deep. The bitter anticlericalism of Wolsey's day made even simple laymen hate papal restoration. At the end of August 1554 Suffolk villagers tried to burn a church with an entire congregation at mass inside. In the same month indignant peasants cut off the nose of a Kentish priest. In February 1555 Renard reported his fear of a rebellion if the burnings were not stopped. On 29 August 1556, 1,000 people cheered through the streets a roped chain of twenty-two men and women from Colchester on their way towards burning. Two of the revived Franciscans at Greenwich reported that the people threw stones at them when they went abroad.

Who was responsible for the persecution?

Not the Spaniards of King Philip's entourage in London. No one saw the peril more clearly than the clever ambassador, Simon Renard. He sent report after report to Philip, urging that the bishops should be restrained, recommending that there were other ways than these perilous public burnings, that secret executions would be better, or

banishment, or imprisonment. He anxiously observed the sympathy of crowds with the victims: how they gathered round the ashes and wrapped them reverently; how they uttered menaces against the bishops, or wept in compassion.

The burnings began after Pole arrived; and the bishops who sat in the courts to condemn heretics were sitting under his jurisdiction as papal legate. Pole wanted mildness to be tried before execution; but he believed that execution was right if mildness failed. Renard thought the coarse and quaint-humoured Bonner to be the most deplorably active among the bishops; and the records of the Protestant victims sustain this reputation. Stephen Gardiner, Chancellor till his death in 1555, carried a large responsibility. Other bishops took a share. The queen and her close advisers killed men and women neither from policy nor from vindictiveness, but from conscience, to purge the realm before Almighty God.

The courage of the martyrs was not expected by the authorities. Believing that English Protestants were few and shallow, they expected recantations. They achieved recantations, of which the most important was that of Sir John Cheke, formerly tutor to King Edward VI, who was kidnapped near Brussels and would not face the fire. But they overestimated the ability of human beings to adopt opinions because they are commanded. The steadfastness of the victims, from Ridley and Latimer downwards, baptized the English Reformation in blood, and drove into English minds the fatal association of ecclesiastical tyranny with the See of Rome. The old anticlericalism, the old hatred of Wolsey and his power, the resentment against the Pope's authority, received a new and terrible justification. Five years before, the Protestant cause was identified with church robbery, destruction, irreverence, religious anarchy. It was now beginning to be identified with virtue, honesty, and loyal English resistance to a half-foreign government.

Everything hung upon the baby that never came. All over Europe men knew that the Princess Elizabeth must succeed and that with her would come another, and Protestant, revolution. Rumours of Mary's illness, reports of her death, spread through the Continent, dismaying the adherents of Rome and strengthening the morale of Protestants. The English exiles in Germany found it easy to borrow money on the credit of their English estates, so convinced were the European bankers that they would soon be home and in health and power. Every calamity which afflicted one of the persecutors was recorded and remembered as a judgement of God – the chancellor of Salisbury diocese who died on the day before he was sending ninety persons to be examined; the gaoler of Newgate who died with flesh rotting; the agent destroyed by lightning at the arrest of a Protestant; the sheriff of London stricken with paralysis. If there had been a baby, the political complexion of England would have changed overnight. But the queen sat wretched in her rooms, or walked the corridors like a ghost, or yearned after her absent and indifferent husband, or sat on the floor with her knees drawn up, while men whispered, in fear or hope, that she was dying.

She died in the early morning of 17 November 1558; and Cardinal Pole died a few hours later.

THE ACCESSION OF ELIZABETH

The religion of Elizabeth is an enigma but not because she was silent upon the subject. She spoke freely to foreign ambassadors, less freely to her councillors; but the resulting information is so confused that we do not wonder at the Spanish ambassador, who wrote in despair: 'After all she is a woman and inconstant.' Religion being at the core of English diplomacy, it is unquestionable that sometimes her descriptions of her faith were intended to please King Philip II of Spain, or the King of France, or the Huguenot or Dutch or German or Scottish lords. She was inclined to

tell people what they wanted to hear. Seeing her affirmations through the eyes of others, we hesitate to trust them. She was once charged by a hostile critic with 'atheism', but absurdly. She has been charged by historians with being 'secular', but the charge is an anachronism. She has been charged less absurdly, but still improbably, with thinking all religions much the same. She kept the inmost creed of her soul as secret as her real intentions about marriage; she talked volubly about marriage, she was in perpetual dalliance with suitors, but no one can penetrate the inner mind; and perhaps, like a woman, she could not always fathom her own heart. Its mechanism was not simple. She had been living so dangerously during the reign of Mary that to conceal its complexities had become natural.

In consequence, historians still argue whether, in making England Protestant during 1559, the queen and her advisers were pushing a reluctant Parliament or whether the House of Commons was pushing a reluctant queen.

As the daughter of Anne Boleyn, she must be Protestant. Under Mary she had suffered for the Protestant cause; she was hailed by the growing Protestant party as their champion; the exiles hurried back from the Continent. For all her diplomatic talent she had no dealings with the Pope and withdrew the English envoy in Rome without ceremony. At Christmas 1558 she ordered the Bishop of Carlisle not to elevate the host, and on his refusal left the church after the Gospel. At the opening of Parliament on 25 January 1559, when she went in state to Westminster Abbey, she was received by the abbot and monks with candles, incense, and holy water, and dismissed the monks, saying: 'Away with those torches, for we see very well.' She summoned Protestant preachers, and surrounded herself with Protestant lords, especially the former secretary of Somerset, William Cecil. With a treasury impoverished and a land undefended, with the French claiming the English crown through Mary Queen of Scots, with a Spanish army in the Netherlands, with two thirds of England Catholic, it was

imprudent to be a Protestant. But by birth, education, and conviction a Protestant she must be. She told the Spanish ambassador openly that she could not marry Philip II because she was a heretic.

She was the daughter of Henry VIII; and it is certain that she was personally attracted to a religious settlement like that of her father, though considered in generalities, not adopted in all its detail. Her ideas of that settlement included a Catholicism without the Pope; the royal supremacy; a preferably celibate clergy; the Real Presence in the eucharist. In March 1559 she told the Spanish ambassador that she was resolved to restore religion as her father had left it. This was not a practicable programme, because no one in the country wanted it. The reigns of Edward VI and Mary had made the Catholics more Roman and the Protestants more Reformed. She was ruling a divided people, among whom some wanted the Pope and others the Prayer Book for which Cranmer and Ridley and Latimer had died.

Seven years later she told a Spaniard that the Protestants had driven her farther than she intended to go, and she was speaking truth as well as diplomacy. But she had no choice. If a Protestant, then despite her talk about the Lutheran Confession of Augsburg, despite her affirmation that she disagreed only with three or four things in the mass, she had no alternative to the Prayer Book hallowed by fire.

It was the fortune of Queen Elizabeth and of England that policy agreed with her preference. A violent change, a down-with-idolatry campaign, might not only have provoked revolution in the north of England, but might have invited the armies of France or Spain. She must retain the Spanish alliance and the good will of King Philip II as the best protection against the French. She was advised to go warily: 'Glasses with small necks, if liquor was poured into them suddenly and violently, would not be so filled, but would refuse to receive it.' So far as possible she aimed to reconcile the moderate conservatives like Bishop Tunstall of

Durham, and therefore to establish a religion which a conservative might accept.

Not without strong opposition in Parliament, a Supremacy Bill offered her the Supreme Headship. She accepted the power but refused the title, and became Supreme Governor. Both conservative and radical disliked the title of Head and were better pleased with the new word. Since the Prayer Book of 1552 was the only possible liturgy, it was reissued under an Act of Uniformity, but with important amendments in a conservative sense. A rubric declared that the ornaments of the church and the ministers should be those of the second year of King Edward VI, a year when the traditional vestments were still worn and the churches still retained much of their medieval appearance and furniture. The Black Rubric of 1552, which declared that no adoration of any Real Presence was intended by kneeling at the communion, was omitted. Above all, the Zwinglian formula which the 1552 book had ordered at the administration of the holy communion was kept, but was to be preceded by the more traditional formula of 1549 – 'The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.'

MATTHEW PARKER

The vacant See of Canterbury was conferred upon Matthew Parker, a man known to have been friendly to reform under Edward VI. During the reign of Mary, Parker had been deprived of his preferments as a married man and lived quietly in England. He was like Cranmer in being retired and scholarly; more persevering than able, in the eyes of the government he possessed the supreme merit of being a moderate man who would conciliate.

The Marian bishops were not ready to cooperate with the government. They opposed the bills steadily in the House of Lords. Archbishop Heath of York refused to crown the queen. In the event only two of the seventeen

Marian bishops (those of Llandaff and of Sodor and Man) retained their sees under Elizabeth. 14 bishops, 12 deans, 15 heads of colleges, and between 200 and 300 clergy resigned their offices or were deprived.

This refusal of the conservative leaders made Parker's task far more difficult. He must rely upon the divines in sympathy with Protestantism.

But many of the divines of the Protestant party were not as moderate as they had been under Edward VI. Those who had been exiled upon the continent had learnt the doctrines and the practices of the Swiss and Rhineland churches. They had themselves been divided on whether the 1552 Prayer Book was a truly reformed book. At Frankfurt the exiles quarrelled bitterly. The less extreme wing, led by Richard Cox, contended that the 1552 Prayer Book was the book for which the martyrs of England died; the more extreme wing, led by John Knox, contended that it still contained the dregs of papistry. These were the men now flooding back into England, and upon some of them the government must rely for its moderate policy.

On 17 December 1559, Parker, after election by his Dean and Chapter, was consecrated Archbishop of Canterbury. The government wanted all to be done in the ancient ways, and hoped that four Marian bishops would agree to consecrate. The hope was vain; Parker was consecrated by Barlow the Henrician Bishop of Bath and Wells, Scory the Edwardine Bishop of Chichester, Hodgkin the suffragan Bishop of Bedford, and Coverdale the translator of the Bible and Edwardine Bishop of Exeter. Parker's difficulties may be judged by the vestments of the ministers. Barlow wore a cope, the legal vestment. Scory and Hodgkin evidently had scruples about a cope, and wore surplices. Coverdale evidently had scruples about a surplice and wore a black gown. It was soon plain that whatever the Ornaments Rubric intended, the traditional dress of ministers was not enforceable. Old exiles, now new bishops, like Grindal and Jewel, threatened to resign their sees upon the issue. So far

from securing that the cope should be preserved, Parker was struggling to preserve the surplice.

Most of the parochial clergy remained at their posts through these vicissitudes. A few in each diocese followed the Marian bishops into retirement or exile, but the great majority of the clergy continued to minister in their parishes through all the changes. An Augustinian canon of Dunstable named John Stalworth was forced to leave his religious order with a pension when the house was dissolved in 1539. He subsequently held livings under Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth, and he died the rector of Great-worth in Northamptonshire in 1590. Though he lived longer than most, this career was not untypical. Hugh Curwen, who had been Marian as well as Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, saw nothing odd, when pleading to Elizabeth for an English see, in recalling that he had served her and her sister Mary for eight years and a half. Nicholas Wotton, who refused bishoprics with passion, was Dean of Canterbury and Dean of York jointly from the reign of Henry VIII to the reign of Elizabeth; but he was less a dean than a diplomat salaried by deaneries. Some were open to the imputation of being Vicars of Bray. Dr Andrew Perne was Master of Peterhouse from 1554 to 1589. When in 1557 the corpses of Bucer and Fagius were exhumed and burnt as heretical in the market square at Cambridge, in company with a pile of Protestant books, Perne was Vice-Chancellor and lent his countenance to the proceedings. Three and a half years later the Senate passed a unanimous grace restoring to Bucer and Fagius their degrees and a public service was held to do them honour; Dr Perne was again Vice-Chancellor. Pamphleteers of Elizabeth's reign coined the Latin verb *pernare*, meaning 'to be a turncoat'. But Perne was exceptional, for a majority of the Marian heads of Cambridge and Oxford colleges were removed after the accession of Elizabeth.

Some clergy were content with lower motives, knowing

that the alternative was possible starvation and certain discomfort. We have the report of a conversation between two clergymen summoned to St Paul's Cathedral in London to make the new subscription before the commissioners. They met outside the door.

Dr Kennall said: 'What do you mean to do today?'

Dr Darbyshire replied: 'What in conscience I am bound to do, to wit, not to subscribe.'

'What!' said Kennall. 'I think you are not so very a fool as to refuse to subscribe, and thereby lose so good livings as you have!'

Darbyshire said: 'I must do that which is secure for my soul, whatsoever becometh of my livings.'

'Before God,' said Kennall with great vehemence, 'if ever you get so good, and so many, and so near together again, I will give you my head!'

Many clergy were ignorant, simple, poverty-stricken, and generally 'unreformed'. Others, more capable of decision, were convinced that the Church needed reform. They were not all happy with what they saw around them in the shape of reform, but they preferred the vernacular to Latin and a wife to a concubine and knew that their parishioners had souls which must be baptized and fed and married and buried. Whatever the status of the Pope, the canon law, or the scholastic philosophy, the people still needed sacraments.

But in 1559 the religious and ecclesiastical model of an English Reformation was still to be determined. So far it was only certain that, in some manner or other, the Church of England would be Protestant.

The Reformation everywhere had political consequences; but in England beyond all other states the political motive was entangled with the reforming ideas. By 1558 Protestantism had struck roots into the country – that was evident from the martyrs under Mary and the attitude of London towards them. But the Reformation as a *reforming* force had hardly begun. The appearance of the churches had been

altered, the monasteries dissolved, the clergy permitted to marry, the images and the chasubles destroyed or sold, the independent power of the church curtailed, the secular authority of the bishops weakened. But the clergy were as ignorant as ever. And Protestant doctrine penetrated little farther than the homilies which they were compelled to read and the liturgy which they were compelled to use. A substantial body of lay opinion (the more substantial the further away from London) preferred the old ways. The leading reformers, with the exception of Matthew Parker, disliked the relics of the old ways still remaining and wanted to alter the new establishment further, to conform with the patterns of Zurich or Geneva. The end of the revolution had not been reached in 1559. Some say that the accession of Elizabeth was the beginning of the English Reformation, not its end.